

Report for the Viking Society for Northern Research

Research Support Fund - International Medieval Congress, Leeds 2026.

I was very fortunate to be able to attend the Leeds International Medieval Congress in August 2026, where I took part in a series of panels on 'New Perspectives on the Viking Diaspora.' As part of a panel focused on the Baltic Sea region, I presented a paper titled '*Quia barbari errant*': Piracy, Slavery, and Trade in Helmold of Bosau's '*Chronica Slavorum*'.

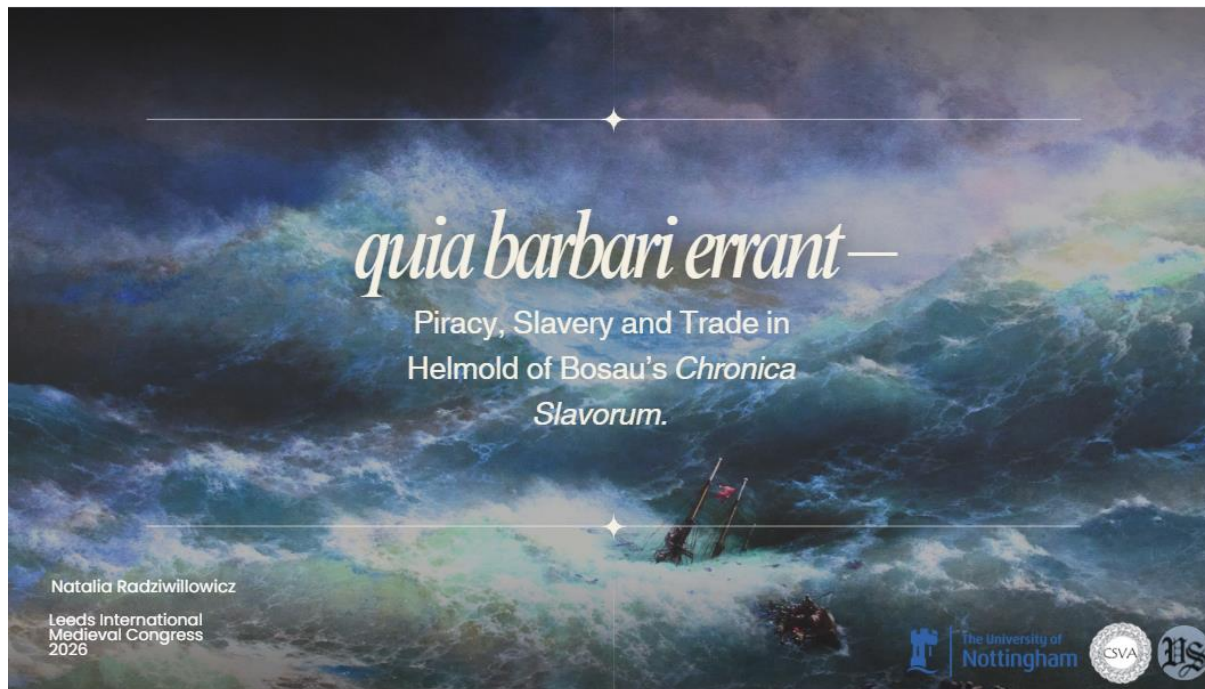


Fig. 1: The title slide of my presentation.

My paper considered the ways in which the twelfth century historian and priest Helmold of Bosau wrote of piracy, slavery and trade, all facilitated – for better or for worse – through access to the Baltic Sea. Through his travels, and documented in his *Chronica Slavorum*, Helmold was able to witness the ever-changing connections forged, rent and re-forged between different groups, including Saxons, Scandinavians and Slavs, which gave him a broad but cohesive image of unfolding events. The unstable alliances and desires of rulers meant that opportunities for trade were complex but vast, and as a result, piracy was rife. With legitimate and criminal trade flourishing, in and around sites such as Jumne and Lübeck, humans often became commodities as well. I put forward that the *Chronica Slavorum* provides a nuanced approach to the nature of cross-Baltic networks, acknowledging the progressing benefits of such contact, without shying away from some of the darker realities, and examined Helmold's work through some of the key settlement and trading sites he wrote of.

Taking part in this panel allowed me to reconnect with friends and scholars I am rarely able to see in person, for which I am very grateful, as we were able to share our research, ideas and suggestions both before and after our presentations. In addition to this, I was able to make new connections and consider potential questions for future research. Being able to engage with other scholars whose work covers areas around the Baltic Sea was an invaluable experience, and my own research has undoubtedly benefited from shared insights. I am very appreciative of open discussions and advice imparted, which has helped me identify further cultural connections across central Europe between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.



Fig. 2: The Medievalist version of a Scholastic Book Fair.

The whole experience of attending the Leeds IMC was a whirlwind; with so many talks to attend, extra-curricular activities on offer, and even knights in armour (on a 30°+ day, one really must applaud their commitment), it was easy to get swept up in the excitement and find discussions on topics you might never have considered otherwise. It was very gratifying to see where my own research fits into the wider field, and the varied directions of others' inquiries. It was also incredibly helpful that the organisers of the Congress were able to facilitate the recording of many panels, so that where clashes occurred between two events you wanted to attend, you could at least catch up later!



Fig. 3: Keynote Lecture: 'Timely Images': Medieval Trans Saints, Historiographical Dysphoria and/as Trans-Temporal Methodology by Alicia Spencer-Hall.

I am truly thankful for the support of the Viking Society for Northern Research, whose Research Support Fund helped make it possible for me to attend and present at this vast conference. The connections made and ideas exchanged at this event have truly had a positive impact on my writing and research, but also helped strengthen the feeling of community I have within the academic world of medieval studies. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Society and the conference and panel organisers for this tremendous opportunity.

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Fig. 4: A bold knight rides out.

[All photos my own.]