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THE SINFUL WOMAN AS AN EXAMPLE OF *METANOIA* IN THE BYZANTINE POETRY

SUMMARY: A story about the sinful woman is told in the Gospel, where she is an example of deep repentance. The Byzantine authors often used this example in their poetic and homiletic works. In this article I juxtapose three genres of Byzantine poetry and I compare the literary motif of the sinful woman which appears in each of them. I choose the most representative genres of Byzantine poetry, as kontakion, kanon and troparion (or sticheron). In the first part I examine Romanos' kontakion *On the sinful woman*, in the second one – Andrew of Crete's the *Megas Kanon* and in the last part – Kassia's troparion, commonly called *On Mary Magdalene*. The works are connected by the common theme, but they are different in respect of the form and the literary genre. In my paper I try to show how the same example of the Gospel parable is used in different ways in literary works.

KEYWORDS: Romanos the Melodist, Andrew of Crete, Kassia the Nun, kontakion, kanon, troparion, *metanoia*, the sinful woman

The aim of my article is the analysis of the "sinful woman" motif appearing in three various genres of Byzantine liturgical poetry: in Romanos the Melodist's kontakion, in Andrew of Crete's kanon and in Kassia the Nun's troparion. The sinful woman is the heroine of some Gospel parables, the most popular of which is that in the Luke 7,37. In the literature

of the first centuries of Christianity, the harlot with the Prodigal Son (Luke 15,11-32) and the Publican (Luke 18,9-14) became a symbol of repentance and conversion, which is described as *metanoia* (Catafygiotu Topping 1981: 205). A. Tripolitis notes the special popularity of the harlot's history : *Her story has been the topic of countless Lenten sermons and hymns of the Eastern Church since the fourth century. Numerous preachers and hymnographers have elaborated Luke's account* (Tripolitis 1992: 76). Romanos belongs to those hymnographers and preachers who developed the topic of the convert woman, as well as Kassia whose troparion devoted to the same figure is sung as a penitential hymn during the morning worship (*ortros*) on Holy Wednesday. From Andrew of Crete's works I have selected, obviously enough, the *Great Kanon*, also sung during Lent, because its main theme is atonement.

Although each of these works have been discussed by scholars, there have not been many attempts, so far, to look comprehensively into their common motif of the sinful woman and repentance from the comparative point of view.[1] Indeed, J. H. Barkhuizen, while commenting Romanos' kontakion, talks about the subsequent development of the subject by Kassia (Barkhuizen 1990: 40). In turn, E. Catafygiotu-Topping and A. R. Dyck indicate that Kassia could refer to the older poet, they both also mention the use of the plot of a harlot by Andrew of Crete (Catafygiotu-Topping 1981: 206; Dyck 1986: 65-66). However, in researches on Byzantine hymnography there has been no systematic treatment of the issue – so I am going to focus on how the Gospel theme was transformed in the different literary genres and to examine the way the Byzantine authors from the 6th to the 9th century speak about *metanoia*.

1. THE KONTAKION

A kontakion is considered the most elaborate from the Byzantine poetic forms, its emergence and flowering are associated with the name

[1] An analysis and a commentary of the kontakion, see Barkhuizen 1990; Grosdidier de Matons 1965: 13-43. There are many articles and essays about Kassia's troparion, but the least developed in regard to literary issues is the *Great Kanon* and those works are from the middle of the last century (see References).

of Romanos the Melodist, the poet and composer of the 6th century. It was a poetic sermon beginning with *prooimion*, followed by a refrain and stanzas arranged in an acrostic (in the number of 18-32).[2] In its contents based on some biblical story or memory of saints or martyrs; it was performed during the liturgy after the reading of the Gospel, hence its preaching function, despite the preponderance of clearly poetic and musical features.

The very fact that an author uses a story or a description of the events from the Gospel suggests that the poetic form will gain the character of the epic, and the fundamental warp of mentioned above Romanos' work is a parable of the Gospel of Luke (7,36-50). The Evangelist tells the story of Jesus' visit to the house of Simon the Pharisee and the harlot's arrival who, weeping, washed Jesus' feet, anointed them, and wiped with her hair. As biblical commentaries give, the woman should not be identified with Mary Magdalene,[3] although many authors of papers automatically just associate this heroine.[4] Her name does not appear in the works in question – a woman there is determined πόρνη (or more gently περιπεσοῦσα γυνή), in the Gospel – ἁμαρτωλος γυνή.

Romanos the Melodist in the first *prooimion* (the kontakion has two *prooimia*) recalls the figure of the harlot and familiarizes the reader (or listener – the participant of the liturgy) with the subject of conversion and repentance, which will be developed later in the work:

῾Ο πόρνην καλέσας θυγατέραν, Χριστὲ ὁ Θεός,
υἱο ν μετανοίας κἀμὲ ἀναδείξας,
δέομαι, ῥῦσαί με τοῦ βορβόρου τῶν ἔργων μου.[5]

[2] Bibliography concerning a kontakion, see Wellesz 2006; Grosdidier de Matons 1977; Grosdidier de Matons 1980-1981: 31-43.

[3] Biblia Tysiąclecia 2005: 1364: *Mary Magdalene was identified with the converted sinner only since the sixth century, and only in the West*, translation A.H. (the note to Luc. 7,37). This resulted from the fact that Pope Gregory the Great (540-604) officially decided that Maria Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha and Lazarus) and the sinner in Luc. (7,36-50) are one and the same woman. The Russian Orthodox Church has maintained a distinction between them and honour them on different days (I quote from Knapp 1999: 599). See too Dyck 1986: 66-67, note 9.

[4] For example Kazdhan 1999: 317ff.

[5] All quotations according to the edition SCh.

In the second *prooimion* the author allows the woman to speak on her own behalf:

Πῶς σοι ἀτενίσω τοῖς ὄμμασιν
ἡ πάντας ἀπατῶσα τοῖς νεύμασιν;

After the initial stanzas containing the narrator's comments on the harlot, her spiritual transformation, and his own sinfulness, the author of the kontakion adds a parable of the multiplication of the loaves – a metaphor of bread enriches the story of the woman's profound conversion. From the 4th stanza on her monologue begins, which later turns into a seeming dialogue, she. In the beginning the woman seemingly returns to Christ, but it is happening only in her imagination. Metaphors, as is often in the case of Mary Magdalene and the heroine of this Gospel episode, depict the scene in an erotic way has the erotic sense, but, with play on words, and stylistic devices like *chiasmos*, mean pure love[6] for God and repentance:

ἀλλοιοῦμαι πρὸς το ν πόθον τοῦ ποθητοῦ,
καὶ ὡς θέλει φιληθῆναι, οὕτω φιλῶ τὸν ἐραστήν μου... (5,5-6).[7]

Another example is calling the house of a Pharisee, in which the meeting takes place, by the word θάλαμος (12,3) – it raises an obvious association with the wedding, which on the one hand leaves the reader still in the realm of erotic associations, but also – if to take into account the rich tradition, in Christian writings, of naming Christ the Bridegroom[8] and offering someone's life to Him – may suggest just this kind of "marriage".

In several stanzas the characters of the Old Testament are cited: Elijah, Anna and Samuel – Anna's childlessness is compared to infertility

[6] Kazhdan 1999b: 318: *Romanos follows the plot of the Gospel, contrasting Mary with Simon the Pharisee and proclaming true love higher than formal veneration*. Kazhdan referring to Dyck 1986: 66.

[7] About the problems of grammar in this passage, see Barkhuizen 1990: 44ff.

[8] Compare the Methodius' of Olympus *Symposion*, especially the ending of the treaty or *Thecla's Hymn* (about influences of Methodius on Romanos I have written in the article 'Methodius of Olympus – one of the Greek Sources of Kontakia by Romanos the Melodist' (Heszen 2013)).

of a soul before conversion; David and Mikal – as a parallel between the love of the king's daughter, who gave up everything for the poor shepherd, and the love for "the descendant David": τὸν ἐκ Δαυὶδ ποθῶ καὶ στέργω (11,6), because of whom the heroine of the kontakion despises unjustly acquired wealth: τὸν ἄδικον πλοῦτον ὑπερορῶ (11,9). As we shall see in subsequent works analysed here, this kind of juxtaposition between the figures of both Testaments are common and important in the composition of liturgical songs and their transmission – the characters of the Old one are a prefiguration, an exemplification, a model or a prototype for the characters or the events of the New Testament[9] (this is, for instance, Rahab in the 7th stanza[10]). In the subject undertaken by Romanos rhetoric also plays an important role – these parallels are emphasized by euphonic and semantic combinations:

ὡς Σαμουὴλ τῆς ἀτέκνου, Ἐμμανουὴλ τῆς ἀνάνδρου,
τῆς στείρας ἦρες ὄνειδος... (8,9)

Another way of enriching the content or rhetorical "beautification" of the work is being free and creative in expanding certain topics of the New Testament. One example of it is the harlot's dialogue with the perfume seller (strophes 9-11), which operates on the edge of erotic and spiritual ἀγάπη, and is an opportunity for the woman to provide insights regarding her sinful past, contrasted with new, now pure love. The response to the seller's question, who deserves such a precious oil, is a confession of faith in the divinity of the beloved one: υἱὸς θεοῦ καὶ θεός (11,2).

The 12th stanza begins with a description of the "scene" in Simon the Pharisee's house, and the dialogue between him and Jesus follows, preceded by an internal monologue of Simon, which is consistent with the message of the Gospel. The sight of the harlot bending over the Lord, washing his feet with precious oil, and asking forgiveness (the refrain includes her words), outrages the host and induces him to doubt the truth of the Messiah:

[9] This method originates from Melito of Sardis – there is a known autothematic part of his homily *Peri Pascha* (35-45) which explains the essence of such statements: the Old Testament as a prefiguration and model (τύπος) of The New one. The connections between Romanos and Melito, see Wellesz 2006: 207ff.

[10] See Josh. 2,6-25.

ὴν ἕκαστος ἡμῶν οἶδεν,
οὗτος καὶ οὐκ ἔγνω· εἰ ἦν γὰρ προφήτης, ἐγίνωσκεν (13,3-4).[11]

Christ's answer is much more extensive than in the Gospel, the parable of the debtors is another opportunity for the Byzantine poet to weave many stylistic and rhetorical figures in his work, such as play on words (ὁ χρήσας ἐχαρίσατο ὅ τι ἐχρήσατο, 14,8),[12] antitheses and original comparisons, for example the harlot as the Church (ἴδε τη ν πόρνην η ν βλέπεις καθάπερ τη ν ἐκκλησίαν:, 17,9-10). The humility and repentance of the convert woman gain here a universal dimension, which is not accidental in the kontakion structure – in the penultimate stanza Romanos often goes from the story to general comment, what relates to the metatextual reality.

The sinful woman motif is not only an explanation of the readings from the Scripture, though it is suggested by the definition of the kontakion as a poetic sermon, but as an extensive story it is a reason for reflection, comments, requests or lamentations and entreaties to save and wash out "the dirt of sins" (τοῦ βορβόρου τῶν ἔργων) as in the words of the refrain, spoken by many characters occurring in the work.

The Gospel description of the event that took place in Simon the Pharisee's house takes Romanos over fifteen stanzas ten verses each, as it was expanded by elements such as the dialogue between the woman and the perfume seller, her monologues rich in lamentations, and Jesus' words addressed to Simon are also longer and extended compared with the original. I would like to draw attention to the intrinsic feature of this passage, which is dialogue: we have harlot's conversation with the perfume seller, Simon the Pharisee's conversation with Jesus, and Christ's extensive speech about debtors also includes elements of the dialogue. So this story is a drama – not only a description of events, but an animated relationship in which people "perform" a lot of speaking. Often a dialogue takes a "stepped" form: one of the characters says "you see that she is talking" and then quotes her words in *oratio indirecta*, and

[11] See Barkhuizen's commentary (Barkhuizen 1990: 48).

[12] Compare: *an effective play on words absent from the biblical model* (Barkhuizen 1990: 49).

these are usually the words of the refrain.[13] Likewise, there are extensive internal monologues that R. J. Schork includes in dramatic parts.[14]

Also J. H. Barkhuizen writes about the scenic nature of the kontakion, though I cannot agree with the division of this work he proposed:

> From the close strophe δ' up to the beginning of ιβ' the poet has created two scenes […]. These two scenes are respectively (i) an interior monologue in which the harlot expresses both her remorse for her past life and her desire for a new life; and (ii) a scene in which she is engaged in a dialogue with the perfume seller (Barkhuizen 1990: 34).

As it is shown in the above analysis, in the Pharisee's house the scene also takes place: while the woman as a talking character is in the background, there are other characters – Simon and Jesus. J. H. Barkhuizen puts this last scene in the so-called "narrative part" (Barkhuizen 1990: 35) but, in my opinion, due to the form of a dialogue that occurs here it must be defined as a dramatic part as well. To paraphrase the scholar's sentence concerning Romanos' kontakion *On Judas*, that *the narrator, by means of the narrative apostrophe, creates a definite dramatic effect* (Barkhuizen 1986: 26), I would say the dramatic dimension was obtained in the kontakion in question by means of imitating the action on stage and introducing a living dialogue.

A vast majority of Romanos' kontakia have a similar central part constructed by dialogues, in which the words of the refrain are woven into expressions of individual characters in a very ingenious way. Here the words "from dirt of my actions" followed by "salvage", "save", "wash", "release" are expressed successively by the narrator, the woman, and Simon. The refrain with the preceding verses forms a semantic-syntactic whole, and unites all occurring characters with one thought – asking for forgiveness of sins, which is directly linked to the symbolism of

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[13] […] η ν βλέπεις
κλαυθμῷ βοῶσαν· Κύριε, λύτροσαί με*
τοῦ βορβόρου τῶν ἔργων μου (13,9-11).

*The Oxford edition has: δέσποτα, ἔγειρόν με (according to the manuscript *Patmiacus 213*).

[14] Schork 1966: 277: *Another technique employed by Romanos to introduce imaginative elaborations of scriptural passages is the interior monologue*.

kontakion's main heroine – the converted harlot. In addition, the refrain keeps the kontakion in a poetic convention – a simple narrative epic is devoid of this element, while the refrain gives it just a poetic tone.

2. THE KANON

Kontakions, probably for some liturgical reasons – the demands from the part of church authorities to return to the traditional considerations and comments to the Scriptures, and to limit the singing[15] – have already been forced out in the 7th century by the canons. Of the most important artists of the latter one can indicate Cosmas of Jerusalem, John Damascene, and Andrew of Crete – their creative work falls on the 7th and 8th centuries. The kanon is an even more extended poetic form containing, admittedly, some features of kontakion, but usually consisting of nine songs (odes), a few or a dozen stanzas each. This structure of the chants cycle derives from the nine canticles of the Scriptures, which are part of the Liturgy of the Hours (Tripolitis 1992: xvii), so each separate ode should theoretically refer to the biblical canticles. Later authors have not been following either a fixed number of odes (hence *triodia*, *tetraodia* etc.) or their thematic links with the biblical original, however they have retained the songs' laudatory tone. Although A. Kazhdan defines a kanon as a "poetic sermon" (Kazhdan 1999: 47), in fact it never replaced the sermon and did not perform the function of homiletic, it also had another place in the liturgy – morning service (*ortros*), evening (*apodeipnon*) or night (*mesoniktikon*) consisting principally of singing hymns. The difference between a kontakion and a kanon is musical, as E. Wellesz notes (Wellesz 2006: 225), but I think that the differences are much greater on the level of literary text and structure.

J. Hennig describes the *Megas Kanon* of Andrew of Crete as "litanic prayer" and the largest of the religious works of poetry in the Middle Ages (along with Irish poem *"Félire" of Oengus the Culdee*) (Hennig 1963: 289). The *Kanon* is a collection of songs, each of which may have

[15] Wellesz (2006: 227) referring to the canons of the Council *in Trullo* (692).

a slightly different structure and length – the nexus connecting all songs is the subject: the repentance, the sorrow over sin, asking for mercy and salvation of the soul. These motifs run through all the odes, so that there are variations on the theme of repentance, and as it happens in the piece of music of the same name ("canon"), the subject always comes back, but is realized in various ways. Again, I quote A. Kazhdan, who writes that *Andrew is iterative in the* Megas Kanon*, returning again and again to the same elements (sin, salvation, repentance, soul, tears, and so forth)* (Kazhdan 1999: 51).

The *hirmos*[16] of the Ode I refers to the book of Exodus 15,2, other troparia along with the previous one form twenty four stanzas. The first three are of preliminary nature – they are a laudation addressed to God, and a command to the own soul to be confessed and repented. From the 4th to 10th stanza the narrator recalls his offences (this is actually like a confession), comparing himself to Eve, Adam, Cain, but also evokes Abel as a contradictory *exemplum*, example not imitated. In subsequent stanzas (10-24) there are apostrophes to God and a prayer asking for mercy, and between them regret is woven for own sinfulness. Here we have several common themes of the sinful woman from Romanos' kontakion, for example the soul who squanders wealth and then, "hungry", cries out for mercy, is the equivalent of the kontakion's last stanza. In several strophes the refrain appears (in the second part of the ode after each of them), but is not used as regularly and as consequently as in the predecessor – in fact there are several repetitions used alternately:

ὡς εὔσπλαγχνός μοι δὸς παραπτωμάτων ἄφεσιν

or

Σῶτερ, σῶσόν με

or else

σύ με οἰκτειρον.

[16] The hirmos is a model strophe with regard for rhythm, but also it constitutes a thematic link between the biblical song, what the kanon is derived from, and the subsequent stanzas.

The *Great Kanon* strophes can be divided into two thematic groups: one part is the author's apostrophes to his own soul, calling for repentance, confession of his sinful life and petitions to God for mercy, and the second part, a great abundance of examples, in the vast majority of the Old Testament, presented as a series of sinners types on the one hand, penitents or converts on the other. I cannot agree with the opinion of J. Hennig that the *Great Kanon* is nine odes interspersed with verses that have no "real sequence of thought" (Hennig 1963: 289), with the exception of chronology in relation to characters of the Scriptures. There are a lot of examples and I think the layout is very well thought--through. First, the chronology binds to the arrangement of prototypes of the kanon or biblical canticles, which are *hirmoi* of the separate ode, and those (biblical canticles) were more or less sung according to the sequence of the Old Testament books. This in turn implies recalling examples of the subsequent Old Testament, which is a kind of presentation of salvation history as the history of individual sins, failures, and trials of rising out of fall, and finally conversion by the grace of God. Secondly, interrupting the continuity of the examples is not so much lack of a sequencing thought, but a rhetorical treatment aimed at diversifying the stories and avoiding monotony of so long the work.

The way in which examples are introduced and the principle of composition are commented on by Andrew of Crete himself in the Ode VIII, when in the 12th troparion he makes autothematic reflection on the characters from the Old Testament:

> Τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης ἅπαντας παρήγαγόν σοι, ψυχή,
> πρὸς ὑπογραμμόν· μίμησαι τῶν δικαίων τὰς φιλοθέους πράξεις·
> ἔκφυγε δὲ πάλιν τῶν πονηρῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας.

It is his summary and also indication that in giving examples, except that these are a pattern to follow in repentance and also warning against a crime of sin, he was guided by chronology. This is a look at the whole history in terms of sinfulness of the human soul and attempts at conversion, and the continuous admonition his soul, as the most sinful.

In the examples taken from the Old Testament, presented chronologically, sometimes there are some motives of the New one as a supplement, for example in the Ode III the wedding feast and a closed chamber

(Paprocki 2000: 109, note 171) are mentioned, a couple of times Peter is invoked, but the theme constantly appearing is a prostitute as an example of special penance. Already in the Ode II the harlot with the story of the Gospel (Luc. 7,37) appears, as well as in predecessor's work, not by name, but as a πόρνη:

Τὰ δάκρυα τὰ τῆς πόρνης, οἰκτίρμων, κἀγω προβάλλομαι·
῾Ιλάσθητί μοι, Σῶτερ... (the 5th trop.)

And below:

῾Ημάρτηκα· ὥσπερ ἡ πόρνη βοῶ σοι·
Μόνος ἡμάρτηκά σοι· ὡς μῦρον δέχου, Σῶτερ,
Κἀμοῦ τὰ δάκρυα (the 22nd trop.)

Andrew of Crete, however, does not develop the episode, does not make any bigger image of that, the fallen woman stands here in a line next to other characters of the Old and New Testaments mentioned by the poet, and serving as *exempla* of the sin, like Cain and Lamech, or of conversion – the Publican. Also, as in the Ode I, positive examples are referred here, whose soul is not conformed to: Enosh, Enoch, Noah. The narrator dwells on his sinfulness, wasting God's gift which was a pure soul, devotion to evil, and it interweaves with repentance, the desire to repent (μετάνοια), and asking for forgiveness. As J. Hennig notes, references to the characters opposite to the saints are rare in the prayers – the *Great Kanon* differs from this pattern, because it contains much more negative examples than those worthy of imitation.

The harlot is mentioned a few times, or as being "the better" of his sinful soul:

῞Ημαρτον ὡς οὐχ ἥμαρτε πόρνη, καὶ ἠνόμησα ὡς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐπὶ γῆς (VII, 17),

or as a comparison of his complaint and remorse to her tears and oils:

δακρύω ὡς ἡ πόρνη...
Τὸ τῶν δακρύων, Σῶτερ, ἀλάβαστρον, ὡς μύρον κατακενῶ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς·
κράζω σοι ὡς ἡ πόρνη... (VIII, 14 and 17).

And in the last Ode (IX) the motif of this heroine returns once again, when calling prostitutes and scoundrels to repentance (the 6th trop.) is

mentioned, when the harlot and the publican are presented as converted (the 16th trop.) or again, when the author regrets that his soul did not imitate the penance of the fallen woman (the 18th trop.). I do not hesitate to say that the harlot is the guiding thread in the *Kanon* – ἡ πόρνη is outside the chronology, beyond the linear representation of examples, from the beginning is held up as a model of *metanoia*, that soul should emulate in his conversion and because the author returns to her every time he calls his soul to repentance.

3. The troparion/sticheron

In addition to these two genres of the liturgical poetry troparia were created, composed to celebrate various feasts of the liturgical year either in honour of the saints or martyrs, having a form similar to the traditional hymns of praise. Troparion is considered to be the earliest form of Greek liturgical poetry, it is usually short, containing over a dozen verses[17], sometimes a few stanzas of a lyrical character. A. Tripolitis calls this types *independent short laudatory hymns with their own melodies* […] *written for specific feasts of saints or important religious holidays* (Tripolitis 1992: xvii). Kassia, a poetess and nun who lived in the 9th century, is the author of this kind of beautiful and theologically deep hymns. She was probably also, as Romanos, the composer for her songs (Tillyard 1911: *passim*).[18] Tradition placed Kassia's troparaia in *menologia*, a collection of liturgical hymns for each day of the month, and her literary legacy also includes the kanons and non-liturgical works, such as gnomes and maxims.[19]

In the edition of Kassia's works the commentator defines the hymn Κύριε, ἡ ἐν πολλαῖς ἁμαρτίαις as "the penitential hymn on Mary

[17] In addition to the generic name *troparion* also functions *sticheron*, which better reflects the structure of the work.

[18] The study is still very much appreciated in research on Byzantine music.

[19] I'm using here the term "non-liturgical" and not "secular" according to Silvas (2006: 22), not as most researchers do, because I agree with her opinion that this part of the Kassia's *ouevre* also refers to matters religious, spiritual, ideological (iconoclasm), it was not only applied in the liturgy, as troparia or kanons.

Magdalene" (Tripolitis 1992: 76), although her name does not appear in the work, just as it does not appear in Romanos the Melodist and Andrew of Crete. In the troparion the woman is described with words περιπεσοῦσα γυνή. As E. Catafygiotu-Topping and A. M. Silvas underline, only in Kassia this character is not named directly πόρνη (Catafygiotu-Topping 1981: 207; Catafygiotu-Topping 1982: 203ff.; Silvas 2006: 31) and that is why the hymn stands out against other works taking up the subject of a harlot, but as we shall see below, self--esteem of the woman clearly indicates the nature of her actions.

The hymn begins with an apostrophe to Jesus Christ and simultaneous introduction of the sinful woman topic, that once, in a very condensed form, summarizes the essence of all events described in the Gospel:

Κύριε, ἡ ἐν πολλαῖς ἁμαρτίαις
περιπεσοῦσα γυνη,
τὴν σὴν αἰσθομένη Θεότητα,
μυροφόρου ἀναλαβοῦσα τάξιν...

The first verse refers to the Gospel of Luke yet another way, namely by the juxtaposition of similarly-sounding words: καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ ἥτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἁμαρτωλός... (Luc. 7,37; underl. by A. H.) and ἡ ἐν πολλαῖς ἁμαρτίαις (Kassia). The author uses a similarity in the sound of the pronoun and the article (ἥτις and ἡ), repeats the preposition ἐν, collates different parts of speech, such as noun and numerical adjective (πόλει and πολλαῖς), likeness of which is, after all, accidental, not related to the etymology, and finally, determinates the sin and the sinner by operating on the same core. This is a very interesting kind of literary reminiscences – the allusion on the level of sound, the artistic device indicates the extraordinary sensitivity of the poetess to language and her sense of the wording of verbal expression (after all she was a composer!). The aim of this is not only to identify the source of her work's content, but also a subtle change in the image of woman who will be discussed – the word of Luke ἁμαρτωλός is stronger than Kassia's; it points to the person (*and there was a woman in the city who was a sinner*[20]), whereas Kassia

[20] The translation from http://www.bibleing.com/versions/nasb/nasb_luke07.htm (accessed Sept. 29, 2014).

alleviates this assessment using expression consisting of an adjective and a noun not specifying explicitly (and therefore evaluating) the person, but her guilt, which is the cause of the collapse (περιπεσοῦσα). So, the entire pronunciation of Kassia's work seeks to ensure that the image of the harlot from the Gospel was more gentle (no terms like πόρνη), but it does not mean that *metanoia* in her case is smaller.

I will return to the question of Mary Magdalene, because words of the 4th verse, however, allow her to be associated with the heroine of the troparion – there is a mention of carrying oils to the tomb of Jesus. It was noted that Kassia not only equates two women with one another, but gives a honourable role to her character: *from the start of the hymn, the point is made (by the narrator of the hymn) that this* fallen *woman has been* raised up *and* elevated *to the position of myrrh-bearer* (Knapp 1999: 600) and *by means of three words,* μυροφόρου ἀναλαβοῦσα τάξιν*, the nun elevates the sinner to sanctity* (Catafygiotu-Topping 1981: 207).[21] The contrast between being "fallen" and "elevated" is very well reflected by two participles περιπεσοῦσα and ἀναλαβοῦσα, whose grammar endings sound the same, and prefixes (περι- and ανα-) represent the opposites: as if "surroundings by sins" and "upward movement".[22] Between them there is another participle – αἰσθομένη, crucial in the context of the whole hymn, because it indicates that God has played the most important role in her transformation.

By the word λέγουσα the poet introduces the speech of fallen woman: she confesses her sins by means of pictorial metaphors of the dark moonless night that engulfed her, and such naming acts meaningfully suggests the sexual sphere: οἶστρος ἀκολασίας, ἔρως τῆς ἁμαρτίας. The physical darkness of night becomes a starting point to express the darkness of the soul dominated by sin. Then the woman heartily asks the Savior to adopt her tears, to bend down to her regret, and as E. Catafygiotou-Topping writes, the following are three petitions (Catafygiotu-Topping 1981: 208; Catafygiotu-Topping 1982: 207f.) – requests of the sinner returning to:

[21] Compare Dyck's discussion with the identification of the woman (Dyck 1986: 66ff., note 9) and Tsironis' opinion (Tsironis 2003: 142ff.).

[22] The significance of the participle περιπεσοῦσα is noted by Catafygiotu-Topping (1982: 204, note 27).

1. God the Creator of the Universe (δέξαι μου τὰς πηγὰς τῶν δακρύων);
2. God who humbled himself and took on the human body – there occurs as if an alignment of the person asking and the recipient, the humiliated sinner and self-emptying God-man (κάμφθητί μοι πρὸς τοὺς στεναγμοὺς τῆς καρδίας);
3. the Savior of souls, whereby the latter "petition" formally belongs to the prayer part of the hymn (μὴμε τὴν σὴν δούλην παρίδῃς).

These three petitions give the song a very emotional, personal, and lyrical character. K. Simić writes about Kassia's dependence on Romanos in some of the songs (Simić 2011: 19) – as far as it cannot be completely negated also in this case, in my opinion the extensive request differs Kassia's troparion from Romanos' work, which are similar in the content. While in the kontakion the characters engage in dialogue with each other and even in a prayer addressed to God – the request for deliverance from sin (i.e. the refrain) is often woven into a conversation, here the heroine returns directly to God.

The scene of kissing and anointing the feet with oil was described by the woman herself as an announcement of what she will do. *She looks to the future* (Catafygiotu-Topping 1982: 208), otherwise than in the Gospel or in Romanos, where the scene "is happening". At the price of dramatization Kassia, however, deepens the description of inner emotions and feelings, the promise made to Jesus becomes a lyrical declaration of love given to the beloved. The words:

Καταφιλήσω τοὺς ἀχράντους σου πόδας,
ἀποσμήξω τούτους δὲ πάλιν
τοῖς τῆς κεφαλῆς μου βοστρύχοις...

fall within the scope of semantics of love (I remember a similar way of expressing in Romanos), but these are opposed to sins confessed above, by contrast of fatal and pure love. . Although these semantic fields somehow overlap (*eros*, the lust, kissing), the context and sequence of confessions show exactly repentance (*metanoia*).[23]

[23] Compare Tsironis 2003: 144: *It is remarkable how tightly the body is linked to the metanoia, which is the changing of mind and the way in which the use and abuse of the body are insinuated in the context of sin and salvation through the personal relationship of the woman – and hence of every believer – with Christ.*

The Lord's feet are in turn a link between the story of a sinful woman and an episode of the Book of Genesis, when Eve, having heard the steps of God, hid from fear and shame. Eve, as it has been seen in the *Great Kanon*, is a popular example of Lent, so it is not surprising that she was evoked by Kassia, though some scholars consider this intercalation as artificial and destructive for composition of the work (Tillyard 1911: 432; Dyck 1986: 71f.). In my opinion, as in Romanos, pronunciation of one story of Scripture is strengthened and enriched by another – the parallel of the harlot and Eve is completely natural and justified. Kassia, as we have seen, uses different kinds of contrasts and juxtapositions: Eve hid because of the sound of God's feet, and Kassia's heroine is just coming close to those feet. Eve from her holiness fell into a sin, the sinful woman from the collapse rises to sainthood.

The whole work has thirty one verses, the form is extremely condensed with very rich content. The reader/listener is introduced into subject in the preface, then by means of carefully selected metaphors an inner picture of the woman is presented to him. This is, however, not a narrative summarizing or expanding the episode from the Gospel; all information about the event and the state of the woman's soul are shown briefly, but – I emphasize – very clearly, by presentation of herself, her monologue full of regret, remorse, and returns to the merciful God. The fact that she is kissing and wiping the feet with her hair is expressed by verbs in the first person. The exclamation "οἴμοι" introduced in her speech sets the woman obviously in a series of tragic heroines, that on Athenian stage were talking about their feelings and experiences.[24]

To see how Kassia concisely treated some issues just compare the topic of oils – she tells about this with one word (μυροφόρου), while at Romanos' work the same motif was expanded into two stanzas, combined with the dialogue between a woman and a seller of perfume. While the epic style of the author of the kontakion is very clear, in the sticheron it is just selected and the whole story is rather only signalled, and the rest can be added in the recipient's imagination. Instead,

[24] This exlamation is discussed by Catafygiotu-Topping (1982: 206, note 39) and by Dyck (1986: 69).

Kassia's hymn is unquestionably similar to Romanos' through very high personal emotions contained in the works: the authors achieve this thanks to immediacy of characters expression, and also by putting them as if "on the stage".[25] In both works, just the sinner woman asks for forgiveness (she is *porte-parole* of the author, and every participant of a penitential prayer can identify with her), but also in many apostrophes, addressed to God, expresses his power, the greatness of his mercy, and love for people. In Romanos the greater emphasis is put on the dramatic situation, which was reached by dialogues, but in Kassia in turn the immediacy of confession and prayers make the work more lyrical, and through various apostrophes and epithets of God it has a large theological idea.

4. THE CONCLUSIONS

To summarize the above considerations it must be stated that the motif of the sinful woman in the Byzantine liturgical works, despite the diverse structure and size, functions as being exemplary to the leading idea of the hymn. In all three genres the lament and humility are present, but otherwise the accents are spread and a poetic intention is another: Romanos the Melodist emphasises dramatic events, Andrew of Crete the depth of personal experience, Kassia – in the most condensed form combines the features of both writers: drama with lyrical confession and theological reflection. Romanos in his kontakion extended the story of the Gospel and made it a rich background for a discussion of the idea of repentance and remission of sins. In the odes of the *Great Kanon* "a story" is fulfilled by *exempla*, these accumulation illustrates the image of a sinner's soul. In contrast with her predecessors, Kassia does not paraphrase any biblical threads nor links examples, but focuses on a character who becomes a point of discussion about sin and forgiveness. And as in archaic poetry-prayer, the Byzantine poetess emphasizes the close relationship with God, commitment and personal

[25] It is not clearly explained, whether a kontakion and a hymn of the *Triodion* were performed divided into roles.

confession, which in any sense makes her next to the most famous poetess of pre-Christian antiquity, Sappho of course.[26]

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[26] The calling Kassia by „Byzantine Sappho", see Marciniak 2005.

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