

Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies SAMEMES  
Sixth International Conference

13-14 September 2018  
University of Bern

**Secrecy and Surveillance  
in Medieval and Early Modern England**

At a time when government secrecy and surveillance has reached an unprecedented scale, there has been a growing scholarly interest in the history of the forms and cultural means of these operations. This conference will explore medieval and early modern practices of secrecy and surveillance. Karma Lochrie has defined secrecy as the “intentional concealment that structures social and power relationships” and has focused on “operations rather than objects of secrecy”. Such operations may include practices of confession, of riddling and decoding, and of thinking with metaphors for the clandestine (secrets are hidden behind seals, veils, doors, in books or treasure chests). Covert operations also invite us to explore how the unspeakable can be transmitted and how secrets can be owned and administered. Foucault’s notion of panopticism points to an increasing need to control, monitor and discipline individual members of society. Surveillance in this sense goes hand in hand with the establishment of the norms and conventions of behaviour that secrecy and covertness seek to circumvent. What can be known and done is called into question as individuals transgress the cultural and behavioural norms imposed on them by society. At the same time, the powerful elite define the epistemological boundaries between themselves and those who become subjects of suspicion and surveillance. We invite submissions for 20-minute presentations on all aspects of secrecy and surveillance in medieval and early modern England. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Secret identities
- Secrecy, surveillance and religion (confession, heresy, persecution)
- Secrecy and surveillance in the domestic sphere
- Disguise, concealment, camouflage
- Secrecy, surveillance and gender
- Secret pleasures, secret vices
- Hidden objects, hidden truths, hidden agendas
- Surveillance and the establishment of power
- Secret places, secret treasures
- Craft secrecy / intellectual property
- Instruments of concealment and surveillance

**Confirmed keynote speakers**

- Professor Karma Lochrie (Indiana University)
- Professor Paul Strohm (Prof. em., Columbia University)
- Professor Sylvia Tomasch (Hunter College, University of New York)
- Professor Richard Wilson (Kingston University, London)

Select papers presented at this conference will be edited by the conference organisers and published as part of the Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature (SPELL) series in the following year.

SAMEMES offers two bursaries to PhD students wanting to attend the conference, based on the quality of the abstract. Please indicate your interest to the organisers.

Please send 250-word abstracts for 20-minute papers and short bios (100 words max) by 25 March 2018 to both conference organisers, Prof. Annette Kern-Stähler ([annette.kern-staehler@ens.unibe.ch](mailto:annette.kern-staehler@ens.unibe.ch)) and Dr. Nicole Nyffenegger ([nicole.nyffengger@ens.unibe.ch](mailto:nicole.nyffengger@ens.unibe.ch)). **Deadline: 25 March 2018.**