

MIRACLES OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Medieval Narratives through Time and Space

International workshop 29 March – 1 April 2017

Maynooth University and Trinity College Dublin, Centre for Medieval & Renaissance Studies

ABSTRACTS

Wadi Awad, Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies, Cairo **The Arabic Miracles of the Virgin Mary**

The Arabic translations of the Miracles of the Virgin are amongst the earliest to be made; there were, however, several different phases in translation, with various stages in copying and subsequent re-translation, from western European vernaculars (perhaps French and certainly Italian). The manuscript tradition of the Arabic manuscripts is, together with the Latin, extremely rich: over a hundred are extant, and many more are waiting to be discovered. The Arabic tradition is considerable in its own right, but also acted as a bridge to Ethiopia and possibly elsewhere.

Ewa Balicka-Witakowska, Uppsala University **The Miracles of the Virgin Mary: Two Ethiopian Collections Locally Composed**

The collections of Mary's miracles widely circulating in Europe and the Christian Near East were almost everywhere enriched by local tales. It was particularly true for Ethiopia as is indicated by over 700 stories recently noticed by scholars. Among these texts two smaller collections copied in different time and serving different purposes deserve particular attention. The first collection, containing nine miracles, belongs to the reign of King Zära Ya'əkob (1434–1468), who, being extremely devoted to the Virgin Mary, promoted her cult often using repressive methods. These stories are a propaganda literature composed with the purpose to justify his religious persecutions. The second collection (45 miracles), compiled in the 19th century but including several older tales, was written in the monastery Däbrä Zämäddo (Lasta province), famous for a miraculous image of the Virgin Mary attributed by local tradition to the evangelist Luke. The monastery, once a religious centre of the province, gradually lost its importance, and the collection, which gathers the tales recalling its glorious past, was composed with the aim to restore the leading position to the site.

Rasa Baločkaitė, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas **Political Appropriations of the “Supernatural”: Marian Apparitions in Soviet Lithuania**

Testimonies of Marian apparitions nearly faded away in early 20th-century Lithuania, but then increased again during the Soviet rule and ceased abruptly after the declaration of Independence. Why did the visions of Marian apparitions become so popular in the period 1940–1990? Under Soviet rule, “supernatural” phenomena were employed for popular resistance, and religious visions have served several purposes, such as providing temporarily escape from totalitarianism, challenging Soviet policies of state atheism, mobilizing local communities, constructing vernacular

narratives of “miraculous healings” of religious peasantry or “premature deaths” of communist authorities, and other multiple ways of sabotaging the Soviet system.

Zsófia Ágnes Bartók, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Budapest
The Exempla of the Virgin Mary in the Early Hungarian Literature

The brightest period of the Hungarian codices flourished at the turn of the 15th and 16th century. The first vernacular Marian short stories were preserved in this valued corpus, written mostly for the simple people of the cloisters (nuns, lay brothers and juveniles): they were the first ones to need vernacular readings for their everyday religious practices. No Hungarian Marian collection is known from the Middle Ages, the short narratives of the Virgin are mostly known from the exempla: they were inserted into homilies to prove the preacher’s statements. In most cases the stories are translations of Latin originals (e.g. *Legenda aurea*, *Sermones discipuli...*) but it seems that the translators showed a preference for the Latin sermons of Pelbartus de Themeswar. He was a Franciscan author from Hungary whose Latin works were printed at the end of the 15th century: his sermon collection prepared in honour of the Virgin (*Stellarium coronae beatae virginis Mariae*, Hagenau, 1498) is fairly often used.

Apart from the list of Floriano Holik—that contains the incipits of 56 Marian miracles (*Index miraculorum Marianorum indici A. Ponzeleti in Anal. Boll. t. XXI. vulgato superaddendus*, Budapest, 1920)—this Marian corpus hasn’t been thoroughly analyzed. At the Eötvös Loránd University a research group has been founded recently, to build a database which helps to examine the Hungarian exempla of this period (*Database of Old Hungarian Exempla*, <http://sermones.elte.hu/exemplumadatbazis>). The project aims to publish not only the vernacular texts but their Latin sources, too. This work is facilitated by the efforts of the research group called “Sermones compilati”, which is preparing the critical edition of the lifework of Pelbartus de Themeswar and Osualdus de Lasko on the internet: <http://sermones.elte.hu/pelbart/>, <http://sermones.elte.hu/szovegkiadasok/latinul/laskaiosvat/>. They also pay a special attention to the exempla used in their sermons: <http://sermones.elte.hu/szovegkiadasok/magyarul/pelbart/>, http://sermones.elte.hu/page/exemplumok_osvat_teljes3.pdf. The most comprehensive sermon collection in Hungarian from this period is called the Codex Érdy. The exempla of the codex has already been analyzed (Zsófia Ágnes Bartók, *The Exempla of the Codex Érdy*, Eötvös Loránd University, doctoral dissertation, Budapest, 2015 (<http://doktori.btk.elte.hu/lit/bartokzsofia/thesis.pdf>): the differences found in the Hungarian texts show that oral tradition—mostly throughout the preaching practice—has made a noticeable influence on the translator.

At the conference I would like to present how the *Database of Old Hungarian Exempla* can help the research on the Marian short stories.

Jean-Louis Benoît, Université de Bretagne Sud (laboratoire HCTI)
Les Miracles de Notre-Dame en français (XIIe et XIIIe siècles). Foi et littérature

Au XIIe siècle apparaissent les collections de *Miracles de Notre Dame* en latin. Elles sont traduites et versifiées en français pour la première fois par Adgar, un moine anglais en 1160. Il intitule son ouvrage *Le Gracial* en raison des grâces qu’il apportera à son lecteur. Gautier de Coinci est le plus illustre représentant de ce genre littéraire au XIIIe siècle. Il ajoute aux récits des sermons et des chansons mariales. L’objet de cette communication, qui constitue une synthèse de mes travaux (et un survol de la recherche), sera de montrer le rapport des auteurs de miracles avec la littérature profane. Celle-ci est refusée pour son immoralité et ses mensonges, mais elle doit être imitée, car

elle est appropriée à un public varié qu'elle a su conquérir. C'est donc ce phénomène d'inculturation, d'adaptation du message chrétien à la culture profane que nous nous proposons de décrire dans cette communication.

The Miracles de Notre-Dame in French in the Middle Ages and literature

As the continuity of the tales of saints' lives, the *Miracles de Notre Dame* appeared in England during the twelfth century first in Latin, then in French.

Adgar, a monk of the London area, translated and versified, circa the year 1165, a compendium of Latin tales gathered by master Albri. Adgar called this miscellany: *Le Gracial*. The greatest book of the *Miracles de Notre Dame* was written by Gautier de Coinci, prior of the abbey of Vic-sur-Aisne, in the first half of the thirteenth century. He added numerous songs to the Virgin and two sermons. The *Miracles* aimed to popularise the truths of the Faith among an audience who couldn't read Latin and who appreciated profane literature. The characters who benefit from Our Lady's miracles are not official saints but mainly ordinary men and women. These Miracles are very varied. The didactic contents are exhaustive: the sacraments, morals, devotion and, especially, the cult of Mary, are encouraged. This sacred literature competed with profane literature.

The supernatural paganist world is replaced with the Christian supernatural, lie with truth, immorality with purity. Nevertheless, many values of courtesy are also found in the work. The courteous lady can be an honest wife, like the empress. The lyrical poetry can be addressed to Mary who is the quintessence of courtesy. This religious literature also knows how to appeal to a flighty public through psychological analysis of love feelings, adventures and chivalrous prowess, as in the French romances, but in an edifying way. Even humour can be found in some tales as in *fabliaux* for instance.

Barbara Crostini, Uppsala University

Silvano Razzi's Tuscan translation of Marian miracles and its success

The *Miracoli di Nostra Donna*, by Silvano Razzi (1527–1611), are crucial in importance to the spread of the Miracles of Mary. Before his entry into the Camaldolese order, the then-Girolamo, composed comedies and a tragedy; his humanist style was, after his profession, turned towards translations and biographies. Between the first publication of his translation of a hundred and sixty three miracle tales in 1574, there were eight further editions before his death, with at least two further publications during the seventeenth century. In our paper, we shall consider the circumstances of the publications, the printers and distribution, with a discussion of his translation technique relating to a number of the core miracles.

Mary B. Cunningham, University of Nottingham

The Miraculous Presence of the Virgin Mary in Constantinople (ca. 7th–10th century): Shrines, Relics and Icons

This paper will explore the ways in which the Virgin Mary became associated with physical landscapes, places, or objects in Byzantine Constantinople. As the Theotokos ('Birth-giver of God') who provided her son, Jesus Christ, with his human nature but who also contained divinity within her womb, Mary was described in theological and liturgical texts by means of metaphorical or typological language that expressed her connection with the created world. It is no accident therefore that shrines, relics, and icons were seen as expressing the Virgin's role as physical container, and mediator, of divine power. Narrative accounts of Mary's appearances or miraculous

actions on behalf of orthodox Christians tended to focus on particular shrines or relics where she could be encountered. Stories concerning the translation of Mary's relics (a robe—or two robes—and a belt) from Jerusalem to Constantinople survive from the early seventh century onward, although they claim to record events dating back to the fifth. Accounts of miracles associated with these relics, as well as with several holy pools or water sources in and around Constantinople, were collected in subsequent centuries. Constantinopolitan tales of Marian miracles are in fact so focused on particular sites or relics in the imperial city that it is difficult to imagine them being exported to other regions in the wider Christian world. This appears to have been a self-contained—and highly civic—cult which served, from about the late sixth century onward, the purposes of Byzantine military and religious leaders.

Beatrice Daskas, Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität München (Humboldt Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow)

From Constantinople to the West: the miracle of Mary's pallium and the Latin version of the Greek Akathistos hymn

This paper will examine the preamble appended to the Latin version of the Akathistos, one of the most famous hymns of the Eastern Church dedicated to the Mother of God. Besides setting the chronological framework for the translation of the hymn to the eighth century, before the Second Nicene council reestablishing the cult of images (787), this preamble gives a legendary account of the deliverance of the city of Constantinople from the Arab siege (717–18), which attributes its achievement to the miraculous intervention of Mary and her *pallium*. Our investigation will focus on the miracle's narrative and on its peculiar features as compared with the Greek *Vorlage*. The paper will also propose insights into the tradition of the *pallium* as 'classical' textual (and iconographic) motif related to the propitiation of the rescue of a city from a thread (cf. Homer, *Iliad*, 6.269–311). The reception and adaptation of the motif into the miracle's account will allow to cast further evidence on the dating of the piece as pre-iconoclastic.

Francesca Dell'Acqua, University of Birmingham

Restored to Fluency: a Miracle of Mary and the Beginnings of Early Medieval Mariology

A twelfth-century Vita included in the Chronicon of the monastery of San Vincenzo al Volturno (Italy), recalls a miracle performed by the Virgin to heal the monk, briefly abbot, and theologian Ambrosius Autpertus († 784). In a church of the monastery dedicated to Mary, Autpertus raised prayers to the Virgin Mary to be delivered from stammering (Chronicon Vulturense, cc. 64r–66r: “eandem Dei genitricem sedulo interpellaret oratu, ut sibi linguae dissertitudo largiretur [fuerat quippe aliquantulum impediocioris linguae]”), a disability that was an embarrassing impediment for somebody who admittedly devoted much of his energy to composing and delivering sermons. The evocative narration implies that Autpertus fell asleep in front of the altar and was miraculously restored to speaking fluency by Mary. She explicitly requested that Autpertus would extoll her with praises and poems (“laudes et carmina”).

The miracle could be the fruit of the chronicler's imagination to explain why Autpertus is presented as an ardent devotee and promoter of Mary. But it is a fact that the monk produced Marian homilies and offered a theological framing of Mary which have been acknowledged by modern scholarship as the basis of western medieval Mariology. Only recently his homilies and textual images of Mary have been related to the earlier Byzantine homiletic and hymnographic tradition, especially the one related to the controversy over sacred images.

Margaret Dimitrova, St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, and **Adelina Angusheva-Tihanov**, University of Manchester

Miracles of the Theotokos in Byzantine and Slavonic Vitae: Reception and Adaptation of Byzantine Hagiography in Slavic Context

One of the earliest texts that present Theotokos' miracles and her intercession in human lives is the *Vitae of Mary of Egypt* supposedly written in the 6th century, and ascribed to Sophronios, patriarch of Jerusalem (ca. 560–638). The Theotokos helps Mary, a whore, to dedicate her life to repentance and asceticism in the desert. The paper explores the types of miracles of the Theotokos that constitute key episodes in the narrative fabric of the saints' vitae. Alongside with the *Vita of Mary of Egypt*, *Vitae of John Damascene*, of Romanos Melodos, Andrew Salos, Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow and others will be considered to map the appearance and the role of these miracles in medieval hagiography. The reception of the Greek vitae in medieval South and East Slavonic cultures will be discussed, and in particular their translations, dissemination, and use as models.

Nino Doborjginidze, Ilia State University, Tbilisi

The Miracles of the Virgin Mary in the Georgian Literary Tradition

The paper will deal with the following texts representing the Georgian Catholic tradition of Marian miracles:

1. Ms. H-174: სასწაულები ყოვლად წმიდა მარიამისა, თარგმანებული იტალიანის ენისგან ქართულს ენაზედ (*Miracles of the holy Virgin Mary, translated from Italian into Georgian*), 102 pp.
2. Ms. გორი 60 (Museum of Gori): სასწაულნი ღვთისმშობლისანი (*Miracles of the holy Virgin Mary*), 40 pp.
3. Ms. Q-1057.
4. Ms. Q-1320: წიგნი ღვთისმშობლის სასწაულთაჲ (*A book of miracles of the holy Virgin Mary*), 460 pp.
5. Ms. ახალციხე 195 (Akhaltsikhe): ღვთისმშობლის სასწაულები (*Miracles of the holy Virgin Mary*), 46 pp.
6. Ms. ახალციხე 3231 (Akhaltsikhe): ღვთისმშობლის სასწაულები (*Miracles of the holy Virgin Mary*), 105 pp.
7. Ms. ახალციხე 401 (Akhaltsikhe): ღვთისმშობლის სასწაულები (*Miracles of the holy Virgin Mary*), 75 pp.

Matthew J. Driscoll, Copenhagen University/Ulster University

Miracles of the Virgin in Old Icelandic

In my presentation I will examine the medieval Icelandic material pertaining to the Virgin Mary, beginning with *Maríu saga*—the life of the Virgin in Old Icelandic, from her immaculate conception to her assumption into Heaven—which was probably composed in the early part of the 13th century and has been attributed to one Kygri-Björn Hjaltason (d. 1237/38), about whom little is known. The saga is found in two recensions, preserved altogether in some twenty manuscripts;

most of these also contain miracles, known in Icelandic as *jarteiknir* or *jartegnir* (a word originally meaning “token” or “sign”), while collections of Marian miracles without the saga are found in a further 25 manuscripts.

Altogether there survive around 300 Marian legends in Old Icelandic. Some of these are not found in any of the major continental miracle collections of the Middle Ages and are thus only preserved in Old Icelandic—and indeed three are ‘local’ in the sense that they take place in Iceland. Nor do any of the existing Latin collections appear to have been used as direct models for any of the Icelandic ones.

Other Marian works in Old Icelandic include the skaldic poems *Líknarbraut* (The path to grace), composed around the end of the 13th century, and the *Drápa af Maríugrát* (The lament of Mary), *Vitnisvísur af Maríu* (Vision-verses of Mary) and *Maríuvísur I–III*, all from the 14th century. The 16th-century manuscript *Reykjahólabók* (Holm. perg. fol. nr 3) contains a life a Mary based on Low German models.

Johan Heldt, Uppsala University

Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Collections of Marian Miracle Stories

In medieval times, one of the strongholds of Marian cult was Constantinople. Numerous shrines dedicated to the Theotokos were built from the 5th century onwards and her role as protectress of the city took shape during Justinian in the 6th century and was firmly established with the sieges of Constantinople in the 620s, reiterated during sieges of the city up until 1453. With her role as the supernatural defender of the city came stories about her miracles. We also see miracle stories appear locally in the many churches and monasteries of Constantinople throughout the middle ages (miracles about healing). This type of miracles includes those about her relics, such as her robe and her girdle, whereas the miracles where she protects her city often were worked through the presence of her icon. All of these stories became important to the lore of the city. Also outside of Constantinople her miracles (and stories about them) were prolific. Considering the importance of the Theotokos in Byzantium it is surprising that the Byzantines never made the effort to collect stories about the Theotokos’ miracles as was done in 12th-century Western Europe. In fact, “universalist” collections in Greek comparable to Latin (and vernacular) collections appear only in the late 16th and 17th centuries (written by the two Cretans Iōannēs Morezēnos and Agapios Landos respectively), and then partly as translations from Italian. In my paper I will give a survey of these post-Byzantine collections, but also trace their background, exploring the few collections we actually have from the period before 1453.

Cornelia Horn, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Traditions on Miracles of Mary in the Syriac Literary and Cultural Realm: towards the ‘status quaestionis’

Based on a review of primary sources and current scholarship, this contribution examines the Syriac tradition with regard to how it presents Mary as a worker of miracles. The paper explores the trajectory of the reception of the Miracles of Mary textual tradition. It also aims at establishing the wider literary and cultural context for the development and application of the motif of ascribing miracles to Jesus’ mother.

Virginia Langum, Umeå University
The Middle English Miracles: Between Sickness and Health

Unlike many other vernacular traditions of Marian miracles, there are no dedicated collections in Middle English. Instead the legends exist in groups within texts such as the *South English Legendary* or the *Northern Homily Cycle* but occur mostly as *exempla* scattered within sermons and other pastoral materials. There are 171 miracles of the Virgin in Middle English of which we know, many of which are found in multiple variations. The study of miracles presents challenges, because they are simultaneously universal and unique. They were stories told and retold with various adaptations and motivations behind their telling. At least in the Middle English legacy and the missing Middle English compilation, their miscellaneity is much a source of fruit as frustration.

Anthony Lappin, University of Maynooth
Introduction: the Latin collection

In this paper I will set out the origins and purpose of the first significant Latin collection to have been composed which was not explicitly tied to a shrine- or relic-cult. I will make some observations on its emphases, which went on to characterize much Marian devotion subsequently; and I will consider its reception and development within the clerical world that provided its first readership.

The Miracles of Mary in Spain

I shall take into consideration three collections: an early, clerical translation by Gonçalvo de Verçeo, a secular cleric, carried out in the first half of the thirteenth century; the various collections of miracles sponsored by Alfonso X of Castile-León in the 1270s, placing these in his wider projects of translation and within his own political aspirations; and finally an Aragonese translation composed in or around Avignon in the fifteenth century.

Lorenza Mazzei, Università degli studi di Napoli (“L’Orientale”)
Foreign Influences on the Development of the Ethiopian Miniature. The Case of the Miracles of Mary

Between the 13th and the 19th century, a number of iconographic subjects was displayed in the Gə‘əz liturgical manuscripts. Among these, the miniatures illustrating the stories of the Tǎ‘ammərǎ Maryam (Miracles of Mary) are a good example of the creativity of the Ethiopian artistic culture and of its receptiveness of foreign influences. Even though the literary work entered Ethiopia in the first half of the 15th century the development of a cycle of images commenting the text story by story must be dated not before the beginning of the 16th century. Actually, the 15th-century illustrated manuscripts, tracing back to the times of Dawit (Amba Gəšän) and Zär’a Ya‘əqob (London, Sam Fogg collection and München, Museum für Völkerkunde), contain miniatures not specifically related to the text. Only starting from the 16th century the need of a systematic visual comment of the Tǎ‘ammərǎ Maryam is documented by a manuscript achieved for Ləbnä Dəngəl (1508–40) and now kept in Tǎdbabä Maryam, a well-known church of Amhara Sayənt founded in 1552 by Gälawdewos (1540–59). If this is the most ancient example of a

collection of images strictly tied to the text of the Miracles of Mary, rather striking is that this manuscript was not illustrated by an Ethiopian hand. A European artist, possibly the renowned Venetian painter Nicolò Brancaleone, has been indicated as the author of this set of ink drawings. Therefore, a study of this manuscript will contribute to cast some new light over several open questions: 1) the authorship of the miniatures, 2) the position of this object in the history of book illustration, 3) the role played by Nicolò Brancaleone as introducer of European forms and models in the Ethiopian artistic culture.

Robert Phoenix, Berlin (independent scholar)

A Comparative Examination of the Miracles of Mary in Armenia

In examining the Armenian recension of the Miracles of Mary, one can draw upon both the short notice of its transmission through Catholic channels as well as comparative examination with the well-attested Ethiopic recension. From this, the biases in the transmission history can be discerned. Furthermore, the reception history among Armenians, both Catholic and Apostolic, offers a reflectin in this context to that of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Jan Retsö, Gothenburg University

A new illuminated manuscript of the Miracles of Mary from Enda Chege, Tigray, Ethiopia

In 2009 the Canadian-German-Swedish team visited the smal and remotel monastery at Enda Chege north-east of Abi Adi in Tigray. They turned out to have few manuscripts but those they had were of considerable interest, among them a Zena Iskändär, a rare text. The most spectacular one was a codex of 179 folios containing the text ot The Miracles of Mary: Ta'ammerä Maryam. The book is carefully written in a classic gwelth script with several illuminations in the First Gondarine style of outstanding quality. The MS will be presented and attempts will be made to determine origin, dating, and content, i.e. locating the text within the textual and literary history of the Ethiopian Ta'ammerä Maryam.

Desislava Uzunova, St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia

Miracles of the Theotokos in South Slavonic Manuscripts (14th–18th centuries)

The focus of my paper is on the Slavonic translation and dissemination of the 'Miracles of the Theotokos', which constitutes the third section of Agapios Landos' work 'Salvation of the sinners' (in Greek), published in 1641 in Venice. The most popular translation among the South Slavs was the one by the Athonite monk Samuil Bakachich, made in the end of the 17th century. Questions of translation techniques, attitudes of the scribes towards the text, principles of a future edition of the translation will be discussed in this paper. Also, the earlier Slavonic translation (dated to the sixth or seventh decade of the 14th century) of the miracle about the bishop Theophilos (who made a pact with the Devil) will be compared with Bakachich's translation of Agapios' version. Thus, the question of sources of Agapios' interpretation will be dealt with.