

# Mirabile dictu!

The Newsletter of the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (CMEMS) at the University of Colorado



## *Medieval Materiality: The Life and Afterlife of Things*

by Professor Scott G. Bruce

### *Mirabile dictu!*

The autumn weather is upon us: there is a crispness in the air; the bears are foraging in the backyards of the Boulder neighborhoods adjacent to the foothills; and the mice are into the bird seed again. October also heralds our much-anticipated international, interdisciplinary conference on medieval materiality. In another two weeks, the CU Boulder campus will buzz with the industry of over 35 medievalists, who

will present their work on material culture and the history of the Middle Ages. Please read on to learn more about our invited plenary speakers and make sure to check out p. 2 for news about of this year's James Field Willard Lecture, which will serve as the conference's keynote address! We look forward to seeing you all in Boulder!

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### *The Second Annual James Field Willard Lecture on Oct. 23*

We are proud to welcome Prof. Caroline Walker Bynum to the CU Boulder campus!

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### *Calling All Scholars Working on Medieval Material Culture*

Anne E. Lester and Katie Little to co-edit a thematic issue of *English Language Notes*.

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### *CFP for Graduate Students in Medieval History*

The German Historical Institute wants you for its Medieval History Seminar (Oct. 2015)!

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### SPEAKER PROFILE: CAROLINE W. BYNUM

Caroline Walker Bynum earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1969 and has taught at Harvard (1969-1976), the University of Washington (1976-1988), and Columbia University (1988-2003). In 2003, she succeeded Professor Giles Constable as Professor of Medieval History at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. She studies religious ideas and practices of the European Middle Ages from late antiquity to the sixteenth century. In the 1980s, her book *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* was instrumental in introducing the concept of gender into medieval studies. Her research has won many awards and prizes, including the Haskins Medal from the Medieval Academy of America.

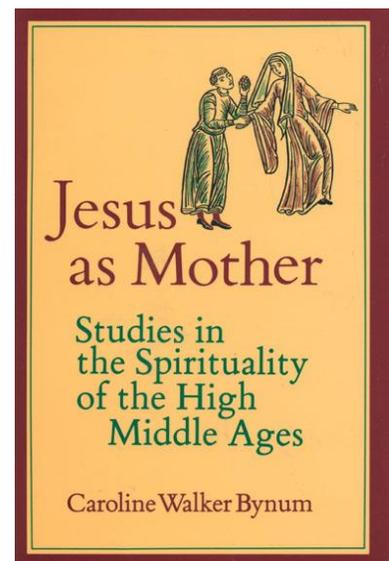
Caroline Walker Bynum, an expert on religious ideas in the Middle Ages, is widely recognized as the most influential medievalist of her generation.

It is with great pleasure that CMEMS welcomes Professor Caroline Walker Bynum to deliver the Second Annual James Field Willard Lecture in Medieval History at CU Boulder. Her public lecture on 23 October also serves as the keynote for the major conference on medieval materiality that will take place on the CU Boulder campus on 24-25 October. Her most recent book, *Christian Materiality* (2011), is a radical reinterpretation of the nature of Christianity on the eve of the reformations of the sixteenth century, which locates the upsurge of new forms of art and devotion in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries against the backdrop of changes in natural

philosophy and theology. For the Second Annual Willard Lecture, Bynum will introduce us to a host of medieval liturgical furnishings that survive from Protestant Germany. This survival has sometimes been attributed to Martin Luther's doctrine of the "indifference" of objects. Using three examples, one from south Germany and two from former women's convents in the north, Bynum argues not only that religious objects are far from "indifferent," but also that they promise to alter our standard opinions about the Observant Reform of fifteenth-century Germany and the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

On Thursday September 23, Professor Caroline Walker Bynum will deliver the Second Annual James Field Willard Lecture in Medieval History, entitled "The 'Indifference' of Things: Do Objects Change Our Understanding of Chronology?"

On Thursday 23 October at 5pm in the British and Irish Studies Room on the fifth floor of Norlin Library, Professor Caroline Walker Bynum will deliver the Second Annual James Field Willard Lecture in Medieval History, an annual public lecture sponsored by CMEMS in honor of James Field Willard, CU Boulder's first medieval historian. Professor Bynum's public lecture is entitled "The 'Indifference' of Things: Do Objects Change Our Understanding of Chronology?" A Q&A and reception will follow the lecture. This event is free and open to the public. Please encourage your students to attend what promises to be a stimulating talk.



## CFP: Papers on Medieval Materiality for English Language Notes 53.2 Fall/Winter 2015

In conjunction with the major conference taking place at CU Boulder this month, our very own Professors Anne E. Lester (HIST) and Katie Little (ENG) are guest-editing an upcoming issue of *English Language Notes* (ELN) on the theme of medieval materiality. Here is the official call-for-papers:

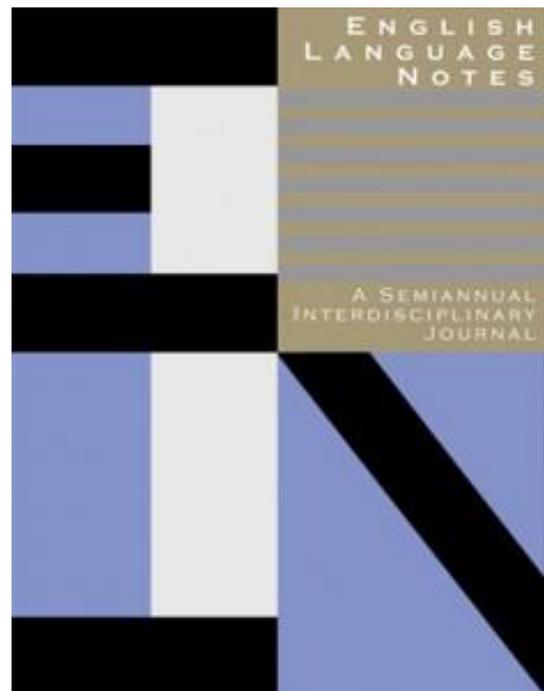
Recent work in medieval history and art history has focused on materiality, specifically the object-ness of the things – relics, cloth, books, and other materials – that survive. At the same time, scholars of medieval literature have approached materiality by reinvestigating manuscript studies and by incorporating theories of digital media and networks. Most of these discussions have happened within disciplinary boundaries and within a traditional periodization: the Anglo-Saxon, the late medieval, the early modern. Despite this apparent atomization, scholars are asking related questions, often guided by or in response to contemporary theories of materiality, such as the work of Jane Bennett and Bruno Latour. This is, therefore, an opportune moment to reflect on materiality from an interdisciplinary perspective and to investigate the status of the medieval, and historical periods more generally, in contemporary theory.

This issue ENL invites research and reflections on materiality from across the disciplines of history, art history, all fields of literature, philosophy, and the social sciences and from across traditional periods. We pose a number of related questions: What do we mean when we speak of medieval materiality? How does medieval materiality relate to the materiality of other periods? And, finally, what are the ramifications of this recent focus on materiality both for the Middle Ages and for literary and cultural studies more broadly? Some potential and welcome avenues of inquiry would be the relationship between objects and their social environments, between objects and their spiritual power, between the literal and the spiritual in biblical exegesis, between descriptions of objects, theories of ekphrasis, and the literal presence of things, and between medieval and post-modern approaches to things. At the same time, we welcome papers that investigate the ethical and political consequences of such a focus on materiality – both for medieval thinkers and for ourselves.

We will consider essays of 5000-7000 words as well as shorter notes and reviews (3000-4000 words). Essays will be reviewed by external readers. All submissions should adhere to the Chicago-style end-note citation format. Please submit double-spaced, 12-point font, .doc file abstracts and submissions to our Editorial Manager site ([www.edmgr.com/eln/](http://www.edmgr.com/eln/)). Please omit identifying information from all pages except the cover page, as we use a blind review process.

Specific inquiries regarding issue 53.2 may be addressed to its editors Anne E. Lester ([anne.lester@colorado.edu](mailto:anne.lester@colorado.edu)) and Katie Little ([Katherine.C.Little@colorado.edu](mailto:Katherine.C.Little@colorado.edu)). For more information about ELN, please visit their website: [english.colorado.edu/eln/](http://english.colorado.edu/eln/)

**Interested contributors are welcome to submit inquiries and abstracts before 15 November 2014. The deadline for papers is 1 March 2015.**



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**Daniel Lord Smail**

After some introductions, the conference begins on Friday morning at 9:30am with our first plenary lecture by Professor Daniel Lord Smail (Department of History, Harvard University), who will deliver a paper entitled “The Snare of the Material: Debtors and their Things in the Lucchesia in the Later Middle Ages.” (British and Irish Studies Room, Norlin Library M519). Professor Smail is professor of History at Harvard, where he works on the history and anthropology of Mediterranean societies between 1100 and 1600. His work has explored the social and cultural history of the cities of Mediterranean Europe with a focus on Marseille in the later Middle Ages. He has covered subjects ranging from women and Jews to legal history and spatial imagination. His new research approaches transformations in the material culture of late medieval Europe using household inventories and inventories of debt recovery from Lucca and Marseille.



**Jessica Brantley**

The second plenary lecture of the conference will take place on Friday at 1:30pm (also in the British and Irish Studies Room, in Norlin Library M519). Professor Jessica Brantley (Department of English, Yale University) will deliver a lecture entitled “In Things: The Rebus in Pre-modern Devotion.” Professor Brantley is a specialist in Old and Middle English literatures, manuscript studies, and the history of the book. Her research examines the cultures of medieval reading as they are preserved in manuscripts. Her first book, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, 2007), shows that the format of a late medieval miscellany reveals surprising connections between the private reading of a meditative lyric and the public performance of civic drama. She is currently at work on a handbook called *Medieval Manuscripts and Literary Forms*, and a monograph tentatively entitled *The Medieval Imagetext: A Literary History of the Book of Hours*.

**Aden Kumler**

The second day of the conference begins with our third plenary lecture, which will be delivered by Professor Aden Kumler (Department of Art History, University of Chicago). Her presentation, entitled “Manufacturing the Sacred in the Middle Ages: The Eucharist and Other Medieval Works of Art,” will take place at 9:30am in Atlas 100. Professor Kumler teaches western medieval art, architecture, material culture, manuscript illumination and manuscript studies, including codicology and paleography. Her first book, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England* (Yale UP, 2011), is a novel and compelling account of how illuminated vernacular manuscripts transformed conceptions of Christian excellence in the later Middle Ages. Her current research considers the understanding of the Eucharist in the Middle Ages, which she will explore in a new study called *The Multiplication of the Species: Medieval Economies of Form, Accident and Substance*.



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These plenary sessions will be interspersed with ten concurrent sessions, grouped around a number of different themes: the relationship between objects and their social environments, between objects and spiritual power, between the literal and the spiritual in biblical exegesis, between descriptions of objects, theories of ekphrasis, and the literal presence of things, and between medieval and post-modern approaches to objects/things.

### **The Material Past**

During the conference, please take time to visit the exhibit organized by the Department of Special Collections and Preservation at the University of Colorado Libraries. *The Material Past: Negotiating the Spiritual and Secular in the Medieval and Early Modern World* features manuscripts dating from the eleventh to the eighteenth centuries. The works on display highlight not only the materiality of the texts themselves, but also the artistry, practices, and traditions of their creators and owners. Special Collections in the Norlin Library will host an open house on 23 and 24 October for conference participants. A preview of the exhibit is in preparation on their website: [omeka.colorado.edu/specialcollections/](http://omeka.colorado.edu/specialcollections/)

### **Practical Information**

You can register for the conference online and view the entire program for this exciting three-day event at: [english.colorado.edu/medieval-materiality/](http://english.colorado.edu/medieval-materiality/)

For those of you who are arriving in town on Wednesday October 22, please send me an email ([bruces\[at\]colorado.edu](mailto:bruces[at]colorado.edu)) about getting together that night for a libation or two before the conference begins. I look forward to the opportunity to welcome you to Boulder and to tell you more about CMEMS and the exciting opportunities that we are creating here for students and visiting scholars. In turn, I would love to hear about your research.



We hope that all of the conference participants enjoy their visit to beautiful Boulder, Colorado. During the conference, please take a moment to thank Anne E. Lester and Katie Little for all of their hard work in organizing this wonderful event. Even better, buy them a well-earned drink! I look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones, so please say hello when you see me!

### **Looking Ahead to November**

The next issue of *Mirabile dictu!* will appear during the first week of November. We look forward to welcoming our next visiting speaker, Professor Michelle Karnes (Department of English, Stanford University), whose research we will profile in next month's newsletter. Our editorial will explore the current state of medieval Latin dictionaries in the wake of the publication of the last fascicle of the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*.

Looks like that bear is back in the yard again...

Servus,  
SGB

## About the Director: Professor Scott G. Bruce, Department of History

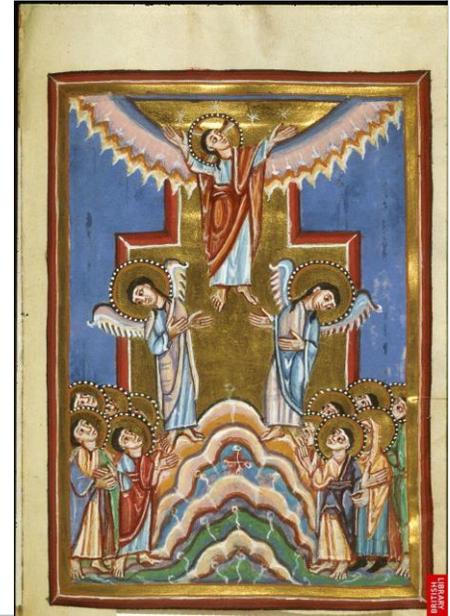


Scott G. Bruce earned his B.A. in History and Latin *summa cum laude* (1994) at York University in Toronto, Canada. He pursued his M.A. (1996) and Ph.D. (2000) in History at Princeton University, where he concentrated on topics in religion and culture in the early Middle Ages and wrote his dissertation under the supervision of Professor Giles Constable.

A specialist on the history of the abbey of Cluny, SGB has published widely on many aspects of medieval monastic culture and literature. He also serves as an editor of *The Medieval Review* (TMR) and plays an active role in the Medieval Academy of America (MAA). For more information, including a complete list of publications, please visit: [www.colorado.academia.edu/ScottBruce](http://www.colorado.academia.edu/ScottBruce)

## Graduate Student CFP: Medieval History Seminar Organized by the German Historical Institute (London & Washington)

The German Historical Institutes (GHI) in London and Washington D.C. are pleased to announce the ninth Medieval History Seminar (MHS), to be held in Washington, D.C. from October 15-17, 2015. The seminar is designed to bring together Ph.D. candidates and recent Ph.D. recipients (2013-2014) in medieval history from American, British and German universities for three days of scholarly discussion and collaboration. They will have the opportunity to present their work to their peers as well as to distinguished scholars from both sides of the Atlantic. The MHS is currently accepting proposals from all areas of medieval history. The seminar is bi-lingual, and papers and discussions will be conducted in both German and English, but participation is not limited to topics in German history. The deadline for submission is **31 January 2015**. Applications should include: a curriculum vitae (with your institutional affiliation, address and email), a description of the proposed paper (4-5 pages, double-spaced), and one letter of recommendation. Please send your application to Susanne Fabricius ([fabricius@ghi-dc.org](mailto:fabricius@ghi-dc.org)). The GHI will cover the travel and lodging expenses of the participants. For further information, please contact Dr. Cornelia Linde ([linde@ghil.ac.uk](mailto:linde@ghil.ac.uk)).



### CMEMS@Boulder

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#### IMAGE SOURCES:

The cover image depicts the restored Heilige Grab in Wienhausen, which Professor Bynum will discuss in her Willard Lecture.

The bear on p. 5 is from the Aberdeen Bestiary (c. 1200), housed in the University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives.

The ascension of Christ above is from an eleventh-century Book of Gospels from Germany (London, BL, Egerton MS 608, fol. 134).

The mouse to the right appears in an eleventh-century medical treatise decorated with many images of flora and fauna (MS Bodl. 130, fol. 91r).

*Postscriptum:* As we finalize the preparations for our upcoming conference, we have been thinking about our friends and colleagues at Dominican University in Chicago who are hosting the 2014 Midwest Medieval History Conference on 17-18 October. This event boasts six thematic sessions ranging from “medieval women” to the “crusades” as well as a keynote address by Professor Barbara Rosenwein of Loyola University Chicago entitled “Jean Gerson’s Musical Theory of the Emotions.” If you are in the Greater Chicago area, you won’t want to miss this conference!

