

VOL. XXX ISSUE 3 ~ DECEMBER 2020

# HAGIOGRAPHY SOCIETY

## President's Report

The Executive Committee has been busy advancing the Hagiography Society's work during these past months. I want to draw your attention particularly to several items.

**The HS Constitution:** We revised our Constitution, which was then formally approved by the membership. The most noteworthy change is the creation of a new position on the Executive Committee. The Outreach Chair will subsume the duties of the former Nominations Chair and, importantly, expand the Hagiography Society's public presence on our digital platform, media accounts, and by circulating our news via other scholarly organizations and public outlets.

**Book Series:** We are delighted to announce the addition of two excellent scholars to our Sanctity in Global Perspective book series. Please see below for details.

**The 2020 Book Prize competition** attracted excellent submissions. The winner, honorable mention, and details for the upcoming book prize are below.

**New Guest Column:** With this newsletter, we are launching a new guest column for scholars to keep us apprised of new trends and perspectives in our field of hagiography.

**Elections:** Help strengthen the Hagiography Society by nominating yourself or a respected colleague for one of three open positions, noted below.

- Catherine M. Mooney

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Many thanks to  
everyone who has  
paid their 2021 dues--  
and a special note of  
gratitude to the many  
who added a  
donation!



## Hagiography Society Elections

The Hagiography Society is now soliciting nominations for three positions on the executive committee: Program Chair, Communications Chair, and Outreach Chair. Both positions carry a three-year term beginning at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, normally held at Kalamazoo Michigan, to be conducted virtually this year in May 2021. Descriptions for all three positions can be found below and in the Hagiography Society Constitution on the Society's website ([http://www.hagiographysociety.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/HS\\_Constitution2020official.pdf](http://www.hagiographysociety.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/HS_Constitution2020official.pdf)). Those interested in running for each position are welcome to contact the current office holder for more information: Barbara Zimbalist for Program Chair ([bezimbalist@utep.edu](mailto:bezimbalist@utep.edu)); Lydia Walker for Communications Chair ([lwalke39@vols.utk.edu](mailto:lwalke39@vols.utk.edu)); and Nikolas Hoel for Outreach Chair (formerly the Nominations Chair).

It should be noted that all officers are expected to attend the Society's business meeting and executive committee meeting at Kalamazoo the year they are elected and the two following years during their terms.

If you would like to nominate either yourself or someone else, please do so by 19 February 2021 by emailing the Nominations Chair, Nikolas Hoel at [n-hoel@neiu.edu](mailto:n-hoel@neiu.edu). Further questions may also be directed to him. If you are not interested in running but would like to serve on the nominations committee for this election, please put your name forth as well.

### Program Chair

The Program Chair shall have primary responsibility for the Society's annual sessions at the ICMS in Kalamazoo and shall play as active a role as possible in other program-related activities of the Society. In specific terms, the Program Chair shall be responsible for:

- conducting the discussion of potential session topics at the Society's annual business meeting at the ICMS in Kalamazoo
- preparing and presenting proposals of their own for timely roundtables, workshops, and other special sessions
- working with the Communications Chair and Outreach Chair to draft calls for papers and other conference-related announcements
- soliciting suggestions for the most qualified speakers and session chairs on a given topic and inviting them to participate
- serving as an ex officio member of the program committees for any symposia, conference sessions, or other events sponsored or co-sponsored by the Society.

The Program Chair may recruit other members of the Society as needed to assist with program planning and may also delegate some duties to another member of the Society, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.

**Deadline:**  
**February 19th, 2021**

**Nominations Chair:**  
**Nikolas Hoel at**  
**[n-hoel@neiu.edu](mailto:n-hoel@neiu.edu)**







## Communications Chair

The Communications Chair shall have primary responsibility for the Society's newsletter and website. In particular, the Communications Chair shall be responsible for:

- writing and editing the Society's newsletter, which shall include
- consulting with the other officers (especially the President, Program Chair, and Outreach Chair) on content priorities for each issue
- soliciting and editing content for calls for proposals, new books, and guest columnists
- promoting the book series through special features in the newsletter
- posting the Society's newsletter on the website and sharing it with the Outreach Chair for distribution via social media
- collaborating with the other officers to compose and edit new content for the website
- regularly verifying the quality and currency of the material posted on the website, making sure that outdated notices are replaced with timely ones and non-working links are removed.

With the approval of the Executive Committee, the Communications Chair may arrange for such paid secretarial or technical assistance as may be necessary to carry out the duties of this office but may not delegate full responsibility for the newsletter or website to another person unless the Executive Committee expressly authorizes such a transfer of responsibility.

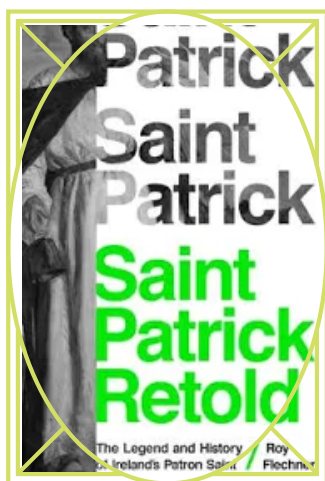
**The revised Constitution  
was approved  
unanimously in December.  
It is now available at:**

[http://www.hagiographysociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HS\\_Constitution2020official.pdf](http://www.hagiographysociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HS_Constitution2020official.pdf)

## Outreach Chair

The Outreach Chair shall have primary responsibility for the Society's digital platforms (listserv and social media accounts), recruitment, and nominations, with the goals of conveying Society news broadly and encouraging active participation in the Society. In particular, the Outreach Chair shall be responsible for:

- maintaining the social media accounts (such as Twitter and Facebook) and the listserv by posting new updates and reposting relevant material, including distributing the Society's newsletter
- working to circulate Society news via the social media outlets of organizations that share an interest in the Society's work
- managing requests to join the Society's social media groups and/or the listserv, and vetting these members' posts
- consulting regularly with the Communications Chair about content for the newsletter and website
- encouraging new memberships by contacting scholars involved in relevant scholarship
- maintaining an annotated list, in consultation with the Secretary-Treasurer, of members who have expressed an interest in standing for election to office, chairing sessions, working on particular kinds of committees, or contributing to the Society in other ways
- sharing this information with the other officers when they need to identify good candidates for particular committees or tasks
- preparing for each election of new officers by appointing a Nominations Committee and working with this committee to solicit and vet nominations, prepare the ballot, inform the membership about the nominees, and conduct the actual balloting.



## Hagiography Society Book Prize 2020

The Hagiography Society is delighted to announce that the winner of the 2020 Hagiography Society Book Prize is Roy Flechner (University College Dublin) for his book *Saint Patrick Retold: The Legend and History of Ireland's Patron Saint* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

We warmly congratulate Professor Flechner for this noteworthy achievement. During these difficult times, we also thank him for donating his \$500 prize money to Save the Children. We would

also like to thank the panel of judges who generously shared their expertise to evaluate the books, published from June 2018 through December 2019, submitted for the prize. The scholars who served on the judging committee this year included Lisa M. Bitel, Dean's Professor of Religion and Professor of History at the University of Southern California; Sean L. Field, Professor of History at the University of Vermont; and Jennifer N. Brown, Professor of English and World Literatures at Marymount, Manhattan. Here is the judging panel's statement regarding Professor Flechner's *Saint Patrick Retold*:

Roy Flechner's return to the sources for St. Patrick shows a remarkable mastery of difficult Irish texts and advances in British archaeology. His sharp-sighted re-interpretations of familiar texts, his willingness to tackle big questions of historical scholarship, his sense of humor and, above all, his ability to make the religious past interesting to non-specialists makes this one of the best books on saints the committee has read in a long time. Offering brave arguments about the chronology of Patrick's adventures and his semi-Romanized situation, Flechner's analysis leads us through the changes in Patrick's identity and cult, the cult's historical context, hagiography and historiography all the way to the twenty-first century. Perhaps its most important contribution is Flechner's explanation of the interaction between historical and textual saints, a dynamic essential to the entire history of Christendom. The book offers a model for new ways of writing about premodern saints and more generally about the Christianities of the distant past.

### Honorable Mention

We also wish to announce that an Honorable Mention has been awarded by the judging panel to Janine Larmon Peterson for her book *Suspect Saints and Holy Heretics: Disputed Sanctity and Communal Identity in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019).

Please note that the next Hagiography Society Book Prize will be awarded in May 2022 for the best first book published in 2020 or 2021. Please consult [www.hagiographysociety.org](http://www.hagiographysociety.org) for more information. The next prize award following that will be for a best article.



"Perhaps its most important contribution is Flechner's explanation of the interaction between historical and textual saints, a dynamic essential to the entire history of Christendom."







## Book Series News: Sanctity in Global Perspective

The book series that was launched a few years ago has successfully maintained a high quality as it continues to establish itself as a prestige series in which to publish. In addition to monographs and edited volumes, we are also inviting proposals for translations of texts related to saints, sanctity, and hagiography.

We are sad to announce that Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski who has served as an editor of the book series since its inception is leaving her post to give attention to her duties as President of the Medieval Academy and other matters. Renate has been a keystone for this important initiative and we are forever grateful to her for her generous work in shepherding the book series forward.

We are delighted to announce the addition of two new editors to the book series. George Ferzoco of the University of Calgary Department of Classics and Religion and the Goggio Distinguished Visitor in Italian Studies at the University of Toronto, and Barbara Zimbalist of the University of Texas at El Paso Department of English, are both bringing their editorial experience. They join Alison Frazier, founder and editor of the book series, and the rest of the editorial board.

For more about submitting proposals to the book series, please see the Hagiography Society website.





## Diocletian the Egyptian?

ASSISTANT PROF. FELEGE-SELAM YIRGA, FYIRGA@UTK.EDU  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

*And when Diocletian the Egyptian became emperor, the army turned to give its help to this impious man and persecutor of the faithful and the most wicked of all men...*

When I first stumbled upon this passage in the 7th-century Egyptian Chronicle of John of Nikiu, I was not quite sure what to make of it. I knew that the Chronicle's tortured transmission, crossing two languages over a span of 900 years, could often lead to strange incoherencies and lacunae. But this struck me as particularly bizarre. There was no room for misinterpretation: the name was unambiguously "Diocletian" in the Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic) text (Diyoglätəyanos), and the entry for his reign began with an account of his 298 CE siege of Alexandria.

After months of puzzling with this problem a few years ago, putting it aside and returning to it again, I stumbled upon the answer while looking outside of historiography to hagiography: there is an entire late antique Egyptian hagiographic tradition that remembers Diocletian as an Egyptian apostate from Christianity, and some of the *passions* even connect the emperor, in his youth, to several other superstars of the Diocletianic persecutions, most notably Psote of Pshoi.

It appears that John, writing in the seventh century, after the Arab Conquest of Egypt in 642 CE, saw it as necessary to integrate Egypt's hagiographic traditions into his history of the Roman Empire, and this was not the only part of the text in which he would do this. Later, he explains that certain Egyptian holy men were vital to the theological development of Anastasios I, who would be best remembered for his lenient attitude towards monophysites throughout the empire.

I plan to use this text as a teaching tool for a graduate course on late antique historiography. I find it particularly appealing as a way of getting away from the notion that studying late antique or Byzantine historiography must necessarily mean the study of those sorts of texts that fall within the narrowly defined limits of the genre of "classicizing" history or "chronicle/chronography." It will provide me with a concrete example of how ancient people understood their own pasts and what they believe constituted historical "truth."

I also found it interesting that, as with many historians (and hagiographers!) of the period and beyond, John is quite interested in integrating his home into the grand narrative of the Roman empire. He endeavored to show his readers that while Constantinople and Rome may have had a tremendous effect on Egypt, Egypt had as much of an effect on the Empire.

"After months of puzzling with this problem a few years ago, putting it aside and returning to it again, I stumbled upon the answer while looking outside of historiography to hagiography..."







## Call for Papers

**15-16 April 2021, Royal Holloway, University of London (Virtual format):** *Until Death Do Us Part: Historical Perspectives on Death and Those Left Behind, c.1300-c.1900* The subject of death and commemoration has been well-treated in the historiography of all periods, but its social and psychological impact on individuals close to the deceased has been much less studied. As such, this conference aims to take a multi-disciplinary and cross-period approach to this topic, examining the ways in which the role of death and grief in society has changed over time. In addition to traditional historical methodologies, we particularly welcome speakers with an art-historical, material culture, or sociological perspective. Proposals of 250 words for 20-minute papers should broadly relate to Europe c.1300-c.1900. To submit a proposal, or for more information, please email [RHULdeathconference@gmail.com](mailto:RHULdeathconference@gmail.com) by 29 January 2021.

**20-21 June, 2021, White Rose Medieval Graduate Conference (Virtual format):** The Centre for Medieval Studies at University of York and the Institute for the Medieval Studies at the University of Leeds have sponsored a new postgraduate conference: the White Rose Medieval Graduate Conference! Our theme this year is *Self & Selves*. This conference explores how medieval people expressed and conceptualized the self and selves. We encourage investigations of medieval selves in all of their expressions in medieval cultural productions, from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and methodologies: such as archaeological, art historical, literary, scientific, theological, and political approaches. For more details see: <https://whiterosemedieval.wordpress.com/>. Applicants are invited to submit an abstract of 250 words and 100-word biographical note by 1 April 2021 to [whiterosemedievalconference@gmail.com](mailto:whiterosemedievalconference@gmail.com).

**Call for Essays for an anthology** devoted to Saint Thomas Becket in Medieval and Postmedieval Visual Culture co-edited by Kay Brainerd Slocum and Alyce A. Jordan. We seek to bring together a collection of essays spanning visual culture from the 12th to the 20th/21st centuries in a wide variety of media, and with a particular eye toward Becket's reception/appropriation/reinvention at various points in time. Boydell and Brewer have expressed interest in this project, which will comprise finished essays ranging in length from 8,000-11,000 words including notes and bibliographies, plus images. We would like to receive abstracts of ca. 250 words by January 5, 2021. Please send abstracts and queries to Kay Slocum ([kslocum@capital.edu](mailto:kslocum@capital.edu)) and Aly Jordan ([alyce.jordan@nau.edu](mailto:alyce.jordan@nau.edu)).

**1-2 July 2021, Cistercian Worlds, Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York (Virtual format):** This conference aims to offer a forum for researchers to build upon existing modes of scholarship and bring together discussions currently occurring across disciplines. How did an initial shared world-view create many different Cistercian 'worlds'? What were the boundaries – real or imagined – of these spheres? Who composed them? In which ways did they extend, shrink, overlap and evolve? What approaches can be used to study them? As such, we are seeking proposals for papers that distil the latest interdisciplinary research on the medieval Cistercians (writ large) and place the study of the Order into conversation with currents and themes outside the cloister walls. Please send an abstract (250 words) to Emmie Rose Price-Goodfellow ([erpg500@york.ac.uk](mailto:erpg500@york.ac.uk)) with details of your institutional affiliation (if any) and career stage. Deadline 31st January 2021.

## Upcoming Conferences

**23-25 March 2021, International Conference on Byzantine Studies and Eastern Middle Ages (Virtual format):**

The event is being organized jointly by Federal University of São Paulo's Mediterranean and Byzantine Studies Laboratory (LAEMEB) and Medieval Studies Laboratory (LEME). The 2nd International Conference on Byzantine Studies and Eastern Middle Ages is an academic event aiming to bring together researchers of Byzantine and Eastern Medieval Studies. These scholars are encouraged to present their work and discuss new approaches to collaborate in the expansion of these contexts in Brazil. Continuing the successful first edition, this year's event becomes international. In this sense, the Conference will contribute to the dialogue between national and international researchers at different levels, whether they are at the doctoral, master's, or undergraduate levels. Papers on different themes addressing Eastern Medieval societies are encouraged, as well as cross-cutting themes that highlight the connections of other geographic regions with the East. More information: <https://en.jornadabizantina.info>

## New Books

*Die Militarisierung der Heiligen in Vormoderne und Moderne*, eds. Liliya Berezhnaya and Michael Grünbart. Historische Forschungen (HF) 122, 2020.

Guarnaccio, Biagio Luca, *Vita Gerardi episcopi Potentini* (BHL 3429): *introduzione, edizione critica, traduzione*. Basilicata University Press, 2020.

*Passionarium Hispanicum, Saeculum XI*, ed. Yarza Urquiola. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (CCSL 171). Brepols, 2020.

*The Interaction of Art and Relics in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art*, ed. L. Stoenescu. Brepols, 2020.

*Vie de Sainte Geneviève*, ed. and trans. Marie-Céline Isaïa and Florence Bret. Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2020.

Winstead, Karen A. *Fifteenth-Century Lives: Writing Sainthood in England*. University of Notre Dame Press, 2020.

