

Borrowings and Code-Switches in the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*

In this paper, I focus on a key aspect of the diction of the *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, a martyr text in which a male Christian author (the so-called redactor, about whose identity and biography much has been postulated [Heffernan 2012:15-17]) purports to report the final thoughts and words of Saint Perpetua, condemned to die for her belief in Christianity around 200 CE. In particular, the Greek borrowings and code-switches (my definitions of which are based on Adams 2003:18-29) scattered throughout the text help reveal the anxiety of the male, upper-class redactor about the reality of Perpetua's low social status.

First, I investigate the borrowings and code-switches primarily within Perpetua's narrative *in propria voce* (chapters 3-10). I explore why the author used the particular terms that s/he does and probe the use of code-switching or borrowing in straightforward narrative versus the descriptions of her dreams. Then, I expand on that analysis to offer inferences about the historical Perpetua and the authorship of the Perpetua section. The redactor describes Perpetua as "born nobly, educated in the liberal arts, wedded as a matron" (*honeste nata, liberaliter instituta, matronaliter nupta*, 2.1) and the narrative as "written in her own hand and by her own sense" (*conscriptum manu sua et suo sensu*, 2.1), but the narrative details, borrowings, and code-switches undermine that assertion.

In short, the redactor's description of Perpetua and this text belies an anxiety about the use of a lower-class, unwed mother as an exemplum of Christian martyrdom (for Perpetua's low status, see Cooper 2013). His sanitization of Perpetua's image manifests in the portrayal of details of Perpetua's life incongruous with social reality and in the use of choice borrowings and code-switches. Perpetua may have been a historical figure, martyred around 200 CE, but this

account of her final days has been filtered irreparably through the lens of male, upper-class anxiety.

Bibliography

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