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## A Virgin Acts Manfully: *Ælfric's Life of St Eugenia* and the Latin Versions

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A comparison between *Ælfric's Life of St Eugenia* and the Latin versions closest to his reveals an interesting difference in approach: the Old English *Life* seems to be written in a tradition more sympathetic towards women than the Latin.<sup>1</sup> The discussion of the Latin *Passio* in what follows will be based principally on the version found in the manuscripts of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, since *Ælfric's Life* appears to have been based on a version very similar to this one.<sup>2</sup>

The basic framework of the part of the story with which this discussion is concerned is fairly simple: a young woman disguises herself as a man in order to avoid discovery in her chosen way of life as a Christian ascetic. The way in which the essentially simple story is told can imply a good deal about the attitudes and preoccupations of the teller, and, by extension, those he expects in his audience.

A feature of the Latin *Passio* is its interest in wordplay, most notably in connection with the masculine disguise which St Eugenia adopts. As we shall see, this disguise enables the author to play on the literal meanings of particular scriptural passages. This has the effect, it will be suggested, of drawing attention to the idea of women's inferiority at the same time as the character and actions of the saint herself are praised.

The motive attributed to Eugenia's assumption of a masculine guise in the Latin is practical and uncomplicated enough at the beginning of the story: she wishes to join the Christians whom she has heard singing, and no women are allowed in their dwelling-place, so she tells her servants that she has decided to have her hair cut:<sup>3</sup>

ad diversorium huius congregationis, in quo Deo canitur, nulla  
patitur venire feminarum. Hoc [H. hęc] ego [C. F. H. ergo]

considerans, tonderi me extimo [C.F. aestimo; H. dignum estimo]. (FG § 5)<sup>4</sup>

[No woman is permitted to come to the dwelling-place of this assembly, where God is praised in song. [C. F. H. Therefore] considering this, I determined to be shorn [H. judged it fitting to be shorn].]

She further explains her choice of secrecy later, in the speech in which she defends herself against Melantia's accusation:

Obtaveram . . . castitatem meam illi soli ostendere . . . Non enim ad laudem hominum, sed ad honorem Dei, pudicitia a sapientibus regitur, custoditur integritas, et castitas possidetur. (FG § 25)<sup>5</sup>

[I had wished to reveal my chastity to him (i.e. to God) alone . . . For it is not for the glory of man, but for the honour of God, that modesty is ruled by the wise, integrity is guarded, and chastity held.]

The theme of chastity is, as one would expect, an important one, and towards the end of the story, Eugenia is given a speech with which she wins converts. She describes the joys and virtues of virginity, emphasises its primacy, and the glory of dying for it:

[Virginitas] est virtutis indicium [C. F. H. Virginitas enim primae<sup>6</sup> est uirtutis indicium]. Deo proxima, similis angelorum parens vite, amica sanctitatis, magistra securitatis, domina gaudii, dux itineris salutaris, virtutis fomentum, [C. F. H. add corona fiedi,] spei adminiculum, et subsidium charitatis. Nicil itaque nobis elaborandum est, nicilque ita est enitendum, nisi aut [H. ut aut][ cum virginitate vivamus, aut, quod est gloriosius, pro virginitate etiam moriamur. (FG § 34)<sup>7</sup>

[Virginity is a sign of virtue [C. F. H. Virginity is a sign of foremost virtue]. It is nearest to God, an imitation of angels, parent of life, friend of sanctity, mistress of safety, ruler of joy, leader of the way of salvation, nourishment of virtue, [C. F. H.

crown of faith,] support of hope, and protection of love. Thus we should labour at nothing, strive after nothing, save that we should either live in virginity, or, which is more glorious, that we should die for virginity.]

There is nothing here to surprise a reader familiar with traditional virginity literature; the implication of these passages seems to be that Eugenia's disguise was adopted simply in order that she would be able to live a life in which virginity played a central role, as it did in the life of many an ascetic and Christian martyr.

However, other passages in the Latin suggest that in the eyes of the writer there is more to the disguise than this; that the assumption of a masculine disguise is not just a matter of convenience, but an action of some symbolic significance. When the disguised Eugenia approaches the bishop Helenus (to whom her identity has already been revealed in a vision, FG § 10) with her request to be admitted into his monastery, he asks her her name. She does not say 'Eugenia', but 'Eugenius':

ego [C. F. H. ego uero] Eugenius nuncupor. Cui beatus Elenus: Recte, inquit, vocaris Eugenius, quia [C. F. quia enim] *viriliter agendo, virum perfectum* in agone te dominico obtulisti. (FG § 11)

[I am [C. F. H. indeed] called Eugenius. To whom the blessed Helenus said 'Rightly are you called Eugenius, because by doing manfully, you have offered yourself a perfect man in the Lord's contest'.]

Helenus's words recall I Corinthians 16.13,<sup>8</sup> 'Vigilate, state in fide, viriliter agite, et confortamini' [Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened].<sup>9</sup> Helenus plays on the literal meaning of *viriliter*: Eugenia is not only behaving 'courageously' – the usual, metaphorical meaning of the word; her disguise enables him to draw attention to the etymology of *viriliter*. By dressing as a man she is literally 'doing manfully'.

The unusual nature of Helenus's play on *viriliter* is highlighted if we compare it with other examples of the use of the word. The passage in Corinthians itself echoes 14 occurrences of the words in various permutations in the Vulgate Old Testament.<sup>10</sup> *Viriliter* in all these cases is used in the metaphoric sense of 'courageously'; not 'like a man' in any literal sense. It is worth quoting the instance

in the Book of Judith, since there the Israelites use the words in their song of praise to a woman, Judith. She is described as a courageous woman whom the Lord has strengthened because she has remained chaste in her widowhood:

Quae cum exisset ad illum benedixerunt illam omnes una voce, dicentes: Tu gloria Hierusalem, tu laetitia Israhel, tu honorificentia populi nostri; quia fecisti *viriliter, et confortatum est cor tuum*, eo quod castitatem amaveris, et post virum tuum, alterum non scieris: ideo et manus Domini confortavit te et ideo eris benedicta in aeternum.

[And when she was come out to him, they all blessed her with one voice, saying: Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people: for thou has done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou has loved chastity, and after thy husband hast not known any other: therefore, also, the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever.]  
(Judith 15. 10-11)

The significance of 'fecisti viriliter . . . tuum' here probably lies in the fact that the words deliberately recall earlier uses in the Old Testament. Judith's actions may thus be seen to accord with the commands of the Old Testament prophets, such as Moses, who instructed the Israelites to 'do manfully and be strengthened' (Deuteronomy 31.6). In its context in the Book of Judith, *viriliter* does not suggest any particular consciousness of the etymology of the word, nor any implicit assumption of feminine weakness (except insofar as a word which equates courageous behaviour with acting 'manfully', – in a manner worthy of a man – can always be taken to imply such weakness).<sup>11</sup>

The Latin *Acta S. Agathae* provides an example of the use of *viriliter* in connection with a female saint. Agatha recalls the phrase 'viriliter agite' in her final prayer in prison before her death: 'Domine, qui me creasti, et custodisti me ab infantia mea, et fecisti me in juventute viriliter agere'<sup>12</sup> [O Lord, who created me, and protected me from my infancy, and caused me in my youth to act manfully]. Apart from the usual metaphorical meaning of acting courageously, the contrast implied here seems to be between (spiritual) youth and adulthood<sup>13</sup> rather than between female and male.<sup>14</sup>

If we return to the *Passio S. Eugeniae*, we find that the bishop continues his wordplay with 'virum perfectum'. Helenus here seems to be referring to Ephesians 4.13: 'donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei, et agnitionis Filii Dei, in *virum perfectum*, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi' [Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ].<sup>15</sup> The 'perfect man' of Ephesians seems to combine the idea of unity in faith and knowledge of Christ with the idea of attaining (spiritual) maturity.<sup>16</sup> By 'doing manfully' Eugenia has become, in some way, a 'perfect man'.

It may be helpful to compare the bishop's use of 'viriliter' and 'vir' with some exegetical passages from Gregory, Bede and Ælfric. Gregory explains the literal and figurative uses of *vir* and *mulier* in the Bible in his commentary on Job 14.1 ('man that is born of a woman liveth a short time, and is full of many miseries'), where he says that in the Bible the word 'woman', *mulier*, is used either literally ('pro sexu') or figuratively ('pro infirmitate'). An example of the former is Galatians 4.4: 'God sent his son, made of a woman, made under the law'; of the latter, Ecclesiasticus 42.14: 'Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing well'. In the latter passage (and by implication elsewhere also), the word *vir* is applied to anyone (man or woman) strong and discerning, while the word *mulier* is taken as referring to a weak and undiscerning mind:

In sacro eloquio mulier aut pro sexu ponitur, aut pro infirmitate. Pro sexu quippe sicut scriptum est: 'Misit Deus filium suum factum ex muliere, factum sub lege' (Galatians 4.4). Pro infirmitate vero sicut per quemdam sapientem dicitur: 'Melior est iniquitas uiri, quam benefaciens mulier' (Ecclesiasticus 42.14). Vir etenim fortis quilibet et discretus vocatur, mulier vero mens infirma vel indiscreta accipitur. (*Moralia* 11, § 65, PL 75.982)  
[In Sacred Writ 'woman' is taken either for the sex, or else for 'frailty'. For the 'sex', as where it is written, 'God send forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law'. But for frailty, as where it is said by the Wise Man, 'Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing well'. For 'a man' is the term for every strongminded and discreet person, but 'a woman' is understood for the weak or indiscreet mind.]<sup>17</sup>

It is worth nothing that by interpreting the latter passage in this way, Gregory completely neutralises what, taken literally, is a virulently sexist statement.<sup>18</sup>

Bede quotes I Corinthians 16.13 in the course of his homily on the story of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6.1-14). Commenting on the spiritual meaning of the 'five thousand men' who received sustenance, he writes:

Quinque milia *uir*i qui manducauerunt perfectionem eorum qui uerbo uitae reficiuntur insinuant. *Virorum* quippe nomine solent in scripturis perfectiores quique figurari quos *feminea mollities* nulla corrumpit quales esse cupit eos quibus dicit apostolus: 'Vigilate state in fide *uiriliter agite* et confortamini'. (*Homelia*, 2.2)<sup>19</sup>

[The five thousand men who ate make known (or set forth) the perfection of those who are refreshed by the word of life. The scriptures use the word men to refer figuratively to the more perfect, whom feminine weakness does not corrupt. That is what the apostle desires them to be like, to whom he says: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened'.]

Ælfric used this homily as one of the sources for his homily on the same subject.<sup>20</sup> While the Old English retains the underlying implication of 'feminine' weakness, Ælfric adds that women can also 'be manfully constituted' in the figurative sense, i.e. of a courageous disposition:

Ðær wæron getealde æt ðam gereorde fif ðusend *wera*; forðon þe ða *menn*, þe to ðam gastlican gereorde belimpað, sceolon beon *werlice* geworhte, swa swa se apostol cwæð; he cwæð, 'Beoð wacole, and standað on geleafan, and *onginnað werlice*, and beoð gehyrte.' Ðeah gif wifmann bið *werlice* geworht, and strang to Godes willan, heo bið þonne geteald to ðam *werum* þe æt Godes mysan sittað. (Thorpe, I, 188)

[There were numbered at that meal five thousand men (i.e. male persons); because the people (i.e. human beings of either sex) who belong to the spiritual meal are 'manfully constituted' (i.e. of a courageous disposition), as the apostle said; he said, 'Be

watchful, and stand firm in faith, act manfully and be encouraged'. However if a woman be 'manfully constituted', and strong in performing God's will, she will then be numbered with the men (i.e. male persons) who sit at God's table.]<sup>21</sup>

In their elucidation of the 'spiritual' (i.e. allegorical) meaning of the 'men' in the story, the words of both Bede and Ælfric imply received prejudices about masculine and feminine; but Ælfric may be more sensitive to the difficulty inherent in the application of *werlice* to women as well as men, since he takes the trouble to draw attention to the metaphorical and more inclusive meaning of the word. This may not have been so necessary for Bede, since 'courageously' was the normal meaning of the Latin word *viriliter*.

In contrast, however, to these passages of scriptural interpretation by Gregory, Bede, and Ælfric, the Latin *Passio S. Eugeniae* delights in the literal as well as metaphorical enactment of St Paul's words in Corinthians and Ephesians in Eugenia's story. The author comments on Eugenia's conduct when she has entered the monastery: 'Illa vero virili habitu et animo, in prædicto virum monasterio permanebat' [Indeed she remained in the aforesaid monastery of men with the dress and mind (or courage) of a man]. Her progress in learning is mentioned, and her virtues. Then the account continues:

Quis enim eam [C. F. H. omit eam] deprehenderet [C. F. deprehenderit] quod esset femina, quam ita virtus Christi et virginitas immaculata [H. omits immaculata] protegebat, ut imitabilis [C. F. inimitabilis] esset etiam viris? Sermo autem eius erat humilis in caritate [C. F. claritate], clarus in mediocritate, vitio [C. F. H. vitiis] carens, et facundiam fugiens [H. facundia fulgens], omnes in humilitate superabat. Nullus illi ad orationem inveniebatur anterior, [C. F. H. add Efficiebatur autem omnibus omnia], tristem consolabatur, læto congaudebat, irascentem uno sermone [C. F. add suo] mitigabat; superbientem ita [H. adds uno] suo edificabat exemplo, ut ovem subito factam ex lupo, credere delectaret. (FG § 13)<sup>22</sup>

[For who could detect that she was a woman, whom the power of Christ and immaculate virginity protected, so that she was a model, even for men [C. F. inimitable, even to men]? For her



speech was humble in (its) love [C. F. plainness], shining in (its) moderation, free from vice [C. F. H. vices], and avoiding fine words [H. shining in eloquence]. She surpassed all in humility. No one was found sooner than she at prayer. [C. F. H. She became all things to all men (cf. I Corinthians 9.22)], she comforted the sorrowful, rejoiced with the glad, soothed the angry by a single word. She instructed the proud by her [H. single] example so that he delighted to believe that suddenly a sheep had been made from a wolf.]

It is possible that 'virili habitu et animo' simply describes Eugenia's dress and her 'courage': *animus* alone often means 'courage',<sup>23</sup> so that 'virili animo' may be taken as equivalent to *viriliter*, 'courageously'. Nevertheless, the phrase does seem at the same time to exploit the prejudice enshrined in the language, so that her masculine dress is seen to symbolise one of the qualities for which she is praised.

Eugenia herself becomes the mouthpiece of the clearest expression in the *Passio* of the idea of male superiority and female inferiority. This is in the speech in which she defends herself against Melantia's charge of attempted seduction – a defence which culminates in the dramatic revelation of Eugenia's sex. I have numbered the lines of this passage for convenience of comparison between the versions:

- Tanta enim virtus est nominis eius [= Christi], ut etiam femine, in timore [H. adds nominis] eius positę, virilem obtineant dignitatem. Neque enim diversitas sexus inveniri potest in fide [C. F. H. add superior], quum beatus Paulus, magister omnium
- 5 [C. F. H. omit omnium] christianorum, dicat quod apud Deum non sit discretio masculi et femine: omnes enim in Christo unum sumus. Huius ergo [C. H. ego] norman animo ferventiori [C. F. fervente; H. ferventi] suscipiens [C. F. add et] confidentiam, quam in Christo habui, nolui esse femineam [C. H. femineam; F.
- 10 feminea]. Consideravi enim non esse inimicam honestatis [H. honestati] simulationem per quam femina virum simulat, sed magis hoc iure puniri, si pro affectu vitiorum vir feminam fingat [F. fingit]. Et hoc iure laudandum, si pro amore virtutum<sup>24</sup> *sexus infirmior virilem gloriam* imitetur. Idcirco nunc ego,

- 15 amore divino [C. H. divine; F diuinę] religionis accensa, virilem habitum sumsi [C. adsumsi F. adsumpsi H. assumpsi], et *virum gessi perfectum*, virginitatem Christo fortiter conservando. Et hæc dicens, scidit a capite tunica [C. F. H. tunicam] qua erat induta, et apparuit femina. (FG §§ 25-26)

[The power of Christ's name is so great that even women placed in the fear of him [H. his name] may obtain the dignity (i.e. (high) rank) of a man. Indeed no difference of sex can be found in faith [C. F. H. a difference of sex cannot be found, i.e. thought to be, superior in faith], since the blessed Paul, teacher of all [not C. F. H.] Christians, says that in the Lord there is no distinction between male and female, for we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3.28). Therefore [C. H. omit] accepting his law with a burning spirit, [C. F. and] (accepting) the trust (or confidence) I had in Christ, I did not wish to be a woman [C. F. H. womanly]. For I considered the pretence by which a woman pretends to be a man not to be injurious of [H. to] honour. But this is rightly to be punished if with a desire for vices a man feigns (to be) a woman. And this is rightly deserving of praise if for the love of virtues the weaker sex imitates manly glory (i.e. the glorious masculine condition). Now for that reason, kindled with the divine love of piety, [C. F. H. the love of divine piety] I assumed a manly dress, and conducted myself as a perfect man, by preserving with fortitude (my) virginity for Christ. And saying this, she rent the tunic, with which she was clothed, from the top, and showed herself to be a woman (or, and a woman appeared).]

This is difficult to interpret, since there seems to be a contradiction between St Eugenia's acceptance of the inferiority of women and the words she quotes from Galatians. In spite of the reference to Galatians, her words suggest that the 'dignity' of a man is greater than that of a woman, and that 'we are all one in Christ' if women become like men.

We may compare the parallel passages in the VP and Mombritius versions. The VP version is very different from the Cotton-Corpus one from 'Huius' (line 7 above) to 'conservando' (line 17 above):

Tanta enim est virtus nominis ejus, ut etiam feminae in timore  
ejus positae virilem obtineant dignitatem; et neque ei sexus  
diversitas fide potest inveniri superior, cum beatus Paulus  
apostolus, magister omnium Christianorum, dicat quod apud  
5 Dominum non sit discretio masculi et feminae, omnes enim in  
Christo unum sumus. Hujus ergo normam animo fervente  
suscepi, et ex confidentia quam in Christo habui, nolui esse  
femina, sed virginitatem immaculatam tota animi intentione  
conservans, virum gessi constanter in Christo. Non enim  
10 infrunitam honestatis simulationem assumpsi, ut vir feminam  
simularem: sed femina *viriliter agendo*, virum gessi, virginitatem  
quae in Christo est fortiter amplectendo. Et haec dicens, scidit a  
capite tunicam qua erat induta, et apparuit femina. (PL 73.614)

[The power of his name is so great that even women placed in the fear of it may obtain the dignity of a man; and to him difference of sex cannot be found (to be) greater (i.e. more important) than faith, since the blessed apostle Paul, teacher of all Christians, says that in the Lord there is no distinction between male and female; for we are all one in Christ. Therefore I accepted his rule with a burning spirit, and from the trust (or confidence) I had in Christ, I did not wish to be a woman, but preserving unstained virginity with all the zeal of my spirit, resolutely in Christ I conducted myself as a man. I did not indeed assume a senseless pretence of virtue (or beauty),<sup>25</sup> so that, being a man, I might pretend to be a woman; but being a woman, by acting in a manly way, I conducted myself steadfastly as a man, in embracing with fortitude the virginity which is in Christ. And saying this, she rent the tunic, with which she was clothed, from the top, and showed herself to be a woman (or, and a woman appeared).]

The penultimate sentence quoted from this version may explain what Eugenia is referring to when she says 'I acted like a man'. *Fortiter* and *viriliter* are synonyms (see Lewis and Short, s.v. 'fortiter' 2): she 'embraced' virginity with fortitude, and so conducted herself like a man, by 'doing manfully'.<sup>26</sup>

Eugenia's speech in the Mombritius version is just over half the length of that

in the Cotton-Corpus version. The passages quoted from FG and VP from 'Tanta enim' (line 1) to 'quam in Christo habui' (FG line 9, VP line 7) have no parallel in the Mombritius version. From 'consideravi' (FG line 10) the Mombritius and Cotton-Corpus versions are very close:

quia *uiriliter* in amore dei *agit* animus christianus: confidentiam meam nolui esse foemineam. Consideraui enim [non (esse)]<sup>27</sup> inimicam honestati simulationem: per quam foemina uirum simulat. Sed magis hoc iure puniri: si pro affectu uiciorum uir foeminam [fingat]<sup>28</sup> et hoc iure laudandum: si pro affectu uirtutum *sexus infirmior uirilem* formam<sup>29</sup> imittetur. Id circo ego nunc amore diuinae relligionis [sic] accensa uirilem habitum sumpsit: et *uirum* gessi *perfectum*: uirginitatem Christo fortiter conservando. Et haec dicens: scidit a capite tunicam: qua erat induta: et insignis facie paruit et pulcro pectore uirgo. (p. 395)

[Because the Christian soul acts manfully in the love of God, I did not wish my trust (or confidence, or perhaps boldness) to be womanly. For I considered the pretence by which a woman pretends to be a man [not] to be injurious to honour. But this is rightly to be punished if with a desire for vices a man [feigns] (to be) a woman, and this is rightly deserving of praise if for the love of virtues the weaker sex imitates a manly appearance. Now for that reason, kindled with the love of divine piety, I assumed a manly dress, and I conducted myself as a perfect man, by preserving with fortitude (my) virginity for Christ. And saying this, she rent the tunic, with which she was clothed, from the top, and showed herself, remarkable in appearance, and with a beautiful breast, to be a woman (or, a woman appeared, remarkable etc.).]

Eugenia does not quote Galatians here. Her words, however, as in the other versions, continue the interplay between the literal and the metaphorical; her dress reflects, or symbolises, her 'courage' or 'fortitude', as she fulfils St Paul's injunction in I Corinthians 16.13 to 'do manfully' (quoted above, and cf. note 9 above). Her words also, as in the other versions, indicate an acceptance of the notion of male superiority and female inferiority. The saint expresses this prejudice

even as she reveals her sex to prove her innocence.

Jerome might have approved this point of view. The Latin versions of the *Passio S. Eugeniae* nicely exemplify his notion of the relative status of men and women. Jerome wrote in his commentary on Ephesians:

quamdiu mulier partui servit et liberis, hanc habet ad virum differentiam, quam corpus ad animam. Sin autem Christo magis voluerit servire quam saeculo, mulier esse cessabit, et *dicetur vir*, quia omnes in *perfectum virum* cupimus occurrere. (*Comm. in Epist. ad Ephes.* III, 5.28, PL 26.533)

[As long as woman devotes herself to birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to devote herself to Christ more than to the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man, because we all desire [in the words of St Paul] 'to meet into a perfect man' (cf. Ephesians 4.13).]<sup>30</sup>

In a letter of encouragement to a man who had taken a vow of continence with his wife, Jerome wrote how this decision raised her to her husband's level and enabled her to achieve equality with a man:

Habes tecum prius in carne, nunc in spiritu sociam; de conjugē germanam, *de femina virum*, de subjecta parem: quae sub eodem iugo ad coelestia simul regna festinet. (Letter 71.3, PL 22.670)  
[You have with you one who was once your partner in the flesh but is now your partner in the spirit; once your wife but now your sister; once a woman but now a man; once an inferior but now an equal. Under the same yoke as you she hastens toward the same heavenly kingdom.]<sup>31</sup>

Ambrose wrote in similar vein in his explanation of the Ephesians verse:

Quae non credit, mulier est, et adhuc corporei sexus appellatione signatur: nam quae credit, occurrit in *virum perfectum*, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi, carens jam nomine saeculi, corporis sexu, lubrico iuventutis, multiloqueo

senectutis. (*Expos. evang. sec. Lucam*, X.161, PL 15.1844)

[She who does not believe is a woman and is still designated by the name of her sex, for she who believes 'has met into a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ', giving up then the name of (her) sex (i.e. the name of woman),<sup>32</sup> the sex of (her) body (i.e. her physical sex), the unsteadiness of youth, the loquaciousness of old age.]<sup>33</sup>

This fits Eugenia's case particularly well. Eugenia has achieved such perfect manhood, in her own view and that of Helenus (see p. 3 and 8-12 above).<sup>34</sup> It is salutary to see how a female saint can be presented in such a way as to reinforce the idea that women are inferior.

The potential weakness, indeed wickedness of woman is in turn exemplified in the figure of Melantia. Eugenia, who has become a Christian and transcended her sex by taking on the role of a monk in order to preserve her virginity, is confronted with Melantia, the wanton woman, the rich widow who attempts to seduce a monk. Melantia provides the author with another opportunity to indulge in wordplay. This time the play is on Melantia's name, which the author takes to be derived from Greek 'melanthēs, -es', 'black' (and compare 'melas, -anos', 'black, dark'; and of character, 'dark, malignant').<sup>35</sup>

When 'the miserable Melantia' has been attempting 'to approach (Eugenia) with her filthy embraces, and to turn her to wantonness with her idle talk' ('obscenis eam amplexibus infelix Melantia temtabat adire, et sermonibus vanis ad lasciviam inclinare', FG § 18), Eugenia arms herself with the sign of the cross (§ 19), and proceeds to rebuke Melantia at some length:

Recte Melantia nomen habere cognosceris; nigredinis [H. nigredine] enim repleta perfidia [H. inuidie], nigra diceris et obscura, socia tenebrarum, amica diaboli, dux pollutionis, fomentum libidinis, soror anxietatis perpetuę, et mortis filia sempiternę. (FG § 19)<sup>36</sup>

[Rightly are you known to have the name Melantia: for (you are) filled with the treachery of blackness [H. blackness of envy], you are called black and dark, companion of darkness (cf. II Corinthians 6.14), friend of the devil, leader of pollution, nourishment of lust, sister of perpetual anxiety, and daughter of

everlasting death.]

Two things may be said about this passage. First, Eugenia's first words to Melantia seem to be a deliberate echo of Helenus's words to Eugenia (FG § 11, quoted above); and secondly, the phrasing and vocabulary of the remainder of the passage (from 'nigra diceris') provide a parallel with Eugenia's account of the virtue of virginity, (FG § 34, quoted above): e.g. *amica sanctitatis / amica diaboli; dux itineris salutaris / dux pollutionis; virtutis fomentum / fomentum libidinis*. Thus attention is drawn to the contrast between the wickedness of the lust of which Melantia is guilty, and the virtue of virginity which Eugenia embraces; and Melantia's name is shown to signify her wicked character, much as Eugenia's masculine dress, and adoption of the masculine form of her name, symbolise her 'courage' – and perhaps also her transcendence of the weakness associated with her sex.

There are significant differences between the Latin versions, with their playing on words, and consequent reinforcement of certain prejudices, and Ælfric's treatment of St Eugenia's Life. Ælfric's is a much more straightforward account. What he retains (in terms of phraseology as well as structure) is very close to the Latin Cotton-Corpus version; what he omits, however, considerably alters the perspective of the life.

One of the few additions he makes is the opening sentence, which has no parallel in the Latin versions:

MÆG GEHYRAN SE ðE WYLE BE þAM HALGAN mædene .  
eugenian philypus dæhter .  
hu heo ðurh mægðhad mærllice þeah .  
and þurh martyrdom þisne middanearð oferswað.<sup>37</sup>  
[He who wishes it, may hear concerning the holy maiden Eugenia,  
the daughter of Philip; how she by her virginity gloriously  
flourished, and by martyrdom overcame this world.]<sup>38</sup>

This draws attention at the outset to Eugenia's virginity and her martyrdom, suggesting that these are to be the two principal concerns of her Life. This is indeed the case in the Old English, unlike the Latin, where further complicating interests emerge as the story progresses.

Like the Latin, but more briefly, Ælfric describes how Eugenia has encountered and been inspired by the teaching of St Paul,<sup>39</sup> and has then been

moved by the singing of the Christians so that she asks her servants to cut her hair and help disguise her as a man in order that she may approach the Christians without being exposed:

Ða nam eugenia hi on sundorspræce .  
het hi gebroðra . and bæd þæt hi  
hyre fæx forcurfon wæpmonna wysan .  
and mid wædum gehiwodon . swylce heo cniht wære .  
wolde ðam cristenan genealecan  
on wærlicum hiwe . þæt heo ne wurde ameldod. (ll. 48-53)  
[Then Eugenia took them into private conversation, called them  
brothers, and asked that they cut her hair in the fashion of men,  
and disguise her with clothing as if she were a young man; she  
wished to approach the Christians in the appearance of a man, so  
that she might not be exposed.]<sup>40</sup>

Her motive, that of avoiding discovery, remains uncomplicated throughout Ælfric's version. When she approaches Helenus he recognises her sex, for it has been revealed to him in a vision – lines 64-65 – (as in the Latin: FG § 10). However he does not take the opportunity to comment on her having 'acted manfully' as the Helenus of the Latin does (FG § 11, quoted above). Rather, what he says reinforces the theme of virginity established at the opening, together with the idea, if not of martyrdom, of persecution; and when he tells her to retain her masculine disguise, it is purely with a view to preserving secrecy:

He genam hi þa onsundron . and sæde hyre gewislice .  
hwæt heo man ne wæs . and hwylcere mægþe .  
and þæt heo þurh mægðhad mycclum gelicode .  
þam heofonlican cyninge . þe heo gecoren hæfde .  
and cwæð þæt heo sceolde swiðlice æhtnyssa .  
for mægðhade ðrowian . and þeah beon gescyld  
þurh þone soðan drihten . þe gescyld his gecorenan . . .  
Ða bebead se biscop þam gebogenan mædene .  
þæt heo swa þurhwundade . on þam wærlicum hiwe .  
oþþæt hi on fante gefullode wurdon .  
and mynsterlicre drohtnunge . dearnunge geþeodde (ll. 77-91)



[Then he took her aside, and told her truly how that (?) she was not a man, and (he told her) of what family she was, and that she, by the virginity which she had chosen, greatly pleased the heavenly king (or 'by her virginity, she greatly pleased the heavenly king, whom she had chosen'): and he said that she would suffer persecutions terribly for her virginity, and yet be protected by the true lord, who shields his chosen ones . . . Then the bishop instructed the converted maiden to continue in this way in the appearance of a man until they had been baptised in the font, and to take part secretly in the monastic way of life.]

It is important to note that there is nothing here that Helenus does not also say in the Latin, although Ælfric condenses the exchange of information about her origins (FG § 11); but by concentrating on her virginity and omitting the punning reference to her having 'done manfully',<sup>41</sup> Ælfric has changed the emphasis.

The passage in the Latin describing Eugenia's conduct in the monastery (FG § 13, quoted above) has its counterpart in Ælfric's account:

Eugenia þa wunode on þam mynstre  
*mid wærlicum mode* . þeah þe heo mæden wære .  
mid hyre twam cnihtum . uncuð gehwam .  
And heold on hyre þeawum halige drohtnunge .  
ðurh modes liþnesse . and mycelre eadmodnesse .  
and þurh halige mægnu . þam hælende gecwæmde .  
Heo þeah on lare . þæs rihtan geleafan .  
and on godcundlicum gewrytum mid godum wyllan .  
and *wearð awend of wulfe to sceape*. (ll. 92-100)

[Eugenia then remained in the monastery with a manly mind (or heart, or courage), though she was a maiden, with her two servants, unknown to anyone, and maintained in her conduct the holy way of life with gentleness of mind and great humility, and by her holy virtues pleased the Saviour. She increased in the doctrine of the true belief, and in the divine scriptures with a good will, and was changed from a wolf to a sheep.]

The question of Ælfric's emphasis here is rather more arguable. The Old English,

though much abbreviated, echoes some of the phraseology of the Latin:

virili habitu et animo / mid wærlicum mode  
ut ovem subito factam ex lupo / awend of wulfe to scape

If 'mid wærlicum mode' (line 93) carries the same connotations as I have argued the Latin does, that the change is also one which confers on her the status and dignity of a man, it is also true that Ælfric does not dwell on the idea, here or elsewhere; nor does he offer any further explanation. Both 'on þæm wærlicum hiwe' just previously (line 89), and 'on wærlicum hiwe' (line 53), are neutral concerning any symbolic implications of the disguise. Ælfric uses not the adverb *werlice* (which would correspond to *viriliter*), but the adjective *werlic* at lines 53, 89, and 93.<sup>42</sup> The point of the phrase here may instead be the remarkable fact that Eugenia's sex remains unrecognised. Interestingly, Ælfric has taken the image of the wolf becoming a sheep to refer to Eugenia – it may be possible to read the Latin in this way. It is not clear in the Old English, however, whether the reference to her turning from a wolf to a sheep denotes her spiritual growth, her progress from paganism to Christianity – or, at the same time, to her having become, in some way, though a woman, like a man. Perhaps Ælfric has not been careful enough about possible ambiguities in his adaptation.<sup>43</sup> But unlike the Latin, which assumes the inferiority of women in its treatment of the story, the general tenor of Ælfric's account, quite deliberately, it seems, is not to attach the same weight to the spiritual significance of her disguise as the Latin does. Ælfric does not refer to the idea of the 'perfect man'; nor does he play on the two senses, literal and metaphorical, of *werlice*.

All this affects one's reading of the episode of the attempted seduction of Eugenia by Melantia. In Ælfric, in the confrontation between the two, with its physical incident – Melantia actually embraces Eugenia – the contrast is not between a wicked woman and a woman who is good partly, as I have tried to show, because she has behaved 'manfully', but between two kinds of woman, the 'prostitute' and the virgin: 'beclypte seo myltestre þæt clæne mæden' (line 169)<sup>44</sup> [the prostitute embraced the chaste maiden]. The force of this is not that Eugenia has transcended her female sex by adopting a masculine disguise and behaving with ('masculine') courage, but rather that she has overcome the weakness of sexuality with her virginity. Certainly it is Eugenia's virginity and not her 'manly' – or indeed 'courageous' – behaviour which receives the emphasis. There is, in addition, no

play on Melantia's name in the Old English, although Melantia's character is here also described as 'black'. As in the Latin (FG § 19, quoted above), Eugenia reproves the widow in no uncertain terms:

beclypte seo myltestre þæt clæne mæden .  
and wolde hi gebygan to bismorlicum hæmede.  
Hwæt ða eugenia . hi gebletsode.  
and cwæð to ðære sceande . þæt heo soðlice wære  
galnysse ontendnyss . and gramena mæge .  
þeostra gefæra . and mid swearnysse afulled .  
Deaðes dohtor and deofles fætels .<sup>45</sup> (ll. 169-75)

[The prostitute embraced the chaste maiden, and wished to turn her to shameful fornication. Whereupon Eugenia crossed herself, and said to the wretched woman that she truly was a kindler of lust, and a kinswoman of wrath, companion of darkness, and filled with blackness; daughter of death and vessel of the devil.]

Any play on Melantia's name would perhaps have been lost on an Anglo-Saxon audience without an accompanying explanation.<sup>46</sup> It is possible that Ælfric did not exploit the idea for the simple reason that his source-text did not provide him with the information he needed. On the other hand, it may have been that the information was available to him, but such wordplay did not suit his immediate purpose: for as Joyce Hill has shown, Ælfric was very willing elsewhere in his homilies to play on the meanings of foreign words in his sources, particularly proper nouns.<sup>47</sup> He may have been no more interested in a play on the literal and metaphorical meanings of 'Melantia' than he was in such a play on *viriliter* / *werlice*. Whatever the reason for it, the omission of wordplay here is consistent with the more straightforward, less playful (and less prejudiced) methods and concerns of Ælfric's version.

When the time comes for Eugenia to prove her innocence Ælfric reports her defence in indirect speech. Eugenia, 'seo æþele fæmne' (line 227) [the noble woman], expands a little on the motive assigned to her when she adopted her disguise; but what she says before she tears her garment apart, in comparison with her lengthy speech in the Latin, is brief and simple:

[Heo] cwæð þæt heo wolde hi sylfe bediglian.

and criste anum hyre clænnysse healdan .  
on mægðhade wuniende . mannum uncuð .  
and forðy underfænge æt fruman þa gyrlan .  
wærlices hades . and wurde geefsoð .  
Æfter þysum wordum heo totær hyre gewædu .  
and ætæwde hyre breost . (ll. 228-34)

[[She] said that she had wished to keep herself hidden, and to preserve her purity for Christ alone, dwelling in virginity, unknown to men; and for that reason at the beginning had adopted the dress of a male order, and was shorn. After these words she tore apart her garment and revealed her breast.]

In the Old English, Eugenia has not suggested it might be better not to be a woman, nor referred to the 'weaker sex' (see pp. 8 ff. above). The disguise was assumed to preserve secrecy and virginity, and this is all the explanation offered by Eugenia in the Old English.

It is also worth noting, in this context, that Ælfric comments on the virginity of Eugenia's servants Protus and Jacintus.<sup>48</sup> The two are martyred for their faith before Eugenia, and Ælfric gives them this epitaph:

Ðas martyras næron næfre on life  
þurh wif besmytene . ac hi wunedon on clænnysse .  
oð heora lifes ænde . mid mycclum geleafan . (ll. 380-82)  
[These martyrs were never in life defiled with women, but they dwelled in chastity until their lives' end, with great faith.]

This comment is not present in the Latin versions (although it is possible that Ælfric's precise source might have included such a comment). The strong expression 'þurh wif besmytene' [defiled with women], presumably alludes to the hundred and forty-four thousand virgins of Apocalypse 14.4: 'These are they who were not defiled with women'.

The emphasis on virginity in this *Life* is characteristic of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* collection as a whole, and of the monastic context in which they were written. Virginity had always held a central place in Christian ascetic life, and it was no less a concern in the Benedictine reform movement of which Ælfric was a part. In his homily on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ælfric wrote:

Se mægðhad is gemæne ægðrum, cnihtum and mædenum,  
þe clænlice lybbað æfre fram cildhade  
oð ende heora lifes for Cristes lufon,  
swa swa þa clænan munecas doð and ða clænan myncena  
on mynstrum gehwær wide geond þas woruld,  
swa swa hit awriten is on *Vitas Patrum*  
and on fela bocum be manegum þusendum  
on mynstrum and on westenum. (ll. 224-31)<sup>49</sup>

[Virginity is common to both, to young men and young women, who live chastely all the time from childhood until their lives' end for the love of Christ, as do the chaste monks and the chaste nuns in monasteries everywhere far and wide throughout this world, as it is written in the *Vitas Patrum* and in many books concerning many thousands in monasteries and in deserts.]

In Ælfric's view (as in that of medieval writers in general) virginity was desirable and praiseworthy, a mark of purity, faith, and spiritual commitment, regardless of sex.

Thus although Ælfric appears to have used a Latin *Passio S. Eugeniae* similar to those discussed, his interpretation of the story is quite different. The tradition in which he was writing, and wished to pass on to his audience, seems to be less prejudiced in its views towards women, and in its notion of what constituted a woman's holiness, than that which produced the Latin versions of the same story.

NOTES

This article is based on a chapter of my dissertation *Women and Sanctity: Lives of the Female Saints Written in English from Cynewulf to the Katherine Group*, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1991), pp. 188-216. I am grateful to Geoffrey Needham, Lynne Grundy, Mark Bateson, and Joyce Hill for their help.

<sup>1</sup> For discussion of several stories of women who disguised themselves as men, including a Latin version (from the *Vitae Patrum*) of the *Life of St Eugenia*, see John Anson, 'The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: The Origin and Development of a Motif', *Viator*, 5 (1974), 1-32. Paul E. Szarmach discusses Eugenia in detail in 'Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia', in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, edited by Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington, 1990), pp. 146-57; he gives references to other studies on p. 156, note 4. Szarmach uses the *Vitae Patrum* version of the *Life* in his discussion; but see below, and note 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Patrick H. Zettel, 'Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources and the Latin Legendary Preserved in BL MS Cotton Nero E. i & CCC MS 9 and Other Manuscripts' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford, 1979), pp. 62, 110-21, 249-50. Zettel gives an account of the Legendary and manuscripts in 'Saints' Lives in Old English: Latin manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric', *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 17-37 (at 18-20). See also note 3 below.

<sup>3</sup> Quotations will be from the text of the Cotton-Corpus version as printed in *Pasionario Hispanico*, edited by A. Fábrega Grau, *Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra: Serie Litúrgica*, vol. VI, Tom. II (Madrid, Barcelona, 1955), pp. 83-98 [FG]; references are to the paragraph numbers. I have collated this text with the three manuscripts of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary which contain the *Passio S. Eugeniae*: Cambridge, Corpus Christi Library, MS 9, pp. 410-26 [C]; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 354, fols 176r-186v [f]; Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P7 vi, fols 205b-213a [H]. MS abbreviations, except  $\epsilon$ , have been silently expanded. Variant spellings and punctuation are not in general recorded, but those variant readings which affect the sense are noted. Reference will also be made where appropriate to the *Vitae Patrum* version: PL 73.605-24 [VP] and the Mombritius version (*Sanctuarium seu vitae sanctorum*, (2nd edition, 2 vols, Paris, 1910), II, 391-98, cited below by page number as Mombritius), because they may have been used by the compiler of the Cotton-Corpus version (see Zettel's dissertation), and a comparison can sometimes be helpful. They also help to illustrate the difference in approach between the Latin and Old English versions. Words and phrases given particular attention in the discussion are italicised.

<sup>4</sup> VP: 'tondere me arbitror' (PL 73.608). The Mombritius version has no precise parallel to these words. She says to her companions Protus and Hiacynthus 'crinibus meis tonsuram adhibete' (p. 392) [apply a shearing to my hair].

<sup>5</sup> There is considerable variation in detail between the versions here, although the gist of what she says is very similar (PL 73.614, Mombritius, p. 395). The remainder of this speech will be discussed below, pp. 8 ff.

<sup>6</sup> MSS 'prima'. Emendation based on VP version, quoted in note 7 below.

<sup>7</sup> There are some minor differences between this and the VP text:

Virginitas enim est primae virtutis indicium Deo proximum, similis angelis, parens vitae, amica sanctitatis, via securitatis, domina gaudii, dux virtutis, fomentum et corona fidei, adminiculum et subsidium charitatis. Nihil ita nobis laborandum, nihil ita est enitendum, nisi cum virginitate vivamus, aut quod est gloriosius, pro virginitate moriamur. (PL 73.617)

[Of this passage the Mombritius text has only 'uirginitas enim prima est uirtutis indicium: similis angelorum, parens uitae amica sanctitatis: gaudii dux' (p. 396).]

<sup>8</sup> Biblical quotations are given from the Vulgate and the Douay-Rheims translation.

<sup>9</sup> The VP version is even closer to I Corinthians 16.13: 'ego vero Eugenius nuncupor. Cui beatus Helenus dixit: Recte te Eugenium vocas; *viriliter enim agis, et confortetur* cor tuum pro fide Christi. Ergo recte vocaris Eugenius' (PL 73.610). There is nothing in the VP version which corresponds to 'virum perfectum . . . obtulisti'. The Mombritius version has 'Recte inquit uocaris Eugenius : quia uir(i)litem agendum te in agone obtulisti' (p. 393). For 'in agone' see I Corinthians 9.25 and II Timothy 2.5. 'obtulisti' [you have offered], perhaps carries the suggestion of a (sacrificial) offering: see Vulgate Concordance (B. Fischer, *Novae Concordantiae Biblorum Sacrorum iuxta Vulgatam Versionem Critice Editam*, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt, 1977), s.v. 'offero'; and compare the injunction given to Moses in Leviticus 1.3, 10, that offerings to the Lord must be male ('masculum') and without blemish ('immaculatum').

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 31.6, Joshua 1.18, I Paralipomenon 19.13, 22.13, 28.20, II Paralipomenon 32.7, Judith 15.11, Psalm 26.14, 30.25, I Maccabees 2.64, 6.31, II Maccabees 10.35, 14.43, III Esdras 8.96.

<sup>11</sup> The extant Old English versions of the Book of Judith have no equivalent for the word. The Old English poem *Judith* omits verses 9-12, passing at line 323 from Judith 15.8 to 15.13 (*Judith*, edited by Benno Timmer, 2nd edition (London, 1961), pp. 15-16). In his homily on the Book of Judith Ælfric uses the verses, but does not directly translate *viriliter* (*Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, edited by Bruno Assmann, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa, vol. III (Kassel 1889; reprinted with a supplementary introduction by Peter Clemoes, Darmstadt, 1964), no. 9, lines 388-94). Even if an ambiguity remains in the Vulgate, clearly neither Ælfric nor the author of the Old English poem is concerned with the 'manly' quality of Judith's conduct. See further note 34 below.

<sup>12</sup> *Acta Sanctorum*, edited by J. Bollandus and others (Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, 1643-1894),

Feb. I, 623.

<sup>13</sup> Compare I Corinthians 13.11: 'When I was a child . . . I understood as a child . . . but when I became a man . . .'

<sup>14</sup> Ælfric based his *Life of St Agatha* on a version very similar to this one (see J. H. Ott, *Über die Quellen der Heiligenleben in Ælfrics Lives of Saints I* (Halle, 1892), pp. 29-31; and Zettel, 'Saints' Lives', pp. 31-32). As in the case of Judith (see note 11 above), the idea of *viriliter* is not one which Ælfric takes up in his (generally close) translation of the Life: he provides no equivalent of these words in her prayer (see *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, edited by Walter W. Skeat, EETS, os 76, 82, 94, 114 (London, 1881-1900; reprinted in 2 vols, 1966), no. 8, lines 184-94 (I, 206).

<sup>15</sup> Compare also Genesis 6.9, where Noah is called 'vir iustus atque perfectus' [a just and perfect man].

<sup>16</sup> The idea is further explained in Ephesians 4.12, 14, 15; and compare I Corinthians 13.11, quoted in note 13 above.

<sup>17</sup> *Morals on the Book of Job*, translated by J. Bliss, and published anonymously in *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, 3 vols (Oxford and London, 1844-50), II, 40.

<sup>18</sup> Compare Isidore's etymologies of *vir* and *mulier*, where he associates *vir* with strength, and *mulier* with softness (or weakness): '*Vir nuncupatus, quod major in eo vis est, quam in femina. Unde et virtus nomen accepit . . . Mulier vero, a mollitie, tanquam mollier, detracta littera, vel mutata, appellata est mulier*' (*Etym.* XI, ii, 17-18, PL 82.417). For further discussion of Gregory's attitude towards women see my 'Women and Sanctity', pp. 148-50.

<sup>19</sup> *Beda's Venerabilis Opera: Pars III/IV*, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), p. 197.

<sup>20</sup> 'Dominica in media quadragesima', *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici or Homilies of Ælfric*, edited by Benjamin Thorpe, 2 vols (London, 1844-46), I, 180-93. On the sources see Max Förster, 'Über die Quellen von Ælfric's exegetischen *Homiliae Catholicae*', *Anglia*, 66 (1894), 1-61 (§ 72); and Cyril L. Smetana, 'Ælfric and the Early Medieval Homiliary', *Traditio*, 15 (1959), 163-204 (at 188).

<sup>21</sup> Ælfric makes a distinction here between *wer* and *mann*: *wer* translates *vir*, 'a man, a male person'; 'a male that has reached man's estate' (*An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, edited by Joseph Bosworth and J. Northcote Toller (Oxford, 1898; reprinted 1976), s.v. 'wer' I and II). *mann* often translates *homo*, 'a human being of either sex' (Bosworth and Toller, s.v. 'mann'). For the sense of *geworht(e)* here, see Toller's *Supplement to the Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1921, reprinted 1966), s.v. 'gewyrca' V. The *Dictionary* and *Supplement* will henceforth be cited as BT and BT Sup.

<sup>22</sup> The VP version is very close to C and F in this passage (for example, it shares with them the readings 'deprehenderet' and 'claritate'). The major variants are 'mirabilis' for 'imitabilis/inimitabilis' [she was wonderful, even to men]; and, at the end of the passage quoted, 'ut



ovem subito factam ex lupo se credere delectaretur' [he delighted to believe that suddenly he had been made a sheep from a wolf] (PL 73.611). Of the passage, the Mombritius version has only 'Beata uero Eugenia uirili habitu et animo cum Protho et Hiacyntho in predicto monasterio persistebat' and the sentence which follows (which has not been quoted) concerning her progress in learning (p. 393).

<sup>23</sup> See Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879; revised edition, 1955), s.v. 'animus' II B 2a.

<sup>24</sup> See Isidore quotation, note 18 above.

<sup>25</sup> 'virtue' does not make sense here. Possibly it may mean 'beauty, comeliness', recorded as 'very rare' in classical Latin (see Lewis and Short, s.v., II B); and compare I Corinthians 12.23 ('honestatem': 'comeliness' in the Douay translation).

<sup>26</sup> Anson and Szarmach also translate and discuss this passage (Anson, pp. 23, 27; Szarmach, 'Ælfric's women saints', pp. 153-54).

<sup>27</sup> The sense seems to require the insertion of 'non' as in FG (although 'esse' is not so necessary): it seems unlikely that she considered it 'injurious to honour for a woman to pretend to be a man', since that is what she did, and she is now defending herself for having done so.

<sup>28</sup> Mombritius 'stringat'.

<sup>29</sup> 'virilem formam': compare 'virilem gloriam' (FG line 14). It seems likely that one is a corruption of the other. If the Mombritius version was used by the compiler of the Cotton-Corpus version (see above, note 3), then 'gloriam' may be a corruption of 'formam'. However, on the present evidence, it is not possible to be certain about the precise relationship of the versions.

<sup>30</sup> This translation and that of the passage from Ambrose quoted below have been adapted from those of Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston, 1968), p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> *Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, edited by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. VI (Oxford and New York, 1893), p. 153.

<sup>32</sup> 'saeculum' here means 'species, kind'.

<sup>33</sup> See note 30 above.

<sup>34</sup> In a sermon on the martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicity, Augustine comments on the achievement of manliness by 'the weaker sex'. 'The crown (of martyrdom) is more glorious where the sex is weaker. For indeed a "virile soul" in the women accomplished something greater when feminine fragility did not grow weak under such a weight (i.e. of martyrdom)': 'Ibi est corona gloriosior, ubi sexus infirmior. Quia profecto virilis animus in feminas majus aliquid fecit, quando sub tanto pondere fragilitas feminea non defecit'. He ends the chapter by saying how Christ 'caused the women to die manfully and faithfully, he who for their sake mercifully deigned to be born from a woman': 'Ille fecit feminas viriliter et fideliter mori, qui pro eis dignatus est de femina misericorditer nasci' (*Sermo* 281.1, PL 38.1284). Augustine is opposing manly courage with

feminine frailty, making use of the rhetorical effect of oxymoron by linking *virilis / viriliter* and *feminas*. His point here, perhaps, is that the stereotype is contradicted by the particular instance. The Old English Martyrology entry for Perpetua and Felicity may be compared:

[Perpetua] mætte þa heo wæs on mædenhade þæt heo wære on wæres hiwe ond ðæt heo hæfde sword on handa ond þæt heo stranglice fuhte mid þy. Þæt wæs eall eft on her martyrdome gefylled, ða heo mid werlice geðohte deofol oferswiðde ond þa hæðnan ehteras. (March 7: *Das altenglische martyrologium*, edited by Günter Kotzor, 2 vols, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Neue Folge, 88.1 (Munich, 1981), II, 29.)

The indication here, once again, is that *werlic geðoht* is found not just in men, but also in women; and that its possession could be symbolised (here in a dream) by the assumption of the physical form and behaviour of the male. James Cross suggests that this detail in the Martyrology entry is derived from Augustine's sermon, and he comments on the entry "The phrase "mid werlice beðohte" echoes *virilis animus* in Augustine, Sermo 281 . . . and the idea that Perpetua was manly in behaviour although feminine in form is one emphasized in the sermons. It does not appear in the *Passiones*' ("The Latinity of the Ninth-Century Old English Martyrologist", in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, edited by Paul E. Szarmach (New York, 1986), pp. 275-99 (pp. 284, and p. 298, note 64).

<sup>35</sup> H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th edition, Oxford, 1940), s.vv. 'melanthēs', and 'melas' I and III.4. Compare also Greek and Latin 'melania', 'blackness', 'black spots (on the skin)' (Liddell and Scott, s.v., I and II; Lewis and Short, s.v.). Aldhelm drew attention to the meaning of the widow's name in his account of Eugenia in his prose *De Virginitate*, ch. 44: 'Melantia nigro nominis praesagio traducta' [Melanthia, inspired [lit. led] by the black omen of her name] (*Aldhelmi Opera Omnia*, edited by R. Ehwald, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi vol. 15 (Berlin, 1919), p. 297; *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, translated by Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Ipswich and Cambridge, 1979), p. 111). Lapidge also notes that Greek 'melanthēs' = 'black'.

<sup>36</sup> VP has only 'Recte nomen tuum nigredinis testatur perfidiam' (PL 73.612): 'Your name rightly bears witness to the treachery of (your) blackness'. Mombritius is almost exactly the same as the Cotton-Corpus version:

Recte Melancia nomen habere cognosceris. Nigredinis enim repleta perfidia: nigra diceris: et obscura tenebrarum amica diaboli: dux pollutionis: fomentum libidinis: soror anxietatis perpetuae: et filia mortis sempiternae. (p. 394)

<sup>37</sup> No. 2 in Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, I, 24-51. Henceforth references will be to line numbers of this edition. Skeat's hyphens and length marks have not been reproduced. Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine.

<sup>38</sup> Skeat's translation.

<sup>39</sup> Ælfric omits Eugenia's rejection (before her conversion) of the suit of the son of the proconsul. She refuses to marry him on the grounds that 'Maritus moribus, non natalibus eligendus est; ipsis enim postea non parentibus utendum est' (FG § 3) [A husband is to be chosen for his character, not his birth; for they (i.e. husbands) are subsequently to be enjoyed, not the parents]. She is said to have been resisting other requests 'with a mind (or spirit, soul) of chastity', when the teaching of St Paul came into her hands: 'Igitur quum aliis atque aliis poscentibus animo castitatis obsisteret, pervenit ad manus eius beatissimi Pauli apostoli doctrina' (FG § 3). According to the Mombritiis text both a letter of St Paul and the story of Thecla came into her possession: 'peruenit ad manus eius beati Pauli Apostoli epistola et uirginis Teclae historia' (p. 391). The Acts of Paul & Thecla relate how Thecla was so inspired by St Paul's preaching that she abandoned her betrothed and later dressed as a man in order to follow Paul (E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, edited by W. Schneemelcher, English translation by R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols (London, 1963 and 1965), II, 353-64). This story would have provided ample precedent for Eugenia's actions, but neither Ælfric nor the Latin versions closest to his mention it. The idea may have been lost in the course of transmission.

<sup>40</sup> 'ameldod': Skeat translates 'betrayed' (and cf. BT Sup. s.v. 'ameldian' III (1)). However, the meaning under BT Sup. II, 'make known' etc. (and hence 'exposed') might be more appropriate, for although Ælfric does not explain her motive, the implication, as he relates the story, is that she does not wish to be discovered by her father. In the Latin, it is clear that she disguises herself as a man because only men are allowed to join the Christians she has heard singing (FG §5).

<sup>41</sup> On Ælfric's use of the adjective *werlic*, rather than the adverb *werlice*, see below, and note 42.

<sup>42</sup> In the passage from the homily on the feeding of the five thousand (quoted above) he uses the adverb, and reminds his audience that the term could also be applied to the conduct of women. Elsewhere in his homilies he also used *werlice* in its metaphoric sense: see Thorpe, I, 542, 586; and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series: Text*, edited by Malcolm Godden, EETS, ss 5 (London, 1979), p. 289.

<sup>43</sup> Szarmach comments: 'The image is startling because Eugenia has hardly been wolfish in any of her actions or thoughts, but it does emphasise the fundamental redirection of her moral life' ('Ælfric's women saints', p. 149).

<sup>44</sup> This is the reading of the Julius MS (British Library, MS Cotton Julius E vii). MS O, however (British Library, MS Cotton Otho B x), has 'þone abbod', not 'þæt clæne mæden', and, accordingly, 'hine', not 'hi' in line 170, quoted below. See Skeat's notes 11 and 12, p. 34. Some of the impact of the contrast between Melantia's lust and Eugenia's virginity is therefore lost in the readings of MS O. On the other hand, these readings do point the irony of Melantia's mistake, and

the effectiveness of the saint's disguise.

<sup>45</sup> 'deofles fætels' (line 175): this appears to correspond to 'magnum enim in te diabolo habitaculum preparasti' (FG § 19, not quoted above, because it occurs in a part of Eugenia's speech not concerned with Melantia's 'blackness').

<sup>46</sup> But see Aldhelm, note 35 above.

<sup>47</sup> See her articles, 'Ælfric's Use of Etymologies', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), 35-44, and 'Ælfric and the Name of Simon Peter', *Notes and Queries*, ns 35 (1988), 157-58.

<sup>48</sup> These two are potentially interesting, in that they are eunuchs. The literal interpretation of Matthew 19.12 had been discredited since Origen (c. 185 - c. 254) decided he had misinterpreted the verse, but in any case, Protus and Jacintus are eunuchs because they are Eugenia's servants; this is a matter of historical custom, and has nothing to do with their Christianity. Szarmach, however, argues that their status as eunuchs is important to an understanding of Ælfric's treatment of the theme of sexuality, particularly in relation to Galatians 3.28 ('Ælfric's women saints', pp. 147-48, 155). What is certainly important in connection with the two is the idea that St Eugenia regards them not as her servants but as her brothers (line 49); compare also Helenus's quotation of Christ's words in John 15.15, 'Ne hate ic eow na þeowan . ac ge synd mine freond' (line 87).

<sup>49</sup> Assmann, *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, no. 3. Mary Clayton suggests that the special devotion to the Virgin found in the centres of monastic reform in late Anglo-Saxon England (including Winchester, where Ælfric was educated under Æthelwold), was an expression of the importance given to virginity, and of the related pressure for priestly celibacy in the reform movement; and she argues that Ælfric's treatment of virginity in this homily reflects his views on the need for celibacy in priests and monks (*The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge, 1990, Conclusion, and p. 248).