

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟ

5 - 7

November / Νοεμβρίου  
2021



### LACTATING BREASTS

#### Motherhood and Breastfeeding in Antiquity and Byzantium

Centre for Medieval  
Arts & Rituals  
University of Cyprus

Learning Resource Centre  
University of Cyprus Library  
'Stelios Ioannou'  
Room LRC 019  
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### ΓΑΛΑΚΤΟΦΟΡΟΙ ΜΑΣΤΟΙ

#### Μητρότητα και Θηλασμός σε Αρχαιότητα και Βυζάντιο

Ερευνητική Μονάδα για  
Μεσαιωνικές Τέχνες & Τελετουργίες  
Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου

Κέντρο Πληροφόρησης  
Βιβλιοθήκη Πανεπιστημίου Κύπρου  
«Στέλιος Ιωάννου»  
Αίθουσα LRC 019  
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RESTART 2016 - 2020 Programme EXCELLENCE/1216/0020

Lactating Breasts: Motherhood and Breastfeeding in Antiquity and Byzantium (4th c. BCE - 7th c. CE)

Γαλακτοφόροι Μαστοί: Μητρότητα και Θηλασμός από τους Ελληνιστικούς στους Πρώιμους  
Βυζαντινούς Χρόνους (4ος αι. π.Χ. - 7ος αι. μ.Χ.)



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## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION/ ΚΑΛΩΣΟΡΙΣΜΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΣΑΓΩΓΗ

10.00-10.10

MEDICAL & MORAL DISCOURSES AROUND MILK / ΙΑΤΡΙΚΕΣ & ΗΘΙΚΕΣ  
ΑΝΑΦΟΡΕΣ ΣΤΟ ΓΑΛΛΑ

Chair: Dionysios Stathakopoulos / Πρόεδρος: Διονύσιος Σταθακόπουλος

- 10.10-10.30** *Galaktology as Literary Genre: Simple Literary Forms in Ancient and Early Byzantine Medical Texts*  
Stavroula Constantinou and Aspasia Skouroumouni Stavrinou
- 10.30-10.50** *The Role of Milk in Early Byzantine Medical Literature*  
Petros Bouras-Vallianatos
- 10.50-11.10** *Lactation Cessation in the Early Byzantine Period*  
Laurence Totelin
- 11.10-11.30** *Teaching Her a Lesson: Favorinus' Moral-Gynaecological Advice about Breastfeeding*  
Michiel Meeussen
- 11.30-12.00** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 12.00-14.00** Lunch Break / Μεσημεριανό Διάλειμμα

## WET-NURSING AND CROSS-NURSING / ΑΝΑΔΟΧΟΣ ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟΣ

Chair / Πρόεδρος: Laurence Totelin

- 14.00-14.20** *Cross-nursing Relationships in Classical Attika and Beyond*  
Katherine Backler
- 14.20-14.40** *Mother, Nurse, Midwife and/or Goddess: Distinguishing Each in Roman Iconography*  
Sandra Jaeggi-Richoz
- 14.40-15.00** *Wet-nurses, their Children, and their Nurslings in Roman Funerary Inscriptions*  
Diana Molkova
- 15.00-15.30** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 15.30-16.00** Coffee Break / Διάλειμμα για Καφέ

BREASTFEEDING IN ART & LITERATURE I / Ο ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΗ & ΤΗ  
ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ I

Chair: Aspasia Skouroumouni Stavrinou / Πρόεδρος: Ασπασία Σκουρουμούνη Σταυρινού

- 16.00-16.20** *'Political' Breastfeeding in Callimachus' Hymns*  
Michelle Solitario
- 16.20-16.40** *The Suckling Paterfamilias: Gender and Power in Campanian Wall Paintings of Pero and Micon*  
Sarah Shread
- 16.40-17.00** *Pero and Mycon in Roman Arts: The Paradox of Female Piety*  
Sarah Beckmann
- 17.00-17.30** Discussion / Συζήτηση

## PROGRAMME / ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ

- 17.30-18.30** MotherBreast TEAM CONSORTIUM MEETING / ΣΥΝΑΝΤΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΟΜΑΔΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΜητρικούΣτήθους
- 19.30** Dinner / Δείπνο

Saturday, 6 November / Σάββατο, 6 Νοεμβρίου

EET

### BREASTFEEDING IN ART & LITERATURE II / Ο ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΗ & ΤΗ ΛΟΓΟΤΕΧΝΙΑ II

Chair: Stavroula Constantinou / Πρόεδρος: Σταυρούλα Κωνσταντίνου

- 09.30-09.50** *Roman Charity, Breastfeeding, and Questions of Gender: The Story of Pero and Cimon/Micon Revisited*  
Tim Parkin
- 09.50-10.10** *Images of Breastfeeding in Late Antique Art: Form – Context – Function*  
Maria Parani
- 10.10-10.30** *Breastfeeding in Byzantine Art: Aspects of Materiality and Realia*  
Mati Meyer
- 10.30-10.50** *The Breast as Locus for Punishment*  
Dionysios Stathakopoulos
- 10.50-11.20** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 11.20-11.50** Coffee Break / Διάλειμμα

### RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES AROUND MOTHERHOOD & BREASTFEEDING / ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΕΣ ΑΝΑΦΟΡΕΣ ΣΤΗ ΜΗΤΡΟΤΗΤΑ & ΤΟΝ ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟ

Chair / Πρόεδρος: Mati Meyer

- 11.50-12.10** *Mother and Newborn Child: From the 1st Day of Birth to the 40th in the Liturgical Tradition of the Orthodox Church and in the Cypriot Euchological Manuscripts*  
Arch. Gregorios Ioannides
- 12.10-12.30** *Motherhood and Sainthood: Childbearing and Breastfeeding in Byzantine Martyrdom Narratives*  
Christodoulos Papavarnavas
- 12.30-12.50** *Good Mother, Bad Mother, Holy Mother? Motherhood in Byzantine Hagiographic and Normative Texts*  
Eirini Afentoulidou
- 12.50-13.20** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 13.30-15.30** Lunch Break / Μεσημεριανό Διάλειμμα

### RELIGIOUS IMAGES & DISCOURSES AROUND BREASTFEEDING / ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΚΕΣ ΕΙΚΟΝΕΣ & ΑΝΑΦΟΡΕΣ ΣΤΟΝ ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟ

Chair: Maria Parani / Πρόεδρος: Μαρία Παρανή

- 15.30-15.50** *The Early Byzantine Galaktotrophousa in Egypt*  
Elizabeth Bolman
- 15.50-16.10** *Milk and Blood: The Association of the Virgin Lactans with the Passion*  
Niki Tsironi

## PROGRAMME / ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ

- 16.10-16.30** *Clement of Alexandria and the Breast of God the Father*  
Maria Pavlou
- 16.30-17.00** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 17.00-17.30** **Coffee Break / Διάλειμμα για Καφέ**

### IDEOLOGIES & DEBATES AROUND (DIVINE) BREASTFEEDING / ΙΔΕΟΛΟΓΙΕΣ & ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΕΙΣ ΓΥΡΩ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ (ΘΕΙΟ) ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟ Chair: Niki Tsironi / Πρόεδρος: Νίκη Τσιρώνη

- 17.30-17.50** *Motherhood and Kourotrophy on the Acropolis of Athens: The Case of the Aglaurids*  
Ioannis Mitsios
- 17.50-18.10** *Empowering Breasts: Women, Widows and Prophetesses with a Child*  
Barbara Crostini
- 18.10-18.30** *Polarizing the Female Breast and Breastfeeding: Gendered Perceptions of Babylonian Rabbis and Christian Authors in the Late Antique and Middle Byzantine Periods*  
Michail Kitsos
- 18.30-19.00** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 19.30** **Dinner / Δείπνο**

Sunday, 7 November / Κυριακή, 7 Νοεμβρίου

EET

### BREASTFEEDING & OTHER FEEDING PRACTICES / ΘΗΛΑΣΜΟΣ & ΑΛΛΕΣ ΔΙΑΤΡΟΦΙΚΕΣ ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΕΣ Chair: Petros Bouras-Vallianatos / Πρόεδρος: Πέτρος Μπούρας-Βαλλιανάτος

- 10.00-10.20** *A Cross-disciplinary Approach to Infant Feeding Practices in Roman Britain*  
Giulia Pedrucci and Carlo Coccoza
- 10.20-10.40** *Infancy and Childhood in Pre-Roman and Roman Italy (1000 BCE -100 CE ca): Data and Perspectives to Inform Current Polity in Health and Education*  
Francesca Fulminante
- 10.40-11.00** *More than Food: Breastfeeding and Maternal Milk in the Phoenician and Punic Worlds*  
Meritxell Ferrer and Miria López-Bertan
- 11.00-11.30** Discussion / Συζήτηση
- 11.30-12.00** **Coffee Break / Διάλειμμα για Καφέ**
- 12.00-13.00** Round Table Discussion / Συζήτηση Στρογγυλής Τραπέζης





**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**  
**ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟ**

**LACTATING BREASTS** **ΓΑΛΑΚΤΟΦΟΡΟΙ ΜΑΣΤΟΙ**  
**Motherhood and Breastfeeding** **Μητρότητα και Θηλασμός σε**  
**in Antiquity and Byzantium** **Αρχαιότητα και Βυζάντιο**

**ABSTRACTS**

**Eirini Afentoulidou, *Good Mother, Bad Mother, Holy Mother? Motherhood in Byzantine Hagiographical and Normative Texts***

The good mother is a recurring *topos* in Byzantine texts. As has been demonstrated, it is usually used, either directly or indirectly, to construct the identity of the protagonist (who's most often a son) who has been mothered by an exemplary woman. But what about texts focusing not on the child but on the mother herself? In this paper, I discuss selected passages from hagiographical texts on women with children and from normative texts, such as penitentials and tales about posthumous judgement. I explore how and to what extent the actions of the women depicted in these texts construct their identity as good, bad, or holy mothers.

**Katherine Backler, *Cross-nursing Relationships in Classical Attika and Beyond***

In Menander's comedy *Samia* (4<sup>th</sup> c. BCE), a lactating woman helps her young neighbour and friend by sharing the breastfeeding of the younger woman's baby. There is a great deal of evidence for the employment of wet-nurses in Graeco-Roman antiquity, but very little evidence for arrangements like the one in *Samia* in which one woman breastfeeds another's child without payment as an act of friendship or support. This paper assesses ancient and modern evidence for the practice of 'cross-nursing', shared breastfeeding of a child between two or more women as part of an informal, unpaid arrangement distinct from wet-nursing. Taking into account medical and anthropological studies from Australia, Brazil, and Mali, I argue that cultural and demographic factors in classical Attika may have made cross-nursing common. I then go on to assess the place of cross-nursing within women's relationships. I suggest that cross-nursing arose out of and strengthened close and collaborative relationships between female relatives, friends, and neighbours. I also consider the role of status and wealth in these relationships, including the possibility of households which could not afford a wet-nurse turning to more informal arrangements, or of women exploiting enslaved women in their households for cross-nursing. Finally, I consider ancient perspectives about the bonds generated by cross-nursing in an anthropological context: the bond between a lactating woman and the child she breastfeeds, even if the woman is not the child's mother; the bond between children breastfed by the same woman; and the bond between women who breastfeed the same child.

**Sarah Beckmann, *Pero and Micon in Roman Arts: The Paradox of Female Piety***

In a famous wall-painting from Pompeii (IX.2.5), now in the Archaeological Museum at Naples, a woman offers her breast to a frail old man; the pair sit in the shadows, with minimal light pouring down on them from a window above. The woman uses her second and third fingers to squeeze milk expertly from her right breast, her eyes connecting with those of the old man, whose lips cup her nipple as his right hand rests on her other breast. The woman is best known to scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity as Pero, an epitome of female piety according to the few ancient authors who discuss her; the old man is her father, Micon, whom she literally nurses back to health as he wastes away in jail. This couple and their story are a legend thoroughly Roman, mentioned for the first time in Valerius Maximus' *Memorable Deeds and Sayings* (1st c. CE). Notably, the author's narration of Pero's piety is assisted by a painting of this astonishing act which, he says, the eyes of men hung upon and are stupefied by: 'haerent ac stupent hominum oculi' (Val. Max. V.4.ext.1). One might say that contemporary scholarship has reacted in much the same way to artistic depictions of Pero and Micon, which are few and far between. Most echo comments made by Larissa Bonfante about representations of this couple as both sentimental and sexually disturbing. This paper aims to unpack this apparent dichotomy, exploring the paradox of a female piety that can never be divorced from

## ABSTRACTS

sexuality, and the correlate shock value associated with viewing this daughter as she gives her breast to her father. My analysis begins with an exploration of the female breast in Roman arts, with particular focus on the later Republic and early Empire. Using artistic representations, but also evidence from erotic and elegiac poetry, I argue that the breast itself was sexualized, even if attitudes towards the nursing breast and breast-feeding in general were more varied. With this foundation, I review the corpus of Pero and Micon images, most of which come from domestic contexts in Pompeii (as wall-paintings and terra-cottas). Based on both the gestures and positions of the father and daughter's bodies, and the location of images as far as can be reconstructed, I argue that these images were infused with erotic undertones that inherently discomfited viewers. That discomfort, I contend, lies in recognition of female agency and the multivalent character of the breast as a source of stimulation and nutriment.

### **Elizabeth Bolman, *The Early Byzantine Galaktotrophousa in Egypt***

By far the largest body of surviving images of Mary nursing Christ comes from monasteries and hermitages in Egypt. Monks often chose to locate monasteries in the desert, which greatly aided the preservation of buildings and their sometimes extensive decoration. After the monasteries were abandoned, dry sands covered them and preserved them exceptionally well. The proliferation of depictions of the nursing Virgin Mary – at least compared to the very scant examples elsewhere in the empire – suggest that the ubiquitous Egyptian depictions of Isis nursing Horus may have been a powerful force. Paintings of the *Galaktotrophousa* (Nursing Virgin Mary – literally, She Who Nourishes with Milk) cannot properly be evaluated without first considering twentieth- and twenty-first century ideas about women, motherhood, babies, and nursing. Various early Byzantine functional contexts for these paintings illuminate these subjects, as do historical ideas about milk, blood, and the Eucharist. Within a Christian context, the iconography of the *Galaktotrophousa* becomes a metaphor for the consumption of the Eucharist and the path to salvation.

### **Petros Bouras-Vallianatos, *The Role of Milk in Early Byzantine Medical Literature***

This paper examines critically the use of milk in early Byzantine medical texts in Greek and Latin by authors such as Oribasios, Marcellus of Bordeaux, Aetios of Amida, Alexander of Tralles, and Paul of Aegina. It is also informed by other contemporary sources, including texts of a superstitious nature (e.g. magical/medical papyri, Cyranides). The first part concentrates on the use of milk as a dietary agent, including, for example, the advice offered to mothers and wet-nurses; special emphasis is given to when and why human milk was preferred over animal milk, and in particular mare's milk, and vice versa. The second part discusses the role of milk in pharmacology, either as a simple drug or as an ingredient of composite drugs. It is argued that milk played a significant role in the treatment of phthisis, and also on ear and eye infections.

### **Stavroula Constantinou and Aspasia Skouroumouni Stavrinou, *Galaktology as Literary Genre: Simple Literary Forms in Ancient and Early Byzantine Medical Texts***

Debates related to breastfeeding, infant care, and milk production and consumption recur in medical treatises of late antiquity and early Byzantium (1<sup>st</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> c. CE), especially in the works of Soranos, Galen, Oribasios, and Aetios. This paper focuses on an exploration of the literary articulation of these milk debates through the authors' employment of simple literary forms. The analysis concerning the spread, thematic distribution and stylistic modulation (morphology and function) of certain types of short literary forms (particularly the anecdote, with reference also to ethnography, and sayings) is

## ABSTRACTS

variously illuminating: for unravelling how the same *galaktology* themes take on different shapes and meanings in each author; and for detecting how usage and function of each literary form alters or remains unchanged throughout time. Enlightening medical (re)writing in terms of the literary transformations of medical diction is essential for a fuller comprehension of ancient and early Byzantine medical *galaktology* and its evolution through time. Furthermore, our discussion aims to contribute to a better understanding of ancient and Byzantine short literary forms and of their uses in scientific texts, such as medical treatises.

### **Barbara Crostini, *Empowering Breasts: Women, Widows and Prophetesses with Child***

Emphasis on the encratic and the asexual (or anti-sexual) have cast Christianity's attitude to motherhood in an ambiguous light. This outlook is only very partially redeemed by the figure of Mary who, as Virgin Mother of Christ (*Theotokos*), is considered far and away an exception that does not do much to rehabilitate women's fertility and conception-and-birth experiences in the eyes of the ordinary Christian. Recent emphasis on the embodied perception of Christian life as emphasized by late antique preachers has restored the place of the physical senses, but it does not put motherhood at the centre of the picture. In this paper, I want to focus on the witness of special women who in fact more closely mirror the prophetic role of Mary as mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ. In being women with a child, these strong characters exhibit a different holiness that goes through rather than avoids the experience of motherhood as a cleansing from lust, reshaping bodily relations as sex-free even as they preserve both touch and nakedness. One example is the widow of Zarepta, who is depicted in the Dura synagogue with exposed breast as she bewails her dead child, only to hold him proudly on her left arm after he has been resurrected by the prophet, in an image that is mirrored in ivories of medieval Virgins in glory. Another example is that of Perpetua and Felicity, whose motherhoods are insufficiently stressed perhaps precisely because they raise questions that we think incompatible with their saintly exalted status. These cases show that the special status of 'widows', intended as women without men, included single mothers who, nevertheless, or perhaps especially for this reason, were included in the economy of salvation as shaped by an incarnational theology. These women's breasts, their pangs of birth, and their acceptance of death are all connected in a very powerful picture of the strength of fertile womanhood, giving mothers power over their offspring and clarity of prophetic vision.

### **Meritxell Ferrer and Miria López-Bertan, *More than Food: Breastfeeding and Maternal Milk in the Phoenician and Punic Worlds***

The main aim of this paper is to analyse the role of breast milk in the entire life cycle of the Phoenician and Punic people, from their birth till their death. To this end, we start from the premise that, even though breastfeeding is a feature shared by human beings, the practice of lactation as well as the use of breast milk must be understood as cultural and social phenomena. We approach different practices surrounding breast milk in the Phoenician and Punic societies through the analysis of written, iconographic, and other material dating from a time span covering the first millennium BCE. To encompass the uses of breast milk as a whole, the first part of the paper focuses on the beginning of breastfeeding for newborns, its duration, and the process of weaning. Then, we move to the uses of breast milk in adulthood, considering the employment of breast milk in curative practices, communal rituals and funerary rites. In doing so, we stress the essential role of breast milk from a biological, cultural, and ritual perspective.

**Francesca Fulminante, *Infancy and Childhood in Pre-Roman and Roman Italy (ca. 1000 BCE - 100 CE): Data and Perspectives to Inform Current Policy in Health and Education***

This paper presents the first results of an ongoing project which investigates past child-rearing practices to determine the effects of cultural-political environments and technological changes on these practices, and vice-versa. This is important because, in societies with no use of contraception, breastfeeding duration is linked to fertility, which in turn affects demographic growth and ultimately economic and urban growth. Only archaeology provides large longitudinal datasets to test such links and enable interpretations that can inform current health policies and medical research strategies. By using Pre-Roman and Roman central Italy as a case study, within the wider Mediterranean context, this paper explores changing infant and childhood perceptions and feeding practices in emerging urban societies to create a dialectic by which present experiences can inform our understandings of the past, and the past, with its long trajectory, can help model the future.

**Arch. Gregorios Ioannides, *Mother and Newborn Child: From the 1st Day of Birth to the 40th in the Liturgical Tradition of the Orthodox Church and in the Cypriot Euchological Manuscripts***

Nowadays, the liturgical tradition and practice of the Orthodox Church knows three rites dedicated to the mother and the newborn infant: the 1st, 8th, and 40th day of birth. The miracle of life – conception, pregnancy, and birth – is a timeless world-historical existential event. The birth of a child, the transformation of the couple into ‘parents’, and the acquisition of a descendant is a cause of God’s glorification and thanksgiving. At the same time, a warm request and entreaty is made for divine help in the physical, mental, and spiritual growth and development of the infant but also for the protection of the precious divine gift from above until adulthood. In both the Old and New Testaments, the birth of a child, motherhood, and breastfeeding are top events of human life and are surrounded with great attention, care, affection, and love. This is why important celebrations of the liturgical year and the festive cycle of the Orthodox Church refer to the conception, pregnancy and birth of Christ, Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist. As indicated through its euchological sources, the liturgical tradition of Constantinople knows and testifies to only one prayer dedicated to the newborn infant for the 8th and the 40th day of birth respectively. The Churches of the Middle East testify to a great diversity and liturgical richness with prayers that concern both the mother and the newborn child on the 1st, 8th and 40th day after birth. Our research pays attention on the rites and prayers of the 1st, 8th, and 40th day after birth, as these are preserved in unknown Cypriot euchological manuscripts. This paper’s main objective is to provide an overview of the liturgical evolution of the abovementioned rites and prayers throughout time by using unknown Cypriot liturgical sources and examining the liturgical orientation of Cypriot euchologies. The attempted analysis seeks to highlight the liturgical and theological wealth of the Orthodox Church that embraces the event of birth and its main timeless protagonists: the mother and the newborn child.

**Sandra Jaeggi-Richoz, *Mother, Nurse, Midwife and/or Goddess: Distinguishing Each in Roman Iconography***

Medical treatises and epigraphic sources have been widely used to understand who the Roman nurse was and what was her place in society. Although less exploited, iconography has nevertheless proved to be an equally rich source of interpretation, both complementary and even divergent. Research into Roman sarcophagi demonstrates that it is sometimes difficult to determine who, between the mother and the nurse, was actually the nursing woman – hence raising questions concerning the political and social message relayed via this medium. It is similarly difficult to distinguish between the nurse and

## ABSTRACTS

the midwife figure, particularly in the scenes of the first bath. What is the purpose? Are we facing a simple lack of interest on behalf of the artist or the desire to place the various actors providing food and care to the child on the same level, along with which the Fates, often present in the background, seem to be associated? Or is it our lack of knowledge of the tricks of the trade? Careful analysis of the characters represented on children's sarcophagi, compared with the same types of scenes on other figurative media, such as mosaics and wall paintings, and in texts already provides some answers.

### **Michail Kitsos, *Polarizing the Female Breast and Breastfeeding: Gendered Perceptions of Babylonian Rabbis and Christian Authors in the Late Antique and Middle Byzantine Periods***

In rabbinic literature and thought, female sexuality has been seen as a source of potential danger. In many stories in rabbinic literature, the male sages (rabbis) discuss the sexual temptation that women pose according to them, thus creating a unilateral and biased gendered approach to the female body that for them can lead to ethical corruption. Whereas the topic of female sexuality and the rabbis' response to it has received considerable examination, particular female body parts and their sexual overtones in rabbinic literature have not received adequate attention on their own right. Moreover, they have not been examined or considered vis-à-vis late antique Christian perceptions of the female body. Taking into consideration that rabbinic and Christian authors alike in late antiquity and the middle Byzantine period occupied themselves with the topics of female sexuality and female body as a sexual instrument, this paper examines rabbinic and Christian perceptions of the female breast, and by extension of breastfeeding, as a body part embraced or rejected by women themselves. These perceptions are investigated through rabbinic excerpts from the Babylonian Talmud, the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, and certain (female and female-to-male) ascetics' hagiographies that bear their authors' perceptions of the female breast and its role for the females who bear it and the male authors who refer to it in their texts. By looking at these narratives comparatively, I argue that rabbis and Christian authors had distinct approaches. On the one hand, rabbis desexualized the female breast and elevated breastfeeding and lactation to a fundamental act of the nursing woman which could secure kinship within late antique Jewish family. On the other hand, Christian authors of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and female saints' hagiographies (over-)sexualized the female breast, so much so that in their narratives they employed various ways to suppress it, such as insinuations to mastectomies, as opposed to proto-Christian writings and iconographic representations of Virgin Mary being depicted to expose her breast to feed the infant Jesus. This paper illustrates the complex rabbinic and Christian gendered viewpoints of the female breast and the act of breastfeeding in the late antique and middle Byzantine periods, revealing at the same time the positive representation of the female breast and lactation by late antique rabbis and early Christian authors and artists, and their negativized depiction by late antique Christian authors of spiritually edifying collections, attitudes that suggest a rather polarizing view of women's breast and body.

### **Michiel Meeussen, *Teaching Her a Lesson: Favorinus' Moral-Gynaecological Advice about Breastfeeding***

This paper discusses the speech concerning breastfeeding of the famous philosopher-sophist Favorinus of Arelate (ca. 80–160 CE) to a young Roman *matrona*, in which he uses a number of philosophical-rhetorical tropes to support the thesis that a biological mother should feed her own child and not employ wet-nurses. Favorinus blends a variety of 'popular' medical-scientific theories with traditional moral-philosophical paraenesis, seeking his inspiration in the age-old nature/nurture debate. By applying moral philosophy to a concrete medical dilemma, the discourse falls firmly

within the remit of ancient bioethics. But at the same time, it provides a fascinating insight into the cultural construction of motherhood in Imperial Rome and the related social expectations between mother and child. The aim of this paper is to take a closer look at how Favorinus organises his speech and how he appropriates and adapts traditional views on the matter, and with what intentions in mind.

**Mati Meyer, *Breastfeeding in Byzantine Art: Aspects of Materiality and Realia***

Breastfeeding in Byzantine art has long been studied as a combination of religious and liturgical aspects. Yet the effort to distinguish these aspects from elements of realia shows that there is still ground for research. This paper interrogates the theme of the representation of breastfeeding in Byzantine art and its peculiar iconographic features in conjunction with visual elements of realia and materiality. It argues that the latter elements articulated through a variety of objects and dresses and the ways the iconographic features are joined across times and regions in the Byzantine Empire can broaden our understanding of this topic and tell us about contemporary practices of breastfeeding and infant care.

**Ioannis Mitsios, *Motherhood and Kourotrophy on the Acropolis of Athens: The Case of the Aglaurids***

According to the mythical tradition and the accounts of Apollodorus (3.14.6) and Pausanias (1.18.2), Athena put her son Erichthonios in a chest which she entrusted to the daughters of Kekrops: Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos (also known as the Kekropids or the Aglaurids). The daughters of Kekrops are primarily involved in the episode of birth (and nurture) of Erichthonios and this is their most characteristic and important attribute, well attested both in the literary sources and iconography (with most depictions derive from vase painting). The kourotrophy of Erichthonios has been associated with Arrephoria, a major festival that took place on the Acropolis of Athens and a cult of kourotrophos existed on the cult of Aglauros, on the east slope of the Acropolis. This paper examines the several different kourotrophic aspects of Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos on the Acropolis of Athens by employing an interdisciplinary approach. It takes into consideration the literary, epigraphic, iconographic, and topographic evidence in close relation with the historical and ideological context of the classical period.

**Diana Molkova, *Wet-nurses, their Children, and their Nurslings in Roman Funerary Inscriptions***

Epigraphy has been central to reconstructing experiences of wet-nurses in ancient Rome, providing information on their social status and position within the family and circumstances of their employment. Such details give context to ancient literary sources that present the wet-nurse as responsible not only for physical survival of the child, but also their emotional well-being and intellectual development. This paper uses an underexplored set of about 50 epitaphs that include the word *collactaneus, -a*, ‘milk-sibling’ to provide further context by showing the relationship between the wet-nurse, her charge, and her own children from two perspectives. On the one hand, these epitaphs provide further evidence on the emotional labor wet-nurses were expected to perform. I follow previous research concerning the refusal to take epitaphs dedicated to wet-nurses to their charges as unambiguous representations of genuine warmth and closeness. This emotional labor is evident in the epitaphs where a nursling ‘intrudes’ into a mother-child relationship. Thus, when Primigenius and Clementilla dedicate a marble plaque for their son, they also mention his ‘milk-brother’, Naevus Clemens (*CIL* 6.36193). This example is all the more telling because the boy being commemorated died at 6 years old—long past being breastfed. On the other hand, these epitaphs can

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aid us in further understanding enslaved and freedwomen's agency. Here I use Mahmood's analysis of the feminist subject in the Islamic revival for envisioning agency as not only complying with or resisting norms but also performing, inhabiting, and experiencing them in various ways. An epitaph of L. Plotius Liberalis which names his 'milk-brother' and enumerates the public offices the latter held (*CIL* 6.41112) demonstrates how a wet-nurse's family could use the connection with the slave-owner's or patron's child to lend itself authority.

### **Christodoulos Papavarnavas, *Motherhood and Sainthood: Childbearing and Breastfeeding in Byzantine Martyrdom Narratives***

Martyrdom accounts constitute one of the most extensive corpora of Byzantine literature. Given the fact that these texts mostly delineate stories of male martyrs, it is not surprising that aspects of motherhood, such as pregnancy, pain during childbirth and breastfeeding, connected to the concepts of martyrdom and sainthood remain insufficiently explored by modern scholarship. The goal of this paper is to study the literary dimension of motherhood, especially 'painful motherhood', through a close reading of two early and middle Byzantine accounts that have female martyrs as their protagonists: the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicity* (*BHG* 1482, translated from the Latin original), and the *Passion of Pistis, Elpis, Agape, and Sophia* in both its pre-Metaphrastic (*BHG* 1637z) and Metaphrastic versions (*BHG* 1638). A literary analysis of these martyr narratives shows two seemingly opposed perceptions of motherhood: being a mother as a serious obstacle to martyrdom and sainthood, and being a mother as a prerequisite for achieving holiness. Yet, in both cases, the separation of a mother from her child proves to be a sign of spirituality. Overall, the investigation of these examples from Greek Passions contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the concept of motherhood in a religious context.

### **Maria Parani, *Images of Breastfeeding in Late Antique Art: Form – Context – Function***

Images of women nursing in late Roman and early Byzantine art of the third–seventh centuries CE are admittedly rare, and many, rightly or wrongly, have been identified as representations of the Virgin Mary suckling the baby Jesus in an iconographic type known as the *Galaktotrophousa* or *Virgo Lactans*. Images of other female figures, especially, ordinary women nursing have received comparatively little attention. Indeed, there is no study devoted to the theme of the nursing woman in early Byzantine art exploring in a systematic way its pictorial treatment, the contexts in which it occurs, the semiotic discourse in which it participates, and, not least, the reason why such a common, natural act of caregiving was so rarely represented. Through a survey of extant late Roman and early Byzantine images of breastfeeding, this paper discusses both the contexts into which such images were introduced and the way this activity was represented in terms of postures, gestures, and the interaction between the nursing woman and the suckling child. By focusing on the contextualization of the theme, its pictorial treatment, and the relation of the latter to the realities of breastfeeding at the time as may be reconstructed from written sources and archaeological evidence, this paper aims to further our understanding of the practices, ideas, and perceptions associated with breastfeeding that informed its representation in early Byzantine art.

### **Tim Parkin, *Roman Charity, Breastfeeding, and Questions of Gender: The Story of Pero and Cimon/Micon Revisited***

The exemplary story of the daughter who secretly sustains her father (who is starving to death in prison) by breastfeeding him is one with a very long history, particularly in art, albeit a history that

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has been largely forgotten and neglected in recent decades. The theme has often been dubbed ‘Roman charity’ because of its classical origins – depictions survive from Pompeii as well as from a range of classical authors. I shall briefly survey the theme before turning to what is to me one of its most intriguing aspects: the fact that the father becomes the mother in some versions of the tale. I shall consider the evidence for this and explore the significance of and possible reasons for this gender shift.

### **Maria Pavlou, *Clement of Alexandria and the Breast of God the Father***

Lactation and breastfeeding are notions related almost exclusively to women, either the mother who gives birth or a nurse/surrogate mother who undertakes the newborn’s care. This paper focuses on a passage from Clement of Alexandria, a Christian author of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE, where lactation and breastfeeding are used metaphorically and are associated with the figure of the father. In his book titled *Paedagogus*, Clement depicts the church as a surrogate mother that maintains access to the milk of the Word (Λόγος), which in turn it is suckled from the breast of God the Father. The metaphor is striking, not least because fathers are not typically associated with breastfeeding, but also because the imagery brings to the fore a double breastfeeding. My intention in this paper is to provide a close reading of Clement’s passage trying both to identify similar metaphors in previous authors and to examine if the metaphor of Christ as Milk suckled from the breast of God by the Church was taken up in the same – or in a somewhat different form – by the Church Fathers.

### **Giulia Pedrucci and Carlo Coccoza, *A Cross-disciplinary Approach to Infant Feeding Practices in Roman Britain***

In this paper, we discuss infant feeding practices at the Romano-British site of Bainesse dating to the 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> c. CE. We employed stable isotope analyses on tooth segments to perform a Bayesian diachronic reconstruction of diet with a temporal resolution of c. 6 months. Ancient textual sources plus osteological and archaeological data were employed to offer an overview of Roman infant feeding practices and to contextualize the isotopic results obtained for Bainesse. The latter show that weaning at Bainesse typically started at *ca.* 6 months. However, two female individuals only consumed human milk for the first *ca.* 12 months either from their mother or from a wet-nurse. The cessation of weaning for investigated individuals took place between *ca.* 2 and 5 years old. Also observable in our results is a higher consumption of animal protein after the age of seven. Breastfeeding and weaning practices established by isotopic modelling are consistent with osteological data from a broad sample at the Bainesse cemetery and seem to be in agreement with the recommendations given by Graeco-Roman physicians such as Soranos. The archaeological record shows that Bainesse was a commercial hub positioned near the fort of Cataractonium and along an important trade route in northern England. It is thus likely that the Bainesse inhabitants were exposed to multiple aspects of Roman culture, including medical treatises. We combine osteological and archaeological data with cultural aspects to offer the most exhaustive reading we can gain of the material found in Bainesse.

### **Sarah Shread, *The Suckling Paterfamilias: Gender and Power in Campanian Wall Paintings of Pero and Micon***

A daughter breastfeeding her own father: this paper examines a handful of wall paintings from early imperial Campania that visualise a myth in which breastfeeding is of critical importance and rich in meaning. The paintings depict the story of Pero, a young woman who breastfeeds her father, Micon,

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after he is unjustly sentenced to death by starvation. In literary descriptions, Pero is applauded as the embodiment of feminine piety in her performance of an intrinsically female act: one painting in the Casa di Lucrezio Frontone at Pompeii, too, bears an epigram that explicitly praises Pero's pudor. Modern scholars have largely taken ancient writers at their word and understood Pero as a role model, perhaps to avoid looking more closely at the scene and the potentially perverse implications of an adult man breastfed by his own daughter. In contrast to prior approaches, this paper engages with close visual analysis and an understanding of gender as performance to understand paintings of Pero and Micon and how they speak to ideas about gender and power in Roman culture. The figure of Pero is read in dialogue with iconographic parallels within Roman visual culture more broadly, particularly lactating goddesses such as Isis, Hera, and the 'Dea Nutrix' figure found in funerary contexts across the Empire. In so doing, Pero's body language and seated position align her with lactating deities and elevate her (literally and metaphorically) above her father, who sprawls, infantilised, on the floor. In visual culture, Pero's act of lactation allows the scene to create and explore an inherently gendered reversal of power between the paterfamilias and his dependent, and to subvert traditional conceptions of masculine and feminine within Roman culture.

### **Michelle Solitario, 'Political' Breastfeeding in Callimachus' Hymns**

My paper aims to elucidate the meaning of breastfeeding in Callimachus' Hymns. In this regard two passages are considered. 1) In the Hymn to Zeus, after giving birth to Zeus in Arcadia, Rhea entrusts the baby to the nymph Neda, who carries him in Crete. Here Zeus is suckled by the goat Amalthea, of which this text incidentally offers one of the earliest attestations (v. 48–49). Considering that behind the figure of Zeus lies Ptolemy Philadelphus, the scene of the exceptional suckling of Amalthea's milk becomes part of the celebratory plan for the new Ptolemaic king. The abundant and miraculous milk offered by Amalthea to baby Zeus, who soon gains extraordinary strength (v. 55–56), hints at the abundance provided by the fruitful waters of the Nile, which the Ptolemies managed to regulate in order to fertilise a large portion of previously desert land. 2) Similarly, in the Hymn to Delos the nymph Latona, escaping the wrath of Hera, manages to give birth to Apollo on the small island Asteria and consequently gives it a new name, Delos. After his birth, Apollo sucks the milk from his mother-island, establishing a deep and sacred bond with her (v. 274–276). In this case too, the suckling takes place on an island that, like Crete, belongs to the new Ptolemaic geopolitical world. The sophisticated ideological campaign organised by the new Macedonian rulers in Egypt gave particular impetus to the local figure of the goddess Isis, often represented in the act of suckling her son Horus, who in turn was identified with the reigning ruler (Isis *lactans*). Thus, in Callimachus' Hymns breastfeeding has not only a mere aesthetic appeal: it contributes to designate both the prosperity of the new Egyptian political order and the boundaries of the Ptolemies' predominantly thalassocrat kingdom.

### **Dionysios Stathakopoulos, *The Breast as Locus for Punishment***

At the heart of this paper lies a discrepancy: in edifying religious texts (such as apocrypha, for example) and the images that sprung from them (attested, perhaps, as early as the ninth century) there are numerous instances in which women are punished in the afterlife for various sins by having torments inflicted on their breasts. The earliest textual evidence comes from the Apocalypse of Elijah, a first-century Jewish apocryphon, a fragment of which is preserved in an eighth-century Latin manuscript containing the Epistle of Pseudo-Titus. It is seen as the oldest of the 'tours of Hell' genre. In this text, we read that '[i]f some women are punished with torment in their breasts, then these are

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women who for sport have surrendered their own bodies to men'. In another text, the Greek *Apocalypse of Esdras*, dated roughly between the second and the ninth centuries, there is the following passage: 'And I saw a woman hanging, and four wild beasts sucking her breasts. And the angels said to me: She grudged to give her milk, but even threw her infants into the rivers.' With the exception of a law from the code of Hammurabi, no Greek, Roman, or Byzantine legal texts record such punishments for any crimes. This suggests a tension around the creation of this universe of punishments: if they do not spring – or at least draw some distant inspiration – from a legal tradition, then their invention needs to be explored. If the textual record is sparse, the same cannot be said of the images that this tradition spawned. The earliest case is from the Yılanlı Kilise, at the Ihlara valley in Cappadocia and has been dated between the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> c.. It features a woman whose breasts are bitten by two serpents and the inscription: 'She who turns away from the infants'. The bulk of the surviving pictorial evidence, however, comes from the late Middle Ages, from the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> c. The lion's share of the surviving depictions comes from Crete and to a lesser extent Cyprus. All images discussed feature women whose breasts are bitten by serpents. The most common scenes are of women who refused to nurse and harlots, but slanderers, gossipers, and witches are also occasionally depicted with the same punishment. The textual evidence is only lightly connected to the images at hand – especially when it comes to the torments inflicted on female breasts – and this throws open a further set of questions that this study explores.

### **Laurence Totelin, *Lactation Cessation in the Early Byzantine Period***

Ancient medical texts contain well-known advice on how to breastfeed and how to choose a wet-nurse. Less noted is the advice on how to make the milk dry up and how to deal with engorgement and other symptoms associated with lactation cessation. In this paper, I examine recipes and regimens meant to help women stop breastfeeding, which are to be found for instance in the works of pseudo-Galen, Oribasios, Aetios of Amida, Alexander of Tralles and Paul of Aegina, as well as the medical collection preserved under the name of Metrodora. I study the symbolism of some of the ingredients used in those treatments. I also explore the cultural expectations that are implicit in this advice. Thus, recipes to stop breastfeeding are sometimes followed by tips to keep the breasts pert, perhaps implying concerns over the perceived physical effects of breastfeeding. On the other hand, advice regarding lactation cessation also points to worries about women whose infants had died and their suffering.

### **Niki Tsironi, *Milk and Blood: The Association of the Virgin Lactans with the Passion***

In this paper, I intend to look at the use of milk and blood in the Eucharist and to explore the association of the two with reference to the growing cult of the Virgin in the Eastern Mediterranean during the first Christian centuries. Furthermore, I explore the association of the Virgin *Lactans* with reference to the background of the cult of female deities in the specific geographical area and more specifically the cult of Isis that played significant role in the iconography of the Virgin *Lactans*. The evolution of the topic of the Crucifixion in Byzantine literature and art gives us an opportunity to delve into the complex association between birth and death and hence between milk and blood. The two pivotal moments in a person's life, birth, and death, acquire cosmological importance with reference to the person of Christ and the role of Mary in the soteriological plan. Mary's breast thus becomes a metonymy for the affirmation of Christ's incarnation and his sacrifice on the cross.

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**ΔΙΕΘΝΕΣ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟ**

**LACTATING BREASTS ΓΑΛΑΚΤΟΦΟΡΟΙ ΜΑΣΤΟΙ**  
**Motherhood and Breastfeeding Μητρότητα και Θηλασμός σε**  
**in Antiquity and Byzantium Αρχαιότητα και Βυζάντιο**

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