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Graduate Student Committee

- Reed O’Mara (2023), Chair, Newsletter Editor
  Case Western Reserve University
- Mary Alcaro (2023), Mentorship Program
  Rutgers University
- Kersti Francis (2023), Social Media
  University of California - Los Angeles
- Will Beattie (2024)
  University of Notre Dame
- Maggie Heeschen (2024)
  University of Minnesota
- Maria S. Thomas (2024)
  Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Chair’s Message

Dear friends and colleagues,

We at the GSC hope that your summer is off to a wonderful start, and we hope you enjoy this issue of the GSC Newsletter. This time of year always marks a transitional moment for the committee, with new members joining the team and new ideas and initiatives coming forward. This year, the GSC aims to continue to create a supportive community of graduate students from around the world. In fact, our focuses at this time are themes of resilience, compassion, and community, and we plan to host a series of conference panels and workshops related to these topics, as well as to professional development, in the coming months. If there are any programs you, our graduate student readers, would like to see, please don’t hesitate to reach out!

As we look forward to the programming for this year, we also are taking a look at the history of the GSC in anticipation of the MAA’s centennial in 2025. In this issue, for example, you will find a new interview series aimed at connecting with former members of the GSC, including where they are now, and what advice they might have for fellow medievalist graduate students. First up, Jill Bjerke tells us about her path from physics to medieval history and about the importance of mentorship.

Lastly, as I write this, the GSC’s anthology-style podcast, *The Multicultural Middle Ages*, is coming up on the end of its first season! Former and current members of the committee have been working tirelessly on this project, and we are elated to announce that the podcast will return for a second season in 2023. The call for proposals for season two will be posted soon, so be on the lookout for that on our social media pages. Like the conference panels, social hours, webinars, and workshops the GSC sponsors throughout the year, *The Multicultural Middle Ages* is designed to create a space where the medieval studies community can expand the stories we hear about the Middle Ages and the voices we hear them from.

Cheers,
Reed O’Mara
Chair, Graduate Student Committee

P.S. You may have seen the Newsletter shout-out from the MAA’s President, Maureen C. Miller, in the *Medieval Academy News* in June! As she importantly noted, we are dedicated to
amplifying the voices of early career medievalists, and so we strongly encourage anyone who is interested in sharing their stories, projects, or advice in the Newsletter to send Will Beattie (wbeattie@nd.edu) and me (rao44@case.edu) their proposals or drafts.

Series on Career Alternatives to Academia and the Tenure Track

For the past few issues, the GSC Newsletter has featured a series on career alternatives to tenure-track teaching. The series draws on the varied perspectives of medievalists who are pursuing a variety of careers beyond the tenure-track. It offers insights into the nature of work in positions outside academia, the unique skills a background in Medieval Studies can bring to these careers, and what medievalist graduate students can do to prepare themselves to enter these fields. In this issue, we hear from Dominique DeLuca, who does freelance work for Les Enluminures and Yale University Press.

Q&A with Dominique DeLuca

Q: Would you mind describing what your work entails? What drew you to this position?
A: For Yale University Press I do metadata tagging for images in art history books. This entails tracking down and organizing information about works of art from several different periods and places, and also deciding how to categorize them by subject. For Les Enluminures, I write catalogue entries on medieval and early modern miniatures, which also entails image and object research. I sometimes also do other tasks like compiling bibliographies and editing. Both jobs are exciting for me, because I get to exercise the skills I developed in graduate school, but I am also always learning something new. Every day of work is different, and rarely do two weeks look or feel the same.

Q: Are there any particular skills, habits, or experiences from your graduate, museum, and academic work that you think prepared you especially well for your career?
A: Obviously object research is still something I do every day. From academic work, I think the most important skills I learned are self-discipline to complete projects without supervision, and the ability to work on several different tasks at the same time. From museum work, I learned how to be flexible and how to take on unexpected or unfamiliar projects. I also learned basic but important things like how to behave and communicate with different types of individuals and different types of groups in a professional setting.

Q: Rumor has it that you will soon be publishing your dissertation! Would you mind telling our readers about your research and about the process of turning a dissertation into a monograph?
A: I started investigating shadows in medieval art the summer after my first year in the doctoral program, and by the time I finished coursework I knew it was what I wanted to study. This led to my dissertation, titled “Ab umbra ad umbram: Shadows in Late Medieval Secular Manuscripts.” It was a sometimes frustrating but always fascinating topic to research. For example, early on I spent about a week trying to track down legitimate resources on vampire lore involving shadows, which ultimately went nowhere relevant, but at least it was fun. I was able to find a lot of semiotically rich references to shadows in medieval literature, science, and (of course) theology. Using these textual references as a framework, I went through the image cycles of three manuscripts – a Roman de la Rose, Confessio Amantis, and L’Istoire de Merlin – and studied how the representation of shadows in those manuscripts could have signified to the medieval reader-viewer. So far, the biggest part of the process of turning the dissertation into a monograph (other than picking a new title), is shifting the language and tone so that I’m not just writing for medieval-minded art historians. Also, after talking about the project with my classmates and professors for so long, it feels strange to talk about the subject and materials and my ideas about them with people who haven’t known me for years and aren’t familiar with my work. However, I am excited to hopefully introduce it to a wider audience.

Dominique DeLuca graduated from Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in January of 2020 with her PhD in Art History, with focus on medieval art. As a doctoral student in the CWRU/Cleveland Museum of Art Joint Program in Art History, she held internships in the departments of medieval art, Islamic art, and Indian and Southeast Asian art. She currently does freelance work for Yale University Press and Les Enluminures.

Interview Series with Former Members of the GSC: Where Are They Now?

In anticipation of the Medieval Academy of America’s upcoming centennial in 2025, the GSC Newsletter will be running a Q&A series with former members of the Graduate Student Committee. Where are they now, and what insights do they have for current medievalist graduate students? In this first iteration, we spoke with Jill Bjerke (GSC 2018-2020), who ran the group’s Facebook page and served as Chair during the 2019-2020 term.

Q&A with Jill Bjerke

Q: Where did you go to graduate school? What is your area of study?
A: I did my MA in Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University and my PhD in History at the University of Colorado Boulder. In my dissertation, I examined how the counts of Champagne and their regents simultaneously ruled Champagne and the Iberian kingdom of
Navarre between 1234 and 1285. I used thousands of charters from this period from both regions to consider how it was possible to govern two geographically, culturally, and linguistically separate principalities at the same time. I focused especially on how the “count-kings” made their presence felt even when they were not physically present. After a busy teaching year since getting my PhD in 2021, I am looking forward to diving back into this material and turning my dissertation into a book.

Q: Would you mind telling us about what you do now?
A: Beginning in Fall 2022, I will be a lecturer in History at McDaniel College in Westminster, Maryland. I began teaching at McDaniel as an adjunct during the last year of my PhD before transitioning into a visiting lecturer role for 2021-2022. I teach all things premodern and especially enjoy teaching premodern gender history.

Q: Could you describe your career path?
A: My path to medieval history was a circuitous one. Despite loving history and historical fiction as a kid, I majored in physics in undergrad. I didn't know anything about history as a profession and thought that a history degree meant memorizing facts and simply regurgitating them. While I was doing a Master's in physics, I realized that physics wasn't my calling. I was reading a lot of medieval historical fiction at the time, and I frequently asked myself, "Why can't I just do this?" A friend then alerted me to the Kalamazoo conference at Western Michigan University, and I decided to go on a whim. In short, I had a total epiphany there. I saw people making a career studying medieval history and learned that it is indeed a living field. I left the conference determined to become a medievalist. With the generous support of my physics advisor, I took courses in preparation for a Medieval Studies degree. After getting my Master's in physics, I went to Western Michigan and did an MA in Medieval Studies. From there, I went to the University of Colorado Boulder for a PhD, and now I teach medieval history!

Q: Are there any experiences from the GSC that helped shape your graduate school experience or your career? If so, please share an example or two.
A: Participating in the GSC mentoring program has been huge, and I'm so glad the GSC has made it virtual and open to early career scholars now. Through the program, I have met several scholars in multiple fields that have continued to mentor me as I transition from graduate student to early career scholar. Having mentors outside my institution who I can reach out to has made this transition much easier. We have talked about everything from the job market and course syllabi to international fellowships and living abroad.

Q: Are there any particular skills, habits, or experiences from your work on the GSC that you think prepared you especially well for your career?
**A:** Being on the GSC gave me a lot of practice interacting with senior scholars serving in the MAA that I would not have gotten elsewhere. It’s not often that graduate students get to engage with the top scholars in their field, and I am so grateful for that opportunity! The GSC was also helpful in learning how professional organizations work. Being a part of things like business meetings and grant selection committees made it possible for me to appreciate the intricacies of national organizations and learn what kind of service work I find most meaningful. I have no doubt that I will draw on this experience as my career continues.

Jillian Bjerke received her PhD in History in 2021 at the University of Colorado Boulder. She has been at McDaniel College since Fall 2020, and is now a Visiting Lecturer in History as of Fall 2021. In her courses, she emphasizes the importance of approaching topics from multiple perspectives and disciplines and draws from other fields such as art history, religion, literature, and music. At McDaniel, she has taught courses in ancient and medieval history as well as thematic courses on gender history and premodern European witchcraft, magic, and medicine.

Series on Collaborative Projects in Medieval Studies

*The ECHOE Project: Collaboration and Innovation in Old English Homiletics*

Winfried Rudolf is Professor of English Language and Literature of the Middle Ages at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany). Over the past seven years, he’s been working with a team developing **ECHOE** (the Electronic Corpus of Anonymous Homilies in Old English), an ambitious project that is set to change the way in which academics interact with medieval multiform texts. The GSC spoke with Dr. Rudolf about the ECHOE project, the opportunities brought by global collaboration, and the critical role, too often forgotten, that graduate students play in bringing major research projects to life.

**Q:** To begin, can you tell us about the ECHOE project and its purpose?

**A:** Certainly. The goal of the project is to create a digital corpus of all the anonymous and Wulfstanian homilies in Old English. Many of these homilies tend to be composite texts, and the question of authorship is often less interesting than the purposes of revision and recompilation. Therefore, the conventional critical edition of an Old English homily is often not the most effective form of presenting an essentially multiform text. The project is borne out of a desire to challenge the prevailing critical methodologies surrounding editing Old English homilies – piecemeal editing and contradictory taxonomy, hierarchies between main text and often very
meaningful variants that are traditionally exiled and degraded in apparatuses. I felt that the homilies were misunderstood in their nature as fluid texts that are used and reused, where the variance between texts was often neglected by scholars. To me, and to the people behind ECHOE, the variance itself is so much more interesting and valuable if you want to trace religious, cultural, political, and linguistic changes.

Rather than collating the text as one might in a critical edition, we are working version by version so that users can compare versions of a text and expose the differences between them. We want it to function both as an edition and an analysable corpus. All the Latin sources for a text will be identified and provided; we’re trying to trace them sentence by sentence. We have cross-search functions, so that you can look at which homilies share common technical language or palaeographical features or make use of Gregory or Augustine, for example. We include rhetorical markup, like doublets, repetitive addresses, and other metacommunicative markers. Crucially, the search engine is sensitive to orthographical variations of Old English, which means that you can search for any term using any of its attributed forms. You should receive much more meaningful results that way.

The project also offers a selection of video performances, including modern English translations, which are largely for teaching purposes—to help students get a sense of the sound and rhetorical effect of Old English homilies when they’re delivered orally.

The ECHOE project has been generously funded by the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation (2015-2020), and a grant from the European Research Council (2018-24). It’s still in its alpha stage, but the full resource will hopefully be online by the end of 2024. We hope that the project will change the ways in which scholars and students engage with primary source materials, moving away from the traditional “critical edition” towards a more representative multiform text edition with source corpus and analytical tools. There’s still plenty of work to do.

**Q:** What can you tell us about the team behind the ECHOE project?

**A:** We’re a truly international group of academics. We have people from Germany, the US, the UK, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Switzerland, all collaborating on this project. While Dr. Susan Irvine and I laid the foundations for ECHOE, we believe that one of the reasons that it has been such a successful enterprise is that the hierarchy here is pretty flat. We obviously have senior scholars who are heavily involved, like Dr. Tom Hall who is our Source Officer (spearheading the arduous process of tracking down sources, even if it’s only a few words, in the medieval corpus), from whom the younger collaborators can learn. But senior scholars also learn a huge amount from the young talent as well, especially in the digital sector of the project. It’s beneficial in every direction.
Having an international team like this also has the enormous advantage of bringing together a far wider range of perspectives than a project which is confined to a single academic culture. We can call upon the expertise of scholars who have worked in vastly different academic environments, ensuring that our work will be both accessible and appealing to anyone who is interested in Old English homilies across the globe. Of course, being an international team, we have different takes on certain issues. But we collaborate well because of the flat hierarchy and the fact that open and regular communication is encouraged and practiced. We have frequent virtual or in-person meetings. We also have affiliated programs like the Vercelli School for Medieval European Palaeography, which provides another avenue for graduate students to meet up and collaborate. All in all, I think we’re a rather jolly bunch of people!

Q: How have graduate students contributed to and benefited from ECHOE?
A: By far the people who I want to celebrate the most are the young men and women, the graduate students, who have been working on the ECHOE project. They do spectacular work, especially with regard to the digital dimension, and, like the ECHOE team as a whole, are doing it mostly in silence. Our graduates are instrumental to ECHOE, diligently working on every element of the project, from basic encoding to source tracing, to indexing. Much of their work often goes unnoticed, so we are promoting them wherever we can and cannot thank them enough for their work.

We want to make sure that they benefit from working on ECHOE as much as possible, specifically with regard to the basic craft required in our field: solid knowledge of Latin and Old English, decent palaeographical skills, critical distance to the subject matter and the established methods, and creativity in finding solutions appropriate for the twenty-first century. ECHOE is a project whose primary aim is better to serve the understanding of the medieval text in its own time period and within the historical circumstances, which is an attitude that we believe is vital but not always practiced. There are all sorts of opportunities within the project which we hope will benefit students in their careers, the primary one being publications of brand new findings in peer-reviewed formats, both printed and digital, in collaboration with the ECHOE Team. But our funding has also created jobs both big and small for no less than thirteen graduate students and opportunities for graduate student exchange, such as a dual Master’s degree program between Göttingen and University College London which started in 2017. We’re constantly looking for ways to keep extending the project, and a big part of that is seeking further funding. Wherever possible, we involve graduate students in this process; as we all know, grant-writing is an essential skill in academia.
There is still plenty to do to bring the ECHOE project to completion, but I am happy to say that we have a gifted and dedicated team. We’ve been able to harness the knowledge and expertise of graduates and senior faculty to create an environment in which everyone can contribute and learn. We hope that ECHOE won’t just be a model of critical engagement with texts in the twenty-first century, but also a model of how medievalists can collaborate across borders in order to bring large-scale projects to life.

If you would like to explore an alpha version of ECHOE or contact the project, you can do so via this link.

Dr. Winfried Rudolf is Professor of English Language and Literature of the Middle Ages at Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany). His research interests include early medieval manuscripts, the transmission of homiletic texts, medieval reading practice, and the interface between Old English poetry and prose. His most recent published book is a co-edited volume with Dr. Susan Irvine titled The Anonymous Old English Homily: Sources, Composition, and Variation (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2021).

**Announcements**

**4 July 2022, 19:00-20:00**

2023 IMC Leeds GSC Session

The GSC-sponsored session, *Gatekeeping the Middle Ages: Accessing, Controlling, and Disseminating the Medieval Past in the Modern World - A Roundtable Discussion* will take place on Monday, 4 July starting at 19:00. This panel addresses the following question: who controls the Middle Ages? The past few years have emphasized the importance of this broad question. As white supremacists and political nationalists summon and twist medieval symbols for their own purposes, and as governments across the world grapple with pressing questions about community identity and social responsibility, we have learned to pay close attention to what it means to control and shape access to the medieval past. These questions are fundamentally about borders and boundaries: boundaries between who has institutional power and who is shut out from it; boundaries between what is ‘medieval’ and what isn’t; and boundaries between the medieval “them” and the modern “us,” just to name a few. To open the discussion, participants will give short presentations on “Taking Up Space as a Graduate Student Parent,” “Medieval Anachronisms, Modern Medievalisms, and Questioning Temporal Boundaries in the Classroom,” and “Bringing the Middle Ages to Composition Students: Special Collections and Manuscripts in the Classroom.”

**31 August 2022 and 30 September 2022**
2023 IMC Leeds Call for Papers and Sessions
The IMC provides an interdisciplinary forum for the discussion of all aspects of Medieval Studies. Proposals on any topic related to the Middle Ages are welcome, while every year the IMC also chooses a special thematic focus. In 2023 this is “Networks and Entanglements.” Paper proposals are due in August, while session proposals are due in September. For more information on this call for papers, go to https://www.imc.leeds.ac.uk/imc-2023/.

31 August 2022
Application to host the 23rd Annual Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies
The Vagantes Conference on Medieval Studies is now accepting applications for the 2024 host institution. The conference is an interdisciplinary graduate student conference focusing on the long Middle Ages. It is entirely organized and run by graduate students. Vagantes is a unique opportunity to showcase the medieval studies community at your institution, as well as to gain valuable experience in planning and organizing the event, and to meet and interact with medievalist graduate students. Applications will be accepted until Wednesday, August 31st and will be reviewed by the Vagantes Board of Directors. Applications should be submitted to vagantesboard@gmail.com. For more information, go to http://vagantesconference.org/hosting-vagantes.

Resource Reminder: Call For Papers!
Looking for a home for your latest seminar paper? Maybe you need an excuse to travel, especially during these summer months? Check out the Call for Papers Archives at Medievalists.net, the Medieval Studies Calls for Papers Facebook Group, and of course the Call for Papers section of the MAA’s very own Medieval Academy Blog. If you have a favorite CFP resource that we haven’t listed here, get in touch and we’ll include it in our next issue!

Resource Reminder: Medieval Jobs!
Medievalists are made for jobs, and jobs are made for medievalists. Check out the Medieval Academy Blog’s Jobs for Medievalists section to keep up with recent job postings of all flavors, tenure-track and beyond.

Resource Reminder: Professionalization Webinars!
Ever wanted to start a podcast, but just didn’t know what to do? Have you been staring down a grant application with no clue where to start? Well, you’re in luck – visit the MAA Webinars web page to catch up on any number of webinars hosted by the MAA and the GSC.

An Invitation from the Editors
In response to the diverse needs and interests of graduate students in Medieval Studies, the GSC plans to continue expanding the variety of content offered in the newsletter. We hope to feature more narratives spotlighting the diverse experiences in which graduate students participate in their higher-ed journeys (conferences, events, workshops, travels, organizations, etc.) and when beginning their forays into the job market, whether on traditional routes, in alternative academic positions, or compatible careers.

If you have an interest in sharing your experiences and ideas as a graduate student, independent researcher, or early career scholar, please send queries and contributions to GSC newsletter editors Reed O’Mara (rao44@case.edu) and Will Beattie (wbeattie@nd.edu) or to GSC@themedievalacademy.org.

Follow the GSC on Social Media!

Get the latest news and information from the GSC on Facebook (facebook.com/GSCMAA) and Twitter (@GSC_MAA).

Listen to the GSC’s Podcast, The Multicultural Middle Ages!

*The Multicultural Middle Ages* is an anthology-style podcast where medievalists from all professional and disciplinary tracks can come together to think and talk about the oft-unsung reality of the Middle Ages as a diverse historical and cultural period. We offer public-facing, open access content directed at experts and non-experts alike to offer updated, accurate, and culturally responsible accounts of the plurality of the medieval period. You can find *The Multicultural Middle Ages* on Spotify, Google Podcasts, Apple Podcasts, and Stitcher! You can also contact us at mmapodcast1@gmail.com.