



Performing Christian Female Identity in Roman Alexandria.

Heather Juliussen-Stevenson



The Christian women of Roman Alexandria are something of a mystery, but they were integral to the transformation of religion. They Christianized the space they occupied, their bodies becoming houses for sanctity. While it is difficult to verify the accuracy of male representations of female subjects, discourse exposes the underlying assumptions upon which gender was understood. Reformed prostitutes, women who traveled to the shrine at Menouthis, collectors of pilgrim flasks from Abu Menas who sat in front of the Virgin Mary fresco at Kom el-Dikka, and virgins who shut themselves away---none of these women may have thought of themselves as men suggested. Yet when men referenced the feminine, they introduced alterity, indicating resistance to a master discourse or even competition among rival discourses. This negotiation, combined with a daily expression of agency through the use of space, reveals how women must have asserted their rights to salvation.

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