

19th international conference of
the AUSTRALIAN EARLY MEDIEVAL ASSOCIATION

the spectrum of the
early medieval world:
exploring the
semiotics of colour



programme

26 – 28 september 2024

the veritas building, AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC
UNIVERSITY, CANBERRA, *and* online



19th international conference of
the Australian Early Medieval Association

26-28 September 2023, hosted in person *and* online at the Australian Catholic
University, Canberra

conference committee

Convenors:

Erica Steiner
Darius von Güttner Sporzyński
with
The AEMA Committee

committee of management
the Australian early medieval association
2023-24

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Programme – Thursday

LIGHT GREEN SESSIONS = ONLINE MID GREEN SESSIONS = IN-PERSON

AEST Thursday 26 September 2024	
0745	
0800	
0815	building access
0830	
0845	
0900	Conference Opening & Welcome / Acknowledgement of Country
0915	Stephen Joyce / Chris Bishop
	SESSION 1 - Colours of the Earth Chair: Bob DiNapoli
0930	The Role of Color and Symbolism in Unveiling the Design and Cultural Significance of a Recently Discovered Anglo-Saxon Object (NMS-FC1F13)
0945	* Pablo Martin Crovetto - University of Buenos Aires, Argentina
1000	Secrets, Swords, and Semiotic Saxons: an invitation to experience new discoveries from a Saxon-period cemetery at an undisclosed location in southern England
1015	Dr Ash Lenton - Australian National University
1030	break
1045	
	SESSION 2 - The Bright Ages Chair: Bronwen Neil
1100	The Colours of the Rainbow...Not So Pretty in the Sky: Isidore of Seville and the Colours of Faith
1115	A/Prof Geoffrey D Dunn - University of Pretoria, South Africa
1130	Everything is Illuminated: the Beauty of Light in Early Medieval Aesthetics
1145	* Jessica Thomas - University of Auckland, New Zealand
1200	Spirit that can pass through solid matter: Colour, light and early medieval stained glass in the queer experimental films of Derek Jarman, Nathaniel Dorsky and Jerome
1215	* Mel Deerson - University of NSW
1230	
1245	lunch
1300	
1315	
	SESSION 3 - The Spectrum of Early Christianity Chair: Geoffrey D Dunn
1330	Improvise, Adapt, Overcome: Establishing Early Christian Legitimacy in Late Antique Roman Egypt
1345	* Daniel Prestipino - Macquarie University
1400	The red martyr: Cyprian and the early Insular church
1415	* Dr Stephen Joyce - Monash University
1430	Monks and Laymen – Dichotomy and Interflow: Colours, Social Position and Recognition (Insights from the Post-Iconoclastic Orthodox Hagiography)
1445	Dr Yanko Hristov - South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Bulgaria
1500	break
1515	AEMA AGM - attendance only for current financial AEMA Members
1530	
1545	break
	SESSION 4 - The Colours of Good and Evil Chair: Ryan Strickler
1600	Symbolic Connotations of Black and White in Early Medieval Islamic Philosophy and Their Ethical Applications
1615	* Kunnan Muhammed Swalih - Institut Mohammed VI Pour La Formation Des Imames des Mourchidines Et Mourchidates, Morocco
1630	Colours of Virtue and Vice: Semiotic Interpretations of Chromatic Symbolism in The Chronica Polonorum by Bishop Vincentius of Kraków
1645	A/Prof Darius von Güttnner-Sporzyński - Australian Catholic University, Canberra
1700	The Spectrum of Sin: Colour Symbolism in the Medieval Iconography of Hell and Dante's Inferno
1715	Dr Aleksandra Krauze-Kołodziej - John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland
1730	
1745	break
	KEYNOTE 1 Chair: Chris Bishop
1800	The Colours of Apocalypse: Portrayals of Medieval Apocalyptic and their Modern Resonances
1815	
1830	Prof Bronwen Neil - Macquarie University
1845	
1900	
1915	group travel
1930	
1945	
2000	
2015	
2030	Conference Dinner @ Two Sisters Lao Thai Cuisine, 5/38 Badham St Dickson
2045	
2100	
2115	
2130	
2145	
2200	

* Postgraduate and Early Career Researcher presenters eligible for the Best Paper Prize are marked with an asterisk.

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australian early medieval association

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Programme – Friday

LIGHT GREEN SESSIONS = ONLINE MID GREEN SESSIONS = IN-PERSON

AEST Friday 27 September 2024	
0745	
0800	
0815	building access
0830	
0845	
	SESSION 5 - Pedagogical Experiences of the Medieval Chair: Bob DiNapoli
0900	Inductive Pedagogies and the Teaching of Latin (a case study from the ANU)
0915	<i>Dr Chris Bishop - Australian National University</i>
0930	Reviving Medieval Art: Pigments, Passion, and My Journey in France
0945	<i>Jerome Manceau - Independent Scholar & Illuminator</i>
1000	The Written Artefact: past informs future
1015	<i>Gemma Black - Independent Scholar & Calligrapher</i>
1030	break
1045	
	SESSION 6 - Manuscript Collections and Colourations Chair: Karen McCluskey
1100	The National Library of Australia's early and later medieval collections
1115	<i>Dr Susannah Helman - National Library of Australia</i>
1130	The Features of Armenian Manuscript Colophons in the Early Middle Ages
1145	<i>* Ovsanna Khachatryan - Mesrop Mashtots Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Armenia</i>
1200	The Madonna in the Book of Kells: an image of motherhood
1215	<i>Dr Margaret Carmody - Australian Catholic University, Canberra</i>
1230	<i>The Splendor of Medieval Books of Hours and the Literary Glorification of Colors in the Melusine Romances</i>
1245	<i>Dist. Prof Albrecht Classen - University of Arizona, USA</i>
1300	lunch
1315	AEMA committee meeting - for current members of executive committee only
1330	
1345	lunch
	SESSION 7 - Demonic Hues Chair: Erica Steiner
1400	'No matter how strangely they shift in form and hue': Colour-Changing Demons and the Writing of the Devil in Solomon and Saturn I
1415	<i>* Stuart Rich - University of Sydney</i>
1430	Black Skin, Black Sin: The demonisation of blackness in Orderic Vitalis' <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
1445	<i>* Christopher White - University of Queensland</i>
1500	break
	SESSION 8 - Judicial Shades Chair: Stephen Joyce
1515	Darker Cattle? Questions of terminology in Celtic inheritance law
1530	<i>* Tobin Miles - Independent Scholar</i>
1545	<i>Why Were Doors Painted Red in the Middle Ages? Judicial Symbolism of Romanesque Church Portals and the Iconography of Red Doors</i>
1600	<i>* Klaudia Śnieżek - Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland</i>
1615	break
	SESSION 9 - Old English Poetic Colours Chair: Christopher White
1630	The Concealed Language of Colours in Early Medieval Literature
1645	<i>A/Prof Nazan Yıldız Çiçekçi - Karadeniz Technical University, Türkiye</i>
1700	The Colour of Your Language: Rhetorical Psychology in Old English Poetry
1715	<i>Dr Bob DiNapoli - Scholar at Large</i>
1730	break
1745	
	Keynote 2 Chair: Chris Bishop
1800	Experiences of Colour in the Middle Ages: exploring the Human-Object Relationship
1815	
1830	<i>A/Prof Karen McCluskey - University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney</i>
1845	
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2000	Informal Drinks/Nibbles @ ACU
2015	
2030	
2045	
2100	
2115	
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2200	

* Postgraduate and Early Career Researcher presenters eligible for the Best Paper Prize are marked with an asterisk.



Programme – Saturday

LIGHT GREEN SESSIONS = ONLINE MID GREEN SESSIONS = IN-PERSON

AEST Saturday 28 September 2024	
0745	
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0900	
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1015	
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1045	
1100	building access
1115	
	SESSION 10 - Cosmic Colours Chair: Geoffrey D Dunn
1130	Blue sea, blue sky, blue men: The semiotics and semantics of the colour blue in Europe from antiquity to the early medieval
1145	* Erica Steiner - University of Sydney
1200	Green Fire: The Colors of Renewal in Hildegard of Bingen's Ecology and Cosmology
1215	* Emma Yeager - University of Chicago, USA
1230	Court rituals, Cosmology and Chromatics at the Mughal Court: King Humayun's 'Carpet of Mirth' and the Theater of Sovereignty
1245	* Sayyada Zainab Naqvi - Aligarh Muslim University, India
1300	
1315	lunch
1330	
1345	
	SESSION 11 - The Semiotics of Coloured Textiles Chair: Erica Steiner
1400	Psellos' Chronographia : red, black, and gold
1415	Dr Penelope Buckley - University of Melbourne
1430	Hierarchical Colours of Medieval Cistercian Communities' Clothing as Boundaries in Sacred-Profane Activities
1445	Dr Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja - Independent Scholar
1500	Tyrian Purple: Enigma of the Royal Dye
1515	Prof Mark Byron - University of Sydney
1530	break
1545	
	SESSION 12 - Colourful Names Chair: Christopher White
1600	"Colour" Nicknames of the Viking Era: Significance and Impact on the Social Status of the Bearer
1615	* David Batishchev - Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia
1630	The semiotics of nef-fqlr ("pale-nebbed") in Old Norse
1645	* Samuel Lewis - University of Sydney
1700	Conference Closing & Wrap
1715	Erica Steiner
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2024 Conference Keynote Speakers

Experiences of Colour in the Middle Ages: exploring the Human-Object Relationship

Associate Professor Karen McCLUSKEY

Keynote 2

(University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney)

In a homily on St Theodore, the fourth-century bishop Gregory of Nyssa described in vivid detail how beholders might undergo a full sensory experience before the relics of this hallowed saint: 'For as if it is the same body, still alive and flourishing, those beholding it embrace it with the eyes, the mouth, the ears. And when they have approached it with all the senses, they pour tears out over it from piety and emotion.' Much later, the famous twelfth-century Abbot Suger described the tremendous commotion of pilgrims visiting relics at St Denis including 'unruly crowds' that 'grievously trod down one another' with women being 'pushed back and forth ... [who] escaped in the nick of time ... gasping almost with their last breath.' Such embodied experiences are perhaps the stuff of the writers' imaginations; exaggerations meant to instill delight and infuse value into the religious practices they reference. But, as art historian David Morgan argues, in ignoring the central role of the body and senses in religion, one risks 'proposing a deeply skewed and quite misleading account of the subject.' I tend to agree.

Therefore, in this paper I aim to explore the possibilities and limitations of locating experience in the medieval Christian devotion to relics. As a case study, the paper will focus on reliquaries – objects created to hold the fragmented body parts of Christian saints. Reliquaries were highly revered, encrusted in gold, silver and jewels and displayed for the veneration of the faithful. In a conference dedicated to colour, the specific question this paper asks is: to what extent did colour – both its absence or presence – and light, colour's staunch companion, play a role in facilitating embodied experiences when encountered by devotees at the shrines of saints in the medieval West.

Karen is an art historian of the European Middle Ages, with a particular research focus on the intersection of art, faith, and experience. Karen teaches history at the University of Notre Dame Australia and is a fellow of the Research Council of Finland's Centre of Excellence in the History of Experiences. She was awarded a PhD from the Department of Art History and Theory at the University of Sydney in 2006. She holds a Master's degree in Art History from Queen's University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from McMaster University, both in Ontario, Canada. Her first monograph *New Saints in Late-Mediaeval Venice, 1200-1500: a typological study* was published by Routledge in 2020 and she is currently editing a volume called 'Art and Lived Religion' which examines the possibilities of art history and lived religion as complimentary methodologies.



The Colours of Apocalypse: Portrayals of Medieval Apocalyptic and their Modern Resonances

Professor Bronwen NEIL

Keynote 1

(Macquarie University)

The last book of the New Testament, simply known as *Apocalypse* or *Revelation*, details John the Elder's prophecy of the End Times as the Jewish-Christian author perceived them in a vision received on the Greek island of Patmos c. 95 CE. The specific colours mentioned in John's vision give extra 'subliminal' meaning to the events of the Final Judgement before God, which takes place before the ultra-white Lamb of God, who stood for Christ. John's colourful portrayals of agony and suffering have had a lasting influence on cultures of the medieval East and West, as we see in northern European and English illustrated commentaries on *Revelation*, and in the novelisation of them in various Apocalypses and saints' lives, which retained their popularity until at least the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In this paper, I propose to walk alongside Greek and Latin medieval readers of *Revelation* in a tour through the richly coloured imagery that sets the scene for John's mythic showdown between good and evil. The violence and carnage is resolved in the rise of the new Jerusalem, its streets paved with gold and crowned with a rainbow. I explore some of the Jewish and Greco-Roman precedents for the symbolic use of specific colours, and how John the Elder's colour scheme was explained by medieval commentators, portrayed in manuscripts, and received by their readers. I argue that John's original and effective use of colour was one of several reasons why his book of visions, with its lurid portrayal of the hidden events of the End Times, had such a lasting impact on the medieval and modern imagination.

Bronwen Neil is professor of Ancient History at Macquarie University. Before 2017, she was the Burke Associate Professor of Ecclesiastical Latin in the Centre for Early Christian Studies at ACU Brisbane. She is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities and current head of its Religion section. During a recent fellowship in the Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies at Heidelberg University in 2024, she worked on apocalyptic understandings of Jerusalem across monotheistic cultures in the early Middle Ages. A former ARC Future Fellow, she now leads an ARC Discovery Project, *Images of Power in the Roman Empire: Mass Media and the Cult of Emperors*, with Ryan Strickler (UoN), Estelle Strazdins (ANU), and Amelia Brown (UQ).



2024 Conference Presenters

“Colour” Nicknames of the Viking Era: Significance and Impact on the Social Status of the Bearer

David Batishchev, Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

Session 12

Nicknames in the Scandinavian world of the Viking era played an extremely important role. They served not only as a means of personal identification but also as a way to convey information about the individual's identity, distinguishing them from others with the same given name. The assignment of nicknames was a widespread practice that could reflect various aspects of a person's life, including physical attributes, personality traits, and notable achievements or deeds.

Nicknames related to colours are of great interest. These “colourful” nicknames were more than simple descriptors; they often carried deeper meanings and connotations. Colour designations could function as standalone linguistic units, such as *Bárðr hvíti* (white) and *Hálfðan svart* (black), indicating straightforward physical characteristics or symbolic qualities associated with those colours. Additionally, colour could be part of more complex nicknames, such as *Þorsteinn rauðnefr* (red nose) and *Þórunn blákinn* (blue cheek). These compound nicknames often provided a vivid image of the person, highlighting specific features or notable incidents. For instance, a “red nose” might suggest someone with a ruddy complexion or a heavy drinker, while a “blue cheek” could indicate a distinctive birthmark or scar.

This report will delve into the various criteria used for assigning colour-related nicknames, exploring the attributes they were meant to reflect. It will also analyse the broader social implications of these nicknames, investigating how they affected the social status and perception of individuals in the Viking society. By examining historical records and sagas, the report aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of “colourful” nicknames in the Viking era.

David is a Masters candidate in Medieval Studies as well as a research intern at the Intercultural History of Literature Laboratory, Centre of Fundamental Research, in the Higher School of Economics, Moscow. His research interests include medieval perceptions of the interaction between Germanic and Romance traditions in culture and art.

Inductive Pedagogies and the Teaching of Latin (a case study from the ANU)

Dr Chris Bishop, Australian National University

Session 5

In 1986, Jack Richards and Theodore Rodgers' *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (CUP) dismissed the Grammar-Translation Method of language teaching in a few lines: “It is a method for which there is no theory [and] no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory.” Writing more than a century after Wilhelm Viëtor had both popularised and vilified the term – *Grammatik-Übersetzungsmethode* in German – Richards and Rodgers wasted few words on a system that, although “still widely practiced ... has no advocates”. For teachers of Classical languages, however, the exact opposite remains true even to this day. Deductive methods of language teaching – whether referred to as Grammar-Translation, Classical, Traditional, Grammar-Traditional, Grammar-Dictionary, or even Presentation-Practice-



Production (3Ps) – retain their dominance in the pedagogical landscape of Latin instruction while Inductive methods haunt the distant hinterlands.

The purpose of this paper is to survey (albeit briefly) the range of methods employed for the teaching of Latin over the last few centuries in order to trace the evolution of these various systems, and to understand why it is that one form of praxis has come to dominate the field. How is it that Classicists (virtually alone among teachers of language) embraced, and continue to embrace, such a “discredited, meaning-impooverished methodology”?

Dr Chris Bishop is an honorary lecturer in the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics at the Australian National University. His areas of research include the poetry of Late Antiquity and the place of both Medievalism and Neoclassicism in modern culture. A former John W. Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress (Washington), he has lectured extensively in the USA and Europe, as well as Australia.

The Written Artefact: past informs future

Gemma Black, Independent Scholar & Calligrapher

Session 5

From cave paintings to digital writing, our written artefacts have been the lifeblood of human existence and knowledge. It was the rise of the Roman alphabet with its Greek, Hebrew, Phoenician, hieroglyphic and transitional scripts evolving over millennia, that has brought us to our overwhelming digital presence. In this short paper I shall present myself to you as a practising artist, working to perpetuate and promote the written artefact as the way forward, so that future generations will have at their fingertips the voice of their past. I shall discuss briefly how one studies to become skilled and competent in calligraphy and illumination. Also covered will be the early medieval resources calligraphers use as prime specimens to research and analyse in order to attain those skills. In conclusion I'll present the works I have created for the Australian Government, including the Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, that will remain as written artefacts for future generations.

Gemma Black is a studio-based practising calligrapher and illuminator. Having studied initially through the Roehampton Institute London, she received her Churchill Fellowship to study with master calligraphers in the UK & Europe. Gemma is a Fellow of the Calligraphy & Lettering Arts Society, UK and her work is held in private and public collections including Parliament House Canberra, The Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge, the European Parliament and the International Calligraphy Collection Moscow (with a forthcoming acquisition by Stanford University Library CA, 2025).

Psellos' *Chronographia*: red, black, and gold

Dr Penelope Buckley, University of Melbourne

Session 11

In his history the *Chronographia*, the eleventh-century philosopher Michael Psellos developed in original ways the three colours that had pre-eminent semiotic function in Byzantine histories: the purple/red (particularly sandals) that signified imperial status, black/dark that signified lost status or humility, and gold that meant riches, decoration, or extravagance. Psellos used these colours in nuanced dramatic scenes: one of a rebel ordered to remove the red sandals he was wearing before making his submission, and another of an emperor walking barefoot to the monastery he was entering because only red sandals



had been provided. He added further functions and nuances to the colours: an emperor's decking a lover in gold and jewels could signify a complex state of mind. Jewels and gold could be used prophetically. An ageing emperor's golden robes could weigh on him as the burden of his office while his skin – dark functioning as pallor or loss of colour – resembled that of someone three days dead. Most originally, Psellos used changes in skin hue to signify emotion. One character's red cheeks flagged youthful beauty but his later blushes serially signified embarrassment, shame, and guilt. In fact, the semiotic system of Byzantine histories became a palette in Psellos' hands.

Penelope Buckley has previously taught and published on English medieval literature but now focuses on Byzantine works. Her book *The Alexiad of Anna Komene: Artistic Strategy in the Making of a Myth* was published by C.U.P. in 2014. She is currently working on Psellos' *Chronographia*.

Tyrian Purple: Enigma of the Royal Dye

Prof Mark Byron, University of Sydney

Session 11

Purple has had a distinctive symbolic value in the broader Mediterranean region since before antiquity: prized as a rare clothing dye by Phoenicians, Minoans, and Ptolemaic Egyptians, and valued in stone material by Egyptian and Roman sculptors, the colour has long borne associations with rarity and royalty. This paper takes a closer look at Tyrian purple, the clothing dye extracted from molluscs in the Eastern Mediterranean and which became the royal colour of Byzantium from the Roman Imperial era to the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Knowledge of the material process of its manufacture was lost for centuries and only recovered in 2001. The status of Tyrian purple clothing as a marker of nobility is evident in some of the most prominent Byzantine monuments, such as the mosaics of Justinian and Theodora in Ravenna and the decorations in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Records of its economic value in early medieval Byzantium can be found in legal documents regulating guild activity such as the ninth-century *Book of the Eparch* (Τὸ ἐπαρχικὸν βιβλίον) of Leo the Wise. Leo's text also pays close attention to the regulation of the silk trade, indicating how local dye materials and exotic fabrics found articulation in manufacturing and in the marketplace – the meeting of Chinese silkworms and Tyrian sea-snails in Nova Roma.

Mark Byron is Professor of Modern Literature at the University of Sydney. He is author of the monographs *Ezra Pound's Eriugena* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) and *Samuel Beckett's Geological Imagination* (Cambridge UP, 2020). He is currently collaborating with Tony Paraskeva (University of Roehampton) on a Leverhulme-funded project, *Modernism and Byzantium*.

The Madonna in the *Book of Kells*: an image of motherhood

Dr Margaret Carmody, Australian Catholic University, Canberra

Session 6

Breastfeeding has always been highly regarded as beneficial and even magical to both the infant and the mother, as demonstrated by many depictions of mothers breastfeeding in the arts and literature of cultures across the world. Two things need to be said about those depictions. First it was assumed that the breastfeeding mother and child was a familiar scene and second, it symbolised love and devotion and the good health of the growing child. Mothers were regarded as beautiful and specifically the full,



lactating breast was the epitome of beauty. Breastfeeding is mentioned many times in the Bible.

When mothers and infants of religious importance, such as the Blessed Virgin and the infant Jesus are depicted breastfeeding, it has the additional meaning of emphasising his humanity. The image of the Madonna in the *Book of Kells* is the first known Western image and it depicts a realistic and remarkably tender relationship between mother and child.

Images of breastfeeding mothers, including the Madonna in the *Book of Kells*, have had the effect of reinforcing particular views about mothers and their dutiful relationship with their infants. When later artworks such as Solario's *Madonna with the Green Cushion* were used in the twentieth century to promote breastfeeding, they may have endorsed uncomfortable positioning and a remoteness in the relationship, reflecting contemporary views of dutiful motherhood.

Margaret Carmody believes that images of motherhood in art have represented prevailing views of motherhood. The images have been influential in shaping the ways mothers cared for their babies, perceived themselves and played their roles in society. Margaret researched the history of maternal education for her Doctor of Philosophy, ACU.

The Splendor of Medieval Books of Hours and the Literary Glorification of Colors in the *Melusine* Romances

Dist. Prof Albrecht Classen, University of Arizona, USA

Session 6

The topic of color has attracted much attention in the last few years, especially with a focus on the color blue (Michel Pastoureau). Art historians have examined many various sites and objects that stand out for their color. Literary scholars have made considerable efforts to follow suit, highlighting the evidence in individual texts. But cultural history should not separate those two areas and needs to take into account both Arthurian or Grail romances, for instance, and manuscripts, especially Books of Hours. As we have learned from theoretical investigations (Mulnay), the gaze matters critically in human epistemology, so considering both the illuminated manuscript and the emphasis on colors in literary texts – here the *Melusine* romances – will take us considerably further in our understanding of late medieval aesthetics and the spiritual meaning of colors.

Dr. Albrecht Classen, University Distinguished Prof. of German Studies at the University of Arizona, works on medieval and early modern literature and culture. He has published currently 125 books and close to 800 articles. He is the editor of the journals *Mediaevistik* and *Humanities*. He has received numerous awards for teaching, service, and research, such as the Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band (Order of Merit) from the German President in 2004.

The Role of Color and Symbolism in Unveiling the Design and Cultural Significance of a Recently Discovered Anglo-Saxon Object (NMS-FC1F13)

Pablo Martín Crovetto, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina

Session 1

This paper explores the significance of color and symbolism in the analysis and interpretation of a unique, recently discovered silver object dating from the 8th to the 9th century CE. By examining the color contrasts created by the gilding and niello inlay, we can decipher the design intricacies that may otherwise remain obscured. These contrasts not only reveal the object's craftsmanship but also provide



insights into how animals, particularly horses, and their colors were perceived during this period, potentially helping us to better understand the meaning of certain Old English words related to color. Additionally, the decorative motifs reveal a complex narrative that reflects the aesthetic and symbolic values of the time. This paper aims to demonstrate how the careful examination of color and design can offer new insights into the dating, cultural relevance, and artistic techniques of early medieval artifacts, thereby enriching our understanding of their place within the broader context of historical art and material culture.

Pablo Martín Crovetto is an educator with a BA in English Education from Instituto Superior del Profesorado "Dr. Joaquín V. Gonzalez," where he teaches Medieval English History. Currently, Pablo is pursuing his MA in Medieval Studies at the University of Buenos Aires. His dissertation explores the captivating world of Anglo-Saxon art. Beyond academia, Pablo is a creative writer, delving into themes of identity and self-discovery through his fiction.

Spirit that can pass through solid matter: Colour, light and early medieval stained glass in the queer experimental films of Derek Jarman, Nathaniel Dorsky and Jerome Hiler

Mel Deerson, University of NSW

Session 2

In his lecture 'Cinema before 1300', experimental filmmaker Jerome Hiler proposes that the stained glass windows of early medieval cathedrals become a threshold or margin between inner and outer worlds; "the border is sacred not because of its subject matter but because of its location ... this wall is permeable by light; a live example of spirit that can pass through solid matter." How can the 'transgressive' and transportive possibilities of medieval stained glass' light and colour be seen unfurling across time? This presentation will explore early medieval stained glass in relation to the work of a number of queer experimental filmmakers who work with colour and light as a spiritually transformative material. Showing excerpts of Derek Jarman, Nathaniel Dorsky and Jerome Hiler's glowing, colour-soaked experimental films, and drawing on their writing which refers to medieval theories of light and colour and early medieval glazing schemes such as St. Denis and Chartres, I will trace colour and light as a border-crossing force across time and space, and put it in dialogue with my own contemporary queer experimental film practice. This paper sits within the field of queer medievalisms, exploring modern queer creative practices in relation to medieval art and culture, without arguing that medieval art is in itself 'queer.'

Mel Deerson is an artist, writer and university teacher living and working on Wurundjeri and Gadigal Land. They are currently undertaking a PhD in Fine Art at UNSW on queer temporalities, women mystics, and medieval art. Her recent book of prose poems and images, *The Dream of the Cherry Tree* is available through Stray Pages.

The Colour of Your Language: Rhetorical Psychology in Old English Poetry

Dr Bob DiNapoli, Scholar at Large

Session 9

In the Old English poem *Beowulf*, when the hero first approaches the Danish king Hrothgar to offer his help with the Danes' monster-problem, he must negotiate a demanding rhetorical etiquette, presenting himself as the solution to Hrothgar's twelve-year failure to resolve the challenge of Grendel, while couching his offer in terms that carefully acknowledge Hrothgar's agency and allow him to save face. In



the exchanges between Earl Byrhtnoth and the invading Vikings' herald in *The Battle of Maldon*, both speakers carefully point their formally delivered terms to emphasise a number of insinuations aimed at demoralising their adversary. Beowulf's later exchange with Unferth, who has peevishly challenged the hero's credentials, manages to answer his challenger roundly while it avoids insulting Hrothgar's household for including such a mean-spirited loser among its members.

In each of these instances, the Old English conception of public discourse embodied in the verb *mapelian* ('to speak', with strong connotations of purposeful language aimed at influencing public deliberations) allows us powerful glimpses of early medieval mental interiority rarely available to modern readers.

In my talk, I will examine brief excerpts from these three episodes, with close attention to how their speakers' language negotiates a dense network of issues involving personal status, social obligation and diplomatic nicety, and how such negotiation can at least suggest deep insights into personal, social and political aspects of Anglo-Saxon psychology.

Bob DiNapoli has lectured in Old and Middle English literature at universities in North America, England and Australia. He now conducts a weekly poetry discussion-group and works with a number of individual students, translating and discussing Old English poems in their entirety. His books include *A Far Light: A Reading of Beowulf* (2016) *Reading Old English Wisdom: The Fetters in the Frost* (2021) as well as three books of poetry, *Engelboc* (2019), *The Gnostic Hotel* (2021) and *Museum* (2024), all published by Littlefox Press. His translation and discussion of the *Exeter Book* riddles, *Reading Old English Riddles: The Dark Glass*, is due to be published in 2024 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

The Colours of the Rainbow ... Not So Pretty in the Sky: Isidore of Seville and the Colours of Faith

A/Prof Geoffrey D Dunn, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Session 7

Every school student has learned some mnemonic by which to remember the order of the colours of the rainbow as identified in the seventeenth century by Isaac Newton. In the early medieval world, rainbows were presented as drabber than that. The early seventh-century bishop, Isidore of Seville, in his *De natura rerum*, described rainbows as consisting of only four colours, two of them being black and white. Even without the benefit of Newton's refracting prism, the naked eye can discern more colour in a rainbow than Isidore permitted. This paper investigates the classical and early Christian heritage bequeathed to the early medieval world, particularly Aristotle, Pliny the elder, and pseudo-Clement, not to comment upon ancient meteorology, but to understand some of the role colour play in Christian faith.

Geoffrey D. Dunn is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and an honorary research associate in the Department of Ancient and Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Pretoria. He has been editor of *Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association* since 2010.

The National Library of Australia's early and later medieval collections

Dr Susannah Helman, National Library of Australia

Session 6

This presentation will introduce and discuss the medieval collections held by the National Library of



Australia.

Dr Susannah Helman is Rare Books and Music Curator at the National Library of Australia.

Monks and Laymen – Dichotomy and Interflow: Colours, Social Position and Recognition (Insights from the Post-Iconoclastic Orthodox Hagiography)

Dr Yanko Hristov, South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Bulgaria

Session 3

Given the significance and considerable number of medieval hagiographical works in the Orthodox world, it is unsurprising that these texts are the subject of constant scholarly interest. Nevertheless, this group of medieval narratives still poses numerous challenges to modern researchers. Despite progress in establishing authorship, determining the time and context of composition, and identifying textual connections or the transfer of motifs and borrowings from earlier texts, more work remains to be done. Even with the present deficits and uncertainties, current achievements provide crucial insights into behavioral patterns, social attitudes and expectations, and the nuances of everyday life. With the necessary caution, such scholarly activity can even encompass hagiographical works with entirely fictional characters and those with an inaccurate historical framework or at least not based on real historical facts. A feature that further highlights the crucial role of hagiography as a primary source of information regarding the medieval era.

Yanko Hristov currently holds the position of Chief Assistant Professor in Medieval History at South-West University “Neofit Rilski”, Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria). He is a member of the editorial board of *Studia Iuridico-Historica* and *Acta Mediaevalia Magnae Tarnovae*, a foreign member of the Medieval Association of the Midwest (USA), and a member of the Balkan Association of History and Philosophy of Medicine. His research interests are focused on Early Medieval hagiography in the Orthodox world, Byzantine law and jurisprudence, the influence of the Roman and Byzantine legal tradition on the so-called *Slavia Orthodoxa*, Medieval captivity, prisoners of war, human trafficking, enslavement, and manumission in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The red martyr: Cyprian and the early Insular church

Dr Stephen Joyce, Monash University

Session 3

Cyprian, the third-century bishop of Carthage and martyr, is an important early church father with a surviving and significant legacy of writings. This paper will explore a particular connection with the early medieval church in Britain and Ireland. Focussing on images found in Cyprian’s writings, the paper will argue that Cyprian’s works were an important contribution to the missions of Germanus and Patrick to Britain and Ireland in the fifth century and that the rehabilitation of Cyprian as an important figure in the ninth-century Carolingian church may well reflect the influence of the Insular church.

Stephen J. Joyce is a research affiliate at Monash University and a learning designer at the Australian Catholic University. He is currently working on an edition of the Hiberno-Latin text, *De duodecim Abusivis Saeculi*, for the *Corpus Christianorum* Series. His research focuses on the British Isles in the early medieval period.

The Features of Armenian Manuscript Colophons in the Early Middle Ages



Manuscripts, Armenia

Manuscripts are one of the historical and cultural certificates of the Armenian people. They are important symbols of the Armenian identity. The Armenian alphabet was created in 405 CE, and Armenian manuscripts were written probably from the beginning of the 5th century. At the same time, a unique literary genre was created, which is called colophon. Usually, colophons were written at the end or at a certain part of manuscripts. Colophons contain information about manuscripts, historical events. That's why they are important sources for the study not only of the history of Armenia, but also of the history of its neighborhood.

In this paper, we will present the features of the colophons of the manuscripts written in the 5th–12th centuries, in comparison with the colophons written in the following centuries. The first part of this paper will refer to following topics: when was the first Armenian colophon written, and what are the historical and literary values of early medieval colophons? In the second part of this paper, information will be presented using the comparative method about the characteristics of 'poetic' and 'prose' colophons written in this period. Finally, the third part of the paper answers the following question: how did this genre change through ages? In the early Middle Ages colophons of the manuscripts were of a very small volume, containing only several lines. Later, they were enlarged.

Ovsanna Khachatryan graduated from the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Khachatatur Abovyan. Currently she is a PhD student in Literary theory at the same University. At the same time she works at the Matenadaran (Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts) as a Codicologist and a Researcher. Her research, as well as the PhD project, revolves mostly around the Armenian medieval literary genres focusing on 12-15th century manuscripts. She has participated in number of specialized scientific conferences and seminars and published scientific articles and monographs.

The Spectrum of Sin: Colour Symbolism in the Medieval Iconography of Hell and Dante's *Inferno*

Dr Aleksandra Krauze-Kołodziej, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland Session 4

The early medieval iconography of hell is a vivid tapestry woven with the symbolism of colours, predominantly black and red. This paper takes a unique approach by integrating insights from Dante's *Inferno* to explore whether these hues are the exclusive chromatic representations of damnation or if other colours also permeate these depictions. By tracing the significance of colours from ancient times through early Christian representations and then examining their meanings in the medieval period, the author will uncover the multifaceted symbolism of black and red – black signifying death, sin, and the potential for spiritual rebirth, and red representing passion, blood, and divine wrath. Further, the paper traces the evolution of hell's representations to later medieval iconography, where additional colours were introduced (blue, green, and yellow), expanding the symbolic palette of infernal imagery. The author will highlight how Dante's use of colours enhances the narrative's moral and emotional depth, creating a powerful visual metaphor for sin and redemption. The paper aims to illuminate the complex role of colour in medieval infernal imagery, including the depiction of the underworld's interior, offering a deeper understanding of how these hues communicated profound spiritual and moral messages to their audience at the time.



Aleksandra Krauze-Kolodziej works as an Assistant Professor at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, in Poland. She completed her PhD in the field of Art History. She also finished Italian Philology (MA), Classical Philology (BA) and Byzantine Studies (Postgraduate Studies). Her main research interests are: comparative iconography between ancient and early Christian and early medieval times, together with Byzantine and Latin traditions in medieval art. Her publications are available at her [university profile](#) and her [academia profile](#).

Hierarchical Colours of Medieval Cistercian Communities' Clothing as Boundaries in Sacred-Profane Activities

Dr Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja, Independent Scholar

Session 11

Medieval monks' clothing expressed devotion, simplicity, and a spiritual focus, varying across different orders and regions, with diverse fabrics, styles, and colours. The underlying message of humility and austerity remains constant. In medieval monastic life, clothing was designed to accommodate their daily activities, supplying comfort during long hours of prayer and work, while liturgical celebrations needed specific garments to underline the symbolic significance of clothing. The hierarchical clothing reflected their commitment to their religious order, and the particulars of their robes and hooded cloaks testify to their spirituality.

For the Cistercians (the 1130s–40s), tunics and cowls were produced from unbleached and undyed wool, whose colour depended on the sheep's colour. They were called the "White Monks," but practically, off-White Monks are correct considering sheep colours. Despite a Cistercian tradition, the wearing of a cowl of undyed cloth may be witnessed in Cluniac houses (11th century). Early illustrations depict Cistercian monks in grey and brown habits; the grey was from greyish sheep. They were referred to as white monks or grey monks, depending on time and place. The lay brothers' clothing was a darker grey or brown, and in later centuries, brown was for the lay brothers and white for the monks. The nun's veil was black for those who professed and white for novices and lay sisters. The veil designated their status as brides of Christ.

Hee Sook Lee-Niinioja is a scholar/journalist/artist/designer. Specialising in comparisons of Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic architecture, cultural heritage, collective memories-emotions, and semiotic texts and images, she has published extensively, with her recent most recent monograph being *The Continuity of Pre-Islamic Motifs in Javanese Mosque Ornamentation, Indonesia* (Archaeopress, 2022). She has also curated Goethe exhibitions, and teaches lectures and workshops at various institutions (including universities, hospitals, prisons, and NGOs) worldwide. She currently resides in Finland.

Secrets, Swords, and Semiotic Saxons: an invitation to experience new discoveries from a Saxon-period cemetery at an undisclosed location in southern England

Dr Ash Lenton, Australian National University

Session 1

Migration period England is confusing. Some historical sources of late-antique Roman Britain, and of course the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, tell us of invasions and mass migrations into the south and east of what is now England. Archaeological evidence has never supported those claims and has always favoured small-scale movements of traders, farm workers, and maybe a few mercenaries. Some new discoveries of well-preserved burials with grave goods and weaponry might tell us something new about those migrant people. The semiotic languages of gold, silver, copper and iron can tell us stories of heroic



deeds, fantastic mythology, far-flung travel, romantic attachments, and probably some pig farming. A fifth to sixth-century cemetery site at a secret location in southern England is currently under investigation by a team of archaeological stalwarts, who hope to discover why those Saxon migrants chose to settle (and die) here, and why they were so fixated on shiny golden swords.

Content warning: this talk contains images of human remains in their graves.

Note: This paper will not be recorded.

Ash Lenton is an archaeologist. His PhD is in the archaeology of medieval urban spaces, architectural design, semiotic communication, ethnic and community identities. He spends his time directing archaeological research and teaching programs, digging up Medieval castles, Roman towns, Saxon cemeteries, prehistoric monuments, and at least one Tasmanian pub.

The semiotics of *nef-fǫlr* (“pale-nebbed”) in Old Norse

Samuel Lewis, University of Sydney

Session 12

My paper will focus on the adjective *nef-fǫlr* in Old Norse. The compound adjective literally means “beak-pale”. It is attested only twice in the Old Norse literary corpus: first, in stanza thirty-five of the heroic poem *Atlakviða* (“The Lay of Atli”); second, in stanza fifty of the mythological poem *Vǫluspá* (“The Prophecy of the Seeress”). In both texts, the adjective overwhelmingly has destructive connotations: in *Vǫluspá*, it modifies the eagle that “slits the corpses” (*slítr nái*, Vsp. stz. 50) of the men who perish at Ragnarǫk; in *Atlakviða*, it is used to refer to the Huns who are about to burn alive in their own hall. My paper builds upon David Clark’s paper ‘Kin-slaying in the Poetic Edda: The End of the World’. Clark argues that the heroic poems of the Poetic Edda serve as a literary mechanism by which to forestall Ragnarǫk. I will suggest that the use of the same adjective in both *Atlakviða* and *Vǫluspá* creates a close link between the destruction of the Huns in the former text and the destruction of the world in the latter. This paper reveals how violence in the heroic poems foreshadows violence in eschaton.

Samuel recently completed an MPhil in Medieval Latin at the University of Sydney. His research interests lie chiefly in the field of Germanic philology and mythology, with a particular interest in Old Norse mythological and heroic poetry. He is also interested in Medieval Latin epic and the intersection of Latin and Germanic vernacular culture.

Reviving Medieval Art: Pigments, Passion, and My Journey in France

Jerome Manceau, Independent Scholar & Illuminator

Session 5

This talk will delve into the use of pigments in medieval illuminated manuscripts, informed by Jerome's experience studying these techniques at the Institut Supérieur Européen de l'Enluminure et du Manuscrit (ISEEM), a specialized school in France which teaches medieval techniques in illumination, calligraphy, manuscript creation, and composition. Jerome will share examples of the methods used to create and apply these pigments, along with a brief discussion on the significance of bookbinding in preserving these works. Looking ahead, Jerome aims to blend traditional manuscript art with contemporary themes in science, philosophy, and social issues, creating a bridge between the past and present in his future



work.

Jerome studied the professional Illuminator program at the Institut Supérieur Européen de l'Enluminure et du Manuscrit (ISEEM), the only government-recognized course of its kind in Europe, which issues certificates for illuminators. Situated near the historic castle of Angers in the picturesque Loire Valley, France, this unique institution provided him with in-depth knowledge of medieval manuscript techniques.

Darker Cattle? Questions of terminology in Celtic inheritance law

Tobin Miles, Independent Scholar

Session 8

The Middle Welsh Laws of Hywel Dda contain references to special cattle described as *gwartheg difach*, a non-standard inheritance from the female line. The word *difach* may derive from *du* “black” or alternately relates to *mach* “surety”, and there are questions over whether an accurate translation is possible. The texts themselves give different and even contradictory explanations which hint at an ancient term that was no longer understood, and modern scholarship has itself been left grasping in the dark! The authoritative Welsh dictionary *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* prefers an etymology based on *mach*, but the key English translations of the laws by Dafydd Jenkins and T.M. Charles-Edwards give “cattle of dark ancestry.” This draws partly from the texts themselves but relies on parallels in Irish legal terminology where dark colouring is associated with non-standard kinship. Is this sufficient evidence to support a colour-based interpretation of the Welsh phrase? Are there perhaps similar instances in the language of other contemporary legal practices? Or will we have to resign ourselves to the fact that these “darker cattle” will be forever shrouded in darkness?

Tobin Miles holds a BA (Honours) and a Masters of Publishing from Sydney University with a Graduate Diploma in ESL teaching from the University of Western Sydney. Currently working in Parramatta, Tobin has returned to medieval research in his spare time and in 2023 revisited his 2013 Honours thesis for the 10th Australian Conference of Celtic Studies.

Improvise, Adapt, Overcome: Establishing Early Christian Legitimacy in Late Antique Roman Egypt

Daniel Prestipino, Macquarie University

Session 3

Roman Egypt in the Late Antiquity has long been recognised as a tapestry of interwoven religious and cultural diversity, with recognisable elements of myriad belief-systems evident across both domestic and communal settings. The continued existence of polytheistic iconography and ritual practices in an early-Christian context has been presented as an example of religious syncretism, continuing a pattern established in Ancient Egypt throughout the Dynastic, Ptolemaic, and Roman periods. While a religious syncretism framework is perhaps applicable at an individual and community level in Late Antique and Early Medieval Egypt, this interpretation of Christianisation underestimates the pressures imposed by institutions of authority and the ways in which they exercised power. This paper argues that the similarities between polytheistic and early-Christian icon and ritual are better understood through an anthropological lens of subversive reinterpretation and reimagining. By applying Carlo Severi’s (2015) ‘Chimera’ model, and Marc Augé’s (2004) theories on social memory, to extant Isiac and Marian *lactans* motifs, the analogues between polytheistic incubation and Christian dreaming rituals, and literary records



of often violent contest for ritual spaces between ‘pagans’ and early Christians, I hope to demonstrate that in order for early Christian ritual and interpretations to be established as dominant in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Egyptian context, Isis and the polytheistic faith she represented had to first be erased and reimagined.

Daniel Prestipino is a graduate student at Macquarie University where he is currently undertaking a Masters of Ancient History, having previously completed Honours in Classical Studies at the Australian National University. He is interested in socio-cultural identity and intersectionality across history, and the stories of individuals and communities told through textual and material evidence.

‘No matter how strangely they shift in form and hue’: Colour-Changing Demons and the Writing of the Devil in *Solomon and Saturn I*

Stuart Rich, University of Sydney

Session 7

The Old English poetic dialogue *Solomon and Saturn I* presents an extended exploration of the powers of the Pater Noster, the Lord’s Prayer, in deliberately cryptic terms. The dialogue evinces an interest in the physical dimensions of language, which is most vividly conveyed in a remarkable speech in which Solomon describes how each letter of the Pater Noster emerges from a person’s mouth to violently assault the devil. Recent work by Tiffany Beechy has situated the dialogue within a uniquely insular aesthetic framework of ‘Incarnational poetics’, which saw baroque, densely wrought language as a means of not only signifying, but actually embodying the central mystery of Christianity – Christ’s verbal nature – by encasing the Word in a tangible linguistic flesh. In this paper I will complicate this account of the poem’s intellectual background by exploring its enigmatic representation of written letters as palpably demonic entities, which has completely escaped prior critical notice. I will argue that in depicting the prayer’s demonic adversaries, the poet draws on both the tropes of the Old English and Anglo-Latin riddle tradition, and the unique physical properties of iron-gall ink, to identify the devil and his demons as deceptive, shimmering ink-drops-cum-letters that threaten to metamorphose in front of the reader’s eyes. This vision of writing as inherently and diabolically deceptive suggests something of the competing theological priorities at work in the poem’s context, while also providing rare clues about the significance of ink and its manifold hues in the early medieval English scriptorium.

Stuart Rich completed a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English at the University of Sydney in 2023, graduating with Honours Class I and the University Medal. His thesis examined ideas of textual corruption, textual deceit and their relationship with the demonic in *Solomon and Saturn I*. Stuart is now studying Medicine at the University of Sydney.

Why Were Doors Painted Red in the Middle Ages? Judicial Symbolism of Romanesque Church Portals and the Iconography of Red Doors

Klaudia Śnieżek, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland

Session 8

Among medieval sources on church portals and their functions, several mention “red door”. The author of the *Schedula Diversarum Artium*, a treatise from 1120, dedicated an entire chapter to the technique of painting doors red, describing the process in detail. Subsequent sources, particularly from German regions and referring to judicial events, confirm the occurrence of this practice, suggesting that the



purpose and significance of red doors were well understood at the time. Unfortunately, only a few original examples have survived, leaving written records as primary evidence.

However, there is another iconographical approach to investigate the topic of red doors, which involves manuscripts from the High Middle Ages. Miniatures of both Western and Eastern origins, depicting hell and paradise, can shed light on the specific meanings that the color red carried in certain contexts.

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the judicial role of red doors in 12th and 13th century churches. By analyzing written sources and iconographic material, the paper will attempt to answer questions regarding the medieval semiotics of the color red. Finally, it will investigate whether medieval imagery of the church portal and its juridical role contributed to the creation of early Last Judgement scenes on the tympanum and the late Middle Ages painted depictions of this theme.

Klaudia Śnieżek is a PhD student at Jagiellonian University in Cracow, currently conducting her doctoral research on the form and function of two-towers facades and porticoes in sacred architecture in Europe from the 10th to 12th centuries. Her academic background includes studies at Jagiellonian University, KU Leuven and the University of Cologne.

Blue sea, blue sky, blue men: the semiotics and semantics of the colour blue in Europe from antiquity to the early medieval

Erica Steiner, University of Sydney

Session 10

For most of western history, the colour blue has arguably been the most elusive of colours to create or even 'own', being relatively uncommon within both flora and fauna, and available in just a handful of highly-prized mineral sources such as azurite, lapis lazuli, opal, sapphire, and turquoise. Pigments, both manufactured and natural, were available to ancient and medieval people to colour their textiles, their paintings and sculptures, and even their bodies – depending on how we should translate and interpret the literary sources – but these were either expensive or muted in tone. Of course, blue was technically freely available for all people to experience through the palette of nature with bodies of water, the sky, and dim illumination such as twilight, often presenting in shades of what we would call blue. But the question this paper will seek to understand, is if ancient and medieval people (similarly to modern people) considered all of these different concepts, objects, and phenomena to be blue? And if they did not, then what *was* blue, and what did it mean?

Erica is a PhD candidate in Celtic Studies at the University of Sydney and her research explores the history and historiography of ancient and medieval Insular tattooing. Her previous degrees include a BA (Hons) in Medieval Studies and a BSc in Marine Geophysics. Her other research interests broadly incorporate the early medieval history of northern and central Europe, the emerging field of geomorphology (with a forthcoming article in *Medieval Ecocriticism*, 2025), intersections between the sciences and the humanities, and medievalism more broadly.

Symbolic Connotations of Black and White in Early Medieval Islamic Philosophy and Their Ethical Applications

**Kunnan Muhammed Swalih, Institut Mohammed VI Pour La Formation Des
Imames des Mouchidines Et Mouchidates, Morocco**

Session 4



In early medieval Islamic philosophy, the symbolic dichotomy of black and white mirrors profound metaphysical and ethical contrasts outlined in Quranic verses, Hadith, and classical Islamic texts. Scholars such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Al-Ghazali have explored these themes, with black symbolizing spiritual darkness (*zulumat*) and moral deviance, representing ignorance and defiance of divine guidance, while white embodies purity (*nur*), enlightenment, and adherence to moral integrity. This study examines how these symbolic opposites are used to distinguish believers from non-believers and to elucidate moral virtues and vices within Islamic theological discourse. It also explores the concept of a nuanced “gray area” that accommodates practical ethical judgments and societal adaptations in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), Sufi mysticism (Tasawwuf), and Quranic exegesis (Tafsir). By analysing primary sources and drawing on insights from early Islamic philosophers and scholars, this research reveals how the dichotomy of black and white colours ethical frameworks and guides moral conduct during the early medieval period. This exploration offers insights into the dynamic interplay between symbolic representation and practical application in Islamic thought, shedding light on the complexity of ethical reasoning and societal norms within early Islamic societies.

Kunnan Muhammed Swalih is a distinguished research fellow at the Institut Mohammed VI Pour La Formation Des Imames des Mourchidines Et Mourchidates in Morocco. He holds a Masters degree in Hadith and Related Sciences from Darul Huda Islamic University in India, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with first-class honours from the University of Calicut, Kerala. Currently pursuing a Masters degree in Sociology from Indira Gandhi National Open University in New Delhi, Swalih's academic journey is dedicated to exploring the intersections of sociology and Islamic studies. He has served as a Student Editor for the *Journal of Islamic Insight Studies (IIJS)* and held roles as Associate Editor and sub-editor for *Theblitcham Monthly*. Swalih has undergone additional distance training in Philosophy, Science, and Religion at the University of Edinburgh, and in English for Journalism at the University of Pennsylvania. His research interests encompass Islamic studies, culture, society, Sufism, aesthetics, literature, and art. He has contributed significantly to academic publications with book reviews, essays, and translations, including a notable review in the *Islamic Insight journal of Islamic Studies* and an article titled "Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Thani and the Hidden Domains of Puratheel" on *Sacred Footsteps*. Swalih's writings also appear in various Indian magazines, reflecting his diverse scholarly output. Fluent in English, Arabic, Urdu, Malayalam, and Farsi, his multilingual proficiency enriches his academic pursuits and fosters cross-cultural dialogue.

Everything is Illuminated: the Beauty of Light in Early Medieval Aesthetics

Jessica Thomas, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Session 2

‘The body is an image of the mind, which, like an effulgent light scattering forth its rays, is diffused through its members and senses, shining through in action, discourse, appearance, movement – even in laughter.’

In his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, St Bernard expresses the value of light to the body, mind and spirit. Lightness of the soul was linked closely with beauty and purity; hence we find references to the brilliance of the sun, and of God, throughout early medieval texts describing the role of light in aesthetics. In the warm reflection of a gilded surface, in the soft radiance of stained glass, we see the power of light to turn colour into a higher calling to contemplate the beauty of the world, the richness of creation and the goodness of the Lord who created light from darkness. This paper examines the role of light in medieval aesthetics, through Scripture, and the works of later theologians St Bernard of Clairvaux and St Thomas Aquinas. What emerges is a unique perspective on light as a symbol of holiness and the essence of true beauty, the key to a colour’s potency, and the means by which a viewer ventured toward an enlightened state of mind, soul, and spirit.



Jessica Thomas is in the final year of her PhD at the University of Auckland. She completed her Masters degree with First Class Honours and received a Doctoral Scholarship to pursue research in the history of medicine, art, and alchemy in late medieval England. Her thesis aims to transform historical understandings of the materials and methods of alchemical, medicinal, and artistic practice by analysing the philosophical and physical connections between these three fields.

Colours of Virtue and Vice: Semiotic Interpretations of Chromatic Symbolism in *The Chronica Polonorum* by Bishop Vincentius of Kraków

A/Prof Darius von Güttner-Sporzyński, Australian Catholic University, Canberra *Session 4*

In *The Chronica Polonorum*, Bishop Vincentius of Kraków offers a narrative that intertwines historical events with moral and spiritual lessons, reflecting the early medieval worldview. This paper examines the semiotic use of colour in the *Chronica* to explore how Vincentius employs chromatic symbolism to convey notions of virtue, vice, and divine justice. The text's deliberate references to colours, both explicit and implicit, serve as a powerful semiotic tool, enhancing the narrative's moral undertones and guiding the reader's interpretation of historical events. By analysing key passages in the *Chronica*, this paper will uncover the layered meanings of colours within the text, highlighting how Vincentius' use of colour parallels broader medieval notions of light and darkness, purity and corruption, and sacredness and profanity. Through this lens, the paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between colour and meaning in medieval historiography, situating Vincentius' work within the wider context of early medieval colour semiotics.

Darius von Güttner Sporzyński is a historian of Central Europe with a particular interest in cultural aspects of transmission of ideas and identity. He is the General Editor of Brepols' series "East Central Europe", and his publications cover diverse aspects of history from the early medieval to the early modern and modern eras.

Black Skin, Black Sin: The demonisation of blackness in Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica*

Christopher White, University of Queensland

Session 7

The *Historia Ecclesiastica*, written by Orderic Vitalis in the early eleventh century, is known to historians as a useful source for the understanding of the Norman demesne, detailing the not only the internecine bloodshed and matters of potentates, magnates, and prelates, but also the minutiae of everyday life for the monks of the abbey of Saint Évroul. Orderic deploys colour in a number of interesting ways in his history of the Norman Church, whether using the blanketing whiteness of snow to obscure the landscape and to turn the familiar unfamiliar, or speaking of the gold of bishop's robes. This paper explores Orderic's use of black skin to represent the uncanny and demonic in his retelling of the priest Walchelin's experience with the mesne *Herlechini*, a "Wild Hunt" narrative which deals with a priest's encounter with a parade of the dead.

In examining the demonic "Ethiopians" of Herlechin's ghostly troop, I will explore the history of the demonisation of blackness, in patristic and early medieval Church texts, and will explain how Orderic deployed demonised black skin to speak of suffering, sin, and repentance. This paper will discuss the monstrous and iconographical depictions of blackness, and in doing so seeks to understand how Orderic's "Ethiopian" devils reflect centuries of the development of black skin as a symbol of black sin.



Chris White is a PhD candidate (hopefully a fully-fledged doctor by September!) at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. His work explores the meanings of symbolic language in medieval wonder tales and the social networks that these stories were transmitted along, their evolution, and the changes their authors sought to make in the world.

Green Fire: The Colors of Renewal in Hildegard of Bingen's Ecology and Cosmology

Emma Yeager, University of Chicago, USA

Session 10

Two antithetical motifs find their marriage in the ecologically-minded work of Hildegard of Bingen. Green fire – fire that purifies and resurrects, rather than destroys – is a prominent theme in this 11th century botanist and theologian's ecology and cosmology and is used to describe the activity of God in the world. My paper examines the function of Hildegard's "green flame" motif in conversation with the prominence of color in her writings and the artwork of the *Rupertsberg Scivias*. Hildegard's first vision in her *Divine Book of Works* presents compelling evidence for her theology of green fire, naming God as both flame and source of viridity; "I am the supreme and fiery force ... With the airy wind I quicken all things with some invisible life that sustains them all. For the air lives in viridity and in the flowers, the waters flow as if alive." Hildegard returns to this motif throughout her descriptions of Eden, paradise, and the refining work of God in the world. She also contemplates the Incarnational aspect of this motif and references the Christ event in one of her morality plays writing, "*viriditas descendit*," or greenness came down. For Hildegard, Christ is the flaming Sun of Justice who came down as Greenness incarnate to restore humanity and the Hexameron – the entire created world – with his green flame. In this paper, I argue that the "green fire" motif is a profound testament to Hildegard's commitment to ecological renewal and a theology of creation and redemption. Special attention is given to the important role of color in Hildegard's cosmology and ecology as well as linguistic patterns to her use of green and fire.

Emma Yeager is pursuing graduate studies in the history of Christianity at The University of Chicago Divinity School. She researches medieval eco-theology and cosmology and medieval women's spirituality, especially that of Hildegard of Bingen. She enjoys reading niche medieval books, exploring her city, and having stimulating conversations about history and theology.

The Concealed Language of Colours in Early Medieval Literature

A/Prof Nazan Yıldız Çiçekçi, Karadeniz Technical University, Türkiye

Session 9

Every community possesses a distinctive notion of colours, including what they mean and whether they are associated with good or evil. The meanings attributed to colours allowed writers to convey deeper meanings, enrich their texts and make them more colourful. In contrast to late medieval literature, we see that colours were not used prominently in early medieval literature. It is noteworthy that the word "colour", borrowed from French, did not even exist in English until the Norman invasion. Arthurian romances, for instance, largely used colour symbolism, especially when describing knights. The Green Knight signifies the cycle of nature, birth and death in the same breath. Sir Gawain ironically wears the colour blue, meaning loyalty, on his last night at the castle when he breaks his vow of faithfulness by keeping the green girdle to himself. Rather than the colours themselves, the narratives of early medieval literature employ colour words which denote to a mood, a feeling, a situation or a character trait, giving a colour effect. It is sometimes the sky, the sun, the sea, an object or a person which/who is pale, dark, gloomy or bright. This paper aims to trace these words of colours in the outstanding early medieval



texts: *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Wanderer* and *Beowulf*.

Nazan Yıldız Çiçekçi received her PhD degree with her thesis entitled “Hybridity in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*: Reconstructing the Estate Boundaries” from the English Language and Literature Department at Hacettepe University, Türkiye, in 2015. She holds a certificate in critical thinking skills from the American English Institute, University of Oregon. She has numerous national and international publications including “A Medieval Madwoman in the Attic: Chaucer’s Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales*” (*Madness, Women and the Power of Art*, 2013), “The Other, Otherness and Othering in the Middle Ages” (*The Encyclopedia of the Global Middle Ages*, 2023), “The Phantom of Woolf and Quandary of Charles Dickens and George Eliot: Whether to Redeem the Fallen Woman” (*Studies in the Victorian and Neo-Victorian Novel*, 2024) and *Science Fantasy: Critical Explorations in Fiction and Film* (co-edited), 2024. Her main areas of interest are Medieval English Literature, Medieval History, Chaucer, Old English Literature, the English Novel, Gender Studies, and Critical Thinking and Literature. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Karadeniz Technical University, Türkiye.

Court rituals, Cosmology and Chromatics at the Mughal Court: King Humayun’s ‘Carpet of Mirth’ and the Theater of Sovereignty

Sayyada Zainab Naqvi, Aligarh Muslim University, India

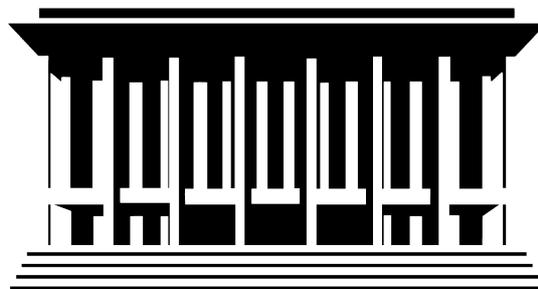
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Color symbolism was central to the Mughals as they traced their origin and right to rule from the sun; the source of divine light. Kingship as per the theory of *Isbrāq* (illumination) was a ‘ray from the sun’ the illuminator of the universe. Light imagery dominated the artistic (miniature paintings) and architectural (the Taj Mahal, for instance was officially known as the *Rauza-i Munawwar*, the illumined tomb) conventions of the Mughals. At the start of his career emperor Humayun (r.1530–1556), the second ruler of the great Indian Mughal dynasty, launched a series of court rituals to create a grand spectacle of his sovereignty that were based on Islamic cosmology (rather than Ptolemean cosmological tradition). This involved a laying out of a carpet of mirth (*bisāt-i Nishāt*) which signified the cosmological order with the sun (emperor) at its center and the grandees, nobles, judges in the concentric lines of the circle. Chromatics played a central role in this set up as different planets were assigned colors which had varied astrological meanings and earthly functions, to be worn by the emperor and the grandees. This symbolic foundation of Humayun’s court is detailed in the Persian panegyric of the Timurid historian Khvandamir (d. 1537) called *Qanun-i Humayuni* (Cannons of Humayun).

The paper aims to study how these astrological principles and color symbolism travelled to the Mughal court from two late medieval sources: Nizami Ganjavi’s *Haft Paykar* “Seven Portraits” (1197) a work which was directly available to Humayun through the encyclopaedia *Javāhir al-’Ulūm Humāyūnī* (Treasures of Humayun’s Knowledge) presented to him by Muhammad Fazil Miskin Samarqandi and the astronomical text of Fakhr al-Din Razi’s *Sirr al-maktūm* (Hidden Secret) which had been translated into Persian for the Delhi sultan Iltutmish (r. c. 1211-1236).

Sayyada Zainab Naqvi has completed her masters in Medieval Indian History from the Centre of Advanced Studies, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, India. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of History on Mughal visual arts and its intersection with embodied kingship. Her research interests include social and cultural history, gender relations, intersectional feminism and minority issues. She is currently the student member of the Indian Association of Women’s Studies, 2023-24. She has written extensively on the erasure of Muslim contributions and a communal interpretation of Mughal history amid recent right-wing syllabus changes to Medieval Indian History.

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