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_____ _____

Kate Wilkinson

Spectacular Modesty
The Self-representation of Ascetic Noblewomen in the Context of the Pelagian Controversy

By

Kate Wilkinson
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion
Historical Studies

_____ [Advisor's signature]
Lewis Ayres
Advisor

_____ [Member's signature]
Joyce Flueckiger
Committee Member

_____ [Member's signature]
Richard Valantasis
Committee Member

_____ [Member's signature]
Philip Rousseau
Committee Member

Accepted:

_____
Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School

_____
Date

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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This dissertation is a feminist historical exercise that argues that modesy among ascetic noblewomen of the late fourth and early fifth centuries AD provided opportunities for the exercise of women's agency. Using primary material addressed to the women of the Anicii family by the Christian ascetic thinkers Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius, this study explores modesty as a series of performances. Comparative material from contemporary ethnographies of women in South Asia functions to reveal the potentially rich forms of being implied by 'conventional' advice on modesty. After exploring external modest performance in dress, domesticity, and speech, the study turns to the interior of modesty and looks at questions of hypocrisy and of congruence between disposition and performance. Lastly the dissertation puts feminist concerns about women's 'agency' into conversation with the conflicting theologies of human and divine agency of the Pelagian controversy.

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Acknowledgments

So neither the one who plants nor the one who sows is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Cor. 3:7

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Introduction

Goths invaded Rome in 410 AD, and like many aristocratic families, a household of three wealthy, senatorial women fled across the Mediterranean to their land holdings in North Africa. Proba and her daughter-in-law Juliana, both widows, traveled with Juliana's daughter Demetrias. Three years later all were consecrated women, their household a refuge for ascetic Christian women of different ranks. The two elder widows and the young virgin formed the center of a religious community of extraordinary wealth and influence. They were the recipients of a plethora of missives from important Christian thinkers that combined ascetic and theological advice with competitive moves to secure the household's considerable material and moral patronage.[1] Many of the recommendations to the Anicii women are not unique to the Christian ascetic movement, but fall into the category of entirely conventional Roman expectations for virtuous, upper-class women. They are recommendations to be discreet, well-covered, domestic, gentle, retiring, frugal; they are recommendations to be modest. Using the body of material addressed to the women of the Anicii family by the theologians and ascetic theorists Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius as my central body of evidence, I argue that

[1] Peter Brown, "The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West," The Journal of Theological Studies XXI (1970), Peter Brown, "Pelagius and His Supporters: Aims and Environments," Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972), Anne Kurdoch, "*Demetrias Ancilla Dei*: Anicia Demetrias and the Problem of the Missing Patron," Religion, Dynasty, and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900, eds. Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Anne Kurdoch, "The Anician Women: Patronage and Dynastic Strategy in a Late Roman *Domus,* 350-600 C.E.," University of Manchester, 2003.

modesty, despite its conventionality, was a creative and performative[2] mode of being for late Roman Christian ascetic women, an opportunity for women's agency. This agency was not a coherent capacity that can be defined in contemporary terms or ancient theories of the will/self but was a part of the women's evolving self-understanding in the context of heated debated over freedom in virtuous action.

I begin with an understanding of modesty as a range of activities that includes veiling, seclusion, restraint in dress, modified speech or silence, and highly controlled comportment. Modesty, then and now, also implied an internal disposition. I address this potential interior aspect of modesty after examining aspects of the outward enactment of modest behavior. To support my analyses of modesty as an active and performative enterprise, I draw on the work of feminist ethnographers who have studied similarly 'traditional', 'conservative' or 'normative' phenomena among women in non-western contexts. Both the work of these ethnographers and my own goes against the grain of feminist scholarship that focuses on women's resistances to oppressive normative expectations[3] rather than the processes of embodying the cultural ideal. Focusing on the latter challenges the assumption of what anthropologist Saba Mahmood calls 'the subject of freedom'[4], the self who only manifests as a fully aware agent when she resists or subverts patriarchal norms.

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[2] Here I indicate only a mode of being comprised partly of performances. I will distinguish the language of 'performance studies' from that of Judith Butler's 'performativity' below. Both contribute to the critical vocabulary of the dissertation as a whole.

[3] For a good example of feminist anthropology using the category of 'resistance': Judith Okely, "Defiant Moments: Gender, Resistance and Individuals (Phyllis Kayberry Memorial Lecture)," Man (N.S.) 26 (1989).

[4] Saba Mahmood, Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). 1-39.

Placing modesty under the rubric of agency, implying choice and activity, or of performance, implying intentionality and conscious framing, also assumes a particular kind of subject, if not exactly the Western enlightenment subject whose basic desire is for freedom. It assumes a subject who has and who values choice, who believes she has the capacity to will and to do. The theological debate that provides the context for the letters to the Anicii women revolves around precisely this question: to what extent is the human subject free to will and to perform virtuous action? Just as the question of agency is today the subject of multiple interpretations in multiple disciplines, the question of human moral choice was contested ground during the early fifth century. The centrality of the Pelagian debate in many of the primary sources for my study serves as a warning against simply importing any one or any set of definitions of agency—ancient or contemporary. Proba, Juliana, and Demetrias were in the middle of a vigorous debate over understandings of choice, freedom, and virtuous 'doing'. While their debate shared many concerns of contemporary discussions, it also placed importance on some entirely different aspects, such as the objective moral content of choices and the role of a divine will, and ignored many questions the 21st century scholar finds crucial, such as the legal status of women and the autonomy of the person.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I place this study within the genre of feminist historiography. I give a working definition for the dissertation topic—modesty--and introduce the primary material. Finally, I discuss the methodological orientation of the work and explore the critical vocabularies I use in the dissertation associated with feminist scholarship and performance studies. The second, third, and fourth chapters separate the external doing of modesty from the implied internal disposition of modesty.

I begin in "Apparel, Identity, and Agency: Demetrias Dresses Herself" with the modest wearing of clothes and an exploration of the ways that ancient evidence reveals a close association between clothing, personal identity and moral reputation. I examine the early Christian authors' advice on modesty in clothing in light of contemporary ethnographic accounts of veiling, covering, uncovering, changing garments, etc. From the world of personal garments I move in chapter three, "Publicity and Domesticity", to the complexities of modest location in space. This chapter deals with the creation of public and private space, the advertisement of a woman's domesticity, and the negotiation of movement between domestic and public places. The fourth chapter, "The Modest Mouth", takes up the analysis of male Roman rhetoric and gender performance and applies it to the verbal modesty expected of the Anicii women and others like them. This chapter also takes up the frequent elision in feminist scholarship between voice and subjectivity.

Garment, location, and speech are not the only activities of modesty I could examine. Glance, movement, and emotional expression among others are also present in the primary material as components of modesty. These three, however, give a good picture of the creative work of modesty, the level of performative competence expected by the modest woman's audience, and the potential for successes and failures. Not only did modesty take a lot of *doing*, the authors of advice for ideal Christian ascetic womanhood knew it. They reveal, sometimes very explicitly, sometimes tacitly, the performative nature of modesty. In the last two chapters, I take up the question of the internality of modesty and the formation of the Christian ascetic woman's virtuous subjectivity. Chapter Five, "Performance Anxiety", engages with the primary material

that uses misogynistic satire to represent a fear of the hypocritical ascetic who displays false modesty. Concern over the hypocrite shows an anxiety over the performative nature of virtue, in this case, feminine virtue. The only way to tell if a woman was modest was through her performance of modesty—but how to tell if the performance was genuine? Thus, some ancient authors skewer the false ascetic, who behaves suspiciously like their ideal ascetic; others give advice for the formation of an appropriate interior; all show a level of inconsistency and concern over the correspondences between act and disposition. The final chapter, "A Modest Agency", maps out the particularities of the two options for moral agency that were being hotly debated in the very writings that provide our evidence on modesty. If chapter five shows that the subjects of this study were just as interested in subjectivity as we are, chapter six shows that they were just as interested in agency. I attempt to draw out some aspects of both Pelagian and Augustinian theologies of the will and its freedom (or lack thereof) in order to highlight the distinctive options the Anicii women and their contemporaries faced in understanding their own virtuous actions and dispositions. I offer no final judgment on the late ancient Christian ascetic subject and her agency; rather, I show the range of competing ways she could come to understand herself and represent herself within the community.

Note on
Sources, Translations, and Abbreviations

AE	*L'année épigraphique*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, series latina*
CE	*Carmina Latina Epigraphica*
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptorum Latinorum*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*

Translations are fully cited at their first appearance, afterwards by translator and page number. I have freely emended translations for accuracy, clarity, and modern English usage.

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works are those of: Albert Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteur chrétiens*. Turnhout: Éditions Brépols, 1954.

Chapter One

Proba, Juliana and Demetrias Act Modestly
Material and Methodology of the Dissertation

I. Genre

This dissertation is an exercise in feminist history and falls within the disciplines of Patristics, Church History, or more recently, Late Antique Studies. 'Feminist history' is a genre that requires some explanation and qualification. Perhaps the best analyses of the developments and continuing tensions in the practice of writing 'women's history' and 'feminist history' are Joan Wallach Scott's introductory essays in the revised edition of Gender and the Politics of History.[5] Women's history emerged as a part of the women's movement in the U.S. and Europe in the 1970s in response to the realization that women were rarely introduced as historical subjects.[6] Writers of women's history implicitly and explicitly criticized the absence of women from modern historiography from a number of stances and simultaneously called on women's history, still in its infancy, to support various, sometimes conflicting, political claims. Women's history continues to stand in an unstable position. It is a political activity in itself and a source for

[5] Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (Revised Edition) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[6] In her 1996 introductory essay to Feminism and History, Scott acknowledges 'women's history' traces its roots to a significantly earlier period. For example, she cites the speech of a political activist demanding women's suffrage in the context of the French Revolution. Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza gives an excellent survey of nineteenth-century American women's historical analysis of Biblical texts in the first chapter of In Memory of Her. Commonly, however, feminist scholars date the beginning of women's history to the academic boom in women's studies of the 1970s. Joan Wallach Scott, "Introduction," Feminism and History, ed. Joan Wallach Scott, Oxford Readings in Feminism (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

evidence legitimizing political arguments. This leads to the circular problem that scholars simultaneously search for alternate histories (based on contemporary concerns) and use those alternate histories to legitimate their contemporary concerns. Other women's studies sub-fields[7] acknowledge this ambiguity. However, while the traditional academic disciplines are equally unstable, their practitioners rarely acknowledge this. History, the source for exempla and 'raw' data is, according to feminist historians, entirely implicated in political machinations. Consciously or not, its practice and results argue specific views concerning the nature and value of Woman and women, past and present, not to mention the work History does in creating and maintaining the category of Woman into which women must fall. Some historians, under the influence of Marxist or feminist or post-colonial theorists, have been more self-critically aware of the political aspects of their work in the past several decades. Many, however, attempt to maintain the discreet veil of neutral historical fact-gathering and objective analysis.[8] Women's history rarely attempts this.

Scott outlines several approaches in women's history. The first she discusses under the rubric of the feminist pun, "her-story."

> As the play on the word "history" implied, the point was to give value to an experience that had been ignored (hence devalued) and to insist on female agency in the making of history… "Her-story" has many different uses. Some historians gather evidence about women to demonstrate their essential likeness as historical

[7] For good introductions to the ambiguities of feminist work in anthropology and archaeology respectively: Ravina Aggarwal, "Traversing Lines of Control: Feminist Anthropology Today," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (2000)., Naomi Hamilton, Joyce Marcus, Douglass Bailey, Gunnar Haaland, Randi Haaland and Peter J. Ucko, "Viewpoint: Can We Interpret Figurines?," Cambridge Archaeological Journal 6.2 (1996).

[8] See the introduction to: Elizabeth A. Clark, "Women, Gender and the Study of Christian History," Church History: Studies in Christianity & Culture 70.3 (2001).

> subjects to men. Whether they uncover women participating in major political events or write about women's political action on their own behalf, these historians attempt to fit a new subject—women—into received historical categories, interpreting their actions in terms recognizable to political and social historians…Another strategy associated with "her-story" takes evidence about women and uses it to challenge received interpretations of progress and regress…A different sort of investigation, still within the "her-story" position, departs from the framework of conventional history and offers a new narrative, different periodization, and different causes.[9]

This attempt to recover and reinterpret data concerning women is interwoven with the growth of social history as an increasingly important mode of research and with the continuing struggle over the history and definition of such categories as 'gender', 'man', 'woman', 'sex', and 'sexuality.' Each of these approaches, from the seemingly simple recovery of sources pertinent to women to complex analyses of historical causes and categories, contains dangers or contradictions to either the aims of feminist activism or the aims of historical research. The plethora of studies focusing on women as historical subjects, for example, serves in some ways to re-particularize and subordinate knowledge about women. An over-eagerness to interpret historical data referring to Woman as positive for women has badly skewed popular perceptions of some of the most interpretively difficult eras.[10] Alternately, historicizing gender breaks down the early feminists' appeal to universal womanhood. Despite the many contradictions inherent in a project that simultaneously constructs and dismantles the category of Woman and the

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[9] Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (Revised Edition). 18-19.

[10] See: Clark, "Women, Gender and the Study of Christian History." 406, Hamilton, Marcus, Bailey, Haaland, Haaland and Ucko, "Viewpoint: Can We Interpret Figurines?.", Ronald Hutton, "The Neolithic Great Goddess: A Study in Modern Tradition," Antiquity 71 (1997)., Lynn Meskel, "Goddesses, Gimbutas and 'New Age' Archaeology," Antiquity 69 (1995).

identity between women, past and present, Scott finds that feminist history is a fruitful political and intellectual pursuit.

> The realization of the radical potential of women's history comes in the writing of histories that focus on women's experiences *and* analyze the way in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics. Feminist history then becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies. With this approach women's history critically confronts the politics of existing histories and inevitably begins the rewriting of history.[11]

Joan Wallach Scott's definitions for the genre of feminist history provide an important framework for this dissertation. I contribute to women's history by studying material that is very much part of the 'operations of gender' in late ancient Christian society but has rarely attracted attention. Accounts of women in the early church tend to focus on the unusual or controversial activities of women--manly[12] activities--rather than distinctly and stereotypically feminine activities. The latter was largely irrelevant to earlier Church historians with little interest in gender and has seemed, perhaps 'part of the problem rather than part of the solution', to feminist historians. By focusing on modesty, particularly in the interpretive framework of performance, I hope to 'confront the politics of existing histories' and contribute to 'the rewriting of history.'

Women's history and feminist history have followed similar paths in the sub-discipline of Late Ancient Studies as in other historical sub-disciplines. The attempt to recreate 'her-story' in the early church, as in all of antiquity, confronts major difficulties in the absence of primary source material. Much more exists, however, than scholars

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[11] Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (Revised Edition). 27.
[12] This is not an outright criticism of the tendency. The early Christian writers themselves often commented on the actions of 'manly women'.

have treated with the serious care given to other evidence. Historians have turned increasingly to sources pertaining to women in their efforts at producing quality critical editions and translations for the non-specialist audience. The work of source recovery is ongoing and crucial to the enterprise. A wealth of material is suddenly available in critical editions and accurate modern translation. Elizabeth Clark, Joan Petersen[13] and Benedicta Ward[14] have edited collections of Greek and Latin sources while others have produced more focused translations with commentary or translations in the appendices of longer works.[15] Although one may trace most of these efforts to translate or simply publish sources on women in the late antique church to the influence of the women's movement of the 1970s, not all are self-consciously feminist works. Some insist the opposite. Joan Petersen and Benedicta Ward both fall into this category. According to Ward's analysis of repentant prostitutes in early hagiographies, "The sinful woman is also Eve, the mother of all living, and therefore the image is of Everyman, of the human

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[13] Joan M. Petersen, ed., Handmaids of the Lord: Contemporary Descriptions of Feminine Asceticism in the First Six Christian Centuries (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996).

[14] Benedicta Ward, Harlots of the Desert: A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources, Cistercian Studies Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1987).

[15] David Brakke, Athanasius and Asceticism (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), Sebastian P. Brock and Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Holy Women of the Syrian Orient (Updated Edition) (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998), Elizabeth A. Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1979), Elizabeth Bryson Bongie, The Life of the Blessed and Holy Syncletica by Pseudo-Athanasius (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing Co., 2003), Kevin Corrigan, The Life of Saint Macrina by Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (Toronto: Peregrina Publishing Press, 1997), Kate Cooper, Concord and Martyrdom: Gender, Community, and the Uses of Chrsitian Perfection in Late Antiquity (Ann Arbor, MI: U.M.I. Dissertation Services, 1993). Rebecca Krawiec, Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

race alienated from the love of God." [16] Ward's translations are not the fruit of a specifically feminist endeavor; indeed, she turns the analysis away from the gender of her subjects and towards the larger framework of repentance and salvation for Every**man**.

Even as sources became more widely available, an entirely new body of scholarly work arose devoted to the social history of early Christianity and especially the history of sexuality in the early Church.[17] Not all of this work addressed gender, and some that did failed to find favor with many feminist scholars.[18] One well-known scholar of the social history of the early church is Peter Brown. His study The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity was an early and important analysis of sexuality in the early church. It also exasperates feminist scholars who find an analysis of sexuality that pays little critical attention to gender and is flawed if not offensive. He promises, for instance, "In Jerome's letters and commentaries, we can glimpse the devoted widows and virgins, whose symbolic role Ambrose had spoken of with such resonance, coming alive, as real women, actively engaged in the politics of erudition."[19] Yet his chapter on Jerome is concerned with Jerome, not the women with whom he corresponded and lived, and Brown's analysis focuses on the sexual ideologies of men and their practical consequences for men almost without reference to women. He waxes eloquent on the erudition of Jerome's female friends but hardly attends to the

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[16] Ward 8.

[17] Peter Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985).

[18] See Kate Cooper's criticisms of both Foucault and Veyne in the introduction to: Kate Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity (Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[19] Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. 365.

complete control Jerome wields over the memory of these women since their own writings do not survive.

> That Jerome did not encourage women to become theological authors in their own right *meant no more* than that he, like all other late antique males, wished to keep for himself the dubious privilege of being aggressive to other men. Given the contemporary preoccupation with the need to preserve an oasis of Christian culture untainted by male profane learning and by male competitive urges, well-educated "daughters of Jerusalem"—prodigious readers and memorizers of the holy texts and their learned commentaries—could maintain, quite as effectively as could any male monks, the quiet heartbeat of an unsullied Christian truth.[20]

The passage uses gender as a category of analysis—profane learning is male, Christian men should avoid profane learning, only men should write aggressive theological works, women can study theology—but the result is confusing. Is theological writing, since it is aggressive, profane? Is theological study feminine? Why should women be able to engage in a feminine pursuit 'just as well' as any *male* monk? The problem, of course, is that Jerome's seemingly contradictory attitudes towards female scholarship meant a great deal. They were part of a complex system of gender ideologies that Jerome himself was in the process of re-asserting and revising. Several of Peter Brown's students and other scholars influenced by his work set about to correct and refine his analysis of early Christian sexuality by writing the history of women in the early church. I am a part of this 'genealogy' as a student of Brown's colleague, Roberta Bondi, and his student Béatrice Caseau, both historians with strong feminist interests.[21]

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[20] Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. 370. Emphasis my own.

[21] Many other scholarly genealogies are possible. I comment on Brown because he was the first social historian of early Christianity I encountered as an undergraduate and was a major influence on several of my mentors. They often recommended works by other students of Brown.

The growth in feminist history often overlaps with the products of the renewed interest in social history. One must note in particular the work of Elizabeth Clark who has made significant contributions to both the recovery of texts and the writing of social history.[22] The ascetic movement provides the wealth of source material on early Christian women and continues to draw scholarly attention. Susanna Elm's 'Virgins of God' studies the development of monasticism and its role in the Trinitarian conflicts of the fourth century from the perspective of women's asceticism.[23] David Brakke and Rebecca Krawiec examine the relationships between women's and men's asceticism in the cases of Athanasius and Shenoute respectively.[24]

The politics of writing women's history in the early Christian era overlaps not only with the women's movement in general but also with the ongoing women's movement within the Christian churches, especially those churches that have only

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[22] This is only a select list of important book-length studies and translations: Clark, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, Elizabeth A. Clark, Women in the Early Church, Message of the Fathers of the Church, ed. Thomas Halton (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), Elizabeth A. Clark, The Life of Melania the Younger, Studies in Women and Religion (New York, Toronto: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), Elizabeth A. Clark, Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity, Studies in Women and Religion (Lewiston, Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), Elizabeth A. Clark, The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), Elizabeth A. Clark, ed., St. Augustine on Marriage and Sexuality (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), Elizabeth A. Clark and Diane F. Hatch, The Golden Bough, the Oaken Cross: The Virgilian Cento of Faltonia Betitia Proba, American Academy of Religion Texts and Translations Series, ed. James A. Massey (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert Richardson, Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977). Elizabeth A. Clark and Herbert Richardson, Women and Religion: The Original Sourcebook of Women in Christian Thought, New Revised and Expanded Edition ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996).

[23] Susanna Elm, 'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[24] Brakke, Athanasius and Asceticism. Krawiec, Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity.

recently, or still not, granted women an equal place in the ministry. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Ruether stand out as scholars who initiated the call for a new history of women in early Christianity and who provided the political justification for such work. Schüssler Fiorenza, a specialist in New Testament, reminds participants in the women's movement at large that Christianity is a crucial aspect of the history of women in the West. "Insofar as biblical religion is still influential today, a cultural and social feminist transformation of Western society must take into account the biblical story and the historical impact of biblical tradition. Western women are not able to discard completely and forget our personal, cultural or religious Christian history."[25] Schüssler Fiorenza does not only believe that biblical history must be 'taken into account' in the narrative of patriarchy in the West, but that it ought be re-read in such a way as to provide a positive basis for a feminist spirituality:

> While I agree with Ruether that the quest for women's power, independence, and freedom cannot be solely or even primarily formulated in terms of personal-individualist and biological female power but has to be social-political, I concur with Carol Christ that at the heart of the spiritual feminist quest is the quest for women's power, freedom and independence. Is it possible to read the Bible in such a way that it becomes a historical source and theological symbol for such power, independence and freedom?[26]

Schüssler Fiorenza's project was so successful that her narrative of the progressive curtailment of women within the early Christian movement is now widely accepted in the academic community.[27] Rosemary Ruether undertook similar work with the later periods

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[25] Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. xix
[26] Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. 9.
[27] Clark, "Women, Gender and the Study of Christian History." Clark notes that while she, Rosemary Ruether and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza all contributed to this schema, strong objections are possible against the 'golden age' origins narratives that feminist historians in many sub-disciplines put forward in the 1970s and 1980s. 404-406.

of early Christianity. In particular, she argued that Christian asceticism provided opportunities for women's liberation in the late ancient era. She added to 'her-story' with the intension of providing models for contemporary women. "…we hope to make a contribution toward the recovery of important chapters of women's history and toward the charting of paradigms of female leadership possible within successive theological world views."[28] Karen Jo Torjesen is a more recent proponent of this line of research that looks for female leadership in the early Church as a part of an argument for female leadership in contemporary Christian communities.[29] This line of scholarship has produced important revisions in the understanding of women's roles in the early church. It falls prey, however, to the ambiguities of any historical exercise that attempts to 'recover' legitimizing models from the early ages of a still-existing institution. Relying on past models to authorize contemporary reforms risks the integrity of one's historical research as well as the foundations of one's political stance. I am interested in the construction of authority in the early church and women's place in hierarchies and decision-making, but I do not look to this period for paradigms for reform in the contemporary Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a member.

As in the wider arena of feminist history, the historians of early Christian women have taken an interest both in the recovery of women's stories and the writing of social history for political ends as well as for the reformulation of historical method overall. Bernadette Brooten argues that the qualitative difference between women's and men's

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[28] Rosemary Ruether, "Mothers of the Church: Ascetic Women in the Late Patristic Age," Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, ed. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). 16.
[29] Karen Jo Torjesen, When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993).

history challenges the genre of history altogether. She asserts that women's history reveals History as men's history, complicit in re-enforcing patriarchal ways of knowing. History can only claim universality by marginalizing gender, which is conflated with women, and by denying the masculine bias of historiography itself.

> If women are no longer relegated to the cultural background or the societal context, but are recognized as central for understanding early Christianity and its theology, a rethinking of the whole will be required. This will not mean a harmonious complementarity of women's history and men's history, simply adding the two together, thereby leaving the structures of male history and theology intact. Rather, early Christian women's history, as prehistory, that is, as qualitatively different from the history of early Christian men, demonstrates the fragmentary and perspectival nature of what has passed as early Christian history. Thus, the goal of writing early Christian women's history is that it will result in a new history of women and a new view of men.[30]

The re-formulation of historiography includes a variety of metaphors for the work, intended to challenge the 'scientific' metaphor of objective data-gathering and interpretation that hides the strong masculine biases of previous histories. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza talks of the detective who must engage in the 'imaginative reconstruction' based on 'evidence' rather than 'facts'.[31] Gillian Clark among others picks up on the ancient trope of woman as textile worker and compares her history to a 'patchwork'.[32] I share in this emphasis on the creative or imaginative aspect of feminist history and am particularly interested in the use of comparative material as a technique for opening imaginative possibilities.

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[30] Bernadette J. Brooten, "Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction," Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, vol. 10, Biblical Scholarship in North America (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985). 91.
[31] Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. 41.
[32] Gillian Clark, Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life-Styles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). 4-5.

Attention to discourse, or the ways in which a culture discusses and simultaneously creates and circumscribes certain realities, i.e. 'the body', 'sexuality', 'Woman', began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but feminist historians of the early Christian era have been investing more and more scholarly effort in the analysis of gender discourse and the complexities of gendered language in patristic texts during the past two decades. Elizabeth Clark, in her article "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the 'Linguistic Turn'" and again in her most recent book, suggests that the only topic for feminist study in the late ancient period is the rhetorical construction of Woman.[33] I would argue against Clark on several fronts. I do not believe that any text, however rhetorically sophisticated, ever succeeds in constructing a flawless presentation of the author's ideal world. Authors frequently lose hold of their rhetorical worlds and let slip contradictions and clues that they never intended. For example, Trinitarian debates revealed a great deal about their authors' gendered understanding of the world without this ever being the rhetorical intent of the polemic.[34] The rhetorical text does not represent reality, but it is the product of a specific reality and functions in specific realities. Jerome's letter to Demetrias is not a spontaneous description of a woman's reality. It is constructed and even artificial. The letter, however, refers to real activities and objects in a real woman's life, and the text itself was part of her world.

Although less pessimistic about the possibilities for recovering 'real women' of the early Christian past, Gillian Clark, Kate Cooper, Rebecca Krawiec and Virginia

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[33] Elizabeth A. Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after The "Linguistic Turn"," Church History 67.1 (1998), Elizabeth A. Clark, History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[34] Virginia Burrus, Begotten, Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity (Stanford, Cambridge: Stanford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Burrus all explicitly focus on the rhetorical representation of Christian women in late ancient texts.[35] This focus on discourse and culture rather than the causation of events and ideas or the actions of 'great men' (or women) forms part of a larger movement in late ancient studies that Dale Martin terms the 'cultural turn'.

> "The cultural turn" in late ancient studies thus refers not to one particular theoretical or methodological innovation, but to a broad shift in textual and historical analyses of a newly defined field of study, analyses influenced, to be sure, by cultural anthropology and the social sciences, but more recently by a wide diversity of theories and methods borrowed from poststructualism: various literary theories, discourse analysis, ideology critique, theories of the construction of the body and the self, feminist and gender studies, ritual studies.[36]

Thus, feminist late ancient history borrows from literary and cultural theories while leaving its mark on work throughout the discipline. This might seem to be a triumph of the 'new history of women', but the results, as many have remarked, are uneven.

Just as the roots of feminist histories of the early church are embedded in the political mobilization of women in contemporary churches, the practice of church history is embedded in the traditions and institutions of churches, often the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. The academic societies, training grounds, and publishing houses for scholars of Christian antiquity are the continuation of decidedly anti-feminist structures, despite the many inroads made by women scholars in all three. Feminist scholarship of

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[35] Clark, Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life-Styles, Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride, Krawiec, Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity, Virginia Burrus, The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[36] Dale B. Martin and Patricia Cox Miller, ed., The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism and Historiography (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2005).

the early Church proceeds side by side with new histories of the patristic era that show no traces of the feminist, linguistic or cultural revolutions of the past three or four decades.[37]

Placing this dissertation in the genre of feminist history runs the risk faced by feminist scholarship in general, that it ghettoizes women's history rather than re-inventing History. However, the alternative of writing about women as if historiography had already accepted the critiques of feminism runs the greater risk of ignoring and erasing the very real dissonance between History and feminist history. While scholars are beginning to write men's history as a gendered rather than a universalist enterprise[38], the majority continue to write men's history as History with occasional footnotes, at best, to alert the reader to the heavily biased nature of the narrative.

II. Topic

The broad topic of this dissertation is the performance of modesty among aristocratic Christian women of the late-fourth and early-fifth centuries A.D. By modesty, I mean, in the first place, a variety of 'traditional' or 'conservative' activities including seclusion, veiling, and silence. These activities fall under the ancient Roman virtues of 'modestia' and 'pudicitia'. 'Pietas', 'castitas' and other womanly virtues also often connote the behaviors that I call modesty. I separate a disposition to act modestly

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[37] A personal favorite is John McGuckin's fine study of St. Cyril and the fifth-century Christological debates in which he takes the ancient church historians' vindictive portraits of the Empress Pulcheria at face value without regard for gender stereotyping or the deployment of gender discourse in ancient political writing. John McGuckin, Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy: It's History, Theology and Texts (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

[38] For example: David Brakke, "Ethiopian Demons: Male Sexuality, the Black-Skinned Other, and the Monastic Self," Journal of the History of Sexuality 10.3/4 (2001)., Burrus, Begotten, Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity.

and avoid immodesty in chapters two, three, and four but focus specifically on the relationship between modesty as action and as internal disposition in chapter five.

Women's modesty is and was generally associated with sexual restraint or abstinence. Many studies of the Late Antique period deal with virginity, sexual renunciation or chastity in both Christian and non-Christian contexts.[39] These studies form part of the larger corpus of inquiry into asceticism in general. Scholars of sexual renunciation and asceticism, however, usually ignore or very briefly note (without analyzing) other, everyday modest activities. This follows from a tacit agreement with the authors of ancient ascetic texts that modesty either *follows naturally from* sexual restraint or is a *false show*. I question both of these assumptions concerning the relationship of modesty to the states, sexual and moral, it indicates. Rather than simply being reflective, corresponding with an internal reality, I argue that modesty is reflexive. It is an opportunity for active self-formation and self-representation in a community. I use the terminology of performance to suggest that modesty was frequently framed for a public as part of an ongoing process of self-representation. The following passage from Karen Jo Torjesen's 1993 study, When Women Were Priests exemplifies the treatment of modesty in most contemporary work:

> According to the gender stereotypes of the ancient Mediterranean, public speaking and public places were the sole prerogatives of males; private spaces, like the household, were the proper sphere for women's activities. Furthermore, society insisted that a respectable woman be concerned about her reputation for chastity and her seclusion in the household; modesty and reticence were accepted as

[39] For example: Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride. Elm, 'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity. These are simply three important wide-ranging studies. Innumerable others deal with specific authors, places or time periods.

> testimony to her sexual restraint. Public activities and public roles seemed incompatible with modesty.[40]

Here modesty slips between state-of-being and activity. It both bears testimony, to a public of some kind, one assumes, and is incompatible with public space. The confusion, I suggest, is due to the common and largely unconscious acceptance of the ancient dichotomy between public and private and the ancient elision of physical chastity, interior shame, and modest behavior. Several authors have already challenged the public/private dichotomy, mostly by examining the pair as part of discourses of power that construct the seemingly antithetical spaces while ostensibly describing them.[41] I re-evaluate modesty by first examining it 'from the outside' as a set of social performances, a collection of 'doings' that contributes to the maintenance of a modest personhood. I then take up the question of the relationship between interior state and observable activities by examining the evidence of self-awareness in modest performance and cultivation of interiority specific to the modest woman.

III. Material

a. Primary

The central pieces of evidence for this dissertation are letters and treatises addressed to the women of the aristocratic Roman Anicii family in the early fifth century A.D. by Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius. The eldest of the Anicii women was Proba, a

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[40] Torjesen, When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity. 11-12.

[41] See: Kate Cooper, "Approaching the Holy Household," Journal of Early Christian Studies 15.2 (2007)., Kristina Sessa, "Christianity and the 'Cubiculum': Spiritual Politics and Domestic Space in Late Ancient Rome," Journal of Early Christian Studies 15.2 (2007).

widow. She lived with her daughter-in-law[42], Juliana, also widowed, and Juliana's daughter Demetrias, a woman in her early teens.[43] Augustine, who met the family shortly after its arrival in North Africa, wrote a long letter on prayer, particularly the prayer of the dedicated widow, to Proba in 411 AD[44] and a brief note a year or so later on an ongoing discussion about the trials of earthly life.[45] In 413 AD, the year of Demetrias' consecration, or early in 414 AD, Augustine wrote a short congratulatory note to Proba and Juliana[46] followed by the treatise 'The Excellence of Widowhood,' which directly addresses Juliana in several places and comments on the communal life and relationships of the three women.[47] The last extant letter, from late 417 AD or early 418 AD, is Augustine's strong letter of objection to Pelagius' letter of advice on the virginal life, which rumor claims to be addressed to Demetrias.[48] This letter refers to others between Augustine and the women of the household, which no longer remain. Both this letter and, to a lesser extent, the treatise 'On the Excellence of Widowhood', form part of Augustine's engagement in the Pelagian controversy.

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[42] All correspondents refer to Proba as Juliana's mother-in-law, although she may have been a niece by marriage. For the family relationships see: Andrew S. Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias: Ascetic Logic in Ancient Christianity," Church History 69.4 (2000)., note 33. Anne Kurdoch keeps the relationships as grandmother, daughter-in-law, grand-daughter in her stemma as does Christa Kumeich. Kurdoch, "The Anician Women.", Christa Krumeich, Hieronymus Und Die Christlichen Feminae Clarissimae (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1993).

[43] She was twelve at the age of her consecration. Since this was old enough to marry, one must consider her a 'young lady'.

[44] Aug., *ep.* 130. PL 33.493-507

[45] Aug., *ep.* 131. PL 33.507-508

[46] Aug., *ep.* 150. PL 33.645

[47] Aug., *De Bono Viduitatis, Vid.* from now on. PL 40.429-450

[48] Aug., *Ep.* 188. PL 33.848-854

I examine two other pieces from Augustine's corpus along with those directly addressed to the Anicii women. The first is his treatise 'On Holy Virginity.'[49] This work, a companion to 'On the Good of Marriage', dates to 401 AD and is part of Augustine's engagement with Jovinianist controversy.[50] Augustine assumes a copy should be accessible and recommends it to Juliana for Demetrias in 'On the Good of Widowhood', if Demetrias wants something of his on her chosen way of life. The second piece is Augustine's letter of 424 AD to the ascetic community founded by his sister. This letter begins with an admonishment to the women to end their quarrels over leadership and continues as a general rule of life for the community.

Jerome wrote a letter of advice for the newly consecrated Demetrias in 414 AD, at the request of her mother and grandmother.[51] This is the last of his many letters addressed to Roman noblewomen. He claims to have written his friend Paula and her daughter Eustochium on an almost daily basis, and wrote to many, like the Anicii women, whom he had never met.[52] His letter is largely an explication the daily life of the virgin and the dangers to her in her way of life. It treats the question of heresy only briefly. Jerome is certainly alluding to Pelagius and his teachings but places the warning in the context of the earlier Origenist controversy.[53] Jerome recommends his earlier

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[49] Aug., *De Sancta Virginitate*, From here on *Virg.* PL 40.396-428
[50] See: David G. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian," Theological Studies.48 (1987)., David G. Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
[51] Hier., *Ep.* 130. PL 22.1107-1124
[52] Krumeich, Hieronymus Und Die Christlichen Feminae Clarissimae. 188, 34.
[53] For the relationships, both theological and personal, between the two debates, see: Clark, The Origenist Controversy.

works on the virginal life to Demetrias, especially his letter from 384 AD to Eustochium.[54]

Pelagius' letter of advice to Demetrias, dating to 413 AD, is both a comprehensive piece of ascetic instruction and the best remaining summary of author's theological views.[55] He also wrote a more general work on virginity and a letter to a pious and ascetically minded married woman.[56]

In addition to the writings of Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius, I analyze works of advice to or about Christian women by several earlier Latin authors. Ambrose of Milan (339-397 AD) was a teacher of Augustine and theological and ascetic predecessor of both Augustine and Jerome. His treatise on virginity treats several aspects of modesty extensively.[57] Two much earlier African Latin authors influenced Jerome. He recommended the writing of Cyprian (d. 258 AD) on virginity to Demetrias.[58] Tertullian's works (late second century) on feminine comportment and especially dress[59] have left a strong mark on Jerome's less flattering depictions of women who lack modesty.

This material spans several centuries, but the central pieces are clustered in the first quarter of the fifth century and the others are, in a sense, embedded into these through references or explicit recommendation. Partly because of the conventional nature of the advice to the Anicii women, much older treatises can provide models and

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[54] Hier., *ep.* 22. PL 22.394-425
[55] Pelag.-Haer., *Epistola ad Demetriadem,* From here *Demetr.* PL 30.13-45A
[56] Pelag.-Haer., The letter on virginity survives under many titles and is from now 'Virg.'; *ad Celantiam (epistola)* is *Celent.* from here. PL 18.77-90; PL 22.1204-29.
[57] Ambr., *De Virginibus,* 'Virgin.' from here. PL 16.187-232
[58] Cypr., *De Habitu Virginum,* from here *Hab. Virg*. PL 4.439-464B
[59] Tert., *De Cultu Feminarum,* from here *Cult. Fem.*; *De Virginibus Velandis,* from here *Virg.* PL 1.1303-1334A; PL 2.887-914A

instruction in modest comportment. The aim of the dissertation is not to catalogue the expectations of ancient modesty, which were remarkably consistent over time, but to reveal the creative work involved in modest living and modest self-representation in specific, daily moments.

IV. Methodology

a. Women Doing Things

I located myself earlier in the genre of feminist history, and so it is clear that feminist analysis is part of my methodology. There are almost as many feminist methodologies as there are feminists, however. I will clarify my use of two ubiquitous terms in feminist analysis: subject and agency. When I say that a woman was a subject, I mean that she really was a person of her own, not merely a body and mind upon which the forces of patriarchy, culture, dominant discourses, went to work. I do not intend to imply that she was free or autonomous or that her sense of self did not rely on outside relationships. The language of subjects is a corrective to previous historical narratives in which the only subjects (grammatically, philosophically or otherwise) were explicitly or implicitly male. Likewise, using the word agency for the actions of ancient women stresses that their actions belonged to them. Ancient women had intentions, desires, hopes, and thoughts that they enacted on their own behalf. By insisting on the subjectivity and agency of ancient women, I underline their ownership of their histories. That is, ancient women were not just along for the ride of early Church history; they lived it. This is not the same as saying that women (or men, for that matter) experienced their lives in an unmediated way or acted in absolute freedom.

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner gives the name 'serious games' to her analysis of people's practices that are neither entirely determined by social structure nor entirely free play. Here she distinguishes the actions of her serious game players from notions of individualistic freedom that have often hidden behind the use of the term agency in anthropology.

> Serious games always involve the play of actors seen as "agents." Yet there is something about the very word "agency" that calls to mind the autonomous, individualistic, Western actor. The very categories historically standing behind practice theory, the opposition between "structure" and "agency," seem to suggest a heroic individual—The Agent—up against a Borg-like entity called "Structure." But nothing could be farther from the way I envisage social agents, which is that they are always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed. Thus while all social actors are assumed to "have" agency, the idea of actors as always being engaged with others in the play of serious games is meant to make it virtually impossible to imagine that the agent is free, or is an unfettered individual.[60]

Ortner is dealing with the differences between structural approaches to cultural anthropology and practice theory approaches, but her idea of serious games applies well to an understanding of modesty as a series of performances, each of which represents a 'move' in a larger game.

Saba Mahmood and other post-colonial theorists[61] criticize feminist scholarship for assuming a potentially feminist liberal subject who actively resists oppressive structures in society or who suffers under 'false-consciousness' and colludes with the

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[60] Sherry B. Ortner, Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006). 130.

[61] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988)., Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2003).

male biased hierarchy. The best scholars are more refined in their analyses, but Mahmood's critique applies as well to the feminist history of women in the late ancient church as it does to her own field, cultural anthropology. Although few studies present women as fully realized feminist subjects or entirely duped subjects of the oppressive discourse, almost all celebrate moments that show women becoming more like the ideal of Western liberal ideology, that is, individuals for whom the final goal of human wellbeing is freedom in thought and action. Activities that do not tend towards this goal are interpreted to be the result of coercion or cultural brainwashing that has robbed women of an understanding of their own best interests. Saba Mahmood, in her study of women in the Egyptian Islamist movement wishes to "…speak back to the normative liberal assumptions about human nature…such as the belief that all human beings have an innate desire for freedom, that we all somehow seek to assert our autonomy when allowed to do so, and that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them…"[62] As a student of the feminist theorist Judith Butler, Mahmood shares in many post-structuralist conclusions about the subject—that she is constituted by language, that she depends on constant 'iterations' or performances to consolidate her identity within a discourse, and that subject formation depends on the exclusion of alternate identities. She chooses, however, to focus on what she calls 'the subject of norms'[63], the person who acts within a discourse in order to fulfill that discourse, not to subvert it. She insists that assuming a 'subject of freedom', a type of person who innately desires freedom and autonomy as final goals, hinders the exploration of alternate forms of women's agency.

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[62] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 5.
[63] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 22.

While participating in the feminist project of recovering women's agency, I also engage in the criticism of previous feminist histories of the early church that focus on dualisms of 'agents and victims'[64] and 'resistance and oppression'. I argue that, by concentrating on moments when ancient Christian women seemed to have protested or escaped the norms of their communities, feminist historians of the early church have failed to explore some of the most interesting and numerous examples and possibilities for women's agency, the ways that they 'lived into the norms'.[65]

b. Subjects Act Out

The critical framework of performance studies places the Anicii women's modesty within the feminist exploration of women's subjectivity and agency. It provides me with a way to approach highly rhetorical letters of advice in search of information they do not necessarily intend to provide. It also provides a common language with which to discuss my primary material and comparative material, drawn from ethnographies and funereal statuary.

Performance studies has roots in the study of theater and ritual. It also derives from forms of linguistic study that emphasize enunciations, actual moments of speech, over grammars, the independent structures of a language. Many disciplines incorporate performance studies; however, cultural anthropology is one of the most productive participants in performance analysis.

Performance, as a technical term, ranges in meaning from *almost any act* to *a highly structured enactment of a text before a defined audience*. Richard Bauman defines performance in distinction to abstract capacities for doing and saying. Performance is the

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[64] Clark, "Women, Gender and the Study of Christian History." 424.
[65] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 22-26.

communicative act itself and never identical to the text or to received vocabulary. Moreover, performance is set off from the usual context of everyday speech and action.

> In contrast to notions of performance as any doing of an act of communication are conceptions of performance as a specially marked mode of action, one that sets up or represents a special interpretive frame within which the act of communication is to be understood. In this sense of performance, the act of communication is put on display, objectified, lifted out to a degree from its contextual surroundings, and opened up to scrutiny by an audience. Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of communication and gives license to the audience to regard it and the performer with special intensity. Performance makes one communicatively accountable; it assigns to an audience the responsibility of evaluating the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's accomplishment.[66]

This definition of performance makes activities that would not usually fall under the rubric of a cultural performance (plays, dances, ritual storytelling, etc) susceptible to performance analysis. And to analyze an activity as a performance emphasizes the agency of the subject, since a performance is not only a communicative action, but a communicative action for which both actor and audience are rendered accountable. Without the performance studies framework, modesty could fall outside the range of true agency, not wholly owned by its subjects but rather owned by an oppressive and coercive dominant discourse. As a performance, however, modesty belongs to the subject of the action; she is accountable for its content and efficacy.[67]

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[66] Richard Bauman, "Performance," Folklore, Cultural Performance, and Popular Entertainments, ed. Richard Bauman (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). 44.

[67] Accountable but not in complete control. Sherry Ortner discusses critiques of agency that highlight the often unintended consequences of intentional acts. Ortner, Anthropology and Social Theory.

Attending to the presence of performance 'cues' is the first step of a performance analysis. Such cues include situational markers, framing techniques that announce the beginning and end of a performance, special paraphernalia or clothing, and occasioning principles or timing.[68] In activities that are less defined than a cultural performance, not all cues will be present and some may be transferred from an actual to a purely rhetorical space. The cues, however, announce that a communicative act is being set off from others and is explicitly open to scrutiny and critique. The agent is risking herself in front of a public, she is agreeing to own the efficacy or non-efficacy of her performance.

Using the vocabulary of performance studies makes activities visible that cannot easily be seen through other analytical frames. It is particularly useful in the study of late antique Christianity because of the profoundly performance-oriented cultural structures of the antique world. Kate Cooper, arguing that the rhetorical nature of ancient texts does not cut off the possibility of learning about the 'reality' of ancient life, comments that, in the late antique world, 'rhetoric was reality'.[69]

The term 'performativity', as distinct from 'performance', has currency in the realm of feminist and gender studies due to the writings of Judith Butler. She argues that identity, in this case gender identity, does not have internal coherent existence. Rather, the effect of coherent gender identity is rather created through discrete embodied activity.

> In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to

[68] Bauman, "Performance." 46.
[69] Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride. 4.

> express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.[70]

Butler's understanding of performativity is important for the performance analyses in this dissertation because of her interest in the way that performance *creates* an identity rather than the ways that performance might *reflect* either an identity or cultural structure. Judith Butler is interested, in her own work, in the instability of gender performance, the ways that one might re-interpret or subvert identity in moments of gendered performance. She concentrates on the opportunities for agency and subject formation in the resistance to ideal performances. Like Saba Mahmood, however, I am interested in the difficulties and rewards of living into cultural ideals, the agency of the woman who creates a pious, ascetic subjectivity through the performance of modesty.

c. Comparative Analysis

In most chapters of this dissertation, I use a substantial amount of comparative material. Most of this is drawn from feminist ethnographies of women in contemporary societies in West and South Asia. I also use material evidence, including textiles, inscriptions, and funerary art, from the imperial and late Roman eras. While I name this section 'Comparative Analysis', I do not use the ethnographic and art historical material to show something similar to modesty in the Christian ascetic context but to provide new ways of thinking about and looking at the ancient Christian texts.

Conventional advice to be modest is barely interesting. However, highly detailed 'thick-description' of the conflict in a young woman's household over whether she can properly maintain modesty in a sari while also wearing a cardigan activates dull and

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[70] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York, London: Routledge, 1999). 173.

lifeless advice to be properly covered in public.[71] Suddenly, 'properly covered' is not self-evident. Ethnographic evidence, with its intimate detail and multiplicity of particular cases, is an analytical lens that opens generic norms for feminine behavior into a wide and even dangerous field of play. It vividly reminds the reader that the seemingly static ideal of modest womanhood is made up of daily battles, the push and pull of cloth, the bite of neighbors' commentary. In addition, since ethnographic material tends to attend to the transitions between habitual activity and heightened social performances, it draws attention to the performance cues, or possible locations for them, in the ancient material.

Another function of the ethnographic material is to further de-center a tacit understanding of person as Western, liberal person. To some extent we always draw analogies between our selves and our subjects when we do history. It is easy to assume that our subjects were the same sort of subjects we are, or think we are, or would like to be. Thus some ancient persons start to act and think a lot like British public school graduates and some like post-consciousness raising American feminists. Late ancient persons were certainly like us in some ways, unlike in more. The use of several different sorts of contemporary people as possible analogies for thinking about ancient Christians should make us more aware and critical of accidental assumptions of sameness or difference. It is useful to ask, along the way, if I have more in common with Juliana, as a practicing American Roman Catholic, or if a contemporary Hindu woman in an ashram does, as a practicing ascetic.

The art historical evidence also serves, not so much as illustration, but as an entry point for historical imagination. In Chapter Two, the textile evidence aids the reader to

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[71] Emma Tarlo, Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). 168-170.

mentally touch and see the sorts of clothes being worn in the early fifth century. They cannot tell us exactly what such clothes looked like when worn—any more than a stack of saris could--but can give some ideas as to the possibilities for many ways in which they were likely worn. The funerary evidence in Chapter Three functions as a way to break down conceptions of what counted as private, what as public, and how Romans maintained those spaces and categories.

V. Conclusions

This dissertation is a work of feminist historiography. In it, I concentrate on some very conventional advice to a very unconventional set of women, the advice of Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius to the Anicii women in the early fifth century. I take up the topic of modesty as a set of activities. This is an argument in itself about the historical value of women and the things they do. I argue that the ideology of modesty was not a hindrance to women's participation in history, but that 'doing modesty' was a part of her participation in history, in this case the history of Roman aristocratic asceticism. While arguing that modesty falls under the rubric of women's agency, I distance myself from understandings of agency that imply total, autonomous freedom in action or a liberated western subject. Instead, I attempt to put contemporary notions of agency in conversation with the ancient Christian debate over moral agency. I use the methodology of performance studies, comparative material from ethnographies, and some material evidence in order to look at the advice on modesty with new eyes. Traditional feminine virtues have been overlooked as a part of women's asceticism. Using performance studies analysis and the rich comparative material of ethnography can open much wider fields of study for practitioners of early church history. Both my choice

of material and my choice of methodologies are arguments for new directions I believe will be fruitful in feminist historiography of the early Christian era.

Chapter Two

Apparel, Identity, and Agency
Demetrias Dresses Herself

> When I first came to the valleys, I tried as best I could to explain to the family I lived with what it was that I was doing. "So much has been written about Kalasha men," I started, "but I want to write about what Kalasha women do, what they think about." "Ha," said Lilizar's father, " I can save you a lot of trouble. Beads. Kalasha women think about beads." --Wynne Maggi[72], early 1990s

> On account of your sentence—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die. And do you think about adorning yourself over and above your tunics of skins? Come, now; if from the beginning of the world the Milesians sheared sheep, and the Serians spun trees [made silk], and the Tyrians dyed, and the Phrygians embroidered with the needle, and the Babylonians with the loom, and pearls gleamed and onyx-stones flashed, if gold itself also had already come, with the greed (which accompanies it), from the ground; if the mirror, too, already had license to lie so largely, Eve, expelled from paradise, (Eve) already dead, would also have coveted these things, I imagine! No more, then, ought she now to crave, or be acquainted with (if she desires to live again), what, when she was living, she had neither had nor known. Accordingly these things are all the baggage of woman in her condemned and dead state, instituted as if to swell the pomp of her funeral. --Tertullian[73]

I. Introduction

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[72] Wynne Maggi, Our Women Are Free: Gender and Ethnicity in the Hindukush (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001). 97.

[73] Tert., *Cult. Fem.* 1, in: "On the Apparel of Women," trans. S. Thelwall, Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minicius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1885). "…propter tuum meritum, id est mortem, etiam Filius Dei mori habuit; et adornari tibi in mente est super pelliceas tuas tunicas? Age nunc, si ab initio rerum et Milesii oves tonderent, et Seres arbores nerent, et Tyrii tinguerent, et Phryges insuerent, et Babylonii intexerent, et margaritae candarent et ceraunia coruscarent, si ipsum quoque auram jam de terra cum cupiditate prodisset; si jam et speculo tantum mentiri liceret: et Haec Eva consupisset de paradiso espulsa, jam mortua, opinor. Ergo nec nunc appetere debet, aut nosse, si cupit reviviscere, quae nec habuerat, nec noverat, quando vivebat. Ideo omnia ista damnatae et mortuae mulieris impedimenta sunt, quasi ad pompam funeris constituta." PL 1.1419

Modesty is enacted in many interlocking ways, but modesty in wearing clothes is perhaps the most obvious and is a good place to start. I argue that modesty in all its forms, the complex web of activities that made up feminine virtue for the early fifth century aristocratic woman, provided opportunities for the dedicated ascetic to create her reputation and form her pious selfhood. To make this argument for performative potential of modest dress, I begin with an excursion into 'other women's clothes.' We know something of late ancient dress and modes of wearing clothes, but much of the fine detail is lost to us. Also lost is the performance of wearing clothes, a performance that comes so naturally to us all and is so seldom made explicit that we find ourselves more attentive to examples from abroad than those from closer to home. But wearing clothes *is* a performance[74] and an immersion in the daily micro-politics of clothing for women who take modesty seriously should awaken us to this potentiality in the dress of our ancient Christian subjects.

II. Other Women's Clothes

My first example comes from the meeting of three different types of women: an American anthropologist, a group of indigenous, tribal women from the Hindukush, and a group of Muslim Pakistani tourists. Each of the three seem exotic in some way to the others, and none is entirely able to interpret the others' clothing choices, but all are interested in their own clothes, each other's clothes, and their implications.

[74] Judith Butler's theory of performativity in gender is, famously, based on the example of the drag queen, but she extends the concept to everyday living as well in addition to the subversive stage performances. Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.

In the early 1990s a group of women, the Muslim wives of Pakistani officials, visits a Kalasha tribal village in the Hindukush where an American woman anthropologist, Wynn Maggi author of Our Women Are Free: Gender and Ethnicity in the Hindukush[75], is studying women's lives, work, fashion, and religion. The officials' wives ask the anthropologist to take a photo of them with the 'exotic' indigenous women. The four Kalasha women wear long, heavy-looking black dresses that are brightly decorated with bands of geometrical beadwork at the hems, wrists and necks. They wear hanks of beads, mostly in oranges and yellows, which entirely cover their necks and chests. Their hair is braided into five distinctive braids and they wear two beaded headdresses, an everyday band around the back of the head that falls partway down the back and a ceremonial headdress that rests on the front of the head, is covered with feathers and a large pompom, and also falls down the back. These women look more or less directly at the camera and seem unsure what to do with their hands, whether to sit cross-legged, whether to smile. One woman's shoes peek out from under her long gown; they are canvas sneakers. The officials' wives sit to the side. Both wear light colored, light-weight clothes, the cuffs and hems of which show out from under pale green and pale pink wraps. Their wraps are pulled over their heads and each holds an edge of fabric over the bottom half of her face. One wears dark careful eye makeup, her brows are perfectly plucked and shaped, and she reveals gold bangles on her wrist. The other woman wears large designer shades.[76] The photograph is an object lesson in the immense amount of work that women can put into apparel and the amount of work that

[75] Maggi, Our Women Are Free.
[76] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. Image 11 in color photo insert.

apparel and adornment can do in terms of the creation of social, moral and religious identity.

The photograph does not catch the women un-self-consciously wearing their clothes. The Kalasha are in their ceremonial headdresses as well as their everyday headdresses. They stare directly into the camera partly to show the Muslim women and the anthropologist that they don't mind their faces being seen; they are Kalasha, not Muslim. The Muslim women, whose faces were uncovered during their previous observation of the festival and conversation with Wynn Maggi, have lifted their wraps over the bottom half of their faces. Under the intensified gaze of the camera, they show their modesty. They sit to the side of the local spectacle. They are here to observe other women, not to be observed. Whoever sees the photo, abroad or in their own homes when they show off their vacation souvenirs, will see them in the moment of differentiating themselves from the objects of their sightseeing. Behind the camera is the American woman in her Kalasha outfit.

When she began her fieldwork, Wynne Maggi expected Kalasha women's 'costume' to represent the conservatism and traditionalism of a minority group holding on to old ways. Instead, she wrote a chapter on Kalasha 'fashion,' emphasizing fashioning, creating and self-expression.[77] While the basic design of the Kalasha women's black dresses is uniform, the decoration is unique to each woman, a testament to her industry, creativity and material resources. The women's clothing and adornment functioned to separate the community from the surrounding Muslim population, but did not do so in a static manner. The women incorporated new colors of yarn into their

[77] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 95.

embroidered designs as they became available. New colors and sorts of beads proliferated with increased trade with the wider world. A year into her fieldwork, Maggi found her own Kalasha dress, made by a friend, was already out-of-fashion, not to mention inspired by the designs of a woman whose style of headdress was 'slightly geeky.'[78] The women's clothes and adornments worked to distinguish the community as a whole ethnically, while expressing personal taste and showcasing personal wealth and talent.

Within the Kalasha community, the clothes carry a multitude of meanings. The more formal headdresses are for ceremonial purposes and for wear in particularly 'pure' locations. The burden of keeping the boundaries between pure and impure, and thus the boundaries between cosmic order and chaos, falls largely on women, and their clothing is implicated in the maintenance of these boundaries. Relatives give girls their everyday headdress at age three and they wear it continually except when sleeping; they also receive their first bead necklaces at this time. The headdress along with other clothes and decoration, however, is ever-changing. Headdresses are re-adorned with the newest materials in the latest patterns. Hanks of neck beads represent personal prosperity, the affection of relations and lovers, or the end of a dispute with another woman. The beads constitute a part of a woman's attractiveness: "Any old average woman, who can do nothing special but manages to string a few beads together looks really beautiful to men."[79] At the same time they are integral to a woman's modest attire: "If this throat could be seen we could die [of embarrassment]."[80] Kalasha women represent their ethnic

[78] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 106.
[79] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 97.
[80] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 108. Brackets in original text.

group, participate in their religion, and express themselves personally via their dress and accessories. They are proud of their apparel and seek out opportunities to display it to insiders and outsiders alike.

> The Kalasha themselves recognize that their dresses are strikingly beautiful and original---possibly the most beautiful way of dressing in the world, women often add. I was often told that I should wear my dress in America and charge for pictures.[81]

Likewise, the Pakistani officials' wives wear their clothes actively, as part of a process of self-representation. Kalasha women are highly sexualized in the imaginations of their Muslim neighbors. The well-to-do visitors veil themselves for their photo with the Kalasha women, thus emphasizing the religious, and presumably moral, difference between themselves and the colorful 'locals'. Yet the Kalasha women's clothes easily cover as much of the body and hair as the Muslim women's. The Muslim women, who maintain 'purdah' or seclusion, actually often travel considerably more than their Kalasha counterparts. While the Kalasha are free to go from home and cover a great deal of territory in their daily walks, their mobility is restricted by the complex geography of purity and impurity.[82] The modesty of the visitors is in the gesture, the performance of veiling for the camera. As with any performance, the interpretive competence[83] of the

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[81] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 94.
[82] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. Chapter 2.
[83] Folklorist Richard Bauman uses the term 'communicative competence' which he draws from the work of linguist Hymes' revision of Chomsky. He focuses on the competence of the performer, that is, the performer's knowledge of cultural language, symbols, actions as well as the ability to display this knowledge in a creative and flexible manner. "…performers are not passive, unreflecting creatures who simply respond to the dictates of tradition or the physical and social environment. They interpret both traditions and social settings, actively transforming both in the course of their performances." (7) The competence of the audience consists in its ability to recognize the 'language' of a performance, the 'long line of preceding interpretations' (19), and the interpretation the performer wishes to convey. In other words, the competence of the audience lies in its

audience is crucial. To an American or European, for example Wynn Maggi or readers of her book, the two sets of women could appear equally exotic, and the Muslim women, their veils contrasting with made-up eyes and movie star shades, might elicit more sexual speculation than the Kalasha in their shapeless black dresses and ponderous headdresses.

On its own, this photograph does not reveal so much to us. It is the long hours of conversation and the observation of the ethnographer Wynne Maggi that make interpretation of the garments and adornment of these six women possible. The ethnographer is able to hear and see several sides of a story: "All women think of is beads." "No, men are very attracted to women in beads as well." "The beads show off a woman's beauty while covering her. They also show off her wealth and skill and social relationships." The ethnographer has access to a rich assortment of voices and views. She can ask follow-up questions if she is confused. She has the opportunity to guage the reaction to new fashions, track down the origins of a woman's full compliment of jewelry, to evaluate a woman's self-presentation over the course of a year's worth of social situations. The ethnographer has more than enough evidence to conclude that far from passively 'being dressed in traditional costume' or 'being veiled' women *do* their clothing. Women's clothing and adornment, while frequently de-emphasized or denigrated in a society's moral discourse, form part of women's vocabulary of self-expression and repertoire for self-representation. Costume, far from being part of the background or static 'setting' of women's agency, is a complex mode of doing.

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ability to recognize the performer's goal and evaluate his/her success. Bauman, "Performance."

Beginning with the example of the Kalasha and Muslim women may, at first, seem an odd way to approach texts about Christian women from the early 5th Century AD. However, these ethnographic descriptions in all their detail provide a new set of questions for our ancient Christian texts. They remind us to pay attention to clothing, not to pass over stereotyped or conventional descriptions of women's adornment. Maggi's ethnographic descriptions demonstrate that acceding to conventional norms need not foreclose opportunities for expression or dissent. Her subjects humorously protest that men's usual complaints about women's adornment belie their attraction to well-adorned women. The dress of both Kalasha and Muslim visitors is entirely conventional yet allows for a range of variations and manipulations.

Conventionality in ancient texts constantly vexes the historian who wants to explore the realia of the past, especially the excluded pasts of women. The authors who wrote to Demetrias inherited a conventional Roman discourse concerning the excesses of women's wardrobes. Tertullian, cited above, was a favorite author of Jerome. His catalogue of the sins of women's clothing owed much to earlier Roman moralizing on the topic.[84] But while he imagines the clothes and jewels as the gross burden of a corpse, living women used their clothing and adornment, or lack thereof, to create selves that represented particular moral stances, religious commitments, social status, and family reputations. Although the surviving literature mostly inveighs against the luxury and artificiality of female dress, it signals that women were particularly associated with the

[84] See satire six in: Juvenal: The Satires, trans. Niall Rudd (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). Also on the theme that the good wife should be adorned with virtue rather than make-up or fine adornments see Plutarch's 'Advice to the bride and groom': Sarah B. Pomeroy, ed., Plutarch's Advice to the Bride and Groom, and a Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary, Interpretive Essays, and Bibliography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

vocabulary of garments and adornments in a society which attached a great deal of importance, in general, to the complex messages of clothing.[85]

Ethnographic examples also remind us that even if a woman wears the same garment day in and day out, her social placement changes. The competence of her audience changes and her responsibility to make sure the right message gets across can increase or decrease. The veiling gesture of the officials' wives brings home that many types of clothing are incredibly flexible and liable to frequent re-draping: a decorative cloth becomes a warming wrap becomes a casual head-cover becomes a ritual veil.[86] In contrast, jeans and a t-shirt, my own day-to-day set of clothes, are not so amenable to re-arrangement. The shawl that accompanies a Pakistani Muslim woman's tunic and loose trousers can be almost endlessly modified. In the case of traditional Kalasha dress, garments that almost never change in form—the basic cut and pattern of the clothes—reveal that they can change with surprising rapidity. Kalasha clothes seemed practically ageless in postcards and textbook descriptions to Wynn Maggi. More intimate observation over many months showed Maggi that decorative bands and headdresses were constantly being reworked and effectively created distinct personas for the women

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[85] Larissa Bonfante and Eva Jaunzems, "Clothing and Ornament," Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome, eds. Michael Grant and Rachel Kitzinger, vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988). On the importance of men's clothing in this era: Mary Harlow, "Clothes Maketh the Man: Power Dressing and Elite Masculinity in the Later Roman World," Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300-900, eds. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[86] A full-page spread in Banerjee and Miller's book on the contemporary Indian sari shows eight photographs under the title "The Animated Pallu". The women in the photos are using the pallu, the leftover hanging length of the sari for various tasks. The captions read: wipe a table, lift a hot vessel, protect one's modesty, store, carry keys, filter out smog, protect from sun, wipe sweat. Mukulika Banerjee and Daniel Miller, The Sari (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003). 38-39.

who fashioned 'identical' traditional costumes. This intimate observation is impossible for the historian of the early Christian woman, but the time spent with these other women should allow us to activate the possibilities of the ancient tunic (*tunica*) and mantle (*palla*), to which we now turn.

III. Late Roman Clothes

Ancient descriptions and artistic rendering of late Roman clothing is difficult to interpret. The vocabulary for clothes was unstable and ambiguous for color. Statuary often represented archaic styles.[87] Few visual representations of the decorative elements of garments remain. A small glimpse of late roman clothing is possible, however, through archeological finds. One of the best collections of late roman textiles is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Anne Marie Stauffer's catalogue of these textiles includes two tunics from the fifth and sixth centuries with explicitly religious themes. One has embroidered shoulder patches showing the head of Dionysius. The other has embroidered bands with scenes of the annunciation and bathing of infant Christ.[88] Tunics with long arms were standard throughout the Roman Empire for the upper classes, male and female, by the late fourth and early fifth centuries.[89] These could be layered and worn together with a mantle. Both tunics and mantles bore decorative stripes whose number, width and elaboration indicated the status, wealth and even official designation of a person. These stripes ran around hems and over the shoulders down

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[87] Clark, Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life-Styles., Bonfante and Jaunzems, "Clothing and Ornament."

[88] Annemarie Stauffer, Textiles of Late Antiquity (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995). Catalogue numbers 31 and 26.

[89] Harlow, "Clothes Maketh the Man." This had not always been the case. The toga had been the citizen male's garment par excellence. The Roman matron was associated with the stola. For evidence on the disuse of the stola, see: A. T. Croom, Roman Clothing and Fashion (Charleston, SC: Tempus Publishing Inc., 2000).

front and back of the tunic. Necklines were also often decorated with dangling tags or bands, 'pendant' stripes of decorative work. The stripes were tapestry work, that is, they were woven directly into the fabric with single colored threads. Additional decoration came in the form of round and square 'patches.' "Contrary to the usual practice of the time, such squares were not woven directly into the ground but treated like *emblemata* in mosaic art; they were produced separately and subsequently inserted, that is, sewn on."[90] These patches therefore could be removed or changed on occasion and some garments show the residual effects of this practice. The motifs and methodology of late ancient tapestry work and embroidery coincide remarkably with examples of domestic wall painting and mosaic. The fourth and fifth centuries provide numerous examples of the 'coloristic' style in which many gradations of brilliant color give naturalistic effect to human, animal and vegetable figures as well as three dimensional appearance and depth to geometric patterns.

IV. Invitation to the Reader

What basic information should the reader keep in mind about the clothes that Demetrias, Juliana and Proba would have worn? Their clothing consisted of lengths of fabric that needed to be draped, pinned or belted. The decorations were more often representational than abstract and very distinctly showed rank. The clothes not only represented wealth but constituted wealth. Throughout antiquity, clothes, especially clothes with tapestry ornament, are regularly listed as part of inheritance, gifts, and ransom.[91] Roman moral discourse, Christian and non-Christian, associated cloth and

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[90] Stauffer, Textiles of Late Antiquity. 11.
[91] Croom, Roman Clothing and Fashion. 29. This custom of giving clothes as gifts or keeping them as valuables remained in the ascetic world, where the poor quality of a

clothes-making with women. The stereotypically bad woman greedily adorned herself, used the most expensive fabrics and displayed herself immodestly. The virtuous woman, on the other hand, industriously spun, wove and decorated cloth. Clothing, for late ancient Romans, was a moral issue for both men and women. Any man who dressed too richly or in an exotic manner opened himself to charges of effeminacy.[92] Any woman who 'dressed up' too much opened herself to charges of un-chastity.[93] Yet the clothes that remain through chance as part of the archeological record show a love for bright, rich detail and skilled work.

Making history, especially ancient history, involves patching together disparate bits of evidence of qualitatively different types. Let us attempt, while returning to the Anician women and the patristic letter-writers, to hold a tunic and a mantle, some coloristic tapestry worked stripes, and lifelike figures on *emblemata,* in our imaginations. Let us not let them evaporate into the abstract and static 'costume' of late Roman antiquity but keep them material and specific, wool and linen, blues and yellows and reds, crocodiles and vines. Make the tunics three or four times the width of a person, arrange the folds to show stripes and patches to best advantage, attach pins in just the

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saint's belt or tunic only serves to increase its value. Touching the garment of a holy person or touching one's own garments to that person had spiritual and physical benefits. See the willing of Anthony's sheepskin and garment at the end of Athanasius' 'Life of Anthony': Athanasius: The Life of Anthony and the Letter to Marcellinus, trans. Robert C. Gregg, The Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. Richard J. Payne (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1980). Also, Augustine's letter of consolation to the consecrated virgin Sapida. He assures her that he has accepted and is already wearing a tunic that she had made for her brother, a deacon who has recently died, and that she sent to Augustine as a memorial gift. Aug. *ep.* 263, PL 33.1082-1084

[92] Harlow, "Clothes Maketh the Man."

[93] Maria Wyke, "Woman in the Mirror: The Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World," Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of Night, eds. Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (New York: Routledge, 1994). This essay gives an overview of the anti-adornment rhetoric throughout the Roman period.

right spots, tie your belt to keep the folds in place, wrap up in a mantle, one you are planning at death to leave to the local church as an altar cover. History has some weight now.

In addition to reviewing evidence, gathering as much as possible and attempting to interpret the literary in conjunction with the archaeological, the historian must always remember the silent partner of past-making, the present. All history must be by analogy, explicit or not; historiography proceeds by 'like' and 'unlike' one's own time and place---and gender and social position. Gibbon's late Roman Empire is not Harnack's, and the late Roman empire of neither is mine. My early fifth century North Africa is distinctly female, 21st century, American. It works by analogy with jeans and logo t-shirts. I realized that I hadn't colored my fifth century in bright enough tones as I rode the subway back from the Metropolitan Museum. Nine out of ten winter coats were black, dark blue denim and dark knit hats were the norm, designs were geometric, abstract and muted. Un-dyed or dark wool may have been the common dress of ordinary folk in antiquity, but Demetrias wasn't a middle-class or working class woman who made her way with the general public. She was expected to dress in the finest, even as a Christian girl. And although she was wealthy, well known, and young, she wasn't much like the designer clad heiresses of contemporary fame or infamy either. Analogy from our own times and places is unavoidable, but let it remain explicit. Let us avoid too quickly erasing the backdrop and lighting for our fifth century, that is, ourselves. And let us try to expand the horizon of analogy. Let us invite the Kalasha festival-goers and the Pakistani officials' wives and other women wearing other clothes to stand beside the Anician women as well. It may well be impossible to learn anything about a foreign time and

place without 'sames' and 'differents' to guide us. Let us, however, hold on to an awareness of the distinctive nature of the starting point for our analogies and try, when possible, to employ other starting points that may reveal analogies we would otherwise fail to recognize.[94]

V. A Dramatic Costume Change

All women, wives, widows or virgins, needed to dress modestly. In his letter of advice to Celantia, a pious married woman who had taken a vow of celibacy, Pelagius recommends a middle road between ascetic dress and extravagance.

> And in order to make known also the ornaments with which married women ought to decorate themselves, he says: Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold or wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is in God's sight very precious. For once the holy women who hoped in God also used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord (1 Pet. 3-6). But in giving these instructions he is not ordering them to wear filthy cloths and to be covered with rough patches of cloth; rather he is forbidding extravagant apparel and sophisticated ornament and is commending simple adornment and dress. And on this subject the vessel of election also says: Also that women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire but by good deeds, as befits women who profess chastity (1 Tim. 2.9,10).[95]

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[94] I am extremely grateful to Professor Brooks Holifield whose discussion of history and analogy in his lectures for History of Christian Thought II at Candler Divinity School in the spring of 2007 initiated my consideration of the subject.

[95] Pelag.-Haer., *Celent*. 27 in: B. R. Rees, The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers, trans. B. R. Rees (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1991). "Atque ut ostendat, squibus ornamentis etiam viris junctae femine decorari debeant, ait: *Quarum sit non extrinsecus capillatura, aut circumdatio auri, aut vestimentorum cultus, sed qui absconditus cordis est homo in incorruptibilitate quieti et modesti spiritus, qui est in conspectus Dei locuples. Sic enim aliquando et sanctae mulieres sperantes in Domino, ornabant se, subjectae propriis viris, sicut Sara obediebat Abrahae, Dominum suum vocans (1 Pet. 3).* Haec autem praecipiens, non eas jubet squalere soribus, et horrentibus pannorum assumentis tegi, sed immoderato cultui, et nimis exquisito interdicit ornatui, simplicemque commendat ornatum atque habitum. De quo et vas electionis ait: *Similiter*

This passage is mostly scriptural citation and the two extremes, finery and rags, receive more descriptive attention than modest, sensible, and seemly attire. It is very difficult to guess exactly what Pelagius wants Celantia to wear. In the end, the question may well be *how* she wears her clothes rather than *what* precisely she wears. In his treatise 'On Virginity', Pelagius does not give specific instructions on dress. He says that the scriptural advice in 1 Peter and 1 Timothy is for wives and it would be offensive to think that consecrated virgins needed such advice. Their adornment must be entirely spiritual and their make-up must be the blushes of modesty. "And let not the virgin see the elegance due to ceruse or any other paint but let her rather posses the radiance of innocence and simplicity, the rosy colour of modesty and the purple glow of bashfulness and decency."[96] The show of modesty and bashfulness certainly had its gestures and costumes, but these are lost to us. The importance of clothing for the ascetic woman is not, however. Noble girls in finery and consecrated ascetic noblewomen both had obligations to modesty. The attention paid to their clothing, both before and after taking an ascetic vow, is evident in Jerome's depiction of Demetrias' transition from the first to the second.

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autem et mulieres in habitu ornato, cum verecundia et sobrietate: ornantes se non in tortis crinibus, aut auro, aut margaritas, vel veste pretiosa, sed quod decet mulieres, promittentes castitatem per opera bona. (1 *Tim*. 2.9-10)." PL 22.1216-1217

[96] Pelag.-Haer., *Virg.* 13 (Rees trans., 83) "Non decorum cerussae aut alterius pigmenti quaerat, sed innocentiae simplicitatisque candorem habeat. Roseum verecundiae colorem, et pudorem ruboris, pudorisque possideat…" PL 30.172

In Jerome's letter to Juliana and Proba on the occasion of Demetrias' consecration to a life of asceticism and perpetual virginity, the scene of the young woman's conversion is strewn with clothes. Very little work is necessary to prove that Jerome intends Demetrias' conversion as a spectacular event. He sets himself up as a spectator of her consecration and of the internal struggles that lead up to the self-revelation of her ascetic purpose to her mother and grandmother. He likens himself, as commentator, to a fanatical circus partisan, a general inspiring the troops on the verge of battle or an attentive gardener.[97] Demetrias is competing in a public arena and even if she is already worthy of praise, further applause and exhortation will speed her to victory. Jerome creates the epistolary fiction of face-to-face intimacy.[98]

First, Jerome recreates the consecration of Demetrias; he knows the scene (*scio*) even if he was not present. The critical act of consecration is her veiling in the flame-colored bridal veil, and Jerome identifies this garment with the multicolored raiment of the Church as Christ's bride, the clothing of the queen of the Song of Songs, and the famous robe of Joseph. Demetrias' veil is woven anew with textual references and moral significance. Her clothes are the queen's clothes and Joseph's and the many colors of those garments were the many virtues of their wearers.

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[97] Hier., *ep.* 130.2 in: Jerome: Letters and Select Works, trans. W. H. Fremantle, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, eds. Phillip Schaff and Henry Wallace (New York: Cosimo Classics, 1893)."Equorum cursus favore pernicior fit. Pugilum fortitudo clamoribus incitatur: paratas ad praelium acies, strictosque mucrones, sermo Imperatoris accendit. Igitur in opere praesenti, avia quidem materque plantaverunt; sed et nos rigibimus, et Dominus incrementum dabit." PL 22.1108

[98] For a wonderful example of a meditation on the power of letters to unite distant friends see the beginning of the theological letter by Evagrius of Pontus to a supporter, perhaps Melania the Elder. Translation in: Martin Parmentier, "Evagrius of Pontus and the 'Letter to Melania'," Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie.46 (1985).

> I know that at the time of the priest's blessing he placed the bridal veil over your head; and this sign is celebrated thus by the voice of the Apostle: But I wish you to all to show yourselves a chaste bride of Christ. When the queen sits at his right hand, she wears gilded clothes of many colors. This clothing that the king's daughter wears is that same coat of many colors, woven from a diversity of many virtues, that Joseph wore. [99]

This interweaving of physical material with Scriptural material is not unique to Jerome's letter to Demetrias. In her essay on Jerome's much earlier treatise on virginity addressed to Eustochium (Ep. 22), Patricia Cox Miller argues that Jerome replaces physical women with idealized, metaphorical Scriptural women.[100] I suggest that while Jerome may erase women's physicality within his text, he doesn't have absolute control over what physical women did with his texts. The clothing may lose some substance in the transition to metaphor, but the metaphor may be re-incorporated, adding significance and power to the woman's wardrobe. The women in the treatises may lose something of their physicality to scripturality. However, the women who owned and read those texts, and may well have thought about themselves with those texts in mind, could reinvest their ordinary clothing, tunics, belts and veils, with spiritual weight.[101] Jerome might simultaneously weaken the realness of a women's veil *in the text* and increase the real efficacy of a real veil.

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[99] Hier., *ep.* 130.2 (Fremantle trans., 261) "Scio quod ad imprecationem pontificis, flammeum virginalem sanctum operuerit caput; et illius apostolicae vocis insigne celebratum sit: *Volo autem vos omnes virginem castam exhibere Christo*. Quando astitit regina a dextris ejus, in vestitu deaurato, circumdata varietate. Qua veste polymita, et multarum virtutum diversitate contexta, indutus fuit et Joseph, et regum quondam utabantur filiae." PL 22.1107-1108

[100] Patricia Cox Miller, "The Blazing Body: Ascetic Desire in Jerome's Letter to Eustochium," Journal of Early Christian Studies 1.1 (1993).

[101] Interestingly, ancient Christians often has scenes of the Joseph narrative woven directly into their clothing, possibly as an apotropaic charm against envy. See: Henry Maguire, "Garments Pleasing to God: The Significance of Domestic Textile Designs in the Early Byzantine Period," Dumbarton Oaks Papers 44 (1990).

The moral association between women and cloth was already ancient by the time Jerome took up the theme. Simply working with cloth or overseeing the weaving workshop in her household was a traditionally pious and chaste occupation for a Roman matron and now for a Christian virgin. Roman epitaphs praise women who work wool with their own hands. The compliment is closely related to chastity, modesty and overall 'appropriateness'.[102] No matter what her social status, a woman who wove her own cloth, or at least oversaw the textile work of the household servants, contributed not only to the domestic economy but to her own and the entire family's moral standing. When making a case for the pious stewardship of the Empress Pulcheria during her brother's minority,[103] the church historian Sozomen relates that she and her sisters spend their time praising God and working textiles 'as is the custom with exemplary women.'[104] He makes their domestic industry a mark of virginity, although it had traditionally been the mark of a matron's virtue, and explicitly connects it with the wellbeing of the imperial household and thus the state.

Jerome transforms Demetrias' veil into scriptural cloth of very high value, a queen's raiment. When he moves back in time to recount her conversion to perpetual virginity and marriage to Christ, he begins by contrasting her luxurious life with the privations she desires. Jewels and silks (*gemmae et serica*) go along with the fine foods and constant attendance of servants that make up the daily life of the wealthy girl.

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[102] Richmond Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1942). 271, 297, 298.

[103] Roughly, the end of the 1st decade of the fifth century.

[104] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* 9.3 in: "The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen," trans. Chester D. Hartranft, Socrates and Sozomenus: Ecclesiastical Histories, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978-1979)."kai_ oi[os a2ciaga5stwn gunaikw~n no5mos, u(fasma5twn kai_ tw~n toiou5twn e1rgwn e2pimelou~ntai." PG 67.1604

Roughness in clothing (*asperitas vestium*) is one of the goals of ascetic life. The first thread of Scripture in Jerome's scene is the words of Christ concerning John the Baptist.

> For she had read the word of the Lord saying: They who wear soft clothing live in the king's house. She was amazed at the way of life of Elijah and John the Baptist who both wore leather belts and mortified their loins…[105]

The text of Matthew 11:8, 'They who wear soft clothing live in the king's house', is another cue that Jerome has Demetrias thinking of herself as preparing for an audience. The words are from Jesus' rebuke to a crowd. He asks them what they came out to the desert to *see* in John the Baptist, and replies ironically, 'Someone dressed in soft robes?' Earlier, Jerome placed Demetrias in the royal place of the king's daughter in the Song of Songs and celebrated her in the metaphorical multicolored gown. But luxurious clothing outside the realm of scriptural metaphor carried a negative moral value. The place of honor goes to one who rejects finery for the belt of skins and life of abstinence. Rather than the queen who glories in her bridal clothes, Demetrias becomes Queen Esther who rejects her ornaments.

> She hated her adornment, and with Esther said to the Lord: You know that I hate the sign on my head (that is the crown that she wore as queen) and that I find it a filthy thing like a menstrual rag.

First Demetrias studies the words of Christ. Then she joins her voice to scripture.

Jerome, in fact, has Demetrias reverse Esther's clothing performance. Esther puts on sackcloth and ash during her private prayers, but when she goes out to seduce the king

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[105] Hier., *ep.* 130.4 (Fremantle trans., 262) "Legerat enim Domini verba dicentis: *Qui mollibus vestiuntur in Domibus regum sunt*. (Matt. 11.8) Stupebat ad conversationem Eliae et Joannis Baptistae, quorum uterque zona pellicea astrinxit et mortificavit lumbos suos…" PL 22.1108

she puts on all her finery.[106] Demetrias is still living the life of soft material when she makes her prayer, but, according to Jerome, has already started to give up softness. "At night and in secret…neither did she use a bed or soft bedding; but she used to lie on rough cloth on the bare ground…to implore [God] to grant her desire and soften the minds of her mother and grandmother." [107] When she finally makes her dramatic entrance, she moves the audience with her poor clothing, not her finery.

When the time for her wedding approaches, Demetrias rouses herself by asking how she would fare in a time of martyrdom if she cannot even brave her mother and grandmother to protect her virginity. When the Goths invaded Rome she trembled under her elders' mantles. [108] She urges herself to 'perfect love'[109] rather than the lewdness of marriage songs, and mentally suits up for spiritual warfare. "Take up the shield of faith, the breastplate of justice, the helmet of salvation, go forth to the conflict." [110] At this point, Demetrias is covered up in gems and silks, diadems and menstrual rags, helmet and armor. But having come to her decision, she casts off the morally offensive garments and puts on garments that are simply vile.

> Having inflamed herself with these and many other thoughts, she cast off all bodily decoration and worldly clothing as if it were a hindrance. She put her precious necklaces, costly pearls and shining gems back in their cases: she put on a mean tunic and even meaner mantle. With tears and sobs she came in unexpectedly to her mother and grandmother, threw

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[106] Esther 5:1-2 in the Vulgate. In the Greek version translated as addition D in the NRSV, Esther faints because of the majesty of the king in his royal garments.
[107] Hier., *ep.* 130.4 (Fremantle trans., 262) "…noctibus et secreto…nunquam eam linteamine, nunquam plumarum usam mollitie; sed ciliciolum in nuda humo habuisse pro stratu…ut impleret desiderium, ut aviae animum et matrisque molliret." PL 22.1109
[108] Hier., *ep.* 130.5 (Fremantle trans., 262) "Dudum inter barbaras tremuisti manus, aviae matrisque sinu, et palliis tegebaris." PL 22.1109
[109] Hier., *ep.* 130.5, PL 22.1110
[110] Hier., *ep.* 130.5 (Fremantle trans., 262) "Assume scutum fidei, loricam justitiae, galeam salutis, procede ad praelium." PL 22.1110

> herself at their knees and showed who she really was. [111]

She bursts in on her elders and reveals *who she is*. Her conversion to the ascetic life, her rejection of marriage and procreation, the entirety of her new identity is in the outfit. She weeps and laments, but does not need to *say* anything. It's all in the clothes.

What does this dramatic scene, with its soliloquy, costume change and sudden revelation, tell us about Demetrias? What does it say about the sort of subject she may have been and the possibilities for her self-expression and self-representation? After all, Jerome's intimate, eye-witness account is a fiction. He deftly uses Demetrias' clothing as a motif, a vehicle for narrative progress. Is the clothing hers or it is his, a wardrobe co-opted into Jerome's own realm of metaphorical garments and scriptural cloth? Following the story line, Demetrias is very much the agent of her apparel. She understands the spiritual implications of her dress and adornments. She hates her elaborate costume, uses scripture to liken it to polluting rags, casts it off as a hindrance to her holy purpose. She calls herself to the spiritual battle lines and orders herself into military garb. She sends pearls and other gems back to their cases and hurls herself into the presence of her grandmother and mother, where she shocks them into a speechless bout of blushing and pallor by her strange dress.

> The holy and dignified women were amazed to see their child in such strange dress. Her mother stood overcome by joy. Neither could truly believe that what they had in truth desired had come to pass. Their voices caught in their throats and between blushing and pallor, fear and joy, they were flying from thought to thought. [112]

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[111] Hier., *ep.* 130.5 (Fremantle trans., 262-263)"His et aliis quampluribus inflammata stimulis, omnem corporis cultum, et habitum saecularem, quasi propositi sui impedimenta, projecit: Pretiosa monilia, et graves censibus uniones, ardentesque gemmae, redduntur scriniis: vili tunica induitur, viliori tegitur pallio: et insperata aviae genubus repente provolvitur, fletu tantum et planctibus quae esset ostendit." PL 22.1110

It would seem that Demetrias is doing quite a lot and doing it with her clothes. Or is Jerome taking the opportunity to show off his skill at literary tapestry by carrying the motif of clothing through his depiction of the young woman's conversion?

The question of the relationship between literary accounts from any time period and 'real life' is endlessly complicated. Jerome's account does not give us access to Demetrias' thoughts and actions. What it does give access to is a vocabulary, a symbolic and material repertoire that Jerome assumed his readership, the Anician women included, would recognize. It made sense to Jerome to tell Demetrias' story in terms of clothing and ornament. It made sense to convey a radical shift in identity via actual items in a women's physical experience: the orange bridal veil, a silk tunic, a rough mantle and the spiritual, metaphorical equipment of an educated Christian's intellectual experience: Esther's diadem, Joseph's colored coat, the helmet of salvation. Moreover, Jerome assumes that being clothed and changing clothes is a spectacle, a performance with an audience. Even Demetrias' 'secret' preference for rough bedding rather than soft down is on display; her maiden companions form an intimate audience. From the inner circle to the whole world is a short distance in Jerome's narrative. Her manifest example converts her handmaids and companions and soon Rome and the whole of the Roman world are joined in rejoicing despite the recent defeat at the hands of the Goths.[113]

VI. Feminist Interpretive Strategies

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[112] Hier., *ep.* 130.5 (Fremantle trans., 263) "Obstupuit sancta et gravis femina, alienum habitum in nepte conspiciens. mater gaudio stabat attonita. Utraque verum non credere, quod verum esse cupiebant. Haesit vox faucibus, et inter ruborem et pallorem metumque atque laetitiam, cogitationes variae nutabant." PL 22.1110

[113] Hier., *ep.* 130.6, PL 22.1110

A logical feminist question at this point is whether Demetrias, by changing from the garb of a wealthy maid of marriageable age to the rough clothes of an ascetic, was exercising a free choice and resisting, in some way, the confines of her patriarchal society. An optimistic interpretation is that she rejects the norms of marriage and procreation, defines her own 'career path,' maintains control over her economic resources, and places herself in a position of considerable influence in the theological debates of the time.[114] The fathers often cite freedom from the constraints of married life, the lordship of a husband, the sorrows of childbearing, as benefits of the ascetic life for women.[115] Late ancient men themselves, exhorting women to virginity, lauded it as an opportunity for freedom from male supervision. Embracing asceticism was a way to resist male control and maintain independence.

Alternately, Jerome might be using the image of Demetrias to promote his own ascetic program and theological point of view. He dresses her up, he strips her, he fashions her to his liking. Whatever her act might mean is controlled by the words of Jerome. Or of Pelagius, or of Augustine. The ascetic habit is as confining as the wealthy young woman's burdensome wardrobe of silks and gems. It carries as many expectations of decorous feminine behavior. Moreover, the real and specific life of Demetrias becomes, in its literary manifestation, a cipher for men's intellectual concerns. The

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[114] Brooten, "Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction.", Clark, Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith: Essays on Late Ancient Christianity. Brooten and Clark posit asceticism as a 'freeing' option for early Christian women in early essays. Clark shifts away from the analysis of women's status to the literary creation and manipulation of 'woman' by patristic authors in her more recent work.

[115] Jerome does so with vigor in his *Adversus Jovinianum*. PL 23.221-352

particular woman is transformed into Woman, a useful fiction that has little to do with Demetrias or Juliana or Proba.[116]

Concentrating too much on the question of 'free choice' in Demetrias' change in clothes, however, risks passing over the very thing she does. Putting aside for a moment the matter of whether Demetrias gains or loses independence from patriarchal systems, let us focus on what Demetrias has before her conversion and does not lose—a rich assortment of cultural and religious symbols that are also part of her daily practical life, a set of clothes that mark her sexual, social and spiritual identity and that are integral to the world's perception of her character. A woman's agency need not be identical with resistance; her use of symbols need not subvert them.

Demetrias' change of clothes upon her conversion to the ascetic life would signal to her community an intention of much broader changes in her lifestyle and draw considerable, sometimes critical, attention to the details of her conversion. A radical change in clothing and religious identity does not end the daily work of maintaining a moral reputation within a community. One matron, Ecdicia, caused general household upheaval and brought on Augustine's criticism for changing her manner of dress as she took up a more pious life.[117] Since her husband had not agreed to this change in clothing—or her other projects, including marital continence and generous acts of charity for the poor—Augustine perceives her costume change as arrogant rather than laudable. He uses the story of Queen Esther in a different manner than Jerome and reminds Ecdicia that Esther was able to wear fine raiment while keeping a humble heart. Ecdicia's

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[116] For an analysis of the Life of Macrina by Gregory Nyssa along these lines see: Clark, "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after The "Linguistic Turn"."
[117] Aug., *ep.* 262.9-10. PL 33.1080-1081

costume change, because of differing circumstance, or perhaps only because of the reaction of a particular audience, remains a cause for outrage rather than praise. For Christian women of late antiquity as for many contemporary women, changes in religious commitment must be accompanied by outward manifestations of moral rectitude. The changes may be drastic, but they are not singular performances. Let us examine several instances of women changing clothes and the ongoing work they must do to maintain the effect of the change under the scrutiny of their communities.

In the area of the Hindukush where the Kalasha live in close proximity to Muslims, a woman's clothing defines her religious affiliation. While the Kalasha and Muslim communities may tolerate a wide range of styles and frequent evolutions of fashion within each mode of dress, some changes cause major dissention.

> A Kalasha woman who converts to Islam immediately cuts her hair and adopts Muslim dress. Guliara Aya's sister was madly in love with a young *sek* (his father had converted to Islam, so he had been born Muslim). Against the wishes of her family she converted so that she could marry her lover. Guilara Aya told me that her sister stoically resisted attempts by her family to change her mind and proudly recited the *kallimah* ("There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet"). But she sobbed when she gave her beads and headdresses to her sisters and friends. Holding the hank of beads her sister had given her ten years ago, Guliara Aya said, "When I think about these beads, *may neasálak híu* (I have no desire to "be"—a phrase that refers to an empty, indefinable state of longing). She said she knew as soon as her sister took them off that she had really become Muslim and that while she only lives a fifteen-minute walk down-valley they would no longer dance together at festivals, travel together to funerals in other valleys, or walk to their father's summer land to harvest pears.[118]

The Kalasha girl's family held hope that she was not *really* a Muslim up to the point she gave up her beads and headdresses. Her recitation of the statement of faith was not

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[118] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 99.

complete proof of a change in religious identity, but her rejection of Kalasha clothing and jewelry made the conversion a reality. Like Demetrias, Guilara Aya's sister had to *show* who she was before she could *be* who she was. And although the conversion story is told as an abrupt, single event---the hair is cut, the beads distributed, the *shalwar kamiz* and shawl donned---it is in fact the beginning of a daily practice of clothing as rich and complex as the wearing of beads and the embroidery of the black Kalasha dresses. Remember the officials' wives holding their wraps across their faces.

The veil, in contemporary religious and political discourse, is the Western symbol of Muslim women's identity par excellence. The symbol is so overburdened with meaning, however, that it frequently obscures the actual practice.[119] 'Veil' is a confusing term for what is usually a head-cover rather than a face-cover. The 'Muslim veil' comprehends materials and styles from diverse cultures and is worn differently in different communities and circumstances. Moreover, a very large number of women, from Nigerian Anglicans to Hindus in India to Orthodox Jews living on Manhattan's Upper West Side wear religiously significant head-coverings either habitually or in particular circumstances. Clearly these different forms of head-coverings which may be called forms of veiling, both within and outside of Islam, signal very different religious identities.

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[119] The literature on veiling is vast. I cite two excellent introductions to the topic. For a survey and analysis of images of Muslim women in the colonial context see: Malek Alloula, The Colonial Harem, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). More recently, Lila Abu-Lughod notes the dangers to Western feminists and humanitarians who make simplistic value judgments concerning Muslim women and veiling: Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Muslim Woman: The Power of Images and the Danger of Pity," Lettre Internationale.12 (2006).

Much feminist interpretation of head-covering practices, both in contemporary communities and in the past, has concentrated on issues of control of the female body and hiding or erasure of women's identity. Eilberg-Schwartz, in the introduction to a collection of essays on the woman's head in different religious contexts, summarizes:

> The eyes become breasts, the nose a navel, the mouth a vagina. What women speak, eat, and see is nothing but desire. Speaking to a woman is a form of sex, seeing her hair a violation of modesty. This sort of erotic symbolism is one of the motivations behind the practices of veiling a woman's face and/or hair and avoiding the sound of her voice. Ironically, of course, the eroticism of the female hair or face is intensified and partially created by the very acts of veiling that are intended to keep female sexuality under wraps. What is forbidden to the gaze is that much more tantalizing to the imagination. Covering the female head is not the only practice which simultaneously presupposes and creates its eroticism. Cosmetics and hairstyling, instead of hiding the female head, draw the gaze to it and highlight its features. These practices are enmeshed in the same eroticism as the practice of veiling…the display of the female face can be another form of decapitation, turning the female head into a symbol of desire, rather than a symbol of identity and of capacity for speech and language.[120]

The *erasure* of a personal identity is the 'real' effect of the veil according to this line of thought; the *creation* of a religious or moral identity is a ruse of the patriarchy. This interpretation of the cultural psychology of the veil is not based entirely on guesswork or presumption. The church fathers provide ample evidence for the misogynistic and eroticized interplay of hiding and revealing of the female visage, both of which ignore the person of the individual woman. Tertullian, in his treatise arguing that virgins as well as married women ought to veil their heads, builds the sexual allure of women's faces to the

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[120] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger, eds., Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). 2.

point that they endanger their kinsmen. Better for the virgin, 'glory' of the church, to hide entirely and reserve her 'surrender' for God alone.

> I pray you, be you mother, or sister or virgin-daughter—let me address you according to the names proper to your years—veil your head: if a mother, for your sons' sakes; if a sister, for your brethern's sakes, if a daughter for your fathers' sakes. All ages are perilled in your person. Put on the panoply of modesty; surround yourself with a stockade of bashfulness; rear a rampart for your sex, which must neither allow your own eyes egress nor ingress for other people's. Wear the full garb of a woman, to preserve the standing of virgin. Belie somewhat of your inner consciousness, in order to exhibit the truth to God alone. And yet you do not belie yourself appearing as a bride. For wedded your are to Christ: to Him you have surrendered your flesh; to him you have espoused your maturity.[121]

Here is an ideology of the veil, not so dissimilar from that cited above. But notice that it is not static, not a cultural given. Tertullian is arguing, trying to convince a group of women to follow his program of Christian feminine attire. Modesty is the value that Tertullian and his audience agree on. His case is for the particular physical form that modesty should take. Controversy over the particular form modest veiling ought take is common, even when veiling is an accepted norm.

Let us now turn to another set of examples from ethnographic writing to expand the horizons of our understanding of the potential for clothing in women's self-representation and self-formation. Anthropologist Lila Abu-Luhgod lived with a group of Bedouins in Egypt periodically throughout the late 1970s and 1980s and devoted a

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[121] Tert., *Virg.* 16 (Thelwall trans., 37) "Oro te, sive mater, sive soror, sive filia virgo, secundum annorum nomina dixerim, vela caput: si mater, propter filios: si soror, propter fraters: si filia, propter patres; omnes in te aetates periclitantur. Indue armaturam pudoris, circumdue vallum verecundiae, murum sexui tuo strue, qui nec tuos emmitat oculos, ned admittat alienos. Adimple habitum mulieris, ut statum virginis serves. Mentire aliquid ex his quae intus sunt, ut soli Deo exhibeas veritatem, quamquam non mentiris nuptam; nupsisti Christo: illi tradidisti carnem tuam, illi sponsasti maturitatem tuam." PL 2.911

chapter of her book, Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories[122], on the lives of women in the community to the topic of honor and shame. She begins the chapter with a photograph of three school age Bedouin girls. Two wear long-sleeved dresses with high necklines. The dresses have floral prints and decorative bows or lace. Both wear floral scarves loosely over their heads and shoulders. The third girl wears a long-sleeved white shirt under a floral jumper. She is wearing a white headscarf that is tightly bound over her forehead and ears. The cloth sweeps neatly under her chin and covers her neck, shoulders and chest. All three are from the same tight-knit community that is coming into more and more contact with the larger Egyptian society. The photo illustrates the community tensions over the question of female modesty. Should Bedouin girls and women continue to wear the modest clothing of their mothers or should they adopt the Egyptian style associated with the modern Islamist movement?

Abu-Lughod relates the conflicting sentiments of the community as manifested in a young girl, Kamla, who struggles with her longings for a better life and her commitment to her family and people. Here, Kamla and a family friend discuss the Egyptian Islamists and the question of clothing.

> She said, "They have forbidden everything. Why the next thing you know they'll forbid the clothes we wear and make us go around naked."
>
> She then described to the group gathered around her how these people dressed. She told them about the wife of a Muslim Brother called Mr. Muhammad who had moved to her town. The woman was offering lessons on religion every Tuesday afternoon for any woman who wished to learn. She wore a veil that covered her head and her face, "except for her eyes''; she wore gloves, a dress down to the ground, and shoes. As an old woman put it, "She looks like a ghost."
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> Kamla showed off her knowledge of religion. "It is wrong for a

[122] Lila Abu-Lughod, Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993).

> woman to veil her face. What is required is for your head to be covered; it is fine to expose your hands, your feet, and your face."[123]

The women, especially the older women, understand the clothes they have always worn as being entirely modest. They joke that the rules of the pious Egyptians would undermine their piety entirely. They can't celebrate the Prophet's birthday, the saints' birthdays, soon they'll have to run around naked because every form of piety will be forbidden.

Kamla, who has more education than the other women, tries to define the right path, somewhere in the middle of the woman who veils her entire face and the loose headscarves of her relations. But at other moments she sides either with her community or with the Egyptians. In a school essay she remarks on the aspects of Bedouin life she hopes will not change for women. The italics represent the original essay, the text in parentheses are Kamla's oral commentary to Lila Abu-Lughod.

> *We all know that everything in life has its good qualities and its bad.* (Weren't you asking what was good about the Bedouins and what wasn't?) *The virtues of the Bedouins are:*
> *1. Their piety and their total adherence to the traditions of the Prophet, despite their lack of education.* (This is the thing I hope will continue until Judgment day. This is the best thing—that they are religious. Even though ninety percent of them aren't educated, they are pious. Long clothing, respect, and modesty. The woman is as pious as the man. No woman can talk with a man she doesn't know or have him visit her home. And she doesn't show her face or talk with any older man. This is what I hope Bedouin women and girls will never abandon.)[124]

This pride in her traditions, however, is at odds with her desire to appear educated and pious in her school context. At another time, Kamla expresses a desire to adopt the modern veil.

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[123] Abu-Lughod, Writing Women's Worlds. 236.
[124] Abu-Lughod, Writing Women's Worlds. 233.

> Kamla had confided to me that she would have liked to replace her kerchief with the new Islamic headcovering but she was afraid her family would object. A photograph of her with her school friends revealed that she was the only one among them not wearing the new modest dress. Yet Kamla criticized some of her classmates who wore this type of clothing but added flowers and multicolored headbands to their veils. She said their religion teacher had given them a real talking to and had confiscated their flowers and headbands saying, "If you want to take on the veil, do it seriously,: Kamla said she would adopt this kind of headcovering "if God opens the way for me and I get to marry someone educated."[125]

Kamla's desire to be and to appear to be modest is not simple. She must play to several audiences at once and evaluate several models of piety. Looking modest at home is not the same as looking modest at school. Even at school there is dissention over what counts as modest veiling and what does not. In her attempts to become more educated and more modern, she does not reject the value of modesty or the practice of veiling. Rather, she confronts options for modest behavior. She does the daily work of maintaining her own and her family's reputation while considering future modes of piety and modest self-representation.

Like Kamla, Demetrias had options for modest self-representation.[126] In early third century North Africa Tertullian was arguing for a certain form of veiling among Christian virgins, not describing a widespread phenomenon. Some two hundred years later, Jerome does not have any more specific standard of modesty to suggest. He gives

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[125] Abu-Lughod, Writing Women's Worlds. 237.

[126] No society is so static or cut-off from outside influences that there is no room for controversy in the matter of modest dress and bearing. Pious behavior in general is always under scrutiny, reform, and revision. For an excellent argument against the notion of culture, in general, as a static an coherent entity see: Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing against Culture," Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1991).

the most fully veiled woman as an example to Demetrias, but there is no hint that this was the norm, even among ascetic women.

> Let her be lovely and lovable to you, let her be among your companions, that woman does not know her own beauty, who neglects her good looks, and when she goes out in public, does not reveal her neck or chest or twist her mantle to show her nape but hides her face and leaves only one opening for her eye, just what is necessary to find her way. [127]

This is an even fuller veiling than Tertullian advised, who held up the 'one-eye opening' as an example of Arab barbarian modesty, but who measured the Christian woman's veil very exactly as covering what the hair, if loose, would cover.[128]

Let us pause to think about the mantle. The roman woman's mantle or *palla* was a necessary garment from Republican times to the Byzantine era. By the fourth century, however, it was no longer a rectangle of cloth so large that it enveloped the entire body; in the fourth and fifth centuries artistic evidence and material remains indicate a narrower rectangle of cloth that could cover chest, neck and head. Like earlier versions, the late Roman women's mantle was not held in place with pins or brooches but draped and secured by holding with one hand or simply held by the weight of fabric looped around the shoulders.[129] Although mosaics, funerary monuments and other depictions show several manners of draping the mantle, all leave plenty of fabric free to be pulled up over the head or across the face. Unlike the modern Egyptian veil, the Roman mantle was not

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[127] Hier., *ep.* 130.18. (Fremantle trans., 270)"Illa tibi sit pulchra, illa amabilis, illa habenda inter socias quae se nescit esse pluchram; quae negligit formae bonum, et procedens ad publicum, non pectus et colla denudat, nec pallio revoluto cervicem aperit; sed quae celat faciem, et vix uno oculo, qui viae necssarius est, patente ingreditur. PL 22.1122

[128] This measurement was confirmed by visions of holy women during prayer. Tert., *Virg.* 17

[129] A. T. Croom, Roman Clothing and Fashion (Charleston: Tempus Publishing Inc., 1988). 90-91.

a snug garment that remained in place. It was an eminently flexible, adjustable garment. It was a garment that required practice to manipulate and frequent judgments concerning its appropriate presentation.

Few of my female readers and almost none of my male readers will have ever had to deal with a six foot by three foot piece of cloth as a garment. But those who veil or who have worn a headscarf for a visit to a friend's mosque or who have put on an Indian sari and shawl for a Hindu wedding will recognize the amount of movement, fixing, and re-draping these garments require. The embodied knowledge of this activity may be second nature to women who wear them on a daily basis, but that does not mean the activity of draping and undraping, covering up and uncovering goes unnoticed. The following examples from a Hindu village context in northern India will show the critical attention paid to women's daily manipulation of the *sadlo*, a half-sari worn with a long skirt and bodice.

Emma Tarlo who devotes several chapters of her book on clothing in India to 'dilemmas' of dress in the Gujarati village where she did her fieldwork in 1988-9, explores the question of veiling or 'doing shame', *laj*:

> There is no simple dichotomy between being veiled and unveiled in Jalia. The cloth is in almost constant motion, being drawn, adjusted, withdrawn and redrawn in such a variety of ways that it seems almost like a part of the female body. And so long as a woman is in her marital village, she must move her veil with the same self-consciousness that she moves her body…
>
> Simple *laj* consists on taking the veil by the hand and pulling it rapidly sideways across the face; this is the type of *laj* typically performed when women are out of doors in an apparently secluded spot, and a man unexpectedly walks past. It sometimes acts as an intermediary stage before going into a more complete form of *laj* if the person approaching is someone who must be avoided. In situations where women have to walk through the village or fetch water from the

> village well, they generally have their veils hanging forward, covering only their face and neck so that they can see where they are walking. If carrying heavy loads, they sometimes keep one hand on the veil so they can lift it slightly without allowing people to see in.[130]

Tarlo goes on to describe the system of warning signals and actions taken by a woman 'doing shame' for senior men in her household, the modifications on this if a woman is doing work, and the extremes of *laj* performed by very young high caste brides at festivals in their marital villages. "They were totally veiled and resembled large bundles of expensive cloth, with only their toes and the tips of their fingers visible from beneath their saris."[131] Far from being a static tradition, the villagers frequently discussed the necessities of 'doing shame', the performance or non-performance of different women in different circumstances, and the viability of different modes of dress considering the need for proper veiling. Clothing appropriate for 'doing shame' is not always compatible with styles that denote higher educational status or wealth. Tensions in one family broke out over a young daughter-in-law's cardigan, which her father-in-law claimed could not co-exist with the proper performance of *laj*.

> But Sureshkaka soon noticed the figure of his veiled daughter-in-law stooping over the fire, dressed in an unfamiliar garment. He demanded with annoyance just what she was wearing and where it had come from. Hansa herself remained mute beneath her veil, but her mother-in-law explained that it was cold and Hansa was wearing a cardigan ('jeket') that she had brought in her trousseau. Sureshkaka, unimpressed, pointed out that the folds of Hansa's sari were interrupted by this unnecessary addition and that it looked untidy and improper. 'No village girl would think it proper to wear such a thing,' he remonstrated. 'Has she no respect for our traditions? How can she do real *laj* when she looks such a sight with her sari half hidden under her "jeket" like that?'[132]

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[130] Tarlo, Clothing Matters. 160-161.
[131] Tarlo, Clothing Matters. 162.
[132] Tarlo, Clothing Matters. 168.

Several days later, Hansa's father-in-law overhears her defending her cardigan, a gift her parents had sent with her to her marital village. He loses his temper and orders her out of the house; she can return to her parents' house where she could wear her fancy city clothes.[133] The question of Hansa's status in the household continues for some time; she returns to her natal home to give birth to her second child. Eventually, friends and relations negotiate her return to her husband's family.

This conflict is about much more than whether a woman can properly veil while wearing a cardigan. The issue of veiling, however, becomes a focal point for understanding, and debating, Hansa's identity within her marital family. Veiling is the particular responsibility of a young bride. It is her way of showing respect to her father-in-law, a figure of considerably more authority than her husband. The marriage match brought more benefits to her husband's family than to Hansa, and her father-in-law is well aware of this. He wanted a wealthy, educated girl who could provide connections to a bigger city and lend an air of sophistication to the family. But once she is a member of the household she must become a 'village girl'. Can she be both a 'village girl' and the sophisticated sort of daughter-in-law who would own a 'jeket'? As Tarlo's description reveals, Hansa's performance of *laj* falls well within the norms of veiling.

> At mid-day there was a customary creaking sound from below and a loud and elongated cry of 'Ram' projected up the stairway, reaching the women in the kitchen above. Leriben warned Hansaben in urgent haste that HE was coming and Hansaben swiftly turned her back, sweeping her sari over her head as she swiveled, and pulling it down till it hung well over her face and neck in *ardhi laj*. Crouched in the corner of the kitchen, her back turned, her face covered and head tilted downwards, she continued

[133] Tarlo, Clothing Matters. 169.

to roll out *roti* (bread) as before.[134]

Both father-in-law and daughter-in-law follow the 'script' of veiling. Neither is happy with the other's performance. Sureshkaka doesn't think she is capable of doing 'real' veiling with the addition of a cardigan; Hansa thinks her in-law is simply cruel to her. His insistence that she wear the cardigan under her blouse or not at all is unreasonable; she has the right to wear a trousseau gift from her natal family. The question of Hansa's relationship to marital family and her natal family continues long after the marriage negotiations and centers around her relationship to clothes: the sari, the garment used for veiling before a senior male in-law, and the cardigan, an exotic item in her trousseau that connects her to her parents. The daughter-in-law, a person who is supposed to be rendered 'invisible' through the practice of veiling, is, in fact, under considerable scrutiny. She need not only be 'invisible' but invisible in the right way. And the 'right way' is a subject of constant household and community debate.

These excursions into Bedouin Egyptian and Hindu Indian veiling practices cannot tell us what was at stake in the daily wearing of the late Roman woman's mantle, especially that of an aristocratic girl who had dedicated herself to the life of a virgin ascetic. They make vivid, however, the possibilities for self-representation inherent in the modest woman's head-covering. Far from erasing women's identities, veils frequently serve to create, maintain, or radically change a woman's moral identity within her community. When Jerome suggests a particular form of veiling to Demetrias, he

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[134] Tarlo, Clothing Matters. 168. *Ardhi laj* is 'half veiling' that covers face and chest but not arms. With head tilted down, one can see and continue a task.

reveals that the question of veiling is not settled. Demetrias has options, more than one strategy for self-presentation.

Shortly after suggesting a full version of veiling to Demetrias, Jerome recommends works of his own as well as other authors who wrote on virginity. Cyprian is among these and in his treatise 'On the Dress of Virgins' he warns that virtue consists in its appearance as well as the fact of its existence.

> But continence and modesty consist not alone in the purity of the flesh, but also in seemliness, as well as in modesty of dress and adornment…A virgin ought not only to be so, but also to be perceived and believed to be so: no one seeing a virgin should be in any doubt as to whether she is one.[135]

By this reckoning the status of Demetrias as a virgin depends on her self-presentation as a modest, seemly woman and the success of that presentation. She must be a virgin *beyond doubt*; her modest conduct must be an entirely convincing performance.[136] This advice hardly seems to reveal opportunities for women's agency to those of us who tend to think of 'covering up' as a constraint on—or even annihilation of--being and doing rather than a *mode* of being and doing. In the light of the ethnographic examples, however, 'seeming' modest as well as being modest begins to look like a full-time job.

VII. Conclusions

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[135] Cypr., *Hab. Virg.* 5 in: "On the Dress of Virgins," trans. Ernest Wallace, Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian, Appendix, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe, Ante-Nicene Fathers (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978-1979). "Continentia vero et pudicitia non in sola carnis integritate consistit, sed etiam in cultus et ornatus honore pariter ac pudore…Virgo non esse tantum sed et intelligi debet et et credit. Nemo cum virginem viderit, dubitet an virgo sit." PL 4.444-445

[136] For similar injunctions to be as careful of reputation as of virtue, see: Pelag.-Haer., *Celent.* 23 and *Aug.*, Vid. 27.

In the preface to his book on sexuality and early Christian asceticism, Peter Brown stresses the alien nature of Roman Christianity, especially in its sexual relations, to the contemporary Islamic Mediterranean.

> …the Christianity of our own times—is separated from the Christianity of the Roman world by a chasm almost as vast as that which still appears to separate us from the moral horizons of a Mediterranean Islamic country. Despite the continued fascination, for the Western reader, of the Roman Empire and the origins of Christianity, we must respect their irreducible particularity, and nowhere more than in the stark limitations that silently and insistently delimited the relations of men and women in late Roman society.[137]

Brown wrote in 1987 and changes were already occurring in the field of anthropology that were intended to re-evaluate the persistent image of the Islamic woman as a non-person swathed in cloth. Mediated as they are by the figure of the anthropologist, the very real interactions of Guilara Aya's sister, Kamla, and Hansa with the clothes that make up their religious and moral identities, do something to contradict both Brown's notion of the chasm between 'us' and Islam (or any other non-Western place where different expectations for relations between the sexes hold) and Brown's pessimism about the 'flinty soil of a long extinct and deeply reticent world' that can tell us little about the lives of early Christian women. Analogy between the life of an American woman in the late 20th or early 21st century and Demetrias seems only to reveal the many lacks and constraints in her life. Comparison with the lives of other contemporary women, women leading very different but nevertheless rich, complex lives, reveals a more interesting landscape. Fictions, advice, metaphors and arguments in the works of the church fathers that we might cast off as 'merely conventional' suddenly give us a glimpse of the daily

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[137] Brown, The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity. xvii.

activity of the modest woman, the significance of her decisions, the dangers of an inconspicuous-ness that is under constant scrutiny by multiples audiences. Demetrias' clothes not only marked her identity, they were one of the most important tools by which she *made* it.

Chapter Three

Publicity and Domesticity

I. Introduction

From the activities of modest dress, we now move into the activities that created and maintained domesticity, the modest location in space and modest movement through space, as well as the public advertisement of such modest location and movement. The location of modesty par excellence was the domestic sphere, and the ideal Roma woman stayed at home. The following second century epitaph sums up Roman feminine domesticity: "Here is buried Amymone wife of Marcus, best and most beautiful: She worked wool, was pious, modest, frugal, chaste and stayed at home."[138] This sentiment was still in full force in the early fifth century as our evidence from Jerome, Augustine, and Pelagius will show. Staying at home, however, can mean many different things. The lifestyle of a Victorian middle class wife and a north Indian Muslim bride living in the seclusion of a joint household may share an ideology of domesticity, but this may mean very different things to the two women—as the writings of British colonials make evident.[139] Did the Roman woman live exclusively within the walls of her house and even there in quarters separate from men as upper class Greek women were supposed to do? Not according to Roman writers like Plutarch who marked the difference between the lifestyles of Greek and Roman women as one of those things that defined *romanitas* in

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[138] "Hic sita est Amymone Marci optima et pulcherrima, lanifica pia pudica frugi casta domiseda." In: Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 295. CE 237

[139] For examples see: Eunice de Souza, ed., Purdah: An Anthology (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

opposition to Hellenistic ways.[140] The heroism of Roman women outside the house was a proper subject for praise. Likewise, a matron appeared at dinner parties with her husband, virgins participated in religious choral groups and athletic competitions, and women of all ages participated in commerce as both buyers and sellers.[141] Roman women did not stay at home all of the time.

The domesticity of women was an ideal, overlapping with the other qualities of a good woman, chastity, modesty and piety. It was valued in itself also for its contribution to the overall modest reputation of a woman and by extension, her household. A woman's sexual integrity and modest conduct, including domesticity, were crucial to the public, political image of her family. Attacking a household by questioning or slandering the virtue of its women was a time-honored tradition in Roman historiography. The lurid accounts of women's immodest and lustful private lives were a mainstay of invective against unpopular emperors into the fifth and sixth centuries.[142] Just as the details of inappropriate behavior were part of attacks on households, so were the details of chaste feminine virtue part of a family's reputation-building capital. Kate Cooper describes the situation of the Roman family in a chapter aptly titled "Private Lives, Public Meanings":

> If a man's enemies were bent on discerning in his private

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[140] See 'Bravery of Women' in: Plutarch's Moralia, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931). "…I do not hold the same opinion as Thucydides. For he declares that the best woman is she about whom there is the least talk among persons outside regarding either censure or commendation, felling that the name of the good woman, like her person, ought to be shut up indoors and never go out. But to my mind Gorgias appears to display better taste in advising that not the form but the fame of a woman should be known to many." Moralia 242.e-f (Babbitt trans. 475)

[141] Clark, Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Life-Styles.

[142] For a notorious example, see: Procopius. The Secret History, trans. G. A. Williamson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), Amy Richlin, The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

> life an intemperance that could compromise the fulfillment of public duty, it was his task to undermine the plausibility of such revelations by a deft broadcasting of his probity. This meant that he should make as public as possible his solemn affection for the chaste women of his family. Paradoxically, the modesty of his wife and female relatives was of use to him only if it was widely acknowledged.[143]

Staying at home, then, was not a non-action any more than being covered up was a non-action. Domesticity was not incarceration or strict-seclusion. It was as much about how one was perceived in relation to domestic and public space as it was about where one actually was at any given moment.

This chapter begins with a look at Roman women's domesticity as it was publicized in funerary epigraphy and visual representations. We then move to the interior of the *domus* as described in Jerome and Pelagius. The next section explores the negotiation of gendered spaces, women's seclusion, and ideal domesticity in ethnographic examples. Finally we leave the house again and look at the creation of domestic personae while on trips outside the domestic space by examining the importance of the women's entourage in Augustine and our other ancient Christian authors. While moving from graveyards outside the city walls to the interiors of Roman homes to the curtains of South Asian seclusion to the difficult journey from home to church, we are considering domestic women's agency in creating their reputations for 'being at home'.

II. Departed Women, At Home Outside the City

We will first enter into the world of Roman domesticity and publicity by way of funerary sculpture and epigraphy. Our aim is to expand our notions of the public and the

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[143] Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride. 13.

private and how these were created in the Roman world. We are looking both at specific spaces and objects and at the work they did to stabilize and naturalize boundaries. These boundaries were not rigid physically or conceptually but were socially constructed and in constant flux. The move is not from single examples to general precept. Rather, I try to take a few examples of epitaphs and funerary portraits and explore their workings, keeping in mind that a single object or phenomenon may have played very different roles over time or depending on which group of people interacted with it.

Jas Elsner claims that art history always faces a methodological dilemma: it examines very specific objects but then generalizes from them, always positing more than the objects can feasibly prove by themselves.[144] This is the dilemma, perhaps, of all history and certainly of ancient history, which must constantly fill in the gaps by comparison or by over-interpretation of the sources. Both comparanda and sources are given as evidences for cases they cannot definitively prove. The very specificity, the realness, of the evidence stands in, by sleight of hand, for authentic proof of very general claims. Elsner suggests that closer attention be paid to the rhetorical function of close analysis. In the case of this dissertation, the description of material evidence—that of clothing in the previous chapter and of funerary inscriptions and statuary in this chapter—does not function as positive proof for the points I wish to make about the modest self-representation of the Anician women. My description of these objects functions, rather, as an entry point for the historical imagination.

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[144] Jas Elsner, "From Empirical Evidence to the Big Picture: Some Reflections on Riegl's Concept of *Kunstwollen*," Critical Inquiry.32 (2006). I am also indebted to Dr. Elsner for his comments on April 25, 2008 during the seminar "On Ekphrasis in Art History," which was given as part of the 2008 Mellon Dissertation Seminar at Emory University: "Critical Engagement, Community and Subjects of Art History".

One way in which a family could publicize the domestic virtue of its women was with inscriptions, portraits and other artistic representations on funerary monuments. From the most elaborate poetic eulogies to the simplest catalogues of virtue, the most common presentation of women was that of the chaste and beloved matron. At death, the woman of domestic virtue left home and even the city, but not the household. Since Romans considered human remains (either ashes or corpses in sarcophagi) polluting, burial grounds were outside the city walls, often along the major roads into and out of the city.[145] A woman's domestic reputation, ideally built up over a long and fertile life, here joined the political and military successes of the men who predeceased her. It also joined the piety of freedmen and freedwomen, the sweetness of lost children and youths, the musical, medicinal, and artisanal skills of professionals and slaves.[146] While almost all Roman burial sites produce more evidence for male decedents than female[147], the greater part of biographical detail and especially description of character falls to that of women. Richmond Lattimore summarizes the tone of epitaphs in the imperial and later Roman periods:

> What we are presented with first and last is the picture of an ideally happy family; devoted husbands and wives, affectionate parents and obedient children, even kind masters and grateful slaves and freedmen. The virtues, especially those which go to make up a family, are magnified; we have, not precise

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[145] J. M. C. Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World, 1996 ed. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

[146] Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. The particular virtues of all members of a household, free male citizens, matrons, children, freedmen, clients, slaves, and other dependants worked together. Monuments were dedicated for slaves or clients by masters and vice versa.

[147] Bettina Arnold, "Gender and Archaeological Mortuary Analysis," Women in Antiquity: Theoretical Approaches to Gender and Archaeology, ed. Sara Milledge Nelson, Gender and Archaeology Series (Lanham, MD; Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press, 2007).

> reminiscence, but the elaboration and adaptation of an ideal. It follows from the centralization of power under the empire that in this period the ideal more than ever concerns the family, not the state; and from this it follows in turn that women play the predominant part they do…the virtues we find holding always the highest place are the old-fashioned domestic virtues of women.[148]

The increasing importance of domestic virtue or the domestic ideal in Imperial Rome has attracted the notice of other scholars, such as Cooper, although they have revised his explanation for the shift.[149] Lattimore's observation emphasizes the funerary idealizations in epitaphs by which a woman's modesty could become widely known and which was increasingly popular through the imperial period. The funerary epitaph and portrait assimilated the deceased to the ideal, and the more piety a family showed in the semi-public space of the burial plot, the more the virtue of ancestors, female as well as male, attached to the living household. Roman families visited their dead on set days after burial, on the decedents' birth and death anniversaries, and at festivals for the dead such as the *dies Parentales*, the *Lemuria*, and the *Rosaria*.[150] These visitations to the family burial places included the offering of flowers, notably violets and roses, to the dead, but most importantly these visits were the occasions for funerary meals shared among the living and the dead of both sexes. Long metal tubes into the sarcophagi often

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[148] Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 299-300. For a somewhat unsympathetic analysis of these developments see: Yvon Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, A History of Private Life: I. From Pagan Rome to Byzantium, ed. Paul Veyne, vol. I (Cambridge, MA London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

[149] Cooper, The Virgin and the Bride.

[150] The *dies Parentales* were the official commemorations of the dead from the 13th to the 21 of February. The *Lemuria* were rites conducted on the 9th, 11th, and 13th of May to guard against ghosts and the hungry dead. Roses and violets were always common offerings to the dead but especially during the *Rosaria* in May-June. Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World.

served as access points to human remains so that the funerary meals could be shared more directly with the deceased. Placating the spirits of the dead was an important function of the meals, but the meals also served as an opportunity for a household to display allegiance to and descent from virtuous forebears. The dead were models for the living household, guarantors of its legitimacy[151], and advertisers of domesticity. Epitaphs could generalize the domestic virtues of a woman into an ideal that the living both benefited from and worked to conform themselves with. Any praise for the living—or the dead—in Latin literature began with the virtues of his/her ancestors.[152] It was therefore necessary to ensure that one's ancestors were known, and known to have been virtuous. A person's reputation was not his or hers alone, but extended throughout the family past and present.

The majority of examples from Roman funerary statuary and epigraphy are conventional descriptions of the deceased. This is part of their value, for they can convincingly demonstrate a long-standing tradition for the idealized domestic woman in Roman society. They include catalogues of feminine virtue that employ a very limited vocabulary for praise and include a number of formulae. "Chaste, modest, decent, wise, generous, praiseworthy" reads one epitaph. [153] This covers most of the feminine virtues. Others include frugality, piety, obedience, simplicity, sweetness, beauty, gravity, dignity,

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[151] The wife who has spent her entire life, from her youthful virginity, with one man is very common in funerary inscription. Also, inscriptions mention the similarity of a woman's children to her husband and her satisfaction with one man or her 'ignorance' of strangers. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs.

[152] Jerome, Pelagius and Augustine all play on the theme of nobility of ancestors in their letters to the Anician women. In essence, all pay appropriate homage to the Anici family but suggest that Demetrias outdoes her consular forefathers by giving up nobility and worldly honors. For this theme in the letters to Demetrias see: Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias."

[153] Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 295. CE 843

old-fashioned chastity, and attention to domestic duties, especially wool-working. One epitaph reads, "Her wool was never out of her hands without good reason"; another notes a woman's contentment with her domestic sphere, "This woman was satisfied to live with her good husband, she desired nothing more than to rejoice in her household."[154]

The visual representations, both portraits and other images that accompany women's funerary monuments tend also to show women as chaste, dignified and domestic. Conventional images such as mirrors, spindles, combs and cosmetics boxes signal the gender of the deceased in less elaborate memorials. The funerary evidence shows that the moralizing discourse against women's beautification and love of clothing that we explored in the last chapter had its counterweight in associations between women's adornment and chaste sexuality. Since men's and professional women's tombs tended to carry the emblems of their work such as lyres, anvils, medical implements, craft tools of all kinds, the presence of beautification 'tools' seems to point to attraction as part of women's work or duty (*labor, officium*) mentioned so often in epitaphs.[155] While these images can having religious meanings and sometimes appear on male memorials as well, they usually represent the domestic work of women, textile production and reproduction. The emphasis on the arts of beauty suggests the erotic role of the matron. Portraits, which were often mass-produced with the features of the deceased only added after purchase, showed dignified women. Their hair is elaborately arranged, often in the style of the current imperial women.[156] Some women wear veils and hold them with one

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[154] Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 297. CE 1988,14; CE 166

[155] Virginia Marie da Costa, "Funerary Portraiture and Symbolism: The Depiction of Women in Roman Asia Minor," University of California, Santa Barbara, 1997.

[156] The interest in Roman women's hairstyles for many years was confined to an interest in dating statuary. Since imperial women had unique and easily identifiable hairstyles

hand in a gesture of modesty (the *pudicitia* type).[157] Both hair and veils suggest the good order and chaste reputation of the woman. Only girls and very old women are shown with simple hair-dos; women with loose hair were in mourning or in the guise of mythological persons.[158] The composition most indicative of a woman's domestic role was the husband-wife portrait in which the couple's right hands are joined.[159] These *concordia* portraits emphasize the domestic fidelity of the couple and the orderliness and harmony of the household.

The danger of conventional forms, whether in art or literary sources, is that they seem to lack authenticity. If modest, domestic representations of women were simply a funerary convention, how can they prove anything about broad cultural understandings or the self-understandings of Roman women? Yet Roman antiquity highly valued tradition and the conventional; originality was rarely a cause for praise. Whether the ideal ever was achieved, or even could be, its material presence acted on the community and on individuals. Kampen argues that the historian of gender should not merely understand material representations as reflections or illustrations of gender norms but as part of the means by which gender is created.

> Representation, the interpretation of the visual world through material means, does a number of things essential to the construction of gender. Among other things, it shows people idealized forms of themselves, forms by which to recognize the categories to which their society assigns them and by which

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and the populace copied these precisely (at least in statuary) an entire dating system can be based on coiffure. Diana E. E. Kleiner, Roman Sculpture (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992). 8-9.

[157] Kleiner, Roman Sculpture. 40-41.

[158] For untying hair as a gesture of women's mourning see chapter three of: Anthony Corbeill, Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[159] Kleiner, Roman Sculpture. 79-80.

> to mark their hopes and desires. It also shows people how they differ from one another both as individuals and as members of categories (for example, of status or of age).[160]

The gendered subject and the material and literary creations of her culture develop mutually rather than one being the product of the other in any straightforward way. Men and women represent themselves as a commentary on or iteration of the tradition but then must live lives in relationship to their own ideals and those surrounding them.

Although conventional forms and language give a useful entrée into the public domesticity of Roman women, the following examples initially seem out-of-place. The first is an epigraph written for a concubine as if she were a matron; the second is a group of funerary portraits of matrons in the guise of a nude Venus. These funerary representations would seem to go against the grain. Close reading of the aberration, however, can generate a richer understanding of the convention.

Below is the middle section of a long poem in praise of the freedwoman Allia Potestas, dedicated by her lover and former owner. The first part extols her character, the second her physical charms.

> She was strong, good, resolute, honest, a most reliable guardian, neat at home and neat enough abroad, well known to everybody, and the only person who could rise to all occasions. She spoke little and was never rebuked (for speaking at the wrong time); she was always first out of bed, and the last to go to bed and rest, and she went only after her things were put away in proper order. Her yarn was never out of her hands without good reason. No one excelled her in obedience and good habits.
>
> She was of fair complexion, with lovely eyes and gold hair. Her face always had an ivory pallor such as they

[160] Natalie B. Kampen, "Gender Theory in Roman Art," I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome, eds. Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996). 17.

> say no mortal ever had. On her snow-white bosom the shape of her breasts was slight. Her legs? Atalanta's figure would be comic beside her. She was never sparing, but lovely as she was, she was generous with her body. She kept her limbs smooth, and every hair was looked for (and removed).[161]

The first part is entirely in keeping with the catalogues of virtue for a Roman matron. She is noticeably domestic. Her care and concern for the home are extraordinary and, while one might wonder when she had time to go out, she is well known (*notissima*) by the people. Lattimore finds that the "poem is completely sincere, guaranteed as spontaneous by its very defects"[162]. Lattimore is convinced that the "portrait of a lady, cultured, quiet, domestic, and hardworking" is rendered absurd by the "embarrassing detail" of the erotic description.[163] Surely her domestic goodness is betrayed by the public display of her pale, naked body, kept pale by staying indoors and properly covering herself on outings? Either the "infatuated patron" is making up her chaste, matronly character entirely and adding it as a ridiculous mask for his deceased lover or he is badly mistreating a domestic paragon by revealing her not merely in the privacy of her home but in the intimacy of the bedroom.

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[161] The translation is Lattimore's; see his notes 274, 277, 278 for problems of interpretation and translation. Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 298-299. "…fortis sancta tenax insons fidissima custos / munda domi sat munda foras notissima volgo / sola erat ut posset factis occurrere cunctis / exiguo sermone inreprehensa manebat / prima toro delapsa fuit eadem ultima lecto / se tulit ad quietem positis ex ordine rebus / lana cui e manibus nuncquam sine caussa recessit / opsequioque prior nulla moresque salubres / haec sibi non placuit numquam sibi libera visa / candida luminibus pulchris aurata capillis / et nitor in facie permansit eburneus illae / qualem mortalem nullam habuisse ferunt / pectore et in niveo brevis illi forma papillae / quid crura Atalantes status illi comicus ipse / anxia non mansit sed corpore pulchra benigno / levia membra tulit pilus illi quaesitus ubique…" L'année Épigraphique: Revue Des Publications Épigraphiques Relatives À L'antiquité Romaine, ed.,^eds., (Paris: Ernest Leroux). 1913, 0088.

[162] Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 298.

[163] Lattimore, Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs. 298.

This poem, however, with its odd juxtaposition tells us something about the nature of public and private, domestic and erotic in the Roman world. It also adds to our understanding of what counted towards the creation of a household reputation. Although the dichotomy of public and private was important to the Roman worldview, the two hardly functioned as they do today. Other than celebrities and politicians, few people today spend a great deal of time or energy fashioning a public image of their private lives in order to secure professional advantage. We have resumés and credentials, yearly reviews, and letters of recommendation that are not likely to mention domestic concord, sexual restraint or modest demeanor. Our habits at home are, in theory at least, irrelevant to our career advancement. Neither do we often conduct interviews in the living room or confer with our top executives in the bedroom. The Roman home, however, was as much a place of business, manufacture, and politicking as of familial intimacy.[164] The Roman world explicitly associated domestic and civic reputation and the actual spaces for civic and domestic life overlapped in ways they perhaps no longer do, at least in the imaginative ideal. The erotic aspect of the poem strikes Lattimore as being in very poor taste. It wants to show the union of goodness and beauty in the common ideal but misses the mark by giving the realia of domestic chores and erotic preparation. The very realness of the description of Allia Potestas, in Lattimore's words, "the matchless garrulity and lack of tact of the author", distracts the contemporary reader from the importance of the

[164] See essays in: Ray Lawrence and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, eds., Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1997). Kate Cooper gives a re-evaluation of public and private in Roman homes and concentrates on the power of the *paterfamilias* to manage scrutiny of the domestic sphere in: Kate Cooper, "Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure and Private Power in the Roman *Domus*," Past & Present: a journal of historical studies.197 (2007). For the idea of the 'atrium turned forum' in the late antique period see: Thébert, "Private Life and Domestic Architecture in Roman Africa."

domestic and erotic in the Roman public sphere. A man's sexual faults, his women's indiscretions, were cause for public and graphic attack. But a woman's desirability and availability *to her husband* while she properly stayed at home guaranteed offspring and survival of the family as a whole. Allia Potestas' sexuality is divinized and if the mundane details of depilation render it more concrete, so much the better for her patron's reputation. The woman's sexuality, divinized, cared for, and made available to her patron was nothing to hide. She could not officially have the status of a matron but her sexual devotion to her patron ought not be in doubt. The Roman sensibility did not shy away from the fact that a woman, however ideally modest and domestic, was and should be sexually active with her husband. The household depended on it.

Moving from the realm of epigraphy to that of funerary portraits, we find, once again, the incongruous spectacle of a nude matron. To the contemporary eye, nothing could appear less domestic and retiring. However, in the first and second centuries, wealthy persons, often imperial freedmen, began to decorate their sarcophagi and burial complexes with portraits of the deceased in the guise of gods and heroes. One set of statues consists of female nudes standing contraposto with the right arm raised across the breasts and the left hand held in front of the pubis. The statues are copies of canonical Venuses, and symbols of Venus such as the dolphin accompany the nudes at the base. The heads, however, are not youthful renderings of the deceased at a 'godlike' moment of beauty. They are instead portraits in the tradition of severe and 'realistic' likenesses in which the viewer sees the moral seriousness of the deceased in the firm lips, lined skin,

and forthright gaze.[165] The hairstyles are high and elaborate, possibly wigs. Eve D'Ambra, following Larissa Bonfante, calls the nudity a 'costume', but both the heads and bodies of these statues, no matter how incongruous they may seem, are representations of an ideal. Like Attia Potestas, these matrons represent virtuous character and sexual intimacy, both of which are ideally kept within the home, in a public space where they can testify, equally, to the legitimacy and continuity of the family and its reputation. The matrons take the 'costume' of both divine sexuality and exceptional virtue out of the home and into the world. A living matron surely could not appear naked before a general audience, but general knowledge of her sexual attachment to her husband, manifest in children who resembled him, was as important as general knowledge of her virtues, manifest in her wool-work or housekeeping.

III. The Ladies are at Home

This tour of funerary monuments outside the city gates gives a sense of the complexities of women's ideal domesticity. Demetrias' advisors expected a domesticity that was similarly complex. As the heiress of a vastly wealthy and noble family, Demetrias was automatically a public figure. She opened herself to even greater public scrutiny by taking up an unusual lifestyle. Pelagius exhorts her to remember, as she embarks on her career as a dedicated virgin, that her life is a spectacle that the entire world is watching.

> Kept in high suspense by the start which you have made and by this foretaste of the fame which is to be yours, all men and women are anxious to hear some wonderful news of you, and those who have appreciated the virtue shown by

[165] Eve D'Ambra, "The Calculus of Venus: Nude Portraits of Roman Matrons," Sexuality in Ancient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece and Italy, ed. Natalie Boymel Kampen (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

> your initial declaration of intent now look forward to that which will appear in your future conduct. Consider now that the faces and eyes of all are turned upon you and that the entire world has settled down to watch the spectacle of your life. Take care not to disappoint so many, if they find in you less than they are looking for. But why am I talking with you about mere men and dragging their expectations into my encouragement of you? *Your* struggle is being witnessed by God himself, the ruler and Lord of all, with his army of angels; for *you* as you strive with the devil, he prepares the crown of eternal life and makes a heavenly prize your spur to victory. See what spirit, what valour, you have to bring to this great spectacle, and measure the magnitude of the contest by the eminence of its spectators.[166]

Despite the care that Demetrias must take to impress her viewers, human and divine, Pelagius insists that she spend as little time as possible in the public view. After exhorting her to transfer her nobility of family to a nobility of soul, he advises her to limit both her visits outside the home and her visitors. The passage draws attention to the double necessity for the reputable women to both stay at home and be *seen* to stay at home.

> I do not think I need to warn you to keep your public appearances sparing and infrequent, since even consideration for worldly propriety will have taught you this much from your infancy and you should therefore have no difficulty in realizing that in this life you have to devote much greater care to the protection of something to which seclusion is more appropriate. I do advise you also to set a fixed limit on those visits which people have to pay to your bedchamber in order to tender respects: do not allow them to become over frequent

[166] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 14.3 in: (Rees trans., 51-52) "Multum his initiis, multum famae tuae odore suspensi, omnes mirum de te nescio quid audire desiderant. Et qui profectionis tuae cognovere virtutem: nunc conversationis exspectant. In te nunc puta cunctorum ora oculosque converses, et ad spectaculum vitae tuae totum consedisse mundum. Cave, ne per te tantorum animi offendantur: nec minus in te inveniant quam requirunt. Verum quid ego tecum de hominibus ago, eorumque de te expectationem ad cohortationem tuam traho? Deus ipse omnium rector ac Dominus, cum omni angelorum militia certamen tuum spectat: ibi contra diabolum dimicanti parat aeterntitatis coronam, et coeleste praemium incitamentum victoriae facit. Huic tanto spectaculo vide quem animum, quam debeas efferre virtutem: et certaminis magnitudinem de spectantium dignitate metire." PL 30.29B-29C

> or daily events, lest they appear not so much to be performing a duty as to be giving you cause for disturbance.[167]

This is not advice to cut off all contact with the outside world. Demetrias must go out at some times and she must receive visitors. Her social class, however spiritualized, demands both. Yet her would-be mentor suggests a program of limitations. The question is not so much whether she will appear in public, outside the home or in her innermost chamber (cubiculum), but how she will manage and frame her public self so as to maintain a reputation of domesticity.

According to Pelagius, who asks for visibly superlative conduct in a virgin[168], the noblewoman dedicated to Christ must outdo the ordinary noblewoman in her womanly virtue. Her domesticity must also be superlative. Domesticity, however, is a state that is created by the careful negotiation of boundaries. Demetrias is not self-incarcerated like some of her contemporaries who depended on second-hand reporting for publicity[169]. Choosing her outings, their manner and their motivation was as important as keeping them sparing and infrequent (parca, rara). Setting a limit on the public access to her

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[167] Pel.-Haer, *Demetr*. 22.2, (Rees trans., 60-61) "Superfluum arbitror te monere, quam para in procendendo debeas esse, quam rara: cum te hoc etiam saecularis ab infantia honestas doduerit, et facile intelligas id tibi multo magis in hac vita esse servandum, quam maxime secretum decet. Illud admoneo, ut ipsis quoque salutationibus, quoe tibi in cubiculo tuo exhibendae sunt, certissimum modum ponas: non sint nimiae, neque quotidianae, ne non tam officium, quam inquietudinem praestare videantur." PL 30.37

[168] "…let a virgin's holiness shine forth for all to see in the manner of a star and reveal the magnitude of her future reward by the unusual quality of her behavior." Ibid. 17.3 (Rees trans., 54).

[169] The stories of desert asceticism from Egypt were very popular in Rome. Palladius reports the visit of the pious Roman lady Melania the Elder who traveled to Egypt to make a tour of famous ascetics and visits a woman named Alexandra who has immured herself in a tomb. They speak through a window in the tomb. Palladius: The Lausiac History, trans. Robert T. Meyer, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, eds. Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1964). 36-37.

bedchamber constituted part of the interpretive framework of those occasions for her visitors. Domesticity was being created even as Demetrias greeted her public.

Immediately following his advice on outings and visitors, Pelagius recommends the time, place and manner of Demetrias' prayer and scriptural study. "During these hours each day pray in a more private part of the house with the door of your bedchamber shut (Mt. 6.6). Even when you are in the city subject yourself to this discipline of solitude, remove yourself for a while from the company of men and join yourself more closely to God…"[170]. The privacy of the inner chamber is not enough, however. The sentence continues, "…then, when you return to the sight of your own family, show them the fruits of your reading and prayer." Even this privacy within the privacy of the home requires the audience of Demetrias' mother, grandmother and extended household.

Jerome's descriptions of the virgin's domesticity and the regulation of public outings are separate rather than interweaving. He gives similar advice for time spent in solitary prayer and study. He then tells Demetrias that she must never be without wool in hand. This moves her, ideally, from the cubiculum to the atrium, traditionally the spaces for woman's two main domestic duties—reproduction and production.[171]

> In addition to the rule of psalmody and prayer which you must always observe at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, at evening , at midnight and at dawn, you should determine how much time your will bind yourself to give to the learning and reading of scripture, aiming to please and instruct the soul rather than to lay a burden upon it. When you have spent your allotted time in these studies, often kneeling down to pray as care for your soul will impel you to do; have some wool always at hand, shape the threads into yarn with your thumb, attach them to the shuttle, and then throw this to weave

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[170] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 23.1 (Rees trans., 61) "His tu per singulos dies horis in secretioris domus parte ora, clauso cubiculo tuo. Adhibe tibi etiam in urbe solitudinem, et remota paulisper ab hominibus, proprius Deo jungere: aspectuique tuorum reddita, reddita, lectionis fructum et orationis ostende." PL 30.37B

[171] For the role of the 'cubiculum' in Roman Christian thought see: Sessa, "Christianity and the 'Cubiculum': Spiritual Politics and Domestic Space in Late Ancient Rome."

> a web or roll up the yarn which others have spun or lay it out for the weavers. Examine their work when it is done, find fault with its defects, and arrange how much they are to do. If you busy yourself with these numerous occupations, you will never find your days long; however late the summer sun may be in setting, a day will always seem too short on which something remains to be done. By observing such rules as these you will save yourself and others, you will set a good example as a mistress and you will place to your credit the chastity of many.[172]

Jerome moves from activity to activity, each associated with a particular space, the cubiculum (or some other private space) and the atrium or workshop. Roman literary evidence so embedded these in social usage that no other spaces could be imagined for these activities. Archeologists, however, show that these seemingly well-defined spaces were invested with symbolic meaning that often contradicted their actual uses. While the atrium was the public reception space, par excellence, of the Roman paterfamilias and domestic production space for the *materfamilias,*[173] it was also a space for domestic production, everyday storage, and casual meetings. Likewise, the cubiculum, which was ideally the space of secrecy, private interviews, sexual activity, and literary production, was a multi-use room that served any number of purposes throughout the day and over

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[172] Hier., *ep.* 130.15. (Fremantle trans., 269) "Praeter psalmorum et orationis ordinem, quod tibi Hora Tertia, Sexta, Nona, ad Vesperum, Media nocte, et Mane semper est exercendum, statue quot horis sanctuam Scripturam ediscere debeas; quanto tempore legere, non ad laborem, sed ad delctationem et instructionem animae. Cumque haec finieris spatial, et frequenter te ad figenda genua, sollicitudo animae suscitaverit, habeto lanam semper in manibus, vel staminis pollice fila deducito, vel ad torquenda subtegmina in alveolis fusa vertantur; aliarumque neta, aut in globum collige, aut texenda compone. Quae texta sunt, inspice: quae errata, reprehande: quae facienda, constitue. Sit antis operum varietatibus fueris occupata, nunquam dies tibi longi erunt: sed quamvis aestivis tendantur solibus, breves videuntur, in quibus aliquid operas praetermissum est. Haec observans, et teipsam salvabis, et alias, et eris magistra sanctae conversationis, multarumque castitatem lucrum tuum facies." PL 22.1119

[173] Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Engendering the Roman Household," I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome, eds. Diana E. E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996).

longer periods of time. Few seem to have been set aside as permanent 'bedrooms' in the contemporary western sense.[174] Household space did not, in fact, simply provide appropriate settings for particular gendered activities.

'Women's space'[175] and domestic space in general was largely defined by the persons in that space and their modes of interacting with that space.[176] The atrium or some other relatively large domestic space became a stage for the display and inculcation of feminine virtue through the activity of Demetrias and the other women of the household. Archeological evidence shows that the meaning of particular rooms, rather than inhering in the physical spaces, came into being through their usage and changed over time depending and who was in a room and what he or she was doing. The symbolic import of the atrium or cubiculum could remain relatively neutral or acquire heightened force through the display of activities like prayer, wool-working, the 'salutatio', alms-giving, or instruction. Although he has just urged Demetrias to leave money matters to Juliana and Proba, Jerome sees Demetrias as a busy overseer in a workshop of virgins who owe their chastity to her industrious example.[177] These virgins included peers, members of the family client class, freedwoman, and slaves. They can

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[174] Shelly Hales, The Roman House and Social Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 124-127.

[175] Archaeology gives little or no evidence for architecturally defined 'women's space' in either Greek or Roman homes. Lisa Nevett's study uses ethnographic evidence to strengthen her case for the fluidity of gendered space in Classical Greek homes. See: Lisa Nevett, "Separation or Seclusion? Towards an Archaeological Approach to Investigating Women in the Greek Household in the Fifth to Third Centuries B.C.," Architecture and Order: Approaches to Social Space, eds. Michael Parker Pearson and Colin Richards (London, New York: Routledge, 1994).

[176] Julia A. Hendon, "The Engendered Household," Women in Antiquity: Theoretical Approaches to Gender and Archaeology, ed. Sara Milledge Nelson, Gender and Archaeology Series (Lanham, MD and Plymouth UK: Altamira Press, 2007). 150.

[177] Hier., *Ep.* 130.15 (Fremantle trans., NPNF 6, 269), (PL 22.1119)

sell their cloth to aid the poor or turn the cloth over to the two elder women in hopes of encouraging them to further charity. Jerome envisions as many 'interior' audience members for Demetrias' domesticity as does Pelagius.

When discussing the public outings that the virgin must make—to church, to martyrs' festivals at tombs, and to the baths if absolutely necessary--Jerome paints a satiric picture of a world so overrun with decadent women, prettified youths and lustful clerics that a virgin would do better to stay at home even on the feast days of the Church and suggests that the city streets are safer than religious gathering places.[178] This sort of extraordinary retreat from public space would be, in itself, a form of publicity. Public absence from an entirely acceptable occasion for gathering underscored reputation and domesticity rather than simply hiding a woman from view and potential worldly dangers. Again, it is the regulation and presentation of staying in the home, receiving visitors and going into public space that matters, much more so than the simple facts of going out frequently or not.

IV. Domesticity Viewed Through the Micro-politics of Purdah

The funerary epigrams and statuary have provided a concrete and specific starting point for thinking about Roman women's domesticity and the public advertisement of that domesticity. Two examples from contemporary ethnographies will give a richer insight into the possible subtleties of day-to-day creation of domestic reputation. Both concern the concept of 'purdah', which in South Asian contexts, Muslim and Hindu, refers to the practices of gender segregation and women's seclusion, of varying degrees, within the home. Upper class Roman women, unlike Greek women, did not practice seclusion. Indeed Roman writers considered it a mark of difference between Romans and

[178] Hier., *ep.* 130.19. For more on the role of satire in Jerome and Pelagius see chapter 5.

Hellenes that their women could go abroad, eat with male guests, accompany their husbands to dinner parties, and attend public rituals and entertainments. The reputation of upper class Roman women, and by extension their entire household, did depend on a perception of domesticity, however, if not seclusion. Let us imagine the Roman woman's domesticity through the particular instances of 'purdah' in the following examples and use them to consider the range of behaviors and performances for which Demetrias, Juliana and Proba would have been responsible in order to maintain the ordinary reputation of an aristocratic home and the superlative reputation of a publicly pious household, one that Augustine could name 'no small church of Christ'.[179]

'Purdah', also transliterated 'parda', means literally 'curtain' and refers to the practices surrounding sex segregation in Hindu and Muslim communities in South Asia. 'Purdah' separates women from men outside the household and separates men and women within the household, depending on marital and kinship relationships as well as circumstance. Purdah can refer both to the physical segregation of the sexes and to women's veiling that creates this segregation in mixed settings. Generally, in South Asian Muslim communities women maintain purdah according to marital or kinship relationships with a man. Thus, a woman maintains more boundaries with unrelated men, strangers to the family, and fewer with her kin and marital relations. North Indian traditional Hindu women, by contrast, maintain the strictest forms of purdah from senior men within their marital families, her father-in-law and her husband's elder brothers. She does not observe purdah on a visit to her natal home. In both Muslim and Hindu contexts purdah tends to be a class marker; the better able a family is to afford seclusion for its

[179] Aug.. *ep.* 188.3 "Domum enim vestram, non parvam Christi Ecclesiam deputamus." PL 33.849

women the more prestigious it is.[180] These generalizations, of course, hardly cover the complexities of purdah as it is lived across wide geographic, religious, socio-economic and individual territory. A woman living 'in purdah' might be in seclusion in her father's and then husband's home for the greater part of her life.[181] Or she might travel both locally and internationally while adjusting her level of veiling to fit many different circumstances.

The two women we will think with are, like Demetrias and her elders, persons of unusual religious status. They are both religious experts. Shobhag Kanvar is a Hindu woman who is a ritual story-teller. She knows a repertoire of tales appropriate to religious rituals for women and is acknowledged in her community as an accomplished performer. Amma[182] is the wife of a Sufi Muslim teacher, which gives her a certain religious status, but is also a popular practitioner of religious healing techniques who has disciples of her own. Both women negotiate their roles as women in purdah. Both must face the challenges of presenting themselves as pious women who are in the unusual position of dealing more frequently with men and the world outside the domestic realm than their lay counterparts precisely because of their piety.

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[180] Hanna Papanek and Gail Minault, eds., Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1982). 3.

[181] Patricia Jeffery, Frogs in a Well: Indian Women in Purdah (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1979). In Jeffery's study, the women of a community of religious experts who keep the shrine of a Muslim saint, 'pir', almost never leave their homes and laugh that they cannot give directions to the anthropologist to places in their immediate neighborhood. The religious authority of the men rests, in various ways, on the superlative modesty and decency of their domestic sphere, which is physically attached to the shrine.

[182] 'Amma' is a title of respect, 'mother', not a proper name. Her husband is referred to throughout as 'Abba', 'father'.

We turn first to Shobhag Kanvar whom anthropologist Ann Grodzins Gold met in the late 1980s and 1990s. Gold writes about one set of encounters with Shobhag Kanvar and one story in her repertoire that her female audience found particularly funny in her essay, "Purdah is as Purdah's Kept: A Storyteller's Story".[183]

Shobhag Kanvar meets with a group of women to worship the goddess and several other deities, an occasion on which she performs the story of the Brahmin Girl and Ganeshji[184]. In this tale a young Brahmin daughter-in-law worships the image of Ganeshji daily but instead of using pure or costly substances, she worships with coals from the cremation grounds and butter from the God's own bellybutton. Any substances associated with deaths or corpses and any bodily fluids are ritually polluting. The God finds this all very funny and places his finger on his nose (trunk) as a joke. The townspeople are distraught by what they see as an inauspicious change in the deity's image and call in ritual specialists who cannot cause the God to put his finger down. The young daughter-in-law asks the king what boon will be hers if she can convince the statue to return to its original position, and she extracts a promise of great wealth. The story continues:

> At Ganeshji's place the Brahmans from Banaras were still sacrificing, but Great Ganeshji didn't take his finger down from his nose.
>
> Then the girl said, "Hang up a curtain (*parda*) in front of Ganeshji, and I will come over there."
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> She took a short stick and double water pots, and she filled her pots with water and bathed Ganeshji. And she ran to the cremation ground and brought fire, and from Ganeshji's navel she took clarified butter and made an offering.

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[183] Ann Grodzins Gold, "Purdah Is as Purdah's Kept: A Storyteller's Story," Listen to the Heron's Words: Reimagining Gender and Kinship in North India, ed. Ann Grodzins Gold and Gloria G. Rahya (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[184] Lord Ganesh, the elephant-headed God.

> Behind the curtains she said, "Ganeshji, I have bathed you; I have brought fire from the cremation ground, and I have given you an offering of your own butter, and you have put your finger on your nose. Now take your finger down; if you don't, then I will take this stick and break your icon into little pieces."
>
> Great Ganeshji understood. "Yes, it's true, this girl is telling the truth." Then Ganeshji started laughing, and blooming flowers fell of their own accord, and his hand came down. She removed the curtain, and all the world saw.[185]

Gold tells us that in this story the deity is pleased by the girl's cleverness and audacity. Shobhag Kanvar and her female audience are also amused. Although they are mostly older, no longer in the very junior position of the daughter-in-law, they like the rebellious, tricky girl who uses her seclusion to give cheap, polluting offerings to the God, to form intimacy with the God who is in on the joke, and to raise her status by outdoing the expert priests. They also live in purdah. Perhaps their women's rituals, secluded from the world of male priestly power, also form intimacy with the God that outdoes that of the authorities? The Brahmin Girl does not reject her low status as a young daughter-in-law or the restrictions of purdah, rather she uses them to her own advantage and Ganeshji laughs right along with her. God can accept an impure offering or be moved by a threat if he wants to. God, after all, does not have to obey priests if he would rather obey a 'lowly' young daughter-in-law.

Gold continues her essay by discussing the various ways that the storyteller negotiates her own life as a woman living 'in purdah'. Shobhag Kanvar consistently remarks on her life in purdah and the obligations that entails, such as 'never' leaving her own home and not being able to go to certain places in the village. She is, however, often called on to leave her home to perform rituals with other women and to worship Dev

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[185] Gold, "Purdah Is as Purdah's Kept: A Storyteller's Story." 166-167.

Narayanji at his shrine at the edge of the village. Dev Narayanji is a deity to whom she is passionately devoted but who is outside her family's usual set of gods. Men and women from a variety of castes worship Dev Narayanji, and Shobhag Kanvar both invites non-related male co-worshippers into her home for devotions and goes on pilgrimage with them. Gold gives the following account of the storyteller's negotiation between preserving her own purdah and instructing the anthropologist in feminine modesty.

> From the early days of our acquaintanceship, Shobhag Kanvar gave me many lessons in the fluidity of the purdah concept, as she kept it. She told me more than once that married women of her caste simply don't leave the courtyard: not to bathe in the pleasant water tank, not to fill water pots at the well. Yet, wishing to instruct me in the art of bathing in the tank (which required deft modesty in changing clothes, which at first I lamentably lacked), she went there with me, saying, "I never go."[186]

In the case of her the Brahmin Girl of the story, purdah is kept, but not quite for the purposes one might expect. In Shobhag Kanvar's own case purdah is not always strictly observed, but she discusses her observance in general and emphatic terms. She knows well enough the etiquette of bathing in the public tank to teach her American guest, but it is important for her to relay the information that she 'never' goes, that women of her caste 'never' leave their own courtyards. In the tale, the Brahmin Girl literally manipulates the boundaries of purdah by ordering a curtain to be hung, behind which she deals with Ganeshji. Shobhag frequently crosses the usual boundaries of purdah but creates her identity as a woman in purdah through her commentary on her own action, not least in her storytelling. The female space of purdah is not fixed, either in place or conceptually, but grows out of series of actions, statements, and interpretations by the women. These are, of course, set in constant relation to fixed places and material objects,

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[186] Gold, "Purdah Is as Purdah's Kept: A Storyteller's Story." 170.

but 'seclusion' is, as archaeologists of ancient women suspect, the mutual work of places on people and people on places.[187]

Like Shobhag Kanvar, Amma is a ritual specialist. She is a Muslim healer who provides diagnostic services, written amulets, exorcisms and advice to a wide clientele of men and women, Hindu and Muslim in Hyderabad. She does not observe purdah while engaging in her healing business. The healing space is a part of her home, and Muslim women traditionally do not veil in their homes except in front of non-kin. Her husband keeps a small shop in the same space and the clients become fictive kin of Amma and Abba. Anthropologist Joyce Flueckiger worked with Amma for several years during the 1990s. She describes the manipulation of the segregating curtain at a 'sama', a gathering for the singing of Sufi devotional songs, to which hired singers ('qavvals') are invited and at which worshippers may go into trance ('wajd').

> The physical manipulation of the curtain itself is an evocative image for the negotiation of gendered positioning at the *sama*. On several occasions when male disciples were hanging the curtain, Amma manipulated how low it hung to the floor so that when she was seated directly behind it, she would be able to lift it or peek under or around it to be able to see what is happening at the *sama*, rather than just hearing it. Once, as she and the disciples were literally pulling back and forth the curtain, she exclaimed, "What are you doing? Don't you think we women want to see?" Amma herself often sits at the entrance of the curtained area (the curtain does not extend all the way to the wall, leaving a walkway), where she can both see and be seen.

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[187] "The idea that certain parts of a dwelling area or the social landscape more generally may have strong symbolic associations with gender is not in itself problematic (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). However, application of this possibility has generally been informed by an unreflexive structuralism that assumes the existence of binary opposition between male and female space that does not take into account how meaning is created through practice in a dynamic and often spatialized process. Static assumptions about gendered space have also led to simplistic notions of how such space would be used, notions contradicted by studies of spatial associations." Hendon, "The Engendered Household." 150.

> The women do not sit behind the *parda* until the *qavvals* arrive; they sit with the men around the *dastarkan* and participate in the antiphonal recitation of the *salamat*. Further, during the tea break in the middle of the *sama*, male disciples come back behind the curtain, serve tea to the women, and often sit to converse with Amma and their female relatives and other female *murids*. I once asked Amma why they hang the curtain at all when all of the men sitting on the other side (other than the *qavvals*) are either relatives or disciples, in front of whom neither she nor the other female relatives and/or *murids* veil. Further, in the healing room she openly sits unveiled to meet both known men and strangers. Amma laughed at my question and rather quizzically affirmed, "Yes, you're right!" But then one of the other women sitting with us explained that it is not right for men to see women in trance/*wajd*, when their saris might be mussed up and fall off their shoulders; this is why the curtain is hung.[188]

Here we glimpse the push-and-pull of the curtain from both sides of the gender divide. Interestingly, the level of self-consciousness about why the curtain is necessary for the maintenance of purdah is less relevant for the participants than for the anthropologist guest. Amma agrees that one wouldn't normally segregate from the men who happen to be at the devotional singing; another woman gives her interpretation of the necessity. The general production around setting up the curtain and deciding its boundaries creates the identity of the women as 'women in purdah' more than that segregation itself, especially considering that they don't veil before the men present either before or after the performance. Each push and pull of the physical curtain constitutes a move in the micro-politics of the purdah-performance. At stake are both men's and women's conceptions of appropriate segregation and how to achieve that segregation. Also at stake are Amma's self-conception and self-representation as both a modest Muslim

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[188] Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger, In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006). 218-219. A 'murid' is a disciple, 'dastarkan' is the ritual counting of seeds onto a tablecloth as the group recites the Names of God or other verses.

woman and a religious leader. For her male disciples, access to a spiritual center is at stake, their own reputations as modest men who respect the boundaries of purdah, and their relationship to the wider realm of Sufi piety in the presence of Amma's husband and the official performers, the musicians.

> There is continual communication from one side of the curtain to the other during the course of the *sama*. Abba, seated right in front of the curtain, is aware when a woman on the other side of the curtain enters trance and hands back a small bottle of scent to apply to her nose, to cool down the trance. When she is moved by a particular line or verse, Amma periodically hands forward monetary offerings to one of the disciples on the other side of the curtain, gesturing for him to take it forward to the *qavvals* on her behalf. Further, Amma herself often goes into trance at the same time as a heightened moment when *ramz* occurs in front of the curtain. Her *wajd*, in particular, impacts the male company seated in front of the curtain; they often shift in their "seats" and attempt to look back to see what is happening.[189]

Given that one major student of purdah claims, "The crucial characteristic of the purdah system is its limitation of interaction between women and males outside certain well-defined categories…", the amount of interaction between the sexes and knowledge exchange across the curtain seems surprising. But as Flueckiger and Gold demonstrate, the crucial characteristic may be more the continuing construction, physical and conceptual, of barriers rather than the policing of inviolable gendered spaces.

These moments of purdah performance give us a chance to review the advice to Demetrias from Jerome and Pelagius. Our texts do not provide access to any of Demetrias' daily moments of domesticity or the gradations of self-awareness, display and framing she undertook to create a consistent reputation of stay-at-home feminine

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[189] Flueckiger, In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India. 220-221. 'Ramz' is the twirling dance manifested in trance or ecstatic states.

modesty. The ethnographic specificity of our comparative material, however, charges the vocabulary of Jerome and Pelagius with rich possibility. The 'setting of limits' to formal salutations in the 'cubiculum', the careful planning of outings and choice of occasions for public self-display, become a vista of opportunities rather than a simple curtailing of mobility and personal freedom. Jerome's vision of Demetrias so busy in prayer, reading or cloth production that each day seems too short might at first appear as a rigorous schedule designed to eliminate any free time for personal thought, action, or decision-making. Demetrias needed to advertise these domestic activities, however, to a critical public audience as well as simply doing them. The amount of actual manual labor a wealthy ascetic woman might have done is debatable; the imperative to represent herself as the sort of woman who stayed at home and wove cloth, however, is not. Although Jerome borrows from an ancient tradition associating feminine chastity and modesty with woolworking, he does not invoke an empty commonplace. As for Amma and Shobhag Kanvar, the Anicii women's opportunities to emphasize domesticity, reinterpret norms, and negotiate the boundaries of home and private space presented themselves as daily challenges, particularly for women who lived in the public eye as both aristocrats and ascetic pioneers. Their shared identity as religious specialists is very important. The exceptional nature of Amma and Shobhag Kanvar's religious commitments lessens the strictures of purdah in some ways, but it makes their observances of purdah more public, more staged for the benefit of their reputations. The Anicii women's domesticity and activities of modesty were reframed by the conversion of their household into an ascetic community.[190] The domestic routine of the ascetic noblewoman could remain very close

[190] For the nature of household asceticism in the previous generation see: Philip

to that of an ordinary laywoman, but the activities would draw a new audience with new understandings of the import of her domesticity.

V. Entourage and Domestic Identity

The upper-class Roman woman was a member of her household wherever she went, and she could make certain that all saw this by taking a portion of her household with her wherever she went. Also, she could train the members of her household in such a manner that they would represent her, as mistress, and the whole house on any outing they made. Augustine's letter to Juliana and other addresses to the Anician women impress the reader with his conception of the women as heads of a corporate entity, a household consisting of many members of different social rank who take their moral and theological cues from their mistresses. He outlines his trust in the orthodoxy of the women and his sense of their spiritual responsibility for the household in the following passage:

> Please assure us by replying, then, whether we are mistaken about this attitude of hers. For we know very well that you are and have been, along with all your family, worshipers of the undivided Trinity. But human error does not sneak up on one on this point alone, so that one holds something different concerning the undivided Trinity. For there are other doctrines on which one errs in a most destructive way, such as the one on which we have spoken in this letter, perhaps longer than was sufficient for your faith-filled and chaste wisdom. And yet we do not know to whom one does injury if not to God and, for this reason, to that Trinity, if one denies that some good, which comes from God, does come from God. May God keep that sin from you, as we believe he has. May God absolutely forbid that this book, from which we believed that we should cite some readily intelligible words, produce some such idea—I do not say in your soul or in that of your daughter, a consecrated virgin, but even in the souls of any male or female servant of yours

> of the lowest rank.[191]

Augustine is careful to both praise the orthodoxy and virtue of the women and suggest, obliquely, that the two are linked. A truly 'chaste wisdom' would not consider the teachings of Pelagius to be sound in any way; thus, any woman who accepts his teachings cannot be considered chaste. The associations of womanly un-chastity and immodesty with incorrect teaching are well established in the discourses of heresy and orthodoxy by the early fifth century. Heresy, like un-chastity, is a communicable disease and the mistresses of a household are responsible for the virtue and virtuous thinking of all within their domestic sphere. This, of course, was as true for a male head of household as for women. In Augustine's vision of female asceticism, however, women lived, at home and abroad, in a condition of mutual imitation and surveillance. This entourage existence both protected and created the ascetic household as an inviolable body.

In Augustine's brief note of congratulation to Proba and Juliana on the occasion of Demetrias' dedication as a virgin (413-414 AD), he glories in the domestic increase the women can expect to follow.

> May many handmaids imitate that lady; may those of lowly birth imitate her nobility, and may those lofty in this fragile

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[191] Augustine, *Ep.* 188.10 in: Letters 156-210, trans. Roland Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 3, 4 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004). 256-257 "De hoc ergo ejus affectu utrum non fallamur, inde nos fac potius rescribendo certiores. Nam illud optime novimus, cum omnibus vestries cultures vos esse et fuisse individuae Trinitatis. Sed non hinc solum error humanus obrepit, ut aliquid secus sentiatur de individual Trinitate. Sunt enim et alia in quibus perniciesissime erratur, sicut hoc est, unde diutius fortasse quam satis esset vestrae fideli castaeque prudentiae in hac epistola locuti sumus. Quanquam qui bonum quod ex Deo est, negat esse ex Deo, nescimus cui faciat injuriam nisi Deo, ac per hoc illi utique Trinitati; quod malum absit a vobis, sicut abesse credimus! Absit omnino ut tale aliquid in animo, non dicimus tuo, vel sacrae virginis filiae tuae, sed in cujusquam extremi meriti famuli vel famulae vestrae liber iste fecerit, ex quo nonnulla verba quae facilius intelligi possent ponenda credidimus." PL 33.852

> world imitate her more humble loftiness. And let virgins who desire for themselves the glory of the Anicii choose their holiness instead.[192]

Jerome describes just such an influx of imitators[193] and often refers to the example Demetrias must set for her handmaids of all social ranks. Pelagius compares the virgins who gather around Demetrias to the beasts her forefathers' clients sent previously as gifts for the civic games her family supported. "…to *you,* however, chosen maidens are sent for you to present to God as most precious offerings and to challenge to follow your example by professing perpetual chastity—in service not to you but to God along with your. The glorious news of your act of public profession has spread abroad and become common talk among all men…"[194] As in the passage quoted above, Pelagius imagines Demetrias and her entourage in terms of the arena and public spectacle. However domestic and homebound Augustine, Jerome and Pelagius encouraged Demetrias to be, they also imagined her as part of group that was most conspicuous in its mobility from one location to another, from the domestic space to the church and back again.

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[192] Augustine, *Ep.* 150 in: Letters 100-155, trans. Roland Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 2, 4 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003). 378. "Imitentur eam multae famulae dominam, ignobiles nobilem, fragiliter excelsae excelsius humilem; virgines quae sibi optant Aniciorum claritatem, elegant sanctitatem." PL 33.645

[193] "Many virgins sprouted at once as shoots from a fruitful stem, and the example set by their patroness and lady was followed by a host both of clients and servants." Hier., *Ep.* 130.6 (Fremantle trans., 263) "Quasi ex radice foecunda, multae simul virgines pullularunt, exemplumque patronae et dominae secuta est clientum turba atque famularum." PL 22.1110

[194] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* 14.2. (Rees trans., 51, italics are those of Rees) "Ad te vero electae quaeque virgines mittuntur: quas tu pretiosissimum munus offeras Deo, tuoque exemplo ad perpetuam provaoces castitatem: non tibi, sed tecum Deo, servituras. Haec professionis tuae Gloria rumore celebri vulgata est per cunctos…" PL 29A-29B

About ten years after Demetrias takes the vow of perpetual virginity and begins to gather community of ascetic women (some certainly already in residence[195]), Augustine writes to a community of virgins in Hippo under his supervision. The occasion for the letter is a dispute concerning the leadership of the community and the priest who acts as spiritual advisor to the women. The letter acts as a proto-rule and includes instructions on eating, prayer, reading, authority, clothing, and property management. It ends with an admonition to read the letter aloud in the community on a regular basis so that nothing may be forgotten and all the instruction taken to heart or used as a mirror for correcting the faults of the community. In a particularly long passage Augustine writes on the subject of outings and emphasizes that a virgin must never appear in public without an entourage of companions.

> When you go out, walk together; when you arrive where you are going, stay together. In your walk, your posture, your habit, and all your movements let there be nothing that might arouse the desire of anyone but only what might fit with your holiness. Even should your eyes fall upon someone, they should not be fixed upon anyone. For, when you go out, you are forbidden not to see men but to desire them or want to be desired by them. A woman is desired and has desires not only because of touches but also because of affection and glances. Do not say that you have modest minds if you do not have modest eyes, for an immodest eye is the messenger of an immodest heart. And when, even if the tongue if silent, immodest hearts send messages to each other by glances at each other and find delight in terms of concupiscence of the flesh from each other's passion, chastity itself flees from their manner of life, even if their bodies are untouched by any impure violation. Nor should the sister who fixes her eye upon a man and likes to have his eye fixed upon her think that she is not seen by others when she does this; she certainly is seen—and by those who she does not think see her. But suppose that she is concealed and is not seen by any human being. What will

[195]Aug., *Vid.* 1, 29; *ep.* 130.30-31. Both the treatise on widowhood and the letter on prayer assume that the household had a number of consecrated widows and virgins before Demetrias converted to the ascetic life.

> she do about that observer on high from whom nothing can be hidden?[196]

Another long passage follows immediately, in which Augustine gives detailed instruction for the chastisement of virgins who are observed in such eye-flirting. The virgin is here both spectator and spectacle. She is responsible for her own public behavior, which reflects on both herself and her companions, which affects both her own state of virtue and the virtue of men she may encounter. She also observes the conduct of her companions and encourages more virtuous behavior in them through her own example and through careful interventions, private then public. The group of virgins acts in concert in the public sphere and acts as an internal audience at all times for all virgins in the household. Each virgin's display of modesty increases or decreases household reputation. A woman's modesty is under constant scrutiny but is also a source for imitation by all around her. Demetrias, as a head of household, was even more intensely mirrored by and affected by her entourage.

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[196] Augustine, *Ep.* 211.10 in: Letters 211-270, 1*-29*, trans. Roland Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. Boniface Ramsey, vol. 4, 4 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003). 23-24. "Quando proceditis, simul ambulate: cum veneritis quo itis, simul state. In incessu, in statu, in habitu, in omnibus motibus vestries nihil fiat quod illiciat cujusquam libidinem, sed quod vestram deceat sanctitatem. Oculi vestry etsi jaciuntur in aliquem, figantur in neminem. Neque enim quando proceditis, viros videre prohibemini, sed appetere, aut ipsis appeti velle. Nec solo tactu, sed affectu puoque est aspectu appetitur, et appetit femina. Nec dicatis vos habere animos pudicos, si habeatis oculos impudicos: quia impudicus oculus impudici cordis est nuntius. Et cum se invicem sibi, etiam tacente lingua, conspectus mutuo corda nuntiant impudica, et secundum concupiscentiam cornis alterutro delectantur ardore; etiam intactis ab immunda violatione corporibus, fugit castitas ipsa de moribus. Nec putare debet quae in masculum figit oculum, et illius in seipsam diligit fixum, non ab aliis videri, cum hoc facit; videtur omnino et a quibus videri non arbitratur. Sed ecce lateat, et a nemine hominum videatur, quid faciet de illo superno inspectore quem latere nihil potest?" PL 33.961

Jerome explicitly warns Demetrias that her choice of companions for public outings will affect her reputation.

> No; you should choose for your companions staid and serious women, particularly widows and virgins, persons of approved conversation, of few words, and of a holy modesty. Shun gay and thoughtless girls, who deck their heads and wear their hair in fringes, who use cosmetics to improve their skins and affect tight sleeves, dresses without a crease, and dainty shoes; and by pretending to be virgins more easily sell themselves into destruction. Moreover, the character and tastes of a mistress are often inferred from the behaviour of her attendants.[197]

The speech and dress of Demetrias' companions will have a direct bearing on her public reputation. Although Jerome imagines many women imitating Demetrias' form of life, he fears that she will be overcome by immodesty, or acquire an immodest reputation, if she goes abroad with women who visually and audibly communicate markers of un-chastity. The public performance of an ideally domestic self requires a manner of leaving home that includes the choice of a supporting cast that will increase the ascetic mistress's holy reputation. At home by setting an industrious example to ascetic handmaids, abroad by traveling with handpicked companions, the ascetic noblewoman creates her domestic identity as part of a corporate identity of mutual surveillance and imitation.

VI. Conclusions

Domesticity was an enterprise that required the active and creative work of women, in particular these women who lived in the public eye, both as aristocrats and

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[197] Hier.,e*Ep.* 130.18 (Fremantle trans., 270) The satiric aspects of this passage and their implications will be discussed in Chapter Five. "Graves feminae, et maxime viduae, ac virgines, tibi comites eligantur: quarum probata est conversatio, sermo moderatus, sancta verecundia. Fuge lasciviam puellarum, quae ornant capita, crines a fronte edittunt, cutem peliunt utuntur pigmentis, adstrictas habent manicas, vestimenta sine ruga, soccosque crispantes: ut sub nomini virginali, vendibilius pereant. Mores enim et studia dominarum, plerumque ex ancillarum et comitum moribus judicantur." PL 22.1121-1122

ascetic exempla. The funerary evidence shows the paradox of Roman domesticity: it only had weight as part of the family reputation for virtue if it were made public, brought outside the home and the private chamber to the roadside display of the family tomb. The epitaphs and statuary allowed a glimpse into the Roman world of gender, material artifacts and space, where artifacts and space simultaneously engendered subjects and took on gendered meanings through their use by men and women.

Holding the advertisement of domesticity through funerary evidence in mind we returned to Pelagius' and Jerome's letters of advice to Demetrias. We noted the complex relationships between domesticity and publicity both in and outside the home. Brief descriptions of 'staying in' and 'going out' revealed the agency of the virgin in creating domestic space, a domestic persona, and a superlatively domestic reputation in her religious household. Ethnographic data from South Asia enriched our understandings of how these spaces and reputations might be created in the micro-politics of day-to-day gender performance. Finally, we considered the expansion of the domestic subject through her identification with an entourage for whom she was morally responsible. In each of these cases we see that domesticity was not so much a matter of a woman remaining in a particular space but of a woman creating a self and a persona who interacted with spaces in such a way as to convince an audience (both within and outside the home) of her domestic virtue. This kind of work has often been described as 're-inscribing norms.' However, the aspects of performance involved in such a re-inscription belie an understanding of this activity as 'automatic' or 'habitual'. Living into the norm of Roman feminine domesticity was a challenge for the urban matron who valued her

family reputation; living into the exceptional domesticity of the Christian virgin, who was often praised as surpassing Roman matrons in every way, was a public spectacle.

Chapter Four

The Modest Mouth

Her speech is silent and her silence is speech.[198]

I. Voice and Feminist Scholarship

Jerome's pithy comment above on the speech of the Roman virgin Asella summarizes the ideology of feminine voice that was taken up by the late fourth and early fifth-century theorists of Christian women's asceticism. It was an ideology of not speaking, speaking quietly, speaking with modesty, communicating with silence. The ideal virgin is often mute and always muted. Silence and modest speech appear at first glance to be the very opposite of being and doing. With the voice goes the person. Pelagius, Jerome and Augustine do not ask for eloquence from Demetrias. They do not ask for teaching or polemic, invective or oratory. When she does speak her voice is to be calm and dignified, gentle, sweet and balanced. Demetrias' range of expression must fit within the bounds of the modest, discreet, and appropriate.

Although texts written to the women of the Anicii remain, not one by the women is extant, unless one counts inscriptions on buildings or tombs.[199] This may simply be the result of prejudice on the part of compliers. We know that the women did write letters, since Pelagius, Jerome, and Augustine mention these in their correspondence. Indeed Pelagius and Jerome write of Juliana and Proba's authority to command the male thinkers

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[198] Hier., *ep.* 24.5 (Fremantle trans., 43) "Sermo silens et silentium loquens." PL 22.428

[199] For the inscriptions in buildings commissioned by the Anicii women see: Kurdoch, "The Anician Women."

to speak and write.[200] A command is without doubt a strong use of the voice. But in history, the women of the gens Anici are as silent as Jerome or his contemporaries could have hoped. The women may have commanded treatises, but those works of instruction present an ideology of speech that defies contemporary understandings of how a commanding woman expresses herself.

This study rests on the thesis that the women of the Anici family performed modesty, that they exercised a form of agency precisely in the creation of modest selves. The modest mouth was as much a part of this self-creation as modest dress or the dynamics of domesticity. Since 'voice', however, is a common metaphor in feminist theory for women's agency and subjectivity, the chapter begins with an exploration of the place of voice and silence, both literally and metaphorically, in feminist scholarship. As I analyze the ideology and inherent possibilities of voice in the writings of Pelagius, Jerome, Augustine and their recent predecessor, Ambrose, I shall both draw on and enlarge upon previous uses of voice as a category of feminist analysis. Additionally, while little has been written about women's silence (although much about their lack of speech), several important studies treat the question of Roman men's speech and it's connection to manliness. These treatments of the gendered aspect of male Roman speech, especially its performative aspects, will aid in exploring the performance of feminine speech and silence.

In 1991 Susan Gal, an anthropologist, wrote on the state of research into gender and language in feminist anthropology. She noted that one of the major themes of

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[200] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* "Scribimus enim petente sancta matre ejus, immo jubente…" PL 30.0016B; Hier., *ep.* 130 "Quod implere non possum, negare non audio: tanta est aviae ejus et matris, insignium feminarum, in jubendo auctoritas, in petendo fides, in extorquendo perseverantia." PL 30.1107

feminist research across the disciplines and in her own particularly was the recovery of women's voices. Catchphrases like 'breaking silence,' 'women speak out,' 'in her own words' resonated across academic disciplines and feminist activism. Because of this, research into gender and language was rife with overlap between the use of 'voice' to signify a mouth making sounds, 'voice' in the political sense ,and voice in the sense of fully conscious personhood. Gal writes,

> …such struggles about gaining a voice, and my earlier example of women's silence in public life, draw attention to a currently widespread and influential metaphor in both feminist and non-feminist social science. Terms such as "women's language," "voice," or "words" are routinely used not only to designate everyday talk but also, much more broadly, to denote the public expression of a particular perspective on self and social life, the effort to represent one's own experience, rather than accepting the representations of more powerful others. And similarly, "silence" and "mutedness" (E. Ardener 1975) are used not only in their ordinary senses of an inability or reluctance to create utterances in conversational exchange, but as references as well to the failure to produce one's own separate, socially significant discourse. It is in this broader sense that feminist historians have rediscovered women's words. Here, "word" becomes a synecdoche for "consciousness."[201]

Likewise, Kamala Visweswaran, in her review of the history of feminist ethnography, noted an increasing interest since the late 1980s in giving the female subjects of anthropology 'voice' in the publications about them. This found expression in longer direct citations of women's speech, life-history as an important form of feminist ethnography, the recording of women's non-literate traditions such as song and storytelling, and the eliciting of women's critique and interpretation of the

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[201] Susan Gal, "Between Speech and Silence: The Problematics of Research on Language and Gender," Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era, ed. Micaela di Leonardo (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1991). 177.

anthropologist's work.[202] In giving voice to the subjects of ethnography, feminist anthropologists tacitly accept the metaphor of voice for personhood and intervene to expand their subjects' capacity for authoritative and far-reaching speech.[203]

This emphasis on voice is also apparent in feminist historical work. In the introduction to her collection of essays on gender and the body in Medieval Europe, Caroline Walker Bynum explicitly connects contemporary concerns with voice and the question of the recovery of voices from the past.

> We hear women of the past speaking exactly (and only to the extent that) we hear ourselves. If we have confidence in the righteousness of our own rage and in the diagnosis of our own oppression, how can we deny the power of female communities and female visions that, different than our own, are nonetheless our heritage? My essays are all undergirded by the conviction that we do hear creative female voices—not merely literary genres or male superegos—speaking from the past. They are also, in recognition their of the partial, committed to the proposition that women in every age speak in a variety of accents.[204]

Two years later, Susanna Elm picks up on Bynum's concern for the voices of women of the past as well as her concern for maintaining the different-ness of other women's voices far removed in time and cultural situation.[205] Andrew Jacobs, in his long essay on the letters to Demetrias, begins with a discussion of the problems of doing a history of women in the absence of women's voices. "With a dearth of women's own voices, can

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[202] Kamala Visweswaran, "Histories of Feminist Ethnography," Annual Review of Anthropology 26 (1997).

[203] Not that ethnographic subjects do not agree. The families and central subjects of Kirin Narayan and Joyce Flueckiger's books were enthusiastic that their words would travel so far and take their wisdom to entirely new audiences. Flueckiger, In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India, Kirin Narayan, Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon: Himalayan Foothill Folktales/Kirin Narayan in Collaboration with Urmila Devi Sood (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[204] Caroline Walker Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1992). 18-19.

[205] Elm, 'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity. 17-18.

historians be expected to reconstruct women's lives?"[206] Jacobs, like myself, looks to the spaces and possibilities of women's lives within the dominant discourses of their times. He singles out Demetrias' nobility and her status as a patroness as a potential space, within the logic of early Christian asceticism, in which she could operate.[207] In singling out modesty, however, I come up against one of the very reasons the for lack of female voices in the history of early fifth-century women's asceticism, the ideology of feminine silence.

With few exceptions, women's silence and the muting of women's voices hold a negative value in feminist academic work. Again, Susan Gal outlines the situation:

> …silence is generally deplored, because it is taken to be a result and a symbol of passivity and powerlessness: those who are denied speech cannot make their experience known and thus cannot influence the course of their lives or of history. In a telling contrast, other scholars have emphasized the paradoxical power of silence, especially in certain institutional settings….silence, like any linguistic form, gains different meanings and has different material effects within specific institutional and cultural contexts. Silence and inarticulateness are not, in themselves, necessarily signs of powerlessness.[208]

Gal remarks on work exploring women's silence in juridical settings, in traditional psychotherapy, and in radical religious movements such as Quakerism. Despite Gal's sympathy for a more nuanced approach to silence, it would seem that the only examples of positive silence come from situations where silence is a direct reproach to the dominant, patriarchal discourse.

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[206] Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias." 719-720.
[207] Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias." 722.
[208] Gal, "Between Speech and Silence." 176.

The preceding paragraphs reveal the backdrop against which I analyze modest speech. Modest dress and domesticity are not entirely unusual places to look for women's agency. Feminist scholars have long argued that women's domestic work is work, a valuable part of any economy. They have insisted on the value of women's crafts, including textile work, as an important part of any culture's artistic expression. Generally, however, these have been portrayed as most positive where they can be shown to represent a counter-discourse or an undercurrent of resistance to patriarchal norms. My aim, however, is to explore the agency implicit in 'living into norms'[209], not in subverting them. Women's silence, to my knowledge, is never given a positive valuation in feminist scholarship except as a direct form of resistance to an authority that demands speech in the form of witness, confession, agreement, etc. I argue that the silence and the modest speech of Demetrias and her female kin were, in fact, modes of self-representation and creative being. Modest speech was a part of the *agenda* of a modest woman, one of the things needing to be *done* in order to achieve a reputable personhood both for oneself and for others. Modest speech was not simply a matter of being quiet. Modest speech required training and modulation and a fine sensibility for the differing qualities of silence.

Artists rarely forget the power and expressiveness of silence. John Cage's 1952 composition 4'33" stages a precise duration of silence that is entirely different depending on the venue, audience size, and instrumentation. Novelists deploy endless qualifiers for silence—heavy silence, awkward silence, charged silence, dull silence, sweet silence, eerie silence. Everyone knows the feeling of a room that falls silent or a silence

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[209] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 22-25.

interrupted. I contend that if elite Roman men were expected to prove their manliness through mastery of speech, elite Roman women, including well-known ascetics, proved their feminine virtue through mastery of silence and restraint in speech.

II. Gender and Speech in Rome

While the historical record leaves frustratingly little to aid the scholar of ancient women, it contains an abundance of material on ancient men. Usually the study of these texts is called simply 'Roman history,' or Classics. Recently, however, scholars have taken an interest in the historical records of ancient men precisely as the records of men. They inquire into the manliness of these texts, the manliness of their arguments and concerns and the ways these records inform the contemporary scholarship about the formation of ancient men into distinctly manly men[210]. Maud Gleason's Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome[211] and Erik Gunderson's Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World[212] make complementary arguments about the formation of the masculine Roman man through rhetorical performance. Gleason centers her study on two second-century competitive speech-makers, Polemo and Favorinus. Gunderson looks to Republican theorists of oratory, Cicero and Quintilian. Both conclude that, at different stages in Roman history, rhetorical display in legal, political or competitive settings was an essential component of

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[210] In the area of early Christian theology, Virginia Burrus' "Begotten, Not Made" takes this approach in exploring the masculinity of arguments about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son in the fourth-century Trinitarian debates. Burrus, Begotten, Not Made: Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity.

[211] Maud W. Gleason, Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[212] Erik Gunderson, Staging Masculinity: The Rhetoric of Performance in the Roman World, The Body, in Theory: Histories of Cultural Materialism (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).

masculine self-formation. The audience, and the performer himself, not only scrutinized what a man said, they also brought down the full weight of cultural criticism on how deported himself in speech making. No matter what was said, it needed to be said by a real man, a man unimpeachable in his masculine authority. Conversely, the right sort of delivery, the right level of self-consciousness and self-reference in a speech could create the masculinity of an otherwise ambiguously gendered person, such as Favorinus.[213]

The quality of the orator's voice was a primary concern. On the one hand, the voice was transparent, revelatory of the speaker's character. On the other, it was subject to intensive formation and manipulation through vocal exercise. A man's voice ought to be firm, strong, healthy (*fortis*) rather than soft and tender (*mollis.*)[214] This voice was attained by vigorous practice, but also by adhering to a moral and masculine lifestyle. Dietary regime, physical exercise, and abstention from effeminate pleasures would result in properly manly voice. Failures of voice were almost always attacked in terms of effeminacy. The failed orator was infected with womanly traits or was secretly a *cinaedus*, a passive homosexual. The goodness of the voice was tied directly to its embodiment of ideal masculinity. No man ever securely attained the masculine voice and the authority that went with it; each performance, and his whole life, which was implicated in rhetorical training, presented dangerous possibilities for failure. Gunderson highlights this necessity for iteration in manly speech performance:

> Watching an orator, one ought to behold the performance of
> the dominant, masculine subject and one ought to hear the voice

[213] Favorinus was born a eunuch, whatever that might mean to a twenty-first-century reader. His voice apparently never lowered at puberty. In any case, he and his contemporaries accepted the category 'eunuch.'
[214] Gunderson, Staging Masculinity. 81.

> of legitimate authority. Where virility or social station is in doubt, a performance fails: the orator has not been a good man, and whatever experience he has in speaking has gone for naught. His authority evanesces and with it his claim to that authority. If this proposition seems circular, it is: good manliness and performative authority are a mutually reinforcing dyad. The two require practice and iteration. Neither is given: they are performed and lived.[215]

Indeed, according to Gleason, unmanliness was tempting. The habits of life that resulted in feminine speech were pleasurable habits and the effeminate voice had charms of it own. Polemo abused his competitor Favorinus for the effeminacy of his voice, but the eunuch's high, melodious voice was a main source of his great popularity. Maud Gleason comments on the practice of orators mimicking the speech patterns of women and *cinaedi* for dramatic effect.

> This paradox highlights the ambiguity of a cultural system that used a secondary sex characteristic like the voice as a mark of gender while at the same time subjecting it to the rigorous calisthenics of the *askesis* mentality. Since the voice was believed to be subject to alteration, either intentionally by exercise or unintentionally as the result of unwholesome sexual habits, it might be diagnostic of gender difference in various degrees but could never function as a definitive boundary.[216]

While both Gunderson and Gleason's studies concentrate on evidence from earlier periods in Roman history, their analysis of the gendered aspects of voice and speaking and the importance of repeated performance of the good man (*vir bonus*) lends insight into the dynamics of gender and speech in the late fourth and early fifth-century handbooks for marvelously silent women.[217] Speech-making was still at the center of

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[215] Gunderson, Staging Masculinity. 8.
[216] Gleason, Making Men. 101-102.
[217] Gunderson's discussion of the *vir bonus* as the beginning and end of Roman oratory starts in his introduction (7) and continues throughout the book. Both Gunderson and

elite male education in the age of Jerome, Augustine, Pelagius and their contemporaries. Jerome and Augustine were certainly well-versed in Cicero and Quintilian;[218] Pelagius' education is unknown, but as a correspondent and debater in educated circles he must have had at least rudimentary knowledge of the general culture of ancient rhetoric.[219] If Kate Cooper can say with confidence that, in late antiquity, 'rhetoric was reality,' one can say with equal confidence that 'education was education in rhetoric.'[220] Despite a shift to imperial or ecclesiastical career paths for the educated classes, the speech continued to make, quite literally, the man.

In addition to rhetorical theories that emphasized the role of gender in speech, medical theories from earlier times that tied voice, physiology, morality and gender continued to hold currency. Physicians, educators, and interested laymen tended to agree that women's voices, like women's bodies in general, were weaker than men's. They were high, 'damp,' and weak. A man's voice ought to be low, dry, warm, and strong, like a man himself. A man was not only naturally more 'aired out' than a woman, but he should frequently practice declamation as an aerating exercise for his voice and whole body. Speech exercises aerated the body, warmed it, and opened the pores. Vocal exercise is also good for women and is almost the only kind recommended for them, but

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Gleason discuss rhetorical handbooks or training manuals at length, although they come to different conclusions regarding the place of the handbook in rhetorical culture.

[218] For Jerome's education see: J. N. D. Kelly, Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1975). 10-17. For Augustine and his relationship with classical education and culture see: Henri Irénée Marrou, Saint Augustin Et La Fin De La Culture Antique (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1938).

[219] Georges de Plinval, Pélage: Ses Écrits, Sa Vie, Et Sa Réforme (Lausanne: Librarie Payot, 1943). 61-67.

[220] Raffaella Cribiore, Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), Henri Irénée Marrou, Histoire De L'éducation Dans L'antiquité (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1948), Marrou, Saint Augustin Et La Fin De La Culture Antique.

can come at a price. Over-vigorous vocalizing can masculinize a woman. Maud Gleason cites the famous second-century gynecologist, Soranus, whose works were approved by Augustine as the best on the subject: "…failure to menstruate is physiological, rather than pathological, the doctor says, and characteristic of 'masculine-looking women and infertile singers and athletes.' 'If a women desires to conceive and she is infertile because of an athletic life-style or habitually vigorous vocal exercise'she should behave more delicately as a corrective for her active mode of life, in order that her body may become more feminine.'"[221] Again, voice is both a natural sign of gender and a space in which one can, and must, work on creating one's gender. Not only vocal exercise but also other bodily experiences could adversely or positively affect the voice. Gleason relates the anecdote from Plutarch and repeated by Clement about Pythagoras' wife, who, when a man on the street crudely compliments her exposed arm, replies curtly, 'Not public property.' The moral of the story is, "The arm of a virtuous woman should not be public property, nor her speech, and she should as modestly guard against exposing her voice to outsiders as she would guard against stripping off her clothes. For in her voice as she's gabbing can be read her emotions, her character, and her physical condition."[222] Pythagoras' wife revealed her good character by the brevity and sharpness of her remark.[223] If Pelagius, Jerome, and Plutarch share a similar ideology of women's voices, one must assume that her comment was also given in a soft and moderate tone as she held

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[221] Gleason, Making Men. 97. For the subject of medical theory on voice and gender in general, see chapter four, "Aerating the Flesh," 82-102.
[222] Plutarch, *Mor.* 142D in Gleason, Making Men. 98.
[223] Alternatively, Roman men could make use of silence at the right moment as well. See the chapter on *verecundia* in: Robert A. Kaster, Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome, Classical Culture and Society, eds. Joseph Farrell and Ian Morris (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

herself with dignity and composure. A sexually impure woman simply could not make such virtuous use of her voice; a virtuous woman must make sure to reveal her character in her voice.[224] The tale is, in fact, an excellent example of how a woman might create a memorable, virtuous persona by deploying, at the right moment, the right words to highlight her 'silent' virtue. Gleason claims that, "This environment [of male competition] fostered the practice of skewering one's opponents for their effeminate style. It was a polemic that had nothing to do with women, who had no place whatever in this performance culture."[225] Women certainly had no place in the forum or in the declamation contests at civic games, but I disagree that they had 'no place whatever' in the performance culture. It is necessarily difficult to 'hear' performances of silence echoing down the halls of history. The evidence in Pelagius, Jerome, Augustine, and their predecessor Ambrose, however, suggests that these performances took place and that writers of handbooks for women were perfectly aware of them. Gleason's own sources suggest that the noticeable, framed silence of virtuous women aided in constructing the masculinity of male speech. A man's reputation was not his alone any more than a woman's.

III. Marvelous Silence

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[224] A woman's reproductive anatomy and vocal anatomy (mouth, neck) were closely associated in Greek and Roman medical voices. For more on the subject, see: Giulia Sissa, "Maidenhood without Maidenhead: The Female Body in Ancient Greece," trans. Robert Lamberton, Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World, ed. John J. Winkler David M. Halperin, Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). 360-361., David Armstrong and Ann Ellis Hanson, "The Virgin's Voice and Neck: Aschylus, *Agamemnon* 254 and Other Texts," Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies.33 (1986).

[225] Gleason, Making Men. 160.

Let us now turn to Pelagius' letter of advice to Demetrias and review it while keeping in mind the place of gender and morality in Roman speaking practices.

> And let a virgin's speech be discreet, unassuming and infrequent and esteemed not so much for its eloquence as for its modesty. Let all marvel at your modesty, while you stay silent, and at your discretion, when you speak; let your utterance always be gentle and calm; let it be adorned by sweetness mingled with dignity, by wisdom mixed with modesty; let it be firm and balanced, most acceptable as being appropriate to itself, and let there be due proportion of silence and talk. Nor should the virgin's mouth speak at all when it were better to have been silent; she should speak with great caution as one who must avoid not only evil speech but also speech which is superfluous.[226]

Men of the Anici family spoke for an audience. They were, by virtue of their status, full participants in the male upper-class world of political and competitive speech. Demetrias' father, Olybrius, was both consul and senator[227] as were other members of the gens Anici and related families. Women of the Anicii performed for an audience as well and could expect to amaze the crowd, but with their silence. Close reading of the above passage from Pelagius' letter to Demetrias reveals that an ascetic noblewoman's silence was not so much a matter of remaining mute as of carefully controlling the timing, context, and tenor of speech. Handbooks for male rhetoricians tended to denigrate the vocal qualities and speech patterns of women; a man who fell into them was effeminate

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[226] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 19.4 (Rees trans., 57-58) "Sit autem sermo virginis prudens, modestus et rarus, nec tam eloquentia pretiosus quam pudore. Mirentur omens tuam, te tacente, verecundiam; te loquente prudentiam. Mite ac placidum semper eloquium tuum. Ornet mixta cum gravitate suavitas, cum pudore sapientia. Sit certa atque librata, suique opportunitate gratissima, silentii verique ratio. Nec umquam omnino virginis os loquatur, ut tacuisse melius sit. Cum ingenti cautione debet loqui, cui non solum malus, sed etiam otiosus sermo vitandus est." PL 30.0034B

[227] Hier., *ep.* 130.3

and unfit for public exercise of authority.[228] Augustine, Jerome and Pelagius, as educated men and preachers certainly knew these traditions, as did their recent predecessor, Ambrose. The handbooks for Demetrias and other ascetic women, however, outline a vision of feminine speech that required as much training, practice, and self-mastery as masculine rhetoric. The virgin must carefully time her speech and silence must portion out speech and silence in a way that will amaze her audience by its discretion (*prudentia*). Likewise, she must control the tone of her voice, the meter of her speech, and the appropriate decoration of her words. The virgin was not simply responsible for not talking too much; she was responsible for nuances in the quality of her reticent speech.

The virgin, through her display of modesty in speech as well as action, increases not only her own reputation but also that of her family. In the following passage from Pelagius' treatise 'On Virginity,' admiration for the virgin moves the audience to admiration for her husband and master, Christ. Like the noblewomen who display remarkable modesty for the sake of their parents' reputations, the daughter of God must make a remarkable effort:

> Present yourself in such a way that your heavenly birth may be visible in your person and your divine nobility shine clearly forth. In your person let there be a new dignity, an admirable probity, a wonderful modesty, a marvelous patience, a virginal gait and a bearing which indicates a true purity, a speech that is always modest and uttered only at the proper time, so that whoever sees you will say with admiration in his voice, 'What am I to make of this readiness to submit to a new kind of human dignity? Of this show of respect for decency? Of this discreet display of nobility? Of this mature wisdom? This is not the product of mere human instruction, mere mortal teaching; it is some heavenly quality inside an earthy body that wafts it distinctive scent over me. I do believe that God lives in some human beings.' And when he gets to

[228] Gleason, Making Men.

> know that you are a handmaid of Christ, he will be even more amazed and will reflect what kind of master he must be who has such a handmaid.[229]

Maud Gleason remarks that a Roman woman ought not be heard *lest* she be seen[230], but in this passage the silent woman radiates (*clarescat*) and gives off scent (*refulgent*) to an amazed observer who imagines himself in the presence of a deity. Like the man whose deportment in speech giving is as important as his words[231], the virgin's silence and deportment work together to amaze observers into inquiring into her family background, which is so startling and new that it must be beyond a mere human lineage.

Pelagius' advice on vocal modesty extends to matrons who were dedicated to an ascetic lifestyle as well as to virgins. He writes to Celantia, an upper-class woman who has vowed herself to a life of piety and sexual abstinence (not entirely with her husband's blessings) and who asks Pelagius for a rule of life. His short treatise covers examination of conscience, reading of scripture, avoidance of sins of speech, fasting, the balance of good conscience and good reputation, clothing, domestic arrangements and the vexed question of her relationship with her less pious husband. The section on sins of speech shows the amount of work Pelagius expects Celantia to put into the regulation of her utterance:

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[229] Pelag.-Haer., *Virg.* 14 (Rees trans., 84) "Ita te exhibe, ut in te coelestis nativitas appareat, et ut divina ingenuitas clarescat: sit in te nova gravitas, honestas admirabilis, et stupenda verecundia, mira patientia, virginalis incessus, et verae pudicitiae habitus, sermo semper modestus, et suo in tempore proferendus: ut qui te viderit, admiretur, et dicat: Quae est haec nova inter homines gravitas? Quae pudoris verecundia? Quae honestatis modestia? Quae maturitas sapientiae? Non est ista humana institutio, nec disciplina mortalis. Coeleste hic aliquid in corpore humano refulgent. Puto quod habitet in quibusdam hominibus Deus. Et cum te filiam Christu cognoverit, majore stupore tenebitur, et cogitabit qualis iste Dominus sit, cujus talis ancilla est." PL 30.172-173.
[230] Gleason, Making Men. 98.
[231] For an analysis of the importance of a Roman man's gait and posture see: Corbeill, Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome.

> Let your mind then be attentive and watchful and always armed against sins; let your speech be in all matters modest and chaste and of the kind that makes it clear that it is prompted by the need to speak rather than the wish to do so; let your modesty adorn your common sense and, as has always been a special characteristic of women, let your sense of shame surpass all the other virtues that are in you. Consider well and long in advance what has to be said and, while still silent, take care in advance that there will be nothing for you to have to regret when you have said it; let your thought weigh your words and let the balance of your mind regulate the functioning of your tongue. Hence the Scripture says: Melt down your silver and your gold, make a balance for your words and a proper curb for your mouth and beware lest you err with your tongue (Sir.28.24-26). Let no curse ever pass your lips, since your are bidden to crown your kindness by blessing even those who curse you; Being, he says, tender hearted, modest and humble, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing (1 Pet.3.8,9).[232]

The language here of balancing, regulating, examining, and training shows that a woman's modesty in speech was an exercise in rational control not far removed from that of the orator who had to study so hard to achieve a natural masculine authority of voice. Every opportunity to speak is also an opportunity to withhold speech. Moments of decision occurred on a daily basis for Celantia as well as for Demetrias and her household. Speak or refrain? Give household direction, rebuke, comfort, praise, question, command, greet? Or remain silent? Choose a few careful words and amaze the room with a comment that underlines rather than destroys one's habitual reticence? Such

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[232] Pelag.-Haer., *Celent.* 18 (Rees trans., 137) "Sit igitur intentus ac vigilans, et adversus peccata semper armatus animus tuus. Sermo in omnibus moderatus et parcus, et qui necssitatem magis loquendi indicet, quam voluntatem. Ornet prudentiam verecundia, quodque praecipuum in feminis semper fuit, cunctas in te virtutes pudor superet. Diu ante considera, quid loquendum sit, et adhuc tacens provide, ne quiddixisse poeniteat. Verba tua ponderet cogitatio, et linguae officium animi libra dispenset. Unde Scriptura dicit: *Argentum et aurum tuum confla, et verbis tuis facito stateram, et frenos ori tuo rectos: et attende ne forte labaris lingua* (Eccli. 28). Nunquam malum verbum de ore tuo procedat, quae ad cumulum benignitatis juberis etiam maledicentibus benedicere, *Misericordes*, inquit, *modesti, humiles, non reddentes malum pro malo, neque maledictum pro maledicto, sed e contrario benedicentes*. (1 Petr. 3.9) PL22.1213.

carefully considered silence is not the silence of 'muted' women. It is a silence which projects and is intended to project. Shame or modesty (*pudor*) might naturally be the special virtue of women, but Celantia must activate it to make it surpass (*suparet*) all the other virtues in her.

Pelagius gives strong evidence for the role and possibilities of silence in the repertoire of modest behaviors available to Christian ascetic women like the Anicii. A Latin author from the previous generation, Ambrose of Milan, adds to our understanding of the ideology and potential of feminine silence in his very popular treatise "On Virgins." Jerome recommended this work to Eustochium[233] long before he wrote Demetrias, and recommends his earlier letter to Demetrias in turn. Augustine knew well the writings the bishop by whom he was baptized and his own treatise on virginity shows signs of borrowing from Ambrose's work.[234] Ambrose's treatise is framed as advice to his sister, a dedicated virgin, and her companions. It is composed partially of a previous sermon on the occasion of Saint Agnes' feast day and a sermon on the feast of the Nativity, ostensibly by the former bishop of Rome, Liberius.[235] "On Virgins" begins with

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[233] This was despite very awkward relations with Ambrose, who was probably among those who approved Jerome's expulsion from Rome and removal to Bethlehem. Nevertheless, Jerome continued to read and borrow from Ambrose directly or through the medium of Augustine's works. Kelly, Jerome. 144.

[234] See David G. Hunter's note 4, page 105 of Kearney's translation: Marriage and Virginity, trans. Ray Kearney, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. John E. Rotelle O.S.A., vol. I/9 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999).

[235] I am hesitant about Ambrose's attribution because of the many parallels between his treatise and Athanasius' letters of advice to virgins, which include as the final section a homily attributed to Alexander of Alexandria. I have yet to find other scholarly remarks on the reliance of Ambrose on Athanasius; however, the letters have only recently become widely available to those unable to consult the Coptic and Syriac. The inquiry into pagan virginity, anti-Arian themes, the exhortation to follow the example of Mary, and the embedded second homily by a respected elder theologian and churchman are all

an elegant example of the Roman emotion *verecundia,* that hesitation to speak out of turn, to overstep one's place that struggles with the necessity of saying the right thing at the right time.[236] Ambrose hopes that God will help him as he helped another ass to speak[237]and is happy that a book feels no embarrassment. The subject of virginity and the child-martyr Agnes, however, opens the floodgates of holy speech[238].

> The word 'virgin' is an indication of modesty. I shall invoke the martyr, I shall extol the virgin. That panegyric is long enough which is not exotic but ready to hand. Away with genius, then, and let eloquence be stilled! A single word is commendation. It is this that the old, the young and children intone. There is none more praiseworthy than the one who can be praised by all. There are as as many heralds as there are persons who proclaim the martyr when they speak.[239]

Talking about virginity and this particular virgin gives Ambrose power and permission to speak. But virginity indicates modesty and so a single word will be appropriate praise. This does not stop him from singing along with the chorus of the entire community but does, perhaps, signal the central importance silence and carefulness of speech will have

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present in Athanasius' first letter to virgins. See: Brakke, Athanasius and Asceticism. Appendix A, 274-291.

[236] See: Kaster, Emotion, Restraint, and Community. Chapter 1.

[237] Ambr., Virgin. I.1.2.

[238] For more on Agnes and other virgin-martyrs as models of feminine piety at this time see: F. E. Consolino, "Modelli Di Santità Femminile Nelle Più Antiche Passioni Romane," Augustinianum 24 (1984). For more on Ambrose's entire corpus of work on virgins and widows see: Franca Ela Consolino, "Modelli Di Comportamento E Modi Di Santificazione Per L'aristocrazia Femminile D'occidente," Società Romana E Impero Tardoantico: Istituzioni, Ceti, Economie, ed. Andrea Giardina, Società Romana E Impero Tardoantico (Rome: Editori Laterza, 1986).

[239]Ambr., *Virgin.* I.2.6 in: Ambrose, trans. Boniface Ramsey, Early Church Fathers (New York: Routledge, 1997). 74. "Nomen virginis titulus est pudoris. Appellabo martyrem, praedicabo virginem. Satis prolixa laudatio est, quae non quaeritur, sed tenetur. Facessant igitur ingenia, eloquentia, conticescat, vox una praeconium est. Hanc sense, hanc juvenes, hanc pueri canat. Nemo est laudabilior, quam qui ab hominibus laudari potest. Quot hominess, to praecones, qui martyrem praedicant, dum loquuntur." PL16.200

in his vision of virginal modesty. Ambrose is writing first of all to his sister, but also for a larger audience. In this larger arena, his speech and her silence mutually create a family reputation for morality and piety. "The love of chastity, and you too, holy sister, (even though you are silent because of your subdued way of life), now beckon us to say something about virginity…"[240] His sister Marcellina is silent, but her silence is the result of her way of life and she calls for a speech even in her silence.

The first extended treatment of feminine silence in Ambrose's "On Virgins" is his comparison between an ostensibly virtuous Pythagorean woman and Saint Agnes. The philosopher bites off and spits out a piece of her tongue when a tyrant demands that she reveal a secret.[241] Ambrose compares this dramatic instance of non-Christian womanly silence in the face of authorities to that of Agnes, who was too young to testify on her own behalf. Moreover, he assures us, the Pythagorean woman's silence was a false sign of virtue, for her loose morals showed themselves in a visible pregnancy.

> …with a strong spirit but a swelling womb she set an example by silence and was a wastrel with her chastity. She who was able to conceal a secret in her mind, then, did not conceal the dishonor of her body…How she might wish the seriousness of her modesty to appear in her voice![242]

The Pythagorean woman promises more than secrecy with her silence; she promises virtue. But in her self-enforced silence she must long for a modesty that can no longer

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[240] Ambr., *Virgin.* I.3.10 (Ramsey trans., 76) "Invitat nuc integritatis amor, et tu, soror, vel mutis tacita moribus, ut aliquid de virginitate dicamus…" PL16.202.
[241] Ambr., *Virgin.* I.4.17. "…cum a tyranno cogeretur secretum prodere, ne quid in se ad extorquendam confessionem vel tormentis liceret, morsu linguam abscidisse, atque in tyranny faciem despuisse…" PL16.204.
[242] Ambr., *Virgin.* I.4.18. (Ramsey trans., 18) "Eadam tamen forti animo, sed tumenti utero exemplum taciturnitatis et proluvium castitatis…Igitur quae mentis potuit tegere secretum, corporis non texit opprobrium..Quam vellet in voce munimentum sui pudoris exisitere!" PL16.204.

reveal itself in her speech. Agnes' silence, however, is a confession of her virtue and her faith,

> Her triumph was more manifold, her steadfastness more dauntless. She did not hold her tongue because of fear but restrained it for the sake of victory, for she had nothing that she was afraid to have known since her confession was not criminal but religious. And so while the former merely kept a secret, the latter bore witness to God, whom she confessed by her very being inasmuch as one her age was not yet allowed to testify.[243]

Both of these tales are exempla rather than description or straightforward advice to Christian (or Pythagorean) women. But the exempla have in common the idea that a woman's virtue could be publicly displayed via a performance of silence, in both cases in one of antiquity's central rhetorical performance spaces, the trial. One performs poorly, inconsistently while the other performs well, but the Pythagorean woman and the Christian girl give silence as the chaste woman's ideal performance in the space of eloquence.

While Ambrose delights in vivid exempla, he does not expect his audience to need to demonstrate a chaste silence in martyrdom. At least, this is not his first concern. The arenas that concern him more are the everyday performance spaces in which a virgin might find herself: charitable visits, gatherings in church to hear the Scriptures and partake in the mysteries, ordinary conversation. In his picture of the virtues of Mary, which is to be a mirror for the virgin, the virtues of modest speech predominate in the initial description. Mary is "serious in speech," "sparing of words," and "not forward in

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[243] Ambr., *Virgin.* I.4.19. (Ramsey trans., 78) "…triumpho numeriosior, constantia confidentior, non sibi linguam propter metum abstulit, sed propter tropaeum reservavit. Nihil enim habuit quod prodi timeret, eujus non erat criminosa sed religiosa confessio. Itaque illa, secretum tantummodo celavit, haec probavit Dominum, quem quia aetas nondum poteral confiteri, natura confessa est." PL16.205.

words." She does not argue or mock.[244] Like the man who must control his voice and bodily demeanor to reveal his moral authority, Mary holds up voice and body to indicate her feminine virtue.

> Her gestures were not abrupt, her gait was not slack, her voice was not pert; her bodily appearance itself was the image of her soul and an indicator of her virtuousness. A good house, indeed, ought to be recognizable from its very threshold and, when one first enters it should be evident that no darkness likes within. Thus our soul, unencumbered by any bodily restraints, should shine without like the light of a lamp placed within.[245]

The gait, gestures and tonality of the 'silent' woman are indicators, signs meant to be read, expected to be seen by an audience. A modest woman is recognizable not because she merely keeps quiet; she is recognizable because her silence is the right kind of silence, accompanied by the right bearing and gestures. It is an evident silence, a shining silence.

In book three, which Ambrose presents as precepts given by Liberius in a Nativity sermon, the treatise directly addresses virgins and recommends silence in two specific contexts: visits of obligation and church. Indeed, this topic forms the bulk of the extract from Liberius. The main danger of visits for virgins, particularly the young, is that their modesty may be endangered by inappropriate talk.

> For chastity is worn away by such duties, imprudence makes its appearance, laughter resounds and modesty disappears under the guise of sophistication. Not to carry one's part in conversation is considered immaturity, but to converse is to engage in lies. It is better for a virgin to be parsimonious with her words than to abound

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[244] Ambr., *Virgin.* II.2.7. PL16.220.

[245] Ambr., *Virgin.* II.2.7. (Ramsey trans., 93) "…non gestus fractior, non incessus inverecundum, non vox petulantior, ut ipsa corporis species simulacrum fuerit mentis figura probitatis. Bona quipped domus in ipso vestibulo debet agnosci, ac primo praetendat ingressu nihil intus latere tenebrarum; ut mens nostra nullis repagulis corporalibus impedita, tanquam lucernae lux intus posita foris luceat." PL16.220.

> in wickedness. For if women are ordered even to be silent in church concerning divine matters and to ask their husbands at home (cf. I Cor. 14:34-35), how cautious do we think virgins should be, in whom modesty is an adornment of their age and silence a recommendation of their modesty?[246]

Here the silence of the virgin is perhaps a counter-cultural performance. An educated and elite girl was expected to make charming and witty conversation on her social calls. But the virgin ought to show her modesty more than her sophistication. She ought make only those visits entirely necessary for her social duty and even then protect her reputation for modesty at the possible cost of appearing infantile. The performance at all female social gatherings, however, was not nearly so important a matter as silence in church.

The virgin must refrain from speech in church first to be able to hear and attend to the scriptural readings. Mary, again, is the example who silently stored up the words of the angel concerning Christ.[247] Ambrose proves that silence is necessary in religious settings with the non-Christian example of the barbarian boy who was burned while Alexander was offering a sacrifice but who kept silent out of reverence.[248] Even beyond silence during the readings, Ambrose asks the virgin to refrain from any sort of vocal communication or gesture during the mysteries. Again he gives a non-Christian example: a young man abstains from obscene gestures to his mistress at a banquet at the request of his father.

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[246] Ambr., Virgin. III.3.9. "Teritur enim officiis pudor, audacia emicat, risus subrepit, modestia solvitur, dum affectatur urbanitas: interroganti non respondere, infantia: respondere, fabula est. Deesse igitur sermonem virgini, quam superesse malim. Nam si mulieres etiam de rebus divinis in Ecclesia jubentur tacere domi viros suos interrogare (I Cor. xiv,34,35): de virginibus quid cautum putamus, in quibus pudor ornat aetatem, taciturnitas commendat pudorem?" PL16.234

[247] Ambr., *Virgin.* III.3.11; PL16.235.

[248] Ambr., *Virgin.* III.3.12; PL16.235.

> But you, virgin of God, "abstain from groaning, shouting, coughing, and laughing" while at the mystery. Can you not do at the mystery what he could do at a banquet? Let virginity be signaled first by voice, let modesty close the mouth, let religion exclude weakness, let custom instruct nature. Her gravity is what should first announce a virgin to me—her obvious modesty, her sober gait, her chaste visage: let these tokens of purity precede the other indications of virtue. A virgin who is inquired after when she is seen is not sufficiently virtuous.[249]

This advice should now sound familiar to us. The virgin must be quiet and physically composed. She must order her body and her voice. And this quiet composure is a communicative act. The virgin's silence announces, indicates, and signals. The successful performance of silence does not require follow up questions. It has eloquently and convincingly argued for her virtuous reputation.

Feminist scholarship has argued that ideologies of feminine silence contribute to the erasure of women from the historical record. I cannot argue against this. We have letters by Pelagius, Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose. None from Demetrias, Marcellina, Proba, or Juliana. The evidence that does remain for the contemporary historian, however, does not suggest that the Roman ideology of Roman silence erased women from their own time and space. The advice of Pelagius and Ambrose in particular emphasizes the cognitive and bodily work involved in appropriate and even brilliant displays of vocal modesty. These performances of oral restraint were expected as a part of the virgin's repertoire of modest behavior. Voice and subjectivity in this case cannot be elided. The subject of modesty was not cut off from her voice; she was responsible for

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[249] Ambr., *Virgin.* III.3.13. (Ramsey trans., 108-109) "Et tu in mysterio, Dei virgo, gemitus, scratus, tussis, risus abstine. Quod ille in convivio potest, tu in mysterio non potes? Voce virginitatis prima signetur, claudat ora pudor, debilitatem excludat religio, inistituat consuetude naturam. Virginem mihi prius gravitas sua nuntiet, pudore obvio, gradu sobrio, vultu modesto; et praenuntia integritatis anteeant signa virtutis. Non satis probabilis virgo est quae requiritur, cum videtur." PL16.235.

it, held accountable for it by a discriminating audience who considered much more than simply whether or not she spoke. Silence had culturally measurable qualities and quantities, its own set of gestures and postures, its own occasions and stages, and an ability to succeed or fail. The ideology of feminine silence as outlined by Pelagius and Ambrose contains space for the exercise of women's agency; indeed it demands it. Absolute silence, however, was not the rule for religious women, especially aristocratic ones, in the early fifth century. The next sections will explore the sorts of speech that could legitimately contribute to a woman's modest, virtuous self-representation.

IV. Sins and Duties of Speech

Sins of the mouth abound. The woman who wishes to maintain a reputation for virtue and train herself in pious modesty must avoid uproar, gossip, argument, swearing, joking, and perhaps most importantly, speaking disparagingly of others. Yet how to tell the difference between disparagement and rebuke or exhortation? Pelagius warns at length about the sins of speech but admits that a modest silence must be broken if it is a sin not to speak out. Augustine knows that modesty will discourage virtuous women from controversy, but asks them to partake in theological dispute and never to shy away from the necessary task of rebuking a sister. At least ten years before writing Demetrias, Augustine wrote to console a widow, Italica[250], and at the same time to encourage her to use his arguments against a group who taught that bodily sense perception would continue in the afterlife rather than a new perception with spiritual senses. In a cover letter to his messenger, the priest Cyprian, Augustine writes the following:

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[250] Before 408 AD. See Roland Teske's notes: Letters 1-99, trans. S.J. Roland Teske, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, ed. John E. Rotelle, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001). 371.

> But let Your Holiness not hesitate to write me what those who hold that view, which we have tried to refute in a few words, say against my position, if her modesty perhaps keeps her from taking up this sort of conflict, which stems from the pride of others.[251]

Augustine sees reticence in speech as a sign of modesty, but not an assurance of modesty. In his letter to the leader and sisters of the religious community he exhorts the women to avoid disputes, quarreling, gossip and general 'uproar.'[252] Silence is not enough, however, if a virgin does not guard herself from other forms of communication.

> Do not say that you have modest minds if you do not have modest eyes, for an immodest eye is the messenger of an immodest heart. And when, even if the tongue is silent, immodest hearts send messages to each other by glances at each other and find delight in terms of concupiscence of the flesh from each other's passion, chastity itself flees from their manner of life, even if their bodies are untouched by any impure violation.[253]

When silence is not accompanied by the proper arrangement and movements of the rest of the body, the modesty of the entire community requires words. Augustine encourages the women to rebuke an erring sister immediately and report her to superiors if she does not reform. He warns any who think that refraining from speech in such instances are doing a kindness to their companions.

> And do not consider yourselves as having a bad will when you report this. You are in fact more lacking in innocence if you allow your sisters, whom your can correct by reporting them, to perish by keeping silence. After all, if your sister had an ulcer in her

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[251] Aug., *ep.* 92A. "Quid autem contradicant, qui illud sentient quod paucis refutare temptauimus, sanctitas tua mihi resecribere non grauetur, si forte illius uerecundiam piguerit istum veluit conflictum quamuis ex aliena praesumptione suscipere…" Corpus Christianorum XXXI A, 166.

[252] Aug., *ep.* 211.1, 3,12, 14.

[253] Aug., *ep.* 211.10. (Teske trans., 24) "Nec dicatis habere animos pudicos, si habeatis oculos impudicos: quia impudicus oculus impudici cordis est nuntius. Et cum se invicem sibi, etiam tacente lingua, conspectus mutuo corda nuntiant impudica, et secundum concupiscentiam carnis alterutro delectantur adore; etiam intactis ab immunda violatione corporius, fugit castitas ipsa de moribus." PL 33.961

> body that she wanted to hid because she feared surgery, would you not be cruel in keeping silent and merciful in reporting it?[254]

Correction, whether in person or by report, is an important duty of speech. Just as the virgins in the community must always display their virtue to a public, so are they also a perpetual audience for the moral performances of others. Others may judge women for their silence, but women also make judgments on each other and on men, depending on circumstance. Italica's modesty might hinder her from warning and correcting those who hold unorthodox beliefs, but Augustine hopes that she will see the particular opportunity as one for needful speech that will not discredit her in the eyes of the wider public. While aware that the difference between kind correction and backstabbing can be difficult to maintain[255], Augustine is concerned that the women under his direction will refrain from speech at the wrong moment and that this will lead to a lack of discipline. This is especially the case for the superior who will owe an accounting for the behavior of her spiritual daughters. Thus, of the whole community, she is advised to rebuke, but never to apologize for her harsh words.

> Let then, whoever offends another by insolence, cursing, or even by accusation of a crime, remember to make reparation for her action as soon as possible, and let her who was offended forgive without discussion…Hence keep yourselves from harsh words, and, if they have passed from your lips, do not be slow to bring forth they remedies from the same lips by which you produced the wounds. But when the need for discipline forces you to speak hard words to your subjects in order to keep them in line, it is not required of

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[254] Aug., *ep.* 211.11. (Teske trans., 24) "Nec vos judicetis esse malevolas, quando hoc indicates. Magis quippe innocentes non estis, si sorores vestras, quas indicando corrigere potestis, tacendo perire permittitis. Sir enim soror tua vulnus haberet in corpore, quod vellet occultari, dum timeret secari, nonne crudeliter abs te sileretur, et misericorditer indicaretur?" PL 33. 962

[255] In letter 210 to Felicity, the head of the women's order, Augustine delineates the possible responses to a rebuke and the need to reconcile and establish communal harmony after any dispute.

> you that you ask pardon of them even if you feel that you have exceeded the limit in their regard. Otherwise, while you show too much humility, you may diminish your authority for governing in the eyes of those who should be subordinate. But you should, nonetheless, ask pardon from the Lord of all…[256]

The fine line between offense and rebuke was perhaps especially pertinent in a community that operated as something in between a household and a formal monastic community. In a society where both invective and moral exhortation were fine arts, however, playing audience to others' performances of virtue was part and parcel of one's own performance. Correctly responding to the moral failings of others required a careful weighing of circumstances, including place, time, and the relative social authority of the players. As the leaders of their household, Demetrias, Juliana, and Proba would have many occasions on which to adjudicate their own and household members' censorious speech and to classify it as an offense for which one should apologize or an obligatory rebuke.

If Augustine fears women will not rebuke when necessary, Pelagius fears that most censorious speech will fall into the category of disparagement. He encourages Demetrias to constant kindness and gentleness on the model of God who sends good things to all people, good and bad. He emphasizes kindness in speech.

> So, let us not find you, above all else, harming anyone even by word, so that you may apply yourself instead to helping

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[256] Aug., *ep.* 211.14. (Teske trans., 26-27) "Quaecumque convicio, vel maledicto, vel etiam criminis objecta, alteram laeserit, meminerit satisfactione quantocius curare quo fecit, et illa quae laesa est, sine disceptatione dimittere…Proinde vobis a verbis durioribus parcite; quae si emissa fuerint ex ore vestro, non pigeat ex ipso ore proferre medicamenta, ex quo facta sunt vulnera. Quando autem necessitas disciplinae minoribus coercendis dicere vos verba dura ompellit, si etiam in ipsis modum vos excessisse sentitis, non a vobis exigitur u tab eis veniam postuletis, ne apud eas quas oportet esse subjectas, dum nimia servatur humilitas, regendi frangatur auctoritas; sed tamen petenda est venia ab omnium Domino…" PL 33.964

> everyone you can in every possible way and, as the apostle says, repay no one evil for evil but only evil with good. And let no word of disparagement escape the virgin's lips: we have enough worthless people, people seeking to make a name for themselves by making others out to be worthless; they imagine that they can win themselves a high reputation by disparaging others and, being unable to find favour on their own merits, wish to find it by comparison with those who are still worse than they.[257]

Well aware that audience response to moral performance has its own performative aspects and audience, Pelagius warns against the mode of self-representation that relies on negative comparison with others. Even just correction can be self-serving. Pelagius shies away from the vocabulary of correction, especially rebuke to specific persons, and introduces the more general category of edifying, holy speech. In his treatise on virginity, he lays out a plan of total avoidance of contentious speech in contrast to Augustine's 'damage control' scenario.

> Avoid words of controversy and causes of animosity; shun also occasions for disagreement and dispute. For if, according to the apostle's teaching: The servant of the Lord must not be quarrelsome (2 Tim.2.24), how much more does this apply to the handmaid of God, whose mind ought to be more moderate as her sex is more modest? Keep your tongue from slander and place the bridle of the law on your mouth, so that, if perchance you have to speak, you do so only when it is a sin to keep silent. And take care not to say anything which lays you open to reprimand: a word once spoken is like a stone thrown, and, therefore, it should be pondered over long before it is uttered. Blessed indeed are the lips that never say anything they would wish to recall! The speech of a chaste mind ought also to be chaste and of the kind that may always edify its hearers rather than drag them down, in accordance with the commandment of the apostle, when he says: Let no evil talk come out of your mouth but only such as is good for edifying, that is may

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[257] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 19.2. (Rees trans., 56-57)"Hoc itaque tibi, vel in primis absit, ut nemini vel in verbo etiam noceas, ut in omnibus quibuscumque poteris, prodesse studeas, et ne vicem quidem mali reddens, pro malis bona, dicente Apostolo, restituas. Numquam detractio ex ore virginis procedat. Vilium satis hominum est, et suam laudem quaerentium, alios viles facere; quia alterius vituperatione se laudari putant; et qui suo merito placere non possunt, placere volunt in comparatione pejorem." PL30.0033D.

> impart grace to those who hear (Eph.4.29). Precious to God is the tongue which knows how to put words together only on divine matters, and holy is the mouth from which heavenly utterances come forth on all occasions.[258]

Apology and reconciliation are not the first order of business for the virtuous woman. She ought to spend her time considering her words so that she has no need of further words to retract mistakes. Ideally, she will be able to avoid all occasions for censure and be able to speak only on edifying, divine matters.

Despite the ideology of feminine silence and the many occasions on which the pious woman could showcase this vocal modesty, women such as the Anicii had many occasions to speak. One of the most common roles was as critical audience to the moral performances of others, both in their households and in the wider community. As public exemplars of feminine virtue their censure would carry weight, but also be scrutinized as carefully as the rest of their behavior. Moral exhortation, rebuke, and correction could easily play out as disparagement, gossip, and harshness. The modest woman had to represent herself as modest and silent; she also had to decide how to speak about the silence, modesty and other virtues—or failings—of those around her. She could confront, or she could choose to speak on a general pious topic and avoid confrontation.

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[258] Pelag.-Haer., *Virg.* 17.1. (Rees trans., 85-86) "Contentionem verba et animositatis causas evita. Discordiarum quoque et litium occasiones subterfuge. Nam si, juxta Apostoli doctrinam, servum Dei litigare non decet (II Tim. 11,24), quanto magis ancillam Dei non expedit? Cujus quo verecundior est sexus, animus debet esse modestior. Linguam a maliloquio cohibe: et ori tuo legis frenos impone: ut tunc si forte loquaris quando tacere peccatum sit, caveas ne quid quod in reprehensionem veniat, dicas: Lapis emissus est sermo prolatus. Quapropter diu antequam proferatur, cogitandus est. Beata quipped labia sunt, quae numquam quod revocare velint, emittunt. Pudicae mentis debet etiam sermo esse pudicus, qui aedificet semper magis, quam aliquem destruat audientem, secundum hoc quod Apostolus praecipit, dicens: *Omnis sermo malus de ore vestro non prcedat, sed si quis bonus est ad aedificationem fidei, ut det gratiam audientibus (Ephes.* IV,29). Pretiosa Deo lingua est, quae non nisi in divinis rebus novit verba construere: et sanctum est os, unde coelestia semper eloquia proferuntur." PL30.174.

Her audience response, in either case, was a part of her self-representation and could build or diminish her reputation. The challenge, of course, was to do this without seeming to. Before self-representation came self-formation. The best performance fell from lips that did not 'know' how to give any other.

V. The Scriptural Voice

The modest woman's speech and silence tell the tale of her inner thoughts, her character, and her desires. In ancient Rome both male and female speech was revelatory of moral integrity. The best speech, and the best silence, was carefully controlled and modulated in the style of secular and religious exemplars like Cicero and Mary. The very best speech *was* the speech of exemplars. Frequent, fluent citation of authoritative texts, with or without credit given, marked the speaker as traditional, educated, and trustworthy. Old-fashioned morals spoke in words approved by the generations. While scholars of classical literature often bemoan the 'derivative' quality of later Roman authors, the original audiences greatly appreciated the ability to weave together citations from the standard reading lists.[259]

This appreciation for citation continued in the Christian literary tradition. Even authors like Jerome, who maintained very uneasy relations with their non-Christian literary educations, cite Virgil and Horace as if by compulsion. And in those translations and texts that italicize Scriptural quotation, often more text than not is italicized. Scriptural allusions, not always marked, make up even more of the text. The ancient Christian authors do not so much compose with Scriptural support or comment on verses as simply write *in* and *with* Scripture.

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[259] Gleason, Making Men. Introduction.

Hypothesizing oral practices based on literary evidence is dangerous business. We know enough about ancient educational methods, however, to say with reasonable assurance that memorization of large portions of text, especially authoritative models, was commonplace. This was true for women as well as men, and the women of aristocratic ascetic households as well as the women of more formal establishments, who spent a great deal of their time in recitation. Whether they were literate or not, ascetic women incorporated quantities of Scripture into their vocabularies. Folklorists show women across cultures as virtuosos in the use of oral traditions such as proverbs or stories,[260] and anthropologists show that contemporary Christians steeped in Biblical language can 'break out' into almost entirely Scriptural speech in evangelical preaching or witness.[261] Based on the advice written to the Anician women and to other women by late Roman Christian authors, I argue that virtuous women cultivated the capacity for a scriptural voice and exhibited their mastery in the semi-public arenas of group prayer and 'holy conversation.'

The words in an ascetic woman's mouth, particularly a virgin's mouth, could form her character or pollute her. Pelagius insists that the mouth that carries holy speech to God must be free from the taint of verbal sin.

> For it is shameful that those very lips with which you confess, request, bless and praise the Lord should be defiled by the filth of any sin. I do not know with what conscience anyone can make a request of God using the tongue with which he also lies or reviles or disparages; God listens to holy lips and speedily grants

[260] For example: Narayan, Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon, Gold, "Purdah Is as Purdah's Kept: A Storyteller's Story."
[261] Elaine J. Lawless, Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal Women Preachers and Traditional Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

> those prayers which an unstained tongue utters.[262]

Augustine is likewise horrified that a virgin, Demetrias, might sully her mouth with corrupting words, in this case with the words of Pelagius' letter of advice to her.

> …we too certainly think that when she read these words, if she did in fact read them, she groaned humbly beat her breast, perhaps even wept, and with trust prayed to the Lord, to whom she was consecrated and by whom she was made holy, in order that, just as those words were not hers but someone else's, so her faith might not be such that she would believe that she has something about which she might boast, but not in the Lord.[263]

What the virgin utters affects who she is, even if it is the words of a letter from a theologian she may not find orthodox. 'Other' words inhibit her ability to correctly speak the words she speaks daily as a part of her ascetic discipline, the words of prayer and supplication, which are mostly the words of Scripture.

Augustine, in his letter on prayer to Proba, teaches that the desire for the happy life that is at the heart of constant prayer is often best expressed by sighs and tears.[264] Since God already knows what we want and what we need, words are, to a certain extent, superfluous. A central function of prayer, however, is to remind the one who prays what it is she ought desire. "We, then, need words by which we may be reminded and may consider what we ask for, not by which we believe that we should either instruct or

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[262] Pelag.-Haer., *Virg.* 10.1. (Rees trans., 80) "Nefas est enim ut labia illa, quibus Dominum confiteris, rogas, benedicis, et laudas, alienjus polluantur sorde peccati. Nescio qua conscientia et lingua quis Dominum rogat, qua aut mentitur , aut maledicit, aut detrahit. Labia sancta exaudit Dominus: et ipsis annuit cito precibus, quas lingua immaculate pronuntiat." PL30.169.

[263] Aug., *ep.* 188.9. (Teske trans., 256) "…hoc existimamus, quod illa verba cum legeret, si tamen legit, ingemuit, et pectus humiliter tutudit, ac fortassis et flevit, Dominumque cui dicata et a quo sanctificata est fidenter oravit, ut quomodo illa non sunt verba ipsius, sed alterius, ita non sit talis et fides ejus, qua se aliquid habere credat, de quo in se non in Domino glorietur." PL 33.852

[264] Aug., *ep.* 130.20.

persuade the Lord."[265] He goes on to explain, line by line, how the Lord's Prayer forms the desire of the petitioner as she speaks the words. The final petition, 'deliver us from evil,' is universally appropriate for Christian prayer.

> And this petition that is placed last in the Lord's Prayer is, of course, so widely applicable that, in whatever tribulation Christians may find themselves, they utter their groans in it, pour forth their tears in it, begin with it, linger over it, and bring their prayers to and end with it. For it was necessary that the truth itself be committed to our memory by these words.[266]

All prayer, says Augustine, ought to conform to the Lord's Prayer. He shows with a list of Scriptural citations that all Biblical prayers fit under the heading of one or another verse of the Lord's Prayer. When he contemplates the possible words for prayer, the words of Scripture are all he mentions. "If you run through all the words of holy petitions, you will not find, in my opinion, anything that this prayer of our Lord does not contain and include. Hence we are free, when we pray, to express the same petitions now with these and now with those words, but we should not be free to make other petitions."[267] Augustine expects Proba to be able to marshal Scriptural language in order to express the intentions of the Lord's Prayer in a number of ways. She does this not only for herself but as an example to her entire household. Although Augustine asks

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[265] Aug., *ep.* 130.21. In: Letters 100-155. 193. "Nobis ergo verba necessaria sunt, quibus commoneamur et inspiciamus quid petamus, non quibus Dominum seu docendum seu flectendum esse credamus." PL 33.502

[266] Aug., *ep.* 130.21. (Teske trans., 194) "Et hoc quidem ultimum quod in dominica oratione positum est, tam late patet, ut homo christianus in qualibet tribulatione constitutus in hoc gemitus edat, in hoc lacrymas fundat, hinc exordiatur, in hoc immoretur, ad hoc terminet orationem. His enim verbis res ipsas memoriae nostrae commendari oportebat." PL 33.502

[267] Aug., *ep.* 130.22. (Teske trans., 195) "Et si per omnia precationum sanctarum verba discurras, quantum existimo, nihil invenies quod in ista dominica non contineatur et concludatur oratione. Unde liberum est aliis atque aliis verbis, eadem tamen in orando dicere; sed non debet esse liberum alia dicere." PL 33.503

Proba to consider herself desolate despite her children and large household, he encourages her to be an example of fervent prayer for Demetrias and the other pious women of the household.[268] "…the Christian soul ought to regard itself as desolate so that it does not cease to pray, and it should learn to turn the eye of faith to the words of the divine scriptures, as if to a lamp set in a dark place…"[269] Her example will encourage all the women in the household to 'pray in competition with a holy and harmonious rivalry.'[270] Prayer, for the contemporary reader, too often brings up images of silent and solitary contemplation and the use of one's own words. In the ascetic household of Proba, Juliana and Demetrias and in the more formal communities of religious women in the fourth and early fifth centuries, prayer was a matter of reading and recitation and the weaving together of scriptural citation, usually in a communal or semi-public setting. Women trained to conform their voices, external and internal, to the rhythms and thoughts of scripture.[271]

Just as Augustine encourages Proba to be an example of scriptural speech, that is, prayer, for her household, Jerome encourages Demetrias to learn holy speech from her elders. His final exhortation to her is to cling to scripture as a lover.

> Love the holy scriptures, and wisdom will love you. Love wisdom, and it will keep you safe. Honour wisdom and it will embrace you round about. Let the jewels on your breast and in your ears be the

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[268] Aug., *ep.* 130.30-31.
[269] Aug., *ep.* 130.5. (Teske trans., 186) "…desolatam debet se christiana anima reputare, ne desistat orare: et Scripturarum divinarum sanctarumque sermoni discat tanquam lucernae in obscuro loco positae fidei oculum intendere…" PL 33.495
[270] Aug., *ep.* 130.31.
[271] For another excellent example see: Pelag.-Haer., *Celent.* 13-14. Pious Christian men memorized Scripture and alternated the scriptural voice with silence too, of course. In his letter to Eustochium, Jerome embeds a description of the daily routine of Egyptian monks. He remarks on both the frequent recitation and exposition of Scripture as well as the silence of the monks. Hier., *ep.* 22.35.

> gems of wisdom. Let your tongue know no other theme than Christ, let no sound pass from your lips that is not holy, and let your words always reproduce that sweetness of which your grandmother and your mother set you the example. Imitate them, for they are models of virtue.[272]

The relationship of the virgin with the Scriptures is one of longing and desire for her divine bridegroom. Jerome, in his letter to Demetrias and his earlier letter to Eustochium, advises the virgins again and again to 'say with' the words of scripture, especially the words of the bride in Song of Songs.[273] His language is so insistent and erotic that one easily forgets that the activity he describes is reading or reciting aloud. Jerome is following in the footsteps of Ambrose here. In his treatise for Marcellina, Ambrose advocates reading and recitation of the scriptures as an activity that is both erotic and fecund. The mouth that is intimate with the Word of God will give birth to holy speech, holy offspring.

> And so, let your works be like honey from the comb, for worthy is the virginity that recalls the bees and that is as industrious, as modest and as continent as they are. The bees feeds on dew, knows nothing of copulation, and produces honey. As for the virgin, her dew is the divine discourse, because the words of God come down like dew (cf. Isa. 45:8). The virgin's modesty is her inviolate nature. What the virgin begets is the fruit of her lips, devoid of bitterness, rich in sweetness. Her toil is in common, and common is her fruit. How I would wish you, O daughter, to be an imitator of this little bee, whose food is dew, whose mouth begets offspring, whose work is accomplished by its mouth. Imitate her, O daughter. Let your words not serve to veil anything deceitful, let them not cover over anything fraudulent, so that they may be pure and full of gravity. Let your mouth bring forth for you, as well, the everlasting posterity

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[272] Hier., *ep.* 130.20. (Fremantle trans., 272)"Ama Scripturas sanctas, et amabit te sapientia: dilige eam, et servabit te: honora illam et amplexabitur te. Haec monilia inpectore, et in auribus tuis haereant. Nihil aliud noverit lingua, nisi Christum. Nihil possit sonare, nisi quod sanctum est. Aviae tuae tibi semper ac matris in ore dulcedo versetur: quarum imitatio forma virtutis est." PL30.1124

[273] Jerome *ep.* 130.4,7,9,10. *ep.* 22.3,17,18,19,25,29,31.

of your merits.[274]

The work and the fruit of gathering dew, divine discourse, is the common activity of the virgins in Marcellina's care. Likewise, the scripturally informed speech and prayer in the household of Proba, Juliana and Demetrias is a common activity, an opportunity for imitation and exemplary performances. As intimate as the virgin's relationship with scripture is, her reproduction of scriptural speech is intended for the edification of an audience.

One of the assumptions of scholarship that tries to locate women's agency or lack of agency in their capacity for speech is that when women's speech is discovered it will be the speech of the speaking subject, the 'I'. Women's speech that coincides with their agency will be *their own* speech. In the writings of Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose, however, the modest woman's mouth conforms to the speech and mind of her bridegroom via the mediation of scripture. Textual evidence obscures the fact that texts, in the late Roman world, especially authoritative texts, were mainly oral realities. Nothing remains to us of the constant, daily 'work' of ascetic women as they gathered and reproduced scriptural language. We can only guess at the sort of subject a woman who 'spoke with' Esther, the Psalmist, Isaiah, and the bride of the Song might have been. That work of formation and self-representation in scriptural language, however, provided

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[274] Ambr., *Virgin.* I.8.40-41. (Ramsey trans., 84) "Favum itaque mellis tua opera componant (Cant., V.11); digna enim virginitas quae apibus comparetur: sic laboriosa, si pudica, sic continens. Rose pascitur apis, nescit concubitus, mella componit. Ros quoque virginis est sermo divinus; quia sicus ros, Dei verba descendunt. Pudor viginis est intemerata natura. Partus virginis fetus est labiorum, expers amaritudinis, fertilis suavitatis. In commune labor, communis est fructus. Quam te velim, filia, imitatricem esse hujus apiculae cui cibus flos est, ore soboles legitur, ore componitur! Hanc imitare tu, filia. Verba tua nullum doli velamen obtendant, nullum habean fraudis involucrum; ut et puritatem habeant, et gravitates plena sint. Meritorum quoque tuorum tibi aeterna posteritas tuo ore pariatur." PL16.210-211.

fertile space for the creative agency of women who lived in a culture that celebrated masterful citation of authoritative text.[275]

VI. Conclusions

The retrieval of women's voices has been one of the central concerns of feminist scholarship since the 1970s. To focus on the topic of feminine silence and vocal modesty is a counter-intuitive move for the scholar who wishes to explore the range of women's possible agency in the ancient Christian world. The sources, however, are not silent on the question of silence nor do they recommend anything like the sort of 'shutting up' that would erase women's being and activity from the social stage. The silence imagined for women like Demetrias and her household is a highly visible silence. It is a silence that requires careful training, measurement, and modulation.

Displays of silence notwithstanding, early Christian handbooks for pious women do not expect women to remain mute. An important part of their reputation for modesty and virtue came from their responses to the moral performance of others, within and outside their households. In a society and communities of intense mutual moral scrutiny, the audience member was as much on display as those whose performances she judged. Spiritual leaders, in particular, were responsible for appropriate audience response in the form of correction, rebuke, encouragement, and edification. As guardians of her companions' modesty as well as her own, the virtuous woman must decided when the greater sin is in not speaking and when a rebuke is really no more than self-serving disparagement.

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[275] On women's reading, pagan and Christian, in this time period and the effect of scholarly women on Christian culture see: Philip Rousseau, "'Learned Women' and the Development of a Christian Culture in Late Antiquity," Symbolae Osloenses 70 (1995).

The content of modest speech—and almost any praiseworthy speech in the ancient world whether Christian or not—was replete with citation from authoritative texts. Heretical text might dirty the virgin's mouth, but frequent reading and recitation of scripture would lead to a progeny of holy words and thoughts. The modest woman had a lover in the scriptures. Her chaste and intimate relationship with the Word of God produced a subjectivity that spoke in the 'I' of biblical exemplars. As with any other language, competence and virtuosity in scripture required work and skill and this paid off in the ability to provide a model of virtue for others. In shining silence, skillful correction, or the sweet fruits of scripture-laden lips the modest mouth did not mute or erase the pious woman but provided a site for formation and expression.

Chapter Five

Performance Anxiety
Hypocrisy and Sincerity in the Display of Modesty

In my analysis of clothing, domesticity and appropriate speech as examples of the performance of modesty that modesty, for the women of the early fifth-century *gens Anicii*, entailed forms of agency, I separated out women's acts of modesty from the women's modest dispositions from these acts were assumed to naturally flow. I concentrated on the performances that made up modesty. I suggested that Proba, Juliana and Demetrias, the subjects of the study, were, as subjects, what they *did*. More specifically, they were the sort of subjects who practiced becoming their ideal selves by performing ideal selves. They became truly modest through the performance of modesty to an audience to whom they were responsible. Their modesty was in their creation of a reputation for modesty for their communities and for themselves. My emphasis on performing, creating, and practicing a particular moral self, the uniquely modest ascetic woman, was intended to highlight opportunities for agency, apart from an end goal of liberation in the contemporary feminist sense. Difficult and interesting work went into being modest, especially for the ascetic noblewoman who was under a double scrutiny of class and religious expectations.

Ironically, some of the very best material with which to show that the modesty of the ascetic woman was achieved through public performances is the satirical portraiture of false, hypocritical virgins and widows in the writings of Pelagius and Jerome. These often give vivid insight into the gestures and staging of modest performance, while

bringing up the question of authenticity in performance. Modesty as an internal disposition is now at stake. These passages show that the authors knew modesty involved self-conscious self-presentation to an audience, and they were uneasy with the implications. They feared that reputation was not reality and that the performance of modesty did not always follow naturally from a modest sensibility.

Saba Mahmood, whom I follow closely in my starting premises, does not attend closely to the problems of sincerity or authenticity in the practice of the Egyptian women of the Piety Movement precisely because she believes these concepts are inextricable from the history of the 'subject of freedom', the autonomous moral agent for whom freedom is the ultimate goal. This subject of freedom is exactly the subject she wishes to de-center in her work. Thus, she concentrates almost exclusively on the power of the exterior, or external practices, to form the subject's interiority rather than the ability of the exterior to either reveal or mask a true interior self.[276]

Since my primary sources exhibit an anxiety over the performative nature of modesty, I explore the question of sincerity and hypocrisy, the question of congruence between moral intention and moral performance. Because the authors' of my primary texts are anxious about the possiblity of hypocritical performance and, we must also assume that it was a problem the Anicii women and their contemporaries in feminine asceticism contemplated. The separation of modesty-as-act from modesty-as-disposition has, I argue, many benefits for the re-imagination of modesty as an opportunity for women's *doing*. The following begins the process of inquiry into the relationship between these activities and the modest woman's way of *being.*

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[276] Mahmood, Politics of Piety.

I. The Contingency of Hypocrisy

I used the words above, but 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' are anachronistic terms of analysis for the early fifth-century Roman Empire. Lionel Trilling, in lectures which focus on literature but expand into the realms of philosophy, art criticism, and religion, traces the notion and word 'sincerity' to Renaissance Europe, specifically France, and follows its blossoming during the period of the Enlightenment.[277] He acknowledges the difficulty of defining such a broad moral term and the initial oddness of assuming that something so natural might have a history[278], but gives the following working definition:

> The word as we now use it refers primarily to a congruence between avowal and actual feeling. Is it really possible, does it make sense, to say that the value put upon this congruence became, at a given moment in history, a new element in the moral life? Surely it is as old as speech and gesture? But I subdue this skepticism by reflecting that the word cannot be applied to a person without regard to his cultural circumstances. For example, we cannot say of the patriarch Abraham that he was a sincere man. That statement must seem only comical. The sincerity of Achilles or Beowulf cannot be discussed: they neither have nor lack sincerity. But if we ask whether young Werther is really as sincere as he intends to be, or which of the two Dashwood sisters, Elinor or Marianne, is thought by Jane Austen to be the more truly sincere, we can confidently expect a serious response in the form of opinions on both sides of the question.[279]

Despite the social importance of sincerity, and its cousin-concept authenticity, which Trilling dates to the Romantics[280], the enemy of both is society and the hypocritical

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[277] Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).
[278] Trilling gave the lectures in 1969-1970, shortly before the works of such thinkers as Michel Foucault became widely available in the United States and made such inquiries into the history of consciousness or selfhood more commonplace. Trilling does, in fact, cite Foucault's 1961 work *L'historie de la folie*. Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity. 170.
[279] Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity. 2.

posturing that society requires. In the 'sincere' world that Trilling describes, the social self cannot be the true self. At best the sincere person lives in society as a living rebuke, the authentic person (or work of art) makes the social audience ashamed of its own inauthenticity.

In her exploration of women's piety in contemporary Egypt, Saba Mahmood implies that the question of sincerity or authenticity is no more appropriate for the subjects of her study than it would be for Beowulf or Abraham. Throughout her study, she emphasizes the exteriority of the women of the piety movement as a means to the formation of interior attitudes and identity. Her work is a corrective to the view that contemporary conservative women's performance of piety is merely a reflection or sign of internalized oppression.[281] Her point is well taken, yet in her study she tends to ignore her subjects' own engagements with the idea and possibility of hypocritical piety.

In the following passage from Mahmood's ethnography, Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject, two young women in the piety movement comment on the practice of shyness or modesty (Arabic *al-haya*).

> Amal said, "I used to think that even though shyness [al-haya'] was required of us by God, if I acted shyly it would be hypocritical [*nifaq*] because I didn't actually feel it inside of me. Then one day, in reading verse 25 in Surat al-Qasas ["The Story"] I realized that al-haya' was among the good deeds [*huwwa min al-a'mal al-saliha*], and given my natural lack of shyness [al-haya], I had to make or create it first. I realized that making [sana'] it in yourself is not hypocrisy, and that eventually your inside learns to have al-haya too." Here she looked at me and explained the meaning of the word *istihya*[282]:

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[280] Authenticity as described by Trilling is not so much about the congruence of interior and exterior, but the identity of a person, or more usually her artistic product, with her true interior self. Trilling begins with an analysis of poems by Wordsworth. Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity. 93-94.

[281] See chapter one of: Mahmood, Politics of Piety.

[282] A form of the word al-haya'.

> "It means making oneself shy, even if it means creating it [*Ya'ni ya Saba, yi'mil nafsu yitkisif hatta lau sana'ti*]." She continued with her point, "And finally I understood that once you do this, the sense of shyness [al-haya'] eventually imprints itself on your inside *[as-shu'ur yitba' 'ala guwwaki*]." Another friend, Nama, a single woman in her early thirties, who has been sitting and listening, added: "It's just like the veil [hijab]. In the beginning when you wear it, you're embarrassed [*maksufa*] and don't want to wear it because people say that you look older and unattractive, that you won't get married, and will never find a husband. But you *must* wear the veil, first because it is God's command [*hukm allah*], and then, with time, because your inside learns to feel shy without the veil, and if you take it off, your entire being feels uncomfortable [*mish radi*] about it."[283]

Mahmood uses this vignette as evidence for her argument that the activities of pious modesty, like veiling, ought to count as a form of the women's agency. She remarks on Amal's comment on hypocrisy and uses this to show that sincerity is not an appropriate measure for the women's moral activity.

> Notably, Amal *does not* regard simulating shyness in the initial stages of her self-cultivation to be hypocritical, as it would be in certain liberal conceptions of the self where a dissonance between internal feelings and external expressions would be considered to be a form of dishonesty or self-betrayal (as captured in the phrase: "How can I do something sincerely when my heart is not in it"). Instead, taking the absence of shyness as a marker of an incomplete learning process, Amal further develops the quality of shyness by synchronizing her outward behavior with her inward motives until the discrepancy between the two is dissolved.[284]

Although Mahmood does not explicitly comment on the historical and cultural contingency of sincerity, she links it with the liberal self, a self who coincides with Lionel Trilling's 'honest soul' or sincere person who arose in Europe and North America with the individual and the autonomous moral agent. Certainly Saba Mahmood is correct in concluding that her subjects do not conceive of sincerity or hypocrisy in the manner of

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[283] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 156-7.
[284] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 157.

that came into force in Enlightenment Europe and lives on in contemporary Western consciousness. However, like the theologians who wrote to Demetrias and her family, they *do* have a concept of hypocrisy that is forceful enough to require comment. Another woman, Amna, who attended a mosque where the piety movement had numerous adherents specifically criticized her co-religionists for their pious performance.

> I cannot stand to go to these mosques anymore for Friday prayers because I find it offensive that so many people start to sob when the time for supplication [du'a] comes. I am not saying that these women are not moved by real love for God. How can I say that? It is only He who knows what is in the heart. But I know from talking to many of these people that when they cry in prayer they do not really feel it from within; they do it because they think they will gain merits [hasanat] with God. Or they think that "Oh, Abu Bakr [the first caliph and Muhammed's close Companion] did this, so should I." Where is sincerity of intent [*ikhlas al-niyya*] here? You should cry not because you want recompense from God, or you want to follow the Companions blindly without thinking. You should cry for God because you really feel inside you what Abu Bakr felt, and cannot prevent yourself from crying, whether you are alone or in public. And I am telling you, it *never* happens to *me* when I am in the company of others.[285]

Obviously, contemporary Egypt is as post-Enlightenment as any other location of the international intellectual geography, and more than one sort of subjectivity can exist in the same community, or even the same person, with varying degrees of compatibility or conflict. Mahmood distinguishes Amna and other critics like her from the participants of the piety movement. She does not, however, comment on the interplay between the two forms of subjectivity, one that expects sincere religiosity to manifest itself not-too-publicly, and one that understands pious performance as a means of religious self-cultivation.

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[285] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 146.

Another anthropologist who studies pious women in terms of agency and performance, is Meena Khandelwal, who has worked with contemporary Hindu women renunciants. In a chapter on genuine and false ascetics, she explores the controversy surrounding an ascetic's authenticity. Disciples and non-disciples alike discuss the authenticity of their own and other's spiritual guides. Khandelwal's dismisses assumptions that Indians simply have no 'interior' or expectations of interiority in religious life and draws out the particularities of her Hindu subjects' understanding of interior and exterior religiosity. She relies on two concepts internal to discourse on true and false ascetics. "

> Discrimination (*vivek*) is an attempt, usually made by non-disciples, to discern interior states by observing exterior signs. Faith (*shraddha*), by contrast, is favored by disciples and rests on the assumption that an interior state of detachment exists regardless of exterior signs. Faith assumes that there may or may not be congruence between interior and exterior, that it does not matter what a saint is doing on the outside as long as the inside is genuine.[286]

Among Khandelwal's subjects, people scrutinized the outward behavior of ascetics to see if it matched the expectations for a true renouncer. They observed dress, demeanor, daily habits, emotional responses, and content of speech. They were on the look out for any deviance from the norms of ascetic performance and ready to accuse a guru of slipping up and revealing herself to be no better than a shady actor who was in it for free food and opportunities for illicit sex. Yet congruence between interior motives and exterior performance was not the only way to judge the authenticity of an ascetic. For the disciple, exterior performances of the ascetic meant little since a faithful attitude

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[286] Meena Khandelwal, Women in Ochre Robes: Gendering Hindu Renunciation (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004). 172.

to one's guru, who stands in the place of God, assumes that any outward manifestation must reveal the divine, even if in a mysterious or contradictory manner. For instance, the ascetic woman who seemingly falls asleep on a platform when she is supposed to be giving a spiritual lecture might be a poor ascetic who tends to her physical needs rather than the spiritual needs of her audience, or worse, a charlatan pretending to go into a trance, or truly a saint who is caught up in a mystical experience.[287] In the specific context of these Hindu women ascetics and their followers (or potential followers), sincerity and hypocrisy do not align precisely with the concepts as they have developed in the West since the Renaissance, but they do matter. If one accepts a woman as a guru, there is congruence between interior piety and exterior performance, but this congruence may be entirely contradictory to usual expectations. Assuming an ascetic to be free from affections, her angry tirade on a disciple's minor moral fault *must* mean more than it seems to mean, it must have a didactic or holy function and *cannot* simply be the manifestation of bad temper.[288] On the other hand, a person who is searching for an ascetic guide must carefully examine a woman who claims to be a renunciant. The would be follower relies on a specific set of expectations for the outward behavior of a genuine guru. Any deviation from the norms may be cause for an accusation of fraudulence.

> A saint's demeanor should include a calm facial expression, steady gaze, and physical poise, which should indicate a dispassionate and disinterested interior. This is not to say they must always be serious; on the contrary, humor is appreciated as a sign of spiritual contentment and carefree disposition (*masti*). They are expected to speak primarily about religious matters, or, when discussing mundane, worldly topics, to do so self-consciously and with didactic

[287] Khandelwal, Women in Ochre Robes. 160.
[288] Khandelwal, Women in Ochre Robes. 158.

purpose. They should avoid gossip and frivolous topics.[289]

Khandelwal does not discuss the possibility of ascetic performance as a means to pious interiority, especially as she is concerned with the point of view of the ascetic's audience in this discussion. For the observer of ascetic women, external manifestations can confirm or deny a woman's genuine sanctity or be the mysterious signs of an internal sanctity attested by faith. The external is a sign of the internal, but the question of congruence is more complex than in the conceptual world of Western sincerity and authenticity.

I also argue that the women of the Anician family also understood the relation between interior and exterior in ways very different from the post-Renaissance concepts of sincerity and authenticity. In fact, Mahmood's subject Amal's explanation of her movement from practicing a shyness she cannot yet feel, but desires to feel, to the growing congruence between her practice and her disposition bears remarkable similarities to Augustine's explanation of prayer which he wrote to Proba around the year 411 AD. He writes that since God already knows the will and needs of all petitioners, the function of prayer is not to make anything known to God but to increase the petitioner's own understanding and love of God's will, which will lead to a greater capacity for reception.

> ...the Lord our God does not want our will, which he cannot fail to know, to become known to him, but our desire, by which we can receive what he prepares to give, to be exercised in prayers. For what he prepares to give is very great, but we are very small and narrow for receiving it. Therefore it is said to us, *Make your heart bigger so that you do not bear that yoke with unbelievers* (2 Cor 6:11)….we shall receive with a greater capacity to the extent that we believe it with more fidelity, and hope for it more firmly, and love it

[289] Khandelwal, Women in Ochre Robes. 163.

> more ardently. We, therefore, always pray with a continuous desire filled with faith, hope, and love. But at certain hour and moments we also pray to God in words so that by those signs of things we may admonish ourselves, realize how much we have advanced in this desire, and arouse ourselves more intensely to increase it.[290]

This is not merely a form of work on the interior disposition by means of outward 'signs', but a project in creating an internal space for the reception of God's gifts, an active stretching out of the narrow spaces of the heart.[291] The outward signs are important for growth in knowledge. Augustine discusses mostly the words of the Lord's Prayer and other short spurs to the memory and desire, but he does not neglect such performances of prayer as weeping and sighing.

> Let many words, after all, be kept far from our prayer, but let our petitions not lack persistence, if attention remains fervent. For to speak much in praying is to do something necessary with superfluous words, but to petition him much to whom we pray is to knock with a long and pious stirring of the heart. For this task is very often carried out with more sighs than words, more with weeping than with speaking. But he places our tears in his sight, and our sighing is not hidden from him who created all things by his Word and

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[290] Aug., *ep.* 130.17-18. (Teske trans., 192) "…Dominus et Deus noster non volutatem nostram sibi velit innotescere, quam non potest ignorare; sed exerceri in orationibus desiderium nostrum, quo possimus capere quod praeparat dare. Illud enim valde magnum est, sed nos ad capiendam parvi et angusti sumus. Ideo nobis dicitur: *Dilatiamini; ne sitis jugum ducentaes cum infidelibus* (II Cor. vi, 15,14)…sumemus capacious, quanto id et fidelius credimus, et speramus firmius, et desideramus ardentius. In ipsa ergo fide et spe et charitate continuato desiderio semper oramus. Sed ideo per certa intervalla horarum et temporum etiam verbis rogamus Deum, ut illis rerum signis nos ipsos admoneamus, quantumque in hoc desiderio profecerimus nobis ipsis innotescamus, et hoc augendum nos ipsos acrius excitemus.

[291] For the uniqueness of Augustine's conception of interior space see: Phillip Cary, Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Annick Charles-Saget, "Les Transformations De La Conscience De Soi Entre Plotin Et Augustin," Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions, eds. J. Assmann and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 1999).

does not seek human words.[292]

Augustine's treatise to Proba is theoretical enough in tone for one to miss the practical means of prayer that Augustine thinks appropriate for the petitioner like Proba, who, as a widow, was uniquely qualified to take up prayer as a special duty. The means of increased capacity for the desire of God, of internal enlargement of the heart, are short audible[293] prayers in the words of Scripture, especially those that accord well with the Lord's Prayer, sighing, and weeping. It would be difficult to find better material with which to explore the idea of pious subject formation through bodily practices.[294] Moreover, the practice of prayer is often communal and always on display. Augustine notes that as head-of-household, Proba's example must inspire her widowed daughter-in-law Juliana and 'the other holy widows and virgins placed under your care'[295]. The sisters mutually encourage one another by example in a competition of piety. "Pray in competition with a holy and harmonious rivalry, for you do not compete against each

[292] Aug., *ep.* 130.20 (Teske trans., 193)"Absit enim ab oratione multa locutio, sed non desit multa precatio, si fervens perseverat intentio. Nam multum loqui, est in orando rem necessariam superfluis agree verbis. Multum autem precari, est ad eum quem precamur, diuturna et pia cordis excitatione pulsare. Nam plerumque hoc negotium plus gemitibus quam sermonibus agitur, plus fletu quam affatur. Ponit autem lacrymas nostras in conspectus suo, et gemitus noster non est absconditus ab eo qui omnia per Verbum condidit, et humana verba non quaerit." PL 33.502

[293] Silent prayer was hardly more common than silent reading at this period. Anna, the more dubious Old Testament example of a widow who prays, was considered drunken because she prayed 'silently', that is, her lips were moving but her prayer was not audible. The better example, the persistent widow of the parable, is unrelentingly noisy in her petition. Augustine, *Ep.* 130.29

[294] Although it is likely that many scholars of Augustine who investigate his 'interiority' or lack thereof might be ill-at-ease with the idea of the saint encouraging or even practicing 'weeping prayers' very similar to those practiced by the women of Mahmood's study.

[295] Aug., *ep.* 130.30

other but against the devil, the enemy of all the saints."[296] Not only the external practice, but the public performance is crucial.

Although questions of the sincere and the hypocritical are specific to time and culture, they are not absent from materials surrounding Demetrias and her family. Since I have begun by emphasizing the performative nature of modesty, I must now inquire into the honesty of those performances and ask whether modesty presented as agency can be a truly pious modesty in the terms of its indigenous temporal and cultural location. Can *we* have Demetrias as an agent in her modesty while *she* remains true to the expectations of congruence between interior and exterior that obtained in her own religious world?

II. Satire as Evidence

While I have argued that both late Roman culture and late Roman Christianity were arenas in which the social performance of roles created not only reputations but also persons, these social performances were most open to criticism precisely for being performances. The figure of the hypocrite is a commonplace in the Gospels and Roman literature. In Roman literature the genre most likely to expose the hypocrite was satire. This, along with courtroom invective and the epigram, was also a genre particularly prone to misogynistic discourse[297]. The immodest woman was a trope in satire and she took on new life in the pro-ascetic literature of ancient Christianity. Tertullian wrote in a strongly satiric vein about women, remarriage, and women's clothing; Jerome relied heavily on Tertullian as he undertook to promote the ascetic life among Roman

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[296] Aug., *ep.* 130.31 (Teske trans., 199) "Orate certatim concordi sanctoque certamine: non enim advrsus alterutrum certatis, sed adversus diabolum, sanctis omnibus inimicum." PL 33.507

[297] On aggressive sexual humor as a part of Roman social competition and character assassination see: Richlin, The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor.

noblewomen and denounce critics of asceticism such as Jovinian.[298] The satiric vein of Jerome's writing to and about women is a source of both its richness and difficulty for the cultural historian. The vivid portraits of decadent social life in Rome are full of those details that make one feel present in a distant and foreign world. His writing is also steeped in a tradition of such social sketches and endlessly complicated by questions concerning the persona of the satirist. It is very easy to laugh at Jerome. It is much more difficult to sort out whether he intends us to laugh, and if so, at whom and for what purpose. On the persona of the Roman satirist of sexuality, Warren Smith remarks,

> Few issues are more highly emotionally charged than sex and marriage, and while the satirist ostensibly (even desperately) may try to turn the reader's attention away from the satirist's self-pity by inviting the reader to share in the indignation and outrage at hand, the self-pity seems to keep gaining the upper hand and causes the satirist's suffering to seem exaggerated and absurd; the satirist almost inevitably becomes, at least in part, the butt of his/her own joke.[299]

The vivid picture of a gaunt Jerome in the desert, tortured by visions of dancing girls,[300] poses as a warning about wicked city pleasures that are impossible to escape, but it is also laughable. It is no accident that one of the most satirical of early Christian authors should so infuriate scholars who are interested in the character of the writer.[301] He is contradictory, offensive, absurd, over-serious, and pathetic by turns. But while he

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[298] Elizabeth A. Clark, "Dissuading from Marriage: Jerome and the Asceticization of Satire," Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage: From Plautus to Chaucer, ed. Warren S. Smith (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2005).

[299] Warren S. Smith, "Satiric Advice: Serious or Not?," Satiric Advice on Women and Marriage: From Plautus to Chaucer, ed. Warren S. Smith (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2005). 5.

[300] Hier., *ep.* 22.7

[301] See, for example, chapter 10 of J.N.D. Kelly's biography. Kelly attempts to explain the wild disparities between his praise and censure of women in psychological terms. He ends up with a Jerome who is 'strongly sexed', 'strongly repressed', 'touchy', 'irascible', and 'bashful'. Kelly, Jerome. 91-103.

seems at first to be one of the most easily knowable characters of Christian antiquity, the satiric persona, like satire itself, is anything but transparent. While the satirist exposes examples of incongruence between a woman's avowals and her actual behaviors, the audience must judge the congruence between the author's avowal and his actual intent. This, of course, is part of the fun of satire.

In his letters of advice to ascetic women, Jerome has as much to say about what *not* to be as he does about what to be. The two are jarringly similar. We recall the passage quoted in Chapter 2 concerning women's head-coverings from Jerome's letter to Demetrias.

> Regard as fair and lovable and a fitting companion one who is unconscious of her good looks and careless of her appearance; who does not expose her breast out of doors or throw back her cloak to reveal her neck; who veils all her face except one eye, and only uses this to find her way.[302]

Yet in letter 117, a fictive letter of admonishment to a virgin living in a 'spiritual marriage' with a brother ascetic, Jerome exposes the hypocritical virgin who uses the public performance of modesty to flirt.

> Your very dress, cheap and somber as it is, is an index of your secret feelings. For it has no creases and trails along the ground to make you appear taller than you are. Your vest is purposely ripped asunder to show what is beneath and while hiding what is repulsive, to reveal what is fair. As you walk, the very creaking of your black and shiny shoes attracts the notice of the young men. You wear stays to keep your breasts in place, and a heaving girdle closely confines your chest. Your hair covers either your forehead or your ears. Sometimes you let your shawl drop so as to lay bare your white shoulders; and, as if unwilling that they should be seen,

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[302] Jerome, *ep.* 130.18 (Fremantle trans., 270) "Illa tibi sit pulchra, illa amabilis, illa habenda inter socias quae se nescit esse pulchram; quae negligit formae bonum, et procedens ad publicum, non pectus et colla denudat, nec pallio revoluto cervicem aperit; sed quae celat faciem, et vix uno oculo, qui viae necessarius est, patente ingreditur." PL 22.1122

> you quickly conceal what you have purposely disclosed. And when in public you for modesty's sake cover your face, like a practiced harlot you only show what is likely to please.[303]

Both the positive advice and the negative satirical sketch are filled with contradiction. An ascetic woman may be careless of her appearance, but she must be very careful to remain covered and to veil her face. Cheap and unattractive clothing must not be so worn as to reveal what it ought to conceal. The physical acts of manipulating the mantle around the shoulders and over the head are fraught with danger. The performance of modesty must not seem to be a strip-tease. Does the second passage render the interpretation of the first, as evidence for modesty as a performance requiring a woman's agency, invalid? If she performed her modesty, was she no more than a hypocrite? The consistent inconsistency of Jerome himself suggests that this is not so. He satirizes and praises precisely the *same* actions again and again. He mocks literary pretensions as he drops learned references.[304] He paints the picture of the cleric who relies on questionable relationships with wealthy women in letters to the very noblewomen who support his monastic endeavors. His ideal ascetic woman and satirized 'false virgin' are the same person. In the letter to Eustochium, which he recommends to Demetrias as additional reading, Jerome warns against an excess of humility.

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[303] Hier., *ep.* 117.7 (Fremantle trans., 218) "Vestis ipsa vilis et pulla, animi tacentis indicium est; si rugam non habeat; si per terram, ut altior videaris trahatur; si de industria dissuta sit tunica, ut aliqui intus appareat, operiatque quod foedum est, et aperiat quod formosum. Caliga quoque ambulantis nigella ac nitens stridore ad se juvenes vocat. Papillae fasciolis comprimuntur, et crispanti cingulo angustius pectus arctatur. Capilli, vel in frontem, vel in aures defluunt. Palliolum interdum cadit, ut candidos nudet humeros, et quasi videri noluerit, celat festinac quod volens detexerat. Et quando in publico quasi per verecundiam operit faciem, lupaniarium arte id solum ostendit, quod ostensum magis placere potest." PL 22.957-958

[304] On classical references in Jerome's letter to Demetrias see: Krumeich, Hieronymus Und Die Christlichen Feminae Clarissimae. 178.

> Harbour not the secret thought that having ceased to court attention in garments of gold you may begin to do so in mean attire. And when you come into a room full of brothers and sisters, do not sit in too low a place or plead that you are unworthy of a footstool. Do not deliberately lower your voice as though worn out with fasting; nor, leaning on the shoulder of another, mimic the tottering gait of one who is faint. Some women, it is true, disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. As soon as they catch sight of any one they groan, they look down; they cover up their faces, all but one eye, which they keep free to see with. Their dress is somber, their girdles are of sackcloth, their hands and feet are dirty; only their stomachs—which cannot be seen—are hot with food.[305]

How is Demetrias or Eustochium to tell the difference between the woman she ought find lovable, the one who can hardly see from under her veil, from the false virgin who only mimics humility and piety? In a description of Eustochium's own mother, Paula, Jerome gives us little with which we might distinguish the two. He complains against those who have accused him of suspicious closeness with upper-class women. "Did I ever cross the threshold of a light woman? Was I ever fascinated by silk dresses, or glowing gems, or rouged faces, or displays of gold? Of all the ladies in Rome but one had power to subdue me, and that one was Paula. She mourned and fasted, she was squalid with dirt, her eyes were dim from weeping."[306] Unlike a satirist of the

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[305] Hier., *ep.* 22.27 (Fremantle trans., 33-34) "…ne cogitatio tacita subrepat, ut quia in auratis vestibus placere desisti, placere coneris in sordidis: et si quando in conventum fratrum veneris vel sororum, homilies sedeas, scabello te causeris indignam. Vocem ex industria, quasi confecta jejuniis, non tenues; et deficientis imitata gressum, humeris innitaris alterius. Sunt quipped nonnullae exterminantes facies suas, ut appareant hominibus jejunantes: quae statim ut aliquem viderint, ingemiscunt, demittunt supercilium, et operta facie, vix unum oculum, liberant ad videntdum. Vestis pulla, cingulum sacceum, et sordidis minibus pedibusque, venter solus, quia videri non potest, aestuat cibo." PL 22.413.

[306] Hier., e*p.* 45.3 (Fremantle trans., 59) "Nunquid domum alicujus lascivoiris ingressus sum? Nunquid me vestes sericae, nitentes gemmae, pieta facies, auri rauit ambitio? Nulla fuit alia Romae matronarum, que meam posset edomare mentem, nisi lugens atque jejunans, squalens sordibus, fletibus pene caecata…" PL 22.481

Renaissance or Enlightenment, Jerome cannot promote sincerity as an alternative to hypocrisy. Personhood and social performance were inextricably related. The question was not whether one performs a role, but whether one performs it *truly*. Jerome can attack the false virgin (always unnamed) and praise his supporters and friends, but the terms remain the same. Demetrias' public reputation is partly created by her appearances with companions who dress and behave in particular ways. When Jerome attacks false virgins, he attacks exactly the entourage he would praise for Demetrias or her elder in asceticism, Eustochium.

> Some there are, however, who by their ill-behaviour bring discredit on the holy profession of virginity and upon the glory of the heavenly and angelic company who have made it. These must be frankly told either to marry if they cannot contain, or to contain if they will not marry. It is also a matter for laughter or rather for tears, that when mistresses walk abroad they are preceded by maids better dressed than themselves; indeed so usual has it become that, if of two women you see one less neat than the other, you take her for the mistress as a matter of course. And yet these maids are professed virgins. Again not a few virgins choose sequestered dwellings where they will not be under the eyes of others, in order that they may live more freely than they otherwise could do. They take baths, do what they please, and try as much as they can to escape notice. We see these things and yet we put up with them; in fact, if we catch sight of the glitter of gold, we are ready to account of them as good works.[307]

This passage exposes one of the major fault lines of this discourse of hypocrisy. The hypocrite, by definition, represents an incongruity between disposition and action,

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[307] Hier., *ep.* 130.19 (Fremantle trans., 271) "Sanctum virginum propositum, et coelestis Angelorumque familiae gloriam, quarumdam non bene se agentium, nomen infamat. Quibus aperte dicendum est, u taut nubant, si se non possunt continere, aut contineant, si nolunt nubere. Digna res risu, imo planctu, incedentibus dominis, ancilla virgo procedit ornatior, ut pro nimia consuetudine quam incomptam videris, dominam suspiceris. Nonnullae separata et absque arbitris quaerunt hospitia, ut viant licentious: utantur balneis, faciantque quod volunt, et devitent conscientias plurimarum. Haec videmus et patimur, et si aureus nummus affulserit, inter bona opera deputamus." PL 22.1123-1124

but she will be found out by an *inevitable congruence* of her bad intention and bad action. The hypocrite is an unsettling reminder that one person may not be able to know another through face-to-face interaction. Satire rests on this anxiety about reliable knowledge of others' morality. In the end, however, it alleviates this fear by insisting that hypocrisy must always fail. Sooner or later the mask slips. Jerome says the false virgins live sequestered lives (such as he recommends to Demetrias), only in order to escape notice. But they cannot escape; he sees what they are up to. Despite Jerome's preoccupation with hypocritical or false virgins, he maintains a belief in the congruence between exterior and interior. A modesty disposition and modest actions will always, eventually, be mutually entailing. From the point of view of the satirist, hypocrisy is a failure. There is no difference between the true virgin and the false virgin except that Jerome *can see* when the false virgin finally displays her bad character, as she must.

This tension between the false show and the inevitability of discovery is endemic to Roman satire. Juvenal's satire on Stoic philosophers begins with the accusation that despite their ascetic clothes and demeanor, philosophers are really only out to seduce boys. By the end of the satire, Juvenal has given up any effort to expose incongruity between the performance of a philosophic life and the seedy realities. Philosophers are simply fat, effeminate, and greedy. They are easy to recognize in their silks and perfumes and a barbarian boy would do better not to come to Rome for an education.[308] We can conclude that of the many functions of Roman satire, one was to ease anxieties about a social world in which performing a public self was a necessity. Satire tells the uncomfortable truth that one may be mistaken in another's self-presentation, or may not

[308] See satire 2 in: Satires.

be entirely honest in one's own performance. But satire also warns that false performance is found out, and is, in the end, not even possible. Juvenal sees the philosophers in their unmanly garb; Jerome sees the false virgins at their private baths. In the end, a false virgin can no more be neglectful of her appearance than a false philosopher can wear the tribon.[309]

The wealth of satiric material, especially in Jerome's writings, provides excellent evidence for the performative nature of women's modesty in late ancient Christianity. It also provides evidence that this performativity was self-conscious enough to create unease in those recommending modest behaviors. The anxiety over women's ability, and responsibility, to create modest personas through public performances adds more, rather than less, weight to the argument that modesty provided an opportunity for women's agency and self-creation. The portraits of women raising and lowering their veils, consciously controlling their speech and public appearances are exposés not only of false modesty, but of modesty in general. While later satirists condemn society and social performance altogether in favor of a sincerity that usually finds privileged voice in the written word[310], Roman satirists, including their Christian exponents, condemned false performance while insisting that a false performance was unsustainable. The awareness of modesty's artifice adds an element of tension and increases the stakes for both performers and audience. In this sense, the discourse of hypocrisy both adds to a women's responsibility for her performance and adds to the risk. An unsympathetic

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[309] As opposed to the effeminate, transparent robe he ends up wearing in Juvenal 2.

[310] The writings of Rousseau, for example, are his 'sincerity', not his face-to-face interactions. When 'authenticity' replaces sincerity as the opposite of hypocrisy, the artistic creation represents the real. One discovers the artist's true, interior self through autopsy of his/her artistic creation, not through physical presence. Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity. Chapters 3 and 4.

audience can turn a woman's pious self-representation against her using the very same tools he recommends.

III. Glory and Conscience

In a passage reminiscent of Jerome's letter to Eustochium, Pelagius warns Demetrias to avoid false humility and, at the same time, provides a full portrait of the performance of modesty.

> And although you ought to employ a very acute intelligence to distinguish all these and, by following all the virtues with their strict limits of demarcation, never to depart from them at all, yet you must be especially careful to avoid false humility and to follow that true humility which Christ taught us and in which pride is not included, for many pursue the shadow of this virtue, few its reality. It is very easy to wear a modest garment, to give a submissive greeting, to kiss the hands and knees with warm affection, to promise humility and gentleness with the head bent to the ground and eyes downcast, to make subdued conversation in a low, faint voice, to sigh frequently and at every word to proclaim oneself a miserable sinner, then straightaway to raise one's eyebrows, if offended by a frivolous speech, lift one's neck and suddenly exchange that refined tone of voice for a wild shout…Eschew verbal fictions at all times, dispense with feigned gestures and keep your conciliatory speeches for the proper occasions.[311]

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[311] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 20.1 (Rees trans., 58) "Summa tibi scientia sit, notitia summa, vitia, virtutesque distinguere, quae quamquam semper contraria sibi sint, aliqua tamen ex eis tanta junguntur similitudine, ut discerni omnino vix possint. Quam multi enim superbiam libertatis loco ducunt, adulationem pro humilitate suscipiunt, malitiam prudentiae amplectuntur vice, et stultitiae simplicitatis nomen imponunt, atque fallaci ac pessima decepti similitudine, vitiis pro virtutibus gloriantur. Et quamquam haec omnia subtilissima intelligentia debeas separare, cunctaque virtutes cum suis lineis insequendo, nusquam prorsus abscedere: praecipue tamen fictam humilitatem fugiens, illam sectare quae vera est, quam Christus docuit, humilitatem, in qua non sit superbia inclusa. Multi enim hujus virtutis umbram, veritatem ejus sequuntur pauci. Perfacile est enim aliquam vestem habere contentam, salutare submissius, manus et genua deosculari, inclinato in terram capite oculisque dejectis, humilitatem ac mansuetudinem pollicere, lenta voce tenuique sermons infringere, suspirare crebrius, et ad omne verbum peccatorem ac miserum se clamare. Et si vel levi sermone offenses sit, continuo attollere supercilium, levare cervicem, et dlicatum illum oris sonus insano repente clamore mutare…Auferantur

Here is modesty in all its physicality as well as the opposite of modesty, which, if the first is feigned, is bound to erupt in the uncontrolled eyebrow, the rebellious neck, and the shouting voice. Again, modesty may be a bodily performance, but a false performance must collapse.

In one important aspect, Pelagius' account of the false virgin differs from that of Jerome. His portrait begins with an acknowledgement that Demetrias ought practice the virtues in their strict particularity and that she will know how to do this by employing her intelligence (*subtilissima integlligentia*). Although Jerome and Augustine both place emphasis on Demetrias' and her elders' intellectual pursuits, especially in the reading of Scripture[312], self knowledge holds a special place in Pelagius' treatise to the young virgin. Moral self knowledge is the framework for the letter and the content of this self-knowledge was Augustine and Jerome's main complaint against Pelagius. Pelagius begins his letter by asking the virgin to take a look at herself and thereby learn that she has, by nature, the ability to discern good from bad action[313], the freedom to decide between the two, and the capacity to enact those choices. That is, as a person with free will she may live with a clear conscience.

This emphasis on self-knowledge and conscience in Pelagius suggests that his treatise reveals an interior conception of virtues such as modesty and that he is interested in the disposition as well as the activities of modesty. The self knowledge of the virgin

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omnia figmenta verborum, cessent simulati gestus, et ante occasionem sermo placidus." PL 30.34C-35A

[312] See, again: Rousseau, "'Learned Women'."

[313] Also good from bad thoughts. Pelagius recommends an examination of conscience which bears some resemblance to Evagrius Ponticus and other ascetic theoreticians' practices of self-scrutiny. Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* 26.2

does begin in an interior space; however, it quickly travels to a review of the exterior and especially a review of what actions are appropriate to her future and present glory.[314] The interior knowledge of the self and its capacities is a starting point for orienting the virgin towards a proper, glorious external revelation of God's gift of natural free will. In the following passage, Pelagius invites Demetrias inward, but gives external signs of shame, fear, and moral confidence as evidence for the existence and the nature of the conscience.

> Come now, let us approach the secret places of our soul, let everyone examine himself more attentively, let us ask what opinion our own personal thoughts have of this matter, let our conscience itself deliver its judgment on the good of nature, let us be instructed by the inner teaching of the mind, and let us learn about each of the good qualities of the mind from no other source but the mind itself. Why is it, I ask you, that we either blush or fear at every sin we commit, displaying our guilt for what we have done at one moment by the blush on our countenance, at another by its pallor, anxiously trying to avoid any witness even of our smallest offences and suffering pangs of conscience all the while? And why, on the other hand, are we happy, resolute, bold after every good deed we have done and, if this fact is hidden from sight, desire and wish it to be seen in broad daylight?[315]

Pelagius moves Demetrias inward, to ask her mind about its own capacities, but the evidence for the mind's capacity is on the face and in the desire to hide or to

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[314] In some ways Pelagius encourages Demetrias to become a living relic whose virtues shine out of her physical particularity. See: Patricia Cox Miller, "Shifting Selves in Late Antiquity," Religion and the Self in Antiquity, eds. David Brakke, Michael L. Satlow and Steven Weitzman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005).

[315] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 4.1 (Rees trans., 39) "Age jam ad animae nostrae secreta veniamus: seipsum unusquisque attentius respiciat. Interrogemus quid de hoc sentient propriae cogitations. Ferat sententiam de naturae bono ipsa conscientia bona: instruamur domestico magisterio animi: et mentis bona non aliunde magis quaeque, quam ab ipsa mente discamus. Quid illud, obsecro, est, quod ad omne peccatum, aut erubescimus, aut timemus: et culpam facti, nonc rubore vultus, nonc pallore monstramus: ac trepidante animo, etiam in minimis delictis testem effugimus; consicentia remordemur? Ex diverso autem in omni bono laeti, constants, intredpidi sumus: idque si occultum est, palam etiam fieri cupimus, et volumes…" PL 30.19A

display.[316] In this passage, *conscientia* may perhaps better be translated by a contemporary reader as 'self-consciousness' rather than conscience, the latter bringing to mind a private review of actions and thoughts rather than awareness of one's own physical display of shame or pride. Pelagius uses these physical signs as an argument for the naturalness of moral judgment here. In another passage, however, he shows Demetrias how control of facial expression creates a moral character in a specific instance. The virgin can refuse to listen to disparaging talk through her facial response to the speaker. "For the listener, who makes the detractor what he is, is the real accuser, and if he but avert his ears, tighten the muscles of his face and check the movement of his eyes by refusing to look, he can then prove the detractor to be guilty of slanderous talk, so that the latter learns not to be so ready to say what he has now found to be not readily listened to."[317] In this case, the virgin's silence or interior disapproval is not enough to keep her from fault. The listener makes the disparager what he is, and not listening, not internally accepting the speech, must take physical form through the adoption of a series of specific gestures and facial movements. Good conscience does not exist without performance.

Pelagius' insistence on moral self-scrutiny and inward knowledge is matched by his assertion that attention to her own glory as a dedicated virgin will inspire Demetrias to a life of unusual and public virtue.

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[316] Robert Kaster's discussion of *pudor* was extremely helpful in my reading of the following passages from Pelagius. Kaster, Emotion, Restraint, and Community. 56-61.
[317] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* 19.3 (Rees trans., 57) "Accusator est enim auditor, qui facit detractorem, qui si avertat aures, et vultum contrahat, ac oculos abnuendo contineat, male loquentem etiam tacens arguit, ut discat non libenter dicere, quod didicerit non libenter audiri." PL 30.33D

> 'Among whom you will shine as lights in this world'[318]: again we read in the gospel: Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt. 13.43). Life is compared to a reward, so that those who are to be given the brightness of the sun in the future shine forth here with a like splendour of righteousness and light up the blindness of unbelievers with works of holiness. That is the sense which is to be applied to this passage uttered by the same apostle in the course of discussion with the Corinthians: There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So it is with the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor.15.41,42). In the kingdom of heaven there are different dwelling-places in accordance with the merits of individuals; for diversity in works makes for diversity of rewards, and a man will shine there in glory as he has shone here in holiness. Now, therefore, direct your mind's attention to complete moral perfection and prepare yourself to lead a heavenly life for a heavenly reward: let a virgin's holiness shine forth for all to see in the manner of a star and reveal the magnitude of her future reward by the unusual quality of her behaviour.[319]

Throughout the letter Pelagius recalls to Demetrias her future glory and future reward as a member of a distinct and elevated group of Christians. This glory and reward are

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[318] Phil. 2:15

[319] Pelag.-Haer, *Demetr*. 17.1-2. (Rees trans., 54) "*Inter quos lucetis,* ait, *sicut luminaria in hoc mundo*. Et rursum in Evangelio legimus: *Tunc justi fulgebunt sicut sol in regno patris eorum* (Matt. XIII). Comparatur vita praemio, ut qui in futuro solis fulgore donandi sunt, hic jam simili justitiae claritate resplendeant, et infidelium caecitatem, operibus sanctitatis illuminent. Huic loco ille sunsus aptandus est, quem ad Corinthios idem Apostolus disserens, ait: *Alia claritas solis, alia claritas lunae, alia claritas stellarum. Stella autem a stella differt in claritate, sic et resurrectio mortuorum* (I Cor. XV, 41,42). Dispares sunt in regno coelorum per singulorum merita mansions. Diversitas enim operum, diversitatem facit praemiorum: quantumque aliquis hic in sanctitate fulserit, tantum ibi fulgebit in honore. Nunc ergo ad omnem morum perfectionem mentis aciem intentde, et ad coeleste praemium coelestem vitam para. Presplendeat omnibus clarissimi in modum sideris sancitats virginis: et futuri praemii magnitudinem, de novitate conversationis ostendat." PL 30. 31C-31D For other long passages on prizes, rank and honor attending to the virgin, see: Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* 19.1 and 28-30.

compared with the emptiness of present glory and wealth, of which she has both in abundance owing to her status as a noblewoman.[320]

Pelagius does warn Demetrias to avoid flatterers and insists that both inconspicuous morality and the kind that makes for praise must be practiced.[321]

> Often we put up a token resistance to the words of flatterers to their face but in the secret places of our mind we take delight in them and consider that we have received the greatest possible benefit if we are commended even with counterfeit praise, never giving a thought to what we really are instead of to what we may appear to others to be. So things have reached a pretty pass that, blind to true merit, we care only for men's opinion of it and seek evidence for the quality of our life not from our conscience but from our reputation. [322]

The bulk of the letter contains advice to attend to conscience and to glory in order to manifest a shining example of ascetic virtue.

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[320] In Andrew Jacob's analysis of the three letters to Demetrias the nobility of the young woman is at the heart of the 'ascetic logic' in which Demetrias could operate. He interprets Pelagius as accepting her nobility and then emphasizing that it has reached its perfection in the nobility of Christian asceticism. Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias."

[321] "This is how it is with those who, disregarding God's will, seek only what wins them praise more easily and quickly results in fame but neglect the benefits of good moral conduct which are less conspicuous. On the other hand, you, who have trodden underfoot the world and its desires in order that, having done so, you make of them a step, as it were, on which to climb to heaven, you must not seek this world's glory. Concentrate rather on pleasing only the one who is often displeased with what pleases men and who will one day judge the judgment of men themselves. You abstinence and fasting please God all the more because they are offered to him along with moral sanctity, so that actions which others use as a mere façade to cover up their vices become in you adornments of true virtue." Pelag.-Haer, *Demetr.* 18.3 (Rees trans., 56)

[322] "Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* 21.1 (Rees trans., 59) "Saepe adulantium resistimus verbis ad faciem, et in secreto mentis favemus, maxiumumque fructum cepisse nos ducimus, si vel fictis laudibus praedicamur. Nec cogitamus quid ipsi simus, sed quid alteris esse videamur. Unde eo perducta res est, ut, neglecta veritate meriti, de sola opinione curemus, qui testimonium vitae nostrae, non a conscientia nostra, sed a fama petimus." PL 30.35C-35D Augustine does not think that reputation is more important that a clear conscience, but he has a strong argument that ascetic women must maintain their reputations for the benefit of others. I discuss this in the next chapter.

The visibly unique quality of Demetrias' ascetic life is encouraged by the visible approval of her mother and grandmother.

> Consider, I beg you, how much holiness is looked for from you by your grandmother and mother, who, since they think of you as a new and brilliant light born to their family, have now transferred to you alone the whole concern of their minds and follow with a remarkable display of enthusiasm and approval the course which you intend to pursue.[323]

Like examination of her own conscience and attention to her own current and future glory, Demetrias' consideration of her family's reputation, and scrutiny of her behavior, do not lead to any hiding away in a secluded state of good conscience, but a bright manifestation of virtue. Pelagius opens up interior space in the secret places of the heart, mind or soul. This interior space functions not as a home for the 'true self' but as a location from which the virgin can compare her present actions with her future glory and make sure that her actions correspond to her spiritual status. Demetrias' conscience is intrinsic to her discernment and development as a virgin, but is not more truly herself than is her glorious display in the spectacle of her own life[324].

In Pelagius' final meditation on the apocalyptic reward of the virgin, glory is precisely the end goal of the clear conscience.

> But as for you, whose meditation day and night is of the coming of Christ, whose pure conscience longs for the presence of God, who can afford to await the end of the world as the time appointed for your reward, you will have cause for rejoicing from heaven, not fear. Then mingling with the choruses of the blessed and accompanied by holy virgins, you will fly upward to meet your bridegroom…Nor will you have any more to fear that you will be

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[323] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 14.1 (Rees trans., 50) "Respice, obsecro, quantum a te sanctitatis avia materque exspectant; quae cum te quasi novum et illustre quoddam lumen generi suo natum esse putant: nunc in te solam omnem curam animi transtulerunt: et propositi tui cursum, miris studiis ac favore succendunt." PL 30.28C

[324] See: Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr.* 14.3, cited in Chapter 3.

> separated from him at any time, since you will be given once and for all the glory of immortality and the splendour of incorruption… let these be the thoughts that revolve continually in the virgin's heart; to them let your efforts be directed throughout the day, on them lay down your head to rest at night, for them let your soul awake again in the morning. No labour ought to be too difficult, no time too long to wait, when the prize at stake is everlasting glory.[325]

The eternal glory of Demetrias is apparent in her everyday life through the unusual quality of her behavior (*novitate conversationis*). The role of her conscience is not so much to dissuade her from performing in the spectacle of her life, but to make her self-conscious of that performance.

In his study of Roman emotion, Robert Kaster puts 'being aware of others being aware of you'[326] at the heart of *pudor*, the emotion English-speakers usually translate as shame. *Pudor* is, perhaps more than other Roma emotions, highly gendered, and the weight of a woman's *pudor* falls on her sense of and enactment of *pudicitia*, which usually translates as chastity or modesty.[327] Pelagius' emphasis on glory, closely related to honor and especially those civic honors that Demetrias surpasses by her choice to reject marriage and childbearing, implies the opposite of glory and honor, that is, shame. Indeed, his insistence on the virgin's attention to conscience reads as a manual for the

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[325] Pelag.-Haer, *Demetr*. 30.3 (Rees trans., 70) "Tu vero cui adventus Christi dierum noctiumque meditatio est, cui pro conscientiae puritate, Domini est optanda praesentia: quae consummationem saeculi quasi certum praemii tui tempus exspectas, exsultationem de coelo capies, non timorem. Tunc enim tu sanctorum mixta choris, et sanctis comitata virginibus, sponso obviam subvolabis…Nec ullius jam temporis separationem timebis, quae semel immortalitatis Gloria, et incorruptionis splendore donanda es…Haec sit igitur cura tua semper, hoc studium: haec jugiter virginis corde volvantur. In his totius diei versetur labor. In his nocturnes somnus reponatur. In haec anima rursus evigilet. Etenim nullus labor durus: nullum tempus longum videri debet, quo Gloria aeternitatis acquiritur." PL 30.44D-45A

[326] Kaster, Emotion, Restraint, and Community. 28.

[327] Kaster, Emotion, Restraint, and Community. 43-44.

development of a strong sense of *pudor*, the main concern of which in a woman's case is *pudicitia*.

Pelagius opposes the hypocrisy of one who can blush and look down at one moment yet arch her brows and snap at someone the next. However, in his concern for conscience and glory manifest in unusual behavior, he demands that the virgin know at all moments whether she ought blush. She must be the ideal spectator of her own performances, endlessly reviewing whether her actions are worthy of the dignity of her spiritual status. She must be constantly aware of herself, aware of the world, her family, and God's awareness of her. Good conscience is not a replacement for the performance of modesty, but is the guarantor of a truly glorious and triumphant spectacle.

IV. Conclusions

The chapters on modesty in clothing, domesticity and speech opened up the richness and difficulty involved in performing a modest self and maintaining modest reputation. These chapters were an analysis of the outside of modesty, the visible and aural doing of modesty for audiences. I did not question the disposition of the performers in these sections of analysis since the elision of modesty activity with modest disposition seemed to me to hide rather than reveal many of the nuances of modesty in action. Precisely, this elision seemed to hide that modesty could be, and even had to be, a set of carefully controlled actions. But, I argue, however much my ancient sources do show that modesty was made up of high stakes performances, they also assume that *pudicitia*, *castitas*, *modestia*, and *verecundia* were internal virtues or dispositions as well as the actions that gave them force and reality on the social stage.

Congruence between the heart or mind and modest display was important, but the concern was not for sincerity or authenticity as we might understand it. In the case of the satirical material on hypocritical virgins, the authors reveal an intense anxiety over congruence between performance and reality, but resolve the anxiety by reaffirming the inevitable, natural character of virtuous performance. For the satirist, hypocritical virtue is a fantasy. The real character of the performer will always be on view. Satire assures us that what we see *is* what we get since any attempt at a ruse will fail spectacularly. Indeed, the satirist makes sure that his audience is there with him to view the congruent display of character and action in all of its lurid detail.

Pelagius' instruction to Demetrias on the use of conscience is a subtler attempt to manage the possible distance between disposition and performance. He invites her to use her inner capacity for distinction between good and bad, worthy and unworthy (*conscientia*) to measure the success of her performance in virtue, her unusual new way of living. By focusing on her glory, both as a virgin in the church and a future member of the heavenly chorus of virgins, Pelagius plays on the honor that all people, men and women, must protect with their sense of and enactment of shame (*pudor*).

The disposition of modesty is 'internal' to a person in that she starts from her own intelligence or secret locations in her heart. Its orientation, however, is outward. The modest woman is an audience member to her own performances. She must represent herself to others, including the all-seeing satirist, and to herself. She must live up to expectations and to self-expectations. The conscience of the modest woman is an interior knowledge of her self as it is in the world, a self-consciousness about how she is seen by all: community, detractors, family, self, and God.

Chapter Six

A Modest Agency

> Do not let yourself be deceived by the examples of those women who, while applauding themselves on their chastity alone, reject the will of God and follow the dictates of their own wills.[328]

I. Translating Agency Back

I hope I have convinced my readership that among the many aspects of aristocratic feminine asceticism of the late fourth and early fifth centuries the playing out of a spectacular modesty merits attention and analysis. Despite the conventional nature of advice to ascetic noblewomen, in our case the women of the *gens Anici*, an approach to the texts that highlights the performative nature of modesty reveals that modesty was a not only a disposition, but a collection of self-conscious acts for which the women were responsible to an audience.

In addition to translating her questions and conclusions to the implied reader of academic research, scholars who investigate contemporary persons or groups of people are increasingly interested in rendering their work intelligible to their subjects. This is the result of the inherent politics of fieldwork. Over time anthropologists, and perhaps especially feminist anthropologists, have become aware of the power discrepancies between subject and researcher, informant and writer, indigenous culture and colonial gaze.[329] In an attempt to mitigate the power imbalances or at least to make the power

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[328] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 10.2 (Rees trans., 47) "Nec te earum exempla decipiant, quae sibi in sola castitate plaudentes, ut post suas voluntates eant, Dei voluntatem abjiciunt." PL 30.25C

[329]

structures of fieldwork more transparent, many anthropologists are seeking ways to collaborate with their subjects rather than simply 'study' them, to share the product of their research, and to incorporate subject's criticisms of their conclusions.[330] Historians cannot, of course, do likewise, but in thought experiment it is, I believe, necessary and illuminating to ask seriously whether one's questions and conclusions would be at all intelligible to one's subjects.

My thesis has been that evidence from the early fifth century shows that traditional feminine virtue, modesty, provided opportunities for ascetic noblewomen's exercise of agency. This interest in women, feminine virtue, and women's agency might surprise the authors of my primary evidence, but an interest in the human capacity to distinguish, intend, and accomplish virtuous behavior would not. Pelagius' and Augustine's writings to the women of the Anicii, like much of their work from the early decades of the fifth century, are partially products of the theological controversies over the relative status of free will and grace, the origin and transmission of sin, and the efficaciousness and necessity of infant baptism, that come under the heading of the 'Pelagian Controversy'[331]. Because of their location in the ascetic theologies of their

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[330] See, for example: Patti Lather, "Postbook: Working the Ruins of Feminist Ethnography," Signs 27.1 (2001), Elaine J. Lawless, ""I Was Afraid Someone Like You...An Outsider...Would Misunderstand": Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects," The Journal of American Folklore 105.1 (1992), Elaine J. Lawless, Holy Women, Wholly Women: Sharing Ministries of Wholeness through Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), Elaine J. Lawless, ""Reciprocal" Ethnography: No One Said It Was Easy," Journal of Folklore Research 37.2/3 (2000), Narayan, Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon.

[331] All three also show continued interest in the question of the spiritual rank of the virgin, as opposed to a wife or widow. This was a central concern of the Jovinianist controversy of the 390s. Hunter, "Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-

authors, the letters to Demetrias, Juliana and Proba pick up on the central moral question of the Pelagian controversy, that of the human capacity for virtuous action. This theme is the main reason that Augustine and Pelagius' to Demetrias letters are cited in scholarly works up to now. Many secondary sources treat the letters; they are not cited in the previous chapters because I have attempted, as much as possible, to keep this a dissertation about the lives, selves, and actions of early fifth century women rather than the theological maneuvering of three men. But they are, of course, interrelated. Modesty is a virtue, asceticism is the life of superlative training and exercise of virtue. One of the questions at the heart of the Pelagian controversy was: How do people achieve virtue? Pelagius and Augustine have very different answers to the question and by convincing the Anician women of his own position each hopes that the women's status as aristocratic patronesses of extraordinary virtue will add credibility to his point of view.[332]

I have been interested in the agency of the Anician women because I find inherent value in women's doing, past and present, and wish to add what I think is a significant part of that doing, modesty, to the historical record. Pelagius and Augustine and Jerome agreed on the value of modesty, but differed over the extent to which the doing could be referred back to the women. All three reveal, that from the perspective of a social observer, modesty often 'broke out' from routine habit and became a spectacle of

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Century Rome: The Case of Jovinian.", Hunter, Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy.

[332] In "*Demetrias ancilla dei*: The Hidden Agency of the Female Patron," the fourth chapter of her dissertation on the patronage of the women of the gens Anici in the 4th-6th centuries, Anne Kurdoch argues that the competition among theologians for the favor of Demetrias' mother and grandmother was a primary rather than secondary concern of the letter writers. Demetrias' consecration was not merely a convenient excuse for writing on the heated question of the freedom of the will. Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius really were writing to convince the female recipients of the letters, even if they hoped to reach a wider audience as well. Kurdoch, "The Anician Women."

religious self-representation and self-formation. By using the term agency, I imply that these displays were to the credit of the women. The intentions and accomplishments of modest being were, however socially constructed and circumscribed, acted out by the women, not merely acted out upon them. There have been attempts in recent scholarship to identify ancient theological positions as more or less 'good for' women. Orthodox theologies, and especially the ascendant theological outlook of Augustine in the west, have tended to fall on the negative side of these evaluations.[333] Whether this is true or it is just that one imagines the road not take *must* have been less patriarchal and repressive is hard to know, especially since much of the evidence is the negative portrayal of women in heretical movements authored by defenders of orthodoxy. In the following I will try to avoid the question of whether Pelagius or Augustine allowed for more or less agency in the virtuous actions of women and concentrate on the intelligibility of modesty-as-agency in their respective theological understandings.[334]

II. Agency to Obey

The letter of Pelagius to the virgin Demetrias is the clearest extant exposition of Pelagius' views on human free will. The treatise begins with the teacher's explanation that the only way to encourage Demetrias to a life of holy virginity is to show her that

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[333] Both Brakke and Elm suggest that non-Nicene theology was less repressive of women than pro-Nicene theology. Brakke, Athanasius and Asceticism.; Elm, 'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity. Likewise, Andrew Jacobs argues that Pelagius provides more room for Demetrias' agency than does Augustine. Jacobs, "Writing Demetrias." Esp. 733-43.

[334] Jerome mentions a new heresy briefly in his letter to Demetrias but connects the heresy with Origenism. (Hier., *ep.* 130.16) His few words on grace and free will do not seem to be part of any theological engagement. (Hier., *ep.* 130.12) By the next year, 415 AD, Jerome is very much in the battle and in his letter to Ctesiphon traces all heresies including the Pelagian back to silly and lascivious women. (Hier., *ep.* 133.4)

such a life is within her capacity. For him, the instruction manual on ascetic practice is only viable if his student first understands the means by which she will succeed.

> Let us then lay this down as the first basis for a holy and spiritual life: the virgin must recognize her own strengths, which she will be able to employ to the full only when she had learned that she possesses them.[335]

Before engaging in pious living she must acquire self-knowledge. She must recognize strengths and capacities before she can put them into action. According to Pelagius, she has already begun to use the most important of her strengths, the freedom of her will, to enter into the dedicated life.

> Who could possibly lack words to sing the praises of one who, though born in the highest station, brought up in the height of wealth and luxury, held fast by the strength and variety of this life's delights as if in the grip of the most tenacious of fetters, suddenly broke free and exchanged all her bodily goods simultaneously for goodness of the soul? Of one who cut off with the sword of faith, that is, her own free will, the very flower of a life still only just beginning and, by crucifying her flesh with Christ, dedicated it as a living and holy sacrifice to God…[336]

The exciting part of this passage, for the historian interested in women's agency, must be the phrase 'her own free will' (*voluntate*). The 'her own' is the translator's addition, but the English lacks a feminine for 'of one who' (*quae*) so perhaps the emphasis is justified. Pelagius' focus on Demetrias' freedom, will, strength, capacity in doing all the things he

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[335] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 2.1. (Rees trans., 37) "Haec igitur prima sanctae ac spiritualis vitae fundamenta jaciantur, ut vires suas virgo agnoscat: quas demum bene exercere poterit, cum eas se habere didicerit." PL 30.16D

[336] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 1.1 (Rees trans, 34-5) "Cui enim oratio deesse possit in ejus laude celebranda: quae summo loco nata, in summis opibus deliciisque nutrita, tantis tamque variis hujus vitae blandimentis, velut tenacissimis quibusdam irretita vinculis, subito eruperit, cunctaque simul corporis bona, animi virtute mutaverit? Quae florem adhuc ipsum incuntis aetatis, quodam fidei gladio, id est, voluntate succederit? Et cruscifigens cum Christo carnem suam, vivam, sanctamque hostiam sacraverit Deo…" PL 30.0015C

advises, including the many activities of modest behavior, adds weight to the argument that these activities were understood by author and contemporary audience to be within the realm of what we call women's agency. The moment of conversion to the ascetic life is a moment of liberation. Demetrias suddenly breaks free (*subito eruperit*) from chains and takes up a weapon. Some historians have suggested that such a radical rejection of a life of marriage and children for asceticism represented a new 'career path' for wealthy women in late antiquity.[337]

'Career path' implies a life with challenges and rewards that belong to the woman herself, that she chooses for herself and that represents her own interests. But the allusion to the contemporary career woman is deceiving. Men who followed the '*cursus honorem'* did not have limitless choice and their work and honor always belonged to their families as well as to themselves. Jerome and Pelagius praise Demetrias precisely in terms of their male relations who had followed such traditional career paths. They intimate that Demetrias has surpassed them in garnering honor for the family name, not deviated from this ancient project. In breaking free as if from fetters, Demetrias has not broken free from the structures of patriarchy to follow a self-determined path. She has broken free from the chains of sinful habit to follow the narrow path to salvation.

Saba Mahmood locates the 'moral autonomy of the subject' at the center of most feminist conceptions of agency.[338] Freedom is then a necessary condition for any agency worth the name, and freedom was important for Pelagius. However, the terms of that freedom, the place it occupied his conception human life were significantly different.

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[337] Brooten, "Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction."
[338] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 7.

When I think of freedom, I usually understand that freedom as the opposite or alternate to some kind of oppression or coercive regime. Women's freedom, in these terms, then is the alternate to patriarchal oppression. Mahmood defines freedom, generally understood, as a combination of capacity and absence of coercion.

> In short, positive freedom may be best described as the capacity for self-mastery and self-government, and negative freedom as the absence of restraints of various kinds on one's ability to act as one wants…I want to emphasize the concept of individual autonomy that is central to both, and the concomitant elements of coercion and consent that are critical to this topography of freedom. In order for an individual to be free, her actions *must* be the consequence of her "own will" rather than of custom, tradition, or social coercion.[339]

When Pelagius spoke of freedom he did not have in mind political freedoms or social equality. Political and social (and gender) hierarchies were natural facts. He might encourage Demetrias to forget her worldly rank and consider her lower-class ascetic companions sisters, but he approaches her as a potential patroness and never forgets that she is the descendant of consuls. Demetrias is at once his social superior and his social inferior; below him in terms of gender, far above him in terms of wealth, rank, and influence. She had a freedom of means; he had political freedoms. Neither was absolutely free nor absolutely constrained, and both lived in a conceptual world in which issues of constraint and freedom were important and contested. Demetrias' fetters and her freedom mattered. But rather than equate her freedom, her choices, her agency with contemporary women's freedoms and choices, or lack thereof, we must inquire into the nature and contours of the debate as existed for the late antique woman. Freedom from what? Freedom for what?

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[339] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 11.

Saba Mahmood warns against assuming a 'subject of freedom' who moves towards an end goal of liberation. While the issue is crucial to her introductory analysis of feminist scholarship, she largely puts the question of freedom aside in her ethnographic chapters to focus on the methods of moral self-formation among the women of the piety movement. Other feminist anthropologists, who likewise resist analyzing their subjects in terms of resistance and reinscription of norms, keep freedom as a central analytical term, but attempt to draw out indigenous discourse about freedom and women rather than trying to decide if certain practices are liberating or not. Wynn Maggi, for instance, entered the field in tribal Hindukush with a defined set of questions about women's agency. She kept agency as a central concern but shifted from her own questions to examine the ways that women's freedom and choice functioned in the Kalasha people's self-understanding and their relations with their Muslim neighbors.

> My Kalasha friends, both men and women, brushed aside my questions about "female subordinate practice." They were resolutely uninterested in issues of gender "equality" or "women's power and autonomy." It wasn't that these issues were not important. And it is certainly not the case that men and women lived in balanced harmony. But rather, for Kalasha people, comparing the relative position of men and women—ritually, socially, politically—is not very interesting, is not a focus of identity for Kalasha, as it is for many Westerners. On the other hand, the related concepts that Kalasha women are "free" (*azát*) and have "choice" (*cit*)—especially compared to women in neighboring communities—are compelling concerns. The idea of women's "freedom" emerges spontaneously in conversations, and touches the heart of individual women's identities and the collective identity of the Kalasha community.[340]

Maggi organizes her study around the intersecting claims that Kalasha men and women make about their women, not in contrast to men, but in contrast to the women of the

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[340] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 17.

dominant surrounding ethnic and religious group. She looks at specific practices and spaces that the Kalasha offer up as proof that their women are free and have choice. She carefully glosses the terms of her study, however, in order to remind her academic audience that the words 'free' and 'choice' have specific limitations and different resonances among the Kalasha than they might for a western reader.

> Throughout this work, I have glossed the Kalasha word *azát* as the English word *free*. In doing so, I know I run the risk that readers will carry into this discussion their own cultural associations of *freedom* with lightness, boundlessness, and independence rather than interdependence. I know too that *freedom* conjures up all sorts of unsavory associations with unreflective patriotism or naïve feminism. And yet I want to rescue the word and use it, even though it is out of vogue. For one thing, I think *free* really works as a translation for *azát*, at least for one particular meaning of that word in English. You cannot use the word *azát* to describe something that is "empty"—as in the English "free from infection," nor can you use it to signify something that doesn't cost anything. However, if you catch a bird in a trap and then release him, he would be *azát*, free. You are also "freed" from prison. A woman whose husband marries a second wife is *azát*—she can choose to stay with him if she wants to or she can leave him and her husband then forfeits the bridewealth his family paid hers when they were married. (In either case the children are "his," so it's not a decision without consequences.) *azát* then carries the meaning of the English word *free* as in "released from restriction"—but always within it is the assumption that those restrictions were there, were real. If women are "free," it is because they *are also* bounded—by traditions and rules, in marriages, by where they should and shouldn't go and what they should and shouldn't wear. Being free for them means being free to step outside the boundaries of those rules—or to choose not to do so—but it doesn't mean that there are no restrictions, no frame, no norms, no exceptions, no consequences.[341]

Maggi draws out the particularity of Kalasha women's freedom and the specific role the idea women's freedom plays in the ongoing dialogue between the Kalasha and their Muslim neighbors. Following this model, I will focus on several of the particularities of

[341] Maggi, Our Women Are Free. 35.

Demetrias's free will or free choice in Pelagius' treatise as well as the specific function of freedom in his conception of the ascetic life.

To live the life of a dedicated virgin, writes Pelagius, one first must know that one really can live such a life. Free will exists, but cannot come to fruition unless a person knows herself to have the power of choice. Demetrias must recall that she is in the image of God, and that this image consists in her rationality, her ability to distinguish between good and evil and to choose either without constraint.

> It is because God wished to bestow on the rational creature the gift of doing good of his own free will and the capacity to exercise free choice, by implanting in man the possibility of choosing either alternative, that he made it his particular right to be what he wanted to be, so that with his capacity for good and evil he could do either quite naturally and then bend his will in the other direction too.[342]

This natural gift[343] has allowed even non-Christians, such as certain philosophers, to live moral and admirable lives. Since she has also the help of God, Demetrias must be able to do much more. She can find proof of humanity's inherent ability to distinguish and accomplish the good in her own conscience. Everyone, after all, has the experience of blushing for shame at a private crime or feeling righteous pride in an unknown good deed. In addition, the works of Biblical figures who lived in the time before the giving of

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[342] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 3.2 (Rees trans., 38) "Volens namque Deus rationabilem creaturam voluntarii boni munere, et liberi arbitrii potestate donare: utriusque parties possibilitatem homini inserendo, proprium ejus fecit esse quod velit, ut boni ac mali capax naturaliter utrumque posset: et ad alterumtrum voluntatem deflecteret." PL0017D-0018A

[343] Detractors of Pelagius, then and now, focus on the naturalness of the free will; his admirers or rehabilitators focus on the status of the will as a divine gift. See: Gisbert Greshake, Gnade Als Konkrete Freiheit: Eine Untersuchung Zur Gnadenlehre Des Pelagius (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1972).

the law attest to the internal law and natural power of choice. Demetrias' free choice is within her as it is within all. It is a natural and universal attribute.

The opposite of freedom is not force or oppression from without. It is self-imposed bonds of habit. Pelagius describes the giving of the Mosaic law as a remedy for a free will that had fallen out of the habit of making conscience-informed choices.

> In a word, as long as a nature which was still comparatively fresh was in vigorous use and long habituation to sinning did not draw a dark veil, as it were, over human reason, nature was set free and left without law; but when it had now become buried beneath and excess of vices and as if tainted with the rust of ignorance, the Lord applied the file of the law to it, and so, thoroughly polished by its frequent admonishments, it was enabled to recover its former brilliance.[344]

Pelagius returns several times to the theme of habit.[345] This is the sole cause of the great difficulty in living a moral life. In one's nature, one is able to do good or evil with equal ease. There is no deficiency in the will itself. Only long habit makes goodness an arduous task. In this sense, the freedom of which Pelagius writes has much more in common with the freedom promised in contemporary self-help manuals than with the analytics of power and oppression in the gender system. Of course, self-help tends to encourage the actualization of a true, authentic self. Pelagius, having defending a natural and universal freedom of choice, turns to the proper use of choice, obedience.

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[344] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 8.2 (Rees trans., 44) "Denique quamdiu recentioris adhuc naturae usus viguit: nec humanae rationi velut quamdam cliginem, longus sus peccandi obduxit, sine lege dimisse est natura. Ad quam Dominus nimiis jam vitiis abrutam, et quadam ignorantiae rubigine infectam, limam legis admovit, ut hujus frequenti admonitione expoliretur, et ad suum posset redire fulgorem." PL30.0023B On the law as a form of grace in Pelagius' thought see chapter four in: Greshake, Gnade Als Konkrete Freiheit.

[345] On habit in Pelagius see: James Wetzel, Augustine and the Limits of Virtue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). 169-170.

The first section of Pelagius' letter invites Demetrias to turn inward, to examine herself and discover her inner strengths and capacities. Once she has learned of the great dignity and power of her will, a primary attribute of the image of God, she turns outside of herself to discover how to exercise her will.

> A virgin's first concern and first desire ought therefore to be to get to know the will of her Lord and to seek out diligently what pleases and what displeases him; in this way she may render to God, in the words of the apostle, her 'spiritual obedience' (Rom. 12.1), and may be enabled to direct the entire course of her life in accordance with his purpose.[346]

While the movements of conscience provide everyone with an interior guide to good and bad actions, the best way to learn the will of God is through careful study of the Scripture and the division of the law into the forbidden, the allowed, the enjoined, and the advised. Before giving up things which may be allowed and pursuing those which are advised, the virgin must be sure to follow those parts of the law that pertain to all, no matter what their chosen role.[347] Pelagius teaches Demetrias that she must take care to obey all prohibitions. But simply avoiding evils is not the extant of the law; she must also fulfill all the positive commands as well.[348] Only when she is confident that she has learned and enacted the things which are necessary[349] may she begin to seek the higher honors that await those who reject the allowed, such as marriage, meat, and wine, to live in

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[346] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 9.1 (Rees trans., 45) "Prima igitur virginis cura, primumque studium sit, scrire voluntatem Domini sit, et quid ei placeat, quidve displiceat, diligenter inquirere, ut secundum Apostolum *rationabile* Deo reddat *obsequium*: totumque vitae suae cursum ex ejus possit ordinare sententia. PL30.0023D

[347] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 10.1 "In causa justitiae omnes unum debemus: virgo, vidua, nupta, summus, medius, et imus gradus, aequaliter jubentur implere praecepta. Nec a lege solvitur, qui supra legem facere proponit." PL30.0025A-0025B

[348] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 15.

[349] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*. 10.1.

accordance with God's counsels of chastity and abstinence. Throughout the process of study Demetrias will employ her rational faculty to make distinctions and to ensure that her enactment of the law is complete.

The complete compliance of Demtrias to the will of God is meaningless, for Pelagius, if Demetrias' cannot freely choose to comply. He insists that she can and that, therefore, her moral obedience merits extraordinary honor and glory now and especially in the culmination of time. Unlike the accrued political merits of her family and the honor due to her because of her wealth and high birth, Demetrias' moral merit is hers alone and truly her own.

> …but no one except yourself will be able to endow you with spiritual riches, and it is for these that you are rightly to be praised, for these are that you are deservedly set above others, and they are things which cannot be within you unless they come from you.[350]

Freedom of choice, in Pelagius' letter to Demetrias, is not a final goal or marker of the achievement of the good life. Rather, freedom is the condition for meritorious obedience, which results in apocalyptic wellbeing and glory.

> But as for you, whose meditation day and night is the coming of Christ, whose pure conscience longs for the presence of God, who can afford to await the end of the world as the time appointed for your reward, you will have cause for rejoicing from heaven, not for fear. Then, mingling with the choruses of the blessed and accompanied by holy virgins, you will fly upwards to meet your bridegroom and will say: I have found him whom my soul has sought (Song 3.4). Nor will you have any more to fear that you will be separated from him at any time, since you will be given once and for all the glory of immortality and the splendour of incorruption…No labour ought to seem

[350] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 11.1 (Rees trans., 48) "Spirituales vero divitias nullus tibi, praeter te, conferre poterit. In his ergo jure laudanda es: in his merito caeteris praeferenda es: quae nisi ex te, et in te esse non possunt." PL30.0026D

> too difficult, no time too long to wait, when the prize at stake is nothing less than everlasting glory.[351]

The duration of the labor is real, but promise of eternal reward does away with fear.

Feminist analyses of agency, even theologically committed ones, refuse to place women's wellbeing outside the parameters of mundane existence. Agency is a good in itself and constitutive of worldly wellbeing. Promises of reward for good behavior that are postponed until the afterlife or a cosmic renewal might seem no more than convenient placating devices from the point of view of feminist analysis, which is always engaged, at least implicitly, in the redress of injustices to women here and now. The hope of eternal reward appears self-delusional and wrong-headed from a perspective outside that hope.

But I would argue that the lives of ancient Christian women, those who were attempting to comprehend and obey complex and difficult moral codes, reveal much more richness and possibility if we take seriously that they really did want to participate in the heavenly chorus of Christ's brides. Their understanding of final good was not linked to a liberal sensibility about individual political and social freedoms. It entailed a cosmic temporal schema and a desire for incorporation into a transcendent community. Only if we allow for the legitimacy of this final goal, can we begin to appreciate the 'hard labor' of those women whose everyday 'living into norms' was oriented towards more

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[351] Pelag.-Haer., *Demetr*., 30.3 (Rees trans., 70) "Tu vero cui adventus Christi dierum noctiumque meditatio est, cui pro conscientiae puritate, Domini est optanda praesentia: quae consummationem saeculi quasi certum praemii tui tempus exspectas, exsultationem de coelo capies, non timorem. Tunc enim tu sanctornum mixta choris, et sanctis comitata virginibus, sponso obviam subvolabis, et dices: *Inveni quem quaesivit anima mea* (Cant.III.4). Nec ullius jam temporis separationem timebis, quae semel immortalitatis Gloria, et insorruptionis splendore donanda es…Etenim nullus labor durus: nullum tempus longus videri debet, quo Gloria aeternitatis acquiritur." PL30.0044C-0044D

than maintaining social structures.

III. Models of Humility and Gratitude

Pelagius' model of the ascetic woman's agency was, of course, only one of the options available to Demetrias and others like her. Augustine agreed with the tradition that explicitly linked virginity, or vows of celibacy by widows, to freedom. In his treatise 'On Holy Virginity' written around 401 as a companion piece to 'On the Good of Marriage' and a part of his response to the double challenge of Jovinian and Jerome, Augustine holds both the Church herself and Mary as examples for consecrated virgins. Following in the tradition of Athanasius and Ambrose, he writes that virginity draws its prestige in part from its status outside or beyond the law.[352] Virginity is voluntary. Here, Augustine comments on Mary, whom he assumes had taken a vow of chastity even before the miraculous conception of Christ:

> The imitation of heavenly life in a mortal earthly body arose from a vow rather than a command, chosen from love rather than imposed by obedience. In this way, by being born from a virgin who had decided to remain a virgin before she knew who would be born from her, Christ chose to approve of holy virginity rather than command it. Even in the woman in whom he took the form of a slave, he wanted virginity to be voluntary.[353]

Augustine could not completely divorce the long association between the virginal state and the freedom that came into the world with the incarnation of Christ. He, like Pelagius, distinguishes between the allowed and the advised, and he explains that the

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[352] Augustine cites, as was typical, Paul's statement that he had no 'command' concerning virgins. (1 Cor. 7:25) Aug., *Virg*. 13.

[353] Aug., *Virg*. 4 (Kearney trans., 70) "…ut in terrano mortalique corpore coelestis vitae imitatio voto fieret, non praecepto; amore eligendi, non necessitate serviendi. Ita Christus nascendo de virgine, quae antequam sciret quis de illa fuerat nasciturus, virgo statuerat permanere, virginitatem sanctam approbare maluit, quam imperare. Ac sic etiam in ipsa femina in qua formam servi accepit, virgintatem esse liberem voluit." PL 40.398

special honor due to virgins derives from their vow being a step beyond simple obedience to the law.[354]

Even in this work, however, an attempt to defend the special honor of virginity in the face of attack from the spiritual egalitarianism of Jovinian while avoiding the forceful anti-marriage approach of Jerome, Augustine praises virginity more as a gift from God than as a meritorious choice. For Pelagius, spiritual rank proceeds directly from freely choosing to follow both commandments and advice in scripture. For Augustine, the differences in spiritual rank are a part of the mysterious choices[355] of God in giving gifts. He does not emphasize the obedience virgins must exhibit in order to merit their rewards. Instead, he emphasizes the humility with which they must receive and preserve their gifts. The task for virgins is not the attainment of eternal splendor but the preservation, through love and humility, of their extraordinary virtue.

> …it is proper that those who stand out from the rest because of some great gift should be especially concerned to develop and preserve this virtue, and so they will pay great attention to what I said at first: *The greater you are, the more humble you must always be and then you will find favor with God* (Sir 3:18). So, since perpetual chastity, and especially virginity, is a great gift for God's saints, great vigilance is needed to save it from being corrupted by pride.[356]

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[354] Aug., *Virg*. 14.

[355] Augustine treats the justice of God's gift giving in a brief aside. Since it is God giving the gifts, they must be fair even if we cannot see how. "What is fair in the way he treats different people differently, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the human mind to discern; but it would be wrong to have any doubt to have any doubt that he does act fairly." Aug., *Virg*. 41 (Kearney trans., 95-96)

[356] Aug., *Virg*., 33. (Kearney trans., 89) "…tum maxime virtutis hujus sectatores et conservatores eo esse convenit, qui magno aliquo bono caeteris eminent, ut magnopere current illud quod primius posui: *Quanto magnus es, tanto humilia te in omnibus, et coram Deo invenies gratiam* (Eccli. III, 20). Proinde quia perpetua continentia, maximeque virginitas, magnum bonum est in sanctis dei, vigilantissime cavendum est ne superbia corrumpatur." PL 40.415

The 'great vigilance' of the virgin is not in her fulfillment of the law, her knowledge of and exercise of her natural capacities. Her project is the development of a properly humble and grateful attitude towards the outstanding quality of her own life.

Augustine passes over the exercise of womanly virtue as a first step in which his audience surely does not need instruction.

> I am not dealing either with those who have a particular desire to please others, either by wearing clothes too elegant for their lofty calling or by dressing their hair in outlandish styles, whether with towering ornamentation or with veils so delicate that the hair bands beneath are visible. These women do not need to be instructed about humility, but about chastity and modesty. Consider the woman who professes perpetual chastity and has none of these or any similar sins or moral defects. It is for her that I fear pride; it is for that great gift in her that I fear the cancer of self-satisfaction.[357]

Augustine's answer to this potential sin among the spiritually advanced is a constant meditation on the source of one's moral accomplishments, Christ, whose own humility in the Incarnation serves as a model for virgins. Moreover, they ought to contemplate not the perfection of their lives but the many sins they have been preemptively forgiven[358] and the heights of devotion, martyrdom, for example, for which they may not be prepared. Where Pelagius wants ascetic women to know themselves and their capacity, Augustine invites them to consider the ways in which they are un-knowable to themselves and the ways others are unknowable to them.

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[357] Aug., *Virg*., 34. (Kearney trans., 90) "Nec de his ago in quibus est quidam placendi appetites, aut elegantiore vestitu quam tantae professionis necessitas postulat, aut capitis ligamento notabili, sive praetumidis umbonibus capillorum, sive tegminibus ita teneris, ut retiola subeter posita appareant: his nondum de humilitate, se de ipsa castitae vel integritate pudicitiae danda praecepta sunt. Da mihi profitendtem perpetuam continentiam, atque his et hujusmodi omnibus carentem vitiis et maculis morum; huic superbiam timeo, huic tam magno bono ex elationis tumore formido." PL 40.415

[358] Aug., *Virg*. 42.

> What then should be her thoughts? She should consider God's hidden gifts, which are revealed even to the person who has them only when put to the test. Saying nothing about other things, even though she is *concerned about the Lord's interests, how to please the Lord* (1 Cor 7:32), how does the virgin know whether, perhaps, because of some hidden spiritual defect, she is not yet ready for martyrdom, whereas the other woman, whom she delights to think is her inferior, is already able to drink the cup of the Lord's humility, the cup her offered to be drunk first by the disciples who were eager to have the places of honor? What I am saying is this: How can she know whether perhaps she is not yet a Thecla, but the other woman already is a Crispina?[359]

This contemplation should teach the virgin to love the possible perfections of those around her and help her in asking God to heal hidden defects or grant gifts she does not even know she lacks. She will thus be able to protect the holy life she lives, and that is revealed to all in her modest conduct.

> Yes, your way of life is now in harmony with the virginity you profess and preserve. Not only do you have nothing to do with murder, satanic sacrifices and other abominations of the devil, theft, robbery, fraud, perjury, drunkenness, and every kind of greed and excess, pretense, envy, irreverence and cruelty, but even things that are less serious, or at least thought to be so, are not observed in you, an do not happen. There are no impudent looks, no wandering eyes, no unbridled tongue, no suggestive laugh, no smutty jokes, no immodest ways, no extravagant or affected walk. *You do not repay evil with evil, curses with curses* (1 Pt 3:9). In the end you have that supreme degree of love, such that you would lay down your life for your brothers and sisters. Yes, that is how you are now, and that is how you ought to be. When you have added these qualities to your virginity, you will

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[359] Aug., *Virg*., 45. (Kearney trans., 98) Thecla was the legendary follower of Paul who rejected marriage to lead a life of celibate devotion. She faced the beasts in the arena and was saved by miraculous means. Crispina was a married martyr. "Quid ergo cogitabit? Occulta scilicet dona Dei, quae nonnisi interrogatio tentationis, etiam in semelipso, unicuique declarat. Ut enim caetera taceam; unde scit virgo, quamvis sollicita quae sunt Domini, quomodo placeat Domino (I Cor. VII, 32), ne forte propter aliquam sibi incognitam mentis infirmitatem, nondum sit matura martyrio, illa vero mulier cui se praeferre gestiebat, jam possit bibere discipluis amatoribus sublimitatis opposuit (Matth. XX, 22)? Unde, inquam, scit, ne forte ipsa nondum sit Thecla, jam sit illa Crispina?" PL 40.422

> display the life of angels to all, and a heavenly life to all.[360]

The life Augustine expects the virgin to live is not different from that Pelagius expects her to live. Both agree on a complete adherence to the moral strictures of scripture and the social codes for modest womanhood. Both expect virgins to display this, in a remarkable way, to the public. Pelagius, however, focuses on the virgin's ownership of her choices and her glory. Augustine, in the treatise 'Holy Virginity' and in the following years in his letters to the women of the Anicii, continues and intensifies his emphasis on the women's non-ownership of their virtue. What is 'in' them is decidedly not 'from' them. This being the case, does agency translate into the thought-world of Augustine's advice to ascetic women at all?

On the one hand, no, not really; on the other hand, well, sort of. In his letter 'On Widowhood' to Juliana in 414 AD, Augustine comments on the dangers of those who teach that ascetic merit rests on free choice rather than divine gift, but when he refers to the recent consecration of Demetrias, he acknowledges both the girl's choice and her guardians' good will:

> You also have children, which perhaps [Anna] did not, but
> you are not to be commended more because you have them,
> but because you give yourself to their care and education.

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[360] Aug., *Virg*., 54 (Kearney trans., 104-105) "Ecce jam tales estis, ut professae atque servatae virginitati caeteris etiam moribus congruatis. Ecce jam non solum homicidiis, sacrificiis diabolicis et abominationibus, furtis, rapinis, fraudibus, perjuries, ebriositatibus, omnique luxuria et avaritia, simulationibus, aemulationibus, impietatibus, crudelitatibus abstinetis: verum etiam illa aque leviora vel sunt vel putantur, non inveniuntur nec oriuntur in vobis; non improbus vultus, non vagi oculi, non infrenis lingua, non petulans, risus, non scurrilis jocus, nn indecens habitus, non tumidus aut fluxus incessus: jam non redditis malum pro malo, nec maledictum pro maledicto (I Petr. III,9); jam postremo illam mensuram dilectionis impletis, ut ponatis animas pro fratribus vestries (I Joan. III.16). Ecce jam tales estis, quia et tales esse debetis. Haec addita virginitati, angelicam vitam hominibus, et coeli mores exhibent terris." PL 40.427

> They were born because of your fertility, they live because of your good will and ability. People should congratulate you on those other things, but imitate you in this. With prophetic insight Anna recognized Christ in his virgin mother; the grace of the gospel had made you mother of Christ's virgin. That sacred virgin, therefore, whom you offered to Christ in response to her free choice and request, adds to the merits of widowhood of her grandmother and her mother something of the merit of virginity. It is not without consequence that you have this daughter, and in her participate in something you do not have yourselves. In marrying you gave up the holy state of virginity, but as a result it has been born again in your child.[361]

Here the choice of all three women works together to add the superior merits of virginity to those of licit matrimony and chaste widowhood.

Throughout the remainder of the letter, however, Augustine insists that to whatever degree one may have used free will to choose the ascetic life, the important thing is to remember that the will must be aided by grace in order to accomplish, or even intend, any good action. Recognizing that virtue is a gift will inspire humble and ardent love rather than self-satisfaction and pride.

> So, when we refuse to be proud and ungrateful and deny God's grace, by which even free will itself is aided, but rather with devout gratitude proclaim it, in no way do we destroy human free will. The willing is ours; but the will itself is instructed so that it will raise itself up, and is healed so that it will have strength, and is enlarged so that it will be receptive, and is filled so that it will possess.[362]

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[361] Aug., *Vid*. 17 (Kearney trans., 124-125) "Tibi autem sunt et filii quos forte illa non habuit: nec ideo laudanda es, quia eos habes, sed quia pie nutrire atque educare studes. Ut enim tibi nascerentur, fecunditatis; ut vivant, felicitates est: ut autem homines gratulentur, in hoc te imitentur. Anna per propheticam scientiam cognovit apud matrem virginem Christum; te evanglica gratia fecit matrem virginis Christi. Illa tiaque sancta virgo, quam Christo volentem et petentem obtulistis, vidualibus aviae matrisque meritis addidit aliquid de merito virginali. Non enim nihil inde habetis, quae hanc habetis: et in illa estis, quod in vobis non estis. Nam ut sancta virginitas adimeretur nubentibus vobis, ideo factum est, ut nasceretur ex vobis." PL 40.441

[362] Aug., *Vid*. 21 (Kearney trans., 127) "Proinde arbitrium voluntatis humanae nequaquam destruimus, quando Dei gratiam que ipsum adjuvantur arbitrium, non

One may say that although Augustine always retains some understanding of human free will,[363] he wants his audience to attend to the more important matter: God's freedom in gift-giving and the appropriate human response. In 417-418, when Augustine writes Juliana to address directly Pelagius' letter to Demetrias, he admits 'some small degree'[364] of freedom of choice but argues strongly against the virgin's personal ownership of her ascetic merits.

> Let her say, *In me, O God, are the vows of praise that I will pay to you* (Ps 56:12), but because they are in her and do not also come from her, let her also remember to say, *O Lord, by your will you have given virtue to my beauty* (Ps 30:8). For, even if they come from her on account of personal choice, without which we do no good work, still they do not come only from her, as this fellow said. Unless one's own choice is helped by the grace of God, a good will cannot exist in a human being. *For it is God,* the apostle says, *who produces in you both the willing and the action in accord with good will* (Phil 2:13), not, as they think, merely by revealing the knowledge in order that we might know what we ought to do, but also by instilling love in order that by loving we may do what we have come to know through learning.[365]

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superbia negamus ingrata, sed grata potius pietate praedicamus. Nostrum enim est velle; sed voluntas ipsa et admonetru ut surgat, et sanatur ut valeat, et dilatatur ut paciat, et impletur ut habeat." PL 40.443-444

[363] For an interpretation of Augustine's theology of the will that locates 'freedom' as necessarily tied to moral choices (no immoral choice can possibly be free), see: Wetzel, Augustine and the Limits of Virtue. See especially the conclusion in which Wetzel takes up the arguments of contemporary philosophers who have great difficulty in seeing any freedom at all in Augustine's account of the human will.

[364] Aug., *ep.* 188.8

[365] Aug., *ep.* 188.7 (Teske trans., 255) "Dicat quidem, *In me sunt, Deus, vota tua, quae reddam laudis tibit (Psal. LV, 12):* sed quia in illa, non etiam ex illa, meminerit etiam dicere, *Domine, in voluntate tua praestitisti decori meo virtutem (Psal. XXIX, 8):* quia etsi etiam ex illa propter arbitrium proprium sine quo non operamur bonum, non tamen sicut iste dixit, *nonnisi ex illa.* Proprium quipped arbitrium nisi Dei gratia juventur, nec ipsa bona voluntas esse in nomine potest. *Deus est enim,* inquit Apostulus, *qui operatur in vobis et velle, et operari, pro bona voluntate (Philipp, II, 13):* non, sicut isti sentient, tantummodo scientiam revelando, ut noveriums quid facere debeamus; sed etiam

The question of the women's, or anyone's, personal agency in virtuous action is secondary to the divine agency in revealing the good, inflaming the will with desire for the good, and granting the capacity to accomplish the good. Demetrias has a choice, but she can only make the right choice by the gift of God and only the good choice is, in fact, a free choice. The choice is hers, it is in her, but is not from her. Concentration on the present location of virtue, in herself, will only lead to pride. Instead, she must focus on the source of virtue.

If the Anician women lived entirely in the theological world Augustine championed, their response to a study of their agency might be, 'You're studying the wrong thing.' But if the study were presented as one about the importance and effective power of their ascetic behaviors as exempla for an audience, they might respond enthusiastically. Augustine, as the chapters on domesticity and silence suggest, was very much interested in the mutual encouragement of ascetic women through exhortation, modeling and imitation. Augustine chastises Pelagius for not realizing that his own exhortations are only effective through grace,[366] but he never gives up on the importance of exhortation and the provision of models for imitation.

In his letters and treatises to Demetrias, Juliana, and Proba, Augustine calls attention to the women's status as leaders of household ascetic communities. His advice is never for them alone, and he requests that if anything is unnecessary for their own use, they pass it on to those for whom it may be useful.[367] Whether or not the virtuous lives of

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inspirando charitatem, ut ea quae discendo novimus, etiam diligendo faciamus." PL 33.851

[366] Aug., *Vid*. 22 (Kearney trans., 128-129)

[367] Aug., *Vid.* 1 (Kearney trans., 113)

the Anician women are *from* them, so long as virtue exists *in* them, they can be effective models for their own household and the wider community.

In his letter to Proba on the holy widow's duty to pray, he makes clear that her activity in prayer is not one of making her will known to God, but stirring up her desire for God's gifts. As she does this she becomes an example for the rest of the household. Her special role in prayer as an elderly widow has effects throughout her family, even though she is to consider herself 'desolate' in the world.

> But if you seek and savor those things that are above, you desire eternal and certain things, and as long as you do not have them, you ought to consider yourself as desolate, even if all of your dear ones are safe and sound and attending you. And if you do so, by your example your most devout daughter-in-law and the other holy widows and virgins placed under your care will, of course, do so with greater security. For, the more piously you govern your house, the more fervently you should devote yourself to prayers, not occupied with the tasks of present affairs unless a motive of piety demands it.[368]

The importance of ascetic behavior as a mode of teaching extends beyond the household and into the community. Augustine warns Juliana, in his treatise, 'The Excellence of Widowhood', it is not enough to have a clear conscience about her activities. She must also take care to maintain a good reputation on account of the way that her life functions as a model for others.

> With all the undoubtedly spiritual pleasures that unmarried women enjoy, their holy conduct must also be cautious, so

[368] Aug., *ep.* 130.30 (Teske trans., 199) "Tu autem si ea quae in sursum sunt quaeris et sapis, aeterna et certa desideras, quae quamdiu nondum habes, etiam salvis omnibus atque obsequentibus tuis, tanquam desolatam deputare te debes. Et sit u, profecto etiam tuo exemplo religiosissima nurus tua, et aliae sanctae viduae virginesque sub vestra cura securius constitutae: quanto enim magis domum vestram pie tractatis, tanto impensius orationibus instare debetis, rerum praesentium non occupatae negotiis, nisi quae flagitat causa pietatis." PL 33.506-507

> that there will be no chance of it happening that, although their life is not evil with obscenity, their reputation is bad through carelessness. You must pay no attention to those holy men or women who, when they are criticized for some carelessness that results in their being suspected of wrongdoing they know they would have no part of, say that they are satisfied to have a clear conscience before God. In their disdain for what people think of them not only are they unwise, but they are also cruel, because they destroy the souls of others. Some blaspheme against God's ways because their suspicions lead them to condemn the way of life of holy people, chaste though it is, as they it were depraved. Others make it an excuse to imitate, not what they see, but what they think is the case. Hence any woman who does not lay herself open to charges of sin and crime does well for herself; but one who also preserves her good name is kind to others as well. Our life is necessary for ourselves, but our good name is necessary for others.[369]

The conduct of the Anician women is not, in Augustine's view, solely or even primarily to the credit of the women. Their conduct has a sort of agency of its own, however. Reputation, which required so much labor and negotiation to maintain, had serious consequences for the spiritual wellbeing of those within the sphere of influence of distinguished ascetic women. The 'carefulness' and 'cautiousness' of which Augustine speaks are part of the self-awareness of the pious woman as she represents herself to a curious and sometimes hostile audience.

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[369]Augustine, *Vid*. 27 (Kearney trans., 132-133) "In omnibus sane spiritualibus deliciis, quibus fruuntur innuptae, sancta earum conversatio cauta etiam debet esse; ne forte cum mala vita non sit per lasciviam, mala sit fama per negligentiam. Nec audiendi sunt, sive viri sancti, sive feminae, quando reprehansa in aliquo negligentia sua, per quam fit ut in malam veniant suspicionem, unde suam vitam longe abesse sciunt, dicunt sibi coram Deo sufficere conscientiam, existimationem hominum non imprudenter solum, verum etiam crudeliter contemnentes; cum occident animas aliorum, sive blasphemantium viam Dei, qubis secundum suam suspicionem quasi turpis quaecasta est displicet vita sanctorum, sive etiam cum excusatione imitantium, non quod vident, sed quod putant. Proinde quisquis a criminibus flagitiorum atque facinorum vitam suam custodit, sibi bene facit: quisquis autem etiam famam, et in alios misericors est. nobis enim necessaria est vita nostra, aliis fama nostra…" PL 40.448

In addition to aiding others by preserving good reputations and providing exempla for virtuous living, Augustine expects the women of the Anicii to take up the causes of orthodoxy and asceticism. Augustine denies that any teacher can affect the disposition or moral path of another without God making the teaching effective, and he urges Juliana to teach this very doctrine.

> On the contrary, a human being may have the greatest power of speech, able by careful argument and pleasant style to plant in the human will the seeds of truth and nourish love, to drive out error by teaching and dispel lethargy by motivating, nevertheless, *neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the increase* (1 Cor 3:7). The laborer's external toil is all in vain, unless the creator works secretly within. I hope, therefore, by your good efforts this letter of mine will quickly reach the hands of those people too.[370]

Productive results from teaching may come only from God's gift, but this certainly does not stop Augustine from teaching or encouraging others, including Juliana and her family, to teach. In his final exhortation to Juliana in 'The Excellence of Widowhood' he asks her no less than five times to speak up and encourage others to imitate her way of life.[371] The problems in translating agency are particularly vivid here, where the author who champions women's free will, Pelagius, tends to encourage their silence, and the author who asks women to think of their accomplishments as gifts rather than choices, Augustine, also asks them to 'be zealous in encouraging'.[372]

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[370] Aug., *Vid*. 22 (Kearney trans., 128-129) "Imo vero, quantalibet homo sermonis facultate praepolleat, ut solertia disputandi et suavitate dicendi in hominis voluntate inserat veritatem, nutriat charitatem, docendo tollat errorem, exhortando torporem: *Neque qui plantat est aliquid, neque qui rigat; sed qui incrementum dat Deus (I Cor. III,7).* Frustra quipped operarius omnia moliretur extrinsecus, nisi Creator intrinsecus latenter operaretur. Spero ergo has litteras meas merito Excellentiae vestrae cito in manus etiam talium esse venturas." PL 40.445

[371] Aug., *Vid*. 28 (Kearney trans., 134)

[372] Aug. *Vid.* 28 (Kearney trans., 134)

IV. Conclusions

Feminist historians do not live in a world where agency is a settled question despite the intense concern over 'how much' agency women in historically and culturally specific locations may have. Contemporary western intuition may tell the scholar that agency should be 'doing something freely in one's own interest'. Even this loose definition fails to capture the agency of aristocratic ascetic women in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The condition of freeness of action, the origins of effective action, the definition of what might be in one's own best interests, all these were subject to debate.

Saba Mahmood concludes that it is impossible to define agency from the outset and that its sense must emerge from analysis of indigenous concepts. "…if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself if historically and culturally specific…then the meaning and sense of agency cannot be fixed in advance, but must emerge through an analysis of the particular concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity."[373] In the case of the letters and treatises addressed to the Anicii women, there is no question of one particular set of concepts emerging since the very questions of effectivity and responsibility are at the center of controversy. I have been exploring one mode of being, modesty, and from the outside it looks very similar in the writings of Augustine, Jerome, and Pelagius. In all three, it appears to require skillful display for which one is responsible to a wide audience. In the terms of the theological debate, however, the enactment of any virtue, including modesty, is a successful use of free choice in obedience to the divine will. Or it is a gift of the divine will, entirely her own

[373] Mahmood, Politics of Piety. 14-15.

but never originating in herself. For Pelagius she is responsible if she succeeds or if she fails. For Augustine she is responsible if she fails and graciously favored if she succeeds; her actions are effective *through* her if not *by* her.

In analyzing the modesty of the Anician women, I can neither fix the meaning and sense of agency in advance nor settle it at the end. I might have my own ideas about what agency 'really is', but I know I have changed my mind many times. Sometimes this has affected how I act and sometimes not. The subjects of my study were in the process of making up their minds too. Even Augustine at his most Augustinian or Pelagius at his most Pelagian was well aware of the other options for understanding human freedom, choice, and action. One of the choices the Ancian women had in a very vivid way during their lifetimes was how to understand their own choices. None of these choices map very well onto contemporary sensibilities about what agency should entail. The notion of thinking about agency, inquiring into people's capacities for choice, charting the range of their freedom, the conditions of their un-freedom, this would be, I believe, intelligible to my subjects. Part of what the Ancian women had to do, as they did modesty and the other virtues of the ascetic life, was to work out the sense and meaning of their doing.

Conclusion

A bumper sticker you can purchase at any feminist bookstore reads: Well-Behaved Women Rarely Make History. The aim of this dissertation has been to re-evaluate a group of well-behaved women, modest women, and make them part of history. They were already part of the historical record. Their acts and dilemmas, the risks they took and the rewards they expected, are not hidden away or erased. Doing what one is supposed to do, however, is not usually a topic for study, unless the goal is to uncover the oppressive structures that make a person do what she is supposed to do. My argument is not that modesty was liberating, but that living up to the cultural ideal of feminine decorum was challenging work. Modesty was on display. It engaged skills of self-presentation and contributed to a women's developing self-understanding. I explored the ways that wearing and manipulating clothes created a modest identity. I investigated the creation of a modest reputation through women's location in domestic space, creation of domestic space, and movements within domestic and public spaces. I drew out the nuances of women's modest silence and showed how silence was performed through self-conscious hesitation, refraining, and specific modes of speech. Moving from the performance of modesty to the disposition of modesty, I analyzed the expectations for congruence between a woman's performance of modesty and her interior disposition and the way that she maintained a modest disposition through attention to the congruence between her actions and her spiritual status. The study ended with a survey of the ways the modest woman could understand her ownership of her modest acts, her agency in modesty. This section also began a discussion between contemporary definitions of agency and those that obtained in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Modesty was a

topic worthy of the attention of my subjects' contemporaries and is, I believe, worthy of scholarly attention as well.

The analysis of the modesty as a performance in this dissertation gives a starting point for the re-evaluation of ascetic virtues, masculine and feminine. There is a wealth of clues to the specific staging and acting out of modesty in the body of material I have used and a vast deal more is available. Many more texts would benefit from re-readings in the light of a performance analysis and in conjunction with contemporary ethnography. I had considered modesty a lack rather than a presence until I started reading ethnographies of women who do *laj* or keep *purdah* or try to develop *al-haya'*. The rich detail of ethnography opens seemingly banal comments on the veiling of virgins or the way a group of consecrated women should travel to church. Good behavior takes on a potential and interest once one begins to see it in the light of negotiations for status, self-understanding, religious identity, and household relationships. The work that I have begun on modesty can be widely applied to other ascetic virtues, especially those like modesty, which began as ordinary civilian virtues but took on intensified meaning in ascetic contexts.

Through this dissertation I have contributed to the history of early Christian asceticism by bringing to the forefront a generally neglected virtue and approaching it in a unique manner. Both the topic and the methodology of the dissertation can, I believe, enrich the discussion of feminine asceticism and the practice of virtues in the early church in general. My attention to agency as a category of analysis also contributes to the ongoing process in feminist scholarship of defining this term in relation to specific historical and cultural contexts. Ideally, my investigation of the spectacular modesty of

the Anician women has contributed to both sides of the feminist historians' mirror, by helping us to reflect more clearly on the women of the past and more clearly on our own projects.

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