
[1] For those persons interested in late medieval culture, the social meaning of sanctity or simply the story of the transformation of the biblical figure Mary Magdalen into the focus of a powerful cult which exemplified, refracted and reflected the most pressing theological, social and political issues of a much later age, *The Making of the Magdalen* will be fascinating reading. The temporal frame of this study, which has its origins in a doctoral thesis, begins with the opening of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and closes in 1517, the textbook date marking the advent of the Reformation. This is the period when devotion to the Magdalen was at its height in Italy and Provence. It is these geographical areas on which the author has focused. Of special interest to her are the *de sanctis* sermons preached to the laity by the newly mandated mendicant orders as well as the newly literate laity's response to these sermons.

[2] Jansen sets the stage by briefly documenting the rise of the cult of the Magdalen in the middle ages. She describes the way in which the historic woman memorialized in the biblical narrative became a multidimensional legendary figure venerated as a repentant prostitute, a desert-dwelling ascetic, the apostle to the apostles, and a zealous preacher responsible for the conversion of Aix-en-Provence. Having thus set the stage, she divides the body of her study into four parts.

[3] Part one traces the emergence of the Mary Magdalen fashioned by the late medieval mendicant preachers. In their exhortations she - "the apostle to the apostles" - became an exemplar of the apostolic life, a champion of the active life, of the laity and of women, as well as a model of contemplative withdrawal. She thus functioned as a saintly patron for the friars' own innovative mixed lifestyle and for the increasingly active religious involvement of laypersons, especially women, in the life of the church. Drawing upon and amplifying her legend, the friars preached Mary Magdalen's close relationship with Christ, her active mission in the world, her retreat into contemplative mysticism and her unwavering devotion to her Lord. They in turn, through symbolic gender reversal, became new Magdalens.
The second part of the book focuses on those aspects of the Magdalen legend from which the friars distanced themselves. They preached fervently against the twin vices of vanity and luxuria or lust, utilizing the more salacious aspects of the Magdalen legend to make their exhortatory points. In this they reflected the contemporary anxiety (given expression by the likes of Savanarola with his bonfires of the vanities) that the moral fabric of society was being rent asunder by excessive displays of wealth and by unbridled lust which, moralists claimed, was responsible for the public evil of prostitution.

Part three explores the friars' Magdalen as an exemplar of the perfect penitent. Jansen places this preached image against the backdrop of the rise of refuges for reformed prostitutes as well as the reformulated penitential theology of the Fourth Lateran Council with its emphasis on confession. The Magdalen was imagined as modeling contrition, satisfaction, and absolution with her sincere tears, mortifications, and prostrations at the feet of the Lord. For late medieval believers the two Marys - the Virgin and the Magdalen - thus became prototypes of two ways of salvation: innocence and penance.

Shifting from the evidence of the friars' oratory, Jansen turns her attention in part four to the responses of those who heard the sermons or read the hagiographic accounts. Although preachers offered the legendary apostolic Magdalen, who traveled and preached the faith, for admiration rather than imitation, evidence suggests that she had her imitators. And the reclusive ascetic Magdalen, fabled for her mystical trances, rather than the biblical Mary of Bethany who chose the "better part," also had enthusiastic followers.

The penultimate section of the book examines the creative interchange between the needs of the laity and the image of the saint presented by the friars. In particular, Jansen explores the possibility that the Magdalen, in the shadow of the Cult of the Virgin, absorbed aspects of the other Mary, Mother of God. Thus her recuperated (through penance) virginity, not emphasized in sermons or in the vitae, inspired medieval matrons and widows in their hopes of attaining the much-prized spiritual crown of virginity. And as a mother the Magdalen, like the Mother of God, was invoked to protect and defend her spiritual children.

A "royal response" is the subject of Jansen's final chapter. She traces the vigor of the Magdalen cult - relic trade, shrines, miraculous activity, dynastic patronage and protection - in territories under the influence of the Angevin dynasty and argues for the intimate connection between dynastic politics and the saint's cult.

The Making of the Magdalen is a fascinating study. It boasts exhaustive footnotes worthy of the most careful dissertation that are valuable to other scholars, but the body of the text reads fluently and is easily accessible to the average literate reader. The author has combed archives, and studied legends, hagiographic accounts, liturgical texts and notorial documents. She has considered the visual evidence of art and iconography, and placed her evidence in the context of the most current historical and sociological analyses of the middle ages. One clearly sees the multi-disciplinary influence of some of the notable scholars like Peter Brown, Carolyn Walker Bynum and Natalie Davis with whom she has studied.

The Making of the Magdalen would be a fine addition to the library of any institution that teaches courses in medieval history, art, literature, culture or religion. Concerned with questions of origins, transmission and reception, it opens up the richly symbolic medieval
Christian world and illuminates the myriad ways in which the cult of saints functioned at all levels of that society and church.

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