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Conference Report: University of Birmingham History Forum in collaboration with the IAA Forum Annual Postgraduate Conference – “Collaboration and Fragmentation.” 18th September 2009. The Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-Upon-Avon.

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The History Postgraduate Forum held its third annual one-day conference in late September 2009, for the first time this year in collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity Postgraduate Forum. With a theme of ‘Collaboration and Fragmentation’ it was widely attended by postgraduate researchers from across the country and from a wide variety of disciplines, including modern history, English literature, art history, Anglo-Saxon archaeology and ancient history.

In total 12 papers were presented, the quality of which was particularly high this year. The morning’s papers were dedicated to ‘Collaboration’ with panels on cultural contact and collaborations within and across unique communities. The first panel, entitled ‘Collectives and Communities,’ included papers on seventeenth-century alehouse associations, sixteenth-century livery companies and the role of the Freemasons in developing cross cultural contacts and communities that span continents. The second panel – ‘Cultures in Contact’ – also examined cross cultural communities across geographical distances with papers on collaboration between European colonists and Native Americans, relations between Umayyad Spain and Byzantium and Anglo-Saxon collaboration against Viking invaders in the tenth-century by students from Birmingham, Oxford and Warwick.

The afternoon’s panels were dedicated to ‘Fragmentation.’ Again, two panels were held, first entitled ‘Propaganda and Rhetoric’ and the second ‘Strife and Conflict.’ The first focussed on the use of historical events in writing with papers on the fictionalisation of the Boxer Rebellion, unusual theological representations of the heretic Novatians in fifth-century literature and the use of Shakespeare’s plays as propaganda tools during the First World War by students from Cambridge, Glasgow and Kings College, London. The final panel of the day focused even more heavily on

discontent, with papers on urban violence in the writings of nuns, failed strikes in the twentieth century and the day ended with a unique perspective on the role of genocide in the twentieth-century as a community building tool for the perpetrators.

25 delegates from universities across the UK attended. As the day was funded by the Roberts Fund organisers were able to ensure that the conference was free and to provide lunch and travel expenses for all delegates. All the delegates commended both the venue, the caterers and the organisers on the event. It was an exceedingly enjoyable day for all who attended, providing an excellent opportunity to meet postgraduate researchers from a great many disciplines and from across the UK. The lunch and coffee breaks provided many excellent opportunities for networking among the delegates, and indeed was so successful that the lunch break was extended by 45 minutes to allow conversation to continue! The discussion at the end of each panel was lively and extended and provided ample opportunity to expand on the themes of the conference and to form cross disciplinary connections. Papers particularly worthy of note on the day were Jacqueline Young's analysis of the fictionalised and semi-fictionalised accounts of the Boxer Rebellion, Peter Kebell's examination of the Freemasons and the conspiracy theory hysteria that tends to surrounds them, and David Patrick's fascinating and moving examination of the motivations and causes of modern genocides.

Special thanks are due to the Roberts Fund for allowing the History Forum and the IAA Forum to hold such a successful event, and the organisers hope for equal success in 2010.

Appendix: Papers Given.

Panel One: 'Collectives and Communities'

'Faith and Fraternity: The Reformation of Ritual at the London Livery Companies c1510-1603' *Laura Branch, University of Warwick.*

'A Social Cement? Alehouse Associations in Seventeenth-Century England' *Mark Hailwood, University of Warwick.*

'Cross Cultural Collaboration: Early Eighteenth-Century Freemasonry' *Peter Kebbell, University of Bristol.*

Panel Two: 'Cultures in Contact'

'The Creation of a New Political Order? Understanding the Context of West Saxon-Mercian Collaboration in the late Ninth and Tenth Centuries' *Matt Edwards, University of Birmingham.*

'East Meets West? Diplomatic Relations Between Byzantium and Umayyad Spain in the Reign of Constantine VII' *Prerona Prasad, University of Oxford.*

'"A Friendship Indispensible to the Founding of the Colony": Collaboration and Fragmentation Between European Colonists and American Indians in Early Georgia' *Christopher Vernon, University of Warwick.*

Panel Three: 'Propaganda and Rhetoric'

'Unorthodox Readings of Schismatics: the Portrayal of the Novatians in Socrates Scholasticus' *Luke Gardiner, University of Cambridge.*

'A Matter of historical Fact' *Jaqueline Young, University of Glasgow.*

'Shakespeare Behind the Trenches' *Anne Isherwood, Kings College London.*

Panel Four: 'Strife and Conflict'

'Images of Urban Violence in the Writings of a Fifteenth-Century Spanish Nun' *Hilary Pearson, University of Oxford.*

'Collaboration and Fragmentation: the Strike at William Denby & Sons, 1963-64 and its Aftermath' *Laura Price, University of York.*

'Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century: An Exercise in Community Building' *David Patrick, University of Sheffield.*