

SUMMARY

Mary Magdalene: From a Follower of Jesus to a Strumpet on the Silver Screen

Theological-Cultural Analysis

In *Mary Magdalene: From a Follower of Jesus to a Strumpet on the Silver Screen*, the complex changes in perceptions about Mary Magdalene over time, the long history of the interpretation of her persona, together with complex interdisciplinary studies on her image, role and works about her are analyzed. For the first time, studies about Mary of Magdala in New Testament exegesis, patristics, legends and a systematic analysis of how she has been depicted in films have been made accessible to the Croatian public.

The book is divided into two sections, together with an introduction presenting research and major breakthroughs about Mary Magdalene in various scientific disciplines.

The first section of the book, entitled *Mary of Magdala: From the New Testament to Legends*, consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides a discussion of the so-called Magdalene question, i.e., whether Mary of Magdala is a specific New Testament woman of that name or whether the name refers to several different New Testament women. In the second chapter, there is an analysis of the persona and role of Mary of Magdala, based on canonical New Testament texts: the Gospels according to Mark, Matthew, Luke and John, the Acts of the Apostles and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. Particular attention is devoted to the question of how much can be gleaned about the position of women in early Christian communities from the depictions of Mary Magdalene. Using Mary of Magdala as an example, women as Jesus' followers and apostles are discussed from a contemporary viewpoint. The roles of Mary of Magdala in the apocryphal texts and the texts of the early Christian church fathers and writers were analyzed (third and fourth chapters) from the aspects of the position of women in early Christianity and the strategies through which they were gradually displaced from the center of Jesus' movement, active roles of leadership and proclamation. In the fifth chapter,

legends about Mary of Magdala from the Christian East and West are presented, compared and analyzed. Particular attention throughout the first section is devoted to the transformations of her persona and role, and to the causes and effects associated with changes in women's roles in Christian communities.

In the second section of the book, the persona of Mary Magdalene as portrayed in motion pictures from early films to the present is analyzed. As whom and how Mary Magdalene is portrayed in films, the roles she appears in, how she looks and is transformed, and her relationships with other figures (especially Jesus, with whom she most often appears in tandem) are analyzed. Furthermore, whether the manner in which she is depicted reinforces the patriarchal stereotypes of women in art, such as those related to sexuality and impurity, is discussed, given the fact that Hollywood and the film industry in general are considered bastions of traditional male values and patriarchal attitudes.

Not only is it important to analyze the persona and roles of Mary of Magdala but also the discourse, i.e., the mechanisms and objectives according to which some discourse becomes established and canonized, while some are suppressed or prohibited. This is true both for the (Catholic) Church tradition, which thereby affects the position of women in Church communities, and also for popular culture, which resolves some intellectual, emotional and existential questions through the persona of Mary Magdalene or expresses dissatisfaction with the official teachings of the Catholic Church about the body, sexuality or celibacy. Namely, Mary Magdalene, who was a figure of continuous transformations during the course of history, is attractive in modern times, which are more disposed to constant changes than constant fixed identities. The problem is, however, that such contemporary changes in her persona generally continue a tradition based on an amalgamation of several New Testament female figures into the persona of Mary Magdalene, which reinforces gender stereotypes and does not question patriarchal structures or relationships. The objective of this book is to foster an appreciation of contemporary theological studies in film and other branches of the arts. Therefore, the two parts of this book, which can function as separate and independent entities, have been intentionally placed within a single common framework for dialogue.