

The Renaissance and the Origins of the Concept of the Middle Ages

5:30 pm on Sept 27, 2017
CEU—Gellner Room
Budapest, Nádor u. 9



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It is well-known that the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were born at the same time in an act of self-definition among the Italian humanists of the fourteenth century. One of them served the purpose of positive self-fashioning, the other's aim was separation and detachment from an earlier tradition. These two notions were asymmetrical from the beginning, and their opposition was far from self-evident. The lecture will explore the metaphorical language used by the humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth century to describe their cultural agenda, and the message hidden in the terms they use to describe their program. Starting from Petrarch, through Piccolomini and Central European humanists, we will examine their cultural self-definitions and the changes in their historical consciousness. Focusing rather on the continuity than on dissimilarities, we will compare the humanists' stance to the Middle Ages with their actual indebtedness towards their medieval masters, and at the same time, discuss how the modern conceptual approaches to the Renaissance are related to the self-definitions of the age, and how the self-representations of the humanist program can be harmonized with a sociologically rooted analysis of the intellectuals who were active in this movement.

This is the first lecture in the series “The Middle Ages: a Period or a Concept?,” organized at CEU in September-December, 2017.



Enea Silvio Piccolomini Presents Frederick III to Eleonora of Portugal, by Pinturicchio. Fresco from the Piccolomini Library, Duomo, Siena, 1502-08

Farkas Gábor Kiss studied Classics and Hungarian Literature at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, and Medieval Studies at CEU. His PhD dissertation focuses on the strategies of imitation in the *Obsidio Szigethiana*, an epic poem of the Hungarian Baroque poet, Nicholas Zrínyi. Since then his interest shifted to the history of Latin literature in East-Central Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. His current research focuses on the history of rhetoric, literary theory, and the art of memory as well as the evolution of political rhetoric in 16th-century Central Europe. He worked as a post-doc researcher at Universität Innsbruck, Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Neulateinische Studien, and in the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes in Paris. Currently he is a lecturer at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest and head of a research group dealing with the intellectual networks of humanists (hece.elte.hu).