

## **Oxford Medieval Graduate Conference 2020: Translation**

It was appropriate, but entirely accidental, that this year's Oxford Medieval Graduate Conference, focused on 'Translation', partly fell on the feast day of St Jerome, the translator of the Vulgate Bible. Originally planned for 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> April, the conference was itself translated twice: first to 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> September, and then, when in-person meeting proved impossible, online. The OMGC, now in its sixteenth iteration, is Oxford's main interdisciplinary conference run for and by graduate medievalists, and each year its one-word theme is chosen by the delegates of the previous conference. It offers a friendly place for people at the very start of their academic careers to get experience at presenting papers, and to get to know people in their cohort across many universities.

This year's edition of the conference was, of course, unlike any other, and we are very grateful for the patience and good-will of our speakers in bearing the repeated alterations to the format of the conference as we responded to changing advice during the pandemic. We sought to replicate as closely as possible the experience of an in-person conference, with slightly shorter papers and questions after each panel. The OMGC always has graduate attendees from around the world, and this year was no exception, with speakers coming from as far apart as Canada and Israel, as well as throughout the UK – the only difference this year is that most of them gave their papers from their home countries. The online-only format of the conference also allowed a very broad audience to attend from all kinds of locations and with a variety of interests, while we had well over 150 registrations and high attendance at the different panels. Each day closed with an address from one of our two keynote speakers: Dr Mirela Ivanova, a JRF at University College, and Professor Ad Putter, from the University of Bristol, and we are very grateful to both for contributing their time to the conference.

The topic of 'Translation' was taken in very imaginative ways by our sixteen speakers across the two days (all panels, keynotes, and more were live-tweeted under the hashtag #OMGC2020). These included, as might be expected, discussions of translations between languages, whether into Latin from the Greek of Pseudo-Dionysius, or in the multiple options offered by Wycliffite psalm translations, but also papers on how images made by Pisan prisoners in Genoa to accompany manuscripts might be related (or not) to the texts they illustrate, on (mis)understandings of Arabic philosophy by Albert the Great, and on the meanings associated

with the placement and movement of relics, such as those of St Alban, or the attempted co-opting of sanctity and memorialisation by Beatrix von Holte's arm reliquary. Other papers discussed the difficulties that medieval translators faced in making their translators, and which modern translators have to overcome in understanding set phrases or proverbs in medieval texts, and, elsewhere, it was proposed that bilingualism could be widespread at all levels of medieval society, as seen in the commonplace book of Robert Reynes of Acle. Our speakers came from many disciplines, including History, English, Medieval Languages, Philosophy, and, possibly for the first time at an OMGC, Fine Art. Most papers were recorded, and we hope soon to publish these so that those who weren't able to attend the conference will be able to see what our speakers had to say.

The Oxford Medieval Graduate Conference would not have been possible without its committee and its sponsors. The conference sponsors (the Society for the Medieval Mediterranean, the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities; and the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature) provided the necessary support for us to run an online conference of this size. The organisers are all postgraduate Oxford medievalists from different Faculties (History, English, and Medieval and Modern Languages): Jose Maria Andres Porras, Sarah Bridge, Helen Lawson, Alexander Peplow, Henry Tann, and Sophie Thorup. We look forward to next year's conference on 'Memory'. To keep updated follow us on Twitter @OxMedGradConf!