THE POLITICS OF VIRGINITY AND WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVITY:
A LITERARY/Critical ANALYSIS OF PRESCRIPTIVE TEXTS
ADDRESSED TO WOMEN ASCETICS

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BY
LAURA LOMAS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the practice of women's asceticism in the late fourth century as it was defined in the prescriptive texts of Sts. Ambrose and Chrysostom. Several feminist scholars have affirmed that women's asceticism provided a liberating alternative for women. They base their conclusion on the ascetic woman's greater equality with men. Michel Foucault's theory of the subject suggests that the individual constructs herself in accord with an ethical ideal, but this self-construction occurs according to various bodies of knowledge. The texts on virginity function as discourse. That is, they are tools used to reshape behavior; and they are products of power, which reveal how and where power operates. To examine the relationships of power visible within the discourse on virginity, I examine the repudiations of male and female celibate cohabitation, which reveal the characteristics of an individual that resist power and where domination had to occur. Secondly, I read texts which prescribe holy virginity and reveal the strategic definitions and metaphors which effect a greater control over the individual woman. Using primarily a textual analysis which is an attempt to simulate the reading experience of the fourth century virgin, I draw a different conclusion than some feminist scholars. Although the virgin gained certain freedoms through the practice of virginity, the liberation of the virgin also insidiously increased ecclesiastical control over her mind and body for the church's political purposes.
general framework of power. To redress Foucault's androcentric reading of the Christian period is yet another impetus for this study.

However, this thesis focuses on the texts written by Sts. Chrysostom and Ambrose and other church fathers, rather than the women who practiced asceticism. I read the prescriptive texts to understand the effects upon the virgin who also would have read or listened to these texts in the congregations of the church fathers. Although the texts in themselves betray information about their context and the people to whom they were addressed, the historical documentation of the activities of the women ascetics in Milan and Antioch comprises another category of research. Here, I interrogate the texts of two influential church fathers as instances of a discourse in the fourth century which exemplify a dominant prescription for the way women ought to understand themselves. This study introduces a new critical framework to evaluate previous feminist interpretations of the practice of women's asceticism. I do not attempt a broad historical reconstruction of the women who practiced virginity, but instead interpret cultural texts. My purpose, in part, is to call attention to the role of interpretation when drawing conclusions about women's liberation, and to emphasize the importance of constantly critically reappraising our assumptions. Feminist methodology itself must undergo constant evaluation in light of new ways of understanding power and subjectivity.

The valiant lives of the women who defined themselves through the practice of virginity and other stringent ascetic practices remain the motivating object of interest behind this project. Many questions, however, are simply unanswerable: How did they come to discipline themselves to the extent that they did? Moreover, where are all the letters they wrote, filled with translations from Greek and Hebrew, theological reflections and academic commitment? This thesis cries out for the voices of the women who remain outside of our grasp. I would like to see this project as part of the work of understanding the historical process by which we have constructed ourselves in relation to the category of our gender. The Philadelphia Inquirer of March 12, 1989 reports the Vatican's decision to
conduct a study on the effects of what they termed "radical feminism" on the church. According to the article, the bishops argued during meetings that "feminism had brought on negative effects, particularly on women's attitudes toward their role in the family and their position in the church." To me this indicates the continuing attempts of the church as a social institution to influence women's behaviors through disciplining their attitudes. The church, which was finalizing one phase of its institutionalization in the close of the fourth century, still affects the subjectivity of women today. Although it would be incorrect to directly connect the struggles of today to those of women in the late fourth century, I see this study as an investigation of one node in a succession of paradigms of the subject existing within different historical and cultural moments within a long history of the church's influence over the bodies and souls of women.

I would like to thank the numerous people who have helped me in this project including Amy-Jill Levine, for introducing me to John Chrysostom and feminist scholarship on church history in general. In particular, I am indebted to Elizabeth Clark, who has made many of the primary texts of Late Antique Christianity which pertain to women available to me. I thank Michael Greenwald for his encouragement throughout the project, and I thank Abbe Blum, whose unending support and brilliant mind generated many sparks which illuminated this study. I also would like to thank my family and friends Michele, Michael, Chrissy, Susanna, Stephen and many others for listening to my profuse diatribes on virginity and Foucault, and providing perspective throughout.
NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of works by John Chrysostom:

Adv. eos: Adversus eos qui apud se habent subintroductas virgines
Quod reg.: Quod regulares feminae viris cohabitare non debeant
De virg.: De virginitate

Abbreviations for Roman Laws:

Cod Th.: Codex Theodosianus
Sirm.: Sirmondian Constitutions

Abbreviations of works by Michel Foucault:

DP Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison
CHAPTER ONE: THE CONSECRATED VIRGIN AND FOUCALUT

All margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of the fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points.

--Mary Douglas

The ideal and practice of Christian virginity developed against the backdrop of the shift between pagan and Christian cultures in the fourth century. The practice of virginity—perpetual abstinence from sexual intercourse in conjunction with a variety of other ascetic disciplines—developed as the church was struggling to assert a unified doctrine. According to Peter Brown, by the fourth century, "the ideal of virginity enjoyed a moral and cultural supremacy...that remained unchallenged until the Reformation."¹ Various church fathers in the nascent orthodoxy wrote texts on virginity, which exhorted men and women to the practice.² These texts defined a "profession"³ for women insofar as the practice exempted them from marital and maternal responsibilities, and freed them to pursue the ideal of virginity.⁴

The profession of virginity provided women with different responsibilities than those of wife and mother, and therefore created a new role.⁵ According to Jo Ann MacNamara, the notion of virginity "became a profession, not a physiological accident; it became a continuing way of life, not an ephemeral characteristic of adolescence."⁶ Therefore, a practicing virgin in Christianity differed from the young girl who simply did not have sex before marriage. Rosemary Radford Ruether further suggests the profession of virginity introduced a new "subject-hood," which she defines as:

the sense of taking charge of one's own life; of rejecting a state of being governed and defined by others. One experiences the sense of moving from being an object to becoming a subject.⁷

As subjects, women defined themselves according to a self-chosen ideal, which in the fourth century Christian church, was virginity.⁸ In this thesis, I will use this definition of the subjectivity as bringing oneself into accord with an ideal that one chooses. Ruether,
along with numerous other scholars concludes that the woman's role as a subject, achieved through the practice of virginity provided greater liberation for women. However, Michel Foucault complicates this understanding of the subject.

This new role of the ascetic woman has been defined by numerous feminist scholars as a somewhat liberating alternative for women in the fourth century. Against this conclusion, my purpose in this thesis is to illustrate that the woman's entry into subjectivity not only made available a new social role with a variety of options, but also increased the church's control and domination of the individual virgin. Michel Foucault suggests that the individual subject constructs her/himself according to an ethical ideal, which is constructed according to local political needs. As a self-produced construct, the ascetic woman not only liberates herself, but also she subjects herself to the structures of power that are at work in her specific historical context, as revealed in texts. I will appropriate aspects of Foucault which illuminate the problem of the female subject in order to re-evaluate the two broadly defined positions within feminist scholarship on women's asceticism.

Elizabeth Clark and others have demonstrated that ascetic women--especially those who were of the Roman aristocracy in the fourth century--reaped both spiritual and worldly rewards that would not have been conceivable for a wife and mother. The Christian virgin's spiritual status was lauded by numerous writers for the church. Virgins of the church were exalted as a model for all Christians: the virgins were to reap "one hundred-fold" in heaven, whereas the married persons would reap only sixty. Church fathers' previously attributed this prominent reward only to the martyrs, whom the virgins, it has been argued, replaced. Finally, this state of virginity was depicted in terms of a marriage with a Spiritual Bridegroom, which enriched the virgin's sexuality with divine value. The relationship of virgin to Christ resulted in a mystical union with God that could not be topped by humanly love.
On a worldly plane, ascetic women gained privileges which were unavailable to her married counterparts. Paula, Marcella, Fabiola, and Blaesilla who were acquainted with Jerome, all studied scripture, learned Hebrew and Greek, participated in scholarly debates and took pilgrimages to the desert extensively under his tutelage.\textsuperscript{13} As several of these women were wealthy heiresses, they were able also to allot their vast fortunes for the development of monasteries and cathedrals under the auspices of charity.\textsuperscript{14} Both Olympias, and Melania the Younger also set up and then orchestrated their own religious communities.\textsuperscript{15} Many of these wealthy women provided monetary assistance crucial to the establishment of the church.

The feminist scholars who emphasize these advances do so in light of the obvious patriarchal bias of the church fathers. In this perspective, feminine advancement represents an anomalous bonus for women despite misogynist rhetoric. Liberation, or the entry into the role of the subject, requires an assimilation of the female into the male gender role. Ruether, for example, sees liberation in the throwing off of traditional roles of marriage and motherhood. For MacNamara, abandoning these roles is "what it means to become a man," and claim the rights associated with masculinity.\textsuperscript{16} Elizabeth Clark draws a similar conclusion when she notes that "manly" virgins experienced personal liberation. In each of these assessments, subjectivity and liberation are strikingly identified with male behaviors, and set against those of the maternal role as raiser of children. This equation of similarity to men with liberation for women raises questions about Ruether's definition of liberation, and the limits of the categories used by feminists to define the subject.

Through showing likenesses to aspects of male privilege, Clark demonstrates the "feminine advancement" of these women's status. She notes the freedom enjoyed and the assertive behavior which is attested to by the striking similarities between monastic styles of men and the women.... In many respects, the patristic assertion that ascetic women were "virile" is based on an accurate representation of the concrete conditions of their lives and conditions that resembled the men's.\textsuperscript{17}
Clark points out the equal opportunities for advancement within the monastic calling. Just as the church fathers' praise of females "who rise above their sex," and "play the man," Clark determines that if the woman's life resembles the man's, then she experiences an increased status. Clark bases her conclusion upon the virgin's newfound rights to study, to escape the domestic sphere, to travel, and to set up independent monasteries. These activities enabled the virgin, in this analysis, to advance beyond the Christian matron. She concludes that the fourth century woman ascetic prefigures a freer woman of the fifth:

The fact that [the women ascetics] were exceptional should not preclude our understanding of them as harbingers of the future: in the process of social liberation, one century's exception becomes the commonplace of the next. Thus, while the church fathers thought the female ascetics "virile," we might rather label their behavior "androgynous." 18

Because the activities of these women are similar to men's, Clark suggests that women's asceticism led to personal liberation. Clark recounts the denigration of "the female" and the Roman matron in late patristic writings to demonstrate that the woman ascetic who takes on male characteristics escapes the identification with the matron and becomes instead "androgynous." This term indicates a definition of the female ascetic which incorporates both male and female. However, Clark's revision of "virile" to the term "androgynous" indicates the very limited distinction between the terms. Because the condition of entering this androgynous state is the transcendence of the the female, Clark's use of the term cloakss a primarily male self-definition within a category that thus falsely suggests both genders equally intertwined.

In contrast to Clark's methodological conclusion that social advancement is defined by male standards, some scholars on this subject believe that the exhortation to manliness and virility requires a debilitating denigration of the female "nature." Rosemary Radford Ruether in an earlier article, concludes:

woman rises to spirituality, personhood and equality with the male, but only at the expense of crushing out of her being all vestiges of her bodily and her
Thus, the frequent claim that Christianity elevated the position of woman must be denied. It actually lowered the position of woman compared to more enlightened legislation in later Roman society as far as the *married woman* was concerned, and elevated woman only in her new 'unnatural' and anti-female role as 'virgin.'

Ruether views the virgin's role is unnatural and anti-female because it requires hatred of the self and body. Elizabeth Castelli, in her article on "Virginity and its Meaning for Women in Early Christianity," similarly recasts what she terms an "ideology" of self denial as part of the culture's repression of "passions." She links the repression of the passions to a Stoic concept of the repression of the female by the male, presented in Gregory Nyssa's biography of the virgin Macrina. Although she notes that the practice of virginity may have been liberating insofar as it allowed a woman control over her own body, she concludes that it resulted in self-abnegation, and was especially destructive for women.

The construction of the feminine as passion means that women, and the embodiment, or cultural representation of the feminine, are erased by that repression of passion. Therefore, for a woman to participate in the institution which calls for the negation of the feminine, is, on one level, for her to participate in a profound self-abnegation, self-denial, even self-destruction.

According to Castelli, in any advancements the women made, they progressively became less female and had to deny their own nature. Castelli defines a certain essential quality of the female in women that was repressed in the practice of virginity.

To illustrate her point, Castelli highlights many of the same examples Clark uses to show the androgyny of women. She cites passages where church fathers praise virgins because they take on "virile" or "manly" characteristics. For Castelli, and I would agree, the masculinization of the ascetic woman by repressing her female nature cannot be unproblematically seen as "androgyny" or "liberation." The advancement of a woman according to male definitions requires an internalized disgust of the female. Thus, the virgin suffers as a result of the dichotomies of mind/body, spirit/flesh, male/female that grow out
of classical and Stoic philosophies, and which are used in an androcentric culture by both society and Christianity to justify the subordination of women.

However, in Castelli's conclusion that the practice of virginity simply repressed passion, and by analogy the female, she essentializes categories of male and female. After identifying the victimization of the female in the Christian appropriation of current Roman philosophical and cultural values, her critique maintains the very categories which were used to specify and constrain women. By contrast, I want to suggest that these categories of mind and body, spirit and flesh, and male and female were *maintained and invested* by power for the purpose of allowing greater control over the virgin's body. Because power employs these categories, they can be read as strategically produced.

These categories of mind/body, male/female, etc., function to increase control by introducing dualistic aspects of a person which can be known and disciplined by power. The virgin who is able to master herself, becomes a subject who can exercise a certain amount of freedom. However, through this very relation to the self she monitors the self according to *prescribed* structures of knowledge, which have been used to oppress women. Thus, the role as subject not only places women within a system of power that grants them some equality with men in terms of various benefits, but the profession of virginity also produces the domination of the virgin through the operations of power in their historical context of an emerging Church institution. To note the ambivalent effects of the entrance into subjectivity is not a new claim. My purpose in this thesis is in part to re-appraise the conclusions and the different methodologies used by Ruether, Clark and Castelli in light of Michel Foucault's theory of the subject. I will re-evaluate the ideal of virginity and the practice of women's asceticism in light of the role of power in the move "from object to subject," a move which inevitably introduces the *subjection* of individuals--in both senses of the word. I now turn to a general discussion of Foucault's theory of power, and how it illuminates the practice of virginity in particular.
To understand the strategies of power which operated at both a social and individual level, Foucault's conception of power must be explored. Foucault revises and expands a definition of power so that we can more astutely analyze its effects. This re-definition calls into question the categories used to understand woman as subject. For Foucault, power is exercised "in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations." Power does not reside in any one place, but instead permeates every action and relationship: there is nothing that escapes the influence of power. Power which is enacted at various levels of society is therefore non-subjective: "one doesn't have a power which is wholly in the hands of one person who can exercise it alone and totally over others. It's a machine in which everyone is caught." Relationships of force take shape and have effect through social apparatuses and institutions as tactics of minute expressions of power. Though no codified or visible agenda of domination in the church existed, or needed to, power was still exercised. The strategies I will discuss cannot be attributed to an oppressive institution or all-powerful elite. Instead the strategies arose from "local conditions and particular needs." Although still incompletely formed, and not yet the single dominant force in late antique society in so far as heresies and other cults were still practiced, the developing church deployed power for the local and particular purposes of various leaders.

In Foucault's thought, power effects individuals invisibly and on all levels. One strategy of power is the use of discourse --which is a body of knowledge employed to define and control individuals according to strategic interests. Discourse is at once an "instrument and an effect of power." These bodies of knowledge infuse power into the way one knows other people, and the way the subject knows him or herself. As the instruments of power, discourses are the medium of domination over the individual.

At the same time, discourses expose strategies of power. Because discourse transmits and produces power, it also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. Discourses disclose those places where power needs to
assert itself, and therefore, where it is fragile. The strategies of power can be uncovered in the ruptures within texts. Foucault also stresses that power does not employ a single strategy, and therefore, discourses must not be analyzed to reveal a uniform ideology. Instead, discourses should be examined in terms of their tactical effects. We must ask: what is a discourse designed to produce in the behavior of individuals, and why are these effects necessary or desired in a particular and local context?29

Even while power employs knowledge strategically and is all pervasive, the possibility or inevitability of resistance is simultaneously introduced:

at every moment, the relationship of power may become a confrontation between two adversaries. Equally, the relationship between adversaries in society may, at every moment, give place to the putting into operation of mechanisms of power.30

Because resistance is necessary to the expansion of power, it co-exists with power. This provides the critic with the ability to identify the operation of power at these junctures of resistance. Foucault describes a critical strategy for analyzing power:

it consists of taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used.31

Foucault directs the critic to "sites of resistance" in order to understand the way power asserts itself and ways it can be thwarted.

Foucault's notion of power, and its relation to knowledge produces troubling conclusions about the subject and sexual desire. If power operates in every action and relation, then even sexual desire is produced for strategic purposes. The specification of categories of gender also exist within a field of power and therefore, they are not to be seen as inherent or natural. Instead these categories are constructed in order to enable a greater encroachment of power over bodies.
Feminists have found Foucauldian theories useful because they suggest that categories of gender can be reconstructed. Some feminists see their theoretical perspectives to converge with those of Foucault at four specific points:

Both [Foucault and feminists] identify the body as the site of power, that is as the locus of domination through which docility is accomplished and subjectivity constituted. Both point to the local and intimate operations of power rather than focusing exclusively on the supreme power of the state. Both bring to the fore the crucial role of discourse in its capacity to produce and sustain hegemonic power and emphasize the challenges contained within marginalized and/or unrecognized discourses. And both criticize the ways in which Western humanism has privileged the experience of the Western masculine elite as it proclaims universals about truth, freedom, and human nature.32

These feminist/Foucauldian insights illuminate the question of power in the discourse on virginity. The definition of virginity in the fourth century required the domination and monitoring of the virgin body. This self-domination enabled the woman to become an individual subject. At the same time, the specification of the virgin's body produced her docility and her participation in strategies of power. This definition was to be placed in operation not by explicit force but by private and self-applied ascetic practices, taken up in response to textual prescription. Since these texts functioned as forms of discourse--i.e., were tactically deployed--they reveal the sites of struggle where power successfully came to dominate the individual virgin. This construction of the ideal of virginity over time suggests that no one definition can make claims to orthodoxy. Secondly, through this lens we can read the effects of the discourse on virginity as a strategic construction of the virgin's body.

However, the constructed "nature" of the virgin or the female creates problems for taking political stands with regard to both the liberating and oppressive nature of a particular practice such as virginity. Foucault has been criticized by feminists for this understanding of power which implicitly debilitates because it only demonstrates that "women willy-nilly reproduce or re-introduce exactly what they thought they were fighting."33 Because the woman ascetic constructed herself through entering and self-
disciplining herself according to rules of a specific discourse, she had to participate in
mastery of the self, which implied a disgust of the female, as Castelli points out. While
this self-abnegation is a useful critique, the construction of "male" and "female" suggests
that to stress the victimization of the female, as I noted above, is to reify the very
categories also employed by power. Thus, if our analysis maintains these categories, we
discursively limit our understanding of the operations of power, and any political stand
in defense of the female reproduces her role as victim.

For some feminists, the governing notion of the all-pervasiveness of power—that
suggests any political stand constructs women as victims—also poses a problem. It
dangerously precludes a stance which is interested in revealing the ways women in
particular have been oppressed when studying history:

...if we fail now to assert the category woman from our own shifting and
open-ended points of view, our oppression may easily be lost among the
pluralities of new theories of ideology and power. There is the danger that
Foucault's challenges to traditional categories, if taken to a "logical"
conclusion, if made into imperatives rather than left as hypotheses and/or
methodological provocations, could make the question of women's oppression obsolete.

If gender is only a construction, then feminists cannot justify focusing on feminist issues
any more than the wide variety of other constructions. To carry Foucault's theories to a
logical extreme could potentially remove the urgency of responding to, or studying, the
effects of power upon women.

Foucault's argument that the subject is constructed precludes an unproblematic
entry of the women into the role of the subject. Mary Lydon suggests the double
problematic of subjectivity:

The struggle to attain the status of subject must incorporate a critique of the
notion of subjectivity. To be a subject, as Foucault demonstrates, is a knife
that cuts both ways, since it implies being subjected to.
Subjectivity itself cannot be seen as either liberating or singularly oppressive. Instead, a new dynamic of subjection compromises, and complicates the process of women's liberation. This dialectic of subjection is similarly at work in the entry of the virgin into her new profession. Subjectivity provided access to previously exclusively male activities as others have noted. At the same time, the virgin experienced constraints on another level, through the control of herself in the role of subject.

In the absence of "natural" gender roles and a clear moral truth, it is at this level--"of the struggles of those resistant objects of knowledge, 'women'"--that one feminist critic, Meaghan Morris, suggests there are possibilities for understanding resistance:

For in a perspective in which bodies and souls are seen as not simply constituted but also invested and traversed by relations of power-knowledge... then what becomes possible in relation to "women," special category of the human sciences, is something more than a history of a "construction": it is, rather, the possibility of a history of a strategic specification...--and at the same time, a history of that in women which defies specification, which escapes its hold: the positively not specific, the unwomanly in history.37

In Morris' interpretation, the woman is not simply constructed but specified. Specification is the process by which an indeterminate entity--the woman's body--is exposed to view and thus made known. Through knowledge of undefined bodies--what Morris calls the "unwomanly"--the bodies are marked according to the needs of power. What is defined in various historical acts of specification--the "nature" of women and their sexuality--is a fruitless question to ask. What can be analyzed are the methods of definition, and those activities which resist definition, which therefore resist power. These reveal the operations of power and its strategies so that its effects can be accurately assessed.

With this feminist appropriation of Foucault in hand, I intend to explore two aspects of the definition of virginity. First, I examine a problematic form of virginity, the practice of cohabitation among male and female ascetics, as a site of resistance to power. The
numerous attempts to specify and control the cohabitation define and control the virgin body, but also reveal its threat.

Secondly, I examine the prescription for virginity which revises the transgressions identified in the practice of cohabitation. While the strategic project of these texts is less explicit than that of the treatises, laws, and homilies which directly repudiate the subintroductae, the strategy can be seen in the effects that they were intended to produce, and how these effects--however obliquely--respond to the particular political need of specifying the possible indeterminacy of the virgin's behaviors and thoughts. I will argue that in applying disciplines prescribed in certain discourses, the ascetic woman made herself into a docile and self-monitoring subject of desire. The behaviors and living conditions of the virgin prescribed in these documents constructed a system by which the virgin monitored herself according to the strict requirements of proper virginity at all times as defined by the church.

The activity of this thesis is primarily the analysis of late fourth century texts on virginity. I chose the texts of Sts. Ambrose and Chrysostom because they are contemporaneous documents which reveal striking similarities even though they represent the Western and Eastern regions of the church. The cities of Milan and Antioch, from which their ascetic treatises originate provided different cultural contexts and practices of virginity. However, the late fourth century marks a distinct period of assimilation between East and West. In addition to transmitting strategies assisting the cultural shift from pagan to Christian, the writings of these two Bishops map the problem of definition created by the assimilation of Eastern and Western cultural contexts and practices of virginity. However, the late fourth century marks a distinct period of assimilation of Eastern and Western cultural contexts. As samples of culture from this time period, I generate conclusions based primarily on the text. However, as I will attempt to show, to create a barrier between the analysis of the problems of definition in the late fourth and the seemingly apolitical discourse on virginity is to falsely distinguish between individual self-
definition and the various forces of power which affect the individual. Instead the
discourse on virginity marks a site of struggle instigated by various strategic needs. I now
turn to a brief history and analysis of an improper practice of virginity and its connection to
the church's legitimation through a proper reputation.

1 Peter Brown, "The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church," in World Spirituality vol. 16, Christian
Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century, ed. Bernard McGinn, John Meyendorff, and John LeClerq,

2 Jo Ann MacNamara argues convincingly, however, that women practiced celibacy long before
representatives from the church defined their role or wrote treatises which exalted virginity in A New Song:
Celibate Women in the First Three Christian Centuries (New York: The Haworth Press, 1983), pp. 124-
25. The question of the historical relationship between prescriptions of virginity and early evidences of the
practice will be taken up in chapter 2.

3 Saint Ambrose (339-397) uses this term in De virginibus 2.1.4. Ambrose's term reflects the fact that in
the fourth century, virgins committed themselves to a full-time pursuit of an ideal, which eventually
became a salaried position when women entered monasteries that provided for their sustenance. At the time
when De virginibus was written (377), Ambrose notes a group of virgins up from Bononia: "leaving their
parents homes, they press into the houses of Christ...they provide their sustenance by labour, and seek
with their hands supplies for their liberality," 1.11.60. Most of the women who initially took up the
practice of virginity in the Western church were wealthy heiresses or widows.

4 The new profession for women was available to both widows and virgins. Each class of women ascetics
frequently received separate treatises. Although I will discuss texts which specifically pertain to virgins, the
virgin ideal pertained to both widows and virgins for the purposes of this paper insofar as each placed
primary value on sexual renunciation.

5 The Jewish and pagan traditions also provided women with this opportunity to pursue the ideal of
virginity, but not on the same scale. The Vestal Virgins were from two to six in number at any one time,
and remained in the cult for only thirty years, after which time they re-entered society, they could marry, and
they were compensated generously with status and legal privileges, according to Plutarch, Life of Numa, 9-
10, translated in Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, Women in Greece and Rome (Samuel-Stevens,
1977), pp. 186-7. In the Jewish tradition, women took Nazirite vows, and the ascetic community of the
Therapeutae and the Therapeutides is, according to Ross Kraemer, the sole example of such a community
in Judaism of Antiquity, "Monastic Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Egypt: Philo Judeus on the
of the Vestal Virgins, discusses the spiritual marriage of the soul and the production of spiritual children
through the celibate contemplative life, On the Contemplative Life, 68-9; cited in Kraemer, p. 345.
Although the historical veridity of this practice is questioned as it is not referred to elsewhere in
contemporary literature, several of the traits of Philo's texts actually reappear in Ambrose's definition of
Christian virginity. See discussion below, chap. 3.
6 Jo Ann MacNamara, A New Song, p. 108.


8 This profession was recognizable much earlier, in the vast Apocryphal tradition, within novels read widely such as the Acts of Paul and Thecla. By the third century, virgins are officially recognized and put into "a non-ordained role" in the church in the Apostolic Constitutions 2.7, presumed a mid-third century document of Syrian origins. They could, moreover, be identified publicly by their changed garb. The "garb" of virgins was the subject of Cyprian's treatise On the Dress of Virgins (220-258 C.E.).


10 This metaphor from Mark 4:20 reappears in the writings of Jerome, Ep. 22.25; 48.3; 66.20; cited in Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Misogyny and Virginal Feminism," p. 166; and Ambrose De virgibus 1.7.60.


12 Chrysostom Quod reg. 12 p. 246., De virg. 1 and 50.

13 Clark offers a detailed account of the educational skills of each, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends: Essays and Translations, pp. 76-78. See Elizabeth Clark A. "Ascetic Renunciation," for a carefully documented description of the activities of these women ascetics.

14 The class disparity suggests that perhaps the option for virginity was not a form of liberation equally available to all women.

15 Life of Olympias, 6; in Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, p. 132.

16 MacNamara, A New Song, p. 108.

17 Clark, Elizabeth A. "Ascetic Renunciation," p. 245. Clark cites both Melanias, Olympias and Marcella, as they are referred to in their biographies.

18 Clark, Elizabeth A. "Ascetic Renunciation," p. 257.


20 Castelli, Elizabeth, "Virginity," pp. 74-75;

21 Castelli, Elizabeth, "Virginity," p. 88.

22 Clark also examines the use of Stoic philosophy in ascetic discourse, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends, pp. 3, 35, 36.
23 In support of this tenous historical leap, Foucault himself alludes to the architectural "partitioning" in monasticism as an early from of these disciplinary practices. The major difference Foucault notes lies in the goals of these two practices: the monastic disciplines "functioned to obtain renunciations rather than increases of utility, and ... although they involved obedience to others, had as their principle aim an increase of the mastery of each individual over his own body," in Foucault, Discipline and Punish trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 p. 137. While the strategies and the effects they produced varied with the vastly different societal contexts, both participate in the specification of the body through both institutional and individual deployments of power.


26 Foucault, P/K, p. 159.

27 Foucault, HS, p. 101.

28 Foucault, HS, p. 101.

29 Foucault, HS, p. 102.


31 Foucault, "Subject and Power," p. 780.


33 Meaghan Morris, "The Pirates Fiancée: Feminists and Philosophers, or maybe tonight it'll happen," in Feminism and Foucault, ed. Diamond and Quinby, p. 32.

34 Biddy Martin, "Feminism, Criticism and Foucault," New German Critique 27 (1982), p. 11; reprinted in Feminism and Foucault.

35 Biddy Martin, "Feminism, Criticism", p. 17.

36 Mary Lydon, "Foucault and Feminism: A Romance of Many Dimensions," in Feminism and Foucault, p. 140.


CHAPTER TWO: COHABITATION WITH CONSECRATED VIRGINS:
Site of Resistance and Domination

Even the expression 'living together' offends me.

--John Chrysostom

I

The practice of cohabitation of male and female Christians who had taken a vow of
celibacy in early Christianity was censored repeatedly by church fathers, church councils
and Roman Law for the public concern and scandal it caused the Church. The female
participants in this practice are referred to mockingly as the gynaikes syneisaktoi,\(^1\) in
Greek, which was translated into virgines subintroductae\(^2\) or agapetae\(^3\) in Latin, and which
carried connotations similar to the modern term, "slut."\(^4\) Usually the man, who was not
necessarily a member of the clergy,\(^5\) would take a virgin in to live with him.\(^6\) Sometimes,
however, a wealthy widow invited a celibate man to live with her.\(^7\) The participants
claimed "the situation did not involve lust, but rather piety," to which John Chrysostom, a
major critic of syneisaktism, quips: "this opinion is appropriate to a person who lives
among stones, but not to anyone among flesh-and-blood humans."\(^8\) Chrysostom's
suspicion of the flesh led him, like many other critics, to distrust the subintroductae's
claims.

The documents that repudiate syneisaktism find moral impunity in the uncertainty of
the cohabitating female virgin's purity, and in the illicit thoughts and desires she
engendered in others. The female virgin's purity or impurity received special attention
because a suspected sexual relation with another man implied her adultery to Christ, the
Bridegroom. The joint residence made her virginal status ambiguous, because the private
space of the shared home made illicit activities possible. The potential disparity between
her acts and the hidden thoughts of her heart made her purity uncertain. Moreover, the
ambiguity of the virgin's status gave rise to illicit thoughts and suspicions among those
outside the church. Although the problem originated with the woman who tempted male
desire, both male and female cohabitators were also culpable for their role as the "stumbling
block" to non-Christians, and source of scandal to other Christians.

Syneisaktism was repudiated because it led to temptation and sin. However,
contradictions within the documents which condemn it indicate that the immorality of
syneisaktism had more than moral ramifications. The numerous repudiations of
syneisaktism caused widespread scandal suggest that it defamed the church in the eyes of
competing cults and discouraged future converts. The textual repudiations acknowledge the
political problem created by syneisaktism, but redefine the question of legitimation in terms
of the virgin's salvation. The condemnations of syneisaktism specify a practice of
virginity. I will attempt to show how the very act of defining the practice enabled the
church to eliminate the practice of syneisaktism and polish the tarnished public image of the
church.

Foucault's conception of power can usefully inform the analysis of the numerous
repudiations of syneisaktism. First, Foucault concludes that power is never asserted
openly, but must at least partially mask its operation in order to be "tolerated." In this
view, power displaces the question of the church's legitimacy. Through highlighting moral
problems for the individual virgin, the repudiations of syneisaktism raise the question of
the individual ascetic's soul, but simultaneously mask the political interest in eliminating the
scandal. The moral and individual basis of the invective against syneisaktism is a
necessary component to the operation of power. The effect is a privileged focus upon the
virgin's body.

Second, power operates at sites of resistance. Even when power is masked, "there
are a multiplicity of points of resistance...[which are] present everywhere in the power
network." Every minute assertion of power produces resistance by momentarily
exposing the assertion of power. Therefore, power can and must always be resisted. The repeated censorship of synesisaktism suggests that this practice resisted the determination of power. At the same time, the sites of resistance are precisely the sites of domination. Power depends on resistance for its operation because power can assert itself at these sites. Resistance discloses momentarily the operation of power. We trace historically the course of domination, but also the resistance to domination.

This chapter explores three characteristics assigned to the virgines subintroductae: her female "nature," and its corrupting influence on men, the falseness of her claims to virginity, and the concomitant moral corruption she brings upon the general public. These crimes of the subintroductae (indeed, they eventually became outlawed) are on one level apologetic: they explain why the practice must be condemned. Simultaneously, they shape the definition of virginity in the fourth century. In order to show this redefinition of a previously acceptable practice, I turn now to a short history of the transformation of synesisaktism into a perversion of true virginity.

II

Synesisaktism was one of the early forms of ascetic practice in early Christianity. We have examples of cohabitation in several parts of the Roman Empire from the mid-third century where these virgins were not defined separately from non-cohabitating virgins. Male and female ascetics practiced sex-segregated celibacy in desert communities toward the end of the third century, beginning with Pachomius' community in Egypt. Evidence of synesisaktism during and prior to this period suggests a simultaneous development of a variety of ascetic practices. In the Syrian speaking East, men and women practiced
celibacy widely, and many took vows of chastity after they had been married. The unique tradition of Syrian asceticism developed independently of the Western ascetic movement, and further complicates a Greco-Latin claim to an orthodox practice. Not until the third century did the two traditions come into conflict.

With the organization of the orthodox church in the fourth century, proper and improper forms of the practice of virginity competed for acceptance. In the late fourth and early fifth centuries wealthy widows, such as Paula, Olympia, and Melania the Elder began to set up monasteries for women, which eventually became the normal living conditions for the practice of virginity. However, the early references to coexisting expressions of asceticism suggest that syneisaktism should not be seen simply as a perverse deviation from the monastic institution, but instead as an early expression of ascetic commitment which was eventually eliminated.

Although the practice of cohabitation may not have become "widespread" until the mid-third century, scholars have argued that there are indications of syneisaktism from the beginnings of Christianity. Achelis, and others, base their conclusion that syneisaktism began in the Apostolic Age on a re-interpretation of the following Pauline passage in I Corinthians 7:36-38:

> If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry--it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

In their interpretation of this passage, modern scholars disagree with the traditional interpretation that this passage refers to a father giving away his virgin daughter. Instead Paul here refers to a male celibate considering syneisaktism. They further support this reinterpretation with the example of celibate marriage in the radical Jewish ascetic communities of the Therapeutae, a select group of Alexandrian Jews known only through
the writings of Philo, but resembling the Essenes, known through the Dead Sea Scrolls. In these communities, men and women lived together but practiced strict continence.22

After these apostolic references, we find several indications of syneisaktism in non-canonical documents dated before the third century. The Shepherd, by Hermas23 offers an example of cohabitation with virgins which attests to the early roots of the contradictory sexual and virginal qualities which subintroductae were supposed to possess. The Ninth Similitude in The Shepherd elucidates a fantasy of "sexual virginity" in which a group of virgins specifically claim a "brother-sister" relationship and invite Hermas to sleep with them:

"You will sleep with us," they replied, "as a brother, and not as a husband: for you are our brother, and for the time to come we intend to abide with you, for we love you exceedingly!" But I was ashamed to remain with them.24

This situation of primordial cohabitation creates a moral problem for Hermas. Because of his shame, Hermas suggests separate rooms as a remedy: "I will wait for him until it is late; and if he does not arrive, I will go away into the house, and come back early in the morning."25 The house, or the roof, already appears as a sufficient device to separate the man from the virgins, to ensure purity. Hermas does in fact stay with them and the text describes them kissing, singing and making merry together. To protect himself Hermas prays all night as he lies among the virgins. According to Pierre de Labriolle, this early reference to a brother-sister relationship in The Shepherd of Hermas cannot be taken as an indication of an historical practice26 because of the highly metaphorical language and the fact that it is presented as a dream. However, this text still indicates a fantasy of intimacy with virgins, even if only in the head of the author. Also, the text suggests a very early understanding of virgins that tempt, and require the man to practice self-discipline.

Irenaeus (c.130-c.200 C.E.) describes in Against Heresies (182-188 C.E.) the practice of cohabitation with "so-called sisters" as a practice of the heretical Valentinians:
Others... who pretend at first to live in all modesty with them as with sisters, have in course of time been revealed in their true colours, when the sister has been found with child by her [pretended] brother.27

The women who pretend to modesty and sister-brother relations are suspected to be in fact, a guise for promiscuity, a theme which proved to be common in repudiations of cohabitation within the orthodox church less than a century later.

By contrast, Tertullian (c.155-220 C.E.) affirmed multiple "spiritual wives" in his argument for continence, and against the Roman practice of multiple sexual partners.28 However, these treatises, written in the first decade of the third century, reflect Tertullian's shift toward Montanism and therefore link this sort of "spiritual marriage" to an heretical tradition. While these references from prior to the third century also do not confirm a widespread practice of cohabitation, they do suggest the existence of a very early conception of males and females who shared living quarters but remained celibate.

With the general increase of ascetic commitment in the third and fourth centuries, the number of references to syneisaktism greatly increases.29 References include prescriptions which applied to a larger audience and therefore indicate a more general practice. Several documents offer evidence of the practice in the Eastern Church, in particular. The first of Pseudo-Clement's two epistles on virginity denounces shameless men who, under pretext of the fear of God, have their dwellings with maidens, and so expose themselves to danger; and walk with them along the road in solitary places alone, a course which is full of stumbling blocks and snares and pitfalls.30

While the men who cohabitate are referred to as shameless, only the men are exposed to danger as a result of the cohabitation. The men are shameless primarily because they have exposed themselves to the temptations of women. Arthur Vööbus concludes the Epistles derive from Syrian Christianity,31 and were written during the late second or third century.32 These documents suggest a Syrian community of Christians where virginity was practiced widely by all Christians, not simply the clergy.33 In fact, he concludes the
pracuice of syneisaktism "belonged to the Christian scene as a legitimate element," up until
the fifth century when the practice was condemned by a synod in Seleucia-Ctesiphon.34

Also in the East, Bishop Paul of Samosata (267-268 C.E.) was indicted for keeping
subintroductae.35 Although his practice of syneisaktism is significant in itself, the letter
which the Bishops wrote after his death and mailed to "all the provinces" more importantly
reflects a wide knowledge of the problem of cohabitating with virgins:

And there are the women, the 'subintroductae' as the people of Antioch call
them, belonging to him and to the presbyters and deacons that are with
him.... And we are not ignorant how many have fallen or incurred suspicion
through the women whom they have thus brought in. So that even if we
should allow that he commits no sinful act, yet he ought to avoid the
suspicion which arises from such a thing, lest he scandalize some one, or
lead others to imitate him.36

The people of Antioch, according to the Bishops of this Synod, concocted a mocking name
for the women who were involved with this practice, which indicates the familiarity of the
citizens of Antioch with this practice. The letter specifically emphasizes the large number
who have fallen or incurred suspicion as result of their liaisons with these women.

Other examples of syneisaktism in the East include Bishop Leontius, who,
according to Athanathius of Alexandria (296-373), was willing to become a eunuch37 in
order to remain with his subintroducta.38 Eusebius of Emesa (c. 300-350 C.E.) provides
an early elaboration of the practice of syneisaktism in his repudiation of cohabitation among
ascetics and his exhortation to "holy virginity" in the Syrian East.39 He prescribes holy
virginity within the context of the home rather than living in a scandalous relationship.

Our knowledge of syneisaktism in the West is not as extensive. In the ante-Nicene
period of the Western Church, there are references to a problem of cohabitation in Carthage
and Spain. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in Africa in the third century wrote a letter (c.
250-258 C.E.) that condemned cohabitation of monks and virgins and prescribed
excommunication as the punishment for clergymen who repeatedly cohabited with
virgins.40 Seboldt cites the Psuedo-Cyprian document On the Singleness of Clerics, which
forbids a clergyman to have a strange woman in the house.41 The Synod of Elvira (305-312 C.E.), ordered that: "A bishop or any other cleric may have living with him only a sister or a virgin daughter dedicated to God; by no means shall he keep any women unrelated to him."42 Although later Western references to syneisaktism do not distinguish between clergy and those not within the church hierarchy, in the ante-nicene Western Church the problem was legislated only for clergy.43

The references to the practice of cohabitation reflect the difference between the Eastern and the Western practices of virginity. In the western desert tradition, ascetics did not live with anyone. The cenobitic form of monasticism--separate-sex community living, such as Pachomius' community in Egypt--developed and specified a form for monastic living.44 The Eastern practice of virginity was even more widespread. During the third century, the Western church began to infiltrate and alter the tradition that developed in the Syriac-speaking world. Although the forms and the prevalence of ascetic practice varied, they reveal a common ante-Nicene problem of cohabitation in both early Latin and Greek traditions. The practice of syneisaktism, although nowhere condoned by church orthodoxy, appears to have existed prior to the definition of virginity which we find in the fourth century Greco-Latin church.45

In the later fourth century, much of what was written about virginity specifically addressed the question of how to preserve it. By this point, the role of the virgin in the church was more clearly defined, and therefore roles could be transgressed.46 Numerous repudiations in both the Eastern and Western regions of the church indicate the continued prevalence of syneisaktism. Each of the Cappadocean fathers took up the question of syneisaktism: Basil of Caesarea (c.330-379 C.E.), his brother Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395 C.E.), and their friend, Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-390 C.E.).47 Also in the Eastern church, John Chrysostom (c. 344-407 C.E.) wrote two treatises addressed specifically to the male and female ascetics who lived together.48 In the West, Jerome condemns the "agapetae" ("love-birds") in his correspondence to a newly dedicated virgin,
Eustochium. His tirade against the virgins who live with men "as sisters" is part of his advice to her as to how she ought to "preserve" her virginity.\textsuperscript{49} A Pseudo-Titus Epistle, "Concerning Chastity," which has been connected to late fourth or early fifth century ascetic communities in Spain,\textsuperscript{50} bemoans the dangers of cohabitation in this farthest Western region of the Christian Empire.

In addition to these treatises and letters, the practice was condemned repeatedly in Church Councils. Following the local Synod of Elvira in Spain, the ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) condemned this practice for the whole church:

The great Synod has stringently forbidden any bishop, presbyter, deacon or any one of the clergy whatever, to have a \textit{subintroducta} dwelling with him, except only a mother, or sister, or aunt, or such persons only as are beyond suspicion.\textsuperscript{51}

In spite of the repudiations, the practice reappeared repeatedly in Councils up until the eighth century.\textsuperscript{52} Our most detailed information about the problems and the practice of cohabitation derives from Church communities of the East, but this history of repudiations through legislation suggests a threatening presence of cohabitating celibates also existed in the West.

In the fifth century under the Christian Emperors Honorius and Theodosius, the continuing scandal led to the use of legal prohibition. One clergyman or bishop enjoined the State to assist in eliminating the practice. The first part of Title 10 of the \textit{Sirmionian Constitutions}\textsuperscript{53} indicates the combined efforts of State and Church :

The faithful recommendation (\textit{suggestio}) of a religious priest demands a discipline that is commendable to the world. For in accordance with good morals he insists that clerics who service the sacred ministries shall not be joined to extraneous women whom they excuse by the disgraceful association of the appellation of "sister."

Clyde Pharr notes that a recommendation usually took the form of an official report to the Emperor made by a Bishop to the Emperor, or a conscientious cleric.\textsuperscript{54} This constitution is dated 420 C.E. in Ravenna, which was at that time the seat of the Rome. This early fifth century law reflects a problematic practice of \textit{syneisaktism} prior to that date, which
corroborates the view that cohabitation was an issue of concern in the late fourth century Roman Empire.

After the fifth century, the repudiations of *syneisaktism* in the ecumenical church councils were repeated in the penitentials: "personal handbooks of reference for the priest confessor." The attempts of the Church to prevent *syneisaktism* in the West continued to be transmitted to ascetics in a more individualized and inescapably prescriptive format. The content and method of the prescription was designed to eradicate this practice by convincing individuals to alter their behavior.

The history of the references to *syneisaktism* complicates the idea of a single true practice of asceticism as defined by later fourth century authors. Indeed, all of our orthodox references to *syneisaktism* condemn the practice, but orthodoxy by definition represents only one position. Against the orthodox claims, the multitude of persons who actually cohabitated indicate an accepted practice that was only later defined as a perversion and the source of scandal.

The threat of scandal was of particular concern to John Chrysostom, deacon of Antioch, because scandal inhibited his effectiveness in asserting the authority of Christianity over competing interpretations of Christianty. Chrysostom's writing especially exemplify the "strategies of specification" deployed in the struggle to define virginity in the late fourth century. The historical problem of defining the Church as a religion and as an orthodox form of ascetic practice was connected to the problem of eliminating the scandal of the *subintroductae*.

Scandal invalidated his primary tool, the power of verbal exhortation. John Chrysostom's oratory fame, the classical tradition of the rhetor, and his position as spokesperson for the Church in the eastern half of the Empire promised a large audience for his oratory. To limit this power was to disarm Chrysostom of a most powerful weapon. Therefore, we understand Chrysostom's emphasis when he says these women "have above all *stitched up our mouths* and poured much dishonor on us."
The debilitation of the scandal of the *subintroductae* does not effect only Chrysostom's ego, but he fears it will inhibit the Church's continued growth:

The honorable, great, and holy name of God is blasphemed among the heathen because of you, and his glory is profaned that such a dignified and important matter is slandered, many souls fall because of these scandals, the healthy section of the virginal choir is infected by the blemish of your reputation, an unquenchable fire is kindled both for yourselves and for those who live with you.60

These women threaten to damage the Church community's reputation among "the heathen," the candidates for conversion who would increase the size and influence of Christianity. This group included particularly the Jews,61 and several heretical movements which flourished in the Eastern region of the church. More pointedly, the slandering of God's name through *syneisktism* actually causes souls to fall, decreases the number of potential converts, or results in apostasy.

Chrysostom here sets out the political undercurrent of his condemnation. The *subintroductae's* liminal position between marriage and virginity rubbed against existing definitions. As an exemplary text, Chrysostom's accusation of the *subintroductae* and rhetorical definition of them exemplifies the transformation of the practice of cohabitation from a coexistent practice to a veritable "other" that threatens the moral stability of the church, and therefore must be eliminated. The next section will examine the common accusations of the *subintroductae*, but focus especially on Chrysostom's detailed and lurid definition of *syneisaktism*.
The subintroductae were condemned because they presented the possibility of indeterminate, or unlegislated sexual activity, and thus, were perceived to be a source of corruption for men. According to Chrysostom, the disease which these women induce is a "violent and tyrannical pleasure."62 Whereas this disease was acceptable or allayed in sexual release condoned in marriage or prostitution, the subintroductae did not occupy the traditional roles for women: the subintroducta could be viewed neither as married women, prostitutes, nor proper virgins.63 The practice of cohabitation was condemned because the subintroducta's sexuality could not be monitored by the church as it could in previously defined relationships. The repudiations focus on the inevitable sexual transgression in the cohabitating relationship.

The ambiguity of subintroductae's role derives from the association of the female with desires of the flesh, which are primarily evil. Paul identifies the flesh as an enemy of the Spirit in Gal 5:17: "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh."64 Christian tradition connects women with the flesh, especially through the myth of Adam and Eve, which is alluded to in Christian Scriptures such as 1 Cor 11:16. Hermas, as noted above, spent the night with the Shepherd's virgins, and the erotic experience of the twelve virgins created desires that he mastered through a spiritual vigil against the flesh. In Athanasius' Life of St. Antony, the devil appears to the beleaguered saint in the form of a woman several times while Antony conducts his spiritual battles in the desert.65 Jerome had similar experiences where he "often found himself amongst bevies of dancing girls,"66 while fasting in the desert.

The conception of female as the source of destructive desires appears in the repudiations of the subintroductae, and fosters a critique of not only actual sexual activity,
but also the potential desires incited through simple interaction with women. The second
Pseudo-Clement's epistles on virginity alludes to David's desire for Bathsheba.67

This woman the holy man [David] saw, and was thoroughly captivated with
desire by the sight of her...Be admonished, O man: for, if such men as
these have been brought to ruin through women, what is thy righteousness,
or what art thou among the holy, that thou consortest with women and with
maidens day and night, with much silliness, without fear of
God?...Therefore let us, who are consecrated, be careful not to live in the
same house with females who have taken the vow. For such conduct as
this is not becoming nor right for the servants of God.68

Consorting with women is demonstrated here to be the "ruin" of men. Pseudo-Clement
makes no distinction between the temptation in seeing Bathsheba bathing and actually lying
with her69 and the temptation produced simply by living in the same house. Because the
flesh corrupts the will, the sin can reside in thoughts which arise even through explicitly
non-sexual contact.

The second epistle offers detailed prescriptions for limited male interaction with
female virgins. The prescriptions ordered the men not to live with maidens, whether under
a vow of celibacy or not.70 While men can greet men normally, when men greet women
they must only make contact between hands wrapped with the fabric of their respective
garments.71 The contact with the opposite sex was contaminating. This appears to be
linked specifically to the woman: when the men, on their rounds, came to a house with a
single woman seeking to learn Scripture, the text orders the men to "flee as if before the
face of a serpent, and as from before the face of sin."72

Eusebius of Emesa similarly notes the corrupting influence upon thoughts, even if
they are not acted out. In this case, it is not only the man who views the woman with
pleasure who commits a sin, but also the virgin who presents herself as a "spectacle" for
him.73 They both incur guilt as a result of the man's enjoyment of the woman; they are
corrupted by mere "mixing" of the sexes, two "ingredients which are not to be mixed".74
Although the mixing results in the condemnation of both, the female taints the male through this intimacy, and the male is condemned for allowing himself to be tainted.

Chrysostom's treatise addressed to the *subintroductae* reproduces these accusations on a grander scale, when he labels the woman a source of corruption. Chrysostom uses violent metaphors to describe the female cohabitant's deadly "attacks" on men's souls. The virgins metaphorically "launch their engines of war from all sides against the onlookers," grind and mix poisons, even "slay people by their skill." According to Chrysostom, these virgins, out of vanity, find pleasure in the death of others. The *subintroductae* invade the marketplace, and perpetually "bait and snare" by "strolling around the marketplace spreading the wings of pleasure."

Even considering the rhetorical requirement to overexaggerate, such a depiction of the virgin's actions--or intentions--reveals the perceived threat of *syneisaktiasm*.

In addition to the demonic efforts of these women to harm their male companions from afar, their intimate contact has drastic *contagious* effects, according to Chrysostom. Their "company" induces the streaming of "an enormous and unspeakable evil" into the men's souls. These women

render [the men] softer, more hot-headed, shameful, mindless, irascible, insolent, importunate, ignoble, crude, servile, niggardly, reckless, nonsensical, and to sum it up, the women take all their corrupting feminine customs and stamp them into the souls of these men.

Although the Devil is ultimately responsible for "capturing" the men, the women here contribute to their downfall. The woman is full of "corrupting" customs such as weaving, cooking and taking care of other domestic responsibilities, which infects particularly the speech of the man who enters her presence. The woman takes responsibility for the downfall of both herself and her partner.

Both Chrysostom and Jerome are disturbed by the male temptations aroused by these women. Chrysostom commences his treatise addressed to the male cohabitators by describing the two justifications given for men and women living together: marriage which
is "ancient, licit, and sensible;" and prostitution, which is "unjust and illegitimate." The men who live with *subintroductae* enact "a third way of life...which greatly perplexes those who wish to discover its rationale." Chrysostom claims he cannot conceive of the man's motivation for entering this relationship, but he actually seems to know of only one possible motivation: love and lust:

This cohabitation is not based on law but on love and lust. For if this reason is taken away, the need for the practice also disappears. What man, if he were free from the compulsion to have a woman, would choose to put up with the delicacy, wantonness, and all the other faults of that sex? Thus even from the beginning God endowed woman with this strength, knowing that she would be totally despicable unless she were provided with this power, that no man would choose to live with her if he were innocent of desire.

Chrysostom cleverly identifies the male state of lust as a post-lapsarian condition. In his attempt to persuade the men to abandon the practice, he identifies the source of their condition as not the woman, but instead her divinely created power to incite male desire.

Chrysostom nullifies the possibility of a non-lustful relation.

Jerome similarly notes the confusion that resulted from the *agapetae*’s problematic relation to men:

How comes this plague of the *agapetae* to be in the church? Whence come these unwedded wives, these novel concubines, these harlots, so I will call them, though they cling to a single partner?

Jerome's use of oxymoron here reflects his discomfort with the *subintroductae*’s undefinable female role. Similarly, he takes the ambiguity as an opportunity to create a variety of neologisms for the woman. In light of the history of syneisaktism, Jerome's claim that they are "novel" appears as a strategic maneuver used to justify his condemnation of another equally viable ascetic practice. Jerome's labels specifically illustrate the confusion of the sexual relationship of the female to the male: the *subintroductae* are one-man whores (*meretrices univirae*) whereas harlots have many partners, they are both "concubine" and "sister", which are categories that are ideally opposites. According to
Jerome's description, the *subintroducta* confounds and transgresses existing definitions and roles.

Chrysostom's treatise addressed to the *virgines subintroductae* specifies the problem as his inability to name them. For these "female companions" he must devise a "shameful and ludicrous" name because they are not the man's mother, sister, spouse, "nor any other relation's name upon which we can agree and is legitimate." In fact, like Jerome, Chrysostom spends much of his treatise explaining his various names for them. For example, he rephrases Canon 3 of the Council of Nicea to repudiate these women. He defines these virgins against matrons, proper virgins, and even prostitutes:

> On the other hand, this "virginity in the company of men" is more severely slandered among all than is prostitution; having lost its proper place, it has rolled headlong down into the abyss of harlotry. Nor does anyone continue to number among the virgins a woman who cares not for the things of the Lord but is involved in countless adulteries—nor is she among the ranks of the matrons either.

*Syneisaktism* is sexual liaisons outside of traditional definitions, and therefore is more slandered than prostitution. This degradation appears because she commits "countless adulteries" but claims to be a holy virgin.

In Chrysostom's frustration with her ambiguity, he not only condemns, but redefines. Besides refusing the man's claim that love and lust are not factors in the cohabitating relationship, he assumes the woman intends to arouse the man's desires:

> Granted you have not engaged in conversations, you have not spoken the words of a harlot, "Come! Let us roll up together in love!" You have not pronounced them with your tongue, but you have spoken them with your demeanor; you have not uttered them with your lips, but with your gait you have loudly proclaimed them; you have not called with your voice, but you have spoken them more clearly with your eyes than with your voice. But after you called you did not give yourself.

We see from the final line that the ambiguity of the woman who "doesn't give" is the greatest problem. Chrysostom admits that he cannot know whether the celibates are actually sexually involved. However, he still interprets all the actions that the virgin *does not do* as promiscuous acts. Putting words into the virgin's mouth, he applies his
language to her unspoken actions: "You remained free from wantonness--but in body, not in soul. You carry out the sinful deed, if not by intercourse, then by the eyes." Chrysostom denies the virgin the final word on whether her actions are in fact rooted in "wantonness," and her normal set of actions become culpable. Instead of determining her own meaning, Chrysostom proclaims the female cohabitators guilty of initiating the scandalous relationship by tempting men to participate.

IV

Not only did the subintroducta arouse the desires of the male celibate, but she also confused the status of her own purity through cohabitation. The walls enclosing the cohabitants technically made it impossible to monitor the private activities of the subintroductae. As a result, the subintroductae were capable--and suspected--of misrepresenting their virginal status. Thus, the repudiations of spiritual marriage problematize the possible discrepancy between the hidden interior and public exterior of the cohabitant's living space. In the writings against the subintroductae, the individual's discrepancy between interior thoughts and exterior acts also becomes a problem. The very labelling of thoughts as "secret" and "hidden" strategically expanded the field of determination of sexual activity. The subintroductae refuse the church's exploration of the interior realm of thoughts in order to determine purity, and for this reason, they are condemned.

Pseudo-Titus's reprobative assessment of the celibate community of both sexes (spadones and virgines) deprecates the misrepresentation engendered by cohabitation. The Epistle specifies the falseness produced by the cohabitants' secretive relationship: "O inherently false one, to despise commandments of the holy law and (through) a deceitful marriage to lose in secret the life everlasting." Life everlasting, or the woman's relationship to the Bridegroom, is lost because of the virgin's ability to deceive. Since
the chastity of these cohabitants was forsaken in secret, Pseudo-Titus condemns these couples on the basis of circumstantial evidence. In particular, the women are accused of aborting the children that result from these secret and shameful relations: "in secrecy they carry out abortions and at the same time think they will live forever." Abortion is culpable because it removes the absent public sign of sexual activity, i.e., pregnancy. Notably, the man's sexual activity is erased, and the woman bears the responsibility for the deceit. The virgins have the power to abort in secret, but their insulation from public knowledge results in their condemnation -- whether the suspicions are accurate or not.

Against this deceit, the ethical goal of integrity is translated into a visible "sign" of virginity, which is a manifestation of the virgin's interior condition. The virgin's sign either accurately or inaccurately represents the integrity between spirit and actions. If her sign is false, she appears to be chaste but actually has committed fornication. Eusebius of Emesa's Homily 7 notified the virgin that God can identify the inaccurate sign of the virgin:

Christ, knows your thoughts, not only those to which you pay attention, but also those you are only beginning to envisage. Let your spirit never fornicate. For then your sign will not be superfluous; your spirit will be in accord with your acts and your acts with your spirit.91

In his exhortation that the virgin's sign not be superfluous, he illustrates the possibility of a situation in which the virgin's spirit might fornicate, and believe her outward appearance. The virgin is culpable because God can see through her misrepresentation.

The subintroductae in fact are accused by Eusebius of "causing many evils" because they appear pure, but in fact might commit sexual crimes. He suggests that even those who do live according to morals become suspect through cohabitation "because they liken themselves to those who do evil and want to escape blame by hiding themselves." Because those who do evil hide themselves, the subintroducta needs not actually commit a crime. The hiding itself is her crime.
Eusebius brings the division between private and public to the boundary of the individual. The crime can be hiding something inside oneself.

A virgin's prevarication is a sin worse than fornication. Each movement and each thought of the virgin is not lost to her Bridegroom. He is jealous, Christ...All that you do, he sees. Don't fall therefore from heaven to the earth. Don't estrange yourself from Jesus in order to approach a mortal.93

Misrepresenting one's sign through dishonest reporting of one's hidden thoughts is a worse crime than the act of fornication. Whereas fornication is a visible and therefore controllable behavior, the greater crime is prevarication where the virgin's statement cloaks her actual behavior.

Discussions of the proper method of ascertaining—as well as defining—a virgin's purity demonstrate the complications of determining whether the unity of spirit and acts has been disrupted by syneisaktism. Cyprian's fourth Epistle, addressed to Pomponius, responds to a request for advice in disciplining virgins who "admit to having slept with men" but "insist on their virginity."94 Cyprian orders the inspection of the virgins' hymens (inspectio virginum) by midwives to ascertain their purity. The practice is first introduced as something the women use to defend their claims of purity, but Cyprian states "no one should imagine she can defend herself with the plea that it can be proven by examination whether she is a virgin."95 Although the examination might determine physical purity, the whole other realm of unseeable activity remains under suspicion. Cyprian notes the various other forms of impurity which cannot be seen in the physical body:

even if she is found to be an unsullied virgin in her private parts, she could have sinned all the same in some other part of her person which can be sullied and yet cannot be examined. There can be no doubt that a great deal of shameful and sinful conduct is admitted by the mere fact of going to bed together, of embracing, of talking together, of kissing, and—disgraceful and disgusting conduct—of two people lying and sleeping together.96

The midwife's examination is prone to error and cannot account for all "shameful and sinful" conduct.97 Cyprian's conclusion suggests that neither the midwife nor the woman herself can know her own body, but must be determined ultimately by an authority, such as
the Bishop.\textsuperscript{98} The definition of virginity extends beyond intercourse to include acts which are shameful, yet go undetected because they do not bear a physical sign. Cyprian problematizes a second field of knowledge--acts which cannot be seen by others.

Like Cyprian, Chrysostom allows for sins undetected by the midwife. However, he denounces the midwife's evaluation altogether and threatens an exposé, conducted by God, to determine the \textit{subintroducta}'s behavior. For Chrysostom, the \textit{subintroducta} inevitably prevaricates. When the virgin claims that she "can show that [her] body has not been deflowered or prostituted,"\textsuperscript{99} he requires that the \textit{subintroducta} be evaluated at level of unseen activities and "hidden thoughts:"

\begin{quote}
For the wisdom and skill of the midwife can see only such things as whether the body has experienced intercourse with a man. But whether it has also fled the rude touch, the adultery of kisses and embraces and their defilement, that day will then reveal, when the living Word of God, who is aware of what happens in secret, sets their lives naked and exposed before the eyes of men and brings the hidden thoughts of human hearts into the open; then we \textit{will know well} whether your body is pure of these sins and is in every way untainted.\textsuperscript{100}
\end{quote}

Every thought, emotion or embrace of the \textit{subintroductae} incurs guilt. Chrysostom invokes Hebrews 4:13\textsuperscript{101} which enables him to use the hidden realm of thoughts as evidence against the virgin. In this case, however, the virgin's integrity must be proven not only to God, but also the general public.

Because the virgin's thoughts--sexual thoughts in particular--can be distinct from their acts, the \textit{subintroductae} are inevitably guilty.\textsuperscript{102} The discourse against the \textit{subintroductae} focuses on a potential discrepancy between the private and public activities of the celibate couple. By creating this distinction, which can never be positively determined, Chrysostom concludes the \textit{subintroductae} are always guilty.
The repudiations of the *subintroductae* in the writings of church fathers depict *syneisaktism* as a moral problem that concerns primarily the purity of the couple involved. As agents of feminine corruption and prevarication, the *subintroductae* are condemned because of their inherent feminine nature, or the inevitably false representation of her status as a virgin. However, the legislation against cohabitation which appears in Church canons, and later in Roman Law, indicates the continued resistance of *syneisaktism* to reform. The collaboration of legal and moral discourse reflects the severity of the threat *syneisaktism* posed for Christianity's important public image in the fourth century.

Evidence of the scandal appears in the repudiations of *syneisaktism*, but the political effects of scandal are exchanged for moral ones. The church fathers categorize the behaviors which cause scandal as worthy of greater punishment than those sins which do not. The redefinition of scandal as sin required a change in the meaning of sin. In Chrysostom's treatises addressed to the men cohabitation with the *subintroductae*, he identifies two kinds of sin: public and private. The public sin incurs guilt even if no sinful act occurred:

> Let us grant that the person saying these things was speaking the truth, is innocent of all lust, and undertakes this patronage from no other motivation than piety alone. But even then we will not find him exempt from punishment. For if he did not lack other opportunities through which he could prove his piety and could do so without scandalizing souls, then he ought not to spend his time on the kind of projects in which the disadvantage is greater than the benefit. 103

Chrysostom concludes that the scandal outweighs the act. Thus, the role of public opinion determines the seriousness and punishment of the sin, so that the importance of the act itself diminishes:

> I will contribute the following: even if someone sins greatly but does so without being observed and causes no scandal, he will be given a lighter
penalty than the one who sins to a lesser degree but does so openly giving offense to many people.\textsuperscript{104}

Because of the effects on other people, the private sin receives less penalty than one that does cause scandal, even if it is a greater sin. Here, the definition of morality changes so as to assist in eliminating scandal.

The exhortation addressed to the individual virgin employed this notion of sin as public morality. The threat of the exposée exhorted the woman to change her behavior because of the disgrace she would cause not only to herself but the whole community. God, the "Unsleeping Eye,"\textsuperscript{105} observes, and the public can read the sources of outrage: what will be the case when we depart for the offended Bridegroom himself, when that which is unknown is brought into \textit{public view}, when even hearts, words, attitudes, looks, and thoughts are open for reading (I leave aside things more disgraceful than these). When, in a word, everything will appear naked, laid open before the whole world, to what disgrace, punishment, and retribution will we be subjected?\textsuperscript{106}

The public offense of an act determines its morality or immorality, the exposure to the public assures the \textit{subintroductae}'s guilt. The thoughts are exposed to knowledge and public interpretation. Out of fear of spiritual punishment and retribution, the cohabitating virgin was urged abandon her relationship of cohabitation and ensure that what is unknown (her private thoughts) are presentable for public view.

In the church's discourse against the \textit{subintroductae}, the writers couch the church's political interests in individual moral terms. The texts called attention to public scandal only insofar as it was an indication of grievous sin. According to Eusebius of Emesa, the cohabitating virgin creates unhappiness for the entire Christian community because her sin incurs the "wrath of God" for the whole Church.\textsuperscript{107} While the entire Church suffers, the individual virgin is responsible. Chrysostom's passage cited above similarly reveals a strategy by which the Church might eliminate scandal without visibly asserting its interests. In this example, the problem of cohabitation is expanded to include "blasphemy against God," among the catalogue of grievances associated with it. Chrysostom defines the church's legitimation as a determining question of the virgin's salvation.
Like Eusebius, Chrysostom asserts that the cohabitating virgin corrupts the whole Church. The problem caused by the *subintroductae* is characterized as a defilement of the church's "holiness:"

the veil which separates [virginity] from marriage has been destroyed, torn asunder by shameless hands, the holy of holies is trod underfoot, and all that which is august and full of terror has become impure, exposed to all.108

In this extended metaphor which likens the virgin's body to the Temple in Jerusalem, Chrysostom transforms the loss of virginity into a form of the most serious blasphemy. The question of the Temple of Jerusalem was of major concern to Christians in Antioch.109 Here, the virgin's purity metaphorically defines God's relationship to the Church. Chrysostom uses the terror of God to encourage a reform of the practice of *syneisaktism*.

This definition of morality as public opinion also appears in the State legislation against the practice of celibate cohabitation. Title X of the Sirmondian Constitutions admittedly forbids the practice in order to eliminate the scandal, but the legislation is motivated by a sense of public morality. The initiative for this action originated within the Church for the purposes of maintaining the church as an institution "commendable to the world":

For We trust that there is such reverence for God in consecrated minds that the consciousness of a wicked persuasion does not know the habitation of this licentious retreat. But though such wicked persuasion may not enter into such an association and friendship, rumor contaminates and the addition of the opposite sex gives an opportunity for evil morals, since the example of obscene suspicion entices to the allurements of crime those persons situated outside and living according to public law.110

The law is called for by a moral imperative that exists because of a potential crime only. Rumor, which is fostered by the ambiguity of this "licentious retreat," is the object of the reform. The crime exists in the opinion produced in the minds of those "situated outside," which may refer not only to non-clergymembers, but also critics of Christianity. The
participants in the practice are, moreover, required to reform themselves solely through the forced awareness that the practice is forbidden:

Since these things are so, Your Illustrious and Excellent Magnificence by posting edicts everywhere shall publish the sanction of the present imperial oracle, so that if any person relies upon any rank whatever in the priesthood or is distinguished by the honor of the clergy, he shall know that consorting with extraneous women is forbidden to him.111

The knowledge of the forbidden is to suffice as an imperative for reform. Through the publication of this oracle, the knowledge was diffused so that not only the clergy's, but also the public's awareness of this crime could enforce an individual reform. Moreover, as an edict to be published "everywhere," i.e. by Praetorian Prefects throughout the Roman Empire, both East and West, we can assume a general effect of this monitoring. While the sin is defined as a problem in terms of public opinion, the reform is to be conducted privately, and specifically by the male cohabitants. The condemnation of the female cohabitant is here only implied.

In the definition of public sin as a more serious crime than private sin, the laws transform the crime of the subintroductae into something to be monitored by the public. Because of the lascivious thoughts that the subintroductae produce, the theological concept of God as the Unsleeping Eye becomes part of the legal discourse into the Christian state. The problem of the indeterminate purity of the virgin's subintroductae is both the site and condition for increased monitoring of syneisktasm.

VI

The identified sites of moral repudiation, the indeterminate relationships between male and female, between one's interior and one's exterior, and between the inside and outside of the church, each exemplify the power of the subintroductae to resist definition. The subintroductae challenged Chrysostoms' conceivable reasons for male and female relationships. The subintroductae did not live by the definition of female as temptress. By
maintaining a commitment to chastity in the context of a committed relationship the celibate
couple refused an isolated monastic style and remained in a small way impervious to the
normalizing power of the ecclesiastical institution, and later the state.

However, through the specification of these moral transgressions, the
subintroductae became a form of perversity against which the proper virgin's behavior was
defined. The very indeterminacy of these women's bodies elicited definition. In response
to the nature of the subintroductae, the writers deployed a discourse which enabled the
church's control and eventual elimination of syneisaktism. The definition of indeterminacy
strategically constructed an opposition between "fallen" and "holy" virgins, which the non-
cohabitating virgin could use to define herself. In fact, it appears Chrysostom's treatise was
intended for holy as well as fallen virgins. This understanding of resistance in the
woman's body provided structures of self-knowledge which applied to holy virgins were
not prescribed as an oppressive reprimand, but arose in response to syneisaktism. The
criticisms of the subintroductae give rise to an ideal definition of the virgin as one who
decides against cohabitation and chooses instead to monitor her desires. The
categorizations of the subintroducta therefore specify the virgin's resistance to power which
engenders a normalizing discourse.

The discourse prescribing holy virginity is implied by the condemnations of the
subintroductae. Chrysostom's discourse sought to teach virgins how to guard their
virginity. As opposed to the subintroductae's deceit, proper virgins are to define
themselves by carefully monitoring the purity of their "sign." To do this, they must submit
their interior condition to examination, and of course, refuse to practice syneisaktism. The
proper virgin must learn from and transcend the subintroducta. The proper virgin will not
offer any excuse for lascivious thoughts among the public -- nor will they tarnish the public
reputation of the church. In the next chapter, I examine four treatises on virginity written
by Ambrose and Chrysostom, both of whom were advocates of virginity in the late fourth
century. Of the four, only Chrysostom's treatise of the subintroductae claims to be a text
that prescribes a normative form of ascetic practice. The other three treatises addressed to women claim only to describe the virginal ideal. In fact, each defines virginity against resistant qualities of the *subintroductae* that are set out here. Although a direct correlation cannot be made, the next chapter describes the strategies of domination which respond to the resistance of the *subintroductae*.

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**NOTES**

1 The word derives from mid-third century Antioch and referred to the women ascetics who lived with Bishop Paul of Samosata and other clergy in his community. See below pp. 7-8. Hans Achelis created the term "syneisaktism" from the Greek word in the earliest and very thorough study of the *subintroductae*. His thinking, via other later scholars has inevitably informed this brief study of syneisaktism. See Achelis, *Virgenes Subintroductory: Ein Beitrag zum VII Kapitel des 1. Korintherbriefs* (Leipzig, 1902).

2 This translation appears in the title to Chrysostom’s treatise addressed to the men cohabiting with virgins, but as Elizabeth Clark points out, this may not have been his own. Clark notes that Felix Quadt, "Subintroductae Mulier," *Zeitschrift für Kathologische Theologie* 34 (1910): 228-231, disagrees with Achelis’ view that *syneisaktoi* was translated as *subintroductae* for the first time in the sixth century; he presents evidence from an early fifth century translation of the canons of the Sixth Synod of Carthage (419 C.E.) for his proof.


4 Today, however, a sexually active woman does not arouse public scandal to the same extent. A more appropriate equivalent might be "dyke," or even the derogatory term for the gay man, "fag," in terms of the politics and wide public response to the *subintroductae* in Antiquity and to homosexuality today.

5 Repudiations of the *subintroductae* in church canon refer specifically to clergy. Some treatises which refer to this practice address both celibate lay and clergy members, which follows from their Eastern Syriac origins, where, according to Arthur Vööbus, celibacy was a requirement for admission to baptism. See Vööbus, *Celibacy: A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1951).

6 Pseudo-Clement’s *De virginitate* 2. 1 in vol. 8 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325* ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951), pp. 55-74, requires that no woman, "unmarried or who has taken the vow," reside with a man dedicated to God, which indicates that unmarried women may have also tried to live with male celibates on occasion and had to be outlawed.

7 In the first situation, Achelis characterizes the woman as a house servant. The latter situation is described in Chrysostom’s treatise, *Adversus eos qui apud se habent subintroductas virginis* or "Instruction and
According to Athanasius, the renowned desert father, St. Antony placed his sister in a house of consecrated women before leaving for the desert. Life of St. Antony, 3. Pachomius is regarded by Phillip Rousseau as the "founder of the community life within the tradition of Christian asceticism," and influenced the ascetic thought of Basil, Evagrius, Jerome, Augustine and Cassian. His sister directed a community of women across the river from him that according to Palladius housed four hundred women, Lausiac History, 33. For a study of the formation of this community, see Philip Rousseau, Pachomius: The Making of a Community (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1985).

Arthur Vööbus concludes: "The fundamental conception around which the Christian belief was centered was the doctrine that the Christian life is unthinkable outside the bounds of virginity," History of Syran Asceticism, vol. 1 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1958), p. 69, Cf. p. 72.


Life of Olympias, 6 in Jerome Chrysostom and Friends.

Palladius, Lausiac History 53; in Women in the Early Church, ed. Elizabeth Clark, p. 214.

Hans Achelis so deems this practice in, "Agapetae," p. 177.


1 Corinthians 7:36-38; NAB.

Chrysostom, for example assures the relationship is between father and daughter. De virg. 78.1-6. See especially Roland Seboldt, "Spiritual Marriage," for a vocabulary study on various words in this passage, by which he demonstrates Chrysostom's strained interpretation.

23 The Muratori Canon (c. 200) identifies Hermas as the brother of the bishop of Rome, Pius (141-155 C.E.), and suggests *The Shepherd* ought to be read but not as a canonical document, Henneke-Schnemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), vol. 1, p. 45. Henneke-Schnemelcher date this highly metaphorical early Christian text in the second or third decade of the second century, but there is much debate on the dating of this text, vol. 2, p. 642.

24 *The Shepherd* Similitude 9.11.

25 *The Shepherd* Similitude 9.11.


27 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.6.3.

28 Tertullian, *Exhortation to Chastity*, 12; *On Monogamy* 16.


30 Pseudo-Clement *De virginitate* 1.10.


32 Johannes Quasten supports this later dating and Syrian origin, *Patrology*, I, p. 59. Although the authorship and specific date are unclear, these documents were preserved as orthodox, and prefigure the position set out by Fathers in other documents.


34 Voëbus, *Celibacy*, p. 25. At the synod held in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in 410 C.E, *syneisaktism* was forbidden for those who wished to serve the church; as in the West, this synod was followed by several more repudiations up until the seventh century.

35 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.29-30, records the accusation and verdict of the Synod of Antioch which was prepared to judge Paul of Samosata for a serious of moral offences when he died.


37 The word and the practice, according to Pierre de Labriolle, derives from Matthew 19:12 "For there are eunuchs...who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it."
38 This anecdote is told by Athanatius in *Apol. de Fuga sua*, 27, and is described by Labriolle, "Le Mariage Spirituel," p. 223.


40 Cyprian, *Epistle 4 to Pomponius*. See discussion below p. 23.


46 The earliest evidence of this process is Cyprian's treatise of the mid-Third century, *On the Dress of Virgins*, which prescribes a certain apparel for virgins, along with various behaviors. Jerome prescribes this brief treatise as a manual of instruction in three of his letters, Ep. 22.22, 107.22; 107.4, which indicates some ongoing use that suggests a codification in the fourth century. The *Apostolic Constitutions* do not grant the virgins a leadership role in the Church, but recognize their presence as a solidified group.


48 The dates on these treatises vary according to ancient sources. Socrates includes the treatise addressed to the women who lived with clerics in a list of ascetic treatises composed in Antioch during Chrysostom's diaconate in the 380's or early 390's. *Ecclesiastical History* 6. 3. Palladius, Chrysostom's ancient biographer suggests that the treatises were written after 398 CE, when Chrysostom was appointed Archbishop in Constantinople, since the community in Constantinople were particularly put off by Chrysostom's hyper-ascetic exhortations, Palladius, *Dialogue 5*. Anne-Marie Malingrey supports the dating of the Antiochene period when Chrysostom had returned from the desert and first commenced his literary career, "Vers un édition critique des ouvrage de St. Jean Chrysostome," in *Studia Patristica*, Vol 3 (Berlin: Akademie-verlag, 1961), p. 82.

49 Jerome *Ep. 22.14*.


52 C. Hippo, (393), 2.16; C. Toledo (397, 400), can. 6.; C. Carthage (401), 4; C. Turon (490); C. Agathen (506) can. 28; C. Epaone (517) can. 38.

53 Sirmondian Constitutions 10, trans. by Clyde Pharr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 481. The Sirmondian Constitutions are named for Jacques Sirmond who discovered and published them in 1931. Pharr notes that scholars believe they antedate the Codex Theodosianus, published in 438 C.E., because they contain unabbreviated or semi-abbreviated forms of many constitutions found in the Codex Theodosianus. This particular law appears to have been split into two laws in the Code: 9.25.1-3 and 16.2.44. All further references to Title 10 are from Pharr's edition.

54 Sirm. x, n.2, p. 481.

55 Cf. Payer, Pierre, Sex and the Penitentials: The Development of a Sexual Code, 550-1150 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press 1984), p. 47 n. 163. Payer lists councils which extended into the eighth century, most of which were listed in the penitentials.

56 H.B. Swete mentions the use of a "spiritual sword" which alludes to this non-oppressive force of persuasion. History of the Early Church and Ministry, p. 365. n. 8.; citing Cyprian, Ep. 4.4.

57 Chrysostom means "golden mouthed" and he received this appellation because of his renown as a captivating orator, according to Wilken, John Chrysostom, p. 104.


59 Chrysostom Quod reg. 1. p. 209.

60 Chrysostom Quod reg. 3. p. 218.

61 The rhetoric that John employs against the subintroductae is strikingly similar to that used against the Jews. Robert Wilkins has demonstrated the connection between John's rhetoric and the problem of Christian definition. A resurgence of interest in Judaism in the fourth century produced a large number of Judaizers—gentiles who practiced the law—who called into question the legitimacy of the church as a completion of the Old Tradition. They Jews received most horrific accusations. See Wilkins' work, John Chrysostom and the Jews.


63 This has been argued by Anne Ewing Hickey, Women of the Roman Aristocracy as Christian Monastics (Ann Arbor, MI: Univ. of Michigan Research Press, 1987). Hickey uses a sociological model to describe the motivation of the Christian female ascetics in the late fourth century. The women, faced with conflicting, or unintegrated, definitions for women with the combination of Christianity and conflicting Roman ideals, adopted the "social deviance" of asceticism, which provided a needed alternative. To demonstrate her thesis, she explores in detail the roles available for women as once-married wife/mother, or woman who was married several times under the Agustan social law. While her thesis in part explains the imperious need for definition of virginity, which I support, it does not make sense to me to define asceticism as deviance, since it became a widely held cultural value.
Also, Rom 8:7 "those who are in the flesh cannot please God." This passage is also cited in Ps-Clement, De virginitate 2.7.

Athanasius, Life of St. Antony, 5, 19, 23.

Jerome, Ep. 22.7.

2 Samuel 11:2ff.

Pseudo-Clement, De virginitate 2.10. Chrysostom also analyzes this text and concludes that mistresses "upset the ruling principle in nature" by en-slaving men, Ad Theodorum lapsum 2.2; cited on p.11 in Clark; Jerome, Ep. 22. 12, also cites Bathsheba's bath to point out the "danger" to the man who simply uses his eyes.


Ps-Clement, De virginitate 2.1.

Ps-Clement, De virginitate 2.2.

Ps-Clement, De virginitate 2.4.

Eusebius of Emesa Hom. 7 23, cited in David Amand de Mendieta, "Virginité," p. 800. This echoes Cyprian, who argues in his treatise On the Dress of Virgins, 19: "You yourself are gazed upon immodestly. You do not corrupt your eyes with foul delight, but in delighting others you yourself are corrupted."


Chrysostom Quod reg. 2. p. 212.

Chrysostom Quod reg. 4. p. 220.

Chrysostom Quod reg. 2. p. 211.

This form of strong invective, psogos, is a common argumentative strategy as defined in the Greek rhetorical tradition. The purpose is to vilify and defame, and commonly the arguments were known to be untrue. Robert Wilkens, John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 112-13.

Chrysostom Adv. eos. 11. p. 197. One of the corrupting effects of being in the presence of women is that it altered male speech so that they began to speak of wool and weaving, which were traditionally associated with wives and the domestic realm. For example, CIL VI.37965 (Rome, 3rd century), an inscription translated in Women's Life in Greece and Rome, ed. Maureen B. and Mary Lefkowitz, pp. 111-12.


Chrysostom Adv. eos. 5. p.179.

83 Chrysostom *Quod reg.* 4, p. 220.
84 Chrysostom *Quod reg.* 4, p. 219.
85 Chrysostom *Quod reg.* 1, p. 211.
86 Chrysostom *Quod reg.* 1, p. 211.


89 See Jerome *Ep.* 22, 5.6 where fallen virgins are likened to the five foolish virgins of Matt 25:13 and the harlot of Israel in Isaiah 1:21, among others "who will not be raised up."

90 Pseudo-Titus, Schneemelcher-Henneke, vol. 2, p. 165. Jerome, *Ep.* 22.13, also describes virgins who receive abortions, and are therefore guilty "not only of adultery against Christ, but also of suicide and child murder as well."


95 Cyprian *Ep.* 4.3.1

96 Cyprian *Ep.* 4.3.1

97 Cyprian *Ep.* 4.3.1


99 Chrysostom *Quod reg.* 3, p. 218.

100 Chrysostom *Quod reg.* 3 p. 218.

101 "And before Him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." NAB.
102 Chrysostom to the subintroductae: "Alas for you, as God himself beckoned you toward the spiritual wedding chamber but you have severed yourself from that glory, have plunged yourself into the devil's fire and into the fatal punishment..." Quod reg. 3. p. 217; Cf. Quod reg 6. p. 227.


105 Chrysostom Quod reg. 10. p. 240.

106 Chrysostom Quod reg. 9. p. 235 (my emphasis).

107 Eusebius of Emesa Hom. 7. 27; cited in Amand de Mendieta, "La Virginité," p. 807.

108 Chrysostom Quod reg. 1. p. 165.

109 In Robert Wilkens careful study of Chrysostom's relationship to the Jews, he notes that Chrysostom interprets the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple as a major threat to the legitimacy of the Christian church. See Wilkens, John Chrysostom and the Jews.

110 Sirm. X. According to Pharr, most editors consider the text corrupt here. Besides the meaning given here, Theodor Mommsen suggests: "The person who completely abstains from such an association and friendship is not contaminated by rumor nor does the addition." Roemisches strafrecht (Leipzig: Duncker-Humblot,1899); cited in Pharr, pp. 481-82.

111 Sirm. X.
CHAPTER THREE: PRESCRIPTION AND PERSUASION IN THE WRITINGS OF CHrysostom AND AMBROSE ON VIRGINITY

Part 1: Introduction

Saints Ambrose (340-397 C.E.) and Chrysostom (347-407 C.E.) were two major advocates of virginity in the late fourth century. Although they lived and preached in different communities—Ambrose in Milan and Chrysostom in Antioch and Constantinople—their definitions of virginity include striking parallels. Ambrose and Chrysostom each wrote treatises on virginity within a decade of each other, and contributed to a large body of texts written on this topic in the late fourth century. The documents of Ambrose and Chrysostom may have been read before audiences of both sexes, but primarily addressed female virgins. The documents to be examined are texts to which women ascetics were exposed in the congregations of Chrysostom, Ambrose and other thinkers who borrowed their ideas. While only prescriptions, these documents indicate the acceptable categories and methods by which these virgins were to define themselves.

This chapter will analyze Ambrose's three-book treatise entitled De Virginibus, or Concerning Virgins and his De Virginitate, or On Virginity, along with Chrysostom's De Virginitate, and some aspects of Quod regulares feminae viris cohabitare nondebitae, or On the Necessity of Guarding Virginity, in order to demonstrate the potential strategic effects of these discourses on the individual virgin within the Late Antique church. The documents not only exhort Christian women to take up the profession of virginity, but they also define an existing practice. The addressees of these treatises on virginity already practiced virginity and comprised an identifiable group of women in the late fourth century. Virgins were flocking to Milan to take the vow of virginity from Placentia, Bononia and Mauretania, located in modern day Piacenza in Northern Italy, Bologna, Italy and Northern Africa, respectively. According to Chrysostom, some 3,000 virgins and
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widows out of a Christian population of 100,000 lived in Antioch. The public veiling ceremony for virgins had been clearly established by this time in the Milanese church. In addition to "alluring women to a profession," these discourses on virginity attempted to reform an existing, growing and, as we have seen in Chapter 2, sometimes scandalous practice.

Following Foucault's assertion that discourse serves as an instrument of power, I will argue that this definition of virginity served the purpose of determining and controlling the behavior of the virgin in precisely the ways that the subintroductae refused determination and control. The treatises reveal two strategies: prescriptions, which require a modicum of behavior in order for the virgin to demonstrate her obedience to God; and persuasions, which attempt to convince the virgin that the prescribed definitions would benefit her individually. In the first strategy, the prescriptions are to be obeyed because they are what the church has determined are God's will. The prescriptions within the discourse on virginity inculcated proper ideals and practices for virgins. Foucault characterizes the behavioral prescriptions as they appeared in Christianity as opposed to Greco-Roman culture in relation to authority:

In the Christian morality of sexual behavior, the ethical substance was to be defined ... by a domain of desires that lie hidden among the mysteries of the heart, and by a set of acts that are carefully specified as to their form and their conditions. Subjection was to take the form...of a recognition of the law and an obedience to pastoral authority.

In fact, the Christian virgin received the prescriptions of these treatises from her Bishop or deacon, who provided authoritative interpretations of the Scripture and set out a code of behaviors. Chrysostom and Ambrose threaten virgins with divine punishment and they castigate individuals on behalf of the church in order to compel the virgins' obedience.

The prescriptions defined by Chrysostom and Ambrose require the virgin to make herself increasingly "visible," or accessible to knowledge. Increased knowledge of the virgin
enabled those who required her obedience to monitor and reform her behavior more efficiently.

What appears as a painful prescription in the first strategy for reforming behavior is recast as a source of pleasure in the strategy of persuasion. The prescriptions required the virgin's obedience to a pastoral authority, but the use of persuasion operated without any authoritative coercion. As Geophrey Harpham interprets Foucault, "The Western techniques of control... do not deny pleasure as much as they appropriate and complicate it."12 Both Chrysostom and Ambrose exhort the virgin to enact these prescriptions because they guarantee her benefits and pleasures both in this world and the next. The virgin makes sacrifices in order to receive these pleasures. As Harpham suggests, the virgin expects to receive precisely what she sacrifices, except on a grander scale. The virgin is persuaded--not forced--to discipline herself in order to reap the benefits of virginity, which "makes those who spend time on earth live like angels dwelling in heaven."13

Whether the virgin obeyed a threatening authority, or freely chose to discipline herself, the prescribed behaviors were designed so that the virgin unknowingly participated in larger strategies of power. This underlying structure can be seen in the treatises on virginity, where Ambrose and Chrysostom defend their position against critics of virginity. In arguing against their opponents, they prescribe not only an individual ascetic practice, but also a self-transformation which enables the church to distinguish itself as a religious institution. As with the repudiation of *subintroducta*, the institution defines itself through the virgin. Ambrose writes:

> Not in herself, daughters, not in herself, I say, is the Church wounded, but in us. We must be careful, then, that no fall of ours becomes an injury for the Church.14

Ambrose characterizes the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the Church as each person's moral responsibility. In defining the virgin, the church sets itself apart from its competitors both within and without the orthodox church. Unlike the *subintroductae*, the ideal virgin was
Cosponsored and arranged as their positions are represented in the delegates themselves.

of power, I will first discuss the policies addressed by opponents of the churches of church. In order to show how these policies might have served as instruments and effects easily controlled, and therefore guaranteed an unbalanced and incapable representation for the
Part 2: Heresy and Paganism in the Discourse on Virginity

...sex is boring.

-- Michel Foucault

The similarities between the writings of Chrysostom and Ambrose reflect a common discourse on virginity from which each writer borrowed, but which they appropriated according to their individual purposes. The differences between each writer's definition of virginity therefore indicate the effects of the polemics within their community upon each set of discourses. The variations, in fact, best illustrate that power responded to local needs through the discourse of virginity, rather than enforcing a universal oppression. The unique characteristics of each writer's definition indicate the flexibility of texts in responding to actual conditions and the effects of social conditions upon texts.

In addition to the shared Christian tradition on virginity which dates back to Paul, and perhaps Jesus, the similarities between their definitions of virginity may have resulted from exchange between different centers of the Church during the late fourth century when numerous authors wrote on this topic. Ambrose knew well of the thriving ascetic practice in the Eastern Church, particularly in Antioch. In addition to writing about the virgin Mary, and the exemplary virgin Thecla, he also discusses four Antiochene virgins as models of ascetic practice. Although Ambrose wrote before Chrysostom, Ambrose knew well of the Eastern practice of virginity, and specifically the exemplary female virgins. Common themes in the treatises of Chrysostom and Ambrose corroborate the possibility of communication between East and West. Both authors quote Psalm 45: 9-11, compare virginity to earthly marriage, exalt virginity as the life of the angels, and describe the virgin as the Bride of Christ. Thus, Chrysostom need not
have read Ambrose's treatises; both participated in a tradition that existed in the Western and Eastern Church. The differences need not be seen as isolated understandings of virginity, but rather modifications which pertained to the conditions of a particular community.

Ambrose and Chrysostom's writings on virginity differed both in their prescriptions for the virgin's relation to the public sphere, and in their definition of bodily passion, which in turn, shaped the acceptable limits of the virgin's activity. Ambrose's definition of virginity exhorts the virgin to stay inside and attend her Bridegroom:

"Learn also to bolt your door during the hours of the night; may no one discover it to be opened readily. Your Bridegroom himself desires that it be closed when he knocks...."A garden locked is my sister, my bride a garden locked, a fountain sealed."23

The image of a "locked garden" represents the body, which is to be inviolate. The language describes a "door," which marks the boundary between the inside and outside of the body. As we shall see, the door is likened to her mouth, which is to be closed and silent, but also refers to the hymen. The image also implies enclosure and a limited sphere of activity. The virgin is to be separated from the outside by a locked door.

Passion in Ambrose, therefore, is understood as that which violates boundaries. Thus, Ambrose sees the woman of Luke's gospel with an issue of blood24 as a person plagued by worldly and uncontrollable passion:

"And you, O daughter, by faith also touch his fringe. The flux of worldly delights issuing forth like a torrent, is already dried up by the heat of the saving Word....The ingrained passion, the refractory passion...is cured by the mere touch of the fringe."

The perpetual flow of menstrual blood represents destructive and evil passion because it transgresses the bodily threshold. For Ambrose, the ideal of purity requires control of one's passions within and protection against the corruptions without. This purity is achieved by maintaining a firm boundary between the interior and exterior of one's body, but also by securing a door between the world and one's private living space.
For Chrysostom, purity of the body and soul is not achieved so much through rigid definitions of interior and exterior, but instead through a purity demonstrated in both public and private realms. Like Ambrose, Chrysostom affirms the virgin who "retires to her house and hears his voice in the Scriptures," and encourages women not to behave like the subintroductae who carried themselves lasciviously in the marketplace. However, for Chrysostom, the virgin can, and is even encouraged to enter public places so long as she carries herself correctly and is easily identified as a proper virgin. Chrysostom contradicts the argument that a virgin would be shamed by chance encounters in public:

you seem to me to be quite ignorant of both what keeps womanly nature from shame and what covers it with it. For appearing in public or retiring from it does not cause shame, but rashness does since it does not check the soul within; discretion and modesty, however, produce no shame. Therefore, many women who have been liberated from their apartments walk through the crowded market and are not censured. In fact, they are much admired for their modesty. Through their demeanor, their walk, the simplicity of their dress, they emit a brilliant ray from their inner decorum.

Virgins were allowed in public so as to manifest their inner decorum through their walk and their dress. Through outward displays, the virgin's purity, like a strong perfume, brought pleasure to those not only "inside and nearby but even to those outside." Virginity was intended to affect the public through their perception of her.

This theoretical disparity between Chrysostom and Ambrose is reflected, moreover, in aspects of the definitions of virginity unique to each writer. For example, Ambrose lauds the Virgin Mary as the supreme model of virginity in his second book of De virginibus, devoted specifically to the instruction of proper precepts for virgins. Chrysostom's discourse acknowledges the virgin birth, but does not dilate upon Mary's virginity. As an attempt to instruct proper virginity, Chrysostom devotes an entire treatise to a discussion of the subintroductae, a practice not discussed by Ambrose. Further, Chrysostom violently repudiates various heretical practices of virginity and violently execrated Judaizers, whereas Ambrose mentions only one heretical sect.

Ambrose devotes a larger amount of his discourse to a discussion of pagan cults.
These disparities reflect local conditions which were addressed through the discourse on virginity in the respective contexts of Chrysostom and Ambrose, Antioch and Milan. Antioch, as noted above, was a large cosmopolitan city with three thriving religious groups. Christianity was a minority, defining itself against Paganism and Judaism. Thus, Chrysostom's virgin needed to defend Christianity's reputation in the public arena. She was likened to an athlete, who entered the "contest of virginity" in a gymnasium, before a judge and spectators. The Judge, as Chrysostom explains, is Christ, the angels spectate from above, and the devil "in a rage gnashes his teeth and, grasping her about the waist, is locked in combat with her." While this interpretation spiritualizes the entire contest, the metaphor reflects an understanding of virginity as a public event to occur before a large audience.

Chrysostom's attention to various forms of heretical virginity follows from his concern with the public responsibility of the virgin. Just as the subintroductae were repudiated because they created public scandal and disgraced Christianity before Jews and Pagans, the heretical virgins raise questions about whether, in fact, Chrysostom could claim spiritual authority over the variety of his opponents. Chrysostom's text, De virginitate, defines the virgin against several other heretical movements which were known for their vigorous practice of virginity, and which flourished particularly in the Eastern region of the Empire. He condemns Marcion, Valentinus, and Mani for their enkratism, or condemnation of marriage, and because they did not have speaking in themselves the Christ who spares his own sheep and who lays down his life for them, but instead the father of falsehood, the destroyer of the human race.

Chrysostom condemns them because they do not "have God speaking in them." This collaboration with the devil derives from the heretical virgin's adulterous relationship to God and the church: like the subintroductae "they have not been betrothed to one man as
the apostle of Christ. How could they be chaste who unsatisfied with one husband, introduce another who is not God?"38

Chrysostom's discussion of the heretical virgins reflects a larger anti-Gnostic polemic which suggests that Chrysostom's definition of virginity had political implications. The heterodox movements cited by Chrysostom were especially threatening because of their position against of marriage, since Chrysostom also presents caustic arguments against marriage and in favor of virginity. To distinguish himself, he has to explain that his arguments do not mean that marriage is bad, only that virginity is better.39 As Clark points out, "it was imperative for Chrysostom to uphold the goodness of marriage, amid his many criticisms of it, if he himself wished to avoid charges of Manichaeism."40 Chrysostom hotly condemned the heretics for a position that resembled his own.41

Although the names of the heretics only appear once, the virulence of his condemnations of them, and independent evidence of the viability of these churches suggest that Chrysostom was guarding the legitimacy of his church.42 Further evidence of the polemical nature of Chrysostom's hyper-ascetic position appears in his removal from Constantinople at the Synod of the Oak in 403 by the Egyptian priest Theophilus.43 He was later reclaimed by the Church, but this incident complicates the idea of a unified and fully established orthodoxy. The variety of definitions of Christian and ascetic practices at this moment calls into question Chrysostom's assertion of a universal orthodox by repudiating heretics. In his treatise on virginity, the mention of the heterodox church suggests that the virgin represented in these documents was to assist in a definition of a church orthodoxy against a rabble of competing practices.

Ambrose's definition of a virgin served a different purpose from Chrysostom's. The virgin did not fight public battles, but served as a single fortress, who guarded against impurity. As Peter Brown notes, Ambrose likens the virgin body to an aula pudoris, which was for the average inhabitant of Milan, a "building rendered perpetually sacred by the presence of the Emperor."44 The abundance of this imagery leads him to conclude:
In the writings of Ambrose's last years, no historian of the early middle ages can fail to catch that note of inward-looking insensibility, that sharp fear of "admixture," and that exaltation of *integritas*, which enabled the Catholic clergy to provide the most formidable of all the "invisible frontiers" behind which the Roman populations of the post-Imperial West preserved their identity, long after the military frontiers of the Empire had been washed away by barbarian invasion and settlement.45

Ambrose's mastery of metaphor marks him, according to Brown, as a thinker who eased the transition into the middle ages by constructing the virgin body, and the church, as an enclosed space of purity. This image of fortitude against intruders also appears in the earliest writings of Ambrose on virginity.46

In Ambrose's writing on virginity, the image of virginity appears not only as a fortress guarding against enemy attacks,47 but also as protection against contamination from within. A battle between these two factions reflects the problem of definition against firmly held pagan values. Indeed, Ambrose saw the church at war:

...let us ask what Christ taught about the unmarried state..."There are," he said, "eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven." Consecrated virginity, then, may be described as a brilliant militia waging war for the kingdom of heaven. And so the Lord has taught us that a zeal for chastity ought to be uncontaminated.48

He interprets Matt 5:12 to gain scriptural backing in his position against marriage. Virginity is described as a militia, which indicates the war-like nature of the church's fight.

Ambrose's use of the metaphor of a militia to justify his stance against marriage is one example of one focus of his discourse: the friction caused by the virgin's noncompliance with familial expectations.49 Traditional pagan values and familial expectations especially impinged upon Christianity. According to Ambrose, the ideal virgin resided within the family home.50 Ambrose describes her as a source of redemption for the family, and encouraged parents to dedicate their daughters to the church, as the consecrated virgin did not require a dowry.51 However, many parents apparently did not agree with Ambrose's valorization of virginity, and complained because he prohibited marriage.52 For example, Ambrose recounts a poignant story of a virgin who had to resist
her family in order to take the veil. She yells to them from the altar where she has sought protection:

What are you doing my kinsfolk? Why do you still trouble my mind with marriage? ... Make the most you can of my wealth, boast of his nobility, extol his power, [but] I have Him with whom no one can compare.53

Many of the virgins of Milan and Rome in the Western Church were of aristocratic background, and therefore faced strong parental pressure to marry and produce heirs.54 The need for heirs was so great that male members of the clergy were not required to practice perpetual continence and could make a post-marital commitment to celibacy, after they had produced heirs.55 The question of tactfully exempting virgins from their familial obligations was crucial to Ambrose because the large number of the women who practiced virginity in the West were wealthy contributors to its revenue.56 Their parents had the power to withhold her inheritance.57 Therefore, Ambrose challenges the virgin: "If you conquer the home, you can conquer the world,"58 but does not focus on the problem of the subintroductae.

Ambrose's text also required the virgin to defend herself against the pagan influence of philosophy. In casting off the body, the virgin cast off "secular wisdom." Ambrose makes an analogy between the cloak, the body and philosophy, so that ascetic denial also required that the virgin renounce the influence of philosophical thinking:

For no one can see Christ who has assumed the garment of philosophy, or specifically, the dress of secular wisdom. It is a good thing that the garment of philosophy was taken from her, so that no one might prey upon her by philosophy.59

In order to see God, one must remove the influence of philosophy. Philosophy must be eliminated or the virgin becomes the "prey" of this pagan practice. Because philosophy derives largely from the existing culture, philosophy already existed within and contaminated the interior.

The definition of virginity as defense against pagan contamination is corroborated by Ambrose's castigation of paganism both in his writing on virginity and his letters. In
contrast to Chrysostom, Ambrose cursorily mentions heretical virginity, and even more thoroughly condemns a variety of pagan religious practices. Ambrose deprecates what he terms the "Phrygian rites" because they are "immodestly conducted by the weaker sex" – most likely a reference to the Montanists, who accepted female prophets. Similarly Ambrose criticizes the "orgies of Bacchus," the Vestal virgins, and condemns through allegory the pagan practice of banqueting and offering blood sacrifices.

In Ambrose's description of John the Baptist, he not only recounts the story, but also introduces non-Biblical meanings when he interprets the text. The banquet is characterized by "royal luxury," and he particularly castigates the girl who comes out to dance:

Is anything so conducive to lust as with unseemly movements thus to expose in nakedness those parts of the body which either nature has hidden or custom has veiled to sport with the looks, to turn the neck, to loosen the hair? Fitly was the next set an offence against God. For what modesty can there be where there is dancing and noise and clapping of hands?...Look, most savage king, at the sights of thy feast. Stretch forth thy right hand, that nothing be wanting to thy cruelty, that streams of holy blood may pour down between thy fingers....Behold those eyes [of John the Baptist], even in death turning away from the sight of delicacies. The eyes are closing, not so much owing to death as to horror of luxury.

The imagery that Ambrose adds to the passage from Mark associates the Greek practice of feasts and blood sacrifices with the beheading of John the Baptist. These feasts typically involved music, libations of wine, eating of cakes and the dancing of young girls and prostitutes. Although some ceased to endorse the practice of sacrificing animals in Rome, the blood sacrifice was required in 250 C.E. by a Christian Emperor and repeatedly banned in the fourth century. Scenes of civic life, moreover, suggest that pagan processions, cults, festivals and dances occurred throughout the Roman Empire even into the mid-to-late fourth century. This surfacing of clear as well as cloaked historical phenomena in the highly metaphorical discourse of virginity shows that paganism was of concern to Ambrose, even or especially, in the midst of his musings on the virginal ideal.
One practical connection that Ambrose makes between the virgin and the battle against paganism is his specific exhortation to the Christian matron in the battle against paganism:

What say you holy women? do you see what you ought to teach, and what also to unteach your daughters? She dances, but she is the daughter of an adulteress. But she who is modest, she who is chaste, let her teach her daughter religion, not dancing.67

As women were keepers of the household, it follows that they would have a great potential to shape their children in the mold of Christianity. Ambrose suggests that women may play a unique role in rejecting pagan practices at various societal levels.68

The political nature of Ambrose's discourses follows from his general political activity in his active defense of the Nicene orthodoxy against the Arian heresy, in defining the independence of the church from the Imperial government and in defending the Christian church against pagan state power in various controversies over pagan properties and religious practices under Christian Emperors.69 In one letter addressed to Emperor Valentinian II, dated 384 C.E., Ambrose responds to Symmachus' proposal that the sacrificial altar be restored to the Senate House in Rome. In arguing against continuing pagan influence in Rome, Ambrose again uses the metaphor of the militia, but specifies who the enemy is by speaking in the voice of Rome against the military failures in Rome, and connecting them to the fact that Rome did not worship the Christian God:

I lament my downfall. My old age is accompanied by shame over that disgraceful bloodshed. But I am not ashamed to be converted in my old age along with the whole world....This alone I had in common with the barbarians, that I did not know God before. Your sacrifice consists in the rite of being sprinkled with the blood of beasts. Why do you look for God's words in dead animals? Come and learn of the heavenly warfare which goes on on earth.70

Ambrose skillfully connects pagan sacrifice to the barbarians, so that an internal religious conflict took on the characteristics of the defense of Rome against invasions. Marta Sordi applauds Ambrose because he only connects pagan religion to the barbarians, which
"makes way for the idea of the continuity of Christian Rome." The tenacity of paganism in Rome presented an internal corruption against which Ambrose, and the virgin battled.

However, this position of definition against pagan culture is problematic because in other places, Ambrose employs the same philosophical language and tools that he condemns. Although he notes that some Greeks were "astute," he denies his participation in this non-Christian philosophical tradition:

In our talk of chariots, horses, and wings of the soul, to some we may seem to have made use of philosophical or poetical conceits. But a list of citations from the prophets shows that we have been drawing upon sources proper to us. To acknowledge his clear appropriation of these philosophical concepts would be to permit the notion of "admixture," which would dangerously contaminate the church's self definition as a virgin who "bears us, her children, not by a human father but by the spirit." It is crucial to Ambrose that this birth of the church, like the birth of Christ, occurred through the joining of the Godhead and the flesh "without any confusion or mixture." Ambrose invokes the image of the virgin Mary, as the quintessential symbol of generation without impurity and of the militia of virginity, in order to mask the hybrid nature of his discourse, and preserve the distinctions between Christianity and barbarians, pagans and heretics.

Particular symbols and definitions of virginity emerge in the writings of Chrysostom and Ambrose. The differences reflect the local needs governing the discourses in the respective communities. The idiosyncrasies in the definition parallel the problems facing the different communities that produced the texts written by Chrysostom and Ambrose.

In addition to these differences, both Chrysostom and Ambrose respond in their treatises to a polemic which was addressed to their churches because of their stance on virginity: critics feared that virginity threatened the Roman population. In Ambrose's treatise, De virginitate, where he responds to accusations in response to his valorization of
virginity, he argues that virginity does not inhibit population growth, but corresponds to it so that a low population has a small number of virgins, and correlative: "Population is highest where a commitment to virginity is strongest." He attributes the population of Africa and the whole East --which is large in relation to his own--to the large number of virgins there. According to Ambrose, the existence of virginity and a large population in other regions throughout the ancient world refutes the idea that virginity might have harmed population growth.

Chrysostom similarly responds to an antagonistic question: "What will prevent the complete disappearance of the human race...?" Not just enemies but also members of the church were disturbed by the threat of virginity to the Empire's population. Chrysostom responds by redefining sexual intercourse and reproduction. According to Chrysostom, the loss of virginity coincided with Original Sin, so that marriage and childbirth were superfluous before "the curse." Post-lapsarian marriage indicates a concession to weakness. Chrysostom offers two arguments to dispel fears about human extinction: first, he argues only God controls reproduction, and determines whether in fact humans will populate the earth. Second, whereas marriage once served the purpose of procreation as well as allaying sexual desire, Chrysostom claims: "now that all the world has been inhabited, only one reason remains for [marriage]: the suppression of licentiousness and debauchery." Chrysostom depicts physical sexual desire and procreation as unnecessary and contaminating, which negates the grounds for criticizing virginity.

Despite the attempts to reframe and redefine these polemics against virginity, the treatises indicate the resistance to the practice of virginity within the church. The stance of Ambrose and Chrysostom met with resistance from those within the Christian communities that were made uncomfortable by the widespread exhortation to abstinence. Virginity removed women from a traditional reproductive role, which produced anxiety about population. The redefinition of condemnation of sexual desire and denigration of marriage
necessarily created tensions. The polemic of population reveals a resistance to virginity, which the definition of virginity must resolve.

These treatises betray political conditions that did not pertain solely to virginity, yet inhabited the discourses on virginity. The subtexts of heretical movements and competing religious cultures indicate the places where the virgin's behavior may have served strategic purposes. Ambrose's writings on virginity especially give evidence of pagan practices, and Chrysostom's treatises focus on competing and dangerous heretical practices within Christianity. However, each writer also was challenged by threats to the church's legitimacy caused by heresy and paganism. The texts suggest strategic accommodations in which the virgin could participate: first, the church could revise individual behavior in order to establish a body of virgins which were distinct from the Roman matron; second, the church could publish orthodox thought by monitoring heretical thoughts in virgins as models of the ideal Christian. Because these political needs find expression in the discourses on virginity, it appears the virgin could, and was expected to play a role in attending to the local problems of heterodoxy and paganism.
Part 3: Prescribed Behaviors for the Woman Ascetic: The Virgin as Angel or Inmate?

You are a letter, known and read by all men, written on your hearts. Clearly you are a letter of Christ which I have delivered, a letter written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh in the heart.84

--Saint Paul

The polemics inscribed in the treatises of Chrysostom and Ambrose indicate that the church had specific interest in the virgin's distinction from the Roman matron, pagan family values and religious practice. The church was interested in the pure status of her virginity, and in her differentiation from heretical practices of virginity including Gnosticism and the syneisaktism. However, these goals are not explicitly inscribed in the treatises on virginity. They appear only as a subtext of the prescriptions describing her appropriate relationship to her Bridegroom and proper characteristics of the virgin. In subscribing to these prescriptions, the virgin willingly submitted to the authority of God and the church. She understood that she risked spiritual punishment if she did not obey this authority. In her seemingly isolated and individual commitment to Christianity, the virgin participated in an apparatus, which enforced a set of prescribed behaviors. The prescriptions for virginity, which I will investigate below, manufactured the virgin as a sort of "letter" to be known and read by all men, as Paul suggests. However, the discourse on virginity inscribed a subjectivity for the individual virgin not by way of the Spirit of God alone, but by texts which were, in fact, written with ink.

In Discipline and Punish, Michel Foucault articulates a strategy of power which maximizes control over the individual so as to reform behavior. Foucault examines how certain behaviors are produced within a panocular institutional apparatus, the Panopticon, which was theorized by the Utilitarian philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. Although Bentham
presented the theory of the Panopticon in the nineteenth century as an effective architecture for a prison, a hospital or school, I will argue here that the characteristics of the Panopticon appear, in rudimentary form, in a mental apparatus prescribed in the treatises on virginity written by Chrysostom and Ambrose. In fact, Bentham’s Panopticon existed only in theory, whereas numerous ascetics actually disciplines themselves within the Christian communities lead by Chrysostom and Ambrose. In order to discuss the construction of the ethical subject according which appears in these treatises, I will first set out the three aspects of the Panopticon which figure prominently in the discourse on virginity, and I then will trace them as they appear in the church fathers’ prescriptive texts.

Bentham’s plan calls for a transparent, circular building consisting of small single cells with one open wall so that the activity inside the cell is visible to a tower in the center. The tower is higher than each cell so that each person subjected to the discipline can be totally seen without knowing whether in fact, s/he is being watched. In the central tower, one can see everything, without being seen by those in the cells.\(^\text{85}\) The products of this discipline (surveiller) are well behaved individuals, "docile bodies:"\(^\text{86}\)

> it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies.\(^\text{87}\)

Three techniques of this structure are crucial to its exercise of power in the the discourse on virginity: the enclosure and partitioning of individuals, the hierarchical gaze by which the individual is totally and perpetually seen, and the "interiorization of the gaze" where the individual comes to monitor herself because s/he can not tell whether or not she is being watched.

The enclosed and separate cell, which Foucault notes is modeled upon the monastic institution, facilitates supervision of the individual:

> Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual ... its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate
individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities and merits. Similarly, the virgin's location in space—that is, where and with whom she cohabitates—determines her legibility. For the ideal virgin, the cellular space grants the solitude in which to be found by God, who is, as we have seen, "the Unsleeping Eye." The "partitioning" individuates and locates the person for viewing, which allows for easier and more accurate monitoring. The virgin is directed to position herself so that she is protected, but also easily found.

The Panopticon and the prescriptions in virginity "created a space of exact legibility." The "Eye" that reads the virgin's activity is positioned hierarchically insofar as it is God, the invisible Eye, Who sees everything. Total and perpetual visibility in the Panopticon enables immediate and inevitable conviction once any rule is transgressed. The virgin is controlled simply by being seen or known:

This reign of opinion, ... represents a mode of operation through which power will be exercised by virtue of the mere fact of things being known and people seen in a sort of immediate, collective and anonymous gaze. Part of this strategy, therefore, is to make the individual increasingly visible. Even her interior condition has to be inspected and evaluated by an authority, who appears "anonymously," since not only God, but also the clergy, other virgins and the public participate in the gaze. The inspection of the interior is limited to outward manifestations of an inner condition. Therefore, the prescriptions require the virgin also to examine herself. Self-knowledge and examination of one's thoughts open a whole new region of control. The virgin enables the church to discipline her body by actively reading and controlling her interior.

The randomness in the Panopticon effectively requires that the individual regulate her/himself continually. Similarly, God's vision is depicted as "unsleeping," yet His arrival is uncertain. This gaze is interiorized to "induce a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assured the automatic functioning of power," it is:
an inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end
by interiorizing to the point that he [sic] is his own overseer, each individual
thus exercising this surveillance over and against himself.93

The virgin interiorizes God's "gaze", so that even if God, or one of His servants, is not
physically present, the virgin monitors herself. However, the transgressive activities to be
noted by the "gaze" were defined by human individuals who wrote treatises and interpreted
the scripture.

In order for the prescriptive treatises to be effective, the virgin has to decide to
incorporate them into her self-understanding and daily practices. Like God's Unsleeping
Eye, the treatises were presented with the authority of a bishop or a deacon, but the virgin
has to internalize the prescriptions in order for them to be effective. These prescriptions
(in)formed the individual virgin: her behavior could be shaped by her own understanding
of what was presented in the treatise. Strategies of control, therefore, are built into the
knowledge communicated to the virgin. The prescriptions require silence, or closely
monitored speech, a visible demeanor, individuation through disengagement from the
world and those around her, and a perpetual vulnerability to observation. The treatises
depict the virgin ideal so that if she followed the prescritions, she would reproduce the
characteristics of the Panopticon and discipline herself. I will examine how, by enacting
prescribed behaviors, the virgin subjugated herself to power.

The virgin was to be silent, or more importantly, she was to strictly monitor her
speech. The silencing or controlling of her speech excluded the woman from the discourse
concerning her body. She was prevented from speaking on her own behalf. As a voiceless
body, she becomes a palimpsest—more easily reinscribed by the observer. This
reinscription does not simply require the virgin to be silent; she has to consciously control
her words. She in fact speaks, but only a language assigned to her. Both Ambrose and
Chrysostom prescribe this restriction of speech.
Ambrose conflates the quiet mouth with the intact virgin body. He exhorts her to shut her "door" and her mouth in order to protect her virginity:

This door of ours is our mouth, which should open to Christ alone. Let it not open unless the Word of God has already knocked... Your mouth should neither open easily nor respond to every commonplace address.94

In order to guard virginity, the woman's speech must be controlled.95 What remains enclosed has great value, so long as it is reserved for Christ. However, both speech and the penetration of the intact body are characterized as evils when they occur outside the unique relation with Christ. In fact, the first woman's speech is the source of all evil:

If Eve's door had been closed, Adam would not have been deceived and she, under question, would not have responded to the serpent. Death entered through the window, i.e., through the door of Eve. And death will come through your door if you speak falsely, lasciviously, or impudently especially when there is no call upon you to speak. Therefore, let the gates of your lips be closed and the vestibule of your voice remain bolted;96

Eve's speech resembles an open door. Since the closed door is a sign of virginity, the open door tempts sexual desire. Women's speech is lascivious, and inherently false. This characterization of women's speech renders anything that she says dubious and indefensible. Thus, the virgin cannot speak out against the definition assigned to her.

Chrysostom draws a similar conclusion regarding women's speech. Holy virginity is destroyed through informal conservation and laughter. Thus, he accuses the subintroductae of outlandish speaking:

When a virgin learns to discuss things frankly with a man, to sit by him, to laugh in his presence, to disgrace herself in many other ways, and does not think this is dreadful, the veil of virginity is destroyed, the flower trampled underfoot. Hence they shrink from nothing. There is nothing they avoid.97

Women who speak overturn the proper hierarchy between men and women. Moreover, the destruction of virginity rests not only in conversation, but also the fact that the "virgin does not think this is dreadful." The virgin doubly sins by not censoring herself according to Chrysostom's interdictions. Implicitly, we and the auditors of this treatise understand that the woman is to "avoid and shrink from" all things.
In a situation of cohabitation, one of the crimes of the woman ascetic living with the man is that she comes to dominate and thus overturns the proper male-female hierarchy:

Chrysostom makes an argument against marriage that rich wives overturn the order of things, making everything topsy-turvy. For the woman does not let her husband keep his place of dominance but with an insane arrogance banishes him from that rank and escorts him to the station that is properly hers, that is to say, one of subordination.\(^98\)

Chrysostom makes use of the patriarchal norms in order to suppress the virgin's resistance to domination through her speech.\(^99\) Chrysostom assures the woman ascetic that God disapproves of her conversation and skilled speech:

> It is not the woman who brings men under her rule who is esteemed and considered remarkable by everyone, but the woman who respects them. But if they cannot endure these words of ours, the law of God will be able to bridle their mouths when it says, "Your refuge is with your husband, and he will rule over you, for the head of the woman is the man."\(^100\)

Thus, the bridling of the women's mouths allows proper reinstatement of hierarchy.\(^101\) In these examples, we see that the discourse silences the woman's speech, so that she can be bridled by power.

The ideal is not silence itself, but the self-discipline which produces silence, or speech which only defends chastity. Ambrose, in fact, denigrates a Pythagorean virgin who cuts off her tongue. By contrast, Agnes, the Christian martyr and virgin "did not destroy her tongue through fear but kept it for a trophy."\(^102\) The ideal of self-control requires the virgin to censor her own speech, according to the prescriptions of the discourse on virginity. Chrysostom prescribes the appropriate words which are to supplant women's contaminating speech:

> We chanting this incantation as a divine refrain both at home and in the market, by day and by night, on the road and in the chamber, with our voice and in our thoughts, and repeat to our soul constantly: 'Hear my soul and see and incline your ear; forget your immoral relationship and the king will desire your beauty.'\(^103\)

This slightly adulterated form of Psalm 45: 10-11 is to be chanted in all places and all times. This constant meditation will in effect eliminate the possibility of unruly speech or
thoughts with this perpetual holy reminder. The virgin is not physically silenced, but her words are to be harnessed and brought into line with the prescriptions for virginity.

The virgin needed to control not only her speech, but also the presentation of her entire body. Although for Ambrose and Chrysostom the different levels of public presentation were allowed, any visibility of the body motivated self-control. This prescription also required restricted contact with other people. In Ambrose's writing, the confinement of the body within an enclosed space follows from his metaphorical association of virginity, doors and mouths. Ambrose defines chastity as a "fenced-in home."104 Younger virgins were to minimize their visits to each other.105 Moreover, virginity was to be secluded from public view:

But she who seeks Christ ought not to be well known; she should not be in the square or in the streets with tremulous voice, an easy stride, a ready ear, and a vulgar appearance. The Apostle denies earthly society to you, instructing you to fly to heaven on spiritual wings, almost beyond the limits of nature.106

Interaction with other people, not only through speech, but through common physical space, vulgarized and contaminated virginity. The virgin was not to have earthly society. Therefore, the virgin was to seek Christ from her couch at home.107

This enclosed space, however, was depicted as infinitely visible. Ambrose masterfully describes the virgin as a house—with both a secret interior and a window. The image constructs a private space which can be viewed from outside. He interprets Song of Solomon:108

'I held him and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber of her that conceived me.' What is signified by the house of your mother and her chamber except the interior, secret place of your nature? Keep this "house" and cleanse its inmost parts so that, once it is an immaculate house unstained by any sordidness of an adulterous conscience.109

The virgin is a house, and must continually clean her interior. This interpretation follows from Ambrose's fascination with the purity of the Virgin Mary's womb, which he then
applies to all virgins who were to follow her example. The interior of the virgin can be seen through a window.

Ambrose defines the window as the "eye of the soul" through which the virgin both gazes at Christ, but also supplies the means by which Christ may see in:

And so, O virgin, let Christ come in through your window, let Christ put his hand in through the window, let the love, not of body, but of the Word come to you. And if the Word puts his hand through your window, note how you should prepare your window, note how you should wipe them clean from all the grime of your sins. Let the window of a virgin have nothing foul about it.110

The image of the window constructs the virgin, albeit metaphorically, behind glass--inside yet visible.111 The window needed to be transparent, free from grime, so that the virgin could be seen inside. The metaphor was used to encourage the virgin to remove adulterous affections and concomitantly, eye cosmetics and other adulterous beautifications.112 This figurative language enjoined a practical self-regulation.

In Chrysostom, the virgin's bodily activities and public image were also important. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the subintroductae's domestic companions within the living space caused public scandal and individual guilt. To clear up the problem, so to speak, Chrysostom emphasized that both inside the home and without, their activities were "open for reading." Chrysostom addresses the problem by exposing them--not to God, but to public opinion:

Since it is not the Unsleeping Eye they fear, but rather it is the eyes of men which produce this anxiety in them, well then, let us rob them of this consolation by bringing these matters which the walls had kept hidden and in the shadows into public view and open the door to those eager to see--after we have first routed them from their beds.113

As does Ambrose, Chrysostom suggests that the virgin's interior can be made visible. In contrast to Ambrose, the walls hinder visibility and therefore foster suspicion rather than guarding purity. Although the walls produce shadows, the door can be opened to reveal what is kept hidden. The treatise assumes that what is enclosed by walls contains
something hidden, and the threat of exposure to the public is designed to produce the ideal virginity which has no shadows and causes no suspicion.

For Chrysostom, scrutiny of the virgin's soul reveals her purity or impurity. Although the ascetic woman's "dejected look and grey cloak" are not to be the determining characteristics of virginity, the character of her soul had visible manifestations. These includes not only speech, but her whole physical demeanor:

She forbids her tongue to utter anything discordant or unsuitable, her glance to stray impudently or suspiciously, her ears to hear any improper song. She cares too that her feet not walk in a provocative or pampered fashion. She has an unaffected and artless gait. She cuts away the decoration from her clothes and continually exhorts her countenance not to dissolve into laughter, not to even smile quietly, but always to exhibit a serious and austere visage, one prepared always for tears, never for laughter. 114

The appearance of her face, the nature of her gait, her whole carriage exposes an interior condition. The virgin assures this image through self-monitoring. She exhorts herself to these behaviors, so as to avoid any impure or culpable act.

This interior condition required, moreover, a disengagement of the virgin from her surroundings. She was to appear publicly, but interact with no one around her.

It is necessary, then, that when she makes her regal entrance into the marketplace that she appear as the very image of all philosophy and astound everyone, as if she were an angel just now descended from heaven...For when she walks, it as thought through a desert, and when she sits in church in deepest silence, her eyes see none of those in attendance...but only the Bridegroom, as if he were present and visible, and having conversed with him in prayer, she retires to her house and hears his voice alone through the Scriptures. 115

The ideal virgin was perceived, but did not perceive others. This prescription effectively insulated the virgin, much like the virgin behind a bolted door and window. She was not constrained by walls but by her own disengagement.

The prescriptions addressed to the virgin made the virgin vulnerable to power by threatening her with God's judgment and spiritual punishment. In Chrysostom, the threat of severe punishment served to encourage the ascetic woman to practice virginity as prescribed. The part of the heretical virgin which stands outside the prescription is her
thoughts, and the heretic who practices virginity is condemned to hellfires because her thoughts are corrupt:

Even if her body should remain inviolate the better part of her soul has been ruined: her thoughts... The heretical virgin has reversed the meaning of this expression by wearing the glory on the exterior but being entirely dishonored within. It is criminal to display before men extreme modesty but to employ with God, who created her, great folly 116

The condemnation of heretics who display virginal characteristics but are corrupted by their interior thoughts requires all those who practice virginity to perpetually guard against exhibiting heretical ideas. These virgins are condemned because they act "without purpose," that is, against what Chrysostom has determined the purpose must be.

Chrysostom explicitly condemns those Christians who attempt virginity for their own reasons:

Will you still speak of virginity and pride yourself for it? When you die, will you not weep for yourselves and lament your folly, through which the devil binds you must as captives and drags you into the fire of hell? You have not entered into marriage? This is not the criterion for virginity. 117

Chrysostom assures the virgin that there are specific criteria for the practice of virginity. In order to escape punishment, she must be sure that she adopts the correct motivations; because the definition of heresy did change frequently, however, the effect was the virgin's experience of a perpetual threat of incurring punishment.

Non-heretical Christians are also threatened with punishment. Chrysostom suggests that those who enter the practice of virginity but do not succeed suffer a greater penalty than those who do not make the attempt. 118 According to Chrysostom, the woman who chooses virginity but succumbs to marriage is like the virgins of Matthew 22, who are barred from the bridal chamber because they have no oil. These virgins will be denied the rewards promised to virgins, and will be punished in hell. 119 Chrysostom concludes his treatise, De virginitate, with a rousing reminder that

when the river swept with fire, and the review of our deeds begun, we are no longer permitted henceforth to strip away our faults but voluntarily we
are dragged to the penalty they [the faults] deserve....it is inevitable that
sinners be punished eternally, just as the virtuous be honored.

The informing of the virgin that she would be punished if she failed functions in this
document as a motivation for her to carefully enact the prescriptions. Moreover, the
punishment was constructed so that a non-heretical Christian still could not quibble with the
nature of the prescriptions. Those who questioned the value of virginity incurred
punishment: "If someone is inevitably punished for not observing a small part of the
ascetic code, what penalty will he receive who disparages sanctity altogether?"

Therefore, the Christian was condemned if she merely disagreed with Chrysostom's
position of virginity. Through Chrysostom's treatise, the virgin was made aware of a
threatening power which impelled her to discipline herself.

Ambrose, on the other hand, depicted the threat of punishment not as a
repercussion of the virgin's behavior, but as a present characteristic of the virgin's
relationship to God. God's knowledge of the virgin penetrates her body, like a sword.
This sword is God's Word, or Christ, and the act of penetrations with such a weapon
creates the image of a wound. The virgin understands, therefore, that she must be
wounded in order to know God:

Learn what this weapon, this sword, shall be; it is said, 'The word is living
and active and penetrating, sharper than any sword, piercing to the division
of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow. The valiant sword is God's word;
a valiant sword, insofar as it scrutinizes the heart and the reins, discerns a
lie from the truth and, far from killing those whose soul it pierces, it
preserves them.'

To embrace Christ is to pierced by a sword, a weapon that penetrates in order to discern
and examine the virgin's "heart" and "reins." The heart represents the interior region of the
individual, which, houses the reins, defined her by an allusion to Plato's image in
Phaedrus of reason as the charioteer holding the reins of unruly passions. The insertion of
the sword, ironically, "preserves." Therefore, the virgin conceives of God's knowledge
of her as a necessary act of violence or punishment.
The virgin who is vulnerable to divine observation reappears in the description of the virgin's entry into the "city" which represents the Kingdom of God. Ambrose uses the imagery of the Song of Solomon to describe the church as a city with open gates, filled with light and surrounded by walls guarded by watchmen. According to Song of Solomon, the virgin's entry into the city is characterized by violence:

the watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they wounded me; they took away my mantle, those watchmen of the walls.

In Ambrose's interpretation of the Song of Solomon, the watchmen are the agents who remove the virgin's garment of the body. Like the piercing sword, they figuratively expose the virgin by removing her cloak. In this removal, the watchmen wound the virgin, and hence cleanse her heart and allow her to see God.

The virgin is taught through this metaphor that she must be wounded not only to know God, but also to enter the Church. These watchmen are identified as the patriarchs and apostles whose names were inscribed on the gates and walls of this figurative church. The virgin seeks Christ within the walls of the city, "having entered by the faith and precious acts, [having] been illumined on by the light of the patriarchs and founded on by the apostles." The watchmen illuminate the path by which the virgin may enter. Thus, the watchmen represent God by similarly observing and monitoring the figurative entrance to Christianity. God's representatives, in this image, voyeuristically enact the role of the Unsleeping Eye.

These images of God and "the watchmen" suggest consequent prescriptions for the virgin. The virgin is depicted in these treatises as vulnerable to violation. For example, she is exhorted to take off the "garment of corporeal life" and wait for God:

Even if you are asleep he is knocking at the door. He comes I say frequently and reaches in through the window. Frequently, (but not always and not to everyone) he comes to that soul which can say, 'At night I had put off my garment'....She so strips herself of bodily acts and earthly ways that she would not know how or even if she could put them on again.
While this image is highly metaphorical, it constructs a relationship of power where, in order to be prepared for God, the virgin strips herself. The image of a body without a garment indicates vulnerability, but also implies a loss of a previous self-understanding and set of activities by which she was connected to her family.

Not only is the virgin vulnerable, but the act of God for which she waits is characterized as penetration. In the above quotation, God’s contacts the virgin by reaching an arm through a window, which as we have seen, represents both the threshold of her domestic space and the surface of her body. The virgin is not only required to strip her soul and await the figurative penetration of God’s arm, but the Word wounds her in this act of penetration. According to Ambrose, this wound does not produce a "sore" because it is given by a "lover." In spite of this attempt to recuperate this image, the wound retains connotations of violence to the body. This image of penetration colors the virgin’s conception of her relationship to God. The virgin is wounded by God’s knowledge, which is the means by which power normalizes the virgin.

In this representation, the virgin is also vulnerable to power because she cannot see God. As in the Panopticon, God’s vision is total, but He is always ‘unverifiable.’ Ambrose notes that in relation to the city described above: "God is outside, God is inside, God is everywhere, for the city has, it says, the glory of God." In addition to this omnipresence, a God is portrayed as a visitor who comes frequently. However, the virgin cannot know when or even if God will come. These frequent but random visits transform the eschatological expectation of God’s arrival into an ongoing current experience rather than a single exposure at the end of time. Chrysostom combines elements of scripture in his depiction of the virgin’s present experience of God. The virgin must constantly expect God’s arrival, and censor her behavior and thoughts accordingly.

In order to achieve the virgin ideal of the vulnerable and quiet body, both Chrysostom and Ambrose prescribe physical disciplines designed to transform the body. This training is described by Ambrose and Chrysostom as breaking in a horse. Both of
our authors appeal to the mythological image of a chariot driver as reason attempting to control the reins of the wild horses of passion. This discipline subdues the body in order to strengthen the will of reason:

You are one of the virgins the splendour of whose mind illuminates the grace of your body....So, when you are in your chamber during the hours of the night meditate continually on Christ and hope every moment for his coming.134

Because of the unique relationship between mind and body, the virgin has a special obligation to discipline and direct her thoughts in one direction. Ambrose and Chrysostom prescribe fasts, frequent prayers, and holy vigils, or limited sleep. Through this physical application of disciplines, the virgin can produce the outward manifestations of her soul. Thus, the virgin seeks through these acts to create a representation that truly reflects an interior condition. As Ambrose states of Mary, his quintessential virgin, the outside must reflect the inside, and it must be readily visible to all:

[She acted so that] the very appearance of her outward being might be the image of her soul, the representation of what is approved. For a well-ordered house ought to be recognized on the very threshold, and should show at the very first entrance that not darkness is hidden within.138

The virgin's project requires her to unify her interior and exterior condition. This congruence renders the virgin's interior diaphanous, which then communicates to all that no element is dark, or potentially corrupt. Chrysostom states that the virgin who attempts to break this unity, and who therefore misrepresents herself will inevitably fail: "...how will [the dishonest virgin] be able to preserve the beauty of virginity when she has unholy thoughts within?"139 Thus, prescription of self-regulation not only ideally enables the virgin's self-control, but requires her to make both her interior and exterior regions visible.

These treatises represent the virgin in the text within a disciplinary apparatus much like the Panopticon. According to the prescriptions, the ideal virgin is to be silent, and censor her speech so that she speaks and thinks only what is prescribed to her. The virgin appears as an individual enclosed in a private space, or simply dissociated from those
around her, and she is exhorted to maintain this isolated existence. The prescriptions depict the virgin with a visible interior and exterior, and exhort her to expose herself. Finally, the virgins in these treatises act in response to an authoritative gaze, which causes her to reform her behavior in order to avoid punishment, or for fear of "being caught." The non-subjective gaze in the Panopticon requires the individual to monitor herself even though she might not be perpetually under observation. Similarly, the virgin understands God's "visits" to be frequent but random. Thus, the discourse of virginity describes an apparatus, which like the Panopticon, produces a self-disciplined ethical subject. By internalizing the structure of knowledge--written with ink by Chrysostom and Ambrose--the actual virgin might transform herself into the "docile body" that appears in these texts.

If the apparatus of control strategically constructed the ascetic woman as a self-disciplined subject, the production of this subjectivity remained imperfect. To the extent that the virgin influenced the church's legitimacy or illegitimacy, she simultaneously gained a certain amount of power as an individual. Power depends on resistance for its operation. Accordingly, the virgin constructed by an exterior authority was capable of resisting definition as we have seen in the practice of the subintroductae. The categories of interior and exterior exposed whole regions of visibility, but this visibility depended upon the willed participation of the individual ethical subject through self-inspection.

The second strategy, that of persuasion, complemented the strategy of prescription. Persuasions specifically addressed the problem of the resistance created in the interstices of the visible structure of power and the subjected individual. The adherence to prescriptions from an exterior authority allowed the resistance of the virgin's will. By contrast, if the virgin was persuaded to enact prescriptions, she subjected herself to ascetic disciplines also by her own free will. Accordingly, when the virgin enacts prescribed ascetic disciplines without authoritative influence, no apparatus of power appears to be in operation. Self-motivated construction of the subject renders power invisible, as the will to power cannot be directly connected to anyone or any structure except the individual. The next section
will examine the persuasions which attempt to construct the virgin's will so that she wants to carry out the prescribed behaviors.
Part 4: Free Choice and Sexual Virginity: Persuasive Arguments Presented to the Woman Ascetic

... It pours forth from its dark mouth such exhalations: it stings the nostrils with the effluvium... And pressing on her with his knotted, rough skin, striving with all his might he thrusts in his spear. There it clings, and driven in, it drinks deep the maiden's blood. The hollow opening re-echoed and gave forth a groan. Dying in ecstasy, the maiden pulls in the weapon with her hand.

-Decimus Magnus Ausonius, *Wedding Song: The Finale*
Fourth century Christian and Gallo-Roman poet

The arguments in the treatises of Chrysostom and Ambrose on behalf of virginity are constructed so as to persuade the virgin to participate in the transition between pagan culture and Christianity. For our authors writing on behalf of the church in the late fourth century, the individual woman's desire to practice a prescribed form of virginity was important to their establishment of the legitimacy of the church. However, neither the rhetoric nor the concept of virginity in the treatises fully differentiates the practice of virginity from existing pagan virtues or practice. Rhetorically, the use of persuasive argument defines virginity as a classical virtue, available only through her free choice.141 Practically, the arguments offered the virgin an alternative to the misery of the matron's life. Yet, the concomitant advantages available to the virgin, only reproduce in another form what the writers assume to be "desirable" characteristics of the life of the Roman matron. The strategy of persuasion, therefore, maintains the conceptual categories of gender roles used to describe those of the matron,142 but seeks to produce practical, and useful distinctions in the virgin's appearance, thoughts and behavior.

Foucault's work published on the Christian pastoral illuminates the mechanisms by which the texts constructed the virgin's desire to undertake the practice of virginity.143
will explain first Foucault's general argument about the construction of subjectivity in Christianity and then apply his theory of the construction of desire to the texts written by Chrysostom and Ambrose.

In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault traces a common method by which ethical subjects produced themselves through *askesis*: a disciplinary relationship to the self. He terms this production the "the arts of existence" which are elaborated in the Greek ethical tradition, and become "the techniques of the self" of the Christian ethic:

What I mean by [the arts of existence] are those intentional and voluntary actions by which men [sic] not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria.

According to Foucault, the ethical subject is self-produced through disciplinary practices. The individual seeks to bring him/herself into accord with an ethical ideal. The transformation required physical application of ascetic ideals, and therefore, what one *thought* could reshape one's body and one's behavior. As Foucault notes, the techniques of the self controlled behavior but did not require a material apparatus; they therefore introduced the possibility of an invisible operation of power. This form of the relationship to the self, or subjectivity, transformed over time and between cultures according to definitions of normativity--or as Foucault irreverently labels these shifting definitions, according to "the games of truth."

Foucault entitled the study of subjectivity the *History of Sexuality* because the ethical subject in Christianity came to be primarily a subject of desire. The ethical activity of the Christian required the monitoring of one's desires:

individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover *in desire*, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen.

In Christianity, the individual's desire is the locus of her/his "truth." Virginity, therefore, came to be an ethical ideal. The virgin's relationship to herself is centrally concerned
with analyzing, disciplining and renouncing corporeal desires so that she can attain purity, immortality, and a relationship with her Spiritual Bridegroom.149

The Christian analysis of desires develops in contrast to the Greco-Roman ethic, since the latter was less concerned with what was ethically permitted and forbidden. Unlike Christianity, the Greco-Roman ethic did not appeal to a unified authority or a stabilized law code and the customs for individual behavior.150 The ethics in Christianity changed as the *telos* became immortality and purity, available through the practice of virginity. The relationship of the self became one of scrutiny instead of artistic creation, or "taking care of oneself."151 Foucault defines the transition between these traditions in terms of gender:

The paradigm of self-restraint becomes a feminine paradigm through the theme of purity and virginity, based on the model of physical integrity. Physical integrity rather than self-regulation became important. So the problem of ethics as an aesthetics of existence is covered over by a problem of purification.152

According to Foucault, Christianity required feminine passivity, whereas the Greco-Roman ethic valued virile self-mastery. Purity of the virgin pleases God, and the Church mediates God's authority in evaluating the status of virginity. In Foucault's perception of the continuities and disjunctures between the two traditions, he introduces the techniques of the self as a means of control which only became "less autonomous" in Christianity and in modern institutions such as medicine, education and psychology.153 While I am wary of evidences of Foucault's nostalgia for paganism as a sort of pre-power (purely masculine) ethic,154 the treatises do require the virgin to discipline her desires at the behest of a prescriptive authority. The feminine paradigm of Bride of Christ appears as a model for the ethical subject addressed in these treatises.155

Finally, and most importantly for this section of my analysis, the Christian technique of the self successfully functions by transforming the operation of power on the self into a pleasure, by way of what Foucault terms "the Repressive Hypothesis." The repressive hypothesis suggests that one's desires are repressed or constrained, and
therefore the individual is enjoined to liberate oneself by engaging in a technique which promises the gratification of pleasure. The production of the self by deciphering, monitoring and renouncing one's desires, one enjoys a sublimated form of pleasure:

the Christian pastoral also sought to produce specific effects on desire, by the mere fact of transforming it--fully and deliberately--into discourse: effects of mastery and detachment, to be sure, but also an effect of spiritual reconversion, of turning back to God, a physical effect of blissful suffering from feeling in one's body the pangs of temptation and the love that resists it.

These treatises on virginity portray a sublimated sexual pleasure as a reward for the one who chooses and successfully achieves the ethical ideal of virginity. The virgin deciphers and disciplines her desires in order to master them, but also in order to earn her access to the nuptial chamber.

The renunciations which the individual performed served strategic purposes. For example, in Chrysostom's treatise addressed to the subintroductae, the virgin's guilt was based on the unprovable hypothesis that the cohabitants engaged in lascivious behavior within their homes. Therefore, Chrysostom argues that the virgin's purity ought to be transparently obvious and the virgins cohabitation with male ascetics becomes a crime. The treatises being considered here do not violently reprimand a scandalous behavior, but they require other strategic renunciations. In particular, the virgin earns her access to the nuptial chamber by renouncing the appearance and the relationships which characterized the traditional Roman lady and married life. The pleasure available through renunciation eased the introduction of a new Christian ideal. The individual need not see the strategy governing the lure of figurative gratification, nor the fact of its construction, however, because one undertakes virginity by "free choice."

Scholars have well noted the abundance of classical pagan rhetoric and imagery in the treatises on virginity. Chrysostom and Ambrose define virginity as a virtue within the Greek ethical tradition. Our writers stress the necessity of the virgin's "free choice" in undertaking the profession of virginity, and the individual effort which one must exert to
achieve this ideal. As both of these clergymen received a traditional Greek education, their reliance on classical ethical thought is not surprising. Their appeal to the virgin's free will effaces their auditors' awareness of any prescriptive authority. The treatises call for a technique of the self, but insinuate that this self-production can and must happen outside of power strategies.

In order to be virtuous, virginity had to be chosen independently, and enforced only by the individual virgin. Accordingly, Ambrose condemns the Vestal Virgins who took up virginity in response to a precept or bribery. Ambrose bemoans the failure of virginity in his discussion of the Vestal Virgins:

O the mystery! O the morals! Where chastity is enforced by law and authority given for lust! And so she is not chaste, who is constrained by fear; no honorable, who is hired for a price.160

The distinguishing factor of the Christian virgin from the Vestal is that the Christian is not bound by law or authority, and therefore her motivations are entirely her own.161 To demonstrate the distinction between the Christian and the pagan virgin, Ambrose discredits his own knowledge and skill and states that he cannot teach but only entice.162 In De virginibus, he reflects on this important distinction between persuasion and precept:

These are not precepts for virgins, but instances taken from virgins. My words have sketched the likeness of your virtue, you may see the reflection of your gravity as it were in the mirror of this discourse.163

By saying this Ambrose declines any interest in the practice of virginity, or role in the construction of the ideal. He claims only to be reflecting their own behavior back at them.164

Chrysostom similarly implies that the practice of virginity had to be motivated entirely by the individual virgin. He explains that he does not condemn marriage, but regards it as a good which can be surpassed by virginity. He compares his position to that of the person who condemns marriage:
Chrysostom denies the role of legislator, even though he does make prescriptions pertaining to virginity. To prescribe virginity would be to eliminate the virgin's choice: "All that you accept under compulsion and against your will, even if it is easily borne, is more intolerable than anything else and chokes our soul more brutally than a noose." Chrysostom repudiates the forced practice of virginity, and only recognizes the virtue of the one who chooses the practice over marriage. He refuses a role in the prescription of behavior for the virgin, and simultaneously and more strategically disclaims any Gnostic encratite tendencies. The individualization of power in these treatises divorces the auditor's conception of her action from considerations of the political effects of her actions.

Both of our authors define virginity against marriage as a higher virtue with greater rewards. In order to persuade women to undertake this ethical pursuit, the treatises use topoi of Roman marriage which are "directly borrowed from the world of classical literature." Thus, by showing the pains of marriage--particularly as they affected women--our authors sought to convince women and people generally to practice virginity according to their prescriptions. The rewards which are available through the practice of virginity proffer more than pleasurable relationships for the virgin. The virgin who accrues these rewards also distinguishes herself from the matron who would participate in and reinforce pagan customs. Second, she comes of her own accord to desire the orthodox practice of virginity, and power operates more efficiently and on a more personal level. The virgin's freely chosen self-definition assists the church in its struggle for power.

Several aspects of the argument against marriage address the disadvantages that women face in that relationship. Ambrose points out the woman's disadvantages in marriage which exist because she is required to please her husband through dressing up her appearance. The Roman lady's dress involved an elaborate use of cosmetics (cultus), jewelry, and detailed hairstyling. Both Chrysostom and Ambrose dramatize the
Roman lady's dress, criticizing it much like Tertullian, and demonstrating its disadvantages to the individual woman. Ambrose suggests that the woman's very need to apply cosmetics indicates the woman's unsightliness: "For she is the first to speak against herself who wishes to change that which is natural to her. So, while studying to displease others, she displeases herself." Because the cosmetics are not inherent to the woman's natural beauty, she appears to be hiding her actual ugliness.

Encoded in the arguments against marriage is a logic which prepares the auditor for the persuasions in favor of virginity. Ambrose notes the great financial and physical expense of such an *accoutrement*:

Look at the ears pierced with wounds, and pity the neck weighed down with burdens...In one case a chain binds the neck in another a fetter encloses the foot...The price makes it no better, except that you women are afraid lest that which causes you suffering be lost. What is the difference whether the sentence of another or you own condemn you? Nay, you, even more wretched than those, are condemned by public justice, since they desire to be set free, you to be bound.

The Roman lady's deportment is characterized as painful and disadvantageous to the woman. Ambrose's logic describes the constraints of the Roman lady as self-inflicted. Because the woman brings the misery upon herself, Ambrose will be able to argue that she also can escape by a simple act of will. Ambrose constructs a sense of repression, in the hopes that the virgin will desire freedom from these traditional customs.

The traditional Roman practices of dress are discussed primarily so that they can be contrasted with the virgin's beauty. The value of these rewards is defined according to the frustrated desires of worldly women. Chrysostom juxtaposes the two options and reveals their similarity:

But the ornament of virginity is not like this. It does not detract from the one wearing it because it is not corporeal but wholly spiritual...Gems and gold and costly garment and lavish embroidered flowers of various colors and anything else perishable in nature in no way adorn souls. But the following do: fasts, holy vigils, gentleness, reasonableness, poverty, courage, humility, patience—in a word, disdain for everything in this life.
Thus, the motivation for taking up these disciplinary practices associated with virginity is to achieve an *adornment*—albeit spiritual—which resembles but surpasses the adornment of the Roman lady. The actual value of female beauty, and the expectation that the woman adorns herself in order to please others does not disappear. In fact, the Christian version maintains the values of pagan practice that it rejects, but effects the necessary physical difference from the Roman matron. The adornment of the Christian virgin persists, but simply takes on another form. The virgin's self-discipline, or adornment of her soul, is characterized as a liberation from the existing constraints of the Roman lady's deportment.

In addition to the discomforts and falseness of the Roman lady's appearance, the wife's relationship to her earthly husband is characterized in our treatises as one of powerlessness, constriction and frustration. The jealous husband keeps his wife at home like a prisoner. The wife who is jealous of her husband's extra-marital associations, however, has to bear this unpleasantness in silence. Chrysostom notes that the woman has no choice as to who her suitors are, and that, unlike men, she must remain shut inside during the betrothal period. After the marriage, according to both Chrysostom and Ambrose, the couple fears they will not be able to produce heirs, and the woman, in particular, fears for both her child's and her own life in childbirth. Ambrose describes the physical pains and anxieties of marriage and childbirth:

> [the woman] marries and weeps...She conceives and her fruitlessness brings her trouble before her offspring. She brings forth and is ill....[Pleasure] is purchased by perils and is not possessed at her own will.

Sexual activity in marriage incurs physical pain and potential danger, according to this interpretation. Moreover, these effects in her body are outside of her will. As Chrysostom points out, the woman was obligated to perform sexual acts as a result of the marriage yoke. The treatises depict for their female auditors the wide range of misery the women might expect in the physical relationship with a husband.
In contrast to this bleak picture, virginity shines for the auditors of these treatises as an option which promises illustrious rewards. Virginity not only frees the woman from the plagues of the married, but she also receives the benefits of the married woman in a far superior form. Chrysostom’s virgin, as we have seen above, conceives of herself as free to walk out into public in the admiration of those around her. In Ambrose, the virgin experiences her freedom on a spiritual level only, but this sort of freedom is depicted as the most superior. Using Platonic language of the soul, Ambrose describes the freedom of the soul available to the virgin:

Once she has quited her chariot from the horses’ tumult and has ben carried along by the beating of her spiritual wings into that ethereal and rarefied place, she despises all worldly things. She soars above the world in her regard for eternal virtues;...even when [goodness] is found in the world it is above the world nevertheless.184

Virginity is a means of achieving the classical virtues. As opposed to the "fetters" of the Roman lady’s customary dress, the virgin can expect to experience a metaphorical flight. The discipline of virginity which requires one to be physically enclosed is the contradictory condition to this freedom.

The freedom of the virgin similarly implies an escape from the trials of marriage. The virgin does not experience fears of childlessness, nor forced sexual intercourse. Yet, the definition of the virgin ideal reinscribes her within the matron’s roles of wife and mother, as she becomes the Bride of Christ.185 In each of our authors’ texts on virginity, the woman ascetic’s relationship to the Bridegroom is described as a sexual relationship which will be eventually consummated. The images depict the virgin who waits expectantly for Christ in her chamber, and anticipate the virgin’s union with the Bridegroom in the nuptial chamber. Like the other rewards of virginal beauty and freedom from the marital role, the ultimate reward of union with the Bridegroom appears in the these texts as a gratification of a constructed desire. Through sexual denial, the virgin can obtain for herself the pleasures that married life inadequately supplies or constrains.
The aspects of the life that the virgin must renounce constitute the value of the desireable object. Ambrose for example, describes virginity against the misery of childbearing. The virgin is free from the physical burdens of motherhood. As a replacement, the virgin experiences a spiritual reproduction:

You know nothing of the burden and pain of childbearing, but more are the offspring of a pious soul, which esteems all as its children, which is rich in successors, barren of all bereavements, which knows no deaths, but has many heirs.\(^{186}\)

Thus, virginity revises precisely those constraining elements which the treatises characterize as the experience of the wife and mother. The virgin renounces sexual reproduction, but not the role of the reproductive mother. In fact, the virgin is likened to the church who produces and feeds spiritual offspring:

She, a virgin, bears us her children, not a human father, but by the Spirit. She bears us not by pain, but with the rejoicings of the angels. She, a virgin, feeds us, not with the milk of the body, but with that of the Apostle.\(^{187}\)

Although Ambrose's language here is clearly metaphorical, the state of virginity, whether in individuals or throughout the world, resembles this image. The virgin's spiritual experience is described by the physical act of painless birth and breast-feeding. The temporal renunciation of the husband, the child, and the breast-feeding defines the source of spiritual pleasure.

Ambrose develops this theme of the virgin's maternal desire in his later treatise, De virginitate, with another allegorical representation of the virgin. He begins his treatise with the story of King Solomon and the two mothers fighting over a baby, where Solomon tries the case by threatening to cut the baby in half. In his interpretation of the story, Ambrose introduces the elements of the drama which he discusses in the rest of the treatise, which is also the drama which supposedly goes on in every person's soul:

These two, then, can represent faith and temptation. Temptation, I would say is a common source of error at the beginning, and afterwards it destroys its "offspring" by the vice of worldly relationship and the "sleep" of the mind. Then it tries to carry away the "posterity" of the other (faith). Thus,
while temptation is fighting in the courts, faith is disturbed, until the sword of Christ reveals the hidden affections. 188

Ambrose defines the following allegorical terms: the two mothers in Solomon's story are faith and temptation, where Temptation is the mother who rolls over and smothers her child, and Faith is the mother who relinquishes her child, and, ultimately gets it back. Ambrose leaves the child ambiguous, and begging interpretation.

According to the actual parable, the mother who represents faith initially renounces her child rather than have it split in two. She is rewarded for her renunciation by regaining her child. In the Ambrose's analogue, too, Faith is rewarded for her renunciation, after the "sword" uncovers the truth. The sword that would have sliced the child in half, is the sword that uncovers temptation's lies, and ultimately, it regains for Faith precisely what she renounced. In this scheme, renunciation is a temporal a sacrifice, and a guarantee that one will never have to make an eternal sacrifice. Ambrose's allegorical model parallels the possible reference to the virgin in Ambrose's audience: the virgin (Faith) defeats temptation through renunciation and discovers (in this treatise) that her renunciation too will be rewarded. The faithful virgin does not have a child to sacrifice, but she can and does sacrifice the ability to have children. In this parable, the virgin with faith is conflated with a mother mourning over her child. However, the virgin expects to get back what she renounces; this parable suggests that she will yet give birth.

In addition to the pleasure which Ambrose attributes to the painless birth and breast feeding of the virgin's spiritual progeny, he also dramatizes the pleasure of expecting God's arrival, and penetration of her boundaries. Like Mary who was graciously impregnated by God, the virgin too awaits the coming of Christ: 189

Rise, open, Christ is at the gate, he knocks at the entrance of your house; if you open the door, he will come in and he will come with his Father.

He bestows the reward not only after entering; even before coming in he sends his reward. Already is the soul troubled; already she is groping along the walls of her house; already she is releasing the secret bonds of flesh and body; already Christ is outside knocking.
If the virgin responds to God and opens the door, he will come in with his Father. The language reveals the conditions placed upon God's arrival: the virgin must desire God's entry. In this passage, the virgin need not be the Virgin Mary, as God offers His reward here and now. The repetition of the word "already" indicates the emphasis that he places upon the lure of a present gratification that prefigures the union with Christ after death or at the end of time.

The image of impregnation is clarified by an even more explicitly sexual metaphor. Using language from Song of Solomon, the Word of God is described as an "unguent," which the virgin may take into her "container." The Son of God did not simply speak, but "the unguent poured out as force coming out from him."191 The reception of this unguent resembles sexual intercourse; it is received through penetration and is described as a source of pleasure:

> Whoever has this unguent receives Christ, and so she who has received it says: 'I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had gone.' What is this going? Simply that he has penetrated into the center of the mind as it was said to Mary, 'And his sword will pierce your soul' for the living Word of God, as piercing as a sharp sword, comprehends both the limits of bodily thoughts and the secret places of the heart.192

The Word of God, who is also the sharp Sword that uncovers the truth of Temptation comprehends the virgin. The violent image of the sword's penetration, and by analogy, God's knowing and normalizing gaze, is associated here with the pleasure of the beloved's arrival. The unguent connotes a seminal fluid, which emanates from the phallic image of the penetrating sword.

Ambrose describes the great value of the unguent which the virgin may take within her, and exhorts her to "take up her container and come forward that [she might] be filled with this unguent."193 The unguent is given for free, and "valued at three hundred denarii."194 Therefore, it must be carefully guarded. The virgin who has been filled experiences pleasure within herself in the form of a holy fragrance:
the smell of your right hand will be musty to you, and your limbs will be redolent with the ardour of the resurrection;...As then, from within your body, O virgin, do you grasp pleasure, and you are sweet to yourself and agreeable, with no hint of the displeasure sinners often feel; for utter simplicity will be the more pleasing to you once you have stripped away the coatings of misleading corporeality.195

The image of a hand which smells "musty," ceases to cause the virgin displeasure. Her inner and her outer conditions have become equally pure, and now give off a pleasant fragrance. The perfect visibility--achieved through an integrity between interior and exterior--is achieved when the garment of corporeality has been removed, and the self-exposure is a means to pleasure.

In addition to this visibility, the virgin who desires to smell sweet to herself must prepare accordingly. The treatise here reiterates some of the prescriptions which I have noted in the previous section. Interspersed with these descriptions of the unguent, Ambrose alludes to or specifically reiterates the exhortation to the virgin to abandon characteristics of the Roman matron's appearance. For example, he directs the virgin to guard the unguent inside of her by closing her vessel discretely and locking it with the key of integrity, i.e., restraint of speaking.196 In a parenthetical statement following the promise that Christ will penetrate the virgin, he urges the virgin not to wear jewelry, or fancy clothing because Christ is not impressed by such things.197 Ambrose discredits another characteristic of the Roman lady's costume: the artificially curled hair produced by a curling iron.198 The prescriptions here are characterized as advice, or preparatory exercises which assist the virgin in pleasing God, so she can gain access to the Bridal chamber.

The treatise interchanges "she," "daughter," and "soul," as the interlocuters of the treatise, which supports a reading of heterosexual impregnation as an image for God's relationship to the virgin. Although Ambrose notes that the soul has no gender in itself, he suggests it is a feminine noun (anima) because the soul "softens the bodily assaults by its gentle love and a certain persuasive rationality."199 He defines gentle love as a feminine
characteristic. The gendered prescriptions pertaining to particular devices of beautification suggest that women primarily prepared to receive the unguent. Therefore, when Ambrose expands his metaphor of the virgin to refer to the church, all the gendered connotations of purity and reproduction are brought to his conception of the church as well. Although Ambrose incorporates numerous referents into his metaphorical system, the sexual component remains an organizing definition for the female ascetic who elected to define herself in relationship to God in Ambrose's community.

In Chrysostom's treatise addressed to the *subintroductae*, he similarly employs sexual desire in order to entice virgins. Instead of calling for changes in appearance as Ambrose does, he requires the virgin to refrain from cohabitation. Chrysostom condemns the cohabitating virgin whose thoughts remained hidden; therefore, the virgin who not only refrains from cohabitation exposes her soul is promised a reward of sexual gratification with her Bridegroom. Chrysostom promises the virgin a lover who surpasses any mortal man:

> you have Him not only as a Bridegroom but also as a lover, a lover more ardent than any man. How will you not give up everything here below and, if it were necessary, life itself?201

Immediately after making the promise of an ardent spiritual lover, Chrysostom notes that the reward is contingent upon self-discipline. Chrysostom attempts to reform the scandalous practice of cohabitation by setting out desireable rewards.202

Prior to consummating the marriage with the Bridegroom, the virgin experiences sexual desire, according to Chrysostom. By way of further defining the moral virtue of virginity Chrysostom asserts that married people concede their susceptibility to sexual temptation. Chrysostom explains that the only benefit of marriage is that they can be serene because when "the flame of passion struggles in them to reach a climax, sexual intercourse follows and swiftly represses it."203 The virgin, however, demonstrates her fortitude by
surviving the flames of desire, and thus earns a reward. The virgin battles an unextinguishable flame:

But the virgin on the other hand has not remedy to extinguish the fire. She sees it rising to a crescendo and coming to a peak, but she lacks the power to put it out. Her only chance is to fight the fire so that she is not burnt... The virgin has the provocative fire roaring... within herself, yet she sustains and endures the flame. 

The virgin ideal does not require the ascetic to eliminate her sexual desire, but she must acknowledge it as a means to a greater reward. Thus, the virgin conceives of her desire, and her body as something to be guarded through ascetic practice. By restraining her desires, the virgin sustains the flame. Chrysostom constructs the virgin in his text as the subject of an unquenchable desire that cannot be gratified until she finally encounters the Bridegroom, which further entices her ascetic participation.

The imagery depicting sexual virginity represents the culminating reward available to the virgin through ascetic practice. In the persuasive arguments of these treatises, the virgin is enjoined to free herself from the "fetters" and dissatisfactions of married life. Through certain renunciations, the virgins participate in a higher Spiritual Marriage, which offers pleasures far superior to those available in earthly marriage. The virgin awaits the pure union with God, the virgin expects to conceive and give birth to eternal heirs. The virgin is freed from traditional and uncomfortable dress, and exudes a pure virginal beauty, which pleases her Spiritual Bridegroom.

Although the treatises claim that virginity releases the woman from the sexual relations and maternal responsibilities of her married sisters, Christian or pagan, the pleasure of that experience remains caught within definitions of sexual pleasure as heterosexual penetration and impregnation. Instead of fully rejecting oppressive female roles, the definitions available to the Christian virgin participated in a larger cultural discourse which defined the woman's role as mother and passive participant in heterosexual intercourse. As Bride of Christ and fecund virgin body, the Christian virgin's
roles were conceptual duplications of those of the matron. Moreover, the roles at this level, have to be understood as ordained by God, perfect and immutable. The reinscription of these roles as part of a cosmological design cloaks the actual means of construction of the virgin's role—that is, through documents produced within by church fathers. While the documents promise pleasure, they simultaneously served as discourses in the Church's struggle for definition while assimilating and replacing pagan culture.

The treatises construct the individual virgin's desire by first demonstrating a lack of general pleasure in the marriage relation and then describing a heavenly reinscription of the renounced sexual relation. The one-sided nature of the reward suggests that the desire which the treatises create is constructed. The images designed to lure the virgin's participation reflect projections of male desire onto the virgin. Chrysostom and Ambrose draw on cultural stereotypes, and assume a female desires a child, or assumes she is most interested in being desireable to men. For example, in Ambrose's explanation of one of his chapter, he describes what Christ desires, and how the virgin needs to act so that Christ might pursue her. Some of the descriptions of penetration reflects this phallocentric desire, which the culture makes available to be reinscribed at the divine level. The similar, but far more grotesque, images which appear in Ausonius' poetry entitled the Wedding Song indicate the sort of cultural materials available to talk about a sexual relationship between male and female. The image of the "weapon," and "spear," complicate the images of the God's Sword. They make it difficult to interpret the imagery of the Spiritual Marriage as non-violent or free of sexual connotations. The virgin's desire only appears to be constructed when we can see it from the perspective of the subintroductae, for whom, according to their claims, sexual relations were not inevitable, and perhaps not the most enjoyable way of relating. In any case, they refuse the desire with which Chrysostom assumes they are plagued.

Although the use of pagan modes of argument and definitions of virtue contradict the apparent purpose of the discourses on virginity, the infiltration—or appropriation—of
pagan elements help Chrysostom and Ambrose to persuade women to renounce their wifely duties and take up a distinctly Christian practice. The successful persuasive argument controlled the virgin's behavior and restricted the possibilities for her self-understanding and lifestyle, like the prescriptions. The persuasive arguments determined the individual woman's behavior without any visible authoritative apparatus. The practice of virginity appears to be an entirely "free" choice, even though leaders in the fourth century church set out authoritative prescriptions, as we have seen in the previous section. Foucault's ideas are useful because they suggest one way to read the imagery we find in the treatises written on virginity by Chrysostom and Ambrose. As Chrysostom notes, no single person's voice can effect a total authority. Instead, the texts insert the structure of power into the minds of the virgin and shape her will, which effects far more control over her behavior and thoughts than any directly communicated requirements or single authority would be able to. The documents present a means by which the virgin might recognize her desire to be the Bride of Christ and her ethical value as a virgin. In their content, these treatises impose not only particular positions for the virgin against pagan culture and correct beliefs, but also a relationship to the self which confined the virgin to cultural gender roles. Moreover, the images of the ideal presented to the virgin do not suggest a free choice, but the choices instead occur within a network of power, each discourse serving different purposes. This illusion of freedom, only eases the inscription of the virgin into whichever limited categories of self-understanding are normal and useful in a particular context.

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NOTES

1 Ambrose wrote on virginity during his first three years as bishop of Milan: De virginibus dates to 377 C.E., which was followed closely by De Virginitate, written in 377-78 in response to criticism of the first set of treatises, according to Angelo Paredi, Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times, trans. M. Joeseph

2 Numerous other patriarchs also wrote on the subject of virginity in the fourth century including, in the East, Eusebius of Emesa, discussed above, Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379), Gregory Nazianzen (323-389), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-395), Basil of Ancyra (336-360), and in the West, Jerome (c. 342-420). Common themes appear in these texts including the image of the virgin as Bride of Christ, the comparison of her to angels, the repudiation of syneisaktism.

3 Ambrose's treatise De virginibus appears in the form of a letter written to his sister, Marcellina, who was a consecrated virgin. Although the letter and his second treatise, De virginitate, refers to the Church and Christ as virgins, they both more generally addresses the virgins as women, or "daughters." Chrysostom's treatise De virginitate makes arguments in favor of virginity which address men alternatively. Elizabeth Clark notes that Chrysostom addresses most of his argument against marriage in De virginitate to women, "Introduction," p. xxiii. Chrysostom's Quod regulares feminae viris cohabiture nondebeant is addressed specifically to the women who cohabitated with men.

4 Jerome praised Ambrose's De virginibus in his letter as appropriate reading material for Eustochium, Epistle 22.

5 The definition of an "order" of virgins began much earlier with the African mid-third century bishop, Cyprian. MacNamara analyzes his attempts to define "impudent" women ascetics in A New Song, pp. 116-117.

6 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.11.60

7 Chrysostom Homily 66, Matt 3; Chrysostom Homily 85, Matt 4.

8 Ambrose De virginibus 1.11.57, 65. Virgins also were identifiable by their change in attire, 3.1.1. Evidently, the ceremonial veiling was not practiced in all churches or else women would not have traveled to Milan for this purpose.

9 Ambrose De virginibus 2.1.1.

10 Michel Foucault, UP, p. 92.

11 As we have seen above with Cyprian, the bishop's punishment took the form of determining whether or not the virgin could receive communion. See Ep. 4.

12 Geoffrey Harpham, The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 229. Harpham does not refer here to the Latin Church but to Western culture in general,

13 Chrysostom De virg. 11.2.

14 Ambrose De virginitate 8.48.


17 Ambrose *De virginitate* 2.2-3.

18 Ambrose *De virginitate* 2.4, 3.7.

19 Ambrose *De virginitate* 1.7.36, Chrysostom, *Quod reg.* 12, p. 246.

20 Chrysostom *De virg.* 51-59; Ambrose *De virginitate* 1.10.54-56.

21 Chrysostom *De virg.* 2.1; 10.3; 11.11; Ambrose *De virginitate* 17.111.

22 For one example among several, Chrysostom, *De virg.* 48; Ambrose, *De virginitate* 1.3.11.

23 Ambrose, *De virginitate* 13. 80.


25 Ambrose, *De virginitate* 15.100 (emphasis added).


27 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 66. 2.

28 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 63. 2.

29 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 1.1.

30 Peter Brown notes that the Hippodrome in Antioch was a place where Jews, pagans and Christians frequently came together. He draws this conclusion from *Huit catéchèses baptismales*, 6.15; cited in *Body and Society*, p. 315, n. 57.

31 Ambrose also discusses the metaphor of the fervent Christian as athlete. Ambrose's interpretation is radically different: "It is the allurement of self display which even Paul fears, it is the slippery slope which even Paul has to beware of....He fears he may become vain because of his revelation and strong athlete that he is, rejoices that he has learned to purchase the health of his soul by wounding his body." *De virginitate* 16.106.
32 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 38.2 (emphasis added).

33 Notably, both Chrysostom and Ambrose discuss Christian virginity in relation to other examples of virginity in Judaism and paganism. Ambrose refers only to scriptural figures from Judaism which prefigure the Christian practice in scripture, whereas Chrysostom asserts that the Jews "disdain virginity because they dishonored Christ who was born of a virgin," *De virg.* 1.1. This suggests that Chrysostom's definition excluded a competing faction.

34 Marcion was converted in Rome in 140 C.E., rejected marriage, and continued to attract followers, especially in the Syriac-speaking East far into the fourth century, according to Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Knopf, 1987), p. 332.

35 Valentinus was a major Gnostic theologian who stressed the transcendence of sexual desire, among other Gnostic beliefs. Marcion, Tatian and Justin were his disciples, when he taught in Alexandria from 138-166 C.E. See Peter Brown, *Body and Society,* pp. 105-121.

36 Mani was the leader of the Manichaean Church, which flourished in the Greek-speaking East, Iran and India. Mani lived from 240 to 276 C.E., but his Church survived as long as the Roman Empire and lasted much longer in the East. See Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians,* pp. 562-563.

37 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 2

38 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 1.1.

39 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 9-10.

40 Elizabeth Clark, "Introduction," p. xvii.

41 For discussion and examples of condemnation, see below, chapter 3, part 2.

42 In the treatise, *De virginitate,* Chrysostom does not discuss the Judaizers, but the rhetoric is repeated in some cases, word for word. See Chrysostom's *Adversus Judaeus* in Robert Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*.


46 The later works that Brown refers to are *De institution virginis* (392), and *Exhortatio virginitatis,* (394). These dates place the later work approximately fifteen years after Chrysostom's earlier writings on virginity. Dates are taken from A. Paredi, *Life and Times of St. Ambrose,* pp. 142-43.

47 Ambrose says that a virgin builds fortresses that defend against the attacks of the enemies: "She builds towers that... she may not only render fruitless the attacks of the enemy, but also erect the safe defense of holy merit," *De virginibus* 2.6.43.

48 Ambrose, *De virginitate* 6.28.
49 Chrysostom also chastises parents who balk the virgin's way to virginity, and cites Matt 10:37, although only in passing, De virg. 78.5.

50 Ambrose does note however, the special problem of housing the growing number of female virgins. He refers to a group from Bononia that had just arrived in Milan: "Not being of the sex which lives in common, attaining in their common chastity to the number of twenty...leaving their parents' dwelling they press into the houses of Christ," in De virginibus 1.11.60.

51 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.7.32.

52 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.3.10.

53 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.12.63.

54 See Ann Yarbrough, "Christianization in the Fourth Century: The Example of Roman Women," Church History 45 (1976): 149-65 for the demographics of the Roman women who converted to Christianity; Cf. Elizabeth Clark, "Ascetic Renunciation and Feminine Advancement."

55 Ambrose, Epistle 63.62; cited in Brown, Body and Society, p. 357.

56 The wealthy virgin, Malia Daedola, sister of Praetorian Prefect and Consul Manlius Theodorus, was to be "powerful in revenue, a mother to the poor," Diehl, Inscriptiones latine christianae veteres 1700, 1:300, cited in Brown, Body and Society, p. 344, n. 17.

57 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.12.62.

58 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.12.63.

59 Ambrose, De virginitate 16.92.

60 The Montanist movement was a heretical Christian ascetic movement which began in Phrygia in the third century and spread through Rome as far west as Lyon. In addition to the main prophet, Montanus, there were two main female prophets. See Frederick Klawiter, "The Role of Martyrdom and Persecution in Developing Priestly Authority of Women in Early Christianity: A Case Study of Montanism," Church History 49 no.3 (Sept. 1980): 251-261.

61 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.4.16. The Bacchic cults were one of a whole genre of "mystery cults" which practiced secret rituals. Robin Lane Fox notes that the Christian teachings were on par with the cult of Dionysus in 170 C.E. Later than that it becomes difficult to determine their group. See Pagans and Christians, p. 93-96.

62 In addition to the Vestal Virgins and the Phrygian seers, Ambrose notes the Cybele and the Mithras cults in Epistle 8 to Valentinian II (384). Recent epigraphs pertaining to the Cybele cult have confirmed the restoration of the temple for his worship by Cybele as late as 288 C.E. according to Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, p. 580-81. According to Liebeschuetz, the Mithras cult enjoyed widespread popularity into the fourth century, especially among a limited social group of officers and officials, who, as such, surely would have been in contact with Ambrose, Bishop of the Imperial city, Milan, p. 233. However, he maintains that the ancestral cult remained "the central feature of Roman piety" in spite of this diversity of cults Continuity and Change in Roman Religion (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 301.
63 Mark 6:21ff.

64 Ambrose, De virginibus, 3.6.27,30.

65 Robin Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, pp. 68-70; Libeschuetz notes Constantius' ban on animal sacrifices in 337 C.E., and the systematic suppression of paganism which did not come until the last decade of the fourth century, Continuity and Change, p. 300; referring to Libanius, Qr. 30 passim; and CodTh 16.10.9, of 385 C.E.

66 Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, p. 582, n. 25, citing C. Lepelley, Les Cités de l'Afrique Romaine au Bas-Empire. Balsdon also notes the practice of such pagan festivities, but notes a difference between acceptable customs of Greek and Roman dancing: "Dancing was legitimate if it was done in the house, and done with restraint. It was done for the benefit of the family and their guests;" Roman Women, p. 275. Although he derives this from Ovid's text, Art of Love, from the Republican period, the continuation of the practice into the fourth century is supported by mosaics form Piazza Armerina in Sicily which show bikini-clad dancing girls, which offers one possible cultural explanation of this overdone description of the beheading of John the Baptist.

67 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.6.31.

68 Ambrose, in fact, sets out precisely the task of instructing virgins for widows in his treatise on widows, written not long after the first treatise on virginity. Widows comprise an interesting topic, but cannot be taken up here.


70 Ambrose, Epistle 8 to Valentinian II, p. 80.


72 Ambrose, De virginitate 17.115.

73 Ambrose, De virginitate 17.112.

74 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.6.31.

75 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.2.13.

76 Balsdon traces the Roman fear of a declining population from the Julian marriage laws of 19/18 B.C.E. which required that men between twenty-five and sixty should be married men, and women between twenty and fifty should be married women. Roman Women, p. 76. The mention of a similar fear in our late fourth century treatises may reflect an anxiety about an unremedied problem, or Chrysostom and Ambrose may have been aware of this cultural history which could be used to criticize virginity.

77 Ambrose, De virginitate 5.24.

78 Ambrose, De virginitate 7.36.

80 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 14.2.

81 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 15.1-2.

82 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 17.5; Cf. Ambrose, *De virginitate*, 7.36. Ambrose notes here that virginity is useful for bringing salvation to the Roman world.

83 Chrysostom, *De virg.* 19.1.

84 II Cor 2:3, *NAB*.


87 Michel Foucault, *PK*, p. 217.

88 Foucault, *DP*, p. 142.

89 Term comes from Chrysostom's *Quod reg.* 10, p. 240, discussed above, Ch.2.


92 Foucault, *DP*, p. 201.


94 Ambrose, *De virginitate* 8.80.

95 Cf. Ambrose, *De virginibus* 3.3.11: "utter no word which you would wish to recall, but let your boldness to speak be sparing."

96 Ambrose, *De virginitate* 8.81.


98 Chrysostom *De virg.*, 53.

99 The threat of the woman's speech is her ability to contaminate men's speech: "if a man lives with women in such intimacy and is reared in their company, he is at a loss to escape being some kind of vagabond, the dregs of the earth, one of the rabble. If he says anything, his talk will entirely concern weaving and wool; his language will be tainted with the characteristics of women's speech," Chrysostom *Adv. eos* 11, p. 197.

100 Chrysostom *Quod reg.*, 7, p. 231.
Ironically, the law of God can be used legitimately to "bridle" their mouths, whereas one of the crimes of the virgins was the "stitching up" of Chrysostom's. See above chapter 2.

Ambrose, De virginibus 1.4.18-19.

Chrysostom, Quod reg., 12, p. 246.

Ambrose, De virginibus 1.12.61.

Ambrose, De virginibus 3.3.9.

Ambrose, De virginitate, 16. 83.

Ambrose, De virginitate, 16. 89. Cf. also 8. 46. Ambrose here notes a previous reprimand to a "certain widow" whom he especially entreats to accept this prescription. This indicates a specific example of control intended through this discourse.

For an analysis of the use of the Song of Songs in the writings of the Latin Fathers, from Origen to Augustine, see Elizabeth Clark, "The Uses of the Song of Songs: Origen and the Later Latin Fathers," Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith, pp. 386-427. Clark notes a shift in the interpretation in the Song of Songs from Origen's Christian self-definition in relation to Judaism and Marcionism, to the late fourth century where this Hebrew Scripture was used by the Later Latin Fathers to exhort women to practice virginity, to valorize Mary as a virgin, and to argue both sides of the Donatist controversy.

Ambrose, De virginitate, 8. 78.

Ambrose, De virginitate, 8. 79.

Ambrose's use of the image of a window here reflects his senatorial class background, since in the Imperial period of Rome glass was in fact used, but only by members of the upper classes. On the other hand, for the average virgin, the image of herself behind glass in this discourse would still have been operable because on a more general level people used translucent marble, fish-scales or micah to cover their windows, all of which could have been cleaned to enable this two-way viewing. Encyclopedia Britannica, 1969 ed., s.v. "Window."

Ambrose, De virginitate, 8. 79.

Chrysostom, Quod reg., 10.

Chrysostom, De virg. 63.3.

Chrysostom, Quod reg., 9.

Chrysostom, De virg. 6. 1-2.

Chrysostom, De virg. 8.3.

Chrysostom, De virg. 26. This argument most likely is addressed to male virgins.

Chrysostom, De virg. 82.3-4; the punishment of virgins without oil reappears in 84.3.
120 Chrysostom, De virg. 84. 3-4.

121 Chrysostom, De virg. 21.3.

122 Ambrose, De virginitate 1.3.

123 Ambrose, De virginitate 13. 86.

124 Song of Solomon 5:7; Cited in Ambrose, De virginitate, 8.48.

125 Ambrose, De virginitate 13. 87.

126 Ambrose, De virginitate 9. 55.

127 Chrysostom, De virg. 7.1

128 Ambrose, De virginitate 15.96.

129 Ambrose, De virginitate 14. 87.


131 Chrysostom also employs this line of argument in his attempt to control the problem of the subintroductae. He represents the virgin as vulnerable to observation in Quod reg. See above, chapter two.

132 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.1.5.; Chrysostom, De virg. 63.

133 Ambrose, De virginitate 14. 96.

134 Ambrose, De virginitate 12. 68.

135 Ambrose, De virginibus 1.2.8.

136 Ambrose even lists six specific times when the virgin should pray in De virginibus 2. 4.18. Chrysostom prescribes constant prayers in Quod reg.

137 Ambrose, De virginitate 12.69; and Chrysostom mentions all of these in De virg. 27, and 63.

138 Ambrose, De virginibus 2.2 7.

139 Chrysostom, De virg. 5. 2.

140 Chrysostom himself notes the limits of the power to threaten: "As for the fear of God, it does not influence people about their bishop in the slightest degree" Homily Acts, 3, cited in Lane Fox, Pagans and Christians, p. 515. The extremity of his statement is debatable, and I shall take up this question in my final chapter.

141 Peter Brown makes this point in his chapter, "The Notion of Virginity in the Early Church," in Christian Spirituality, ed. by McGinn et al, pp. 429-32. Brown argues that the loss of virginity was a
social act, and therefore the "vow," moved the body "out of circulation." Women and men who took on virginity welcomed a new ground of society "no longer formed by bonds of marriage, family and kinship." Virginity is seen as a refusal of the traditional "sexual social contract" of sexual joining in marriage to produce progeny, and an entirely free choice.

142 Ambrose, De virginitate 1.1.1; Chrysostom, Quod. reg. 1, p. 210.

143 Michel Foucault analyzes the transition between the Greco-Roman and the Christian ethical tradition in the second of the projected six-volume History of Sexuality. Of this series, only three volumes have been published, due to Foucault's death in 1984. Some aspects of Foucault's fourth volume on the Christian pastoral, which was to be entitled The Confessions of the Flesh have been published post-humously, and he discusses his work on the Christian period in several other collections which I have used in my research.

144 Michel Foucault, UP, p. 10.


146 Michel Foucault, UP, pp.6-7.

147 Michel Foucault, UP, p. 5.

148 It is important to note here that Chrysostom claims, in the context of an anti-Gnostic polemic, sexual intercourse itself was not defiling, only a waste of time. De virg. 30.2. Chrysostom problematizes "tyrannical desires" not the physical act.

149 Michel Foucault, "Genealogy of Ethics," p. 358.

150 Foucault notes: "Although the necessity of respecting law and the customs--the nomoi--was very often underscored, more important than the law was the attitude that caused one to respect them." Michel Foucault, UP, p. 31. Peter Brown corroborates Foucault's assessment, in Making of Late Antiquity, in his description of the single normalizing force as the Greek honorific inscriptions, p. 4.

151 Michel Foucault, "Technology of the Self," p. 22; Foucault, "Genealogy of Ethics," p. 366.

152 Michel Foucault, "Genealogy of Ethics," p. 366.

153 Michel Foucault, UP, p. 10.

154 For example, Foucault does not try to hide his bias against Christianity: "We are more inclined to see taking care of ourselves as an immorality, as a means of escape from all possible rules. We inherit the traidition of Christian morality which makes self-renunciation the condition for salvation." Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," p. 22.

155 In fact, Ambrose confuses this gender distinction because he defines Christ and the Church as virgins. He also notes that soul(ānima) is not gendered, but suggests the verb is feminine because of the ability of the soul to assuage brutal relationship between body and soul, De virginitate 15.93. In any case, Ambrose's definition of virginity, the Bride is passive in relation to God--rather than biologically gendered person. However the definition uses biological and "naturally" feminine traits to describe the soul, which, given the historical definition of the feminine severely limit possible definitions for women, or the feminine.
laden discourses that were suffered...because, in addition to serving a host of regulatory and disciplinary functions, they felt good," in *The Ascetic Imperative*, p. 227. The question remains, however, as to how something came to "feel good." In the case of these women, the desires were defined by men, and reflect that perspective.


Chrysostom studied with Libanius, a famous rhetor in Antioch, and with the philosopher Andragathius; according to Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.3 and Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8.2. See M.L.W. Laistner, *Christians and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire* (Itaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1951) for Chrysostom's prescription of a classical education for young Christian boys. Ambrose also studied within the classic philosophical tradition. As noted above, he read Greek, and participated in philosophical study groups like the one surrounding Plotinus in Rome. Immediately after taking up his post as Bishop, and prior to writing his treatises on virginity, Ambrose went into philosophical retreat, according to Palinus,' *Life of Ambrose*, 7.

Ambrose, *De virginibus* 1.4.15.

As Ambrose notes, Christian virgins did not require a dowry, but neither did the Vestal virgin. Her price, it would seem, is the money and status that she received upon leaving her post because pagan virginity was not a perpetual state.


Ambrose, *De virginibus* 2.6.39.

However, while Ambrose is in part reporting, he also embellishes. The cult of the Virgin Mary, for example, did not grow into a vast tradition until centuries after her death. Her virginity became the object of numerous treatises starting in the third century. In the late fourth century, Jerome and Ambrose composed the most famous treatises on Mary's perpetual virginity, and established retrospectively the Church's position on her virginity. In describing the ideal, the church father's added and reshaped the understanding of the woman. Clarissa Atkinson traces the similar creation of the legend of Monica, Augustine's mother. See her article "'Your Servant, My Mother': The Figure of Saint Monica in the Ideology of Christian Motherhood," Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan and Margaret Miles, *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), pp. 139-72.

Chrysostom, *De virg*, 11.2.

Besides the prescriptions noted in the previous section, Chrysostom states very clearly what the virgin must do beyond marriage: "It is not enough to be unmarried to be a virgin. There must be spiritual chastity, and I mean by chastity not only the absence of wicked and shameful desire, the absence of ornaments and superfluous cares, but also being unsullied by life's cares. Without that, what good is there in physical purity?" *De virg*. 77.

Chrysostom, *De virg*. 76.1.
Cf. Chrysostom, De virg. 8.3: "The woman who has power to enter marriage but chooses not to is a virgin."


Cosmetics included make-up and scents and jewellery. Lucien writes: "For a woman does not just wash away her sleepiness with cold water, and proceed to a serious day's work. No, innumerable concoctions in the way of salves are used to brighten her unpleasing complexion. As in a public procession, each of the servants has some different object in her hand; a silver basin, a jug, a mirror, a multitude of boxes, enough to stock a chemist's shop, jars full of mischief, tooth powders or stuff for blackening the eyelids." Amores 39, cited in Balsdon, Roman Women, p. 261.

Jewelry included a variety of precious gems, which were worn in earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, brooches and hair diadems, according to Balsdon, Roman Women, p. 263.

Balsdon describes the hairstyle made fashionable by Julia, daughter of Titus: "Curl climbs on top of curl and over the forehead there arose something which at its best looked like the chef d'oeuvre of a gifted pastrycook and, at its worst, like dry sponge. At the back the hair was plaited, and the braids were arranged in a coil which looks like basket work." Roman Women, p. 256.

Tertullian, De cultu feminarum.

Ambrose, De virginibus 1.6.28.

Chrysostom similar concludes that women who wear gold ornaments are plagued by a perpetual fear of losing them, and that gold actually violates natural beauty and increases a woman's ugliness. De virg. 61-2.

Ambrose, De virginibus 1.10 55.

Chrysostom, De virg. 63.1.

Ambrose similarly defines for the virgin a beauty which releases her from worldly cares because it is eternal, and not of the body. Instead of human appraisals, the virgin's beauty is judged by God. Ambrose, De virginibus 1.6.30.

Chrysostom, De virg. 52.1-8. Balsdon notes that jealousy is a theme present in Ovid's Art of Love, in Roman Women, p. 209.

Chrysostom, De virg. 57.2

Chrysostom, De virg. 57.4-5; Ambrose, De virginibus, I.6.30.

Ambrose, De virginibus, I 6.25ff. Cf. also Chrysostom, De virg. 55 and 57.4, on the anxiety of childlessness.

Chrysostom, De virg. 40.2-3. p. 60. Of course, Chrysostom also points out the burden to the man who finds himself married to an intolerable woman. Cf. De virg. 46.1-5.
Ambrose, De virginitate 17.108

Ambrose reports one virgin, St. Pelagia, who put on a bridal gown in preparation for her martyrdom. De virginibus 3.7.34. Virgins frequently wore traditional Roman bridal dress for their veiling ceremonies, according to Peter Brown, Body and Society, p. 356.

Ambrose, De virginibus 1.6.30.

Ambrose, De virginibus 1.6.31.

Ambrose, De virginitate 1.2-3.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.60.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.60-61.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.64.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.67.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.67.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.66.

Ambrose, De virginitate 12.73.

Ambrose, De virginitate 11.66

Ambrose, De virginitate 12.68.

Ambrose, De virginitate 12.71.

Ambrose, De virginitate 13.94. It is interesting to note here Ambrose's appropriation and changes of Philo's imagery of the soul and the Bridegroom, which follows from the fact that he studied Philo's works. For Philo, the soul became increasingly masculinized in preparation for the union with God, whereas here the soul takes on female characteristics. Philo, On the Cherubim, 50; cited in Ross Kraemer, "Monastic Jewish Women."

Ambrose, De virginitate 12.68.

Chrysostom, Quod reg. 12, p. 246.

Chrysostom, De virg. 34.7-8.

Chrysostom, De virg. 34.4.
205 Ambrose De virginitate 10.59.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSIONS: The Double-Edged Sword of Subjectivity

The preceding interpretations of the prescriptive texts of Chrysostom and Ambrose employ a Foucauldian model of the subject to analyze the textual definition of virginity presented to fourth century Christian women in Antioch and Milan. The texts offered the Christian woman or consecrated virgin in the late fourth century a set of motivations and a variety of images of herself as an ethical subject. If the virgin accepted the definitions of these texts, she would subject not only her behavior but also her thoughts to a normalizing inspection. Through routine discipline, she would conceive of herself within a perpetual condition of evaluation which enabled a far more efficient and extensive behavioral control than forcibly required prescriptions. To enjoin the virgin's voluntary participation, the rhetorical structure of the texts constructed the virgin's desires so that she would enact the prescriptions by her own will—without any necessary apparatus of control. The relationships of power traced within the treatises on virginity reflect strategic theoretical constructions within discourse, and demonstrate the potential effects upon the auditors of these texts.

Because the texts on virginity are prescriptions presented by the church fathers to women, we can only speculate as to whether the ascetic woman responded to them. In fact, many women did take up the practice of virginity, and their lives are being uncovered and reclaimed as significant contributors to the beginnings of Christianity.1 In the lives of Chrysostom and Ambrose, we find two examples of women who practiced virginity: Ambrose's sister, Marcellina, and Olympias, the wealthy deaconess and friend and correspondent to Chrysostom.2 Marcellina was a consecrated virgin, whereas Olympias only took up ascetic practices after the death of her husband, Nebridius.3 Marcellina is remembered to us only through the writings of her brother. Olympias, who was an
extremely wealthy widow at the age of twenty and a deaconess probably under the age of thirty,\(^4\) started a monastery for virgins in Constantinople, and provided bountiful funds for cathedrals, clergy and women ascetics and services for the poor.\(^5\) She is also renowned for her intrepid self-defense before the praefect, where she defended herself against accusations of starting a fire which burned the Cathedral and the Senate House in Constantinople, among other charges.\(^6\)

Although we have two accounts of Olympias' life, they both are written in a formal style which celebrates the Saint after her death, and therefore, do not provide particular insight into her subjective experience.\(^7\) Similarly, aspects of Ambrose's letters to Marcellina are very formal, whereas, he addresses her specific experience and personal questions in other places. The correspondence of the Ambrose and Chrysostom with Marcellina and Olympias are periodically characterized by a more informal tone. Although the letters are written by men, they occasionally discuss informally the daily and more mundane aspects of the life of virginity.\(^8\)

In Chrysostom's correspondence with Olympias, Chrysostom indicates that Olympias indeed enacts the strict bodily disciplines to which he exhorts the virgins. Olympias enters the athletic contest that he prescribes to the virgin, even though her body is female, and "feebler than a cobweb, treading under foot with derisive scorn the fury of lusty men gnashing their teeth upon you."\(^9\) As prescribed in his treatises, Olympias speaks eloquently in the voice of example and strips for the contest,"without thrusting [herself] into the forum, or occupying the public centers of the city, but sitting all the while in a small house and confined chamber."\(^10\)

Although passages here too become rhetorical, his letters reveal another side of the "the uninterrupted teaching of the most holy patriarch [John]"\(^11\) directed toward Olympias' community of virgins. In the private form of the letter, we find advice to Olympias that contradicts other prescriptions to virgins. Whereas the virgin who weeps continually is idealized in the virgin, he suggests that Olympias may have taken the call to
ascetic life too far. He urges Olympias to take care of her health, and limit the disciplines which she applies to herself: "pray shake off the despondency which now oppresses you, and do not exact inordinate and cruel penances from yourself." Here Chrysostom reprimands Olympias for her extreme concern, and despondency over John's expulsion. In another letter, he reprimands her for her extreme self-critique at being unable to remove him from exile in Cucusus:

when you ought to be using every exertion and making it your business to expel dejection from your soul, you go about collecting distressing thoughts, even inventing things (so you say) which do not exist, and tearing yourself to pieces for no purpose, and to your very great injury.

Olympias is one example of a woman who respected Chrysostom's teaching and disciplined her body to the point of illness.

Ambrose, in his three-book treatise on virginity addressed to Marcellina, similarly breaks from his formal rhetorical purpose of valorizing the virgin ideal to advise his sister in her practice of virginity. She, like Olympias far surpasses the call to fast for single days. According to Ambrose, Marcellina fasted and studied to the detriment of her health:

multiplying nights and days, [you] pass untold periods without food....Your very meals consisted but of what food came to hand, so that fasting is to be preferred to eating what was repugnant; your drink is from the spring, your weeping and prayer combine, your sleep is on your book.

Marcellina seeks to tame her body with self-discipline, and she serves as an example for the prescriptions that Ambrose sets out with regard to fasting and prayer for virgins. However, he suggests that she too, may be pursuing the self-discipline with dangerous vigor, and encourages her to moderate her fasts, reading work and prayer.

While the above examples by no means demonstrate the perfect translation from text to body, they address the lives of two real women who would have been exposed to the writings of John Chrysostom and Ambrose. Both women practiced sexual renunciation and extreme ascetic discipline, but they also read and wrote letters, participated in public and theological debates, quoted Scripture, and earned the respect of illustrious male
leaders. However, their practice and perception of themselves (as we receive it through the texts of the church fathers) indicates some of the costs that resulted from the entry into the new role.

These examples suggest the women's self-construction of their subject as suggested by Foucauldian theory, but ultimately their subjective experience remains unavailable. We do not have textual articulations from women who were exposed to the ascetic writings of Ambrose and Chrysostom, and therefore, we cannot determine to what extent the women participated in power. However, the value of the purity of their bodies suggested by the discourse on virginity, and the concomitant self-discipline suggests their bodies remain a site of continual subjective construction which both enabled women and involved them in a new discourse which harnessed them for the purposes of a larger institution. An interpretation of these texts can neither deny the influence of these texts upon the woman's self-construction, nor can it demonstrate a totality of power which produced subjects on the basis of authoritative requirements. Instead, the limits of authoritative prescription, and the ambivalent discourse on virginity suggest a dialectic between text and body, where the historical woman pursued an ethical ideal, but simultaneously resisted it.

This dialectic appears on several levels in the thesis. Women within the ascetic movements of syneisaktism, for example, resist sex-segregated ascetic practice which precludes the non-sexual interaction of cohabitation. One form of asceticism defines itself as authoritative, and the other becomes heretical. Similarly, the individual ascetic woman practices the virginal ideal only against a resistance of her body, and an inevitable indeterminacy of her thoughts. Finally, the female ascetic woman is defined by men in these texts, but her sexual difference introduces a resistance which calls into question singularly male sexual models. Both the practice of syneisaktism, the gendered experience of the woman, and her hidden thoughts shape, yet escape, the definitions which are available for interpretation.
Bearing this in mind, we return to the questions set out in our introduction. I offered a critique of the two methodologies of feminist interpretation. On one hand, I question a definition of androgyny that subsumes female into male definitions, and does not allow for sexual difference in determining a definition of women's liberation. On the other hand, an interpretation which relies upon essential biological categories by defining ascetic practice as repression of sexual desire, for example, similarly limits our description of gender to existing definitions. In fact, if we consider the female as some essential quality that is repressed, we participate in the "repressive hypothesis." Foucault's refutation of this hypothesis suggests that the liberation of what is repressed can only reproduce a cultural definition of the feminine--one that has been created by male philosophers and church fathers who recommend the repression. The revision that Foucault offers is that the construction of subjectivity involves a dialectic between individual and social discourses. In the Foucauldian frame, the attention to the construction of gender, of institutions, and of the subject brings into focus the limits of the authority and the mutability of the categories under examination. By analyzing the mechanisms by which power asserts itself, disheartening as the mapping of domination may be, we affirm the possibility of reconstruction of institutions, gender and the subject.

NOTES

1Elizabeth Fiorenza provides a brilliant theoretical model for feminist recovery even from androcentric texts in *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York:
Crossroads, 1987); I am indebted to the work done by Elizabeth Clark, Sebastian Brock and Susan Ashbrooke Harvey as well.

2 Marcellina lived from and practiced virginity in Ambrose's family home in Milan. Olympias lived from the c.365 to the early fifth century, and was closely associated with John Chrysostom during and following his bishopric in Constantinople (397-407).

3 After becoming a wealthy widow, the emperor Theodosius tried to force Olympias into a marriage with one of his relatives, an offer she stubbornly refused. Life of Olympias, 3; Palladius, Dialogue 61.


5 The evidence of Olympias' wealth and generosity abound. The Life recounts the thousands of pounds of gold and silver, and the variety of property she donated the church, 5; Cf. also Palladius, Dialogue 61; Life 13.14.

6 Life of Olympias 9.10.


7 These two accounts are translated in Clark's volume, Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends.

8 For example, Chrysostom discusses his poor health and requests repeatedly that Olympias send him medicine for his problem vomiting, Chrysostom, "Letters to Olympias," p. 293; Chrysostom also reveals first-hand information to Olympias concerning the events of his expulsion from Constantinople, which he urges her not to reveal to others, Chrysostom "Letters to Olympias," p. 298.


11 Life of Olympias, 9.

12 Chrysostom, "Letters to Olympias," p. 296.


14 Ambrose, De virginibus 3.4.15.

15 Ambrose, De virginibus 3.4.16
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