

The Society's generous award of a Travel Bursary enabled me to undertake a research trip to Massachusetts in April 2012. The trip consisted of research carried out at the Houghton Library, Harvard, followed by attendance at the annual Maritime History Conference at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Cape Cod. The trip proved to be extremely fruitful, both contributing to my current PhD thesis and opening up new avenues for future research.

My current research examines the use of runic letters in medieval manuscripts, focussing on the practice of incorporating runes within texts that are written predominantly in the roman alphabet. My thesis will argue that themes of writing and the semiotics of written communication can be identified as a central concern in these texts, and that runic letters in this context are used specifically to represent the written word in way that roman letters are not. Because the concept of the written word is central to my thesis, much of my research focuses on medieval depictions of, and attitudes towards, the practice of writing and written communication, extending beyond specifically runic texts. This includes studying scribal colophons, marginal notations and manuscript illuminations, alongside historical descriptions of the act of writing, practicalities of manuscript production, and the use of the written word in artistic and epigraphic designs.

Whilst at the Houghton Library, I was able to examine many of the manuscripts included in the collection 'Books in Books: Reflections on Reading and Writing in the Middle Ages'. All of the manuscripts chosen for this collection contain depictions of books being written, read or handled, thereby reinforcing the importance of the written word, and the role of the author, in medieval society. Moreover, as artistic representations of books drawn on the pages of actual books, these manuscripts demonstrate the complex and often playful interaction between word and image that is frequently encountered in medieval art and literature.

Although all of these manuscripts provide a useful context when considering the role of writing in medieval society, the two that have proven most relevant to my current research are MS Typ 202 and Ms Typ 120. The first of these is a 12th century copy of Bede's commentary on the Gospel of Luke, and includes an image of Bede himself presenting his mentor Acca with a copy of that same text. This image provides a commentary on the status of this specific manuscript, in a manner similar to the colophon at the end of the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, or the metrical prologues of King Alfred. The second of these manuscripts comprises a handful of pages from the *Noyon Missal*, a large 13th century Mass book. The vivid illustrations include a depiction of a scribe at work on f.1v. Photographs of this page, kindly permitted by the Houghton Library, will be used in my thesis to demonstrate the development of such images throughout the medieval period, including depictions of the four Gospel writers in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* and the monks in the *Arundel Psalter*.

After concluding my research at the Houghton Library, I travelled to the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Cape Cod to attend the annual Maritime History Conference in the Humanities. I was invited to present a paper discussing the impact on contemporary coastal communities of interactions between Anglo-Saxon England and medieval Scandinavia. Much of the early written evidence for these interactions survives in the form of runic inscriptions, and this paper therefore combines my current study of runes with potential post-doctoral

research on early medieval maritime history and literature. The conference was attended by historians, archaeologists, literary scholars and maritime specialists. As a result, I was able to discuss my research with academics from a wide range of backgrounds and benefitted considerably from their varied perspectives. I am currently in the process of writing up this paper, and will be submitting the resulting article to the conference's associated journal *Nautilus* later in the year.

I would once again like to express my gratitude to the Society for the award of a Travel Bursary. The research that I have undertaken on this trip, both at the Houghton Library and at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, has already greatly benefitted my thesis and has expanded both my current and future fields of research. The experience was both productive and highly rewarding.

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