



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation in Medieval Studies
of
Marijana Vuković

on
**Martyr Memories: The Afterlife of the Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium
between East and West in Medieval Hagiographical Collections
(Eighth – Eleventh Centuries)**

will be held on

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**Senate Room
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Nádor u. 9, Budapest**

Examination Committee

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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the “afterlife,” uses and medieval readings of an early Christian martyrdom narrative, the *Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium*. I reconstruct the cultural and social contexts of the text centuries after it was composed as reflected in Latin, Greek, Old Church Slavonic, Armenian and Georgian manuscripts. This narrative is a paradigmatic representative of its genre: anonymous, without exact dating, allegedly written in the fourth century. Bereft of information about the original language and the original version, it records the death and martyrdom of an early Christian bishop Irenaeus of Sirmium. The “afterlife” encompasses the places and the collections, in which this text was included, its relation with the cult, as well as its textual transformations.

The *Martyrdom of Irenaeus* belongs to the genre of martyrdom literature, which had a changing status and ambiguous treatment from Late Antiquity to the early Middle Ages. One of the purposes of this literature might have been the exhortation to martyrdom and the establishment of a model behavior for Christians facing persecution. After CE 313, however, encouraging martyrdom was curtailed to simple veneration and memory. Created at the threshold of the acceptance of Christianity as a tolerated religion, martyrdom literature went through processes of rewriting and purification to be acceptable after the age of transition. “Rewriting” is clearly observable in the great deal of textual variations of the *Martyrdom of Irenaeus*. The study of these textual variants constitutes the core of this dissertation. Textual variants, however, do not reveal much in their own right without taking into consideration the communities behind the texts. The communities that rewrote this text in different languages were bound to a multiplicity of places, environments, and realms. These circumstances influenced the text. The analysis of different contexts contributed to understanding of the way the martyr was “remembered” in various Christian communities. The Middle Ages were chronologically removed from the age of Early Christian martyrs. The distance compelled me to reflect on the uses of the past in the early medieval period. I dealt with the uses of the past through my case study of the *Martyrdom of Irenaeus*.

Concepts, terminology and problems

In this dissertation I understand “martyrdom narratives” as an early Christian genre and a sub-genre of hagiography, which is commonly named by scholars as “acts and passions of martyrs.” The term “martyrdom narratives” implies that the text ends with a martyr’s death or martyrdom. This is characteristic for acts and passions alike and the term does not necessitate further distinction between the two concepts. Scholars attempted to distinguish the two concepts in the past and offered a number of definitions, none of them fully satisfying. Martyrdom narratives stand at the outset of medieval hagiography and are understood as part of the broader genre of hagiography.

The dissertation focuses on the Early Middle Ages (eighth-eleventh century). The *Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium* first surfaces in an eighth-century Latin manuscript. By the eleventh century, Latin, Greek and Old Church Slavonic manuscripts exist. The eleventh century represents a determining period in the afterlife of this narrative. After the eleventh century, the Latin West saw a notable increase of the number of manuscripts containing this text, while the text almost completely disappeared in Byzantium and its Commonwealth, where the number of manuscripts decreased. Later manuscripts are used in the dissertation as a contrast group. Geographically, “East” and “West” in the title imply the Greek-speaking Byzantium and its multilingual

Commonwealth (Bulgaria, Armenia and Georgia), and the Latin-speaking half of the former Roman Empire.

My research received inspiration from recent work on early martyrdom literature, which analyzes what these narratives reveal about the ideologies of martyrdom and the social and cultural contexts of Early Christianity. Yet, any such research must acknowledge that the textual history of Early Christian martyrdom texts is extremely complicated. At the time when martyrdom narratives were copied in medieval manuscripts, their transmission was characterized by varieties. It is impossible to know the initial layer of a text and the consecutive additions during medieval reworking. Consequently, ancient Christian texts contain not only ancient layers, but also later interpolations and insertions. No text can be taken for granted without following each phase of its afterlife. However, modern scholars have hardly undertaken the full extent of varieties and the textual variants have been usually neglected in favor of the representative manuscripts that were used as a basis for critical editions. Current methodological trends, which attempt at reconstructing the ideologies and mentalities of Early Christians, mostly base their research on textual editions.

Research methods

“New Philology” has a potential to deal with textual varieties. It describes the history of a period or a group by using the written sources, which came out as cultural products of the same period and the same group in order to understand their perspectives on their own history. New Philology was a methodology used in Colonial studies in the 1970s, striving to study the history of colonized people by using their written sources (Lockhart, Restall, Schroeder). The study of native language sources was crucial to understanding indigenous societies. New Philology entered medieval studies in the 1990s, first in medieval French and Norse studies (Driscoll). The work of the Würzburg research group was particularly effective in the field of hagiography combined with New Philology.

The study of hagiographical texts combined with the methodology of New Philology has been encouraged by the general instability and differences among medieval textual variants. “Variation is what medieval text was about.” It is possible to have as many versions of a text as there are manuscripts. New Philology does not focus on varieties *per se*; the versions speak to the specific contexts of their use and reveal the way a text was performed and understood as a separate unit or as a part of the whole manuscript. This approach is particularly applicable when studying anonymous texts whose origin and original text are disregarded and the text is studied in the different contexts and the form in which it was used within different communities. Narratology and intertextuality complement New Philology in this dissertation in presenting textual variability regarding the narrative structure and textual borrowings. I relied on the works of Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal. The study of the places of manuscript production and use concerns manuscript geography. In the study of calendars, I used the quantitative method of Guy Philippart.

Dissertation structure

Chapter one presents the places where the manuscripts containing the *Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium* were produced, kept and used. The chapter touches upon the issues of availability and comprehensibility of hagiographical texts to wider audiences. The connections of the various

scriptoria that produced the manuscripts containing this text and the emergence of the first translation of this text were also discussed. Chapter two discusses the importance of calendars in the processes of survival of hagiographical texts. A hagiographical text had to cope with the complex set of rules applied in formation of hagiographical collections. Complying with such guidelines meant an enduring afterlife of a hagiographical narrative. The period from the eighth to the eleventh century was the key period for martyrs and other saints to establish themselves in calendars and be remembered or to fade into oblivion for good. Chapter three investigates the links of the alleged local late antique and medieval saintly cult of Irenaeus and the appearance of his hagiographical text in the collections, arranged according to the calendars, which were in use in places that could claim him as a local saint. The aim of the chapter is to understand that the presence of saints in calendars did not necessarily depend on their cults and their local prominence. Calendars often had a life of their own. Chapter four deals with textual varieties of the *Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium* in different Christian traditions and different languages, as well as within the same-language groups. It reveals the extent to which medieval interpolations had their say in the processes of textual transformation of the late antique text. The chapter seeks to determine whether the textual variants revealed the preferences of the particular communities or the texts solely displayed the different phases of textual *metaphrasis*. It pertains to the question of whether communities shaped the text. This particular issue is elaborated in chapter five, where the focus is on several manuscripts in which the text was transformed to suit the purposes of the new collections. The dissertation ends with the epilogue, where the contemporary use of martyrdom symbolism in Sremska Mitrovica is evoked.

Conclusions

The dissertation shows that martyrdom symbolism functions in both medieval and contemporary examples. Of the past reused, the strongest element is the reworking of past suffering. This mechanism has been particularly efficient in times of turmoil between a current crisis and a need to invoke past martyrdoms. Candida Moss argues that whenever Christians feel threatened, they return to the martyrs of the early Church for consolation and inspiration. Early Christian martyrdom narratives were continually rewritten in the Middle Ages because of their potential for such appeal among Christians.

Byzantine emperors in the middle Byzantine period commissioned collections of saints' lives, some of which excelled in the number of martyrdom narratives. One of these collections is Moscow Syn. 183, the "Imperial Menologion" dedicated to the emperor Michael IV Paphlagonian. The texts ended in the prayer for the emperor where the martyr is asked to grant the emperor earthly benefits. The emotional tone in the texts of this *Menologion* significantly differed from their earlier versions. Such collection was cleverly conceived in order to enforce the feelings of vengeance by the present and the generations to follow. It had an "agenda" to transform single texts in order to fit the collection. One of the introduced changes in the version BHG 949e of this collection was the description of the martyr as a victimized hero. This feature shows the change in the initial purpose of the text among the Greek textual versions. While BHG 959e and BHG 950z transform a paradigmatic character into a victim, BHG 948 describes the martyr as an inspiring character apt for emulation. Such transformations fit into general trends in rewriting hagiographical literature in the Middle Ages. The examples abound and go beyond what we know about them by far.

In the process of survival and transmission, medieval hagiographical texts not only had to go through extensive textual transformations but also cope with the complex processes in aligning

saints within calendar collections. The memory of saints was dependent on the feast day of a saint, the position of the feast day in the calendars in comparison to the movable cycle, the other saints who were celebrated on the same date or on the choice of scribes and copyists. Some saints had a prominent cult, providing a safe way to keep their feast day, the place in the calendar, and secure grounds in which to plant their hagiographical text. However, for lesser known saints and saints without relics the cult was not the way to enter calendar collections in the transitional period from the popularization of the cult of saints to the standardization of the church calendars. Calendars were sometimes transferred and fossilized from a more authoritative realm and adopted without appropriation.

Hagiographical texts occasionally did not reveal anything about the communities and societies that used them. Alternatively, textual versions displayed different phases of textual *metaphrasis*. The Old Church Slavonic and Latin texts analyzed in this dissertation reflect different phases of Greek textual *metaphrasis* and do not reveal about the societies and groups, which copied these texts. BHG 948 is another form of *metaphrasis* without uncovering the mentality of the communities that created it. Several variants reflect purposeful transformations, such as the manuscript Moscow Syn. 183.

The Greek variants developed two independent lines of narrative, which continued throughout the Middle Ages. One line relates to BHG 950z (*Martyrdom of Irenaeus, Or and Oropseus*) in the manuscripts from Jerusalem, Athos, Sinai, Southern Italy, while the other relates to BHG 948 from Constantinople, which was later translated in Latin, Old Church Slavonic and Armenian. Multiple narratives about the same saint thus appeared in different parts of the Mediterranean world quite independently.

The Old Church Slavonic text does not contain a paragraph of the text, which commonly appears in the other versions. Possibly this paragraph did not exist when the text was translated from a Greek version. This conclusion makes the Old Church Slavonic text the earliest extant textual version, which further raises a red flag towards trends in the study of martyrdom literature. It is uncommon that scholars use versions in languages such as Old Church Slavonic when discussing various early Christian views expressed in early Christian martyrdom narratives, even though at times hagiographical narratives in this and some other languages are among the earliest preserved variants. Unlike the latest trends in the study of martyrdom literature, which attempt to uncover Early Christian ideologies of martyrdom and social and cultural contexts of Early Christianity based mostly on textual editions, this dissertation starts from the premise that it is generally difficult to recognize specifically Early Christian and late antique layers in hagiographical texts because of the medieval interpolations and subsequent contents added over time.

One of the aims of the dissertation is to put in relief the study of hagiographical texts in all the languages of their appearance, not yet a common feature in scholarship. Another goal is to methodologically contribute to the study of hagiography by emphasizing textual diversities. The method of examining textual diversities is applicable to other genres of medieval literature as well.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Work experience:

2013 – present – Researcher at the University of Oslo, Department for Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, the project “Tiny Voices from the Past;” 2009 – Teaching Assistant, Greek beginner course, CEU, Medieval studies, Budapest; 2002 – 2008 – Latin Teacher in Grammar school, Apatin (Serbia), Medical school, Sombor (Serbia), and Private Medical School, Vrbas (Serbia); 2002 – 2003 – English Teacher, Grammar school, Vrbas (Serbia); 2001 – 2002 – Volunteer, Museum of Vojvodina, Novi Sad (Serbia).

Studies:

2008 – 2015 – PhD studies, Department of Medieval studies, Central European University, Budapest, the dissertation: *Martyr Memories: The Afterlife of the Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium between East and West in Medieval Hagiographical Collections (Eighth – Eleventh Centuries)*

2013 – 2017 – Research Fellowship, University of Oslo, Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, the project: *Childhood in Context: The Infancy Gospel of Thomas in Different Christian Communities*

2010 – 2011 – Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

2006 – 2007 – Master of Arts in Medieval Studies, Central European University, Department of Medieval Studies, MA thesis: *The Library of Vivarium: Cassiodorus and the Classics*

1995 – 2001 – University degree in Classics, University of Belgrade, BA Thesis: *The Development of Astronomy and Mathematical Geography in Antiquity, with Translations of Seneca’s Naturales Quaestiones and Strabo’s Geographia*

Grants and fellowships:

2014 – Research Grant at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo, for research in the manuscript libraries in Paris (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Bibliothèque Saint-Genevieve), and Brussels (Bibliothèque royale)

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2013 – Research Grant at the Department of Philosophy, Classics, History of Art and Ideas, University of Oslo, for study trip to the manuscript libraries in St Petersburg (Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences) and Moscow (State Historical Museum)

2013 – Summer School Grant for attending the Summer school “Crossing the Languages of Medieval Europe,” Rome, June 2013, granted by Central European University, Budapest

2012 – Doctoral Research Support Grant, CEU, Budapest for research at the University of Vienna, Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik

2011 – 2012 – Fellowship at the American Research Center in Sofia, Bulgaria

2011 – Scholarship for the Summer Intensive Course in Modern Greek Language, Aristotle’s University, Thessalonica, Greece (declined)

2011 – Tuition fees for Byzantine Greek Summer School, Queen’s University Belfast

2010 – 2011 – Reese Miller Telluride Scholarship for Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

2010 – CEU PhD Research Grant (research in Marciana, Ambrosiana, Bibliothèque royale, Brussels)

2009 – 2010 – Višegrad scholarship

2008 – 2011 – CEU Full PhD scholarship

2006 – 2007 – CEU Partial MA scholarship

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Conference papers related to the subject of the dissertation:

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- May 2013 – The International Conference *Saint Emperor Constantine and Christianity*, Niš, Serbia, 31 May – 2 June 2013, the paper: “Constantine as ‘just a man:’ Modeling an image of an earthly ruler in eastern Christian hagiographies”
- March 2013 – The International conference *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th-6th centuries)*, Budapest-Pecs, 7 – 10 March 2013, Central European University, Budapest, and University of Pecs, Hungary, the poster: “Studying Pannonian Martyrs: Irenaeus of Sirmium”
- September 2012 – International conference *Intercultural Transmission of Intellectual Traditions in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. A Comparative Perspective*, Warsaw, 27 – 29 September 2012, the paper: “Uncovering the Original Language of Early Christian Martyrdoms among Inter-culturally Transmitted Textual Versions”
- July 2012 – Summer school *Georgian script*, National Center for Manuscripts, Tbilisi, Georgia, 17 – 26 July 2012, the paper: “Early Christian Hagiographical Texts and their Ancient Translations”
- June 2012 – The Conference *Encyclopaedia slavica sanctorum. Светци и свети места на Балканите*, the paper: “Mučeništvo Irineja Sirmijskog” u Suprasl rukopisu iz X veka (*The Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium* in Suprasl Codex from the Tenth Century)”
- May 2012 – Lecture in the American Research Center in Sofia (ARCS), the title: “Comparative Textual and Manuscript Study of Early Christian Martyrdom Narratives”
- November 2011 – Annual Student Conference *Klimentovi Chetenia*, Department of Cyrillo-Methodian Studies, Faculty of Slavonic Philology, University of Sofia, Bulgaria, the paper: “Mučeništvo Svetog Irineja: Izvorni jezik i verzija teksta (Martyrdom of St Irenaeus: The Original Language and Version of the Text)”
- June 2011 – Graduate Conference, *Authoritative Texts and Reception History: Aspects and Approaches*, St Andrews, UK, Biblical and Early Christian Studies, the paper: “Anonymous Late Antique Martyrdom Narratives: The Issues of Genre, Imitation, Narratological Patterns”

Publications:

“The Early Christian Martyrdom Narratives: Narrative Features, Intertextuality and the Authoritative Texts Behind.” In *Authoritative Texts and Reception History: Aspects and Approaches*, ed. Dan Batovici and Kristin De Troyer, 259-277. Leiden: Brill, forthcoming.

“Martyrdom of Irenaeus of Sirmium in the 10th-century Codex Suprasliensis.” *Palaeobulgarica* 47 (2013): 60-73.

“Constantine as ‘just a man:’ modeling an image of an earthly ruler in eastern Christian hagiographies.” In *St Emperor Constantine and Christianity II*. Niš, Serbia: The Centre of Church Studies, 2013.

“Using an Ancient Saint for Contemporary Political Purposes: The Case of Irenaeus of Sirmium in Sremska Mitrovica Today.” *Religion in Eastern Europe* 30, No. 3 (2010): 16-24.

Praestante Domino, auctores liberalium litterarum collegimus. Belgrade: Zadužbina Andrejević, 2009.