

15th Annual Symposium IMS (Paris, 28–30 Jun 18)

Paris, France, Jun 28–30, 2018

Deadline: Nov 24, 2017

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TRUTH AND FICTION

15th Annual Conference of the International Medieval Society-Paris (IMS)

In the wake of the US presidential election and the Brexit referendum, the Oxford English Dictionary chose the expression “post-truth” as its word of the year. This expression underlines the growing tendency to dismiss objective facts in favor of impulsive – and often prejudicial – feelings, frequently supported by “alternative facts.” The contentious relationship between the truth and lies, or truth and fiction, which is currently playing out in the public arena has, in fact, a long-standing legacy – one which can be traced back to the Middle Ages. For this reason, this year’s IMS conference seeks to investigate the variety of different approaches to truth and fiction that existed in the Middle Ages.

One possible avenue of inquiry concerns new ideas of Truth introduced by the Gregorian reforms. On a philosophical and doctrinal level, the idea of the infallibility of the Pope, the “Doctor of Truth,” was introduced by Gregory VII who, taking up the words of Christ, contended that he was the Truth (via, veritas, et vita). From a liturgical and sacramental point of view, on the other hand, we can study contemporary tenets of Eucharistic doctrine as a challenge to common sense as a mystery of human understanding – albeit articulated in rationalist terms. Papers thus might address the manner by which the Gregorian reforms placed the question of truth at the center of the demands of society: by constructing this “ideology of truth,” but also – and above all – by implementing mechanisms like preaching, which spread Truth to Christians, and confession, which introduced the obligation to speak the truth. We are particularly interested in the place and the role of Fictions in these devices (sermons, exempla, vita, etc.).

A second approach to this theme is through language, discourse and narrative forms that aimed to produce a supposed truth. We could examine the relationships between literature and history and their ambiguity with respect to the truth. For example, fictionalized historical narratives throughout the medieval period were frequently thought to be true because they provided a means of decrypting the social order. As John of Salisbury wrote, “even the lies of poets served the Truth.” Papers might explore relationships between truth and fiction through the lens of historical and literary genres (novels, epics, etc.) and the ‘truths’ they produced, placing special emphasis on the way that it was possible to believe the facts related in these works. The importance of these historico-literary fictions – what Paul Veyne called “doctrine in the face of facts” – might also be taken into account.

Law and rhetoric also construct notions of truth. Rhetoric permits the control of the relationship between the author and the audiences of a text and the establishment of the status of a text as veridic, among other things. It can even create direct links between music and words, using metaphor as a means of approaching the truth. Papers could consider, for instance, the virtuosity of the effects of Truth produced by the dictamen or even the *quaestio scholastique* as a method for establishing Truth with certitude, as well as the place of fiction within these new political languages.

Images throughout the medieval period play a fundamental role in the construction or undermining of truth(s). According to Augustine, the image is not truth, but rather a means of understanding Truth. For him, the work of art renders abstractions concrete using representations that are both specific and individualized. What is the art object's role in dispelling truth or decrying falsehoods? Through what formal and material means does it achieve either? Papers might consider the use and forms of medieval diagrams, the role of the art object in spiritual form, etc.

Finally, the conference aims to examine the origins and development of interrogative procedures in the medieval period, in that they illustrate relationships with the truth maintained by medieval societies. We are especially interested in the uses and status of fictive facts in inquisitorial trials, the manner that fictions were revealed during trials, or even how the participation of individuals in inquisitorial trials was viewed as an instrument of legitimization of power and as a way of acknowledging those individuals' own truths and interpretations of facts.

This great diversity of themes opens participation to researchers working in a variety of different fields and coming from a variety of backgrounds: historians, art historians, musicologists, philosophers, literary scholars, specialists in auxiliary sciences (paleographers, epigraphists, codicologists, numismatists)... While we focus on medieval France, compelling submissions focused on other geographical areas that also fit the conference theme are welcomed. In bringing together such diverse proposals, the IMS conference seeks to take a new look at the notion of Truth, its articulations, and its relationship with Fiction in the medieval world.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words (in French or English) for a 20-minute paper should be sent to communications.ims.paris@gmail.com. Each proposal should be accompanied by full contact information, a CV, and a list of the audio-visual equipment required for the presentation.

The deadline for abstracts is 24 November 2017.

Paper selections will be made by a scientific committee composed of Catherine Croizy-Naquet (Univ. Paris 3/CERAM), Marie Dejoux (Univ. Paris 1/LAMOP), Lindsey Hansen (IMS), Fanny Madeline (LAMOP/IMS), and Valerie Wilhite (Univ. of the Virgin Islands/IMS), as well as the members of the Board of Directors of the IMS.

Please be aware that the IMS-Paris submissions review process is highly competitive and is carried out on a strictly anonymous basis.

The selection committee will email applicants in mid-December to notify them of its decisions. Titles of accepted papers will be made available on the IMS-Paris website thereafter.

Authors of accepted papers will be responsible for their own travel costs and conference registration fees (35€ per person, 20€ for students, free for members of LAMOP and CERAM; 10€ membership dues for all participants).

The IMS-Paris is an interdisciplinary, bilingual (French/English) organization that fosters exchanges between French and foreign scholars. For more than a decade, the IMS has served as a center for medievalists who travel to France to conduct research, work or study. For more information about the IMS-Paris and for past symposium programs, please visit our websites: www.ims-paris.org and <https://imsparis.hypotheses.org>.

IMS-Paris Graduate Student Prize:

The IMS-Paris is pleased to offer one prize for the best paper proposal by a graduate student. Applications should consist of:

- 1) a symposium paper abstract
- 2) an outline of a current research project (PhD dissertation research)
- 3) the names and contact information of two academic referees

The prize-winner will be selected by the board and a committee of honorary members, and will be notified upon acceptance to the Symposium. An award of 350€ to support international travel/accommodation (within France, 150€) will be paid at the symposium.

Reference:

CFP: 15th Annual Symposium IMS (Paris, 28-30 Jun 18). In: ArthHist.net, Sep 29, 2017 (accessed Jul 15, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/16336>>.