



Saints and Holy (Wo)Men in Byzantine Literature and Art

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Session 2: Sanctity through Martyrdom: Male and Female Martyrs (continued)

Session 3: The World of the Desert: Male and Female Hermits

■ Literary Analysis of Two *Passions* (continued)

The *Passion of Polykarpos* (BHG 1556-1560)

- Contextualization of the text: author; place, time and characters of the story
- Christian virtues of the protagonist
- Similarities between the passion of Polykarpos and the passion of Christ
 - *Imitatio Christi*
- “Caesar is lord” (p. 9)
- The depiction of the Jews in the text
- Phases of martyrdom
- Intra-textual (bystanders) – extra-textual audience (listeners/readers)

■ Literary Analysis of Two *Passions* (continued)

The *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (BHG 1482)

- Contextualization of the text: authors; place, time and characters of the story
- Emotions (esp. father, Perpetua)
- The special spiritual status of Perpetua (ch. IV, VII, IX, pp. 127-129)
- Visions – Reality; the visions’ role in the story
- The vision with the Egyptian man (ch. X, pp. 129-130)
- The common features between the two female characters of the story
- “a second baptism” (ch. XVIII, p. 133, cf. ch. XXI, p. 134)
- The end of Perpetua (beheading)

■ The World of the Desert: Male and Female Hermits

Literary Analysis: the *Life of Mary of Egypt* (BHG 1042), transl. by Maria Kouli

After reading the text, you should be able to discuss the following topics:

- Contextualization of the text: author; place, time and characters of the story
- The main function of the text ('message') (pp. 65-66)
- The encounter between Mary and Zosimas, their reactions and first impressions
- The ascetic virtues of Zosimas and Mary
- Structure of the text: Mary begins with her own narration (p. 80), interrupting the general narration of the author-narrator. The words of the female protagonist serve as a 'narrative parenthesis' and form the core of the entire story.
- The most important phases in the life of Mary:
(1) sinful life, (2) repentance and conversion, and (3) ascetic way of life

■ The World of the Desert: Male and Female Hermits

Literary Analysis: the *Life of Mary of Egypt* (BHG 1042), transl. by Maria Kouli

After reading the text, you should be able to discuss the following topics (continued):

- The reason of her conversion and the episode at the church
- Depiction of diametrical opposite ends: sins vs. piety
 - sexual addiction vs. devotion to God and pilgrimage
 - living as a prostitute vs. living as a holy woman
- The death of Mary and the end of the story
- How is the ascetic figure of Mary of Egypt depicted in Byzantine literature and art?

See the text pp. 68, 76-77; cf. the online article by Roland Betancourt:

https://www.ancientjewreview.com/articles/2020/1/9/fragment-toward-a-critical-trans-history-of-byzantium?fbclid=IwAR3VRNYVPWiYuHAF0yqVQRCFXSiMn_PvXhuCxsRnttP7VyISU_bLly72VPw