

NEWSLETTER

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Summer 2016

GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR



Brett Whalen, Director of MEMS

It's a distinct pleasure to mark and celebrate another successful year for the UNC-CH program in Medieval and Early Modern Studies. As you'll see by browsing the pages below, in 2015-16, MEMS continued its mission of fostering premodern studies in a variety of disciplines across campus, bringing distinguished guests to Chapel Hill, holding lectures and colloquia, and offering forms of financial support for faculty and graduate studies. The program's minor is still going strong.

This year, after I stepped down in December, MEMS benefitted immensely from the leadership of its interim director, **Glaire Anderson** (Art History). Next year, as described below, **Jessica Wolfe** (English) will take the reigns. I would like to thank both of them for their past, present, and future service to the program. I would also like to thank the MEMS administrative assistant, **Beth Hasseler**, for her invaluable contribution to running things, along with **Ellen Welch** (Romance Languages) for organizing this year's compact seminar, and **Shayne Legassie** (Comparative Literature) for serving on our grants committee (with Glaire Anderson). MEMS continues to benefit from the generous support of the Senior Associate Dean's office in Fine Arts and Humanities, the History Department staff, and our private donors.

It's been an honor to serve as director of MEMS these last few years—and I am glad to say that the program remains strong and vital heading into the future.

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LECTURES

Every year MEMS sponsors numerous lectures and events on campus.

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COMPACT SEMINAR

MEMS is in its third year of these innovative, interdisciplinary exchanges.

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RESEARCH

MEMS is proud to support the research of UNC faculty and students.

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On behalf of Dr. Terry Rhodes, Senior Associate Dean, Fine Arts and Humanities: the MEMS program is pleased to inform you that DOECL Professor **Jessica Wolfe** has graciously agreed to serve as Director of MEMS for a three-year period, from July 1, 2016-June 30, 2019. After studying at Bryn Mawr College, Cambridge University, and Stanford University (Ph.D.), Jessica Wolfe was hired at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1998, where she is currently Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the Program in Comparative Literature, with affiliated appointments in Classics and Romance Studies (French & Italian). A genuine 'Renaissance' scholar with a wide range of interests including epic

poetry, the reception of classical literature in the Renaissance, the history of scholarship, and the history of science and medicine, Wolfe has published two books, *Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge UP, 2004) and *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes* (Toronto UP, 2015) and is currently co-editing Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, a fascinating 17th c. English encyclopedia of errors about subjects including unicorns and pygmies, as part of the forthcoming *Complete Works of Thomas Browne* to be published by Oxford UP. A native Manhattanite, Jessica Wolfe now lives in Durham with her husband, fellow UNC English professor Reid Barbour, and a rotating series of foster dogs; whenever they can, they enjoy traveling to sites of historical significance to their fields of study, ranging from Rabelais' childhood home in the Loire Valley to the Kepler Museum in Prague.

Dorothy Ford Wiley Crossroads Lecture Series

ON NOVEMBER 11, 2015, Louise Rice (Art History, NYU), presented the Fall DFW Crossroads Lecture, "Poussin and the Elephant: Art, Diplomacy, Curiosity, and the Show Biz of Exotic Animals in Early Modern Europe." In this imaginative and intriguing talk, Rice explored the nature of the exotic and marvelous in Poussin's art and early modern European society, by tracing the long, strange fortunes of an elephant brought to Spain as a royal gift, sent to England, sold to

a French circus, and eventually brought to Italy, where Poussin's encounter with the animal animated his historical painting of Hannibal crossing the Alps. Part detective story, part art historical investigation, and always engaging, Rice's talk showed how an elephant featured in an early modern painting had its own story to tell, enlightening the audience on Poussin's work and the nature of spectacle in early modern Europe.

MEMS | UNC PROGRAM IN MEDIEVAL & EARLY MODERN STUDIES PRESENTS

The Fall 2015 Dorothy Ford Wiley Crossroads Lecture

Poussin and the Elephant:
Art, Diplomacy, Curiosity, and the Show Biz of Exotic Animals in Early Modern Europe

by
Louise Rice
Department of Art History, NYU



Thursday, Nov. 5
6:00 - 7:30
Hamilton Hall 569

ON APRIL 18, 2016, RENATA HOLOD (Art History, University of Pennsylvania) delivered the Spring DFW Crossroads lecture on “Lighting the Great Mosque of Cordoba.” The intersecting polylobed arcades that are key visual elements of the architecture of Islamic Spain, whether in structural actuality or as ornamental designs, have been taken as geometric exercises within the setting of the Iberian Peninsula’s Islamic courts, or later as markers of superior ‘Moorish’ craftsmanship whether on Iberian or Moroccan soil. Yet, as Professor Holod argued, the roots for the genesis of these arcades and patterns may lie in a different sector of experience: cognitive recall and the arts of memory. In this stimulating lecture, Professor Holod discussed the rich potential, as well as the challenges, of applying new digital visualization technologies to historical analysis. Accompanied by fascinating computer reconstructions of the interior of the Great Mosque of Cordoba as it would have been illuminated (naturally and artificially) on specific days of the year in the tenth century, her talk challenged received wisdom about this building’s design,

DFW CROSSROADS 2015-2016

functions, and meanings to medieval viewers and underscored the potential benefits of collaboration between the humanities and sciences, notably computer science and engineering.



ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2015, MEMS cosponsored and helped to organize the inaugural ACC Distinguished Lecture Series, inviting Robin Fleming (History, Boston College) to campus. Drawing upon archeological and textual evidence, Fleming delivered a rich and thought-provoking lecture titled “On the Move in Britain after Rome’s Fall,” challenging commonly held notions about what the “decline and fall of the Roman Empire” looked like in the British Islands. Rather than menacing barbarian invaders destroying civilization, she revealed an historical picture of multi-directional migration and local identities in flux during the economic collapse of Roman imperial power. The audience, suffice it to



say, will never look at the “Dark Ages” the same way again.

Dorothy Ford Wiley Compact Seminars

INAUGURATED IN 2013-14, the DFW Compact Seminars represent an intellectual and professional hybrid—organized thematically, the interdisciplinary seminars are part conference, part colloquium, part workshop. These innovative seminars involve exchanges between UNC faculty and graduate students, as well as outside scholars invited to campus. Ideally, each Compact Seminar acts as a first step in the creation of ongoing collaborations and projects.

PRE-MODERN DIPLOMACY AND THE ARTS

THE THIRD ANNUAL DOROTHY FORD WILEY COMPACT SEMINAR brought together an interdisciplinary group of scholars for a discussion about “Pre-Modern Diplomacy and the Arts” on February 18-19, 2016. Co-organized by **Ellen Welch** (Romance Studies) and graduate student **Ashley Bruckbauer** (Art History), the seminar explored the role of

literary texts, works of visual art, and musical and theatrical performances in fourteenth-through eighteenth-century diplomatic encounters. It aimed to investigate how aesthetic objects have themselves operated as agents of negotiation during a period of intensifying diplomatic contact on a global scale.

The seminar began with a private exhibit of art works

related to diplomacy selected from the Ackland Museum’s collection by Ashley Bruckbauer. It continued with a public conversation on “Diplomacy and the Arts, Then and Now” held in Hyde Hall’s University Room on February 18. In this official kick-off event, seminar participants **Rebekah Ahrendt** (Assistant Professor of Music, Yale), **Nancy Um** (Associate Professor of Art, SUNY-Binghamton), and **John Watkins** (Distinguished

Professor of English and History, University of Minnesota) compared perspectives with three individuals who have participated in contemporary arts-diplomacy projects: **Shirlette Ammons** and **André Barden** (DJ A-Minor), former artists-in-residence of the “Next Level” hip-hop



DFW COMPACT SEMINAR 2016 CONTINUED

Continued... diplomacy program, and retired **Ambassador W. Robert Pearson.**

On February 19, the seminar culminated in a day-long discussion of pre-circulated papers by Ahrendt, Bruckbauer, Um, and Watkins as well as **Melinda Gough** (Associate Professor of English, McMaster University), **Meredith Martin** (Associate Professor of Art, NYU) and **Jane O. Newman** (Professor of German and Comparative Literature, UC-Irvine). While the papers considered a variety of works—from the porcelain flasks of aromatic oils exchanged in the East Indies to paintings and prints representing embassies to the court of Louis XIV to poetry, plays, and opera—the conversation was tightly focused on the aesthetics of diplomatic encounter.

Graduate student participants **Kevin Chovanec** (English) and **Kirsten Cooper** (History) served as respondents and chairs, as did many faculty members from the UNC and Triangle MEMS community, including **Tim Carter** (Music), **Eduardo Douglas** (Art History), **Keith Luria** (History, NCSU), **Mary Sheriff** (Art History), and **Jessica Wolfe** (English).



LOOKING AHEAD

11-13 SEPTEMBER 2016 We are looking forward to the Fall 2016 Compact Seminar, on the topic of *Interrogating the English Portrait: Tudor and Jacobean Portraits in the North Carolina Museum of Art*. Organized by **Dr. Tania String** (Art History), with Graduate Student Assistant: **Miranda Elston** (Art History).

The 2016 MEMS Dorothy Ford Wiley Compact Seminar will bring together an international panel of experts to explore topics related to early modern portraiture through close study of an extraordinary collection of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English portraits in the North Carolina Museum of Art. This unique collaborative event will be held at the North Carolina Museum of Art, in the new exhibition *History and Mystery: Discoveries in the NCMA British Collection*.

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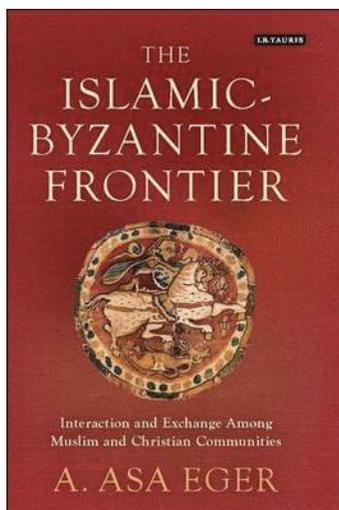
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Contributors to the seminar will include scholars from the National Portrait Gallery, London, the University of Sussex, the University of Southampton, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and the Yale Center for British Art.

The opening event will be a public lecture on Sunday, 11 September 2016 at 2:30 pm in the North Carolina Museum of Art's Auditorium by Professor Maria Hayward (University of Southampton) entitled, *'the apparel oft proclaims the man': The significance of clothing in Elizabethan and Jacobean portraits.*

OTHER MEMS EVENTS

ON 16 JANUARY, 2016 MEMS hosted a Book Colloquium discussing UNC



Greensboro professor **Asa Eger's** *The Islamic-Byzantine Frontier: Interaction and Exchange Among Muslim and Christian*

Communities (I.B. Tauris, 2014). In this award-winning study, Eger reexamines longstanding notions of the contested no-man's land between

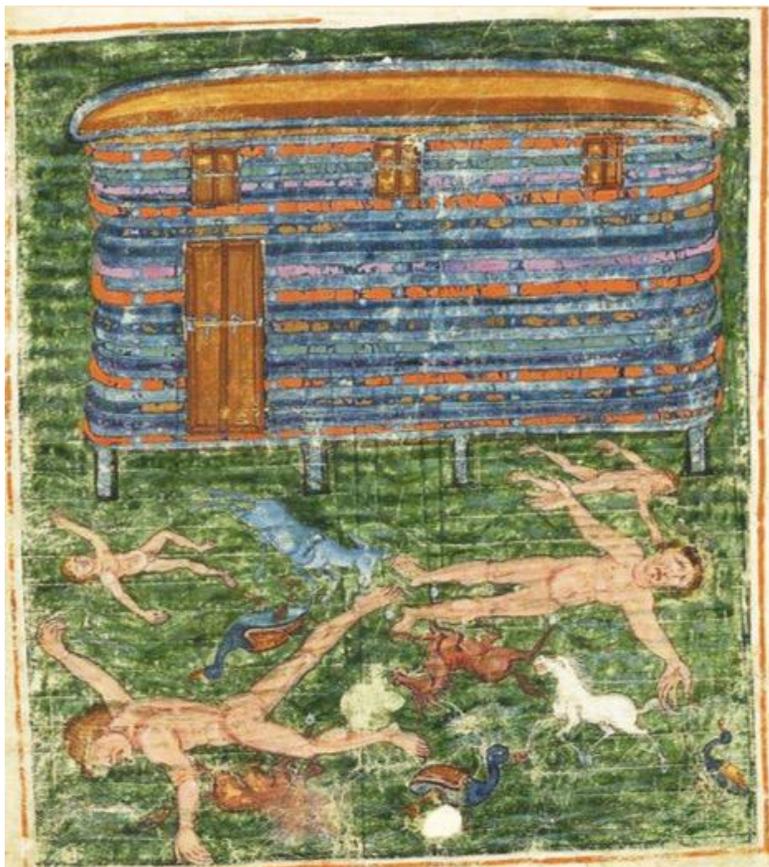


medieval Muslim-Christian territories. He brings new archaeological and ecological perspectives to traditional historical views of the communities that occupied these borders, and provides a more nuanced picture of this complex and key aspect of medieval history. Special guest **Zayde Antrim** (Trinity College, Hartford, CT) served as interlocutor for a stimulating discussion.

ON MARCH 31-APRIL 2, 2016 MEMS co-sponsored the Graduate Romance Association of the Department of Romance Studies conference "Taste and Text(ure)." **Janet Beizer** (Harvard) and **Jack Halberstam** (University of Southern California) delivered the keynote lectures, and the conference also included a presentation by invited artist **Diali Cissokho** of Kaira Ba. Taste and Texture mediate the human encounter of the material world by traversing diverse spaces, times, and contexts, thereby enriching sensory perception. Sounding these five corporeal senses reveals a more profound "sixth" sense that lends psychosomatic, emotional, spiritual, and even supernatural dimension to the human body. Whether exploring the bawdy Carnavalesque of the Renaissance or the textual aesthetics of contemporary global cinema, the 2016 Carolina Conference sought to approach the discovery of the senses within the context of Romance Studies, but from an interdisciplinary perspective.

OTHER MEMS EVENTS CONTINUED

ON MARCH 7, 2016, Chapel Hill welcomed **James Palmer** (History, St Andrews), who spoke on “Climates of Crisis? Apocalypse and Nature in the Early Medieval World.” In this talk, critiquing the use of modern climate models to explicate the description of weather-related phenomenon in medieval texts (and vice versa), Palmer also explored the complex set of attitudes that informed ideas about the natural world, including the possibility that “climate change” (as we might now call it) portended the end of days.



OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, MEMS HAS CONTINUED ITS SUPPORT FOR THE VENERABLE NORTH CAROLINA COLLOQUIUM IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN STUDIES (NCCMEMS).

THIS COLLOQUIUM (which predates UNC’s MEMS program) is an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional effort that is organized each year by graduate students from Duke and UNC. The event brings together graduate students from these two institutions as well as from a variety of different programs across North Carolina and the southeast. The event alternates annually between Duke and UNC.

On February 19-20, 2016, at Duke, the colloquium focused on the theme of “Representations of the Ordinary in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods.” Dr. **C. Jean Campbell** (Emory University) delivered the keynote address, “Drawing the Ordinary, Painting the Extraordinary.” Students from a variety of fields, including history, art history, and philosophy engaged in scholarly exchange on topics ranging from grief and madness, to Jacobean court theater, to early modern court testimonies. We look forward to next year’s colloquium, to be held at UNC!



ON APRIL 7, 2016 MEMS hosted the first Dissertation Workshop Seminar on the topic of “Preternatural Knowledge in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.” The seminar was led by Dr. **Garrett Sullivan** and featured the work of **Katherine Walker**, a PhD Candidate in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at UNC. Dr. Sullivan is Liberal Arts Professor of Research in the Department of English at Penn State and author of such books as *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage*. In addition to the discussion of the play and dissertation chapter the seminar participants also benefited from discussing related professional development issues with Sullivan, such as how to turn a dissertation chapter into an article, and preparing for the job market and academic life.

ON APRIL 15-16, 2016 MEMS co-sponsored the 5th annual UNC-King’s College London (KCL) collaborative graduate student conference on medieval and early modern studies. Devoted to “Old and New Humanism(s),” the conference included keynote speeches by **Dr. Whitney Trettien** (UNC-CH) and **Dr. Lucy Munro** (KCL).

Graduate students from an array of disciplines gave papers that sought to consider humanism from the medieval and early modern period as a movement to recover the classical past and to explore what it means to be human, and how this relates to humanist inquiry and the role of the humanities today. Presentations approached medieval and early modern

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texts with innovative and emerging fields and theories, such as medical humanities, digital humanities, and posthumanism.

Conference events included a rare book exhibition at Wilson Library and a roundtable discussion about humanist inquiry and the role of the humanities today. The exhibition, which featured materials from the Rare Book Collection and the Health Sciences Library History Collection, explored early modern humanism from the perspectives of medicine, language learning, and classical antiquity. During the roundtable discussion, participants reflected on the panels and engaged in a thoughtful conversation about the state of the humanities and about the role of humanistic research and teaching in academia and in public discourse more generally.

Next year, the collaboration will continue with a conference at King's College London, most likely on the topic of "Reformations and Remediations." The conference organizers would like to thank those individuals and organizations who provided guidance and support making this year's conference possible, especially the Department of English and Comparative Literature, the Graduate School, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Graduate and Professional Student Organization, and the Program in Medieval and Early Modern Studies.



MEMS WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

OUR LIST OF MEMS-AFFILIATED FACULTY continues to grow. This year we are happy to welcome **Aleksandra Prica**, Assistant Professor of German Literature (Ph.D., Medieval German Literature, University of Zurich). Her areas of research and teaching include Medieval and Early Modern German Literature and Culture, Media Studies, Literature and the Bible; Literature and Knowledge, Poetology and Hermeneutics, Historical Processes, and Aesthetics of Form.

FACULTY RESEARCH & CONFERENCE TRAVEL

SARAH MALONE GRADUATE STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS

WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE GILMAN AWARD, MEMS awarded a Faculty Research Support Award to **Jessica A. Boon** (Religious Studies) for her second book project, *Spanish Passion: Jesus, Mary, and the Jews in the Castilian Religious Imagination, 1480-1540*, in which she examines the sudden expansion of spirituality concerning Jesus' torture and death just after the Expulsion of the Jews and during the early rise of the Spanish empire.

Gilman funds supported three months of Professor Boon's research in Spain and Portugal: in Madrid her research focused on primary sources in the Rare Books and Manuscripts room of the Biblioteca Nacional. In Lisbon she examined rare books and altarpieces in its national library and museums, and in

Seville she photographed Passion altarpieces from the time period.

Professor Boon noted "the most important aspect was the widening of scope for my analysis of the visual tradition. Works of art in the cathedral from early sixteenth century Seville, the port city to the New World, are particularly useful for thinking about the global impact of the Castilian Passion spirituality tradition. In Lisbon, the unique 1518 exemplar of one of the most popular early modern Castilian texts on the Passion, a poem titled *Retablo de la vida christiana* (Altarpiece of the Christian Life), completed my survey of the woodcuts used to decorate this poetic altarpiece, an important piece of my consideration of the intersection between word and image in this era."

MEMS IS VERY GRATEFUL TO SARAH MALONE, who has generously provided funding in 2016-17 for three \$500 graduate student travel grants. Funding supports research in three main areas of study: history, literature, and fine arts (i.e. art history and music/dance history/performance). The first award went to **Kirsten Cooper** (History), who presented "Navigating Between Dynasty and Nation: The Rhetoric of Austria in Jean de La Chapelle's *Lettres d'un Suisse*" at the 62nd Annual Conference of the Society for French Historical Studies, held at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee on March 3-5, 2016. Look out for a call for applications in the near future.



MEMS RESEARCH

*Encouraging new scholarship in Medieval and
Early Modern Studies at UNC*

MINOR IN MEMS

THE MEMS UNDERGRADUATE MINOR SEES ITS SEVENTH YEAR

The Undergraduate Minor in Medieval and Early Modern Studies provides students with a broad, humanities-based approach to the rich and fascinating cultures that flourished globally from around 500 CE to 1800 CE. This challenging, interdisciplinary minor cuts across departments and disciplines and encourages students to discover connections among diverse aspects of medieval and early modern culture. Currently there are twelve departments and over one hundred and fifty departmental offerings from among which students may create their minors—an amazingly rich pool of resources!

SUPPORT MEMS!

The Program in Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) is grateful for the generosity of alumni and friends who have supported its students, faculty, and interdisciplinary program. Private support enables MEMS to sustain and enhance its approach to fostering research and teaching in medieval and early modern studies across a wide variety of disciplines. **Please consider making a gift to the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Fund to support the program’s mission of education and outreach.**

To make a gift online, please visit giving.unc.edu/gift/asf and search for fund number 107380. Gifts by check may be made payable to the Arts and Sciences Foundation with MEMS – 107380 in the memo line and mailed to The Arts and Sciences Foundation, 134 E. Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, 27514.

MEMS emerged from Chapel Hill’s traditional strengths in the study of the European Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Reformation, and other early modern fields. From its inception, the program also embarked upon an innovative, global approach to medieval and early modern studies within and beyond the traditional borders of the European world, including Byzantine and Islamic lands, peoples and polities from Eastern and Southern Asia, as well as the Caribbean, Latin American, and North American territories of the “New World.” The MEMS program thus gives our existing strengths in medieval and early modern studies a new impetus and global reach.

This newsletter is a collaborative effort of MEMS faculty, graduate students, and staff. Thank you to all who contributed!