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AEMA Newsletter: July 2024

Dear AEMA members and supporters,

I am pleased to announce that the 19th AEMA conference will take place at the Australian Catholic University, Canberra Campus, this year, 26-28 September. This will be both in-person and online. For further details please see the Call For Papers below. We look forward to your participation to making this conference a success!

I also wish to call to your attention the second issue of volume 19 of JAEMA which is now available on [Informit](#) as part of your membership benefits. It will be available in print later this year - don't forget to let the [committee](#) know if you want to receive a print copy! This latest edition features 4 articles as well as 17 book reviews. We encourage you to explore the new issue and consider publishing your own work with us. Your engagement with the journal helps to support and enrich our academic community.

It has a been a while since the last newsletter was released. From now, AEMA will continue to run a quarterly newsletter as it had done in the past. If you have any career updates, graduations, or new publications you'd like us to include in the newsletter, please contact me, and I will gladly add them to the next edition. Stay informed about the latest developments and contributions in early medieval studies with our newsletter.

AEMA Newsletter Editor, Julian Calcagno
info@aema.net.au

2024 AEMA Conference



AEMA 19 – Call for Papers

The Spectrum of the Early Medieval World:

Exploring the Semiotics of Colour

26–28 September 2024, Australian Catholic University, Canberra Campus *and* Online

Throughout the medieval era, colour served not only as a visual and aesthetic element but also as a powerful semiotic tool, delineating concepts of light and darkness, virtue and vice, conformity and deviation. The application of colour—whether vivid, subdued, variegated, or absent—was a deliberate choice by medieval authors, artists, scribes, and patrons, imbued with significant cultural, philosophical, and spiritual meanings. Colour held significant aesthetic and symbolic roles across various cultures. Colour also delineated social status through clothing and heraldry, providing essential visual cues in both daily life and on the battlefield. This period's rich engagement with colour demonstrates its powerful role in communication and cultural expression, shaping individual experiences and societal values.

Potential themes may include:

- **Chromatic Cosmologies:** Exploring astrological and cosmological colour symbolism.
- **Hues of Havoc:** Examining the representation of climate and natural disasters through colour symbolism.
- **Palette of Plagues:** The use of colour in depicting disease and medicine.
- **Wilderness Tinted:** The depiction of wilderness and domestication through colour, exploring how these elements are represented across various media.
- **Spectral Technologies:** Investigating the interplay of colour with medieval technologies and superstitions.
- **Sacred and Secular Shades:** Analysing the use of colour in religious contexts, contrasting pagan and Christian iconographies.
- **Cycles of Life:** How biological cycles and human cultural expressions are conveyed through colour.
- **Visions Beyond the Veil:** The colour motifs associated with the natural and the supernatural realms in medieval thought.
- **Eternal Colours:** The symbolism of colour in the concepts of life and the afterlife.]
- **Contrasts of Creation:** The use of colour to express dualities such as daylight and darkness, and what these represented in the medieval mindset.
- **Monstrous Pigments:** Investigating how colours contribute to the portrayal of monsters and totems in medieval iconography.
- **Imaginative Spectrum:** The role of colour in articulating the bounds of art and the imagination within a medieval context

In keeping with the inclusive spirit of AEMA's annual international conferences, submissions may be thematically colourful—or not. There are no geographical limitations, only a requirement that submissions relate to the early medieval period (c. 400–1200 CE)—or its reception in later contexts.

Keynote Speakers:

- A/Prof **Karen McCluskey** (Notre Dame University, Sydney)
- Prof **Bronwen Neil**, FAHA (Macquarie University)

Please email submissions for a standard 20-minute paper (+Q&A time) to conference@aema.org.au by **29 July 2024**.

Each proposal should include: the **presenter/s**, their **academic affiliation/s** (if applicable), paper **title**, an **abstract of 150-250 words**, a short presenter/s **biography of 50 words**, mode of presentation (**in-person or online**), including the **timezone** if online. We also strongly encourage all prospective presenters to consider submitting a full version of their paper to our journal, *JAEMA*, for a planned special themed issue in 2025.

AEMA members who are either Graduates or Early-Career Researchers are eligible to apply for a limited number of travel bursaries, and will go into the running for our Best Paper Prize awarded to both an in-person and an online presentation.

We look forward to submissions that offer vibrant insights into the chromatic dimensions of the early medieval world!



the **australian early medieval association**

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2023 AEMA Conference Review

The 18th AEMA Conference – the Natural and the Unnatural in the Early Medieval World – 28–30 September 2023

Last September, after an unplanned hiatus of 4 years (!) since our last in-person conference, and 7 years since our last conference at the University of Sydney, delegates and AEMA members from near and far eagerly gathered in the familiar surrounds of the

John Woolley Common Room to kick off our 18th annual conference. Our very first hybrid conference, a number of interstate and international attendees also joined us online both as audience members and presenters in a carefully crafted program which peppered each session with both in-person and virtual presenters from 34 different institutions across 10 different timezones.



Professor Daniel Anlezark (University of Sydney), co-convenor of the conference, opened proceedings with a thought-provoking and erudite reflection on the theme: the Natural and the Unnatural in the Early Medieval World, inviting the audience to consider how early medieval individuals and societies perceived, described, and recorded their own worlds and the worlds of others.



He was followed by our first keynote speaker, Professor Roland Fletcher (University of Sydney), who enthralled our audience with an exploration and overview of the early medieval urban megapolis of Greater Angkor, in south-east Asia. When the great temples were rediscovered by Westerners in the 19th century, these were thought to be the cities because they were the size of medieval European cities. However, it is only with recent decades of archaeological and geophysical research, led in part by Professor Fletcher, that the true scale of medieval Greater Angkor can be understood: a vast (~3000 km²), man-made, low-density, engineered urban landscape interspersed with semi-urban and farming zones which persisted for many centuries. And it was only external forces in the form of climatic instability from the late 14th century onwards which caused societal collapse.

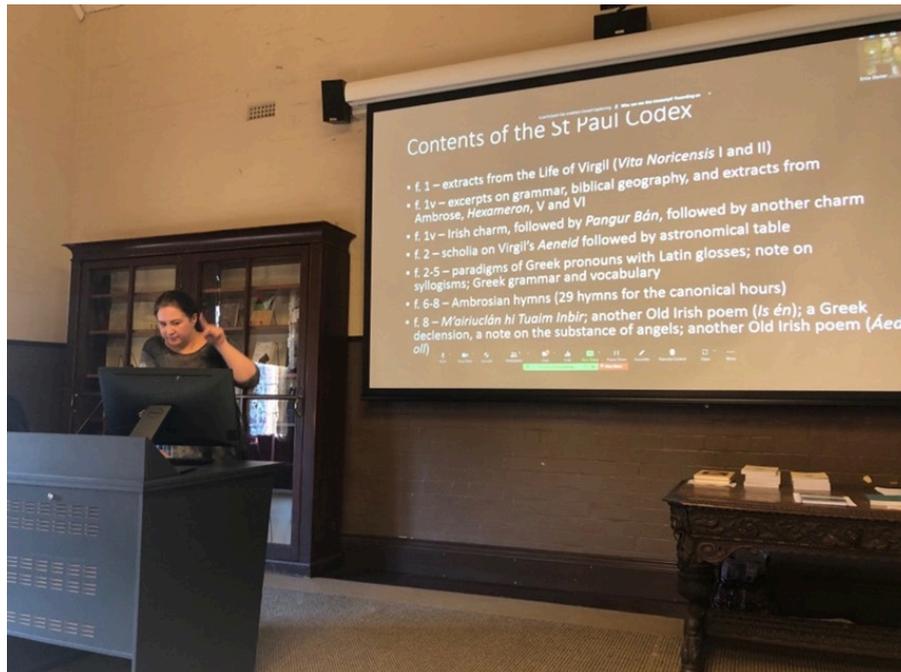


Following a short coffee/tea and savoury croissant break, Day 1 of the conference began in earnest with 20 individual papers in 6 sessions across 2 parallel streams. Following the end of the first day's sessions, all those attending the conference dinner walked a short way down to Wayward Brewing in Camperdown, where we combined an informal conference dinner with a 'practical session' on medieval brewing technology and experimentation. Hosted by the owner and founder of Wayward, Peter Philip, we all enjoyed a most informative talk about the historical aspects of beer-brewing and the different techniques used within the early medieval period, as well as insights into the experimental brewing which Peter and his team have used previously to recreate beers of the past. The team at Wayward also brewed a special small batch of beer especially for our conference which all attendees were able to partake of as part of their dinner ticket, and reflect on the warm-ish, slightly sour, and rather 'bready' beer of the period. Their colleagues at [Mixtape Brewing](#) also generously contributed a growler of gruit, a type of dark ale seasoned with herbs that was a big hit - even among the wine-drinkers of the crowd.



Returning to campus for Day 2 the next morning, the programme was a mirror of the previous day, opening with 20 individual papers in 6 sessions across 2 parallel streams.

It concluded with a very special keynote from Dr Elizabeth Boyle (Maynooth University, Ireland) who provided a comprehensive understanding of the breadth and depth of Early Irish verse literature as it speaks to the natural world. But even as the in-person portion of the conference came to a close with much applause and promises to keep in touch until next year, there was still an additional, or bonus day of the conference to come. Due to the great variety and quality of submissions received for AEMA 18, it was decided late in the piece to hold an additional online-only day of the conference. Scheduling the final 10 papers of the conference in a single-stream, online only session allowed the conviviality of the conference to be extended, and for us to hear of many more permutations of the theme.



At AEMA 18, the committee awarded a record number of joint winners for the Best Paper Prize. Christine Grundy (Australian National University) and Caitlyn Dunn (Macquarie University) shared the honours for Best Paper (in-person), while Pablo Martín Croveto (University of Buenos Aires) and Joanne Machin (University of the Highlands and Islands) shared the honours for Best Paper (online). We congratulate the winners and also thank the Australian Catholic University, Canberra campus, for contributing towards their prizes.

Special mention must go to my fellow conference convenor, Daniel Anlezark, for all his assistance and support; to the School of Art, Communication, and English which generously provided us with room hire; to the Rosemary Samios Foundation which contributed towards the costs of Dr Boyle's flights and accommodation; to Dr Pamela O'Neill who performed the invaluable task of podium-wrangling for the Woolley Common Room while I similarly wrestled with the AV of the Rogers Room; to everyone who 'volunteered' as a session chair; and to the AEMA committee for their continuous support during the planning of the conference. But most of all, thanks will always go to the presenters and the audience, without whom none of this would have succeeded as well as

it did. We hope to see you all at this year's AEMA conference in Canberra!

- Erica Steiner
AEMA Communications Officer

AEMA News

CONGRATULATIONS

Chris White has been appointed new Social Media Manager for AEMA. Keep a look out for some exciting new updates from our social media channels! Chris will be working closely with the AEMA committee to drive engagement across our platforms whilst proving fresh and engaging content for all things early medieval and more. We welcome Chris to the AEMA family and we are confident that his enthusiasm will be instrumental in advancing our mission and goals. Welcome Chris!



Matthew Firth was awarded an ANZAMEMS ECR fellowship in 2023. ANZAMEMS funds Early Career Fellowships to support the development of early career researchers in pursuing advanced research and publication in medieval studies, early modern studies, and medievalism. Matthew's research is titled 'Medieval Life Writing and the Construction of Reputation'. It looks at the historiography of medieval lives and how they are received and adapted over time.



Additionally, Matthew has also been awarded an AHA Fellowship in 2024. His project title is 'Constructing History Across Conquest'.

According to the *AHA*: the Judges deemed Matthew's work to be a well-articulated and compelling project exploring life writing in Medieval and Early Modern England, focusing on writing about figures from the pre-Norman Conquest period.

The project explores narratives of conquest and will reveal ideas and cultural memories that have continued to resonate in the present. Firth's project takes an innovative approach to pre-Norman Conquest history by placing life stories within the political, social and cultural worlds of the writers. The fellowship will be used to fund visits to un-digitised archives in the UK, and will lead to a monograph exploring biographical representations of England's pre-conquest past. Well done, Matt!

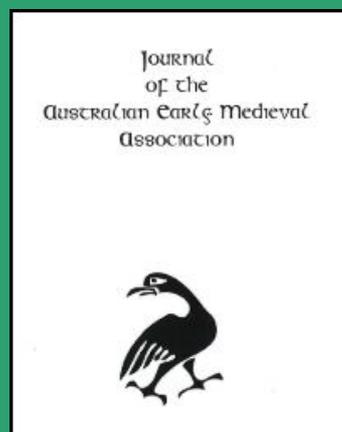
JAEMA

We are thrilled to announce the release of the second issue of the *Journal* for December 2023! Make sure to check out the [Informit](#) website where you can read the latest edition. This issue has four fantastic articles along with some great book reviews covering the latest publications that are shaping the discourse in early medieval studies.

We invite all members and supporters to contribute to *The Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association*, and we accept submission on all aspects. *JAEMA* publishes scholarly articles, book reviews, and short notices. Presenters at last year's AEMA conference are strongly encouraged to publish with us if they have not done so already!

Submissions should normally be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length (not counting footnotes, which should be kept to a reasonable proportion). Visit our [website](#) if you wish to submit or contact our Journal Editors at journal@aema.net.au

Books for review and correspondence about reviews should be sent to the Reviews Editor at reviews@aema.net.au.

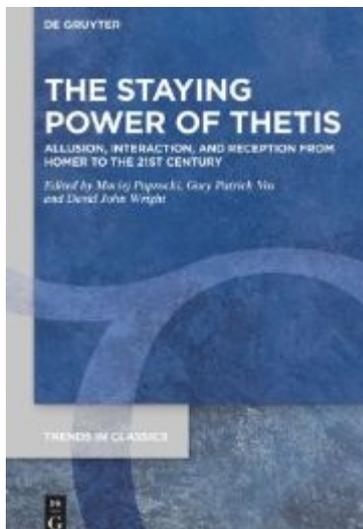
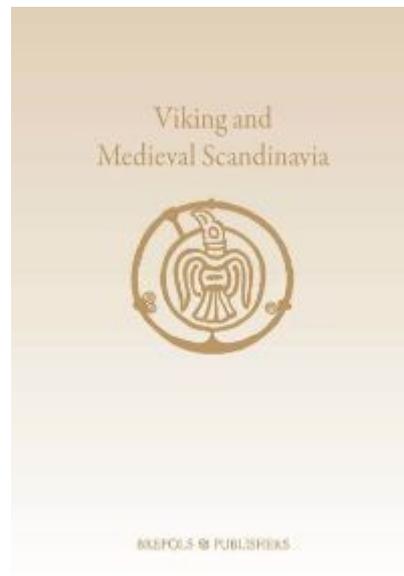


New AEMA Member Publications

AEMA Member: Manu Braithwaite-Westoby

New Article

M. Braithwaite-Westoby. "Movement and Stasis in Hárbarðsljóð", *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 19 (2023), pp. 41-66. [Read here!](#)



AEMA Member: Amelia Brown

New Book Chapter

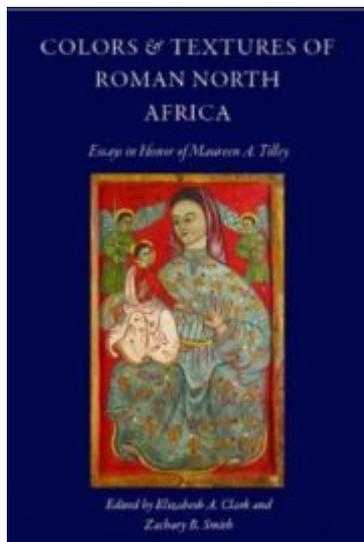
A. Brown and N. de Jonge. "Saviour Mermaids of the Ancient Mediterranean: Thetis and the Nereids as Patrons of Ancient Greek Mariners", in *The Staying Power of Thetis* (De Gruyter, 2023). [Purchase a copy here!](#)

AEMA Member: Pablo Martin Crovetto

New Article

P. Crovetto. "Unlocking the menagerie: Exploring symbolic animal depictions in ninth-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts", *JAEMA*, 19:2 (2023), 195-208.





AEMA Member: Geoffrey Dunn

New Book Chapter

G. Dunn. "Jeremiah 23:28b, the Donatists, and Augustine", in *Colors and Textures of Roman North Africa Essays in Memory of Maureen A. Tilley* (Catholic University of America Press, 2024). [Purchase a copy here!](#)

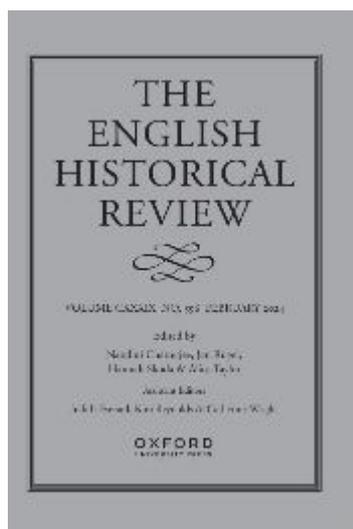
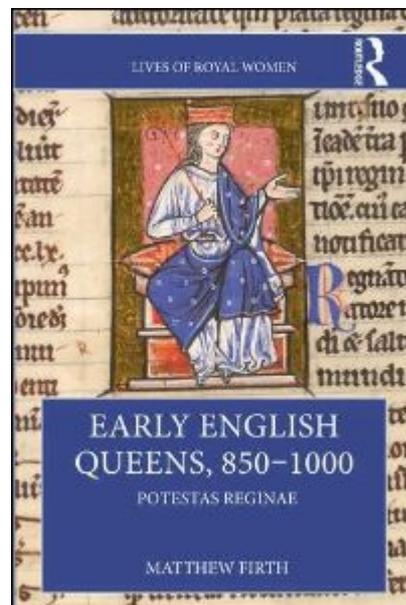
AEMA Member: Matthew Firth

New Book

M. Firth. *Early English Queens, 850–1000 Potestas Reginae* (Routledge, 2024). [Purchase a copy here!](#)

New Book Chapter

M. Firth. 'The Vikings and Francia, 799–936', in *The Routledge Handbook of French History*, (Routledge, 2023), pp. 31-41. [Purchase a copy here!](#)



New Articles

M. Firth. 'What's in a Name? Tracing the Origins of Alfred's 'the Great'', *The English Historical Review*, 139:596 (2024), pp. 1–32. [Read here!](#)

E. Sebo, and M. Firth. 'Saxo Grammaticus's Account of the Viking Age Site on the Danish Island of Hjørnø in Gesta Danorum', *Scandinavian Studies*, 95:2 (2023), pp. 166-182. [Read here!](#)

AEMA Member: Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński

New Article

D. Guttner-Sporzynski. "Conversion of pagans and the evolution of holy war ideology: Assessing the vulnerability of Mieszko's realm to holy war", *JAEMA*, 19:2 (2023), 160-194.



AEMA Member: Adelaide Greig

New Article

A. Greig. "Buried giants, hot memories: Kazuo Ishiguro's misty vision of post-arthurian britain", *JAEMA*, 19:2 (2023), 143-169.

AEMA Member: Stephen Joyce

New Article

S. Joyce. "Dating Gildas", *JAEMA*, 19:2 (2023), 123-142.





AEMA Member: Kathleen Neal

New Book Chapter

K. Neal. "Accounts concerning Elizabeth, Countess of Holland, 1297–1300", in *English Medieval Government and Administration Essays in Honour of J.R. Maddicott*, (eds.) Nigel Saul and Nicholas Vincent, (The Boydell Press, 2023).

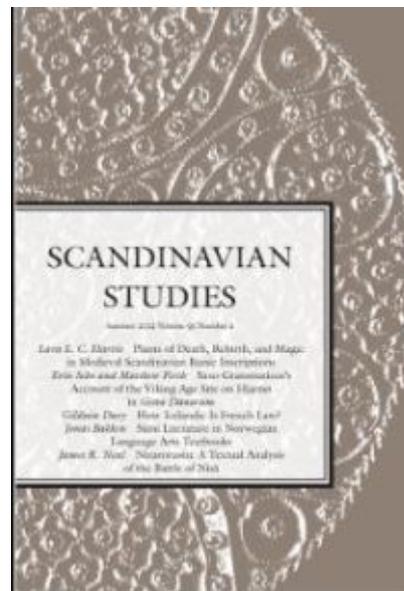
[Purchase a copy here!](#)

AEMA Member: Erin Sebo

New Article

Sebo, Erin, and Matthew Firth. 'Saxo Grammaticus's Account of the Viking Age Site on the Danish Island of Hjørnø in Gesta Danorum', *Scandinavian Studies*, 95:2 (2023), pp 166-182.

[Read here!](#)



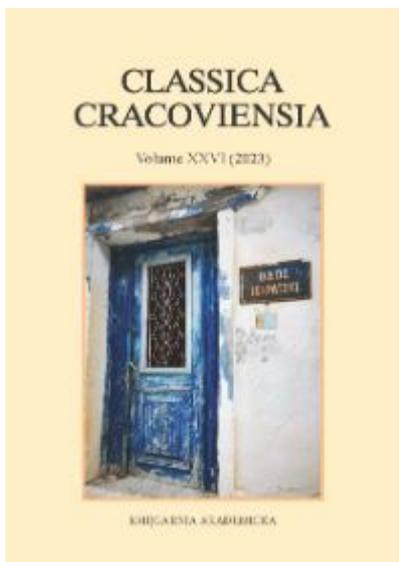
AEMA Member: Michael Stewart

New Article

M. Stewart. 'A tangled web: marriage and alliance in the shadows of the plague, 542-548'. *Classica Cracoviensia*, 26 (2023), pp. 163-217. [Read here!](#)

New Book Chapter

M. Stewart, 'Finding Mr or Mrs Right: Marriage Alliances in the Age of Theodora', in *Masculinities in early medieval Europe: Tradition and Innovation, 450-1050*, (eds.) Cristina La Rocca, Francesco Borri, and Francesco Veronese, (Brepols, 2023), pp. 19-41. [Purchase a copy here!](#)



We always accept recent publications, so please [contact us](#) if you are happy to share your amazing achievements with our members!

AEMA Member Profile



AEMA member **Adelaide Greig** has a Masters in Arts from the University of Melbourne. As part of AEMA's mission to celebrate the research and achievements of our members, I asked her a few questions about AEMA and her current research.

What are you currently working on? And how do you follow new developments in your field of research?

I'm currently applying for international PhD programs; I'm proposing a project looking at smell and affect in the literatures of medieval Britain, mostly Middle English, Old French, and Middle Welsh texts. I'm fascinated by the connection between our olfactory sense and our emotions, which is often something of which we're quite unaware; it's almost subconscious. Smell is also linked to a whole range of constructed social identities such as gender and race, and has historically been used to separate the haves from the have-nots. There's an increasing amount of research on smell in more modern literatures, particularly the nineteenth century, but I've been able to find few published studies looking at smell in medieval literature, particularly the secular literatures that I'm planning to base my research around. So that's a gap I'm hoping to fill.

As for following new developments, I find that conferences are the best way to keep up-to-date with current discussions. Even if I never have the time to apply for everything I find compelling, even just reading through CFPs gives you a good idea of topical and trending themes and questions. The research presented at conferences is often still in mid-development, ready to take on and share new ideas, and that's really exciting to me.

Why did you choose to study History?

I can't really remember a time when history wasn't something I find fascinating; like

reading, it's been a lifelong obsession. Even then I'm aware I will never know enough history facts and never read enough books. I do consider myself as very much a literary historian specifically. The realisation in the third year of my undergraduate that literature is a portal through which we can glimpse otherwise unrecorded aspects of medieval lives, people's dreams, fears, and fantasies, has driven much of my research over the past six years. Analysing historical literature is like a puzzle with numerous right answers from different angles, but one that always grants some further insight into the lives of our past and the conditions of our present.

What makes AEMA significant to you?

I discovered AEMA through a CFP for the 2022 conference. Even though the 2022 conference was entirely online, I was struck by what a warm and welcoming group of scholars AEMA is, and felt very inspired by how varied and substantial the presented papers were. Australia often feels very far away from the rest of the international medievalist community and I think it's so important to participate in the wonderful associations we have here at home, particularly as postgraduate students trying to grow and develop our skills. To be part of such a passionate group of early medievalists who are eager to engage with my research (even though I'm mostly a fourteenth-century person!) has been an extra special part of my Masters years and beyond.

Who is your favourite historical person and why?

To pick just one, I'd have to say Gwerful Mechain. She was a fifteenth-century Welsh poet, who also wrote devotional works but is mostly known for her bawdy selection of erotic poems including "Ode to the Vagina" and "To Jealous Wives". Little is known about her life other than that she was a married woman of a high-status family and likely wrote for pleasure rather than income. But as Katie Gramich notes in the "Introduction" to her English translation of Mechain's works, the very existence of a female poet within the record of late medieval Welsh poetry disrupts the idea that the bardic tradition of Wales has always been exclusively male. Mechain is often discussed as a surprisingly "modern" voice from a far gone era but I think it's more constructive to think of her work as evidence that women of all periods have enjoyed and expressed their sexuality on their own terms. I highly recommend Gramich's translation to anyone interested!

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