

Skepsi



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BAD BEHAVIOUR IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

The Role of Ecclesiastical Stairs, Galleries and Upper Spaces in Medieval ‘Bad Behaviour’

Toby J. Huitson: University of Kent, Canterbury

‘I do mistake my person all this while’: Blindness and Illusion in *Richard III*

Krista Bonello Rutter Giappone: University of Kent, Canterbury

Robbing Churches and Pulling Beards: The Rebellious Sons of Henry II

Elizabeth J. Anderson: University of Huddersfield

Between Menace and Utility: Handguns in Early Sixteenth-Century Bohemia

Christopher Nicholson: University College London

The Bad Behaviour of Friars and Women in Medieval Catalan *fabliaux* and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*

Jerónimo Méndez: University of Valencia

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Our title, *Skepsi* — which comes from the Ancient Greek 'σκεψις [*skepsis*]' or 'enquiry' and the Modern Greek 'σκέψις [*sképsis*]' or 'thought' — symbolises our will to explore new areas and new methods in the traditional fields of academic research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Originality and creativity in the approach of thought and of texts are crucial for us: to enhance and to promote these aspects will be our contribution to the tremendous range of existing academic publications.



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FOREWORD

I am very pleased to have been invited to introduce this selection of lectures given at the recent *Bad Behaviour in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* post-graduate colloquium organised by the University of Kent's Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

My first duty is to congratulate the organisers on their choice of title — what inspired vagueness! It enabled contributors to address 'a multitude of sins', as, indeed, the present representative sample of papers delivered at the colloquium amply demonstrates.

And the thirteen speakers were equally cosmopolitan — Kent students were well represented, of course, but so were students from other British universities, as well as international researchers from Spain and Italy. We ranged widely chronologically too, from Anglo-Saxon times (Malte Ringer's discussion of anti-social behaviour in three of Wulfstan's homilies), via the consideration of works by such 'mainstream' writers of the European Renaissance as Shakespeare (James Smith) and Tasso (Marianna Orsi), to Joel Swann's fascinating paper on the frequently scurrilous verse libels of the English seventeenth century — by way of early sixteenth-century Bohemian gun-culture (Christopher Nicholson — *within*).

As befits such a multifarious theme, methodological approaches were just as varied, ranging from the old-fashioned comparativists — exemplified in my own art-historical keynote address — to post-structuralists, in Krista Bonello's reading of *Richard III*, both on the page and in performance (*within*).

More than one contributor reminded us that — then as now — bad behaviour was by no means the prerogative of the laity. While Eduardo Santamaria regaled us with examples of late medieval religious misbehaviour in the choir-stalls of Spanish cathedrals, Toby Huitson entertained us with the equally reprehensible misdeeds contemporaneously taking place in the 'upper spaces' of English cathedrals (sleeping it off in the gallery! — *within*). Of course — as medievalists won't need telling — it was above all the lubricious escapades of the 'wandering' friars that inspired many a medieval satire throughout Europe: Jerónimo Méndez's valuable contribution introduced us to some little-known yet compelling parallels in Catalan *fabliaux* with Chaucer's treatment of the mendicants (*within*).

Lastly — but far from leastly — Elizabeth Anderson, in considering the youthful misbehaviour of the rebellious sons of Henry II, reminds us of the importance of symbolic gesture (a subject dear to my own heart) in her *Robbing churches and pulling beards* (*within*).

As the Oldest Contributor (and one of exemplary moral rectitude), it was a truly invigorating experience for me to observe with what vitality the (mostly) younger scholars who animated this colloquium delivered their papers — there is hope yet for historical cultural studies! (And the only bad behaviour I observed at first hand during the colloquium was a cartoon drawn of myself on the lunchtime table-cloth — which I intend to frame and hang on the wall of my retirement home as a fitting memento of a truly inspiring occasion).

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