

## The Vandalised Statue of Mary of Magdala: Contemporary Implications of an Ancient Figure

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Plaster statue, Saint Pilon Chapel, 31.03.2019; author: Rémy Jouan © CC BY-SA 4.0. Wikicommons

In her 2023 monograph on Mary of Magdala, Diane Apostolos-Cappadona reports that a magnificent contemporary statue of her was destroyed in 2020 in the small chapel of Pilon, above the town of Sainte-Baume in France. It was a first version in plaster, awaiting the final one in marble. The anonymous vandal left a few lines explaining that one could not bear to see a saint represented in this way. Images of the statue before and after the vandalism are available on Wikicommons and show that even in a democratic country, it can still be unbearable to see Mary of Magdala as a radiant beauty, instead of a repentant sinner or a woman in ecstatic trance. This paper will argue that the scholarly discourse on this first-century woman has lost weight in the last decade, leaving her to media or artistic discourses. Everything seemed ready for her rehabilitation as an authoritative disciple when, in 2016, Pope Francis completed her dissociation from the repentant sinner of Luke 7:36-50.

In the meantime, however, the polemic surrounding the modern forgery of the *Gospel of Jesus's Wife* has led to a decline in scholarly attention to the authority of Mary in the *Gospel of Mary* or the *Gospel of Philipp*. Today, she can even be left in silence in articles, for example by Ramelli, when she reviews the question of syzygies in the first centuries C.E. (2022). It is time to recall, with Painchaud (2007), that Mary, the *koinonios* (companion) of Jesus in *GosPh* 59:7-10, is a beloved disciple, similar to James in *2Apoc* 57:10-17 or to the “beloved disciple” in John 13:23 and 21:20. Let’s hope that the Pilon chapel will one day welcome the marble statue of the radiant Mary of Magdala. This paper is based my own chapter in peer-review, in a book co-authored with Priscille Marschall (University of Laval, Canada).



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