

Celora Interview Final


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SPEAKERS


Ben Pykare, Will Beattie, Eleonora Celora


 **E** Eleonora Celora 00:06
I'm Will Beattie.

 **B** Ben Pykare 00:07
I'm Ben Pykare.

 **Will Beattie** 00:08
And we're two graduate students at the University of Notre Dame's Medieval Institute.

 **B** Ben Pykare 00:13
We're here to chat with students and scholars of the medieval world about what they do and how they came to do it.

 **Will Beattie** 00:20
So who we got today, Ben?

 **B** Ben Pykare 00:22
Well, today we're sitting down with Eleonora Celora, a PhD student at the University of Notre Dame. She is working on liturgical manuscripts and hagiography. She has studied in Italy and France. And today, she has graced us with her presence.



Will Beattie 00:40

I'm excited. Let's go and meet her in the Middle Ages.



Ben Pykare 00:44

So Eleonora, starter question.



Eleonora Celora 00:47

Okay.



Ben Pykare 00:48

When were you first interested in the medieval period in general. When did that start for you?



Eleonora Celora 00:55

I think like, the Middle Ages were always like, in the back of my mind. I remember like, as a kid reading about King Arthur, and like, for me, that was the Middle Ages.



Ben Pykare 01:05

Yes.



Eleonora Celora 01:05

But then, of course, when I was an undergrad, I started to, like, get serious with it and like, get interested. And it was mostly through manuscripts that I got interested in Middle Ages. Like it was not history. It was not literature. It's like, dealing with a... the object. That was like, the turning point for me.



Ben Pykare 01:26

Cool. Cool. So where did you go to your undergrad?



Eleonora Celora 01:29

Oh, I studied in Milan at the Catholic University. Yeah.


B Ben Pykare 01:34
Can you... so you're, you're from Milan.

E Eleonora Celora 01:37
I'm from Milan.

B Ben Pykare 01:37
Okay, what was that like a known thing? Where you like new people who had gone there? Or was that was... yeah.

E Eleonora Celora 01:46
so I remember I was considering options. And there were like this two big universities in my city. And I remember talking to a couple of people, and... from both schools, and some of them, they told me like, "this particular school is better." Like, I was thinking about doing literature mostly; Italian literature, and Latin. And this one guy told me "like, if you go to this one school you will focus more on modern stuff. While if you go to these other school, the Catholic University, you will be more focused on Middle Ages and, like, more older, older stuff." So I chose that because I thought that would... that was what I wanted, actually. And it worked out pretty well, I think.


B Ben Pykare 02:30
Yes, clearly, clearly!

 Will Beattie 02:33
Latin has been a very important part of your research, the ability to use Latin, but a lot of people don't necessarily have access to those sort of the skills... you know, the ability to learn Latin from early age. Where were you actually learning Latin? What gave you that, sort of, facility with the language?


E Eleonora Celora 02:49
Ah, so for sure being Italian helps. Because I mean, the language is closer, our language is closer, and we start doing Latin very early compared to other countries. So in high school, we have... I had five years of Latin.

B Ben Pykare 03:03

Okay.

 Eleonora Celora 03:03


So even when I started my undergrad, I was not good in Latin at all. I already had a background. So I started from scratch again, but not really from scratch when, like, I was taking the first Latin exam as an undergrad. So [it] is like a cultural environment, a school... educate basic education that helps you dealing with the language once you want to get good at it, I think.

 Will Beattie 03:31

That's interesting. I wish, I really wish that my school did Latin. We did a year in Year Six, and it was pretty much it. And then I got all the way through my undergrad and never really touched it. So yeah, I've always been very envious of those people that can do Latin for that long.

 Ben Pykare 03:43


I was fortunate enough to have a high school that offered Latin, but I opted not to take it thinking when "when would I use Latin?" And here I am, you know, like, needing needing Latin and having acquired it much later. So, so you mentioned in undergrad there were some courses that expose you to manuscripts. Do you remember?

 Eleonora Celora 04:02

Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

 Ben Pykare 04:04

Yeah. Tell us about those early experiences.

 Eleonora Celora 04:06

So it was the first time that I started hearing about manuscripts. It was not a medieval class, it was more like humanism. But then, like, what cracked me was basically palaeography class. And the professor became my supervisor for my undergrad thesis. So that was, like, the beginning of everything for me. Yeah, we like we started dealing with, like, documents and different handwritings. Of course, just Latin, because we were doing just Latin. And yeah, that was just the beginning. It's like that specific class that changed... that's the reason why I'm here.

 Ben Pykare 04:52


Yeah. Yeah. Do you remember what manuscripts those were? Were those liturgical texts were they...

 05:00

No, really. So the first time I dealt with a liturgical manuscript it was, it was for an assignment. So we were going, not... we were going through handwritings, not really manuscript. But we were also doing some manuscript studies like codicology and like material features? Uh, besides...

 Ben Pykare 05:18

Sorry to interrupt. Could you, for our listeners, explain what codicology is?

 Eleonora Celora 05:23

So it's when you take the manuscript as a book, and you describe its features. So: dimensions, uh how many lines per pages? What's the material? What's the cover? If there is decoration, what type of decoration? Colours. What else? Music.

 Ben Pykare 05:42

So so really, really detailed descriptions of books.

 Eleonora Celora 05:46

Exactly. Old books.

 Ben Pykare 05:47

Yes. Or pieces of books...


 Eleonora Celora 05:49


Or pieces of books.


 Ben Pykare 05:49


... or whatever we have left.





 Eleonora Celora 05:51
Exactly.


 Will Beattie 05:52
What kind of thing do you use that information for?


 Eleonora Celora 05:56
Me, I am not really into like the description of these details. I use them to get an idea of how the object is. So if I see some dimensions, I know if it's big or small, basically. So I can say, "okay, like I can hold it in my hands, or I need like something to support the manuscripts." A lot of the manuscripts I worked with, they were huge, gigantic. Musical manuscripts.


 Ben Pykare 06:22
The big ones are fun, I think.

 Eleonora Celora 06:24
Yeah, they're fun, but like to move them? Not always super fun. But, but yeah, so that's one thing.

 Will Beattie 06:29
And that kind of tells you about their use, right?

 Eleonora Celora 06:32
To some extent, yes. And also, like, if there are amazing decorations, you can, you can think that maybe like the... it was meant to be a gift for something, or for somebody, sorry.

 Ben Pykare 06:45
Again, sorry. But when you say "decoration," again, for our listeners, would that mean something on the cover, or inside?

 Eleonora Celora 06:54
I'm most, I'm mostly thinking about the inside. So, I don't know, in a page at the beginning of a text, you have like the first letter, which is decorated. So if we're talking about a particular event, that letter might have a little scene inside the body of the letter representing some part

event, that letter might have a little scene inside the body of the letter representing some parts of what the text is narrating. But of course, we can also talk about the decoration of the cover. But that's like, to some extent, a different field. It's more like for art people rather than for manuscript people. Of course, these, like, fields are all connected. But when I talk about decoration, I think mostly about the decoration that's, that's in the pages, not outside.

B Ben Pykare 07:45

Yeah. So you have this first class, and then you were like, "I want to do more of this." Were you able to, like, take more classes with that professor? Or just similar course titles? We're kind of wondering, yeah, you had this first experience. How did that develop through your undergrad?

E Eleonora Celora 08:03

Uh, so it was... so undergrads have three years in Italy. So I took this class, and it was already my third year. So I took another class with this professor, which was medieval literature, sort of like survey of medieval literature. But then I, like, I was done with the undergrad.

B Ben Pykare 08:26

You were out of time.

E Eleonora Celora 08:27

Exactly. So I didn't have any more opportunities to take classes with this specific professor, even though, like, we are, we remained in contact for long. And she suggested that I go to get a Masters in another school, another university, where traditionally they they work with manuscripts, music in Middle Ages. So I went there.

B Ben Pykare 08:55

Okay.

E Eleonora Celora 08:56


So like, I did, I was not able to take classes in, in that university. But like, there was a sort of like, a "fil rouge" that connected me to this other university, where I was able to take other classes...


B Ben Pykare 09:09


I see.


 Eleonora Celora 09:09
... and learn more about manuscripts. In a different way. But...


 Ben Pykare 09:13
So kind of in your last year of undergrad, you kind of...


 Eleonora Celora 09:16
Figured it out, yea.


 Ben Pykare 09:17
Like what's next, as we all felt at the end of our undergrad. What do we... what am I doing next?

 Eleonora Celora 09:23
Exactly.

 Will Beattie 09:23
Some of us are still waiting for that to come. So what was the experience like going into a Masters? How did it compare to the undergrad life?

 Eleonora Celora 09:32
It was completely different. So it was a different city, different environments. So the Catholic University is a big university, many different faculties and departments. Where I studied for the Masters it was a very, very small campus with like, two departments, and the classes were very different. For one, one difference was, for example, that we were instead of being, I don't know, one hundred we were ten, five, four, two sometimes three people in one class. And then also the methodology was different because when you're an undergrad in Italy, you have to read like huge books, and you have oral exams. You don't have written exams, you don't have papers. And that's more like the Italian way of doing it. While, like, in that other university, it was more...


 Ben Pykare 09:36
Sorry, which university?

 Eleonora Celora 10:24

It was the musicology department at Pavia University. So it's a very, very small department connected to this bigger university.

 Ben Pykare 10:36


I see. Which city was this in?

 Eleonora Celora 10:38

Cremona?

 Ben Pykare 10:39

Okay.


 Eleonora Celora 10:39

So, the Department of Musicology is in Cremona, while they, like... like the university is in another city. Same area, geographical area: northern Italy. But different cities. So, so yeah, this at Musicology, in the Musicology department they had a very different approach. So classes were smaller. We did a lot of case studies instead of, like, general surveys. And we... I started to do papers, to write papers, to do projects. So that was really, really different. And of course there was a, like, a discrepancy between what I had studied as an undergrad because I was doing mostly literature, language, manuscript studies, like more texts. And [in] musicology I was doing music. Studying music, not doing music. But like, there was this component that was not new, because I was a musician, but still different from what I was doing before. So it was a weird, a weird switch. It took me some time to adjust and say, "okay, what's the connection between these two worlds?" Like, I'm trusting this person that told me to come here because she was my supervisor, and like, I fell in love with the manuscripts because of her. But I... it took me some time to realize why I was there, if you know what I mean. Because it was like two different worlds.



Will Beattie 12:03

Absolutely, yeah. I'm wondering if you're still connected to that supervisor as well.

 Eleonora Celora 12:08

Um, I mean, I, if I go back home, I would - COVID, with COVID permitting - I would go and visit her for sure. So if I need something, I can always send an email.

B Ben Pykare 12:20
Oh, that's great.

E Eleonora Celora 12:21
Yeah, yeah , yeah.

B Ben Pykare 12:21
Yeah. So you have these two loves: this music love and this manuscript love. I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit more about... because a lot of people haven't gotten to see a medieval manuscripts, or maybe not even many pictures of them. First manuscripts, and then we'll talk about music. But what, what was it about these manuscripts that, kind of, grabbed you in some way?

E Eleonora Celora 12:48
In general...

B Ben Pykare 12:49
Yeah.

E Eleonora Celora 12:49
... manuscripts or musical manuscripts?

B Ben Pykare 12:52
Either one way, which, whichever.

E Eleonora Celora 12:53
So the, the thing for me about manuscripts is that they are objects. So if you want to think about it, it's like doing archaeology. So you're touching and dealing with stuff that people touched. It's now like philosophy or like, thinking, speculation, which is great, but not everybody is for that. I'm not for that. I don't do philosophy. But touching the same stuff that people were touching and using. And that's the thing about liturgy, liturgical manuscripts too. [It] tells you something about the people. So it's like a different way of doing history to some

extent Or like, the tradition... on the other hand it's is also the traditional way of doing history. So. Because it's archaeology. You're just... you're not dealing with Greek vases, or Egyptian stuff. Or mummies. You have books.

B Ben Pykare 13:04

Yes.

E Eleonora Celora 13:13

But still, it's archaeology. So I think that's the thing, like the fascinating aspect for me that it's an object, something concrete.

B Ben Pykare 13:47

Yeah. And then, so the liturgical manuscripts or the books are the text used in traditionally, right, Masses and other religious ceremonies. What about those in particular, was that music connection?

E Eleonora Celora 14:05

For sure there is the music connection. So, it sounds maybe silly, by the way music is written is fascinating. So the, the signs that they were using and to trace how they developed for me, it was fascinating. And of course, there is an artistic aspect, because that music is like art. Yes. It is a different type of art. It's not the Romance, it's not Beethoven. But it's still... we can still consider it art.

B Ben Pykare 14:32

Yeah.

E Eleonora Celora 14:32

Even if it was used in a different way to some extent. And liturgical manuscripts, because I talked about like the practical, practical aspect of these archaeological objects. The liturgical manuscripts are like the quintessential representation of it because they're not always beautiful. Sometimes they are ugly. But they were used.

B Ben Pykare 15:01

Yeah.

E

Eleonora Celora 15:02

Like, they served a purpose. You know? So that's like they tells us things about the people that, I don't know. Of course, it is only, this is only partially true because at the same time, it's not that everybody could use those manuscripts. They were used by like the people, the clergy, or like whomever had access to them. It's not that like the, I don't know, the person working, working in the fields was going to, like, the church and...

B

Ben Pykare 15:26

Walk up, touch it.

E

Eleonora Celora 15:27

Yeah, exactly. But still, they are. I don't know. Something else than literature. They have a different purpose. And I think that that's the most fascinating aspect for me. Even though sometimes they do contain literature, like pieces of literature, in the music as art. So they are like, I don't know. Like, they gather a lot of elements together that tells you about specific places, specific societies, specific community.

B

Ben Pykare 16:04

Yeah, and even if the person in the fields didn't pick up that book and read it, they were being led...

E

Eleonora Celora 16:11

Exposed.

B

Ben Pykare 16:12

They were listening and hearing and perhaps joining. Right, and so they did participate in the the work of that text.

E

Eleonora Celora 16:20

Exactly. Exactly.

B

Ben Pykare 16:21

Which is cool.



Will Beattie 16:23

And what kind of stuff do you get in these texts which show how they're being used? I mean, clearly these are texts being used by, sort of, in a sense, the leaders of whatever service it may be. Are you getting things like marginal notes saying, "oh yeah, got to do this differently next time?" Or, you know, "add a bit here, subtract a bit there."

E

Eleonora Celora 16:41

No like that. But for example, if...

B

Ben Pykare 16:43

Drums come in here.

E

Eleonora Celora 16:44

Yeah, exactly. No, not exactly like that. But for example, you have a book that you're using. At some point they introduce a new feast, like a new saint. So you want to celebrate the saint, because it's like a new important thing for that specific little church. What do you do? You add, like, some leaves with the text for the new saint. So it's like, you find stuff like that...

B

Ben Pykare 17:04

Like some pages in the middle?

E

Eleonora Celora 17:05

Exactly. So they, they they're dry interventions on the manuscript. Not all of them clearly. Or at some point the... something happened with the music. So they said, "okay, we cannot do the chants like this anymore." So you, you have like pieces of paper that cover the melisma.

B

Ben Pykare 17:26

The what?

E

Eleonora Celora 17:26

The melisma so the, like, melodic... I don't know how to explain this in a good way, let me think.

B

Ben Pvkare 17:34

No, it's fine.

E

Eleonora Celora 17:36

So you don't have your chance, or like work, words and, and music. But you have sometimes like one syllable, and a bunch of notes above it. So like a bunch of them like lines of notes without on one syllable. So basically, you don't have text. And those are the melismas. And like, I remember, I was working with this manuscript, manuscript in Milan. And there were these pieces of paper covering portions of the melisma because they didn't want them anymore. I mean, no, it's more complicated than that. But...

B

Ben Pykare 18:06

Were they replacing them with different music or just deleting them?

E

Eleonora Celora 18:08

Deleting them in that specific case.

B

Ben Pykare 18:11

Yeah, in that case.

E

Eleonora Celora 18:11

Yeah.

B

Ben Pykare 18:13

That is cool. So okay, so you mentioned that you are a musician, and that you love music. Can you talk more about what, what instrument? Or plural?

E


Eleonora Celora 18:22


Oh, no, just one. So I, I used to play the piano. I'm not a musician. I was. So I just went to music school, got my degree, and then...





Will Beattie 18:33


Just went to music school. Just just got the degree.


 Ben Pykare 18:36
Just, you know. Like you do.


 Eleonora Celora 18:38
Yeah, exactly. A lot of kids do it.

 Ben Pykare 18:42
I don't know. I didn't know.


 Will Beattie 18:43
I'm impressed.

 Eleonora Celora 18:45
And yeah, so then I like I got my degree, I think the first year of undergrad, so I had like one year where I was like, choosing what I wanted. And then I said, like, "I'm probably better for academia," or like, I probably I didn't say that. But like, I felt that I was not really a musician. I was more like, I should go with grad school. And like, that direction was my direction. So... but that's cool. Because like you have like, you're educated in another world. Like I was playing the piano. So I was not doing Gregorian chant. So I had a sensitivity for another type of music and art. And then yeah, my career is completely different. Is doing... I'm doing something else, but still.

 Ben Pykare 19:27
Music is still there.

 Eleonora Celora 19:28
Exactly. So not completely clear how they are connected, but they are.

 Ben Pykare 19:35
They are, no they are. That's really cool. So how long was that program? Your Masters.

 Eleonora Celora 19:43

Musicology? It was two years. Okay. Yeah.

B

Ben Pykare 19:46

So that two years starts to come to a close. What do you know, like, how are you feeling at that point?

E

Eleonora Celora 19:52

Oh, really bad. It was terrible. So of course, it was like thinking, "should I get a PhD?" And I didn't want to. So I started to work.



Will Beattie 20:02

Why not? Why on earth wouldn't you want one?

E

Eleonora Celora 20:04

Because I think because I didn't, I didn't want to get a PhD in Italy. And I didn't know where else to look for, like, a position. I didn't know like scholars enough, like I didn't have contacts. I didn't, I didn't have any network. And also probably, I needed to take some time to think what I really wanted to do. So I just started working. And then at some point I received, like, a text or email saying, "you want to come here and work for us?" And that was in Paris. And so I left my job. And I was like, sure, I'm coming." And then and after that I started seriously thinking about the PhD. So what was this job in Paris? So it was a research job. Before I, I graduated for the MA, uh from the MA, I had an internship in this research institute in Paris for, like, three months. Then I went back home and graduated. But then there was a position opened in this same place. And they asked me if I wanted that position for that, like, job as a researcher, like associated researcher in this institute. So I went there. So it was like, first time I was an intern. Second time, it was, like, a real job. And so I went back to research to some extent, and I thought, "why not?" And I stayed there for that project and another project. And then I was...

B

Ben Pykare 21:45

What were the projects you were researching?

E

Eleonora Celora 21:47

So the first one was about, like the best sellers of the Middle Ages. So this institute has a lot of databases that collect... gathers a lot of data on like, different topics. So this particular project was about collecting basic information, bibliography manuscripts, and blah, blah, blah, about, like the most read books in the Middle Ages. So we're just like, collecting information, reading a

lot of papers, deciding what data to put it in the database. Very useful. If you're doing research that's a good, like, resource. A good tool to use because you get like the, yeah, the basic information you need to start.



Will Beattie 22:36

It sort of gives a pretty, like, broad strokes kind of view of the way that manuscripts are being used. What's interesting to people.



E Eleonora Celora 22:45

Yeah, exactly, exactly. Yeah, you can tell like with that project, you can tell like, what did people read, or like to read in the Middle Ages?



Will Beattie 22:56

And so that project then is coming to a close. When did you decide that you would pursue a PhD? And how come you... how did you end up in Notre Dame?



E Eleonora Celora 23:05

Um, so I don't remember when I decided exactly that I wanted to, to apply for PhDs. Probably it was like a combination of elements. But I applied basically just for US, so that that was one thing.



Will Beattie 23:26

How come?



E Eleonora Celora 23:27

Because I had, I think I was curious about something that was very distant from my education, my way of thinking. I felt, I probably felt the need to do research in a different way. So I love the way people work in Italy. I think that there is, like... there are some amazing things going on, but to some extent, probably felt that I wanted to have another perspective. And that's the reason why I did not apply or ever thought about doing a PhD in Italy. And Notre Dame... I mean, there are not many, not that many Medieval Institute's in general. And for liturgy and manuscripts, this is like, one of the best places. So it was like... I mean, I was like, "of course, I'm applying there," and then I got in, but... I mean, you don't go after the names you go after the schools. So I...



B Ben Pykare 24:26

Yes.

E Eleonora Celora 24:26

... so I know that there are like amazing university in the US. But I wanted to, I was looking for something very specific. And this was one of the right places. So that's the reason why.

B Ben Pykare 24:38

How was that as, as someone who is only fluent in this language, English, though I research in multiple languages, I don't have to write papers and attend lectures in other languages. How was the switching from first Italian to French, and then moving from Paris to hear French to English. How were those transitions?

E Eleonora Celora 25:01

So they were two different things. Moving to Paris, I didn't know one single word in French. So I was not like, it was not exactly the best. But I could work because I can, I could read something. I don't know how, but I could still do research and collect the data that I needed to collect. But it was not....

B Ben Pykare 25:01

That's wild to me. I did not know.

E Eleonora Celora 25:07

Well, I did not know like one single word in French.

B Ben Pykare 25:18

Bonjour?

E Eleonora Celora 25:30

Bonjour. Maybe Bonjour. But no, maybe no, no more than that. But I was still able to work and my boss, who is Laura Albiero, the co-editor of the book, she's Italian. So it, was it was doable. So the database and like the work, the job was in French, by my boss was in was Italian. And a lot of the people around me they were very nice. They were speaking French very slowly, they would help me with my, like, learning the language, like a few words per day. They would allow me to speak Italian because they are scholars. So they under, they understand Italian so we could understand each other. And slowly, I learned some, like, after a couple of years, I was able to speak some reason[able], I hope, French. So that was that. Coming here, it's a

completely different, like, environment. So I'm, I'm in grad school, I was attending classes. Of course, I did study English. So I was a little bit more prepared. But if I have to be honest, like I remember the first classes is taking notes in English, it was terrible. I was, like, slow, I could not understand what the professors were saying. Took me a few weeks to like, and also to accept, like, to be able to follow, to be able to interact in a proper way, or at least to feel comfortable enough to interact. Because part of the problem is that you don't feel confident about your language. And after a while you still, you are still not enough. Not good enough. But it doesn't matter. At least this is what happened in my mind. Like after a while I was like okay, "my English, I'm not a native speaker. My English has problems." But you get used to like phrases you get used to the way people saying can you get used to the fact that you are like, it's okay, if you're not good enough. It's It's okay.

B

Ben Pykare 27:30

You're more than good enough. But I Yes, yeah. Thanks for sharing about that. That's two huge transitions. I did not know that you didn't know French when you moved.



Will Beattie 27:38

That blows my mind.

B

Ben Pykare 27:40

Yeah. So you mentioned your your former boss. And you had a big recent project. Yeah. So you're here, you're doing your PhD? And then how did this project come about in the midst of this?

E

Eleonora Celora 27:57

Oh, so when I was an intern in Paris, I was working for like, Laura's project, Laura's database. We, this database was about liturgical manuscripts. The other project I worked for, they were not exactly about the, the things that I love and study. But this particular project, it was about, like, my, my things.

B

Ben Pykare 28:22


Yeah.


E


Eleonora Celora 28:23


So we basically, like we met, like, almost every week to... she needed to check like how I was doing. And like, if I had problems, we should, we will discuss them. And basically, we started to have discussion on like, how to talk about manuscripts; this type of manuscript, what problems are there? How do we call them? How do we share information with people? How do we teach


people how to work with this type of stuff? Because there are very few people interested in liturgical manuscripts, and very few people able to work with them. So slowly, after months, weeks, after weeks, even when, like the internship was, was done, and I was back home, and I was or I was working for another project, we kept talking and discussing, reading articles together. And basically like that, at some point, I remember she organized a conference and we presented the project. And she was like, "we should write a book." And it was like, "what?" And then yeah, and then we started. We started to consider the structure, what we wanted to say, what, what were the questions we were trying to answer, basically. And yeah, so it was like, two years, and then it happened. I mean, the decision happened.


 **B** Ben Pykare 29:50
Yes.

 **Will Beattie** 29:50
Oh, so even getting to that decision took about two years of work before that.


 **E** Eleonora Celora 29:56
Yeah, because like since the book, to some extent the book is a, is an attempt to answer questions that we had. So we studied to prepare that book. We, like, it's not that we knew already what to write. Like most cases, of course, we we did know what we wanted. But to write I, write some passages, some parts of it, I remember I was studying. I was like going through multiple manuscripts saying, "okay, how does this work? I think it works like that. But let's verify it."

 **B** Ben Pykare 30:27
What were some of those questions that you were...?

 **E** Eleonora Celora 30:29
Like, very one very basic questions that are some type of manuscripts that like, people are not sure how they work? Like, what's inside? What's their use? So you open some of them, as many as you can, and you try to figure out what, if there is a structure, if there if you can figure out the use of them and the reason why they're made that way. What traditions they transmit, what type of chants what type of text, how they are connected, how they circulated, where they were written, why they were written in that specific place. Were they written for another place for another institution, for a specific guy? Stuff like that.

 **Will Beattie** 31:15
And this is an edited volume, right? So you've got, am I own thinking, you've got articles or


chapters from contributing scholars as well?

 Eleonora Celora 31:23


Yeah, so we have one part, that is essays from scholars. We wanted to give a like a sample of what people are working on now, what are their thoughts about like methodological problems, or what type of manuscripts they are studying. And then the second part, which is the part that we wrote - like, in this essence, there is also one, one essay that we wrote - but the like, the bigger work, the biggest work for us was to write a sort of guide on how to describe many medieval manuscripts. So it's like a manual. So it's, and like, that's the part that we really wrote. So the idea was, let's create a tool with which people can understand and approach manuscripts, liturgical manuscripts, without being scared.

 Ben Pykare 32:15


That sounds very helpful.

 Will Beattie 32:17

It sounds really helpful. Sounds like it's something I need to be reading from my research. It's all in Italian, isn't it?

 Eleonora Celora 32:22


No, it's only in French.

 Will Beattie 32:23


Oh, great.


 Ben Pykare 32:25


Okay, so what was the decision to write and publish in French?


 Eleonora Celora 32:30

So we were in France, once we start when we started. So we were already like, at that point, we were presenting in France, interacting in French. And the tip... the people that accepted the book, they're French speakers mostly. They, they asked us not to write in Italian only. And we were like, "sure, of course." We didn't think actually about writing in English. I like recently in the last weeks I was, a lot of people - not a lot to people - some people asked me why in French? "Couldn't you write it in English?" And I was like, "I didn't even think about it. Because I was in France at that time."

 Ben Pykare 33:06
Yeah.


 Eleonora Celora 33:09
And French is like a very common language among scholars. So we yeah, we did not have any.... We didn't think about that. But I understand like, for Italians, it's probably easier. I don't know. It sounds different, but it's the same.


 Will Beattie 33:25
Yeah, that's, that's the excuse, I'll use: French just sounds too different to English. Even though I've been learning it since I was five.

 Ben Pykare 33:34
So when you're working on this, I guess, to kind of try to demystify a little bit of it. When you have a big project like this, what would a typical day look like working on this project?

 Eleonora Celora 33:48
So it's a little hard to answer, because I was.... to some extent, this was a side project.

 Ben Pykare 33:56
Yes.

 Eleonora Celora 33:57
So I was not that, that was not like my main activity during the days. So I remember using weekends for that. Breaks. I remember one winter break, I think it was the first winter break from Notre Dame. And me and Laura, we were like on a Zoom call or Skype call for hours every day during, like, Christmas break. Talking about what to write. What.... having a look at digitized manuscripts together, trying to make sense of them. So I think I mostly use breaks or probably I did put in, like some are few hours every week. So it was like, "let's get done... get it done with my job." So grad school, for example. And then let's save some space for the book.

 Ben Pykare 34:49
Got it.

E Eleonora Celora 34:50

So I got there were some moments where I was really stressed because like there were maybe like one month or like weeks where we couldn't work because Laura was doing the same. And we were like "will we ever finish it?" So that was a little stressful. But yeah.

B Ben Pykare 35:09

Yes, yes. I commend your, your passion and your, your work ethic to commit breaks and weekends to a different academic endeavor.

E Eleonora Celora 35:20

I mean, I get bored. So it's a good way to entertain [myself]. I'm kidding.


 Will Beattie 35:24


But, I mean, it's an amazing achievement. It really is. So you mentioned there as well about digitized manuscripts and the fact you had to, kind of, pour over these over the break. So do you find that there are advantages and disadvantages to using digitized versions? I mean, do you feel like it's a different experience, looking at a manuscript as a picture online, as opposed to, you know, physically handling it?


E Eleonora Celora 35:50


Of course it's a completely different experience. But I am very grateful for whatever is online now. Especially like with a pandemic, and like being in the US, instead of like, Italy, or France, I, like, I don't have access to the manuscripts I need to study. So whatever is online is, like, a great gift. And I wish it could be more stuff online, honestly. Of course it's different. Like, I think you, you should start like when, for example, if we're thinking about people approaching manuscripts for the first time, you should start in a library. So you see, like, a bunch of manuscripts, you get used to, like, touching the manuscripts, like feeling like the pa... the, the parchment or the paper. Reading it through. And then after you have done that, you can go to the digitized manuscripts and also learn something about their material aspect because you recognize features that you already saw in the library, if it makes sense. So I think that digitized manuscripts are a great resource, especially when you don't have access to manuscripts. But of course, you need to see the actual manuscripts because like, again, they are objects. So they have a material dimension, you cannot not take that into account, of course. But if I want to read the text, now, I'm like looking for specific texts, texts for a saint? The manuscript. If the manuscript is digitized, that's great. And then I will take a look at the manuscript when I can go to the library, but in the meanwhile, I can work on a text.


B Ben Pykare 36:57


 Ben Pykare 30:37
Yeah. Yes.


 Eleonora Celora 37:30
So both things, I think.


 Will Beattie 37:33
Did you ever get that question, which I have got quite a few times of "you came from medieval... from Europe to America to study medieval Europe? What were you thinking?"


 Eleonora Celora 37:44
All the time, especially from Italians and Europeans. Americans like, and people in the US? They don't ask it.

 Ben Pykare 37:50
No.

 Eleonora Celora 37:50
But Italians are like, "why?"


 Ben Pykare 37:51
We're like "of course, makes sense coming here."

 Eleonora Celora 37:55
Yeah. So yeah, I got this question a lot. Well, one thing is that, again, I came here because I needed something different, I needed different questions. And I found, like, a different way to approach manuscripts and to approach research, and I am asking different questions to my sources. So my dissertation will not look like a dissertation that I would, I could have written in Italy or France.

 Ben Pykare 38:22
What are some of those differences?

E Eleonora Celora 38:25

Um, for me, for example, it's like, I have developed more attention to the texts in their, like, layers of meaning. So I am reading a lot of material on some saints. And before coming here I was not able to read the text for real, to, to read like a passage and say, "okay, what are they saying?" And then read the chant and connected to the text and say, "okay, the chant is saying these things, the text is saying these other things, how are they, like, connected? What, why are they saying these specific things in the chant, and why are they saying these specific things in the text?" So like, what's the purpose, o some extent? What's the meaning? Before coming here, I was not able to ask this question. It's very simple, but still, it's, for me it makes the whole difference. So I was like, very technically skilled before coming here ready, but I was not able to reflect on texts, if it makes sense.

 Will Beattie 39:34


That's really interesting. I mean, is it just something about the atmosphere, the way that seminars are conducted here that brought that change in your thinking?

E Eleonora Celora 39:42

For sure, but also seeing how other people that are technically skilled are also able to be... to narrate, like, about the things that they read. So it's like both, like, how the grad school is organized, but also how the people work, like the scholars work here. So my supervisor, she's able to, like, take the texts in her hands and, like, take them, like, understand the meaning, you know? So when you see people working this way you learn. If it makes sense again.

B Ben Pykare 40:21

No, that does.

 Will Beattie 40:21

Yea, definitely, it absolutely does.


B Ben Pykare 40:25


One question I have, as we're wrapping up is, what advice do you have maybe for students currently doing a humanities undergrad or people that are thinking about pursuing humanities education at the graduate school level? As someone who's kind of walked through some of those roads? Do you have any advice? Or?


E Eleonora Celora 40:52


I don't know. Like, just if you love something in the humanities, just do it first. Because a lot of


people they don't do because they are like, "work, what do I do after?" Yeah, at least back home, this is a big, big problem. So first thing...


 Ben Pykare 41:07
No, no, that's fair.


 Eleonora Celora 41:08
... if you love something, do it. This saved me actually, second thing, just choose one thing that you like, follow it, and then you will figure out that it's not exactly what you're going to do. But that's like a starting point. So so have at least one idea in your mind. So for me, it was like "manuscripts." And then, like, I will probably like my dissertation will be like on manuscripts, but very different. And then another advice, more practical advice: study languages, so decide what parts of the world you want to focus [on], and then study the languages that you need, because that is very, very useful. So if you're want to do Greek do Greek, if you want to do Latin do Latin, but just do it as early as possible.


 Ben Pykare 41:51
Yes. Yes.

 Eleonora Celora 41:53
Yeah, that's it.

 Ben Pykare 41:54
And if apparently, you didn't learn a language, you can just move to the capital of a country where it's spoken.

 Eleonora Celora 41:59
Exactly, more or less like that.

 Will Beattie 42:05
So unfortunately that is all the time we have today. Ele, it's been a pleasure chatting with you. How can our listeners find out more about you and your work?

 Eleonora Celora 42:13

So you can find information about me on the Medieval Institute webpage or on academia[.edu]. I'm on Facebook, even though I don't use it much. And yeah, look, so that if you want to take a look at my book, it's called "DÃ©crire le manuscrit liturgique," [published] by Brepols. You can find it on the Brepols website, too. That's it.

B

Ben Pykare 42:37

Thanks again.

E

Eleonora Celora 42:38

I'm grateful to have the chance to talk with you guys.

B

Ben Pykare 42:41

Oh, we really appreciate it. And thank you all for listening. We hope you'll meet with us next time in the Middle Ages.



Will Beattie 43:00

Meeting In the Middle Ages is sponsored by the Medieval Institute of the University of Notre Dame, with a generous grant from the Medieval Academy of America. If you have any questions for medievalist send them to us at "meetingthema@gmail.com." You can follow us on Twitter at "meetingintheMA" and Instagram at "meetinginthemiddleages." For more information on some of the topics raised in this episode, head on over to the episode description. Thanks for listening