Bodies in flux: Rewriting the Body in Medieval Literature, Art, and Culture 1000-1450
20th May 2017, University of Warwick

Keynote Speakers:
Dr Miranda Griffin (St Catharine’s College, Cambridge),
Dr Robert Mills (University College London) & Dr Debra Strickland (University of Glasgow)

Follow the day’s events:
@medievalwarwick #bodiesinflux
### Conference Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.30-10.00</strong></td>
<td><em>Registration, Tea and Coffee, Opening Remarks</em> (Wolfson 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### First Session  
**Parallel panels 10.00-11.30**

**Panel 1: Species Encounters** – Chair: Liam Lewis (Wolfson 3)
- **Eleanor Hodgson** (University of Southampton), ‘Disguised, transformed, or trapped bodies? Questioning voluntary and reversible metamorphosis in the Guillaume de Palerme animal-skin motif’
- **Harriet Jean Evans** (University of York), ‘Shaking ears and warrior cattle: mutual transformation between domestic animals and humans in the Íslendingasögur’
- **Philippa Carter** (University of York), ‘Embodying excess: the body of the giant in the Middle English popular romances’

**Panel 2: Seizing The Unruly Body** – Chair: Christiania Whitehead (Wolfson 1)
- **Bonnie Millar** (University of Nottingham), ‘Hearing and Authority: Auditory transformations in the Middle Ages’
- **Aisling Reid** (Queen’s University Belfast), ‘Carnal Visuality and the Evil Eye in Late Medieval Italy’

| **11:30-11.45** | *Tea and coffee* (Wolfson 1)                                        |

#### Second Session  
**Parallel panels 11.45-13.15**

**Panel 1: Divine Encounters** – Chair: Jane Sinnett-Smith (Wolfson 3)
- **Cher Casey** (University of York), ‘Making Matter of the Mind: reconstructing the medieval cranial anatomy of Cologne’s 11,000 Holy Virgin skull relics’
- **Jonah Coman** (University of St Andrews), ‘Grimestone’s book, Grimestone’s body: volatile matter and creation of identity in the Advocates MS 18.7.21
- **Sophie Kelly** (University of Kent), ‘Diabolical or Divine?: The Three-headed Trinity in the St John’s Psalter (St John’s College, Cambridge, MS K 26)’

**Panel 2: (Dis)membered** – Chair: Linda Paterson (Wolfson 1)
- **Emma Campbell** (University of Warwick), ‘In the Cut: Reading Mutilation in Philippe de Rémi’s La Manekine’
- **Pamela Diaz** (Hamilton College), ‘Feeling Cut Off: Allegory, Aesthetics and Castration in the Roman de la Rose’
- **Catherine Coffey** (Queen’s University Belfast), ‘The body fighting the flesh in Mechthild von Magdeburg’s Das fließende Licht der Gotthei’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.15-14.15</td>
<td>Lunch (Wolfson 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>**Third Session **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Parallel panels</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.15-15.30</td>
<td><strong>Panel 1: Thinking Beyond the Body</strong> – Chair: Iman Sheeha (Wolfson 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sebastian Kleinschmidt</strong> (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), ‘Embodying Salvation – Crossing the Boundary Between the Narrative and the Reader in Middle English Visions of the Afterlife’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Marco Nievergelt</strong> (University of Warwick), ‘Theory vs. Experience: first-person narrative and the body-soul problem in scholasticism and poetry’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Panel 2: (Trans)historical Change</strong> – Chair: Sarah Wood (Wolfson 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Blake Gutt</strong> (King’s College, University of Cambridge), ‘Bodily transformation, continuity and change in Tristan de Nanteuil’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sophie Conaghan-Sexon</strong> (University of Glasgow), ‘Why Do Women Need a Female Christ?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.30-16.00</td>
<td>Tea and coffee (Wolfson 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Roundtable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00-18.00</td>
<td>Chair: Emma Campbell (Wolfson 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Miranda Griffin</strong> (St Catharine’s College, University of Cambridge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Robert Mills</strong> (University College London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Debra Strickland</strong> (University of Glasgow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Featuring presentations and discussion from our keynote speakers on the theme of bodily transformation in the Middle Ages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.00-19.00</td>
<td>Closing Remarks and Wine Reception (Wolfson 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>Conference dinner (<strong>Xananas</strong>, Warwick Plaza)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome to *Bodies in Flux*!

We are delighted to welcome you to the University of Warwick for this interdisciplinary conference on the theme of bodily transformation in the Middle Ages.

This conference promises to be an exciting event, drawing scholars from all manner of disciplines with a special interest in medieval bodies, what they meant, what they continue to mean, and how they can shed new light on our understanding of the Middle Ages.

Today’s events have been generously supported by the Warwick Humanities Research Centre, the Society for French Studies, and the Department of French Studies in the School of Modern Languages at the University of Warwick. Extra tea and coffee breaks have been generously provided by the Library’s Postgraduate Community Engagement team. We would also like to thank staff at the University of Warwick Library, and at Warwick Food and Drink, without whom today would not have been possible.

Most of all, however, we would like to thank you for supporting this conference, whether through submission of abstracts, assistance in organizing the conference, or attendance as delegates. We were overwhelmed with responses of interested participants in all aspects of the conference, which attests not only to the great interest in the field, but also to the value that such discussions hold for academic research into the past. We hope that today provides an opportunity to gain a deeper access into this subject, and to create new connections and inspiration for research.

If you are on social media, please join us on Twitter @medievalwarwick using the hashtag #bodiesinflux if panelists are willing. We are excited at the prospect of discussions starting today and extending well into the future, so do keep in touch once the day is over!

Warm regards,

Liam Lewis and Jane Sinnett-Smith
HRC Doctoral Fellows at the University of Warwick
Abstracts

First Session, Panel 1: *Species Encounters*

Eleanor Hodgson

**Disguised, transformed, or trapped bodies? Questioning voluntary and reversible metamorphosis in the Guillaume de Palerne animal-skin motif**

The late twelfth-century Old French anonymous romance *Guillaume de Palerne* has been the subject of a growing body of criticism over the past decade in which scholars have questioned the representation of metamorphosis in the text. The work features a werewolf, Alphonse, whose lycanthropic state is paralleled in the narrative by the quasi-transformation of the eponymous hero and his beloved (and later of his long-lost mother) who all don animal skins in order to conceal their human form. Recent studies, such as those of Griffin (2015), Small (2013), and Ferlampin-Acher (2012), have discussed the way in which the representation of humans in animal skins in *Guillaume* raises questions of identity, doubling, and disguise. In particular, the animal-skin motif is most often seen as mimicking the werewolf’s transformation, as the three humans voluntarily adopt an animal form which they can remove at will. However, close analysis of the depiction of the lovers in the skins reveals a more complex relationship between the seemingly reversible disguises and the werewolf’s involuntary hybrid form.

This paper will compare and contrast the figures whose human bodies are ‘in flux’ in *Guillaume*, examining the way in which the poet manipulates images of transformed humans in order to question the permanence and reversibility of metamorphosis in the narrative. This analysis will reveal an ambiguous picture of hybridity in *Guillaume*, which will in turn facilitate discussion of the notions of doubling and correspondence highlighted by the zoomorphic transformations in this intriguing text.

Eleanor Hodgson completed her PhD in medieval French literature in July 2015 at the University of Sheffield, where she had also completed a BA in French and Music and a Masters in Medieval French. Her doctoral thesis focused on exploring the anonymous romance Guillaume de Palerne as a self-reflexive text in which the processes of romance production and reception are reflected in the narrative’s themes of transformation, doubling, and recognition. Since September 2015 Eleanor has been teaching French and German in a Devon Secondary school as part of the programme ‘Researchers in Schools’, including running medieval French sessions with sixth-formers.

Harriet Jean Evans

**Shaking ears and warrior cattle: mutual transformation between domestic animals and humans in the *Íslendingasögur***

The medieval *Íslendingasögur* contain many episodes in which the boundary between human and animal is blurred. Humans become pigs, cattle become warriors, the dead flesh of animals take the place of human figures, and the spirit of a dead man comes back as a bull to avenge the killing of the man’s son. While the bodies of animals and humans are depicted as interchangeable and fluid in these texts, they are also tangible and physical entities, and often treated to naturalistic descriptions, grounding these literary animals in their physical counterparts.
Two fourteenth-century sagas in particular, Harðar saga, and Gull-Póris saga, contain episodes in which magical illusions are cast in an attempt to allow animals to defend the farm in the form of humans, and humans to escape an attack in the shape of animals. This reversal of the relations of care and protection in domestic animal-human relationships may suggest that the relations of care were perceived as mutual, two-way networks, in which animals and humans required each other in order to survive. This paper will adopt an interdisciplinary approach to these episodes, considering the presence of animal bodies in the spaces of medieval Icelandic society, and the influence of the physical world and lived experience on the formation of literary narratives.

Harriet Jean Evans is a PhD candidate at the University of York funded by the Wolfson Foundation. Her interdisciplinary PhD research focusses on relationships between humans and domestic animals in Viking-age and medieval Iceland, and the textual representations of these relationships. In particular, she considers the spatial aspects of these relationships, and the network of animals, humans, and place on the farmsteads depicted. Her thesis is co-supervised by Dr Matthew Townend and Dr Steve Ashby.

Philippa Carter

Embodying excess: the body of the giant in the Middle English popular romances

In the Middle English romance Bevis of Hampton, the eponymous hero is confronted by a body altogether too large to be human. Marvelling at the giant’s height, Bevis asks whether all the men of his town are ‘as meche’ as he. The giant explains that, on the contrary, at home he had been ostracized and bullied on account of his dwarfism. What effect on the reader did the author intend by this giddying shift in perspective? What cultural work is performed by the gigantic body in Bevis and the other vernacular romances of late medieval England? This paper addresses these questions by drawing upon current neuroscientific understandings of how the brain gains a working knowledge of the body. The neuroscientific model known as the ‘sensory homunculus’ – a visualization of a human body which inflates a given zone of the body according to the proportion of the cortex devoted to it – is a monstum in which medieval audiences would surely have delighted, and suggests that we share with them a desire to explore the often bizarre experience of human embodiment through distortion and extremes. Examining the ways in which the destabilization of the brain’s ‘body schema’ can trigger a pleasure-giving cognitive dissonance, this paper argues that the romances’ disorientating oscillations of scale – between small and big, feminine and masculine, good and evil, intimacy and alterity – ultimately serve to destabilize the safe quarantine to the excessive body of the giant of all that is ‘to meche’ about humanity.

Philippa Carter is a Masters student in Medieval Studies at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York. She completed her undergraduate degree in History and History of Art at the University of Edinburgh in 2016. Her current project looks at representations of skin in the Middle English romances.
Hearing and Authority: Auditory transformations in the Middle Ages

In both medieval self-narratives and fictional stories hearing and authority can be intrinsically linked. Non-normative hearing patterns and auditory transformations are indicative of virtue, communication with the divine or female authority. Teresa de Cartagena, a fifteenth-century nun in her autobiographical account *Arboleda de los enfermos*, depicts her acquired profound deafness as a virtue, which facilitates her withdrawal from the temptations of worldly vanities and enables her to focus on the path to salvation. Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, who becomes partially deafened through a fight with her husband, is freed from listening to male authority and able to voice her own arguments, confronting male Latinate textual authority. Conversely, the sounds and voices heard by Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen, resembling contemporary accounts of tinnitus and auditory verbal hallucinations, were interpreted as evidence of their transition into vehicles of divine communication. The sensory components of these women’s visions have spawned a number of alternative retrospective modern medical diagnoses ranging from migraine attacks, neurosis, and bipolar disorder to temporal lobe epilepsy and Tourette’s syndrome. However, this paper will examine how through auditory transformations the nun, three mystics, together with the fictional model of the Wife of Bath are translated into authoritative figures in their narratives.

**Bonnie Millar** is currently a researcher at the University of Nottingham. Bonnie has authored a critical study of the “Siege of Jerusalem”, and also published regularly on alliterative poetry, medieval romances, gender theory, medical humanities and sound studies. Recent publications include a paper entitled: “Hero or Jester: Gawain in Middle English Romances and Ballads” in *Le Personage de Gauvain dans la littérature européenne du Moyen Âge*, a chapter on “Key Critics, Concepts & Topics” in the *Continuum Handbook of Medieval British Literature*, “A Measure of Courtliness: Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle” in *Cultures Courtoises en Mouvement: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Congress of the International Society of Courtly Literature* and “Naming and Unnaming: Cynewulf’s Runic Signatures” in *La construcció d’identitats imaginages*. Current projects include the analysis of Tinnitus narratives and a full length study of Gawain in Middle English and Early modern English romances and ballads.

Carnal Visuality and the Evil Eye in Late Medieval Italy

This paper will explore ideas surrounding the evil eye in late medieval and early modern Italy. Drawing on medieval theories of vision, as well as theological texts, it will outline the perceived corporeal capacities of vision and its potential to affect harm. The non-optical qualities of vision were, for instance, demonstrated by the thirteenth century theologian scholar Peter of Limoges, whose study into optics known as the *De Oculo Morali* was translated into Italian and widely circulated. The eighth chapter of his work aligns the various functions of the eyes with each of the seven deadly sins. He warns of the dangers of ‘licentious’ looks between men and women, which can cause both bodily and spiritual damage. The physical capacity of sight is outlined through his example of Holofernes, who was ‘captured’ by the eyes of Judith when he entered her sight. The author draws analogy between the basilisk, whose look kills birds flying in the sky, and women
who look at men and spiritually kill them. The phenomenon is explained in both extramissive and tactile terms; when a woman looks ‘licentiously’ at a man, the prurient fumes which emerge from her heart are emitted through her eyes. These then clash with men’s eyes and penetrate the heart with their ‘corruption’. Women’s fumes are conceptualised in terms of a ‘venereal ray’ which spreads through the eyes like a sexually transmitted disease. Sight in late medieval Italy thus entailed a tactile interaction between bodies and the ‘evil’ eye could enact physical change.

Aisling Reid is based at Queen’s University Belfast, where she successfully defended her 2015 PhD dissertation on the role of material artefacts in the religious practices of late medieval Italy. She specializes in medieval material culture and is particularly interested in confraternal studies.

Second Session, Panel 1: Divine Encounters

Cher Casey

Making Matter of the Mind: reconstructing the medieval cranial anatomy of Cologne’s 11,000 Holy Virgin skull relics

Eight hundred human skulls grace the walls of Cologne’s Golden Chamber in the Church of St Ursula; a further two hundred skulls are displayed in the neighbouring Cathedral Sacristy. Enabled by the 1106 discovery of Cologne’s Agar ursulanus, the extensive Roman cemetery, the cult of the Holy Virgins became a medieval relic phenomenon of unrivalled proportions. Abundant collections of the skull relics from this site and their monumental displays within Cologne’s religious institutions and beyond, demonstrate the elevated significance of the head at this time. Enveloped within layers of form-fitting textiles that often revealed the forehead, these freestanding skulls invite exploration of the (sacred) head in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe. This paper will explore the connections between the reliquaries’ layered textile construction and exposure of bone with anatomical accounts of the human head circulating across Europe in the high middle ages. In addition to the perception of the head as constructed from layers of biological materials protecting the brain, elements of cranial anatomy were often described through literal and metaphoric references to threads, weaving, and fabric. It will be argued that analysis of such descriptions and terminology found within medical writings present considerable insight to the phenomenon of assembling, wrapping and, re-wrapping in textiles and decorated needlework typical of Cologne’s skull reliquaries; this in turn sheds light on the wider understanding of the saints and the reconstruction of their sacred anatomy as present in their reliquaries.

Cher Casey is a History of Art doctoral student at the University of York. She is currently exploring the medieval and early modern textile skull reliquaries of Cologne’s 11,000 Holy Virgins. This interdisciplinary project explores the sacred, cultural, medical, and material elements of these objects within Cologne and throughout Europe. Cher earned her MA from the University of York and her BA from the University of California, Santa Cruz where she taught for six years following her degree. Her interests include sites of religious intersections, intellectual networks, and the visual culture of female cloisters. Outside academia, Cher enjoys leading historic tours of York.
Jonah Coman

**Grimestone’s book, Grimestone’s body: volatile matter and creation of identity in the Advocates MS 18.7.21**

While Friar Grimestone’s manuscript (Edinburgh, NLS Advocates MS 18.7.21, c.1372) is generally known for its wealth of vernacular religious lyrics and preacher tags, no scholar has yet approached the small, rugged manuscript as material artefact worthy of study. A Franciscan preacher’s handbook, the manuscript reveals under closer inspection a deep sensibility to the production of body, identity and gender, through the experience of the material world and its boundaries. Grimestone, the creator, binder and first owner of the manuscript, seems to have been extremely preoccupied with the ontological condition of the human and the sacred bodies. By studying the Christocentric devotion of Grimestone, I discovered a sophisticated understanding of human and divine identity predicated on the Chalcedonian body, and at the same time, the Franciscan’s solution to the desire of integration into this sacred body.

I will argue that, through transgressive replacements, the object of the book becomes the meeting place of two bodies, standing witness for a Christian mystical materialism. As the personal handbook of a mendicant friar sworn to poverty, the manuscript becomes an appendix of the Franciscan’s body, and by this, a conduit for metamorphosis and transformation: a volatile object. Using as main theoretical tool the notion of ‘the extended mind’, I argue that the trifold physicality that the preacher’s notebook stands witness (Grimestone’s book, Grimestone’s body and Christ’s body) is effecting a queer transformation of bodies. This way, I show how Grimestone’s literary and physical practices regarding his reading can be mapped onto the material artefact as locus for transformation.

**Jonah Coman** is an SGSAH-funded second-year Medieval Studies PhD student at the University of St Andrews. He is continuing research on the topic of his master’s, developed at the same institution under the supervision of Drs Bettina Bildhauer and Kathryn Rudy. Jonah is interested in pain and torture in late medieval crucifixions, and in how these relate to gender and its expression.

Sophie Kelly

**Diabolical or Divine?: The Three-headed Trinity in the St John’s Psalter (St John’s College, Cambridge, MS K 26)**

The holy body of the Trinity was thought by some medieval theologians to defy anthropomorphic or corporal representation: as Augustine stated in his *De Trinitate*, the concept of a God who is both three persons and one, though fundamental to the Christian faith, is at the same time an ‘unimaginable mystery’. Yet throughout the Middle Ages artists increasingly turned to more inventive visual forms in order to ‘imagine’ the body of the Trinitarian God. This paper will address arguably the most unusual of these artistic solutions, the three-headed Trinity. This iconography became a popular way to represent the Trinity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but the earliest extant example, a full-page illumination from the St John’s Psalter (St John’s College Cambridge, MS K 26, f. 9r and 9v), was made in England in the late thirteenth century, and is one of only a handful of examples of three-headed Trinities to date from before the fifteenth century. This paper will situate the three-headed Trinity in the St John’s Psalter within the wider culture of the period, exploring the connections between this ‘heavenly’ three-headed being and other
representations of ‘three-headed’ bodies, such as that of the anti-Christ and the giant. Engaging with theories on bodily deformity and the monstrous, and particularly the work of scholars such as Debra Strickland, Jeffrey Cohen and Robert Mills, the paper will ask how an iconographic device typically used to represent the diabolical and the ‘other’ was reconciled with the ‘divine’ body of the Trinity.

Sophie Kelly is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies at the University of Kent. Her research explores the iconography of the Trinity in English and French Gothic art. Sophie’s project examines the ways in which artists found solutions to the complex and paradoxical idea that God is ‘three persons in one’, exploring the relationships between theological interpretations of the Trinity and its visual representation across a variety of different media. The thesis specifically explores more unusual or strange Trinitarian images, such as the ‘three-headed’ or ‘three-faced’ Trinity, addressing why artists turned to more atypical and inventive designs to express the problematic concept of the triune God. Sophie’s PhD project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Second Session, Panel 2: (Dis)membered

Emma Campbell

In the Cut: Reading Mutilation in Philippe de Rémi’s La Manekine

This paper focuses on the transformation of the body as this occurs through mutilation, considering not only how this is represented in one medieval romance, but also how this affects other, more material aspects of the reading process.

Philippe de Rémi’s thirteenth-century French romance La Manekine is the story of a young Hungarian princess called Joie: a heroine threatened by incestuous desire who, in an attempt to dissuade her father from marriage, amputates her own hand. In her exile from the court where she grew up, this amputation gives Joie the name by which she comes to be known – ‘Manekine’ – a name that reference’s the heroine’s mutilation and inverts the joyful meaning of her original name.

My paper examines the significance of mutilation in the text on two different levels, arguing that the thematics of amputation and cutting in the romance extend to questions of readership and material transmission. Philippe de Rémi’s works are contained in a single, illuminated manuscript of c. 1300: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, fr. 1588. Readers of this manuscript have left a number of traces on the manuscript pages, including marginal highlighting and underlining of text; the parchment of a number of folios is also cut or stitched, a feature that appears to be more frequent in the section of the codex containing La Manekine. Drawing on Derrida’s discussions of cutting as a structural feature of operations of reading and writing, my paper explores the interconnections between the activities of cutting, amputating, and grafting in the manuscript and the significance of these gestures as they are depicted in the text itself.

Emma Campbell is Associate Professor of French at the University of Warwick. She is the author of Medieval Saints’ Lives: The Gift, Kinship and Community in Old French Hagiography (2008) and co-editor of Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory (2012) and of Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality and Sight in Medieval Text and Image (2004). Her next book, which comes out of
a project supported by an AHRC fellowship, explores the relationship between translation and untranslatability in medieval francophone texts and manuscripts.

Pamela Diaz

Feeling Cut Off: Allegory, Aesthetics and Castration in the Roman de la Rose
In Jean de Meun’s 13th century continuation of the Roman de la Rose, the castration stories of Origen, Saturn, and Abelard become allegories for the allegorical method itself, understood as a fertile cutting-off resulting in the proliferation of meaning. Similarly, the single rosebud, the object of the male lover’s dream-quest, represents the female genitalia—singed-out, protected, and completely decontextualized from the absent female subject. This theme of cutting off is represented in the 15th century Rose manuscript (Bodl. Douce 195), where a large, colorful miniature depicts an otherwise-clothed Origen, front and center, preparing to emasculate himself, genitalia out and knife in hand. Though this image anticipates the violent, self-inflicted gesture, I will argue that because it is suspended, it provokes a sense of detachment, leaving us with an aesthetic object to contemplate: the violence of the gesture never comes but it is as if the object is already detached. This sense of detachment is likewise mirrored in the marginia of a 14th century Rose manuscript (BnF Fr. 25526) showing a nun picking fruit from what might be called a “phallus tree.” A pattern of distortion, reframing, and decontextualizing emerges, suggesting that we might read dismemberment as an aesthetic mode as well as an allegorical tool resonating with Jean de Meun’s literary aesthetic of leaving action and meaning, and even his readers, in suspense before finally reshaping or redirecting them.

Pamela Diaz is Visiting Instructor of French at Hamilton College, New York. She graduated from Cornell University before undertaking doctoral work at the University of California, Berkeley. Her thesis examines the hermeneutics of hunger in the Roman de Renart through the lenses of visual and verbal proof, space and place, the unruliness of language, and the instability of bodies. She has begun a project on dismemberment in medieval textual and visual culture, and has published on frontier epic in El Cid y el Mundo Épico.

Catherine Coffey

‘Mit zwoelf tugenden stritet si wider das vleisch’: the body fighting the flesh in Mechthild von Magdeburg’s Das fließende Licht der Gottheit

A landmark text in the history of medieval female-authored mysticism, Mechthild von Magdeburg’s Das fließende Licht der Gottheit (FL) sees the narrative voice oscillate between ambivalence, antagonism and acceptance, as regards its relationship with the physical body. The distinction and conflict within the body itself, between lîp and vleisch, is quickly established. Struggling to rise above this battle is the voice of the soul, in its quest to achieve unio mystica with God. Yet Mechthild’s visions of this interaction are markedly embedded in the physical, and the translation of these experiences to the page necessitate extensive use of bodily imagery.

Separating the body into several entities, including the soul and senses, Mechthild cloaks each component of the human being in at least some form of physicality. The aim of this paper is not simply to draw attention to the complex and often fraught nature of the manner in which the body is dismembered, reconstructed and translated in the FL. More specifically, the manner in which the different “voices” extant in Das fließende Licht der Gottheit move from the embodied to the disembodied and vice versa will be considered. In order to investigate this thoroughly, each
facet will first be viewed through the prism of gender, thereby highlighting the significance of Mechthild’s own female body in the translation of her physically-oriented visionary experiences.

**Catherine Coffey** completed her BA in French & German at Brasenose College, Oxford. She further developed the interest in medieval studies garnered here during a MA in Medieval Studies at Queen’s University Belfast, where she also undertook a MA in Translation Studies. Catherine is now completing her PhD at Queen's, focusing on Mechthild von Magdeburg’s Das fließende Licht der Gottheit through the lenses of translation, gender and reception theories.

**Third Session, Panel 1: Thinking Beyond the Body**

**Sebastian Kleinschmidt**

**Embodying Salvation – Crossing the Boundary Between the Narrative and the Reader in Middle English Visions of the Afterlife**

It is a commonplace that the bodies of the souls inhabiting the afterlife and sometimes also those of the traveling visionaries play a significant role in and for visions. The transformative nature of the punishment exacted on these spiritual bodies has been stressed, the ‘popular’ nature of the depiction of them pointed out; thus, research has, so far, mainly focused on the story level. The connection created between (the bodies of) the narrative and (the bodies of) the readers or listeners, however, has not been addressed yet. I will consider this special relationship by looking at different Middle English visions of the afterlife, e.g. The Vision of Tundale and the Revelation of Purgatory, that enable such a conjunction. My argument is a twofold one: First, I will argue that the focus on the visionary’s ‘physicality’ and their experience, especially when they are suffering in purgatory, facilitates a merging of narrative and physical body, through which the latter is affirmed and transformed, i.e. cleansed. Second, I want to argue that the way the visions are narrated furthers physical involvement of the reader. By considering the medieval practice of reading and memory creation in conjunction to my argument it will become clear that visions did not merely want to entertain through narrating a gruesome and beatific story but were meant to actively transform the reader’s physical and spiritual nature.

**Sebastian Kleinschmidt** studied English/American Studies, Biology (both B.A.), and Medieval and Renaissance Studies with a major in English and minors in German, History, Philosophy and Archaeology (M.A.) at Ruhr University Bochum from 2009 to 2015. Since then he is a member of the DFG-funded research training group “Factual and Fictional Narration” at the University of Freiburg and working on his dissertation “Memoria or Imaginatio? Narrating Salvation in Middle English Visions of the Afterlife”, which analyses the extant Middle English visions of the afterlife from a pragmatic and narratological point of view.

**Marco Nievergelt**

**Can Thought Experiments Backfire? Avicenna’s Flying Man, Intellectual Cognition and the Experience of Allegory in Deguileville’s Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine.**

Avicenna’s ‘Flying Man’ thought experiment in the *De Anima* was frequently used or alluded to by scholastic authors in their discussions of the nature and cognitive faculties of the human soul. The Flying Man owes its popularity to the fact that it could be employed to validate Augustine’s theory
of the soul as an independent substance capable of performing its own cognitive acts without need of the body—a position that came under threat with the consolidation of Aristotelian models of cognition in the thirteenth century. There is at least one vernacular version of the Flying Man, hitherto unnoticed, in Guillaume de Deguileville’s widely circulated, influential allegory, the *Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* (1331 and 1355). But rather than inviting his readers to perform an exercise of mental visualisation of the soul as an independent substance, Deguileville writes a first-person narrative that allows his pilgrim/narrator to *experience* (‘esprouver’, PVH1 I. 6169) the separation of his soul and body, thanks to the operations of Lady Raison. While this literary device enhances the idea of a thought experiment as an actual experience, it proves ultimately self-defeating. The pilgrim’s experience of his own duality is described in distinctively bodily terms, notably by describing how the disembodied pilgrim’s soul, or self, bends down to feel the absent pulse of his inert body. This contradicts the very idea that the Flying Man thought experiment is intended to support, namely the ability of the soul to gain knowledge internally and not through corporeally mediated sense perception. Finally Avicenna’s thought experiment ends up implicitly validating the very proposition it was developed to refute. There are numerous signs that Deguileville realised this, notably his decision to provide an extended, laborious but ultimately inconclusive discussion of the status of mental images in his longer, revised version of the poem. This suggests that far from being easily controlled, allegorical thought experiments easily develop a life of their own, opening up speculative, truly ‘experimental’ possibilities that their original deviser may not have foreseen. Such thought experiments, and allegorical narratives more widely, can easily end up interrogating or dismantling philosophical propositions they were designed to uphold.

Marco Nievergelt specialises in late medieval and early English modern literature, often from a comparative angle (French, Italian, German). He holds an MA degree in German and English language and literature from the University of Lausanne; an MPhil in English from the University of Glasgow; and a Dphil in English from the University of Oxford. His interests include chivalric romance, allegory, and Franco-English cultural and literary relations. His current work focuses on the development of vernacular narrative allegory in the wake of the *Roman de la Rose*, specifically on the philosophical aspects of the tradition and the relation of vernacular narrative to scholastic theories of cognition and significature. He has held various teaching positions at the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne, and research fellowships at the Universities of Lausanne (SNF Ambizione fellow 2012–15), Oxford (visiting fellow Corpus Christi College, 2012–13), and as a EURIAS junior research fellow at the Paris Institute for Advanced Studies (2015–16). He is currently a Senior Teaching Fellow in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies at the University of Warwick.

**Third Session, Panel 2: (Trans)historical Change**

Blake Gutt

**Bodily transformation, continuity and change in *Tristan de Nanteuil*.**

Blanchandine, in the fourteenth-century *chanson de geste, Tristan de Nanteuil*, is a Saracen princess who becomes the wife of the eponymous Tristan, and the mother of his son Raimon. However, by the end of the text’s 23,000+ lines, Blanchandine is now Blanchandin, a Christian king and knight, and the father of another son, Saint Gilles. This transformation involves both mundane and supernatural elements: Blanchandine’s conversion to Christianity is unremarkable, whereas
the intervention of an angel who rewrites her body to become his body is less commonplace (although not without precedent – another chanson de geste, the thirteenth-century Yde et Olive, presents a strikingly similar scenario).

In this paper, I examine the fluctuations of Blanchandin/e’s body and identity throughout the narrative of Tristan de Nanteuil, disentangling the elements of continuity which persist despite the character’s altered embodiment from the changes which s/he experiences. The transformation is propelled by a sacred genealogical imperative, since Jesus wishes Blanchandin to father Saint Gilles. The bodily metamorphosis which is demanded significantly alters both Blanchandin/e’s social positioning and her/his interpersonal relationships: Blanchandin cannot stay with his husband, and must now have a wife of his own. I employ transgender theory as I question the continuity of Blanchandin/e as a coherent personality undergoing both physical rewriting and its social consequences, and explore the resonances and dissonances between modern transition narratives and this medieval French tale of transformation.

Blake Gutt is a third-year PhD student at King’s College, Cambridge, supervised by Professor Bill Burgwinkle. His doctoral thesis, entitled ‘Rhizomes, Parasites, Folds and Trees’, is an investigation of conceptual networks and the ways in which they underlie both text and its manuscript presentation across a range of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century French, Occitan and Catalan literary works. The project explores the resonances of twentieth- and twenty-first-century theorisations of systems with medieval texts, which include saints’ lives, encyclopedic works, and texts featuring characters who can be read as transgender.

Sophie Conaghan-Sexon

‘Why Do Women Need a Female Christ?’

Suzannah Biernoff (2002) writes that in the late medieval period, ‘Christ’s body is semantically unstable. It signifies excessively.’ One of these semantic instabilities is the gendered representation of Christ in art and literature written by or intended for the use of women. This paper uses queer theory to challenge heteronormative assumptions about the presentation and reception of Christ’s gender identity through an examination of the representation of and possible responses to Christ’s wound. In my interdisciplinary approach, I will concentrate on a selection of images in late medieval Books of Hours where Christ’s disembodied side wound is represented in devotional contexts, and contrast these with feminized representations of Christ in the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe.

A number of critics (including Caroline Bynum and Karma Lochrie) have done extensive work on the significance of the feminisation of Christ in late medieval culture. Building on this work, this paper will use queer theory to explore the possible reasons why women would have historically represented Christ as female, and demonstrate how women could benefit from transforming Christ’s body into the feminine.

Whether it be using the female body to portray a queer Christ in late medieval Books of Hours, or to create a queer relationship with the mother Christ in female writing to protect against the threat of rape, this paper asks how the gender of the most culturally significant icon of this period is transformed, and what gender norms are disturbed and dispelled by gendering Christ as female.
**Sophie Sexon** is a 2nd year PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow. Her AHRC funded PhD takes a queer theoretical approach to explore the gendered significance of Christ’s wounds in both late medieval sources and contemporary queer performance art. As part of her practice and research, she performs as her drag king alter ego, Boris Gay, at various venues across Scotland.
Roundtable discussion

Miranda Griffin

Miranda Griffin is the Fellow in French at St Catharine’s College, Cambridge. Her first book, The Object and the Cause in the Vulgate Cycle, was published by Maney in 2005; her second, Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature, was published by OUP in 2015. She has also published articles on the medieval French lai and fabliaux, as well as the Perceforest and the poetry of Christine de Pizan. Her current research interests focus on materiality and the senses in medieval French literature, especially in relation to landscape and journeys.

Robert Mills

Robert Mills is Reader in Medieval Art at University College London and director of UCL’s LGBTQ network qUCL. Author of Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture (2005) and Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages (2015), he has recently completed a book on Derek Jarman’s medievalism entitled Derek Jarman’s Medieval Modern. Current projects include a book on animality and sovereignty and an article on the cult of Saint Eugenia.

Debra Strickland

Dr Debra Higgs Strickland teaches medieval and Renaissance art history at the University of Glasgow and has published extensively on beasts, monsters, and representations of non-Christians in Christian art. She is author of Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology (1995) and editor of The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature (1999). Her other major studies include Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art (2003) and most recently, The Epiphany of Hieronymus Bosch: Imagining Antichrist and Others from the Middle Ages to the Reformation (2016). She is a member of the Advisory Board for a new Medieval Institute Publications series on Monsters, Prodigies, and Demons: Medieval and Early Modern Constructions of Alterity for which she welcomes potential contributions! Her current writing projects include a short study of insects in Renaissance art and a new book on Bosch’s Monsters.