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Visualising Sexual Otherness in the Late Medieval Eastern Christian Monasteries

Life in a medieval monastery was conceptually conceived as the path toward achieving angelic likeness. The practices of bodily mortification were employed in attaining the genderless and passionless nature of angels. Alongside discussion on the performativity of the non-binary character of monastic gender and desired asexuality, the aim of this paper is to show that certain pictorial representations were able to encourage this fashioning of the monastic Self by offering the image of sexual Other in their contemplative encounter with the monk. The argument is presented through the analysis of three case studies: (1) the monumental figures of alluring nude sinners from the Sopoćani Monastery; (2) the gruesome painted "relief" of the condemned from the Gračanica Monastery; (3) and the unusual representations of two demons depicted in the sanctuary of the church at Marko's Monastery.