

ACMRS NEWS

OCTOBER 2014

WHO CAN'T DISTINGUISH FACT FROM FICTION? BAGWYN BOOKS AND HISTORICAL TRUTH

by Sharonah Fredrick, Asst. Director, ACMRS

Bagwyn Books, founded in 2011 as an innovative publishing arm of the ACMRS, strives to combine scholarship and literary creativity in the genre of historical fiction. The idea is a valid one: use authors who are also respected historical researchers in their fields, and the result will be a work of pleasure impeccably accurate in detail. Nonetheless, forays by academics into this genre have often been maligned as a "lesser" use of their talents, as though the same academic and author who wrote his/her book is incapable of distinguishing fact from fiction. And unfortunately, too much American historical fiction, from Margaret Mitchell's notably racist *Gone with the Wind* to the bodice-ripping pseudo-medievalism of so-called "swash-buckler" pulp fiction series, is truly a lesser, and even embarrassing, breed of literature. But in the British Isles, Ireland, France, Holland, and Latin America, historical fiction has been cultivated as a genre that encompasses rigorous study of chronology and mentality, what the French historian Marc Bloch rightly termed "the history of mentalities." Bloch applauded the genre, whose outstanding exemplars in France included Marmontel and his romances of the Incan empire, and of course Dumas and his stories of the musketeers of the court of Louis XIII. Bloch was not worried, as some critics today are, that his readership could not differentiate fact from fiction. On the contrary, historical fiction written by an expert, which is the principle upon which Bagwyn books is based, was viewed by Bloch as an edifying and stimulating accompaniment to the understanding of history, one that, in hands of masters such as Marmontel and Dumas, could aid greatly in the comprehension of mentalities.

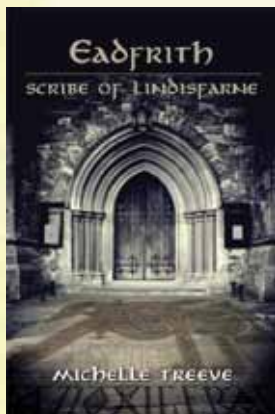
Holland's greatest contemporary archaeologist and anthropologist, Ruud Van Akkeren of the University of Leiden, raised the ire of many of his colleagues, and the admiration of thousands of readers, when he wrote his *Dance of the Drum*, considered by many literary critics to be one of the most insightful historical novels pertaining to the Mayan Indians and their resistance to the Spanish Conquest in the mid 16th century. Van Akkeren's years spent tracking and deciphering the connections between pre-Colombian and contemporary Mayan life in Guatemala, and his enviable trajectory into Mayan/Christian syncretism, did not detract from his ability to weave a tale; it contributed to making the background of *Dance of the Drum* a rich and educational tapestry in which the plot unfolds. Authors of Britain's period of imperial expansion, such as Sir Walter Scott, used the medieval heritage of bardic poetry, supplemented by a fast-dying oral tradition, to recreate a romanticized vision of the Celtic past. Lady Gregory did much the same in Ireland, where she, and the poet William Butler Yeats, used her collection of Irish-language legends as inspiration and spur for the nationalist rebirth of Erin. (Continued on next page.)

WWW.ACMRS.ORG

This “romanticism” is what has brought the most opprobrium on the genre of historical fiction ... but how justified is that claim? No historical fiction author claims to be a historian: they are all quite clearly self-proclaimed writers of fiction. And fiction has its uses. As a case in point, contemporary Colombian author William Ospina, whose *The Land of Cinnamon* about the 1542 Amazon voyage of the Conquistador Orellana and Francisco Pizarro’s brother Gonzalo, was heralded as one of the most unsettling and penetrating political novels of Colombian literature. Ospina does not claim to be a historian, but he has a profound and enduring respect for history, and his weaving of several themes – Pizarro’s brutality towards the roughly 3,000 Inca captives who were taken to the Amazon on that voyage; Orellana’s eventual disgust with Pizarro’s cruelty and the ambivalence of a generation that was neither wholly Spanish nor wholly Native American – illustrated many of Colombia’s contemporary dilemmas.

Bagwyn Books does not claim to be a historical press: ACMRS has other publication series, such as MRTS, that fit that bill nicely. But like the above-mentioned examples, its authors, including Elizabethan authority Grace Tiffany and medievalist Sharan Newman, provide pleasure and edification. And as Marc Bloch noted in the 1930s, intelligent readers are capable of distinguishing historical mentalities, which good fiction should convey, from actual works of historical investigation.

BAGWYN BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE AS EBOOKS



EADFRITH: SCRIBE OF LINDISFARNE

by Michelle Treeve (\$4.99)

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NHBEM26>



PAINT

A NOVEL OF SHAKESPEARE’S DARK LADY

by Grace Tiffany (\$5.99)

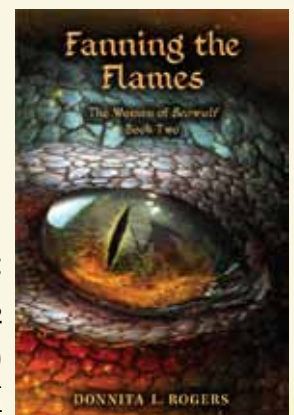
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00N58KBAI>



FACES IN THE FIRE: THE WOMEN OF BEOWULF

BOOK 1 by Donnita L. Rogers (\$5.99)

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NHANEQW>



FANNING THE FLAMES:

THE WOMEN OF BEOWULF BOOK 2

by Donnita L. Rogers (\$5.99)

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00NH5OTHK>

WWW.ACMRS.ORG

FEARLESS FEMALES LECTURES AVAILABLE ON ACMRS YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Check out the new ACMRS YouTube Channel, **ACMRS Arizona**, to see all of the public lectures offered by the center! Beginning in 2012 with “Fearless Females: Audacious and Feisty Women of the Middle Ages and Renaissance” and moving on to the ACMRS Scholars Series, which delves into topics ranging from “Apocalypse in the Andes” to “Madness in the Middle Ages,” this channel gives everyone the opportunity to benefit from the scholarship of ACMRS affiliated faculty.

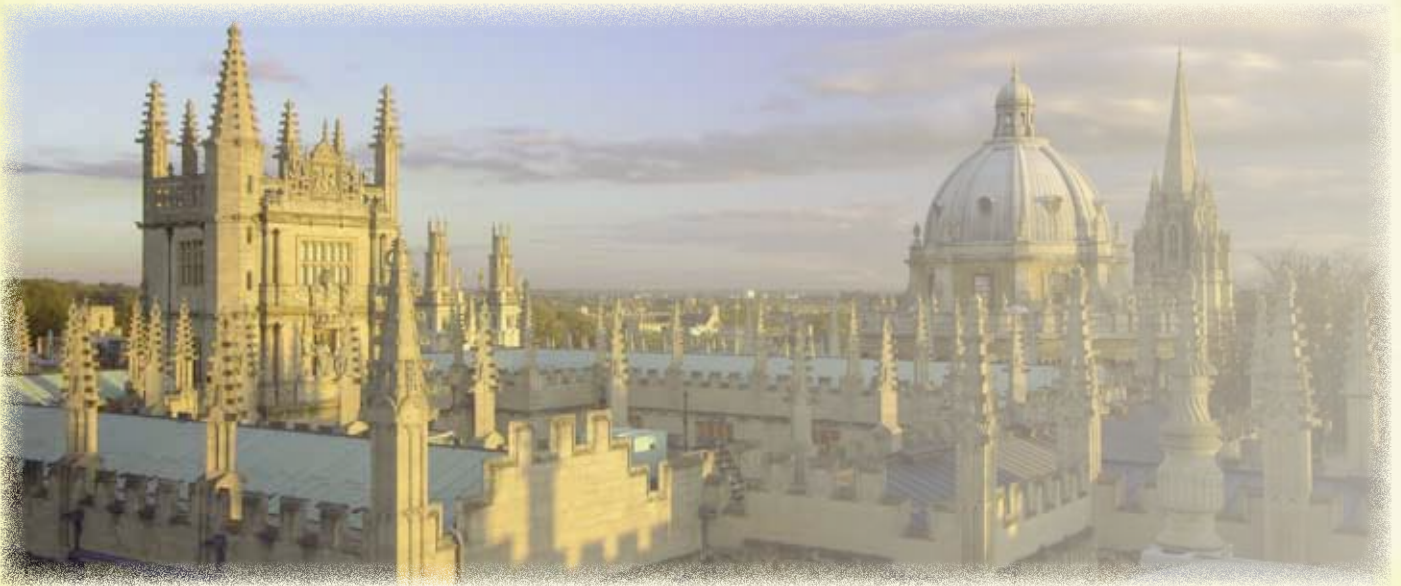


Click here to see them all: <https://www.youtube.com/user/acmrsaz>

MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE STUDIES IN OXFORD

Spend your summer in the City of Dreaming Spires! Travel abroad with ACMRS to the Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Oxford and study for 5 weeks with Prof. Edward Mallot (English, ASU) and Prof. Ralph Hanna (Keble College, Oxford). Students earn 6 credits in 5 weeks with “The Afterlives of Beowulf” and “Shakespeare and His Contemporaries in Performance” while visiting London, Stratford-upon-Avon, Glastonbury, Stonehenge, and West Stow.

This interdisciplinary opportunity is open to all undergraduate and graduate students, regardless of major, discipline, or institutional home. Apply through the ASU Study Abroad Office. Please visit the ACMRS website to learn more or contact ACMRS Outreach Coordinator, Kendra TerBeek (Kendra.TerBeek@acmrs.org). <https://acmrs.org/academic-programs/oxford>



WWW.ACMRS.ORG

GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE HONORS ASU PROFESSOR, ACMRS AFFILIATE: ALEKSANDRA GRUZINSKA

In recognition for her contribution to the French language and culture through scholarship and education, the Government of France has inducted Aleksandra Gruzinska, professor of French at Arizona State University's School of International Letters and Cultures, into the prestigious Ordre des Palmes Académiques (Order of the French Academic Palms) at the grade of Chevalier.

Gruzinska is the fifth faculty member at ASU's French program to be honored as Chevalier in the order. Professors emeriti William Hendrickson, Deborah Losse, and David Wetsel, and current faculty member Sylvain Gallais, have also been awarded the Palmes Académiques, the latter with the distinction of Officier.

"It is a real pleasure to see the French Government acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Aleksandra Gruzinska," said Joe Cutter, director of the school. "The School of International Letters and Cultures has an outstanding and dedicated group of French professors, and we are all delighted at Aleksandra's achievement."

During a career spanning almost five decades, Gruzinska has authored or contributed to 11 books, published nearly 60 scholarly articles and reviews, and presented her research at renowned international, national, and regional conferences and meetings.

Iti Agnihotri, ASU Media Relations
<https://asunews.asu.edu/20140915-gruzinska-palmes-academiques>

ASU RESEARCHERS, ACMRS AFFILIATES BRING MEDIIEVAL MANUSCRIPT TO LIFE

For Arizona State University art historian Corine Schleif and musicologist Volker Schier, images and sound are paramount to their research. Together, they have used modern multimedia tools to bring a 500-year-old manuscript to life. The result is a first-of-its-kind international pilot project called "Opening the Geese Book."

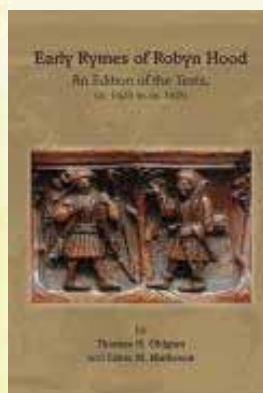
The Geese Book is a two-volume liturgical manuscript, originally produced in Nuremberg, Germany, between 1503 and 1510. It contains the complete mass liturgy for the entire year, used at the parish church of St. Lorenz until 1525. Measuring 30 by 50 inches, the books are the largest on record at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Their monumental size allowed for the entire church choir, made up of boys and young men, to gather around the only copy when it came time to sing.

All throughout the Geese Book, fanciful illustrations and designs are scattered among the pages of music. Animals, mythological creatures, dragons, hybrids, and more are all depicted, as well as more traditional religious scenes. But the most famous painting shows a choir of geese with a wolf as their choirmaster.

Using a web-based platform with audio and visual features has given the Geese Book a sort of modern revival. Schleif hopes the project will serve as a model for future explorations.

Allie Nicodemo, OKED
<https://asunews.asu.edu/20140917-bringing-geese-book-to-life>

THE BOOK NOOK: FEATURING ACMRS PUBLICATIONS AND BAGWYN BOOKS



Early Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Edition of the Texts, 1425 to 1600 Edited by Thomas H. Ohlgren and Lister M. Matheson

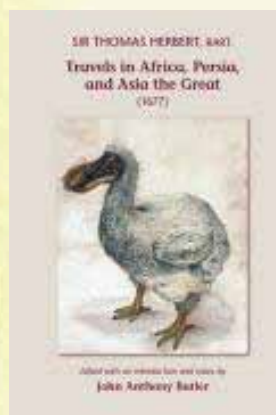
This volume comprises new editions of all of the known works on Robin Hood, ca. 1425 to ca. 1600, drawn from the original manuscripts and early printed books. All the relevant texts are transcribed as closely as possible to correspond to their originals, including spelling and typesetting errors, metrical irregularities, lacunae, and typographical conventions, with extensive notes on significant lexicographic features. By reproducing nearly two centuries of Robin Hood texts with all their “faults,” this volume offers a genuine and foundational alternative to the “best”-text approach taken by those editions that have attempted to make the

Robin Hood tradition more accommodating and accessible for modern readers.

Works edited here derive from two sources: manuscripts and early printed books. Poems from two Cambridge University Library MSS are Robin Hood and the Monk (ca. 1465) and Robin Hood and the Potter (ca. 1468). A previously unpublished fragment of Robin Hood and the Monk from the British Library is also included, as well as a schematic text for a Robin Hood play in a Trinity College, Cambridge, manuscript (ca. 1475–1476). The texts edited from early printed books include seven different editions of A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode and two editions of the plays Robin Hood and the Friar and Robin Hood and the Potter.

THOMAS H. OHLGREN is Emeritus Professor of English and Medieval Studies at Purdue University.

† **LISTER M. MATHESON** was Professor of English at Michigan State University.



Sir Thomas Herbert: *Travels in Africa, Persia, and Asia the Great* Edited by John Anthony Butler

The 1677 version edited with Introduction and Notes by John Anthony Butler. This book is an edition of Sir Thomas Herbert's *Some Years Travels into Africa and Asia the Great, especially describing the famous Empires of Persia and Hindustan, as also divers other Kingdoms in the oriental Indies, 1627-30*. Herbert (1608-1682) is perhaps best-known for having been Charles I's humane custodian in his final imprisonment, but at the age of twenty-one he had travelled to India and Persia as a member of Sir Dodmore Cotton's diplomatic mission to Shah Abbas I, and his book, which proved very popular, ran into several editions over a forty-year period in Herbert's life. The travel narrative is lively and engaging, although

some readers have felt that Herbert's vast number of additions to his original 1630 text detract from these qualities somewhat. However, Herbert has created a chorographical extravaganza through which the enthusiastic young traveller can still be discerned, and the additions reveal the mind of a seventeenth-century gentleman-scholar and antiquarian at its best.

JOHN BUTLER is currently Associate Professor of Humanities at the University College of the North in The Pas, Manitoba, Canada.



UPCOMING PUBLIC EVENTS



OCTOBER

FEARLESS FEMALES SERIES

"Fearless Women Fighters and Writers for Their Faith in 16th and 17th Century Germany"

Albrecht Classen, Distinguished Professor of German, University of Arizona
Tuesday October 7, 2014 at 7:00pm - Changing Hands Bookstore, Tempe, AZ
[Click here to reserve a seat: https://fightersandwriters2.eventbrite.com](https://fightersandwriters2.eventbrite.com)

ACMRS SCHOLAR SERIES

"John the Evangelist as 'summus secretarius' in Medieval Music, Exegesis, and Iconography"

Catherine Saucier, Associate Professor of Music History, ASU School of Music
Monday, October 20, 2014 at 1:00pm - Coor Hall, Room 4403, ASU Tempe Campus
[Click here to reserve a seat: https://medievalmusic2.eventbrite.com](https://medievalmusic2.eventbrite.com)

ACMRS DISTINGUISHED LECTURE IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES

"What is Middle in the Middle Ages? Center and Periphery in the Middle Kingdom"

Stephen West, Foundation Professor of Chinese in the School of International Letters and Cultures, ASU
Wednesday, October 29, 2014 at 7:00pm - Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ
[Click here to reserve a seat: https://medievalchina.eventbrite.com](https://medievalchina.eventbrite.com)

NOVEMBER

ASU HOMECOMING BLOCK PARTY

Saturday, November 1, 2014 (Time To Be Announced)
The ACMRS tent will be on Cady Mall and University on the ASU Tempe Campus.

STAY CONNECTED WITH ACMRS!

