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Mothers' Time: The Temporality of Motherhood in the *Life of Martha* and the *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*

1 Introduction

Mothers and motherhood, either physical or spiritual, are central in Byzantine Greek hagiography.¹ There is an extremely large number of texts belonging to different narrative hagiographical genres: Passions, saints' Lives, Collections of Beneficial Tales, and Miracle Collections in which mothers are central figures acting as narrative agents, namely as authorial characters whose mothering and actions determine the development of both their children and the plot. The mothers appearing most commonly in hagiographical narratives are those who give birth, nurture, and bring up the (saintly) protagonist who is mainly a man.² In fact, male hagiography, the texts commemorating holy men, pay special attention to the heroes' mothers whose role to their sons' sanctification is presented as instru-

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1 For spiritual motherhood in female monastic contexts, see Stavroula Constantinou, *Female Corporeal Performances: Reading the Body in Byzantine Passions and Lives of Holy Women* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2005), 151–57, and Stavroula Constantinou, "Monastic 'Gynealogy': The Maternal-Feminine Structure of Byzantine Women's Asceticism," in *Rethinking Gender in Orthodox Christianity*, eds. Ashley Purpura, Thomas Arentzen and Susan Ashbrook Harvey (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2023): 88–103. For Syriac hagiography, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Sacred Bonding: Mothers and Daughters in Early Syriac Hagiography," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4/1 (1996): 27–56.

2 Concerning saints' Lives in particular, see the discussion of mothering practices in texts dating from the sixth to the eleventh centuries in Despoina Ariantzi, *Kindheit in Byzanz: Emotionale, geistige und materielle Entwicklung im familiären Umfeld vom 6. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 51–168. See also Peter Hatlie, "Images of Motherhood and Self in Byzantine Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009): 41–57, 50–51.

mental. Mothers of women saints, on the other hand, are less frequently present in female hagiography, the texts devoted to holy women,³ in which fathers often take the lead.⁴

Mothers other than those of saints that are depicted in hagiography undertake various roles: they take care of martyrs' wounds (e.g. Theodote in the *Passion of Anastasia the Widow*, chapter 19); they are the (former) wives of holy men (e.g. Athanasia in Daniel of Sketis' *Narration* "Andronikos and His Wife Athanasia");⁵ they promote the saintly protagonists' veneration (e.g. the abbess Bryene in the *Passion and Life of Febronia*);⁶ and they are beneficiaries of miracles (e.g. mothers in the *Miracle Collection of Artemios*, miracles 11, 24, 28, 31, 36). Since virginity is the ideal for female holiness, there are only a few women who before entering holy orders marry and give birth to children. I would call the holy women whose sanctity is constructed through the repression of physical motherhood "saintly mothers." Two cases in point are saints Matrona and Theodora of Thessalonike. The first abandons her daughter Theodote to enter holy orders as a man called Babylas. The latter suppresses her feelings towards her daughter Theopiste while the two women lead the nun's life within the same monastery.

As for the women who are sanctified through motherhood and whom I would label "maternal saints," these are even fewer. There is just a couple of women who achieve the status of holiness because they give birth, breastfeed, and bring up future saints. These are: Sophia, the mother of the virgin martyrs Agape, Pistis, and Elpida and Martha, the mother of Symeon Stylite the Younger. Sophia is not even commemorated in a separate hagiographical text, but within the context of her daughters' Passion narrative. As for Martha, she is the only maternal saint who

3 The division of hagiography into two subgenres, male and female, has been introduced by me in Stavroula Constantinou, "Subgenre and Gender in Saints' Lives," in *Les Vies des Saints à Byzance: Genre littéraire ou biographie historique? Actes du II^e colloque international sur la littérature byzantine*. Paris, 6–8 juin 2002, eds. Paolo Odorico and Panagiotis A. Agapitos (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2004): 411–23; see also Constantinou, *Female Corporeal*, 11–18.

4 For the role of fathers in early Byzantine hagiography, see Fotis Vasileiou, *Ποιμένας ή Τύπαννος: Ο Πατέρας στη Χριστιανική Λογοτεχνία της Ύστερης Αρχαιότητας* (Athens: Αρμός, 2013).

5 Athanasia's motherly feelings are examined in Andria Andreou, "'Emotioning' Gender: Plotting the Male and the Female in Byzantine Greek Passions and Lives of Holy Couples," in *Emotions and Gender in Byzantine Culture*, eds. Stavroula Constantinou and Mati Meyer (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019): 35–64, 37–44.

6 For a discussion of Bryene's (motherly) treatment of Febronia, see Stavroula Constantinou, "Re-writing Beauty and Youth in Female Martyr Legends," in *Pour une poétique de Byzance": Hommage à Vassilis Katsaros*, eds. Stéphanos Efthymiadis, Charis Messis, Paolo Odorico and Ioannis Polémis (Paris: Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2015): 99–112.

is the protagonist of a free-standing *Life*, a rather long anonymous *Life* that is dated to the seventh century. She features prominently also in the first part of her son's *Life*, which covers the first six years of his life that is the time before he starts his monastic career on the "Wonderful Mountain." The anonymous *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger* was probably composed earlier than that of Martha, at some point between the sixth and seventh century.⁷

As an important role that operates under various guises and that carries different characteristics, hagiographical motherhood deserves a thorough study that promises the most valuable results.⁸ For the purposes of this rather short contribution, my discussion shall be based on the figure of Martha as depicted in the two aforesaid *Lives*: the *Life of Martha* (hereafter *LM*) and the *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger* (hereafter *LSSY*).⁹ These texts are supplementary in many respects, yet what concerns me here is their complementarity in the construction of Martha's maternal holiness. Space allows me to only touch upon the issue of mother's time that, as I will show, is integral to the construction of maternal holiness which is inextricably related to both linear and circular time, as well as to the *ἔσχατον*, the end of time. My approach to mother's time is informed by the work of the famous contemporary thinker, Julia Kristeva,¹⁰ especially two of her essays: "Women's Time"—that is where my own title ("Mothers' Time") comes from—and "Stabat Mater."¹¹ Following Kristeva, I will also bring to the fore the inseparability of the maternal saint's time from space: the space she inhabits and the locus she becomes from which time unfolds.

In her 1979 essay "Women's Time," Kristeva argues that female subjectivity is traditionally divided between cyclical, natural time (repetition, gestation, the biological clock) and monumental time (eternity, myths of resurrection, the cult of maternity). These modalities are set off against the time of linear history that has been treated as man's domain. Kristeva turns to the maternal body to "free"

7 The two texts' chronology is discussed in Paul van den Ven, ed., *La vie ancienne de S. Syméon Stylite le Jeune (521–592)* (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1962 and 1970), 1: 124*–30*.

8 I intend to investigate this topic systematically within the framework of a future research project.

9 Both texts are edited by van den Ven, ed., *La vie ancienne*.

10 For an introduction to Kristeva's work, see Stacey K. Keltner, *Kristeva* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

11 First published as "Le Temps des femmes," *Cahiers de recherche de sciences des textes et documents* 5 (1979): 5–19, the first essay was translated by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake as Kristeva, "Women's Time." The second essay was first published as Julia Kristeva, "Hérétique de l'amour," *Tel Quel* 74 (1977): 30–49. In 1983, it was reprinted as "Stabat Mater" in Julia Kristeva, *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 234–63. The English translation used here is from Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *Poetics Today* 6/1–2 (1985): 133–52.

woman from her patriarchal reduction to the mother's role which prevents her from acting outside home and from assuming power and authority. By bringing the mother to the fore, Kristeva provides women with a past (a genealogy of their own, a community of women, a history hitherto repressed) and, simultaneously, with a future (in the sense of liberating them from predefined roles and positions). In fact, the maternal body to which Kristeva turns is a feminized version of the Platonic *χώρα* where time and space merge.¹²

In "Stabat Mother," published in 1977, two years before "Womens' Time," Kristeva is preoccupied with the figure of the mother as both human and divine, as Eve and Virgin Mary, to rethink the relationship between corporeality and temporality. The two parallel columns in the pages of the "Stabat Mater" essay—one depicting the lived and embodied (three-dimensional) experience of motherhood as voiced by Kristeva herself, the other unraveling and deconstructing an idealized (two-dimensional) image of Maternity—represent the two versions of time: the rhythmic volume and the evolutive line, which coexist in women through maternity. As the following discussion will hopefully manifest, Kristeva's matrilineal conception of time finds its full application in the figure of Martha, as depicted in the first part of Symeon's Life and in the Life exclusively dedicated to her.

2 The *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*

Let's start from our older Byzantine text, which presents an earlier stage of Martha's life absent from her Life and which concerns her impregnation, birth-giving, breastfeeding, and upbringing of Symeon until he enters holy orders. The narrative begins with a reference to time. This is a linear time that is initially a man's time. The opening sentence of the Life's first chapter reads as follows: "*In the previous years and not long before this time*, a man called John from the city of Edessa, and while being still of young age, moved with his most honoured parents to the great city of Antiochos."¹³

This John, who is the future father of Symeon, soon loses his central role and agency to Martha. In fact, at the very time John performs a fathering role, he disappears from the narrative. The Life's second chapter opens too with a time reference which introduces Martha as the new protagonist of the narrative by establishing her own spatio-temporality:

¹² Kristeva, "Women's Time," 16.

¹³ LSSY 1,1–4: *Ἐν τοῖς μικρὸν ἐμπροσθεν χρόνοις ἀνὴρ τις τοῦνομα Ἰωάννης ὁρμώμενος ἐκ τῆς Ἐδεσηνῶν μητροπόλεως ἔτι νέαν ἄγων τὴν ἡλικίαν τὴν Ἀντιόχου μεγαλόπολιν σὺν τοῖς αὐτοῦ τιμιωτάτοις γονεῦσιν* (emphasis added). Translations are my own.

*As time passes thus, [...] being aware of the destruction of her virginity's beauty, Martha goes to [...] the church of John the saintly prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist pleading him to intercede to God so that she might receive the gift of parenthood. [...] And she awaits long enough in this holy church asking with tears for this gift, staying without food [...] and sitting on the ground where she takes her sleep.*¹⁴

In the time that follows her unwanted wedding, Martha's bodily situation changes: she loses her virginity and acquires a sexualized body. The first sentences of *LSSY*'s second chapter narrate a decisive moment in Martha's life. This is the point at which she becomes a subject by realizing her current situation, an awareness that becomes possible through looking both to her past and future. She thinks of her past purity and imagines a future as a mother that would allow her to make up for her lost bodily integrity. In an attempt to control her present and future, she undertakes immediate action. She enters and inhabits the sacred space of John the Baptist's church where she engages in ascetic practices, thus orienting her life towards reconstituting a past she was unable to control by seeking a future in motherhood, a state that could be her own. In her repeated asceticism, human time is associated with a cosmic time pointing back to a virginal origin and forward to an end of times. By suppressing her bodily needs and wholly devoting herself to prayer and the tears of repentance, Martha is in fact trying to reverse time: she looks forward to the τέλος of redemption, to the last cosmic days, and backwards to the incarnation and to the time before material creation.

After spending enough time in the church, Martha is deemed worthy of saint John's visitation who orders her to take the incense he offers her and burn it in her house until no incense is left. Martha follows the saint's orders and in so doing transforms her house into a sacred space emitting an otherworldly smell. At the end of the day, when there is almost no incense left, Martha returns to the church where she receives another amount of incense which she burns the next day. She goes back to the church and the whole procedure is repeated again and again, giving the impression that it could be prolonged to eternity. Martha's continuous movement between the same spaces – from her house to the church and from the church to the house, and back again – is interrupted in the next chapter, which opens thus: "After some time [...] passed..."¹⁵ By now Mar-

¹⁴ *LSSY* 2,1–11: *Χρόνου τοίνυν διαδραμόντος, [...] θεασαμένη τὸ καλλῶπισμα τῆς παρθενίας αὐτῆς διαλυθὲν [...] τῷ [...] οἴκῳ τοῦ ἁγίου προφήτου προδρόμου καὶ βαπτιστοῦ Ἰωάννου δυσωποῦσα γονὴν αὐτῇ διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ πρεσβείας ὑπὸ Θεοῦ δωρηθῆναι [...]. καὶ προσκαρτερεῖ ἐπὶ χρόνον ἱκανὸν τῷ αὐτῷ πανσέπτῳ οἴκῳ σὺν δάκρυσιν ἱκετεύουσα περὶ τούτου, οὐδενὸς τὸ παράπαν ἀπογενομένη [...] ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τε τοῦ ἐδάφους καθεζομένη καὶ τὸν φυσικὸν διανύουσα ὕπνον (emphasis added).*

¹⁵ *LSSY* 3,1: *Χρόνου δέ τινος [...] διαδραμόντος.*

tha is back in the church to collect another portion of incense. But she receives saint John's second visitation instead. This time the saint orders her to return home, yet not in order to perform another liturgical ritual, but to have intercourse with her husband. He also foretells the birth of a son ordering her to call him Symeon, to breastfeed him only from the right breast, and to arrange his christening when he turns two years old.

Without losing any time, Martha returns home, has intercourse with her husband whom she had previously convinced to keep a more chaste marriage, and conceives thereafter. From that moment on, Martha follows the timing of her pregnant body, being extremely careful not to harm the fetus. According to the omniscient narrator, when her due date arrives she gives a painless birth.¹⁶ Towards the end of the first part of Symeon's Life, Martha receives a divine dream foretelling both her own future holiness and that of Symeon. In this very dream, she sees herself flying in the air holding her child and saying: "It is my desire to see your divine ascend, my child, and then God will release me in peace, since I have been rewarded among women for offering the pains of my labour to the Highest God."¹⁷

The fact that Martha's birth, like that of the Virgin Mary, is viewed as painless by the hagiographer-narrator reflects our civilization's paradox concerning "maternity" as identified by Kristeva in "Stabat Mater." On the one hand, there is the most idealized and fantasmatic mother that is epitomized by the Virgin Mary to whom our author often likens Martha. On the other hand, there is what Kristeva herself refers to as "the real experience that fantasy overshadows,"¹⁸ namely Martha's own bodily and emotional experience of birth-giving, breastfeeding, and mothering. In Kristeva's words, the hagiographer-narrator's approach represents a "masculine appropriation of the Maternal" integral to "masculine sublimation."¹⁹ In other words, Symeon's Life constitutes a sixth-century illustration of what Kristeva tries to do through "Stabat Mater," that is to incorporate the two diametrical articulations of motherhood which have dominated Western discourse: the fantasmatic idealization of motherhood and its bodily experience.

16 LSSY 3: Τοῦ δὲ χρόνου περαιωθέντος, τίκει ἡ τιμιωτάτη γυνή, οὐ πάνυ τῶν ἀλγηδόνων αὐτῇ ἐπιτιθεμένων.

17 LSSY 8,6–9: Ἐπεθύμουν ἰδεῖν σου τὴν θεῖαν ἀνάβασιν, ὧ τέκνον, ὅπως ὁ Κύριος ἀπολύσῃ με τὴν δοῦλὴν αὐτοῦ ἐν εἰρήνῃ, ὅτι εὖρον χάριν ἐν γυναιξὶν ἀποδοῦναι πόνους ὠδίνων μου τῷ ὑψίστῳ.

18 Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," 133.

19 Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," 135.

3 The *Life of Martha*

The *LM* starts by introducing Martha herself and not her parents as is the case with *LSSY* and most saints' Lives.²⁰ Unlike most hagiographical narratives, that of Martha begins *in medias res*:²¹ from the point in which the heroine receives the prophetic dream mentioned before that is repeated almost *verbatim* in her own Life, an indication that her hagiographer used Symeon's Life. Evidently, *LM* is an account of the life she leads as soon as her son departs for the "Wonderful Mountain." This third phase of her life is structured around the cyclical time of liturgy: "Throughout the year, she did not refrain from evening and morning prayers, seeking eagerly the night vigils that were performed in commemoration of the martyrs."²²

As was the case with Martha's pre-maternal asceticism in Symeon's Life, in her continuous participation in church rituals human time is interlinked with cosmic time, pointing back to a beginning and forward to an end. By commemorating the martyrs, she continues a tradition that recalls the origins of the Church and looks to the Second Coming.

Apart from participation in liturgy, Martha's human time in her Life is devoted to teachings and philanthropy. Her teachings are mostly addressed to Symeon and his fellow-monks. As for her philanthropic works, she provides clothing for poor children at baptism, tends to the sick and supplies food and clothing for the poor, arranges the funerals of dying strangers, tends to demoniacs, and takes care of the pilgrims and monks at her son's monastery. Martha's philanthropic work, apart from reflecting a mother's role, is strongly associated with church rituals, such as baptisms and funerals, allowing thus an experience of both the linear time of human life and the cyclical time of ritual. Yet, the account of Martha's works is not combined with any indications of time. In fact, they are frozen in time. Linear time is reconstituted when Martha's life reaches its earthly end, that is, a year before she dies. From *LM*'s eleventh chapter, when the time that is left until Martha's death is revealed to the heroine, and up to the point of her actual death in chapter 27, there are precise references to time in the form they

²⁰ Thomas Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2005), 56–80.

²¹ The uniqueness of Martha's Life is discussed in Lucy Parker, "Paradigmatic Piety: Liturgy in the *Life of Martha*, Mother of Symeon Stylites the Younger," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 24/1 (2016): 99–125.

²² *LM* 3,7–10: Ἐν ὅλοις δὲ τοῖς χρόνοις αὐτῆς λυχνικῶν καὶ ἑωθινῶν οὐκ ἀπελειπάνετο, σπεύδουσα μάλιστα εἰς τὰς νυκτερινὰς διαγρηγορήσεις τὰς γινομένας ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἁγίων μαρτύρων μνήμας.

are given in the first part of Symeon's Life discussed earlier. If we zoom in time references from chapter 11 to chapter 27, we come up with the following list:

1. "One day just a year before her death..." (LM 11,1–2: Ἐν μιᾷ οὖν τῶν ἡμερῶν πρὸ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐνὸς τῆς πρὸς Θεὸν ἐκδημίας αὐτῆς ...).
2. "The blessed Martha said [...] 'Three months are left to me in this life'" (LM 13,2–6: ἡ μακαρία Μάρθα, εἶπε [...] Τρεῖς γάρ μοι μῆνες μόνοι ὑπολελειμμένοι εἰσὶ τοῦ βίου τούτου).
3. "The next day..." (LM 15,1: Τῇ δὲ ἐξῆς ἡμέρᾳ...).
4. "And on the same night..." (LM 16,1: Καὶ ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ἐκείνῃ...).
5. "From now and until the end of time..." (LM 17,21: ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα...).
6. "These she explained on a Sunday when she stayed praying [...] on Monday she invited the brothers" (LM 19,1–2; 3–4: Ταῦτα ἐξηγησαμένη ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κυριακῆς, ἔμεινε προσευχομένη [...] τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ δευτέρᾳ προσκαλεσαμένη τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς).
7. "Having prayed thus, she turned to the saint (Symeon) [...] and told him: 'Behold, the day of my death has arrived'" (LM 24,1–4: Ταῦτα προσευξαμένη, ἐστράφη πρὸς τὸν ἅγιον [...] καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ἴδου ἡ ἡμέρα παρέστηκεν τῆς πρὸς Κύριον ἐκδημίας μου).
8. "She stayed there on that day, which was a Monday" (LM 26,16–17: ἔμεινεν ἐκεῖ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκείνην οὖσαν δευτέραν).
9. "On Tuesday [...]. After two days [...] they transferred her to Daphne. [...] After some time passed, [...] she gave her soul to the angels' hands" (LM 27,1; 11–12; 13–14: Τῇ δὲ τρίτῃ [...] μετὰ δύο ἡμέρας [...] ἀπήγαγον ἐν Δάφνῃ. [...] Βραχείας δὲ ὥρας διαδραμούσης, [...] τὴν ψυχὴν παρέδωκεν ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἀγγέλων χερσίν).

In narrative terms, there are different temporal variations within the time span of Martha's last year. Firstly, narrative time slows down with detailed descriptions and accounts of Martha's activities; then, narrative speeds up through summaries. Finally, narrative time decelerates once again to allow a more detailed presentation of the heroine's last days and moments. As the narrative accelerates, we realise that Martha's final twelve months are shortened into just three months, a period during which she intensifies her movements in space from the monastery of Symeon on the "Wonderful Mountain" to the church of saint John the Forerunner in Daphne. The time she spends with her son is prolonged having thus an effect on narrative time that slows down.

It is during the teachings of the heroine's last three months that she is once again reminded of her birth-giving and maternal spatio-temporality. She says to Symeon: "*Just three months* have been left to me in this life and I will depart to

the Lord, my God Who created you and chose you from the unworthiness of my birth labour.”²³

Her words highlight the function of her maternal body as a Kristevan *χώρα*, namely as spatial and temporal at once. She has been selected to become the space where a new life could be generated, but not without bodily pain. The painless birth in *LSSY* is here transformed into a painful labour, highlighting the materiality of the maternal body. Time allowed the development of the fetus in her womb. When the baby was born, a full human being, her maternal time gave another birth, this time to a pious boy with a future in sanctity that has no time. At the same time, the two births of Symeon as a baby and as saint marked also Martha's own birth as a maternal saint.

Two chapters later, narrative time is accelerated once more. Martha's final three months are condensed into some days in which the heroine continues her teachings to her son: “My child, as a sinner and humble person, I am telling you what I owe to tell you. You deserve to be honoured by the most honoured whom you have always honoured by co-crucifying yourself from infancy.”²⁴

Despite her articulate humbleness, or rather because of it, Martha's spiritual superiority to her son is clearly manifested. She knows her own and Symeon's future before him. What renders Martha superior to her son, whose ascetic life begins from his early years, is her experience of motherhood which proves more valuable than her former virginity. Motherhood enables her to create two saints—she and her son; virginity would only allow for one saint.

Two days before Martha's death, references to time become even concreter: it is a Sunday, then a Monday, and she dies on a Tuesday. Yet, Martha's death marks the beginning of new rituals and a new life. Martha is initially buried in Daphne and subsequently reburied on the “Wonderful Mountain,” the places she inhabits during her earthly life. Her burials and the commemoration rituals that follow take place in a precise timeframe. Martha's new life is that of a miracle-worker and an intercessor between earth and heaven through dreams and visions. *LM* ends by pointing to a future beyond the narrative in which more miracles and visions of Martha are performed. Just as was the case during her earthly life, Martha is omnipresent in Symeon's monastery also in her afterlife. Posthumously, her previously earthly maternal body is transformed into an exalted corpus of divine revelation.

²³ *LM* 13,5–8: *Τρεῖς γάρ μοι μῆνες μόνοι ὑπολελειμμένοι εἰσὶ τοῦ βίου τούτου, καὶ πορεύσομαι πρὸς Κύριον τὸν Θεόν μου τὸν ποιήσαντά σε καὶ ἐκλεξάμενόν σε ἐκ τῆς ἀναξιώτητος τῶν ὠδίνων μου* (emphasis added).

²⁴ *LM* 14,13–16: *ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ, τέκνον, ὡς ἁμαρτωλὴ καὶ ταπεινὴ λέγω τὸ κεχρεωστημένον μοι· σοὶ δὲ ἡ τιμὴ πρέπει ἐκ τοῦ τετιμημένου, ὃν ἐτίμησας ἀεὶ συσταυρωθεὶς αὐτῷ νηπιόθεν.*

4 Concluding Remarks

Kristeva believes that the representations of woman and motherhood can be changed through the power of texts, such as her “Stabat Mater” which expresses in one of the most eloquent and graphic ways the mother’s spatio-temporality, her contributions to culture within the framework of both linear and cyclical time. As I have attempted to show in my analysis of the *LSSY* and its twin text, the *LM* from the perspective of mother’s time, both texts have the power to create the new ethics, “herethics” that Kristeva envisions in which mothers’ relation to children are taken into account. Martha’s figure and her sanctification as a mother create what Kristeva aims at producing: a discourse on maternity that provides women, but also culture, with a true past and future.