**Strong hold: Castles and the Culture of Nation Building**

**29 June 2017**

**Southampton City Art Gallery, Civic Centre, Southampton SO14 7LY**

**In collaboration with the**

**Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Culture, University of Southampton**

10.00 Coffee

10.15 Welcome

10.20 -11.40

**Political Ecology and the Medieval Castle: Bodiam and Beyond**

Matthew Johnson, Professor and Chair of Anthropology, Northwestern University

**Castles in an English Republic**

Alice Hunt, University of Southampton

**Encastling England: Walls, and Neo-Medievalism in Europe and Beyond**

Alireza Fakhrkonandeh, University of Southampton

11.40-12.00 Coffee

12.00-12.30

**Hiding in Plain Sight: The Secret Lives of Southampton Castle**

Cheryl Butler, University of Winchester

12.30 -1.00

**Introduction to the ‘Capture the Castle’ Exhibition**

Steve Marshall, and Tim Craven, Exhibition Curators

1.00 – 2.30

Lunch (own arrangements) and Tours of the ‘Capture the Castle’ Exhibition

<https://www.southampton.gov.uk/news/article.aspx?id=tcm:63-392397>

2.30-3.30

**Mother and castle-builder: Melusine, the founder of Lusignan’**

Kirsty Bolton, University of Southampton

**This septic isle? The castellated British Isles and nation building in Shakespeare from *Henry VI* to *Cymbeline***

Ros King. University of Southampton

3.30-4.00 Round table review of the CMRC Strong-Hold events, Jan – June 2017.

4.15 Complementary walk around the site of Southampton Castle, led by Cheryl Butler. Meet at Arundel Tower

This event is free, but please book on Eventbrite <http://bit.ly/Castles17>

**Abstracts**

**Kirsty Bolton, University of Southampton CMRC**

**Mother and castle-builder: Melusine, the founder of Lusignan**

Melusine, the eponymous heroine of the 1393 romance, is famed as the mother of ten heroic sons and the founder of the Lusignan dynasty, which ruled in France, Cyprus, and Jerusalem throughout the Middle Ages. Jean d’Arras’ text was composed on commission of Jean duc de Berry to defend his claim to the very first castle that Melusine is supposed to have built, the fortress of Lusignan. How, then, does Melusine’s role as a builder of castles relate to her enactment of motherhood within the text? How does she compare to historical female castle builders, such as Ethelflaeda and Maud de Braose? Is it Melusine’s supernatural heritage that allows her to manage the conventionally gender divided roles of mother and builder?

**Cheryl Butler, University of Winchester**

**Hiding in Plain Sight: The Secret Lives of Southampton Castle**

Norman Castles were designed to dominate the landscape, to look out over the conquered land and Southampton Castle was no different: the personal property of the monarch; the place that Henry Plantagenet wanted to hold as he waited for Stephen to die, so that he could become king,; where Henry V dated his will before Agincourt; part of the dower of the Queens of England. By the time of the Tudors, Southampton castle was thought ‘very ruynaise and in greete decays’. It could so easily have disappeared, stone by stone, but instead was re-invented first as a symbol of  Gothic romance and then as a monument to modernism. This paper will look at the development and re-invention of Southampton Castle and the marks it has left in documents, in the imagination and in the landscape.

**Alireza Fakhrkonandeh Encastling England: Walls, and Neo-Medievalism in Europe and Beyond**

Castles are primarily defined by their literal/architectural and symbolic/ideological use of walls. And walls, in their turn, are conspicuous concretizations of the idea of the limit. Currently across the world, from Britain, America, and Israel to Hungary, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and India, we are faced with the anachronistic yet pervasive erection of state border walls: both actual and metaphorical. We are thus confronted with four salient paradoxes and sources of conflict: between sovereignty of the nation-state and global (market) capitalism; between national economies and corporate multinationalism; between national(ist) attempts at physical border building and borderless cybernetics, networked communication, and virtual power; between trans-nationalist and universalized values (such as democracy, human rights, cosmopolitanism), and neo-colonizing acts of exclusion and stratification (of other people, ethnicities, and social groups). I shall explore the traumatic consequences of limit and wall in a range of contemporary plays (Barker, Bond, Greig, Hare, and Kane) in the context of the rampant resurgence of walls in the contemporary political scene.

**Ros King. University of Southampton**

**This septic isle? Castles and nation building in Shakespeare from *Henry VI* to *Cymbeline***

John of Gaunt’s speech in *Richard II* iwhich describes the geography of the British Isles as a natural castle surrounded by a ‘silver sea’ or ‘moat defensive’ and includes the line ‘This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle’, which leant itself as the title of a 100 part BBC radio series on the history of Britain. It has been much anthologized as an expression of British power, monarchy and empire. It is less often noticed (and then only with puzzlement, verging on disgust) that Shakespeare gave more or less the same speech to the wicked Queen in *Cymbeline*. What is going on here? This paper shows that Shakespeare used feminized and effeminized castle contexts in order to critique ideas of priviledge, class, and nation state.

**Matthew Johnson, Professor and Chair of Anthropology, Northwestern University Political Ecology and the Medieval Castle: Bodiam and Beyond**

Castle studies have moved away from their military role, towards a stress on social life, aesthetics, symbolism and 'status'. While this social/cultural turn is a marked advance, it has not always been thought through in a theoretically rigorous way; nor have social/cultural interpretations always been grounded in everyday life and practices. Consequently, 'social' analyses of castles have sometimes tended to be rather disembodied, and to be limited in their engagement with issues of power and inequality. In this paper, I sketch out what a political ecology of the castle might look like, with reference to the late medieval castle of Bodiam in south-east England. I focus on how the castle and its surrounding landscape work to control, delimit and define flows -- flows of things, of animals, and of people, circulating in and around the castle and its context. Flows work at a series of different scales ranging from the position and practices of the human body within particular castle spaces, to the local and regional, to networks of religion and power across the nation and beyond.