

The Surrounding Forest: Trees in the Medieval Imaginary

Saturday 22nd June, The Keynes Library,
Birkbeck College, University of London

A Symposium Hosted by Medieval Ecocriticisms and N/EMICS



This one-day symposium aims to explore the image of the tree as a conduit for the exploration of human engagements with environment in the global middle ages, broadly defined, and seeks to encourage cross-cultural, trans-national, and interdisciplinary understanding of the role of trees, woodland, and other vegetation in various contexts. We want to better understand human responses to nature. What is it about ‘arboreal beauty’ that connects it with the divine? Recognized across cultures as axis mundi, the tree shoots upwards, its trunk and branches stretching, reaching, growing towards the light as it seeks to bridge the in-between space that divides earth from the heavens. The liminal quality of foliage, trees, and forests is recognized by artists and weavers of images across the world.

0930 Registration

1000 Welcome (Mike Bintley)

Introduction: Pippa Salonijs, 'Mother Earth, Sister Moon and the Vast Sacred Forests of Tane/*Te Wao-tapu-nui-a-Tane*: Trees in Māori and Franciscan Thought'

1010 Panel 1: Trees, Kinship, and Material (Chair: Pippa Salonijs)

Aileen Marwung Walsh, 'Trees are Family'

Jeannette Jones, '*Plorer mon filz*: Musical Networks, Genealogy, and the Tree of Jesse'

Pete Sandberg, 'Shaping with the Plane of the Voice: Old Norse Poetry as Woodwork'

David P. Bardeen, 'Arboreal Formations: Ecological Dimensions of Italian Intarsia'

1200 Lunch

1300 Panel 2: Trees, Space, and Place (Chair: Mike Bintley)

Alexander Ford, 'Cult Posts in the Anglo-Saxon Conception of Natural and Fabricated Ritual Space'

Jessica Treacher, '*Hnutu* in a Nutshell: Considering 'Nut-Tree' Place Names in England'

Renzo Chiovelli, Giulia Maria Palma, Vania Rocchi, "'Sopra un abete il Re dell'alto regno con una trina face in un doppier si mostra ad un Re pio. Son questi il luogo e il legno": the tree of the Trinity and the foundation of Abbazia del Santissimo Salvatore'

1430 Break

1445 Panel 3: Trees, Image, and Iconography (Chair: Michael Warren)

Lamia Balafrej, 'Plant-Thinking in Early Islamic Art'

Valerie Gonzalez, 'The Aporetic Muteness of the Arboreal Mosaics of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (715 AD)'

Meg Boulton, 'Wondrous Tree(s): Considering the Symbolic Significance/s of Trees in Early English Sculpture'

1615 Break

1630 Panel 4: Trees, Categories, and Structures (Chair: Maryanne Cline Horowitz)

Alice Lafôret, 'Arbor est Indie nobilissima: Describing Exotic Trees in Medieval Encyclopaedias'

Anoush Sargsyan, 'The Genealogical Tree of Christ in the Context of the Armenian Version of Peter's *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi*'

José Higuera Rubio, 'Lullian Arborescent Structures: The Premodern Emergence of the "Diagrammatic Turn"?'

Pauline Leplongeon, 'Vegetal Imaginary in Exemplary Literature: The Case of the *Cinquantenaire*'

1820 Closing

Links:

Places strictly limited: [Book with Eventbrite](#)

[Birkbeck](#)

[N/EMICS](#)

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