

HAGIOGRAPHY SOCIETY

Sherry L. Reames Graduate Student Travel Award Winners

The Hagiography Society is delighted to announce that, for 2023-24, we are able to recognize two winners and a runner-up for the Sherry L. Reames Graduate Student Travel Award, which supports participation at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan, US, each year in May. First prizes go to Kartik Maini, for his paper on “A Mahdī at the End of Time,” and Margaret McCurry, who will speak about “The Silenced Voices of Sanctity: Muteness as a Catalyst for Revelation in the Hagiographies of St. Mechthild and St. Gertrude.” Our runner-up is Ryan Randle, who will present “From Head to Toe: Thomas Becket, Sixteenth-Century Martyrdom Reenactments, and Early Special Effects.” We are very much looking forward to hearing their work in May 2024. Congratulations to all!

The Hagiography Society Book Series

The executive committee of the hagiography society and editorial board of the society’s book series *Studies in Global Sanctity* invite feedback on a proposed change from book series to a new newsletter/journal format. This change is prompted by the completion of our contract with our previous publisher and a growing sense by the editors and the executive committee that the society’s interests would be better served by a periodical publication format. We envision creating a plan for this transition during the 2023-2024 academic year; and we solicit feedback, suggestions, and expressions of interest in this initiative from the society’s membership.

Please complete this Google Poll to submit your ideas by March 1st, 2024.
<https://forms.gle/z7AYk8ZCLGVDDf1w8>

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DUES NOTICES ARE
COMING IN JANUARY. IF
YOU NOW YOU PAY
YOUR DUES ANNUALLY,
PLEASE DO SO NOW AT
[HTTPS://WWW.HAGIOGR
APHYSOCIETY.ORG/?](https://www.hagiography-society.org/?PAGE_ID=112)
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HS Elections, 2024

The Hagiography Society is collecting nominations and self-nominations for the following positions:

- Program Chair
- Communications Chair
- Outreach Chair

Full descriptions of the positions can be found here: http://www.hagiographysociety.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/01/HS_Constitution2020official.pdf.

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.
- Candidates must be members of the HS while running and serving.

Please send nominations to Lisa Bitel (bitel@usc.edu), Chair of the Nominations Committee, **as soon as possible**.

Timetable for elections...

September 30 – Nominations Committee constituted and begins soliciting nominations
Late January/early February – candidates' brief statements circulated to the HS membership.
Late February/early March – all members in good standing receive a link to their online ballot by March 30 – election results announced on the website & listserv.

Those interested in running for each position are welcome to contact the current office holders:

- Communications: Lydia Walker (lmwalker@barton.edu)
- Programming: Anna Harrison (anna.harrison@lmu.edu)
- Outreach: Stephanie Grace-Petinos (stephanie.grace.petinos@gmail.com)

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. The Program Chair's specific responsibilities include conducting the discussion of potential session topics at the Society's annual business meeting at the ICMS, drafting CFPs and related announcements, and soliciting suggestions for the speakers and session chairs on a given topic and inviting them to participate.

The Communications Chair shall have primary responsibility for the Society's newsletter and website. The Communications Chair's specific responsibilities include writing and editing the Society's newsletter, collaborating with the other officers to compose and edit new content for the website, and regularly verifying the quality and currency of the material posted on the website.

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. The Outreach Chair's specific responsibilities include maintaining the social media accounts and the listserv, working to circulate Society news via the social media.



Of saints and shadows

Samantha K. Herrick, Associate Professor of History, Syracuse University

This newsletter's guest columnist is Samantha K. Herrick, Associate Professor of History at Syracuse University. Her publications have advanced the understanding of hagiographies as valuable historical sources. She is currently writing a monograph about a sizeable but neglected body of apostolic saints' lives, tentatively entitled "Networks of Shared Imagination: Apostolic Legends in Medieval Europe." This book explores the legends' local significance, how they traveled over space and time, and how numerous authors drew on them to construct a larger historical vision.

After several years of pursuing Saint Fronto of Périgueux, I started seeing him everywhere. Or, at least, I began finding references to him in unexpected places, such as texts and artworks honoring other saints. He turned up, for instance, in the *vita* of Martha of Bethany, whom he purportedly accompanied from Judea to Gaul (along with her supposed sister, Mary Magdalen, and about a dozen other saints). Martha's *vita* also credited Fronto with conducting her funeral, a scene depicted in late-medieval manuscripts, paintings, and even the sculpture that graced Martha's tomb. Fronto similarly turned up in two *vitae* celebrating Clement, first bishop of Metz, with whom he reportedly traveled from Rome to Gaul. These appearances were puzzling. Although, according to their legends, all three saints lived at the dawn of Christianity—Fronto and Clement were both remembered as founding bishops while Martha featured in the gospels of Luke and John—I couldn't find a more specific link among them. In addition, their cult centers were very far from one another and, so far as I could tell, not connected in any way.

This confusion also stemmed from my sense that Fronto was a somewhat obscure saint. Other than his basilica in Périgueux, I found only one small church dedicated to him. Evidence of his liturgical veneration is also thin. Altogether, his three *vitae* survive in about two dozen manuscripts, which is not particularly impressive either: by way of comparison, there are roughly 96 copies of Hilduin's *Passio Dionysii* and over 250 copies of Sulpicius Severus's *Vita Martini*. Moreover, there are nearly twice as many copies of Fronto's first *life* as of his third. That detail gives the impression that the third *vita* was a flop, and that Fronto's renown faded over the course of the Middle Ages. It seemed reasonable to view Fronto as never having achieved great success. (*continued*)



SANO DI PIETRO, "THE BURIAL OF ST. MARTHA" (C.1460–70), METROPOLITAN MUSEUM



OF SAINTS AND SHADOWS

Yet here he was, popping up in the stories of other saints, and in ways that seemed to expect medieval audiences to know something about him. Martha's *vita*, for instance, simply cast Fronto among the disciples of Jesus who, it said, sailed from Jerusalem to Gaul after the Resurrection, without any explanation of who he was. That idea that Fronto was Martha's contemporary and, like her, hailed from Judea, matched the claims of his third *vita* closely. For this text transformed Fronto from a native of the Périgord and disciple of Peter to a native of Judea and direct disciple of Christ. Did Martha's hagiographer know Fronto's *Vita tertia*? Did she or he take for granted that others knew it too? It seems possible that this was the case, for the same author alluded briefly to another episode in Fronto's legend as though readers would catch the reference, even though it featured nowhere in Martha's *vita*. If the audience of another saint's legend could be assumed to know Fronto's story as recounted specifically by his third *vita*, then perhaps that text had not flopped after all. Perhaps Fronto was not as obscure as he seemed.

Fronto's appearances in other saints' legends reminded me of the shadow cast by something that itself remains unseen. For what I saw in these references was not so much Fronto's actual presence in medieval veneration as allusions to it. These references hinted that he occupied a greater place in medieval devotion than evidence pertaining to his own cult would suggest. Like shadows, they seemed at once insubstantial and potentially significant.

So I began hunting for more of this shadowy evidence. It turned out that Fronto featured regularly in Cistercian legendaries. A significant number of the surviving copies of his *vitae* are found in these collections, which in turn hint at many others, now lost. For even though these multi-volume legendaries rarely survive in their entirety, they were relatively consistent in their content. Fronto's shadow was discernible in Dominican *legendae novae* too, including the *Legenda aurea*. For although his legend did not make it into this vast compendium, he nevertheless appeared, sometimes fleetingly, in the entries for both Peter and Martha. Members of these immense orders clearly knew Fronto's legend (although, I also discovered, they knew different versions). This shadowy evidence again suggested that Fronto was much better known than I'd thought.

The idea that saints might cast a "shadow" beyond the sources directly pertaining to their cult was intriguing. For one thing, it seemed to help offset the loss of key evidence. In Fronto's case, Huguenots had completely destroyed his basilica, along with its shrine and manuscripts, and tossed his relics in the river Isle. That makes it hard to study his cult, and consequently renders oblique evidence particularly valuable. It also means that the quantity of surviving evidence cannot simply be equated with the actual extent of his medieval veneration. (*continued*)

OF SAINTS AND SHADOWS

The loss of nearly everything associated with his cult center no doubt played a role in making him seem obscure. It is almost certainly one reason that he has received so much less attention than his neighbor, Martial of Limoges, whose church's manuscripts were preserved. But if traces of Fronto's "shadow" survive, then there may be ways to get around this gaping evidentiary hole. Additionally, the notion that saints' legends could provide evidence for the veneration of other saints highlights the fact that these cults did not exist in isolation. They related to and influenced each other in ways that merit greater attention.

Ultimately, I do not know how the Cistercians or the Dominicans first encountered Fronto's legend or how much it featured in their devotion. Nor do I know how it reached the authors who celebrated the deeds of Martha and Clement or why they decided to cast Fronto in their saints' stories. But I believe that the fact that Fronto's legend reached these various parties, and that they incorporated it—to varying degrees—into their liturgical celebration and their stories, is worth thinking about. If saints cast figurative shadows, then such traces have something to tell us about those saints' cults and the construction of sanctity.



A FOLIO FROM A DOMINICAN BRIEVIARY (PARIS BN MS LAT. 10484, FOL. 262; C. 1323-26), AT THE TOP, MARTHA RECEIVES JESUS IN BETHANY. IN THE BOTTOM MARGIN, FRONTO SLEEPS ON HIS EPISCOPAL THRONE IN PÉRIGUEUX (LEFT) WHILE ALSO PERFORMING MARTHA'S BURIAL WITH CHRIST (GALLICA).





Grants, CFPs, and Conferences

SACRIFICE AND THE BODY: EXPLORATIONS BEYOND METAPHYSICS

"Open Theology" (<https://www.degruyter.com/opth>) invites submissions for the topical issue "Sacrifice and the Body: Explorations beyond Metaphysics," edited by Katerina Koci (Institute for Human Sciences and University of Vienna, Austria) and Esther Heinrich-Ramharter (University of Vienna, Austria). This issue seeks papers that examine the concept of sacrifice and its relationship to the body from the perspectives of philosophy of religion, theology, feminist and gender as well as cultural studies. Especially welcomed are papers that:

- explore sacrifice and the body from the perspectives of psychoanalytical philosophy and theology,
- discuss childbirth, breastfeeding, and weaning as forms of sacrifice within the realm of feminist philosophy of religion and theology,
- investigate the question of gendered sacrifice and its connection to religion,
- address the issue of child sacrifice in the Bible and its relation to gender,
- explore the topic of embodied sacrifice and religion in art and culture (including fine art, literature, and film).

Submissions will be collected until March 31, 2024, via the on-line submission system at <http://www.editorialmanager.com/openh/>

Further questions about content for this thematic issue can be addressed to Dr Katerina Koci (koci@iwm.at). In case of technical problems with submission please write to AssistantManagingEditor@degruyter.com.

Saints in Crises at IMC, July 1-4, University of Leeds

We are thrilled to share the news that all three of the sponsored panels on Saints and Crises, proposed by Nikolas Hoel and Silvio Lorenzo Ruberto, have been accepted for the 2024 International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds, July 1-4. You are also invited to attend their panels on this topic at the Renaissance Society of America in Chicago (March 21-23).

The Bollandist Society

The Bollandist Society would like Hagiography Society members to know that the Belgian American Educational Foundation (BAEF) offers fellowships for graduate students and post-doctoral scholars to study in Belgium. They invite you to apply to do research in the Bollandists' expansive collection of books and manuscripts regarding saints and hagiography. Applicants must be citizens or permanent residents of the U.S.A. For more information, visit <https://baef.be/fellowships-for-americans/> and <https://baef.be/research-fellowships-us/> Also, members are encouraged to send copies of publications to the Bollandist Society, which includes a notice of new publications in their *Analecta Bollandiana*. (<https://www.bollandistes.org/analecta-bollandiana-general/>)



Marian Devotion and the Senses in the Middle Ages: Deadline 20 December 2023

The volume seeks to explore the sensory approaches of the Marian cult as reflected in Eastern and Western Christianity. It aims to examine the private and collective expressions of Marian devotion in relation to the senses or intersections of senses (visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory) that generate forms of spiritual entanglements and mutual dependencies between human devotional practices, artefacts, and sites. Suggested topics, on any geographic area or time period (between 300-1500) may include, but are not limited to:

- pilgrimages to Marian shrines/holy sites (incubation, dreams, and Marian miracles);
- devotion gestures based on: touch (e.g. touching the floor, kneeling, kissing), smell and its healing properties, sound, etc.;
- active/passive use of the senses in Marian devotion;
- inner senses/external senses in relation to Marian devotion;
- Marian devotion, the senses, and the liturgy (ceremonies, sermons);
- architecture/church interiors in relation to sensory effects and Marian devotion;
- personal/collective devotional practices;
- religious objects, the senses, and Marian devotion;
- sensory deprivation, mystical experience, and Marian proximity;
- visual representations and the senses: books and illustrations, paintings, mosaics, marbles, statues;
- literature: liturgical dramas/plays; books.

Submissions from a variety of disciplines (and sources) are accepted including but not limited to: history, art history, visual culture, social history, cultural history, hagiography, religious studies, cultural studies, textual studies in a transdisciplinary perspective. The language of publication is English.

Please submit a 600-800 word abstract clearly underlying the main argument and the potential outcomes of the essay. All contributions should be original and previously unpublished. Proposals should have an abstract format written either in PDF file or Word.doc and be accompanied by a short 700 words CV including e-mail, current affiliation, affiliation address, and academic position. CVs should have the standard CV format; narrative bio formats are not accepted.

Please submit all relevant documents, as PDF or Word.doc, by 20 December, 2023, to the e-mail address: znorovszkyandrea@usal.es Contact information: Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky, University of Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain (znorovszkyandrea@gmail.com)



GENDER AND SAINTHOOD, C. 1100–1500
CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD AND ONLINE, 5-6 APRIL 2024
CO-SPONSORED BY THE HAGIOGRAPHY SOCIETY

Organisers: Antonia Anstatt (University of Oxford; antonia.anstatt@history.ox.ac.uk) Edmund van der Molen (University of Nottingham; edmund.vandermolen@nottingham.ac.uk)

Gender and sanctity are inextricably intertwined. Medieval saints and holy people exceeded, enshrined, and subverted cultural constructions and expectations of gender, yet were also contained, defined, and controlled by these same practical and discursive ideas. In the later Middle Ages, conceptions of gender and gendered roles changed: the sacralisation of marriage came hand in hand with new ideals of marital sexuality; the mendicant orders and other movements opened up new forms of lay piety and new routes for sanctity; and growing urbanisation and centralisation enabled the tightening of everyday gender roles, but also a sphere in which different performances of gender could be broadcast to a wider audience. At the same time, the *vitae* of late antique and early medieval saints continued to circulate, leading to a myriad of co-existing, intertwined, and interacting modes of gender and sanctity. Later medieval holy women had gender non-conforming experiences of Christ, the saints, and the Virgin, and expressed their own (a)gendered modes of holiness in different ways; the *vitae* of many saints complicate and expand a binary understanding of gender; male monks and bishops positioned themselves as female in relationship to the Divine – everywhere one turns, questions of gender and exceptional holiness converge.

This two-day conference, taking place at the University of Oxford and online, aims to put two immensely complex cultural categories, those of gender and sanctity, into conversation with one another. Both are multivalent, unstable categories of being, capable of both enforcing and disrupting hegemonic cultural and social structures and extending beyond themselves to unsettle and reinvent wider categories of meaning. Since the 1980s and the field-defining work of Caroline Walker Bynum (1982) and Barbara Newman (1987, 1995), medievalists have embraced the importance of viewing sanctity and holiness through a gendered lens. More recent work (Bychowski and Kim, 2019; Spencer-Hall and Gutt, 2021) has expanded the methodological and conceptual toolkit with which we can approach the intersection of gender and sanctity and made clearer the political and ideological stakes of undertaking such research.

The medieval world has become a totemic utopia for the modern far-right, where questions of gender, race, and normativity can be considered largely settled, and then deployed as a weapon in modern political discourse. This practice aids in the political project of abolishing or refusing the rights of transgender and nonbinary people. Against this backdrop, it is crucial that medievalists discuss these issues within their own research, and demonstrate the vibrancy, instability, and complexity of medieval categories of identity.



New Books

Barr, Jessica and Barbara Zimbalist (eds.) *Writing Holiness: Genre and Reception across Medieval Hagiography*. Brepols, 2023.

Boivin, Michel and Pénicaud Manoël. *Inter-Religious Practices and Saint Veneration in the Muslim World Khidr*. Routledge, 2023.

Browne, Martin OSB, Tracy Collins, Bronagh Ann McShane & Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB (eds.) *Brides of Christ: Women and Monasticism in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland*. Four Courts Press, 2023.

Di Salvo, Gina M. *The Renaissance of the Saints After Reform*. Oxford University Press, 2023.

Gunn, Cate, Liz Herbert McAvoy and Naoë Kukita (eds.). *Women and Devotional Literature in the Middle Ages: Giving Voice to Silence. Essays in Honour of Catherine Innes-Parker*. Boydell & Brewer, 2023.

Huesman, Amy. *Tempting the Tempter: Imitatio Christi and the Encounters of Quattrocento Holy Women with the Devil*. Brill Publishing, 2023.

Long, Mary Beth. *Marian Maternity in Late-Medieval England*. Manchester University Press, 2023.

Papaioannou, Stratis. *Saints at the Limits: Seven Byzantine Popular Legends*. Harvard University Press, 2023.

Have a CFP, new book, or other news of interest to our members?

Please send an email addressed to the Communications Chair, Lydia Walker at lmwalker@barton.edu

