

the australian
early medieval
association



**FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
CONVERSION AND CULTURAL
TRANSFORMATION**

Wednesday 26 to Friday 28 September 2007
University of Sydney

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 26 September

8:30	REGISTRATION
9:15	PRESIDENT'S WELCOME Dr Pamela O'Neill, Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne and President of the Australian Early Medieval Association
9:30	SESSION 1 Chair: Pamela O'Neill
	Geoffrey Dunn (Australian Catholic University) Innocent I and the Transformation of the Illyrian Churches on the Question of Heretical Ordination
	John Martyn (University of Melbourne) Sisebut's Life of Saint Desiderius
	Timothy Scott (Macquarie University) It's all Alamannic to Me! Ethnicity as an Interpretative Tool for Cultural Transformation
11:00	Morning Tea
11:30	SESSION 2 Chair: Natasha Amendola
	Lisa Bennett (Flinders University) 'He Died in His White Baptismal Vestments': Kings and Conversion in the <i>Íslendinga Sögur</i>

	Katrina Burge (University of Melbourne) 'Will the Archangel be My Advocate?': Iceland's Negotiated Conversion to Christianity
	Leon Wild (University of Sydney) Óláfr's Raven Coin: Old Norse Myth in Circulation?
1:00	Lunch
2:00	PRACTICAL SESSION Chair: Carole Cusack
	Michael Spencer on Medieval Heraldry
3:30	Afternoon Tea
4:00	SESSION 3 Chair: Julianna Grigg
	Bernard Mees (University of Melbourne) Fate and Malediction in Early Celtic Tradition
	Pamela O'Neill (University of Melbourne) The Real Irish Peregrinatio?: Penance and Exile in Early Christian Ireland
5:00	BOOK LAUNCH WITH WINE AND NIBBLES
	AEMA is pleased to launch Lynette Olson, <i>The Early Middle Ages: The Birth of Europe</i> , Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
6:00	PLENARY SESSION Chair: Andrew Stephenson
	Dr Andrew Gillett (Macquarie University) Gothic Conversion: Frameworks for Interpretation

Thursday 29 September

9:00	REGISTRATION
9:30	SESSION 1 Chair: Tessa Morrison
	Natasha Amendola (Monash University) Penelope's Odyssey to Ninth-Century Ireland
	Kay Smith (University of Queensland) Cultural Incorporation: Conversion in the Old French Chansons de Geste
	Glenda Marsh-Letts (Independent Scholar) The Queen of Heaven: Isis, Nut or Mary?
11:00	Morning Tea
11:30	SESSION 2 Chair: Denis Hawkey
	Denise Doyle (Independent Scholar) Imagery as Exegesis in the Book of Kells
	Tessa Morrison (University of Newcastle)

	The Evolving Image of the New Jerusalem in Early Medieval Art and Architecture
	Robin Cook (University of Queensland) The Visual Repertoire of the Genesis Page Illustration of the Alcuin Bible
1:00	Lunch
2:00	PRACTICAL SESSION Chair: Carole Cusack
	Fisher Rare Book Library: 'Liturgy and the Word: The Role of Books in Western Religion' - exhibition of medieval manuscripts and early books and viewing of relevant facsimiles.
3:30	Afternoon Tea
4:00	SESSION 3 Chair: Andrew Stephenson
	Bronwen Neil (Australian Catholic University) Blessed are the Rich: Attitudes to Poverty in Fifth-Century Rome
	Lisa Bailey (University of Auckland) 'No Use Crying Over Spilt Milk': The Challenge of Preaching God's Justice in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Gaul
5:00	Wine and Nibbles
5:30	PLENARY SESSION Chair: Chris Bishop
	Dr Antonina Harbus (Macquarie University) Transforming Concepts in Old English Translations of Latin Texts
	Conference Dinner Al Mustafa Restaurant, 23 Glebe Point Road, Glebe; tel. 9660 9006.

Friday 29 September

9:00	SESSION 1 Chair: Bernard Mees
	Julianna Grigg (University of Melbourne) Bounding the Past: The Case for a Pictish Parish
	Carole Cusack (University of Sydney) History, Authenticity, and Tourism: Encountering the Medieval: Walking Saint Cuthbert's Way
10:30	Morning Tea
11:00	SESSION 2 Chair: Rosemary Huisman
	Robert Di Napoli (Australian Catholic University & University of Melbourne) Close to the Edge: <i>The Fortunes of Men</i> and the Limits of Wisdom Literature
	Chris Bishop (Australian National University)

	Fate, and the Absence of Future, in the Poetry of Wessex
	Emily Baynham (University of Sydney) The Place of Charms in Late Anglo-Saxon England
12:30	Lunch and AEMA Annual General Meeting
2:00	SESSION 3 Chair: Emily Baynham
	Rosemary Huisman (University of Sydney) Courtly But Not Courtly Love: Male/Female Roles in the Old English Poem <i>Beowulf</i> (Again)
	Verity Fisher (University of Melbourne) <i>Beowulf</i> and Sutton Hoo Syndrome: Integrating Text and Material Culture in the Study of the Past
3:00	Afternoon Tea
3:30	SESSION 4 Chair: Chris Bishop
	Susan Loftus (Macquarie University) Authority and Cultural Transformation
	Denis Hawkey (University of Wales, Lampeter) Wilfred, Bede and the Northumbrian Celtic Church
	Lyn Olson (University of Sydney) Genetic Evidence and the Early Medievalist
5:00	Wine and Nibbles
5:30	PLENARY SESSION Chair: Carole Cusack
	Dr Jonathan Wooding (University of Wales, Lampeter) Baptising the Islands of the Ocean: Biblical Prophecy and the Historiography of Conversion
6:30	Close of Conference with Wine and Nibbles

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ABSTRACTS

NATASHA AMENDOLA

Monash University

PENELOPE'S ODYSSEY TO NINTH-CENTURY IRELAND

Penelope was the wife of Odysseus, or Ulysses as he is now more familiarly known. While he fought at Troy and struggled to find his way home, an absence of twenty years, Penelope stayed at home, raising their son, weaving a shroud for her father-in-law and maintaining her chastity in the most trying of circumstances. If she ever did leave her home at Ithaca, it was to return to her father's household in the Peloponnese. She was a thoroughly Hellenic woman. However, her name and reputation were maintained in Latin texts and her fame spread beyond the continent. In the ninth century, about two millennia after she is supposed to have lived, her name appears in two Irish manuscripts: the Lorsch Commentary and Sedulius Scottus' *Ars Maior*. Both of these are commentaries on a work of Donatus, also called *Ars Maior*, but this work does not include any mention of Penelope. This paper will trace how Penelope's fame travelled from classical Latin texts into the changed environment of early medieval Europe, where she appears as a grammatical *exemplum*.

LISA BAILEY

University of Auckland

'NO USE CRYING OVER SPILT MILK': THE CHALLENGE OF PREACHING GOD'S JUSTICE IN FIFTH- AND SIXTH-CENTURY GAUL

It was not enough to convert the peoples of Gaul to Christianity. The Church needed also to effect a cultural transformation - to penetrate their ways of thinking about and understanding the world. Part of this involved altering expectations of divine justice - when it would come and what form it would take. This proved a challenge for the Christian clergy. In the Eusebius Gallicanus sermon collection it is possible to trace some of the efforts at explanation which pastors made in the fifth and sixth centuries. Against a background of high-level theological debate over issues of grace and free will, they attempted ground-level explanations of how God could be just despite allowing sinners to flourish, allowing the virtuous to suffer and condemning any to damnation. Preachers sought to make complex arguments accessible and understandable to the urban laity, but also, at the same time, to control and guide interpretation along 'suitable' paths. To do so they

employed established rhetorical and argumentative techniques, but adapted these to the specific local challenges they faced. The result was a subtle but coercive assertion of power over the ways Gallic Christians understood their world and their place within it.

EMILY BAYNHAM

Department of English, University of Sydney

THE PLACE OF CHARMS IN LATE ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

Anglo-Saxon charms are preserved in a variety of manuscripts, alongside texts including medical remedies, computus, prayers, blessings, laws and liturgical texts. These immediate contexts can give valuable insights into how these charms were viewed by those who recorded them. Yet though Anglo-Saxon charms are recorded in around thirty manuscripts, modern scholarship tends to focus only on the two manuscripts which contain the most charms: British Library MS Harley 585 and British Library MS Royal 12.D.xvii. This paper will look outside of these manuscripts, taking several charms recorded in the early to mid-eleventh century in order to illustrate some of the insights that a deeper analysis of immediate contexts may provide. It will consider the possibilities for generic and thematic strands within these manuscripts that link their contents and make them internally coherent as a text and historical source.

LISA BENNETT

Flinders University

'HE DIED IN HIS WHITE BAPTISMAL VESTMENTS': KINGS AND CONVERSION IN THE *ÍSLENDINGASÖGUR*

Flóamanna saga, *Bárðar saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* – written between the late thirteenth to mid fourteenth centuries - consider the presence or absence of Norwegian royal influence on the Icelandic conversion, which took place over two hundred years earlier, in interesting ways. In these sagas, the Icelanders that accept conversion without coming into direct contact with the King(s) are ultimately described as 'powerful' figures; by contrast, if the King (generally Óláfr) plays an overt role in encouraging conversion in these sagas, then the new converts tend to reach a more ambivalent end. In two such cases, the convert 'dies in his white baptismal vestments.' As part of a much broader project, this paper proposes that what these three sagas (amongst others) seem to suggest is that, while the thirteenth to fourteenth century Icelanders clearly do not deny the historical facts of their conversion, the way in which they collectively remember, and write about, the King's involvement (or lack thereof) in the Icelandic adoption of Christianity influences their attitude toward individual acts of conversion.

CHRIS BISHOP

Australian National University

FATE, AND THE ABSENCE OF FUTURE, IN THE POETRY OF WESSEX

Wyrd biþ ful aræd wrote the poet of *The Wanderer* and with this statement the West-Saxon concept of predetermination is made crystalline - fate is inexorable. No plea, no sacrifice, no

noble act of humanity nor intercession of deity could alter *wyrd* [fate] from its course. The vernacular poetry of Wessex expresses an intense fatalism which speaks to us not only of their perceptions of living and dying, but also of the inextricable links between fatalism and their native language, the very process by which they spoke themselves into being. This paper will explore this powerful underlying reality of the West-Saxon psyche that shaped so much of their ontology and subsequent poetic discourse, and it will look at the complex relationship of fatalism and Christianity and the ways in which this relationship found expression. Moreover, this paper will propose that the West-Saxon mind perceived the machinations of *wyrd* as neither benevolent nor ambivalent, but as an arbitrary and inhuman force that pulled all things inexorably towards destruction. More than just fatalism, the poetry of Wessex embraced a vision of predestination that was all-pervading, inescapable and entropic.

KATRINA BURGE

University of Melbourne

'WILL THE ARCHANGEL BE MY ADVOCATE?': ICELAND'S NEGOTIATED CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

This paper explores the official conversion to Christianity in Iceland in 1000 CE. Several Icelandic texts present accounts of the negotiations leading to the peaceful adoption of Christianity at a national assembly and of the compromises that were achieved. Iceland was a society structured around regulated feuds, negotiated settlements and the rule of law. Royal power did not exist and there was no distinct non-Christian priesthood, with religious power being held by secular leaders. The introduction of Christianity from Norway was resisted by many as an attempt to gain political control over the island. However, the Icelanders recognised that a conflict of faiths could disturb their carefully balanced and somewhat fragile social structure. In keeping with their fondness for lawyerly argument and balanced friendships, the Icelanders performed a cultural transformation on the process of conversion, shifting it from a religious question to a legal procedure.

ROBIN COOK

University of Queensland

THE VISUAL REPERTOIRE OF THE GENESIS PAGE ILLUSTRATION OF THE ALCUIN BIBLE (STAATSBIBLIOTHEK BAMBERG MSC.BIBL.1)

This paper is an analysis of the visual repertoire of the Genesis page of the Alcuin Bible, as part of my ongoing research on the design, style and visual repertoire of this unusual Carolingian illustration. It attempts to define the style and characteristics of the component motifs of the illustration's visual repertoire - the figures, animals, hand of God, sun and moon, and trees - and demonstrates that the figures, which are often referred to in the literature as 'silhouettes' as a result of the gold and silver paint of their surface treatment in the illustration, are not silhouettes and suggests possibilities for their aesthetic tradition. It then explores the relationship of the Alcuin Genesis motifs to some motifs in other Tours codices, finally suggesting the possibility of

the existence of an 'extended repertoire' of motifs of the same style and characteristics as those of the Alcuin Genesis, which may have been one of the visual repertoires of the Tours scriptorium.

CAROLE CUSACK

University of Sydney

HISTORY, AUTHENTICITY, AND TOURISM: ENCOUNTERING THE MEDIEVAL
WALKING SAINT CUTHBERT'S WAY

The walk from Melrose in the Scottish Borders to Lindisfarne on the Northumbrian coast is known as Saint Cuthbert's Way and was opened for tourists and local holidaymakers in 1996. It is easily walked in four or five days, and is marketed as retracing an authentic journey made by the great Anglo-Saxon saint in 664 CE. The Way passes through many sites that fill the student of the Middle Ages with excitement: Melrose Abbey, Ad Gefrin (Yeavinger), St Cuthbert's Cave, Holy Island. Cuthbert is a seventh-century figure about whom it is possible to know much: his coffin, pectoral cross, portable altar and gospel book may be seen; his tomb at Durham Cathedral, his final resting place, still attracts pilgrims; the magnificent Lindisfarne Gospels were made to further his cult; and three vitae (the Anonymous, and two by Bede, one prose and one verse) preserve the story of his life. This paper considers the use of Saint Cuthbert and the marketing of the medieval in creating a modern tourist attraction.

ROBERT DI NAPOLI

Australian Catholic University & the University of Melbourne

CLOSE TO THE EDGE: *THE FORTUNES OF MEN* AND THE LIMITS OF WISDOM
LITERATURE

In this talk I wish to discuss one of the less often studied Old English poems commonly lumped together as 'wisdom poetry'. Titled *The Fortunes of Men* by Krapp and Dobbie, it has received scant attention in studies of Old English literature. What mentions it has received tend to be condescending dismissals of its supposedly formulaic character as a catalogue poem. I hope to demonstrate some of what I take to be the poem's stronger literary qualities: its supple construction, its often striking imagery, and its surprising turns of thought. I hope to raise some necessary questions about the putative 'wisdom' genre in Old English and to demonstrate how this particular example - which nearly all scholars have waved off as a piece of unimaginative, rote Christian didacticism - actually evades and defers any overtly orthodox Christian moralizing of its twin themes of death and fate, in favour of a much more idiosyncratic and imaginative dramatization of its themes than modern scholarship has thus far recognised. I plan to provide the entire text of the poem, with an accompanying modern English verse translation, in a handout.

DENISE DOYLE

Independent Scholar

IMAGERY AS EXEGESIS IN THE BOOK OF KELLS

The luxuriously decorated gospel manuscript known as the Book of Kells is enriched by an unusually large number of full-page images. The inclusion in this manuscript of four full-page illustrations of the evangelist symbols and the ambiguity of the author portrait of Matthew is unique among ancient manuscripts. It can be expected that, consistent with the scholarship of the time, the Kells scribe-artists created this iconography as a tool for exegesis. In *De doctrina Christiana* Augustine of Hippo indicated two essential elements in the treatment of all scriptures: the seeking to understand and the communicating of what has been understood and that the greatest problem would be to cut off the potential of further meaning by the refusal to attempt to pierce the opacity of a sign. This paper will seek further understanding of these vibrant full-page images of the evangelist symbols in the Book of Kells.

GEOFFREY D DUNN

Centre for Early Christian Studies, Australian Catholic University

INNOCENT I AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ILLYRIAN CHURCHES ON THE QUESTION OF HERETICAL ORDINATION

The Illyrian bishop Bonosus created not only theological problems for the church with his denial of Mary's perpetual virginity, but created administrative problems through the schism he created in the late fourth century. The difficulty concerned differing opinions and practices with regard to those who were clerics in Bonosus' schismatic community and who wanted to rejoin the church: should they be taken back as clerics or as lay people or reordained as clerics? The procedure employed by some Illyrian bishops in the early fifth century was at variance with that endorsed by the church of Rome. This paper examines *Epistula 17* of Innocent I, bishop of Rome from 402 to 417, in which he considered one part of the problem: those who had been ordained by Bonosus after his condemnation (*Epistula 16* had considered the question of what to do with those ordained by Bonosus before his condemnation and who had joined him in schism). Innocent set out to transform the Illyrian practice and this paper considers the method by which he attempted to achieve that. It will be argued that Innocent sought to use the influence and prestige of the Roman church together with rational argument to persuade the Illyrians to adopt Roman practice rather than any directive that imposed the papal will or expressed jurisdictional superiority over the Illyrians. This evidence is relevant to the questions of the development of papal primacy in the early medieval period.

VERITY FISHER

University of Melbourne

BEOWULF AND SUTTON HOO SYNDROME: INTEGRATING TEXT AND MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE STUDY OF THE PAST

It has been traditional to regard the archaeological evidence from periods for which there is also written documentation as providing the 'illustration' to the documentary 'explanation'. Such use of material culture is not particularly illuminating for our understanding of the past; it tends to gloss over and downplay difference in favour of similarity. Both texts and material objects are

the product of human cultural activity, and consequently the written evidence should not be privileged over the material. Artefacts are just as capable of being interpreted in multiple ways as texts are, particularly when gender is taken as a category of analysis: it will be shown that stereotypical assumptions have tended to colour the classification of objects as 'male' or 'female'. This paper will explore some of the ways in which the archaeological and textual sources have been used in the history of the Anglo-Saxon period of 600-800 CE, and also raise new questions about the way that gender is used as a means for interpreting the archaeological evidence from this period.

JULIANNA GRIGG

University of Melbourne

BOUNDING THE PAST: THE CASE FOR A PICTISH PARISH

Investigations in England of county and parish boundaries have long suspected that these boundaries were of some antiquity. Delineated units of land in the early medieval period may highlight the keen administrative control and governance at a variety of levels. The right of a king to bestow land on secular and ecclesiastic officials, as Bede describes for Northumbria, indicates territorial control at the highest level. In order to ascertain the degree to which land in Pictland had been similarly divided into units and systematically administered, I chose to investigate the modern-day, marginal and somewhat isolated parish of Ardersier, Invernessshire. The aim of my paper is to relate some of the findings from my site analysis of Ardersier. Evidence for the antiquity of the parish boundaries will be explored, and the implications for administrative organization in the early medieval period will be suggested.

DENIS HAWKEY

University of Wales, Lampeter

WILFRED, BEDE AND THE NORTHUMBRIAN CELTIC CHURCH

Bede had three passions: a) Easter on the right date according to the date that he (a mathematician proud of his abilities to do the sums) supported; b) the correct tonsure that had to be in the style of the Crown of Thorns, and c) that churches should be built of stone in the Roman way (rather than the wood, wattle and daub styles of the Celts). Given that the Celtic Church, so called, was turned from its supposed un-orthodox ways this paper shall examine what was the orthodoxy on which Wilfred's argument was built. Did an actual orthodoxy exist and what of the differences between the Eastern and Roman or Western expression of what was right, correct and of Godliness? Was the so-called orthodoxy espoused by Wilfred and later recorded by Bede a construct, a fabrication, a political push to court favour with the establishment?

ROSEMARY HUISMAN

University of Sydney

COURTLY BUT NOT COURTLY LOVE: MALE/FEMALE ROLES IN THE OLD ENGLISH POEM *BEOWULF* (AGAIN)

A traditional short plot summary of the poem we know as Beowulf might read:

The hero Beowulf, from a people called the Geats, when a young man visits the Danish court of King Hrothgar and kills in turn two monsters who have savaged the Danish people - first a monster called Grendel, then Grendel's mother. Fifty years later, as an old man and now king of the Geats, Beowulf kills a dragon which is threatening his own people, but in the process is himself killed.

Of course, that chronological summary of the plot gives little indication of the complexity of the narrative. In particular, it makes scant reference (the words 'hero', 'king') to the central importance of social roles. Beowulf is a story of social roles as much as (even more than?) a story of physical actions. In this paper I focus on the different but complementary roles of men and women, as told in the poem, in maintaining social cohesion, making some reference to archaeological and linguistic evidence to support my reading.

GLENNDA SUSAN MARSH-LETTS

Independent Scholar

THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN: ISIS, NUT OR MARY?

Nut, Isis and Hathor, ancient goddesses of Egypt, as well as their worshippers and royal personifications, were often shown in Ancient Egyptian funerary contexts wearing a garment of the heavens: a blue-beaded dress. In a process of amalgamation common in Ptolemaic Egypt, Isis came to absorb some of the attributes of Nut and Hathor. Her worship spread to major centres of the Roman Empire and survived well into the Early Middle Ages in Europe, as well as in Byzantine Egypt. Isis was addressed as the Queen of Heaven. To what extent can we trace a blending of the attributes of Isis with those of the Virgin Mary, also addressed as the Queen of Heaven, in Christian iconography? In the conversion of temples of Isis to Christian Churches, in both Byzantine Egypt and Early Medieval Europe, do we see a continuity of the worship of the Queen of Heaven?

SUSAN LOFTUS

Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University

AUTHORITY AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

In the sixth century, the Frankish and Burgundian kings were baptised as Nicene Christians in the church of Gaul. These conversions represented a significant change in political and religious authority and also point to the beginning of a significant cultural transformation. The purpose of this is multifaceted. There are many possible reasons for this but was this chiefly a way to identify themselves as more 'Roman'? While wielding the military power in Gaul the Franks and Burgundians were in the minority and they needed the support of the local Gallo-Romans. Similarly, to continue to be recognized by the Eastern emperors as the legitimate substitute for the previous Roman rule in Gaul they needed to acquire certain vestiges of Roman identity. One way to achieve this was to enter into the Nicene Church. This paper will discuss how the Franks and the Burgundians interacted with the local Christian bishops and their congregation during

this transition. It is argued that in this uncertain period for the local Gallo-Romans the function of the Church may be recognized as a form of collective Roman identity in the transforming world of late antique Gaul.

JOHN R C MARTYN

University of Melbourne

SISEBUT'S LIFE OF SAINT DESIDERIUS

This paper will give a brief introduction to the Gothic King Sisebut (king of Spain 612-620), who wrote two significant Latin poems, on the 'Creation' (89 hexameters) and on 'Eclipses' (61 hexameters), the latter written to match the 'Divisions of Nature' by Isidore of Seville, dedicated to the king by its author. Desiderius had wealthy Roman parents and was well-trained in the Classics, and became bishop of Vienne in 595, at once playing a key rôle in helping Augustine and his monks as they crossed Gaul to Kent. He received four personal letters from Pope Gregory the Great, but fell foul of Queen Brunhilde and bishop Syagrius, who arranged for him to be exiled, but after some miracles he was brought back to Vienne, only to be murdered by soldiers. A new edition of the *vita* with an English translation and the appropriate papal letters and extracts from his poems and letters will be the basis of a projected book on King Sisebut and his biography. It will bring together eminent Christian scholars from early seventh-century Rome, Seville and Vienne.

BERNARD MEES

University of Melbourne

FATE AND MALEDICTION IN EARLY CELTIC TRADITION

One of the most notable features of early medieval Celtic hagiography is the ready and widespread use of curses by Insular saints. The cursing practices of ancient times are also represented in many linguistically Celtic texts from Britain and Gaul, not that these have always been contextualised properly by Celticists in the past. Considered in light of such epigraphic evidence for a pre-Christian Celtic cursing tradition, the development of a new form of imprecation can be discerned among the Insular Celts - a close textual and linguistic study of medieval Insular sources reveals little reflection of ancient Celtic cursing in the new tradition of saintly imprecation. This Christian Insular tradition seems largely to have remained separate from inherited notions of fateful stipulation, of geases and 'swearing' destinies, but its development helps explain some of the otherwise rather perplexing features of Celtic supernatural injunction nonetheless.

TESSA MORRISON

University of Newcastle

THE EVOLVING IMAGE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM IN EARLY MEDIEVAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE

The Celestial City in the *Revelation of John the Divine* is described as being cubic in shape with entrances on the north, south, east and west. All sides are symmetric and identical. The foundations of the city were massive gems; the streets were made of gold and the gates were each carved from a single pearl. The garden of the celestial Jerusalem is the tree of life symmetrically placed within the city. The city's measurements are multiplies of twelve which perhaps were chosen more for their mystical power rather than their architecture or aesthetic qualities. Both John the Divine's economy of words and his measurements in his description gave no end of problems to later authors and illustrators. The cubic shape, (dis)proportions and the massive exposed foundations in the description left a visual challenge to artists throughout the eras. Yet, the description of the Celestial City is one of the most popularly quoted passages from the New Testament and artists have attempted to realise the image of the city. This paper considers some of these attempts and examines the transformation and realise of this image.

BRONWEN NEIL

Australian Catholic University

BLESSED ARE THE RICH: ATTITUDES TO POVERTY IN FIFTH-CENTURY ROME

The sermons of Pope Leo (440-461) offer valuable information on the social history of the little-documented period of the mid-fifth century, and particularly on the changes and continuities in attitudes to the urban poor under the leadership of this bishop of Rome. In the climate of civic disorder that characterised this period, the organisation of welfare to the poor in urban centres - widows, orphans, refugees, prisoners, the sick and those without paid work - became increasingly the responsibility of individual bishops of those cities.

The first part of my paper examines the kind of rhetorical language Leo used in his sermons to motivate people to give alms to the poor. The second part asks the question: does Leo's conceptualisation of poverty indicate a substantial change in Roman attitudes to the urban poor from typical elite attitudes in pre-Christian Rome? The third, perhaps most important part, looks at the degree to which these papal attitudes translate into effective action on behalf of the poor.

LYN OLSON

University of Sydney

GENETIC EVIDENCE AND THE EARLY MEDIEVALIST

The genetic evidence of European population that is increasingly becoming available is not just a trendy, peripheral aspect of the study of our period but one of intrinsic and deep significance to understanding what was going in the Early Middle Ages. To what extent were the enormous cultural changes of the period due to movement of people or to cultural overlay? Interestingly, criticism of the 'Invasion Hypothesis' began among archaeologists before genetic evidence came on line, but the latter has greatly reinforced their arguments for movement of cultural artefacts, even language, rather than people. This has been true of studies of the British Isles from the first time they were called to my attention up to recent conclusions that no known migrant group has contributed more than 5% to the gene pool there, which mainly goes back to the original settlers

of the British Isles in the Stone Age. What about other areas, like Spain? How should genetic evidence be used in the study of history? How does one evaluate such evidence?

PAMELA O'NEILL

School of Historical Studies, University of Melbourne

THE REAL IRISH PEREGRINATIO? PENANCE AND EXILE IN EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND

The notion of wandering Irish 'exiles for Christ' who voluntarily departed their native lands in order to serve Christ as missionaries or contemplatives during the 'age of saints' is largely a later construct, whose origins may lie in texts dating mostly from the tenth century or later. In this paper, I examine putatively earlier sources, including Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, Cáin Adomnáin, and various Irish penitentials, for evidence of earlier Irish understandings of the term *peregrinatio*. The paper proposes that, far from a voluntary act of devotion, *peregrinatio* was an imposed penance-in-exile, requiring not aimless or spiritual wandering but hard work under strict rule within institutional settlements. I propose that in this context, 'peregrinus' is better translated 'convict' than 'pilgrim'. In addition to early textual sources, the paper will draw on material evidence for early Irish ecclesiastical settlements in exploring this hypothesis.

TIMOTHY SCOTT

Macquarie University

IT'S ALL ALAMANNIC TO ME! ETHNICITY AS AN INTERPRETATIVE TOOL FOR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Cultural transformation in late antique and early medieval Europe has been explored through the concept of ethnicity. Ethnicity is a distinctly modern term that first emerged in the 1960s and can be defined as a self-identification process whereby individuals perceive themselves in relation to others. The extent to which it is legitimate to argue that this term can be used as an analytical tool for cultural transformation is at the crux of this paper. Commencing with an exploration of the term ethnicity, this paper will show that, due to its modern and contested nature, ethnicity is a problematic framework for discussion about cultural transformation in late antique and early medieval Europe. This paper will also suggest a possible solution to this problem in the form of Bourdieu's notion of habitus. Applied to the concept of ethnicity in 1987, *habitus* sits unaffected by faultlines inherent in the more conventional theoretical perspectives. If cultural transformation as it appears in late antique and early medieval Europe is to be interpreted along ethnic lines, then it might be through such an environmental framework that a reconciliation between cultural transformation and ethnicity in late antique and early medieval Europe can be found.

KAY SMITH

University of Queensland

CULTURAL INCORPORATION: CONVERSION IN THE OLD FRENCH *CHANSONS DE GESTE*

The conversion stories used as a basis for this paper are taken from several *chansons de geste* from the Cycle of Charlemagne, a group of epic poems whose subject matter is largely concerned with the conquest of non-Christian people and which abounds in stories of conversion to Christianity. As the singers of the chansons were dependent on their audiences for their livelihood, it was advantageous to them not to alienate their audiences. The attitudes they expressed towards conversion of non-Christians could be assumed to be common to both poets and audiences of the era. In these poems, conquest and conversion are interlinked. The bulk of conversions are forced on massed populations or individuals and there are two examples of intensely spiritual conversions in these poems, but many aspects of the epic plots highlight the social and cultural nature of conversion. The French identify their society with the religion it espouses, converts are influenced to change their religion by the qualities they perceive in their French opponents and they succumb to offers of riches, land, powerful alliances and belonging to what is portrayed as a more powerful and materially and morally superior society. This paper will examine cultural aspects of conversion in the Old French *chansons de geste*.

LEON WILD

University of Sydney

ÓLÁFR'S RAVEN COIN: OLD NORSE MYTH IN CIRCULATION?

The early medieval coinage of York under the rulership of the Scandinavians presents a variety of symbols of their presence, which may have some associations with Old Norse myth and religion. A striking example is from the mint of Óláfr Gothfrithsson. Óláfr was the king of Dublin from 934-41 and additionally King of York from 939-41. His pennies minted in York bore a vivid figure of a raven. This bird of battle is an aggressive symbol of Óláfr's reign and has resonance with the ideas of an Old Norse 'raven banner'.