

Gender and the Fame of a City

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The reputation of a city is normally measured in terms of its economic success, wealth, and political influence. The importance of a city can be seen in the strength of its walls and the solidity and beauty of its buildings. In the Middle Ages, the respect commanded by its citizens was also an important component of the reputation of a city. In the late Middle Ages this respect was not so much a matter of lineage, esteem, wealth or diligence, but rather of morals. Notions of what constituted moral behavior carried the imprint of ideas that originated in the Church and then increasingly infiltrated secular society, thereby changing social habits. One might therefore assume that it was the clergy's job to secure the commitment of a city's inhabitants to ecclesiastical commandments and a Christian way of life through sermons and other pastoral measures. In the fourteenth and to an even greater extent in the fifteenth century, however, municipal authorities were no longer content to leave the responsibility for maintaining morality within the city to the Church. Instead they took the initiative themselves. With great assiduousness city councils issued regulations designed to ensure that residents lived an upright life, on pain of punishment.

What constituted an upright life was determined in part by what gender one was. Each gender was assigned a specific role in society, a role that carried certain moral expectations with it. Uprightness was therefore gender specific. To live righteously also meant to follow certain rules in one's interactions with members of the opposite sex and regarding sexuality in general. Sexuality, marriage, and the family played a very important role in respectability, so respectability is an important theme in gender history.

Respectability as it relates to gender was thus a regular subject of city council meetings. The respect engendered by its citizens was important for the reputation of the city as a whole, which in turn could have repercussions for its economic success. Moral behavior on the part of its citizens was conducive to domestic peace, which benefited urban markets. Obedience to church mandates also helped ensure the mercy of God, which was necessary to maintain the city's wealth and welfare. Thus, if a member of society violated the rules of decorum and morality the whole of society suffered. It was, therefore, the responsibility of the town council as the guardian of the city's welfare to keep a close eye on the personal habits of the town's residents. In this connection it was crucial to distinguish the respectable from the dishonorable.

Various sources provide information about the goals of the urban authorities. In addition to urban law per se, there are also numerous individual regulations that have survived in numbers increasing from the fourteenth century onward. The most notable are the sumptuary laws. Clothing represented the wealth, economic position, and social rank of those that wore it. It was a tool in the struggle for social recognition and status. It could be used to give the impression of greater economic potency that one really possessed, thereby aiding in securing advantages over one's competitors. At the same time, elegant clothing could drive those who wore it into financial ruin if they tried to feign greater wealth than they had. Because the individual citizen was a part of urban society, communal interests could be damaged if a city's residents dressed in ways that did not reflect their true social status. Not only would the economic potential of the city be weakened if too much of its capital was invested in unproductive luxuries, its reputation for honesty and trustworthiness might also suffer, thereby weakening the chances of its citizens to secure credit. Social harmony could also suffer.

Until the sixteenth century, the municipal sumptuary laws were particularly directed against women. They were required to match the costliness and extent of precious fabrics, furs and jewelry they wore to the wealth of their husbands. In Hamburg, for example, a woman had to yield up her coat to a creditor and thus fell into dishonor. The woman represented the dignity and respectability of her husband, as well as his economic power, for better or worse.¹

Luxurious clothing was not only an expression of actual or desired social status, but also pride, which was the deadly sin most often subject to the corrective efforts of preachers. The idea that luxurious clothing was closely allied with impurity made it seem especially dangerous. Clothing could express sensual desire, either by emphasizing or exposing certain parts of the body, and thus send signals to the opposite sex that could lead to immorality and ultimately to premarital sex, adultery or rape. Adultery in particular could seriously damage civil peace.

As is widely recognized, according to the Church it was especially women, as successors of the Biblical Eve, who in their roles as temptresses aroused sinful sexual desire in the opposite sex. It thus comes as no surprise that municipal sumptuary laws were directed so much against women. But this also

¹ Roswitha Rogge, *Zwischen Moral und Handelsgeist. Weibliche Handlungsräume und Geschlechterbeziehungen im Spiegel des hamburgischen Stadtrechts vom 13. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1998), 147 ff. (henceforth Rogge, *Moral*); Gerhard Jaritz, "Kleidung und Prestige-Konkurrenz. Unterschiedliche Identitäten in der städtischen Gesellschaft unter Normierungszwängen," in *Zwischen Sein und Schein. Kleidung und Identität in der ständischen Gesellschaft*, ed. Robert Jütte and Neithard Bulst (Saeculum, 44) (Freiburg/Breisgau: Alber, 1993): 8-31; Jutta Zander-Seidel, "Ständische Kleidung in der mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Stadt," in *Terminologie und Typologie mittelalterlicher Sachgüter: Das Beispiel der Kleidung* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für mittelalterliche Realienkunde Österreichs, 10) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988): 59-75.

had a practical purpose, since it was important to distinguish between honorable and dishonorable women – namely prostitutes. Similar efforts were unnecessary regarding men, since there was no officially regulated system of male prostitution in medieval cities, in contrast to female prostitution. Women's clothing was therefore carefully examined for immoral elements. Too deep a décolletage, too tight, form-fitting tailoring or too conspicuous buttoned openings in the front or side of a dress were regularly forbidden for respectable women, because they were thought improper. Hair, to which was attributed particular seductive power, had to be worn in a way that did not attract attention. Married women were required to keep their hair covered. Their bonnets, scarves and hats had to be modest and were the subject of close regulation in many cities.²

New fashion trends in both men's and women's clothing were condemned on a regular basis. Both Church and secular authorities found them immoral, simply on the grounds that they broke with tradition. Respectable clothing for women, a matter of frequent discussion in town council meetings, was thus conservative, class-appropriate, representative of the husband's wealth and position in an honorable and permissible fashion, and projected an image of chaste morality.

Women who had lost their good name, either justifiably or not, were not permitted to dress like honorable women. In some cities they were forced to do without furs or jewelry. This, of course, was also used as a punishment for bearing illegitimate children, and it was carried over to the female children of illicit relationships.

Quite obviously set apart in matters of clothing were the dishonorable women in the municipally-controlled brothels. These women were subject to both sumptuary requirements and prohibitions. All outward signs of respectability were forbidden for them, such as jewelry, silk, velvet, and furs. Their social status was too low for these distinctions. On the other hand, they were required to wear other signs of their social position and profession, such as yellow ribbons, veils, rags, and red caps. These were intended to prevent them from being mistakenly taken for respectable women. The preachers insisted such a mistake was all too easy to make, because on the one hand if given the chance whores would try to dress like honorable women, and on the other hand, if left to their own devices, honorable women would follow their nature and try to dress in as attractive and seductive a way as possible.³

So why didn't town councils just forbid prostitution altogether, if it endangered the reputation of the city? The Nuremberg brothel regulation of 1480 contains the following justification for this apparent paradox:

² Peter Schuster, *Das Frauenhaus. Städtische Bordelle in Deutschland 1350 bis 1600* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1992), 145 ff.

³ Käthe Sonnleitner, "Wertung der Geschlechter und Geschlechterbeziehungen bei Berthold von Regensburg," in *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Alpen-Adria-Raumes. Festgabe für Othmar Pickl*, ed. Herwig Ebner (Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Geschichte, 9) (Graz: Institut für Geschichte der Karl-Franzens-Universität, 1997), 377 ff.

Although the honorable council of this city of praiseworthy lineage would and should prefer to promote honor and good morals rather than tolerating a sinful and punishable activity, nonetheless, the Church permits the keeping of common women to prevent an even greater evil.⁴

The council carefully considered whether it was more important for the reputation and welfare of the city to avoid sinfulness, thereby ensuring the mercy of God, or to avoid an even greater evil. By this greater evil they meant the danger that in the absence of prostitution, honorable women might have been sexually molested by men who had no other way to satisfy their sexual urges. Of particular concern was the pent-up sexual energy of the young single men in the city, the journeymen and servants who were forced to remain single, and the many travelers passing through the city, as well as vagabonds. The consequences of frustrated sexual desire would be public commotion and fist fights, which would damage the reputation of the city. So one made use of an out provided by the double morality of the Church, in place since St. Augustine, which presented prostitution as the lesser evil for society.

Respectability in the sense of proper sexual behavior also played an important role in guild regulations. A master needed a respectable wife at his side to help him run his household. Marriage to questionable women was therefore frequently prohibited on pain of expulsion from the guild, which meant of course a loss of livelihood. Premarital relations and illegitimate children were frowned upon. Indeed, illegitimate children were refused membership in the guilds. The strict sexual morality of the guilds was intended to enhance the reputation of artisans, as a kind of substitute for the prestigious lineage to which patricians could point in justifying their power. Sexual morality was thus an important part of the guilds' struggle for a place in city governance.⁵

In a master's household, marital harmony was expected, since it was crucial to maintaining control over the servants, and therefore to protecting the master's reputation and economic standing. Establishing and maintaining such harmony was mainly the responsibility of the wife. She had to obey her husband in all things, since he was her legal guardian. The guardianship system also gave him the right to discipline his wife. In fact municipal law even obligated him to do so, although sometimes with the restriction not to beat her without reason or too severely. He did not have the right to beat her to death, however.⁶

⁴ Johann Christian Siebenkees, ed., *Materialien zur Nürnbergischen Geschichte*, vol. 4 (Nürnberg: Schneider 1795), 597.

⁵ Rogge, *Moral*, 192 ff.; Ferdinand Frensdorff, "Das Zunftrecht insbesondere Norddeutschlands und die Handwerkerehre," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter*, 34 (1907): 1-89.

⁶ Rogge, *Moral*, 167 f.; Gernot Kocher, "Die Frau im spätmittelalterlichen Rechtsleben," in *Frau und spätmittelalterlicher Alltag* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für mittelalterliche Realienkunde Österreichs, 9) (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), 481.

There is a long tradition of literary and scholarly concern about marriage. During the early and high middle ages, this concern was centered on the monasteries and cathedral schools, but during the late middle ages it spilled over into the cities. The older theological and scholarly speculation was translated into generally understandable, practical advice that could be applied in everyday life. Numerous marriage and household manuals, composed in the vernacular, sought to raise the standard of sexual behavior among urban citizens. The standard they set was supposed to represent the ideal, proper urban household, which would redound much to the benefit of the urban community as a whole.⁷

I would like to introduce one such source as representative of many in this regard, namely Albrecht Eyb's little book, *Whether a Man Should Take a Wife or Not*. Albrecht Eyb (1430-1478), canon in Bamberg and Eichstätt, had studied for many years in Italy, where he had become familiar with humanistic teachings regarding marriage. In Germany he applied himself to spreading these ideas, which he very successfully combined with Church teachings on marriage. Eyb's book addressed itself to city dwellers, especially the upper class, which through its position of authority could serve as a model for the classes below.

Eyb based his teachings about marriage on both the Church fathers and on ancient philosophers, especially *Socrates philosophus*. He addressed the same question to Socrates that is posed in his title, namely whether it was better for a man to marry or remain single. Socrates somewhat pessimistically stated that a man would regret both decisions, because he would either live in constant conflict with his wife and anxiety about his family, or he would have to live without the love of a woman and children. Eyb, on the other hand, was much more optimistic. For him the choice was clear: it was better for a man to marry. As a key element of his argument, he stated that marriage provided a basis for a more peaceful life for people:

Marriage is a useful and wholesome institution. Through it countries, cities and houses are built and maintained in peace. Conflicts, wars and enmity have been brought to an end by marriage, and friendships have been established between related and unrelated people alike.

Marriage, as an institution that contributed to social harmony, thus served the interests of the city by promoting its economic progress and reputation⁸.

But how was peace to be maintained within a family? This is the topic to which Eyb addressed himself in his book. For him the solution lay in selecting

⁷ Rüdiger Schnell, *Frauendiskurs, Männerdiskurs, Ehediskurs. Textsorten und Geschlechterkonzepte in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Geschichte und Geschlechter 23 (Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verlag, 1998); Sylvia Nagel, *Spiegel der Geschlechterdifferenz. Frauen didaxen im Frankreich des späten Mittelalters* (Ergebnisse der Frauenforschung, 54) (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000), 81 ff.

⁸ Albrecht von Eyb, *Ob einem manne sey zunemen ein eelichs weyb oder nicht*, Nachdr. mit einer Einführung von Helmut Weinhacht (Texte zur Forschung, 36) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 81; Käthe Sonnleitner, "Familiendiskussion im Spätmittelalter?" *Informationen für Geschichtslehrer* 1997/98: 12-17.

the right wife—someone who would not endanger her husband's rule. Rationality required that a man did not love his wife too passionately, for that would endanger his authority over her. For the same reason, a man should avoid marrying a woman of tremendous beauty or wealth that eclipsed his own. The urban upper class was, of course, particularly interested in accumulating additional wealth through marriage, so this last opinion required some explanation on Eyb's part. He argued that too large a marriage portion on the part of a wife was a problem, since she too should derive benefit from marriage. Especially to be avoided, according to Eyb were mean-spirited, talkative, contrary, wrathful, and domineering women. If a man took such a woman to wife, he would have nothing but worry and trouble: "Nothing is worse than a woman who cannot be silent."

Fear of an ungovernable woman was not exclusive to Eyb. The same concern is present in many of the marriage manuals of the late Middle Ages, in urban popular literature, such as comical tales and carnival plays, and especially in the increasingly common witch literature of the end of the fifteenth century. A good woman, on the other hand, is obedient, respectable, chaste, modest and moderately pretty. She is kind to her children and husband, and subjects herself willingly to his authority. She is constantly on guard to protect the honor of her household. She carries out her husband's orders, something that was to assume first place on the list of desirable characteristics of a wife.

Harmony and peace in the household, and by extension in the city, could therefore be achieved if a woman fulfilled the role assigned to her. The role of the husband, oddly enough, was not the main concern of the teachings on marriage. Men were taught to train their wives. This assumed that they had strength of character, were morally upright and strong and possessed the ability to lead. But it was not until the sixteenth century that these expectations regarding men were given clear expression in the works on marriage.

I have only been able here to give an overview of the sources appropriate for the study of this topic. Many have not been thoroughly evaluated yet. Nevertheless, one thing is clear: men and women experienced increasing disciplining of their family and sexual lives in the course of the late Middle Ages. This was meant to protect the peace of the urban community, to strengthen the reputation of the city and thereby serve its economic interests as well.

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HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

niederösterreich kultur

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Einleitung

Alltag ist mit ‚privatem‘ Raum bzw. den verschiedenen Ebenen und Graden von ‚Privatheit‘ in Verbindung zu setzen, genauso jedoch mit Öffentlichkeit und öffentlichem Raum. Dies ergibt sich vor allem auch dadurch, dass ‚privater‘ und öffentlicher Raum zwar einerseits als voneinander verschieden, andererseits jedoch immer als miteinander verbunden anzusehen sind¹. Vermeintliche Trennungen sind als relativ zu behandeln. Dies gilt für gegenwärtige Lebenswelten in gleicher Weise wie etwa für den Zeitraum des Spätmittelalters und jede andere historische Epoche. Verknüpfung, Überlappung, Interdependenz und Vernetzung sind als Regel anzuerkennen².

Das Interesse für die Zusammenhänge zwischen öffentlichem und ‚privatem‘ Raum hat sich in den letzten Jahren gerade für die Periode des Spätmittelalters deutlich gesteigert³. Dabei zeigte sich oft recht deutlich, wie auch besonders die verschiedenen Ebenen des Öffentlichen und der Öffentlichkeit in vielerlei Hinsicht alltagsbestimmend und alltagsbestimmt waren. Dies gilt wohl vor allem für solche Bereiche und Räume, die in starkem Maße durch umfangreiche Kommunikation größerer Gruppen der Bevölkerung gekennzeichnet waren. Vor allem der städtische Raum des Spätmittelalters ist derartig zu charakterisieren.

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford und Cambridge, Mass. 1991, Nachdruck 2000), 167: „Private space is distinct from, but always connected with, public space. In the best of circumstances, the outside space of the community is dominated, while the indoor space of family life is appropriated..“

² Ibidem 153, mit Bezugnahme auf Japan: „The ‘public’ realm, the realm of temple or palace, has private and ‘mixed’ aspects, while the ‘private’ house or dwelling has public (e. g. reception rooms) and ‘mixed’ ones. Much the same may be said of the town as a whole.“

³ Vgl. z. B. Gert Melville and Peter von Moos (Hrsg.), *Das Öffentliche und Private in der Vormoderne*, Norm und Struktur. Studien zum sozialen Wandel in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit 10 (Köln, Weimar und Wien 1998); Michel Hebert, *Vie privée et ordre public à la fin du Moyen-Age* (Aix-en-Provence 1987); Bernard Vincent, „Espace public et espace privé dans les villes andalouses (XVe-XVIe siècles),“ in *D’une ville à l’autre: structures matérielles et organisation de l’espace dans les villes européennes (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)*, hrsg. von Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, Collection de l’École française de Rome 122 (Rom 1989) 711-724; David Austin, „Private and Public: An Archaeological Consideration of Things,“ in *Die Vielfalt der Dinge. Neue Wege zur Analyse mittelalterlicher Sachkultur*, hrsg. von Helmut Hundsbichler et al., Forschungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit – Diskussionen und Materialien 3 (Wien 1998) 163-206. Philippe Ariès und Georges Duby (Hrsg.), *Histoire de la vie privée II: De l’Europe féodale à la Renaissance* (Paris 1985) widmeten sich jener Verknüpfung von privatem und öffentlichem Leben nur in relativ geringem Maße.

Chroniken, Reisebeschreibungen, Normen, Bilder etc. verweisen regelmäßig auf die entscheidende, typische und allgemeine Relevanz des öffentlichen städtischen Raumes und die vielfältigen Diskussionen und Diskurse, die diesbezüglich geführt wurden⁴.

Dies war einer der Hauptgründe für die Organisation von fünf Sektionen des Sachbereiches ‚Alltag‘ beim *International Medieval Congress* 2003 in Leeds zum Themenkreis „The Public (in) Urban Space.“ Dieselben sollten die vielfältigen Varianten und Variationen aufzeigen, in welchen sich Öffentliches und Öffentlichkeit als bestimmend für und bestimmt durch das städtische Leben des Spätmittelalters herausstellten⁵. Zwei Bände von ‚Medium Aevum Quotidianum‘ vermitteln ausgewählte und für den Druck überarbeitete Beiträge aus den genannten Sektionen.

* * *

Eine wichtige Rolle innerhalb der städtischen Alltags spielten Ruf, Ruhm und Ehre von Einzelpersonen, Familien und Gruppen innerhalb der urbanen Gemeinschaften sowie natürlich auch der gesamten Kommunität. Viele unterschiedliche Versuche lassen sich nachweisen, dieselben zu kreieren, aufrecht zu erhalten und zu verstärken. Im vorliegenden ersten Teil der Veröffentlichung der Referate beschäftigt sich Rebecca Müller an Hand des spätmittelalterlichen Fallbeispiels Genua mit dem Ruhm von Familien innerhalb der Stadt und angewandten Varianten seiner öffentlichen Visualisierung. Lucie Doležalová widmet sich dem Problemkreis, inwieweit für Böhmen und Mähren das Phänomen des ‚Städtelobs‘ in bezug auf eigene Kommunitäten nachgewiesen werden kann und stellt dabei jedoch fest, dass dasselbe im Vergleich zu anderen Gebieten des

⁴ Vgl. z. B. Helmut Hundsbichler, „Stadt begriff, Stadtbild und Stadtleben des 15. Jahrhunderts nach ausländischen Berichterstattungen über Österreich,“ in *Das Leben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für mittelalterliche Realienkunde Österreichs 2 = Sb. Ak. Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse 325, 3. Aufl. (Wien 1997), 111-133; Gerhard Jaritz, „Das Image der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt. Zur Konstruktion und Vermittlung ihres äußeren Erscheinungsbildes,“ in *Die Stadt als Kommunikationsraum. Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Karl Czok zum 75. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von Helmut Bräuer und Elke Schlenkrich (Leipzig 2001) 471-485; ders., „‚Straßenbilder‘ des Spätmittelalters,“ in *Die Straße. Zur Funktion und Perzeption öffentlichen Raums im späten Mittelalter*, Forschungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Diskussionen und Materialien 6 (Wien 2001) 47-70; Charles Burroughs, „Spaces of Arbitration and the Organization of Space in Late Medieval Italian Cities,“ in *Medieval Practices of Space*, hrsg. von Barbara A. Hanawalt und Michal Kobialka (Minneapolis und London, 2000), 64: „In medieval Italy, city statutes typically included detailed provisions regarding the maintenance and, to a degree, improvement of public space.“

⁵ Vgl. Keith D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages 1000-1450* (Basingstoke 2002) 241: „The medieval townscape was, at one and the same time, both constituted and constitutive: that is, it was shaped by the actions of townspeople, while it also shaped the activities of townspeople.“

spätmittelalterlichen Europas nur wenig zu erkennen ist. Käthe Sonnleitner geht an Hand der Quellenüberlieferung des deutschsprachigen Raums der Frage nach, inwieweit Rolle geschlechtsspezifische Komponenten für den ‚guten Ruf‘ der Stadt bestimmend sein konnten. Thomas Kühtreiber und Anneli Randla verwenden die Beispiele der Stadtummauerung bzw. der Bettelordensarchitektur zur Vermittlung der entscheidenden Relevanz, welche die variantenreiche öffentliche Zeichensetzung im städtischen Raum mit Hilfe von Bauwerken erlangen konnte.

Im zweiten Teil der Veröffentlichung (‚Medium Aevum Quotidianum‘ 48) setzen sich Juhan Kreem und Judit Majorossy mit Fragen des notwendigen Öffentlichkeitscharakters verschiedener Bereiche und Handlungen der städtischen Verwaltung auseinander. Danach beschäftigt sich Ingrid Matschinegg mit der Rolle von Universitätsstudenten im öffentlichen urbanen Raum. Florence Fabianec untersucht für Dalmatien die bestimmenden Einflüsse, welche die öffentliche Hand auf das städtische Wirtschaftsleben ausübte. Gordan Ravančić zeigt für Dubrovnik das Maß auf, in dem das Phänomen ‚Alkohol‘ auf den öffentlichen Raum der Stadt und die darauf bezogene Diskussionskultur wirken konnte⁶. Thomas Pettitt verdeutlicht schließlich am Beispiel des Theaters im städtischen Raum die unabdingbare Wichtigkeit öffentlichkeitsbestimmter und - bestimmender Gestaltungsprinzipien.

Die Beiträge vermitteln damit eine Reihe aussagekräftiger Beispiele, welche die vielfältige Bedeutung des öffentlichen Raums und der Öffentlichkeit im städtischen Alltag widerspiegeln. Trotz ihrer mitunter deutlich hervortretenden Unterschiedlichkeit lassen sie sich dennoch häufig verallgemeinern und auf einen gemeinsamen Nenner bringen, durch welchen Kultur und Lebenswelt des Spätmittelalters entscheidend bestimmt wurden.

Gerhard Jaritz und Judith Rasson

⁶ Dieser Beitrag wurde nicht beim ‚International Medieval Congress‘ in Leeds präsentiert, aber dennoch hier aufgenommen, da er sich in starkem Maße mit der Rolle des öffentlichen städtischen Raums und seiner Beeinflussung sowohl auf als auch durch einen ausgewählten Aspekt der materiellen Kultur des Spätmittelalters auseinandersetzt.