

Benjamin Barootes
Centre for Medieval Studies
University of Toronto
bsw.barootes@utoronto.ca

My Oxford Research Trip, June 2017

Thanks to the bursary from the Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, I was able to spend a week in Oxford in mid-June carrying out research at the Bodleian and Weston libraries. This research was fundamental for my postdoctoral project, “*in nomine meo*: The Texts and Contexts of Oxford, Trinity College MS 8.” This study turns on the Beauchamp missal, the fourteenth-century mass book belonging to Sir William Beauchamp, first Baron Bergavenny, brother to the rebel Earl of Warwick, and friend to Chaucer and several Lollard knights. Beauchamp’s missal stands out as the earliest exemplar of the votive mass of the Holy Name of Jesus. Beauchamp’s devotion to the Holy Name complicates his position between the orthodox stalwarts among his extended family—his wife’s uncles include Humphrey Bohun and Thomas Arundel—and the heterodox figures in his social affinity.

I started my first day in the library studying the two folia of the mass, which appears on near the end of the missal. Without giving too much away, I can say that my examination of these folia confirms that Beauchamp’s devotion to the Holy Name ran deeper and was likely more intense than has been previously thought. While I spent some of each day with this important codex, I also looked at a number of other missals from the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that contain the Jesus mass. Two of these came from the Worcester diocese, where Beauchamp held several manors, and I believe I’ve established that one of these missals shared a decorator with Sir William’s mass book. One of the most important secular books that I included in my research was University College MS 97, a miscellany of Latin and English devotional texts that may have been compiled by Beauchamp’s secretary, William Countour. This collection, which may have either belonged to or been partially copied from Sir William’s now-lost library, points to the sort of vernacular piety that was current in the Beauchamp affinity. The images I captured and the subsequent transcriptions and dissemination of the texts from University 97 will allow for a broader understanding of West Midlands devotional cultures at the turn of the fifteenth century.