



The Norwich – York Graduate Medieval Conference

1st-3rd June 2007

FRIDAY 1st June


Session 1: Spatial Interpretations and Perceptions of Identity, c. 1450-1700.

Chair: Janka Rodziewicz
14.00-15.30

Popular Memory and Occupational Identity; Mining Custom and Interpretations of Space in the Forest of Dean, c.1450-1640

Simon Sandall

Simon Sandall (postgraduate student) will present an analysis of popular memory and occupational identity in the Forest of Dean. This paper will argue that, whilst free mining custom was undoubtedly constitutive of a unique occupational identity, it would be misleading to consider this body of use rights in reified isolation. Instead, mining custom represented one component in a complex interplay of social relationships and usages which combined to form the local 'taskscape'. In short, the preservation of schematic spatial structures which perpetuated mining rights was coterminous with the protection of use rights which were integral to the survival (and occupational) strategies of a far wider section of the forest community. The institutional focus of the Mine Law Court, therefore, appears to have been central to the apparent role of the free mining community in organising resistance to encroachment upon 'forest' space as perceived in customary understandings of such. This paper draws on a range of material and documentary evidence from the C15th onwards, culminating in an analysis of the fierce resistance to 'improvement' of the forest during the 1630s. As such, it will hopefully demonstrate a fundamental contradiction between the fluid and synchronic perceptions of the relationship between time and space which perpetuated embodied and collective rights to the forest resources on one hand and, on the other, the privileging of linear time in the abstract ordering of space which is implied in the notion of 'improvement' and exclusive understandings of property rights.



Custom, Space and Identity in Early Modern Essex: The cases of Maldon and West Mersea

Helen Band

In contrast, Helen Band (postgraduate student) will present a detailed contextual analysis of the physical experience and spatial identities engendered in an urban environment. In the towns studied here, the ritual apparatus of custom, and the definition and meaning of the physical spaces and boundaries of civic jurisdictions, were appropriated by an elite male minority. Contemporary records indicate the increasing control of custom, memory and the past, as a powerful means of social exclusion/inclusion. The paper will explore the interconnection of custom and collective identities; and how the codification of civic spaces shaped perceptions of early modern towns.

Gender Identity in the Urban Landscape: Public and Private, Reality and Imagination

Fiona Williamson

Fiona Williamson (postgraduate student) will present an analysis of gender identity in the urban landscape comparing the contrast between public and private spaces, in reality and the imagination. The urban environment provides the focus for a discussion of power, authority and control in the urban modern cityscape as related to the identities of men and women living within a strict oligarchy of elite rule. Plural perceptions of identity co-existed within the public and private worlds, often vocalising themselves in the peripheral boundary between the two, in the traceable form of conflict, slander and social negotiations. The aim is to consider the realities of gendered identities in comparison to a strict ideological framework, brought to life by the spatial conception of the city in the popular mind.

~ ~ ~ **COFFEE** ~ ~ ~

Session 2: Aspects of Medieval Religion: Attraction and Application


Chair: Helen Birkett

16.00-17.30

Miracles and Medicine: Celestial Physicians and Earthly Care

Louise Wilson

This paper will examine twelfth-century miracle collections. These record the wide range of curative miracles experienced by pilgrims. In doing so, they encapsulate the ambiguous connections between medicine and religion in medieval society. Superficially, these collections appear to indicate a relationship characterised by conflict - through their



ardent promotion of saintly intercession over the treatments offered by worldly physicians. However, a more rigorous examination reveals the complementary use of spiritual and secular methods of healing by both laity and clergy alike.

Defining almsgiving in the textual references of the Anglo-Saxon homilies

Aleisha Olson

The giving of alms was an important aspect of religious devotional practice in Anglo-Saxon England. The act of almsgiving allowed a person to outwardly express his piety and devotion as well as offering a way to repent for his sins and prepare himself for eternal life in heaven. This notion of almsgiving as a way of attaining eternal life is expressed in many Biblical passages as well as in many patristic and Carolingian sources. This paper outlines preliminary research into the textual expressions of almsgiving in Anglo-Saxon England as seen in the homilies of Ælfric and Wulfstan, as well as the anonymous homilies of the Vercelli and Blickling codices. The references to almsgiving in these texts show that the giving of alms could occur in a variety of diverse practices in Anglo-Saxon England. It is the aim of this paper to establish a working definition for almsgiving which will serve as a basis for further research into evidence for almsgiving in Anglo-Saxon England according to contemporary wills, charters and law codes. This paper will also introduce related themes of almsgiving and its place in contemporary material culture, and almsgiving as an indicator of contemporary attitudes toward giving in Anglo-Saxon England.

Why did Robert de Sackville become a monk?

Peter Davidson

In about 1150 a knight, Robert de Sackville, gave his manor and church in Wickham Skeith, Suffolk, to the Benedictine Abbey of St John the Baptist, Colchester, and became a monk. At first sight this appears a typical example of the piety of the knightly class in 12th century England. There are, however, some unusual features concerning Robert's actions and these will be explored in this paper. Furthermore a possible answer to the question posed in the title may be found in a traumatic event experienced by Robert de Sackville as a young knight 30 years earlier.


Evening Event: 18.30- 23.00 Dinner and Quiz at Dragon Hall

SATURDAY 3rd June

Session 3: Medieval Vision: Romantic and Realistic

Chair: Kate McLean

10.00-11.00



The Bread and Butter (and Beer!) Cures for Medieval Blindness
Joy Hawkins

The ubiquitous nature of blindness in Medieval England meant that there were many men and women suffering from eye complaints seeking a cure. The title of this paper refers to the three main types of remedy available to the blind and near-blind. Firstly, bread, or the host, underscoring the important role religion played in understanding and treating blindness. Secondly, may-butter was used in the herbal compounds which were firmly grounded in medieval scientific thinking and humoral theory, and thirdly, ale was an ingredient frequently used in popular healing. This paper will examine the varying degrees to which these remedies were used and also consider the other options available to the blind, including eye-salves, herbal medicines, charms, prayers, precious stones and surgery.

'Right with Hire Look': Love, Vision, and Certitude in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde

Charles T. Archer

For medieval perspectivists, the study of visual perception entails the interdisciplinary engagement of optics, epistemology, and semantics. Tying together ideas on seeing and knowing, medieval perspectivists seek to establish what Katherine Tachau, in 'Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham', aptly categorizes as "a 'unified field theory' of light, vision, cognition, and our expression of what we know to be true;" they do so by synthesizing their ideas on knowledge gained through visual perception and by challenging the integrity of such knowledge through questions of certitude. In my presentation, I will investigate the dynamics of love at first sight in Book One of Chaucer's *Troilus*. I will employ Roger Bacon's thirteenth-century theories on *species* multiplication, which he addresses in his *Perspectiva* and *De multiplicatione specierum*, in order to posit that Troilus does not obtain certifiable vision of Criseyde. By interpreting the expression "right with hire look," which Chaucer repeats several times in the text, to indicate "right with hire *species*," I will argue that these *species*, while similar to, are not essentially the same as the object itself. As a result, the "look" which presents itself to Troilus is not itself Criseyde, but instead a reproduction of Criseyde, something not-Criseyde.


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Session 4: Medieval Material Culture

Chair: Gesine Oppitz-Trotman

11.30-13.00

Breaking the Mould: The Issue of Conventionality in Cardinals' Seals



Matthew Sillence

Engraved dies, or matrices, which were used to form impressions in malleable materials such as wax, clay, paper, ink and even some types of metal, are called seals. They are most commonly appended to documents, though impressions were attached to personal property to establish ownership or goods as a guarantee of quality and provenance. This paper summarizes the methods that have emerged in the study of seals from the late fourteenth to the twenty-first centuries in Western Europe in order to define previous descriptive and interpretative approaches to these objects. My premise is that although these approaches have made seals more accessible to the researcher, they have failed to investigate the production (of both matrix and impression) and the operation of seals in society.

A recent anthropological consideration of the seal impression, matrix and act of sealing suggests that from the twelfth century, seal imagery was characterized by conventionality, or the adherence to certain types, which in turn influenced the perception of oneself in society. With reference to a sub-class of seals, those made for cardinals from across Europe, I contend that the construction of identity through types in the later middle ages is much more complex than recent sigillography suggests, and I recommend that different forms of identity should be acknowledged to better appreciate what might be termed a 'quasi-corporate' sub-class of seals, such as those made for cardinals between 1378 and 1533.

Medieval Town Walls: The East Anglian Exemplar

Richard Turk

Abstract TBA

"Show me you insignia and I'll tell you who you want to be!": An Interpretation of Harold's Coronation Scene on the Bayeux Tapestry.

Sarah Power

'Here sits Harold, King of the English'. Yet what occasion is occurring that allows Harold to sit in such majesty? Does his defiant glare engage and contrive the viewer to witness his moment of Coronation, as Barbara English discusses? Or is his stance, one of a king enforcing his authority at a crown wearing occasion as Lucien Musset argues? It is generally agreed that the eleventh century Bayeux Tapestry, in fact an embroidery in wool, illustrates the Norman version of the events culminating in the conquest of England in 1066. Consequently although Harold is the only character to appear in the Tapestry from beginning to end it is William who is the ultimate hero of this piece of unique visual narrative. Thus the strongest explanation for this scene is that it depicts the motive that set in motion the chain of events that would lead to Harold's downfall, in other words the coronation of Harold and therefore the usurpation of William's rightful title as King of England.

~ ~ ~ LUNCH ~ ~ ~

Session 5: Medieval Lives: Poetic and Prose

Chair: Chloe Morgan

14.00-15.30

Archbishop Becket and the Sport of Kings: Falconry and Hawking in the Miracles of St Thomas

Gesine Oppitz-Trotman


Robin Oggins suggests that Thomas Becket was ‘the most prominent bishop who flew falcons.’ From an early age, hunting and hawking featured in Becket’s life. Richer de l’Aigle, Lord of Pevensey, an acquaintance of Becket’s father, introduced the merchant’s son to hunting and the art of falconry, the latter usually reserved for the nobility. However, the sport has a wider significance than just another fashionable hobby. It is very likely that the friendship between Henry II and Becket was advanced to some degree by their common love of hunting and hawking, cementing the trust the King placed in his chancellor. However, while Becket’s knowledge of falconry aided his social status, it was frowned upon by the church where churchmen were involved; Becket was criticized on one occasion for wearing a falconer’s cape by a visiting ecclesiast in France, and his keeping of wild birds became one of the foremost signs of the worldliness that many people thought disqualified him from any authority as archbishop.

It is a little strange, then, that the sport should feature among the martyr’s miracles. Although only ten miracles of the 703 attributed to Thomas Becket concern falcons and hawks, it is a subject which bridges the divide not only between Becket’s secular and religious careers, but also his earthly existence and afterlife as a saint. Indeed, in one miracle the sport becomes part of the widely perceived forgiveness of the martyred archbishop for his career’s enemies, for his cure of one of the king’s birds suggests something of a reconciliation by referring to their common enjoyment of the pursuit in the period of their greatest friendship, during Becket’s tenure as royal chancellor. I will thus suggest ways we can understand what may seem at first a relatively obscure footnote in the well-trodden history of Thomas Becket’s life, proposing that the sport – in symbolism as well as practice – can be used as a fascinating and innovative means of tracing some of the familiar contradictions of this life.

‘He walked before Him with an upright heart and did what was pleasing in His sight.’ Clovis as God’s Avenger in Book II of Gregory of Tours’ Histories.

Adrian Smith

This paper looks at three connected episodes in the life of Clovis (d. c.511), the first Catholic king of the Franks, as described by Gregory, Bishop of Tours (573-c.594). Gregory is our only account of the events in France after the fall of The Roman Empire, all others copying his work. His depiction of Clovis has long been seen as the image of a



barbarian king, the three episodes in question have particularly been seen as examples of the ferocity of this barbarian warlord in his bid to unite the Franks under his rule. However, as this paper shows, I believe that this is all part of Gregory's didactic agenda and shows Clovis as God's avenger. He dispatches three rival kings for sins of greed, pride and debauchery, faults that Gregory repeatedly preaches against in his work, particularly relevant at his time of writing due to the civil wars of the Merovingian kings. This reveals not only a different side to Clovis, but also the complexity of Gregory's writing, something that has until recently been ignored. This also means that Gregory's image of Clovis is highly selective and can no longer be taken as historical.

Elene's Spiritual Journey: Heo gefylled waes wisdomes gife

Lexi Ramsden

Cynewulf's version of the 'inventio sancta crucis' legend narrates a physical journey to a foreign place, the actual search for an unknown location and a hidden relic. This journey is above all an intellectual quest for hidden truths and a movement towards spiritual insights. Despite her prominence, Elene's distinctive role in the mission to Jerusalem is generally underestimated. Rather than being merely Constantine's representative in the quest for the True Cross, she participates in her own journey of spiritual discovery. Moving away from static figural readings of her character, I trace Elene's personal transformation, particularly her developing 'willa', which reflects larger thematic patterns and assures her crucial place within the narrative and the structure of the poem as a whole.

~~~COFFEE~~~

**Session 6: Vice and Virtue in Medieval Art, Literature and Drama**


Chair: Rebecca Pinner

16.00-17.30

*Virgin Soldiers: Amazons, Worthy Women and the Virgin Mary*

Sue Hedge

The trope of the 'Nine Worthy Women', or *Neuf Preuses*, emerged in Valois France to accompany literary and artistic portrayals of the established 'canon' of male Nine Worthies. Their composition drew upon an enduring *corpus* of literature featuring female warriors – from the classical Greek traditions incorporated in the *History* of Herodotus to Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus*. This paper will look at the ways in which the concept of the Amazon – disquieting in any patriarchal society – was remodelled along the lines of virgin saint and as a 'type' of the Virgin Mary. As such, statues of Amazon *preuses* could take their places alongside a relief showing the Assumption of the Virgin at Louis of Orléans' Château of La Ferté-Milon.




*The Female Phallus and Male Attempts to Transcend it in the Commentum Super Sex Libros Eneidos Virgilii*  
Hartley Miller

Representing the phallus, Dido becomes a hurdle in the path towards male spiritual fulfilment in the Commentary on the First Six Books of Virgil's Aeneid attributed to Bernardus Silvestris. The commentary, originating in the clerical world of the twelfth century School of Chartres, inculcates in its male readership the sense that the 'spiritually virile' man is one who has eschewed women and successfully transcended the flesh and its desires, and thus it genders the phallus as feminine, that is, a source of weakness.

Thus as Aeneas passes through books one to six, his consort shifts from the sexualized Dido to the virgin Sibyl, a figure allegorized in much the same way as Boethius' Lady Philosophy. Male companionship is also privileged as Aeneas is likened to Orpheus and Theseus, and the commentary ends with the erasure of sexuality through the declaration of Aeneas as 'chaste.' The paper intends to show how the commentator accomplishes the erasure of the phallus through the erasure of women, and how the privileging of a homosocial society accomplishes the pedagogical aims of the author.

*Vicious Spaces: Reassessing the Vice in Culture c.1400-1600*  
George Oppitz-Trotman

The personified Vice figure's appearance within the tautly balanced allegories of the very early drama such as *The Castle of Perseverance* and *Wisdom* has of course featured in the work of scholars investigating the part personification had in elaborating Christian doctrine through the plays. The Vice's bawdy license elsewhere, as in *Everyman* or *Mankind*, or its festive engagement of the audience in York and Coventry's *Corpus Christi* pageants, have also impressed those working since the 1960s within a Bakhtinian tradition elaborating a second, popular life. Similarly, and not unconnectedly when one reads Bakhtin's work closely, dialectical materialists seeking to unearth an older, pre-capitalist popular dramatic tradition as it engaged with new dramatic developments also assign the Vice figure an important role. I will argue that we need to redefine what we mean the 'figure' of the Vice if we are to overcome the critical dead end this duality has had the tendency to become, especially since the term 'Vice' became current only during the 1530s. In particular, I will suggest ways we can understand the Vice's greater control and dynamic use of the playing space in comparison with that of the virtuous expositors it rivalled. I will attempt to probe the changing relationship of this in examples ranging from very early extant works to well-known secular tragedies such as *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. In all cases I will underline the essential difference of each play as a unified work but in a way which illustrates the operation of anachronism, the ghost of a cultural past, within this difference. The Vice increasingly became this anachronistic element, even as it fused with ideas of Machiavellian villains, mingled with ancient traditions of the clown and the fool, or revitalized devilish marginalia. I will explore the power of this development on the increasingly ambivalent religious attitudes to the theatre. Critics like Gosson and Munday, earlier playwrights themselves, clearly had ideological difficulty understanding theatre's regulation of its own space, even in the



relatively defined and confined spaces of the private theatres, imagining a physical escaping of pernicious, sinful theatricality outside the theatre. My paper will therefore attempt to re-establish the Vice's changing position within a series of cultural unities that played themselves out, during a play's performance, on the space it transformed, and suggest ways we can understand the spatiality of playing in the manuscript texts left to us.

**Evening Events: 18.30-19.30 Walking tour of Norwich**  
**19.30-late Dinner at Bedfords. 5 course meal in medieval undercroft restaurant £17.50 for presenters and chairs, £27.50 for others, drinks and tip not included.**

## SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> June

### **Session 7: Regulating Medieval Society**

Chair: Simon Sandall

10.00-11.00

*Buyer beware: Light weights and false measures in the market place*

Catherine Casson


Regulating weights and measures was a major concern for provincial towns in England in the period 1250 to 1400. Civic authorities and guilds initiated prosecutions for short measures, inaccurate weights and deviant balances. Fishmongers, bakers and brewers all appear frequently in borough court rolls. The authorities targeted particular groups at particular times, in response to local concerns. Maintaining the reputation of the town's market was a major objective. However rivalry between guilds was also a factor in the initiation of some prosecutions.

The paper considers how far trends in the regulation of weights and measures reflected general national trends in the regulation of trade, and how far they reflected specific problems in individual towns. A comparison of London and Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Colchester points out interesting similarities and differences and illuminates the general urban history of the period.

*Violence and community morality in Late Anglo-Saxon England*

Emlyn Lucas

Based on my research for my MA dissertation, this proposed paper is concerned with how violence was used to enforce or demonstrate moral codes within English communities in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and subsequent consequences.



For the purpose of brevity I shall focus on one particular incident described in a legal charter concerning the slaying of two brothers who had given shelter and protection to a thief. As well as their initial murder further controversy was aroused when the local reeve gave the two men a Christian burial in a churchyard – a move that stoked anger within the community as demonstrated by the local ealdorman’s complaint to the king concerning this burial.

I shall examine what the above example can tell us about the pursuit of punishment for perceived moral outrages by a community, not only in the initial act of physical violence but further ‘psychic violence’ in of rejection from the Christian community even after death. It can also be used to demonstrate the relationship between royal authority, through the roles of the reeve and ealdorman, and such judgements of ‘the people’, and the friction it can entail. I would also like to search for any correlation (or lack thereof) between these outbursts of violence and the sermons preached to their congregations by the clergy of this period.

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## **Session 8: Medieval Court Records**

Chair: Fiona Williamson

11.30-12.30

### *Late Fourteenth-Century Yarmouth Criminals*


Janka Rodziewicz

Using the 1366-81 Yarmouth leet court records, this paper will analyse the attitude of the court to perpetrators of crime. Individuals presented before the Yarmouth leet court had committed crimes varying from the violent to the economic. The presentation of these crimes reflected the concerns of civic government, regarding who and what needed controlling in the borough. The court was not simply concerned with the crime committed, but also the particular perpetrator. Issues of gender and status were not without their effects upon the decisions of capital pledges to, or, perhaps more importantly, not to present a criminal. The character of the repeat offender is also of particular interest, including how the attitude of the court to such individuals can be seen to evolve with their repeat appearances.

### *Religious Dissent & Family Conflict in Thirteenth-Century Languedoc*

Chris Sparks

The family is often seen as the primary unit through which correct religious faith and practice was propagated amongst the laity in the medieval period. In studies of the lay followers of popular heretical movements, the role of families has been similarly emphasised. Yet whilst the importance of family support networks to the growth and



sustenance of heresy cannot be underestimated, it is not the whole story. An examination of deposition records taken in southern France during the 1240s reveals that the picture of strong family allegiance is not always appropriate, and that whilst faith could bring families together, it could also tear them apart. Attempts to guide the young might be woefully unsuccessful; worried parents and siblings sometimes resorted to forceful coercion, and couples themselves disagreed -- and at times rowed bitterly -- over matters of faith. This paper attempts to complicate ideas about religion and the family by looking at some of the broad range of reactions people had to the religion of their relatives.

**Event: Lunch at Pizza Express – individual payment.**