

Insanity from a Historical Perspective: The Holy Fool in Late Antiquity

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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I first came across holy fools in an undergraduate unit taught by my present supervisor. His lecture on holy fools, stylites and dendrites caught my attention. Over the years, I found myself returning time and again to that lecture, pondering on these extraordinary forms of asceticism. Thus, it has been a privilege to have the opportunity to research a topic that has captivated my imagination, under the tutelage of the supervisor who first ignited my passion in Byzantium many years ago.

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ABSTRACT

Against a backdrop of the nascent Christian empire in sixth-century Byzantium,¹ we find the emergence of an unusual group of ascetics. Commonly known as holy fools, they displayed anti-social behaviour such as walking around naked in the markets, defecating in public and generally indulging in socially unacceptable behaviour. Accordingly, the Byzantine citizens scorned them as madmen. Taking the opposite perspective, Christian writers promoted holy fools as exemplars of high spiritual devotion who avoided the sin of pride through the practice of self-humiliation and that beneath their pretence of madness, they continued to work for God in saving souls.

A question of ambiguity thus arises. Were holy fools sane individuals, consciously feigning insanity as a form of devotion, or had hagiographers selected individuals as religious symbols regardless of mental status? When there was potential for any mad person to be a saint in disguise, the beholder's appraisal of an insane individual became confused. This ambiguity allowed hagiographers an opportunity to deliver an edifying message to the faithful. Abuse of a mad person could be an abuse of an exalted servant of God, thus requiring repentance and contemplation of one's own devotion. Although the primary goal was to create religious impact, scholars have argued that holy fools could cause social change. This study explores how the Byzantine understanding of madness facilitated holy foolery to emerge and flourish. Then, using Symeon² of Emesa as an exemplar of holy fools,³ this thesis analyses the ambiguity presented by their feigned insanity before investigating the holy fool's social impact in seventh-century Byzantium.

¹ "After the Roman Empire split into two parts, East and West in 395 CE, Byzantium is the modern name given to the state and society of the Eastern Roman Empire. Although the Byzantine high culture used Greek as its medium, the inhabitants of the empire called themselves 'Romans' or, at times, simply 'Christians'." Cameron, 2006: 1.

² "Symeon" is sometimes denoted as "Simeon".

³ Also known as Symeon the Fool, he was an exemplar of holy fools. "His (Symeon's) behaviour formed the basis for the general analysis of holy fools in the earlier excursus on monks and monasticism." Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xviii; "Symeon of Emesa was a role model for all subsequent generations of holy fools." Ivanov, 2006: 104.

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Chapter 1. Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology

1.1. Introduction

A holy fool is a person who serves God under the guise of foolishness. In principle, the disguise is not discovered until the fool is dead. Then he or she becomes a saint. If the holy fool happens to be recognised earlier, he runs away, or else commits an act that is so foolish that the rent in his disguise is repaired.⁴

Holy fools were unusual ascetics who served God by feigning insanity, thus inviting only derision and abuse during their lifetime. As they were only praised after their death, they could not be accused of practising their devotion to invite admiration from others. Thus, the religious devotion of holy fools was considered to be pure. This unusual form of asceticism provided hagiographers with a means to communicate with Christian followers from another perspective. Hagiographers have used holy fool narratives to inspire Christians, as a reminder for self-contemplation, as spiritual guidance and to provide negative comments on undesirable behaviour, such as selfishness and arrogance. It has been argued that holy fools were drivers of social change. However, the holy fool model carried an inherent flaw in that it required disruptive behaviour or violence from others to reify the sanctity of the holy fool. As such, it was a model intended for contemplation but not imitation. In seventh-century Byzantium, when an increasing number of people mimicked holy fools by feigning insanity, there was evidence of social disruption, which necessitated the Church to issue a canon to ban the feigning of demonic possession.⁵

This thesis traces how the Byzantines understood madness, deconstructs the holy fool model, and interrogates the figure of Symeon of Emesa as an exemplar of holy fool.

⁴ Ryden, L. 1981: 106.

⁵ See chapter five for discussions that the banning of demonic possession is considered to the same as the banning of feigned of insanity.

It explores the cultural context of seventh-century Byzantium and evaluates both the holy fool's effectiveness as agents of social change and the challenges brought about by the feigning of insanity in real life.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. The historical perspective of madness

Mental illness is a controversial topic. A literature review on madness both in modern times and antiquity shows that this area is fraught with problems. Terms used in discussion are often loaded and can carry negative connotations. In current literature, difficulties with inconsistent use of terms such as "madness", "insanity" and "mental illness" cause confusion. Scholars such as Thumiger,⁶ Thumiger and Singer,⁷ Dols⁸ and Poulakou-Rebelakou⁹ investigate the different aspects of madness and acknowledge the problems with terminology in their discussions. Gäbel, focusing on Aëtius of Amida, finds similar issues, requiring her to define the term 'mental illness' in her article.¹⁰ For discussions of madness in antiquity, Hélène Perdicoyianni-Paléologou explores madness by examining the verbal groups of words meaning madness, *μαινομαι*,¹¹ *βακχεύω* and *λύσσα*.¹² Her works highlight nuances of terms on madness used in ancient literature, thus exposing another challenging area.

From a sociocultural perspective, Perdicoyianni-Paleologou¹³ and Dodds¹⁴ discuss madness as caused by the gods, both as gifts and punishments. Other scholars focus their discussions on the medical perspective of madness and explain madness as a pathological illness. Nutton discusses the humoral theory put forth by the classical Hippocratic writers, who explained that an imbalance of the four humours caused

⁶ Thumiger, 2017; Thumiger, 2013.

⁷ Thumiger and Singer, 2018.

⁸ Dols, 1984.

⁹ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014.

¹⁰ Gäbel, 2018: 316-318.

¹¹ Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 311-339.

¹² Perdicoyianni-Paléologou, 2009: 457-467.

¹³ Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 311-335.

¹⁴ Dodds, 1951: 64-82.

illness.¹⁵ Siegel focuses on mania from Galen's perspective,¹⁶ while Gäbel investigates Aëtius of Amida's work on brain diseases.¹⁷ Boudon-Millot believes that the continuing strong influence of the Hippocratic writers was due to later medical writers, such as Galen, using Hippocratic teachings to validate their own standing, thus elevating Hippocratic works to high levels of reverence for many centuries.¹⁸ Gäbel also supports the view that Galen strongly influenced Greek medicine.¹⁹ Lloyd concludes that, due to his prominent medical standing, Galen's support ensured that the Hippocratic view of illness dominated until the seventeenth century.²⁰ However, Bouras-Villianatos questions the view that Galen has not been criticised and recommends more research in this area.²¹

From the Christian religious perspective, Krueger,²² Johnston²³ and Ivanov²⁴ discuss explanations of madness with a specific focus on demonic possession. Metzger links demonic possession to Christian beliefs, explaining that "demonic possession is closely related to the Christian doctrine of salvation as emphasised in the gospels".²⁵ Ferngren adds that exorcisms were used to inaugurate the eschatological reign of God.²⁶ Horden states that the Byzantines did not consider exorcism the only cure for madness; they sometimes chained up, imprisoned the insane or hospitalised them.²⁷ Saward²⁸ taking the theological perspective explores the concept of adopting madness as "folly for the sake of Christ".

¹⁵ Nutton, 2013: 74.

¹⁶ Siegel, 1973: 272-274.

¹⁷ Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 335-402. Gäbel also provides an extract from Aëtius' work. The eighth chapter of book six of Aëtius' work deals with *mania*. Gäbel provides both the original Greek text and English translation in her book. Gäbel, 2018: 332-333. This extract can be found in Appendix 1.

¹⁸ Boudon-Millot, 2018: 292-314.

¹⁹ Gäbel, 2018: 318.

²⁰ Lloyd, 1991: 195.

²¹ Bouras-Villianatos, 2015.

²² Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 106.

²³ Johnston, 2015: 22.

²⁴ Ivanov, 2006: 133.

²⁵ Metzger, 2018: 86, from Ferngren 2009: 54-56.

²⁶ Ferngren, 2009: 49.

²⁷ Horden, 1993: 177.

²⁸ Saward, 1980: 1-30.

Pericoyianni-Paléologou discusses the ethical stance of Plato, who perceived madness as a possible congenital fault in a person's intellectual capacity, believing that madness could be provoked by diseases prompted by the aggravation of the natural violence of a person.²⁹ Ferngren argues that early Christians accepted a natural causality of illness within the framework of a Christian worldview and that medical treatment and prayers were complementary.³⁰ Metzger states that we should not use our modern rationality to view ancient thinkers who did not see religion and medicine as closed systems separated from one another.³¹ These discussions highlight the complexity of the explanations and interconnectivity of the different perspectives of madness which contributed to the Byzantine understanding of madness.

1.2.2. The holy fool model and the normalisation of feigned insanity

Central to the holy fools is the element of ambiguity in the model. In exploring the holy fool phenomenon, Ivanov lays the groundwork for exploring the model by focusing on the origins and emergence of holy fools before tracing their development through time.³² He also discusses the paradox of the holy fool.³³ Scholars such as Rotman³⁴ and Ivanov³⁵ investigate the various aspects of ambiguity in the holy fool model, whether the holy fool was insane or only feigning madness. As ambiguity is essential for this model to be effective, scholars do not aim to resolve this ambiguity but to analyse the intricacies of the model. Johnson discusses the importance of liminality in the holy fool model.³⁶ Rotman comments that when hagiographers introduced the concept that people who exhibited signs of madness had the potential to be holy persons in disguise, beholders of madmen in Byzantium could not discern whether the person was a saint or suffering from mental illness. Thus, every encounter with madness became an ambiguous experience³⁷ and a possible call to

²⁹ Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 315.

³⁰ Ferngren, 2009: 81.

³¹ Metzger, 2018: 106.

³² Ivanov, 2006.

³³ Ivanov, 2006: 1-2.

³⁴ Rotman, 2016.

³⁵ Ivanov, 2006.

³⁶ Johnson, 2014.

³⁷ Rotman, 2016: 46.

devotion.³⁸ Rotman argues that if historians wish to explore how encountering madness in real life affected the reader and beholder of holy fools in Byzantium, they must surpass the literary level of the narrative.³⁹ He proposes combining the psychological approaches of Bakhtin and Winnicott⁴⁰ to understand how reading about simulated madness in religious literature affected the reader when encountering madness in real life.

Kincaid states that Foucault viewed mental illness as a social and historical problem rather than a medical one.⁴¹ This view supports Gazmuri and Dols perspectives that madness is a matter of perception specific to the context of time and space.⁴² These viewpoints help this thesis define the type of insanity attributed to holy fools.

Rotman suggests that people require a change in their perception of reality to accept the sanctification of feigned insanity.⁴³ Berger uses concepts of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation to show how social reality can be constructed and altered. Hence, he shows how abnormal behaviour could be normalised.⁴⁴ Thus, while Rotman suggests that a change in the perception of reality was required to sanctify feigned insanity, Berger provides a theoretical framework to explain the elements involved in this change. This thesis combines the works of Rotman and Berger to analyse how the hagiographers used holy fools to drive social change in Late Antiquity.

1.2.3. Symeon of Emesa

An exemplar of holy fools, Symeon of Emesa, is explored in this thesis through the works of two scholars who translated primary texts on Symeon. Whitby translated the

³⁸ Rotman, 2016: 57.

³⁹ Rotman, 2016: 49.

⁴⁰ Rotman, 2016: 49-60.

⁴¹ Kincaid, 2012: 560.

⁴² Gazmuri, 2006: 88; Dols, 1984: 136.

⁴³ Rotman, 2016: 62.

⁴⁴ Berger and Luckmann, 1991.

Greek text of the *Ecclesiastical History (HE)*⁴⁵ written by Evagrius Scholasticus into English. In Book iv.34 of the *HE*, Evagrius documented a brief history of Symeon of Emesa, highlighting some of his unusual behaviour. Krueger translated a more detailed account, the *Life and Conduct of Abba Symeon called the Fool for the Sake of Christ (VS)*,⁴⁶ written by Leontius of Neapolis.⁴⁷ Mango,⁴⁸ Krueger⁴⁹ and Whitby⁵⁰ discuss the sources and historicity of the two narratives. Scholars generally consider Evagrius' work to be a historical account of Symeon, while Leontius' work, detailing many of Symeon's exploits, is primarily seen as a hagiography.⁵¹

Dudley states that cynics may have been present in Byzantium.⁵² Krueger discusses allusions to the classical Greek philosopher Diogenes in Leontius' narrative and notes the similarities between Symeon and Diogenes.⁵³ Thus, scholars argue that this shows a strong presence of Graeco-Roman influence in late antique culture. Chesnut supports this argument by citing themes from classical Greek tragedies in Evagrius' *HE*.⁵⁴

1.2.4. Holy fools as agents of social change

Leontius, the bishop of Neapolis in Cyprus around the mid-seventh century CE, wrote a detailed narrative of Symeon of Emesa. Krueger believes that the setting in Leontius'

⁴⁵ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000. Whitby bases his translations on the original Greek in the Bidez-Parmentier text of *HE*. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: lxi-lxii. Although there are other translations, Whitby's translation has been chosen for this thesis as it is widely used and easily accessible.

⁴⁶ Krueger and Leontius, 1996. "The translation of the Life of Symeon the Fool by Leontius of Neapolis is based on the critical edition of the Greek text by Lennart Rydén in *Léontios de Néapolis: Vie de Syméon le Fou et Vie de Jean de Chypre*, ed. A. J. Festugière, in the series *Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique* (Paris: Geuthner, 1974), pp. 55–104." Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 131, footnote (there is no number to this footnote). Although there are other translations, Krueger's translation has been chosen as it is the translation that most discussions refer to.

⁴⁷ Leontius was the bishop of Neapolis in Cyprus (modern Limassol) around the mid-seventh century CE. He wrote a detailed narrative of Symeon of Emesa. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 1. Note that his name is sometimes denoted as "Leontios" in other publications.

⁴⁸ Mango, 1984: 26-33.

⁴⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 9-35.

⁵⁰ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xxii-xxxiv.

⁵¹ "Hagiography is literature celebrating the deeds and sayings of holy men and women as well as their afterlife as a sacred memory among members of a Christian community." Efthymiadis, 2016: 2.

⁵² Dudley, 1967: ix.

⁵³ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 17-18.

⁵⁴ Chesnut, 1986: 218-219.

narrative only points to a generic Late Antique city. Thus, we cannot assume that it was set in the actual city of Emesa.⁵⁵ However, it is reasonable to consider that Leontius would have invented a city resembling the city that both he and his audience were familiar with.⁵⁶ Thus Krueger argues that the narrative revealed information on the religious and social landscape of seventh-century Cyprus.⁵⁷

Efthymiadias states that hagiography suffered a decline as part of the general cultural decline in the so-called Byzantine Dark Age (ca.650 – ca 800).⁵⁸ In evaluating the popularity and effectiveness of holy fools, Ivanov believes that the impact of holy fools appears to have been felt more intensely during certain times.⁵⁹ He argues that the popularity of holy fools was affected by the level of external threat as perceived by Christians. Ivanov believes the Orthodox holy fool was neither a heretic nor a religious reformer.⁶⁰ However, Rotman argues that some characteristics of the holy fool, such as the liminality in the holy fool model, embodied his alienation from society. This alienation represented a subversive threat to authority and enabled the holy fool to be used to change the relationship between the centre and the periphery.⁶¹ Rotman also discusses how abnormal behaviours, such as the unusual behaviour of holy fools, martyrs, and ascetics, caused social changes.⁶² However, some aspects of the change had not been discussed in detail.⁶³

A review of the current scholarship reveals that the exploration of madness remains challenging due to the complexity of the understanding of madness and the problems encountered by scholars in both modern and ancient discussions. The holy fool, the intricacies of the various aspects of ambiguity in the holy fool model and how abnormal behaviour can be normalised in society have received much scholarly

⁵⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 21. The modern name for the town of Emesa is Homs, a town in present day Syria. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 135, footnote 10.

⁵⁶ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 21.

⁵⁷ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 7.

⁵⁸ Efthymiades, 2014: 10.

⁵⁹ Ivanov, 2006: 130-132.

⁶⁰ Ivanov, 2006: 9.

⁶¹ Rotman, 2016: 34.

⁶² Rotman, 2016: 125. Rotman's perspective on how martyrs caused social change is especially helpful for this thesis. In chapter 5, this thesis adapts his arguments to define social change as applied to holy fools.

⁶³ Crislip, 2018: 443-446.

attention. While scholarship in these areas is comprehensive, more attention to the effectiveness of holy fools as agents of social change is required.

1.3. Methodology

This thesis seeks to understand⁶⁴ the holy fool phenomenon in the cultural context of seventh-century Byzantium before exploring the effectiveness of holy fools as agents of social change. Thus, it starts with broad discussions of madness before focusing on the insanity of the holy fool. Then, using various theoretical approaches, the ambiguity of the holy fool and the model of holy foolery are analysed. The literary figure of Symeon of Emesa is explored as a case study by analysing primary texts. Finally, drawing on these findings, the impact of holy fools in both religious and social settings and their effectiveness as agents of social change are evaluated.

This thesis begins by exploring literary evidence regarding the sociocultural, medical and religious understanding of madness. Archaic and classical literature are examined to demonstrate the sociocultural understanding of madness as having divine causes. The works of Hippocrates and Galen, arguing that madness has pathological causes, are explored to gain an understanding of the medical perspective of madness. From the Christian standpoint, madness is investigated as the practice of “fools for the sake of Christ” and as demonic possession. Further consideration of the interconnectivity of these three principal perspectives yields additional insight into how the Byzantines understood madness, and provides context for exploring holy foolery in seventh-century Byzantium. Although in overall terms, scholarship on madness is comprehensive, individual scholars focus on different aspects and periods in its history. How madness was explained from Graeco-Roman times to Late Antiquity,⁶⁵ viewed from the different perspectives mentioned previously, is required as a

⁶⁴ Explanations communicated through literary documentation provide tangible evidence for research. If we consider that how something is explained alludes to a discussion of its understanding, then indirectly, analysis of an explanation implies the exploration of its understanding. Hence, although analysis of the explanation of madness is pursued, an understanding of madness is the result.

⁶⁵ “Late Antiquity is a term used to denote the time-span which runs roughly from the fourth to the mid-seventh century CE”. Efthymiadis, S. and Déroche, V., 2016: 35.

backdrop for investigating the perceptions and impact of the holy fools. Hence, this section synthesises current scholarship to address the specific need so as to create a suitable context for exploring the insanity of holy fools in seventh-century Byzantium.

The thesis then explores the different aspects and areas of ambiguity in the holy fool model. As ambiguity was an essential component for the model to be effective, this thesis aims to analyse rather than resolve the ambiguity in the holy fool model.

To assess the impact of holy fools in Byzantium, this thesis investigates how encountering insanity in real life affected the reader and beholder of holy fools. This is difficult because we are separated by time and culture; thus, this thesis adapts Rotman's approach. Rotman uses Bakhtin's analysis of "literature in great time"⁶⁶ and combines Bakhtin's concept with Winnicott's perspective of the *true self* and the *false self*.⁶⁷ Adapting Rotman's approach for my investigation, I explore Leontius' narrative from the viewpoint of a reader of literature to reveal the meaning of his text. Then, a scholarly study⁶⁸ of his text is undertaken to focus on the aesthetic⁶⁹ aspect of the story. This combined approach gives insight into the Byzantine cultural context and sheds light on the readers' understanding of the narrative.⁷⁰ Winnicott's viewpoint of the *true self* and the *false self* is then used to explore how confrontation of madness in real life affected the Byzantine reader.⁷¹ Thus, combining these approaches allows us to look beyond understanding the process of reading about holy fools to how holy fool narratives affected someone encountering madness in real life.⁷²

Accepting feigned insanity as normal behaviour necessitated a change in the perception of reality. Adopting Foucault's perspective that mental illness is a social and historical rather than a medical problem,⁷³ this thesis uses Berger's work to

⁶⁶ Rotman, 2016: 49-51.

⁶⁷ Rotman, 2016: 49-60.

⁶⁸ Rotman, 2016.: 51.

⁶⁹ The aesthetics of the narrative, refers to how the story and the hero have been constructed.

Rotman, 2016: 53. Aesthetics of Leontius' narrative is further discussed in chapter 4.

⁷⁰ Rotman, 2016: 50-55.

⁷¹ Rotman, 2016: 55-62.

⁷² Rotman, 2016: 55-59.

⁷³ Kincaid, 2012: 560.

explain how the perception of reality is constructed and how it can be altered to accommodate and normalise what has previously been considered abnormal behaviour. This rationale is then applied to the case of the holy fool.

Thus far, these discussions have explored the holy fool model from a theoretical perspective. The next task grounds the previous theoretical discussions by exploring an exemplar of holy fools, Symeon of Emesa.⁷⁴ This section analyses his primary narratives and evaluates their sources. In addition, the thesis considers the aesthetics of the narrative to show a resemblance between the behaviour of Symeon and Diogenes of Sinope, allusions to classical themes of Greek tragedy and biblical motifs. Although Byzantine society was strongly Christianised, there was evidence of an ongoing influence of pre-Christian philosophy and education in seventh-century Byzantium. Thus, this thesis argues that, as a way of reaching his audience, the hagiographer of Symeon's narrative took a familiar wise but seemingly mad person from antiquity and re-situated him as a religious figure of the holy fool in Byzantium.

The final part of the research assesses holy fools as drivers of social change. To explore this aspect of the holy fool, the perspectives of Durkheim⁷⁵ and Berger⁷⁶ on religion are used. Durkheim states that,

Religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a church, all those who adhere them.⁷⁷

Berger considers religion a social need.⁷⁸ Recognising religion as a functional component of Byzantine society with the power to achieve social solidarity, this

⁷⁴ "Symeon" is sometimes denoted as "Simeon". Also known as Symeon the Fool, Symeon was an exemplar of holy fools. "His (Symeon's) behaviour formed the basis for the general analysis of holy fools in the earlier excursus on monks and monasticism." Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xviii; "Symeon of Emesa was a role model for all subsequent generations of holy fools." Ivanov, 2006: 104.

⁷⁵ Durkheim and Swain, 2008.

⁷⁶ Berger, 1990.

⁷⁷ Durkheim and Swain, 2008: 66.

⁷⁸ Rotman, 2016: 133-135.

section looks through the lens of structural functionalism to consider the social needs of seventh-century Byzantium and the place of religion in that society. Then it explores the needs addressed by this form of asceticism.

One method of gauging the usefulness of holy fools would be to access church records in Late Antiquity to find out how often holy fool narratives have been used in church sermons. It would also be helpful if we could access information as to how often people read or listened to the holy fool stories. High usage of these narratives in these areas would imply their popularity and perceived effectiveness. However, this is difficult and beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence, this thesis adopts an alternate approach to analyse this issue through the evidence supplied by other literary sources. Effects of political perils, such as the Islamic threat to Byzantium and the religious uncertainties faced by the Church arising from the controversies of theological interpretations, are considered. Then, investigating the social, religious and political landscape of the time and using both religious sources, such as rulings of the Council of Trullo, and secular sources, such as Eunapios of Sardis, that document incidences relating to the feigning of insanity, this final section evaluates the effectiveness and problems posed by holy fools as agents of social change.

Chapter 2. A Historical Perspective of Madness: Archaic Greece to Byzantium

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores Byzantine concepts of madness to place the feigned insanity of the holy fool within a broader cultural context. Ivanov argues that “Christianity sprung up from within Judaism, but early in its growth, it was grafted onto Hellenistic culture”.⁷⁹ Thus, as Byzantine Christian culture has Graeco-Roman roots, this research traces how madness was understood in the Graeco-Roman world, beginning in Archaic Greece (c. 800 – 480 BCE)⁸⁰ and continuing through to Byzantium,⁸¹ in order to provide the backdrop for exploring the feigned insanity of the holy fool in the seventh century CE. Discussions of the concept of “madness” and how it was perceived and understood in antiquity are broad. Scholars tend to focus on specific types of madness or particular periods in its history. Presently, no single study traces madness as it was seen from the sociocultural, medical and Christian religious perspectives from Archaic Greece to early Byzantium. As such, this chapter undertakes a synthesis of current scholarship to provide an accessible summary of these perspectives before focusing on the feigned insanity of the holy fool.

For a broad understanding of madness, we analyse how madness was explained in Graeco-Roman antiquity from three different but connected perspectives. The sociocultural standpoint suggests that since Archaic Greece, madness was thought to be caused by the gods. Investigations from the medical perspective from the Classical Greek ⁸² period show that ancient physicians explained madness as having pathological causes. Lastly, from a Christian perspective in the early Christian period and Late Antiquity, madness could be seen as either demonic possession or as a

⁷⁹ Ivanov, 2006: 11.

⁸⁰ Harris and Platzner, 2008: 20.

⁸¹ “After the Roman Empire split into two parts, East and West in 395 CE, Byzantium is the modern name given to the state and society of the Eastern Roman Empire. Although the Byzantine high culture used Greek as its medium, the inhabitants of the empire called themselves ‘Romans’ or at times, simply ‘Christians’.” Cameron, 2006: 1; Gregory, 2010: 21.

⁸² The Classical Greek period occurred during 479-323 BCE. Harris and Platzner, 2008: 20.

consequence of being “fools for Christ’s sake”. While such explanations of madness emphasise exclusive causes of madness (divine or pathological), further analysis reveals additional complexity due to their interconnectivity, as visually represented by the Venn diagram below.⁸³ The centre of the chart represents the interconnectivity of these ideas of madness in the Byzantine mind. As each person’s reaction when confronting madness was personal, fluctuating and complex, this area of the chart illustrates a unique dynamic complexity in each individual’s perception and understanding of madness, providing insight into their reaction when confronted with madness. It also reveals how the interaction of these ideas facilitated the emergence of the concept of feigned insanity, which was a defining element in the behaviour of holy fools.

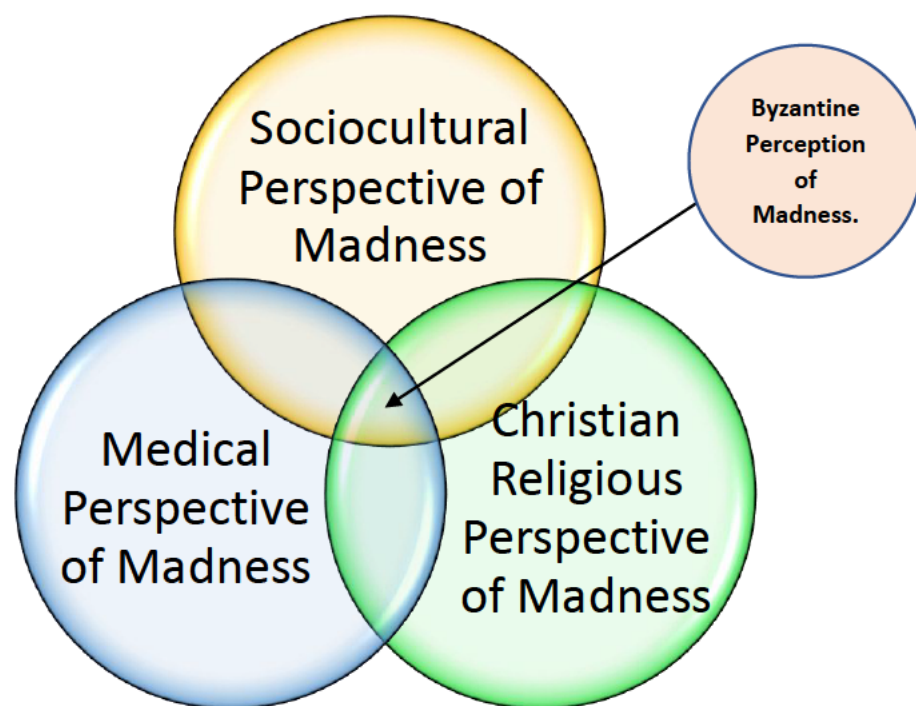


Figure 1. The Understanding Madness in Byzantium

⁸³ This is a diagrammatic representation of the understanding of madness in Byzantium. It does not imply that all these factors exert equal influence on any individual, instead, depending on the time and circumstances the influence of the different perspectives on each person understanding is ever-changing.

2.2. Problems with the term “mental illness”

In an article published in 2018, Gäbel considers the problematic use of the term “mental illness” when dealing with both ancient texts and modern scholarship. She believes that the definition of this term, how to diagnose it and the extent that it could be conceptualised and treated independently of physical causation is controversial. Thus, she finds it necessary to provide details and defines how she uses this term in her work.⁸⁴ She summarises the problems associated with this term by stating that no single classification or definition of mental illness stretches across different periods and applies to all medical literature.⁸⁵

2.3. Problems with the term “madness”

....work in disability studies has long argued, choices of vocabulary for impairing pathologies are never neutral.⁸⁶

There is a range of problems in attempting to define madness in antiquity. It is essential at the outset to acknowledge that the term “madness” carries strong connotations in modern usage, many of them derogatory. The principal term used to describe madness in ancient Greek texts is “mania”, which covered a broad range of behaviours. The modern English translation of “mania” as “madness” tends to assign a pejorative sense to all of these behaviours and consequently obscures their cultural significance - especially in the behaviour of holy fools in Byzantium.

2.4. Problems with the use of the terms “madness” and “insanity”

⁸⁴ Gäbel, 2018: 316-318. Gäbel further discusses this problem in her book, *Aëtius of Amida on Diseases of the Brain*.

⁸⁵ Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 40-43.

⁸⁶ Thumiger, 2017: 52.

There are similar problems with the use of the term ‘insanity’. In modern scholarship, the terms “madness” and “insanity” are commonly used to refer to the behaviour of holy fools, and this presents several problems. As noted above, they are both loaded terms that often have derogatory connotations and pejorative meanings. Thus, it is necessary to appreciate the importance of sensitivity and empathy when using them.

This section begins by underscoring the interchangeable use of the terms “madness” and “insanity” in modern scholarship and ancient texts. Currently, the Oxford English Dictionary defines these terms to have similar meanings.⁸⁷ Thumiger, a leading expert on the mind and mental health in ancient Greek thought, demonstrates this trend in the introduction to her book, *A History of the Mind and Mental Health in Classical Greek Medical Thought*.⁸⁸ This tendency is also seen in discussions by other scholars such as Thiher. In his work on madness in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, Thiher discusses trepanned skulls of the insane in the Stone Age and describes that action as removing the stone of madness through a hole.⁸⁹ Then, regarding the madness of Ajax, Thiher states, “Fate is also responsible for Ajax’s madness, for his insanity was inscribed in his destiny and was the object of prophecy.”⁹⁰ Following the same trend, Dols, when referring to Symeon, said he acted out the pretence of madness, then went on to discuss Symeon’s guise of insanity.⁹¹ Rotman, discussing the feigning of insanity, declares that “simulation of insanity is a well-known phenomenon that exists in many societies..... never know whether the believers simulated madness as forms of xeniteia...”.⁹² Here, he also did not show any distinction between these terms. A work by Caelius Aurelianus⁹³ indicates that these terms have also been used

⁸⁷ Madness is defined as “impudence, delusion or (wild) foolishness resembling insanity.” Insanity is defined as “the condition of being insane; unsoundness of mind as a consequence of brain-disease; madness, lunacy.” *OED : Oxford English Dictionary : the Definitive Record of the English Language, 2000*, s.v. “Madness” and “Insanity”.

⁸⁸ For evidence, see the introduction to Thumiger’s work, *A History of the Mind and Mental Health in Classical Greek Medical Thought*. Here, these two terms are used interchangeably. Thumiger, 2017: 1-16.

⁸⁹ Thiher, 1999: 1.

⁹⁰ Thiher, 1999: 22.

⁹¹ Dols and Immisch, 1992: 374.

⁹² Rotman, 2016: 26.

⁹³ Caelius Aurelianus was a Latin medical writer and a physician of the Methodist school, in the fifth century CE. He translated the works of Soranus of Ephesus into Latin which enabled the transmission of Greek medicine to the Middle Ages. His publication *On Acute Disease* (three books) and *On Chronic Disease* (five books), were his versions of Soranus’ work. Aurelianus & Drabkin, 1950: xi.

interchangeably in ancient texts. One of the sections in Caelius Aurelianus' work devoted to the causes and treatment of madness has been written under the heading, "*Madness or Insanity (Greek Mania)*".⁹⁴

As discussed above, many authors have used the terms "madness" and "insanity" interchangeably without declaring their similarities or differences. This thesis argues that this lack of clarity may cause confusion in discussions. Thus, a definition of these two terms and how they are related to the term "mental illness" is undertaken. For this thesis, "mental illness" is defined as the term used when pertaining to a pathological condition, and "madness" is one type of behaviour exhibited by those afflicted by mental illness. Later discussions in this thesis show that madness can be manifested in many ways, from quiet withdrawal to overt aggression. Thus, this study reserves the term "insanity" to be used in discussions of the unusual behaviour of holy fools. In other words, "madness" is used in general discussions and "insanity" is used when dealing with holy fools to denote their specific type of insanity.⁹⁵ The assertion of the distinction between these terms aids in more precise discussions and presents an opportunity for this thesis to convey a subtle nuance of terms used in this thesis.

2.5. Problems with discussions of mental illness in ancient texts

In discussions of mental disorders in antiquity, scholars face similar challenges with ancient terminology. The principal term used to describe madness in ancient Greek texts is "mania" (μανία) in both prose and poetry.⁹⁶ Along with related words of the same root, it is probably the most common term used in ancient texts and carries various nuances.⁹⁷ In medical literature, it has not been consistently used to describe

⁹⁴ Aurelianus. *Treatise on Chronic Disease*. Mania or Insanity (Greek Mania): I.V: 534: *De furore sive insaniam, quam Graeci maniam vocant*, in Aurelianus & Drabkin, 1950. For Caelius Aurelianus' work, many publications refer to the page number in the translated book rather than the original section number in the primary text. This thesis adopts this trend.

⁹⁵ Feigned insanity of the holy fool is discussed in more detail in section 2.7 of this chapter.

⁹⁶ Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 335.

⁹⁷ Perdicoyianni-Paléologou offers an informative and detailed discussion of the verbal group μαίνωμαι. Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 312-339.

a specific disease but is more often understood as broader terms for mental derangement in general.⁹⁸ After the classical period, ancient medical sources named mania (μανία), melancholia (μελαγχολία) and phrenitis (φρένιτις) as a tripartite classification of mental illness.⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly, the term “melancholia” (μελαγχολία), used in discussions of mental illness, has similar problems.

Thus, the modern understanding of these terms differs from ancient usage. In antiquity, μανία, which occurs without fever,¹⁰⁰ could be a “violent and often murderous derangement”¹⁰¹ or a “mad and furious state,”¹⁰² which is in line with the definition of the word “mania” in modern English usage. Hippocrates explained that this behaviour was indicative of one type of μανία which can be exhibited as noisy or restless behaviour. However, the affected patient could also be quiet.

The corruption of the brain is caused not only by phlegm but by bile. You may distinguish them thus. Those who are mad (μαινόμενοι) through phlegm are *quiet*, and neither shout nor make a disturbance; those maddened (μαίνωνται) through bile are *noisy*, evil-doers and restless, always doing something inopportune. These are the causes of continued madness.¹⁰³

Caelius Aurelianus also suggested that mania manifested itself in many ways.

For when mania lays hold of the mind, it manifests itself now in anger, now in merriment, now in sadness or futility, and now, as

⁹⁸ Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 335.

⁹⁹ Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 335. Thumiger and Singer, 2018: 2.

¹⁰⁰ Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 336.

¹⁰¹ Thumiger and Singer, 2018: 13.

¹⁰² Perdicoyianni-Paléologou sees it as indicating a “mad and furious state.” From Chantraine, P. (1968–80) *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque. Histoire des Mots* (Paris: Klincksieck). Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 312.

¹⁰³ Hippoc. *Sacred Disease* II: XVIII: Γίνεται δὲ ἡ διαφθορὴ τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου ὑπὸ φλέγματος καὶ χολῆς· γνώσει δὲ ἑκάτερα ὧδε· οἱ μὲν ὑπὸ φλέγματος μαινόμενοι ἡσυχοὶ τέ εἰσι καὶ οὐ βοηταὶ οὐδὲ θορυβώδεις, οἱ δὲ ὑπὸ χολῆς κεκράκται τε καὶ κακοῦργοι καὶ οὐκ ἀτρεμαῖοι, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ τι ἄκαιρον δρῶντες. ἦν μὲν οὖν συνεχῶς μαίνωνται, αὗται αἱ προφάσεις εἰσιν·

some relate in an overpowering fear of things which are quite harmless.¹⁰⁴

Aëtius of Amida,¹⁰⁵ also agreed with this view and saw *μανία* as having different manifestations.¹⁰⁶ Hence, while modern readers generally interpret mania as aggressive behaviour, ancient texts documented *μανία* as a broad spectrum of behaviours, ranging from aggression to quietness, from merriment to sadness.

“Phrenitis” (*φρένιτις*) appears to have been used as a medical term for madness involving fever,¹⁰⁷ thus implying inflammation and acute infection. As this is not relevant to the behaviour of the holy fools, it will not be further explored in this thesis.

In the Greco-Roman world, melancholia (*μελαγχολία*) was a depressive illness in which sufferers exhibited despondency¹⁰⁸ and often sought isolation.¹⁰⁹ Here, the usage of the term “melancholia” is similar to the modern use of this term. However, Caelius Aurelianus¹¹⁰ stated that melancholia could occasionally manifest as cheerfulness.

The signs of melancholy, when it is actually present, are as follows: mental anguish and distress, dejection, silence, animosity toward members of the household, sometimes a desire to live and at other times a longing for death, suspicion on the part of the patient that a plot is being hatched against him, weeping without reason, meaningless muttering, and, again, occasional joviality...¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Aurelianus. *Treatise on Chronic Disease*. Mania or Insanity (Greek *Mania*): I.V: 538: *Nam furor nunc iracundia, nunc hilaritate, nunc maestitudine sive vanitate occupant mentum, nun timore comminante inanium rerum...* in Aurelianus & Drabkin, 1950.

¹⁰⁵ Aëtius of Amida was a physician of the sixth century. Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 336.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix 1 for Aëtius’ discussion of mania.

¹⁰⁷ McDonald, 2009: 125.

¹⁰⁸ Jouanna, van der Eijk, and et al., 2012: 235.

¹⁰⁹ Kazantzidis, 2018: 53-54.

¹¹⁰ See chapter 2, section 2.4, footnote 93 for information on Caelius Aurelianus.

¹¹¹ Aurelianus. *Treatise on Chronic Disease*. Melancholy: I.VI: 550: *eos vero qui iam passione possessi sunt animi anxietas atque difficultas tenet, attestante maestitudine cum silentio et odio conviventium. sequitur etiam nunc vivendi nunc moriendi cupido, cum suspicionibus velut insidiarum sibi paratarum; item inanes fletus, atque murmura vacua, et rursum hilaritas...* in Aurelianus & Drabkin, 1950.

Seigel points out that in Graeco-Roman times, a person suffering from melancholia could be “depressed, agitated, hallucinatory, paranoid or demented”. Thus he warns that the ancient diagnosis of melancholy has no direct analogue in modern psychiatric classifications.¹¹² Therefore, the similarities and dissimilarities of the modern and ancient usages of the terms “mania” and “melancholia” tend to confuse rather than clarify our understanding of madness in antiquity.

From a broader perspective, Thumiger also recognises the difficulties of vocabulary when discussing unspecified insanity in ancient texts. She provides a fundamental vocabulary that refers to mental disturbance in a general, unspecified way in ancient texts. She then concludes that aside from indications of degrees by using suffixes or modified by adverbs, these unspecified terms of insanity are all translatable into unspecified madness in English, such as “be deranged”, “mad”, “raving”, “furious” or “insane”. To reduce confusion, she uses Busby’s work to define some terms used in her discussions, offers some of her own definitions and adopts the terminology of the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders when she discusses currently recognised psychiatric entities. However, the difficulties with translations remain. To contend with this problem, she elects to maintain a close reference to the Greek to preserve nuances in ancient texts. She decides to avoid using terms that may provoke technical authority, opting instead to use colloquial terms such as “insane”, “mad”, “deranged”, and “raving delirium”.¹¹³ As these are common usage of modern words, she probably did not feel the need to provide more precise definitions of these terms, and hence none are provided.

Difficulties with the nuances of ancient terminology make it challenging for historians to assign precise meaning to ancient Greek terminology for madness,¹¹⁴ which is compounded by the “difficulty in mapping this ancient vocabulary onto our own

¹¹² Siegel, 1973: 274.

¹¹³ Thumiger, 2017: 52-54.

¹¹⁴ Thumiger, 2017: 50; Gazmuri discusses similar problems with Roman terminology for madness. Gazmuri, 2006: 88.

similarly controversial and loaded terminology of madness.”¹¹⁵ Consequently, it is challenging to find modern equivalents for ancient forms of madness and to classify the holy fool’s behaviour according to modern terms. In addition, we do not have a reliable definition of madness that would allow us to contrast our psychopathological interpretation of madness to the feigned insanity of holy fools because one aspect of their behaviour strove to highlight the “madness of this world” in opposition to the celestial world.¹¹⁶ These problems severely hamper the historical study of the topic.

Recognizing difficulties caused by these problems, this thesis explores how the Byzantines explained madness in broad terms before attempting a viable definition for a particular type of madness, the feigned insanity of the holy fool, which is the focus of this study.

2.6. The understanding of madness in Byzantium

This thesis analyses the understanding of madness in Byzantium from three different perspectives.

2.6.1. The sociocultural perspective of madness

In the Archaic period, Greek literary sources explained madness in terms of divine intervention.¹¹⁷ In Homer’s *Iliad*, Zeus punished Hector by inspiring him into a warlike madness, turning him into a fierce warrior who acted furiously, respecting no one, including the gods.

¹¹⁵ Thumiger, 2017: 50.

¹¹⁶ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 102.

¹¹⁷ In Rome, the people similarly assigned madness to be caused by the divine. Gazmuri, 2006: 91.

... Hector exulting greatly in his might rages (μαίνεται) furiously, trusting in Zeus, and respects neither men nor gods, for mighty madness (λύσσα) has entered him.¹¹⁸

Later, in the classical period, the gods may still inflict madness as a punishment on a person hated by the gods. However, madness might also be a gift from the gods.¹¹⁹ In Euripides' *Heracles*, Hera's jealousy and hatred of Heracles led her to render Heracles mad so that he killed his children.

But come now, maiden daughter of black Night, pull together your implacable heart and send upon this man madness (μανίας) and child-killing derangement of mind....¹²⁰

However, in *Phaedrus*, Socrates declared that,

.. the greatest of good things come to us through madness (μανίας), mind you, which is given as a divine gift.¹²¹

As a divine gift, it has the beneficial function of bestowing on the maddened person divinatory, creative and poetic faculties, as well as love, pleasure and happiness. According to Plato, the gods granted four types of divine madness as gifts.

Of the divine madness, when we distinguished four parts belonging to four gods, proposing the prophetic part to be the inspiration of Apollo, mystic rites to be associated with Dionysus, again poetic

¹¹⁸ Hom. *Il.* 9: 237-239: "Ἐκτωρ δὲ μέγα σθένει βλεμεαίνων μαιίνεται ἐκπάγλως, πίσυνος Διί, οὐδέ τι τίει ἀνέρας οὐδὲ θεούς· κρατερὴ δὲ ἐλύσσα δέδυκεν. Μαινεσθαι as often refers to acquired and passing madness caused by "divine interference, intense psychic disturbance, or mental trouble, as well as a lack of righteousness." Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 314. λύσσα indicates the disastrous and furious goddess of madness or human madness.

Perdicoyianni-Paléologou, 2009: 461.

¹¹⁹ Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 327.

¹²⁰ Eur. *Heracles* 833-836: ἀλλ' εἴ' ἄτεγκτον συλλαβοῦσα καρδίαν, Νυκτὸς κελαινῆς ἀνυμέναιε παρθένε, μανίας τ' ἐπ' ἀνδρὶ τῷδε καὶ παιδοκτόνους φρενῶν ταραγμούς...

¹²¹ Pl. *Phdr.* 244 a-b: νῦν δὲ τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἡμῖν γίγνεται διὰ μανίας, θεία μέντοι δόσει διδομένης.

madness associated with the Muses, and the four belong to Aphrodite and Eros, we said that the madness (*μανίαν*) of love is the best ...¹²²

In these passages, the word *μανία* was used commonly to denote madness, supporting the earlier observation that *μανία* was a term broadly used to describe madness in ancient texts. From this perspective, mania had a divine cause.

2.6.2. The medical perspective of madness

From the fifth century BCE, physicians adopted another approach to explain madness from a pathophysiological perspective.¹²³ To illustrate this new perspective, we focus on the views of three physicians, Hippocrates, Galen and Aëtius of Amida, tracing the medical perspectives of madness from the fifth century BCE to the sixth century CE. Hippocrates and Galen are selected because of their enduring influence on ancient Greek medicine. Aëtius is chosen for his perspectives on mental illness during a period approximating the period studied in this thesis.

Hippocrates of Cos,¹²⁴ a Greek physician of the fifth century BCE, commonly referred to as the “Father of Medicine,”¹²⁵ was considered by later writers to be the most influential physician of his time. Little is known about the man, and there is no direct evidence that Hippocrates wrote any of the treatises that were attributed to him.¹²⁶ However, there is general agreement that early Greek medical writers wrote the Hippocratic treatises sometime during the Classical Age.¹²⁷ Thus, regardless of authorship, the treatises form a valuable early source for understanding the medical

¹²² Pl. *Phdr.* 265b: *Τῆς δὲ θείας τεττάρων θεῶν τέτταρα μέρη διελόμενοι, μαντικὴν μὲν ἐπίπνοιαν Ἀπόλλωνος θέντες, Διονύσου δὲ τελεστικὴν, Μουσῶν δ' αὖ ποιητικὴν, τετάρτην δὲ Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἔρωτος ἐρωτικὴν μανίαν ἐφήσαμέν τε ἀρίστην εἶναι.*

¹²³ Cilliers and Retief, 2009: 130.

¹²⁴ King, 2019: 17.

¹²⁵ Jouanna and Hippocrates, 1999: xi.

¹²⁶ King illustrates the point by devoting an entire chapter to document what is known about Hippocrates. This chapter consists of only two sentences. “Hippocrates lived in classical Greece and was associated with the island of Cos. He gained a reputation as a writer and a medical doctor.” King, 2019: 17.

¹²⁷ “Hippocrates lived in the age of Socrates and most of the treatises seem to originate in the classical period.” Craik and Hippocrates, 2015: Half title page.

perspective of madness. The Hippocratic writers believed that the balance of humours in the body was vital for health, while imbalance caused disease.¹²⁸ In the Hippocratic corpus, humoral balance was discussed in the context of the theory of the four humours.

The body of man has in itself blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile; these make up the nature of his body, and through these he feels pain or enjoys health. Now he enjoys the most perfect health when these elements are duly proportioned to one another in respect of compounding, power and bulk, and when they are perfectly mingled.¹²⁹

Galen of Pergamum (CE 129 – c.216) was the most influential doctor in the Roman imperial period. He relied on the humoral theory of the Hippocratic writers to explain psychic disorders, believing that an excess of black bile caused melancholy while an excess of yellow bile caused mania.¹³⁰ Galen viewed mania as a loss of mind and a change in the customs and habits of the individual.¹³¹ He promoted himself as the only “true” heir of Hippocrates¹³² and defined what was genuinely written by Hippocrates and which parts of his work were worthy of study. Due to his prominence as a physician, Galen’s view of Hippocratic medicine prevailed from Late Antiquity onwards. Other previously flourishing medical traditions, such as the Empiricists and Erasistrateans, whom Galen disagreed with, were suppressed. Their works are now mostly lost. Galen’s decisions were accepted to the point where Galenism and Hippocraticism were viewed as identical.¹³³ Thus, with the prominence of Galen, who accepted and promoted the Hippocratic views as definitive, the Hippocratic explanations of illness persisted until as late as the seventeenth century.¹³⁴ However,

¹²⁸ Drabkin, 1955: 229.

¹²⁹ Hippoc. *Nature of Man*: IV: Τὸ δὲ σῶμα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχει ἐν ἑωυτῷ αἷμα καὶ φλέγμα καὶ χολήν ξανθὴν καὶ μέλαιναν, καὶ ταῦτ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ἡ φύσις τοῦ σώματος, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἀλγεῖ καὶ ὑγιαίνει. ὑγιαίνει μὲν οὖν μάλιστα ὅταν μετρίως ἔχη ταῦτα τῆς πρὸς ἄλληλα κρήσιος καὶ, καὶ δυνάμιος καὶ τοῦ πλήθους, καὶ, μάλιστα μεμιγμένα ἢ

¹³⁰ Siegel, 1973: 273.

¹³¹ Gazmuri, 2006: 90.

¹³² Boudon-Millot, 2018.: 314.

¹³³ Nutton, 2013: 5-6.

¹³⁴ Lloyd, 1991: 195.

recent scholarship challenges this trend, Bouras-Villianatos believes that Galen's reception in Byzantium has not been systematically studied and using the case of Symeon Seth, and provides an article that criticised Galen in Byzantium medical literature.¹³⁵ Although he recommends further research in this area, this thesis considers, at least for the moment, that the current view on Galen's influence still stands.

In the sixth century CE, Aëtius of Amida, also regarded mania as having a pathological cause.¹³⁶ He believed that mania could be manifested in different ways¹³⁷ and that these various manifestations were the visible results of the change in certain processes and their affections on the brain.¹³⁸ Like Galen, he also listed problems with yellow bile as one of the causes of mania.¹³⁹

Thus, throughout Greek medical history, from the Hippocratic period to the time of Galen and Aëtius of Amida, madness was viewed generally as having an organic or pathological cause.¹⁴⁰

2.6.3. The Christian perspective of madness

The Christian perspective provides two different explanations of madness. As the insanity of the holy fool is understood in the Christian religious context, it is worthwhile discussing this perspective in greater detail.

2.6.3.1. Fools for the sake of Christ

¹³⁵ Bouras-Villianatos, 2015

¹³⁶ Gäbel, 2018: 335. Aëtius said that mania can be caused either by problems of blood or bile. Aëtius and Gäbel, 2022: 339-340.

¹³⁷ Gäbel provides the Greek text from Aëtius' discussion of mania. Gäbel, 2018:332-333. This text has been included in Appendix 1.

¹³⁸ Gäbel, 2018: 334-335.

¹³⁹ Gäbel, 2018: 333.

¹⁴⁰ Drabkin, 1955: 225.

According to ancient Greek tradition, “madness that comes from the gods is to be preferred to the sanity that came from human beings”.¹⁴¹ This belief aligns with later Christian thinking that regarded divine wisdom as superior to earthly wisdom.¹⁴² In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul expressed concerns that the Church was rife with elitism. Using himself as a “living parable” to demonstrate the folly of their pride, Paul delivered the following message.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool (*μωρός*) that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly (*μωρία*) with God.¹⁴³

His audience did not understand Paul’s message, and thus to them, he appeared foolish. Paul contended that it was because, in their arrogance, they had judged him using their inferior worldly wisdom, but in God’s eyes, he claimed he was wise.¹⁴⁴ Thus, he was content for others to judge him as a fool. Using his own actions as an example, Paul urged Christians to embrace God’s wisdom rather than men’s folly. However, he did not consciously adopt a pretence of insanity or advocate for the feigning of insanity. In the quote above, Paul only aligned himself with fools (*mōros*).¹⁴⁵

2.6.3.2. Demonic possession

In Greek history during the archaic and classical periods (c. 750–323 B.C.), demons (*daimones*) were regarded as divinities subordinate to the gods. These demons then gradually evolved into evil forces in Christian thought.¹⁴⁶ The gospels considered

¹⁴¹ Pl. *Phaed.* 244d: *μανίαν σωφροσύνης τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ τῆς | παρ’ ἀνθρώπων γιγνομένης.*

¹⁴² Saward, 1980: 2-5.

¹⁴³ 1 Cor. 3: 18-19: *Μηδεὶς ἑαυτὸν ἐξαπατάτω· εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός, ἡ γὰρ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου τούτου μωρία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ ἐστίν·* Westcott and Hort, 1974: 381-382. Note the word is “μωρός” not “σαλός”. This significance is discussed in detail in chapter 3, section 3.2.

¹⁴⁴ Saward, 1980: 2-5.

¹⁴⁵ In the Septuagint, *mōros* is not a commonly used term, but when used, it is an insulting term used to differentiate an individual (the *mōros*) from the righteous people who need no repentance. Thus using the term *mōros* to refer to himself, he highlights his belief that the Corinthians were arrogant in considering themselves as righteous people. Saward, 1980: 5.

¹⁴⁶ Ferngren, 2009: 49.

demonic possession to be closely related to the Christian doctrine of salvation.¹⁴⁷ Exorcisms were viewed as “a cosmic struggle in history to inaugurate the eschatological reign of God”.¹⁴⁸ In Byzantium, madness was commonly seen as demonic possession,¹⁴⁹ where the demon took residence in the body, thus possessing it. Therefore, the casting out of demons was a common cure for madness. For example, in the New Testament, according to Matthew, Jesus drove out demons from many men and healed their sicknesses.

That evening they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick.¹⁵⁰

Again, in the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniacs, Jesus drove out demons that caused a man to exhibit violent behaviour. He commanded the demons to enter a herd of pigs that ran into a lake and drowned.

.... And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea. The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.¹⁵¹

After examining the three principal perspectives of madness, the following section explores their interconnection with each other.

¹⁴⁷ Metzger, 2018: 86 from Ferngren, 2009: 54-56.

¹⁴⁸ Ferngren, 2009: 45.

¹⁴⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 106; Johnston, 2015: 22.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew 8:16.

¹⁵¹ Mark 5: 13-15. The country where this happened is noted as belonging to the Gerasenes but footnote 2 of this passage states that in some manuscripts, this country is written as belonging to the Gadarenes.

2.6.4. The interconnection of sociocultural and medical perspectives

In the Graeco-Roman world, the line between a lay person and a doctor was not well-defined, and there was no agreement that physicians had the sole right to treat illnesses. As illustrated below, philosophers discussed medical issues¹⁵² and conversely, doctors debated philosophy. Although the Stoics discussed medicine and philosophy, they kept these issues separate by distinguishing the kind of madness which affected all those who lacked wisdom from madness with a pathophysiological cause.

The Stoics also say that madness (*furorem*) is of two kinds, but they hold that one kind consists of lack of wisdom, so that they consider every imprudent person mad; the other kind, they say involves a loss of reason and a concomitant bodily affection.¹⁵³

Plato likewise believed that madness can be caused by illness or can be prompted by the aggravation of natural violence resulting from external circumstances, such as bad education. He concluded that bad behaviour was improper social behaviour and unreasonable misconduct inappropriate for a well-conducted city.¹⁵⁴

There are many and various forms of madness (*μαίνονται*): in the cases now mentioned, it is caused by disease, but cases also occur where it is due to the natural growth and fostering of an evil temper, by which men in the course of a trifling quarrel abuse one another slanderously with loud cries—a thing which is unseemly and totally out of place in a well-regulated State.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Harris, 2013: 7.

¹⁵³ Aurelianus. *Treatise on Chronic Disease*. Mania or Insanity (Greek *Mania*): I. V: 534: *Stoici duplicem furorem dixurent, sed alium insipientiae genus, quo omnem imprudentem insanire probant, alium ex alienatione mentis et corporis compassione*, in Aurelianus & Drabkin, 1950.

¹⁵⁴ Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 315.

¹⁵⁵ Pl. *Leg.* 934d, 1–934e, 2: *μαίνονται μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ πολλοὺς τρόπους, οὓς μὲν νῦν εἵπομεν, ὑπὸ νόσων, εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ διὰ θυμοῦ κακὴν φύσιν ἅμα καὶ τροφὴν γενομένην· οἱ δὲ σμικρᾶς ἔχθρας γενομένης πολλὴν φωνὴν ἰέντες κακῶς ἀλλήλους ἐβλασφημοῦντες λέγουσιν, οὐ πρέπον ἐν εὐνόμῳ πόλει γίνεσθαι τοιοῦτον οὐδὲν οὐδαμῇ οὐδαμῶς, εἷς δὲ περὶ κακηγορίας ἔστω νόμος περὶ πάντας ὅδε·*

In *Phaedrus*, Socrates said,

...that of the ancients too those who assigned names to things did not consider madness (*μανίαν*) shameful, or a reproach.¹⁵⁶

Rosen comments that this implies that in Socrates' day, people did consider it shameful and discreditable.¹⁵⁷

Thus other than as a disease, the Stoics and Plato additionally explained madness as a moral fault or shortcoming. Galen also believed that madness might be caused by the flaws and affections of the soul, thus moving away from the purely Hippocratic picture, which framed these subjective experiences solely as pathological conditions. These thoughts introduced an element of ethical assessment.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, connecting the medical and philosophical perspectives, madness could be due to a pathological cause through no fault of the patient, or it could also be seen as the shortcomings of a person and thus could invite negative judgement and derision.

2.6.5. The interconnection of Christian and medical perspectives

Both demonic possession and medical madness could have similar symptoms,¹⁵⁹ making it difficult to distinguish between them; thus, what we now know to be a medical illness, could previously have been treated as demonic possession. In the example given below, depending on the perspective taken, the seizures described by Matthew could be seen as either epilepsy or demonic possession.

¹⁵⁶ Pl. *Phaed.* 244b: ὅτι καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ τὰ ὀνόματα τιθέμενοι οὐκ αἰσχρὸν ἡγοῦντο οὐδὲ ὄνειδος μανίαν.

¹⁵⁷ Rosen, 1969: 87.

¹⁵⁸ Thumiger, 2017: 336.

¹⁵⁹ "Spasms and convulsions ... are notably associated with demonic possession at various stages of the Christian era and are only (at least partially) restored to the realm of mental phenomena after the Enlightenment..." Thumiger, 2017: 144. Rotman supports the view that madness and demonic possession have similar appearances. Rotman, 2016: 26.

And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him, and kneeling before him, said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him." And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." And Jesus rebuked the demon and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.¹⁶⁰

Johnston points out that in addition to causing madness, demons were believed to cause a host of other afflictions, such as loss of speech and inability to straighten one's back.¹⁶¹ Terms denoting healing (*iaomai*) are used.¹⁶² Thus, successful demonic exorcism could be seen as "healing".¹⁶³

One would expect religious interventions and the medical treatment of patients to be conflicting concepts, as the former was God's will, and the latter was human intervention. However, Christian physicians used medical theories and concepts passed down from pre-Christian predecessors, integrating them into a Christian interpretation of the world.¹⁶⁴ Thus, although Christians explained them as the manifestation of God's will, they accepted the natural causes of diseases within a Christian worldview and believed that medical treatment and prayers were complementary.¹⁶⁵ That religion and medicine existed in harmony alongside each other can be seen in Byzantium, where exorcism was not the only resolution for demon possession; the possessed were sometimes hospitalised.¹⁶⁶ This close interplay between medicine and religion shows that the Byzantines were comfortable

¹⁶⁰ Matthew 17:14-18..

¹⁶¹ Johnston, 2015: 22.

¹⁶² Johnston, 2015: 20.

¹⁶³ As previously discussed in chapter 2, section 2.6.3.2, the possessed were seen as being "healed" by exorcism.

¹⁶⁴ Metzger, 2018: 81.

¹⁶⁵ Ferngren, 2009: 81.

¹⁶⁶ Horden, 1993: 177.

with the interaction and did not see religion and medicine as closed systems separated from one another.¹⁶⁷

2.6.6. The interconnection of sociocultural and Christian perspectives

Whether madness was believed to be caused by a god or by a demon, both the sociocultural pre-Christian and Christian religious perspectives of madness involved supernatural causes. As both these groups shared a common view, this explanation of madness as having a supernatural cause remained consistent throughout the period in this study.

2.6.7. The intersection of all three perspectives

Represented by the middle area of the Venn diagram, the three perspectives intersect to create a rich tapestry for the explanation of madness. Madness might be caused by gods who might have been benevolent or had malevolent intent. It might be a physical disease requiring medical treatment or hospitalisation. Madness might be due to demonic possession requiring exorcism, or it could be the behaviour of people feigning insanity and acting as Fools for Christ. Influenced by the thoughts of philosophers and physicians, madness might have been seen as a flaw of character, thus inviting negative judgement and derision, or it might be caused by external factors affecting a blameless person.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Metzger, 2018: 106.

¹⁶⁸ This summarises the interconnection of the different perspectives of madness previous discussed thus far. However, there is a final perspective which has not so far, been considered. This the legal view of madness. Although it does not contribute to the understanding of madness as such, it provides an understanding of the place of the mentally ill in society. Legal sources view mental illness as incapacity or simply a loss of reason. The *Justinian Digest* states: "A lunatic is not to be regarded as one absent because he lacks the intellect to ratify anything done". Watson and Justinian, 1998: 3.3.2.1. Discussing the issue from the perspective of the western Roman Empire, Gazumuri states that by the first century CE, there was a consensus between the different medical schools, defining madness as a loss of reason. Thus, as "reason" made a person responsible and accountable for his acts, when madness was identified as a lack of reason, it implied that the insane were not responsible for their actions and could not control their own decisions and behaviour. Gazmuri, 2006: 90.

It is well established that madness is socially and culturally specific. I would add that it is also personally and temporally specific. When encountering madness, depending on the person and their circumstances at that moment, they may favour some explanations over others. Thus a Byzantine person's reaction to madness was personal and dynamic. In the next chapter, when discussing how abnormal behaviour can be normalised, we bear in mind the cultural milieu of the understanding of madness in Byzantium and the place of the holy fool's feigned insanity within this context. In addition, understanding how all these factors might impact a person's interpretation when they encounter madness is crucial for the consideration of the different reactions to feigned insanity and holy foolery in later discussions.

2.7. The feigned insanity of holy fools

Although there is a considerable range of scholarly opinions regarding madness and insanity in antiquity, this thesis focuses on the feigned insanity of the holy fool. Thus, after exploring the explanation of madness from different perspectives, we concentrate on the holy fools' particular type of insanity and then analyse how the phenomenon of feigned insanity emerged. This investigation begins by considering the insanity of Symeon of Emesa as presented by Evagrius Scholasticus.

Symeon lived in the mid-sixth century.¹⁶⁹ He was a contemporary of Justinian,¹⁷⁰ the Byzantine emperor between 527-65 CE. Symeon's life had been documented by two authors, Evagrius Scholasticus and Leontius, Bishop of Neapolis. Symeon was born in Edessa (modern Urfa in Turkey) and was the educated child of wealthy parents.¹⁷¹ He

¹⁶⁹ Whitby explains that the earthquake in Phoenicia Maritima mentioned by Evagrius, was the earthquake in 551 BCE which devastated the Levant and terminated the prosperity of Beirut, thus placing Symeon in the sixth century CE. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: iv.34 [184], p. 239, footnote 110. I have included square brackets when referring to Evagrius' original text to indicate pagination by Bidez and Parmentier.

¹⁷⁰ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 134 [124]. For the English translated text, Krueger states on page 131 of his book that he also provided the reference Numbers in "square brackets which refer to the pagination of the Greek text in *Das Leben des heiligen Narren Symeon*, ed. Lennart Rydén (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1963), which is reproduced in the inner margins of Rydén's text in the volume edited by Festugière, *Vie de Syméon le Fou*." I have provided both the page number in Krueger's book and the square pagination in square bracket in my references.

¹⁷¹ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 98.

became a monk in the Jordan, along with his friend John where they lived as hermits and grazed like sheep in the desert,¹⁷² in a secluded location near the Dead Sea.¹⁷³ Twenty-nine years later, after achieving a state of spiritual perfection, Symeon left the desert for the city of Emesa in order to devote himself to saving souls.¹⁷⁴ It was in the urban environment of Emesa that Symeon enacted his foolish behaviour. Regarding the insanity of Symeon, Evagrius wrote,

But there were times indeed when, while frequenting the main streets, he appeared to have been estranged from normality (*ἐκτετράφθαι τοῦ καθεστῶτος ἐδόκει*), and to be completely devoid of sense and intelligence; and sometimes even, on entering a tavern, he would consume the available breads and foods when he was hungry.¹⁷⁵

Thus, the “insanity” of Symeon, was described by Evagrius, as being “estranged from normality” (*ἐκτετράφθαι τοῦ καθεστῶτος ἐδόκει*). Perdicoyianni-Paleologou views madness as manifested by a “moral transgression of religious, family and social” spheres.¹⁷⁶ Considering problems of defining madness both in the present and in the past, Dols decides that it is appropriate to define madness as any behaviour that is judged to be abnormal or extraordinary by a social group at a specific time and place.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 19.

¹⁷³ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 98.

¹⁷⁴ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 19. “But if you hear me, get up, let me depart; let us save others.” Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 148 [142].

¹⁷⁵ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: iv.34 [183]. Evagrius, Bidez, and Parmentier, 1964: “Ἔστιν δὲ οὗ καὶ κατὰ τὰς λεωφόρους ἀγοράζων ἐκτετράφθαι τοῦ καθεστῶτος ἐδόκει καὶ μηδὲν φρενῆρες ἢ ἀγγίνου ἔχειν ὅλως· καὶ που καὶ καπηλείῳ παρεισδὺς ἐκ τῶν προστυχόντων ἐδεσμάτω ἢ σιτίων ἥσθιεν ὅτε πεινώη.

¹⁷⁶ Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, 2009: 334.

¹⁷⁷ Dols, 1984: 136.

This thesis considers Perdicoyianni-Paleologou's and Dol's interpretations of madness as the most useful for studying the insanity of the holy fool. As the feigning of insanity of the holy fool was an observable behaviour, Thumiger's concept of embodied cognition, which considers the body and mind as integrated and interdependent, expands and enhances these discussions. Embodied cognition considers the body not as a mere instrument of the mind or a surface on which symptoms of madness emerge but as the place where the observer directly sees madness.¹⁷⁸ In other words, the body exposes madness by signalling it as a visible manifestation.¹⁷⁹ As the feigned insanity of holy fools was demonstrated through visible abnormal behaviour, their observers interpreted their madness through embodied cognition. Thus, from these perspectives, Symeon's insanity was exhibited as a visible manifestation, deviating from the customs and habits of his society. When investigating the feigned insanity of the holy fool, we should remember that we are exploring the insanity that the holy fool was *attempting to display*, rather than the kind of insanity the holy fool was *suffering* from.

2.8. The emergence of holy fools

Having defined the type of insanity exhibited by holy fools, we surmise how the concept of feigned insanity emerged. Ivanov cites the experience in Rus where madness was understood only in terms of divine intervention. When madness was viewed only as sacred, any madman was necessarily a holy fool. Accordingly, in Rus, the concept of feigned insanity did not evolve, and the type of holy foolery that developed in Byzantium did not advance.¹⁸⁰ In Byzantium, madness had many causes. The interaction of ideas where the medical perspective considered madness in terms of pathophysiological causes, and the belief that the divine could also cause madness, created an ambiguity that allowed for the development of a complex phenomenon where the feigning of insanity became possible. Christian belief allowed the holy fool

¹⁷⁸ Thumiger, 2017: 70.

¹⁷⁹ Thumiger, 2017: 67.

¹⁸⁰ "Byzantine holy foolery could not have arisen had there not already existed, in the Greek world, a developed tradition of medicine which regarded insanity as a distinct malaise, not necessarily linked to demonic possession." Ivanov, 2006: 408.

narratives to be written as a religious truth rather than fiction.¹⁸¹ As such, holy fools and their feigned insanity became authentic, and the holy fool was no longer a mere literary construction. However, moving the holy fool from a literary figure into real life, where people adopted a guise of insanity, social problems were created. These problems are discussed in more detail in chapter five.

2.9. Conclusion

This chapter highlights difficulties in researching the understanding of madness in antiquity, and the problems with terminology and definitions of madness, both in ancient sources and modern discussions. It identifies the type of madness explored in this thesis – the feigned insanity of the holy fool. Discussing the explanation of madness from different perspectives, from Archaic Greece to Byzantium, this chapter illustrates how the interplay of the seemingly separate yet interconnected perceptions of madness created a complex interwoven framework which served as a platform for the Byzantines to interpret madness and feigned insanity. Moreover, the ever-changing mindset of each person's perception of madness, affected by their belief and sociocultural status, activated a unique personal experience for each contact with madness. Although the medical tradition of madness allowed the feigned insanity of holy fools to come into existence, it is the interplay of these three separate yet interlinked perceptions of madness that allowed holy foolery to flourish. The next chapter investigates the holy fool model, the ambiguity it presents and how social reality can be altered to accommodate this phenomenon.

¹⁸¹ Rotman, 2016: 28.

Chapter 3. Holy Folly and the Holy Fool Apparatus

3.1. Introduction

Leontius of Neapolis' work, the *Life and Conduct of Abba Symeon Called the Fool for the Sake of Christ*,¹⁸² provides a detailed account of Symeon of Emesa, who was generally considered an exemplar of holy fools.¹⁸³ The analysis of holy foolery provided by this thesis is based mainly on the figure of Symeon in Leontius' narrative.¹⁸⁴ The previous chapter explored the historical perspectives of madness to provide the context for investigating the Byzantine reception of feigned insanity. This chapter focuses on the holy fool phenomenon. Although it is difficult to gauge whether Leontius was aware of the intricacies of the model he chose to deliver his message, the ambiguity of the holy fool remains an intriguing concept. This chapter explores how holy foolery began, then unpacks the holy fool phenomenon before analysing the multiple levels of ambiguity presented in the holy fool model. It then investigates how this concept affected the readers and beholders of madness and analyses how the Byzantine perception of social reality was altered to accommodate the unusual behaviour of holy fools. Rotman states that some societies "looked for spiritual values in abnormal, or insane behaviour, and legitimised it by attributing a unique spiritual character."¹⁸⁵ Accordingly, using Berger's concept that reality is a social construct, this thesis analyses how a change in social perception was brought about to legitimise the behaviour of the holy fool.

3.2. The origin of holy fools

¹⁸² Krueger includes a translation of Leontius' work in his book, *Symeon the Holy Fool Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City*. Krueger and Leontius, 1996.

¹⁸³ "His behaviour formed the basis for the general analysis of Holy Fools in the earlier excursus on monks and monasticism." Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xviii. "Symeon of Emesa was a role-model for all subsequent generations of holy fools." Ivanov, 2006: 105.

¹⁸⁴ A brief description of Symeon can be found in chapter 2, section 2.7; a brief description of Leontius of Neapolis' account of Symeon, *Life and Conduct of Abba Symeon Called the Fool for the Sake of Christ*, can be found in chapter 4, section 4.2.

¹⁸⁵ Rotman, 2016: 2.

There were a variety of “fools” in history, wild men of Byzantium, Russia and Ireland, ‘merry men’ of the Middle Ages, God’s jongleurs, and those who have been written off by the world as mad and contemptible but who “rejoice and are glad.”¹⁸⁶ Beyond Byzantium, holy foolery continued in the figures of the Russian *iurodivye*,¹⁸⁷ where the holy fool tradition can be seen in literary forms, such as in the protagonist of Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*.¹⁸⁸ In the Byzantine Christian context, the holy fool was a person who feigned insanity or provoked shock or outrage by his deliberate unruliness. However, not all pretences of insanity can be appraised as holy foolery. Extravagant behaviour would qualify as holy foolery only if observers assumed that what lay beneath was sanity, high morality and pious intent.¹⁸⁹

Asceticism, especially monasticism, began to influence Christian thinking in the fourth century. However, anchoritic monasticism¹⁹⁰ might cause self-delusion, pride and mental instability.¹⁹¹ When a holy man showed devotion to God, other Christians, seeing his devotion, might admire him for his dedication. Therefore, it was difficult to know if a holy man was making sacrifices only to worship God or if he intended to invite praise from others for his own glorification. In contrast to other traditional holy men, saints, and martyrs, holy fools feigned insanity to avoid praise. Hiding holiness behind a guise of madness, which invited revulsion rather than praise, allowed holy fools to worship God with pure intent. Thus, this was considered the highest form of devotion and set holy foolery apart from other forms of Christian devotion. In the fourth century, Evagrius described a particular type of ascetic who shunned recognition; however, he did not name them holy fools.

¹⁸⁶ Saward, 1980: 1980.

¹⁸⁷ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 100. Syrkin gives examples of holy fools in the Russian Orthodox Church. Syrkin, 1982: 158. Ivanov discusses the Russian *iurodivye* in detail. Ivanov, 2006: chapters 9-12.

¹⁸⁸ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 2.

¹⁸⁹ Ivanov, 2006: 1.

¹⁹⁰ Solitary monasticism. Ferngren, 2009: 77.

¹⁹¹ Marty, 1994: 107.

By proclaiming themselves mad (*παραφόρους*), they then trample down vainglory, which according to the wise Plato, is the last garment that the soul naturally casts off.¹⁹²

In order to study the development of this type of asceticism, this thesis traces the Christian tradition of the holy fool. This concept began with the teachings and experiences of the apostle Paul.¹⁹³ As instructed by God, Paul preached the resurrection, which he believed to be true but was seen as ridiculous by the wise men of Athens.¹⁹⁴ Saward argues that “folly is a relative concept” because it only has meaning if compared with some form of wisdom.¹⁹⁵ Hence, Paul was judged as a fool by earthly wisdom but wise by the divine wisdom of God.¹⁹⁶ Accordingly, distinguishing between earthly folly and divine wisdom, Paul rejoiced to be known as “a fool for Christ’s sake”.¹⁹⁷ In 1Cor. 4:10, Paul first used this phrase.¹⁹⁸

*“We are fools for Christ’s sake but you are wise in Christ.”*¹⁹⁹

Although later hagiographers²⁰⁰ chose to interpret Paul’s words as an injunction to become a fool for Christ,²⁰¹ it remained that Paul did not purposely pretend to be mad, nor did he advocate for others to feign insanity as a form of devotion. In

¹⁹² Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: i.21 [31]. Whitby comments that this general description of this type of ascetic as being “attributed to Plato in Athenaeus xi.507D and paraphrased in Evagrius’ description of Symeon the Fool”. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: 51, footnote 185.

Evagrius, Bidez, and Parmentier, 1964: αἱ παραφόρους σφᾶς ἀπαγγέλλοντες, οὕτω τὴν κενόδο ξίαν καταπατοῦσιν, ὃν τελευταῖον χιτῶνα κατὰ Πλάτωνα τὸν σοφὸν ἢ ψυχὴ πέφυκεν ἀποτίθεσθαι. *παραφόρους* is defined as borne aside, carried away mad, deranged. Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1968. Online edition, s.v. “*παραφόρους*”.

¹⁹³ Saward, 1980: 2.

¹⁹⁴ Acts 17:32. “Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked”.

¹⁹⁵ Saward, 1980: 3.

¹⁹⁶ “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.” 1Cor. 3.18.

¹⁹⁷ Saward, 1980: preface ix.

¹⁹⁸ Saward, 1980: 2.

¹⁹⁹ 1Cor. 4:10. ἡμεῖς μωροὶ διὰ Χριστόν, ὑμεῖς δὲ φρόνιμοι ἐν Χριστῷ. Westcott and Hort, 1974: 382.

²⁰⁰ “Hagiography is a modern term for a genre of Byzantine literature whose aims were the veneration of the saint and the creation of an ideal of Christian behaviour as well as documentation and entertainment.” Kazhdan et al., 1991. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Thus, hagiographers are writers of hagiography.

²⁰¹ Taves, 2018: 73.

addition, it should be noted that in using the phrase “fool for Christ’s sake”, Paul used the term *moros* (μωρός) rather than *salos* (σαλός).

If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool (μωρός) that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly (μωρία) with God.²⁰²

The term *salos* (σαλός), now commonly used in scholarship to denote “ holy fool”, is of uncertain origin. It first appeared in the early fifth century CE in Palladius’ *Lausiaca History* to describe a nun who feigned madness and possession by the devil. The nuns in the monastery told the narrator that the nun who feigned madness (μωρία) and demonic possession was a *σαλή*. Palladius explained that this was a word the nuns used to describe “those women who are afflicted”. Although her story has a theme of sanctity and concealed madness, Krueger does not believe that this term, used to describe the nun’s practice, was a technical term.²⁰³ Thus, *salos* did not denote a technical category at this stage, and feigned madness was not seen as a form of spiritual expression. As such, *salos* should not be understood as the equivalent of “holy fool” at that time.²⁰⁴ In addition, Evagrius in *Ecclesiastical History (HE)*²⁰⁵ did not use the term *salos*.²⁰⁶ It is not until later in the seventh century that Leontius used the term *σαλός* to describe Symeon as a “fool for Christ’s sake” (*σαλός διὰ Χριστόν*). Even here, Leontius did not use the term in a technical sense to define a holy fool but to define his folly as “for Christ’s sake” (*διὰ Χριστόν*).²⁰⁷ He also used a previously unattested verb *σαλίζω* to denote “playing the fool”.²⁰⁸ He did not attempt to recover Paul’s definition of the phrase but borrowed Paul’s language to establish biblical

²⁰² 1 Cor. 3: 18-19. Μηδεις εαυτον εξαπατατω· ει τις δοκει σοφος ει̃ναι εν υμιν εν τῷ αι̃ωνι τούτῳ, μωρος γενεσθω, ι̃να γενηται σοφος, η̃ γαρ σοφια του̃ κοσμου̃ τούτου μωρια̃ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ̃ ἐστιν· Westcott and Hort, 1974: 381-382. Note the word is “μωρός” not “σαλός”.

²⁰³ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 63.

²⁰⁴ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 65.

²⁰⁵ Evagrius had concluded writing of the *HE* by 593/594. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xx.

²⁰⁶ Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 199.

²⁰⁷ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 65. Also see quotation regarding Symeon on chapter 4, section 4.3.2, footnote 294. *σαλός* is defined as a silly, imbecile. (It did not imply sanctity). Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1968. Online edition, s.v. “σαλός”.

²⁰⁸ Leontius, *Life of Symeon*, p. 154 line 19; p.157 line 15, Cf. Rydén, *Das Leben des Heiligen Narren Symeon*, pp. 78-79, from Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 65

authority as a theological justification for Symeon's folly.²⁰⁹ Following Leontius' use of the term *salos* (σαλός), this term gradually evolved to denote holy folly²¹⁰ or the feigning of insanity to hide sanctity. In modern scholarship and the Orthodox churches, the term *salos* is commonly used to denote a holy fool whose status of holiness was granted by an audience who assumed that what lay beneath is sanity and high morality.²¹¹

The following section unpacks the holy fool model by exploring the paradox of the holy fool and the ambiguity presented by the holy fool.

3.2.1. The paradox of the holy fool

Ivanov explains that the holy fool's abnormal behaviour could only be edifying if he abandoned his disguise, but if he did, he subverted his vocation. If edification was not his purpose, then he could isolate himself from society which he abhors. However, as holy foolery could not survive without spectators, living amongst people was an essential aspect of the holy fool model. Thus, in Leontius' narrative, Symeon had to abandon the desert to live in the city of Emesa. This is the essential paradox of the Orthodox conception of the holy fool.²¹²

3.2.2. The ambiguity of feigned insanity

In holy foolery, there is ambiguity in whether people exhibiting abnormal behaviour were insane or if they were saints pretending to be insane. When every insane person could potentially be a saint in disguise,²¹³ sanctity could be sought and found in every madman. Ambiguity in the encounter caused tension between abnormality and sanctity, producing a philosophical challenge on both the individual and collective levels.²¹⁴ As ambiguity is central to the holy fool model, this thesis intends not to

²⁰⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 66.

²¹⁰ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 63.

²¹¹ Ivanov, 2006: 1.

²¹² Ivanov, 2006: 1-2.

²¹³ Rotman, 2016: 29.

²¹⁴ Rotman, 2016: 69-70.

resolve the ambiguity but to analyse this concept and explore how this presented an opportunity for hagiographers to deliver an intended message.

3.2.3. The liminality of the holy fool

Johnson's article²¹⁵ explores how Symeon's time spent feigning insanity during the liminal period allowed him to play the role of someone who both challenged and inverted social norms while remaining a "loyal, albeit restless member" of the Emesan Christian community.²¹⁶ Johnson uses the works of two scholars, Van Gennep and Turner, in his analysis. In Johnson's article, he discusses how Van Gennep divides what Van Gennep termed a 'ritual process' into a 'tripartite rites of passage schema': separation, margin (*limen*) and re-incorporation. Then Johnson discusses how Turner, expanding upon the second phase of Van Gennep's work, describes the "*liminal*" period as characterised by "ambiguity, transition, a lack of status, an absence of social obligations and foreignness."²¹⁷ Applying this ritual model to the figure of Symeon, this thesis considers his folly. Firstly, his insanity isolated or separated him from society (stage 1). He then lived on the margin of society during the liminal period, where he enacted the performance of a holy fool (stage 2). This middle stage had "a prophylactic function" in controlling the abuse of authority by the creation of *communitas*, or an intense personal bond between Symeon and the Emesans.²¹⁸ This bond facilitated his re-incorporation into society later in the ritual process. Finally, after he died, a new element of sanctity was introduced, and Symeon was re-incorporated into the society where both he and the Emesans had new roles; Symeon as a saint and the Emesans as his devotees (stage 3).²¹⁹

²¹⁵ Johnson, 2014: 592-612.

²¹⁶ Johnson, 2014: 602.

²¹⁷ Johnson, 2014: 593.

²¹⁸ *Communitas* that characterizes the liminal, recognizes that the liminal is a threat to social order but through personal bonding, the threat can be harnessed and domesticated. Johnson, 2014: 599.

²¹⁹ Johnson, 2014: 593.

In the discussion above, Turner uses the term “period”²²⁰ and considers liminality a “concept of being outside the usual social order as understood, asserted and defended in specific contexts”.²²¹ However, I find it useful to also consider the liminal as a virtual space outside the border of the usual social order. My perspective is prompted by Van Pelt, who views holy fool narratives as performances.²²² Thus, I see the liminal as applied to Symeon, also as a space or a stage for him to perform his act during his liminal period. For Symeon’s feigning of insanity, it is the place where he enacted sanctity on one border and insanity on the opposite side. Thus, during his liminal period and within this liminal space, he enacted his performance of holy foolery, moving between sanctity and insanity.

After analysing the liminality in the model of the holy fool, other areas of ambiguity in the model are explored. This thesis first investigates the ambiguity within the holy fool narrative and ambiguity at the level of the historian. Then, how the Byzantine reader of the narrative and the beholder of holy fools are affected when they are confronted with madness in real life are analysed.

3.2.4. Ambiguity in the narrative (or lack thereof)

In Leontius’ narrative, the central point is that the holy fool was a saint who feigned insanity. Thus, for the readers of the narrative, there was no doubt that Symeon was sane. Taves argues that the holy fool ceases to be an ambiguous figure in Christian hagiography once the hagiographer reveals that the fool was only pretending to be insane.²²³ Thus, it is true that for the readers of Leontius’ narrative, Symeon was not an ambiguous figure. However, Rotman argues that ambiguity was not set at the level of the story but at the level of historical context, which attributed ambiguous behaviour to real people, where theoretically, any insane person could be a saint in disguise.²²⁴

²²⁰ Johnson, 2014: 593

²²¹ Johnson, 2014: 607-608, footnote 8.

²²² See section 3.2.4.1 below.

²²³ Taves, 2018: 74.

²²⁴ Rotman, 2016: 26.

3.2.4.1. The ambiguity of the hagiographer's choice of their subject

As discussed by Rotman, historians cannot be sure whether hagiographers assigned holy fool status to sane individuals who intentionally chose to feign insanity if they have chosen individuals as symbols regardless of their actual mental state.²²⁵ Trevett reminds us to consider that holy fools may simply be suffering from mental illness. She compares the manifestations of the abnormal behaviour of holy fools to Asperger's Syndrome suffered by her grandfather. Then, she warns that theology might have ignored the needs of a person who has been afflicted by mental illness in a bid to use them as tools for their purposes.²²⁶ Thus, there is danger in taking the ablest view in not considering that the subject might have a genuine illness that requires help. In this sense, the integrity of the hagiographer when choosing individuals to be assigned holy fool status may be ambiguous.

To investigate the ambiguous areas in Leontius' narrative, an analysis of the structure of the narrative is required to facilitate further discussions. Looking beyond the surface of the story, we find that the narrative happened on two levels. In Leontius' narrative, there is a narrator and an audience 'within' the story and the same 'outside the story.' From 'within' the story, one of the characters, John the deacon, recounted Symeon's behaviour and the reaction of the Emesans; from the "outside" of the story, Leontius told the story as the author of the narrative. In other words, there were essentially two audiences to the story: the citizens of Emesa within the narrative and the readers of Leontius' narrative. The ambiguity of the holy fool's behaviour affected these audiences differently.

In 2018, viewing holy fool narratives as 'performances', van Pelt wrote an article to explore the interplay between the literary portrayal of a saint's performance and the narrative's textual performance.²²⁷ Although it is not the focus of this thesis, van Pelt's

²²⁵ Rotman, 2016: 3.

²²⁶ Trevett describes her personal experience with her grandfather who suffered from Asperger's Syndrome. She had mistaken him as being saintly in her earlier life, only realising later that he was neurodivergent. Trevett, 2009.

²²⁷ Van Pelt, 2018.

approach to the holy fool narratives as performances and the terms she uses, provide valuable tools for discussions in this study. Taking her concept of viewing the narrative as a textual performance, this thesis analyses Leontius' narrative by assigning roles and labels to "actors" and audiences involved in the two narratives. In labelling narrators and audiences in the intra-diegetic or extra-diegetic²²⁸ levels, it defines their roles "within" or "outside" of the story. This facilitates discussions on how the feigned insanity of Symeon affected the two audiences. Below is a summary of the characters and their roles in the two levels of the narrative:

Intra-diegetic level

- Intra-diegetic character - John the deacon, a character "inside" the story commented on Symeon's behaviour, his hidden sanctity, and the reactions of the Emesans to his antics
- Intra-diegetic audience - this included other characters in Leontius' narrative who witnessed Symeon's performance. This audience was unaware of Symeon's holiness during his lifetime, and his sanctity was only revealed to them after Symeon's death.

Extra-diegetic level

- Extra-diegetic narrator - Leontius of Neapolis. He claimed access to John the deacon as a primary source and wrote the narrative from "outside" the story
- Extra-diegetic audience - this included the readers of Leontius' narrative. This audience was aware throughout the narrative that Symeon was a saint.

As members of the different audiences have various knowledge levels of Symeon, they were affected by the ambiguity in Symeon's feigned insanity in different ways.

3.2.4.2. Effect of the holy fool's feigned insanity on the intra-diegetic audience

²²⁸ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, diegesis is a narration. *OED : Oxford English Dictionary : the Definitive Record of the English Language*, 2000. s.v. "diegesis". Thus, intra-diegetic is defined as what happened within the story and extra-diegetic as what is external to the story.

At the intra-diegetic level of the narrative, other than characters who have been given insight into Symeon's behaviour, most of the audience believed that Symeon was insane. He did good deeds, but these were followed by outrageous actions so that he could continue to hide his sanctity. There was the incident where a snake vomited poison into a wine jar. Therefore, Symeon destroyed the jar to prevent harm to those who might drink it. The tavern keeper did not understand Symeon's motive and abused Symeon for this act. However, he later realised that Symeon had performed a good deed but Symeon enacted his folly to hide his sanctity.

He was edified and considered Symeon to be holy. Thereupon the saint wanted to destroy his edification, so that the tavern keeper would not expose him. One day when the tavern keeper's wife was asleep alone and the tavern keeper was selling wine, Abba Symeon approached her and pretended to undress. The woman screamed, and when her husband came in, she said to him, "Throw this thrice cursed man out! He wanted to rape me." And punching him with his fists, he carried him out of the shop and into the icy cold. Now there was a mighty storm and it was raining. And from that moment, not only did the tavern keeper think that he was beside himself, but if he heard someone else saying, "Perhaps Abba Symeon pretends to be like this," immediately he answered, "He is completely possessed. I know, and no one can persuade me otherwise. He tried to rape my wife. And he eats meat as if he's godless."²²⁹

In addition, those who wanted to tell others of his holy status were rendered mute. This was illustrated in the incident with the village headman. A village headman heard about Symeon and said that he would be able to tell if Symeon was only pretending to be a fool. He found Symeon being carried by one prostitute while being whipped by another. Although he knew that Symeon was a holy man, his tongue had been bound so that he could not speak.

²²⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: [147-148] p. 152-153.

At once, the Fool left the women and came toward the village headman, who was about a stone's throw away from him, and hit him. And stripping off his tunic, he danced naked and whistled. And he said to him, "Come here and play, wretch, there is no fraud here!" By this the man knew that Symeon had seen what was in his heart, and he was amazed. Every time he started to tell someone about this, his tongue was bound, and he was unable to utter a sound.²³⁰

Thus, during his life, his feigning of insanity led the Emesans to treat him as a madman. However, after his death, all was revealed, and the Emesans were under no illusion that he was a holy man.

Then all came to their senses, as if from sleep, and told each other what miracles he had performed for each of them and that he had played the fool (σαλόν) for God's sake.²³¹

Thus, the narrative had been designed to momentarily deceive the intra-diegetic audience rather than expose them to ambiguous thoughts. Discussions of the Emesan's adverse reaction to Symeon's insanity ended when Symeon died, and his sanctity was revealed. There was no further projection of the Emesans' reactions to their subsequent exposure to other mad people.

3.2.4.3. Effect of the holy fool's feigned insanity on the extra-diegetic audience

At the extra-diegetic level, the readers of Symeon's story 'knew' that he was not insane.²³² Thus, there was no ambiguity regarding his insanity at this level. However, as a hagiography, the narrative of Symeon was neither written nor read as fiction. In

²³⁰ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: [156] p. 160.

²³¹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: [168] p. 170. *σαλός* is defined as a silly, imbecile. (It did not imply sanctity). Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1968. Online edition, s.v. "*σαλός*".

²³² For the sake of simplicity, I have labelled readers and listeners of holy fool narratives simply as readers of holy fools.

a religious context, the narrative was rendered not only credible but also the actual truth. Thus, although the extra-diegetic audience did not experience ambiguity on the literary level, Symeon's ambiguous behaviour translated to the ambiguity they experienced in real life when they were confronted with madness. Thus, if this story was true, then every insane person they met could theoretically be a saint in disguise. To explore this effect, this thesis now analyses the Byzantine experience when confronting madness in life.

3.3. The experience of the readers and beholders of insanity in Byzantium

Rotman argues that if historians wish to explore how encountering insanity in real life affected the reader and beholder of holy fools in Byzantium, they must surpass the literary level of the narrative; that is, they must move beyond the story. However, historians cannot move past the story because stories are all they have.²³³ Thus, Rotman proposes using the combined perspectives of Bakhtin and Winnicott,²³⁴ to mitigate this problem. This thesis adapts Rotman's approach and uses aspects of Bakhtin's concept of analysing "literature in great time" to investigate how reading about simulated insanity of holy fools affected the readers who were confronted with madness in real life.

The first task is to explore how Byzantine readers might have been affected by reading holy fool narratives. Bakhtin states that there is no scholarly study without understanding the author as a modern reader of literature, just as there can be no such understanding without scholarly study."²³⁵ Thus, this thesis explores Leontius' narrative from the viewpoint of a reader of literature to reveal the meaning of his text. Then, a scholarly study of his text, exploring the aesthetic aspect of the story, is used to elucidate the cultural landscape of Leontius' time, how Leontius hoped to

²³³ Rotman, 2016: 49.

²³⁴ Rotman, 2016: 49–60.

²³⁵ Rotman, 2016.: 51.

reach his reader and how they might have received his message.²³⁶ Combined with findings of the previous chapter regarding how madness was understood in Byzantium, this approach places the thesis in a good position for this task.

Secondly, Rotman discusses his use of Winnicott's perspective to explore how confrontation of madness in real life affected the Byzantine reader.²³⁷ According to Rotman, Winnicott coined the terms the *true self* and the *false self*. In life, these *selves* are in constant communication with each other. The *true self* perceives itself by the images projected at it by its surroundings, and the *false self*, is the image that a person wishes to project onto his surroundings. In other words, the true self comes from an interpsychic experience of the world, while the false self is modelled for its surroundings. If the *self* is formed and sustained by the way in which it is acknowledged by its surroundings, then there is a danger when the *self* of a sane person faces an insane other. The image of the *self* projected from an insane person, that is, the feedback provided by an insane person to a sane individual, distorts the *true self* of the individual. This distortion creates a rupture of dialogue between the two *selves* of the sane person, where the insane person is experienced as an enemy of the beholder. Translating to fear and unease, the sane individual fights the danger that insanity inflicts by reacting with cruelty, ridicule, or abuse, to resolve this conflict.²³⁸

Thus, when the reader of holy fool narratives confronted insanity in real life, the instinct was to abuse the insane or avoid them. However, in Byzantine hagiography, holy fool narratives were presented as truth. As discussed in the previous chapter, their understanding of madness allowed the possibility of feigned insanity to occur. Thus, the readers of holy fool narratives believed that it was possible for holy fools to exist. The result was the ambiguity that the insane person could be a saint. This tension between the abnormality/threat and sanctity provided the hagiographers

²³⁶ The aesthetics of the narrative refers to how the story and the hero have been constructed. Rotman, 2016: 53. The aesthetics of Leontius' narrative is discussed in the following chapter.

²³⁷ Rotman, 2016: 55-62.

²³⁸ "holy fools ...might be considered potential prophets or dangerous lunatics. Disturbed behaviour usually poses a threat, so that some degree of fear has always influenced the social response to madness." Dols, 1984: 136.

with an opportunity. When a person who believed in the existence of holy insanity met insanity in real life, they could not end the internal conflict of the *selves* produced by the encounter with insanity.²³⁹ In depicting the insane as possible saints, that ambiguity led the spectator through a journey of self-discovery to repentance because in abusing the insane, they might have abused perfect servants of God.²⁴⁰ Thus, with every encounter, an insane individual could prompt repentance in beholders by reminding them to consider their own commitment to their faith, hence, delivering a renewed call to devotion every time a madman was encountered. The combination of these theoretical approaches helps explain how encountering insanity in real life affected the reader and beholder of holy fools in Byzantium.

3.4. The normalisation of feigned insanity

As discussed earlier, Dols defines insanity as “any behaviour that is judged to be abnormal or extraordinary by a social group at a specific time and space,” that is, insanity is culturally and socially specific. In addition, he stated that “within the wide spectrum of human behaviour, members of the society set boundaries to what they believe to be acceptable or permissible behaviour.” Thus, from Dol’s perspective, although the feigned insanity of the holy fool may pose a threat resulting in fear, this fear can be allayed if it is sanctioned by society.²⁴¹ Rotman argues that people require a change in their perception of reality to accept the sanctification of feigned insanity.²⁴² In Byzantium, simulated madness was a part of its culture.²⁴³ There were holy fools in existence, and writers have used their stories as hagiographical narratives, suggesting that Byzantine society was familiar with the feigned insanity of holy fools. This thesis analyses how the boundaries of Byzantine society had been altered to accommodate the unusual behaviour of the holy fools.

²³⁹ Rotman, 2016: 59.

²⁴⁰ Rotman, 2016: 57.

²⁴¹ Dols, 1984: 136.

²⁴² Rotman, 2016: 62.

²⁴³ Rotman, 2016: 59.

Berger explains that reality is socially constructed through externalisation, objectivation and internalisation.²⁴⁴ This study uses elements of his theory to explain how the feigned insanity of holy fools has been accepted and then ingrained in Byzantine culture. Berger explains externalisation as the process where meaning is communicated to the outside world. In the holy fool narratives, this was achieved when hagiographers taught and communicated that sanctity could be hidden behind feigned insanity. Berger sees objectivation as the process of objectifying non-objective things. In Symeon's narrative, the encounter with a mad person was objectified as a possible encounter with a saint. Through internalisation, individuals internalised and accepted their externalised and objectified understanding as reality. In the case of holy fools, internalisation was facilitated as church writers communicated the narratives as factual accounts,²⁴⁵ legitimised within the religious sphere of the Christian institution. Feigned insanity was thus normalised and became a part of reality²⁴⁶ in Christian Byzantium.

3.5. Conclusion

Commencing with how holy foolery began, this chapter explores the paradox of the holy fool model and the ambiguity at different levels of the holy fool narrative. It then looks at how reading about feigned insanity and beholding madness affected the Byzantines. Recognition of holy fools as holy men required society to view their unusual behaviour as acceptable. This was achieved through a change in societal perception of their abnormal behaviour. By engaging with the beholders of holy fools and turning the abnormal behaviour of feigned insanity into acceptable behaviour, Christians created a new ontology and a new reality for their changing society. The discussions in this chapter are from theoretical perspectives that provide the basis for the investigations in this thesis. The next chapter focuses on the case study of a holy

²⁴⁴ Berger and Luckmann, 1991.

²⁴⁵ Rotman, 2016: 59.

²⁴⁶ Berger defines 'reality' as a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition (we cannot 'wish them away'). Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 1.

fool, Symeon of Emesa, to explore a figure who embodied the ambiguity of feigned insanity and gave purpose to an outlier of social conventions.

Chapter 4. Symeon of Emesa

4.1. Introduction

This chapter solidifies the theoretical discussions of the previous chapters by exploring the case study of a holy fool. It analyses the literary evidence and evaluates the writers of the primary narratives of Symeon of Emesa. Then it investigates seventh-century Byzantine culture and analyses how the narrative had been structured to reach its audience. This exercise explores the cultural milieu of seventh-century Byzantium and considers the inspiration of holy fools within this context.

As the Greek heroes of the past have shared characteristics,²⁴⁷ holy fools also shared many common features.²⁴⁸ The numerous holy fools,²⁴⁹ such as Andrew the Fool²⁵⁰ and the nun at Tabennisi,²⁵¹ shared some common elements in their stories: the incognito, the self-abasement, the poor treatment and the moral lesson.²⁵² In addition, there was usually a character in their narrative who “knew” of their sanctity and communicated this to the reader of the narrative. Due to the scope of this thesis, this work focuses on an exemplar of holy fools: Symeon of Emesa,²⁵³ as documented by Evagrius Scholasticus and Leontius of Neapolis. Although there is no definite proof that he was a historical figure, Symeon had nonetheless been canonised in Byzantium, medieval Russia,²⁵⁴ and by the Roman Catholic Church.²⁵⁵ This shows the importance accorded to holy fools in some circles.

²⁴⁷ In Greek mythology, heroes often take place in archetypal events. Lord Raglan, the folklorist and mythographer, provides a list of patterns of heroes. Harris and Platzner, 2008: 313.

²⁴⁸ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 70-71.

²⁴⁹ Syrkin mentions other holy fools. Syrkin, 1982: 157.

²⁵⁰ Rotman, 2016: 17.

²⁵¹ Ivanov, 2006 : 51-52. Rydén, 1981: 106.

²⁵² Rydén, 1981: 106.

²⁵³ For discussions of Symeon as an exemplar of holy fools, see chapter 3, section 3.1, footnote 183 .

²⁵⁴ Syrkin, 1982: 150.

²⁵⁵ The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America lists the feast day of Symeon the Fool for Christ on 21st July. [Search for a Saint or Feast - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America \(goarch.org\)](http://goarch.org)
The National Catholic Register lists the feast day of St. Simeon Salus, the Holy Fool on the 1st July. [St. Simeon Salus, the Holy Fool | National Catholic Register \(ncregister.com\)](http://ncregister.com)

Although Leontius was the bishop of Cyprus, he set the narrative in a Syrian city. Krueger claims that the literary aspects of the story and the theological concerns of Leontius' narrative pointed not only to a local Cypriot audience but also to an international readership.²⁵⁶ As mentioned by Rotman in a previous chapter, the *aesthetics* of the narrative, that is, how the story and the hero have been constructed, alludes to how the author expected his readers to receive it, thus demonstrating a dialogue between the author and the reader.²⁵⁷ For this dialogue to be effective, the author must set his message at an appropriate level to reach his audience. Thus, exploring the aesthetics of his story intimates the writer's education status and that of the readers and gives a glimpse into the cultural and educational environment of their time. As this narrative had been aimed at an international readership,²⁵⁸ there were likely common elements in Byzantine culture across the empire.

4.2. Life of Symeon the Fool – Literary evidence

Although there were earlier, mostly fragmentary documentations of Symeon,²⁵⁹ this thesis focuses on two primary accounts: Evagrius Scholasticus' brief account of Symeon²⁶⁰ within his more extensive work, *Ecclesiastical History (HE)* and Leontius of Neapolis' detailed account in the *Life and Conduct of Abba Symeon Called the Fool for the Sake of Christ (VS)*. The *VS*, written after the *HE*, is one of the earliest and most original accounts of holy foolery.²⁶¹ As the first full-length *vita* of a holy fool,²⁶² it is a valuable primary source for this thesis.

Evagrius mentioned that there were holy fools who existed earlier than Symeon. In Book i of the *HE*, he stated,

²⁵⁶ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 18.

²⁵⁷ Rotman, 2016: 53.

²⁵⁸ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 18.

²⁵⁹ Mango argues that Leontius used a written source in the form of a paterikon. Mango, 1984: 30.

²⁶⁰ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: Book iv.34.

²⁶¹ Johnson, 2014: 594. In addition, in footnote 10 in his article, he states, "There are earlier, less developed characters who are referred to as *saloi* as Symeon is, especially 'The Nun Who Feigned Madness' from the Tabennesi Monastery from the fourth century, but Symeon appears to be the first sustained treatment of this *topos* in Christian hagiography."

²⁶² Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 1.

And I will tell of another type also, which almost escaped me, although it has the highest honour in the eyes of all. They are very few, but nevertheless, there are those who, when through virtue they have achieved absence of passion, return to the world in the midst of its turmoils. By proclaiming themselves mad (*παραφόρους*), they thus trample down vainglory, according to the wise Plato, is the last garment that they should naturally cast off.²⁶³

In Book iv.34 of *HE*, Evagrius mentioned Symeon in a short narrative. He began his narrative about Symeon by documenting his unusual behaviour, saying that “he appeared to have been estranged from normality.” This was followed by three incidences involving Symeon: his treatment of a pregnant servant girl, his dealings with a prostitute, and the prediction of an earthquake.²⁶⁴

The text in the *VS* is divided into two sections. The first section documented Symeon leaving his home, going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, entering a monastery in Jordan with his friend John, and then living as a grazier hermit in the desert for twenty-nine years,²⁶⁵ where he attained a state of spiritual perfection. The second section involved Symeon, in his spiritually perfect state, leaving the desert for the city of Emesa,²⁶⁶ where he planned to save souls. This thesis concentrates on the second section, where Leontius documented thirty-one episodes of Symeon’s exploits of holy foolery in Emesa.²⁶⁷

4.3. The hagiographers and their sources

²⁶³ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: i.21 [31] *παραφόρους* is defined as borne aside, carried away mad, deranged. Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1968. Online edition, s.v. “*παραφόρους*”.

Also see chapter 3, section 3.2, footnote 192 regarding the attribution of the quotation to Plato.

²⁶⁴ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: iv.34 [182-183]

²⁶⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 31.

²⁶⁶ Modern Homs in Syria. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 135, footnote 10.

²⁶⁷ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 19-20.

4.3.1. Evagrius Scholasticus

Evagrius was a Syrian, possibly born between 532 and 537²⁶⁸ in Epiphania, located in the valley of the Orontes River in Syria II. He grew up in a moderately well-off family and had an expensive education.²⁶⁹ After studying rhetoric, he trained in legal studies and became a *scholasticus* (barrister²⁷⁰) in the 550s.²⁷¹ As such, he was attached to the services of Gregory, Patriarch of Antioch.²⁷² Jones supports the claim that Evagrius had a comfortable home background and mentions that although the bar was the principal platform where men of modest origins could rise to the state's highest position during this period, "the law was not a profession accessible to the humblest ranks of society."²⁷³ Evagrius' work focused on the city of Antioch²⁷⁴ and ecclesiastical matters such as the dealings at the Fifth Ecumenical Council.²⁷⁵ According to Whitby, Evagrius targeted the educated elite.²⁷⁶ As such, the *HE* has been written by an educated author for an educated audience. As Evagrius declared his book to be finished in the twelfth year of Maurice Tiberius,²⁷⁷ the *HE* was concluded in 593/94 CE.²⁷⁸

Due to his proximity to Gregory of Antioch, Allen posits that Evagrius' sources on Symeon included Gregory of Antioch and/or his monastic circle.²⁷⁹ In addition, Allen believes that he likely had access to church histories and records, the works of ancient authors such as Zacharia Scholasticus, Eustathius of Epiphania, John Malalas and Procopius of Caesarea, which he used for his work.²⁸⁰ Although Evagrius' account

²⁶⁸ For a discussion of Evagrius' possible year of birth, see Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 1.

²⁶⁹ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xiii.

²⁷⁰ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: 26, footnote 82.

²⁷¹ Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 2.

²⁷² Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xiv.

²⁷³ Jones, 1964: 512.

²⁷⁴ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xv.

²⁷⁵ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: lvi.

²⁷⁶ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xxi.

²⁷⁷ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: Book vi: 24 [240].

²⁷⁸ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xx.

²⁷⁹ Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 199-200. Furthermore, Evagrius described five categories of ascetic life where Holy Fools carried the highest honour. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: i.21 [29-30]. Allen believes this detailed knowledge is further testimony to Evagrius' monastic connection. Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 90-93.

²⁸⁰ Whitby offers a discussion on the different sources that Evagrius may have used. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xxii – xxxi. Allen also discusses Evagrius' sources. Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 6-11.

representing the earliest narrative of Symeon²⁸¹ is brief, scholars such as Allen believe that Evagrius produced a realistic portrayal of Symeon because of his access to reliable sources.²⁸² Mango also considers Evagrius a serious historian.²⁸³ From the historical focus of *HE*, Rotman believes Symeon to be an actual historical figure.²⁸⁴ However, despite Allen's claim that he had access to Gregory of Antioch and his monastic circle, Krueger points out that Evagrius did not have written sources for Symeon. Thus, his account should not be taken as evidence for the historical Symeon but rather as the earliest account of a tradition about Symeon.²⁸⁵

4.3.2. Leontius of Neapolis

Leontius was the bishop of Neapolis on Cyprus (modern Limassol) around the mid-seventh century CE.²⁸⁶ Although there is little information about him,²⁸⁷ judging from his work, Leontius also likely received a formal education in grammar and rhetoric.²⁸⁸ Scholars generally agree that Leontius wrote the *VS* after he finished the *Life of John the Almsgiver* in 641/2. As Symeon was placed within a prosperous urban society in Cyprus before the Arab invasion of 649 CE,²⁸⁹ Krueger estimates the *VS* to have been written between 642 to 649 CE.²⁹⁰

There are scholarly debates on whether Leontius and Evagrius shared the same oral or written sources, whether Leontius had access to a non-extant intermediary source which expanded on Evagrius' *HE* or if Leontius built his work on Evagrius' account. In addition, regarding the possible sources for his work, scholars are concerned about

²⁸¹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 61.

²⁸² Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 200.

²⁸³ Mango, 1984: 28.

²⁸⁴ Rotman, 2016: 16-17.

²⁸⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 22.

²⁸⁶ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 1.

²⁸⁷ Syrkin, 1982: 151.

²⁸⁸ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 6.

²⁸⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 7. Scholars tend to place credence that the prosperity of the society places Symeon before the Arab invasion. However, as the work is a hagiography, Leontius could have chosen to place Symeon in a peaceful scenario to highlight his feigned insanity without the distraction of a complicated political background.

²⁹⁰ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 4-5. Alexander Syrkin dates this to between 641 and 648 CE, but he does not give a rationale for his dating. Syrkin, 1982: 151.

the different styles of the two sections of the *VS*,²⁹¹ and some believe that Leontius may have used different sources for the two parts.²⁹² As Leontius had included elements of Evagrius' introduction to Symeon and two of the three events narrated in the *HE*, Krueger believes that Leontius had likely used Evagrius as a source.²⁹³

One of the significant problems regarding the *VS* is the problem of its veracity. In the *VS*, Leontius claimed that Symeon had personally narrated the events to John the deacon.

All this Symeon narrated in Emesa, where he pretended to be a fool, to a certain deacon of the holy cathedral church of the same city of Emesa, an excellent and virtuous man, who, by the divine grace which had come to him, understood the monk's work, and it was on his behalf that this most blessed Symeon performed a wonderful marvel, which we shall recall in its proper place.²⁹⁴

Leontius then claimed that he had access to John the deacon. According to this claim, his narrative was written using evidence from an eyewitness to Symeon. Thus, it was accurate, and its veracity was undeniable.

This aforementioned John, beloved of God, a virtuous deacon, *narrated (διηγήσατο) for us* almost the entire life of that most wise one, calling on the Lord as witness to his story, that he had *written*

²⁹¹ The first section depicted Symeon in the desert, while the second section placed him in Emesa.

²⁹² There does not seem to any general consensus on this matter. For discussions, see Efthymiadis and Deroche 2016: 75-76. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 20-21.

²⁹³ Efthymiadis and Deroche 2016 : 75. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 34-35. Chapter 2 offers a detailed discussion of Leontius' sources.

²⁹⁴ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 135 [125]. Festugière and Rydén, 1974: 59 line 16-21:

“αὐτὰ δὲ πάντα ἐξηγήσατο ὁ ἐνάρετος Συμεὼν τινὶ ἐν Ἐμέσῃ, ἔνθα καὶ τὸν σαλὸν προσεποιήσατο, διακόνῳ τῆς ἀγίας καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας τῆς αὐτῆς Ἐμεσηνῶν αὐτῷ πόλεως, ἀνδρὶ θαυμαστῷ καὶ ἐναρέτῳ, ὃς καὶ ἐκ τῆς προσοῦσης θείας χάριτος ἐνόησεν τὴν ἐργασία ν τοῦ γέροντος, εἰς ὃν καὶ θαῦμα φοβερόν ἐποίησεν οὗτος ὁ μακάριος Συμεὼν, οὕτινος θαύματος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ τόπῳ μνημονεύσομεν.

σαλός is defined as a silly, imbecile. (It did not imply sanctity). Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1968. Online edition, s.v. “σαλός”.

(ἐπέγραψεν) nothing to add to the narrative, but rather that since that time he had forgotten most things.²⁹⁵

Based on the reporting of the event of an earthquake in Evagrius' account, where Symeon had been present, Whitby concludes that Symeon lived in the mid-sixth century.²⁹⁶ As Evagrius' narrative of Symeon formed part of the excursus of other saints during the first half of Justinian's reign, Mango sees this as evidence to support this dating.²⁹⁷ In the *VS*, Leontius stated that Symeon was a contemporary of Justinian,²⁹⁸ the Byzantine emperor between 527-65 CE. This statement also supports the timeframe that places Symeon in the mid-sixth century. However, as discussed previously, scholars date the *VS* to be written between 642 and 649 CE, that is, Leontius wrote the *VS* approximately one hundred years after Evagrius' *HE*. As such, it is impossible that John the deacon would have lived long enough to narrate the events to Leontius as an eyewitness one hundred years later. Hence, scholars generally agree that Leontius' claim of access to an eyewitness of Symeon is a fabrication.²⁹⁹ However, Krueger argues that the words *narrated* (διηγήσατο) and *written* (ἐπέγραψεν) in the quotation above may have caused the confusion. Taking a less accepted approach within scholarly circles, he argues that Leontius had not claimed an oral source because *narrated* does not necessarily mean a verbal account. It could have been related in a *written* statement.³⁰⁰ Hence, Krueger argues that Leontius' status as a reliable historian remains intact.

²⁹⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 135 [125]. Festugière and Rydén, 1974: Page 59 line 21-24: ὁ εἰρημένος οὖν θεοφιλῆς Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἐνάρετος διάκονος, αὐτὸς ἡμῖν τὸν ἅπαντα βίον σχεδὸν τοῦ πανσόφου διηγήσατο, τὸν κύριον προβαλλόμενος τῶν λεγομένων μάρτυρα, ὥς ὅτι οὐδὲν κατὰ προσθήκην ἐπέγραψεν τῷ διηγήματι ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα ἐκ τοῦ χρόνου ἐπελάθετο.

²⁹⁶ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000.: iv.34 [184] p. 239, footnote 110. Whitby explains that the earthquake in Phoenicia Maritima mentioned by Evagrius, was the earthquake in 551 BCE which devastated the Levant and terminated the prosperity of Beirut.

²⁹⁷ Mango, 1984: 27.

²⁹⁸ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 134 [124].

²⁹⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 23. Believing that Evagrius is well informed about holy fools, Allen sees Evagrius' information about Symeon as "contemporary and realistic" while that of Leontius to be stylized. Allen and Evagrius, 1981: 200.

³⁰⁰ For a more detailed discussion on the words *narrated* and *written* see Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 23-24.

Due to this discrepancy of one hundred years, Mango labels Leontius as a manipulator who had done a “pretty careless job” in the compilation of his work.³⁰¹ However, scholars view Leontius’ VS as a hagiographical account. From this perspective, accurate historicity is not essential because Leontius’ purpose was not to create a “historical truth” but to edify and save souls.³⁰² In the quotation below, Leontius stated his intention in writing the narrative,

...I shall today unveil for you a nourishment which does not perish
but which leads our souls to life everlasting.³⁰³

Putting aside his criticism of the historicity of the VS, Mango concedes that hagiography should be seen as the literary equivalent of religious painting. For example, when looking at the icon of St Abakyros’ in S. Maria Antiqua, one understands that it is not an actual portrait.³⁰⁴ Van Pelt also supports the view that it was not the intention of the hagiographer to deceive his reader because his ultimate goal was to rouse a different kind of belief in his audience. Thus, his narration portrayed a religious belief rather than a historical truth.³⁰⁵ In the introduction to their recent volume of translations of *Syriac Lives of Women Saints*, Brock and Harvey write that “variation in historicity does not detract from the worth of these texts as social documents for their period of composition, as they offer insight and information on the world from which they came.”³⁰⁶ Thus, although it remains difficult to ascertain Leontius’ sources and whether Symeon is a historical figure or if Leontius’ narrative is historically accurate, the VS remains a valuable resource. It gives us a glimpse into the religious and social landscape of seventh-century Byzantium, a detailed portrayal of a

³⁰¹ Mango, 1984: 33. Mango further discusses other difficulties with Leontius’ chronology. Mango, 1984: 27-30.

³⁰² Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 6-7.

³⁰³ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 132 [121]. Festugière and Rydén, 1974: 55 line 21-22:
τροφὴν ὑμῖν σήμερον μὴ ἀπολλυμένην ἀλλ’ ὁδηγοῦσαν πρὸς ζωὴν αἰώνιον τὰς ἡμετέρας
ψυχὰς ἀνακαλύψωμεν.

³⁰⁴ Mango, 1984: 41.

³⁰⁵ Van Pelt, 2020: 86-87. Also see the definition of hagiography as a genre of writing in chapter 3, section 3.2, footnote 200.

³⁰⁶ Brock and Harvey, 1987: 3. “The *Life* reflect certain aspects of social and culture life on Cyprus at the end of Late Antiquity, particularly the economy of the city and the preservation of Graeco-Roman secular culture through traditional systems of education.” From Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 8.

holy fool and demonstrates how a holy fool fitted into the social and cultural terrain of his time.

4.4. Social culture in Late Antiquity

There was still evidence of Graeco-Roman culture in late antiquity. Evagrius demonstrated this by using themes from classical Greek tragedies in the *HE*.³⁰⁷ In recounting Justin's life in the *HE*,³⁰⁸ Evagrius portrayed Justin's downfall as that of a tragic Greek hero. In many ways, Justin was a good emperor, but power made him arrogant. His wrongdoings necessitated his formal abdication from the throne, and in the style of a hero in Greek tragedy, he decried how his faults had led him to his downfall.³⁰⁹ Another example can be found in i.31 of the *HE*, where Evagrius' discussion of the humility of holy fools echoed the thoughts of the classical Greek philosopher Plato.

By proclaiming themselves mad (*παραφόρους*), they then trample down vainglory, which, according to the wise Plato, is the last garment that the soul naturally casts off.³¹⁰

Although society was essentially Christian, schools maintained a classical syllabus throughout the fourth to the sixth centuries.³¹¹ As the beliefs of polytheistic paganism³¹² and monotheistic Christianity are insurmountably at odds with each

³⁰⁷ Chesnut, 1986: 218-219.

³⁰⁸ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: v.1-v.13 [195-209].

³⁰⁹ Chesnut, 1986: 218-219.

³¹⁰ "A saying attributed to Plato in Athenaeus xi.507D and paraphrased in Evagrius' description of Symeon the Fool iv.34 [182]". Also see chapter 3, section 3.2, footnote 192. Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: i.21 [31] p. 51, footnote 185. *παραφόρους* is defined as borne aside, carried away mad, deranged. Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1968. Online edition, s.v. "*παραφόρους*".

³¹¹ Jones, 1964: 1006.

³¹² The term 'pagan' is used loosely to denote non-Christians. As discussed by Jürgasch, Christians started using the term *paganus* only from the fourth century. Previously, it had been a term used to denote an outsider to a group. From the fourth century, it is a non-religious term used by Christians to label non-Christians. Jürgasch posits that the terms "Christian" and "pagan" are "results of interpretations of certain social realities such as the changes taking place in the fourth-century Roman Empire" and is a result of the Christian desire to forge a new identity for their newly formed religious group. Jürgasch, 2015: 115-138.

other, one would expect the church to reject an education system based on pagan classics and mythology. Thus, as expected, many Christians regarded the classics as sinful.³¹³ However, as training in the classics aided imperial employment and status, the elites continued to educate their sons in Greek classics, and Christian students continued to study the pagan gods.³¹⁴ Basil, the bishop of Caesarea in 370 CE,³¹⁵ wrote a letter to young men on how they might benefit from pagan literature.³¹⁶ As this letter had been widely circulated and used as a school text in late antiquity, it demonstrates that the outline of a Christian curriculum remained essentially similar to that of Late Antique pagan schools.³¹⁷

One classical cynic philosopher from the fourth century BCE, whose teachings were still influential during Late Antiquity, was Diogenes of Sinope.³¹⁸ His rejection of earthly pleasure and riches revealed a similarity to the ascetic orders of Christianity.³¹⁹ As there are many allusions to Diogenes in the *VS*, it is worthwhile to explore the influence of Diogenes in Byzantium further.

Evidence of the continuing impact of Diogenes on the Byzantines is found in the wide use of *chreia* in educated circles. A *chreia* is a concise statement or action attributed to some specified character or something analogous to a character. Students learnt *chreias* to be able to use them in a speech or to illustrate a point.³²⁰ More than one thousand *chreias* attributed to Diogenes³²¹ continued to be a feature of rhetorical education throughout the Byzantine era. Below is an example of a *chreia* attributed to Diogenes,

³¹³ Jones, 1964: 1005.

³¹⁴ Jones, 1964: 1006.

³¹⁵ Basil was born around the year 330. He belonged to a relatively prosperous and locally prominent family in Pontus, near the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor. He settled in Caesarea and became bishop in 365. Rousseau, 1998: 1-2.

³¹⁶ Basil. Letters Volume IV: 7 -10. See Appendix 2.

³¹⁷ Krueger, 1993: 35.

³¹⁸ Krueger, 1993: 30.

³¹⁹ Dudley, 1967: 207.

³²⁰ Krueger, 1993: 31.

³²¹ Fischel, 1968: 374.

Diogenes mocked those who lock up their storehouses with bolts, keys seals, but who open up all the doors and windows of their bodies, through their mouth, their genitals, their ears, and their eyes (3.6.17).³²²

Many church fathers referred to Diogenes in favourable terms. For example, Basil of Caesarea referred to Diogenes in a letter to young men discussed earlier in this chapter. In his treatise *Against the Enemies of the Monastic Life*, John Chrysostom wrote,

Do you know how much money Alexander [the Great] would have given to Diogenes, if he wanted to accept it? But he did not want it. And Alexander tried hard and did everything, so that he might someday come to Diogenes' riches.³²³

However, the reference was not always positive. In other instances, John Chrysostom accused Diogenes of being motivated by δόξα or glory.³²⁴

Not like him of Sinope, who clothed in rags and living in a cask to no good end, astonished many, but profited none: whereas Paul did none of these things; (for neither had he an eye to ostentation;) but was both clothed in ordinary apparel with all decency, and lived in a house continually, and displayed all exactness in the practice of all other virtue; which the Cynic despised, living impurely and publicly disgracing himself, and dragged away by his mad passion for glory [δόξα]. For if any one asks the reason of his living in a cask, he will find no other but vain-glory³²⁵

³²² Krueger, 1993: 33.

³²³ Krueger, 1993: 37. From John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* II,4; PG 47, 337.

³²⁴ Krueger, 1993: 39.

³²⁵ Krueger, 1993: 39. From John Chrysostom, *Ad viduam juniorem* 6, PG 48, 607; cf. NPNF (first series) IX, p. 126.

Nonetheless, whether they admired Diogenes or denigrated him, Diogenes remained a familiar figure in Late Antiquity.

4.5. Framing the narrative to reach a targeted audience: the aesthetics of Leontius' narrative

It is reasonable to assume that hagiographers would have structured their narratives in a style that resonated with their audience in order to create the maximum desired impact on them. Hence, this study posits that the aesthetics of the narrative and how it had been delivered reveal information on Leontius' audience and contributes to the understanding of the cultural context of his society.

In discussing the possible audience of the *VS*, Krueger offers that by the end of the sixth century and the first half of the seventh century, hagiography had developed subgenres of varying sophistication and literary styles to address different audiences.³²⁶ He concludes that although it conveys a Christian message, the *VS* is ribald and comic,³²⁷ and the texts are middle and low-style.³²⁸ Krueger also argues that Diogenes' anecdotes were preserved and widely disseminated because of their oral traditions. Thus, knowledge of Diogenes was not limited to the educated elites³²⁹ because it was accessible to the illiterate. These claims support the argument that the *VS* might not have only targeted the elites. Leontius himself claimed to strive to narrate "in a prosaic, unadorned and humble style (*πεζῷ καὶ ἀκαλλωπίστῳ καὶ χαμηλῷ χαρακτήρι*) so that the even the unlearned and illiterate would be able to benefit" from his words.³³⁰ Although it did not preclude a more sophisticated audience, Krueger argues that the *VS* had been primarily written for a lay audience.³³¹ Therefore, it was likely that the story of Symeon had been designed to be not only

³²⁶ Krueger, 2016: 177.

³²⁷ Krueger, 2016: 180.

³²⁸ Krueger, 2016: 188.

³²⁹ Krueger, 1993: 33.

³³⁰ Krueger, 2016: 179.

³³¹ Krueger, 2016: 188.

read as text but also narrated. In other words, the *VS* had been constructed to reach as broad an audience as possible.

Regarding the aesthetics of the narrative, due to the continuing Graeco-Roman influence in seventh-century Byzantium, it is unsurprising that there are many allusions to Diogenes in the *VS*: Symeon's shameless behaviour, his defecation in public, his consumption of lupines (legumes which cause gas), his ingestion of raw meat, and his dragging a dead dog into the city.³³² These allusions are not claims that the figure of Symeon was based on Diogenes of Sinope, but that they shared common traits in a way that the writer and his Byzantine audience could identify and understand.

Other than allusions to Diogenes, there are references to biblical characters and motifs. Krueger discusses how it was the usual practice for hagiographers to use allusions to biblical stories in the writing of their works. He provides information on the number of quotations and words from the Bible that have been referenced in the *VS* to support his claim.³³³ As these biblical motifs approach ten per cent of the text, Krueger argues that Leontius had assumed an elite audience, well-versed in scripture, ecclesiastical politics, and some of the finer points of theological controversy.³³⁴ This statement supports the previous argument that although the language Leontius used was aimed at ordinary people, he did not preclude a more educated audience. Ivanov adds that the behaviour of the Byzantine holy fool is reminiscent of the prophets in the Old Testament. Like the holy fool, the true prophet is hard to distinguish from the false, and their behaviour can mark them as madmen.³³⁵ For example, God had commanded Isaiah to walk naked and shoeless,³³⁶ Jeremiah to wear a yoke designed for animals³³⁷ and Hosea to marry an adulteress.³³⁸ There are also many allusions to the figure of Jesus Christ and New Testament motifs in the *VS* to ensure that the

³³² Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 17.

³³³ Krueger, 2016: 178, table 7.1.

³³⁴ Krueger, 2016: 179.

³³⁵ Deut. 18:20–2.

³³⁶ Isaiah 20:3.

³³⁷ Jeremiah 27:2

³³⁸ Hosea 1:2.

narrative resonated with his audience. However, some allusions to Jesus Christ are inverted, possibly to render the narrative more amusing. For example, while Jesus changed water to wine, Symeon changed wine into water.³³⁹

4.6. Conclusion

From these discussions, it is apparent that although it was essentially a Christian empire, the aesthetics of the *VS* support the evidence of the persistence of Graeco-Roman influence in the Byzantine education curriculum. Thus, mid-seventh century Byzantium would essentially have been a Christianised Graeco-Roman society with residual secular culture.

Although the behaviour and character of Symeon seemed outrageous and counter-intuitive for inspiring Christians, the familiar characteristics of the wise man from Ancient Greece, motifs from the Old Testament, and the religious figure of Jesus Christ in the *VS* help to make Symeon and his story, if not entirely acceptable, then at least familiar to the Byzantines. Symeon's story is different to the traditional stories of saints and martyrs. As the cynic philosopher Diogenes delivered his message using unconventional methods, the *VS* provided a novel avenue for Leontius to reach his audience. In this sense, Leontius had resurrected a familiar wise man from Ancient Greece and re-situated some of his qualities in a religious Byzantine character to deliver his message to an audience still influenced by Classical Greek culture. The aesthetics of his narrative, pointing to a Christianised Graeco-Roman culture in seventh-century Byzantium, helps understand the cultural context when discussing the function of holy fools and their effectiveness as agents of social change in the following chapter.

³³⁹ Please refer to Appendix 3. The references to Diogenes, Jesus and Biblical motifs are numerous, and for clarity and ease of access, I have summarised many of these examples. The list is not exhaustive.

Chapter 5. Holy Fools as Agents of Social Change

5.1. Introduction

Many scholars have stated that holy fools are drivers of social change. However, most have not given a precise definition to the term “social change”. Furthermore, their discussions lack details on the holy fools’ effectiveness and problems as agents of social change. This chapter explores Byzantine society in the seventh century, its problems and its needs before defining the term “social change” as applied to the feigned insanity of holy fool. Then, it explores the reception of feigned insanity by the Byzantines. This thesis distinguishes between the terms “driver of social change” and “agent of social change” and argues that holy fools are agents rather than drivers of social change. Finally, the effectiveness of holy fools as agents of social change is discussed, focusing on their effectiveness in their role as intended by the hagiographer as well as problems caused by the holy fool model.

5.2. The society in seventh-century Byzantium

5.2.1. Problems within the Church

After defeating Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge in the fourth century, which he attributed to the Christian God, the Roman emperor Constantine I adopted Christianity as the state religion, thus beginning a new age of monotheism for the Roman Empire.³⁴⁰ This statement alludes to the change as being instantaneous and smooth, and Brown warns that this view had been promoted by ecclesiastical authorities to enable them to claim and promote a picture of instant, supernatural

³⁴⁰ Rotman, 2016: 2.

victory.³⁴¹ Brown initially stated that this change had been so successful that by the end of the sixth century, Roman society regarded itself as totally Christian.³⁴² However, in a later article, he cautions against this simplistic interpretation because this history had been written by Christian writers, polemicists and preachers.³⁴³ This highlights that the situation was likely more complicated and supports the arguments discussed in chapter 4, that the aesthetics of the VS showed that Graeco-Roman influence was still reasonably strong during Late Antiquity. At Eusebius'³⁴⁴ insistence that the emperor was both the head of the state and God's representative on earth, the boundary between Church and State became blurred from the fourth century.³⁴⁵ Constantine strengthened the position of Christianity by granting wealth and legal privileges to the Church.³⁴⁶ He built many churches³⁴⁷ and changed the balance of his advisors by surrounding himself with a retinue of Christian clergy.³⁴⁸ As imperial ideology held that loyalty to the Orthodox Church equated to allegiance to the emperor and the state, a united church was vital to the cohesion of the empire. The state considered Christianity an effective means to unite an ethnically and linguistically diverse empire.³⁴⁹ As discussed in the section on Methodology (section 1.3), this work takes the structural-functionalist perspective and regards religion as a functional component of Byzantine society.³⁵⁰ Unfortunately, even from the early days of Christianity, the Corinthian Church had been riddled with religious elitism where rival factions asserted their spiritual superiority, excellence

³⁴¹ "... it is necessary to remain mindful in our interpretation that Late Roman Christians considered the end of polytheism occurred with the coming of Christ on earth. The battle of polytheism had been won by Christ, and the alliance of emperor and Church that took place after the conversion of Constantine had been a 'mopping-up' operation". Thus this victory had already been won centuries before by Christ. This perspective had promoted the event as preordained and instantaneous, hence allowing the ecclesiastical authorities to claim and promote a message of instant, supernatural victory. Brown, 1997: 634-35.

³⁴² Brown, 1972: 141.

³⁴³ Brown, 1997: 633.

³⁴⁴ Eusebius was a fourth century Christian scholar. Cameron, 1993: 137.

³⁴⁵ "Eusebius' political theory promoting Constantine as God's representative on earth formed the basis of Byzantine political theory." Cameron, 1993: 67. Haldon also discusses the close relationship between the Church and State. Haldon, 1997: 283.

³⁴⁶ Eusebius et al., 1964: X.II: *ἐφοίτα δὲ καὶ εἰς πρόσωπον ἐπισκόποις βασιλέως γράμματα καὶ τιμαὶ καὶ χρημάτων δόσεις*. "...and bishops constantly received even personal letters from the Emperor, and honours and gifts of money."

³⁴⁷ Odahl, 2004: 141.

³⁴⁸ Eusebius, VC, 1.42.1 from Eusebius, Cameron, and Hall, 1999: 86.

³⁴⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 8; Johnson, 1979: 316.

³⁵⁰ See discussions in chapter 1, section 1.3 on the methodology for the thesis.

in wisdom, and knowledge on theological matters. The apostle Paul, appealing for unity,³⁵¹ offered himself as a living parable to demonstrate the absurdity of their pride.³⁵² However, the problem remained, and the Church continued to be plagued by doctrinal disagreements.

In the fourth century, there was an impetus to bring various forms of Christianity into conformity.³⁵³ Intending to unite his empire under the banner of Christianity, Constantine I convened the first ecumenical council in 325 BCE in Nice to define the new religion of Christianity as a state-sanctioned universal faith. Although the intention of this task was to seek agreement on matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical authority, it had the opposite effect of causing a series of doctrinal and power conflicts. The canons from the seven Ecumenical Councils³⁵⁴, from 325 to 787 CE, were a testimony to the effort undertaken by both the Church and the emperors to solve these problems.³⁵⁵ The violence that erupted between supporters of Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria and Nestorius, the Archbishop of Constantinople, preceding the Council of Ephesus in 431, illustrate the difficulties encountered. The second council of Ephesus in 449 concluded with similar scenes of violence. After the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the emperor Marcian issued an edict to persuade people that the controversies were settled.

³⁵¹ 1 Cor. 1:10. "I appeal to you brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and same judgement."

³⁵² Saward, 1980: 2 ; 1 Cor. 2: 1-5 "And I, when I came to you brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

³⁵³ Harvey, 1990: 4.

³⁵⁴ " .. ecumenical councils [are a] gathering of bishops or their representatives from the five main centers of Christianity-Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, as well as other bishops throughout the Mediterranean. In practice, however, these ecumenical councils remained largely a Greek enterprise, in that they were held in the Eastern part of the Roman empire and consisted mainly of Greek-speaking bishops. The ecumenical councils, an expanded version of the local and regional councils of the early Church, were convened in order to render decisions concerning the practice and content of the Christian faith. In addition to doctrinal statements and definitions, these councils produced decrees of a legal nature. These decrees, known as canons, offered practical, liturgical, pastoral, and ethical guidelines on how clergy and laity ought to live a Christian life. These canons, coupled with imperial legislation, became the basis of ecclesiastical law for the Greek and Latin churches." Skedros, 2000: 289.

³⁵⁵ Wace and Schaff, 1979.

At last that which he wished, with earnest prayer and desire, had come to pass. Controversy about the orthodox religion of Christians had been put away; remedies at length have been found for culpable error, and diversity of opinion among the peoples has issued in common consent and concord. (Stevenson, *Creeds*, 342).³⁵⁶

However, this was only his wish, not reality. In the sixth century, Evagrius Scholasticus disapproved of the confrontational doctrinal debates of the Chalcedonian position of Sabas and others³⁵⁷ and conceded that the Church was still divided during his lifetime.³⁵⁸ The problem continued on to the seventh century, and Leontius of Neapolis used his role as a hagiographer to bolster the position of the Chalcedonians against the Monophysites.³⁵⁹ Leontius' position was demonstrated in the narrative where Symeon converted two Monophysites. When an unclean spirit, in the form of an Ethiopian passed through a phouska³⁶⁰ shop, he broke everything in the shop,

The amazing Symeon, when he returned, said to his mistress, "Who broke these things?" She said, "An accursed blackman came and smashed everything." He said to her laughing, "Too bad, too bad." She said, "Yes, indeed Fool." He said to her, "Truly I sent him so he would break everything." When she heard this, she tried to beat him. But ducking down and scooping up a handful of dirt, he threw it in her eyes and blinded her. And the saint said, "Truly, you won't catch me, but either you will take communion in my church, or the

³⁵⁶ Cameron, 1993: 65.

³⁵⁷ Evagrius and Whitby, 2000: xviii

³⁵⁸ Evagrius, commenting on the effect of the doctrinal edict issued by Justin II, observes that "everyone consented to this edict, saying that its expressions were orthodox; but none of the parts that had broken off was completely united . . . (v: 4 [201])" *Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, 2000: xlvi.

³⁵⁹ Bagnall, R.S., 2013: Leontius of Neapolis.

³⁶⁰ The *φουσκάριος* sold a soup called phouska, which was made with vinegar. (Cf. Latin posca, a mixture of vinegar, hot water, and eggs.) He was not a "wine merchant". Leontius's phouskarios also sold baked beans and boiled lentils in his stall in the marketplace. This should probably be understood as rather humble fare. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 151, footnote 31.

black man will break everything, every day.” For they were members of the sect of Acephalic heretics. After he left her, behold the next day at the same hour, the black man came back and again smashed everything in sight. In dire straits, they became Orthodox, taking Symeon to be a sorcerer.³⁶¹

Doctrinal problems were also illustrated in the first canon of the Council of Trullo in 692.³⁶² This canon was dedicated to confirming the Chalcedonian position against the stances of Arius and Nestorius.³⁶³ The fact that these were still in discussion shows that previous ecumenical councils had failed to resolve these issues, thus supporting the claim that many doctrinal problems continued into the seventh century. That the Church in the west had never accepted the rulings of the Council of Trullo³⁶⁴ further demonstrates the ongoing doctrinal problem between different factions of the Church. Today, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church are still divided. Amongst other differences, as shown in chapter 4, they still have different feast days for St. Symeon the Fool.³⁶⁵

5.2.2. The Islamic threat

In the early seventh century, the Arab raids into Byzantium would be the beginning of the Islamic conquest of key territories of the Byzantine Empire. Although Heraclius had won a victory against the Persians in 628,³⁶⁶ both Rome and Persia were weakened by their decades-long war (609-28). This weakness allowed opportunities for those bordering the deserts of Arabia to invade the Byzantine empire. Many cities in the east fell: Damascus (635), Jerusalem (637), and Antioch (637); and then Edessa in Syria (640), Alexandria in Egypt (642), and Seleucia/Ctesiphon, the capital of Sasanid Persia (645). By the end of 645, these Roman regions became the heartland of the

³⁶¹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 157-158. [153-154]. Acephalic Severans were Monophysites. Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 27.

³⁶² Skedros, 2000: 290. This council is also known as the Quinisext Council

³⁶³ Wace and Schaff, 1979: 359-361. For Canon 1 see Appendix 4.

³⁶⁴ Skedros, 2000: 290.

³⁶⁵ See chapter 4, section 4.1 footnote 255 for details

³⁶⁶ Howard-Johnston, 2013: chapter 9.

new “Islamic Empire” for the following centuries.³⁶⁷ From the perspective of the economy, the loss of Egypt was significant because that meant the loss of a central grain-producing area. A recent study estimated that the total revenue from this loss amounted to seventy-five per cent of its sixth-century income. As Byzantium could not afford to lose its other grain-producing areas of Thrace and Anatolia, it had to defend the Balkans and Anatolia with an already reduced revenue,³⁶⁸ thus adding to its problems.

Although seventh-century sources are rare, some sources indicate how some church fathers viewed the Arabs. The Patriarch, Sophronius of Jerusalem (Patriarch 634-638), saw the Arabs as godless invaders. He found many Old Testament parallels to his current situation, initially viewing the Arab conquests as divinely sent punishment for Christian sins and predicted that a rededication to Christian principles would result in a Christian triumph over the Arabs.³⁶⁹ He said of the Saracens,

...who, on account of our sins, have now risen up against us unexpectedly and ravage all with cruel and feral design, with impious and godless audacity.”³⁷⁰

By 636, Sophronius realised that Islam was a rival religious critique of Christian faith and practice.³⁷¹ Most Christians regarded the Islamic conquest as a disaster, blaming it on their own sinfulness and the sinfulness of those they considered heretics.³⁷² In addition, the Justinian plague, from 541 to 750 CE, resulted in a series of outbreaks in the Mediterranean basin as far as Yemen.³⁷³ Thus, beginning with the second half of the sixth and continuing to the seventh century, the cities and towns of Byzantium experienced a general decline due to natural disasters such as plagues, wars,³⁷⁴ and economic woes. Despite regional differences from the second half of the sixth century

³⁶⁷ Griffith, 2008: 24.

³⁶⁸ Haldon, 1997: 10.

³⁶⁹ Kaegi, 1969: 139-140.

³⁷⁰ From Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 69. Griffith, 2008: 25.

³⁷¹ Griffith, 2008: 26; Kaegi, 1992: 109.

³⁷² Griffith, 2008: 28.

³⁷³ Stathakopoulos, 2013: 87.

³⁷⁴ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 8.

to the seventh century, literary evidence from this period suggests that the Byzantines perceived that their society was in crisis.³⁷⁵ Unsurprisingly, seventh-century Byzantium Christian writers wrote apocalyptic discourses to explain military defeat as part of God's providential plan to inflict divine chastisement and to offer hope of salvation in eventual deliverance.³⁷⁶ These difficulties experienced by the Byzantines argue for a religious society filled with self-recriminations and doctrinal divisions and thus anxious to seek solutions from the divine.

5.3. Defining social change

Social change is a broad term. The *Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* defines social change as "any alteration in the cultural, structural, population, or ecological characteristics of a social system such as a society."³⁷⁷ Rotman suggests that social change could be driven by the abnormal "human noise" of deviant behaviour.³⁷⁸

It is essential to distinguish between the terms "drivers" and "agents" of social change. Whilst martyrs and other ascetics could demonstrate their intentions, holy fools did not have this agency per se. As mentioned earlier, extravagant behaviour might qualify as holy foolery only if observers assumed that what lay beneath was sanity, high morality and pious intent.³⁷⁹ Thus, the purpose of the holy fool had to be made known to the reader by the hagiographer. As the hagiographers used the holy fool as an agent to achieve their purpose, I argue that the hagiographers were drivers of social change. Holy fools were agents used by the hagiographers to drive social change.

Taves' approach is adopted to define social change as driven by the hagiographer. Taves built her argument from Rotman's discussions on the behaviour of martyrs. Rotman argues that martyrs who portrayed abnormal behaviour were sanctified and

³⁷⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 9; also see Haldon, 1997: 39-40; Kaegi, 1992: 207-213.

³⁷⁶ Strickler, 2018: v.

³⁷⁷ Johnson, 1995.

³⁷⁸ Rotman, 2016: 5.

³⁷⁹ Ivanov, 2006: 1.

marked as social models because society found in them a means to define and implement a new set of norms.³⁸⁰ Taves said that Rotman had included Jews and pagans in the discussion of involuntary death. She argues that in the case of martyrs, only Christians promoted the social change of sanctified voluntary death. Hence, she refines his argument by stating that it would be more reasonable to consider the change as “when a group (the Christians) promoted those who embraced voluntary death at the hands of the state as social models, the group offered a new set of social norms and a new way to perceive social reality, which if accepted would lead to social change.”³⁸¹

This thesis applies both their arguments to the holy fool model. In the case of holy fools, I argue that a group (the hagiographers) promoted those who feign insanity to hide their sanctity (holy fools) as social models, offering sanctified feigned insanity as a new set of social norms and a new way to perceive social reality. As it had been taught as “truth”, Christians had accepted the message. In other words, the social change is within the Christian religious context, where “spiritual values in abnormal, or insane behaviour were legitimised by attributing a unique spiritual character to figures who portrayed it” and thus “changing the social and cultural norms related to abnormality and normality”.³⁸² As the society was comprised mainly of Christians, this change could be considered a general social change. A previous chapter has analysed the social perception of reality and discussed how this perception could be altered.³⁸³ The mechanism of this social change, as driven by hagiographers, is understood on that theoretical basis.

The holy fool is fundamentally a saint whose essence is his feigned insanity. Thus, the social change driven by holy foolery is the acceptance of their feigned insanity as sanctified behaviour. I argue that holy fools are successful as agents of social change because there were many holy fools in history. Although holy fools are commemorated in only three Byzantine Greek Lives: *Life of Symeon* (mid-seventh

³⁸⁰ Rotman, 2016: 125.

³⁸¹ Taves, 2018: 74.

³⁸² Rotman, 2016: 2.

³⁸³ Chapter 3, section 3.4.

century), *Life of Andrew* (mid-tenth century) and the fragmentary anonymous *Life of Paul the Corinthian* (ninth century),³⁸⁴ there are many other documentations of holy fools, such as Isidora,³⁸⁵ Euphrosynos³⁸⁶ and Theodosios.³⁸⁷ In addition, the tradition of holy foolery spread beyond the Byzantine border through the Slavs and into Russia, where they are known as *iurodstvo* in later times.³⁸⁸ It is also reflected in the patron of St. Basil's Cathedral in the Red Square in Moscow and the literary form of the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. In the west, French Jesuits of the seventeenth century continued to show interest in holy fools.³⁸⁹ Having established holy fools as successful agents of social change, this thesis continues to explore their effectiveness and problems with the holy fool model.

5.4. Social needs addressed by holy fools

The social change to accept feigned insanity as a social norm enabled holy fools, as agents, to fulfil their many roles as intended by the hagiographers. Holy fools are not traditional holy men. Their narratives can be shocking or amusing, thus providing an alternative and engaging way to communicate with audiences. Within the context of the threats and challenges of seventh-century Byzantium, holy fools could be presented as a form of social protest³⁹⁰ to reflect the folly of society, as a moral mirror for his or her beholder, or as a moral conscience of society.³⁹¹ They could have edifying purposes, to remind Christians of their spiritual devotion. A fool can be truthful and direct in speech without having to observe the usual social conventions or political correctness in human interactions. Amidst religious controversies and factional fighting, the pure devotional intent of holy fools may be used to reflect on the absurdity of power struggles and act as a reminder to consider the essence of faith.

³⁸⁴ Constantinou, 2014: 343-344.

³⁸⁵ Ivanov, 2006: 51-52.

³⁸⁶ Ivanov, 2006: 53-55.

³⁸⁷ Ivanov, 2006: 140-141.

³⁸⁸ Ivanov, 2006: 244ff.

³⁸⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 2-3; Saward, 1980: 104-184.

³⁹⁰ Ivanov, 2006: 4.

³⁹¹ Rotman, 2016: 76-77.

Brown describes the “piety of the average Byzantine as essentially a piety of discontinuous moments of contrition.”³⁹² The forte of the holy fool model was to present an ambiguity³⁹³ that any madman could be a holy fool. Their spiritual narratives were intended to penetrate the psychological level of the readers by translating their experiences as readers into experiences as believers.³⁹⁴ Thus, in the religious context and the reality of the Christian audience, every encounter with a madman could be a reminder of devotion.³⁹⁵ As such, they provided a constant reminder of their commitment to their faith.

Feigned insanity has been used as a literary device to encourage the audience to reflect on a range of religious and ethical matters³⁹⁶ and to offer spiritual guidance in a society that had been shaped to accept that method of instruction. Thus, although holy fools have no position of authority after the social norms have been altered to accept them, they have been used as agents of moral and religious transformation.³⁹⁷

5.5. The effectiveness of holy fools

An assumption is made that if a model is effective, the church would have been kept it in the fore. However, it is difficult to access church records in Late Antiquity to find out how often holy fool narratives had been used in church sermons. It is also impossible to access information regarding how often people read or listened to holy fool stories. Thus, this thesis reassesses their usefulness and popularity using indirect methods.

³⁹² Brown, 1998: 97.

³⁹³ Rotman sees ambiguity as the literary device in the holy fool model. Rotman, 2016: 62.

³⁹⁴ “Humiliation and repentance of the holy fool turns into humiliation and repentance of their beholders.” Rotman, 2016: 41-42.

³⁹⁵ Rotman, 2016: 62.

³⁹⁶ Krueger 1996: 71.

³⁹⁷ Rotman, 2016: 39. This thesis interprets “transformation” as stated in Romans 12:3, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing, you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”. Thus, “transformation” is interpreted as a change in order to please God.

Scholars suggest that exploring the prevalence of the writing of holy fool narratives could be an indirect method to evaluate their popularity and the perception of their effectiveness at specific times. Focusing on the decline of holy fool narratives in the seventh century, scholars argue that holy foolery is tied to its social-political or geographical context. Efthymiades believes that hagiography suffered a decline as part of the general cultural decline in the so-called Byzantine Dark Age (ca.650 – ca 800).³⁹⁸ Ivanov agrees that holy foolery is sensitive to its environment but argues that holy fools were more useful during times of peace and less so in times of stress. He supports this claim by stating that during the height of the Islamic threat in the seventh and eighth centuries, there had been less mention of holy foolery because when threatened by an external force in the form of the Islamic invasion, that threat restored Christianity to the front of the consciousness of the Byzantines.³⁹⁹ Thus there was less urgency to remind the Byzantines of their faith. Consequently, coupled with the scantiness of sources of the Byzantine Dark Age, there was little mention of holy foolery.⁴⁰⁰ Likewise, he argues that the iconoclast controversies of the eighth century may have also brought religion to the front and sapped the energy from holy foolery.⁴⁰¹ He further supported his argument by stating that holy fools resurfaced at the end of the Byzantine Dark Age, in the short vita of the ascetic Theodoulos.⁴⁰²

Others argue that the popularity of holy fools was tied to geographical factors. They believe that Byzantine asceticism lost its impetus with the loss of Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Thus, holy fools in the calibre of Symeon of Emesa no longer appeared. In subsequent centuries, there were instead, pious men, who behaved like fools for short periods and for special reasons. Some examples are Basil the Younger, Symeon

³⁹⁸ Efthymiades, 2014. :10, vol 2 “The writing of Passions, biographies, panegyrics and all kinds of stories about holy men and women went hand-in-hand with other social and political developments typical of this period such as the rise and spread of monasticism, the increase in bishops’ spiritual and institutional authority, the emergence and vigour of theological disputes, as well as conflict between religions such as between Christianity and paganism including Persian Zoroastrianism.” (Efthymiadis, 2016. :35. Vol 1)

³⁹⁹ Ivanov, 2006.: 130-131.

⁴⁰⁰ Ivanov, 2006.: 132.

⁴⁰¹ Ivanov, 2006.: 131.

⁴⁰² Ivanov, 2006.: 132

Eulabes and Cyril of Phileas.⁴⁰³ Thus, holy fools could be effective in their roles intended by the hagiographers, but this was affected by social-political factors.

5.6. Challenges presented by the holy fool model

Hagiographers presented the holy fool as a literary figure to provide inspiration and spiritual guidance. Thus, for the laity, the lives of saints living on the fringes of society were not to be pursued but understood as spiritual inspiration.⁴⁰⁴ The holy fool model carried an inherent problem in that holy fools were socially disruptive. Their aggressive behaviour and the feigning of insanity prompted undesirable behaviour in others. Ivanov states that holy foolery involves aggression and provocation. The holy fool deliberately provoked or manipulated a situation that forced another person into an undesirable reaction. They were aggressive in that they purposely disrupted the *status quo* of personal relations to elicit a perception of hostility from the person to whom their activity was directed.⁴⁰⁵ Although the hagiographers' intention was for people to question whether they had abused servants of God when they abused mad people, it could be argued that holy fools caused others to abuse them in order to increase their own humiliation and hence increase their standing in the eyes of God.⁴⁰⁶ Johnson argues that although Symeon's miracle-working helped others, his trickery for the sake of maintaining his pretence of insanity is driven by self-interest.⁴⁰⁷ It is also interesting to note that in Symeon's narrative, the emphasis was on the detrimental effect on a person for having abused a mad person because he might have abused a saint. Christian ideals that a person should not abuse another person, regardless of whether they were a saint or not, had been omitted in the narrative.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Ryden, 1981. :111.

⁴⁰⁴ Hagiography "encapsulated the values of society as a whole, clarifying what was important, instructing implicitly how one was to live an ordinary life". Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 2.

⁴⁰⁵ Ivanov, 2006: 9; Rotman, 2016: 39.

⁴⁰⁶ Although it is not in the scope of this thesis to discuss the concept of the seeking of humiliation in Christian thought, Virginia Burrus offers an interesting discussion for further reading. Burrus, 2008: chapter 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Johnson, 2014: 598.

⁴⁰⁸ Rotman, 2016: 42.

In the seventh century, there was evidence of social disruptions caused by the feigning of insanity by the general populace. The prohibitions of the Council of Trullo provided a glimpse into problems in the ecclesiastical, religious and secular life of Christians in the eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁰⁹ Regarding the feigning of demonic possession, Canon 60 of the Council of Trullo stated,

Since the apostle exclaims that he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit, it is clear that he who is intimate with his [i.e. the Lord's] enemy becomes one by his affinity with him. Therefore, those who pretend they are possessed by a devil and by the depravity of manners feign to manifest their form and appearance; it seems good by all means that they should be punished and that they should be subjected to afflictions and hardships of the same kind as those to which they who are truly demonically possessed dare justly subjected with the intent of delivering them from the [work or rather] energy of the devil.⁴¹⁰

Viewing demonic possession as a dangerous deviation from standard orthodoxy,⁴¹¹ the Church banned this behaviour in the Council of Trullo in 692.⁴¹² Canon 60 stated the banning of feigned demonic possession rather than the banning of feigned insanity. This statement requires further examination. Rotman argues that although demonic possession and medical madness are not identical, medical literature of the period shows that they have the same symptoms.⁴¹³ He supports his argument by citing that in the story of Palladius, feigned folly and demonic possession were synonymous.⁴¹⁴ Thus he considers the banning of feigned possession by demons as synonymous with the prohibition of feigned insanity. As previously mentioned, not all pretences at insanity can be appraised as holy foolery.⁴¹⁵ Extravagant behaviour

⁴⁰⁹ Skedros, 2000: 290.

⁴¹⁰ Wace and Schaff, 1979: 392.

⁴¹¹ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 95.

⁴¹² Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 99.

⁴¹³ Rotman, 2016: 26.

⁴¹⁴ Rotman, 2016: 26, footnote 50.

⁴¹⁵ Ivanov, 2006: 7.

might qualify as holy foolery only if those who watch it assume that what lies beneath is sanity, high morality and pious intent.⁴¹⁶ Thus, if no such assumptions were made, the feigning of insanity does not have a religious purpose. As such, it is essential to clarify that Canon 60 banned the simulation of demonic possession or feigning of insanity but did not ban holy foolery. From the ruling of Canon 60, we surmise that feigning insanity had caused social disruptions. The discussions below illustrate some of these problems.

The Byzantines were aware that feigning insanity might be used to evade social circumstances.⁴¹⁷ Kaldellis reminds us that Byzantines had been aware of religious fraud; thus, many were annoyed by the disruptive behaviour of some ascetics.⁴¹⁸ Eunapios of Sardis⁴¹⁹ reported that people had been intolerant of the more extreme forms of asceticism. Pagans were annoyed by the outrageous behaviour of monks,

They began to send the so-called “monks” to the holy places. These monks look like humans but live like pigs. They made a show of their suffering and performed thousands of unspeakably obnoxious acts. But piety for them lay precisely in despising the holy. Thus, any man wearing black and wanting to behave indecently in public possessed tyrannical power. (Eunapios, *Vitae sophistarum* VI. 11. 6–7).⁴²⁰

Christians also disapproved of the movement of monks into the cities. St Neilos of Sinai complained that,

⁴¹⁶ Ivanov, 2006: 1.

⁴¹⁷ Rotman, 2016: 26. As discussed in chapter 2, section 2.6.7, footnote 168, Roman law view madness as a loss of reason and that the person is not responsible for his/her actions. Thus, people might have feigned madness to avoid debt, to avoid marriage, to extract themselves from difficult situations, to shirk life’s responsibilities, or even to attract attention. It would be simplistic to assume that when a Byzantine encountered madness, they always saw that as a guise of sanctity.

⁴¹⁸ “Byzantines had to exercise their practical, day-to-day judgment to distinguish between charlatans and the real thing. This created a permanent state of suspicion that is rarely acknowledged in modern studies, which have lavished their sympathy on authentic religious experience while distrusting the very concept of religious fraud as an invention of nineteenth-century rationalism.” Kaldellis, 2014: 467.

⁴¹⁹ Eunapios of Sardis 345/6 -ca.420, was a Neoplatonist rhetor. Di Berardino, 2014: I:866.

⁴²⁰ Ivanov, 2006: 67.

...all the towns and villages are groaning with pseudo-monks who gad around aimlessly and pointlessly.... Every householder is pestered by them and is now justifiably annoyed by their very appearance. (St Neilos, *Epistula CXIX*, PG 79, col. 437).⁴²¹

As late as the eleventh century, feigned insanity continued to cause problems. Symeon, the New Theologian, reminded people to be careful not to be deceived by charlatans,

Those who feign that they are fools, cracking jokes and speaking nonsense at the wrong moment, those who behave improperly and make people laugh, these they revere as being free from desire and holy, thinking they try to conceal their virtue and their lack of desire through such behaviour. At the same time, they disdain and neglect those who live in piety, virtue and the simplicity of their heart and are truly holy, as if they were ordinary men.⁴²²

Another canonical source, the *Interpretations of Nikon of Montenegro* (eleventh century), states that divine rules condemn those who practice holy folly in the manner of Symeon and Andreas.⁴²³ This demonstrates that Canon 60 was ineffective in stopping this unwanted practice, and feigning of insanity continued to cause social disruptions.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter examines the social and religious challenges of Late Antiquity and places holy fools within the cultural context of the seventh century. We establish that holy fools had been used effectively as agents to drive a social change that normalised and

⁴²¹ Ivanov, 2006: 67. However, this more an example of disruptive behaviour from ascetics, not specifically of feigned insanity.

⁴²² Haldon, 1997: 111.

⁴²³ Poulakou-Rebelakou et al., 2014: 100.

sanctified feigned insanity. Holy fools, as literary figures, were intended to inspire devotion. As one aspect of the holy fool model was to elicit social disruption, it was not intended for their behaviour to be imitated in life. Thus, when holy foolery migrated into life, this concept caused social disruption. When an increasing number of people feigned insanity, their disruption compelled the Church to issue a canon against this practice. Holy fools had been successful as agents of social change and, to varying degrees, depending on socio-political factors, also fulfilled roles that the hagiographers had intended. However, the holy fool model was a double-edged sword. When an increasing number of people decided to imitate the literary figure, the feigning of insanity became a problem for society.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This thesis explores the historical perspectives of madness to provide context to investigate the Byzantine reception of holy fools and to evaluate the holy fools' effectiveness as agents of social change. The literary figure of the holy fool, as a representation of pure devotion, had been used by hagiographers to further their message of the importance of Christian devotion. The model planted a seed of doubt or an ambiguity that a person exhibiting signs of madness could have a mental illness, or they could be feigning insanity and thus be a saint in disguise. If Christians looked down on a mad person or abused them, they could be committing transgressions against an exalted servant of God, thus necessitating repentance and contemplation of their own faith. In this way, this edifying message was renewed whenever madness was encountered.

I have explored the understanding of madness in Byzantium to construct a broad understanding of madness before focusing on a specific type of madness, the insanity of holy fools. The exploration of the Byzantine understanding of madness, considering their sociocultural, medical and religious heritage, demonstrated the complexities involved and how the interplay of these perspectives enabled holy foolery to come into existence and flourish. By analysing the holy fool model, I have found that ambiguity in the holy fool figure is central to the model and that this uncertainty must be preserved for the model to remain effective. In addition, for holy foolery to be accepted by society, a change in social perception to normalise the feigning of insanity was required. Through a study of the aesthetics of the narrative of Symeon of Emesa, this thesis found allusions to biblical motifs, Diogenes of Sinope, as well as the figure of Jesus Christ. Thus, Symeon has been presented as a Christian holy man with some characteristics of a familiar wise man from antiquity. Hence, this thesis argues that although the Byzantines regarded themselves as Christians, during the seventh century, they were still in the process of synthesising their new faith with the cultural legacy of their pagan past. Finally, within the cultural context of political threats and doctrinal controversies, my thesis demonstrated that hagiographers had effectively

used holy fools as agents to drive social change where the feigning of insanity had been sanctified and normalised. However, the usefulness of holy fools was tied to socio-political factors. In addition, provocation and violence were embedded in the holy fool model, creating a flaw in the concept. Holy fools deliberately provoked shock and outrage in their audience, manipulating them into untoward reactions. By its very nature, it was a model that encouraged disruption. Although the concept worked well as a literary device to prompt Christian devotion, it floundered when the boundary between literature and real life was breached. Thus, although hagiographers had effectively used holy fools as agents of social change, the inherent flaw in the model did not make them ideal models to imitate. When people imitated holy fools in seventh-century Byzantium, social disruption ensued.

This thesis is built on existing scholarship on madness and holy foolery, benefiting from the comprehensive works of current and past scholars. Exploration of current literature shows that although many aspects of the holy fool have been explored in detail, less focus has been given to the effectiveness of holy fools as agents of social change. This thesis seeks to contribute to holy fool discussions by offering a more targeted approach to that area. In addition, mental health issues adversely affect many people today. We are all products of our culture and our past. Thus, deepening our understanding of madness in the ancient world allows us to draw parallels and use that to understand our world, gain insight into our biases and reactions, and create a more compassionate society.

Appendix :1 Aët., Lib. Med. 6.8

Mania

“*Mania* occurs without fever when plenty of non-putrefied blood flows towards the brain; this blood is sometimes well-tempered, causing distress just because of (its) amount, ... and sometimes full of yellow bile.... Well then, if *mania* occurs as a result of blood alone, the following things accompany those who suffer (from it): ungovernable laughter attacks them because they often see images in front of their eyes which are such as to provoke laughter and their face is cheerful and they sing constantly: for sometimes ringing around the ears accompanies them because of the rise of vapours which occurs, so that they seem to hear pipe-players. Their memory is preserved, as is possible to infer from the fact that they sing what they are accustomed to; but the *phantastikon* and the *logistikon* are harmed. In cases where yellow bile is mixed with the blood and makes it biting, as if the brain and the meninges were being pricked and stabbed from inside because of it, they become irascible and bold and brawlers and insolent men. For, as much as the bile is mixed with the blood, so much do the pleasures alter and the unpleasant and spirited things increase: if the yellow bile is further over-heated and becomes thick and as if it were stickily attached to the body of the brain itself and the meninges and stabbing them and tearing them apart, it brings about beast-like deliria. For, some even tasted their own flesh and beat or wounded or laid hands on their own relatives as if they were plotting against them: it is possible that the same human being is sometimes seized by unreasonable laughter and sometimes by rage and anger.”

γίνεται μανία χωρίς πυρετοῦ αἵματος πολλοῦ ἀσαποῦς ἐπιρρεῦσαντος τῷ ἐγκεφάλῳ, ποτὲ μὲν εὐκράτου, τῷ πλήθει μόνον λυποῦντος, ... ποτὲ δὲ ξανθοχόλου ἐπὶ μόνῳ τοίνυν τῷ αἵματι γιγνομένης τῆς μανίας ταῦτα παρέπεται τοῖς πάσχουσι· γέλως ἄσχετος αὐτοῖς κινεῖται θεωμένοις πολλάκις πρὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν εἰδωλά τινα γέλωτος ἄξια φαιδρόν τε αὐτοῖς ἐστὶ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ ἄδουσι συνεχῶς· ἐνίστε γὰρ ἐκ τῶν γιγνομένων ἀναθυμιάσεων ἦχοι περὶ τὰ ὦτα συνεδρεύουσιν, ὥς δοκεῖν αὐτοὺς

αύλητῶν τινων ἀκροᾶσθαι. σώζεται δ' αὐτοῖς ἡ μνήμη, ὡς ἐξ ὧν ἄδουσι συνήθη αὐτοῖς ὄντα ἔνεστι

τεκμαίρεσθαι· βέβλαπται δὲ τὸ φανταστικὸν καὶ τὸ λογιστικόν. μιχθείσης δὲ τῷ αἵματι τῆς ξανθῆς χολῆς καὶ δακνῶδες αὐτὸ ἀποτελεσάσης, οἷον κεντουμένου καὶ νυττομένου ἐξ αὐτῆς ἔνδοθεν τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου καὶ τῶν μηνίγγων, ὀργίλοι καὶ θρασεῖς γίνονται καὶ πληκται καὶ ὑβρισταί. ἐφ' ὅσον γὰρ ἡ χολὴ ἀναμέμικται τῷ αἵματι, ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον παραλλάξει τὰ τερπνὰ καὶ ἐπιτείνει τὰ ἀηδῆ καὶ θυμικά· ὑπεροπτωμένης δὲ ἐπὶ πλεον τῆς ξανθῆς χολῆς καὶ παχυνομένης καὶ οἷον προσπλαττομένης αὐτῷ τῷ σώματι τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου καὶ τῶν μη-νίγγων ἰξωδῶς καὶ νυττούσης καὶ διασπώσης, τὰς θηριώδεις παραφροσύνας ἐργάζεται. ἤδη γάρ τινες καὶ τῆς ἰδίας σαρκὸς ἐγεύσαντο καὶ τοὺς οἰκείους ὡς ἐπιβούλους ἐτύπτησαν ἢ ἐτραυμάτισαν ἢ διεχειρίσαντο· ἐγχωρεῖ δὲ καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνθρωπον ποτὲ μὲν γέλωτι παραλόγῳ κατέχεσθαι, ποτὲ δὲ θυμοῖς καὶ ὀργαῖς.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁴ Aet., *Lib. Med.* 6.8 (136,18–137,15 Olivieri). From Gäbel 2018: 332–333.

Appendix :2 Basil. Letters Volume IV: 7 -10.

For just as in the case of other beings enjoyment of flowers is limited to their fragrance and colour, but the bees, as we see, possess the power to get honey from them as well, so it is possible here also for those who are pursuing not merely what is sweet and pleasant in such writings to store away from them some benefit also for their souls. It is, therefore, in accordance with the whole similitude of the bees, that we should participate in the pagan literature. For these neither approach all flowers equally, nor in truth do they attempt to carry off entire those upon which they alight, but taking only so much of them as is suitable for their work, they suffer the rest to go untouched. We ourselves too, if we are wise, having appropriated from this literature what is suitable to us and akin to the truth, will pass over the remainder. And just as in plucking the blooms from a rose-bed we avoid the thorns, so also in garnering from such writings whatever is useful, let us guard ourselves against what is harmful. At the very outset, therefore, we should examine each of the branches of knowledge and adapt it to our end, according to the Doric proverb, 'bringing the stone to the line'.⁴²⁵

⁴²⁵ Basil. Letters Volume IV: 7 -10.

Appendix :3 Some characteristics of Symeon of Emesa

Symeon of Emesa	Diogenes of Sinope	References in the Holy Bible
Symeon defecated in public. ⁴²⁶	While speaking to a group of people in Cranion (<i>a suburb of Corinth</i>) (8.5) during the Isthmian games (8.6), he (Diogenes) squatted down and defecated. People who had originally been impressed with his speech, left in disgust. (8.36). ⁴²⁷	
Symeon walked around naked in public. ⁴²⁸		Isaiah walked naked and shoeless, as requested by God. ⁴²⁹
Symeon ingested raw meat. ⁴³⁰	Diogenes attempted to eat meat raw but did not manage to digest it. ⁴³¹	
Symeon dragged a dead dog into the city. ⁴³² This alludes to the use of cynic imagery. ⁴³³	When someone dropped a loaf of bread and was ashamed to pick it up, Diogenes admonished the man by tying a rope to the neck of a wine-jar and dragging it through the Ceramicus. ⁴³⁴	

⁴²⁶ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 153 [148]. See chapter 2, section 2.7, footnote 170 of this thesis for explanation of the square bracket.

⁴²⁷ Dio and Cohoon, 1932: 8.5, 8.6, 8.36.

⁴²⁸ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 153 [148-149].

⁴²⁹ Isaiah 20:2.

⁴³⁰ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 161-162 [158].

⁴³¹ Diogenes and Hicks, 1925: 6.34.

⁴³² Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 151 [145].

⁴³³ The term "Cynic" is derived from the Greek kuōn, "dog," and Cynic sages were often called "dogs." Diogenes, Mensch and Miller, 2018: 272, footnote. 43.

⁴³⁴ Diogenes and Hicks, 1925: 6.35.

Symeon of Emesa	Diogenes of Sinope	References in the Holy Bible
Symeon ate excessive lupines (beans) to create excess gas. ⁴³⁵	When a young man was displaying his oratory, Diogenes, who had filled the bosom of his robe with beans, was gulping them down right in front of him. ⁴³⁶	
Symeon left the desert to save souls. ⁴³⁷		Jesus left the wilderness to return to the city to start his ministry. ⁴³⁸
Symeon overturned the tables of the pastry chef. ⁴³⁹		Jesus turned over the table of money lenders at a marketplace. ⁴⁴⁰
Symeon cast out the devil. ⁴⁴¹		Jesus cast out demons. ⁴⁴²
Symeon cured some demoniacs. ⁴⁴³		Jesus exorcised the Gerasene demoniacs. ⁴⁴⁴
Symeon miraculously provided food for several men. ⁴⁴⁵		Jesus miraculously fed five thousand men. ⁴⁴⁶
Symeon turned wine into vinegar. ⁴⁴⁷		Jesus turned water into wine. ⁴⁴⁸
Symeon predicted his own death. ⁴⁴⁹		Jesus predicted his own death. ⁴⁵⁰

⁴³⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 151 [146].

⁴³⁶ Diogenes and Hicks, 1925: 6.48.

⁴³⁷ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 148 [142].

⁴³⁸ Mark 1:38.

⁴³⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 151 [146].

⁴⁴⁰ Matthew 21.12.

⁴⁴¹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 154 [149-150].

⁴⁴² Matthew 8:16.

⁴⁴³ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 165 [162].

⁴⁴⁴ Mark 5: 13 -15.

⁴⁴⁵ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 166 [163-164].

⁴⁴⁶ Mk 6:32-44.

⁴⁴⁷ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 167 [164-165].

⁴⁴⁸ Jn 2:1-11.

⁴⁴⁹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 169 [167].

⁴⁵⁰ Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:21-22.

Symeon of Emesa	Diogenes of Sinope	References in the Holy Bible
Symeon's body was not found in his grave. ⁴⁵¹		Jesus' tomb was empty when Mary went to investigate. ⁴⁵²
Symeon practised unacceptable behaviour, such as throwing nuts and putting out candles in church. He also threw nuts at some women. ⁴⁵³		The prophet Jeremiah displayed unusual behaviour. Jeremiah wore a yoke designed for animals because God had requested it. ⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 170 [168].

⁴⁵² Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10.

⁴⁵³ Krueger and Leontius, 1996: 151 [145 - 146].

⁴⁵⁴ Jeremiah 27:2.

Appendix :4 The Canons at the Council at Trullo

(Labbe and Cossart, Concilia, Tom. VI., col. 1135 et seqq.)

CANON I.⁴⁵⁵

THAT order is best of all which makes every word and act begin and end in God. Wherefore that piety may be clearly set forth by us and that the Church of which Christ is the foundation may be continually increased and advanced, and that it may be exalted above the cedars of Lebanon; now therefore we, by divine grace at the beginning of our decrees, define that the faith set forth by the God-chosen Apostles who themselves had both seen and were ministers of the Word, shall be preserved without any innovation, unchanged and inviolate.

Moreover the faith of the three hundred and eighteen holy and blessed fathers who were assembled at Nice under Constantine our Emperor, against the impious Arius, and the gentile diversity of deity or rather (to speak accurately) multitude of gods taught by him, who by the unanimous acknowledgment of the faithful revealed and declared to us the consubstantiality of the Three Persons comprehended in the Divine Nature, not suffering this faith to lie hidden under the bushel of ignorance, but openly teaching the faithful to adore with one worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, confuting and scattering to the winds the opinion of different grades, and demolishing and overturning the puerile toyings fabricated out of sand by the heretics against orthodoxy.

Likewise also we confirm that faith which was set forth by the one hundred and fifty fathers who in the time of Theodosius the Elder, our Emperor, assembled in this imperial city, accepting their decisions with regard to the Holy Ghost in assertion of his godhead, and expelling the profane Macedonius (together with all previous enemies of the truth) as one who dared to judge Him to be a servant who is Lord, and who wished to divide, like a robber, the inseparable unity, so that there might be no perfect mystery of our faith.

⁴⁵⁵ Wace and Schaff, 1979: 359-361.

And together with this odious and detestable contender against the truth, we condemn Apollinaris, priest of the same iniquity, who impiously belched forth that the Lord assumed a body unendowed with a soul, (1) thence also inferring that his salvation wrought for us was imperfect.

Moreover what things were set forth by the two hundred God-bearing fathers in the city of Ephesus in the days of Theodosius our Emperor, the son of Arcadius; these doctrines we assent to as the unbroken strength of piety, teaching that Christ the incarnate Son of God is one; and declaring that she who bare him without human seed was the immaculate Ever-Virgin, glorifying her as literally and in very truth the Mother of God. We condemn as foreign to the divine scheme the absurd division of Nestorius, who teaches that the one Christ consists of a man separately and of the Godhead separately and renews the Jewish impiety.

Moreover we confirm that faith which at Chalcedon, the Metropolis, was set forth in accordance with orthodoxy by the six hundred and thirty God-approved fathers in the time of Marcian, who was our Emperor, which handed down with a great and mighty voice, even unto the ends of the earth, that the one Christ, the son of God, is of two natures, and must be glorified (2) in these two natures, and which cast forth from the sacred precincts of the Church as a black pestilence to be avoided, Eutyches, babbling stupidly and inanely, and teaching that the great mystery of the incarnation (*oikonomias*) was perfected in thought only. And together with him also Nestorius and Dioseorus of whom the former was the defender and champion of the division, the latter of the confusion [of the two natures in the one Christ], both of whom fell away from the divergence of their impiety to a common depth of perdition and denial of God.

Also we recognize as inspired by the Spirit the pious voices of the one hundred and sixty-five God-beating fathers who assembled in this imperial city in the time of our Emperor Justinian of blessed memory, and we teach them to those who come after us; for these synodically anathematized and execrated Theodore of Mopsuestia (the

teacher of Nestorius), and Origen, and Didymus, and Evagrius, all of whom reintroduced feigned Greek myths, and brought back again the circlings of certain bodies and souls, and deranged turnings [or transmigrations] to the wanderings or dreamings of their minds, and impiously insulting the resurrection of the dead. Moreover [they condemned] what things were written by Theodoret against the right faith and against the Twelve Chapters of blessed Cyril, and that letter which is said to have been written by Ibas.

Also we agree to guard untouched the faith of the Sixth Holy Synod, which first assembled in this imperial city in the time of Constantine, our Emperor, of blessed memory, which faith received still greater confirmation from the fact that the pious Emperor ratified with his own signet that which was written for the security of future generations. This council taught that we should openly profess our faith that in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, our true God, there are two natural wills or volitions and two natural operations; and condemned by a just sentence those who adulterated the true doctrine and taught the people that in the one Lord Jesus Christ there is but one will and one operation; to wit, Theodore of Pharan, Cyrus of Alexandria, Honorius of Rome, Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul and Peter, who were bishops of this God-preserved city; Macarius, who was bishop of Antioch; Stephen, who was his disciple, and the insane Polychronius, depriving them henceforth from the communion of the body of Christ our God.

And, to say so once for all, we decree that the faith shall stand firm and remain unsullied until the end of the world as well as the writings divinely handed down and the teachings of all those who have beautified and adorned the Church of God and were lights in the world, having embraced the word of life. And we reject and anathematize those whom they rejected and anathematized, as being enemies of the truth, and as insane ragers against God, and as lifters up of iniquity.

But if any one at all shall not observe and embrace the aforesaid pious decrees, and teach and preach in accordance therewith, but shall attempt to set himself in opposition thereto, let him be anathema, according to the decree already

promulgated by the up-proved holy and blessed Fathers, and let him be cast out and stricken off as an alien from the number of Christians. For our decrees add nothing to the things previously defined, nor do they take anything away, nor have we any such power.

No innovation upon the faith of the Apostles to be allowed. The faith of the Nicene fathers is perfect, which overthrows through the homousion the doctrines of Arius who introduced degrees into the Godhead.

The Synod held under Theodosius the great shall be held inviolate, which deposed Macedonius who asserted that the Holy Ghost was a servant.

The two hundred who under Theodosius the Younger assembled at Ephesus are to be reversed for they expelled Nestorius who asserted that the Lord was man and God separately (idikws). Those who assembled at Chalcedon in the time of Marcion are to be celebrated with eternal remembrance, who deposed Eutyches. who dared to say that the great mystery was accomplished only in image, as well as Nestorius and Dioscorus, observing equal things in an opposite direction.

One hundred and sixty-five were assembled in the imperial city by Justinian, who anathematized Origen, for teaching periods (periodous) of bodies and souls, and Theodoret who dared to set himself up to oppose the Twelve Chapters of Cyril.

At Constantinople a Synod was collected under Constantine which rejected Honorius of Rome and Sergius, prelate of Constantinople, for teaching one will and one operation.

ARISTENUS.

The fifth was held in the time of Justinian the Great at Constantinople against the crazy (parafrons) Origen, Evagrius and Didymus, who remodelled the Greek figments, and stupidly said that the same bodies they had joined with them would not rise again; and that Paradise was not subject to the appreciation of the sense, and that it was not from God, and that Adam was not formed in flesh, and that there

would be an end of punishment, and a restitution of the devils to their pristine state, and other innumerable insane blasphemies.

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