

Report to *Medium Aevum* on *The Medieval and Early Modern Garden: Enclosure and Transformation*, Swansea University, 4-5 June 2015

The conference brought together postgraduate students, early career scholars and experienced researchers in the disciplines of English Literature, History and Archaeology to explore the textual representation and material reality of the garden space from c.1100-1750.

On 4 June the programme started with a workshop session for students led by Elisabeth Whittle, Roberta Magnani and John Law examining the range of evidence for the premodern garden, from extant heritage sites, to artistic representations and literary images. This was followed by a session of postgraduate student papers (Morgan, Kreidler, Smith) exploring the gendering of the garden and its representation as a reconstructed Paradise or Eden. This in turn raised questions about the definition of the 'garden' and lively discussion as to what constituent elements were required to distinguish it from other outside spaces. There was an opportunity for students to meet and discuss their papers with colleagues and mentors in the evening.

On 5 June a further six conference papers were presented (Black, Magnani, Francis, Price, Tyers, Herbert McAvoy), developing issues raised on day 1 and adding significant discussion of the garden motif in Judeo-Christian discourse, late medieval drama and political tracts. The garden as a liminal and queer space, and its function as a place of refuge and containment, emerged as themes. The practical benefits of the garden as a place of food and medicine production were also explored in greater depth.

The day ended with two public lectures (Benson and Whittle) on current work to reveal the garden spaces of medieval and early modern Wales.

The symposium was well-attended, drawing scholars and students from across the UK. Numbers increased throughout, from c.30 on Day 1 to c.45 for the public lectures. A significant proportion of the attendees were early career or independent scholars, illustrating the potential of this theme to reach out to, and engage with, a broader constituency. The conference served as a launch event for the interdisciplinary project *The Enclosed Garden: Pleasure, Contemplation and Cure in the Hortus Conclusus, c.1100-1450*, which will be commencing under Professor Liz Herbert McAvoy's direction at Swansea in October 2015.

It is planned to publish a selection of the conference papers, and a proposal is currently being prepared to be submitted in the first instance to Ashgate. In discussion with speakers and other colleagues, it is also planned to develop certain themes of the conference in greater depth at the Leeds International Medieval Congress in 2016 and Kalamazoo IMC in 2017.

The conference organizers, Professor Liz Herbert McAvoy and Dr Eoin Price, would like to thank *Medium Aevum* for its support. Thanks to this, the conference was able to invite postgraduate speakers from outside Wales, assist with free and subsidised travel and refreshments for these student delegates, and broke even when registration fees were taken into account. As the report above demonstrates, this 'seed' funding will bear rich intellectual 'fruit'.

Professor Liz Herbert McAvoy
September 4th 2015.