

# *Mirabile dictu!*

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



## *De herinacio: Concerning the Hedgehog*

by Professor Scott G. Bruce

### *Mirabile dictu!*

What animal comes immediately to mind when you think about the Middle Ages? A lion rampant with its forepaws raised? A serene unicorn resting its head in the lap of a maiden? The writhing kraken of House Greyjoy? Well, it is time to put all of them behind you and make room for the mighty hedgehog! As we announced in last month's issue

of *Mirabile dictu!* CMEMS has adopted this spectacular thirteenth-century illumination of a hedgehog from a manuscript in the J. Paul Getty Museum as its mascot. Read on to learn more about medieval hedgehog lore!

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### *Mark Your Calendar for the 1st James Field Willard Lecture!*

On Oct 29, Professor William C. Jordan (Princeton) will give a public lecture at CU Boulder.

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### *October is Early Modern History Month at CU Boulder*

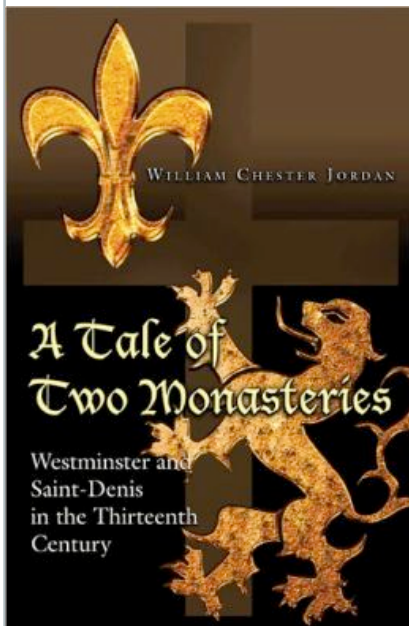
Or so it seems with three public lectures and colloquia on topics in early modern history!

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### *Transforming Work: Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry*

A new book on pastoral and labor by Professor Katherine C. Little (Department of English).

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### SPEAKER PROFILE: WILLIAM C. JORDAN

William Chester Jordan is Dayton-Stockton Professor of History and Chairman of the History Department at Princeton University. His many book-length studies of the history of Europe in the High Middle Ages include: *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership* (1979); *The French Monarchy and the Jews from Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (1989); *The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century* (1996); *A Tale of Two Monasteries: Westminster and Saint-Denis in the Thirteenth Century* (2009); and most recently *Men at the Center: Redemptive Governance under Louis IX* (2012).

## William Chester Jordan is Dayton-Stockton Professor of History and Chairman of the Department of History at Princeton University

The renowned historian Jacques Le Goff recently called Professor William Chester Jordan "one of the greatest living medievalists." No one would argue the point. Jordan has published nine books and numerous articles on topics in the High Middle Ages with approaches that range from micro-history to comparative history to environmental history. His versatility is matched only by his virtuosity as a writer and his profound empathy toward the subjects of his historical research. His most famous book, *The Great Famine* (1996), was awarded the Haskins Medal by the Medieval Academy of America. To read a sample of Jordan's recent research, please visit the CMEMS Academia.edu page, where you will find a copy of his award-winning article "Count Robert's 'Pet' Wolf," which appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 155.4 (2011).

One of the most important measures of the influence of a scholar is the success of his or her graduate students. Jordan has a reputation as a deeply committed and inspiring graduate teacher and dissertation advisor. His graduate seminar on medieval rural history is legendary. His students are legion. Many of them are professors of medieval history across the United States and in Europe. This year, seventeen of them contributed to a Festschrift entitled *Center and Periphery: Studies on Power in the Medieval World in Honor of William Chester Jordan*, ed. Katherine L. Jansen, G. Geltner, and Anne E. Lester (Brill, 2013) on topics that reflect the far-ranging research interests of their beloved advisor: royal power and minorities, the politics of peace-making, religious institutions and society, crusading and memory, and law and history.

## On October 29, William Chester Jordan will present the first annual James Field Willard Lecture in Medieval History at CU Boulder

On Tuesday October 29 at 5pm in the British and Irish Studies Room of the Norlin Library (M519), Professor Jordan will give the first annual James Field Willard Lecture in honor of Professor Willard, the first medieval historian to teach at the University of Colorado at Boulder (1906-1935). This public lecture is entitled "From England to France: Felony and Exile in the High Middle Ages." All are welcome!



## October Brings Three Presentations on Topics in Early Modern History

October is a busy month for public lectures and colloquia on topics in early modern history on the CU Boulder campus. Visitors from outside Boulder are especially welcome to attend!

First, on Wednesday October 2, **Professor David Cressy** (Humanities Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Ohio State University) will give a public lecture in the Pre-1700 British Studies Seminar entitled "Trouble with Gypsies: Representation, Law and Engagement in Early Modern England." Professor Cressy is one of the foremost authorities on the social history of early modern England and has published important books on a wide range of topics, including reading and literacy, English migration to the New World, political revolution, monstrous births, libel and scandalous talk, and saltpetre. This talk will take place in the British and Irish Studies Room of the Norlin Library (M519) at 5:15pm.



Next, on Thursday October 3, **Professor Nan Goodman** (Professor of English, CU Boulder) will present her new research on Puritan ideology and the Hebrew Republic at the Jewish Studies Colloquium. Her pre-circulated paper is entitled "The Inter-Nation and the Cosmopolitics of Covenant Renewal." It examines the internationalism and cosmopolitanism of the corporate covenant made between God and his people in the Hebrew Bible and in the writings of the seventeenth-century Puritans in New England. Through their references to the cosmopolitanism of this covenant, Professor Goodman presents evidence that the Puritans demonstrated a legal and political identity that was far more outward looking and global than has been previously thought, shedding new light on their ostensibly insular and proto-national activities. This event begins at 5pm in UMC 247. To obtain a copy of the paper, please email [Meghan.Zibby@colorado.edu](mailto:Meghan.Zibby@colorado.edu).

And lastly, on Thursday October 17, **Professor Charlene Kellsey** (Associate Professor in the Libraries, CU Boulder) will give a presentation on her current research in the Library Symposium Series. Entitled "How an Abbess Stonewalled an Archbishop, a Parlement and a King and How One Thing Leads to Another in Historical Research," this paper will focus on a series of incidents and legal maneuvering in the seventeenth century regarding the proposed reformation of the venerable women's abbey of St. Caesarius in Arles and the process of reconstructing events from the original documents that have survived. This talk will take place from 3:00-4:15pm in Norlin Library N410.



(continued from p. 1)

### Hedgehog 101

The hedgehog is a very small nocturnal mammal native to Europe, Asia and Africa. Its name derives from the Middle English *heyghoge* (c. 1450) because the animal often lived in hedgerows (*heyg* or *hegge*) and sported a snout similar to a hog (*hoge* or *hogge*). The spines of the hedgehog are its most distinctive feature. The average hedgehog has between 5000 and 6500 quills. When they are threatened, hedgehogs roll up into a tight ball, which causes all of their spines to point directly outward. Other than owls and badgers, there are very few predators that prey on them. Hedgehogs are not very picky with respect to their own food: they are omnivores and commonly eat insects, snails, frogs, small snakes, bird eggs, lizards, mushrooms, berries, melons, and even carrion. The domestication of hedgehogs may go back to the Roman period, but it became popular in the 1980s and remains in vogue.



### Pliny's Progress

The *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (d. 79 CE) provided generations of medieval readers with an authoritative account of hedgehog behavior. According to Pliny, the hedgehog prepared for winter by rolling on fallen apples and impaling them on his quills until his entire body was covered with fruit. The hedgehog would then take up a few more apples in his mouth and carry this bounty back to his home in a hollow tree to provide food for the long winter months.

Pliny's account informed the descriptions of hedgehog behavior found in Isidore of Seville's early seventh-century *Etymologies*, the most influential source of natural lore in the Middle Ages. In Isidore's work, the hedgehog makes forays into vineyards, where it climbs up vines and shakes or chews off those with the ripest grapes. It then climbs back down and rolls on the grapes, in order to carry them back to its lair on its quills to feed its young.



### Devil Pigs and Sinful Swine

Thanks to the work of encyclopedists like Pliny and Isidore, medieval authors were well acquainted with hedgehog behavior and allegorized it in several ways to express larger Christian truths. In the medieval Bestiary tradition, hedgehogs appeared between the mole and the ant. Their clever habit of gathering the fruit of the vine using the quills on their backs became a dire warning of the devious ways that the Devil himself could steal the spiritual fruits of well-meaning human beings!

Similarly, in a sermon by the thirteenth-century Franciscan preacher Anthony of Padua (1195-1231), sinful Christians were compared explicitly to hedgehogs: "Note that the hedgehog is altogether full of quills and if one tries to pick it up, it rolls itself up and becomes like a ball in the hand of the holder ... The hedgehog is the obstinate sinner, covered all over with the quills of pride. If you endeavor to convince him of the sin he has committed, he immediately rolls himself up and hides his fault."

Continued...



### The Redemption of the Hog

Medieval authors were not consistent, however, in their allegorical reading of the hedgehog's habits. At least one medieval tradition depicted our little friend as a preacher of Christian modesty. Among the numerous beast fables preserved in the thirteenth-century *Mirror of Wisdom* is the story of a vain goat who delighted in admiring his own reflection in a pond. His horns made a fine crown, he thought, and his beard a regal necklace. The goat was very pleased with himself until a passing hedgehog reminded him of his ugly tail and bad temper. Humility, preached the hedgehog, and not vain self-regard, was the true mark of nobility in an animal.

Clearly, in medieval allegorical traditions, there is more to the hedgehog than meets the eye!

### Looking Ahead to November

October is upon us and the heralds of autumn are here. All across the Front Range, the leaves are turning red and yellow and the Aspens in the high Rockies are just spectacular right now. But before you know it, the snows will arrive. In our November issue of *Mirabile dictu!* we will introduce you to the work of this semester's Front Range Speaker: Elisabeth Moore Hunt, Associate Professor of Medieval, Renaissance and Islamic Art History in the Department of Art at the University of Wyoming. We will also consider the origins of two of November's most important Christian feastdays: All Saints (Nov. 1) and All Souls (Nov. 2).

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.

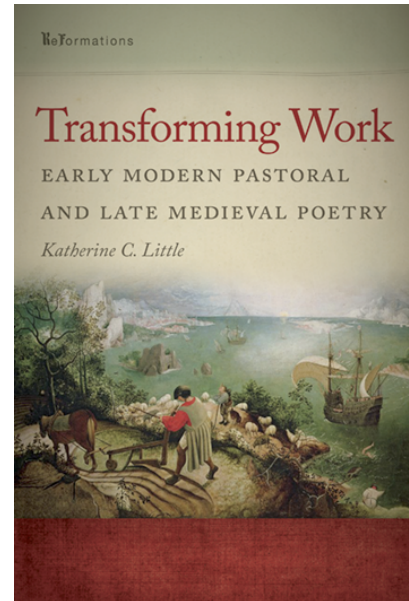
A specialist on the history of the abbey of Cluny, SGB has published widely on many aspects of medieval monastic culture and literature. He also serves as an editor of *The Medieval Review* (TMR) and plays an active role in the Medieval Academy of America (MAA). For more information, including a complete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



## A New Book on Renaissance Pastoral and Labor by Katherine C. Little, Associate Professor of English.

The University of Notre Dame Press announces *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry*, a new book by Katherine C. Little, associate professor of English at CU Boulder: "Little offers a new literary history for the pastoral, arguing that the authors of the first English pastorals used rural laborers familiar from medieval texts—plowmen and shepherds—to reflect on the social, economic, and religious disruptions of the sixteenth century. In medieval writing, these figures were particularly associated with the reform of the individual and the social world: their work also stood for the penance and good works required of Christians, the care of the flock required of priests, and the obligations of all people to work within their social class. By the sixteenth century, this reformism had taken on a dangerous set of associations—with radical Protestantism, peasants' revolts, and complaints about agrarian capitalism. Pastoral poetry rewrites and empties out this radical potential, making the countryside safe to write about again."

Professor Little published her first book, *Confession and Resistance: Defining the Self in Late Medieval England* (2006), with the University of Notre Dame Press as well. You can purchase both books at [www.undpress.nd.edu](http://www.undpress.nd.edu).



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#### IMAGE SOURCES:

The glorious hedgehog on p. 1 graces a late 13<sup>th</sup>-century Franco-Flemish bestiary, now MS Ludwig XV 3 (fol. 79v) in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California.

The Hebrew scroll on p. 3 dates from the 18th century. It was sold by Bloomsbury Auctions in New York on 4 April 2009.

The lone hedgehog at the top of p. 4 can be found in a 13th-century English bestiary now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 3630, fol. 85r, while the rolling hedgehogs on p. 5 appear in yet another 13th-century bestiary (British Library, Royal 12 F XIII, fol. 45r).

The creatures to the right are a detail from an illumination of Noah's ark depicted in a 12th-century *Beatus Super Apocalypsim* (Latin MS 8, fol. 15r) owned by the John Rylands University Library, Manchester.

*Postdiluvian*: The biblical deluge that brought so much rain, high river waters and destruction to Boulder Valley in the middle of September also resulted in the cancellation of Professor Renée Trilling's scheduled CMEMS talk. She arrived in Boulder in the wake of the storm and, to make matters worse, her hotel was evacuated during the night out of fear that the swollen Boulder Creek would inundate downtown Boulder! Fortunately, the worst did not come to pass and we enjoyed a longer visit with our brave friend and colleague thanks to the lingering storm!

