THURSDAY

Session 1: Expanded Histories
Session Chair: Katie Sucha

Church Asylum in Non-Normative Sources in the Carolingian World
Nick Rogers, Yale University

For much of the medieval period in the Latin West one could, if accused of a crime or involved in a dispute, flee into a church and claim asylum, thereby notionally avoiding the threat of a physically violent reprisal. Almost every church council and legislative source from the early and central medieval period mentions and to some degree endorses the practice, yet there are very few sources prior to the thirteenth century that attest to actual, historical instances of asylum, and of these, it is cases involving elite disputes that have received the most scholarly attention. This paper will focus on the small corpus of evidence for historical instances of “every-day” asylum involving a humbler class of supplicant. The sources in question are five letters by the Carolingian courtier Einhard and his wife Imma written to intercede on behalf of people claiming asylum at Einhard’s church at Seligenstadt. These letters are an invaluable source for understanding the practice of asylum as it applied not to dramatic political controversies involving the highest echelons of the Frankish elite, but to more quotidian disputes among peasants or between peasants and their lords. Supplicants in these cases were willing to travel considerable distances to claim asylum, and, as I will argue, made creative use of the institution in pursuit of more favorable outcomes to legal disputes. I will also argue that similarities between these letters and roughly contemporary formularies, as well as the circumstances surrounding the survival and transmission of Einhard’s letters, are suggestive of broader applicability than might normally be assumed for such a small corpus.

Sites of Slavery in Frankish Acre
Christopher Herde, The University of Wisconsin–Madison

This paper analyzes the position of Acre as a center of the trade in captives and enslaved people during the period of Frankish occupation. While the practice of capturing enemies or members of other faiths for ransom or enslavement is well-documented in contemporary sources, we know very few specifics about what happened after a person was taken from the battlefield. Further complicating the matter, the line separating a captive held for ransom and a slave held for labor was very thin and frequently only differentiated by the captive’s ultimate fate. One of the few clear delineations between the status of prisoner of war and enslavement was sale in a marketplace. While sources indicate that such sales were a regular occurrence in the Latin east, they record very little about how and where such sales were conducted. This paper attempts to fill this gap by examining Frankish Acre, the largest port in the Kingdom of Jerusalem. It will analyze a range of legal, economic, and geographical sources in conjunction with narrative chronicles and archaeological records in order to identify as much as possible about the location, operation, and conditions of the trade in enslaved people through the city. As this trade occupies
Some Possible Methodological Approaches to the Phenomenon of Monastic Sign Languages
Rauno Alliksaar, University of Tartu

Monastic sign languages were sign languages used in medieval Western Europe in the high and late medieval period. They were mostly used in monasteries following the rule of St. Benedict at times when speaking was forbidden in order to communicate essential information necessary mainly in the refectory and the dormitory but in some cases also regarding liturgical matters. Texts documenting the use of monastic signs (lexicons) have so far mainly been researched only in the context of monastic customs but a closer review of local forms of monastic signs could illustrate international communication in the medieval period. While it is well-known that texts were transported to and copied in various places across Europe, further information could be derived from close readings of monastic sign lexicons, as they have so far not been viewed so much as logically structured visual-kinetic communication systems but as curiosities that emerged in isolated monastic communities. This paper elucidates some possible methodological approaches in order to reach further conclusions regarding communication and transmission of customs and traditions in medieval Europe. First, a linguistic approach could be applied to monastic sign languages. Even though they can be considered 'incomplete' as languages, it is still possible to compare gestural signs of the same meaning in different monasteries and by separating composite gestures into distinct phonemes, a comparison of signs on linguistic grounds becomes viable. Second, a visual semiotic analysis could possibly reveal hidden parallelisms that derive from common iconographical or other pictural sources. Furthermore, much of the research so far focuses on the role of sign languages in monasteries and not so much on the implications of the phenomenon. By tracing its development we can also trace the development of contacts between monasteries in medieval Europe.

Session 2: Global Connections: Real and Imagined
Session Chair: Dane Harrison

The Pillars of Hercules and the End of the World: Medieval Mapping and the Geographic Imaginary
Karen M. Klockner, The Graduate Center, CUNY

The end of the known world was clearly marked on western medieval world maps, or mappae mundi, with two classical columns known as the Pillars of Hercules. How did the cognitive process of mapping overlap with the imaginative process of conceptualizing the boundaries between the known and the unknown? My paper will consider evidence found on western medieval mappae mundi, on Mediterranean sea charts, and on Islamic world maps to investigate how geographic representation overlapped with the geographic imaginary expressed in literature such as Brunetto Latini’s Il Tesoretto (ca.1265), Dante’s Inferno (ca. 1315), and
Christine de Pizan’s *Le Livre du chemin de long estude* (1402-03). While scholarly attention has focused on the representation of Paradise in the east and thus at the top of medieval *mappae mundi*, there is a dearth of literature regarding the geographic point of opposition, the farthest point west shown on most *mappae mundi*: the Pillars of Hercules. A location defined in Greek myth as the place Herakles marked as the end of the world while undertaking his tenth Labor is known today as the Strait of Gibraltar, framed by geological promontories on the Iberian peninsula and on the north African coast. The Strait was both a geographical point of transit and an imaginary one in medieval thought; the Pillars signified a passage from one world to another, but also a destination representing the end of knowledge and a point of no return. By focusing on one geographic site—the Strait of Gibraltar as the visually dramatic juncture between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean—my paper will seek to demonstrate the synchronous relationship between imagination and cognition in medieval mapping.

**(De)Constructing Christian Conques: Islamic Presence in the Shrine of Sainte Foy**  
Kristen N. Racaniello, The Graduate Center, CUNY

From the foundation story of the hermit Dado to the presence of Arabic script on the tympanum and reliquary of Sainte Foy, Islamic materials and iconography shaped the Latin Christian shrine complex in Conques, France. This phenomenon is almost entirely unstudied, seen as a peripheral component of the vibrant medieval shrine site. However, an emphasis on Islamic presence was intrinsic to the success and growing prestige of the shrine of Sainte Foy in Conques during the long twelfth century.

Conques’ Abbey Church is a central monument of French national identity due to its unusually intact treasury and its historiographic status as an important pilgrimage church. However, Islamic presence in such Christian spaces in France has historically been denied by scholars due to pervasive Christiancentric nationalism. Past scholars maintained the notion that Islam was present in Spain but not in France despite numerous extant documents and materials attesting to Christian-Islamic interactions within Capetian regions. Through an examination of the *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis’* foundation and miracle stories concerning the Abbey Church of Conques and its focal reliquary, the Majesty of Sainte Foy, this paper presents the complex role of Muslims as antagonists, foes, prisoners, captors, converts, allies and important revenue sources for a twelfth century shrine in the South of France. The paper will culminate with a discussion of materials that were created by free and enslaved Muslim artisans that can still be found in the shrine complex of Sainte Foy and their erasure in contemporary French medievalism. Islamic presence was a critical component of medieval Conques, boosting the shrine’s visibility and celebrity throughout the Latin Christian world despite the contemporary denial of medieval Muslim histories in France.

**The Geographical and Temporal Scale of Hospital Construction in the Premodern Mediterranean**  
Brittany Forniotis, Duke University

This paper reconsiders the geographical and temporal scale of the architectural history of hospitals in the premodern Mediterranean. I contend that the construction of hospitals was a
significant pan-Mediterranean phenomenon necessitating study in the aggregate. Hospitals—
institutions providing charitable medical care over extended periods of time—were important
spaces in premodern Mediterranean communities. They were constructed on a large scale from
the fourth century to the seventeenth century in the Levant, Anatolia, North Africa, and Southern
Europe by patrons providing for the physical and spiritual wellbeing of their communities.
Hospitals maintained socially organized wards; functional facilities like pharmacies, baths, and
lavatories; and trained staff to care for patients. Hospitals were the center of large regional
networks attracting patients and staff alike. Across the diverse cultures of the region,
Mediterranean hospitals embodied a shared sense of communal welfare in their operation and
design. These hospitals constitute a group in their architectural form, approach to medical care,
and their facilitation of the community. However, previous scholarship separates this history into
two narratives, European and Islamic, creating a false binary between the inhabitants of
geographic continent of Europe and the diverse Muslim communities in the premodern
Mediterranean. It also negates earlier work establishing the connectedness of the region prior to
modernity and its function as a unit of study. I bring together these divergent historiographies to
chart a holistic history of hospital architecture. With the help of a growing database in which I
have already documented over 250 hospitals operating in the premodern Mediterranean, I use
ArcGIS, a geographic information system, to visualize and analyze the spatial and temporal
relationships between hospitals. Visualizations of the growth of hospitals across the region
evinces the broad nature of their significance to the Mediterranean built environment and the
human health experience.

Session 3: The Body and Theology
Session Chair: Cameron McConnell

Ritual Impurity and Women’s Liturgical Participation among Medieval Copts
Arsany Paul, University of Notre Dame

The persistent taboo restricting women from receiving communion during menstruation has received significant attention by scholars of Late Antiquity as well as by those exploring Coptic history and theology. In these studies, the principal emphasis has been on ancient Alexandrian canons and what they say about early Christian perceptions of the female body and ritual life. Yet, the medieval Coptic views on this issue are virtually unknown, since they are difficult to access and have remained largely untranslated and unpublished. This paper fills this scholarly gap by offering the first English translations of three authoritative medieval Egyptian sources relevant to the topic of ritual im/purity, and by drawing some preliminary conclusions based on these sources.

In his virtually unknown work The Canons of Ibn Nānā, the eleventh-century canonist and commentator Abū Ṣulḥ ibn Nānā is critical of the practice of abstaining from the eucharist due to menstruation, insisting that it adheres to those Jewish norms no longer considered relevant to the Christian community. While Mīkhāʾīl (d. 1208), the metropolitan of Dumyāṭ, does incorporate the early Alexandrian regulations in his canonical compendium, enough parallel evidence suggests that these practices were not considered normative in thirteenth century Egypt. Lastly, in his Homily on the Oblation, the fourteenth-century liturgical commentator Yūḥannā
ibn Sabbā‘ gives no attention to ritual purity regulations but rather insists that the only justified reason for eucharistic abstention is one based on moral grounds.

When brought together, these Arabic Christian sources seem to suggest that the medieval Coptic church steered away from early Egyptian notions of ritual im/purity and women’s bodily fluxes. They thus pave the way for further discussions and provide a new vantage point on this topic in the Coptic Church then and now.

Seeing, Tasting, and Touching: Sensing the Holy Pregnant Body in the Later Middle Ages
Claire Kilgore, The University of Wisconsin-Madison

The pregnant body in the Middle Ages posed a sensorial mystery to lay and religious men and women seeking to comprehend it and its anatomical and theological secrets. Modern understandings of the pregnant body are sensorially intimate due to the use of ultrasound technology that not only visually reveals two- and three-dimensional images of the occupied womb but also audibly conveys bodily processes such as cardiac rhythm. While these technologies postdate the Middle Ages, medieval individuals used a variety of sensorial methods to interact with the pregnant body. Monastic devotional culture optically revealed the fetal interaction of Jesus and John the Baptist as documented in the Visitation sequence, as in the fourteenth-century rock crystal embellished sculpture group from the Dominican convent at Katharinental and the clay infants applied to a fifteenth-century sandstone Visitation from the Niedernburg convent in Passau. Lay-facing altarpieces, such as the Life of Mary altarpiece in Cologne’s Church of the Holy Virgins, showcased the haptic perception of the Visitation as felt by Mary and Elizabeth. Additionally, pregnant women would consume foods imprinted with devotional images and symbols to aid in their labor and delivery. Scholarship primarily discusses these phenomena within the separate physical and spiritual realms of the cloister, church, or childbirth chamber. This paper employs a phenomenological lens to re-examine these lay and ecclesiastical images as existing in both physical and spiritual settings and communicating both medical and theological understandings of the body. The confluence of these multisensory methods of interaction with the medieval pregnant body reveals the pregnant body as a multivalent object of curiosity and devotion. I argue that synesthetic perceptions of the medieval pregnant body functioned as therapeutic agents for body and soul.

Holy Healing: English Alabaster St. John’s Heads (C. 1430–1550) and Remedial Ingestion
Rebekkah Hart, University of California Riverside

“Powder of it is said to have done great service to sore eyes, especially where there was a white speck” reads a curious inscription from 1746 on the reverse of an English alabaster carving from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. This tablet, held in the Ashmolean Museum, is one of many still extant English alabaster tablets made in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that depict the decapitated head of St. John the Baptist on a charger. However, rough cuts and irregular scrapes have reduced this tablet to a mere fragment — the result of a destructive phenomenon linked with curative properties attributed to both alabaster and to holy medieval Sculpture.

Some questions central to my investigation address alabaster’s purported healing usage:
What precisely is the nature of alabaster’s association with healing? How might healing associations come to bear on the stone’s role as a favored sculptural material in the medieval and early modern periods?

This paper reveals that alabaster has long been attributed with curative powers and that these associations were alive and well in medieval and early modern England at the height of the English alabaster trade. I suggest that the popular English St. John’s heads’ distinct iconographical emphasis on eucharistic consumption critically intersects with alabaster’s medicinal associations, making alabaster a particularly symbolic material for the genre. Furthermore, the relation between the specific iconography and the exclusivity of alabaster as material may be explained by shared consumptive associations that come together in the form of St. John’s heads to produce new meaning about the immediacy of eucharistic consumption. Lastly, I suggest that the physical scraping of alabaster from devotional sculpture for its curative abilities fits within an established tradition of consuming material such as dirt and powder from such sculpture, relics, and images.

Royal Bodies and the Las Huelgas Deposition
Anabelle Gambert-Jouan, Yale University

Polychrome multi-figured wood sculpture groups of Christ’s Deposition from the Cross enlivened the interiors of churches of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas throughout the Middles Ages. Many Depositions were located in smaller rural churches or urban cathedrals and were intended for lay audiences. By comparison, the late thirteenth-century Deposition from the church of the Real Monasterio de Santa María la Real de las Huelgas, near Burgos in Spain, offers a unique perspective. The extraordinary significance of Las Huelgas in medieval history attests to the relevance of Deposition sculptures even among elite religious communities. Yet, despite the extensive literature on Las Huelgas, the fact that the larger-than-life-size bodies of the Deposition group enact the narrative of Christ’s death and burial in the nuns’ choir in the immediate vicinity of medieval royal tombs has not been discussed.

This paper considers the Las Huelgas Deposition as an artistic object and as a functional tool for devotion, exploring ways in which the sculpture group responded to and endowed meaning upon its environment. Recent scholarship has shown that from the mid-thirteenth century, a renewed emphasis was placed on honouring the memory of the founders of the abbey, especially King Alfonso VIII of Castile. Paying particular attention to the sculptures’ polychromy, I will consider how the Deposition sculptures participated in this commemorative process. Finally, a comparison of the sculptures’ painted garments with the luxury medieval textiles from the Las Huelgas tombs, now in the Museo de Telas Medievales in Burgos, will further the connection between the sculpted bodies of the Deposition group and the physical bodies of the interred royals and their family members.

FRIDAY

Session 4: Experiencing the Medieval Landscape
Session Chair: Vivian Lewis
The biblical story of Noah was well known in late medieval English iconography, appearing frequently in striking stained glass windows and elaborate, emotional manuscript illuminations. It was also one of the few Old Testament stories to be found in three extant late medieval English Cycle Plays—Chester, York, and Towneley. Performed on the occasion of Corpus Christi in civic productions, the late medieval Noah plays in these three Cycles dramatized the events of the biblical Flood story and added medieval details, most notably the trenchant, truculent character of Uxor Noe and her female companions, or Gossips. Instead of following God’s command to board the ark with her husband, like the animals do in two-by-two formation, Uxor argues that her place is on land with her Good Gossips, whom she is willing to follow to her death. Layered on top of the recusant choice to disobey God’s command is Uxor and her Gossips’ willingness to defy social norms, exemplified especially in the defiant drinking song they sing towards the end of the Chester play. In their resistance and refusal, Uxor and her Gossips stand together as an antagonistic force for change in the midst of rising floodwaters around them.

The importance of this story in the medieval biblical narrative and its cosmic proportions suggest several questions. What sort of ecological framework did the Noah pageants put forth for their medieval audiences? What image of nature would an audience have walked away with? And how did the plays conceive of a woman’s role in the midst of this ecological disaster? Through a comparative, ecofeminist look at Uxor and her Gossips, this paper will argue that these three plays enacted a redefinition of human relationships, thereby reinterpreting what it could mean to interact with the wildness of God and nature, as represented by the Flood.

The elaborate mid-meal entertainments known as entremets have been thoroughly mined for their political significance by cultural historians past and present, but seldom analyzed from a material perspective. This is partly because very few entremets have survived to the present day. To a certain extent, lack of physical contact with ephemeral material defines both the object and the methodology for analysis of entremets. Evidence for entremets include not only the narrative accounts often produced on behalf of the courts in question, but also the accounts drawn up by the various household offices in order to track the remuneration of artisanal laborers employed to create the ephemeral performance pieces and art objects.

By combining literary approaches to narrative accounts of medieval feasts with the rich font of archival documents from the staging of several different elite banquets throughout the medieval world, in this paper I explore how historians can grasp the material components of immaterial entremets through ekphrastic analysis of both types of sources. Treating narrative
accounts of medieval feasts as ekphrastic permits not only the imaginative reconstitution of entremets as material objects, but also scholarly illumination of the competing goals of those collaborating behind the scenes to create these intentionally ephemeral performances of people and things alike. The marked incongruity of the surviving sources—with political rhetoric eliding utilitarian practicalities in the narrative accounts, and the paradigmatic utilitarian practicality of labor compensation defining the household accounts—provides the beginnings of an answer to the twin questions: what do we as historians do when studying material culture that by design has not survived? And how do we glimpse those without voice in either the written or material records?

Camila Marcone, Yale University

Accurate information affords a successful hunt. To encounter and bag specific game requires knowledge of its range, behaviors, and seasons of peak activity. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in conjunction with local authorities, closely monitors these patterns to precisely define sustainable hunting seasons for each game animal. Medieval hunters living in fourteenth-century Castile were likewise attuned to how seasonal changes affected their marks’ behavior and consequently the schedule of their hunts. Such expertise is properly displayed in Libro de la montería [Book on hunting]. Written in medieval Spanish, this hunting treatise, completed around 1350 under the direction of King Alfonso XI of Castile (1312–1350), is at once a practical manual for hunters from the nobility (monteros) and a comprehensive topographical survey of the 1560 hunting grounds (montes) that belonged to the Crown of Castile in the mid-fourteenth century. The survey or catalog sets Libro de la montería apart from other medieval hunting manuals. Each entry lists the type of game found at that location as well as the season(s) in which the game is most abundant, usually summer (verano) or winter (yuerno). Nevertheless, approximately 10% of the entries describe the seasons with non-standard expressions such as “season of acorns” (tiempo de la bellota) or “season of beehives” (tiempo de las colmenas). In this paper I explore the origins and meanings of these expressions through literary sources, local ordinances concerning agricultural activity, and a study of their geographical distribution throughout the Iberian Peninsula as recorded in Libro de la montería. I argue that these non-standard expressions reflect local agricultural practices rather than climate differences across the peninsula. Moreover, in light of prior research on how Libro de la montería was compiled, the non-standard expressions gesture at moments of unexplored collaboration between the royal huntsmen and local “men of the land” or omnes de la tierra.

Taking a Closer Look at a Group of Late Medieval Prayer Nuts with the “Boxwood Project”
Samantha Horton, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Out of the approximately sixty-five prayer nuts with Gothic tracery that survive today, eleven have the same two inscriptions around their exteriors—levemus corda nostra cum manibus ad dominum in coelos (Lamentations 3:41) and attendite et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus
Lamentations 1:12)—and highly complex Crucifixion iconography at their centers that have never been studied as a group before. The Boxwood Project, a 2016 website that catalogued and digitized all known boxwood carvings with high-quality images and magnification tools, not only facilitated close-looking at individual details but also comprehensive comparisons across the whole that allowed for this new group to be identified. This paper performs a close-examination of this group’s visual and textual evidence, from their exterior designs to their interior contents, to address how these objects could have been used as personal devotional tools to meditate on the Passion. It argues that the exterior inscriptions play a key role in this understanding: the inscriptions guide the users’ experience from the beginning, encouraging them to think of the prayer nuts lifted up in their hands as metaphorical representations of their own hearts and preparing them to both see with their eyes and imagine with their minds the Passion scenes inside. The Crucifixion scenes, in particular, force the users to engage with the limits of their vision and activate their imagination as they strain to see the tiny details and peripheral figures, which through their associated actions and stories would also remind the users to remain alert in their meditation and respond to Christ’s sacrifice with the proper sorrow and reverence. Coming in the wake of the pandemic museum closures and limited access to objects, this paper demonstrates the importance of digitization projects not only to benefit the general public but also to advance significant scholarly research.

Session 5: Movement and Melody in the Medieval World
Session Chair: Maura Sugg

Ariela Algaze, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

Near the end of the seventh century, Pope Sergius I (r. 687-701) established four new penitential processions to commemorate the Mother of God. In this conference paper, I explore the visual culture and textual evidence of the Procession of the Assumption in medieval Rome, which would be practiced continuously on the night before August 15th for almost a millennium, until the procession was cancelled by Pope Pius V in 1566. Through their urban staging, these Marian processions constructed historical and biblical typologies as they wended their way from the extant sites of classical Rome up the Esquiline Hill to Santa Maria Maggiore in medieval Rome, where, beginning in the eighth century, the achiropita of Christ (held in the Sancta Sanctorum in the Lateran) would meet the Salus Populi Romani (an icon of the Virgin purportedly painted by Saint Luke) on the Feast of the Assumption. The meeting of these two icons became, in effect, the reenactment of the meeting of the Mary and Christ in heaven after the Assumption of the Virgin.

Bridging art history, liturgy studies, and performance studies, this paper charts the physical movement of the procession through urban space and reconstructs the anagogical movement of the participants in this procession as mediated both through images and the liturgy. The vast lacunae in surviving medieval visual and liturgical evidence represents an inherent challenge to working with this material. Modern scholars, therefore, must use their imagination in attempting to recapture the emotional affect these images and spaces might have held in the
eyes of Roman witnesses and participants in medieval processions. In so doing, I find that the relationship between liturgy and theology of the Assumption Mary was iterative: each influenced and was influenced by the other and that the liturgy of the Assumption was inextricably embedded in — and reinforced by — the urban layout, architecture, and visual programs of Rome itself.

**Donning Melodies, Dawning Awareness: Intermelodicity and Meaning in the Alba Tradition**

Anya B. Wilkening, Columbia University in the City of New York

The practice of contrafacture – the retexting of a melody – generates intriguing chains of associations. In two twelfth-century troubadour songs (Giraut de Bornelh’s *Reis glorios* and Cadenet’s *Sanc fuy bela ni prezada*), the singer laments that the coming of the dawn heralds the lover’s separation from the beloved. In a thirteenth-century Catalan contrafact of Cadenet’s melody, the speaker praises the Virgin Mary, while in a fourteenth-century contrafact of Giraut’s melody, the dominant voices seek to convince their Christian relation to give up her faith. These otherwise quite disparate songs are connected by their shared motivic references, which echo earlier Marian liturgical and vernacular devotional songs. I argue that deeply embedded and widely known sonic associations shaped the interpretation of these songs; the melodies are thus a latent yet potent means of communication and signification.

My close reading of this constellation of songs places their texts in the context of the dawn song tradition and paraliturgical practices, as well as situating the melodies in relation to their historical predecessors. I will then consider the unique mobility of song, which traverses linguistic and temporal boundaries; contrafacture and other practices of melodic borrowing transcend these borders because their signification operates by means of musical connections. The paper addresses the role that melody plays in creating and conveying meaning, and complicates traditional notions of intermelodicity and authorship in the medieval monophonic song repertoire.

**The Challenges of Medieval German Musicking**

Anna O’Connell, Case Western Reserve University

This lecture-performance will present works from the *Spruchsang* repertoire while investigating the relationship between the music of Heinrich von Meissen, called Frauenlob (d. 1318), and his imitators to provide both a performance practice and a new perspective of medieval Germanic monophonic song. Structures of nationalism have tended to guide our musicking with medieval German lyric verse, whether through the works of Richard Wagner, Carl Orff, or the creation of musical canon; even the unsuspecting Walther von der Vogelweide, whose one example of *Minnesang* with extant music, *Palestinalied*, has caught the eye of members of the alt-right movement throughout the world.

By contrast, the music of Frauenlob has hardly been performed: a combination of his expressive, rich poetry with themes in support of “women” (his moniker means “In Praise of Women”), and the genres in which he writes and for which music is still extant were perhaps interesting to nineteenth century dramaturgs, poets, and musicologists, but did not capture the
imagination of the nationalist movement. Spruchsang, the art of creating melodies and strict poetic forms for repetition in subsequent strophes, were largely miscategorized as Meistersang, which was thought to be less inspired than Minnesang. While the work of compiling Frauenlob’s music and texts has been largely completed (Brunner and Stackmann, 2010; Stackmann and Bertau 1981-2000), interpreting Spruchsang melodies for performance provides a unique opportunity not only to investigate a canonically unexplored repertoire, but also to shed new light on the genres which have been held captive to a prevailing narrative.

Session 6: Old Books, New Readings
Session Chair: Katelyn Jones

How to Do the History of Persianate Homoerotic Iconography? Male Intimacy in Illuminated Manuscripts of Sa’adi’s Gulistan
Gilad BenDavid, The Graduate Center, CUNY

The Gulistan (Rose Garden) is a celebrated masterpiece of Persian medieval literature, written by the Sufi poet Sa’adi Shirazi (ca 1210 – 1291). Since its compilation in 1258, the Gulistan had been circulating throughout the Persinate world, often in illuminated manuscripts. This paper examines the homoeroticism of Sa’adi’s poems and their illuminations, focusing on examples from Timurid and Safavid Iran and Mughal India. In the Gulistan miniatures discussed in this paper, the erotic undertone is hardly detected at first glance. The paper first explores how miniaturists signify homoerotic desire without depicting direct physical touching. It then discerns how each miniature suggests a different interpretation of Sa’adi’s text. Building on David Halperin’s analysis of the erotics of male hierarchy in Greek pederasty, the paper argues that the miniatures display a hierarchic relationship between a beautiful beardless boy (the beloved) and an older Sufi mystic man (the lover). I stress that the Persian manuscripts’ iconography of erotic hierarchy suggests a conceptualization of homoeroticism as an integral part of Sufi mysticism where the sight of a boy’s physical beauty is deemed to provoke an encounter with the divine. Finally, the paper surveys a Mughal miniature depiction of the Gulistan scene, where Sa’adi’s beloved is depicted as a bearded man rather than a boy. I argue the miniature challenges the notion of the homoerotic relationship as a master-novice hierarchy. As both men seem to share age and rank, the homoerotic tension is signified through the intimacy of sameness rather than the erotization of difference.

Teenagers at Tintagel: Female Childhood and Adolescence in Chrétien de Troyes’ Conte du Graal
Samantha (Sami) Olive, University of Toronto

The Tintagel episode of Chrétien de Troyes’ Conte du Graal features a young girl – the daughter of the lord of Tintagel, known only as “the girl with the small sleeves” – who successfully requests that Gawain ride as her champion in a joust organized by her ill-mannered older sister. Until recently, analyses of this episode have focused on the relationship between the
girl with the small sleeves and Gawain. Rarely do they center on the conflict between this petite protagonist and her older sibling, which serves as the episode’s backdrop.

This paper provides a deeper analysis of this latter aspect of the Tintagel arc. Specifically, I will first compare the depiction of the girl with the small sleeves to representations of the puer senex (wise child) and the nice (simpleton), a dichotomy common to child characters in the medieval French epic and romance traditions. Furthermore, I will set the girl with the small sleeves and her sister against other high-medieval descriptions of childhood and adolescence, such as Guibert of Nogent’s De vita sua, Philippe of Novara’s Les quatre âges de l’homme and Aldobrandino of Siena’s Régime du corps.

From the analytical angles mentioned above, I argue that the clash between the Tintagel sisters represents more than a well-observed case of sibling rivalry. The Conte du Graal’s Tintagel episode offers a re-writing of character types common to French romance. Neither puella senex nor nice, the girl with the small sleeves resembles more closely a “normal” child. Neither child nor adult, the older sister echoes what might have been the 12th-century idea of an adolescent. These depictions suggest an effort on the part of Chrétien de Troyes to write realistic child and adolescent characters, rather than resorting to the tropes typical of his genre.

**SATURDAY**

**Session 7: Modes of Power: Medieval Gender Construction and Representation**

**Session Chair: Maura Sugg**

**Equestrian Imagery and the Seal of Joanna de Stuteville**

Wren Biszewski Eber, The Courtauld Institute of Art

In the mid-13th century there appeared a new type of woman’s seal; a small group of Anglo-Norman noble women chose seals depicting them on horseback. While this may seem of little import, prior to the emergence of this small group only men were depicted on horseback, while women’s seals depicted them standing, holding emblems of their sex. In his 1275 treatise Summa de arte prosandi, Conrad of Mure described how important it was that the iconography of seals accurately reflect the people those seals represented. It can be extracted then, that the images displayed on seals convey something about the identity of the sealer and the role they played in their society. What then, might this new equestrian iconography tell us about the women who chose it?

By examining these seals, particularly a surviving example from Joanna de Stuteville dating to between 1266 and 1276, as well as the documents to which they were attached, this paper questions the ways existing iconography was adopted and adapted by these women to signify their identity. While it would be tempting to reduce this choice to a simple desire to borrow from masculine modes of signification, a close reading of these female seals in comparison to their male counterparts reveals that the reality was much more complex. The iconography of seals was not developed in isolation, but rather in response to the wider culture. In order to satisfactorily discuss the emergence of this seal type, its iconography must be considered within the broader context of women’s equestrian iconography in visual and literary culture of the period.
Portraits of Hripsime: Examining the Iconographic Relationship between Trdat and Hripsime
Lauren Onel, University of Chicago Divinity School

Hripsime looms large within the narrative of the conversion of Armenia to Christianity. A strikingly beautiful virgin who persevered in her faith and defended her vows to Christ against two kings who sought to marry her—Diocletian of Rome and Trdat III of Armenia—Hripsime indirectly caused the statewide conversion of Armenia to Christianity. This paper will examine two portraits of Hripsime in differing mediums: her literary portrait in the History of St. Gregory and the Conversion of Armenia by Agathangelos, and an embroidered banner of Hripsime with Gregory the Illuminator and King Trdat III from 1448. Each of these objects highlights a different aspect the importance of Hripsime to Female devotion in Armenian Christianity. Due to evolving views on gender and martyrdom and the fluid language of Christian iconography, the relationship of Trdat and Hripsime is reframed depending on what the author or artist wants to emphasize. The earliest depictions of Hripsime focus on glorifying the act of martyrdom, then, later, the woman herself. Thus, her martyrdom and the bodily harm that Trdat caused is central to the image of Hripsime. However, when the three figures of Hripsime, Trdat III, and Gregory the Illuminator are shown together, the focus shifts from the individual to the universal. Rather than glorify Hripsime through the specific actions that comprise her martyrdom, the emphasis instead is on the historicity of Armenian Christianity through the assertion of a uniquely Armenian trinity.

Queer Vikings and Trans Magic
Hero Lyram Morrison, University of New Mexico

With the growing appropriation of the Middle Ages—and especially the Viking Age—by hate groups, scholarship countering violent interpretations of the Viking Middle Ages is needed now more than ever. Popular conceptions of the Vikings paint them as hypermasculine and warlike with a rigid sexual and gender binary. This paper seeks to offer an alternative perspective on the sex and gender expectations of medieval Scandinavia. This work is framed through the budding field of trans history as popularized by C. Riley Snorton, M.W. Bychowski and Dorothy Kim, and uses literary myth histories in comparison with Icelandic and Norwegian law codes to analyze gender nonconformity and gender transformation in the Icelandic tradition. I suggest that through the transformative properties of Viking magic seiðr, the binary between masculine and feminine becomes a blurred, queered spectrum. Figures like Freyja, Odin, Loki, and Unnr the Deep-Minded demonstrate this type of gender queering through the power and reputation they gain or lose in practicing magic. Above all, this paper argues for a queer, trans perspective on medieval history which would not only establish a greater understanding of the gender structures of medieval Scandinavia, but emphasize the necessity for queer and trans scholars in medieval studies.

Session 8: International Politics and Liturgy
Dynamics of Power in Byzantine Syria: Liturgical Byzantinization in the Syriac Baptismal Ordo Attributed to Basil
Paul Joseph Elhallal, University of Notre Dame

This paper examines the dynamics of power and influence between the Constantinopolitan and Syrian Churches from the 10th- to 13th-centuries through a study of Syrian Melkite practices of baptism and anointing. After the Byzantine reconquest of Antioch in 969, the churches allied with the Byzantine emperor, called Melkites, began to undergo a process of “liturgical Byzantinization” in which they gradually adopted the liturgical characteristics and practices of Constantinople. While the existence of Byzantinization in Melkite Syria is well-attested, the nature of the interaction between Constantinople and its Syrian peripheries is unclear. Did the Constantinopolitan church impose liturgical directives on the churches in the peripheries, or did these churches voluntarily adopt Constantinopolitan practices on their own? If the latter, what might have driven them to do so?

The application of comparative liturgiological methods to the Syrian Melkite manuscript tradition provides insight into this relationship. This paper studies the baptismal rites in seven untranslated Syriac liturgical manuscripts of Melkite provenance from the 10th- to 13th-centuries. Examining the rites of anointing and baptism in these manuscripts, I identify the varied ways in which communities adopted and retained different Constantinopolitan and Syrian practices. I then compare these findings with data from contemporary Constantinopolitan and non-Chalcedonian sources, arguing that the traditionally Syrian theologies of Christian initiation remained operative even in some of the most Byzantinized manuscripts. I thus contend that the process of liturgical Byzantinization in Melkite Syria was not a systematic exercise of coercive power but rather occurred as a process of adoption from below. I conclude with a discussion of the significance of these findings with regard to the power dynamics between Constantinople and Melkite Syria. These findings provide insight into the ecclesiastical governance of Byzantine Syria and thereby fill a significant lacuna in scholarship on the Byzantine peripheries in the Middle Ages.

Reception (Halls) of the First Crusade: Assessing Komnenian Foreign Policy in 1096-1097
Tiffany VanWinkoop, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Alexios I Komnenos, the eleventh-century ruler of the Medieval Roman Empire erroneously called “Byzantium”, believing the encroaching armies of the First Crusade had their ambitions set on capturing Constantinople, set about an intentional policy of divide and placate. Despite using the historically effective tactic of appeasement found in the tenth-century handbook *De Administrando Imperio*, the Crusaders were resistant to Alexios’ efforts. My paper explores the tension between Medieval Romans and Crusaders during the arrival of the armies of the First Crusade to Constantinople in the winter and spring of 1096-1097. In particular, my paper considers Alexios I Komnenos’ motivations for utilizing the Palace of Blachernai, located at the northeastern corner of the city, to greet the incoming crusader forces rather than the Great Palace, situated in traditional epicentre of Constantinople. Furthermore, I argue that in using the
Palace of Blachernai, Alexios inadvertently weakened an already-fragile image of Medieval Rome in the eyes of the arriving Crusaders.

The transition from the Great Palace to the Palace of Blachernai is often cited as a foregone conclusion – particularly since the Palace of Blachernai became the administrative centre after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261. This palatial transition is thought to naturally follow wider bureaucratic and administrative changes which the Komnenians enacted during their century-long dynasty. However, this perspective fails to consider the Constantinopolitan court as a place of political memory independent from the whims of the reigning monarch. By contrasting successful applications of De Administrando Imperio in the Great Palace against scenes of Crusader subversion within the Palace of Blachernai in 1096-1097, this paper highlights how politics were performed in the Medieval Roman Empire: the emperor was only one actor in a wider polity of politically engaged subjects.

An Unpublished Sixteenth-Century Armenian Gospel Book from Sanahin Monastery
Claudia Haines, Tufts University

As Dickran Kouymjian has pointed out, “the term ‘archaeology of the book’ has become a catch phrase to describe the study of manuscripts as physical objects.” Indeed, codicological research—which concerns itself with such factors as the binding, organization, and preservation of codices, among other qualities—is not unlike archaeology in its close attention to the physicality of historical artifacts, and has proven equally as important as investigations into codices’ contents and context, particularly in the context of medieval illuminated manuscripts. This paper, tentatively titled “An Unpublished Sixteenth-Century Armenian Gospel Book from Sanahin Monastery,” offers the first comprehensive codicological and art historical study of an illuminated Armenian Gospel Book of 1504 (Andover-Harvard Theological Library, MS 24).

Based on conclusions drawn from several hands-on object handling sessions and thorough secondary source research, this paper presents an in-depth codicological examination of MS 24, detailing the condition of its covers and binding, the organization and materiality of its pages, the character of its written text, the state of its preservation, and more. The paper also translates and examines the manuscript’s extensive Armenian colophon, a detailed inscription at the conclusion of the manuscript which preserves crucial information about the identity of its scribe, Megerdich, his associates, and the turbulent historical context in which he lived. Finally, this paper engages in a brief comparative iconographic analysis of MS 24’s three full-page miniatures and abundant marginalia. Ultimately, “An Unpublished Sixteenth-Century Armenian Gospel Book from Sanahin Monastery” hopes to offer a fascinating but long-neglected medieval Armenian manuscript the scholarly attention it deserves.

Session 9: The Speaking Page
Session Chair: Luke Hester

Silky Sinew and Sutured Skin: Embroidered Manuscript Repairs in the High Middle Ages,
Emilela Thomas-Adams, The Ohio State University
An understudied element of medieval manuscript repair and decoration is the use of silk embroidery, a tradition that developed in Switzerland and Germany in the twelfth century. Largely overlooked by art historians, embroidered repairs have been primarily segregated to discussions of conservation, leading to a gap in scholarship on their place within high-medieval devotional practice and materiality.

The process of making parchment is a bloody and arduous one. After an animal is slaughtered, the skin is removed and prepared. This entails removing the remaining flesh and hair from the hide, which is then stretched out on a wooden frame to dry while it is still wet and pliable. However, skin has a propensity to rip. Weaknesses in the skin eventually evolve into small holes or rips that will continually expand as the skin is stretched. Parchment-makers became adept at masking these imperfections, but at times accentuated the gaps with silk embellishments. This paper places medieval embroidered repairs in dialogue with concurrent manuscript practices, such as silk curtains, sewn-in badges, and other paratexts to suggest ways in which the study of codex-based textile decoration can contribute to a more complex understanding of the hermeneutics of embodiment.

To fully understand the symbolic implications of embroidered manuscript decoration, the practice must be considered within the larger theological tradition of associating Christ’s body with codices. For a medieval viewer, the making and contents of a manuscript were inherently intertwined with the metaphor of “Christ-as-book.” The material of manuscripts, being vellum or parchment, imbued the metaphor with a tangible realness and the preparing of parchment was seen as analogous to the crucifixion. This study considers how the elevation of, and care for perforations in parchment served as a form of affective engagement with the Holy Wounds of Christ. With each stab of her needle through the surface of the page, the embroiderer would reenact the process of the Passion.

Towards a Queer Reading of the canso of Bietris de Roman
Diana Myers, University of Oxford

Most contemporary scholarly readings of the sole canso (lyric poem) attributed to the 13th century Occitan poet known to us as Bietris de Roman, “Na Maria pretz e fina valors,” note right away the possibility of the poem being lesbian in nature, yet almost as swiftly dismiss such a reading. It is the only poem in the troubadour corpus to be addressed from one woman to another, but, some say, claiming it as lesbian is nevertheless impossible to do on the basis of the shaky manuscript evidence, and furthermore would not reflect the actual world of the troubadours. But what would our study of these poems gain if we accepted that the initial impulse to read Bietris’ work as lesbian is a valid one? What might we learn about ourselves as contemporary queer readers? What might we learn about the queer nature of the thirteenth century? In this paper, I offer a reading of the poem as an expression of lesbian desire in order to situate it within theories of queerness that seek to understand the contemporary wish of queer readers to find themselves in history. Drawing on the work of Carolyn Dinshaw and Anna Wilson, I then offer a hermeneutics in which affective engagement with a text is prioritized over an approach that privileges more quantifiable relationships between authors and texts. I argue that this impulse to read Bietris’ work “queerly” and “affectively” might give us a new way to view the on-going scholarly debate over what the figure of the trobairitz (female troubadour) is doing in adopting for herself the poetic forms and strategies of the male troubadours. By reading
this poetic corpus with an affective approach, we can think more broadly about the relationships that *trobairitz* and troubadours might have had with each other in thirteenth-century France.

"There will be signs in the sun": Illuminating the Apocalypse of Hildegard of Bingen's Homilies for the First Sunday of Advent
Theresa Rice, University of Notre Dame

Among her many identities--abbess, medicinal writer, visionary author, composer--Hildegard of Bingen (1098 - 1179) won greatest contemporary renown for her predictions of the end times. As a woman with harsh critiques of the Church, her identity as prophet and visionary offered both legitimation and protection--and her visionary predictions of the end-times both appealed to contemporary imaginations and illuminated a strand of Christian thought stemming from the very beginnings of Christianity. Yet insufficient attention has been paid to the pastoral context in which Hildegard operates as abbess of a Benedictine community, which grounds and nuances her transformation of apocalyptic themes into the call for individual repentance. Thus, in this paper, I explore Hildegard’s central apocalyptic concerns through several of her homilies on Luke 21:25-33, an explicit Gospel prediction of the end-times which Hildegard would have preached each year in the liturgical season of Advent.

Two key themes emerge from reading Hildegard’s apocalyptic thought in these homilies: first, her intimate familiarity with the prayers, liturgical seasons, and music of the Christian liturgy, woven into all of her writings. This liturgical context illuminates and anchors her apocalyptic critique of ecclesial corruption, offering continuity with the wider Christian tradition. Secondly, the homiletic genre itself emphasizes Hildegard’s role within the established church she critiques, as abbess of Benedictine community. This pastoral role as leader of her community explains her ultimate focus on the individual soul, a focus which anchors all of her writings. Ultimately, Hildegard’s allegorical exegesis of this particular Scriptural text in her homilies illustrates the rich liturgical imagination underlying her understanding not only of the anticipated end times, but of the ultimate drama of each Christian life in the face of evil and death.