

Women's Networks in the Early Medieval North Atlantic

This session invites 15 - 20 minutes papers that examine the roles of women, their writing, and their influence in the formation and cultivation of cultural networks in the early medieval North Atlantic. Women were powerful agents of political, cultural, and religious connections in the Middle Ages, and thus medieval networks were dependent upon women. Looking at cultural networks in terms of the women involved in them thus allows for the study of a wide range of topics that engage with gender and sex.

This panel is particularly, although not exclusively, interested in studies that engage with women's networks in an expansive global North Atlantic. "North Atlantic" is a term that has primarily served as a shorthand for England, Ireland, and Scandinavia but, if geography is closely attended to, could facilitate the study of connections between England, Ireland, Scandinavia, Iberia, North Africa, and even North and Central America. In a forthcoming article, Nahir I. Otaño Gracia argues for a Global North Atlantic Studies that decenters Europe by researching and acknowledging the cultural influence exerted on the cultures of the traditional North Atlantic by Africa, the Islamicate, the Iberian peninsula, and "even the Americas."¹

Studying early medieval women as connected and as connections within and between cultures, potentially (but not necessarily) supplemented by a geographically realistic understanding of the term "North Atlantic," can facilitate better models of a networked early Middle Ages. This panel is sponsored by A Feminist Renaissance in Early English Medieval Studies. Please submit abstracts of approximately 300 words and a Participant Information Form to Erin Sweany (esweany@vassar.edu) and Rebecca Straple (rebecca.straple@wmich.edu) by September 20

1. Otaño Gracia, Nahir I. "Towards a Decentered North Atlantic: Blackness in Saga af Tristram ok Ísodd." Literature Compass. Forthcoming.