

Alexander Riehle, University of Vienna

Women's Writing in Byzantium

Course at Masaryk University, Brno

26-27 March 2015

Course description

Compared to medieval Western Europe, the amount of surviving works written by women in Greek in the middle ages is extremely scanty. Of the list of ca. 1250 Byzantine authors recently compiled for a dictionary project, only 13, or just over 1 per cent, are women. In this course, we will inquire into this phenomenon by looking at the general parameters of women's writing in Byzantium, including women's roles in society, female literacy, and the issue of preservation. Secondly, based on the reading of selected texts authored by women, we will investigate the poetics of women's literature by discussing aspects such as genre, structure and style, voice and identity.

Course outline with mandatory readings

Sessions 1 and 2 (26 March, 15:50-17:20 and 17:45-19:05): General Parameters

Liz James, "The Role of Women," In *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, pp. 643-51

Maria Mavroudi, "Learned Women of Byzantium and the Surviving Record," In *Byzantine Religious Culture. Studies in Honor of Alice-Mary Talbot*. The Medieval Mediterranean 92, eds. Denis Sullivan, Elizabeth Fisher and Stratis Papaioannou. Leiden: Brill, 2012, pp. 53-84

Session 3 (27 March, 9:00-10:20): Kassia, *Troparion on the Sinful Woman*

Alexander Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (650–850)*. Research Series 2. Athens: The National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, 1999, pp. 315-22

Source: Kassia, *Troparion on the Sinful Woman* (with Luke 7:36-50, Mark 16:1-8 and Genesis 3:1-8)

Session 4 (27 March, 10:40-12:00): Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*

Leonora Neville, "Lamentation, History, and Female Authorship in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*." *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 53 (2013): 192-218

Source: Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, Prologue and Book VI 8