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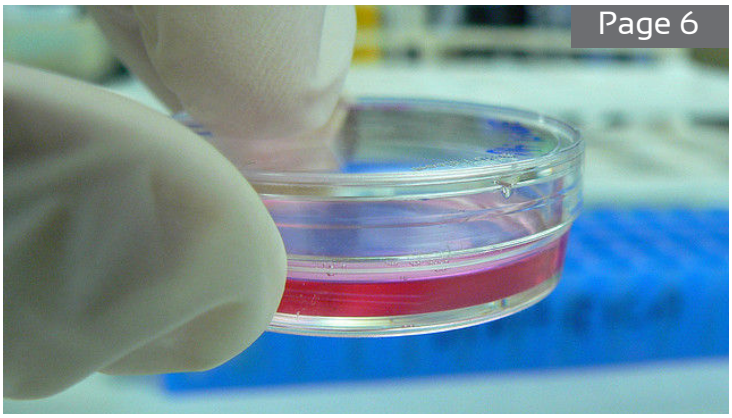
Five Great Ladies Who Refused to Be Quiet



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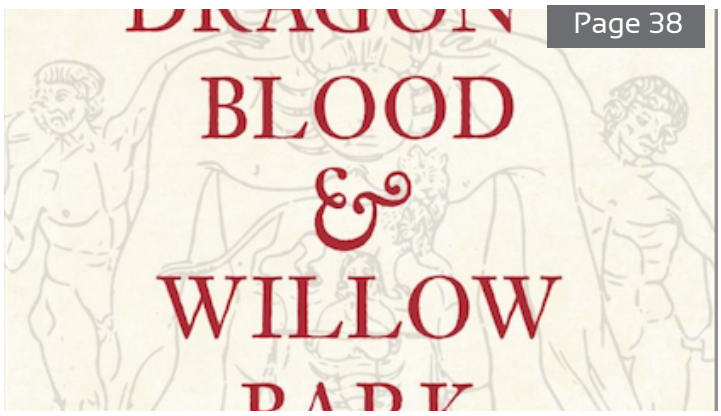

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Peter Konieczny and Sandra Alvarez

Website:
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Cover Photo: Eleanor of Aquitaine

Joan of Arc Museum opens in France

Those interested in the story of Joan of Arc have a new destination - Rouen, where the Joan of Arc History Centre opened last month, making use of a 15th century Archbishop's palace that played a key role in history of the Maid of Orléans.

The story of Joan of Arc, French heroine and Catholic Saint, is intrinsically linked with that of Rouen. It was here that she was tried and burnt at the stake in 1431 and, after a second trial in 1456, exonerated.

The legacy of Joan of Arc can be found throughout the city from the Place du Vieux Marché, where she met her fate and which today has a church in her honour, to the Archbishop's palace where both her trials took place.

The museum is the result of a €10 million project that combines a state of the art immersive exhibition space with comprehensive historical content, inviting the visitor to step back in time to the 15th century and become a witness and participant in Joan of Arc's trial.

Visits will be conducted in groups of up to twenty-five people per group and four groups per hour and will be accompanied with audio guides, available in different languages. An educational centre will be available for both school groups and families.

The museum believes they will be able to attract between 100,000 and 150,000 visitors per year.

Click here to learn more about the museum from the Rouen Tourism website

New spectrometer may revolutionize archaeology

A new carbon dating technology tool being developed by researchers at the University of Liverpool could lead archaeologists to date finds much quicker and easier.

Norton Priory foundations - WikiCommons

Radiocarbon dating is used to determine the age of ancient objects by means of measuring the amount of carbon-14 remaining in a sample. However it is an expensive process which takes place offsite and typically takes six weeks or more which means that an excavation is likely to be over before the important dating information can be obtained.

But now, the new quadrupole mass spectrometer (QMS) being developed at the university will reduce the time it takes to obtain data for a bone sample to just two days.

Significantly the technology can also be utilised onsite, and this is the first time this has been attempted.

So far the technique has been has been used to analyse both medieval and post medieval bone samples provided by Norton Priory Museum & Gardens, the most excavated monastic site in Europe.

Professor Steve Taylor, from the University's Department of Electrical Engineering and Electronics who is leading the project, commented, "It will be a challenge to develop a portable instrument to achieve the required performance, but thanks to this funding we are in a strong position to make a real attempt."

Frank Hargrave, Director of Norton Priory added, "The potential of this new technique is incalculable. Archaeologists will, for the first time, be able to make decisions onsite and within days of sampling.

"The expense and time consuming nature of conventional methods will also no longer be a barrier and it's likely that many more samples will be able to be taken with significant benefits to the archaeological record."

It is anticipated that the first new QMS unit of its type is will be commercially available for field trials by archaeologists in 2016.

The project received a £96,000 investment from Art Council for England's Museum Resilience Fund which supports museums to become more financially sustainable.

Medieval Medicine and Modern Science: An Interview with Freya Harrison

Last week's news that researchers have discovered that an Anglo-Saxon remedy for eye infections has performed well in tests against the MRSA bacteria has drawn media attention from around the world. The team from University of Nottingham have easily surpassed their crowdfunding goal for a summer project to expand on their research.

We had a chance to interview Dr. Freya Harrison, from the University's Centre for Biomolecular Sciences, who was one of the researchers involved in the discovery. We talk about this project's collaboration, the potential of medieval medicines, and her reaction to all the attention her research has generated.

There has been a growing trend in universities to find ways for different fields of study to collaborate with each other, and your research is a perfect example of this. What are your thoughts about being able to collaborate with each other – what have the challenges and pleasures been with doing this kind of research together?

This collaboration has been wonderful – at the beginning, it was nice to occasionally step away from my routine research and discuss something totally different. As the small project mushroomed into something that looked like it was giving results and could become a longer-term project, I really enjoyed working with people form the humanities who had different ways of looking at questions, and different methods. The questions they/we were asking were in many ways more difficult to tease apart and test than the questions we usually address in microbiology, because there are more layers – for instance, in the case of the eyesalve, you have the translation of the language itself, the interpretation of what was meant by it and then on top of that the actual sourcing of ingredients and testing of the product. Universities and research councils do put a lot of emphasis on interdisciplinary work, but often I think they can "play it safe" by only supporting projects from very closely allied disciplines. The University of Nottingham took a risk by supporting a project that's about as interdisciplinary as it's possible to get, and I hope we've shown it was worth it.

The idea of looking into medieval medicine to see if it can have some applications in the modern world is fairly new – what do you think the possibilities are for this field?

For a while scientists have been testing natural compounds for antibacterial activity – this has been particularly big in China, but European and American researchers have also got in on the act. Garlic, for instance, has received a lot of attention and one of out clinical colleagues at Nottingham was even involved in a pilot study to see if garlic could help people with cystic fibrosis fight off lung infections. But I think where medieval sources are useful is that they don't rely on single ingredients, but on mixtures of things. This is very interesting and could provide a new way of looking at plant-derived chemicals for antibiotic potential. With Bald's eyesalve, we found that it was the combination of ingredients that was key – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. So there is something going on in the way different ingredients affect bacteria, or on how they much react with one another, that gives the recipe its power. This might explain why individual plant preparations or molecules purified from a single plant often aren't clinically useful (like the garlic

useful (like the garlic and lung infection example – it looked great in the lab, but did not have a big effect when tested in humans).

I do think, though, that we have to recognise that most potential "new antibiotics" fail. Early promise in the lab might not translate into useful levels of activity when tested in humans, or the drug might have dangerous side effects, or it might be really easy for bacteria to evolve resistance. So we have to be prepared for medieval remedies to look super exciting in the early stages of research, but fall at a later hurdle. But this is true of any potential new drug – exactly the same goes for molecules designed by big pharma.

Finally, you have had a lot of media interest in your research, and your fundraising campaign has already exceeded its goal. What is your reaction to this interest?

I've been pretty overwhelmed, to be honest. I had no idea this would take off in the way it has – I certainly never expected to be interviewed on TV, or have Playboy write an article about our research! But it is really heartening to see how interested people are – it's great that the public has engaged with this so much (via twitter, facebook, email...) and we've also had some very positive responses from clinicians. I'm incredibly grateful to the people who have donated to our crowdfunder. It's going to help us trememdously in the short term as we'll be able to get a summer student in to help me in the lab, but it could also have longer-term effects – we're applying for research council funding to continue and expand the work, and the fact that ordinary people have chosen to donate to our project will hopefully demonstrate that our work has real impact and public appeal. So big thank yous are due to everyone who donated and who helped to spread the word.

A Broken Book of Hours – Saving a Medieval Manuscript

By Peter Konieczny

Last month at an auction house in Germany, a single page from a medieval manuscript went up for sale. Among those who were trying to buy it was David Gura, the Curator of Ancient and Medieval Manuscripts at the University of Notre Dame. It was another chance for him to save part of a 15th century Book of Hours, which only a few years earlier had been broken up. He is now in a race to find the remaining the pages of this manuscript before they disappear.

Medieval manuscripts have extraordinary beauty – even those with no images can be a delight to look at. It is not a surprise that since the 19th century there has been a strong trade in centuries-old manuscripts. However, it did not take sellers long to realize that it was more profitable to sell individual pages from the manuscripts than it was to sell the entire book.

The practice of breaking books has been thriving since then. Although it is not illegal to split up a book and sell the pages individually, the industry falls into a grey-zone - and those who take part in it generally keep a low profile. While these businesses remain profitable, they also need to get their hands on medieval manuscripts to create new pages. Therefore they keep their eyes on these items when they come for sale, which led to one of them buying a 15th century Book of Hours in 2011.

The manuscript had been made in the early 15th-century in the French region of Brittany, in or near the town of Vannes. It had probably been created for a noble woman in the area, and also contained in its 129 leaves a calendar of months, details about local saints, and the Office of the Dead.

In 1981 the manuscript was purchased by Joseph Pope, a Canadian financier with a passion for medieval books. He had collected hundreds of manuscripts and spent much of his free time researching them. The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies at the University of Toronto even awarded him on a honourary doctorate for his contributions to the field.

When he passed away in 2010, it was expected that his collection would have been donated to the University of Toronto. However, his descendants had other ideas, and most of his medieval manuscripts were sold to the highest bidder.

On July 5, 2011, the Book of Hours was sold at Sotheby's Auction House in London for £25,000– you can still see the record of the sale and manuscript details on the Sotheby's website – to an unknown buyer. That day saw dozens of manuscripts sold, some reaching prices hundreds of thousands of pounds. Most have now disappeared into private collections.

About seven months later David Gura went on Ebay.com hoping to find some examples of a medieval calendar that he could make use of when teaching medieval palaeography at the University of Notre Dame. The popular e-commerce website is one of the best places to find pages of medieval manuscripts. Here you can find all sorts of pages, selling from anywhere between a few hundred and a few thousand dollars per folio.

Gura was able to find the pages he was looking

Three Living and Three Dead. 15th century, pigments and gold on parchment, 7 x 5 ½ in (173 x 135 mm). credit: University of Notre Dame, Hesburgh Library, Frag. III.1, fol. 75v.

for. The seller provided details about the manuscript, which proved to be fabricated information, but soon Gura was able to figure out where these pages had come from. He also found that other portions of the manuscript was for sale, and was able to start purchasing them.

"The primary motivation was preservation of the manuscript," Gura explains. "There are so few witnesses which contain a calendar for the use of Vannes in a book of hours, that I felt it was important to study its relationship to the rest of the manuscript. I did not think I would be able to recover many leaves at all – the fact that the calendar was intact was beyond my normal expectations."

Over the next few months he was able to locate more pages of the Book of Hours and purchased them for the university. Gura even started contacting other people who had bought parts of the manuscript on eBay, asking if they would be interested in giving the pages so he could restore the manuscript. Some never responded, while others agreed to hand over the pages – for a price.

At the same time, Gura was able to find other pages of the manuscript in the hands of dealers, auction houses and other private collectors. The university was the highest bidder at last month's auction in Germany, bringing it's collection to 92 of the 129 pages from the Book of Hours.

Gura concedes that he will probably not be able to find all the pages of this Book of Hours, but he

occasionally gets a new lead on where they might be. He explains how important this project has been: "Since no new medieval manuscripts can be made, it is of vast importance to preserve the ones which do exist and make them available for study. This manuscript reveals much. On a larger scale, it shows the richness of Breton culture and Catholic devotional practices in the Vannetais during the 15th century, but it also makes a specific contribution: we now know that books of hours from Vannes contain the use of Nantes and Rennes, where it was thought previously that the use of Nantes occurred exclusively. None of this would be accessible if the pages of the manuscript remained fragmented in private hands."

To help bring more awareness to the project and the issues related to the breaking of medieval manuscripts, an exhibition was held at the Snite Museum of Art, on the campus of the University of Notre Dame. In this video, David Gura spoke at the exhibition:

You can learn more about this Book of Hours and the project to save it at:

http://hour-by-hour.snitemuseum.org/

Our thanks to David Gura, who you can follow Twitter **@d_gura** and the Snite Museum of Art - **@SniteMuseum** – for their help in creating this article.

John, the Apostle. 15th century, pigments and gold on parchment, 7 x 5 ½ in (173 x 135 mm). credit: University of Notre Dame, Hesburgh Library, Frag. III.1, fol. 49r.

MOOCs: Medieval Courses this Spring

Interested in learning about medieval history? Here are severl free MOOCs (Massive open online courses) that you can take between April and June 2015.

Sagas and Space – Thinking Space in Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavia

From: Coursera
Starting Date: 7 Apr 2015
Length: 8 weeks

Space is a basic category of human thought. Over the last decades it became a very productive scientific category, too. Thinking about spaces, places, locations, or landscapes covers a spectrum of meanings from the concrete and material through to the abstract and metaphorical. In this course we explore various categories of space in the field of Old Norse culture. Together with international guest scholars from different fields we want to find out how mythological, heroic, historical, geographical spaces or landscapes look like in written and oral narratives, but also on picture-stones, runic inscriptions, paintings, woodcarvings and manuscripts. Another promising question could be to ask about the relationship between texts, images and maps and the process of mapping itself.

Click here to learn more and sign up

Digging Deeper: The Form and Function of Manuscripts

From: Stanford University
Starting Date: 21 Apr 2015
Length: 6 weeks

Digging Deeper: The Form and Function of Manuscripts introduces you to the way medieval manuscripts are interpreted, conserved, and disseminated today. The Digging Deeper team of scholars from Stanford and Cambridge shows how to analyze the function of manuscripts, the methods by which they are conserved, and the digital means that are transforming the field of manuscript studies. We will look at the development of music, move beyond the European tradition to study non-Western manuscripts, and see how digital methods are allowing for new inquiry and posing new problems. In pursuing these studies, you will study some of the most significant and beautiful books held by the university libraries of Cambridge and Stanford.

Digging Deeper is a six-week course, with each week featuring filmed sequences of experts with manuscripts, reading assignments, a short transcription, and self-test quizzes. Assignments will help you further your knowledge of how to access manuscripts in person and online, skills in codicology (the study of the medieval book and the physical make-up of manuscripts), palaeography (the describing and analysis of medieval scripts), and transcription (the reading and interpretation of writing in manuscripts).

Click here to learn more and sign up

Magic in the Middle Ages

From: Coursera
Starting Date: 4 May 2015
Length: 6 weeks

Magical thought has always attracted human imagination. In this course we will introduce you to the Middle Ages through a wide conception of magic. Students will have an approach to medieval culture, beliefs and practices from the perspective of different areas of knowledge (History, Literature, Art History and History of Science). Popular magic, as well as magie savante (alchemy, geomancy and necromancy) will be addressed and we will also deal with artistic manifestations, such as relics, art objects, the Saint Grail and Arthurian literature. Magic in the Middle Ages offers a captivating overview of medieval society and promotes reflection about certain stereotypes associated with this period.

Click here to learn more and sign up

The Divine Comedy: Dante's Journey to Freedom, Part 3 (Paradiso)

From: Edx
Starting Date: 10 Jun 2015
Length: 5 weeks

In this course, you will be asked to participate in learning activities on both edX and on MyDante, an innovative platform for deep reading that emphasizes mindfulness and contemplative reading habits as key to deriving lasting meaning from poetic texts. The pedagogical approach of the course goes beyond mere academic commentary on the poem as literature; it introduces the reader to a way of thinking about the meaning of the poem at a personal level. This module is the third of three modules that compose the full course. The previous modules are the Vita Nuova and Inferno, and a module on Purgatorio.

Click here to learn more and sign up

Monty Python and the Holy Grail turns 40

Considered to be one of the funniest films ever made, and perhaps the best film ever done about the Middle Ages, Monty Python and the Holy Grail was first released on April 9, 1975. We took a poll from our readers on what their favourite scene from the film was, and here are the two leading vote-getters.

Help Help I'm Being Repressed

Just a Flesh Wound

Five Great Ladies Who Refused to Be Quiet

By Danièle Cybulskie

In the Middle Ages, the ideal woman was meant to be either a helpmeet in marriage, or a cloistered nun, obedience being paramount in both roles. Human nature being what it is, however, not every woman found it easy to fill one of those narrow roles in society. Although my list could be much, much longer, here are five great women who refused to sit down and be quiet.

1. Empress Matilda (1102 – 1167 CE)

Matilda, the daughter of England's Henry I, was the heiress to the throne, as well as Empress of Germany by marriage. Despite this, her cousin Stephen usurped her throne upon her father's death, but Matilda did not take this lying down. Unwilling to concede defeat, she gathered her forces and returned to England, deposing Stephen and taking back her inheritance. Unfortunately, the pith and vinegar that gave Matilda the impetus to march in and take over managed to alienate her allies within England itself, and soon enough Stephen was placed back on the throne. Although she was the rightful queen, she was never acknowledged as such, and is remembered as Empress Matilda instead of a queen of England.

2. Eleanor of Aquitaine (c.1122 – 1204 CE)

Eleanor is remembered as one of the most powerful women of the Middle Ages, and with good reason. She was Duchess of Aquitaine, Countess of Poitou, and Queen of France when she and Louis XII divorced over claims of consanguinity. Not long after the divorce, Eleanor married Henry II of England without bothering to ask for permission from Louis, likely because he would have refused the marriage: with Eleanor's land, Henry II owned more of modern France than Louis did. Passionate love may easily have been a part of Eleanor and Henry's courtship, and passionate dislike (if not outright hatred) was certainly a part of their long and tempestuous marriage. Refusing to be a quiet and obedient wife, Eleanor exerted a huge influence over her sons, encouraging their longing for more autonomy in ruling pieces of the kingdom. Henry was so convinced that she was behind the civil wars that erupted between himself and his sons that he kept her imprisoned (comfortably) far from court for many years. The rift between father and sons was never able to be healed, and Henry II died after submitting to Richard (I – the Lionheart) and John. Eleanor's hand in raising Richard was most likely the reason he was much more enamoured with Aquitaine than England itself, which he barely ever set foot in, as well as the reason the courtly love tradition began to flourish in England.

3. Isabella of France (1295 – 1358 CE)

Isabella was a princess of France, married to Edward II of England. Marriage to Edward was difficult for Isabella, however, as he was a weak king, in the habit of alienating the aristocracy by elevating his favourites (it's very likely these men were also his lovers) and showering them with outrageous gifts and status. Eventually, Isabella had had enough of Edward's ineffectual rule, and led an open rebellion against him, placing her son (Edward III) on the throne. Not only did she manage this through her vast influence, but she also held power enough that she was able to keep a lover, Roger Mortimer, without needing to keep the scandal too carefully under wraps. Eventually, Edward III separated them and executed Mortimer, but he never held his mother to the same account. Isabella's French influence was felt long after Edward's rule, as it was she (and through her, Edward III) who held a claim to the French throne, a major factor in the Hundred Years' War.

You can follow Danièle Cybulskie on Twitter

4. Joan of Arc (c.1412 – 1431 CE)

I mention Joan here because she was absolutely remarkable in her refusal to ever back down. A peasant girl from Domrémy, Joan managed to convince the local population, then high aristocrats, then the Dauphin himself that she was not a heretic, but rather a chosen vehicle for God's work. Rumour of her visions alone might have been enough to reignite the French army's low morale, but Joan actually put herself on the front lines of battle, again and again, despite this being absolutely contrary to all convention. Unfortunately for Joan, her obstinacy split the army between the path of her visions and the plan of experienced commanders, and she found herself excluded from strategy sessions and forays against the enemy. By the time she was captured by the English, her influence in France had waned, but Joan held to her convictions. She was treated badly by the English, and told she would escape burning if she would only confess to being a heretic. In a moment of weakness, she signed a confession, but the next day she took it back. Joan was duly burnt at the stake, only being canonized a saint many years later.

5. Christine de Pizan (1365 – c.1430 CE)

Christine was a contemporary of Joan of Arc, and she is said to be the first professional female writer. Widowed young with little children to care for, Christine used the education she had received at the insistence of her father to write poetry and prose for the French court. She wrote essays promoting peace, songs about her experience as a woman, and even a piece in praise of Joan. Most stunningly, however, Christine wrote The Book of The City of Ladies, a careful argument which takes apart all of the conventional arguments men made about women at the time. She wrote it in reaction to The Romance of the Rose, the content of which she strongly, vocally disagreed with. In The City of Ladies, Christine uses biblical stories, legends, and conventional wisdom to prove that women are smart, strong, loyal, and worthy of more respect than they get. Her careful logic and tact kept the book from being banned, and herself safe from prosecution throughout her long life. Unfortunately, The City of Ladies was not considered a vital part of historic study for centuries, which (in its own way) proves Christine's very point.

Although I don't have a book recommendation for Empress Matilda's life, I'd recommend Alison Weir's biographies of Eleanor of Aquitaine (she also has written a novel on Eleanor) and Isabella of France. For Joan of Arc, check out Nancy Goldstone's ***The Maid and the Queen*** for a great look at both Joan and another influential great lady: Yolande of Aragon. As for Christine de Pisan, I highly recommend reading ***The Book of the City of Ladies*** for yourself.

You can follow Danièle Cybulskie on Twitter **@5MinMedievalist**

Beef and Pork in

The books – ***Beef: A Global History***, by Lorna Piatti-Farnell, and ***Pork: A Global History***, by Katharine Rogers – examine how these two meats became popular foods and how they are served throughout the world. Both authors even note how they were thought of during the Middle Ages. Here are some medieval morsels of information you can learn about beef and pork from these two books...

Beef in Ancient Times

The Romans rarely ate beef, but it was reserved for special occasions such as religious ceremonies, with cows being used for ritual sacrifices to the gods. Moreover, Romans would have found it logistically difficult to make use of cows for their meat, since these animals require a lot of pasture to feed off of, and when killed, the beef needs to be preserved in cold conditions.

Pork in Ancient Times

Ancient Romans and Greeks found pork to be among their most favourite foods. The Greek physician Galen claimed it was "the most nutritious of all foods", while Pliny the Elder praised pork, writing that offered "almost fifty flavours, whereas all other meats have one each."

Beef in the Early Middle Ages

By the early Middle Ages, cows and beef found increasing popularity, Lorna Piatta-Farnell notes that in Anglo-Saxon England, beef was often an ingredient in medical recipes. "The imagistic connection between cows and strength clearly made an impression on the way in which Anglo-Saxons perceived beef, building a belief that meat deriving from cattle would bestow health upon those who ate it."

From Bald's Leechbook (10th century): "Against hiccupy stomachs or swelling take horned cattle flesh cooked in vinegar and with oil thickened with salt and dill and leek, partake of that for a seven night, henceforth relieven thence the afflicted stomach."

Pork in the Early Middle Ages

The popularity of pigs continued into the Middle Ages. Katherine Rogers explains, "in early medieval England, the idea of roaming, foraging pigs was so familiar that some woods were measured in the Domesday Book by the number of swine they could support...Pigs did not require pastures like cattle or sheep, but could forage on their own, in the woods, by the roadside and even in city streets."

the Middle Ages

14th century Butcher's shop, depicted in the Tacuinum sanitatis

Pork in Medieval China

In ancient and medieval China, pork was considered to be the main type of meat. Rogers notes that "the Chinese character for home is made by putting the character for roof over the character for pig, suggesting that historically a typical family would have a pig that would live around or even in its house." While in Europe pigs often were allowed to forage, in China they would be typically kept in pens, which made them smaller and fatter than their Western counterparts. One popular dish is named for Su Dongpo, an eleventh-century poet, who was said to have invented the dish for labourers that were building a dam - Dongpo pork "consists of pork belly, complete with skin and lots of fat, cooked long and slowly until the skin and fat become jellylike and the meat is meltingly tender."

Beef in Medieval Korea

While beef continued to gain popularity in medieval Europe, it was still seen as a food for the lower classes. Meanwhile, in medieval Korea, dishes that made use of grilled beef, such as Bulgogi, were enjoyed by the aristocracy. Today, one can ask for 120 different cuts of beef in the East Asian nation.

No eating of pigs among Jews and Muslims

Jews and Muslims find pigs to be taboo, believing the animal to be unclean. The Jewish philosopher Maimonides (1135-1204) wrote that if Jews ate pork, their "streets and houses would be more dirty than any cesspool, as may be see at present in the country of the Franks."

Beef in Stews

Stewing has long been used as a method to prepare meats, especially beef. The word stew comes from the Old English word stewen, which means 'to bathe in a steam bath.' There are several recipes for beef stews from medieval and early modern times, such a this one from the mid-16th century: "Take halfe a handful of rosemary and as much of tyme / and bynder it on a bundell with threde after it is washen / and put it in a pot / after that the pot is clene skyned / and lette it boile a while / then cur soppes of white bread and put them in a great charger and put on the same skaldynge broth / and whan it is soken ynough / strayne it through a strainer with a quantitie of wyne or good Ale / so that it be not to tarte / and when it is strainer / poure it in pot and than put in your raysons and prunes and so let them boyle tyl the meate is inough. If the broathe to be sweete / putin the more wyne / orels a lytell vinegar."

Cooking Pork in 14th century Paris

Le Menagier de Paris, a 14th century guide by a Parisian to his young wife, "gives recipes for spit-roasted pork, served with spring onions (scallions) and verjuice (the sour juice of unripe grapes or other fruit); an elaborately stuffed roast piglet; boiled salt ham; and fresh ham cooked in saffroned stock and grain verjuice, with ginger and bread, served with mashed grape sauce." The guide also mentions pork being used in side dishes, including sausages and roasted boar's tail. The writer even gave his wife directions on how to make pig taste more like wild boar.

Beef in Renaissance Art

In Renaissance art, "scenes depicting slaughtered cows were common, especially when the subject of the painting had a biblical connection. The parable of the prodigal son often received particular attention in this sense, with the carcass of beef - a symbol of celebration and wealth - functioning as a representation of the father's happiness upon his son's return home.

Medieval Articles

The Sumptuous Use of Food at Castle Marienburg (Malbork) at the Start of the Fifteenth Century

By Olga Długokęcka and Wiesław Długokęcki

Acta Poloniae Historica, No. 102 (2010)

Introduction: In the late Middle Ages (fourteenth – fifteenth centuries) the attitude towards sumptuousness in consumption, including eating, was one of ambivalence. On the one hand, it was condemned as being at odds with the ascetic models of the Christian religion, while on the other it functioned as one of the indicators of the prestigious political, economic and social position of a group or individual. Sumptuous feasts were characterized by both the excess in food consumed as by its luxurious nature, which was connected with the rarity and price of the dishes, or the ingredients they were composed from, as well as the sophistication with which they were prepared and served.

Click here to read this article from Acta Poloniae Historica

Trial by Battle in France and England

By Ariella Elema

PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2012

Abstract: Trial by battle was a medieval European form of legal proof in which difficult lawsuits were decided by a single combat between two duellists before a judge. This dissertation surveys the history of trial by battle in the French-speaking regions of the European continent and England, concentrating on the period between roughly 1050 and 1350 when it was most practiced.

Chapter One examines the origins of the procedure and the earliest references to it in the legal codes of the early Middle Ages. The second chapter discusses the courts in which it could be used and the gradual process by which higher courts reserved the privilege of holding judicial duels. Chapter Three examines the nature of the suits in which trial by battle could be used, while Chapter Four looks at the litigants who participated in it, finding that not only knights, but also poor men, could fight judicial duels, while women, clergy, Jews, the young, the elderly, the disabled and certain kinds of kin enjoyed varying forms and levels of exemption from them. The fifth chapter traces the steps involved in a lawsuit leading to proof by battle, while the sixth one describes the procedures on the duelling field and the consequences of winning and losing a judicial duel. Chapter Seven traces the history of opposition to trial by battle and concludes with its gradual decline and disappearance.

The honour and shame of medieval litigants, and the reputations which both upheld these conditions and resulted from them, form an ongoing theme in this discussion. Trials by battle, both actual and threatened, were above all events that challenged and re-established their participants' status and reputation in their communities.

Click here to read this thesis from the University of Toronto

10 Must-See Italian Works o

By Sandra Alvarez

After living in London for a year and a half, I'm ashamed to say I only set foot in the National Gallery last month, albeit briefly, to kill time before catching a play. The National Gallery (located in Trafalgar Square) is FREE, and time well wasted. I still need to go back and visit to see the entire Gallery properly. There is so much to see that you really need to invest in several visits or one rather lengthy visit, in order to see it all. I decided to spend some quality time in the Medieval and Renaissance sections of the National Gallery. The majority of the art works in this section are Italian and incredibly beautiful. Here are 10 masters of Italian art from the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.

The Coronation of the Virgin with Adoring Saints (1370-1371) - Jacopo di Cione

Florentine artist Jacopo di Cione (1325-1390) features heavily in this section of the National Gallery. This piece was commissioned by the powerful Albizzi family, sworn enemies of the Medici. It was part of the high altarpiece in San Pier Maggiore and one of Jacopo's most famous works. The narrative and design was by friend and fellow collaborator, Niccolò di Pietro Gerini (1340-1414), another well known Florentine painter.

f Art at the National Gallery

The Virgin Enthroned with Two Angels (1265-1280) - Cimabue

Cimabue (1240-1302) was one of the most famous of the medieval Italian painters. He was known as the first artist to move towards naturalism in Italian art. He was also known as Giotto's (1266-1337) teacher and the father of the Proto-Renaissance. This picture was considered revolutionary for its time because it demonstrated tenderness and naturalism between the Virgin and Child. deservedly considered to be one of the best known and most valuable cartographic monuments of all times and its lavish artistic decoration is particularly noteworthy.

The Virgin and Child with Narrative Scenes (1263-1264) - Margarito d'Arezzo

While little may be known about this impressive painter from Arezzo, Italy, Margarito d'Arezzo (1250-1290) has managed to leave behind a lasting legacy of beautiful artwork. This piece, found at the National Gallery in London is remarkable for its 8 narrative scenes surrounding the Virgin Mary. The scenes depict various tales about St. John the Evangelist, St. Catherine, St. Nicholas, and St. Margaret.

The Funeral of St. Francis (1437-1444) - Il Sassetta

Stefano di Giovanni di Console, better known as il Sassetta (1392-1450), was a famous Sienese painter. I saw his "The Blessed Ranieri Frees the Poor from a Jail in Florence", recently while visiting the Louvre in Paris. In this painting, a disbelieving knight examines the stigmata at St. Francis's side during the saint's funeral service.

Cassone with Tournament Scene, Florence 1455-1465 (Italian Wedding Chest)

I've always been enamoured with these gorgeous marriage chests from Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy. They were often painted with beautiful scenes and heraldic devices. The cassone was presented to the bride at her wedding and contained the personal goods she was bringing into the marriage. The cassone was also the family of the bride's contribution to the wedding. This chest depicts a stunning tournament scene. Tournaments to celebrate a marriage were popular among the noble families of this period. This chest may have represented the Spinelli and Tanagli families.

The Dead Christ Supported by Two Angels (1470) - Carlo Crivelli

This is a panel from an altarpiece of the Franciscan Church at Montefiore dell'Aso. Carlo Crivelli (1430-1495) was an Italian Renaissance painter from Venice. He had a distinctive, conservative style to his art and was known for his punched gilded backgrounds. Interesting fact: Crivelli was imprisoned in 1457 for 6 months for having an affair with the wife of a sailor!

The Virgin and Child (1499-1500) - Leonardo da Vinci

This artist needs no introduction. Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) drew this cartoon with the intent of turning it into a full scale painting. The painting never materialised but the sketch remains perfectly intact. The Virgin Mary is sitting on the lap of her mother, Saint Anne, while Christ is blessing his cousin, Saint John the Baptist.

The Virgin and Child with Saints (1435-1441) - Pisanello

Antonio di Puccio Pisano, a.k.a., Pisanello (1395-1455), was born in Pisa around 1395. There is not much known about the early life of this talented artist of the Quattrocento but he is well known for his beautiful frescoes, portraiture and medals. He was frequently commissioned by the Gonzaga and d'Este families in Mantua. This painting depicts the Virgin and Child enshrined in sunlight and Saint Anthony with his bell.

Christ Glorified in the Court of Heaven (1423-1424) from the Fiesole San Domenico Altarpiece - Fra Angelico

Guido di Pietro, better known as Fra Angelico (1395-1455) was an Italian Renaissance painter. He was born near Florence in the Mugello district and joined the Carmine Church in 1417. This painting, along with four others, formed the lower (predella) section of the high altarpiece of San Domenico at Fiesole near Florence. This magnificent piece depicts Christ's Court in Heaven.

The Annunciation (1450-1453) - Fra Filippo Lippi

Fra Filippo Lippi (1406-1469) was a 15th century Florentine painter. He was the son of a butcher and was placed in a convent at a young age after his parents died. He quit the monastery to pursue painting. He had a son with a Florentine novice named Lucrezia Buti. He had been commissioned to paint her but ran off with her instead! Lippi was purportedly poisoned by her angry family before they could marry. In this painting, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary to tell her about the pending birth of Christ. The lilies and the walled garden represent Mary's virginity. This painting came from the Palazzo Medici in Florence and appears to have been commissioned by the infamous Florentine family because their device can be seen clearly on the parapet.

How to recreate a Viking funeral – minus the human sacrifice

By Carlos Galan-Diaz, Frances Wilkins and Shane McLeod

When most people think of Vikings, they think of the usual stuff: longships, raiding, fighting, loot, burial and paganism. Scholars are increasingly aware that the reality was more complicated, but no doubt the popular associations will remain – and are reinforced by the likes of last year's Viking exhibition at the British Museum in London.

Yet one aspect of Viking culture that gets little attention is funeral rites. There are very few sources that allow us to reconstruct in precise detail what happened during these complex ceremonies – there are no descriptions of funerals in Scotland, for example. But we can get a sense of Vikings' burial custom from a 10th-century eye-witness account from Russia by the famous Arab traveller Ahmad ibn Fadlan, and from some references in the ancient poem Beowulf.

They suggest that songs and chants about the deceased were performed, along with processions in circular directions around mounds, and the use of simple percussion instruments. In the account by ibn Fadlan, which was the basis for the beginning of the Hollywood film The 13th Warrior, the funeral takes ten days to prepare and is presided over by a character described as the Angel of Death.

It features feasting and excessive alcohol consumption. A ship containing the deceased is placed on a funeral pyre, with grave goods alongside including his weapons, silk quilts and a couch covered with cushions. The deceased is dressed in specially prepared, expensive funeral clothes.

The ceremony also involves the sacrifices of various animals and a slave girl. Before the slave girl is simultaneously strangled by two men and stabbed by the Angel of Death, she is forced to have sex with many of the men who are present. The ship is then set alight and later a mound is raised over the remains, upon which is placed a piece of wood inscribed with the name of the dead man and his king.

Our re-enactment

This gives some indication of how elaborate and spectacular a Viking funeral could be. To help understand what these ceremonies could be like and the likely effect on the participants, we carried out a re-enactment project on Kildonnan on the western Scottish Isle of Eigg.

Kildonnan is one of many sites in which Vikings were buried in the British Isles, though there is no evidence of animal or human sacrifice. We know that the deceased was buried in a grave rather than cremated – just like us, Vikings did both.

In August 2014, with the help of adults and schoolchildren from the local community at Kildonnan, we staged two re-enactments of a Viking funeral procession at two original burial mounds that date back to between 900 and 950. When they were excavated in 1875, they contained various grave goods including two swords, an axe, a spear, two brooches and a sickle, all of which are now in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh.

Henryk Siemiradzki's 1883 painting of ibn Fadlan's burial tale

We brought Viking-style shields with us and invited participants to bang these with sticks in time to the singing (which can be heard here). Our aim was certainly not for accuracy but to create an atmosphere through music, sound and movement which would in some way resonate with our historical knowledge of Viking funerary customs and with the location in which the performances were taking place.

As part of the rite we chose to sing the first four lines of a Viking-age poem, Sonatorrek, to the rhythm of a rimur (Icelandic poetic form):

I´ll make offerings to Odin
Though not in eagerness,
I´ll make my soul´s sacrifice
Not suffer silently.

What came out of it

Many of those taking part hadn't previously been aware of the existence of the Viking burial mounds at Kildonnan. Having the time and resources to explore the site and some of the funerary practices which may have taken place there more than 1000 years ago created a great sense of curiosity and interest.

Some said it increased their awareness of the spiritual importance of Kildonnan through history. One person said: "I liked the idea that I was following in the footsteps of Vikings so that I knew a little of how they felt." Another said: "The beat from the shields at the Viking graves all felt like you were back in time doing it for real."

Performing the rituals also allowed participants to be directly involved in the experience. Instead of just "attending" a Viking funeral, they were part of it. One participant said: "It felt very involving. I enjoyed that it felt like we were all taking part rather than just observing and listening. This helped to create atmosphere."

Finally, we all became aware of the power and beauty of the landscape within the context of funerary ritual. Participants expressed a feeling of freedom and transition, and an understanding of the location as somewhere to "free the soul from the body".

Being in tune with the surrounding landscape seemed to allow participants to be at ease and experience what a sorrowful occasion in relative calm. One person said it felt, "peaceful, sad – the beauty of the place, the music and the sounds of nature made me feel I was saying goodbye to someone".

The different sensations that were sparked by the landscape resonate with what we know about humans' natural tendency to bond with and be surrounded by other living things, and the fact that different environments can help to restore people's bodies and minds.

Close interaction with nature has beneficial consequences for humans. It seems that even at times of distress, such as funerals, even pretend ones, such connections allow us to digest information in a more positive way.

You can learn more about the Funeralscapes project by visiting the website:

http://funeralscapes.abdn.ac.uk/

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Ten Thoughts on Game of Thrones: The Wars to Come

Another long wait between seasons is over, and *Game of Thrones* returns to HBO for a fifth season. Some semi-random observations on Season 5 Episode 1: The Wars to Come

1) The season begins with a solid first episode that takes about 15 minutes before we see our first scene of full frontal nudity, and about one-minute later to have someone get killed off (that might not even count – it was just an unknown member of the Unsullied). Typically, the first episode of a season starts to give us some of the emerging plot lines for the rest of the season, and tie up a few loose ends from the previous one.

2) The most important news from The Wars to Come is that we see the end of Mance Rayder. The King of the Wildlings is presented with two options – submit to King Stannis or get burned alive. Stannis even sends Jon Snow to convince Mance to kneel, if not for his own sake, but to save the thousands of Wildlings who follow him. However, Mance fails to be persuaded, claiming that even if he did surrender, his people would not accept it.

Is Mance Rayder just in a no-win situation, knowing that he would get killed for either choice, or is he just being stubborn and wants to go out heroically defiant? It is interesting to see his reaction to learning that he will be burnt alive – it is something that Mance naturally fears, and there are a few moments where I thought he might change his mind as the flames licked at his feet. In the end he doesn't have to undergo the pain and humiliation of death by fire, as Jon Snow sends an arrow into his chest. It is another one of those scenes that make Jon one of the best heroes of the show – he acts when all others around him just watch, unafraid of risking the wrath of his superiors, including King Stannis. Why can't he become the new Lord Commander?

3) King Stannis' plan does not seem to be very sound to me – why does he need the Wildlings to help him capture Winterfell and go to war against Roose Bolton? Stannis had just easily defeated the Wildling army in the last episode, yet he thinks so much of them that he is willing to bring them south and give them land in exchange for their help. While I can see a few giants being an asset, Stannis seems to me like a man who thinks he could take out the Boltons all on his own.

4) The best lines of the night go to Tyrion and Varys, who have sailed across the sea to Pentos. While Tyrion is despondent over his situation ("The future is shit, just like the past"), Varys gives him a good pep talk ("I never said you were perfect.") and convinces him the best course of action is to go to Meereen to support Daenerys. I think if the whole episode was just having those two talking it would be pure joy, but it looks like we will be getting to see them on a roadtrip for at least a good part of this season.

5) Meanwhile, in Meereen we can see that Daenerys is in need of some support. She still seems stuck trying to run her small kingdom, and finding little problems everywhere. Daario Naharis points out that "a dragon queen with no dragons is no queen," a good reminder that her three dragons are what really give her awe and authority over her subjects. However, Daenerys soon finds that two dragons she locked up are in no mood to be nice to her.

6) I haven't been much a fan of the Missandei and Grey Worm scenes, and this episode is no exception. I think I was like a lot of people who thought that the Unsullied who got murdered was Grey Worm, but it just was someone who had a vague resemblance to him.

7) It looks like another road trip is set to begin, with Petyr Baelish and Sansa Stark heading off somewhere after dumping young Lord Arryn off with one of the nobles from the Vale. I'm curious to know where they might be headed, since it seems to me that if they really did want to get away from the Lannisters, it would be best to sail away from Westeros.

8) We get to see a lot of Cersei this episode, including a flashback to 25 years earlier, when a then young Cersei meets a witch and gets her fortune told. This was a nice take on those typical fairy tales where children meet a witch in the woods, but in the hands of George R. R. Martin the story gets to be told darker and with a little oddness to it.

9) Cersei also gets to deliver a strong tongue-lashing to Jaime over his actions, which led to their father's death. Jaime just stands there and says nothing while she complains about his

"stupidity" and failure to "look at the consequences" of freeing Tyrion. The dynamic between Cersei and Jaime is constantly changing, and you really don't know what will happen between this brother-sister / lovers duo.

10) This episode ran a little short – just over 50 minutes – but I am beginning to think the show runners prefer to have the episodes run a little short or long instead of having to add in or cut certain scenes. HBO doesn't seem to mind, and I think these minor deviations from standard television faire also help make the show standout.

Images of Women Reading in th

By Sandra Alvarez

I love to read. I also love books depicted in art. I became fascinated wit
I noticed while I was walking around the National Gallery, Musèe Clu
women reading or with books. Saints, sinners, and laywomen; I wante
and their books:

The Annunciation (1465-1490) - Master of Liesborn

The Master of Liesborn was an anonymous painter from Germany. The Annunciation, where the angel Gabriel comes to the Virgin Mary and tells her she will bear God a son, was a favourite topic for Medieval and Renaissance artists. It is celebrated in the Christian calendar on March 25th. In this version, we see Mary reading when Gabriel arrives to bring her the news. This scene comes from the Liesborn altarpiece.

The Virgin Annunciate (1475-1480) - Cosimo Tura

Cosimo Tura (1430-1495) also known as Il Cosmè, was a painter of the Quattrocento and the School of Ferrara. He was commissioned for many pieces by the noble d'Este family. In this version of the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary is startled from her reading by the archangel Gabriel.

e Middle Ages and Renaissance

h Medieval and Renaissance pictures of women reading or with books. uny and the Louvre recently that there are many beautiful images of ed to share a few of my favourites. Here are 12 works of art of women

The Virgin and Child with an Angel : The Donne Triptych (1480) - Hans Memling

What captivated me about this was that not only was the Virgin Mary depicted with a book but Sir John Donne's (1420-1503) wife, Lady Donne is also reading. Memling (1430-1494) was a German painter who is well known for his beautiful Early Netherlandish art. He was an expert in devotional art and extremely popular in Italy. He was often commissioned by noble families like the Sforza and Medici, as well as prominent Church officials, for religious pieces.

Vision of the Blessed Clare of Rimini (1340) - Master of the Blessed Clare

Clare of Rimini (1282-February 10, 1346) was born Chiara Agolanti. She entered the Third Order of St, Francis and then later on, the Poor Clares. She was beatified in 1782 by Pope Pius VI (December 25, 1717-August 29, 1799). Her feast day is February 10th. In this painting, Clare is handed a book by Saint John the Evangelist inscribed with Christ's words: *My peace I give you. My peace I leave you.*

The Magdalen Reading (1438) - Rogier van der Weyden

This painting of Mary Magdalen reading comes from a larger altarpiece. Rogier Van der Weyden (1399-June 18, 1464) was one of the most prominent Early Netherlandish painters of this period. He was commissioned by Kings and nobles to create triptychs and devotional art. He was known for his deft use of colour, naturalism and sympathetic looking subjects.

The Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine (early 16th c.) - Unknown Portuguese artist

Saint Catherine is heavily represented at the National Gallery. She was a favourite subject of many painters during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Although traditionally portrayed with a large wheel, the wheel in this painting is small and shown at the bottom of her cloak (on her right), with a sword lying on top of it. There are two other women in the painting reading but I decided to focus on Catherine in her frequently depicted marriage to Christ.

Saints Christina and Ottilia (1506) - Lucas Cranach the Elder

This painting captured my attention because it looked so odd. Saint Ottilia (Odile) of Alsace (662-720), a Benedictine nun, appears to be presenting Saint Christina (1150-July 24,1224) a set of googly eyes on top of a book. The image is bizarre. What's really going on here? Saint Ottilia is known as the patron saint of eyesight. She was born blind and miraculously recovered her sight after being baptised. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-October 16, 1553) was a famous German Renaissance painter, printmaker and woodcut artist. He was purportedly a close friend of reformer, Martin Luther. This strange painting at the National Gallery formed the outside shutters of an altarpiece for Frederick the Wise (January 17,1463-May 5,1525).

Rhetoric - Justus of Ghent and Workshop (1470s)

This painting is part of a larger set known as The Seven Liberal Arts made for Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino (June 7, 1422-September 10, 1482).

Justus of Ghent (Justus Van Ghent 1410-1480) was another Early Netherlandish painter who lived in Italy and was popular with the Italian nobility. Ghent was the Duke's official court painter in the 1470s. Here we have the beautiful Rhetoric seated with a book and a man kneeling before her.

The Tomb of Valentine Balbiani (1574) - Germain Pilon

This piece was commissioned by Balbiani's husband, René de Birague (February 2, 1506-November 24, 1583), Chancellor of France. Birague, was actually Biragro, from Milan. After the Battle of Pavia, he escaped the wrath of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, (July 23, 1401-March 8,1466) who had Birague declared a traitor, by fleeing to France with his brothers. There, he married Valentine Balbiani and had 2 children. Upon her death in 1572, he had this beautiful monument made of her reading with her little dog. Germain Pilon was a French Renaissance sculptor who also made Birague's funeral effigy in 1583. Pilon was also the favourite sculptor of Queen Catherine de' Medici (April 13, 1519-January 5, 1589). This image is one of my favourites, it reminds me of reading with my dog beside me...except of course in much more comfortable.

The Virgin of the Annunciation with Book - late 14th century

This beautiful and serene statue was one of the first things I saw when I walked into the Musèe de Cluny. Mary is often featured with books and there has been debate over whether she could read. Was it merely symbolic or a sign of growth in lay literacy? Sadly, the artist of this gorgeous statue remains unknown.

Saint Barbara - Musèe de Cluny, Paris. Malines/Mechlin, Belgium (1515-1520)

Saint Barbara is the patron saint of armourers, miners, artillerymen and anyone who may face death by violent means. Why is she the patron of such a gruesome group? It's due to the legend of her father being struck by lightening after beheading her for converting to Christianity. Her exact dates are unknown but she is usually dated to 267 AD. Her Feast Day is December 4th.

The Magdalen - Workshop of the Master (1518)

This exquisite 16th century Mannerism piece depicting Mary Magdalen with a book is found in the National Gallery in London. The Master of 1518, sadly, remains shrouded in mystery. We know that he belongs to the anonymous Antwerp School of Mannerism, a mix of Italian and Flemish Mannerism often featuring ruins as a backdrop to the paintings. Unfortunately, a single artist cannot be pinned down. The Master of 1518 has been linked to several possible painters of the period. Here, Mary is holding a jar with Cain and Abel on it and the background is Provence, where legend has it that she spent her life after the death of Jesus.

Dragon's Blood & Willow Bark: The Mysteries of Medieval Medicine

Toni Mount's new book, which has just been published by Amberely Publishing, guides the reader through a labyrinth of strange ideas and such unlikely remedies as leeches, meadowsweet, roasted cat and red bed curtains – some of which modern medicine is now coming to value – but without the nasty smells or any threat to personal wellbeing and safety.

Here is an excerpt from the book: **Women as Medicinal Practitioners**

If Trotula existed and was a university-qualified physician, she was virtually unique in medieval medicine. One other that we know of, once again in Italy, was Dorotea Bocchi.13 She was the Professor of Medicine and Philosophy at the University of Bologna for more than forty years, from 1390 to 1436, having succeeded her father in the post. In medieval times and into the eighteenth century, Italy was far more liberal in such matters as the education of women. England lagged far behind, sadly. In this country, there were one or two references to female physicians, but they were labelled as charlatans and deceivers and, however knowledgeable they may have been, since the universities of Europe only admitted men, they couldn't have completed their studies in the traditional way.

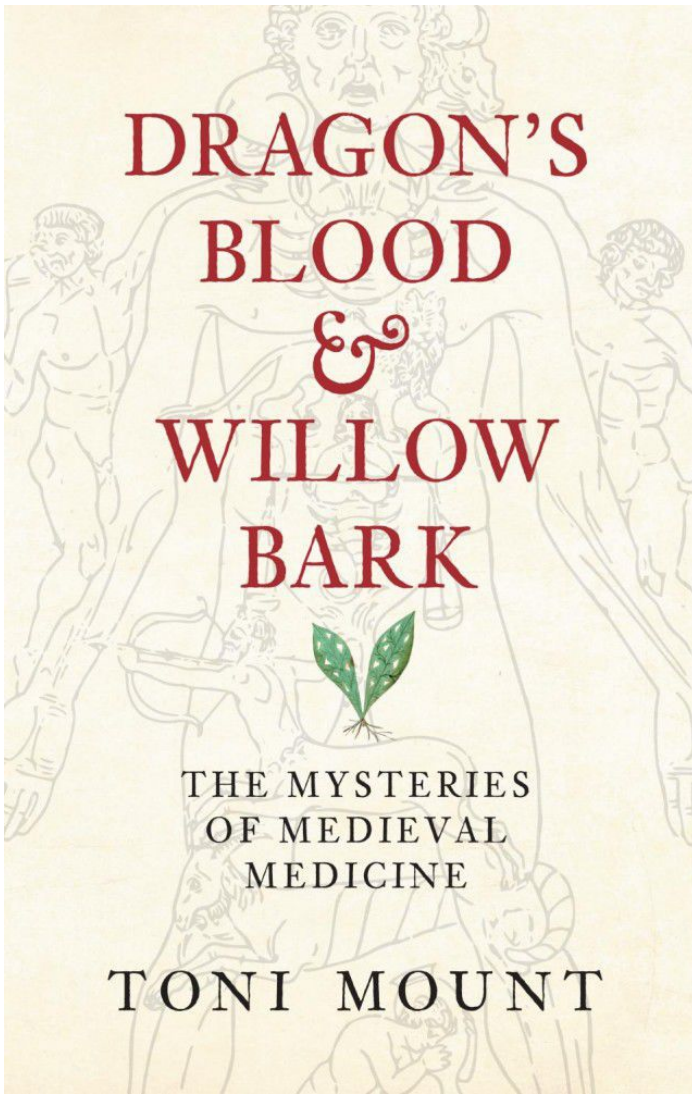
In sixteenth-century Norwich, the Guild of Physicians and Barber- Surgeons complained about 'sundry women who were practising physic and surgery who were regarded as quacks'. At St Bartholomew's Hospital in Smithfield, London, and St Thomas's in Southwark, in 1562, Master Gale noted that the poor state of at least 300 patients at those hospitals was caused because they were being treated 'by witches, by women and by counterfeit rascals; three score women that occupieth the arte of physicke and chirurgery'14. But at least matters hadn't yet gone so far as they did in Salisbury in 1614, when the Company of Barber-Surgeons of the town specifically banned 'divers women and others within this city, altogether unskilful in the art of chirurgery who oftentimes take cures on them, to the great danger of the patient ... that no such woman or any other shall take or meddle with any cure of chirurgery'.

However, in the medieval period, women were able to qualify as surgeons perfectly legitimately by working as apprentices, serving under other surgeons. Usually, the master was a relative of the woman – her father, uncle or elder brother, etc. The City of London regulations demanded that all apprentices signed an indenture to study under a master-surgeon for at least seven years to complete the course, learning the practical skills. Surgery was a craft, not an art like that of a physician. Because it didn't involve going to university and, therefore, require enrolment in holy orders, girls could serve an apprenticeship to practise surgery. The records suggest that there were never very many female surgeons, but a woman named only as 'Katherine' is listed as a surgeon in London in 1250. Apparently, her father and brothers were all surgeons too, so it seems she had followed in the family tradition. In 1389, London master surgeons were required to take an oath to keep 'faithful oversight of all others,

to take an oath to keep 'faithful oversight of all others, both men and women, occupied in the art of surgery'. The annals of the Barber- Surgeons of London record, 'From the earliest times the custom has prevailed to admit women to the freedom [of the company of Barber-Surgeons] mostly by apprenticeship but also by patrimony, and these freewomen bound their apprentices, both boys and girls at the Hall [Guildhall].'

Unfortunately, we know the names of hardly any women involved in this 'custom' from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries in England and often they are only mentioned in passing with a derogatory comment. For example, in the late fourteenth century, the London surgeon, John of Arderne, wrote of a priest who had had a lump on his right breast for two years and consulted 'a lady' who instructed him to lay a plaster on it (to draw it out) and to drink 'the drynke of Antioche'. Then the priest consulted 'a wise surgeon' – meaning John of Arderne himself – who advised him not to use corrosive plasters. Another of Arderne's patients had also been consulting 'a lady' for six months and the drink of Antioch and 'other pillules' was all she could recommend.

Despite John of Arderne's reservations about women in medicine, his untitled medical treatise, which he wrote sometime after 1425, contains illustrations of a woman carrying out 'cupping' procedures on both male and female patients. Arderne's treatise is now in the British Library, catalogued as 'Sloane MS 6'. Folio 177r shows a fashionably gowned woman, wearing the latest in headdress design, cupping a naked man at various points all over his body. Folio 177v shows the same woman cupping a seated naked female patient beneath her breasts and on her abdomen. Historians have speculated that the well-dressed woman might be Arderne's wife, although nothing is mentioned in the treatise, so she remains anonymous.



In 1421, a group of London physicians petitioned the Privy Council in an effort to change the law so that 'no woman use the practice of Physick', but the council never obliged. One of very few positive references to a woman in medicine is found in the will of the wealthy London barber-surgeon Nicholas Bradmore, drawn up in 1417. Bradmore bequeaths a red belt with a silver buckle and 6s 8d to his apprentice Agnes Wodekok, whom he seems to remember with fondness.

Medieval Videos

Law in the Lives of Medieval Women: Beyond the Magna Carta

Ruth Mazo Karras discussed, through an analysis of the lives of three women, the way law affected (or not) women at different levels of society in medieval England.

Shining Light on Medieval Illuminations: Pigments through the Ages

Lecture by Andrew Beeby, given at the Royal Society of Chemistry