

Cambridge Elements

Elements on Women in the History of Philosophy
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EARLY CHRISTIAN WOMEN

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Early Christian Women

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Abstract: In this Element, the author argues that genre deeply affects how early Christian female philosophers are characterized across different works. The included case studies are three women who feature in both narrative and dialogic texts: Thecla, Macrina the Younger, and Monica. Based on these examples, the author demonstrates that the narrative sources tend to eschew secular education, while the dialogic sources are open to displays of secular knowledge. Philosophy was seen not only as a way of life but sometimes also as a mode of educated argumentation. The author further argues that these female philosophers were held up in their femininity as models for imitation by both women and men.

Keywords: ancient female philosophers, early Christian women, Thecla, Macrina, Monica

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Contents

1	Introduction: Lady Philosophy and Real Female Philosophers	1
2	Thecla, "Second to None in Philosophy and the Liberal Arts" (Meth. <i>Symp.</i> 8.170)	7
3	Macrina the Younger, "Who Raised Herself to the Furthest Limit of Human Virtue through Philosophy" (Greg. Nyss. <i>Vit. Macr.</i> 1.27–29)	25
4	Monica, Who "Grasped the Very Citadel of Philosophy" (Aug. <i>De Beat. Vit.</i> 2.10)	41
5	Conclusion	57
	List of Abbreviations	60
	References	61