

Fame and Fortune

CERÆ

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Fame and Fortune

Fortune rota volvitur, descendo minoratus, alter in altum tollitur, nimis exaltatus.

A lyric from the *Carmina Burana* reminds us that fortune turns, one falling diminished while another is raised, sometimes too high. The image is a familiar one, capturing the instability of human affairs and the ever-present possibility of sudden reversal in status or position. Yet, as the papers presented here show, such movements were never experienced as straightforward or universal cycles. Fortune did not turn evenly for all, nor did it carry the same meanings across contexts. Instead, the rise and fall of individuals and communities were shaped by social position, access to resources, systems of belief, and the ways lives were narrated, recorded, and remembered. Fame and fortune do not simply belong to individuals, but take shape over time through how lives are told, recorded, and remembered.

The keynote contributions foreground these dynamics from different but complementary perspectives. Lisa Kaaren Bailey's study of Balthild traces how a life marked by dramatic reversals of fortune is retrospectively reordered as providential design, even as her *fama* fractures into competing visions after her death. Jane Hwang Degenhardt, in turn, situates fortune within the expanding worlds of global trade, colonialism, and theatrical performance, showing how risk, speculation, and gendered agency reshape both economic and metaphysical understandings of chance. Carl Wennerlind extends this line of inquiry to the moral debates surrounding early capitalism, where figures such as bees, yahoos, and houyhnhnms serve as powerful lenses through which to examine the uneasy coexistence of prosperity, vice, and virtue. Together, the keynotes reveal fortune as a force that moves across narrative, economic, and moral domains, shaped as much by interpretation and representation as by circumstance.

The contributions that follow extend these concerns across a wide range of texts, practices, and historical settings. From saints' legends and manuscript transmission to legal records, gift exchange, economic thought, poetic allegory, and ritual or magical practice, fame is shown to be produced through textual, performative, and communal acts of mediation, while fortune is experienced as materially grounded and unevenly distributed. Several papers attend to the power of language, whether in the speech acts of charms that seek to redirect fate or in poetic forms that give structure to contingency, infamy, and renown. Others reveal how communities regulate and weaponise reputation, transforming rumour, accusation, and moral judgment into enduring forms of fame or infamy. Together, these contributions explore how medieval and early modern people grapple with the unequal distribution of prosperity, suffering, remembrance, and oblivion, and how, through text, ritual, theology, law, and performance, they seek not only to explain fortune's turns but, at times, to resist or outlast them.



Acknowledgements

Conference Committee

Julián Giglio, Essi Nuutinen, Michele Seah, and Erica Steiner.

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Kim Bergqvist, Ashley Castelino, Abbie Fray, Onofrio Gasparro, Julián Giglio, Emilia Loidl, Ali Mirzabayati, Essi Nuutinen, raenelda rivera, Lynn Riehl, Brigitta Schvéd, Michele Seah, Ela Sefcikova, Athena Spanidou, Erica Steiner, Denis Sukhino-Khomenko, Barbara Taylor, Maria Gloria Tumminelli, and Andrea Wait.

Acknowledgements

We would also like to thank Arc Humanities Press who have generously provided all registered conference delegates with access to an exclusive 40% off discount code for their hardback and paperback titles, valid until 31 May 2026.



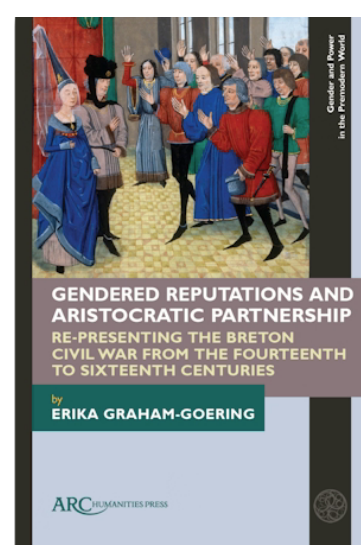
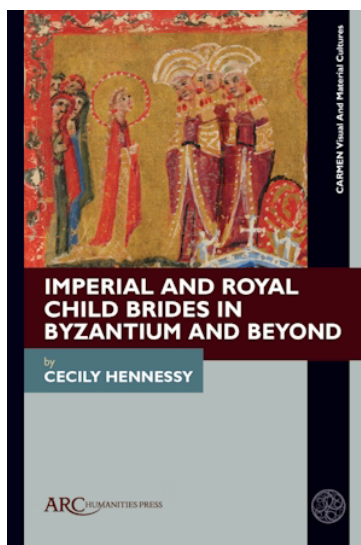
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Conference Schedule

Times in **LILAC** are on Friday 24/4/26; times in **ORANGE** are on Saturday 25/4/26; times in **BLUE** are on Sunday 26/4/26; and times in **GREEN** are on Monday 27/4/26.

TIMEZONE											SESSION	CHAIR	PAPER TITLE	ACADEMIC TITLE	PRESENTER NAME	PRESENTER AFFILIATION																
NZST	AEST	AWST	BST	IST	EEST	CEST	BST	UTC	ADT	EDT	CDT	MDT	MST																			
1830	1630	1430	1230	1200	0930	0830	0730	0630	0330	0230	0130	0030	2330	OPEN		Conference Opening - 15 minutes prior to start of keynote.		Ela	Sefcikova	Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany												
1900	1700	1500	1300	1230	1000	0900	0800	0700	0400	0300	0200	0100	0000	KEYNOTE 1	Chair: Ela Sefcikova	The <i>Fama</i> and <i>Fortuna</i> of Balthild, Slave-Queen	Assoc Prof	Lisa	Bailey	The University of Auckland												
2030	1830	1630	1430	1400	1130	1030	0930	0830	0530	0430	0330	0230	0130	SESSION 1	Chair: Denis Sukhino-Khomenko	Ritual and Poetry: Fortune and Fate in Early Latin and Old Norse		Sam	Lewis	University of Cambridge												
2100	1900	1700	1500	1430	1200	1100	1000	0900	0600	0500	0400	0300	0200	The Language of Fame and Fortune I		Speaking Fortune: Magical Language and the Power of Words in the Medieval North		Vilde	Fagermoen	University of Oslo												
2130	1930	1730	1530	1500	1230	1130	1030	0930	0630	0530	0430	0330	0230	SESSION 2	Chair: Michele Seah	Monetary terminology in Nicole Oresme's <i>De moneta</i>	Dr	Julián	Giglio	University of Buenos Aires												
2200	2000	1800	1600	1600	1330	1230	1130	1030	0700	0600	0500	0400	0300	The Language of Fame and Fortune II		Destiny in a Language: How the <i>Fortuna</i> of Female Pilgrims Became Literary <i>Fama</i>		Alessandra	Adornato	University of Barcelona												
2300	2100	1900	1700	1630	1400	1300	1200	1100	0800	0700	0600	0500	0400																			
2330	2130	1930	1730	1700	1430	1330	1230	1130	0830	0730	0630	0530	0430																			
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0030	2230	2030	1830	1800	1530	1430	1330	1230	0930	0830	0730	0630	0530	SESSION 3	Chair: Julián Giglio	The Fatherless Child: The scandalous early medieval origins of the infamous Merlin Ambrosius		Erica	Steiner	University of Sydney												
0100	2300	2100	1900	1830	1600	1500	1400	1300	1000	0900	0800	0700	0600	Famous People and Places in Historical and Performative Texts		Fame in Public, Fortune in Kin: Gender and Value in <i>Laxdæla saga</i>		Mervi	Salo	University of Saskatchewan / UIT The Arctic University of Norway												
0130	2330	2130	1930	1900	1630	1530	1430	1330	1030	0930	0830	0730	0630			From Bohemia to Byzantium: Winter's Tales of Fortune and the Syrian Gaze		Z I	Mahmud	University of Delhi												
0200	0000	2200	2000	1930	1700	1600	1500	1400	1100	1000	0900	0800	0700	KEYNOTE 2	Chair: Maria Gloria Tumminelli	Fortune's Empire: The Global Rise of Fortune on the Early Modern English Stage	Prof	Jane Hwang	Degenhardt	University of Massachusetts Amherst (USA)												
0230	0030	2230	2030	2000	1730	1630	1530	1430	1130	1030	0930	0830	0730																			
0300	0100	2300	2100	2030	1800	1700	1600	1500	1200	1100	1000	0900	0800																			
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0530	0330	0130	2330	2300	2030	1930	1830	1730	1430	1330	1230	1130	1030	SESSION 4	Chair: Lynn Riehl	Chance and necessity: Thomas Aquinas between Boethius and Joachim	Assoc Prof	Tamas	Nyrkos	Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest												
0600	0400	0200	0000	2330	2100	2000	1900	1800	1500	1400	1300	1200	1100	Classical Literary Echoes - Fortune across the Centuries		Boethius is Everywhere. The Discussion of Fortune in Fifteenth-Century Literature: Johannes von Tepl, Christine de Pizan, and the anonymous Fortunate Returns: Astraea and the Reception of a Classical Myth in Medieval and Early Modern Literature	Dist. Prof	Albrecht	Christie	Classen Hilton	University of Arizona University of Iceland and University of Oslo											
0630	0430	0230	0030	0000	2130	2030	1930	1830	1530	1430	1330	1230	1130																			
0700	0500	0300	0100	0030	2200	2100	2000	1900	1600	1500	1400	1300	1200	SESSION 5	Chair: Ali Mirzabayati	Fortune and Narrative in <i>The Tale of Hervör and Heidrek</i>		Milica	Čukalović	University of Iceland												
0730	0530	0330	0130	0100	2230	2130	2030	1930	1630	1530	1430	1330	1230	Divine Fortune and Destiny in Literary Contexts		Dreaming of Fame: The Instability of Allegorical Divinity in <i>The House of Fame</i>		Colleen	Connelly	Florida Atlantic University												
0800	0600	0400	0200	0130	2300	2200	2100	2000	1700	1600	1500	1400	1300																			
0830	0630	0430	0230	0200	2330	2230	2130	2030	1730	1630	1530	1430	1330																			
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1230	1030	0830	0630	0600	0330	0230	0130	0030	2130	2030	1930	1830	1730	SESSION 6	Chair: Ashley Castellino	When Fortunes Changed: Providence and the Rise of Anxiety	Assoc Prof	Robert	Nelson	University of Melbourne												
1300	1100	0900	0700	0630	0400	0300	0200	0100	2200	2100	2000	1900	1800	Intellectualising Fame and Fortune		The Role of Gifts in Infamy: The Case of Queen Katherine Howard	Dr	Michele	Seah	The University of Newcastle												
1330	1130	0930	0730	0700	0430	0330	0230	0130	2230	2130	2030	1930	1830			Peter Ramus And <i>The Legend Of Cicero</i> : Fame And Infamy In Early Modern Educational Reform *	Dr	Emma Annette	Wilson	Southern Methodist University												
1400	1200	1000	0800	0730	0500	0400	0300	0200	2330	2230	2130	2030	1930																			
1430	1230	1030	0830	0800	0530	0430	0330	0230	2330	2230	2130	2030	1930	SESSION 7	Chair: Andrea Wait	Fame and Infamy: The Role of Community Reputation in English Church Court Proceedings on Sexual Misconduct		Nicholas	Ringwood	The University of Auckland												
1500	1300	1100	0900	0830	0600	0500	0400	0300	0000	2300	2200	2100	2000	Fortune within the Realm of Law		Fortunes of the Foreigner: Limitations to Compensation in Early Welsh and Icelandic Law		Tobin	Miles	Independent Scholar												
1530	1330	1130	0930	0900	0630	0530	0430	0330	0030	2330	2230	2130	2030			Wheel or Law? Re-reading Fortune and Karma as Competing Cosmologies of Destiny		Suchismita	Ghoshal	Independent Scholar												
1600	1400	1200	1000	0930	0700	0600	0500	0400	0100	0000	2300	2200	2100																			
1630	1430	1230	1030	1000	0730	0630	0530	0430	0130	0030	2330	2230	2130																			
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2200	2000	1800	1600	1600	1330	1230	1130	1030	0700	0600	0500	0400	0300	SESSION 8	Chair: Abbie Fray	Making Fame: St Barbara in Manuscript Transmission and Use		Constanze	Albers	University of Freiburg												
2230	2030	1830	1630	1600	1330	1230	1130	1030	0730	0630	0530	0430	0330	Famous - and not so Famous - Holy Figures		Good fame, limited fortune: beyond the Commedia: The selective reception of Peter Damian before and after Dante		Gerardo	Auria	University of Rome "La Sapienza"												
2300	2100	1900	1700	1630	1400	1300	1200	1100	0800	0700	0600	0500	0400			"Gwefrewi deg un fryd oedd": tracing the afterlives of Saint Winefride of Holywell		Rachael	Robertson	Australian Catholic University												
2330	2130	1930	1730	1700	1430	1330	1230	1130	0830	0730	0630	0530	0430																			
0000	2200	2000	1800	1730	1500	1400	1300	1200	0900	0800	0700	0600	0500	SESSION 9	Chair: Essi Nuutinen	The Riches of Midnight: the Novgorod Yugra Campaigns		Benjamin	Gray	King's College, London												
0030	2230	2030	1830	1800	1530	1430	1330	1230	0930	0830	0730	0630	0530	The Individual within Society and the Search for Personal Fame		Individual Vices as Ground for Leprosy: a Medieval approach		Lidia	Downarovich	Jagiellonian University												
0100	2300	2100	1900	1830	1600	1500	1400	1300	1000	0900	0800	0700	0600			The Unfortunate Architect: Fame and Hierarchies of Merit in Eighteenth-Century France	Dr	Demetra	Vogiatzaki	Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), ETH Zürich												
0130	2330	2130	1930	1900	1630	1530	1430	1330	1030	0930	0830	0730	0630																			
0200	0000	2200	2000	2000	1730	1630	1530	1430	1100	1000	0900	0800	0700	KEYNOTE 3	Chair: Erica Steiner	Bees, Yahoos, and Houyhnhms: Mandeville and Swift on the Morality of Capitalism	Prof	Carl														



Keynote Speaker Abstracts

Assoc. Prof. Lisa Bailey (University of Auckland) – New Zealand

The *Fama* and *Fortuna* of Balthild, Slave-Queen

Fama and *fortuna* are useful lenses through which to examine the stories about the life of Balthild, a slave girl who became the queen-regent of much of France and then was pushed out of power, reshaping herself as a servant of God. Balthild experienced the vicissitudes of *fortuna*, the classic rise and fall, but her story was not told in those terms after her death. Instead, her life path was represented as the will of God, playing out in unexpected but pre-determined ways. Meanwhile her *fama* became a tense issue after her death, with the rapid emergence of competing visions of Balthild, as hero or villain. Even now her *fama* is unclear, being claimed by modern scholars as a schemer, an abolitionist, or a feminist hero, while she remains largely unknown outside of academia (and even within it...). This paper seeks to give Balthild's *fama* and *fortuna* an early medieval context, to understand how these conceptual categories shaped the telling of her life-story.

Biography

Lisa Kaaren Bailey is Associate Professor of History / Classics and Ancient History at the University of Auckland / Waipapa Taumata Rau. She is the author of *Christianity's Quiet Success: The Eusebius Gallicanus Sermon Collection and the Power of the Church in Late Antique Gaul* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), *The Religious Worlds of the Laity in Late Antique Gaul* (Bloomsbury, 2016) and *Servants of God, Slaves of the Church: Service as Religious Metaphor and Social Reality in Early Medieval Europe* (Cornell University Press, 2026).

Prof. Jane Hwang Degenhardt (University of Massachusetts Amherst) – USA

Fortune's Empire: The Global Rise of Fortune on the Early Modern English Stage

This talk will explore how the late-sixteenth-century English commercial theater participated in a larger cultural discourse linking global trade and colonialism to the concept of fortune. Beginning with a consideration of the shifting meaning of "fortune" in the period in relation to seafaring and overseas investment, this paper will focus on how new forms of economic fortune affected metaphysical understandings of fortune and its relationship to human will. Through brief discussions of the influence of Machiavellian philosophy and sixteenth-century emblems that linked iconic representations of Fortuna to Occasion, this identifies



Keynote Speaker Abstracts

a gendered dialectic between fortune and human will in which masculine action was increasingly privileged. Turning to the theater, we will consider how English playwrights took up this dialectic in order to problematize and reframe it. We will explore the ways in which the risks inherent to theatrical commerce and live performance were bound up with fortune's evolving signification and conclude with some thoughts about fortune's legacy in our current world, where luck and chance serve as alibis for the ongoing inequities of global capitalism.

Biography

Jane Hwang Degenhardt's work focuses on early modern drama with particular interests in the effects of globalizing processes, historical and speculative understandings of "worlding", and the intertwined histories of race, religion, and empire. Her publications include the collection *Religion and Drama in Early Modern England: The Performance of Religion on the Renaissance Stage* (co-edited with Elizabeth Williamson; Routledge Press, 2011), *Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage* (Edinburgh University Press, paperback 2015), and *Globalizing Fortune on the Early Modern Stage* (Oxford University Press, 2022). Current book projects include "Shakespeare's Speculative Worldmaking: Beyond Empire and Empiricism", and "Shakespearean Cosmologies: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Experience" (the latter in collaboration with Henry S. Turner, Rutgers University). Professor Degenhardt has recently co-edited a special issue on "Local Oceans: New Perspectives on Colonial Geographies" in the *Journal for Early Modern Studies*, and has co-edited a special cluster on "Speculation and the Early Modern" forthcoming in *SEL*. She currently serves as the lead editor for *English Literary Renaissance*, a top journal for new research in early modern literature and culture.

Prof. Carl Wennerlind (Barnard College, Columbia University) – USA

Bees, Yahoos, and Houyhnhnms: Mandeville and Swift on the Morality of Capitalism

Monsters, as the saying goes, "are good to think with". From the Bible's *Nimrod* to Stephen King's *Pennywise*, monsters serve as mirrors onto our cultural anxieties and fears. The ideological battles fought over the moral impact of the emergence of Capitalism around the turn of the eighteenth century in Britain featured a veritable menagerie of zoological monsters. Alongside philosophical tracts and political pamphlets, the debate raged on in novels, ballads, plays, and poems. Three of the most famous monsters to come alive in these debates made their appearance in Bernard Mandeville's poem *The Grumbling Hive* and Jonathan Swift's novel *Gulliver's Travels*. Mandeville employed bees to show how selfish and hedonistic capitalist subjects, having repudiated all pretensions of morality,

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nevertheless successfully generated a prosperous and well-functioning society. Swift used yahoos, a vile creature obsessed with pleasure and accumulation, to reveal how despicable and distasteful humanity had become now that Capitalism had invaded the very soul of Augustan England. Swift also employed a special breed of horses, houghnms, to put the spotlight on the absurdity of people living perfectly rational and moral lives, the very dream of moralists troubled by the naturalization of Capitalism. The contrast that Swift makes between the yahoos and the houghnms is mirrored by Mandeville's juxtaposition between the selfish bees that produced a thriving society and the pious bees, made morally righteous by divine intervention, that caused the economy to collapse and the population to implode. The two authors used the bees, the yahoos, and the houghnms as allegorical figures to put the spotlight on particular characteristic of human behavior. More precisely, true to the original meaning of the term monster, or the Latin monstrum, these figures served to warn, remind, instruct, and foretell.

Biography

Professor Wennerlind specializes in the history of early modern Europe, with a focus on intellectual history and political economy. He is particularly interested in the historical development of ideas about money and credit; ideas on the relationship between economy and nature; and ideas about "improvement" and "modernization". He is the author of three monographs: *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720* (Harvard University Press, 2011), *A Philosopher's Economist: Hume and the Rise of Capitalism*, together with Margaret Schabas (University of Chicago Press, 2020), and *Scarcity: A History from the Origins of Capitalism to the Climate Crisis*, together with Fredrik Albritton Jonsson (Harvard University Press, 2023). Currently, he is working on two books, one on early modern Swedish political economy (tentatively titled *The Materiality of Capitalism: Linnaeus and the Conquest of Nature*) and one on the history of arguments for and against Capitalism.



Presenter Abstracts

Alessandra Adornato (University of Barcelona) – Portugal

Destiny in a Language: How the *Fortuna* of Female Pilgrims Became Literary *Fama*

This study investigates the dialectic between *Fama* and *Fortuna* through the experiences of medieval female pilgrims, analyzing how the use of the Latin language transformed the precariousness of travel into an everlasting literary monument. In an era when female mobility was rigidly regulated, pilgrimage represented an open challenge to *Fortuna*: a direct confrontation with the unpredictability of the sea, the roads, and transmarine dangers. Yet, precisely within this risky contingency, figures such as Egeria, Paula, and Hugeburc found the space to construct a new form of *Fama*. Focusing on the fourth-century *Itinerarium*, the Jerome-Paula correspondence, and the eighth-century *Hodoeporicon*, the analysis demonstrates that the use of Latin was not merely a linguistic choice, but an act of cultural self-assertion. Focusing on the fourth-century *Itinerarium* and subsequent monastic testimonies, the analysis demonstrates that the use of Latin was not merely a linguistic choice, but an act of cultural self-assertion. In conclusion, the research highlights how these authors were able to convert the "caprices" of fate into intellectual authority, bestowing upon posterity a *Fama*.

Biography

Alessandra Adornato is a PhD candidate in Medieval Cultures at the University of Barcelona. She holds a bachelor's degree in Ancient Literature from Sapienza University of Rome and a Teaching qualification in the A013 competitive exam class. She has also undertaken a specialisation course in General and Museum Education, Orientation Education, and Self-Assessment of Learning and School Autonomy at Roma Tre University, and a training course in Interculturality and Internalization at CFI Scuola. She is a university assistant in Italian Literature at ISEF in Rome, a chair of state exams at secondary schools and has been a tenured teacher of Latin and Greek for 25 years.

Constanze Albers (University of Freiburg) – Germany

Making Fame: St Barbara in Manuscript Transmission and Use

St Barbara is among the most widely transmitted female martyr figures of the later Middle Ages. Her legend survives in numerous Latin and vernacular witnesses, appears in different book types (legendaries, sermon and devotional

Presenter Abstracts

contexts), and is functionally embedded in varied institutional settings. This paper uses that density of transmission as an entry point to “Fame”. Rather than modern popularity, it asks how medieval renown is produced through selection, indexing, codex placement, textual neighbourhoods, paratextual framing, and traces of use. Methodologically, it combines paratext analysis, codicology, and comparative transmission profiles. Barbara also opens a perspective on “Fortune” as the contingency of norm-making: her liturgical and institutional “officialness” is negotiated locally and communally, and thus participates in the very processes that stabilise or redirect a saint’s fame. By reading the tension between abundant textual presence and flexible anchoring in calendars, patronage, and functional contexts, the paper outlines a research programme that positions Barbara as a case study for a material and institutional history of saintly fame.

Biography

Constanze Albers is a doctoral researcher in General and Comparative Literature at the University of Freiburg. Her dissertation examines the early manuscript transmission of the Latin *Legenda aurea* in Cistercian and Premonstratensian contexts up to 1350, focusing on monastic writing culture, hagiographical and liturgical frameworks, and institutional decision-making in the formation of textual traditions. She previously completed an M.A. at the University of Freiburg in Medieval Latin Philology, Editorial and Manuscript Studies. She has held research positions at the University of Freiburg and the University of Zurich and has presented her work internationally. In 2026, she received the Snyder Prize. In this paper, she outlines an approach for a future Habilitation project.

Gerardo Auria (University of Rome, "La Sapienza") – Italy

Good fame, limited fortune: beyond the *Commedia*: The selective reception of Peter Damian before and after Dante

This paper reconstructs the limited and selective fortune and reception of Peter Damian in late medieval Italian culture (thirteenth to fourteenth centuries), despite Dante’s repurposing of the monk of Fonte Avellana in *Paradiso XXI* and the broader historical-intellectual significance of the author. Defining “reception” as the combination of explicit citations, identifiable textual reuse, and biographical knowledge independent of the *Commedia*, the paper compares two corpora: Jacopo da Varazze’s *Legenda aurea*, as an authoritative pre-Dantean attestation of Peter Damian’s reception, and Trecento commentaries on the *Divina Commedia*. In the *Legenda aurea*, Peter Damian functions chiefly as *auctoritas* and



Presenter Abstracts

as a reservoir of exempla: the materials that circulate are those suited to hagiographic compilation and preaching (edifying narratives, festal sermon matter, punitive miracle-stories), evidence of a demonstrable transmission, and, at the same time, of a selective, use-oriented textual dissemination. On the post-Dantean side, early commentators provide sparse information largely derived from the poem; only later (especially with Benvenuto da Imola) does a qualitative shift occur, with more concrete references to Damian's writings and themes. The analysis thus shows that literary canonization does not automatically entail broad circulation: Dante may generate attention, but he does not ensure widespread reception.

Biography

Gerardo Auria earned an MA in Modern Philology from Sapienza University of Rome (2025; *summa cum laude* and Excellence Track) with the thesis 'Peter Damian and the Origins of a Radical Spirituality: Reception and Metamorphosis between Francis of Assisi, Dante, and the *Disciplinati* Movement' (advisors: Umberto Longo, Marco Grimaldi). He also holds a BA in Letters (University of Bologna, 2023) with a thesis on corporeality in early Franciscan sources (advisor: Riccardo Parmeggiani). He has been accepted to present at the International Medieval Congress 2026 (University of Leeds, 8–10 July) with a paper on Dante, and has an accepted article in the peer-reviewed *Bibliomanie. Letterature, Storiografie, Semiotiche* (no. 61, June 2026).

Dist. Prof. Albrecht Classen (University of Arizona) – USA

Boethius is Everywhere. The Discussion of Fortune in Fifteenth-Century Literature: Johannes von Tepl, Christine de Pizan, and the anonymous Fortunatus

We have learned already that Boethius had a huge influence on his posterity, certainly until the nineteenth and perhaps even the twentieth centuries. Here I examine his specific impact on late medieval literature, such as Johannes von Tepl's *Plowman* (ca. 1400), Christine de Pizan's *Mutacion de Fortune* (ca. 1402), and the anonymous *Fortunatus*, with occasional side-comments on the highly popular *Melusine* tradition. Indeed, late medieval authors perceived their existence very much as controlled by the allegorical wheel of fortune, as we can also observe in countless manuscript illustrations and frescoes. What does that mean in terms of the history of mentality and history of emotions? How did Boethius's philosophy shape life in the fifteenth century when there was such a deep sense of crisis and, at the same time, embarkment of a new era? The



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dialectics of Fortune can thus be identified as fundamental for the late Middle Ages.

Biography

Albrecht Classen is University Distinguished Professor of German Studies, researching German and European literature, religion, and philosophy from about 800 to 1600. He has published 138 books, 870 articles, and over 3000 book reviews. His latest book, *Miracles and Wonders in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period*, appeared in 2025. In 2004 he received the Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band from the German government, and in 2017, the rank of Grand Knight Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Three Lions. He is the editor of three major journals, *Mediaevistik*, *Humanities*, and *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*.

Colleen Connery (Florida Atlantic University) – USA

Dreaming of Fame: The Instability of Allegorical Divinity in The House of Fame

Well known for its enigmatic text, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The House of Fame* brings much to discuss in how it intercepts the expectations of literary authority, to which its role in medieval satire, particularly when models of divine authority are used in this genre, is not generally considered in current research. When encountering the goddess Fame in this text, there is much to question about her role as a reflection against an expected model of divine authority. From the goddess' arbitrary scenes, her fragmented form, to the materially unstable architecture surrounding her judgement, this figure is unique in supporting not only the abstract structure of the dream vision itself but also in showing us the limits of using divine figures in literature. How can we consider the theological implications of Fame as judge and how her character defines these literary limits? Through the lens of medieval theories of *auctoritas* and allegorical embodiment, this presentation aims to evaluate the peculiar divine authority of the goddess Fame in *The House of Fame* and her role in fracturing the historical expectation of moral stability with allegorical divinity in literature while exposing literary authority as fragile and contingent.

Biography

Colleen Connery is an English graduate student at Florida Atlantic University. While working as an academic librarian at Nova Southeastern University, she is pursuing an MA in English to specialize in medieval literature. Colleen's primary research interests surround medieval dream vision poetry, but she is also studying Arthurian texts and manuscript culture.



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Milica Čukalović (University of Iceland) – Iceland

Fortune and Narrative in *The Tale of Hervör and Heiðrek*

In *The Tale of Hervör and Heiðrek*, the fortune and luck of the leading characters are shaped by many hands, of this world, and another. Their life paths are woven by societal expectations, where the fate of the individual grows from expectations, where comments serve as self-fulfilling prophecies, and no one escapes the claws of genealogy. The ghost of Angantyr marks the life of his daughter and her son in just a few verses. The magical sword Tyrting leads the way of his possessors, marked with an ancient curse. In this presentation, I aim to illuminate various ways in which the lives of legendary saga heroes are set and bound, and at the same time give an illusion of freedom to create one's own path. As literary heroes they answer to the *vox populi*, cultural structures and curses, which results in extremely set destiny – where good and bad luck change in waves that are controlled by narrative that poses as fortune.

Biography

Milica Čukalović acquired a bachelor diploma in the module Literature, Language and Culture, University of Belgrade, in 2024. Currently she is pursuing master's studies in Viking and Medieval Norse programme in the University of Iceland, also accompanied by finishing her master's thesis at the University of Belgrade. Her interests for further studies narrow to legendary sagas set in medieval Scandinavia.

Lidia Dovnarovich (Jagiellonian University) – Poland

Individual Vices as Ground for Leprosy: a Medieval approach

In this presentation I will present my findings from the research for the article on social, economic and religious aspects of accessing (or being denied) medical care in medieval England for leprosy and similar infectious diseases. Here, I will focus on contemporary moral teachings that tried to find and explain the reason for disease in one's vices and virtues. Leprosy and other diseases generally deformative in their symptoms were often presumed to be a physical manifestation of extremely degenerated misfortune, lack of luck, and Lord's Grace. It will be discussed how from the same religious point of view leprosy was explained both as curse and a blessing, and how these arguments were used in other contexts for discrimination and lawmaking for different marginalized people. Special place will be given to the Robert Copland's *Highway to the*



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Spitalhouse (c.1530) as a depiction of discussed understanding of leprosy in popular mind.

Biography

Lidia Dovnarovich is a BA History student who specializes in social and economic history of Medieval Europe and Ancient Egypt. She has participated in several Student Conferences in Poland and partook in IMC Leeds 2025 within a *Ceræ*-sponsored session. She has one published paper in *JU History Magazine* on the Bastet Cult in Egypt and another in preparation on social aspects of access to medical care for leprosy in Medieval England.

Vilde Fagermoen (University of Oslo) – Norway

Speaking Fortune: Magical Language and the Power of Words in the Medieval North

Medieval charms often promise practical forms of fortune: healing, protection, love, and influence over others. Yet their efficacy was believed to lie not only in ritual objects or gestures, but in the power of language itself. This paper examines how magical language in Nordic charm traditions functioned as a medium through which practitioners attempted to influence fortune and human relationships. Drawing on examples from Scandinavian charm manuscripts, including blood-staunching charms and love spells from texts such as *Galdrabók* and Royal Irish Academy MS 23 D 43, this presentation explores how ritual speech acts invoke sacred authority, biblical narratives, and supernatural forces. Through spoken or written formulas, often combining Latin invocations with vernacular elements, practitioners sought to bring divine or supernatural power into direct contact with human concerns. Using speech act theory as a framework, I argue that these charms functioned as performative technologies that sought to reshape fortune in the present moment. By invoking sacred authority and re-enacting sacred narratives, magical language enabled practitioners to attempt to redirect bodily conditions, social relationships, and emotional bonds. In this sense, charms illustrate how language itself could be understood as a powerful tool for negotiating fortune in the medieval world.

Biography

Vilde Fagermoen is a recent MA graduate in Viking and Medieval Studies from the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Oslo. Her research focuses on magical language, ritual practice, and the relationship between speech and perceived supernatural realities in the medieval and early modern Nordic world. Her master's thesis,



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'Speaking the Sacred: Magical Language and the Creation of Supernatural Reality in the Medieval and Early Modern North', examined how charm texts use language as a performative medium through which practitioners attempted to influence bodily, social, and supernatural forces.

Suchismita Ghoshal (Independent Scholar) – India

Wheel or Law? Re-reading Fortune and Karma as Competing Cosmologies of Destiny

Medieval societies across cultures grappled with the problem of destiny: why do prosperity and misfortune fall unevenly upon individuals and communities? In the European intellectual tradition, this question was frequently articulated through the metaphor of Fortune's wheel, most famously elaborated by Boethius in *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Fortune appears as a capricious cosmic force raising and ruining human lives with little warning, rendering worldly fame and wealth unstable and morally ambiguous. In contrast, classical Indic philosophy developed the doctrine of Karma, framing destiny not as arbitrary chance but as the unfolding consequences of ethical action within a morally structured universe. This paper offers a comparative philosophical reading of these two cosmologies of destiny. By juxtaposing the medieval European imagination of *fortuna* with Indic karmic causality, it argues that the former externalizes fortune as a volatile cosmic agent, while the latter internalizes destiny within moral law governing action and consequence. Such a comparison reveals fundamentally different cultural responses to uncertainty, suffering and worldly success. Ultimately, the paper suggests that these competing frameworks illuminate broader medieval and early modern debates about providence, justice and the legitimacy of fame and fortune.

Biography

Suchismita Ghoshal is a postgraduate independent researcher with a MA in Philosophy (Indira Gandhi National Open University), and a MA in Folklore, Heritage and Culture Studies. She is processing her research work in the intersection of philosophy, theology, religion, feminist phenomenon, memory studies and heritage-oriented cultural analysis, with her vast research interests spanning across disciplines of archaeology, religion, aesthetics, feminist theory, metaphysical science and material culture in South Asia.

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Dr Julián Giglio (Universidad de Buenos Aires) – Argentina

Monetary terminology in Nicole Oresme's *De moneta*

In the turbulent context of the *États généraux* of the 1350s, two main positions emerged regarding monetary policy. The French Crown has been debasing the currency for decades, but the urgent fiscal requirements resulting from the war with England accelerated the process of intervention and taxation by removing precious metals from minted coins. Nicole Oresme sided with the landowners, who were arguing against the mutation of money. While doing so, Oresme wrote a publicist treatise and, at the same time, the first monetary treatise in the Latin West, the *De moneta*.

This paper focuses on Oresme's treatise, written in the mid-fourteenth century, to analyse the author's vocabulary for money throughout the work to show that each of the three terms (*moneta*, *pecunia*, and *nummisma*) has a technical specificity. In this sense, the three lemmas serve the author in referring to the monetary phenomenon in a differentiated way, enabling greater terminological precision and even approaching an early conceptualization of capital.

Biography

Julián holds a BA in Politics and International Relations from the Universidad del Salvador, and a DPhil from the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP). He has studied Latin, Ancient Greek, and Classical and Medieval Thought at both the UNLP and the Universidad de Buenos Aires where he is currently a postdoctoral researcher. His research focuses on the history of political and economic thought in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For his doctoral thesis he analysed Nicole Oresme's monetary treatise, and he is currently working on a critical edition of Quaestio XI of Liber I of Nicolas de Vaudemonte's *Commentary on Politics*. He is interested in how economy, value, money and exchange have been conceptualised and developed from antiquity to modern times.

Benjamin Gray (King's College, London) – United Kingdom

The Riches of Midnight: the Novgorod Yugra Campaigns

The land of Yugra, in the taiga belt of the great Ob River in modern North-western Siberia, was for centuries the world's premier supplier of valuable sable fur. Between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, Islamic merchants from the trading hub of Volga Bulgaria travelled north into the boreal forest and tundra by ski and dog sled caravans to purchase sable and other furs from the indigenous Khanty, Mansi and Nenets peoples of Yugra. These were then



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shipped out to the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Silk Road cities of Central Asia. The Bulgar merchants brought an array of silver ornaments to purchase the furs, which have been found around the Ob system. The Republic of Novgorod in Northwest Russia, which oversaw a huge boreal empire (lands known as 'Midnight'), came to the Yugra too, and demanded this silver by threat of force. Novgorod appears to have used Yugra silver to supplement its tribute owed to the Golden Horde. For the commanders who dared lead expeditions against the Yugra, hundreds of cold miles from home, though, personal fame, fortune and social advancement were on offer. This quest, however, often ended in disaster.

Biography

Ben Gray is a second year PhD student at King's College London, funded by the Leverhulme Trust's Knowledge Orders before Modernity scholarship. His research focuses on the medieval taiga forest empire of the Republic of Novgorod and the indigenous peoples that lived under its rule. The topic incorporates study of the fur trade, the Golden Horde, the Baltic Crusades and Uralic oral traditions. Having trained as a barrister and worked as a paralegal before returning to academia, he is also interested in legal history, particularly the constitutional structure of the Novgorod Republic.

Christie Hilton (University of Iceland and University of Oslo) – Norway

Fortunate Returns: Astraea and the Reception of a Classical Myth in Medieval and Early Modern Literature

The Greek figure Astraea, the virgin goddess of justice who departs the earth at the end of the mythic Golden Age, remained a persistent presence in European intellectual culture long after the religious world that produced her had disappeared.

In Greek and Roman sources, Astraea represents the withdrawal of peace and fortune from a morally declining humanity. Medieval writers inheriting Greek mythology through late antique mythographic traditions increasingly interpret her through allegorical and cosmological frameworks. Through her identification with the constellation Virgo, medieval authors embedded Astraea within a Christianized cosmology in which Classical myth functioned as moral symbolism rather than religious narrative.

During this period, Astraea re-emerges in literature with humanist writers linking the myth to hopes of restored justice and fortune, drawing upon



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traditions of the returning Golden Age. In Elizabethan literature especially, Astraea imagery became associated with the fame of just rulers and the promise of renewed fortune for the realm.

This paper examines the reception of Astraea in medieval and early modern literature as a case study in the transformation of Classical myth within Christian and humanist traditions. Using the framework of Classical reception studies, this paper argues that Astraea endured because her myth offered a flexible explanation for the loss and hoped return of justice, fame, and fortune in human society.

Biography

Christie Hilton is a MA candidate in Viking and Medieval Nordic Studies. She holds a BA in History with a minor in Medieval Studies and a certificate in French. Her research focuses on mythography and ancient religion, with interests in the transmission and reinterpretation of myth across medieval and early modern literature. She has published research on the Classical influences in *Dante's Inferno*, and her MA thesis examines Classical narrative structures in medieval Irish literature. She has also studied Latin, Old Icelandic/Norse, Old Irish, and Old English.

Sam Lewis (University of Cambridge) – United Kingdom

Ritual and Poetry: Fortune and Fate in Early Latin and Old Norse

My paper will explore a somewhat neglected topic in scholarship: the potential coherence between Fortuna and Urðr in the Early Latin and Old Norse poetic traditions respectively. My paper will explore these particular concepts from the perspective of verse and ritual. My paper first highlights the close coherence that Roman poets establish between Fortuna and the verb *vertere*. From this observation, I proceed in also observing that *vertere* is etymologically related to the word *verse*, and ultimately goes back to an Indo-European **wért-e-ti* ("to be turning"), itself the source of Old Norse Urðr. This paper thus nuances discussions on Fortuna and Urðr in two ways: first, it highlights a seemingly special function of poetry as a means of calling upon fortune or fate; second, it gives a further parallel between the cultures of the Old North and the Mediterranean. In this regard, this paper contributes to a growing body of scholarship on shared traditions in Indo-European and ritual studies by bringing it into the realm of comparative linguistic and poetic analysis.



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Biography

Sam Lewis is a first-year PhD student in the Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic at The University of Cambridge. Sam's research focuses on the depiction of the Huns in Frankish and Scandinavian sources during the Middle Ages. He is thereby interested in interactions between Latin and Old Norse language and literature.

Z. I. Mahmud (University of Delhi) – Bangladesh

From Bohemia to Byzantium: Winter's Tales of Fortune and the Syrian Gaze

This paper explores the entwined dynamics of fame, fortune, and desire in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* alongside medieval English imaginings of Syria. While Bohemia in Shakespeare's play embodies the vicissitudes of human fortune — shifting from jealousy and exile to reconciliation and legacy — Syria functions in medieval texts as a site of aspiration, religious significance, and exotic longing. By tracing the literary and cultural trajectories from the familiar landscapes of the English stage to the distant lands of the Eastern Mediterranean, this study situates Shakespearean narrative within a broader historical imagination of desire and opportunity. The "Syrian gaze", as both a motif and a lens, illuminates how medieval and early modern audiences projected their ambitions, anxieties, and moral contemplations onto distant geographies. In doing so, the paper foregrounds the performative interplay of narrative, material culture, and geographic imagination, arguing that *The Winter's Tale* reflects a sustained fascination with the tenuous balance between fortune and longing. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that literary texts mediate between the intimate contingencies of human experience and the expansive horizons of medieval curiosity, mapping a transregional theatre of fame, fortune, and desire.

Biography

Z. I. Mahmud is a scholar of medieval and early modern literature, with research interests spanning transregional encounters, literary imagination, and the cultural histories of desire. His work examines intersections between Shakespearean drama, medieval English texts, and representations of the Eastern Mediterranean, and he has published on Gothic poetics, posthuman femininities, and the reception of historical and literary geographies. Mahmud is particularly invested in exploring the creative and performative dimensions of literary scholarship, bridging textual analysis with imaginative approaches. An alumnus of University of Delhi, India, he participates actively in international conferences in medieval and early modern studies. He aspires to pursue a postgraduate Fulbright residency fellowship to advance research in Medieval and Early Modern literature and culture, Shakespearean studies, and creative writing.



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Tobin Miles (Independent Scholar) – Australia

Fortunes of the Foreigner: Limitations to Compensation in Early Welsh and Icelandic Law

Payment of compensation is one of the primary aspects of the law codes of Celtic and Germanic societies in the early Middle Ages. We can therefore assume that some consideration had to have been made towards the ability (or inability) of anyone bound by compensation law to participate in it. For people such as foreigners however, their marginal status – with potentially limited fiscal, economic, or other social supports – must have been a concern which would need to be addressed. I will be looking at the legal restrictions around foreigners in the early laws of Wales (the assorted texts comprising the corpus of *Cyfraith Hywel*) and of Iceland (the text of the Commonwealth-era *Grágás* laws), with regards to the capacity for foreigners to participate in compensation payments. Can we glean any real information regarding their fortunes (whether real or assumed) from just an examination of the legal codes? Or is broader evidence necessary to truly understand the situation?

Biography

Tobin Miles holds a BA (Honours) and a Masters of Publishing from Sydney University with a Graduate Diploma in ESL teaching from Western Sydney. While working full time as an insurance administrator, Tobin has been using his spare time to further the research he first began when majoring in Medieval Studies. He is interested in linguistic and cultural trends across the Celtic and Germanic worlds in the Early Middle Ages, with a particular focus on the idea of the “foreigner” in the legal texts of Scandinavia and the British Isles.

Assoc. Prof. Robert Nelson (University of Melbourne) – Australia

When Fortunes Changed: Providence and the Rise of Anxiety

As fortune in the sense of fate (*fortuna*, *τύχη*) was replaced by Christian providence, fresh anxiety arose in the European psyche. Ancient beliefs in fortune did not create anxiety, even though fate is unalterable and disempowering. In pagan cosmologies, fortune offers no address for petition or blame. Outcomes are allotted beyond your power of influence, and you are not responsible for the result. Though bleak, this resignation is stress-free, because there is no favour to win according to divine precepts. By contrast, providence is necessarily moralized, since God rewards faith and compunction over failure. Paradoxically, if you are responsible for the outcome, the anxious question of

‘have I done enough?’ or ‘have I been sufficiently contrite?’ is without end. The believer must fear omissions. This paper argues that classical fortune survived in other guises, especially the concept of good fortune (*εὐτυχία*) as it slipped into material meanings to do with prosperity. While conducting a history of fortune, the paper identifies several lexical genealogies of fortune between antiquity and the Middle Ages across Greek, Latin, Germanic and Slavic traditions. It reveals that fortune enjoyed an afterlife in order to take care of the anxiety that providence inadvertently generates.

Biography

Associate Professor Robert Nelson is a Principal Honorary Fellow at Melbourne University. He trained in art history at La Trobe University with an MA and PhD, and taught in Art, Design and Architecture at Monash University where he became Associate Dean Research & Graduate Studies. His most recent books are *A history of inspiration* (Routledge 2022), *A visceral history of bread: from First-Nations Australia to Byzantium* (museum of innocence, Mildura 2023), and a collection of verse, *Eclogues to Polixeni*. Robert was art critic for *The Age* and the scene painter for Polixeni Papapetrou.

Assoc. Prof Tamás Nyirkos (Ludovika University of Public Service, Budapest) – Hungary

Chance and necessity: Thomas Aquinas between Boethius and Joachim

The very idea that the future of humanity and the fate of individuals is driven by “chance” or “fortune” should be evidently unacceptable for any theistic view of history. The fact that medieval, nominally Christian societies nevertheless accepted and widely celebrated this idea shows how they were less theologically impregnated than it is conventionally supposed. On the other hand, the Joachimic idea of necessary development toward a perfect state of humankind also gained remarkable popularity during the Middle Ages, indicative of a remarkable cognitive dissonance. This paper aims to show how theologians like Thomas Aquinas struggled to refute both views, arguing for a systematic notion of providential history, while at the same time maintaining that history in the substantive sense ended with the revelation. Such an ambiguous strategy at the same time reopened the possibility that the remaining “time to be filled” would be just as unpredictable and contingent, governed by chance, as the first type of the rejected views of history had presumed.

Biography

Tamás Nyirkos, senior research fellow at Ludovika University, Budapest since 2022. Associate professor at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest since 2012. PhD in moral and political philosophy, Eötvös Loránd University, 2011. Main publications: ‘Thomas Aquinas on Work’ (in *The Concept of Work in the History of European Philosophy*, Palgrave, 2025); ‘“Friendship” as a Political Concept in Thomas Aquinas’ (in *Fraternity as an Overlooked Element in Global Politics*, Routledge, 2025); *Secular Religions: The Key Concepts* (Routledge, 2024); *Bevezetés a világvégéhez: Joachim apát történelmi misztikája [An Introduction to End Times: The Historical Mysticism of the Abbot Joachim]* (Attraktor, 2015).

Nicholas Ringwood (University of Auckland) – New Zealand

Fame and Infamy: The Role of Community Reputation in English Church Court Proceedings on Sexual Misconduct

This paper explores the role of community reputation and fame, or infamy, in late medieval English church court proceedings against those accused of sexual misconduct. The majority of these cases were *ex officio*, similar to modern criminal prosecution, in which the courts themselves initiated action against the accused. This allowed the court to proceed on the basis of infamy or ‘common fame’ – a complex interweaving of multiple networks of informing, gossip, and rumour – to enforce the law regulating sexual and moral behaviour, and to pass sentences on those it found guilty. Drawing on canon law, contemporary legal commentaries, and a selection of fourteenth-century cases from the visitation records of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln (1336–1349), this paper examines how fame was defined, the roles it played throughout the visitation process, the consequences facing parishioners who developed bad reputations, and possible avenues of redemption in the eyes of the community. In particular, it contributes to the scholarship on medieval community reputation by taking a longer-term view and analysing the role of infamy when recidivist offenders were brought before the courts multiple times.

Biography

Nicholas Ringwood is a PhD student and Graduate Teaching Assistant at Waipapa Taumata Rau / the University of Auckland. His primary research focuses are medieval social history, particularly as it relates to sexuality and gender, alongside ecclesiastical and legal histories. He has previously completed an MA exploring the regulation of marital behaviour in late medieval England, alongside a Diploma in Languages (French and Latin).



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Rachael Robertson (Australian Catholic University) – Australia

“Gwenfrewi deg un fryd oedd”: tracing the afterlives of Saint Winefride of Holywell

By the fourteenth century, the Welsh Saint Gwenfrewi, or Saint Winefride, finds early fame in the Lansdowne 436 manuscript (*Gregory* 1-5). She is both martyr and living virgin, her legends speaking of God’s intercession upon the moment of a violent beheading. The Welsh poet Tudur Aled (circa 1460–1520) further immortalises her and the divinely sealed wound that “gem[s] her neck” (Taylor, 67). Later echoes emerge in Celia Fiennes’ seventeenth century travelogues with their “dropps of red colour stone” at Holywell (180). In the late nineteenth century, Gerard Manley Hopkins moreover pens his (unfinished) play about her after a visit to the shrine with its “well as clear as glass” (261). More recently, curious cross-currents of fame surface. Embodiment of Winefride’s story occurs in the 1969 Holywell Town Women’s Guild performance of the legend. David Lowery’s 2021 film *The Green Knight* features a spectral Winefride re-establishing herself beyond the Gawain poet’s brief mention of Holy Hede. More obscurely, Winefride finds a place in *Cadfael* fanfiction as part of fan reception to Ellis Peters’ historical novels. This paper seeks to piece together the refashioning and reception of Winefride in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century through interrogating the tension between ‘Winefride the still-acknowledged-Saint’ and a reconfiguring of ‘Winefride the woman’.

Biography

Rachael Robertson lectures and tutors in Literature at Trinity College, the University of Melbourne, as well as teaching sessionally at the Australian Catholic University. She has presented most recently on medievalism at the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies conference last December.

Mervi Salo (University of Saskatchewan / UiT The Arctic University of Norway) – Canada

Fame in Public, Fortune in Kin: Gender and Value in *Laxdæla saga*

In *Laxdæla saga*, fame and fortune are not abstract ideals but measurable social resources distributed through gendered pathways. This paper argues that the saga structures fame as public reputational capital – won through speech, risk, and sanctioned violence – while fortune appears as the durable assets that sustain



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life and feud: land, marriage, inheritance, and the kin networks that underwrite security. Reading key feud and household scenes alongside inheritance and marriage motifs, I track how the saga limits who can pursue “public” fame and how it frames the costs of that pursuit. At the same time, the narrative repeatedly shows women exercising strategic agency in the domains coded as “fortune”: arranging alliances, calibrating reputations, and redirecting kin obligations. These forms of agency are not merely private; they shape the public outcomes on which male fame depends. By treating fame and fortune as interconnected currencies rather than opposites, the paper reframes saga gender not as separate spheres but as a system of value conversion, where domestic strategies can produce public consequences, and public renown can collapse without the infrastructures of kin and property.

Biography

Mervi Maarit Salo is a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan and University of Tromsø (UiT) – The Arctic University of Norway, affiliated with the Centre for Sámi Studies (SESAM). Her research is interdisciplinary and bridges Indigenous and northern studies, particularly in circumpolar contexts. She is also a Toronto-based education leader with the Toronto District School Board. Her historical interests include the medieval North Atlantic and early contact between Indigenous peoples and Vikings.

Dr Michele Seah (University of Newcastle) – Australia

The Role of Gifts in Infamy: The Case of Queen Katherine Howard

Research on queenly gift-giving abounds on the benefits of gifts but there was a dark side to gifts and gift exchange. There were gifts that were dangerous items and/or given with nefarious intentions. There were also gifts whose intentions were read the wrong way or impacted negatively on one or both parties in the exchange. This paper considers gifts that were given with less than positive objectives and gift-exchange where the participants’ purposes were misread. It takes as its case study the second last queen consort of King Henry VIII of England, Katherine Howard, whose story is all too familiar to posterity. This paper interrogates the role that gifts played in this queen’s downfall and her subsequent infamy by examining more closely the different gifts that were said to have been exchanged between the queen and various individuals from her past and present. It considers the circumstances surrounding gift-exchange and asks what the items themselves and the transactions say about Katherine and/or



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the recipients of her gifts. In doing so, it argues that these gifts had a negative impact how her actions were perceived, thus contributing towards her downfall and future reputation.

Biography

Michele Seah completed her PhD at the University of Newcastle, Australia where she currently works as an associate lecturer. She has published articles in *Parergon: the Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, *Cerae: an Australasian Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, and the *Journal of Medieval History*. Her monograph, *Financing Queenship in Late Fifteenth Century England*, has recently been published with Boydell and Brewer and focuses on the economic and financial resources of three later fifteenth-century queens consort in England. She has, however, moved into the crowded sixteenth century in England for her next project on queens.

Erica Steiner (University of Sydney) – Australia

The Fatherless Child: the scandalous early medieval origins of the infamous Merlin Ambrosius

The figure of Merlin is arguably one of the most enduring and recognisable literary creations from the medieval period, being consistently popular from the character's very first appearance in the twelfth century works of Geoffrey of Monmouth – which in order of publication are: the *Prophetiae Merlini*, *De gestis Britonum*, and the *Vita Merlini*. The sources which Geoffrey pillaged to create his infamous histories are well-known, most notably the ninth century anonymous *Historia Brittonum*, which Geoffrey used extensively. Merlin appears in all three of Geoffrey's works at different stages of life, and I here will focus solely on the young Merlin, or Merlin Ambrosius as he was called from very early in the reception of Geoffrey's works to distinguish him from the aged Merlin Caledonensis. In Geoffrey's works, Merlin was possessed of magical powers because he was the unholy product of the union between a nun and an *incubus*. But Geoffrey's source, the *Historia Brittonum*, makes no mention of Merlin being a half-demon.

In this paper I propose to examine the early medieval sources behind the story of Merlin Ambrosius to uncover an unsanitised version of Merlin Ambrosius' paternity and historicity. The key to my analysis is the consistent description of Merlin Ambrosius as a 'fatherless child', a detail which Geoffrey developed into the notion that Merlin had no father, and therefore must have been conceived



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through the agency of a supernatural being. But the early medieval usage of this phrase, 'fatherless child' paints a very different – and more sordid – picture.

Biography

Erica Steiner is a PhD candidate at the University of Sydney in the Celtic Studies department, and her thesis explores the history and historiography of Insular tattooing from antiquity to the early medieval period. As well having as a BA (Hons) in Medieval Studies, with a thesis entitled 'The Dating and Datability of Beowulf in an Historical and Eschatological Context', Erica also holds a BSc in Marine Geophysics. Her other research projects include studies in landscape archaeology and geomorphology with a forthcoming article in *Medieval Ecocriticism*, as well as issues of etymology and (mis)translation, and representations of the past in modern media.

Dr Demetra Vogiatzaki (Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zürich) – Switzerland

The Unfortunate Architect: Fame and Hierarchies of Merit in Eighteenth-Century France

In eighteenth-century France, the architectural profession was governed by an elaborate apparatus of competitions, prizes, and institutional rankings designed to identify and reward merit. Yet the relationship between talent and recognition was far from transparent. For every laureate of the *Prix de Rome*, dozens of competent practitioners labored in anonymity, their careers shaped less by ability than by the capricious logic of patronage, social connection, and institutional gatekeeping. This presentation casts light on these social mechanics of fortune in the making and unmaking of architectural reputations during the late *ancien régime* and Revolutionary period. Taking as a thread the life and work of Louis-François Petit-Radel (1740–1818), whose professional trajectory defied the meritocratic ideals of Enlightenment discourse, it asks how contemporaries understood the gap between failure and reward. Drawing on competition entries, state documents, and biographical records, the paper traces how "mediocrity" functioned as both a judgment and a structural condition, one that consigned individual architects to obscurity while quietly producing the vast workforce that staffed royal agencies, rebuilt provincial towns, and gave material form to the everyday architecture of France.

Biography

Dr. Demetra Vogiatzaki (she/her) is a Visiting Lecturer at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta), ETH Zürich. Holding a PhD from Harvard University (2023), she works on the politics of space and the built environment in the long eighteenth century, with a focus on



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religion, bureaucracy and subsistence politics within the French colonial state. Dr. Vogiatzaki's writings have appeared in venues such as *Journal18*, *Architectural Histories*, *Public Domain Review*, and *caa.reviews*, while her work has been supported by a range of international grants and fellowships, among them the Swiss National Science Foundation, the Canadian Centre for Architecture, UCLA, Harvard University, and the French Embassy in the United States.

Dr Emma Annette Wilson (Southern Methodist University) – USA

Peter Ramus and the Legend of Cicero: Fame and Infamy in Early Modern Educational Reform

This paper discusses how educational reformer Peter Ramus engaged with both the fame and infamy of Roman orator Cicero in his *Ciceronianus* (1557) to create a classical origin story for his controversial curricular innovations which were so polarizing that ultimately Ramus himself was targeted as a high-profile victim of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572. This is a paper about two interwoven stories of famously eloquent "new men": both Cicero in classical antiquity and Ramus in the sixteenth century came from non-noble backgrounds to become respectively the foremost spokesperson of the Roman Republic and the King's Professor of Eloquence at the University of Paris. In his *Ciceronianus*, Ramus plays upon their parallel rises to pre-eminence to present a new model of education to his students, one which he argues is perfectly designed to empower them to flourish in the newly-emerging and newly-powerful public political sphere. The *Ciceronianus* argues that Ramus' educational reforms are rooted in the practices of Cicero, a revered figure in early modern eloquence, yet Ramus also plays upon the fact that Cicero paid the ultimate price for his eloquence to lend both gravitas but also infamy and bravery to his new curriculum for the liberal arts.

Biography

Dr. Emma Annette Wilson is the co-editor of two collections of essays about logician, educational reformer, and spotlight hound Peter Ramus: *Ramus, Pedagogy, and the Liberal Arts* (2011) and *The European Contexts of Ramism* (2019). She and Dr. George Brocklehurst are preparing a new edition, translation, and commentary, *Peter Ramus' Ciceronianus* (University of Durham Press, Translatio, 2026/27) and she is preparing an edition of Zachary Coke's *Art of Logic* (MHRA CRT, 2028).