



The Lament for the Missing Girl in Byzantine Hagiography Focused on Women

Ángel Narro¹

Abstract: This article examines the hagiographic motif of the lament for a missing girl, tracing its origins and evolution from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* through various Byzantine hagiographic texts, including the two recensions of the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* and its metaphrastic version, the *Life of Apollinaria*, and the *Life of Euphrosyne* and its metaphrastic version. It explores how this motif, initially secondary in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, becomes central in later texts and demonstrates direct textual and thematic connections between these works. The analysis highlights the continuity and adaptation of literary and rhetorical elements, emphasizing their significance in the development of Byzantine hagiography.

Keywords: Byzantine hagiography; women Saints; lament; missing girl; *Imitatio Theclae*

The study of lament in the Greek tradition has been significantly advanced by scholars such as Margaret Alexiou, who distinguished three principal terms: *θρήνος*, a formal dirge sung by professional mourners; *γόος*, a spontaneous cry of grief by kin; and *κόμμος*, a tragic lament in dramatic contexts. In early Greek literature, *θρήνος* tended to be more restrained and consolatory, while *γόος* was individualized and emotive². Although these terms later became nearly interchangeable, *θρήνος* retained its formal, praiseful character.

Lamentation appears prominently across classical genres – from Homeric epics to tragedy and elegy – and was later adapted into Hellenistic novels and early Christian literature³. In Christian hagiography, especially from the 4th century onward, authors like Gregory of Nyssa crafted rhetorically complex laments, as seen in the *Life of Macrina*, where her

¹ Prof. Ángel Narro, Universitat de València, Spain; e-mail: Angel.Narro@uv.es; ORCID: 0000-0002-4333-2772. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the reviewers for their insightful and inspiring comments, which have greatly contributed to the improvement of the final version of this article.

² M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, London – New York 1974, p. 102-103.

³ See, for example, the case of Theagenes' second lament (Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 2, 4); S.M. Trzaskoma, *Theagenes' Second Lament*, in: *Reading Heliodorus' Aethiopica*, ed. I. Repath – T. Whitmarsh, Oxford 2022, p. 52-69.

sisters mourn her with a choral *θρῆνος* full of spiritual and literary resonance⁴.

The light of our eyes has died – they say. The light guiding our souls has been taken away. The safety of our life has been broken up. The seal of immortality has been removed. The bond of concord has been torn away, the support of the weak is broken, the healing of the sick has been removed. With you even night was to us as day, illumined by a pure life; but now even the day shall be turned into darkness⁵.

This study examines a specific development within that tradition: the lament for a missing girl in Byzantine hagiographic narratives focused on women. I distinguish between scenes of grief – narrative descriptions of sorrow – and laments, defined here as first-person, direct expressions of mourning that align with the literary conventions of *θρῆνος*. This terminological distinction clarifies the rhetorical and narrative functions of mourning across texts.

In these stories, grief often focuses on the perceived death or loss of the female protagonist, who is in fact alive and pursuing spiritual transformation. The motif builds dramatic irony and underscores the tension between material life and religious calling. While sometimes voiced by non-Christian characters or those ignorant of divine plans, these laments serve to mark a decisive moment in the heroine's path to sanctity.

This article explores this motif in the lives of four women saints – Thecla, Eugenia, Apollinaria, and Euphrosyne – arguing that lamentation functions both as emotional punctuation and theological marker of spiritual rebirth. I have adopted a philological approach grounded in diachronic analysis, focusing on the structure, motifs, and content shared by the texts under discussion. Special attention is given not only to the imagery evoked but also to the specific language used to articulate grief. The analysis centers on how words themselves – beyond the scenes they describe – contribute to the construction and typification of lament in these narratives.

⁴ S.A. Harvey, *Guiding Grief: Liturgical Poetry and Ritual Lamentation in Early Byzantium*, in: *Greek Laughter and Tears. Antiquity and After*, ed. M. Alexiou – D. Cairns, Edinburgh 2017, p. 200.

⁵ Gregorius Nyssenus, *Vita Macrinae* 26, 23-29: “Ἐσβέσθη, λέγουσαι, τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν ὁ λύχνος· ἀπῆρθη τὸ φῶς τῆς τῶν ψυχῶν ὁδηγίας· διελύθη τῆς ζωῆς ἡμῶν ἡ ἀσφάλεια· ἤρθη ἡ σφραγίς τῆς ἀφθαρσίας· διεσπᾶσθη ὁ σύνδεσμος τῆς ὁμοφροσύνης, συνετρίβη τὸ στήριγμα τῶν ἀτονούντων, ἀφηρέθη ἡ θεραπεία τῶν ἀσθενούντων. Ἐπὶ σοῦ ἡμῖν καὶ ἡ νύξ ἀντὶ ἡμέρας ἦν καθαρᾶ ζωῆ φωτιζομένη· νῦν δὲ καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα πρὸς ζῶφον μεταστραφήσεται”.

1. Origins and early development of the motif: from the *Acts* to the *Life of Thecla*

The narrative of Thecla's disappearance and the subsequent scene of grief of her relatives and servants, provides an early and inspiring example of the lament motif for Byzantine hagiography focused on women. In the 2nd century *Acts of Paul and Thecla*⁶, the story of Thecla describes a situation in which the lament and weeping of her mother, Theoclia, her fiancé, Thamyris, and even her servants are explicitly mentioned. This scene later serves as a reference point for introducing the description of the lament for the missing girl in Byzantine hagiography as a kind of prototypical example. This is similar to what happens with many other hagiographic *topoi*, as masterfully analyzed by Pratsch⁷. The scene of grief is marked by the expression of the emotions of the characters who utter it upon the girl's disappearance, which they interpret as a family tragedy and a dangerous situation, almost equivalent to the girl's own death, for which they bitterly weep.

The description of the scene of grief in this work appears for the first time in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 10. After Thecla's conversion due to the beatitudes pronounced by Paul in the house of Onesiphorus, the young woman becomes absorbed in her thoughts, as if dazed, constantly looking out the window.

And Thamyris, entering, now on the one hand loving her, but on the other hand fearing her mental disturbance, said, "My espoused Thecla, why are you sitting in such a way? And what sort of suffering takes hold of your terror-stricken? Turn to your Thamyris and be ashamed". Yet, even her mother said the same, "Child, Why are you sitting in such a way looking downward, and not answering but stricken?". And those in the house were weeping bitterly, Thamyris, for the loss of a wife; Theocleia, (for the loss) of a child, but the female slaves (for the loss) of a mistress. Therefore a great confusion of mourning was in the house. And these things having thus come to pass, Thecla did not turn, but was gazing intently to the word of Paul⁸.

⁶ I follow for the text the most recent edition with English translation: *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. J.W. Barrier, Tübingen 2009. English translations of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* used in this article are also by Barrier.

⁷ T. Pratsch, *Der hagiographischen Topos. Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*, Berlin – New York 2005.

⁸ *Acta Pauli et Theclae* 10: "Καὶ προσελθὼν Θάμυρις, ἅμα μὲν φιλῶν αὐτήν, ἅμα δὲ καὶ φοβούμενος τὴν ἔκκληξιν αὐτῆς, εἶπεν Θεκλα ἐμοὶ μνηστευθεῖσα, τί τοιαύτη κάθησαι; καὶ ποῖόν σε πάθος κατέχει ἔκκληκτον; ἐπιστράφηθι πρὸς τὸν σὸν Θάμυριν

Thecla experiences a kind of spiritual love sickness due to Paul's message, to which she reacts by renouncing food and drink. This attitude anticipates some of the most characteristic actions of Christian asceticism, which, however, is interpreted by non-Christian characters of the text as a sort of illness, as inferred from *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 7-8. In such a situation, both her fiancé Thamyris and her mother Theoclia try to persuade Thecla with words, but she pays them no heed. This behavior, interpreted as an unequivocal sign of madness through the use of the term παραπλήξ in reference to Thecla herself, provokes the bitter weeping of her mother, fiancé, and even her maidservants. The text employs expressive resources typical of the description of a scene of grief, such as the verb κλαίω, further emphasized by the use of the adverb δεινῶς, or the formula σύγχυσις πένθους, meaning 'a mix of mournings', in reference to the tears shed by Thamyris for his betrothed, Theoclia for her daughter, and the maidservants for their mistress. This triple perspective of lament reinforces the idea of a collective mourning that affects the entire household (οἶκος) of Thecla, where the plot develops and will continue to unfold.

In this passage, the scene of grief marks a crucial moment in the narrative. Thecla ceases to exist merely as a daughter, a betrothed woman, or a mistress, and appears as a Christian devoted to a new spiritual life. The tears of her relatives signify a social death, announcing the beginning of a new existence perceived as positive only by the initiated. From this perspective, Thecla's family embodies the social resistance to the emerging Christian doctrine, while their mourning symbolizes the heroine's renunciation of worldly life in her pursuit of spiritual transformation.

The second part of this sequence pertains to the disappearance of the girl, an element that, in Byzantine hagiography, will become crucial for the literary development of this motif. Until now, the expression of lament was originally linked to Thecla's absent attitude and the growing concern of those around her for her physical and mental state, but also for her social behaviour. This latter element gains greater importance in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 18-19, a key scene for understanding the definitive configuration of the core elements of this specific motif. In this case, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* describes how Thecla escapes from home at

καὶ αἰσχύνθητι. Ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἡ μήτηρ αὐτῆς τὰ αὐτὰ ἔλεγεν Τέκνον, τί τοιαύτη κάτω βλέπουσα κάθησαι, καὶ μηδὲν ἀποκρινομένη ἀλλὰ παραπλήξ; Καὶ οἱ μὲν ἔκλαιον δεινῶς, Θάμυρις μὲν γυναικὸς ἀστοχῶν, Θεοκλεία δὲ τέκνου, αἱ δὲ παιδίσκαι κυρίας· πολλὴ οὖν σύγχυσις ἦν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ πένθους. καὶ τούτων οὕτως γινομένων Θέκλα οὐκ ἀπεστράφη, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀτενίζουσα τῷ λόγῳ Παύλου”.

night, bribes the gatekeeper to open the door, goes to the prison, bribes the jailer to let her in, and meets Paul. Thecla's family and Thamyris himself – again referring to the idea of οἶκος – notice her disappearance and search for her throughout the city until they find her.

But as Thecla was being sought out for by her own people and Thamyris, thus she was being pursued in the streets as one who was lost. And a certain one of the fellowslaves of the gatekeeper was making it known that she went out in the night. And going out they questioned the gatekeeper, and he told them that she said, “I am going to the stranger in the prison”. And just as he told them, they departed and found her in a certain place, having been united by means of love. And having gone out from there, they attracted the crowd and reported these things to the Governor⁹.

Here, there is no clear expression of lament; rather, a desperate search for the absent girl is described, with an enraged crowd that ultimately brings Paul before the local tribunal¹⁰. In any case, the missing element to complete the motif of the lament for the missing girl emerges at this point of the narrative: the discovery of an empty room or space where the protagonist was expected to be.

All these elements at play, combined, reimagined, and reformulated, appear in the so-called *Life of Thecla* (BHG 1717)¹¹, the paraphrase of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*¹², one of the earliest – if not the first – in the realm of hagiographical literature. Composed in Seleucia in the 5th century by an anonymous author with significant knowledge of ancient literature¹³, trained in classical literature and rhetoric¹⁴, and connected to

⁹ *Acta Pauli et Theclae* 18: “Ὡς δὲ ἐζητεῖτο Θέκλα ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ Θαμύριδος, ὡς ἀπολλυμένη ἐδιώκετο κατὰ τὰς ὁδοὺς, καὶ τις τῶν συνδούλων τοῦ πλωροῦ ἐμήνυσεν ὅτι νυκτὸς ἐξῆλθεν. καὶ ἀνήτασαν τὸν πλωρόν, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι πεπόρευται πρὸς τὸν ξένον εἰς τὸ δεσμοτήριον· καὶ ἀπῆλθον καθὼς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς καὶ εὗρον αὐτὴν τρόπον τινὰ συνδεδεμένην τῇ στοργῇ. καὶ ἐξελθόντες ἐκεῖθεν τοὺς ὄχλους ἐπεσπᾶσαντο καὶ τῷ ἡγεμόνι ἐνεφάνισαν”.

¹⁰ On the nature of this crowd and its identification with Roman *diogmitae*, see J. Den Boeft – J. Bremmer, *Notiunculae Martyrologicae IV*, VigCh 45 (1991) p. 109.

¹¹ For the critical edition of the text see, *Vie et Miracles de Sainte Thècle*, ed. G. Dagron, Bruxelles 1978.

¹² On the techniques used by the hagiographer and the relation between the source text and the rewritten one, see S.F. Johnson, *The Life and Miracles of Thekla. A Literary Study*, Washington 2006, p. 15-66.

¹³ On the author, see Dagron, *Vie et Miracles*, p. 13-30.

¹⁴ See Á. Narro, *Lo scontro tra formazione classica e pensiero cristiano: La vita e miracoli di Santa Tecla*, “Graeco-latina Brunensia” 15 (2010) p. 127-138; Á. Narro,

the city's grammar school¹⁵, the *Life of Thecla* forms a kind of “*Iliad and Odyssey*” alongside the compilation of the saint's miracles, in the words of Dagron¹⁶. The hagiographer who authored the text produces an early example of metaphrastic text¹⁷. He reworked the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* by expanding speeches, imagining the development of specific scenes such as the one at hand, and, overall, imparting to the narrative a much more solid narrative framework and a more sophisticated novelized and varied rhetorical artifice¹⁸.

The influence of the famous *progymnasmata* has been identified in the text. These exercises became popular in the rhetorical schools from the imperial period and were a fundamental part of the education and literary training in the late antique period. Perhaps the best illustration of the implementation of specific exercises from the wide variety of *progymnasmata* in the *Life of Thecla* can be seen in the direct speeches that various characters in the narrative deliver. For example, it has been noted how in *Life of Thecla 2* an adaptation of the formula with a rhetorical question to introduce the exercise of the ἠθοποιία¹⁹ is used for presenting Paul's first speech at Onesiphorus' house (*Vita Theclae 2*: “ποῖοι δὲ καὶ τίνες οἱ τοῦ Παύλου λόγοι;”)²⁰. This type of rhetorical exercise consists of reformulating a speech to highlight

Nouvelles réminiscences littéraires décelées dans la Vie et les Miracles de sainte Thècle (BHG 1717-1718), AnBol 130 (2012) p. 301-303.

¹⁵ R.A. Kaster, *The Son (s) of Alypius. Vie et Miracles de Sainte Thècle II. 38*, AnBol 101 (1983) p. 301-303; R.A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language. The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1997, p. 431.

¹⁶ Dagron, *Vie et Miracles*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Although Alwis, Hinterberger, and Schiffer situate the practice of hagiographical rewriting at the beginning of the seventh century, texts such as the *LTh* suggest that this literary tradition was already in circulation by the late fifth century. See A.P. Alwis – M. Hinterberger – E. Schiffer, *Introduction*, in: *Metaphrasis in Byzantine Literature*, ed. A.P. Alwis – M. Hinterberger – E. Schiffer, Turnhout 2021, p. 12.

¹⁸ On the procedures of novelization in Byzantine Hagiography, see: C. Messis, *Fiction and/or Novelisation on Byzantine Hagiography*, in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, Farnham – Burlington 2014, p. 313-20. The connection of the *Life and Miracles of Thecla* with the Greek novel and its ways of expression has been also analyzed in Á. Narro, *The influence of the Greek novel on the Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla*, ByZ 109 (2016) p. 73-96.

¹⁹ *Vita Theclae 2*: “ποῖοι δὲ καὶ τίνες οἱ τοῦ Παύλου λόγοι;”.

²⁰ Á. Narro, *La Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle et l'École de Gaza*, in: *L'École de Gaza: espace littéraire et identité culturelle dans l'Antiquité tardive*, ed. E. Amato – A. Corcella – D. Lauritzen, Leuven – Paris – Bristol 2017, p. 315-316.

different aspects of the thought and, especially, the character (ἦθος) of the speaker²¹.

Another concrete example of the narrative application of the *progymnasmata* in the text can be found in the speech of Governor Kestillios in *Life of Thecla* 11, where he tries to persuade Thecla to renounce the new Christian path she has discovered through Paul and to accept the marriage previously arranged with Thamyris, before the apostle arrived in the city. In this case, the author of the *Life of Thecla* places in the mouth of the governor of Seleucia a speech constructed using elements from the composition of wedding discourses. For instance, if one follows, for example, the rhetorical manual of Pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus²², which describes how to compose such wedding speeches (μέθοδος γαμηλίων)²³, one can observe with remarkable clarity the numerous coinciding elements between the theoretical exposition of Pseudo-Dionysius and the practical application by the author of the *Life of Thecla* in this section (praise of marriage as a divine creation and guarantee of the perpetuation of the race, mention of children as a source of joy for the city, the idea of children as a replacement for the parents, etc.).

A third example of the influence of the rhetorical background of the author of the *Life of Thecla* could be found in the rewriting of the scene from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* where the definitive creation of the motif of lament for the missing girl is observed. As in the text that the *Life of Thecla* reformulates, there is a preceding scene in which Thamyris is summoned by Theoclia to talk to Thecla, and where the pain and grief caused by the situation are described, here affecting especially the fiancé. Thus, the hagiographer emphasizes how Thamyris transitions from excessive joy to excessive sorrow²⁴, playing with *polyptoton*. Indeed, the term λύπη becomes a key interpretive word of the passage, as it will be repeated just before Thamyris begins his speech trying to persuade Thecla.

²¹ On this progymnastic exercise, see: H.M. Hagen, *Ἡθοποιΐα. Zur Geschichte eines rhetorischen Begriffs*, Nürnberg 1966; *Ἡθοποιΐα. La représentation de caractères entre fiction scolaire et réalité vivante à l'époque impériale et tardive*, ed. E. Amato – J. Schamp, Salerno 2005.

²² The text has been traditionally dated between the 2nd and the 3rd century: G.A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, Princeton 1994, p. 225.

²³ Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Ars rhetorica* [Sp.], Greek text can be seen in the edition of *Dionysii Halicarnasei quae exstant*, v. 6, ed. H. Usener – L. Radermacher, Stuttgart 1899, p. 253-387.

²⁴ *Vita Theclae* 4: “καὶ πρὸς ἄμετρον λύπην ἐξ ἀμέτρου χαρᾶς ὑπενόστησε”.

While in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* the description of the lament of Thamyris, Theoclia, and the maidservants focuses on the initial scene, in the *Life of Thecla* the hagiographer reserves the lament for the scene of Thecla's escape from her own home to visit Paul in prison. Indeed, whereas the sequence of this scene in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is recounted somewhat schematically, here the hagiographer spares no detail and utilizes his extensive rhetorical repertoire to elaborate on the various scenes that compose the complete sequence. The reader is guided from the prison setting where Thecla had been left at Paul's feet to the young woman's home, where, at sunrise, the inevitable discovery of Thecla's absence occurs. Indeed, in the very description of the setting where the scene unfolds, a tendency toward rhetorical embellishment and detailed depiction of the narrative framework is already evident. Thus, employing description (ἔκφρασις), the hagiographer recounts what a typical dawn would be like in the home of the young noblewoman Thecla:

At dawn, when the rays of the sun began to shine, all the young women and maidservants of Thecla, who had been keeping watch outside the girl's room, moved to the surrounding rooms. Indeed, their mistress was expected to get up at any moment and would desire their usual attentions: those that a mistress expects and those that the maidservants provide²⁵.

Next, the scene of the expression of a certain concern anticipating the discovery of the empty room is introduced. The hagiographer describes how the servants' anxiety grew due to Thecla's lack of response, imagines the comments of the maidservants on the situation following the regular procedures for developing the scholarly exercise of the ἠθοποιία or προσωποιία²⁶, and details the reactions of the women and Thecla's mother, Theoclia, upon discovering the young woman's absence.

But as the sun was already over the earth, and no voice of Thecla ordering the maidservants their usual tasks had been heard, they began to ask each other: "What is happening? Is the little girl still sleeping? Has something serious happened to her? Is she ill? Has she suddenly died? How is it that

²⁵ *Vita Theclae* 10, 6-10: "Ἡμέρας γὰρ ἤδη γεγонуίας, καὶ τῆς ἀκτίνος ὑπολάμπειν ἀρχομένης, αἱ μὲν κόραι πᾶσαι καὶ παιδίσκαι τῆς Θεκλας, αἱ καὶ προκοιτοῦσαι τῆς κόρης αὐτῆς, περὶ τὸν κοιτωνίσκον διέτριβον, ὡς ἀναστησομένης τε ἄρτι που τῆς δεσποίνης καὶ τὰ συνήθη παρ' αὐτῶν ἐπιζητούσης, οἷα δεσποίνης τέ ἐστιν ἐπιζητεῖν καὶ θεραπαινίδων ὑπουργεῖν" (my own translation).

²⁶ As Harvey pointed out, the *progymnasmata* and declamation exercises provided important samples for the grief. See Harvey, *Guiding Grief*, p. 205.

she has not spoken a word yet?”. While saying such things, they all entered the room simultaneously – since the time of day did not bode well – and found the young woman nowhere, instantly filling the house with their screams and cries. When Theoclia, upon learning the reason for the cries and laments, was left breathless and speechless, the entire city was soon filled with commotion. The townspeople ran in confusion, dispersing in different directions and searching for the girl, as they considered her flight a common misfortune for the city. While all this was happening, Thecla remained seated at Paul’s feet, delighting in the divine teachings with an unwavering and undaunted spirit²⁷.

With this scene, the core elements for the composition of the motif of the lament for the missing girl are definitively established: 1) It occurs normally at dawn in the home or the place where the girl should be sleeping; 2) The room or space is found empty, with no trace of the young woman; 3) The expression or description of the lament takes place; 4) There is a significant contrast because the reader is fully aware that the girl is in perfect condition. Moreover, this last aspect is intended to highlight the opposition between the sorrow for the material and physical absence of the girl, while she is in a state of happiness, being able to dedicate her life to her religious and spiritual progression.

This last aspect is precisely what the author of the *Life of Thecla* aims to emphasize the most. By introducing the imagined conversation between Thecla’s maidservants, he creates a growing narrative climax that delves into the ominous feelings provoked by the absence of their mistress’s call for her usual attentions. Progressively, they question whether something bad (μή τι γέγονεν αὐτῇ τῶν ἀνιαρῶν), an illness (νόσος), or even an unexpected death (θάνατος αἰφνίδιος) might have befallen her.

²⁷ *Vita Theclae* 10, 11-28: “Ὡς δὲ πολὺς μὲν ὁ ἥλιος ἦν ὑπὲρ γῆς ἤδη, βοῆ δὲ οὐδαμοῦ παρὰ τῆς Θεέκλας ἠκούετο, τὰ συνήθη προστατούσης ταῖς κόραις, «Καὶ τί τοῦτο;» λεγουσῶν ἤδη τῶν παιδισκῶν πρὸς ἑαυτὰς καὶ ἀλλήλας, «ἄρα καθεύδει μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ἢ τροφίμη; μή τι γέγονεν αὐτῇ τῶν ἀνιαρῶν, μὴ νόσος, μὴ θάνατος ἄρα αἰφνίδιος προσέπεσε, ὡς μηδὲ φωνὴν ἔτι προΐεσθαι;» Ἔτι δὲ ταῦτα λέγουσαι, καὶ ὁμοῦ πᾶσαι τῷ κοιτωνίσκῳ ἐπεισελθοῦσαι – καὶ γὰρ ὁ χρόνος ὑποπτεύειν ἐδίδου τι λοιπὸν αὐταῖς οὐ χρηστὸν – τὴν μὲν παρθένον οὐδαμῶς εὐρίσκουσι, βοῆς δὲ καὶ ὀλολυγῆς ἐξαίφνης πληροῦσι τὸ δωματίον· ὡς τὴν Θεόκλειαν, ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ ἡ βοῆ καὶ ὁ θρήνος ἐγγόνει μαθοῦσαν, ἄπνουν γενέσθαι καὶ ἄναυδον, θορύβου τε ὁμοῦ πληρωθῆναι πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν, δρόμου δὲ καὶ ταραχῆς τὸν δῆμον, ἄλλων ἄλλοθεν διαθεόντων καὶ ἀναζητούντων τὴν κόρη· καὶ γὰρ κοινὴν τῆς πόλεως συμφορὰν τὴν τῆς κόρης ἐκάλουν φυγὴν. Ἡ μὲν τοῖ γε Θεέκλα, καὶ τούτων γινομένων, ἐκάθητο μὲν παρὰ τοῖς τοῦ Παύλου ποσί, ἀκαταπλήκτω δὲ καὶ ἀπτοήτῳ φρονήματι τῶν θείων δογμάτων ἀπήλαυνε” (my own translation).

Not finding her anywhere triggers the expression of lament, manifested through a lexicon typical of the representation of such scenes. Terms such as βοή, ὀλολυγή, θόρυβος, and παραχή are used to describe the cries, the expression of grief, and the mass confusion and agitation that spread from Thecla's house to the entire city of Seleucia. In addition to all these terms, the word θρήνος, which becomes the key word for interpreting the passage, is particularly relevant to the theme I am discussing here. This tension contrasts with the image of Thecla seated at the feet of Paul "with an unwavering and undaunted spirit"²⁸.

As for the *Metaphrastic Martyrdom of Thecla* (BHG 1719), this version is based on the original text of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, from which it directly borrows certain expressions related to this scene of grief. The Metaphrast explicitly refers to the household (ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ) to emphasize that "the lament was shared" (κοινὸς ἦν ὁ θρήνος), and he categorizes those affected by the mourning into three groups: the betrothed, Thamyris, mourning his bride²⁹; Theocleia, mourning her child; and the maidservants, mourning their mistress³⁰. He also uses the key terms σύγχυσις and πένθος, both of which appear in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 10. Unlike the *Life of Thecla*, which expands on the scene of the discovery of Thecla's empty room, the Metaphrast offers only a brief reference to the search for the missing girl, led by Thamyris and her attendants³¹.

2. Consolidation of the lament for the missing girl in Hagiographic Literature: *Topoi* and *Imitatio Theclae*

The use of an extensive repertoire of *loci communes* in hagiographic narrative is one of the characteristics of the lives of saints, as demonstrated in Pratsch's seminal study on the structure of biographies of male and female saints appearing in the Middle Byzantine period (8th-13th centuries)³². However, the manner of presenting and narrating the lives of saints, and the repertoire of hagiographic *topoi* interwoven within them, harkens back to the origins of hagiographic discourse in Late Antiquity with the adoption of the biographical model typical of ancient

²⁸ *Vita Theclae* 10, 28: "ἀκαταπλήκτω δὲ καὶ ἀπτοήτῳ φρονήματι".

²⁹ Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium sanctae Theclae* 2.

³⁰ Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium sanctae Theclae* 2: "Θαμύριδι μὲν γυναικὸς ἀστοχοῦντι· Θεοκλεία δέ, τέκνου· ταῖς δὲ παιδίσκαις, κυρίας".

³¹ Symeon Metaphrastes, *Martyrium sanctae Theclae* 5: "Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἅμα πρῶτ' ἐζητεῖτο Θέκλα ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκειῶν τε καὶ Θαμύριδος".

³² Pratsch, *Der hagiographischen Topos*.

philosophers (among others) for Christian programmatic discourse³³. In this way, the adoption of narrative models developed in the rhetorical environments of the imperial period sets the path for a deepening of the tendency to adopt not only models of expression but also specific motifs and scenes with a rich tradition in earlier Greek literature, in the burgeoning Christian hagiographic literature.

Consequently, in this general framework, the presence of the motif of lament in Byzantine hagiographic literature is not surprising. Moreover, in the case of hagiography featuring women, there is a certain limitation regarding reference models³⁴. Compared to the biographies of male saints, modern scholarship has noted the relative scarcity of lives of female saints in Byzantine literary sources³⁵. In fact, in many instances, the lives of female saints are viewed collectively as an expression of a minority among the different profiles of sanctity³⁶. While there are nuances and various subtypes, they consistently present a significant number of common elements that revolve around virtues such as virginity, chastity, or the prototypical tension between ἀσθένεια and ἀνδρεία³⁷, thus reiterating the same scenes and commonplaces more evidently.

Among the reference models for the definitive configuration of a hagiographic discourse focused on women, the figure of Thecla emerges prominently. This is not only due to her popularity in late antiquity but also because she is one of the earliest texts susceptible to being considered under the label of “hagiographic”. Indeed, in recent years, various studies have demonstrated the significant influence of Thecla and her texts on shaping Byzantine hagiographic discourse with a feminine focus³⁸. The formula *imitatio Theclae* has even been employed to denote the trend of narrative inspiration from Thecla and her exploits in creating

³³ See, among others, M. Van Uytvanghe, *La biographie Classique et l'hagiographie chrétienne antique tardive*, “Hagiographica” 12 (2005) p. 223-248.

³⁴ See, for example: N. Delierneux, *The Literary Portrait of Byzantine Female Saints*, in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, Farnham – Burlington 2014, p. 363-386.

³⁵ A.M. Talbot, *Female Sanctity in Byzantium*, in: *Women and Religious Life in Byzantium*, ed. A.M. Talbot, Aldershot – Burlington 2001, p. 1-16.

³⁶ *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.M. Talbot, Washington 1996, p. VIII-X.

³⁷ U. Mattioli, *'Ασθένεια e 'Ανδρεία. Aspetti della femminilità nella letteratura classica, biblica e cristiana antica*, Roma 1983.

³⁸ Á. Narro, *Tecla de Iconio. La santa ideal, un ideal de santa*, Reus 2021, p. 237-320; *Thecla and Medieval Sainthood. The Acts of Paul and Thecla in Eastern and Western Hagiography*, ed. G. Dabiri – F. Ruani, Cambridge 2022.

new lives of female saints³⁹. Thus, while this *imitatio Theclae* is clearly evident in cases such as martyrdom scenes where other female martyrs face fire or wild beasts, in other cases the connection with Thecla is more subtle and harder to prove.

An evident example of how this tendency operates can be observed in the general conception behind the creation of the so-called “lives of transvestite saints”⁴⁰. The central element of these lives – the saint’s transformation into a monk to attain spiritual perfection and spend her life in a male monastery, where she will stand out for her asceticism and virtue – has a clear antecedent in the story of Thecla⁴¹. In the first scene, Thecla will express her intention to cut her hair and follow Paul in his preaching, while in the second, she will directly adopt male attire with the intention of traveling and reuniting with Paul in Mira. Thus, while in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* these scenes are not heavily emphasized and hold a secondary importance for the development of the narrative, in the lives of transvestite saints they become the central element around which the entire plot revolves⁴². Consequently, this demonstrates the considerable versatility of these motifs, which can be adapted to the specific purposes or agenda of the hagiographer while remaining within the framework of describing female sanctity.

Within this same theoretical framework, the description and expression of the lament for the missing girl will find an interesting literary development in the lives of transvestite saints. Indeed, scenes of this type can be observed in the lives of Eugenia, Apollinaria, and Euphrosyne. In general terms, these scenes are linked to the saint’s cross-dressing and her subsequent departure from the familiar household. From this perspective,

³⁹ Narro, *Thecla de Iconio*, p. 237-241; G. Dabiri, *Introduction*, in: *Thecla and Medieval Sainthood. The Acts of Paul and Thecla in Eastern and Western Hagiography*, ed. G. Dabiri – F. Ruani, Cambridge 2022, p. 13-19.

⁴⁰ On these lives, see, among others: J. Anson, *The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism. The Origin and Development of a Motif*, “*Viator*” 5 (1974) p. 1-32; E. Patlagean, *L’histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l’évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance*, “*Studi Medievali*” 17 (1976) p. 597-623; N. Delierneux, *Virilité physique et sainteté féminine dans l’hagiographie orientale du IV^e au VII^e siècle*, “*Byzantion*” 67 (1997) p. 179-243; J. Van Pelt, *Saints in Disguise: Performance, Illusion and Truth in Early Byzantine Hagiography*, Leuven 2025.

⁴¹ *Acta Pauli et Theclae* 15 and 40.

⁴² On the influence of the Thecla model on the lives of transvestite saints, see: J. Van Pelt, *Thecla, the First Cross-Dresser? The Acts of Paul and Thecla and the Lives of Byzantine Transvestite Saints*, in: *Thecla and Medieval Sainthood. The Acts of Paul and Thecla in Eastern and Western Hagiography*, ed. G. Dabiri – F. Ruani, Cambridge 2022, p. 197-232.

the lament – traditionally associated with funerary contexts – signals the symbolic death of the woman, who from this moment forward is fully devoted to her spiritual progression. The tears and mourning of those left behind should be understood as a narrative marker of her new life, one removed from the material world she formerly inhabited, highlighting the transition from worldly existence to Christian ascetic dedication.

3. Eugenia, Apollinaria, and Euphrosyne

3.1. *Martyrdom of Eugenia*

The first I deal with, the first version of the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* (BHG 607w)⁴³, is a clear example of the phenomenon described in the previous section⁴⁴. The *Martyrdom of Eugenia* recounts the conversion and spiritual journey of the young woman Eugenia. The narrative primarily focuses on her renunciation of secular life, her decision to disguise herself as a male monk, and her entrance into a male monastic community. After her true identity is revealed, she is forced to leave the monastery, subsequently faces persecution by pagan authorities, and ultimately suffers martyrdom.

The *Martyrdom of Eugenia* combines two major hagiographic genres – biography and martyrdom account⁴⁵. The text appears to have been originally composed in Latin, likely at the end of the fifth century or the beginning of the sixth, and subsequently translated into Greek⁴⁶.

⁴³ The critical edition of the text can be found at S. Apserou, *To Αγιολογικό dossier της Αγίας Ευγενίας (BHG 607w-607z)*, Ioannina 2017 (diss.). The only modern translation of the Greek text has been recently published in Spanish by C. Sánchez-Mañas, *Martirio de Eugenia de Roma (BHG 607w)*, in: *Martirios de santas del primer cristianismo*, ed. Á. Ibáñez – Á. Narro, Reus – Córdoba 2024, p. 141-197.

⁴⁴ On the intertextual references between *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and the *Martyrdom of Eugenia*, see: S.J. Davis, *Crossed Texts, Crossed Sex: Intertextuality and Gender in Early Christian Legends of Holy Women Disguised as Men*, J ECS 10 (2002) p. 16-19.

⁴⁵ S. Constantinou, *Holy Actors and Actresses Fools and Cross-Dressers as the Protagonists of Saints' Lives*, in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume II: Genres and contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, Farnham – Burlington 2014, p. 344.

⁴⁶ E.G. Whatley, *Textual Hybrids in the Transmission of the Passio S. Eugeniae (BHL 2666, 2667)*, “Hagiographica” 18 (2011) p. 37-38; M. Lapidge, *The Roman Martyrs. Introduction, Translations, and Commentary*, Oxford – New York 2018, p. 231-232.

Although the *terminus ante quem* provided by the manuscripts preserving the Greek version (tenth century) allows for a wide chronological range, the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* exhibits certain features suggesting that the Greek redaction was produced relatively soon after the presumed Latin original, likely still within the fifth or sixth century.

At the beginning of the *Martyrdom of Eugenia*, it is expressly mentioned how the moment that sparks Eugenia's intense desire to delve into Christian doctrine – a desire that contrasts sharply with her previous adherence to Greco-Roman religiosity – is her chance discovery of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*⁴⁷, which she reads in secret with immense emotional turmoil due to the beliefs in which she was raised⁴⁸. The influence of Thecla's story becomes even more apparent in the description of the lament for the missing girl introduced in *Martyrdom of Eugenia* 10. The scene unfolds after Eugenia's travestism. The young woman, with the help of her eunuch slaves Proteas and Hyacinth, escapes from the litter in which she was normally transported due to her noble status, intending to enter a male monastery.

In this instance, the expression of lament follows the pattern established in Thecla's scene, although a close examination of the terminology used reveals a dependence not only on the primitive *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, but also on the *Life of Thecla*, where the three of the four core elements of this type of lament described in section 3 can be observed (there is no reference to the time of day in which the sequence occurs).

Let us then return to that time when Proteas and Hyacinth, having taken Eugenia, sent the empty litter back to her mother. For the household, thinking that she had arrived, all went out joyfully to meet her, but when they did not find her in the litter, they all began to wail. There was a commotion and uproar throughout the entire city, and an unbearable lamentation and much weeping ensued, with everyone in great confusion and despair. They searched through every district looking for Eugenia, inquiring of the peasants and seeking answers from soothsayers. Sacrifices were offered to the idols, and everyone said that Eugenia had been taken up to heaven by the immortal gods. The father believed this and, turning his mourning into consolation, decided to have a golden statue made of her. But her mother Claudia and her

⁴⁷ Davis, *Crossed Texts*, p. 16-17; Narro, *Tecla de Iconio*, p. 303-306.

⁴⁸ *Martyrium Eugeniae* 2: “ἐνέπεσεν δὲ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς τοῦ ἀγιωτάτου ἀποστόλου Παύλου καὶ τῆς παρθένου Θεκλῆς ἡ ἐξήγησις καὶ ἀναγινώσκουσα λαθραίως ἐδάκρυεν ἐφεκάστης διὰ τὸ καὶ μάλιστα ἐλληνικωτάτοις αὐτὴν γονεῦσιν ὑπάρχειν”.

brothers, Abitus and Sergius, could not at all be relieved from their grief; it was unbearable for them⁴⁹.

The textual dependence on the model from the scene in *Life of Thecla* 10 is evident due to the use of identical vocabulary. The initial expression of joy from Eugenia's relatives, exemplified by the term *χαρά*, mirrors that of Thecla's betrothed, Thamyris, in *Life of Thecla* 4. The suspicion of a relationship between the two works in the creation of this particular scene is confirmed by the use of terms such as *ταραχή*, *θόρυβος*, and *θρήνος*, which hold significant conceptual weight in *Life of Thecla* 10. Nonetheless, the direct influence of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* is also evident in the use of terms like *πένθος* or *σύγχυσις*. This approach to crafting the first hagiographic narrative about the martyr Eugenia, rather than being anomalous, clearly demonstrates that the incorporation of literary motifs specific scenes, at least in certain hagiographic texts devoted to female saints, is governed by the reliance on established literary models within the hagiographical tradition itself.

The second recension of this martyrdom (*BHG* 607x-y) also contains a significant scene of grief⁵⁰, which marks a turning point in Eugenia's devotional life. From this moment onward, Eugenia disappears from her family, adopts male monastic dress and subsequently embrace monastic life. As the text makes clear, there is once again a close connection with the scene preserved in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. This recension, however, avoids an explicit reference to that work as Eugenia's motivation for conversion to Christianity, and instead alludes to the *Didachē of the apostle Paul* as the book that comes into her hands⁵¹.

⁴⁹ *Martyrium Eugeniae* 10: “Επανάλωμεν τοίνυν εις εκείνον τὸν καιρὸν, καθ’ ὃν Πρωτέας καὶ Ὑάκινθος λαβόντες τε τὴν Εὐγενίαν, τὸ βαστέριον διὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ κενὸν ἐξάπεστειλαν πρὸς τὴν μητέρα αὐτῆς. οἱ γὰρ οἰκεῖοι νομίσαντες παραγενέσθαι αὐτήν, μετὰ χαρᾶς ἅπαντες ἐξῆλθον εἰς ἀπάντησιν αὐτῆς, ὡς τε οὐχ εὔρον αὐτὴν ἐν τῷ βαστερνίῳ, ὁμοῦ πάντες ἐπωδύροντο. καὶ ἐγένετο ταραχὴ καὶ θόρυβος κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν, καὶ ἦν θρήνος ἀφόρητος καὶ κλαυθμὸς πολὺς, καὶ ἅπαντες ἦσαν ἐν συγχύσει καὶ ἄθυμια πολλῇ. περιήρισαν δὲ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἐπαρχίαν ζητοῦντες τὴν Εὐγενίαν. ἐπηρώτων οὖν τοὺς ἀγροίκους καὶ ἀνεζήτησαν τοὺς ἐγγαστριμύθους θυσία τε τοῖς εἰδώλοις ἀνεπέμπετο καὶ πάντες ἔλεγον τὴν Εὐγενίαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν παρὰ τῶν ἀθανάτων Θεῶν ἀναληφθῆναι. ἐπίστευσεν δὲ ὁ πατὴρ τοῦτο καὶ τὸ πένθος εἰς παραμυθίαν μεταβαλὼν, ἔδοξεν τοῖς θεοῖς αὐτὴν καταριθμεῖσθαι καὶ ἐποίησεν αὐτῇ ἀπὸ χρυσοῦ καθαροῦ ἀνδριάντα. ἡ δὲ μήτηρ αὐτῆς Κλαυδία καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῆς, Ἀβίτος καὶ Σέργιος, οὐδαμῶς ἠδύναντο ἐκ τῆς ἄθυμιας κουφισθῆναι ἀλλ’ ἦν αὐτοῖς τὸ πένθος ἀφόρητον” (my own translation).

⁵⁰ The critical edition of the text can be found at Apserou, *To Αγιολογικὸ dossier*, p. 327-370.

⁵¹ *Martyrium Eugenia (recensio b)* 2: “Ἦλθεν δὲ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῆς ἡ διδαχὴ τοῦ Ἀποστόλου Παύλου”.

However, the arrival at Eugenia's home of the empty litter borne by her two servants, Proteas and Hyacinth, is clearly modelled on the scene of grief for Thecla. The passage employs a substantial number of technical terms associated with the expression of lament, including the nouns πένθος, κοπετός, κλαυθμός, λύπη, and θλίψις, as well as the verbs κλαίω and πενθέω.

When they saw the animals approaching, the servants proceeding in proper order, and the litter coming up, all those in the household ran forward joyfully to meet her. But when they saw that the litter was empty, they all raised their voices together and wept, and suddenly great mourning arose throughout the whole city. For who, upon hearing that the prefect had lost his own daughter, could have borne it? Thus there was lamentation and immeasurable weeping among them all, and they mourned in utter confusion of grief: the parents their own daughter, the brothers their sister, the slaves their mistress. An unbearable sorrow and unceasing affliction seized them all⁵².

In addition, the tripartite perspective of lament – distributed among the different individuals or groups connected to Thecla in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 10 – reappears here, adapted to Eugenia's narrative profile. Accordingly, the parents mourn their daughter, the brothers their sister, and the slaves their mistress. The text of Eugenia even employs the expression ἐπένθουν συγκεχυμένοι τῇ λύπῃ, which rewrites the original σύγχυσις πένθους ('a mix of mournings') found in the Thecla narrative, thereby pointing to a clear intertextual relationship with the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* in the construction of this scene.

Regarding also the dependence on specific literary models, and still with reference to Eugenia, it is striking to observe the rewriting procedure for this lament scene as found in the *Metaphrastic Life of Eugenia* (BHG 608), included by Papaioannou in his *Christian Novels from the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes*⁵³. Here, once again, a reformulation of

⁵² *Martyrium Eugenia (recensio b)* 14: "[...] Βλέποντες δὲ τὰ ζῶα περιπατοῦντα καὶ τοὺς παῖδας κατὰ τὴν ὀφείλουσαν τάξιν καὶ τὴν βαστέρναν ἀνερχομένην, προστρέχουσιν μετὰ χαρᾶς πάντες, οἱ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ, εἰς ἀπάντησιν αὐτῆς καὶ ὀρῶσιν τὴν βαστέρναν κούφην καὶ ὁμοῦ πάντες ἐπῆραν τὴν φωνὴν αὐτῶν καὶ ἔκλαυσαν καὶ γίνεται ὅλη τῇ πόλει ἐξαίφνης πένθος μέγα. Τίς γὰρ ἀκούων ὅτι ὁ ἑπαρχὸς τὴν ἰδίαν θυγατέρα ἀπώλεσεν, ἠδύνατο φέρειν; Ἦν οὖν κοπετός καὶ κλαυθμὸς ἀνείκαστος ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐπένθουν συγκεχυμένοι τῇ λύπῃ, οἱ γονεῖς αὐτῆς τὴν ἰδίαν θυγατέρα, οἱ ἀδελφοὶ τὴν ἀδελφήν, οἱ δοῦλοι τὴν ἰδίαν δέσποιναν, καὶ κατεῖχεν αὐτοὺς πάντας καὶ λύπη ἀφόρητος καὶ θλίψις ἀδιάλειπτος" (my own translation).

⁵³ S. Papaioannou, *Christian Novels from the Menologion of Symeon Metaphrastes*, Washington 2017.

the lament scene for the missing Eugenia seems evident, based on both the *Life of Thecla* and the original *Acts of Paul and Thecla* texts. On one hand, the *Life of Thecla* seems to be the unmistakable source of inspiration for the text in introducing, in direct style, the questions posed by those gathered to receive the litter intended for Eugenia upon discovering it was empty⁵⁴. On the other hand, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* continues to serve as a literary model for this scene, reflecting the triple distinction of lament found in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* 10, where Thamyris laments for Thecla as a future wife (γυναικός), Theocleia as a daughter (τέκνου), and the maidservants for their mistress (κυρία). The words speak for themselves: “and lamented bitterly, the parents for their daughter, the brothers for their sister, the slaves for their mistress”⁵⁵.

3.2. *Life of Apollinaria*

The lament for the missing girl motif is also prominently featured in the *Life of Apollinaria* (BHG 148)⁵⁶. The story describes the life of a young noblewoman who rejects her parents’ plan to marry her and instead embarks on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Disguised as a male eunuch named Dorotheus, she joins a monastery in Scetis, where she gains fame for her spiritual strength and healing abilities. After a misunderstanding involving her sister’s false pregnancy, her parents discover her true identity but remain silent. Apollinaria returns to the monastery as Dorotheus, where she lives until her death, at which point the monks discover her biological sex.

The text bears a particular connection to the *Life of Hilaria*, preserved only in Coptic. Drescher does not propose a specific date for the composition of this text, nor for the *Life of Apollinaria*, which he also includes

⁵⁴ Symeon Metaphrastes, *Vita sanctae Eugeniae* 31: “What has happened? What has been done? What is this overwhelming evil that has befallen us?”, tr. Papaioannou, *Christian Novels*, p. 209.

⁵⁵ Symeon Metaphrastes, *Vita sanctae Eugeniae* 32: “ἐπεβοῶντο πικρῶς, οἱ πατέρες τὴν θυγατέρα, οἱ ἀδελφοὶ τὴν γνησίαν, οἱ δοῦλοι τὴν δέσποιναν”, transl. Papaioannou, *Christian Novels*, p. 209-211. This intertextual reference was already detected by Davis, *Crossed text*, p. 17, and discussed by Van Pelt, *Thecla, the First Cross-Dresser?*, p. 216.

⁵⁶ The text I present from *Life of Apollinaria* is based on my own transcriptions from the manuscripts in which it appears. Until the new definitive critical edition is published, the only way to consult the text remains the diplomatic edition by J. Drescher, *Three Coptic Legends. Hilaria – Archellites – The Seven Sleepers*, Cairo 1947, p. 152-161.

in his study of three Coptic legends⁵⁷. However, a clear *terminus ante quem* can be established in the year 848, the date of the manuscript from the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (M.583), in which the *Life of Hilaria* is preserved. Furthermore, since a degree of textual dependence on the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* also seems likely, the chronological range for the composition of the *Life of Apollinaria* may be further narrowed to between the sixth and the first part of the ninth century, a period of significant flourishing in the production of hagiographic texts centred on pious laywomen⁵⁸.

The scene of grief in *Life of Apollinaria* has a special connection with the *Martyrdom of Eugenia*, particularly due to the disappearance of both women after their cross-dressing and the use of the empty litter as the focal point of the lament. This motif, along with the presence of two male characters accompanying the protagonists, shows clear similarities with Eugenia's narrative⁵⁹.

However, the social and religious contexts in the *Life of Apollinaria* and the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* are distinct. While Eugenia's story involves conversion from a non-Christian background, Apollinaria's narrative takes place within a fully Christian framework. Both women share noble status, though Apollinaria is even more prominent, being described as the daughter of the fictional Emperor Anthemius. Her disappearance happens during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where she gradually frees her servants, keeping only a eunuch and a litter-bearer. This marks the beginning of her ascetic life, culminating in her renaming as Dorotheus. The complete scene can be read in *Life of Apollinaria* 12-13:

Seeing her love for Him, God provided dates as food for her sustenance and revealed to her how many years she would remain there. When the litter-bearer and the eunuch woke up and realized she was not in the litter, they were very astonished; for they found the garments she had worn left in the litter. They returned to St Menas and recounted the entire story to the *oikonomos*, also showing him her garments. The *oikonomos*, frightened, went to the city with the litter-bearer and the eunuch and relayed the entire matter to the governor. The governor was terrified and wrote a letter to Apollinaria's

⁵⁷ Drescher, *Three Coptic Legends*, p. III-V.

⁵⁸ Delierneux, *The Literary Portrait*, p. 376-378.

⁵⁹ On other correspondences between both texts, see Á. Narro, *La Vida de Apollinaria/Doroteo (BHG 148). Una santa travestida de origen copto*, in: *Del relato martirial al género hagiográfico en la tardoantigüedad. Personajes y espacios liminales*, ed. L. Bonhome – M. Movellán Luis, Madrid – Oporto 2022, p. 100-101.

father, the emperor, explaining everything clearly and also sending her garments. When the emperor received and read the letter, he wept bitterly. Seeing his daughter's garments the father was inwardly overwhelmed, and he began to lament with the girl's mother and all his court. Subsequently, they began to pray to God and calmed themselves. The emperor then said: "God, who chose her for Your reverence, strengthen her". Then they all wept again, and some of them said to the emperor: "Truly, lord, she is the daughter of a pious emperor. Indeed, she is the descendant of your power. Your good deeds shine now more than ever". And after saying such things and more, they all prayed for her⁶⁰.

As seen in *Life of Apollinaria* 12, the empty litter of Apollinaria is accompanied by the additional detail of the appearance of the saint's garments, which represents a novelty compared to the previously discussed scene in *Martyrdom of Eugenia*. In fact, this will be the belonging of the missing girl that, along with the letter written by the governor after hearing the story of Apollinaria's disappearance from the *oikonomos*, the eunuch, and the litter-bearer, triggers the lament of the emperor, the protagonist's father, and all those with him.

The litter is used only as the initial setting and elicits the surprise, or rather, the astonishment of Apollinaria's servants. The negative connotation in the text of the adjective *ἔκθαμβος*, referring to the eunuch and the litter-bearer, is confirmed by the use of the aorist passive participle of the verb *πτοέω* ("to be scared") to illustrate the reaction of the *oikonomos* upon receiving the news on Apollinaria. Regarding the lament for

⁶⁰ *Vita Apollinariae* 12-13: "ὁ δὲ Θεὸς ἰδὼν αὐτῆς τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀγάπην περιποιήσατο πρὸς ἀποτροφὴν αὐτῆς φοίνικα ἐπαρκέσαι αὐτῇ καὶ ἀνήγγειλαν ὅσα δ' ἂν ἔτη ἐποίησεν ἐκεῖ. τοῦ δὲ λεκτικαρίου καὶ τοῦ εὐνούχου δῦνπισθέντων καὶ γνωσάντων ὅτι οὐκ ἦν ἐν τῷ λεκτικίῳ ἔκθαμβοι ἐγένοντο πάνυ. ἡῦρον γὰρ τὰ ἱμάτια ἃ ἐφόρει ἐν τῷ λεκτικίῳ. καὶ ἀναλύσαντες ἤλθον εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Μηνᾶν καὶ ἀνήγγειλαν τῷ οἰκονόμῳ τὰ περὶ αὐτῆς δεῖξαντες αὐτῷ καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῆς. καὶ πτοηθεὶς εἰσῆλθεν ἐν τῇ πόλει σὺν τῷ λεκτικαρίῳ καὶ τοῦ εὐνούχου καὶ ὑπέστησαν τῷ ἄρχοντι τὴν αἰτίαν πᾶσαν. ὁ δὲ ἄρχων φοβηθεὶς γράφει ἐπιστολὴν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτῆς τῷ βασιλεῖ σημάνας αὐτῷ πάντα ἀκολούθως, ἀποστείλας καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῆς. δεξάμενος δὲ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν καὶ ἀναγνούς ἐδάκρυσεν πικρῶς. ἰδὼν δὲ καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ, πλέον ἰλιγγίασεν τοῖς σπλάγχνοις αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤρξατο ὀδύρεσθαι σὺν τῇ μητρὶ αὐτῆς καὶ πάσῃ τῇ συγκλήτῳ. ὕστερον δὲ εὐχαριστήσαντες τῷ Θεῷ ἠσύχασαν. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς· ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ἐκλεξάμενος αὐτὴν εἰς τὸν φόβον σου, στερέωσον αὐτήν. πάλιν οὖν πάντων δακρυσάντων, τινες αὐτῶν εἶπον τῷ βασιλεῖ· ἐπ' ἀληθείας, δέσποτα, αὕτη θυγάτηρ βασιλέως εὐσεβοῦς ἐστίν. ὄντως τέκνον τοῦ κράτους σου ἐστίν, νῦν πλέον ἀνεφάνησαν αἱ ἀγαθοεργαίαι σου. καὶ ταῦτα εἰπόντες καὶ πλείονα τούτων, ἅπαντες ἠῤῥοντο ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς" (my own translation).

the missing daughter, the text describes the father's bitter sorrow upon reading the governor's letter through the verb δακρύω, intensified by the addition of the adverb πικρῶς. The sight of Apollinaria's garments leads him to lose his mind, as indicated by the use of the verb ἰλιγγιάζω, and to share the expression of his grief with his wife, an action conveyed through another verb commonly used in the depiction and expression of lament, ὀδύρομαι.

Finally, another element that the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* and the *Life of Apollinaria* have in common is the emergence of the concept of consolation (παραμυθία) in the scene. In both versions of *Life of Eugenia*, both the original and the metaphrastic, the father erects a statue in honor of his daughter, finding solace in his religious beliefs by thinking she has been taken up by the gods. In the *Life of Apollinaria*, however, the verb ἠσυχάζω suggests a more serene acceptance of events by the imperial family. The final words of some of the emperor's companions, praising his daughter and mentioning God, seem to suggest that Apollinaria's disappearance is eventually interpreted as a divine miracle. However, the text does not explicitly clarify this religious interpretation of the event, something that is evident to the reader who knows in advance that everything is arranged according to God's plan (κατ'οικονομίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ), as the text had foreshadowed in the immediately preceding scene. In that scene, while the eunuch and the litter-bearer sleep, Apollinaria changes her secular clothes for a monk's habit inside the litter and then ventures into the swamp where she will begin her ascetic training, toughening her skin and appearance to blend in with men and preparing for her entry into a male monastic community once she receives the divine sign indicating it.

In the story of Apollinaria, the scene of grief contrasts sharply with the heroine's actual situation at the very moment her relatives mourn her disappearance. While she is presumed dead, Apollinaria has entered the swamp to live as a hermit, train in ascetic practices, and transform her body in preparation for receiving God's sign to embrace coenobitic life in a male monastery. This simultaneous mourning and hidden transformation underscores her symbolic rebirth, a process further emphasized in the text through a baptismal-like imagery associated with the swamp.

Finally, it should be stressed that there is no metaphrastic version of the *Life of Apollinaria*.

3.3. *Life of Euphrosyne*

The *Life of Euphrosyne* (BHG 625)⁶¹ recounts the life of a devout Christian young woman from Alexandria, who, after losing her mother, becomes acquainted with monastic life through her father's connections with Egyptian monastic communities. Deeply inspired by this way of life, Euphrosyne resolves to renounce marriage and dedicate herself to the spiritual path. However, convinced that her father would easily find her in a female monastery and believing in the greater spiritual quality of male monastic communities, she decides to leave home, disguise herself as a monk, and enter the monastery of Scetis under the identity of the eunuch Smaragdus. Her father, Paphnutius, is devastated by her disappearance and eventually visits the very monastery where she resides. Despite their frequent interactions and conversations, the father fails to recognize her daughter until Smaragdus/Euphrosyne reveals her true identity to Paphnutius on her deathbed.

Due to the use of the exclamations “οἶμοι τέκνον ἐμὸν γλυκύτετον” and “οἶμοι φῶς τῶν ἐμῶν ὀφθαλμῶν” appearing precisely in the expression of lament included in *Life of Euphrosyne* 12, which is shared by many texts including similar θρῆνοι⁶², it can be securely dated no earlier than the seventh century. In addition, a *terminus ante quem* is provided by the mention of the *Life of Euphrosyne* in the work of John the Stylite (eighth century)⁶³.

In the *Life of Euphrosyne* the scene of lament for the missing girl returns to the domestic setting that appeared in the initial manifestation of this motif in the story of Thecla. This is logical considering that in the *Life of Euphrosyne*, the general plot unfolds in a more intimate environment, focusing clearly on the relationship between Euphrosyne's father, Paphnutius, and his daughter. Both characters are presented as pious Christians, sharing the misfortune of losing, he a wife and she a mother.

⁶¹ The critical edition of the Greek text and further analysis can be found at Á. Narro – I. Muñoz Gallarte, *La Vida de santa Eufrosine* (BHG 625-625b). *Introducción, edición crítica y traducción*, “Collectanea Christiana Orientalia” 20 (2023) p. 143-189.

⁶² Similar expressions appear in a later version of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* (10, 1, 2b), Georgius Syceota, *Vita sancti Theodori Syceotae* (32, 10) or in *Vita sancti Alexii* (10, 12) [BHG 51]. The latter texts are both dated in the seventh or eighth centuries.

⁶³ C.L. Lubinsky, *Removing Masculine Layers to Reveal a Holy Womanhood: The Female Travestite Monks of Late Antique Eastern Christianity*, Turnhout 2013, p. 28. For further detail on the chronology of the *Vita Euphrosynae*, see Anson, *The Female Transvestite*, p. 12; Patlagean, *L'histoire de la femme déguisée*, p. 601; Davis, *Crossed Texts*, p. 4.

They are both captivated by the virtue and behaviour of the monks from the monastery of Scetis, with whom the father establishes a cordial relationship. It is within this monastery that the daughter, after completing her cross-dressing and adopting the identity of the young monk Smaragdus, integrates herself.

In this case, Paphnutius' expression of lament for his missing daughter, following her decision to secretly leave the family home and enter a male monastery to pursue her spiritual calling, becomes a central element of the narrative. Indeed, the father's initial expression of lament in *Life of Euphrosyne* 12 transforms into a perennial sorrow that accompanies him throughout the story. This sorrow is given significant narrative space in *Life of Euphrosyne* 15-16, where Paphnutius visits the monastery of Scetis seeking solace for his daughter's absence⁶⁴. Paradoxically, it is Euphrosyne herself, under the identity of Smaragdus, who comforts him and even urges him not to grieve or weep⁶⁵.

Returning to the first scene of *Life of Euphrosyne* 12, where Paphnutius' lament is performed, it is noteworthy that it also includes elements typical of the descriptions of grief previously discussed in other hagiographic texts focused on women, but it presents very significant novelties. Firstly, rather than merely describing the weeping and sorrow felt by the character suffering from the protagonist's absence, Paphnutius' lament is expressed explicitly in direct speech, clearly employing characteristic elements of the *θρήνος*, as a rhetorical composition. Secondly, this lament interplays with other hagiographical texts containing similar expressions of grief and borrows imagery and vocabulary from the lament included in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina*⁶⁶.

Meanwhile, Euphrosyne's father returned home at lunchtime, and when he did not find his daughter, his expression started to change, and he questioned the servants: "Where is Euphrosyne?". When the servants replied that they had seen her the previous evening but not since dawn, Paphnutius thought that someone to whom she was not betrothed had taken her away, and he sought to discover this by sending messengers. Upon hearing this, the father

⁶⁴ Precisely these chapters, in which the conversation between the daughter, disguised as the monk Smaragdus, and her father Paphnutius takes place, are rewritten and expanded in one of the manuscripts that transmits the text. For further information and the edition of this section, see: Á. Narro – I. Muñoz Gallarte, *Una versión inédita de la Vida de Eufrosine (BHG 625b) en el ms. Paris. gr. 1538*, "Collectanea Christiana Orientalia" 20 (2023) p. 251-271.

⁶⁵ *Vita sancta Euphrosynae* 16, 12-13: "μη̅ λυποῦ, μηδὲ δάκρυε".

⁶⁶ See Gregorius Nyssenus, *Vita sanctae Macrinae* 26, 23-29.

of the young man to whom she was betrothed became agitated, ran to Paphnutius' house, and found him lying on the ground and weeping. They asked him, "Who came and took her away?". Immediately, horsemen were sent to Egypt and Libya. Ships were detained, search parties were organized; houses, monasteries, friends, neighbors, deserts, and caves were searched, but she was not found. Failing in every type of investigation, they changed their perspective and began to lament as if she were dead. The young man's father lamented for the bride, the young man for his betrothed, the maidservants for their mistress, and the father for his daughter, saying: 'Alas, my sweetest daughter! Alas, light of my eyes! Alas, comfort of my soul! Who plundered my treasure? Who took away my being? Who scattered my wealth? Who extinguished my lamp? Who claimed my hopes? Who took the dignity of my house? What kind of wolf devours my flock? What place hides that beauty like the sun? What sea holds in its abyss the radiant face? What king has as a war slave the royal image? She was the essence of the family; she, the staff of the old man; she, the release from troubles; she, the rest from labors; she, the consolation from sorrows. Earth, do not cover the blood of my flesh until I know who caused this tragic act to my Euphrosyne'. The friends who were present and heard his words raised their voices in lament so that the whole city ended up weeping for the unexpected loss of the girl⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ *Vita sanctae Euphrosynae* 12: "ὁ δὲ πατὴρ αὐτῆς ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἐλθὼν εἰς τὸν οἶκον, καὶ μὴ εὐρῶν τὴν θυγατέρα αὐτοῦ, ἤρξατο ἀλλοιοῦσθαι τῷ προσώπῳ καὶ ἀνετάζειν τοὺς παῖδας καὶ τὰς παιδίσκας τὸ τί γέγονεν ἢ Εὐφροσύνη· τῶν δὲ παιδῶν εἰπόντων ὅτι ἐσπέρας εἶδομεν αὐτήν, ἀπὸ πρῶτῃ δὲ οὐκέτι, ἐλογίσατο ὁ πατὴρ αὐτῆς μὴ ἄρα ὁ μνηστευσάμενος αὐτῇ ἦλθεν καὶ ἔλαβεν αὐτήν, καὶ πέμψας, ἐπυνθάνετο τοῦτο. ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ τε πατὴρ τοῦ νεανίου καὶ ὁ ὄρμασάμενος αὐτήν, καὶ ἐν ταραχῇ γενάμενοι, δρομαῖοι ἔρχονται εἰς τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Παφνουτίου, καὶ εὐρίσκουσιν αὐτὸν χαμαὶ κείμενον καὶ ἀποδυρόμενον, καὶ λέγουσιν ὅτι ἀνεστάτωσεν αὐτὴν τίς καὶ λαβὼν ἔφυγεν. Εὐθέως οὖν ἰπεῖς κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον καὶ Λιβύην ἀπεστέλλοντο, κατοχαὶ πλοίων καὶ ζητήσεις, ἠρευνῶντο οἶκοι, μοναστήρια, φίλοι, γείτονες, ἔρημοι, σπήλαια, καὶ τὸ ζητούμενον οὐχ εὐρίσκετο. ὡς οὖν διὰ πάσης ἐρεύνης ἐλθόντες ἀπέπιπτον τοῦ σκοποῦ, μεταβαλλόμενοι ὡς ἐπὶ νεκρῷ ἐθρήνουν, ὁ πενθερὸς τὴν νύμφην, ὁ νεανίας τὴν ὄρμαστίην, αἱ δοῦλαι τὴν δέσποιναν, ὁ πατὴρ τὴν θυγατέρα θρηνῶν ἔλεγεν· οἴμοι τέκνον ἐμὸν γλυκύτατον. Οἴμοι φῶς τῶν ἐμῶν ὀφθαλμῶν. Οἴμοι παραμύθιον τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς. Τίς τὸν ἐμὸν θησαυρὸν ἐσύλησεν; τίς τὴν ἐμὴν οὐσίαν ἀφήρπασεν; τίς τὸν ἐμὸν πλοῦτον ἐσκόρπισεν; τίς τὸν ἐμὸν λύχον ἐσβεσεν; τίς τὰς ἐμὰς ἐλπίδας ἐχειρώσατο; τίς τοῦ ἐμοῦ οἴκου τὴν εὐπρέπειαν ἔλαβεν; ποῖος λύκος τὸ ἐμὸν πρόβατον καταμένεται; ποῖος τόπος τὸ ἠλιόμορφον ἐκεῖνο ἔκρυψε κάλλος; ποῖον πέλαγος ἐν βυθῷ κατεχεῖτο τὸ φαῖνον πρόσωπον; ποῖος βασιλεὺς αἰχμάλωτον ἔχει τὸν βασιλικὸν χαρακτῆρα; ἐκεῖνη μου τοῦ γένους ἢ σύστασις, ἐκεῖνη τοῦ γήρωσ ἢ βακτηρία, ἐκεῖνη τῶν κακῶν ἢ λύσις, ἐκεῖνη τῶν μόχθων ἢ ἀναπαύσις, ἐκεῖνη τῶν ὁδυνῶν ὁ κουφισμός. Γῆ, μὴ ἐπικαλύψης ἐφ' αἵματι σαρκός μου, ἕως ἂν γνῶ τίς τὴν ἐμὴν Εὐφροσύνην πένθους πάρεργον ἐποίησεν. ἀκούοντες δὲ ταῦτα τὰ ῥήματα

The sequence can be clearly divided into two distinct parts: 1) the first part describes the absence of the girl, the announcement of the news to the father of Euphrosyne's betrothed, the organization of the search for the girl, and the futile results of these efforts. 2) In the second part, the girl is presumed dead, leading to Paphnutius' explicit lamentation, which, given the context, moves from an expression of sorrow for her absence to a near-funereal lament. This structure effectively transitions from the initial shock and frantic search to a profound and personal expression of grief, highlighting the depth of Paphnutius' despair and the impact of Euphrosyne's presumed loss on his soul.

The first part contains a series of elements that seem to clearly refer to the story of Thecla. Firstly, the presence of the maidservants who were waiting for Euphrosyne, the question of whether they knew what had happened to his daughter, and even the reference to the last sighting of the girl the night before and the allusion to dawn clearly recall the story of Thecla, with more points in common with the *Life of Thecla* than with the primitive *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Secondly, the search for the girl, a secondary motif that appears both in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* and *Life of Thecla* but is minimally developed, is extensively addressed here, giving the passage a distinctly rhetorical touch. In this section, for the first time, a specific vocabulary typical of the description of lament is used, such as the verb ἀποδύρομαι, referring to Paphnutius, and is included a detailed enumeration of the places where the search efforts are directed. The aim is to create an apparent growing narrative tension. The lack of news about Euphrosyne leads to despair, thus introducing the second part of the sequence.

Despair leads to considering Euphrosyne as dead, which results in a change of perspective, expressed by the verb μεταβάλλω, and causes the lament to be expressed as one would for someone deceased, as the text clearly states (“μεταβαλλόμενοι ὡς ἐπὶ νεκρῶ ἐθρήνουν”). As in the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, where lamentation was associated with three feelings and perspectives on the loss of Thecla (Thamyris for his future wife; Theocleia for her daughter; the maidservants for their mistress), here four distinct perspectives are distinguished: the father of the betrothed for the bride, the betrothed for his fiancée, the maidservants for their mistress, and the father for his daughter⁶⁸. The dependence on

οἱ παρόντες φίλοι, θρηνώδη φωνὴν ἀνέπεμπον, ὥστε πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν δακρύνειν, ἐπὶ τῇ αἰφνιδίῳ ἀπωλείᾳ τῆς κόρης” (my own translation).

⁶⁸ *Vita sanctae Euphrrosynae* 12: “ὁ πενθερὸς τὴν νύμφην, ὁ νεανίας τὴν ὄρμαστήν, αἱ δοῦλαι τὴν δέσποιναν, ὁ πατὴρ τὴν θυγατέρα θρηνῶν ἔλεγεν;”; Van Pelt, *Thecla, the First Cross-Dresser?*, p. 215-216.

the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* model is evident, although some influence from the *Martyrdom of Eugenia* should not be ruled out, given the similarity in expressing the vertical social relationship between mistress and maidservants through the terms *δοῦλος* and *δέσποινα*. In any case, this device serves to introduce Paphnutius's lament in direct speech, and the order in which the author of the *Life of Euphrosyne* presents the four affected by Euphrosyne's disappearance is clearly intentional.

Regarding the lament expressed by Paphnutius, I have already mentioned the presence of expressions used in different hagiographical text for the same purpose, which suggest a conscious choice of the elements of the composition and the creation of this lament (*θρήνος*) following rhetorical conventions for the expression of the grief. His speech resembles a funeral lament, such as that employed in the *Life of Macrina*, and appears to progressively move in that direction, deepening the portrayal of the father's grief over his daughter's absence.

The use of the exclamation of pain, *οἶμοι*, is noteworthy as it is characteristic of ritual lamentation in the entire Greek literary tradition. The emotional and personal involvement of the lamenting subject is clearly observed in the repetition of possessive pronouns within the exclamations and rhetorical questions concerning his daughter's supposed death. The use of familiar language ("*τέκνον ἐμὸν γλυκύτατον*") and various metaphors to describe what Euphrosyne means to Paphnutius also follows the patterns of ritual lamentation and had a parallel in the *Life of Macrina*⁶⁹. Lastly, there is a direct invocation to the earth, requesting sufficient time for Paphnutius to overcome the ordeal of his daughter's death and to discover who is responsible for what he believed to be her certain death. This final part of the lament reveals another source of the *Life of Euphrosyne*, as the phrase "*Γῆ, μὴ ἐπικαλύψῃς ἐφ' αἵματι σαρκός μου*" is literally taken from Job 16:18, where the prophet, a paradigmatic example of a suffering man, laments before God. This final detail emphasizes the use of a certain biblical repertoire for the composition of this lament, as it was the case in the liturgical poetry of that period⁷⁰.

The lament for the missing girl carries particular significance in Euphrosyne's narrative. As in the other texts examined, the scene of grief – here accompanied by an explicit lament – signals the abandonment of a normal, material life in favour of spiritual or monastic pursuits. In this case, Paphnutius' grief becomes a central focus of the narrative and converges with

⁶⁹ Gregorius Nyssenus, *Vita sanctae Macrinae* 26, 23-29: "τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῶν ὁ λύχνος [...] τὸ φῶς τῆς τῶν ψυχῶν ὁδηγίας".

⁷⁰ Harvey, *Guiding Grief*, p. 200-201.

the sequence depicting his daughter at the monastery of Scetis, where he begins a new spiritual relationship with the monk Smaragdus – who, in fact, is the daughter he has been seeking. This intricate plot heightens the significance of both Euphrosyne’s disappearance and Paphnutius’ lament.

In the *Metaphrastic Life of Euphrosyne*, Paphnutius’ lament is preserved in an abridged form and is integrated, as in the source text, into the description of the scene of grief – with fewer details in this case – in which the anonymous fiancé of Euphrosyne and her servants also participate⁷¹. Paphnutius begins his lament with a direct appeal to his daughter (“Ποῖ πεπόρευσαι, τέκνον;”), voicing his grief with poignant emotion (“ἐλεεινῶς ἐπιλέγοντα”). He reflects on his emotional state following Euphrosyne’s disappearance, maintaining the same tone throughout (“οἴμοι τέκνον ἐμὸν”) and employing key terms such as στέρησις (“deprivation”) and μόνωσις (“isolation”) to express his sense of loss. He concludes this brief lament by emphasizing that Euphrosyne was his only daughter (“οὐκ ἔστι μοι τέκνον ἕτερον ὡς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ βλέψαι, καὶ τῆς ἐπὶ σοὶ λύπης ἀναψυχὴν ἐφευρεῖν”), a detail that had remained implicit in the *Life of Euphrosyne*, as it was already mentioned at the beginning of the narrative.

4. Final remarks

The trajectory from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* through the *Life of Thecla*, the two versions of the *Martyrdom of Eugenia*, the *Life of Apollinaria*, the *Life of Euphrosyne*, and their metaphrastic versions shows the formation and refinement of a specific hagiographic motif: the lament for the missing girl. Initially rooted in the influential model of *Thecla* – whose narrative achieved wide diffusion – this motif became a flexible resource within hagiography focused on female sanctity, especially through the productive framework of the *imitatio Theclae*. Over time, the motif was developed and recontextualized in scenes involving concern, grief, or direct lament over a girl’s disappearance. This does not imply that the motif is unique or exclusive to hagiography focused on women, although it plays a decisive role in the development of these narratives and finds its fullest expression in the lives of transvestite saints. In any case, tracing, studying, and comparing such scenes in hagiographic texts focused on male saints would exceed the scope of an article of this kind.

This study has highlighted two distinct narrative strategies: narrator-described scenes of grief and direct expressions of lament by

⁷¹ See Symeon Metaphrastes, *Vita sanctae Euphrosynae Alexandrinae* 9.

characters. While grief descriptions appear widely, structured lament – following rhetorical conventions of the literary *θρῆνος* – occurs only in select examples (*Life of Euphrosyne*, especially, and briefly in the *Life of Thecla* or the *Life of Apollinaria*). Paphnutius’s lament in the *Life of Euphrosyne* emerges as the most rhetorically elaborate, linking the scene to earlier examples in the *Life of Thecla* and the *Life of Macrina*, and reflecting broader trends in late antique Christian literature.

Lexical and structural parallels confirm a shared textual tradition across these works, with the *Life of Thecla* acting as a key turning point – especially through its vivid depiction of Thecla’s empty room at dawn. The motif is consistently tied to fundamental moments in the protagonists’ journeys, often following conversion or cross-dressing, and signalling a deeper spiritual transformation. In the end, this lament for the missing girl echoes the emotional power of funerary lament while adapting it to new religious and narrative purposes within Byzantine hagiography focused on women. These scenes of grief and lament carry a clear symbolic weight, marking the protagonist’s departure from the material and familiar world. By witnessing the mourning of relatives, the texts emphasize the heroine’s renunciation of worldly attachments and signal the beginning of her spiritual transformation, highlighting the threshold between her former life and the monastic or ascetic path she is about to fully embrace.

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