



Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

PROJECT ACRONYM AND TITLE: WoMent - Mad for Him'. Women, Religion and Mental Illness in the Late Middle Ages and in the Early Modern Age

FUNDING PROGRAMME: H2020 Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions Individual Fellowship

CALL: H2020-MSCA-IF-2018-Global Fellowship – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships

SCIENTIFIC FIELDS: Social Sciences and Humanities

HOST DEPARTMENT: DSU – Department of Humanities

SCIENTIFIC RESPONSIBLE: Antonio Montefusco

FELLOW: Mattia Zangari

FINANCIAL DATA:

Project total costs	Overall funding assigned to UNIVE
€ 237.768,00	€ 237.768,00

ABSTRACT:

This research will analyse the biographical and autobiographical texts of late-medieval and early modern women who were deemed to be mystics, blessed, or saints. The main objective is to determine to what extent extreme religious experiences (ecstasies, visions, physical sensations) might be attributable not to unexplainable relations with the Godhead, but to very explainable medical causes. What their contemporaries saw as mystical experiences can, from our modern perspective, be characterized in medical terms. Questions at the basis of the project are, therefore: what is the boundary between illness and sanctity? Is it possible to draw a demarcation line between alleged miracles and mental illness? What do biographical texts tell us about this? Where, how, and when have these texts come down to us and who has transmitted them? This research will consider five cases of mental illnesses (anorexia, visions, hysterical pregnancies, folie à deux and post-partum depression) in biographical texts of six religious women: St.Lutgardis of Aywières †1246, St.Angela of Foligno †1309, the Bl.Giustina of Arezzo †1319, St.Margareta Ebner †1351, Margery Kempe †1438, Bl.Colomba of Rieti †1501. These six women may well illustrate a broad spectrum of diseases. This research is important because: a) biographical texts that reveal how women saints lived their daily lives marked by ecstasies and mental alterations, that have not yet been fully investigated; b) similar studies exist, but they focused only on a single nervous disease and were limited mostly to Italian women saints; c) current studies have not taken into account the fundamental iconographic sources.

Planned Start date	Planned End date
1 st September 2019	31 st August 2022

PARTNERSHIP:

1. Ca' Foscari University	Italia	Coordinatore
2. University of Toronto	Canada	Partner