

**Female Bodies and Female Practitioners  
in the Medical Traditions of the Late Antique Mediterranean World  
International Conference, 27-29 October 2014**

MONDAY EVENING, 27/10/2014

Conference Opening: 18.00

**Charlotte Fonrobert** (Stanford): *Talmudic Gynecology and its Relationship to Late Antique Medical Literature: Transfigurations of ‘Women’s Affairs’ (Gynaikeia).*



Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert specializes in Judaism: talmudic literature and culture. Her interests include gender in Jewish culture; the relationship between Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity; the discourses of orthodoxy versus heresy; the connection between religion and space; and rabbinic conceptions of Judaism with respect to Greco-Roman culture. She is the author of *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford University Press, 2000), which won the Salo Baron Prize for a best first book in Jewish Studies of that year and was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in Jewish Scholarship. She also co-edited *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (2007), together with Martin Jaffee (University of Washington). Currently, she is working on a manuscript entitled *Replacing the Nation: Judaism, Diaspora and the Neighborhood*.

Selected Bibliography:

- “Gynecological Exams in Rabbinic Literature – Women’s Bodies Between Female Autonomy and Male Control,” *JAGNES* 4:2, Fall 1993, pp.65-72.
- “When Women Walk in the Ways of Their Fathers: On Gendering the Rabbinic Claim for Authority,” in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10: 3/4 (Winter 2001).
- “On Carnal Israel and the Consequences: Talmudic Studies Since Foucault,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:3 (Summer 2005), pp.462-469.
- “Plato in Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai’s Cave (bShabbat 33b-34a): The Talmudic Inversion of Plato’s Politics,” *AJS Review* 31:2 (Fall 2007), pp.277-296.
- “Blood and Law: Uterine Fluids and Rabbinic Maps of Identity,” *Henoah* 30:2 (2008) (special issue devoted to the topic of Blood) edited by Raanan Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed)
- “The Women with a Blood-Flow (Mark 5:24-34) Revisited: Menstrual Polemics in Christian Feminist Hermeneutics” in *Early Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigation and Proposals*, JTNTSup 148, ed. by Craig A.Evans and James A. Sanders, 1997, pp.121-141.
- “Yalta’s Ruse: Resistance Against Rabbinic Menstrual Authority in Talmudic Literature”, in *Women and Water: Female Rituals of Purification in Jewish History and Culture*, ed. by Rachel Wasserfall, University Press of New England, 1999, pp.60-82.

TUESDAY, 28/10/2014

Session 1: 9.30-11.00

**Tanja Pommerening** (Mainz): *Ancient Egyptian Concepts of Female Anatomy, Physiology, and Specified Pharmacotherapy.*

Ancient Egyptian texts describing anatomical or physiological concepts in detail have yet to be discovered. It is, nevertheless, possible to reconstruct, at least partially, the ideas of the female - in contrast to male - body and functions, such as conception, reproductive substances, pregnancy, and lactation. This reconstruction makes full use of all existing sources; i.e. not only texts concerning gynaecology and obstetrics, such as diagnosis texts, prescriptions, fertility and pregnancy tests, magical incantations and spells, but also magical objects and sources from non-medical contexts. It will be shown which ideas emerged in which contexts, and that most of them seem to be deeply settled in the broader Ancient Egyptian world view, and that remedies were rationally used according to the underlying anatomical and physiological concepts.



Tanja Pommerening holds a degree in pharmaceutics and has worked as a pharmacist for 15 years. After her first studies and the approbation (1995) she completed a M.A. (2001, with distinction) in Egyptology and in the history of pharmacology, pharmaceutical biology and natural sciences. In 2004 she received her PhD (summa cum laude) from the University of Marburg and started to work in several DFG-funded research projects. Since 2010 Tanja is professor of Egyptology at Johann-Gutenberg-Universität in Mainz where she is involved in several research initiatives on ancient medicine and science, history of knowledge, the history of ancient cultures and Egyptology.

Tanja has published her monography *Die altägyptischen Hohlmaße*. (Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur. Beihefte; 10; Hamburg: Buske 2005) which was awarded the Dalberg-Preis 2005. In collaboration with Annette Imhausen she edited the volume *Writings of Early Scholars in the Ancient Near East, Egypt, Rome and Greece. Translating Ancient Scientific Texts* (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde; 286; Berlin / New York: De Gruyter 2010). Among many others she has published several articles on ancient Egyptian medicine and science like:

- "Altägyptische Rezepte – Eine diachrone Betrachtung." *Geschichte der Pharmazie* 64,3 (2012): 33-38.
- "βούτυρος 'Flaschenkürbis' und κουροτόκος im Corpus Hippocraticum, De sterilibus 214: Entlehnung und Lehnübersetzung aus dem Ägyptischen." *Glotta* 86 (2010): 40-54.
- „Healing measures: dja and oipe in Ancient Egyptian pharmacy and medicine.“ In: Jenefer Cockitt, Rosalie David (Hgg.): *Pharmacy and Medicine in Ancient Egypt. Proceedings of the conferences held in Cairo (2007) and Manchester (2008)*. (British Archaeological Reports; S2141) Oxford: Archaeopress 2010, S. 132-137.
- "Empfängnisverhütung im Alten Ägypten." In: Helga Dietrich / Birgitt Hellmann (Hgg.): *Vom Nimbaum bis zur Pille. Zur kulturgeschichtlichen Vielfalt der Verhütungsmethoden*. Weimar: Hain-Verlag 2006, S. 71-76.
- "Altägyptische Heilpflanzen – eine Perspektive für die moderne Phytotherapie?," *Zeitschrift für Phytotherapie* 26 (2005): 61-65.
- "Altägyptische Rezepturen metrologisch neu interpretiert," *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 26 (2003): 1-16. [Jerry Stannard Memorial Award 2005]

**Ulrike Steinert** (FU Berlin): *Women's Healthcare in Ancient Mesopotamian Medicine: Texts, Problems, Interpretations.*

Not unlike the modern medical sub-discipline, Mesopotamian gynaecology was mainly concerned with female health problems connected to fertility, pregnancy and childbirth, as is witnessed by diagnostic and therapeutic texts, which were written within the long period of the 2nd and 1st millennia BCE, and unearthed mainly in the urban centers of ancient Babylonia and Assyria (in the area of modern Iraq). But despite of a similar scope and focus, Mesopotamian medical literature concerned with women differs decisively from texts of other ancient medical traditions as well as from modern gynaecological text books, most prominently by a lack of general theoretical discussions, e.g. about the anatomical differences between men and women, about the female reproductive system, and processes restricted to women such as menstruation.

This presentation will offer an introduction to Mesopotamian gynaecological texts, their characteristics and features, as well as an overview of the topics presented in this corpus. The discussion will address problems of textual interpretation and questions arising from the fragmentary nature of the available sources, e.g. the question concerning different medical practitioners and their involvement in treating women.



Ulrike Steinert studied Assyriology and Social Anthropology at the Freie Universität Berlin in 1997-2004, and at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen in 2004-2007. In 2007 she was awarded a Ph.D. in Assyriology at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen for a study about the Mesopotamian concepts of the human person in Akkadian texts of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (published as *Aspekte des Menschseins im Alten Mesopotamien. Eine Studie zu Person und Identität im 2. und 1. Jt. v. Chr.*, Brill: Leiden, Boston 2012). In 2011, she was awarded a Medical History and Humanities Fellowship by the Wellcome Trust for a research project on women's diseases in Babylonian medical texts, which brought her to the University College London, where she worked from 2011-2013. Ulrike's research focuses on the Akkadian language as well as the cultural history, anthropology and medicine of Ancient Mesopotamia from an intercultural perspective.

Her current research in the BabMed project aims at a historical and comparative approach to Assyrian and Babylonian gynaecology.

Session 2: 11.30-13.00

**Giulia Ecca** (BBAW Berlin): *Women's (and Men's) Infertility in Galen's Commentary on Aphorisms, Book 5.*

The Fifth book of the “Hippocratic” Aphorisms represents an important evidence of ancient gynecology: exactly the half of the whole aphorisms (thirty-six Aphorisms of the seventy-two transmitted in the book) is concerned with gynecological problems. Among these there are some aphorisms (especially n. 59 and 62) concerning obstacles to pregnancy or sterility of the woman or of the man (Aph. V 63). The aim of my talk is to show how Galen interprets these aphorisms, to which he dedicates a very long section (more than ten Kühn's edition pages) of his commentary, according to his own theory of the mixture (κρᾶσις). I will briefly show also how the aphorisms and the related galenic commentary are interpreted by the later commentators such as Stephanus and Theophilus.



Giulia Ecca graduated in Classics at the University La Sapienza, Rome and submitted her PhD at the Humboldt University, Berlin, defending her dissertation “*Praecepta. Vorschriften zur medizinischen Deontologie. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*”. Since July 2013 she is Mitarbeiterin at the Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*.

**Publications:**

2009, *Un inno cletico nella decima Epistola pseudoippocratica*, Seminari Romani di Cultura Greca XII, 2, 271-288.

(in Press), *The μισθῶριον in the Praecepta. The medical fee and its impact on the patient*, in G. Petridou - Ch. Thumiger (Hrsgg.), *Approaches to the Patient in the Ancient World*.

(in Press), *Note sul Vat. Urb. gr. 68 e sullo scolio a Praec. I 1*, in A.M. Ieraci Bio - A. Roselli (Hrsgg.), *Ecdotica dei testi medici greci, Atti del VII. Colloquio Internazionale*.

(in Press), *Trattati deontologici ai margini del Corpus Hippocraticum: De decenti habitu e Praecepta*, Seminari Romani di Cultura Greca.

**Siam Bhayro** (Exeter): *Gynaecology in Syriac Sources: Theory and Practice*.

## Summary

### Part One: Theory

- A: Galen's main gynaecological works
- B: Pseudo-Galen
- C: Incidental gynaecological references
- D: Paul of Aegina

### Part Two: Practice

- The Syriac Book of Medicines
- BoM Part I: Two multiuse remedies for the liver
- BoM Part I: Three multiuse remedies for the colon
- Common ingredients
- BoM Part III: Two specific gynaecological remedies



Session 3: 14.30-16.00

**Caroline Musgrove** (Cambridge): *Finding the Authorial Voice in Late Antique Medicine: Maternal Bodies and the Generation of Seeds in the Encyclopaedic Traditions.*

The late antique encyclopaedists have traditionally been viewed as imitative and unoriginal, in keeping with the way much Byzantine literature has been understood in modern scholarship. But despite such negative assessments, this paper will argue that distinct authorial projects can often be discerned in the medical compilers. Focusing upon the collections of Oribasius (c. 320-400), with reference to the later compilations of Aetius (c. sixth century) and Paul (c. seventh century), this paper will aim to describe the more specific ways in which Oribasius used, excerpted and adapted his medical predecessors in constructing his own authorial voice, by offering a case study of his writings on the female body and its generative seed. Indeed, in Oribasius, a view of maternal generation and seed theory emerges which was in many ways unique and distinct from the classical traditions upon which he drew. In addition, it will be suggested that Oribasius offered a more theoretical discussion on generation and embryology than the later compilers, Aetius and Paul; who instead favoured greater practicality and accessibility. In the final part of this paper, it will be argued that this difference between the compilers might be traceable to Oribasius' own authorial intentions, which were as much about the creation of a cultural project of pagan ownership, as it was about the production of a practical medical handbook.



Caroline Musgrove completed her MA at Cardiff University in 2012, with an Arts and Humanities Research Council scholarship. She is currently in the third year of her AHRC funded PhD in Classics at the University of Cambridge. Her PhD dissertation explores the gynaecological texts of late antiquity from the fourth to seventh centuries AD, and their relationship with the broader cultural context of this period, particularly regarding the influences of Christianity and Christian culture. Within this framework, she is primarily concerned with the themes of virginity and generation, and on the reception of classical gynaecological texts in late antiquity. In addition, she has academic interests in gender studies, late antiquity, and in early Christianity more broadly. She has presented aspects of her work at the 'Approaches to Ancient Medicine' conference at Cardiff in August 2012, and at the 'Cambridge Interdisciplinary Reproduction Forum' in November 2013.

**Tirzah Meacham** (Toronto): *Reality or Theoretical Discussion: Pre-Menarchal Pregnancy, Superfetation, and Pregnancy during Lactation in Rabbinic Literature.*

This paper will discuss the tannaitic source and the Talmudic discourse on it which mandate use of a contraceptive device for three categories of women: a pre-menarchal girl, a pregnant woman, and a lactating woman. Although none of these women are obvious candidates for contraception, the rabbinic sages' understanding of female reproductive processes enabled them to create protective legislation for them and their existing and potential offspring. The sages were well aware of the possibility that the quality of a woman's milk would change as a result of pregnancy. Their discussions of the change in milk and its production do not reflect the actual *realia* of the processes as understood today but demonstrate their concern for the welfare of the nursing child and the health risks to a child weaned early. Conceiving during pregnancy was a disputed topic in antiquity. Not all rabbinic sages agreed that superfetation was possible. Despite the disagreements, a school of thought held that superfetation was not only possible but constituted a danger for the existing fetus. Recent medical studies, however, have demonstrated that superfetation is far more common than previously thought. Here, too, the *realia* of the situation is somewhat different than that envisioned by the rabbis who held that the later conceived fetus would compress the earlier conceived fetus, when actually the later conceived fetus is endangered by the possibility of premature birth. One of the most unlikely categories of women to conceive is the girl who has not yet reached menarche. Nevertheless, in a society in which pre-pubertal marriage was common enough, pre-menarchal pregnancy may also occur in the window just prior to her first period. Most, but not all, newly menstruating girls have anovulatory cycles yet a minority do ovulate and can conceive. Therefore the protective legislation is threefold in its concerns. In the first case, the pre-menarchal girl is protected from becoming pregnant. In the case of the pregnant woman, the welfare of the existing fetus is protected from competing fetus. In the case of the nursing woman, the quality of the milk available for the suckling child is protected from any change a new pregnancy would bring about.



Tirzah Meacham completed her MA and submitted her PhD at the Hebrew University, and since 1995 is Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations.

Selected publications:

*Sex Rewarded, Sex Punished: A Study of the Status 'Female Slave' in Early Jewish Law* by Diane Kriger, [Final editing and preparation for publication by Tirzah Meacham (leBeit Yoreh)] Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011 (424 pp.)

*Introducing Tosefta: Textual, Intratextual and Intertextual Studies*, (Harry Fox (leBeit Yoreh) & Tirzah Meacham (leBeit Yoreh), eds.). Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav 1999, 370pp.

"Women are not Susceptible to Arousal," [Hebrew] in *To be a Jewish Woman*, vol. 6, (Tova Cohen, ed.) Jerusalem: Kolech , 2013, pp.153-167.

"How Pragmatism Trumps Dogmatism: Marginalization and the Masses in the Case of Coming to the Temple," in *Feminist Commentary to the Babylonian Talmud: Seder Qodashim*, Mohr-Seibeck 2012, pp. 85-104.

"On the Margins of Jewishness: The Ambivalent Status of the Convert," in *From Antiquity to the Postmodern World: Contemporary Jewish Studies in Canada* (eds. Daniel Maoz and Andrea Gondos), Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, 18-37.

Session 4: 16.30-18.00

**Monika Amsler** (Zürich): *“My Mother Told Me ...”*. An Evaluation of the Treatments of the Sickly Newborn in *bShab 134a*.

In commenting upon a passage of the Mishna that deals with the treatment of the wound of a freshly circumcised baby, the Gemara of the Babylonian Talmud includes a list of anomalies that occur (presumably frequently) in newborn babies and an explanation on how they are to be treated. Every recipe in the list is passed on by Abaye and introduced with the phrase: "My mother told me...". A comparison with graeco-roman sources (Pliny, Soranos, Galen) shows that the respect of the rabbis towards women's knowledge is quite singular. However, some of the recipes lack any practical foundations and the question arises, whether this is due to misunderstandings by Abaye himself or due to the mistakes of later copyists - or, they might even suggest that the rabbis' wish to enter into the domain of female knowledge led them to produce fictitious recipes.



Monika Amsler (25.10.1976) studied at the University of Berne (Bachelor in Theology, 2008-2011), and the Universities of Berne and Zurich (MA in Ancient Judaism, 2011-2013). She is a PhD fellow at the University of Zurich (URPP Asia and Europe).

Publications:

Der Himmel als rabbinische Institution: Aspekte einer Jenseitsvorstellung im babylonischen Talmud, in: P. Bukovec / B. Kolkmann-Klamt (eds.), *Jenseitsvorstellungen im Vorderen Orient*, Tübingen 2013 (RVO Bd. 1), 379-394.

**Hannah Tzuberi** (FU Berlin): *The Difficult Birth in Mishnaic Law: Regulation, Failure and Empathy.*

The mishnah Ohalot 7:4 describes a woman, who gives birth. Yet, its prime intent is not the accurate description of “what a birth is,” but the halakhic handling of a “grey zone” of passage, the management of the timespan, in which somebody or something changes from status “a” into status “b.” The tannaim try to incorporate a birth into their halakhic system, and to comprehend it inasmuch as it is relevant for the halakhic subject in question (here: ritual purity). mOhal 7:4 is not a midwife’s handbook, but a text of law, that seeks out order and clear, definable borderlines. In order to make the female body accessible, the tannaim conceptualize it in analogy to a house: When does its “door” open? When exactly can a child be considered to be born? In my lecture I would like to focus less on the tannaim’s answers to this question, but on the effects (rhetoric and concrete, social) of this “body-as-house”-concept. I am interested in how the female birthing body makes its way into halakhic discourse, how it is made and represented, and by extension, how this discourse constitutes relations of power and knowledge.



Christiane Hannah Tzuberi studied Jewish Studies (“Judaistik”) and Islamic Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. In 2012 she finished her Ph.D., in which she focuses on the halakhic discourse surrounding the (disputed) legitimacy of a transgression when being trapped in situations of mortal danger. Her main research interests are rabbinic literature, feminist theory, and gender studies. She is currently working as a research assistant with Tal Ilan (Freie Universität Berlin) and works both on the publication of her Ph.D. and a feminist commentary on Tractates Kelim, Ohalot and Negaim, as part of Tal Ilan’s research project (“A Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud”).

#### Publications:

“A Rescue from a Transgression through Death, or a Rescue from Death through a Transgression,” in: *Between Babylonia and Palestine*, Ronit Nikolsky and Tal Ilan (eds.), Brill 2014

“And a Woman is a High Priest.” From the Temple to the Kitchen, from the Laws of Kashrut to the Laws of Ritual Im/Purity,” in: *Conference Volume “A Woman in the Temple? Women in Tractate Qodashim,”* Tal Ilan (ed.), Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck 2012

“Clouds of Glory or Real Sukkot? The Symbolism of the Sukkah,” in: Shulamit Valler, *A Feminist Commentary on Massekhet Sukkah*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck 2009

„Der Fetus ist ein Glied seiner Mutter (ubar yerekh imo): Eine rabbinische Interpretation von Exodus 21:22-24”, *Lectio difficilior*, 2008.2.

Übersetzung: Das israelische Gesetz über Sterbehilfe und über Betreuung am Lebensende aus dem Jahr 2005, Übersetzung aus dem Hebräischen und Einleitung von C. Steuer, *Frankfurter Studien zur Geschichte und Ethik der Medizin* 4, Wetzlar 2010, 65 S.

WEDNESDAY, 29/10/2014

Session 1: 10.00-11.30

**Tal Ilan** (FU Berlin): *Salome's Medicinal Recipes and Jewish Women Doctors in Antiquity.*

This paper discusses the appearance of an enigmatic Salome in the writings of the Greek physician Galen and the medical recipe assigned to her. First I argue that this is a historical personage, typical of the king of women mentioned in the writings of Galen, who also provided him with medical recipes. Then I argue that, although the evidence we have in other sources as well (primarily rabbinic literature) is scant, Salome was not the only learned female Jewish physician and I will put her in context with the other women who are recalled in a similar manner.



Tal Ilan awarded a PhD in 1991 at the Hebrew University, and since 2003 is Professor at the Freie Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Judaistik.

Most important publications:

Tal Ilan, 1995. *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 44)

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Tal Ilan, 1997. *Mine and Yours are Hers: Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature* (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 41) Leiden: Brill.

Tal Ilan, 1999. *Integrating Jewish Women into Second Temple History* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 76) Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Tal Ilan, 2002-2012. *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity: Part I – Palestine 330 BCE-200 CE* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 91); *Part II – Palestine in Late Antiquity 200-650* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 148); *Part III – The Western Diaspora 330 BCE-650 CE* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 126); *Part IV – The Eastern Diaspora 330 BCE-650 CE* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 141) Tübingen: Mohr. Siebeck.

Tal Ilan, 2006. *Silencing the Queen: The Literary Histories of Shelamzion and other Jewish Women* (Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 115) Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Tal Ilan, 2008. *A Feminist Commentary to the Babylonian Talmud, Volume II.9: Massekhet Ta'anit*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

**Carmen Caballero-Navas (Granada): *On the Medieval Beginnings of Jewish Gynaecology.***

This paper focuses on the early stage of the reception and accommodation of gynecological literature by Jewish authors and translators during the Middle Ages. In it I discuss the Hebrew textual production on women's health care from the end of the twelfth and during the thirteenth century, and provide with an inventory of texts and their distribution. By doing so, I attempt to offer a glimpse of the gynaecological literature available in Hebrew at the time, as well as to contribute to the understanding of textual choice and dissemination. In addition, I discuss the weight that theories on the functioning of the female body from the Latin and Arabic medical traditions had in the Hebrew corpus, and explore the ways in which notions on women's physiology were accommodated by Jewish authors, translators and copyist at this early stage. In my view, their negotiations regarding this key issue were central in shaping this genre of Jewish medical literature.



Dr. Carmen Caballero-Navas is Associate Professor at the University of Granada. Her research focuses on the Hebrew textual production on women's healthcare in the Mediterranean West during the Middle Ages, with special attention to women's experiences. Her other research interests include: the transmission and reception of medical ideas among medieval Jews of southern Europe; the medieval Hebrew medical corpus; Jewish debates on sexual difference and the construction of meanings for the female body; the historical experience of medieval Jewish women; and Jewish knowledge and practice of magic in the Middle Ages.

Her more relevant publications include:

*The Book of Women's Love and the Jewish Medieval Medical Literature on Women: Sefer ahavat nashim* (London: Kegal Paul, 2004),

"Secrets of Women: Naming Sexual difference in Medieval Hebrew Medical Literature," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 12 (2006): 39-56.

"Algunos 'secretos de mujeres' revelados. El Še'ar yašub y la recepción y transmisión del Trotula en hebreo", *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos, Sección Hebreo*, 55 (2006): 381-425.

"The Care of Women's Health: An Experience Shared by Medieval Jewish and Christian Women," *Journal of Medieval History* 34. 2 (2008): 146-63.

"Mujeres, cuerpos y literatura médica en hebreo", *Asclepio. Revista de Historia de la medicina y de la Ciencia*, 60 (2008): 37-61.

"Maimonides' contribution to Women's Health Care and his Influence on the Hebrew Gynaecological Corpus", in Carlos Fraenkel (ed.), *Traditions of Maimonideanism*. (Brill: Leiden, 2009, pp. 33-50).

*Late Medieval Jewish Identities. Iberia and Beyond*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, Co-edited with Esperanza Alfonso)

"Medicine among Medieval Jews: The Science, the Art, and the Practice", in Gad Freudenthal (ed.), *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 320-342).

"El saber y la práctica de la magia en el judaísmo hispano medieval", *Clio & Crimen: Revista del Centro de Historia del Crimen de Durango*, 8 (2011): 73-104.

"Maimonides and his practice of gynaecology", in Kenneth Collins, Samuel Kottek y Fred Rosner (eds.), *Moses Maimonides and His Practice of Medicine*. (Haifa-New York, Maimonides Research Institute, 2013, pp. 61-84).

"She will give birth immediately. Pregnancy and Childbirth in Medieval Hebrew Medical Texts Produced in the Mediterranean West", *Dynamis. Acta Hispanica ad Medicinae Scientiarumque Historiam Illustrandam*, 34/2 (2014): 377-401.

Session 2: 12.00-13.00

**Sean Coughlin** (TOPOI Berlin) / **Marzia Soardi** (Palermo): *The Female in Aristotle's Biology and its Byzantine Reception*.

Aristotle was the first philosopher we know of to argue from female animals' reproductive role to their status as inferior members of a species. These arguments were to have a profound influence on later accounts of female behaviour, function, physiology, and illness. In this talk, we will trace one of these lines of influence: from Aristotle to his twelfth-century Byzantine commentator, Michael of Ephesus. The talk has two aims. The first is to clarify Aristotle's arguments concerning the female and their reproductive role. To do this, we will look at the philosophical and empirical evidence behind two of Aristotle's claims—the physiological claim that females are colder than males, and the functional claim that the female contributes only matter to the process of reproduction. The second is to look at how these claims were received and interpreted by Michael of Ephesus (12<sup>th</sup> Century) in his commentary of Aristotle's *On the Generation of Animals* (*GA*). Michael's commentary on *GA* is not as extensive as his commentaries on other works—Michael tells us that his *GA* commentary, unlike the others, will treat only confusing or unclear aspects of *GA*; it also lacks an explicit endorsement of the Aristotelian positions it covers. Nevertheless, by looking at the kinds of things a twelfth-century audience might find confusing, and the ways Michael goes about clarifying them, we think we can shed some light on Michael's own philosophical and empirical commitments. Specifically, we will look at passages about female function and physiology, and show how Aristotle's arguments concerning the inferiority of females were adapted to fit Michael's own philosophical framework.



Sean Coughlin is a post-doctoral fellow with the Topoi Excellence Cluster and based at the Humboldt working with Philip van der Eijk. He studied under Devin Henry at the University of Western Ontario in Canada, and defended his dissertation "Method and Metaphor in Aristotle's Science of Nature" in 2013. His research looks at ideas about causation in ancient philosophy and science, particularly the ancient life sciences, and attempts to piece together how these ideas changed over time, and what these changes can tell us about the development of different methods, models and norms of scientific inquiry. He is currently putting together a collection, translation and commentary on fragments of Athenaeus of Attaleia, the purported founder of the Pneumatist school of medicine and purported student of the Stoic natural philosopher, Posidonius. He is also working on a translation of Michael of Ephesus' commentary on Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*. Some further projects he is working on include a digital repository of texts related to ancient experiments; a study of ecology and the concept of place in Theophrastus' botany; and, a study of the influences of medical inquiry on Aristotle's natural science.



Marzia Soardi graduated in Classics at the University of Palermo with a dissertation entitled "Women, maternal role and maternity in the biological works of Aristotle" (supervisor Prof. V. Andò). In 2009 she gained a PhD in Greek-Latin Philology and Culture at the University of Palermo, with a dissertation entitled "The Female representations in the Aristotelian thought", under the supervision of Prof. V. Andò. During her doctoral studies she was visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Classics. Since 2012 she has been conducting the most part of her research in Berlin, taking part in the Prof. Philip van der Eijk's project "Medicine of the Mind, Philosophy of the Body", where she is now as visiting scholar.

#### Publications:

"Le rappresentazioni del femminile in Aristotele", Roma, 2014, Book, forthcoming.

"Aristotele e le malformazioni genetiche: riflessioni a partire dal IV libro del *De generatione animalium*", "Aevum Antiquum", forthcoming.

"Automaton and spontaneous generation: a problematic aspect in the Aristotelian theory of reproduction", "Medicina nei secoli", forthcoming.

"As a Mother": a reading of the relationship between the Aristotelian theory of Reproduction and the concept of Prime Matter", "EPEKEINA. International Journal of Ontology. History and Critics", V, 1, 2015, forthcoming.

"La *philia materna* nella riflessione aristotelica", "Seminari romani di cultura greca", III, 1, 2014

"Né uomo né bestia. Riflessioni sulla *Theriotés* a partire dal VII libro dell'*Etica Nicomachea*", in V. Andò, N. Cusimano (a cura di) "Come bestie? Forme e paradossi della violenza tra mondo antico e disagio contemporaneo", Roma 2010, 77-88.

"Aggressività e istinto materno nella zoologia aristotelica: l'identità sessuale tra maschile e femminile", in S. Beta, F. Marzari (a cura di), *Animali, ibridi e mostri nella cultura antica*, Atti dei convegni, Siena, 4-5 giugno 2007, Columbus, Ohio, 11, 12, 13, gennaio 2008, I quaderni del ramo d'oro, 9, Firenze 2010, 95-110.

"Il femminile come alterità in Aristotele", in M. Gargiulo, C. Peri, G. R. Regalzi (a cura di) "Definirsi e definire: percezione, rappresentazione e ricostruzione dell'identità", Atti del III convegno dell'Associazione Orientalisti (Roma, 23-25 febbraio 2004), 2006, 144-158.

"Il coraggio in Aristotele. tra virtù maschile e identità femminile", "Hormos", 6/7, 2005, 193-214.

Session 3: 15.00-16.30

**Petros Bouras-Vallianatos** (London): *Byzantine Criticism of Galenic Theories on Conception: the Case of Symeon Seth's Refutation of Galen.*

The paper deals with the short eleventh-century Byzantine treatise, *Refutation of Galen*, written by Symeon Seth with an attempt to unveil author's writing intentions and audience. This is the sole case in Byzantine medical literature where an author writes a specific work to openly criticise Galen, whose otherwise authority remained uncontested throughout the Byzantine era. It is even more striking by the fact that Symeon Seth is not a practising physician, but a famous as a translator from Arabic into Greek and a professional astrologer in the service of the emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118), writing also treatises on natural philosophy, astronomy, and dietetics. The *Refutation of Galen* discusses various Galenic ideas on human physiology, mainly based on Galen's *On the Natural Capacities*, *On the Function of the Parts*, and *On Semen*. A certain part of the text focuses on Galen's theory of conception, and, in particular, on his deviation from Aristotelian views or Galen's own contradictions within his corpus on theories such as the formation of bodily parts from menstrual blood and the theory that the right side of the womb produces males and so forth. I would like to show that Symeon Seth's criticism is not based on practical observations, but it is a mere literary construction with an ultimate scope to claim authority and establish himself among his contemporaries.



Petros Bouras-Vallianatos (BPharm, Athens; BA, London; Mst, Oxon) has recently submitted his PhD at King's College London. His thesis concentrates on the works of the late Byzantine medical author John Zacharias Aktouarios. He spent time as a Junior Research Fellow at John Kluge Center of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (2012-2013), and taught medical history as a Visiting Lecturer at Royal Holloway, University of London (2013-2014). He has recently completed a new descriptive catalogue of the Greek manuscripts at the Wellcome Library in London. His publications include articles on the reception of ancient medical authors such as Galen and Archigenes in Byzantium, and also specialised studies on Alexander of Tralles, Symeon Seth, and John Zacharias Aktouarios. He has been contracted to co-edit *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Galen* with Barbara Zipser. His main interests encompass the history of uroscopy and pharmacology, and Greek palaeography.

**Rebecca Flemming** (Cambridge): *John of Alexandria and the 'sex which is not one': commentary and gynaecology in late antique medical schools.*

This paper uses the fragmentary surviving commentary on the Hippocratic treatise *On the Nature of the Child* by John of Alexandria to explore the relationship between late antique commentary and gynaecology more broadly. While Hippocratic authors composed works dedicated to women's bodies and disease, Galen did not, and those operating with these twin sources of authority, teaching a curriculum based on expounding the key texts of both, had some decisions to make. In many ways the pull of gynaecology proved irresistible, despite Galen's great prestige, and, indeed, regardless of the theories of sexual difference involved: regardless of the degree of difference and its content, what exactly that difference was held to consist in.



Rebecca Flemming is Senior Lecturer in Ancient History in the Faculty of Classics, and Fellow of Jesus College, University of Cambridge. She has published widely on medicine and gender in the ancient world, both jointly and separately. She is currently one of the holders, with colleagues from across the University, of the Wellcome Strategic Award, 'Generation to Reproduction' <http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/generation/> a major, interdisciplinary project which aims systematically to re-assess the history of reproduction from antiquity to the present day.

Select Relevant Publications:

'The invention of infertility in the classical Greek world: medicine, divinity, and gender', *BHM* 87.4 (2013), 565-590

'Gendering medical provision in the cities of the Roman West', in E. Hemelrijk and G. Woolf (eds.), *Women and the Roman City in the Latin West* (Leiden: *Mnemosyne Supplement*, 2013), 271-93

'Antiochus and Asclepiades: medical and philosophical sectarianism at the end of the Hellenistic era', in D. Sedley (ed.), *The Philosophy of Antiochus* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 55-79

'Demiurge and emperor in Galen's world of knowledge', in C. Gill, T. Whitmarsh and J. Wilkins (eds.), *Galen and the World of Knowledge* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 59-84

'Commentary', in R.J. Hankinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Galen* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 323-354

'Galen's imperial order of knowledge', in J. König and T. Whitmarsh (eds.), *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 241-277

'Women, writing, and medicine in the classical world', *Classical Quarterly* 57 (2007), 257-279

'The pathology of pregnancy in Galen's commentaries on the Hippocratic *Epidemics*', in V. Nutton (ed.), *The Unknown Galen (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplement 77, 2002)*, 101-112

*Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).