

Netherlands Research School for Medieval Studies

Heritage of the Middle Ages

Symposium for PhD and Research Master's Students

Huygens ING, Prins Willem Alexanderhof 5, Den Haag

22 June 2012

In this Symposium experts on Medieval Heritage will present their views on the conservation, study, exploitation and topical use and value of material and ideas that survived from the Middle Ages.

Registration

Please contact the secretariat (ozsmed@rug.nl) for registration as soon as possible, but no later than 3 June 2012

PhD and ReMa students who are full member of the school can participate without any additional costs. Further information may be obtained from the secretariat.

Introduction

'Each society has its own, often debated, but coherent whole of landscape elements, objects and stories, which constitute the inalienable possessions, the 'heritage' of a group. These possessions do not stand alone. Heritage comprises the story about the past [...], but also the palpable heritage, its interpretation and the care to be taken for it, meaning investments to be made for it [...]. Care implies successful transmission of heritage and is constitutive for the ways in which groups define and maintain their identity. The story not only serves the maintenance of heritage, but is an integral part of it' (Bazelmans).¹

Within a short period, 'Heritage' ['Erfgoed'] has become a key concept in our approach of the past, which also left traces in scholarly enterprises and institutions. The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research [NWO] runs a major research program CATCH (Continuous Access to Cultural Heritage), which focuses on digital access to heritage. In Medieval Studies, however, the approach of our object of research as 'heritage', including its theoretical implications, is not *en vogue* as yet. This Masterclass has as its goal to test the hypothesis that such an angle of approach could be fruitful for the Middle Ages as well. This presupposes, at the least, that to the three elements mentioned by Bazelmans – **landscape, objects, stories** – a fourth category is added: **texts**.

¹ "Iedere samenleving kent haar eigen, vaak omstreden, maar samenhangende geheel van landschappelijke elementen, objecten en verhalen die de onvervreembare bezittingen, het 'erfgoed' van een groep vormen. Deze bezittingen staan niet op zichzelf. Erfgoed omvat het verhaal over het verleden [...], maar ook het tastbare erfgoed, de duiding ervan en de 'zorg', dat wil zeggen de investeringen ervoor [...]. Zorg staat voor de succesvolle overdracht van erfgoed en is bepalend voor de wijze waarop groepen hun identiteit blijvend weten te definiëren en te handhaven. Het verhaal is niet slechts dienstbaar aan behoud van erfgoed maar intrinsiek onderdeel ervan". Aldus Jos Bazelmans (in: Erik A. de Jong e.a., *Perspectief. Maakbare geschiedenis*, Stimuleringsfonds voor de Architectuur, 2007, p. 81).

The decisions we as medievalists take in our days, will influence the ways in which and the degree to which heritage will be handed down to future generations. If we approach the legacy of the Middle Ages as 'heritage', it will be possible to integrate questions of both scholarly interpretation and of societal positioning of medieval studies into one coherent whole. This is a challenge to science/ scholarship we have to take up in order to make our disciplines survive. E-humanities might be one of the instruments to achieve this goal, but we also have to present the results of our research to a broader public. The Heritage of the Middle Ages could be made more visible in present day society.

Programme

- Introduction: Historians and heritage - Key issues in the heritage debate since 1980

Prof. dr. Jan Kolen, Universitair docent Archeologie, Afdeling Oudheid, Bijzonder hoogleraar Erfgoed van Stad en Land, directeur CLUE (= Institute for Cultural Landscape and Urban Environment), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

- Collecting and Preserving Early Printed Books

Drs. Marieke van Delft, Conservator Oude Drukken/Curator of Early Printed Editions

- Heritage in the Hands of the Scholar and the Crowd

prof. dr Karina van Dalen-Oskam (Huygens ING)

- Medieval Monuments: Heritage Management and policy – (Lecturer: not yet known)

- Conclusion: Can the Middle Ages survive?

prof. dr. Peter Raedts

Summaries

Jan Kolen

Historians and Heritage - Key issues in the heritage debate since 1980"

Since c. 1980, opinions and perspectives on heritage have changed considerably in the historical and social sciences. In the 1980s, the debate was dominated by pleas for the critical "debunking" of public histories and heritage practices (see Hewison 1987 and Tollebeek & Verschaffel 1992 for examples). Over the last decade this critical approach has been replaced by more positive, postmodern and constructivist perspectives on the relationships between heritage and history. So far, the heritage debate has focused primarily on material culture (buildings, archaeological artefacts, museum items) and cultural traditions (folk tales, rituals etc), and much less so on archival material and texts. In this presentation Jan Kolen discusses the major shifts in the historical thinking about heritage in the historical sciences over the last thirty years, with specific reference to the interpretation of (historical) texts.

Marieke van Delft

Collecting and Preserving Early Printed Books

In the Low Countries, the first dated books were printed in 1473. This was the beginning of a fast growing industry. Until 1501, 2229 editions have been printed that

survive in 14,300 copies. These books - incunabula - have been studied intensively. Bibliographies were compiled and the producers, physical appearance (letter types, paper, woodcuts, bindings) and provenance have been researched. The Koninklijke Bibliotheek, national library of the Netherlands, holds the biggest collection of incunabula printed in the Low Countries (more than 900 copies) and has been a leading institution in the research on Incunabula of the Low Countries. At the moment, the collection is being digitised by ProQuest. In her presentation, Marieke van Delft discusses the different research projects on this collection, shows how the results can be used when studying the medieval cultural heritage and how digital tools might alter research practices as well as questions.

Karina van Dalen-Oskam

Heritage in the Hands of the Scholar and the Crowd

Textual and documentary heritage is a key element in the research programme of the Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands (Huygens ING) of the Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). The institute is extensively experimenting with the possibilities of modern information technology. One of the tools developed at Huygens ING is eLaborate, an online work environment that enables a scholar or a group of scholars and/or volunteers to upload scans, transcribe textual documents, easily annotate the transcription, and ultimately publish the transcription/edition online. Especially medievalists have been very interested in using the tool. A scholarly kind of crowd sourcing using eLaborate has proved to be extremely efficient in getting basic transcriptions available in a relatively short time. Karina van Dalen-Oskam will describe the background of the development of the tool: why did Huygens ING choose to build it, and how is deployment of the tool connected to the research programme for the next five years?

Peter Raedts

Can the Middle Ages survive?

The concept 'Middle Ages' was forged in the eighteenth century when Europeans discovered that Classical Antiquity was not their only inheritance from the past and not the only foundation to build on. Modern Europeans came to feel that they were also heirs to another fascinating past, first called 'Gothic' and later on 'medieval', a Northern culture that stood in many interesting ways in contrast to the Mediterranean civilisation of the South, a past that was more emotional, more spontaneous, more innocent, more original than the artificial culture of Rome. This climate of aversion to reason from which the new interest in the Middle Ages sprang has determined the course of medieval history to a very large extent. Interest in the Middle Ages often included resistance to modern developments such as rationalisation, industrialisation and individualisation. Evoking the medieval was criticising the modern, as we can see from Tönnies when he used the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* (medieval) and *Gesellschaft* (modern) as tools to analyse his own society. At the moment we see a new wave of criticism of modern society that takes the form of what is now called populism. Is medieval history going to become the inheritance of the populists, as seems to be the case with the Lega Nord in Italy? Or are there other ways to redefine the significance of the medieval past for twenty-first century Europe?