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Earth and Heaven in the Middle Ages



Spring Lecture Series 2015
April 13-16

University of New Mexico
College of Arts and Sciences
Institute for Medieval Studies

IMS

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 7:15 P.M.

“Dante’s Vision of Heaven: *Purgatory* and *Paradise* as the Lands of the Living”
Christopher Kleinhenz, University of Wisconsin

In his second presentation for the 2015 Spring Lecture Series, Christopher Kleinhenz will discuss the second and third cantos of the *Divine Comedy*, in which Dante travels through Purgatory, described as a great mountainous island in the Earth’s southern hemisphere, and then Paradise itself, which forms the outer rim of the cosmos, beyond the spheres of the planets and stars. Professor Kleinhenz will look at the previous written and visual traditions of Purgatory and Paradise and their influence on Dante. In the Florentine poet’s day Purgatory was a fairly recent and underdeveloped idea; as a result, Dante enjoyed great artistic/poetic freedom in his invention of this transitional realm of the afterlife in which souls are made ready for a blessed life in eternity. He will then consider the many challenges Dante faced in composing *Paradise*, and specifically how to maintain the narrative of the pilgrim’s physical journey through the heavenly spheres and how to invent a language and a set of images that would convey the extraordinary and ineffable experience of Paradise concluding with the beatific vision of the Triune God. As in the opening lecture, Professor Kleinhenz will introduce us to the large body of illustrative materials that accompany Dante’s poem from early manuscript illuminations to the present.

Christopher Kleinhenz is the Carol Mason Kirk Professor of Italian Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin and one of North America’s most distinguished experts on medieval Italian literature and culture. A former President of the American Association of Teachers of Italian and of the American Boccaccio Association, he has received the Leonard Covello Educator of the Year Award (2005), the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages Distinguished Service to the Profession Award (2006), the Medieval Academy of America’s Award for Outstanding Service to Medieval Studies (2008), and the *Fiorino d’Oro* from the City of Florence (2008). His numerous publications include *The Early Italian Sonnet: The First Century (1220–1321)* (1986) and *Dante intertestuale e interdisciplinare: saggi sulla “Commedia”* (2015). From 1988 to 2002 he served as editor of the journal *Dante Studies*. He is the editor of *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia* (2004) and *Approaches to the Teaching of Petrarch’s “Canzoniere” and the Petrarchan Tradition* (2014), and is an associate editor of *The Dante Encyclopedia* (2000). In 2009 Professor Kleinhenz directed a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for College and University Teachers in Prato, Italy, on “Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and the Medieval World”; in 2013 he was a Visiting Professor at Università di Roma Tre. Since 2012 he has served as Ombudsman for the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Professor Kleinhenz is a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and an Honorary Member of the Società Dantesca Italiana.

2015 LECTURE SCHEDULE

Monday, April 13, 7:15 p.m.

“Dante’s Vision of Earth: *The Inferno* and the Earthly City as the Land of the Dead”

Christopher Kleinhenz, University of Wisconsin

Tuesday, April 14, 5:15 p.m.

“The Throne of Khosrow: Cosmos and Empire between Antiquity and the Middle Ages”

Benjamin W. Anderson, Cornell University

Tuesday, April 14, 7:15 p.m.

“Medieval Maps and Their Unearthly Data”

Martin Foys, University of Wisconsin

Wednesday, April 15, 5:15 p.m.

“Medieval Computing: The Astrolabe’s Contributions to Science and Religion”

Kristine Larsen, Central Connecticut State University

Wednesday, April 15, 7:15 p.m.

“The Fault in Our Stars, or, the Medieval Two-Step on Astrology”

Laura A. Smoller, University of Rochester

Thursday, April 16, 5:15 p.m.

Concert by the UNM Early Music Ensemble

Directed by Colleen Sheinberg

Thursday, April 16, 7:15 p.m.

“Dante’s Vision of Heaven: *Purgatory* and *Paradise* as the Lands of the Living”

Christopher Kleinhenz

All lectures will take place in Woodward Hall, Room 101.

The concert by the UNM Early Music Ensemble will take place in Keller Hall (opposite Popejoy Hall in the UNM Center for the Arts)

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 7:15 P.M.

“Medieval Maps and Their Unearthly Data”

Martin Foys, University of Wisconsin

Medieval maps of the world (*Mappaemundi*) are not indices of geography and the physical earth, designed to measure reality or guide travel from point A to point B. Rather, these maps draw the earth in a different way, fashioning literal world views of medieval space, time, and belief. They are magnificent and complicated examples of “thick data,” compressing onto a single two-dimensional page layers of past and present medieval knowledge and related notions of local, textual, imagined historical and spiritual locations. In his presentation Professor Foys will explore some famous and not-so-famous examples of early English *mappaemundi*, focusing on the virtual natures of the worlds they construct. He will also discuss the difficulty modern scholars have had studying these perplexing artifacts, and the roles that manuscript, print, and digital technology play in helping understand them.

Martin Foys is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin and is the current Executive Director of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists. He previously held positions at King’s College (University of London), Drew University, Hood College, and Florida State University. His research focuses on Anglo-Saxon England, medieval media, and the intersection of digital technology and medieval studies. His publications include the *Bayeux Tapestry Digital Edition* (CD, 2003), *The Bayeux Tapestry: New Interpretations* (2009), and *Virtually Anglo-Saxon: Old Media, New Media, and Early Medieval Studies in the Late Age of Print* (2007), which won the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists Best Book Award for 2007. Dr. Foys co-directs the DM Project, a digital resource for the open annotation of medieval texts and images that is funded by a multi-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is currently working on a book on the nature of Anglo-Saxon media and is editing a series of early maps for the British Library’s Virtual Mappa project.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 5:15 P.M.

“Medieval Computing: The Astrolabe’s Contributions to Science and Religion”

Kristine Larsen, Central Connecticut State University

While we consider the art of “computing” to be a modern invention, medieval scientists and explorers were able to make detailed and precise predictions for various events in the heavens (such as the time of sunrise on a particular date and the motions of the moon and planets) using analog rather than digital technology. Chief among these “computers” was the astrolabe, part workhorse, part work of art. While the origin of the astrolabe is shrouded in the fog of ancient history, it is well-known that during the golden age of Islam the astrolabe was routinely used not only to calculate the times of prayers but equally importantly to allow travelers to locate the relative direction of Mecca from their location. Christian monks also utilized the astrolabe to align their prayer schedules to the heavens, and there is increasing evidence that Jewish scholars employed astrolabes for a variety of purposes. The astrolabe was so firmly ingrained in medieval Western culture that England’s most famous medieval author, Geoffrey Chaucer, wrote a popular treatise on the subject. Kristine Larsen will take us on a journey through space and time as we explore the history and science of the humble astrolabe.

Kristine Larsen is Professor of Astronomy and Faculty Coordinator of the Copernican Planetarium and Observatory at Central Connecticut State University, where she has been on the faculty since 1989. She received her Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Connecticut in 1990 where her work focused on general relativity, black holes, and cosmology. Her scholarship and teaching have focused on the intersections between science and society, including the history of women in astronomy and geology, science pedagogy and outreach, and the intersections between science and popular culture (especially science as described in the works of J. R. R. Tolkien). She is the author of *Stephen Hawking: A Biography* (2005) and *Cosmology 101* (2007), and co-editor of *The Mythological Dimensions of Doctor Who* (2010) and *The Mythological Dimensions of Neil Gaiman* (2012; recipient of the Gold Medal for Science Fiction/Fantasy from the Florida Publishing Association). Dr. Larsen has received numerous awards for her work in science education and outreach, including the Connecticut Science Center’s Petit Family Foundation Women in Science Leadership Award, the Walter Scott Houston Award of the North East Region of the Astronomical League, CCSU’s Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Astronomical Society of Greater Hartford’s Astronomer of the Year Award.

MONDAY, APRIL 13, 7:15 P.M.

“Dante’s Vision of Earth: The *Inferno* and the Earthly Cities as the Land of the Dead”

Christopher Kleinhenz, University of Wisconsin

In this richly illustrated lecture Christopher Kleinhenz will get the 2015 lecture series under way with a presentation exploring the first canto of Dante’s great masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, in which Dante visits the afterlife over a five-day period during Easter of 1300. Professor Kleinhenz will examine the written accounts and visual representations of Hell from Classical Antiquity through the Renaissance. He will then focus on Dante’s conception of the afterlife, his construction of the Inferno, and the ordering of sins and their punishments. He will demonstrate that Dante’s vision was shaped in part by the previous tradition but also that it quickly became recognized as a unique and enduring representation of the infallible operation of Divine Justice in the universe. The lecture will also consider the extensive visual influence of Dante’s poem on the figurative arts, as well as its voluminous illustrative tradition, ranging from medieval manuscript illuminations to modern interpretations.

Christopher Kleinhenz is the Carol Mason Kirk Professor of Italian Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin and one of North America’s most distinguished experts on medieval Italian literature and culture. A former President of the American Association of Teachers of Italian and of the American Boccaccio Association, he has received the Leonard Covello Educator of the Year Award (2005), the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages Distinguished Service to the Profession Award (2006), the Medieval Academy of America’s Award for Outstanding Service to Medieval Studies (2008), and the *Fiorino d’Oro* from the City of Florence (2008). His numerous publications include *The Early Italian Sonnet: The First Century (1220–1321)* (1986) and *Dante intertestuale e interdisciplinare: saggi sulla “Commedia”* (2015). From 1988 to 2002 he served as editor of the journal *Dante Studies*. He is the editor of *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia* (2004) and *Approaches to the Teaching of Petrarch’s “Canzoniere” and the Petrarchan Tradition* (2014), and is an associate editor of *The Dante Encyclopedia* (2000). In 2009 Professor Kleinhenz directed a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar for College and University Teachers in Prato, Italy, on “Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and the Medieval World”; in 2013 he was a Visiting Professor at Università di Roma Tre. Since 2012 he has served as Ombudsman for the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Professor Kleinhenz is a Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America and an Honorary Member of the Società Dantesca Italiana.

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 5:15 P.M.

Concert by the UNM Early Music Ensemble

Directed by Colleen Sheinberg

Colleen Sheinberg is a lecturer in early music performance at the University of New Mexico’s Department of Music, where she has been involved in directing the UNM Early Music Ensemble since 1995. In addition to coaching the EME, Ms. Sheinberg is also a founding member and director of the acclaimed professional early music group, Música Antigua de Albuquerque. Música Antigua performs regularly in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and has given guest performances throughout the state. The group has also performed by invitation on the PSALM concert series in Houston and on the Early Music Now! series in Milwaukee and was the recipient of the Albuquerque Arts Alliance’s 2002 Bravo Award for Excellence in Music. Ms. Sheinberg has recorded four CDs with Música Antigua, including two on the Dorian label: *A Rose of Snych Virtu*, *The Sport of Love*, *Music to the Max (Music at the Court of Maximilian I)*, and *Round and Round We Go*.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 7:15 P.M.

“The Fault in Our Stars, or, the Medieval Two-Step on Astrology”

Laura A. Smoller, University of Rochester

Laura Smoller will examine medieval knowledge of, beliefs about, and attitudes toward astrology, a practical science devoted to scrutinizing the planetary effects on Earth. While the idea that the heavens influence the Earth below was a cosmological “given” throughout the ancient and medieval periods, the Church fathers had come down strongly against “judicial astrology,” or the predictive aspects of the science, arguing that astrological influences could in no way impinge upon God’s omnipotence or human free will, and opining (as did St. Augustine) that when astrologers *did* make correct predictions, it was through the furtive intervention of demons. Still, as translations from the Arabic in the twelfth century brought both more accurate astronomical tables and a set of theories for making general predictions about large groups of people, interest in astrology increased, and even the most grudging of theologians were forced to admit that astrologers might be able to prognosticate accurately about the human body and about populations in general. The parts of astrology of most potential help and use to individuals, however, remained suspect, especially genethliology (predictions based on natal charts) and elections (the choice of propitious times for certain undertakings). Professor Smoller will show how the rich medieval conversation about astrology left proponents and opponents performing a complicated two-step as they straddled an ever-shifting line of legitimate and illegitimate knowledge about the stars’ effects.

Laura Smoller received her PhD from Harvard University and taught at Stanford University and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock before moving in Fall 2014 to the University of Rochester, where she is Professor of History. Her research focuses on intersections between magic, science, and religion in medieval and Renaissance Europe, centering on two major themes: astrology and apocalyptic prophecy, and saints and miracles. Her first book, *History, Prophecy, and the Stars: The Christian Astrology of Pierre d’Ailly, 1350-1420* (1994), explores a French cardinal’s use of astrology to investigate the time of the world’s End. In her second book, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (2014), she studies the canonization and cult of the Valencian friar Vincent Ferrer, a fiery apocalyptic preacher who died in 1419 and was canonized in 1455. More recently, she has returned to the interrelationships between astrology and prophecy in a new book project, tentatively titled “Astrology and the Sibyls,” an investigation of ways of knowing the future ranging from ca. 1100 to ca. 1600. Her research has been supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 5:15 P.M.

“The Throne of Khosrow: Cosmos and Empire between Antiquity and the Middle Ages”

Benjamin W. Anderson, Cornell University

Between the years 700 and 1000, multiple authors writing in Arabic, Latin, and Persian described the throne of the Iranian Shah Khosrow II (r. 591-628) as an object of exceptional material splendor decorated with images of the sun, moon, planets, and stars. A parallel tradition in Greek described an image that was installed in a temple and depicted the shah enthroned among the heavenly bodies. In all of these accounts, the cosmic throne exemplified Khosrow’s hubris and explained Iran’s involvement in the cataclysmic war against Rome that dominated the first three decades of the seventh century. The image of the Throne of Khosrow allowed early medieval authors to depict the collapse of the ancient world system as the result of a single man’s tyrannical appetites, and thus provided a cautionary tale for contemporary sovereigns. Today, it provides historians with a valuable context for the material trappings of “cosmic kingship” in the Frankish, Byzantine, and Umayyad states. Benjamin Anderson will explore the interplay between literary representations of Khosrow’s throne and selected early medieval monuments that, at first glance, appear to replicate its hubris, including the *qibla* wall of the Umayyad-era Great Mosque of Damascus and the ivory “Throne of Peter” (*Cathedra Petri*), a product of the ninth-century Carolingian court of Emperor Charles the Bald.

Benjamin Anderson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of the History of Art and Visual Studies at Cornell University, having received his M.A. from Saint John’s College and his Ph.D. from Bryn Mawr. His forthcoming book *Cosmos and Community in Early Medieval Art* was written with the support of a fellowship from the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). It analyzes the reception of ancient techniques for imaging the cosmos by Byzantine, Islamic, and Frankish artists. Professor Anderson’s articles on the urban history of Constantinople and the afterlives of ancient statues have appeared in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, and the *Journal of Field Archaeology*. He is currently preparing a new book entitled *Image as Oracle from Byzantium to the Baroque*. This study of medieval Greek oracle books and their early modern reception will be supported in part by a fellowship at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz (Max-Planck-Institut).