



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Dissertation in Medieval Studies

of

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on

**BETWEEN MARY AND CHRIST:
DEPICTING CROSS-DRESSED SAINTS IN THE MIDDLE AGES (C. 1200-1600)**
will be held on

Tuesday, 7 June 2016, at 11:00

in the
**Senate Room – Monument Building
Central European University (CEU)
Nádor u. 9, Budapest**

Examination Committee

- Chair László Kontler (Department of History – CEU)
- Members Gerhard Jaritz, primary supervisor (CEU, Medieval Studies Department)
 Gábor Klaniczay (CEU, Medieval Studies Department)
 Miri Rubin, external reader and external examiner (present),
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 (Department of Art and Art History, University of Colorado)
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The doctoral dissertation is available for inspection in the CEU-ELTE Medieval Library,
Budapest, 6-8 Múzeum krt.

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT ABSTRACT

Between Mary and Christ: Depicting Cross-Dressed Saint in the Middle Ages (c. 1200-1600) deals with a comparative approach to the visual and textual sources of the group of holy virgins in disguise, namely, Saints Eugenia, Euphrosyne, Margareta Pelagius, and Marina the Monk. Briefly, their lives, in a nutshell, concentrate on stories of women who wore men's clothes, fled the world to follow Christ, and joined in monasteries or, sometimes, retired in solitary places.

This dissertation demonstrates that in visual and textual sources of the Late Middle Ages holy women in disguise are viewed as women in contrast to previous research that emphasized gendered, theological, patristic or intertextual interpretations. The research focused on the analysis of visual and textual sources that expand on four centuries - c. 1200-1600 - and aims at presenting the way this group of saints is presented in the very sources.

The two parts of the dissertation center around the image-text relationship antithetically: 1) By analyzing the textual in order to re-interpret and re-evaluate the visual. In this case several images of holy women in disguise were compared to only one text, that of the *vita*. 2) By focusing on the construction of visual source(s) in relation to multiple hagiographic texts: poems, liturgical sources, *vitae*, inscriptions and so on. These two parts correspond to two types of visual sources: that of the manuscript illumination which is closely connected to the text and that of the art products depicted for various types of recipients and displayed in various contexts.

In both cases the image-text relationship indicates that the image follows the narration (the text) while the text incorporates certain thirteenth-fifteenth-century hagiographic developments that help re-interpret the image and view the protagonists as holy women who employ disguise in order to live a life dedicated to Christ as *sponsae Christi*. Generally, the insertion of these hagiographic *topoi* occurs in the entrance-exit episodes emphasizing the construction of these hagiographic characters as holy women. However, this does not exclude the existence of other types of patterns which re-emphasize and contribute to their construction as women using disguise. Disguise, both visual and textual, becomes the key focus when depicting these saints in illuminated manuscripts as it is mostly included in all the important episodes of their lives.

Holy women in disguise are constructed as female hagiographic/visual characters due to their lives' flexibility and to the assimilation of patterns of female sanctity as it follows:

1. Patterns of female mystics and mystical lexicon.

Hagiographic patterns are inserted at the beginning and at the end of these lives contributing to a symmetrical construction emphasizing that these women evolve from *sponsae* to be to *sponsae* meeting the Groom.

2. Models of sanctity

My research shows that holy women in disguise, Saint Euphrosyne, in this case, turned out to be models for new emergent saints such as Saint Catherine of Siena. Fourteenth-century lives of Euphrosyne circulated prior to the canonization of Catherine in 1461 (which adds to the possibility of influence) and share common elements with her life: intention of imitating Euphrosyne, intention of running away and live according to her model, lack of consent, refusal of marriage, seclusion in a cell.

3. Marian influences: apocryphal and iconographic patterns of Virgin Mary

Fifteenth-century northern influences upon the German(ic) sources coincide with apocryphal (France) and iconographic insertions (France and Italy) into the visual and textual sources on women in disguise.

3.a). *Apocryphal and iconographic patterns of the Virgin Mary in French sources*

The insertion of apocryphal patterns into the textual sources occurs mostly in the entrance-exit episodes similarly to the patterns of female mystics. In this sense the variety of patterns that are inserted contribute to their clustering around these episodes emphasizing right from the beginning that it is women saints' lives that one is familiarized with.

The iconographic patterns of *the Virgin with Child in her arms* and *the Virgin teaching Christ Child to read* are reflected in the visual representations of Saint Marina who is depicted in similar situations. I conclude that Saint Marina assimilated from Marian piety/iconography the pattern of intimacy with the child which becomes one of her iconographic attributes (France, Italy, Spain).

3.b). *Iconographic patterns of the Virgin Mary in Italian and Spanish sources (Saint Marina and Eugenia)*

The above mentioned pattern of *the Virgin with Child in her arms* was assimilated in Venetian paintings of Saint Marina whose iconography develops in such a way that Marina turns out to be a mirror image of the Virgin and Child. The pattern of the *Virgin with Child in her arms* was transferred from the miniatures into panel paintings (statues, frescoes, and so on). Even more, my analysis indicates that this pattern circulated in both milieus at the same time in various regions: Italy, Spain, or France. What all the panel paintings, frescoes, and statues have in common is that they depict Saint Marina, generally, together with the child. A regional imprint occurs when the depiction is connected to Marina's local cult.

In Saint Eugenia's case it is important to underline the continuity in her representation as a martyr saint. In early fifth-seventh century mosaics she is one of the virgins accompanying the Virgin, while in fifteenth-century frescoes (Rome,

Bagnoro, Siena) she is depicted right next to the Virgin. In her Spanish representations subtle textual references suggest similarities with the Triumph of the Virgin while her clothes are viewed as a symbol of triumph over evil embodied by Melanthia.

4. Positioning and iconographic attributes

Holy women in disguise are paired according to hagiographic themes, such as disguise, in the *Speculum historiale* (Marina, Euphrosyne), inserted into groups of women in the *Legenda Aurea* (Marina, Margareta Pelagius) or into groups of men (less frequently). The insertion of women in disguise among holy penitents underscores their gender. This is valid also when inserted among holy men (Germanic sources).

5. Cult, Crusades, and iconographic confusion

The promotion of these saints implies a higher degree of dissemination among various types of recipients. These saints acted as models for communities of both genders. Marina was a model not only for the male monastic community of Ardea or promoted by Doge Andrea Gritti in Venice, but also for women, if we have a look at the French registers which indicate women offering religious objects to a Church of Saint Marina. Saint Eugenia again was promoted by Cardinal Bessarione in Italy. In France and Spain she became a model for male religious communities but also for mixed groups of pilgrims. The case of Saint Euphrosyne is a little bit different, as she was a model for a female religious community, and promoted for pilgrimage by the same religious establishment after being transferred from the Holy Land to France.

When speaking about Saint Marina's cult, it is important to bring into discussion the crusader context of her transfer. As my sources indicate, Saint Marina the Monk was much venerated in the Near East. Consequently around the twelfth-thirteenth century various individuals transferred her 'several times.' I conclude that there are at least two phases of development with regard to Marina the Monk's iconography in Venice. In a first phase, Saint Marina the Monk's iconography seems to be influenced by that of a homonymous saint, namely, Saint Margaret/Marina of Antioch. This confusion can be explained in several ways: confusion of names which determines confusion of relics and confusion of iconography and confusion of attributes (the cross for instance). However, in my opinion all this authorizes Marina as a specifically female saint.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Work experience:

2016-2017 (*forthcoming*) - *Assistant Professor*, American University of Central Asia, First Year Seminar, General Education Department, Bishkek; **2013** - *Teaching Assistant*, Course: *Wealth and Poverty from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages CEU*, Medieval Studies Department, Budapest; **2012** - *Teaching Assistant*, Course: *Monasticism and Hagiography in Late Antiquity CEU*, Medieval Studies Department, Budapest; **2011**- *Teaching Assistant*, *Women and Christianity CEU*, Medieval Studies Department, Budapest; **2005-2010** - *Teacher of Romanian Language and Literature*, Arad, Romania (College of Environmental Protection and Construction, “Mihai Eminescu” Secondary School, “Francisc Neuman” High School, “Henri Coandă” High School, “Csiky Gergely” High School).

Studies:

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- 2010 – 2011 Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
 Master’s Degree in Medieval Studies, Medieval Studies Department
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Conference papers related to the subject of the dissertation:

2/4 June 2016 - *Center for Iconographic Studies*, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia-Tenth Conference of Iconographic Studies: Marian Iconography East and West; Paper: **The Virgin of the Apocrypha: Reasons for Further Research In Marian Iconography**

17/20 March 2016 - Centre for Visual Arts and Research, Nicosia, Cyprus - Othello's Island 2016 the 4th annual international conference on mediaeval and renaissance art, literature, social and culture history; Paper: **The Multiple Bodies of Saint Marina the Monk in the Middle Ages: Iconography, Transfer of Relics, and the Crusades**

8/9 January 2016 - *St. Hilda's College*, Oxford, U.K. – Art and Articulation: Illuminating the Mystical, Medieval, and Modern; Paper: **Cross-Dressed Saints as Brides of Christ: Adapting Representations of Holy Women in the Middle Ages**

6/9 July 2015 - *University of Leeds*, Leeds, UK- International Medieval Congress; Paper: **Between Mary and Christ: Depicting Cross-Dressed Saints in the High Middle Ages, 1200-1600: A Case Study on Saints Eugenia of Rome and Marina the Monk**

7 February 2015 - *Courtauld Institute of Art*, London, UK- Movement in Medieval Art and Architecture; Paper: **Holy Women in Medieval Art: A Case Study of Cross-Dressed Saints' Iconography**

9/11 January 2014 - *University of Winchester*, Winchester, UK – Gender and Status; Poster: **Cross-Dressing for Christ's Sake: Visualizing the *Sponsa* in Illuminated Manuscripts**

1/4 July 2013 - *University of Leeds*, Leeds, UK- International Medieval Congress; Paper: **Is the Virgin a Transvestite? Visual Representations of Female Sanctity in Fourteenth-Sixteenth Century Venice**

4/6 May 2013 - *University of St. Andrews*, St. Andrews, UK- Gender and Transgression in the Middle Ages; Paper: **Uncovering Layers of Meaning: Holy Female Monks in Illuminated Manuscripts**

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Publications:

Znorovszky, Andrea-Bianka. "Holy Female Monks-Patterns of Purity: A Comparative Approach of the Visual Representations of Saint Marina the Monk, Saint Eugenia of Rome, and Saint Euphrosyne." In *Il Genere Nella Ricerca Storica* vol. 1, edited by S. Chemotti, C. La Rocca, 151-170. Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2015.

Znorovszky, Andrea-Bianka. "Ave Mari(n)a! Representing a Cross-Dressed Saint in Fourteenth- to Sixteenth Century Italy/Venice and France: Influences, Models, and Patterns of Female Sanctity." *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* 69 (2014): 45-62.

Znorovszky, Andrea-Bianka, Rákos-Zichy, Johanna. "Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches. An International Conference: Budapest, 7-10 March 2013." *Bollettino di studi latini* 43 (2013): 599-602.