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Generic Hybrids: The “Life” of Synkletike and the “Life” of Theodora of Arta*

Generic Hybridity

Mikhail Bakhtin called “hybridisation” the mixture of two different social languages or linguistic consciousnesses within the boundaries of a single utterance.¹ Bakhtin saw hybridisation as an essential constituent of “novelistic discourse”, that is, the discourse employed by novelists. The Russian theorist characterised novelistic discourse as “dialogic” and “polyphonic” because, as he argued, it includes a variety of different voices and styles set against each other dialogically. As he put it, the discourse of the novel is a “multi-toned narration” including “the mixing of high and low, serious and comic [...] prosaic and poetic speech”.² According to Bakhtin, the hybridity detected in novelistic discourse is also essentially dialogical because, as he suggested, within a hybrid utterance two different and often contradictory points of view are set against each other. The dialogical structure of a hybrid discourse is marked by oppositions and tensions caused by the coexistence of binary opposed ideologies, styles and modes.³

Following Bakhtin, the term “hybrid text” can be employed to describe a single text which is produced when two different genres or types of texts are combined together. A text can also be called hybrid in which two distinct and often contradictory elements, on both a thematic and an ideological level, can be found.⁴

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¹ M. M. BAKHTIN, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by C. EMERSON and M. HOLQUIST. Austin 1981, 304–305, 358 (*Voprosy literatury i estetiki*. Moscow 1975).

² M. M. BAKHTIN, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. by C. EMERSON. Minneapolis 1984, 108 (*Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo*. Moscow 1929).

³ BAKHTIN, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 360–361.

⁴ J. HAWTHORN, *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*. London 2000, 159.

Despite the fact that generic hybridisation is the mixture of two different types of texts, it should be distinguished from “generic mixture”, the process by which certain genres incorporate formal or thematic elements from other genres.⁵ A Byzantine saint’s Life, for instance, constitutes very often a generic mixture because it frequently includes elements from other genres such as epistolography and the ancient novel.⁶ There are saints’ Lives which appear in the form of a letter (*Life of Antony*, *Life of Macrina*). Other saints’ Lives include both thematic and structural characteristics of the ancient novel such as travelling, adventure (*Life of Thecla*, *Life of Gregory the Decapolite*) and the structure of embedded narrative (*Life of Theoktiste of Lesbos*).

In contrast to a hybrid text, in a “mixed” text there is a genre hierarchy. The mixed text is dominated by one genre which, while entering the process of mixture, opens in order to receive elements from other preexisting genres, but in fact does not lose essential elements from its original character. In the case of a hybrid text, on the other hand, classification into one specific generic category is difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, a generic hybrid is a text that lies between the two genres in which it originates, since neither of these two genres is dominant. They are kept distinct and set against each other, sometimes in opposition and sometimes in concert.

Hybrid Texts in Female Hagiography

In the Byzantine subgenre which I call “female Life”, two hybrid texts can be traced: the hagiography of Synkletike and that of Theodora of Arta. Before presenting these texts and exploring their hybrid

⁵ A. FOWLER, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Oxford 1982, 181–188.

⁶ See M. VAN UYTFANGHE, *Heiligenverehrung II (Hagiographie)*, in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum XIV* 1988, 154–155 and T. HAEGG, *The Novel in Antiquity*. Berkeley and Los Angeles 1983. For other Byzantine generic mixtures, see P. AGAPITOS, *Mischung der Gattungen und Überschreitung der Gesetze: die Grabrede des Eustathios von Thessalonike auf Nikolaos Hagiotheodorites*. *JÖB* (1998) 119–146; P. AGAPITOS, *Ancient Models and Novel Mixtures: The Concept of Genre in Byzantine Funerary Literature from Photios to Eustathios of Thessalonike*, in: G. NAGY–A. STAVRAKOPOULOU (eds.), *Modern Greek Literature Presented to Margaret Alexiou*. New York 2003, 5–23; I. NILSSON, *Archaists and Innovators: Byzantine “Classicism” and Experimentation with Genre in the Twelfth Century*, in: B. AGRELL–I. NILSSON (eds.), *Genres and their Problems: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives*. Göteborg 2003, 413–424.

status, I would like to explain what I mean by the term “female Life”. As I have argued elsewhere,⁷ the Byzantine genre of a saint’s Life may be divided into two subgenres according to gender: the male and the female Life. The criterion for this subgeneric division is not the gender of the hagiographers, who in their large majority are men, but the gender of the saints to whom the Lives are devoted. Accordingly, male Lives are the texts having male saints as their protagonists, whereas female are the Lives whose protagonists are holy women. What led me to this subgeneric distinction is mainly the fact that the Lives of holy women share a number of characteristics which set them apart from the vast majority of the Lives devoted to male saints which, in turn, have their own common features.

The “Life” of Synkletike, one of the oldest texts devoted to a female saint, is believed to have been composed around the first half of the fifth century.⁸ The “Life” of Theodora of Arta, one of the latest Byzantine texts venerating a holy woman, was written in the thirteenth or at the beginning of the fourteenth century.⁹ As a matter of fact, the “Life” of Synkletike was written when the subgenre of female Life was at the beginning of its formation, whereas the “Life” of Theodora of Arta was composed when the subgenre was declining.¹⁰ But let us have

⁷ S. CONSTANTINOY, Subgenre and Gender in Saints’ Lives, in: P. ODORICO–P. AGAPITOS (eds.), *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du IIe colloque international philologique Paris, 6–7–8 juin 2002 (Dossiers Byzantins 4)*, Paris 2004, 411–423; S. CONSTANTINOY, Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women (*Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 9), Uppsala 2005.

⁸ See L. AMPELARGA, Ο Βίος της Αγίας Συγκλητικής (εισαγωγή, κριτικό κείμενο, σχόλια): Συμβολή στη διερεύνηση και μελέτη της πρώιμης ασκητικής γραμματείας (*Βυζαντινά Κείμενα και Μελέται* 31), Thessaloniki 2002, 22–24; L. REGNAULT, Vie de sainte Synclétique et Discours de salut à une vierge (*Spiritualité Orientale* 9), Bégrolles-en-Mauges 1972, 7.

⁹ See E. PATLAGEAN, Une sainte souveraine grecque: Theodora impératrice d’Épire (XIIIe siècle). *BSI* 56 (1995) 453–460; S. PETRIDES, Le moine Job. *EO* 15 (1912) 40–48; A.-M. TALBOT, Life of St. Theodora of Arta, in: A.-M. TALBOT (ed.) *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints’ Lives in English Translation (Byzantine Saints’ Lives in Translation 1)*, Washington 1996, 323–333.

¹⁰ The oldest Byzantine Life of a holy woman which has come down to us is the *Life of Macrina* by Gregory of Nyssa, written around 382/383 (see P. MARAVAL, Grégoire de Nysse: Vie de sainte Macrine [SC 178], Paris 1971, 67). In the fifth century, when the “Life” of Synkletike was composed, only a few Lives of holy women seem to have been written. The texts which have come down to us are only three or five: the *Life of Melania* (between 439 and 485), the *Life of Eusebia/Xene* (fifth century),

a closer look at the two texts. The rest of this paper is primarily devoted to the hagiography of Synkletike, which is much longer and more complex than that of Theodora.

The "Life" of Synkletike

In the anonymous text devoted to saint Synkletike's life and teachings,¹¹ the genre of the saint's Life is combined with that of *Apophthegmata Patrum*. Life and Apophthegmata are two related genres; both of them belong to a larger category of genres called by modern scholars hagiographical. Other such genres are Collections of Miracle Stories, Accounts of the Discovery or Movement of Relics, Panegyrics and Homilies.

A saint's Life is a relatively long narrative which focuses on the religious career and spiritual adventures of a pious man or woman who, through his or her way of life and great devotion to God, attains sainthood. Very often a saint's Life takes the form of a biography which starts from the saint's conception and birth, goes on to present his or her early years, education and maturity, and closes with the saint's death which is frequently described in great detail. There are many saints' Lives in which, after the presentation of the saints' death, an account of their posthumous miracles is included.

As it has come down to us, the genre of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* has the form of an anthology consisting of maxims and teachings attributed to certain desert Fathers and Mothers, as well as various independent and self-contained narratives having an instructive character. The length of these narratives varies. The shortest narrative is about four printed lines long while the longest consists of around 130 printed lines. The maxims, teachings and narratives refer to the life and spiritual struggles of the ascetic, the virtues which he or she should possess,

the *Life of Pelagia* (fifth century), the *Life of Theodora of Alexandria* (fifth or sixth century), and the *Life of Olympias* (fifth or sixth century). The "*Life*" of *Theodora of Arta* is either the only female hagiography written in the thirteenth century or the second composed in the fourteenth century. The other female Life written at the beginning of the fourteenth century is that of Euphrosyne the Younger by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos. In fact, it can be said that after the tenth century the subgenre of female Life starts declining, since the Lives of holy women composed after the tenth century are extremely few.

¹¹ In the manuscript tradition, Synkletike's hagiography was falsely attributed to Athanasios (295-373), the bishop of Alexandria (AMPELARGA, op. cit. 14-21).

and the wisdom and holiness of certain desert Fathers and Mothers as manifested in their words and miraculous powers. Both the maxims and teachings of the desert Fathers reflect Christ's teachings in the New Testament addressed to his followers (see, for example, Matt. 5–7).

Unlike the genre of Life which derives from a written tradition, that of Apophthegmata is the product of an oral tradition. The collections of Apophthegmata have their origins in the speeches and the teachings which the old desert Fathers of the fourth century addressed to their disciples. At some point in the fifth century, some monks started writing down the sayings of the desert Fathers and the anecdotes about them which were circulating from mouth to mouth. Thus a textual nucleus was created which was enlarged and rearranged as time passed.¹²

Apart from being two related genres, Life and Apophthegmata are also the products of the same cultural milieu, that is, the early Christian asceticism of Egypt.¹³ The first saint's Life, the *Life of Antony* (356/357) written by the Alexandrian bishop Athanasios, which had a great impact on Byzantine hagiography, presents the life and spiritual struggles of the father of Egyptian asceticism.¹⁴ While Antony's holy life offered the necessary material for the writing of the first saint's Life, his teachings were some of the first Apophthegmata which circulated orally among the monastic circles of Egypt.¹⁵

As far as the case of Synkletike is concerned, Apophthegmata attributed to her might have also circulated orally before the writing of her "Life".¹⁶ Synkletike's hagiographer must have used the oral tradition of her Apophthegmata as a source for the composition of his text, as we can assume from his words. He states in the prologue of the text:

ἡμεῖς δὲ κατὰ τὴν οἰκειάν δύναμιν ἰγνηλατοῦντες τὰ κατ' αὐτήν καὶ ἐκ τῶν συνηλίκων δὲ αὐτῆς τὰ κατὰ τὸν πρῶτον βίον ἀκροθιγῶς ἀκούσαντες καὶ ἔξ αὐτῶν δὲ τῶν πραγμάτων

¹² J.-C. GUY, *Les apophthegmes des Pères: Collection systématique, chapitres I–IX* (SC 387), Paris 1993, 18–35.

¹³ About desert Fathers and the monastic movement of early Christianity, see D. CHITTY, *The Desert a City*. Oxford 1966.

¹⁴ G. J. M. BARTELINK, *Athanasie d'Alexandrie: Vie d'Antoine* (SC 400), Paris 1994, 27–70.

¹⁵ B. WARD, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (*Cistercian Studies* 59), Kalamazoo, Michigan 1984, xviii.

¹⁶ AMPELARGA, *op. cit.* 34.

ἀμυδρῶς κατανασθεντες ἐπὶ τὸ γράφειν ἤγομεν ἑαυτοῖς τροφὰς σπηριώδεις ἀποθησαυρίζοντες. (lines 18–22)

Searching out things having to do with her according to our own power, hearing superficially from people her age about things from her early life, from her own activities dimly illuminated, we have come to write hoarding up on wholesome food.¹⁷

While Synkletike's hagiographer might have used as a source for his text the oral tradition of her sayings, his text, in turn, was also utilised as a source for the compilation of later collections of Apophthegmata. The sayings of Synkletike which are included in both the alphabetical and thematical collections (PG 65, p.421–428 and Guy II.27, III.34, IV.49–51, VI.17, VII.22–25, VIII.24–25) were taken from her "Life". The editors of the collections do not make any changes as regards the content of Synkletike's sayings, but they do change the feminine word forms employed by the author of her "Life" into masculine ones. In her "Life", Synkletike appears to address her teachings to a female audience, therefore when she refers to her audience, she uses feminine word forms. The fact that the editors of the collections of Apophthegmata change the feminine word forms into masculine ones indicates that they had an audience in mind which consisted of either men only or both men and women.

That Life and Apophthegmata are two genres of the same milieu which appeared more or less simultaneously might offer an explanation for the production of a text such as that of Synkletike in which both genres are included in a way that gives the text a hybrid status. Of course, Synkletike's "Life" is not the first text where the genre of Life and that of Apophthegmata coexist. In Antony's Life there is already an interaction between Antony's life and teachings. The inclusion of Antony's teachings in his Life must have been unavoidable, since when Athanasios was writing the Life, Antony's teachings were circulating orally. Antony's Apophthegmata take up a considerable space in the Life, but there is no equal relation between the genre of Life and that of Apophthegmata. In Antony's hagiography, the genre of Life is dominant, something which does not occur in Synkletike's hagiography.

¹⁷ The English translation of the hagiography of Synkletike is by Elisabeth Castelli (E. CASTELLI, *The Life and Activity of the Holy and Blessed Teacher Syncletica*, in: V. L. WIMBUSH [ed.], *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, Minneapolis 1990, 265–311) with minor corrections and revisions of my own.

The much later *Life of Cyril Phileotes* (twelfth century) written by Nicholas Kataskepenos, which also contains a high proportion of Apophthegmata, differs to a large degree from Synkletike's "Life". Classified into the genre of Life,¹⁸ Cyril's hagiography, like that of Antony, is rather a generic mixture than a hybrid. The Apophthegmata which are included in Cyril's Life do not constitute a free-standing and detachable entity, as is the case of the Apophthegmata in Synkletike's text, but they are an inseparable part of the Life. Cyril's Apophthegmata appear in the Life in order to emphasise the significance of some incidents from his life and comment upon them. The way in which the Apophthegmata are organised and presented is determined by the structure of the Life.¹⁹ In Synkletike's hagiography, on the other hand, both Life and Apophthegmata constitute two autonomous entities set against one another. If either of the two entities were removed neither of them would be affected.

The genre of Life and that of Apophthegmata are combined in Synkletike's hagiography in the following manner: the Apophthegmata are sandwiched between a standard beginning of a saint's Life, followed by some biographical information on Synkletike, and a typical end of a saint's Life. In other words, the genre of Life frames the text. What lies within this frame is a collection of Synkletike's Apophthegmata which take up more than two thirds of the whole text: in Ampelarga's edition, 886 of the text's 1185 lines are devoted to the holy woman's teachings.

Synkletike's hagiography begins with the standard prologue of a saint's Life. An important function of the prologues that introduce most saints' Lives is to establish, right from the opening move, a relation between hagiographer, text and audience. The hagiographer undertakes to set up an explicit contract with his audience through his text. He appears as the person who will provide the members of his audience with a true and pious story which has an instructive character. This underlines the important role and particular character of the hagiographer, who is simultaneously a writer and a narrator speaking directly to an audience of Christians. Through the hagiographer's story, whose sacred content is emphasised in the prologue, both the hagiographer and his audience are involved in a spiritual experience which allows

¹⁸ M. MULLETT, *Literary Biography and Historical Genre in the Life of Cyril Phileotes* by Nicholas Kataskepenos, in: ODORICO-AGAPITOS, op. cit. 387–409, 388.

¹⁹ MULLETT, op. cit.

them to participate in the holiness of the saint, something that has beneficial effects on their souls.²⁰

Synkletike's hagiographer starts his prologue with a maxim, and by so doing he imitates the subject of his narrative, Synkletike, in her role as a wise teacher. The hagiographer assumes the role of the teacher not only in the prologue of his work. As the narration of Synkletike's life-story progresses, he frequently interrupts its flow in order to make a comment which has the form of an Apophthegma (see, for example, lines 52–59, 81–85, 105–108, 152–156, 158–167 and 186–187). Some of the hagiographer's maxims, like those of Synkletike, refer to the ascetic's life:

ὄσοι μὲν οὖν ἀγυμνάστως καὶ ἀσκέπτως προσῆλθον τῷ θεῷ τούτῳ μυστηρίῳ ἀπέτυχον τοῦ ζητουμένου μὴ προθεωρήσαντες τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον. (lines 105–107)

All those who approached this divine mystery [asceticism] unprepared and inadvisedly fell short of the object of their desire, not having considered everything ahead of time.

τῶν γὰρ ὄπλων συμπεσόντων ποία ἐλπίς ἔτι τῷ στρατιώτῃ εἰς πόλεμον; τινὲς γοῦν ἀμέτρως καὶ ἀνεξετάστως τῇ αἰτίᾳ ἑαυτοὺς καταδαπανήσαντες καιρίαν ἑαυτοῖς τὴν πληγὴν ἐπήγαγον· ὥσπερ δὲ ἐν παρατήρῃ τοῦ ἀντιπάλου γενόμενοι ἑαυτοὺς κατέφθειραν. (lines 153–156)

For, when all the weapons have come to battle, what hope is there for the soldier in [the moment of] battle? Certainly, the ones [ascetics] who were immeasurably and indiscriminately consumed by fasting experienced it as a crucial blow. Just so in the rejection of adversary [the devil], they corrupt themselves.

The maxim which opens the prologue reads as follows: “It was necessary that all people not be uninitiated in good things” (line 1). From what follows it becomes obvious that the hagiographer acquired the knowledge of this general truth out of a personal experience. As he goes on to remark, people are not initiated in good things not because they do not happen to encounter them, but because they fail to recognise them due to their lack of skills and their unpractised souls. Having himself an immature and unpractised soul, the hagiographer could not see Synkletike's goodness and greatness the first time he encountered her. After he observed her for some time, he gradually came to realise that Synkletike is so precious that she may be likened to a valuable pearl. As soon as this occurred to him his soul was filled with divine love (lines 1–11).

²⁰ C. RAPP, Storytelling as Spiritual Communication in Early Greek Hagiography: The Use of Diegesis. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998) 431–448.

Thus the unspecified and general term “good things”, to which the hagiographer refers at the very beginning of his prologue, now acquires a more specific meaning. By this term the hagiographer means holy people and more specifically Synkletike, the saint to whom his story is devoted. Later, in the presentation of Synkletike’s way of life and teachings, good things will become synonymous also with virtues, ascetic life and everything related to God and His commandments.

It is quite clear why the hagiographer thinks that people should be initiated in good things, such as the saints. Through contact with Saint Synkletike, people are led to further good things: they practise their souls and desire the love of God. Since the contact with Synkletike and her holiness is achieved by the reading or hearing of the hagiographer’s text, this very text acquires a great importance. It becomes also something good, since it is devoted to someone who is the personification of good and inspires people to engage in good deeds. Thus in the prologue, apart from establishing his role as the writer and narrator of the text, Synkletike’s hagiographer also makes obvious his role as a Christian teacher who provides his audience with both an instructive story and some Christian truths in the form of maxims.

In order to avoid sounding arrogant, the hagiographer hastens to say that his knowledge about Synkletike can never be complete and sufficient, because whoever attempts to “examine her life becomes dizzy by the magnitude of her perfection” (lines 17–18) and becomes confused. Repeating a topos of the prologues of saints’ Lives, the hagiographer goes on to express his unworthiness to tell the story of a person so marvelous as Synkletike.²¹ However, like all other hagiographers, he proceeds to Synkletike’s story.

Synkletike’s biography resembles those of many saints, referring to the holy person’s origin, the situation of his or her family, his or her divine zeal, his or her decision to enter holy orders, his or her ascetic life and subsequent spiritual progress. Synkletike’s biography, as is the case with most saints’ stories, starts with her ancestors and family. Like the majority of saints, Synkletike comes from a wealthy and pious family. Her family is of Macedonian origin and lives in Alexandria. Synkletike is one of the family’s four children (two daughters and two sons). One of the brothers dies at a very young age while the second brother

²¹ Compare, for example, the prologue of the *Life of Melania* and that of the *Life of Stephen the Younger*.

passes away in his twenty-fifth year just before his marriage (lines 23–36).

After giving this information about Synkletike's family, the hagiographer focuses on the protagonist of his text. Synkletike's beauty and pious life are exalted. Desiring her beauty, many men want to marry her. Being anxious to protect their lineage and to pass on their wealth, Synkletike's parents exhort her to marry.²² Synkletike, however, rejects marriage because she wishes to devote herself to God. Her divine zeal is also expressed in her domestic asceticism: Synkletike closes up all her senses. Nothing in the world can seduce her eyes, neither precious stones nor clothes. Her hearing cannot be deceived by any music, the tears of her parents entreating her to marry, or the exhortation of her relatives. She avoids any contact seen as harmful to her soul while she seeks any advice supporting her in her religious life. Synkletike completely neglects her bodily needs and fasts secretly (lines 37–47, 66–88).

Synkletike enters the second stage of her religious career when her parents die. After her parents' death, young Synkletike is free to devote herself entirely to God. She sells all the family possessions, gives the money to the poor and cuts her hair as a sign of her renunciation. She then takes her sister, who becomes blind, and goes to a relative's tomb which is remote from the city.²³ In the tomb, which can be seen as a symbol of the end of Synkletike's life in the world, Synkletike leads the harsh life of the anchorite for which she prepared herself while she was under her parents' protection. In her new life, Synkletike undergoes many sufferings: she mortifies her flesh, fasts and drinks only a small amount of water. Like all ascetics, Synkletike is attacked by the devil and defends herself by using prayer, stricter fasting and faith as her weapons. She gradually progresses in virtues and gets rid of human passions such as anger, envy and love of fame. "Her apostolic life, governed by faith and voluntary poverty, yet shines through with charity and humility" (lines 87–88). Synkletike's spiritual battles are so great that she surpasses all solitaries of her times. According to the hagiographer, this is the time when Synkletike becomes worthy of the name of "virgin", since she is pure in both body and spirit (lines 88–187).

²² This is very common in hagiographical texts, especially saints' Lives: saints' parents wish to marry them in order to secure the succession of their family and the inheritance of their property. Cf., for example, the *Life of Melania*, the *Life of Thecla* and the *Life of Euphrosyne*.

²³ In a tomb outside his city, also Antony leads part of his life as a solitary (*Life of Antony*, §8).

Since Synkletike manages to increase her good works and virtues, she can be compared with the good servant in the New Testament who increased the *talents* (money) given to him by his master (Matt. 25:14–30). Thus the hagiographer suggests that

αὕτη ἤκουσε τὸ Εὖ δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστῆ, ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἦς πιστός, ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· τὸ δὲ ἡτόν, εἰ καὶ ἐπὶ δωρεῶν ἀνάγεται, ἀλλ’ ὁμως ἐνταῦθα νοεῖσθω ὡς, ὅτι ἐνίκησας τὸν ἔνυλον πόλεμον, καὶ κατὰ τοῦ ἀύλου δὲ τρόπαιον στήσεις ἐμοῦ ὑπερασπίζοντός σου· γνώτωσάν σου τὸ μέγεθος τῆς πίστεως αἱ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεράποντός μου Παύλου ῥηθεῖσαι ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι· νικήσασα γὰρ τὰς ἐναντίας δυνάμεις προσομιλήσεις καὶ ταῖς κρείττους. (lines 177–183)

She hears: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much” (Matt. 25:23). This saying, if it refers to gifts, here let it signify: “You were victorious in the material battle, and you will also secure the trophy concerning the immaterial, with me shielding you. Let them know the greatness of your faith, the principalities and powers concerning which Paul, the one who serves me, wrote; for you were victorious over opposing powers, you will come into contact with greater ones.”

Having achieved such spiritual perfection, Synkletike is ready to enter the third phase of her religious career during which she, as the impersonification of good works, is expected to teach others how to acquire perfection in good works:

οὕτω μὲν οὖν καθ’ ἑαυτὴν ἀναχωροῦσα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργων τελειουργὸς ἐγένετο. τοῦ δὲ χρόνου προϊόντος καὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν αὐτῆς ἀνθουσῶν ἡ εὐδοκία τῶν εὐκλειεστάτων αὐτῆς πόνων εἰς πολλοὺς διέβηαεν· οὐδὲν γὰρ, φησί, κρυπτόν δ’ οὐ φανερωθήσεται· οἶδε γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς αὐτὸν ἀγαπῶντας κηρύττειν πρὸς διόρθωσιν τῶν ἀκουόντων. (lines 183–187)

Thus having withdrawn by herself, she became perfect in good works. As the time went on, and when her virtue blossomed, the sweet fragrance of her most glorious sufferings passed on to many. “For nothing”, it says, “hidden will not be made manifest.” For God knows how to proclaim those who love him toward the correcting of those who hear.

It is at this point that the genre of *Apophthegmata* is introduced into the text. Some women go to Synkletike’s place of isolation in order to be edified by her words and way of life. As soon as they see Synkletike, they ask her how one can be saved (lines 187–191). This is the usual way in which a large number of the narrative units included in the collections of *Apophthegmata Patrum* start, namely with a question addressed to a desert Father or Mother. Usually, this question refers to either ascetic life or the roads leading to salvation.

When Synkletike is asked by the women in what way one can be saved, she replies by sighing and shedding a multitude of tears. Then

she withdraws into herself and remains totally silent. Wishing to listen to her edifying words, the women implore her without any success for a long time to speak loudly and clearly. Finally, Synkletike talks in order to express her unwillingness to answer a question which is answered by God in the Bible.²⁴ The women tell her the following words in reply:

Οἶδαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς ὅτι μία ἡμῶν ἐστὶ παιδαγωγός, ἡ Γραφή καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς διδάσκαλος· ἀλλ' αὐτὴ ἐπαγρύπνη σπουδῇ προέκοψας ταῖς ἀρεταῖς, καὶ δεόν τὰς ἐν ἕξει τῶν καλῶν γενομένας ὥσπερ δυνατωτέρας ἐπιπάττει τοῖς μειρακίους. (lines 205–208)

We know this too, that our guide is one, Scripture, and the same teacher; but you have made progress toward virtues with vigilant zeal; and it is necessary for those who have become in habit of good things, because they are stronger, to help the young.

Synkletike responds to the women's words with tears and when she becomes calm, she remains again silent for a long time. The women ask Synkletike once more to talk. Wishing to benefit the women through her speech, Synkletike begins eventually to talk (lines 191–214).

Here there is a contradiction and a tension between Synkletike's desire to remain silent and her desire to speak. She wishes not to talk because, being adorned with the virtue of humility, she does not consider herself as someone capable of saying something good. In addition, speech and communication with people contradict the very life of the solitary chosen by Synkletike. However, Synkletike cannot remain silent. Even though silence is something good for Synkletike herself, it can be harmful for the women seeking spiritual guidance in order to be assisted in their attempt to reach God.

There is a paradox here: Synkletike's contradictory desires are simultaneously both positive and negative. The lack of speech benefits Synkletike but at the same time it harms the women, whereas speech violates Synkletike's way of life and principles but benefits the women and, ultimately, affects the readers or hearers of Synkletike's hagiography. The tension between Synkletike's desires is resolved by her decision to speak. By choosing speech, Synkletike suggests that it is better to benefit others than the self, which is one of the most important principles of Christianity.

²⁴ Cf. a passage in the *Alphabetical Collection* under letter A where Antony is asked by his disciples how they can be saved and answers that the Scriptures can teach them about salvation (PG 65, p.81, §19).

Synkletike’s teachings start as follows: “Children, we all know how to be saved, but through our own neglect of salvation we abandon it” (lines 214–215).²⁵ In what follows, Synkletike presents many of the roads leading to salvation. In fact, everything that Synkletike says in the large narrative space which her teachings take up can be seen as a long answer to the women’s question about the achievement of salvation. Synkletike is not presented as talking without interruption. Her speech is interrupted by either further questions posed by her disciples that are related to what she says (lines 224–225, 315–316) or the hagiographer’s comments about the wisdom of her teachings and their effects on her disciples (lines 312–314, 606–607).

During her teachings Synkletike advises her disciples to undergo painful ascetic practices (line 296), to fight against temptation armed with prayer, faith and asceticism (lines 290–312, 460–510), to acquire virtues such as chastity (lines 244–245, 262–263, 270–289), voluntary poverty (lines 316–361) and humility (lines 577–606), and to renounce human passions such as memory of past injuries (lines 630–652), pride, envy and love of fame and money (lines 361–376, 388–399, 545–559). Her teachings are in full accordance with her own behaviour and way of life as described in her life-story presented just before her teachings. Thus Synkletike is legitimised to perform the role of the teacher. As she formulates it in her sayings:

ἐπικίνδυνον τὸν μὴ διὰ τοῦ πρακτικοῦ βίου ἀναχθέντα διδάσκειν ἐπιχειρεῖν ὥσπερ γὰρ ἂν ἦ τις οἰκίαν ἔχων σαθρὰν ξένους ὑποδεξάμενος βλάψει τῇ πτώσει τοῦ οἰκήματος, οὕτω καὶ οὗτοι μὴ πρότερον ἑαυτοὺς ἀσφαλῶς οἰκοδομήσαντες καὶ τοὺς προσελθόντας σὺν αὐτοῖς ἀπόλεσαν· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ λόγους προὐκαλέσαντο εἰς σωτηρίαν, τῇ δὲ τοῦ τρόπου κακία τοὺς συλλεγέντας μᾶλλον ἠδίκησαν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ψιλὴ τῶν λόγων ἔκθεσις ἔοικε γραφαῖς διὰ χρωμάτων εὐαποπτύστων συστάσας, ἅστινας μικρότατος χρόνος διέλυσε ἀνέμων ῥιπαῖς καὶ ὑετῶν σταγόαι, τὴν δὲ ἔμπρακτον διδασκαλίαν οὐδ’ ὁ πᾶς αἰὼν διαλύσει· δυνηθεῖν τὰ γὰρ στερεὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκκολάπτων ὁ λόγος αἰώνιον ἄγαλμα Χριστοῦ τοῖς πιστοῖς δωρεῖται. (lines 780–788)

It is dangerous for the one who has not been led by means of a life of activity to endeavour to teach. For just as, if someone has an unsound house and receives strangers hospitably into it, he injures them in the fall of the house, just so such ones who have not first built themselves up securely, they destroy the ones who have come with them. They summoned to salvation with words, but rather they injured the ones gathered to them by the evil of their habits.²⁶ For the unfortified exposition of words is like letters composed from colours that easily fall off, dissolved in the least amount of time by gusts of wind and drops of rain; but the teaching that is

²⁵ This saying is included in the *Alphabetical Collection*; see GUY, op. cit. 35.

²⁶ *Alphabetical Collection* in PG 65, p. 425.

practised all eternity cannot dissolve. For the word, carving out substantial things on the soul, bestows forever an image of Christ in the faithful.

When he narrates Synkletike's life-story, the hagiographer presents her virtues and asceticism by employing the same discourse used by Synkletike herself in her teachings (cf., for example, lines 103 and 581–582; 587–588 and 984–985; 109–116 and 780–788). As we have seen earlier, in the part of Synkletike's hagiography belonging to the genre of Life, the hagiographer appears also to imitate Synkletike's role as teacher. Obviously, there is an intertextual play and a mutual commentary between the two genres (Life and *Apophthegmata*) included in Synkletike's text.

Synkletike's teachings are not organised around a coherent argument. In other words, they do not have the tight structure of an instructive homily or treatise which has a beginning, middle and end. According to their content, the teachings of Synkletike can be divided into thirty-four self-contained and independent narrative units between which there is no cohesion. As is the case of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* which, as stated earlier, are also collections of narrative units, some of Synkletike's ideas and views about asceticism expressed in one narrative unit are repeated in others.

As for the structure of the narrative units, like the macro-structure of Synkletike's teachings, it is also loose. Each narrative unit consists of a collection of statements on a certain issue related to the life, the spiritual struggle and the virtues of the ascetic. Many of these statements are citations from the Bible, and others echo ideas expressed in the Bible and in hagiographical and ascetic works of early Christianity such as the *Life of Antony*, the writings of Evagrius Ponticus, John Cassian, Methodius of Olympus and Clement of Alexandria.²⁷

The loose structure of most narrative units is based on contradictions which take various forms. One type of such contradictions is the juxtaposition of opposed terms within a single unit. Such an example is unit 11 in which Synkletike says:

ἕτερον κακὸν ἢ παρακοή· ὄθεν διὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου, τῆς ὑπακοῆς, δυνατὸν τὴν σπυεδονώδη νομὴν τῆς ψυχῆς περικαθάραι. (lines 529–530)

Another evil [is] disobedience. Whence through the opposite, obedience, it is possible to purify the putrefying cancerous sore of the soul.

²⁷ AMPELARGA, op. cit. 25–41.

In unit 2, Synkletike says:

ἀπὸ τῶν μικρῶν ἐπὶ τὰ μείζω καλὸν προκόπτειν· ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν μειζόνων ἐπὶ τὰ ἐλάττωνα κατατρέχειν οὐκ ἀκίνδυνον· ὁ γὰρ ἅπαξ νεύσας ἐπὶ τὰ χεῖρω οὐδὲ ἐν ὀλίγοις στήνα δύναται, ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ ἐν βυθῷ τῆς ἀπωλείας φέρεται. (lines 228–232)

It is good to make progress from the lesser to the greater; but it is dangerous to pursue the lesser from the greater. For the one who has once descended to the worse is not able to stand among the few but is borne into the depth of perdition.

In the passage from unit 2, the juxtaposition between two opposites has a different effect from the one created in unit 11, where two binary opposites are put together so that the superiority of the one, obedience, is emphasised. The discussion of two opposite conditions in unit 2 (spiritual progress and retrogression) creates an unresolved tension. It is not clear from Synkletike’s words which situation is worse: the lack of any progress or retrogression after making a certain progress.

In unit 15, Synkletike says the following:

μέγα οὖν ἐν ἀγαθοῖς ἡ ἀγάπη, ὅθεν καὶ δεινὸν ἐν κακοῖς ὁ θυμὸς· πᾶσαν γὰρ ψυχὴν σκοτώσας καὶ ἀποθηριώσας εἰς ἀλογίαν φέρει. [...] λαγνεῖαν κινεῖ ὁ ἐχθρὸς; σοφροσύνη ἡμᾶς ὁ Κύριος ὥπλισεν· ἀλλ’ ὑπερηφανίαν γεννᾷ; ταπεινοφροσύνη οὐ μακρὰν τυγχάνει μῖσος ἐνεφύτευσεν; ἀλλ’ ἡ ἀγάπη ἐν μέσῳ παρίσταται· ὅσα οὖν ὁ ἐχθρὸς καθ’ ἡμῶν κινεῖ βέλη, πλείοισιν ἡμᾶς ὁ Κύριος ὄπλοις ἠσφαλίσατο πρὸς τε τὴν ἡμῶν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὴν ἐκείνου καταπίπτωσιν. κακὸν μὲν οὖν ἐν κακοῖς ὁ θυμὸς· ὀργὴ γὰρ, φησί, ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ οὐ κατεργάζεται· δεῖ δὲ αὐτὸν ἠνιοχεῖν, ὅτι καὶ ἐν καιρῷ χρήσιμος ὄφθη. θυμοῦσθαι μὲν γὰρ καὶ κινεῖσθαι κατὰ δαιμόνων συμφέροι. (lines 618–627)

Therefore charity is great among the good, while anger is terrible among the evil; for darkening and enraging every soul, anger bears one toward unreason. [...] Does the enemy mobilise lust? Our Lord cultivated chastity. Does he cause arrogance to be born? But humility is not far away. Did he enliven hate? But charity is present in the midst of it. Therefore as much as the enemy waves his sword against us, all the more so our Lord made us safe with instruments toward our salvation and toward the fall of the enemy. Thus anger is the evil among evils. “For the anger of man”, it says, “does not work the righteousness of God.” Therefore it is necessary to rule over it because it appeared useful at certain times; for it is useful to be angry and to move against demons.

In the above passage, two different types of contradiction coexist which, in turn, contradict themselves. On the one hand, virtues (charity, chastity, humility, charity) are juxtaposed with human passions (anger, lust, arrogance, hate). On the other hand, one of the passions, anger, which is described as “the evil among evils”, is presented as being both bad and good. As Synkletike argues, anger against people is bad whereas anger against demons is good.

Whereas in some units, Synkletike contrasts lay people with ascetics in order to show the superiority of the latter (see, for example, unit 3, lines 244–260 where Synkletike juxtaposes the life of lay women with that of nuns), in other units she often uses experiences and images from worldly life as models for the life of the nun. She says, for example, in unit 17:

ὀφείλομεν οὖν τῷ ἀληθινῷ νυμφίῳ προσελθοῦσαι εὐπρεπέστερον κοσμηθῆναι· γινέσθω δὲ ἡμῖν οἰκοδομὴ ἢ θέα τοῦ κοσμικοῦ γάμου. (lines 959–961)

We are obliged now, coming to our true Bridegroom, to be adorned more decently. Let the vision of worldly marriage become for us an edifice.

While, on the one hand, Synkletike continuously asks her disciples to forget the world, on the other hand she prevents them from doing so, since she constantly reminds them of the world through the examples she uses in her teachings.

In general, Synkletike's teachings contain certain paradoxes and many oppositions and tensions between lay and religious life, solitary and cenobitic asceticism, the body and the soul, the physical and the spiritual. Some of Synkletike's teachings suggest that the lay life she rejected can be even harder than religious life:

μὴ οὖν ὑποσυρῶμεν ἡμεῖς τῷ φρονήματι λέγουσαι τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀμεριμνοὺς τυγχάνειν τάχα γὰρ ὡς πρὸς σύγκρισιν μᾶλλον ἡμῶν κοπιῶσι. (lines 423–425)

Therefore we will not seduce ourselves with the thought that people who are in the world are carefree. For perhaps in comparison they toil much more than we do.

According to Synkletike, religious life may be proved both superior and inferior than lay life. She also suggests that both lay and religious life can be simultaneously beneficial and harmful. In unit 9, Synkletike says the following:

ἐν ἀδήλῳ πλέομεν· θάλασσα γὰρ ὁ βίος ἡμῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἱεροψάλτου Δαβὶδ εἴρηται· ἀλλὰ τῆς θαλάσσης τὰ μὲν ἐστι πετρῶδη, τὰ δὲ θηρίων πλήρη, τινὰ δὲ καὶ γαλήνη· ἡμεῖς οὖν ἐν τῷ γαλήνῳ μέρει τῆς θαλάσσης δοκοῦμεν πλεῖν, οἱ δὲ κοσμικοὶ ἐν τοῖς κινδυνώδεσσι· καὶ ἡμεῖς μὲν ἡμέρας πλέομεν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἡλίου τῆς δικαιοσύνης ὀδηγούμενοι, ἐκείνοι δὲ ἐν νυκτὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ἀγνωσίας φερόμενοι· ἀλλ' ἐνδέχεται πολλάκις τὸν κοσμικὸν ἐν χειμῶνι καὶ ἐν σκότει τυγχάνοντα, βοήσαντα καὶ ἀγρυπνήσαντα σῶσαι τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκάφος, ἡμᾶς δὲ ὑπὸ ἀμελείας ἐν γαλήνῃ βυθισθῆναι τὸ πηδάλιον τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἀφέντας. (lines 467–475)

We sail in obscurity; for our life is called the sea by the holy psalmist David. But there are rocky places in the sea, places full of beasts, as well as calm places. We seem to sail in the calm part of the sea, but worldly people in the dangerous part; and we sail by day guided by the sun of righteousness, but they sail at night, borne by ignorance. But it is often possible for the worldly person in the midst of storm

and darkness, crying out and being watchful, to save his own boat; but we in the calm may be submerged by carelessness, neglecting the rudder of righteousness.

Even though Synkletike never goes to a monastic community, many of her teachings refer to cenobitic life. While she herself chooses solitary life, she seems to consider cenobitic life as superior. For instance, she condemns the cenobitic monks or nuns who abandon their monasteries (lines 985–988), but she asks her disciples to give up solitary life and enter a monastery when they are concerned with worldly thoughts. According to Synkletike’s teachings, cenobitic life, unlike solitary life, can cure the passions of pride and arrogance (lines 522–528).

Synkletike teaches a religious life which is both physical and spiritual. The mixture between the physical and the spiritual can be seen in the most important forms of asceticism suggested by Synkletike’s teachings where physical and ethical disciplines coexist: chastity, fasting, mortification, voluntary poverty, love, obedience and lack of ascetic pride and arrogance. Thus asceticism is not only renunciation, but also self-transformation. In the ascetic life taught by Synkletike the body is both rejected and invested with significance. On the one hand, bodily needs and pleasures are suppressed, and, on the other hand, the body is in focus since it becomes the site of religious self-formation. It is through the body that the soul can be cured and elevated. In fact, Synkletike’s teachings are organised around “a careful observance of the body and the soul, and the tensive balance between the two”.²⁸ The discourse which Synkletike employs when she refers to the body and the soul is very often hybrid: she describes the body with spiritual metaphors while she uses corporeal images when she talks about the soul.²⁹

Synkletike’s teachings end rather abruptly and unexpectedly. The reader or hearer of the text realises that the teachings have come to an end when the hagiographer makes the following statement: “these are the teachings of the holy and all-virtuous Synkletike” (line 1075). When Synkletike finishes her speeches, she is no longer the young and healthy woman about whom the hagiographer was talking before the insertion of the *Apophthegmata*. Now she is eighty years old and suffers from an incurable illness, probably lung cancer. The illness is presented as an attack of the devil against Synkletike. The holy woman’s sufferings are

²⁸ E. CASTELLI, *Mortifying the Body, Curing the Soul: Beyond Ascetic Dualism in the Life of Saint Synkletica*. *Differences* 4 (1992) 134–153, 142.

²⁹ CASTELLI, *op. cit.*

stressed by the hagiographer, who presents them as more burdensome than those of Job and the martyrs. Despite her great bodily sufferings, Synkletike does not give up her spiritual struggle and she goes on teaching her disciples. As the hagiographer formulates it, through her teachings Synkletike

τοὺς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τραυματιζομένους ἴατο· καὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐκ λέοντος αἰμοβόρου ἀπλήγους τὰς ψυχὰς ἀπέσπα· ἐθεράπευε δὲ τοὺς τραυματίας τοῖς σωτηρίοις τοῦ Χριστοῦ φαρμάκοις· τινὰς δὲ καὶ ἀτρόπους διεφύλαττεν· ὑποδεικνύουσα γὰρ αὐτοῖς τοῦ διαβόλου τὰς δολεραῖς παγίδας ἐλευθέρους ἐποίητο τῆς ἁμαρτίας. (lines 1111–1115)

healed those wounded by him [the devil]; for she drew up the souls unharmed as if from a bloodthirsty lion. And she healed the wounded by means of the salvific remedies of the Lord. She kept safe some who were unwounded; for, showing them the treacherous traps of the devil, she made them free from sin.

Synkletike's voice resists physical pain and becomes a healing instrument. She lifts up spiritual pain while she is in bodily pain. Seeing her spiritual power, the devil strikes Synkletike's tongue and she loses her voice. Nevertheless, Synkletike does not cease to cure the souls of her disciples who are edified and lifted spiritually by the sight of her unbearable sufferings. Thus Synkletike herself becomes once more the site of contradictions: her diseased body offers cure to others and despite her inability to talk she does not cease to be a teacher. Synkletike's situation becomes gradually worse and her end is approaching. She dies after having predicted the day of her death. Synkletike's earthly end also concludes her hagiography.

The "Life" of Theodora of Arta

The second text I am concerned with here, the "*Life*" of *Theodora of Arta*, as already stated, is much shorter than the "*Life*" of *Synkletike*. In fact, Synkletike's text is one of the longest hagiographical texts devoted to a woman, whereas Theodora's hagiography is one of the shortest texts venerating a female saint. According to Spyros Pétridès, Theodora's "Life" was written by the monk Job Iasites who lived in the second half of the thirteenth century and was an adviser of the patriarch Joseph I.³⁰ The fact that Theodora's "Life" has so many chronological errors led Alice-Mary Talbot to the conclusion that Job Iasites, who lived very close to the period to which Theodora's text refers, cannot be the author, but that a later monk also called Job must have

³⁰ PETRIDES, *op. cit.*

written the text.³¹ Evelyne Patlagean suggests that the text might have been written at the beginning of the fourteenth century.³² Unlike Synkletike's "Life" which was well read, as its large and rich manuscript tradition attests,³³ Theodora's "Life" does not seem to have been popular, since it has come down to us in a single manuscript.³⁴

In the case of Theodora's "Life", the genre of Life coexists with that of the chronicle. In contrast to the Life and the *Apophthegmata Patrum* which are religious genres belonging to the category of hagiography, the Life and the chronicle are not classified into the same group of texts. Nevertheless, there are many similarities and intertextual relations between these two genres, a fact which offers an explanation for the existence of a text such as that of Theodora where a chronicle is set against a life.

As for the similarities between the two genres, both the Life and the chronicle were very often written by monks in a simple language that could be understood by the wider public to which these genres were addressed. One could say that the Life and the chronicle belonged to Byzantine popular culture,³⁵ since they were easy to understand and enjoyed high popularity.

Hagiographers and chroniclers frequently employed the same sources which, among others, consisted of the Bible and the works of the Church Fathers. A number of chroniclers also used Lives of saints as their sources, and some hagiographers venerating saints who were historical persons had chronicles as their sources.

A comparative approach to the genre of the Life and that of the Chronicle reveals that these two genres were used to dialogue with each other. For example, the motif of the author's humility, an integral part of a Life's prologue, was frequently adopted by Byzantine chroniclers. Following Byzantine hagiographers, many chroniclers also asked their audiences in the prologues of their works to pray to God for their welfare and to forgive them for the deficiencies of their works.

³¹ TALBOT, op. cit. 325.

³² PATLAGEAN, op. cit.

³³ AMPELARGA, op. cit. 59–178.

³⁴ PATLAGEAN, op. cit. 453.

³⁵ Cf. A. GUVERICH, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. by J. M. BAK and P. A. HOLLINGSWORTH (*Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture* 14). Cambridge 1998 (Problemi srednevekovoy narodnoy kulturi. Moscow 1981).

Many chronicles include also hagiographical topics, such as the biographies and the miracles of saints. A number of hagiographical texts, on the other hand, contain historical events which in many cases are not related to the venerated saints.

The hybridity of Theodora's "Life" is less complicated than that of Synkletike's "Life". Theodora's hagiography does not contain the tensions and contradictions found in the "Life" of Synkletike. Its hybrid character can be attributed only to the fact that it includes two distinct literary genres set against each other.

In contrast to Synkletike's "Life", in that of Theodora the one genre is not inserted into the other, but the one generic discourse follows the other. The text starts as a Chronicle and ends as a Life. Both generic discourses take up almost the same length of narrative space.

The chronicle which commences the hagiography of Theodora belongs to the category of the short chronicle that presents, in a summary form, various historical events referring mainly to the deeds and political actions of emperors and other important persons. The short chronicle appearing in Theodora's text does not have a prologue. It starts with a reference to the names of Theodora's parents. In what follows, various historical events, not always in a chronological order, are briefly presented. Such events are: the sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders, the captivity and imprisonment of the emperor Alexios Komnenos, the seizure of the throne of Nikaia by Michael Palaiologos, the liberation of Thessalonike by Theodore Palaiologos, his defeat by the Bulgarians and his subsequent captivity, and how Michael II Komnenos Doukas marries saint Theodora and becomes the emperor of Epiros.

The way in which these events are given is a bit confusing. The one event is introduced after the other. Necessary information on the events is missing, and as a result there are difficulties in understanding how the one event is associated with the other, why the author refers to these particular events, and how they relate to Theodora. The only events which are relevant to Theodora and her biography are those referring to her noble family, and her husband and emperor Michael II Komnenos Doukas.

The chronicle comes to an end when Theodora's married life starts. At this point begins Theodora's Life. In contrast to the Lives of other holy men and women, Theodora's hagiography does not refer to her early years and her education. Her life before her marriage does not seem to interest her hagiographer, since her sanctification is inextrica-

bly associated with her married life. Theodora belongs to the category of married female saints whose sanctification is primarily achieved because they suffer abuse at the hands of their husbands.³⁶ Such saints are Mary the Younger and Thomaïs. Theodora is sent into exile by her husband, who has an affair with another woman. Theodora, being pregnant at the time, undergoes all the hardships of her exile without any complaint. After her reconciliation with her husband, she founds a convent in Arta to which she withdraws after Michael’s death. Like Synkletike, Theodora dies after having foreseen her death. As is the case with Synkletike’s and most saints’ Lives, the hagiography of Theodora ends with her death.

In the present paper, the two texts marking the beginnings and the decline of the Byzantine subgenre of the female Life have been presented. According to Bakhtin’s theory, both the “Life” of Synkletike and that of Theodora of Arta constitute generic hybrids. The hybridity of Theodora’s hagiography is the result of the coexistence of two distinct genres within a single text. The hybrid character of Synkletike’s hagiography, on the other hand, is attributed not only to the appearance of two different genres within one text, but also to the actual presence of oppositions and tensions which in some cases remain unresolved.

³⁶ CONSTANTINOU, *op. cit.* 162–192.

