



# Medieval Conceptual Conflicts and Contrasts: Text and Image

Wednesday, 17.30 – 19, Room 104

**22 February** Lenka Panušková (ÚDU AV ČR)

## “Who was the Reader of the Passional of the Abbess Cunigonde? Passion Imagery and Devotion in St George Monastery, Prague”

The sumptuously illuminated manuscript of the Passional of Abbess Cunigonde indisputably belongs to the most famous medieval Bohemian manuscripts. There is a long tradition in the scholarship claiming that the manuscript was commissioned by Cunigonde, daughter of Přemysl Otakar II and sister of Wenceslas II. However, the question of its use has never been asked. In my lecture, I am going to talk about the text-image relationship as a tool in private devotion as well as in the education of medieval women. This variability in the use of the Passional manuscript becomes clearer as soon as the principle of reading aloud as a common practice in the Middle Ages is considered. Moreover, recent discoveries in the manuscripts made for the Convent show that the Passion imagery does not apply only to the visual depictions but also to various rituals performed in St George's.



**1 March** Alixe Bovey (The Courtauld Institute of Art, London)

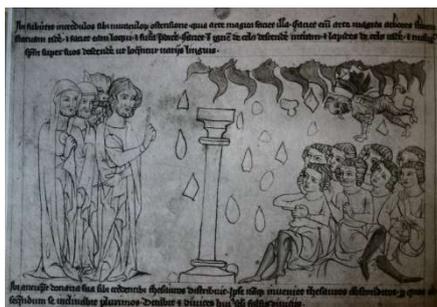
## The Smithfield Decretals: The Art of Storytelling in Fourteenth-Century London

In the 1340s, a London lawyer acquired a substantial, second-hand law book, and commissioned an ambitious programme of images to fill almost all of its 600-odd margins. Most of these marginal images have nothing whatsoever to do with the legal text: instead, they take the form of lively narratives, recounting stories involving saints, sinners, romantic heroes, beasts and monsters. Known as the Smithfield Decretals (BL, Royal 10 E IV), this manuscript is an astonishingly vivid witness to the culture of storytelling in the London of Geoffrey Chaucer's childhood. This paper will consider the relationships between the visual narratives and literary analogues, and between the legal text and the remarkable framework of pictures that surrounds it.



**8 March** Kateřina Horníčková (Universität Wien)

## “Earned in Translation? The Antichrist Cycle in the Velislav Bible and the Representation of the Intellectual Community”



Pictorial hagiographic narrative plays one of the key roles in the medieval Christian imagination and didactics. Analysis of pictorial cycles is, however, traditionally focused just on following the extent of their connections to textual models. The prevailing view is that the pictorial legend can simply be 'read' as a story, like some kind of medieval comics. What precisely 'reading' this kind of pictorial narrative means has been the subject of debate for more than two decades. As recent research interest shows, it is far from being the simple and straightforward process it appears to be at first sight. Elisabeth Sears, for example, understands 'reading' as an 'interpretation from a certain perspective', while in her view 'reading' more suitably includes the eye working together with the mind. Focusing on Vita Antichristi pictorial cycle in the Velislav Bible I will argue that interpretation is based on a detailed analysis of the work within the given functional and contextual framework, and on the understanding of its pictorial conventions within the given genre.

**15 March** Sarah James (University of Kent in Canterbury)

## “The Friar, the Saint, and the Miraculous Image”

In the 1440s the Norfolk-based Austin Friar John Capgrave completed his Life of St Katherine of Alexandria. Unlike earlier English versions of the Katharine legend, Capgrave's 8624-line poem gives extensive coverage to the saint's childhood, education and mystical marriage before providing a lengthy account of her passio, and provides us with a level of detail which was almost unprecedented in English hagiography. In 1450 a series of wall paintings was commissioned for St Peter's and St Paul's Church in Pickering, North Yorkshire; the decorative scheme, completed in the following decade, remains one of the most complete sets of wall paintings preserved in England, and among them is a lengthy narrative sequence depicting the life and martyrdom of St Katherine.

In this paper I will explore the possible reasons for a heightened interest in the details of this saint's life in mid-fifteenth-century England. I will also examine Capgrave's particular focus on the status and use of images in several of his texts, and consider to what extent, if any, we might relate Capgrave's poem to this extraordinary series of paintings.





# Medieval Conceptual Conflicts and Contrasts: Text and Image

Wednesday, 17.30 – 19, Room 104

## 22 March Karoline Kjesrud (Universitete I Oslo, Institutt for lingvistiske og nordiske studier) “From the Mother of God to the Mother of Mary”



Mary was the most important saint in European Middle Ages. Texts and images from all over Europe are depicting her in different positions indicating that people have perceived her differently in various contexts and periods of time. In this talk I would like to ask how a development in Mary's positions can reflect societal and church political strategies in medieval Scandinavia. Examples from the rich Norwegian collection of medieval wooden sculptures and textual examples from homilies and Maríu saga (based on the apocryphal stories about Mary) will demonstrate that Mary was introduced as the mother of God when the church first organized, and later she obtained other positions. In the 14th century the sources express an interest in the larger divine family, and thus the origins of Mary herself. This development will be investigated due to prioritizations and strategies of the church.

## 29 March Helena Znojemska (ÚALK FF UK) “The Franks Casket and the Appositive Style”



In his seminal book, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*, Fred C. Robinson presented the complex structure of the epic as a creative application, on a large scale, of the principle underlying the Old English poetic technique of variation. Since then, the semantically open juxtaposition of contrastive, parallel or subtly modified statements has been traced and explored in a number of Old English texts; the principle has been even presented as fundamental for Old English poetry in general, stemming, as has been argued, from its oral roots. The appositional style has thus been amply discussed in verbal art; I propose to look at a specific Anglo-Saxon artefact, the famous Franks casket, through a similar prism and discuss the way it juxtaposes apparently disparate scenes from Christian, Roman and Germanic history / legend.

## 5 April Vincent Gillespie (University of Oxford) “Man of Sorrows”

The talk will explore cognitive stillness and affective movement in the tradition of Christ as The Man of Sorrows.



## 12 April Emily Guerry (University of Kent in Canterbury) “Passion relics and Patrons between Paris and Prague”



The symbolic significance of the Crown of Thorns forever changed when the relic arrived in Paris. King Louis IX of France (1214, r. 1226–1270, canonized 1297) received the Crown as part of a diplomatic exchange with Emperor Baldwin II (1217, r. 1237–1273). For the kingdom of France, the subsequent acquisition of more Byzantine reliquaries between 1241 and confirmed what the initial festivities first revealed: Christ had selected Paris as the new and eternal location for the veneration of His Passion. Over the course of the next nine years, the construction of the Sainte-Chapelle, the palatine chapel designed to enshrine the relic, would explicate its extraordinary role in the history of salvation within an integrated decorative programme of sculpture, painting, and glass. The 'Historia Susceptionis Coronae Spineae' is the most detailed account of the translation of the Crown of Thorns from Constantinople to Paris via Venice.

This study of 'text and image' will examine the content of the *Historia* and defends the attribution of Archbishop Gauthier Cornut of Sens (d.1241) as its author and reveal how his vision shaped the chapel's design. Having explored the influence of Cornut's strategies on the devotional culture of the Sainte-Chapelle, this paper will conclude by examining the legacy of the place of Passion relics in Gothic palatine designs with reference to Emperor Charles IV's patronage of his own Christological relics – acquired from the Sainte-Chapelle – in and around Prague.

## 19 April Tomáš Klír (ÚPA, FF UK) “Images that heat - stove tiles in late medieval Bohemia”

Housing culture changed dramatically in the high and late medieval period across all social milieus in the Czech lands. One of the crucial changes concerned heating facilities. The heated but smoke-free rooms with stoves emerged, primarily in castles, later in towns and finally in peasant farmsteads. Designed tile stoves, situated usually in the most spectacular and communal living room of the house, became an extremely important arena of social representation and expression of political and religious ideas. The lecture addresses (1) the principles of heating systems connected with stoves; (2) the typology of stove tiles and the methods used in their production; (3) the most considerable sets of relief-decorated tiles discovered in the Czech lands and their social context; (4) the iconography, the significance of various motifs and their connections to texts.





# Medieval Conceptual Conflicts and Contrasts: Text and Image

Wednesday, 17.30 – 19, Room 104

## 26 April Gabriella Mazzon (Universität Innsbruck) “Affectivity in late-medieval texts and images”



Affectivity was a recurrent element in public communication in the Middle Ages, an era in which an emotion-based rhetoric was more important than other strategies to influence and instruct the population. Verbal and visual elements were often employed in synergy, to impress the public and to help the memory. These new communication types are particularly typical of the late Middle Ages, when the mendicant monastic orders introduced new methods of preaching to instruct the congregation, which employed the vernacular, and not Latin – they introduced the belief that the use of a local language, the insertion of comic episodes, and a closer attention to worldly aspects could be more effective than obscure, ritualised liturgies. This synergy emerges very clearly in verbal and visual aspects of religious texts and visual art, where representations of affection, pain and suffering are particularly relevant in the construction of this rhetoric. While aspects pertaining to history of art, literary criticism and iconography have been widely studied, a systematic connection of these factors with the linguistic perspective has hardly been attempted, e.g. through the analysis of specific linguistic structures or the repetition of specific words and figures of speech, which could remind the people of the value of emotional reactions in their progress towards salvation.

The talk examines these and other aspects, using examples of late-medieval dramatic and non-dramatic texts set in dialogue with some co-temporary artistic productions, to unravel the mechanisms through which pathos was produced and employed with mainly religious, but also political aims.

## 3 May Mary Carruthers: (New York University; University of Oxford) “The Geometry of Creativity: Using Diagrams in the Middle Ages”

This lecture will explore the close relationships in medieval creative practice among geometric shapes, meditation, and the human ability to create original works. Focused on materials crafted in the twelfth century chiefly on the basis of Biblical texts, and then disseminated widely during the thirteenth century, I will investigate the fundamental cognitive insight of medieval diagram makers, that shape and pattern not only envision what we already know, but invite us to discover surprising logical relationships that can provoke our thinking in new ways.



## 10 May Helen Cooper (University of Cambridge) “The Living and the Dead” (the ‘three living and the three dead’, the Dance of Death, and the Towneley play of Lazarus)



The preoccupation with death in the premodern age often took the form of images, notably those of the Three Living and the Three Dead, the Dance of Death, and the cadaver tomb. This paper will look at some of the texts associated with each of those images, and also at a further text that relates to them in some unexpected ways: the play of the Raising of Lazarus in the Towneley Cycle.

## 17 May Deirdre Jackson (Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge) “The Colours of Fortune”

Capable of granting riches and honours and abruptly withdrawing her favours, the capricious figure of Fortune, inspired by the pagan goddess, was one of the most alarming constructs inherited by medieval thinkers from their Roman predecessors. From Boethius onwards, writers and artists sought to describe the paradoxical nature of Fortune, personified as a female figure whose only stable characteristic was her mutability. Among the attributes assigned to Fortune were a crown signalling her sovereignty over mortal affairs, a blindfold underscoring her indifference and disregard for merit, multiple hands ready to reward or ruin, and, above all, her perpetually turning wheel. As outlined in this talk, in addition to these overt emblems, colour played a major part in medieval conceptions of Fortune. To signal her variability, artists sometimes depicted her with two faces (one light and one dark), painted one side of her face black and the other white, and clothed her in bi- or multi-coloured gowns. In these depictions of Fortune, meaning is dependent on combinations of colours, rather than attributes alone. Focusing on fifteenth-century France, this paper examines the strategic deployment of colours by leading illuminators who transformed and reinvigorated the venerable symbol of Fortune, including the Luçon Master (fl. c.1400-1415), Jean Colombe (c.1430-1493) and Jean Bourdichon (1457-1521).

