

# The Medieval Magazine

Volume 3 Number 2

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Sunny Barcelona**

**A spin on the ice**

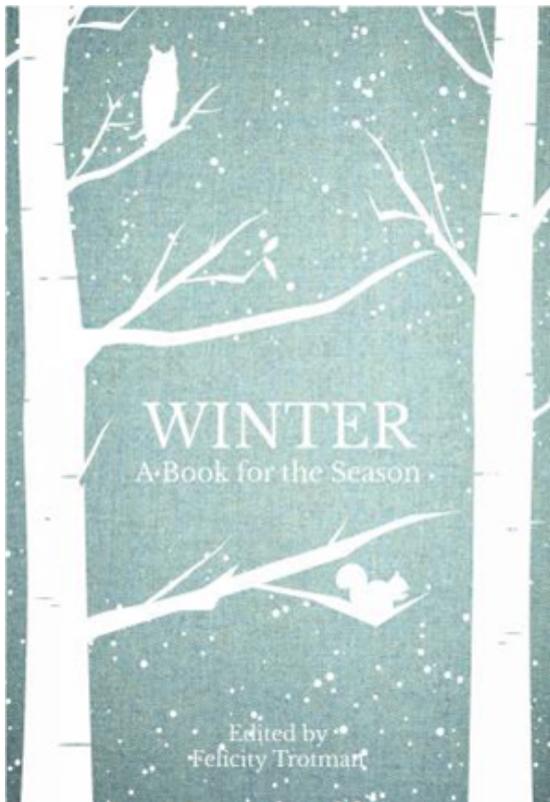
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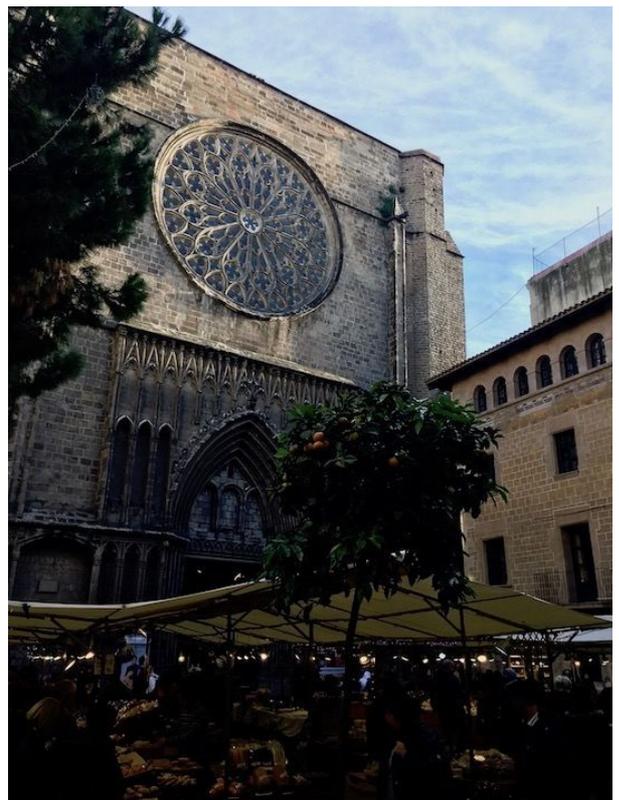
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### THE MEDIEVAL MAGAZINE

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Cover Photo Credit: *15th century fireplace at the Cluny Palace, Paris, France. Photo by D. Trynoski*

# BRRR! Baby It's Cold Outside

One of my favourite winter songs is Frank Sinatra's 1949 ditty, with Dorothy Kirsten, "*Baby It's Cold Outside*." While I'm sitting at home, looking out my window at the rain in London, it certainly doesn't feel terribly wintry right now. However, I grew up in Canada, and spent many years seeing deep snowfalls, and experienced temperatures that dipped well into the frigid minuses. I can't complain, I had electricity, heat, food and warm clothing.

But what was winter like for medieval people? We romanticize winters of the past with cozy images of roaring fires, families laughing and sipping ale, while a stew bubbles away over the hearth. This wasn't the reality for most people hundreds of years ago,, it was a lot less "**Hygge**" than that.

In this issue, we look at winter in the Middle Ages, and how people survived, the stories they shared, and their traditions. We hope this issue carries you through the depths of this icy season. In the meantime, I leave you with that favourite ditty of mine...Wherever you're reading this, stay warm, because,, baby, it's cold outside!

Sandra & Dani



Baby It's Cold Outside - Frank Sinatra and Dorothy Kirsten. 1949 words and music by Frank Loesser.

## **Sandra Alvarez**

Sandra is the co-founder and editor of Medievalists.net, and The Medieval Magazine. Sandra has a Hon. B. A. from the University of Toronto in Medieval Studies, & a diploma in Human Resources from George Brown College. She is a content writer for a digital marketing agency & lives in London, England with her Jack Russell Terrier, Buffy. When she's not doing something medieval, she can be found with her nose in a book, attempting to learn 3 languages, & planning her next adventure. You can follow her on Twitter @mediaevalgirl or check out her blog Mediaevalgirl.com.



## **Danielle (Dani) Trynoski**

Danielle earned her MA in Medieval Archaeology at the University of York in England. She is passionate about "the stuff" beyond the text of primary sources, & how modern people engage with medieval culture. When she's not visiting museums and historical sites, she's riding horses, reading about Vikings, or making loose leaf tea in a French Press. She currently lives in southern California and manages CuratoryStory.com. She is a contributor to Medievalists.net & editor at The Medieval Magazine. You can follow Dani on Twitter: @MissDaniTryn.



## **Danièle Cybulskie**

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## **Peter Konieczny**

Along with being a co-founder and contributor at Medievalists.net, Peter is the editor of Medieval Warfare Magazine, and the web admin at De Re Militari: The Society for Medieval Military History. He has been working to spread knowledge about the Middle Ages online for over 15 years. Peter lives near Toronto, Canada, and enjoys all the books publishers send to him. When he is not reading about medieval history, you can find him trying to keep up with his son in Minecraft. Follow Peter on Twitter @medievalicious.



# Scandinavian Winters of Old Were Less Hygge, More Nordic Noir



*Viking tuft house. (Photo: amaliadillin.com)*

***This winter hygge has replaced Nordic Noir as the UK's favourite Scandi-import. But the festive season in the Nordic world has not always granted an opportunity for cosy mindfulness. Medieval sources offer a decidedly more terrifying vision of Christmas, or jól (yule), its proximity to the winter solstice putting it at the heart of icy nightmares.***



*Reindeer (Photo: Il Piccolo)*

In the tenth century, **King Hákon the Good** (c. 920-961) ordered that the pre-Christian festival of yule should be observed at the same time Christians celebrated Christmas, Icelandic historian **Snorri Sturluson** (1179-1241) tells us. The word *jól* was not replaced when it came to designate the Christian feast and related terms are still used in the modern Scandinavian languages. Both festivals involved drinking and feasting – but **Old Norse texts** also make a firm correlation between yuletide and the supernatural.

Understandably in such a northern climate, Norse mythology associated wintry weather with hostile forces. It was said that a mighty winter lasting three years would lead up to

ragnarök, the apocalypse. The giants that constantly threaten the civilisation of the gods are associated with rime and frozen altitudes – one even has an icicle-beard that tinkles as he moves. It's no surprise in **Game of Thrones** that those living north of the Wall are referred to as “wildlings” by the citizens of the Seven Kingdoms, or that the truly terrifying White Walkers come from the “Lands of Always Winter” in the Far North.

### **Yuletide ghosts**

In the **Icelandic sagas**, hauntings are particularly rife at Christmas, with draugar, the corporeal ghosts of the deceased, returning to wreak havoc in their former households.



***"The Real War is Between the Living and The Dead:"*** Game of Thrones Season 6: Official Trailer (HBO).

In the *saga* of *Grettir Ásmundarson*, for example, the fearsome shepherd *Glámr* engages in a mutually fatal Christmas Eve battle with an "evil creature" beleaguering the farm. But *Glámr* returns posthumously to damage property and terrorise the population by night. The hauntings lessen as the days grow longer, but next Christmas Eve the cycle begins again. In the third year, the pattern is broken by the eponymous hero *Grettir*, who – after an almighty tussle – is able to defeat the revenant by cutting off its head and placing it beside its buttocks (though not before being cursed so that *Grettir* is forever afraid of the dark).

And in *The Saga of the People of Eyri (Eyrbyggja saga)*, a household is

beset just before yule by a supernatural seal popping up through the fireplace – a far less welcome visitor than Santa coming down the chimney. Every attempt to club the seal only makes it rise further, until a boy whacks it with a sledgehammer "and the seal went down as if he were driving in a nail". The ghostly return of six drowned men is at first celebrated, but the revenants outstay their welcome and are eventually dispatched through a combination of religious rites and legal proceedings.

In latitudes where midwinter offers at best four or five hours of daylight, it is natural that beliefs imbued with a fear of the dark should transpire.

It has been suggested that **the association of revenants with winter** may have been heightened because solidly frozen ground or heavy snowdrifts could hamper normal burial procedures, leading to a consequent fear that the dead could more easily rise.

## Freaky feasts

Even kings can't avoid their Christmas parties being ruined by supernatural happenings. In Snorri's **Heimskringla**, his chronicle of the kings of Norway, all the food for **King Hálfdan's** (c. 810-860) yule banquet is spirited away. King Harald Fine-Hair (c. 850-932), on the other hand, drinks a love-potion disguised as Christmas mead, driving him so mad with desire he neglects his kingly duties until the object of his new affections dies and is cremated.

Aristocratic Christmases are also documented by the skalds, medieval Scandinavia's court poets. Here we find all the elements now associated with a merry Christmas – eating, drinking and gift-giving – but given a typically dark and martial twist.

When the poet Grani **praises Harald Hardrada** (1015-1066) for “prepar[ing] a yule-feast for the retinue of Huginn”, the implications are darker than they seem: Huginn is one of Odin's pet ravens – and a feast for carrion birds consists of dead bodies.

Grani is in fact lauding Harald's success in battle. For the skalds, Christmas was just another occasion to boast of their patron's brutal brand of bravery.

The medieval period didn't have a monopoly on creepy Christmases. Iceland's **Gryla** may be a giantess known to Norse myth, but her tendency to devour naughty children at Christmastime – and her pet cat who gobbles up those without new clothes – are recorded hundreds of years later. Modern-day figures have become more good-natured, though: Gryla's sons, known as the “Yule Lads”, are now more likely to be found distributing Christmas gifts than scaring the population into good behaviour.

“**Winter is coming**” still resounds with menace in modern storytelling, but we can all sleep snug in our beds knowing we probably won't have to contend with a supernatural seal while hanging the stockings this Christmas.

This article originally appeared in **The Conversation**

# Talk the Talk

Old Norse

"Kaldr", Noun: Cold

"Kala", To be cold

In January, 2012, a **group of archeology students from the University of Tartu** decided to live as Vikings in the depths of January's brutal cold. They built an authentic Viking house using period tools and lived in it for one week, wearing Viking age clothes, and eating the same foods people did over 1,000 years ago.

In keeping with our theme of winter, with this chilly experiment in mind, we decided to use the Old Norse term, **Kaldr**, 'cold'. I'm sure it was well used during that long, frigid week.



*Authentic replica Viking house built using period tools. (Photo: University of Tartu)*



# Medieval Minded

**Julian Harrison**

Curator,  
Medieval  
& Historical  
Manuscripts  
& the Harry  
Potter Exhibit at  
**The British**

## Current Occupation?

I'm Curator of Medieval Historical Manuscripts at the British Library, and also (shhh) curating the Harry Potter exhibition which opens this October.

## Why'd you go medieval?

I've always had a fascination with the Middle Ages. I remember visiting the site of the Battle of Hastings as a young boy and being hooked from there.

## Favorite medieval thing?

I guess I'd have to choose one of the amazing manuscripts in our collections. The Silos Apocalypse springs to mind, or maybe the Harley Golden Gospels. Beowulf is pretty special, too!



## If you could time travel, would you live medieval?

Probably not, no, I'd doubtless succumb to plague. Intriguingly, I do sometimes daydream about what it would have been like at the court of Henry VIII; if I was to go there, my gut feeling is that wouldn't be wise to outstay your welcome.

## Favorite modern thing?

Good question. Can I say Fulham Football Club? Also perhaps the most frustrating modern thing.

## What projects are you currently working on that you'd like people to know about?

In 2015 I curated the Magna Carta exhibition at the British Library, and last year Shakespeare at the Library of Birmingham. 2017 is no different, as the British Library is staging a major exhibition devoted to the Harry Potter books of J. K. Rowling. There will be lots of fantastic books and manuscripts on display, together with some priceless items from J. K. Rowling's own collection. It's very exciting to be working on!

Follow Julian Harrison on Twitter: [@julianpharrison](https://twitter.com/julianpharrison)

Follow the British Library on Twitter; [@britishlibrary](https://twitter.com/britishlibrary)

For more information about current and upcoming exhibits, please visit [The British Library website](http://www.britishlibrary.org)



Church singing, Tacuinum Sanitatis Casanatensis, 14th century. (Photo: Wikipedia)

# Did People Ice Skate in the Middle Ages?

By Sandra Alvarez



*Ice Skating at the Tower of London. Photo by [www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com).*

*As a Canadian, the subject of ice skating is near and dear to my heart, so it's not difficult to imagine why I wanted to write about ice skating in the Middle Ages. I live in London now, and many fantastic places in the city have opened up for ice skating – the Tower of London being one of them – and it made me wonder (naturally), did medieval people ice skate?*

*When I was doing research about surviving winter in the Middle Ages, and how people passed the time during the coldest part of the year, sure enough, I came across several instances of medieval people strapping on skates and taking a twirl (or a tumble!) on the ice. So where did it begin?*



*Medieval ice skates made of bone on display at the Museum of London. (Photo by Steven G. Johnson, Wikipedia.)*

Oxford scholars, **Federico Formenti and Alberto E. Minetti** conducted a study of ice skating through the ages using skates from 1800 BC to the present day, to determine how fast and effective skates were as they evolved over the course of history.

The first ice skates appeared about 3,000 years ago in Finland and were made of animal bone. They weren't initially used for recreation, but as a means to get around frozen bodies of water, to move people and goods, and for trade. They were primarily for survival, to traverse the large number of lakes that dotted southern Finland. Skates were a

cheap and efficient mode of transportation. Skating on bone reduced the time and energy of travelling in Scandinavia during the frigid winter months. Skates were developed around the same time as skis for similar reasons – people needed to be able to move across heavy snow without sinking in, or having their journey grind to a halt, although at one point, there was some conflict found between Old Norse texts and the archeological record. It was believed that skis predated skates in Scandinavia due to skates not being mentioned in Old Norse literature. The archeological evidence suggested that both existed at the same time, with Vikings leaving bone

skates behind in Denmark, Sweden and Germany from the eighth to the twelfth centuries. According to B.A. Thurber, the discrepancy was linked to the idea that bone skates and skis were considered to be related, if not the same.

Thurber added, **“One possible explanation for this is that Scandinavian skiers interpreted bone skates as small skis suited to different environmental conditions because of the similarities between the two technologies.”**

The skate was strapped to the feet with pieces of leather that were threaded through holes in the back and front of the bone. Why animal bones? Animals bones had an oily surface that worked as a natural wax enabling skaters to glide smoothly across the ice. Over time, skate materials evolved from bone, to ash and iron, to fibre glass and steel. Minetti and Formenti employed one type from each period for their tests:

1800 BC – animal bone

1200 AD – ash and iron

1400 AD – ash and iron

1700 AD – birch and steel

Present Day – fibre glass, kevlar steel and carbon fibre

It might not come as a surprise, but modern skates are four times faster than their bone and wood predecessors. Bone skates only

moved at about 8 kilometres per hour, far from the break neck speeds we're used to seeing today with hockey players, or speed skaters who can reach speeds of 60 kilometres per hour.

The pastime we associate ice skating with today didn't become popular until the Middle Ages. The earliest mention of ice skating was discovered in the twelfth century writing of English monk, William Fitzstephen (†1191). William was employed as a clerk to Thomas Beckett (1118-1170), and wrote extensively about the city of London in his work, *Descriptio Nobilissimi Civitatis Londinae*. In the account, he mentioned children attaching bones to their ankles and 'flying like birds across the ice'.

Another famous medieval story about ice skating involved the Dutch saint, Lidwina of Schiedam (1380-1433). Lidwina was one of the first recorded cases of multiple sclerosis and some scholars have attributed her disability to her fall while ice skating. The story of the incident was recounted in detail in the German friar Johannes Brugman's account of her life.

**“However, as she could not succeed in recovering her strength, she was confined to her room, where, some days before the Feast of the Purification, some friends visited her. It was freezing**

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 dicta sit. Ca. scdm.**

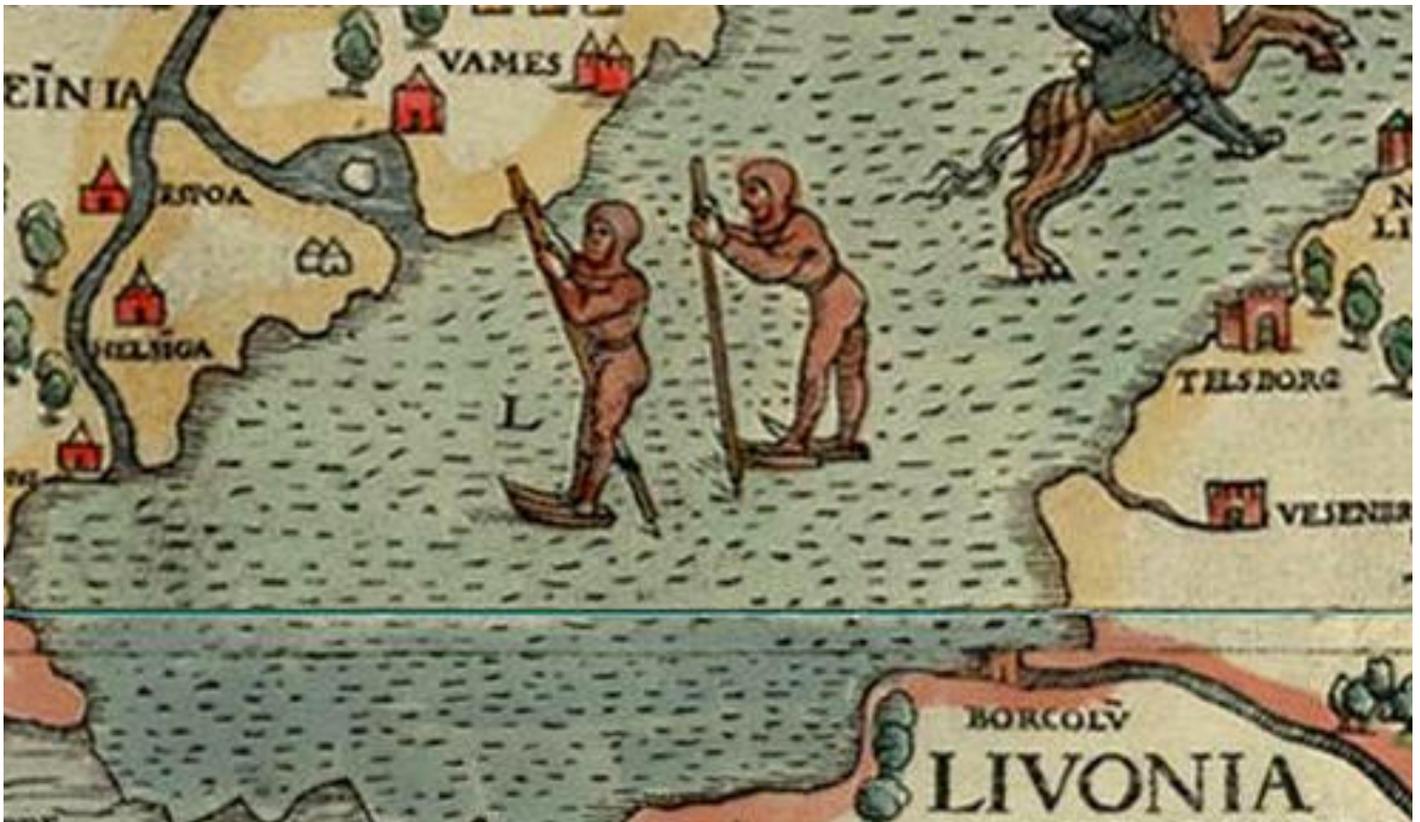
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 strātū infirmitatis nup̄ime dimissū: ecce recreatiōis  
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From the 1498 text, 'Vita alme virginis Liidwine' by friar Johannes Brugman depicting the fall of Saint Lidwina in an ice skating accident. (Wiki Commons).

hard at the moment ; the river Schie, which runs through the town, and the canals, were frozen over; and in this wintry weather all Holland was skating. These young girls invited Lydwine to skate with them, but, preferring to be alone, she made the bad state of her health a pretext for not going with them. They insisted so much, however, reproaching her for not taking more exercise and assuring her that the open air would do her good, that, for fear of annoying them, she finally, with the consent of her father, accompanied them on the frozen water of the canal behind which the house was situated.

She was just starting, after having put on her skates, when one of her comrades, going at a great pace, threw herself against her before she was able to get out of the way, and she was dashed against a piece of ice whose edges broke one of the lower ribs on her right side." ~Johannes Krugman (1498), Saint Lydwine of Schiedam, trans. by Joris-Karl Huysmans.

Skates at this time weren't edged like modern ones, so skaters used poles with iron tips to propel themselves across the ice, and mock joust with each other and they passed by.



*Image of people ice skating using poles to propel themselves forward. From Olaus Magnus', Carta Marina (1539).*

Formenti added, “Bones did not have an edge that allowed the typical skating movement pattern, so the forward propulsion was given by the upper limbs as a stick was pushed backwards between the legs while the legs were kept almost straight.”

Edges were added by the Dutch in the thirteenth century. The first wooden skates appeared in the Netherlands in the fourteenth century and had a metal blade fixed to the bottom. From this period forward, skates became 30% lighter and were the most popular way of getting around in the Netherlands.

Swedish writer, Olaus Magnus (1490-1557), best known for his work, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (Description of the Northern Peoples), also described ice skating in great detail. His writing was translated into German, Dutch and Italian and was a popular sourcebook for the traditions and customs of Nordic people:

“The other kind of men are those who attach to the soles of their feet a piece of flat, polished iron, a foot long, or the flat bones of deer or oxen, the shin bones, that is. These are slippery by nature because they have an inherent greasiness and achieve a very



*Winter Landscape with Ice Skaters (1608) – Hendrick Avercamp (1585-1634).*

great speed, though only on smooth ice, and continue to shoot forward without pause as long as the ice remains level. Among this sort too there are found everywhere men who take pleasure in racing for a prize. Their race-course over frozen lakes as smooth as a mirror is fixed at eight to twelve Italian miles from one end to the other, or it can be less. The prizes are silver spoons, copper pots, swords, new clothes, and young horses, but more often the last.

The rest are outrun by those competitors in the race who attach to the soles of their feet the shin-bones of deer thoroughly smoothed and greased with pork fat, since, when the cold drops of water rise as it were through the

pores of ice during fierce cold, the bones smeared in this way cannot be hampered or kept in check, as iron can however much it is polished or greased. For no greasing suits iron as much as it does the shin-bones of deer or bullocks, which have an innate slipperiness of their own.

In this way, whenever the ice, two or three fingers thick, is clear and bared of snow, these shows are performed easily and with little fear of danger; but this is by no means the case at other times, for you are never in greater peril or nearer to death than when you set off skating while the ice is covered with even the thinnest layer of snow.



*Esaias van de Velde (1587-1630) A Winter Landscape (1623)*

For rivers or brooks, silently and swiftly entering the lake from its shores, wear away the ice by their constant movement so that it cannot grow thick and firm, unless the streams themselves are held in check by a very hard frost. But sometimes rash skaters, ignorant of our scorning the properties of ice and racing with more temerity than caution, are drowned, their bodies lamentably left under the ice and on top of it their heads, which have been sliced off by the sharp edge of the ice as if by an axe." ~ Olaus Magnus, Description of the Northern Peoples, trans. Peter Fisher and Humphrey Higgens (London, Hakluyt Society, 1996)

Bone skates were used well into the eighteenth century in certain

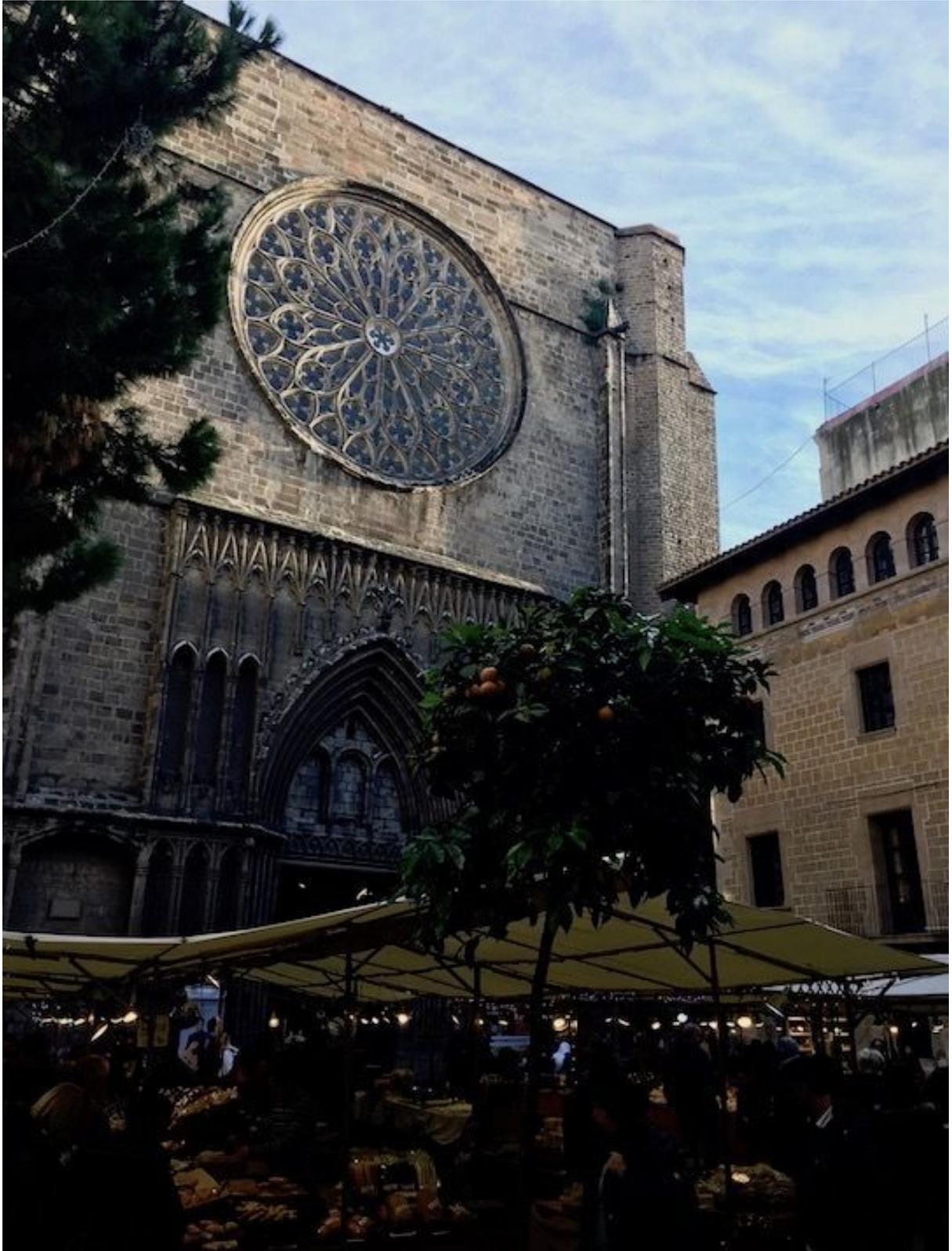
places such as Iceland, Gotland, Hungary and Germany. While skating on bone skates was demanding and required expending more energy, it was still safer than walking on ice. Ice skating clubs didn't appear until well into the eighteenth century, the first being opened in Edinburgh, Scotland. London didn't establish an ice skating club until 1830. While initially an activity that everyone could afford and enjoy, it eventually became the preserve of the nobility and upper classes. From bone to blade, functional to fun, it's once again an activity that everyone can enjoy. Happy skating!

Follow Sandra on Twitter:  
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Travel

# Places to See: Santa Maria del Pi, Barcelona

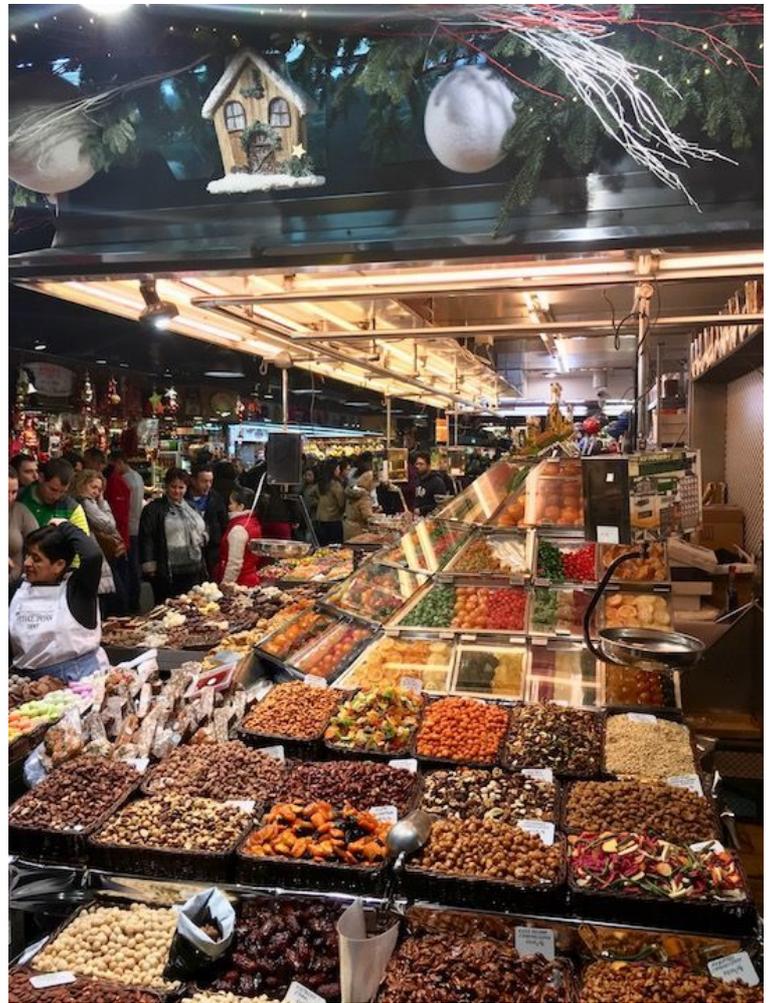
By Sandra Alvarez



*The Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi with a bustling market outside its front doors. (Photo by Medievalists.net)*

*In the third part of my four part series looking at Barcelona, I visited the stunning Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi. The church is tucked away in the Gothic quarter, just off the busy tourist thoroughfare of La Rambla. After fuelling up with some street food at the nearby Mercado del la Boqueria, I spent a little over an hour inside this Gothic Catalan gem.*

*(R) The famous street food market of Barcelona, La Boqueria. (Below) The bustling market outside Santa Maria del Pi.*



# Travel Tips

## Origins

The beautiful Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi is considered one of the finest examples of Catalan religious architecture in Spain.

Records indicate that there was a church dedicated to St. Mary as early as the tenth century, but there have also been claims that there was a church three five centuries earlier.



The current church replaced a Romanesque structure. The Gothic church we see today began construction in 1320 and was completed rather quickly (by medieval church building standards!) in 1391.

**(Top R)** Interior nave of Santa Maria del Pi facing the altar.

**(Below, L):** An altar in one of many devotional alcoves.



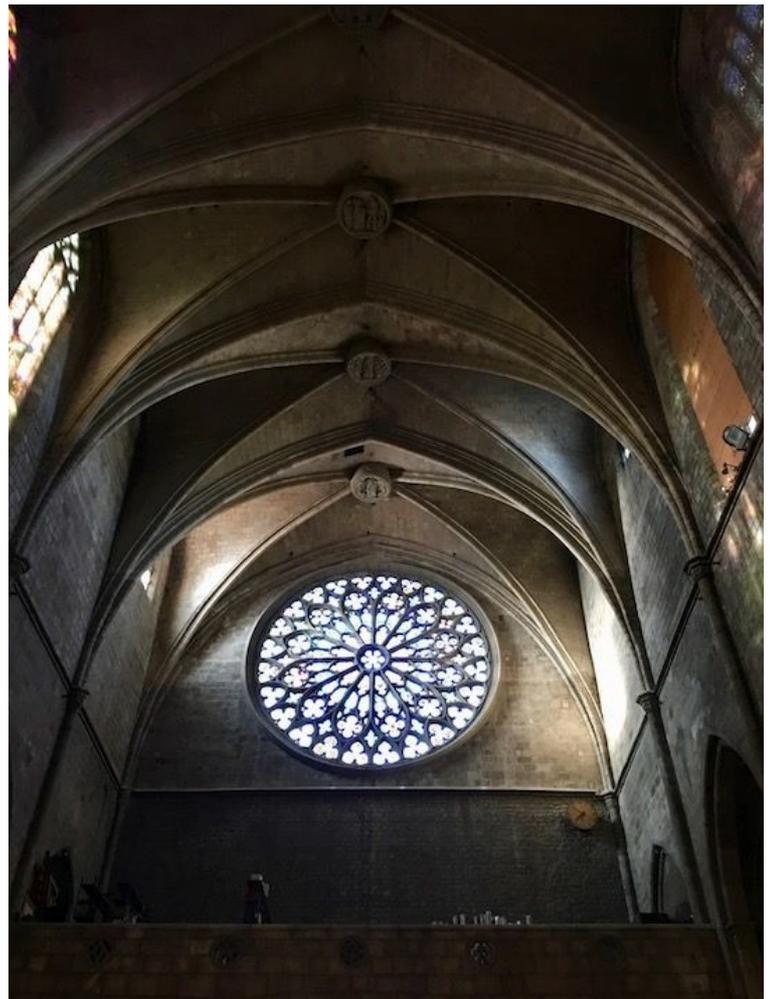
## The Rose Window

The basilica houses one of the largest rose windows in the world, measuring 10m (33ft) in diameter.

It was destroyed in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) but was painstakingly reconstructed under the guidance of Catalan architect Josep Maria Jujol (1879-1949).

The rose window depicts the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse, the coat of arms of the Church of Santa Maria del Pi and the coat of arms of the Royal House of Barcelona.

The rose window is the only stained glass piece in the Basilica that has retained its original fourteenth century design.



# Travel

## The Museum

The Church contains a small museum. The stunning cross shown here is one of its treasures. This piece is known as the Renaissance reliquary of "*Lignum Crucis*", also known as the "*King Martin Reliquary*" and dates to 1498. The museum holds beautiful treasures, art and furnishings. It well worth a quick peek inside to learn more about its history.



## **La Torre Campanario**

The bell tower was designed by Bartomeu Mas. Construction began in 1379 and finished in 1461. The tower has four levels, with an additional level for the bell, and walls that are in some places, more than 10 ft thick (3m). ( It is 177 ft tall (54m) and one of the tallest Gothic towers in Spain. One of it's bells weighs in at a hefty 1,806kg (3,981lbs)!



## **Damage and Reconstruction**

After the church was badly damaged in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, the medieval building was saved and the interior was redecorated to reflect a more modern style. The original stained glass windows that adorned the church were destroyed during a fire and were rebuilt in 1967 by Joaquim de Ros y de Ramis. In collaboration with sculpor Enric Monjo, he also reorganized the entire crypt to the way it looks today.

# Travel Tips

To plan your next visit to the Basilica of Santa Maria del Pi, please visit:

**[basilicadelpi.com](http://basilicadelpi.com)**

Follow Santa Maria del Pi on Twitter:

**[@santamariadelpi](https://twitter.com/santamariadelpi)**

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**[santamariadelpi](https://www.instagram.com/santamariadelpi)**

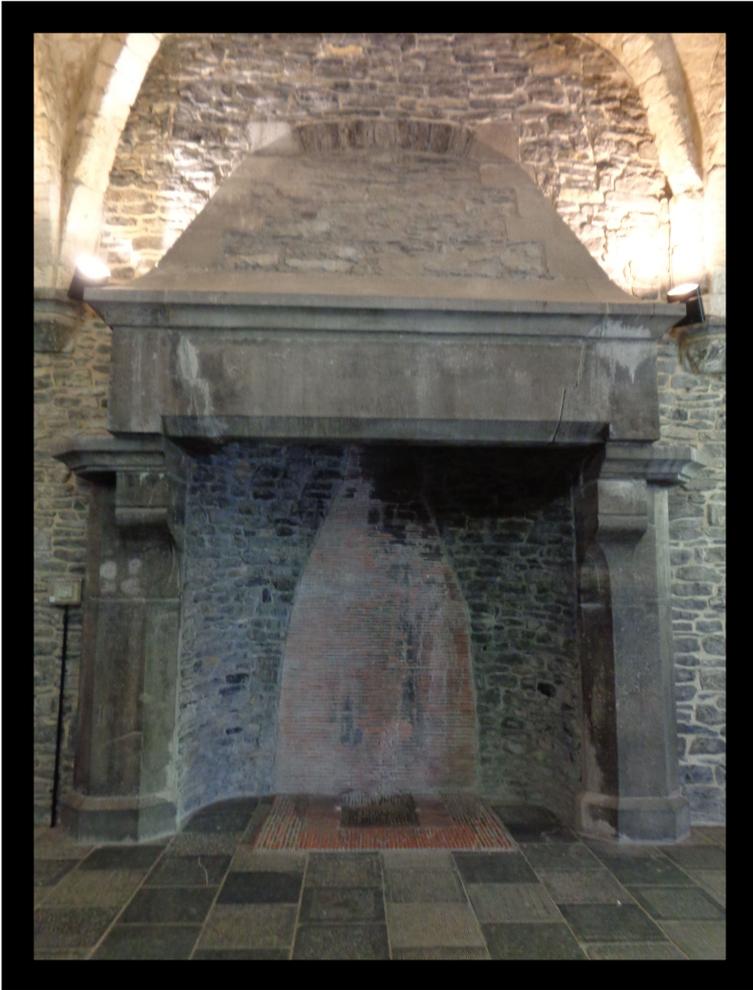
**Plaça del Pi, 7,  
08002 Barcelona,  
Spain**



## Decor

Although Santa Maria del Pi has changed its internal decor and the presbytery layout with the passage of time, from Medieval, to Renaissance to Baroque, the original Gothic structure has been left intact. The crypt was constructed in 1551, with the new choir stalls added to the presbytery in 1771. The church returned to its medieval roots in the nineteenth century with the rise of the popular Gothic revival style.

# Building the Medieval



## fireplace

The stone fireplace and chimney are one of the most notable medieval inventions, first documented in the 12th century. Prior to their development, an open hearth in the center of the floor provided the main heat source and cooking epicenter. Since masonry was expensive, fireplaces and chimneys were exclusively built by nobility until the late 13th century.

Don't underestimate the significance of this relatively simple invention. While chimneys are less effective at heating an interior space compared to an open hearth, they allow for multiple floors to have heat and light. This led to the development of larger castle keeps and multi-story noble residences. It doubtless also improved living conditions for servicemen and women working in castles and stone structures.

In a religious context, the fireplace in the warming room of a monastery was the only source of heat outside of the kitchens. In the cold winters of damp Ireland and Britain, this was an important resource for monks as they continued their routines of prayer and work. In some orders, it was the only room where they were allowed to communicate with their peers, adding a significant social element to the fireplace too.

***Let us know if you're enjoying a cozy fireplace or wood stove while you're reading The Medieval Magazine, and give us a shout-out on Twitter @Medievalists using #MedievalInvention***

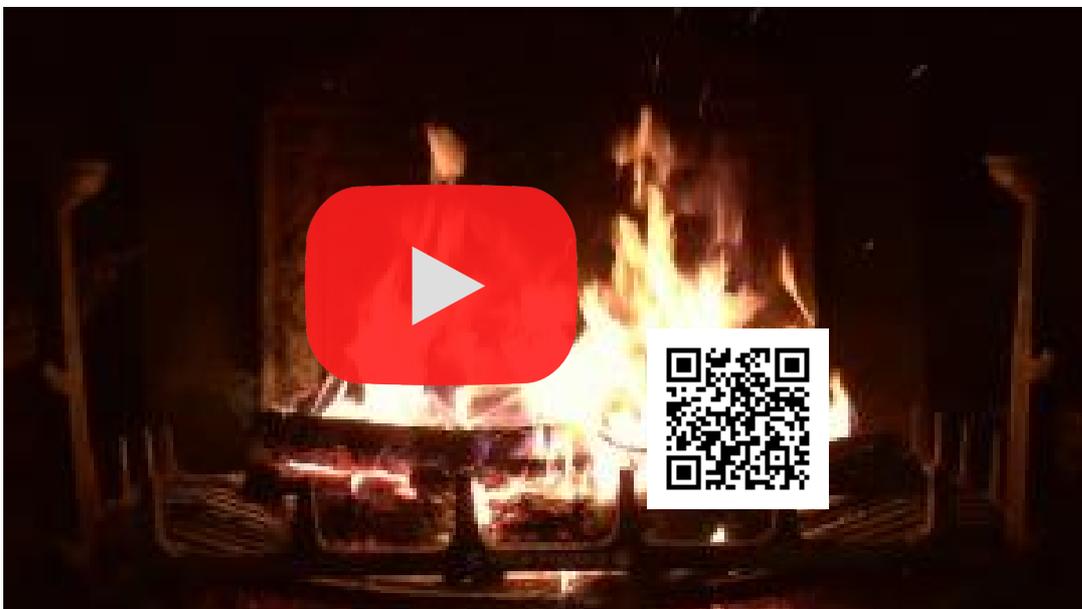


*Left: One of the fireplaces in the Great Hall of Gravensteen Castle, Gent*

*Above: The bailey wall at Montaner Castle, France. Note the second-story fireplace visible in the center of the photo.*

*Right: One of two massive hearths in the kitchens of 16th century party-palace Warkworth Castle, England, comfortably holding three ADULT women.*

*Photos: D. Trynoski*



# Londinium New Exhibit at the Museum of London! Tunnel: The Archaeology of Crossrail



Medieval animal bone skate found near Liverpool Street Station in the City of London (Photo: Crossrail/MOLA).

***The most complete range of archaeological objects unearthed by Crossrail, Europe's largest infrastructure project, will go on display alongside the story of this great feat of engineering in a major new exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands next year. It will open 10 February 2017.***

# Londinium

The construction of London's newest railway, which will be

*Roman iron horse shoes found near Liverpool Street Station*

known as **the Elizabeth line when services begin in 2018**, has given archaeologists a unique chance to explore some of the city's most historically important sites. Since work began in 2009, the project has undertaken one of the most extensive archaeological programmes ever in the UK, with over 10,000 artefacts shining a light on almost every important period of the Capital's history.

*Medieval animal bone skates found near Liverpool Street Station*

*Late 19th century ginger and jam jars from the site of the Crosse & Blackwell bottling factory near Tottenham Court Road station*

*Human remains including one of the skeletons found near Liverpool Street Station from the 17th century Bedlam cemetery, which aDNA has shown died from the Plague.*

The wide variety of items on display will explore 8,000 years of human history, revealing the stories of Londoners ranging from Mesolithic tool makers and inhabitants of Roman Londinium to those affected by the Great Plague of 1665.

These finds were discovered in locations as diverse as suburban Abbey Wood in the south east, through Canary Wharf, across to Liverpool Street, Tottenham Court Road and ending in Westbourne Park and Acton. The finds will sit against a backdrop telling the engineering story of the largest infrastructure project currently underway in Europe, with key facts and figures presented throughout.

## **The finds include:**

*Prehistoric flints found in North Woolwich, showing evidence for Mesolithic tool making 8,000 years ago*

Jackie Keily, Curator of archaeological collections at the Museum of London, said:

*Tudor bowling ball found at the site of the Tudor King John's Court manor house in Stepney Green*

*"From east to west, the Crossrail project has dug through layers of London's rich history, unearthing a wealth of fascinating stories and objects. The exhibition will take us on a journey from prehistoric forests and marshes to the marvels of 21st century engineering. It will include objects illustrating the human history of London, from Mesolithic times over 8000 years ago, to the 20th century. Crossrail has enabled us to discover new and exciting stories of London which will be the centrepiece of this exhibition."*

visitors will be taken on a site-based journey, following the map of the new Elizabeth line, and will find out about who populated these parts of London and when. Offering something for everyone, Tunnel: the archaeology of Crossrail, will provide people with a fascinating insight into the history of London and a glimpse of what the future

holds for this great city.

Jay Carver, Crossrail Lead Archaeologist, added:

*"The Crossrail project has given archaeologists a rare opportunity to study previously inaccessible areas of London.*

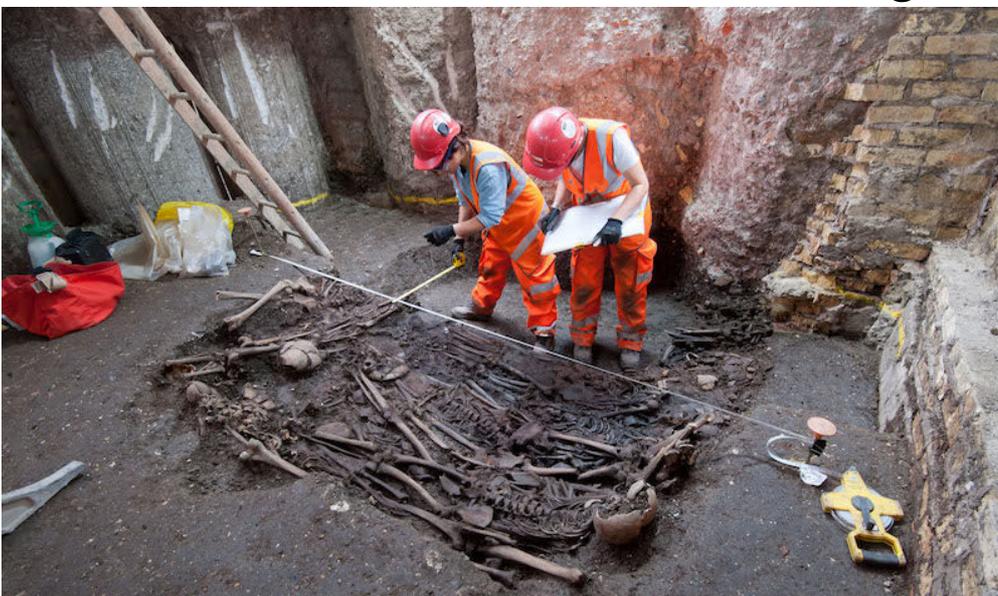
*This exhibition will bring together some of our oldest and oddest finds, and help us bring the stories of 8,000 years of London's hidden history to light."*

**This exciting, must-see exhibit will run from 10 February - 3 September 2017!**

For more information, please visit: **[museumoflondon.org.uk](http://museumoflondon.org.uk)**

Follow the Museum of London on

Twitter: **@museumoflondon**



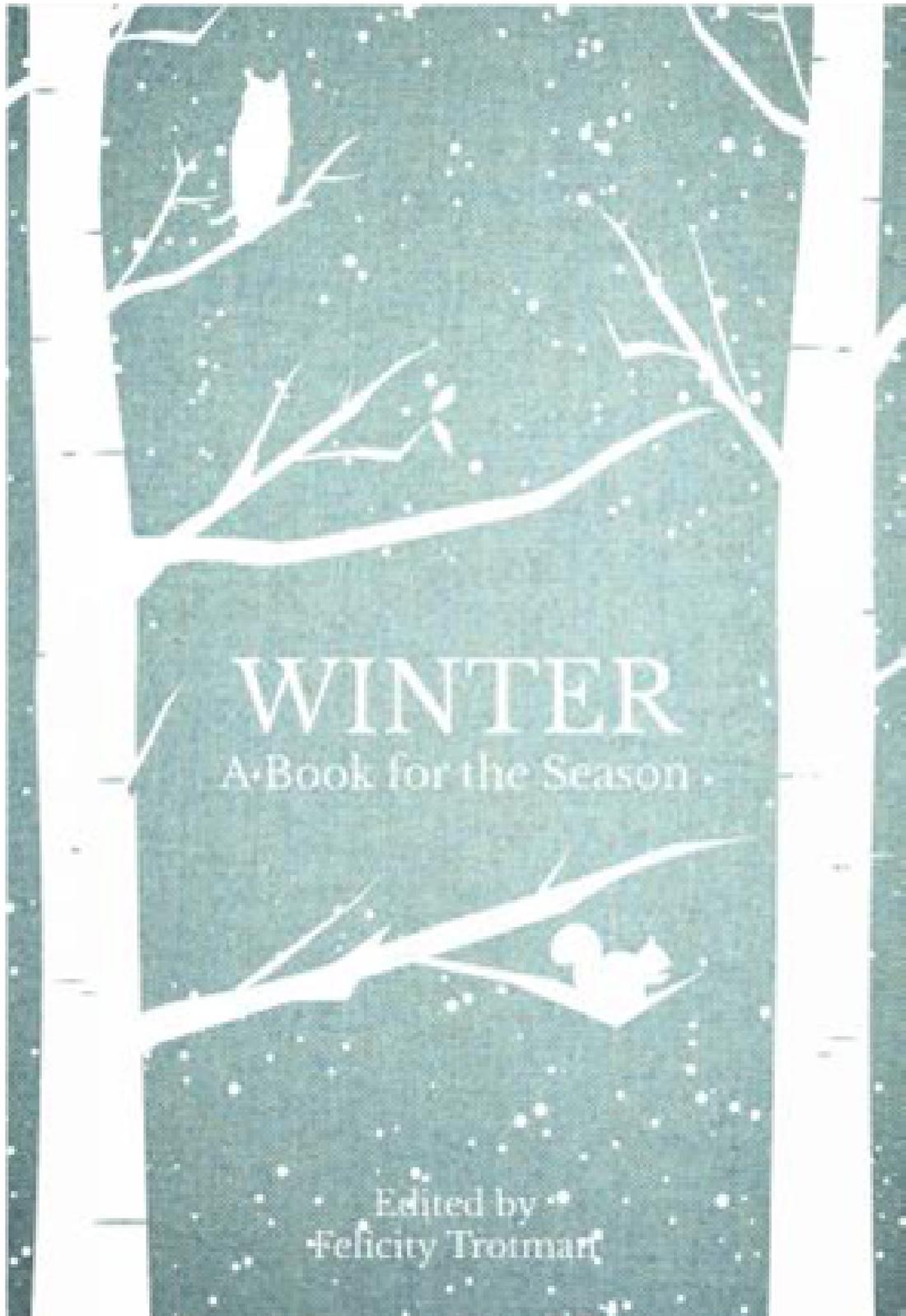
**(L):** Human remains on display, including those found in a mass grave at the Bedlam burial site showing the individual died of the Plague. Archaeologists depicted here examining the skeletons part of this project. (Photo: Crossrail)

# Book Reviews

## Winter: A Book for the Season

Edited by Felicity Trotman

Review by Sandra Alvarez



Considering this issue's theme is about Winter, this book couldn't have come at a better time. Felicity Trotman has gathered some of the best stories, recipes, poems, and diary entries about the season in one fantastic book: *Winter: A Book for the Season*. From the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, to pieces Samuel Pepys, Charles Dickens, and Dan Runyon, this delightful collection spans across the ages, from medieval to modern.

While most of the pieces tend to be from the sixteenth century onward, there are a few medieval entries. There is the nice addition of a snippet (The Green Knight's Challenge) from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, along with an Arthurian piece from Sir Thomas Malory (1415-1471).

The book is broken out into three sections: The Old Year, Christmas: Secular and Sacred, and The New Year. There is no particular chronological order to the stories, Trotman's picks flit from century to century but everything is centred around these three themes. I actually enjoyed the fact that this collection wasn't necessarily slotted into one specific historical period or place.

Not every story has a happy ending, and Trotman showed readers all sides of winter - it's beauty and bleakness. From the Christmasy heart-warming fireside tale, to basic advice for how to manage winter from sixteenth and seventeenth century diarists, to daring stories of survival by stranded explorers, winter good, and bad, is covered from all angles.

Some favourites from The Old Year include the modern *The Cop and the Anthem* by William Sydney Porter (1862-1910), and *The Snow Man* by fairytale master, Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875).

From the Christmas section, I enjoyed: *Dulce Domum* by Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932) of *The Wind in the Willows* fame and of course, Sherlock Holmes in *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930).

In the final section, The New Year, my picks are: *How Arthur Was Chosen King* by Sir Thomas Malory, the farming advice of Thomas Tusser (1524-1580), and a brief diary entry by Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) on the winter wind in London, from January 26, 1666.

If you're looking for a good book to read curled up by the fire, sipping a hot chocolate, wearing fluffy socks and trying your hand at Danish Hygge, this is the perfect read on a cold winter night.

For more information, visit: Amberley Publishing: [www.amberley-books.com](http://www.amberley-books.com)

Follow Amberley Publishing on Twitter: [@amberleybooks](https://twitter.com/amberleybooks)

## Angkor replicated:

How Cambodian workshops produce fake masterpieces, and get away with it

**By Martin Polkinghorne**

As part of my work as an archaeologist, my team and I recently discovered an ancient artists' studio in UNESCO-listed Angkor, an area in Cambodia that was home to numerous capitals of the Khmer Empire and is now one of the most important archaeological sites in Southeast Asia.

The finest examples of Cambodian art produced at these sites during the Angkorian period (circa 800-1400CE) are recognised as among the greatest artistic masterpieces of the pre-modern world.

Sadly, the looting of such material has caused considerable problems in a world that is progressively becoming concerned about the integrity of both public and private collections.

Since 2014, art institutions and private collectors have returned 11 sculptures to Cambodia. All were looted, or illegally

obtained or exported. This represents a significant post-colonial correction in the ownership of cultural property. But for about the same amount of time that looted art has been traded between buyers and sellers, another issue has remained hidden.

Fakes have overrun the Cambodian antiquity market, their authenticity obscured by the skill of the artists who make them. Indeed, a significant proportion of the artists are so accomplished that the modern origins of their work will probably never be recognised.

***An intentionally broken fake Angkorian sculpture being artificially aged. Image Jim Sanborn***



## A homage to Angkorian sculpture

The art of Angkor and mainland Southeast Asia is particularly vulnerable. In correspondence with me, Helen Jessup, an eminent art historian and the author of six books on Cambodian art, made the connection between war, looting, and fakes:

***Civil disturbances roiling Cambodia for 30 years made access difficult and led to a thinning of the ranks of experts in the field, including within Cambodia itself. Political uncertainty enabled illicit access to ancient sites and looting was rampant. Thailand was the usual destination for the stolen objects, handled by networks of middlemen and dealers and serving as models for skilled craftsmen to replicate. Provenance issues in strife-torn regions were fudged and acquisitions increased with few questions asked.***

While peace has thankfully returned to Cambodia, the lucrative production of fakes continues.

Few know more about the production of replicas than contemporary artist Jim Sanborn, who witnessed the skill of Cambodian fakers first-hand while researching an art project of his own.

He told me:

***Over a four-year period I travelled back and forth to infiltrate the forgery trade in order to gain the knowledge that generations of forgers had used to age their pieces.***

The result was Sanborn's path-breaking work *Without Provenance: The Making of Contemporary Antiquity*. It presents sandstone sculptures made in Cambodia and falsely aged in his US studio.

Jim Sanborn is a celebrated artist with pieces in collections worldwide, but he is still seeking an exhibitor for this challenging work that exposes the faking of Khmer art. The subversion of *Without Provenance* is testament to the unease with which custodians of Southeast Asian art approach authenticity and provenance.

## Makers and Models

In 2012, I accompanied Sanborn to a workshop in rural Cambodia. Posing as an art collector, I was offered contemporary replicas as genuine Angkorian sculptures. Objects like the ones we examined are sold at international auctions for anywhere between ten to one hundred times the sale price in rural Cambodia.

We were shown numerous sculptures in various stages of production. Even with an expert's eye, often the only clue to the sculptures' contemporaneity was the fact that

we saw them in a workshop

The art works were created using techniques not employed to produce art for the tourist market. Polishing obscures the giveaway marks that modern tungsten-tipped chisels leave behind, for instance.

At two or three months, the carving process is relatively quick compared to the task of artificial ageing, which can take many years.

Identifying a fake sculpture is not an easy task. Artists work within a family tradition, with knowledge passed from master to apprentice. Certain practices of cultural and artistic reproduction might well be unbroken since the time of Angkor.

Master craftsmen do not copy known sculptures, but design original works in the style of a particular time period. Variations in decoration, iconography and quality are commonly used to mimic actual antiquities.

To make matters more difficult, identifying a genuine sculpture is not very simple either. Even the most accomplished connoisseur will question authentic sculptures that intentionally reference iconography and motifs from earlier periods. For example, a group of sculptures produced in the ninth century have only recently been identified as 12th century copies.

When I asked Helen Jessup about identifying fakes and their proliferation, she said:

***It will probably never be certain which***

***of the pieces acquired from as early as the 1980s are real and which are fakes, but it is fair to ask why nobody wondered why, after almost a century of diligent research and acquisition by the French, so many, and so many perfect sculptures were appearing.***

### **Revisiting authenticity**

Technical analyses are the best tests. Regrettably, these are not foolproof either. Contemporary artists use the same sources of stone as the ancients; and fakers can replace clay cores of contemporary sculptures with ancient ones to avoid detection by scientific dating techniques.

Assistant Professor Christian Fischer from the UCLA/Getty Conservation Program is an expert in the types of stone used by ancient Cambodian artists.

Fischer told me about the extent to which fakers are one step ahead of would-be experts:

***Fakers are aware of the published research that can help them to improve their artificial ageing procedures. For example, from the late 1990s, the appearance of questionable sculptures showing a surface layer enriched in manganese might be related to equivalent descriptions of manganese in the academic literature. This feature is absent on notorious fakes made in the 1970s and 1980s.***

We continuously change the way objects of the past are appreciated and represented in terms of the present. Angkorian sculptures have always been treasured for their aesthetic beauty and as we learn more about them, we begin to recognise their significance to those who produced and venerated them, and especially their value to Cambodians today.

provenance? Fearing the potential reputational damage that will follow if they're known to have fallen prey to fakers' deception, some custodians of Cambodian and Southeast Asian sculptures do not seek clarity on authenticity.

The ancient sculptures of Southeast Asia embody impressive examples of human creativeness and increase cross-cultural knowledge. But how might we accept replica sculptures acquired from a market full of objects with insufficient

*Below: Fake sculptures artificially ageing in bath of nitric acid. Image Jim Sanborn*



*Products of a faking workshop offered for sale at the site of their manufacture. Image Jim Sanborn*



But as problematic as they are, rigorous independent technical analyses can test the legitimacy of sculptures. In recognising fakes, custodians can come to terms with how past collecting encouraged the production of forgeries and the looting of sacred archaeological sites.

Whether real or replica, the sculptures are original works of art and worthy of celebration. They are produced by Cambodian artists with abilities equal to that of their Angkorian ancestors.

Still, custodians have a responsibility to follow a process of due diligence to

ensure objects in their possession are authentic. Acknowledging the true character of the sculptures is the only way forward for caretakers who wish to address acquisition customs of the past.

Failure to do so will see both real and fake sculptures languish in storerooms, have fakes attain legitimacy as ancient, or ensure buyers are fooled again by the fakers' skills.

Dr. Martin Polkinghorne is a Research fellow in Archaeology at Flinders University. Keep up with his research on Twitter @dr\_marpol

## 33rd Annual

# JORVIK Viking Festival



If you've attended the JORVIK Viking Festival, then you likely have fond, somewhat fuzzy memories of saga performances, beards of epic fullness, furs, boat burnings, and plenty of vendors selling anachronistic jewelry. York Archaeological Trust, which manages the JORVIK Viking Centre, is the primary operation producing the annual JORVIK Viking Festival. Taking place in mid-February, the festival's programme of family-friendly events, lectures, guided walks and battle re-enactments attracts over 40,000 visitors each year from across the globe, with many returning year after year to take part and enjoy the atmosphere. Vikings from all over the world will descend on York for a week-long celebration of the last Viking King in York, Eric Bloodaxe.

Over 1000 years ago when York was under Viking rule, great celebrations took place during February called 'Jolablot.' The festival heralded the coming of spring and the end of winter hardships. These celebrations were long forgotten until the 1980s when York Archaeological Trust revived this lost Norse tradition. Now returning for the 33rd time, the JORVIK Viking Festival has become a firm fixture in the York calendar. Going from strength to strength each year with established events including our Strongest Viking and Best Beard contests, the Coppergate Viking Camp and our spectacular finale. The festival continues to grow with new events added each year, so whatever you are looking for there will be something to entertain and educate throughout the week.

If you can make it to York, don't miss any of these fantastic events. If you can't make it, keep up with the action on Facebook, Twitter (@JorvikViking), Instagram (@jorvikviking) with #JORVIKVikingFest.

## February 20-25

Festival Hub: Exhibitions,

Entertainment and General Information

Coppergate Encampment

Animal Steading

Have-a-go Sword Combat

Have-a-go Archery

Viking Crafting

Festival Walking Tour- 2,000 Years  
of History in 2,000 Steps

## February 20

Little Diggers: Viking Toys & Games

Meet the Experts: From Dig to  
Display - Archaeological  
Conservation

## February 21

Little Diggers: Norse Myths and Stories

Meet the Experts: Site Investigations

Poo Day!

From Raiders to Traders, from Tents to Town Houses: The Helen  
Thirza Addyman Lecture with Dawn Hadley- University of Sheffield

## February 22

Little Diggers: Viking York

Meet the Experts: Food and Identity in the Age of the Vikings

Norse Nålebinding Workshop (Beginners Class)

Norse Tablet Weaving Workshop (Beginners Class)

The Story of JORVIK - Past, Present and Future

## February 23

Little Diggers: Dress Like a Viking

Meet the Experts: What Came First? The Chicken or the Pot?

Historical Writing Masterclass with Justin Hill

Norse Nålebinding Workshop (Beginners & Advanced Workshop)

Norse Tablet Weaving Workshop (Beginner & Advanced Workshop)

Snail Tales Storytelling at Fenwick

1066! The End of History

See the full programme at [www.jorvik-viking-festival.co.uk](http://www.jorvik-viking-festival.co.uk)



## February 24

Little Diggers: Viking Celebration

Meet the Experts: The Past Through a Lens

The Man Who Would Be King: Harald Hardrada, Jerusalem, and 1066  
with Justin Hill

Drumming Workshop

10th Century Traders at the Parliament Street Yurt

10th Century Traders at St Sampson's Square Marquee

Einar Selvik - Wardruna: The Thoughts and Tools behind the  
Music

The Danish Conquest of 1016

1066! The End of History

Viking Banquet Experience - Eric Bloodaxe's Battle Feast

## February 25

Little Diggers: Viking Heroes

10th Century Traders at the Parliament  
Street Yurt

10th Century Traders at St Sampson's  
Square Marquee

Annual Strongest Viking Competition

March to Coppergate

Best Beard Competition

Festival Finale - Bloodaxe's Last Stand



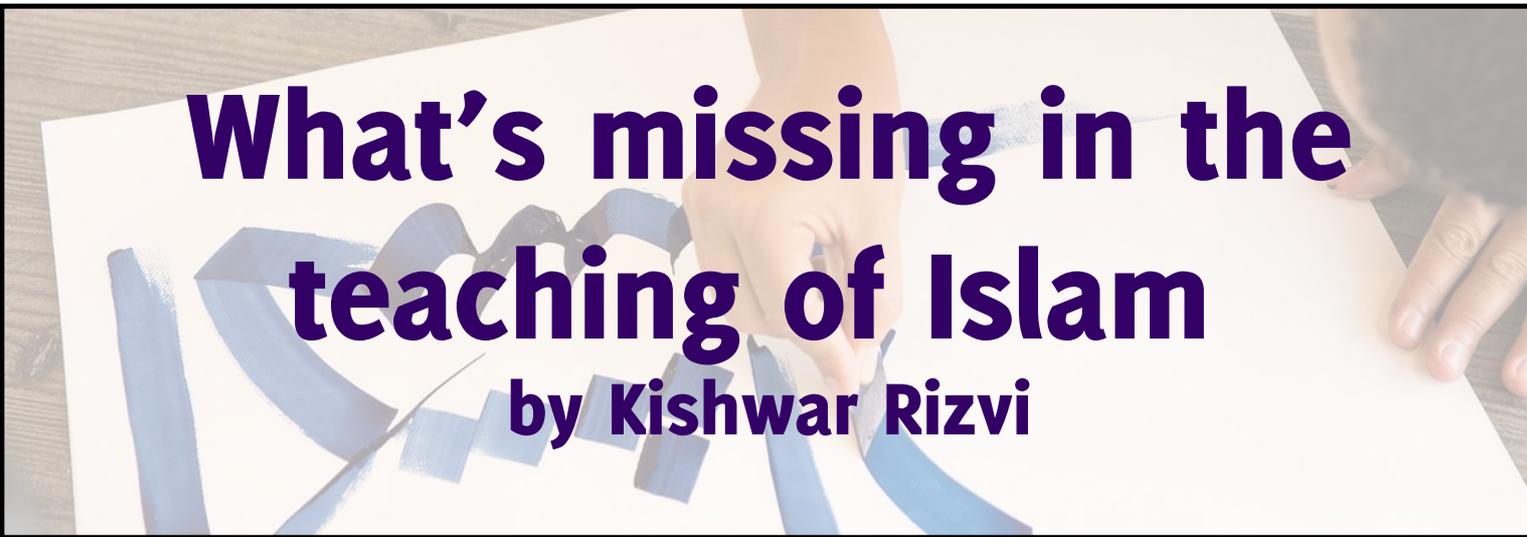
## February 26

Richard Hall Symposium: Vikings on Display

10th Century Traders at the Parliament Street Yurt

10th Century Traders at St Sampson's Square Marquee





# What's missing in the teaching of Islam

by Kishwar Rizvi

There has been much misinformation about Islam. Reports in Western media tend to perpetuate stereotypes that Islam is a violent religion and Muslim women are oppressed. Popular films like "American Sniper" reduce places like Iraq to dusty war zones, devoid of any culture or history. Fears and anxiety manifest themselves in Islamophobic actions such as burning mosques or even attacking people physically.

At the heart of such fear is ignorance. A December 2015 poll found that a majority of Americans (52 percent) do not understand Islam. In this same poll, 36 percent also said that they wanted to know more about the religion. Interestingly, those under 30 years were 46 percent more likely to have a favorable view of Islam.

These statistics highlight an opportunity for educators. As a scholar of Islamic art and architecture, I am aware that for the past 20 years, educators have been trying to improve the teaching of Islam – both in high school and college history courses.

The problem, however, is that the teaching of Islam has been limited to its religious practice. Its impact on the arts and culture, particularly in the

United States, is seldom discussed.

## ***What teaching of Islam misses***

In high school history books, there is little mention of the intertwined histories of Europe, Asia and Africa in the middle ages and the Renaissance. There is even less mention of the flowering of art, literature and architecture during this time.

In a world history textbook for New York public high schools, for example, the "Muslim World," appears in the 10th chapter. In condensing a thousand years of history – from the seventh to the 17th century – it focuses only on "Arab armies" and the rise of early modern Muslim empires.

Such narrow focus misses out on the cultural exchanges during this period. For example, in medieval Spain, the Troubadour poets borrowed their lyrical beauty from Arabic. Arabic was the courtly language of southern Spain until the 15th century. Similarly, the 12th-century Palatine Chapel in Sicily was painted and gilded in the imperial style of the Fatimids, the rulers of Egypt between the 10th and 12th centuries.

*Photo above: The lyrical beauty of Arabic inspired many poets, writers. Land Rover MENA, CC BY*



*Palatine Chapel borrowed from the art of the Fatimids. Al-dabra, CC BY-NC-ND*

Such exchanges were common, thanks to the mobility of people as well as ideas.

The point is that the story of Islam cannot be told without a deeper understanding of its cultural history: Even for early Muslim rulers, it was the Byzantine empire, the Roman empire and the Sassanian empire (the pre-Islamic Persian empire) that provided models. Such overlaps continued over the centuries, resulting in heterodox and cosmopolitan societies.

The term “Middle East” – coined in the 19th century – fails to describe the complex social and cultural mosaic or religions that have existed in the region most closely associated with Islam – and continue to do so today.

### ***How the arts can explain important connections***

So, what should educators do to improve this literacy?

From my perspective, a fuller picture

could be painted if identities were not to be solely defined through religion. That is, educators could focus on the cross-cultural exchanges that occurred across boundaries through poets and artists, musicians and architects. Both in high school and university, the arts – visual, musical and literary – could illustrate the important connections between Islam and other world histories.

For example, a class on the Renaissance could explain how the 15th-century Italian painter Gentile Bellini gained fame at the court of Mehmet II, the conqueror of Istanbul. Mehmet II commissioned Bellini to design an imperial portrait that was sent to rulers throughout Europe. His art presents a wonderful example of the artistic exchanges that took place between early modern cities such as Delhi, Istanbul, Venice and Amsterdam.

It might also help students to know that the Dutch painter Rembrandt collected Mughal miniature paintings. Silks from the Safavid empire (the Iranian dynasty from the 16th to 18th century) were so popular that Polish kings had their coat of arms woven in Isfahan.

This exchange of art continued into the Age of Enlightenment, a time when ideas around politics, philosophy, science and communications were rapidly being reoriented in Europe. A class on the Enlightenment may highlight the fact that writers like Montesquieu turned to the Middle East to structure a critique of their own religious institutions.

A poetry class could similarly show connections between the German author Wolfgang von Goethe's writings and Islam, as exemplified in his "West-Eastern Diwan," a collection of poems. This epitome of world literature was modeled after classical Persian poetry in its style, and inspired by Sufism, the mystical tradition in Islam.

Most students are open to seeing these connections, even if it might require overcoming their own preconceptions about Islam.

For example, when I teach my class on medieval architecture, students are surprised to learn that the two oldest continuously run universities in the world are in North Africa (in Fez – a city in Morocco – and Cairo).

Indeed, it is not easy to disentangle contemporary politics from historical fact, to teach more fully the culture and

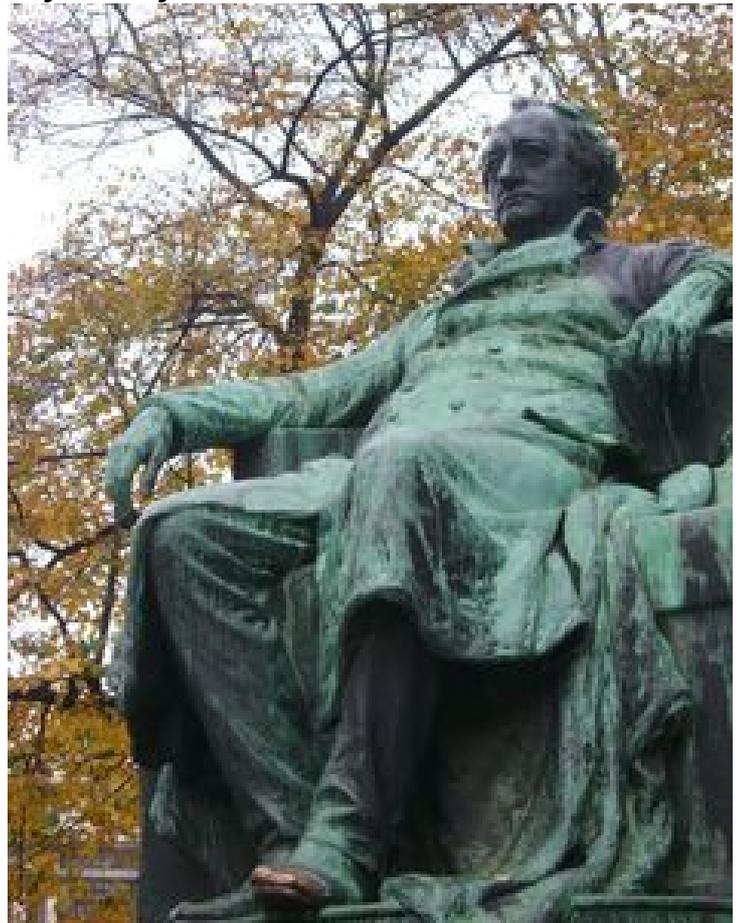
diversity of a religion that is almost 2,000 years old.

Perhaps educators could learn from a recent exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York titled "Jerusalem 1000-1400: Every People Under Heaven." The show illustrates how Abrahamic religions – that is, Christianity, Judaism and Islam – borrowed freely from each other in the realm of art, music and literature. Jerusalem was home to diverse populations and the arts played an important role within its religious and political life.

### ***Muslims in America***

It's not in the past alone. We see these connections continue today – here in America, where Islam is an intrinsic part of the culture and has been for centuries.

*Goethe found inspiration in Persian poetry. kaythaney, CC BY-NC*



From the Mississippi delta to the Chicago skyline, Muslims have made contributions, which might not be so obvious: West African slaves in the South were central to the development of the blues. Its complex vocalization and rhythms incorporated the rituals of Islamic devotion many of them had to leave behind.

The same is true of architecture. A quintessential example of modern American architecture is the Sears Tower in Chicago, which was designed by the Bangladeshi-American structural engineer Fazlur Rahman Khan.

Muslim contributions to art and architecture don't just reflect the diversity of America, but the diversity of Islam in this country. Muslims in America comprise a rich tapestry of ethnicities, languages and cultures. This knowledge is particularly meaningful for young Muslim Americans, who struggle to claim their

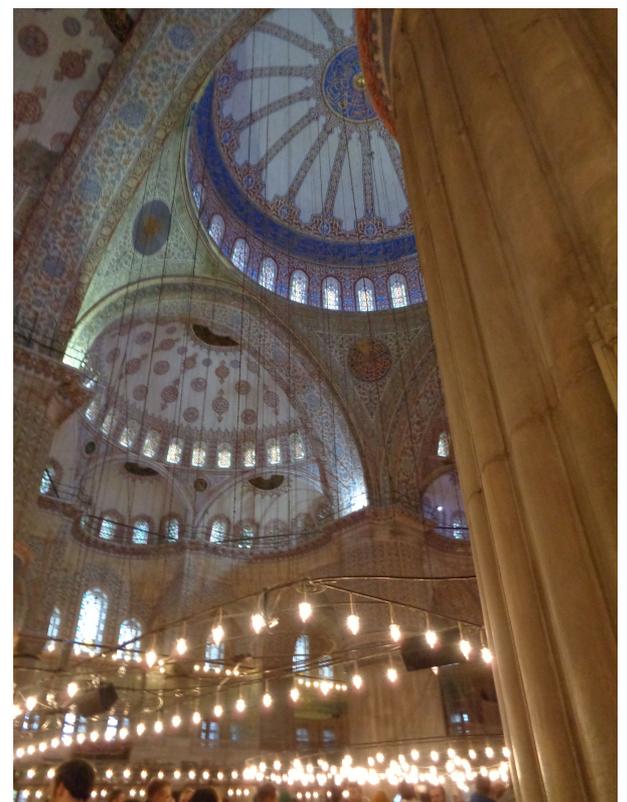
place in a country in which they are sometimes made to feel like outsiders.

Educators, especially within the arts and humanities, have an important role to play in this religious literacy, that helps students understand the unity in the diversity. After all, as the most popular poet in America, the 13th-century Muslim mystic Rumi wrote:

***All religions, all this singing, one song.  
The differences are just illusion and vanity.***

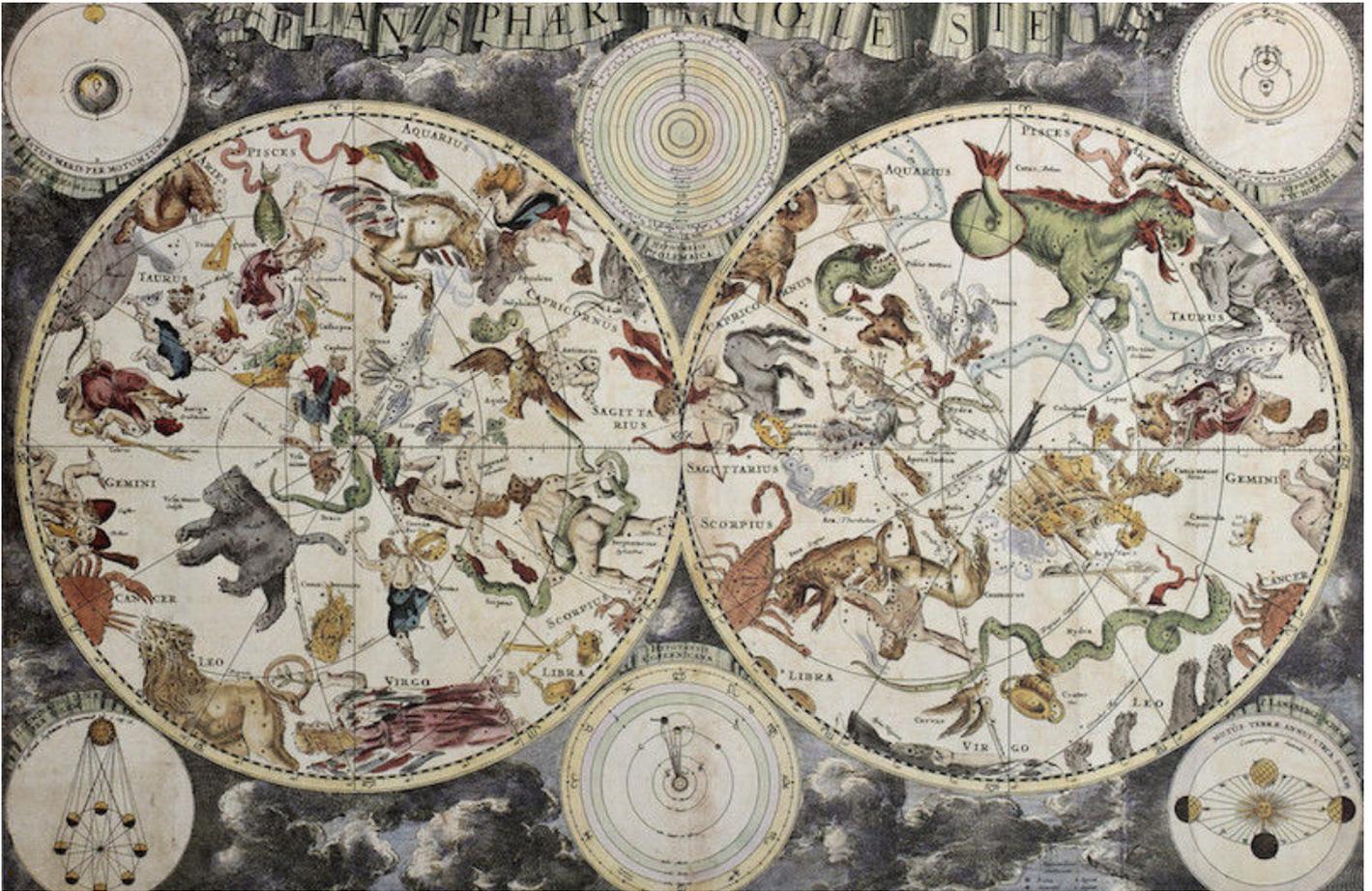
Dr. Kishwar Rizvi is an Associate Professor in the History of Art Islamic Art and Architecture, Yale University. Her research is supported in part by Title VI funding from the U.S. Dept. of Education through the Middle East Studies Council at Yale University.

This article was originally published by The Conversation.



*Istanbul's Blue Mosque, where quiet tourists respectfully view the vivid tiles and historic architecture while worshippers pray in dedicated areas nearby. Photos by D. Trynoski*

# What Would the Ancient Astrologers Have Told Us About 2017?



*Old sky map depicting boreal and austral hemispheres with constellations and zodiac signs. Photo: Marzolino/Shutterstock)* **by Karl Kinsella**

Apparently 2017 will be my year – indeed, it is a good year for everyone born between November 22 and December 21 under the sign of Sagittarius – half man, half horse, all myth.

**Modern astrology** as we know it – in the form of a yearly, monthly or daily horoscope – is based on a celestial coordinate system known as the “zodiac”, a Greek word that means the circle of life. And, although

astrology has been dated to the third millennium BC, **it has been argued that it began** as soon as humans made a conscious attempt to measure, record and predict seasonal changes.

But, unlike modern times where the idea of star signs and horoscopes is often scoffed at, until the 17th century **astrology was seen as a scholarly tradition.**

And it is credited as influencing the development of astronomy – because back then its concepts were used in alchemy, mathematics, meteorology and medicine. And it was even accepted in political and cultural circles.

But by the end of the 17th century, emerging scientific concepts in astronomy undermined the theoretical basis of astrology, which as a result fell out of favour.

### The Ancient 'Mathematici'

Medieval astrologers – who were known as mathematici – wove stories in an attempt to say something true about the world. And, much like modern mathematicians, they made predictions which they hoped could be verified.

One of the earliest Christian authors, Origen, hinted at the presence and desire for knowledge about the future, given by mathematici. Origen, who had a somewhat uneasy relationship with Christian orthodoxy, speaks of man's "insatiable desire" to know about the future.

He complained about the situation of the Old Testament Israelites who were forbidden from "heathen" **divination techniques**, including "astrology" and argued that in the Israelites' desperation to know more about their future they turned to their prophets and the stories they told. Though, this was convenient for Origen because he argues that they foretold the coming of Christ. Several centuries after Origen's death, bishops at the Christian council of Braga in 561 **condemned these mathematici** and their stories because of their implicit assumption that the future could be told by looking at the stars – which raised questions about free will.



Astrologer-astronomer Richard of Wallingford is shown measuring an equatorium. (14th c.)

## Stars Aligned

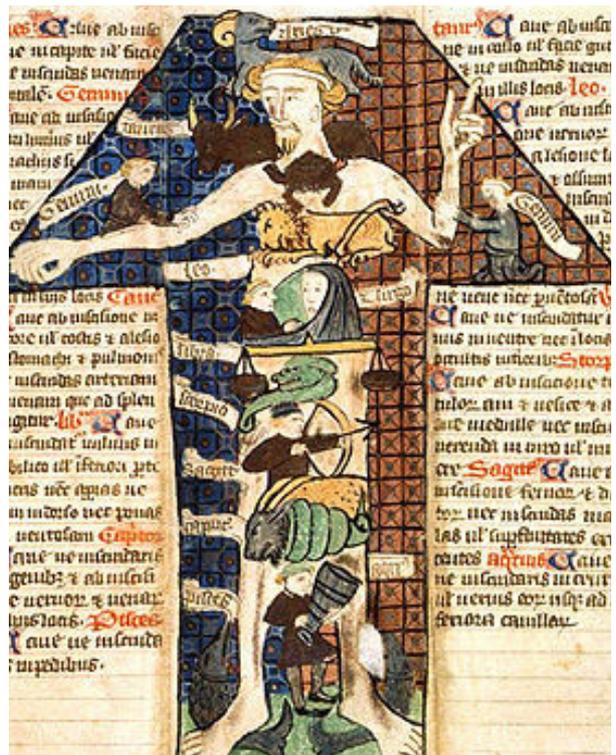
Throughout history, astrology and the stories told by mathematici were repeatedly condemned – and the frequent criticism of the practice only makes sense in the context of astrology’s prevalence in the everyday life of the early Middle Ages. After all, you can only disprove what is practised.

Part of the problem was that the stories astrologers and their horoscopes elicited could be dangerous, wielded by kings and emperors like monarchical manifestos that described the tone of their rule, violent or peaceful, long or short. But like beauty, the meaning of a story lies in the eye of the beholder.

Astrology in the Middle Ages held an ambiguous position, disparaged but common, reviled but satiating an “innate desire”. It told stories about the world and the lives of the people in it, stories that hinted at their true desires and motivations. Such desires are no more apparent and perhaps surprising that in the case of the bishop and amateur astrologer Pierre d’Ailly around

the year 1400. At the time, the church faced a division which threatened to rip the institution in two. **The Great Schism** was a result of a desire for a Roman pope after years of the pope having a base in Avignon, France – and a series of popes and antipopes brought turmoil to the Church and across Europe.

Plus, historically speaking, the beginnings of centuries and millennia have tended to encourage people to reflect on the stability of the world and its possible end – and the schism brought that sharply into focus.



A Zodiac illustration from a medical almanac, 1399, Sloane 2250, Section 12 (British Library)

D'Ailly examined the night sky, but did not predict fire and damnation, instead, he suggested that the end of the world was far in the future, something for other generations to worry about. D'Ailly confounded expectations by reading the stars and telling whoever would listen to him a convenient truth: the stars tell us to press on and to make something more of this world – and who could argue with that?

### **Reading the Future**

For D'Ailly, the prospect of an imminent apocalypse called only for man to repent and pray – and possibly abandon the institutions that kept the world ticking over. Whereas D'Ailly hoped that, by facing the fact that the world would continue, the church would heal its recent division and carry on with what it was good at – saving souls.

Like D'Ailly, these messages from ancient star gazers tapped into an innate human desire: to gain a sense of control in a world of disorder.

Something to hold on to when doubts formed about the road ahead.

Of course, human history is filled with foreboding about the future – and 2016 has shown us that the world is still full of surprises. So while these days we're not all looking to the skies for an explanation of worldly happenings – like our ancestors did – perhaps we can look to the past to understand people's desire to make reason out of the unreasonable.

And while astrology has a somewhat problematic relationship with modern science, my own prediction is that the year 2017 looks set to be as turbulent as any. So perhaps D'Ailly was on to something when he suggested we just try to do our best.

**This article originally appeared in the Conversation.**

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# The Winter of Our Discontent

By Danièle Cybulskie



Viking turf house (Photo: Hurstwic.org)

Winter got you feeling down? You're not alone. The long, dark nights of winter have always been the cause for a little doom and gloom, especially before the age of electric lights and electric blankets. In the late Middle Ages, the world was experiencing the "**Little Ice Age**", as well, with temperatures lower than in previous centuries. All of this added up to some winter blues for a lyricist whose words were recorded with various other songs in **MS Harley 2253**. This song is subtitled "*A Winter Song*" by Susanna Greer Fein in her **TEAMS translation**, which I'll be using here.

The anonymous lyricist cuts straight to the chase with the words:

*"Wynter wakeneth al my care"  
("Winter awakens all my sorrow"),  
placing the blame squarely on the season. He cites the bare trees as reminders of the futility of life that often make him feel mournful. "Nou hit is, ant nou hit nys / Also hit ner nere, ywys!", he says ("Now it is, and now it isn't, / As if it had never been, indeed!"),*

Echoing that timeless wonder at how what was so full of life and greenery is now so empty and bare.



Winter snowball fight. Maestro Venceslao, *Ciclo dei Mesi*, gennaio, Torre Aquila, 1400 circa, particolare. (Wikipedia)

Unsurprisingly, the lyricist uses this reflection on winter, life, and death to meditate on faith, and the will of God. Like the crops, man is destined to live and die, and (he hopes) live again.

*"Al goth bote Godes wille; / Alle we shule deye"* ("All passes except God's will; We all shall die"), he writes, with an attempt at acceptance, but in what sounds to me like a grumpy little end line (that makes me smile), he adds, *"Thath us like ylle"* ("Though we dislike it"). He then implores Jesus to *"shild us from helle"* ("shield us from hell"), because he doesn't know how much longer he'll live, or where he'll end up afterwards. While an invocation of Jesus is pretty common in song, as it is in

so much medieval writing, ending this Winter Song on a note of uncertainty gets at what must've been a very familiar feeling towards winter.

In the Middle Ages, death was never far away, but in winter, this was especially true. Starvation was a real danger, as people relied on food stores from warmer months, as was disease, more easily spread in close quarters and low temperatures. With wool, furs, and wood – again, hopefully stockpiled in preparation – people could remain relatively warm, especially with their livestock huddled in the house with them or on the first floor of a two-story home.

With fire, though, came the danger of smoke and spreading flames. Fighting the dangers of winter was enough of a challenge that enemy countries often suspended their hostilities until the season had passed. A medieval song about winter, then, is a natural invitation to consider a person's possible death and the state of the soul.

With the winter came contemplation and the fasting of Lent, but people knew that if they could only hang on, they would be rewarded by the rebirth of spring, and the promise of eternal life that accompanied the celebration of Easter. Until then, it was natural – just as it is now – to experience a little bit of the winter blues.

The poem "*Wynter wakeneth al my care*" ("*A Winter Song*") follows below in its original Middle English. For the **full translation**, check out the wonderful **TEAMs online edition of MS Harley 2253**, edited by Susanna Greer Fein.

*Wynter wakeneth al my care;  
Nou this leves waxeth bare.  
Ofte Y sike ant mourne sare  
When hit cometh in my thoht  
Of this worldes joie:  
Hou hit geth al to noht!*

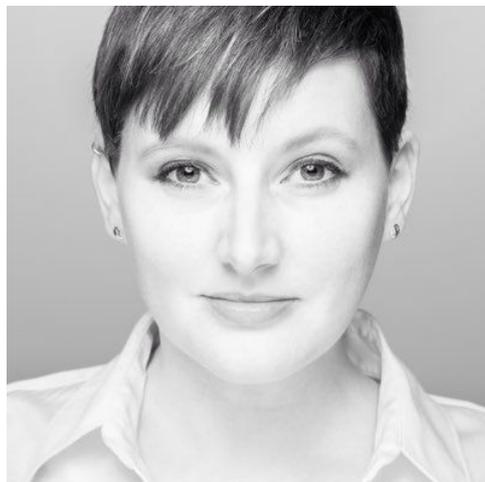
*Nou hit is, ant nou hit nys,  
Also hit ner nere, ywys!  
That moni mon seith, soth hit ys:  
Al goth bote Godes wille;  
Alle we shule deye,  
Thath us like ylle.*

*Al that gren me graveth grene;  
Nou hit faleweth al bydene.  
Jesu, help that hit be sene,  
Ant shild us from helle,  
For Y not whider Y shal,  
Ne hou longe her duelle.*

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# Hippocras, Ipocras, Hipocras, Hipocrasse, Hypocras, Ypocras, Ypocrasse...

by Dani Trynoski

Feeling cold and sad? Deep in the January doldrums? Make something warm and alcoholic! It fixes so many of life's problems. Well, not really, but it IS fun to experiment with medieval recipes and if you're having fun then it's a lot easier to look forward to February!



A spiced wine, hippocras was a not-so-subtle way for nobility to show off their pantry. Even in the Middle Ages, folks knew their wine regions and it was a way for the have's to show off what they could afford. Common ingredients included ginger, cloves, cinnamon, peppercorns, or nutmeg however it's a variable recipe based on the consumer's preferences (and

budget). Spiced wine has almost as many names as recipe variations; hippocras has many many spellings and medieval wino's also called for their pimen. Pimen or Piment is a word derived from the Latin pigmentum: aromatic or spice.

According to [www.historicfood.com](http://www.historicfood.com), the spices were filtered through a cloth bag known to apothecaries as a *manicum hippocraticum* (the sleeve of Hippocrates). Alcohol was a primary resource for doctors and apothecaries, who were some of the few practitioners with stills aside from beverage producers.

For the hippocras I LOVED experimenting with different levels of spice, which complemented the fruit notes of the sangria red wine base. While the weather is pretty comfortable in southern California, we had our two weeks of cool weather during the preparation for this issue so it was the perfect time to sip some warm drinks while the wind howled outside.

If you don't have a *manicum hippocraticum* hanging around your kitchen and you can't stand leaves floating in your drink, grab a loose leaf tea strainer. If you want your spiced wine to be warm, then make sure it's metal or heat in a pot and pour into a French Press to prevent leaves in your cup.



For an easy spiced wine, order this mulled wine spice mix from U.S.-based Penzey's Spices. Their ready-to-use blend of mulling spices includes cassia, cloves, allspice, cardamom seeds, and mace.

If you want to mix your own, here's two options from well-researched medieval recipe collections.

### ***Daniel Myers at Medieval Cookery***

Spiced wines have been popular for centuries, and the spices used haven't changed much since the 14th century. Instructions for making hypocras can be found in medieval cookbooks from several countries, making it one of the most common recipes. Myers cites 5 different medieval manuscripts, from England, Spain, and France in the 14-16th centuries.

***2 cups red wine***

***1 tsp. powder douce***

***2 - 3 Tbsp. sugar, according to taste***

***Stir until powders are dissolved, and serve warm or cold.***

***Powder douce: (alter to suit tastes)***

***3 Tbsp. ginger***

***2 Tbsp. sugar***

***1 1/2 Tbsp. cinnamon***

***1 tsp. cloves***

***1 tsp. nutmeg***



## ***The Gode Cookery***

Ypocras was a very popular medieval beverage, and many different directions for preparation still exist. Also called Hippocras, the drink is named after the famous physician Hippocrates.

**1 bottle (750 ml) of an inexpensive, sweet red or white wine**  
**1 - 2 cups honey (OR: 1 - 1 1/2 cups sugar)**  
**1 tbs. each of ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, white pepper, clove, nutmeg, & caraway seed**  
**cheesecloth**

**Bring the wine and honey or sugar to a boil; if using honey, skim off the scum as it rises. Taste for sweetness; add honey or sugar as necessary. Remove from heat, stir in spices, and allow to sit covered for 24 hours. After sitting, the spices will create a thick residue which will settle to the bottom. Using a ladle, pass the wine into another container through a strainer lined with 2 or 3 layers of cheesecloth to remove the spices, being careful to leave as much of the spice residue in the pot as possible. Make at least 1 month before serving. The older it is, the better.**

We hope these recipes, or your favorite hot drink, helps make winter a little less chilly and a little more beautiful! Wassail!

### **Art/ifact Spotlight**

A container for hot coals, typically used to supplement or replace a hearth. Most braziers are a pan or metal basket with legs to distance the hot base off the floor. Common materials include fired clay, iron, or steel like this 14th century piece from Spain in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid. Braziers were used in many different situations; to heat rooms in castles, to heat tents while traveling, and for cooking. Some braziers had a top and were used to cook food, however many were used simply as a source of heat on a chilly day.

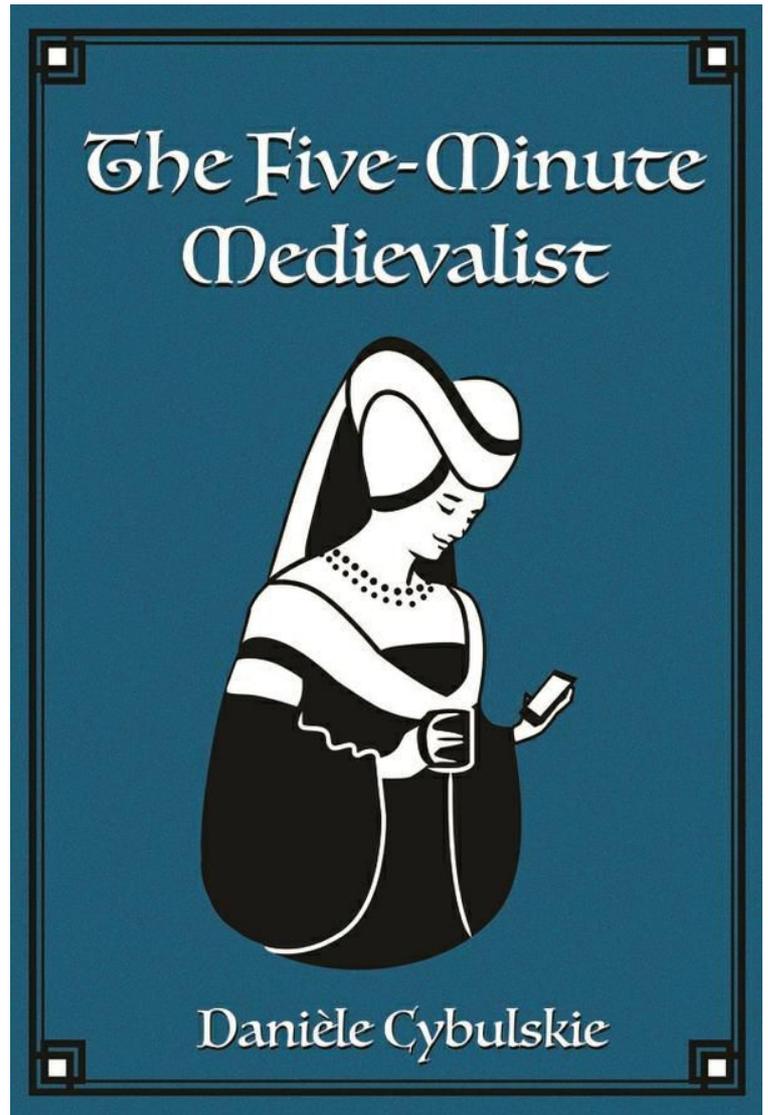


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By Danièle Cybulskie

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