

# Mirabile dictu!

The Newsletter of the Center for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (CMEMS) at the University of Colorado



## *Historiae Canadensis: Histories of Premodern Canada*

by Professor Scott G. Bruce

### *Mirabile dictu!*

Welcome back! I hope that the summer was restive and productive for everyone. I am delighted to return to the pages of *Mirabile dictu!* to share my thoughts on medieval and early modern topics and to remind you of the many wonderful events that CMEMS has planned for the new academic year. On our summer travels, my family visited Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons, a Jesuit outpost on the

southern shore of Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada, that was inhabited for a decade in the early seventeenth century. This visit was a vivid reminder that premodern history is not exclusive to Europe. Read on to learn more about premodern Canada and upcoming events featuring CU Boulder Faculty on the theme of “medieval” America!

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*Work-in-Progress Speaker Profile: Professor Peter H. Wood*

Distinguished early American historian takes us on a tour of the “medieval” Mississippi.

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*Sub Arboribus Convenes Again for the Fall Semester*

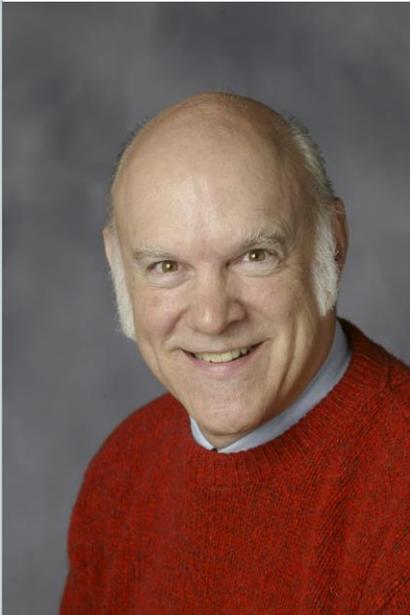
The CMEMS Medieval Latin Reading Group is on its way to hell. Literally.

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*New Translations of the “Basic Works” of Thomas Aquinas*

Professor Robert Pasnau (Department of Philosophy) co-edits an important new volume.

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**SPEAKER PROFILE:  
PETER H. WOOD**

Peter Wood is Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Boulder, after a long career teaching early American history at Duke University (1975-2008). Wood graduated from Harvard College in 1964, spent two years in Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship, and returned to Harvard to earn his PhD in 1972. His landmark first book, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 to the Stono Rebellion* (1974) won the Beveridge Prize of the American Historical Association. More books followed this one, many of which won major awards. In addition to his current research on “medieval” canoes, Wood is working on a book on the Abolition Movement and the Civil War era.

**Peter H. Wood is Professor of History at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he teaches courses in early American History**

When asked what led him to early American history, Peter Wood replies: “My parents were from Massachusetts, so I learned about Paul Revere as a kid and became hooked early on colonial American history. I wrote my senior thesis in college on the Puritans’ relations with the Indians. But coming from the Midwest, I pushed against the narrow chronological and geographical boundaries of the traditional field. Having grown up in St. Louis, west of the Mississippi, I knew there was life beyond New England and Virginia. And it stretched back long before Plymouth Rock and Jamestown in the seventeenth century and indeed even before Columbus in 1492.”

“St. Louis gave me some hint of the medieval world,” Wood adds, “but from an unusual angle. The city was named for King Louis IX of France, and admiring his equestrian statue outside the St. Louis Art Museum is an early memory for me. The city’s Romanesque train station, built in the 1890s, was modeled – believe it or not – on the medieval fortress of Carcassonne, where Edward the Black Prince failed in his siege of 1355, during the Hundred Years War. But three centuries before that, mound builders on the Mississippi were creating Cahokia near St. Louis! I never forgot that.” Please join us for Professor Wood’s talk, the first in our series about topics in “medieval” North America.

**On Friday August 29, Peter H. Wood will give a CMEMS Faculty Work-in-Progress Talk entitled “Before Huck’s Raft: Life on the Medieval Mississippi in the Lost Age of Dugout Canoes”**



On Friday August 29 at 12 noon, Professor Peter H. Wood will present the first CMEMS Faculty Work-in-Progress Talk of the new year and inaugurate a series of presentations by CU Boulder Faculty members on the theme of “medieval” North America. The talk will take place in UMC 245. Students are especially welcome to attend this event, which is free and open to the public. Please help us to make our first event of the year a success by coming out for a stimulating paper, lively discussion and refreshments, brought to you by CMEMS.

*Sub Arboribus, CU Boulder's Medieval Latin Reading Group, will convene again in late August*



A belated thank you to Professor Carole Newlands (Classics) for organizing *Sub Arboribus*, the CMEMS-sponsored medieval Latin reading group, in the spring of 2014! It was another great success! The group will convene once again in the fall semester of 2014, led this time by Professor Scott G. Bruce. This semester's text is the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, a work of uncertain origin originally written in Greek that became immensely popular in the medieval tradition. We will be using H. C. Kim's Latin text, available in the Toronto Medieval Latin Texts series published by the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto. Get yours today!

This may well be our last semester of *Sub arboribus* and that is good news! Due to the popularity of this reading group, CMEMS has proposed a new Medieval Latin Reading Course that will be cross-listed in Classics and History at the 4000 and 5000 levels so that interested students will be able to read medieval Latin for course credit. We hope to offer this new medieval Latin reading course for the first time in Spring 2015. Stay tuned! In the meantime, students who want to take part this fall should email Professor Bruce ([bruces@colorado.edu](mailto:bruces@colorado.edu)) for information about the initial meeting of *Sub arboribus*.

(continued from p. 1)

### L'Anse aux Meadows

Canada is far richer in pre-modern history than you may have imagined. This tour begins at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northwestern tip of Newfoundland. Discovered in 1960 and thoroughly excavated over a decade, this site contains the remains of a modest Norse settlement dating from around the year 1000. L'Anse aux Meadows is a particularly significant find because it provides unparalleled evidence for European contact with the North American continent almost five hundred years before the arrival of Columbus. When I visited this site as a graduate student in August of 1996, the North Atlantic was teeming with icebergs and grey whales and you felt that you could almost glimpse the shores of Greenland 600 miles away.

For those who are unable to visit the site (it is admittedly very remote), you can capture the sense of discovery of its Norse inhabitants by reading the *Saga of the Greenlanders* and the *Saga of Erik the Red*, both of which describe the medieval discovery of "Vinland," a land of vines located to the west of Greenland, and encounters with the aggressive *Skrælingar* (native Americans) who inhabited the place.

### Saint-Marie among the Hurons

In 1639, the Jesuits created the first European settlement in Ontario, on the southern shore of Georgian Bay near the modern town of Midland. Excavation of the site began in the nineteenth century and

today there is a large-scale reconstruction of the original mission, which operates as a living museum, with students enacting the roles of Jesuit priests, soldiers and workers.

From the standpoint of the history of Christianity, Saint-Marie among the Hurons is important as the place where Jesuits like Jean de Brébeuf (1593-1649) conducted intensive research on the Huron language (Wyandot). They mastered this difficult language through constant interaction with Huron people, wrote grammars and dictionaries to teach other Jesuits, and composed hymns and prayers to convey the Christian message to Huron converts. Brébeuf was among the eight Jesuits martyred in New France in the early seventeenth century. Captured by invading Iroquois, several Jesuits were subject to ritual torture and slain. They were immediately hailed as saints

and their martyrdom was understood as a sign of God's favor for their mission, but their formal canonization did not take place until 1930, after which Brébeuf became one of the patron saints of Canada.

Saint-Marie among the Hurons is not as remote as L'Anse-aux-Meadows and an abundance of texts survive from the mission. The Jesuit *Relations* were the annual reports of missionaries working in the far corners of New France. Starting in 1626, Jesuits wrote narrative accounts of their missionary activities in Latin and French accompanied by fascinating digressions on the flora, fauna and geography of Canada. While these letters were redacted before their publication in Europe, they nonetheless provide insight into the Jesuit experience in a sometimes hostile missionary field. The modern edition of the Jesuit *Relations* comprises a staggering 73 volumes.



Continued...

### Historiae Canadensis

Inspired and informed by the Jesuit *Relations*, François Du Creux composed the earliest history of Canada, the *Historiae Canadensis seu Novae Franciae Libri Decem* (Paris, 1664), which covers the years 1625 to 1658. Sixteen engraved plates adorned this book, depicting native American women at work grinding corn (the image to the right) as well as exotic Canadian wildlife like moose. These images and their veracity has received the lion's share of scholarly attention devoted to Du Creux's fascinating history, but very few scholars have examined to his Latinity: his word choice and other modes of expression, his ancient and medieval influences, his ways of telling a story. In fact, as a recent article by Jean-François Cottier (Université de Montréal) has shown, the study of Latin writings in New France has only just begun and will certainly reward scholarly attention: "Écrits latins en Nouvelle-France (1608-1763): Premier état de la question," *Tangence* 92 (winter 2010): 9-26.

Needless to say, this short introduction to Christian Latin sources from New France leaves out the centuries-old histories of the Native American peoples, which are known to us primarily from archaeological remains, and it raises the question whether terms like "medieval" and "premodern" are relevant to native American history.

### Looking Ahead to September

Due to the late appearance of the August newsletter, you can expect the next issue of *Mirabile dictu!* to appear during the second week of September. There you will find an editorial on the Loeb Classical Library (its history, the logic behind its omissions, its censorship of the naughty bits of classical literature, and what this series means for medieval studies) as well as profiles of our next two visiting



speakers: Professor Karl Shoemaker (University of Wisconsin at Madison) and Professor Brian Duwick (University of Colorado at Colorado Springs). We will also have some announcements about premodern courses at CU Boulder coming in the Spring semester of 2015.

Servus,  
SGB

### About the Director: Professor Scott G. Bruce, Department of History



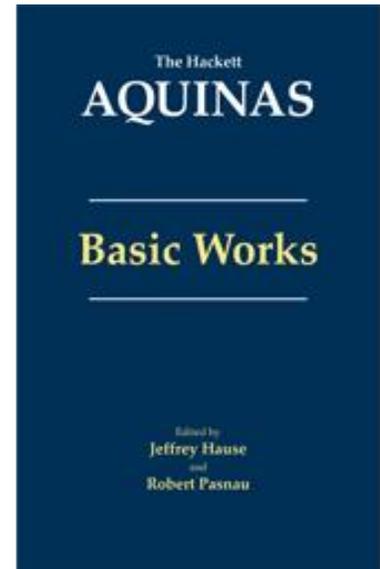
Scott G. Bruce earned his B.A. in History and Latin *summa cum laude* (1994) at York University in Toronto, Canada. He pursued his M.A. (1996) and Ph.D. (2000) in History at Princeton University, where he concentrated on topics in religion and culture in the early Middle Ages and wrote his dissertation under the supervision of Professor Giles Constable.

A specialist on the history of the abbey of Cluny, SGB has published widely on many aspects of medieval monastic culture and literature. He also serves as an editor of *The Medieval Review* (TMR) and plays an active role in the Medieval Academy of America (MAA). For more information, including a complete list of publications, please visit: [www.colorado.academia.edu/ScottBruce](http://www.colorado.academia.edu/ScottBruce)

## Robert Pasnau, Professor of Philosophy, Edits an Important New Translation of Aquinas's Basic Works

Robert Pasnau, Professor of Philosophy at CU Boulder, together with Jeffrey Hause (Associate Professor of Philosophy and Classics at Creighton University), has edited a new collection of translations of important works by the thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas with Hackett Publishing Company. From the press: "Drawn from a wide range of writings and featuring state-of-the-art translations, *Basic Works* offers convenient access to Thomas Aquinas' most important discussions of nature, being and essence, divine and human nature, and ethics and human action. The translations all capture Aquinas's sharp, transparent style and display terminological consistency ... *Basic Works* will enable students to immerse themselves in Aquinas's thought by offering his fundamental works without internal abridgements. It will also appeal to anyone in search of an up-to-date, one-volume collection containing Aquinas' essential philosophical contributions – from the Five Ways to the immortality of the soul, and from the nature of happiness to virtue theory, and on to natural law."

Congratulations to Bob on this wonderful new publication!



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#### IMAGE SOURCES:

The image on the title page is an engraving depicting the martyrdom of Brebeuf, which first appeared in Du Creux's *Historiae Canadensis* (1664).

The illumination of the Harrowing of Hell on p. 3 is from a thirteenth-century manuscript at St. John's College, Cambridge (MS K.21, fol. 54r).

The engraving of native American women pounding corn on p. 5 can be found in Du Creux's *Historiae Canadensis*.

And our awesome hedgehog to the right comes from a Franco-Flemish manuscript dated around 1270 now in the possession of the J. Paul Getty Museum.

*Postscriptum:* Another year of CMEMS unfurls before us. We are very grateful to CU's College of Arts and Sciences and the Center for Western Civilization (CWC) for their financial support during the coming academic year. Our lecture series and other events would be impossible without their help. Stay tuned for our next issue of *Mirabile dictu!* where you will find more information on our Fall events, including all of the details about our upcoming conference on Medieval Materiality on 23-25 October.

