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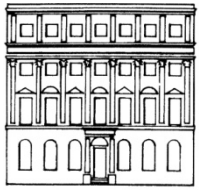

BULLETIN

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Matthew Champion and Julia Crispin:
Medieval History Seminar
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Medieval History Seminar. Conference organized by the German Historical Institute London and the German Historical Institute Washington and held at the GHIL, 10–12 October 2013. Conveners: Stuart Airlie (University of Glasgow), Michael Borgolte (Humboldt University Berlin), Patrick Geary (Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton), Stefan Hördler (GHIW), Ruth Mazo Karras (University of Minnesota), Cornelia Linde (GHIL), Frank Rexroth (University of Göttingen), and Miri Rubin (Queen Mary, University of London).

At the eighth biennial Medieval History Seminar, jointly organized by the German Historical Institutes in London and Washington, twenty participants from UK, US, and German universities presented and discussed their current research. These research projects represented a wide range of methodological approaches, reflecting the participants' different backgrounds, which ranged from political, social, and religious history to literary studies, communication studies, and art history. Each paper was briefly introduced by its author and was the subject of two commentaries by fellow participants. The papers were then discussed in plenum, allowing for rich and fruitful engagement with each paper, within the context of wider reflections on relationships between projects and the broader interests of the seminar's participants. Although the papers employed and combined a number of methodological approaches and utilized an array of source material, particular areas of shared interest emerged. A comparatively large group of the projects was concerned with cultural history and the history of religious cultures, while studies of social and economic history were less represented. A stress on modes of communication and reception, combined with the interpretation of political, visual, and theological languages, showed that recent theoretical emphases on questions of mediation and representation remain central to this group of early career medieval historians.

Several contributions were concerned with a broadly defined intellectual and cultural history of the high and late Middle Ages. Milan Žonca explored the beginnings of the study of Maimonidean philosophy in late medieval Jewish communities in Central Europe, especially in Prague. In his contribution to understandings of intel-

The full conference programme can be found under Events and Conferences on the GHIL's website <www.ghil.ac.uk>.

lectual authority within Jewish communities, Žonca argued that the turn to philosophical texts in the late fourteenth century was stimulated by internal Jewish developments as well as external influences from contemporary Christian intellectual culture. Continuing this focus on communities and authority, Nicholas Youmans discussed the definition of early Minorite obedience and its development, arguing that increasing institutionalization of the order during the thirteenth century gradually changed the meanings of obedience. Charismatic understandings of the early Franciscans were gradually overshadowed by hegemonic strategies. Like Youmans, Torsten Edstam devoted his paper to changes in meaning over time, particularly changes in the reception of the writings of the twelfth-century theologian Hugh of St Victor within reforming monastic communities in the fifteenth century. Focusing on Hugh's texts at the Benedictine Abbey of Melk, Austria, Edstam argued that the interests of this particular community in linking discipline to love of God shaped the transmission of Hugh's work.

Reform and reform texts were likewise the focus of contributions by Matthew Champion and Sebastian Dümling. Champion's paper used the writings of the Louvain theologian Peter de Rivo to explore the ways in which the concept of time was created and experienced within reformed monastic communities of fifteenth-century Brabant. Arguing for a history of time which considers explicit reflections on time alongside the rhythms of human action, his contribution described the production and maintenance of a liturgical self in late medieval reform. Dümling's paper turned from the liturgical implications of reform to the construction of expertise and experts within a complicated body of texts devoted to political and ecclesiastical reform in the fifteenth century. In these texts, university-educated experts are presented as a means of reform, and failures of expertise are castigated; knowledge and experts emerge as a social good which offers a pathway to managing change and contingency. The role of experts and the reception of the past was also central to the paper by Joseph Lemberg. Addressing debates over the interpretation of Charlemagne in 1935, Lemberg's paper focused on the successful career of the German medievalist Friedrich Baethgen. Negotiating the poles of race and Reich ideology, Baethgen rehabilitated the idea of Charlemagne as a founder of the German Empire against the attacks of Alfred Rosenberg. Lemberg's paper accorded with the ple-

nary address by Stuart Airlie, who discussed the complex and mediated reception and projection of medieval power and rulership in the twentieth century, through reflections on Percy Ernst Schramm and Aby Warburg.

Questions of authority, knowledge, and the production of value mentioned in the preceding papers were pursued more closely in a trio of papers dealing with church structures, politics, and canon law. Étienne Doublier examined the use of indulgences by Pope Gregory IX, arguing that indulgences served as an efficient political instrument which supported and shaped the newly founded mendicant orders, particularly through crusade sermons, the inquisition, and the cult of the saints. Jeffrey Wayno analysed the communication practices and strategies of Pope Alexander III during the schism of 1159 and the role of Eberhard, Archbishop of Salzburg, in that conflict. Wayno's particular emphasis lay in the importance of the Archbishop's information networks for the Pope. Strategies of communication, this time in legal settings, were a theme for Emily Corran, who examined the function and the development of oaths of calumny in thirteenth-century canon law. She argued that the oath had a limited practical impact on court decisions. Instead it functioned as a statement of the ethical values of the ecclesiastical courts in the face both of increasing professionalization of the law and the concomitant danger of morally questionable legal practice.

Legally and ethically questionable inquisitorial practice emerged in Eugene Smelyansky's investigation of itinerant inquisitors in the fourteenth century. Smelyansky's paper focused on the means by which one such inquisitor, Heinrich Angermeier, negotiated and constructed his inquisitorial power and practice in the persecution of Waldensians in late fourteenth-century Augsburg. Smelyansky's largely cultural-historical analysis of late medieval urban persecution of heresy was balanced by investigations of urban and communal social structures in the papers by Dana Durkee and Lilach Assaf. Taking fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Norwich as an example, Durkee examined questions of social mobility in the late medieval English town. Revising theories of mercantile domination of guilds in Norwich, Durkee argued for the importance of weavers' guilds in Norwich's civic elite and traced examples of social mobility within these groups. Assaf's examination of Jewish memorial books explored social structures and gender relations in German Jewish

communities from the thirteenth century onwards by means of naming practices, leading her to suggestive conclusions concerning changes in women's positions within families and Ashkenazi communities.

In contrast to the lives of these Jewish women, Linda Dohmen's paper examined the women of the Carolingian court. Using Richardis, wife of Emperor Charles III, as a case study, Dohmen examined accusations of sexual impropriety against the wives of Carolingian rulers. She focused on the political implications of those accusations and emphasized the explanatory value of their political discourse for relations between Emperors and Carolingian elites. This emphasis on rule, as practised and performed, continued in three papers examining the complexities of hegemony in fifteenth-century Europe. Duncan Hardy explored lateral interactions between political actors, such as regional leagues and alliances, in the south-western Holy Roman Empire. Arguing against exclusively vertical analyses of imperial action, Hardy used the example of Emperor Sigismund to show how rulers could instrumentalize horizontal structures for political ends. Hardy's emphasis on the mechanics of horizontal relations was complemented by Daniela Kah's examination of self-representation and strategic communication in the imperial cities of Augsburg, Lübeck, and Nuremberg. Combining communication studies and art history, Kah interpreted the ways in which imperial presence was constructed and negotiated in civic architecture and town planning in the second half of the fifteenth century. Like Kah's paper, Julia Crispin's paper straddled the disciplines of political history and art history. Through a close examination of the manuscripts illuminated in Paris for John of Bedford, regent of France from 1422 to 1435, Crispin interpreted their function and use as devotional aids and pedagogical tools, showing their representations of politically central ideals of lineage and Lancastrian rule in fifteenth-century France.

Such questions of cultural interchange, transfer, and interaction were the subject of a final group of papers spanning an array of settings from early medieval Rome to early sixteenth-century Ethiopia. Maya Maskarinec's examination of the introduction of the cults of Eastern soldier–saints to early medieval Rome showed how these militant saints were shaped by, and responded to, the needs and ideals of changing communities, particularly the Byzantine presence

in Rome. In turn, these soldier–saints aided the development of Rome's new Christian topography. Moving northwards, Jan Clauß's paper examined the texts of Theodulf, Bishop of Orléans and scholar at the court of Charlemagne. Theodulf introduced specific Visigothic traditions and modes of communication, shaping Frankish court and scholarly culture. Christopher Braun was the sole historian of the medieval Arab world. His paper examined the enigmatic genre of handbooks for treasure-hunting in Egypt. These guides, which provide instruction for finding buried treasure and for the occult rituals associated with extracting it, present a window into the widespread phenomenon of treasure-hunting in the medieval world. Finally, in a paper based on the material culture of late medieval Ethiopia, Verena Krebs showed how European visual culture was received at the Christian court of the Emperor of Ethiopia in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Through textual traces of European artists at the Ethiopian court, as well as surviving visual materials, Krebs shone a light on this complex and as yet under-researched world of cultural exchange and contact.

The seminar concluded with a wide-ranging discussion, led by Patrick Geary, on the purposes and methods of historical research. Debate about the purposes of history, and its social and cultural roles, led to reflections on the importance of public history from a variety of participants. This emphasis on the participation of historians in public life was mirrored by a strong emphasis on the important role of teaching in academic life. The role of teaching in maintaining a vibrant public discourse of history in turn generated reflections on the ways in which research can be tied to both dissemination and teaching. Yet, as several participants insisted, research also exists as a contribution to the longer history of academic discourse, emerging in unexpected ways at unexpected times to challenge and supplement later historical practice.

The 2013 seminar saw the retirement of Patrick Geary and Michael Borgolte from their leading roles in the Medieval History Seminar. It was fitting, then, that the final discussions closed with warm thanks for their rigorous dedication in mentoring early career medieval historians, and for their extraordinarily distinguished service to fostering international dialogue in the study of the medieval world.

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