

# Cultures of Belief and Unbelief

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## Book of Abstracts

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## Werewolves, magicians, false gods, and deadly doctors. Superstitious beliefs and scepticism in ancient Greek and Roman narratives

*This multi-disciplinary panel of historians and classical linguists consists of four papers, each exploring the beliefs in classical Graeco-Roman Antiquity. They all share a common interest in the beliefs held by ordinary Greeks and Romans in many different subjects. The subjects are wide-ranging from Roman physicians to Greek magic users and from Scythian werewolves to the godliness of a Roman general. Juha Isotalo examines in his paper *Werewolves at the Border. Beliefs on Neighbouring Communities in Herodotus and Pomponius Mela* the themes of lycanthropy and cannibalism that the Greek historian Herodotus and Roman geographer Pomponius Mela reported among Scythian customs using Scythian sources. He deliberates why the themes of savagery are often found in the ancient sources in reference to people living in the margins of the known world. Saara Kauppinen discusses different aspects of agency and attitudes towards Greek magic users in her paper *Words have power. Language and beliefs as builders of agency in ancient Graeco-Roman magic*. The assumed effect of the rituals required that both the customer and the ritual expert had certain beliefs about how the ritual works, and of who had the potency to perform them. By comparing primary material with literary sources, she explores what kind of narratives regarding the ritual practitioners (e.g., their gender, nationality, secrecy) functioned as builders of these beliefs. Jasmin Lukkari examines Polybius' and Livy's thoughts about the common belief in the godliness of Scipio Africanus in the paper *The relationship of historical truth and religious beliefs in Polybius' and Livy's descriptions of the "Scipionic legend"*. Livy lamented that during his time, people did not respect the gods like in the mid-early Roman Republic. At the same time as a historian, he wanted to strive for "truth", as did Polybius. Lukkari contrasts the wish to respect religious beliefs to the historian's duty to be truthful – a matter that both Livy and Polybius considered important. Joonas Vanhala analyses beliefs about the medical profession in his paper *Popular beliefs about physicians in ancient Rome*. Ancient Roman sources such as Pliny the Elder and Martial contain many negative stereotypes about physicians. Vanhala examines how widely these stereotypes were held and compares the views expressed in Roman literature to those in other sources. Vanhala also assesses the accuracy of these beliefs in light of other sources such as archaeological finds and Roman medical treatises.*

### Isotalo: *Werewolves at the Border. Beliefs on Neighbouring Communities in Herodotus and Pomponius Mela*

The Greek historian Herodotus (490/480 – 430/420 BCE) wrote in his *Histories* about the people surrounding the Greek world. In the ethnography of Scythians he describes the people living in Scythia, a vast area from northern coast of the Black Sea to Central Asia. Among the Scythians were a people called Neuri. The other Scythians say that Neuri could turn into wolves once a year.<sup>1</sup> The Herodotean description of Scythians includes also depiction of Androphagoi, or the Man-Eaters as one of the Scythian people. The earliest known Roman geographer Pomponius Mela (died c. 45 CE) used Herodotus as his main source when describing the Scythians. He also writes about the Neuri as people who are claimed to be able to transform into wolves and the cannibalistic Anthropophagi. In addition to them, he describes many other Scythians as bloodthirsty and savage in terms not found in Herodotus. Why is the themes of cannibalism and savagery found in ancient sources often in reference to people living in the margins of the known world? The source for Herodotus and Pomponius Mela was not those people, who were claimed to engage in cannibalism or being werewolves. It was their neighbours. In this paper, I examine the beliefs and accusations of deeds that would be unacceptable to Ancient Greeks and Romans made by their informants and present in their sources. I will identify the probable sources of these stories. Using the framework of social identity formation through narratives about one's past (or someone other's past) I will try to understand what purpose these kinds of stories served.



## Kauppinen: Words have power. Language and beliefs as builders of agency in ancient Graeco-Roman magic

In ancient literary sources and other documents, such as laws, magic is often presented in a dubious light, but on the other hand, primary sources reveal that the use of magic was quite commonplace regardless of social class. In this paper, I examine ritual agency in a) the magical papyri, a collection of spells and formulas found in Egypt, dating from the second century BCE to the fifth century CE, and b) curse tablets, widespread in the Graeco-Roman world, dating from fourth century BCE to 4th century CE. By comparing this primary material with literary sources, I will detect agency of, and attitudes towards the ritual practitioners. The terms 'magic' and 'magician' were often used in an othering sense, but how did the ritual experts see themselves? What about their customers? I will discuss several aspects of agency: first, how society defines the agency of individuals or certain groups, and second, how the ritual experts expressed their own agency in their texts. Third, in magical ritual, agency is not limited to the performer of the spell: the equipment was used to call on the gods and to manipulate their actions, and it was thought that the deity could settle on the object. Magical language itself had similar agency: both written and uttered words were thought to be able to carry divine power. All of these aspects, and the assumed effect of the rituals in general, required that both the customer and the ritual expert had certain beliefs about how the ritual works, and of who had the potency to perform them. I will further discuss what kind of narratives regarding the ritual practitioners (e.g. their gender, nationality, secrecy) functioned as builders of these beliefs.

## Lukkari: The relationship of historical truth and religious beliefs in Polybius' and Livy's description of the "Scipionic legend"

The relationship between "truth" and historiography is a question that has concerned historians and philosophers of history since antiquity. Cicero wrote that in general historical writing should aim for telling the truth but admits that even the texts of Theopompus and of Herodotus, "the father of history", are full of mythological fables. Mythology, religion, and historical writing were indeed very much intertwined also in Roman literature. Livy lamented that during his time, people did not believe in portents or respect the gods like in the good old times during the mid-early Roman Republic. At the same time, Livy felt like it was necessary to apologise that the beginning of his history is based on legends with divine aspects and advises that these stories should not be taken too literally. As a historian, he wanted to strive for "truth". Polybius too thought that it was a historian's duty to be as truthful as possible. How did this historical "truth" comport with respecting myths and religious beliefs? In this paper, I examine Polybius' and Livy's thoughts about the relationship between such beliefs and historical truth through one particular case example, the so called "Scipionic legend". According to Polybius and Livy, who both lived after, many Romans living at the same time with Scipio Africanus believed in Scipio's godliness. Polybius' and Livy's descriptions of these beliefs are interesting because they directly address the subjects of religiousness and superstition and provide a metahistorical commentary on the possibility to use such beliefs to alter the perceptions of historical truth for the posterity.

## Vanhala: Popular beliefs about physicians in ancient Rome

The medical profession has given rise to ambivalent reactions throughout history. Physicians are often portrayed either as wondrous healers or deadly charlatans. In addition to technical treatises on the art of medicine, ancient Roman sources relate many popular beliefs held by laypeople about physicians. Pliny the Elder who wrote his *Natural History* in the first century CE describes the physicians of his time as greedy and murderous quacks. Martial compares physicians to

gravediggers, poisoners and thieves in his satirical epigrams. In the roughly contemporary Greek epigrams physicians often kill or maim their patients. These and other Roman sources paint a vivid picture of the ancient medical practitioners and common attitudes towards them. In this paper I will examine these popular beliefs about physicians in ancient Roman sources. How widely were these beliefs held? Were they purely negative or were there positive stereotypes as well? Were these beliefs expressed only in literature or were they also found in sub-literary sources such as wall inscriptions? Were these beliefs based in reality or were they just literary hyperbole? I will try to assess the accuracy of such beliefs by comparing these descriptions of physicians by non-professionals with what we know of the ancient medical profession from other sources such as Roman medical treatises and archaeological finds.

## “Eternity Politics”: institutionalization of Beliefs in Modern South-Eastern European Political Culture. Text, Image, Context

*The last two years of the Pandemic enforced the already very broadly shared idea of conflicting spheres of rationality and radicalization, which lays at the very core of modernity (Israel 2019; Mali 2012; Taylor 2007). Although the dominant political discourse has underscored, again and again, the need for a rational take on the matter of managing the newest global threat, the reality presents itself as strikingly conflicting, on a global scale (Rosa 2020, Martin 2020). The present cultural and political divide is yet another expression of the birthmark of modernity; the “politics of eternity” (Snyder 2018) follow a recurrent pattern through various cultural and political contexts along the 19th and 20th centuries, as the literature shows (Burleigh 2005, Salmi 2008). Radicalism, denial, superstitions, abandonment of rational political projects by embracing secular theologies are confronting the modern democratic process, unfolding a cultural and political narrative that can be traced back to the making of the modern state (Ezrahi 2015). The present panel is aiming towards an investigation into the ways of constructing the modern web of secular religions, as a mode of channeling the various social needs of believing and belonging in South-eastern Europe, with an emphasis on Romania’s case. In South-eastern Europe, making religion “safe” for democracy, a constant theme in the early modern political thought (Owen, 2016), has always been a conflicting process, as Church and State, Religion and Nation often experience an imbricated construction process. The authority of a rational, institutionalized discourse struggles to gain autonomy and finds itself, now more than ever, unable to come up with a credible and engaging proposal. Vladimir Crețulescu chooses to illustrate this thesis via a case-study of three 19th century, pictorial personifications of the Romanian nation – namely, Daniel Rosenthal’s “Revolutionary Romania” and “Romania breaking its shackles on the Plain of Freedom”, as well as Gheorghe Tattarescu’s “Rebirth of Romania”. His proposal will discuss these images within the historical context of their creation, and proceeding to analyze their iconography and compositional schemes, in comparison with relevant examples of religious painting representing the Virgin Mary, drawn from both the Orthodox and Catholic traditions. Raluca Alexandrescu’s proposal aims at analyzing the political narratives through a case study of different political texts pertaining to the making of the Modern Romanian State in the mid Nineteenth century. Her take is to be constructed around the crystallization of the „politics of eternity”, via the messianic, religious view of the political construction of democracy itself during this period. The question of secular religions as the main category of providentialism and authoritarianism is dramatically recast in the interwar years of the 20th century, when significant sectors of Romanian society are swept up in the political zeitgeist of fascist corporatism and political theology. Victor Rizescu sets out to explore an aspect of this social-political dynamic and discourse, and the roots of the xenophobic and authoritarian sideslips of the interwar period. Gelu Sabău rounds out this panel with an overview of the critical reactions to modernity, numerous because of the upheavals produced by modernity, which have been stronger in this region than in other parts of the continent. Anti-modern reactions were formed in Romanian culture even in the national communist period (second half of the twentieth century), when the totalitarian regime developed a new type of messianic cult of the leader, and of the party.*

## Alexandrescu: “Every nation has an evangelical mission to fulfil on earth”. Revolution, God and the New “Politics of Eternity” in 19th Century South-Eastern Europe

During the 19th Century, South-Eastern Europe experienced a complicated construction of a new unity of beliefs: the sacred unity of nationhood and national community (Trencsény 2016). It was a visible and tangible scope of the political thought in the Romanian Principalities and a joined effort in absorbing a new mode of sacralized markers in secular institutions (Israel 2019). Identified and put in texts and revolutionary discourse, the new secular religion takes over, influenced by a vast and intricate web of cultural and philosophical transfers. French reactionary thought, Vico’s *Nuova Scientia* (Mali, 2012), the penetrating force of new. Orthodox unifying virtues, all come together in constructing a political rhetoric based more on believing and confessing the new faith, than on institutionalizing secular politics. The shaping of the Romanian sacralized modernity is not very different from the similar process unfolding in important parts of East Central Europe (Todorova 2014). And the main instrument used in order to obtain that type of motivation was the messianic view of the political construction of democracy itself, namely by the invention of the New History which dominated the methodological approaches during the long nineteenth century, and operated on the perception and dealings with Historical Time and messianic and providential structures of Chronos (Hartog 2020). The present paper is a part of a panel proposal dedicated to the theme of “Eternity Politics”: institutionalization of Beliefs in Modern South-Eastern European Political Culture. The panel aims at retracing a long process of constructing a new political religion, dominating an important part of the political thought and institutions throughout East and Central European Modernity (Snyder 2018). The main goal of this paper is to discuss, with examples, the beginning of this narrative in the first half of the 19th century, on the basis of Romanian political literature inspired mainly, but not exclusively, by the French and the Greek models, with consideration given to the degree of relevance of such texts, including pamphlets, short stories or travel memoirs. The study of such grand mutations in the methodological perception of time and its different political usages implies a transdisciplinary analysis, more than ever in times such as ours, when memory and the historical past are converted into political tools, daily.

## Crețulescu: Secular icons of the Nation: Quasi-Marial Personifications of Romania in 19th Century Romanian Painting

The Industrial Revolution, and the corresponding rise of the scientific paradigm, bring about the collapse, in the West, of the religious metanarrative of Christianity. This, however, leaves Europeans deprived of their richest source of transcendental meaning: peoples’ need for religiosity, for a meaningful connection to some great Beyond, persists even in a rationalistic, scientific, post-Christian world. By the early 19th century, the national idea emerges as a quasi-spiritual metanarrative, set on satiating humanity’s thirst for meaning, by replacing the erstwhile transcendence of the Christian Paradise with the ersatz immortality which one might enjoy, as a participant in the “eternal body of the Nation”. Many of the nascent modern nations of the 19th century came to be represented, in sculpture and painting, but also on official State insignia, as female figures. It is, most famously, the case of the French Marianne, or of Britannia; there are also many lesser-known examples, such as the Brazilian *Efígie da República* or the Finnish Maiden. I propose that such visual embodiments of a proud, nurturing, suffering motherland are, in fact, analogous to religious icons, in the specific context of the secular religiosity commanded by nations. I set out to argue for this thesis, via a case-study of three 19th century pictorial personifications of the Romanian nation – namely, Daniel Rosenthal’s “Revolutionary Romania” and “Romania breaking its shackles on the Plain of Freedom”, as well as Gheorghe Tattarescu’s “Rebirth of Romania”. I shall be situating these images within the historical context of their creation, and proceeding to analyze

their iconography and compositional schemes, in comparison with relevant examples of religious painting representing the Virgin Mary, drawn from both the Orthodox and Catholic traditions.

### [Rizescu: Lingering Scientism and Palingenetic Modernism: Competing Right-wing Departures from Religious Traditionalism in Interwar Romania](#)

As elsewhere in Europe at the time, the Romanian interwar searches deployed within the camp of the Right with the target of overcoming the predicament of structural social-economic backwardness conjoined with the purported paralysis of liberal parliamentarianism took place in relation with a widely perceived crisis of the cultural model sustained by the philosophical stance of positivist scientism. A reconsideration of the politics of secularism and a rejuvenation of the religious bond of social life stood as an integral part of this ideological constellation. The customary description of the entire welter of right-wing advocacies of the period under the general label of traditionalism has been subjected to various criticisms over the past decades. Such disagreements with the entrenched interpretative view have most conspicuously been formulated from the perspective of the overall understanding of generic fascism – together with the related strands of the Right – as constituting the privileged political embodiment of the culture of palingenetic modernism (itself opposed to both the tenets of modernizer Enlightenment liberalism and those of the backward-looking anti-Enlightenment trend). The new vision thus articulated has been applied to the Romanian record, with the tendency of indiscriminately conceptualizing all the varieties of the Right in the context – including their avowed religious-based pleadings and convictions – as instances of the world-wide modernist drive. The paper proposed sets the Romanian case in a comparative frame, resting on the tentative characterization of the modernist dimension of fascism and of the Right as dependent on the lags of development within Europe (being therefore best represented in the western national milieus where the new forms of right-wing politics originally emerged and featuring only as exceptional occurrences against the background of a traditionalist continuum in the East European milieus of the sort). An ideological strand indebted to the tenets of lingering positivist scientism with a developmental cast is identified alongside the scant palingenetic modernist and the dominant traditionalist varieties of the Romanian Right from the period concerned.

### [Sabău: The anti-modern sources of the discourse of the far-Right in interwar Romania](#)

In this paper I will try to analyze the anti-modern intellectual sources that are found in the discourse of leaders or public intellectuals representative of the ideology of the far Right in the interwar period. To this end, I will define anti-modern discourse as a form of intellectual reaction to the rational discourse of Enlightenment modernity, which has its origins in Descartes and his maximum form of representation in the ideology of the French Revolution. I will analyze how some ideas taken from authors such as Giambattista Vico, Charles Maurras, Jacques Maritain, Georges Sorel or Oswald Spengler shape the political discourses of Romanian authors such as Nae Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Nicolae Roșu, Vasile Marin etc. and provide the intellectual sources for the radical rejection of the discourse of the Enlightenment modernity in the Romanian space.

## Philosophical and ideological grounds of belief and unbelief

## Stogova: Public Knowledge between Scepticism and Disbelief: The Controversy of Nicholas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld

The 17th century is known for significant transformations in the field of knowledge. The status and criteria of knowledge, as well as the ways in which it is obtained and communicated, underwent significant changes. One of them was the spread of scepticism, not only as a methodological basis for new knowledge, but also as a behaviour expected of the reader or listener of scientific discussions. However, here the new model of knowledge came into conflict with the principles of rhetoric and eloquence built on the desire to persuade the reader/listener and in which "seduction by language" played as much a role as logical arguments. This conflict could produce rather painful situations where new public knowledge, addressed to an interested audience, encroached on spheres and established practices where the scepticism of the recipients was highly unwelcome. The paper will look at the famous public controversy between two followers of Descartes, Antoine Arnauld and Nicolas Malebranche, which took place from the 1680s onwards, and was one of the key events in the intellectual culture of late seventeenth-century Europe. It revolved around Malebranche's work, *A Treatise on Nature and Grace*, in which he tried to apply the Cartesian method to questions of metaphysics. Both authors accused each other of trying to frighten the reader and make him or her incapable of critically analysing the text they were reading. Within this controversy the figure of the frightened reader (*lecteur effrayé*) first emerges, which in the next century would be associated with the reading of sophisticated scientific texts by the unprepared reader. However, at the end of the 17th century it highlighted a number of problematic areas of new knowledge related to the very form of public polemics, the impact of the author's reputation on the reception of his texts and to attempts to apply the scientific method to questions of metaphysics.

## Hörcher: Compensation theory and its political overtones in the Ritter School

Joachim Ritter was an influential post-WW2 German philosopher and historian of ideas. One of the best-known of his theories was what is called compensation theory. This is the idea that the loss of religious belief caused by the secularising influence of modernity can and should be compensated through the humanities, and particularly through the arts. This is certainly an important idea about the relationship of religion, the arts and the humanities. It is also a characteristic claim about the nature of modernity – thinkers like Charles Taylor, for example, did not accept the secularisation-thesis itself. Yet this paper wants to address the theory from the perspective of the efforts of stabilising German politics after the disaster of WW2. By now we know, that Ritter and his school played a major role in the consolidation process. While in party politics, Christian Democrats took the lead, it was predictable, that religious politics itself cannot address a large enough majority in the postwar context. The paper asks the question if Ritter's proposal can be seen as an effort on Ritter's part to take over the intellectual lead from religious political ideology, as exercised by the Christian democrats, and substitute traditionalist Christian views of politics and culture with a modernist one. A further question, which arises is whether the liberal conservative „ideology“ advocated by Ritter and most of his circle, matched the view of the arts and religion, as expressed in their compensation theory. Further authors to be mentioned from the circle will include Odo Marquard and Robert Spaemann.

## Okabe: Beliefs in democracy: The case of East Germany around 1960

The paper examines the students' struggle for their own beliefs and the relationship between a state-sponsored student cabaret group and the authorities around 1960 in the German Democratic

Republic. This makes it possible to clarify the students' beliefs in a new socialist society and the authorities' control as well as the censorship on them in the post-Stalinist era.

The student cabaret group "Rat der Spötter" in Leipzig was supported by the Socialist Unity Party German (SED) as an agit-prop. Though acting under the authorities' supervision, the students were finally arrested by the Stasi in 1961 because of the censorship. Previous studies have interpreted this affair as one of the examples of the sweeping operations against "suspected" students by the Stasi, and the group members have been depicted as typical victims of the SED repression. Contrary to these previous views, my paper reconsiders this affair by paying attention to the vision of socialism and democracy those students nourished. As students of new generation and of proletariat origin, they had a great hope to construct a new socialist community and democracy. In addition, the students took pride in their role as actors of satiric cabaret and prospective professional journalists. They believed that their dynamic activity would give an energy to establish a new "true" democratic society, which conflicted with another vision the East German authority had. Accordingly, the Stasi put the group under surveillance since the mid-1950s to investigate their visions and arrested the students for their believed "ideal," "true" democratic socialist state. From this perspective, the paper describes what the "democracy" meant for each of them and the gaps between the students and authorities, and how their beliefs made the East German society by using German archival materials such as the secret police, the administrative and university documents.

### [Mihaescu: Desacralizing the Moon, Mythologizing Spaceflight: the Reception of the Moon Landing in Communist Romania](#)

For millennia, humans have seen only the near side of the Moon, always wondering what is on the opposite, on the far side. At the same time, the Moon stimulated the human imagination, the celestial body being a place for gods or legendary creatures. Gradually, against the background of astronomical theories and methodological development, the Moon has become an object of scientific analysis. After centuries of astronomical observations, on October 4th 1959 the Soviet space probe Luna 3 sent to Earth the first ever images of the hidden, far side of the Moon. The Soviet Union was leading the space race. Following the Soviet model, the Romanian communist authorities were interested in stimulating the popular curiosity for science and technology. From a propagandistic point of view, sciences such as astronomy or astronautics were suitable tools for supporting some ideological theses, especially the axiom of scientific atheism. Therefore, an event such as the first Moon landing had a wide mass-media coverage in Communist Romania.

In my paper I analyze the reception of Apollo 11's mission progress in Romanian print media from July to August 1969. More specifically, I look closely at the most important and widely circulated newspaper from that time, namely "Scinteia", the official broadsheet of the Romanian Communist Party. Afterwards, I investigate the reception of the Moon landing in some niche magazines from Communist Romania, such as "Lucafarul" (a literary periodical) and "Cutezatorii" (a youth-oriented magazine). Considering the international context of the Cold War, the investigation provides relevant information on how a major milestone in space exploration, the 1969 American Moon landing, was perceived in an Eastern Bloc country, and furthermore, on how space propaganda was intertwined with the atheistic politics of a Communist regime.

## Approaching the Changing Historical Culture of a Nation

*The concept of historical culture refers to the wide range of activities in which images and information about the past are produced, mediated, and used. Academic history is only one of the many forms of mediating history. Popular practices, such as entertainment, identity projects and policy justifications often have a more effective role in historical culture than academic history. Public traditions, such as national commemorations*



*are the central scenes of historical culture. They call for a discussion of the essence of nations and nationalism in the public sphere. During globalisation and the rise of multiculturalism, national histories are increasingly said to be a 'broken mirror': there are several and contested narratives about a nation. On the other hand, there is also a strong tendency to emphasise and reinforce national 'master narratives' among nations evoked by social-national conservatism and the overall rise of populist nationalism. This panel discusses what role historical culture plays in the narrating of a nation. The starting point is Finnish historical culture, especially the Finnish centenary of 2017. The panel is interested in the relationship between academic history, history education, museums and other forms of historical culture, namely the filmed representation of history.*

#### Kortti: Introduction: Historical Culture and the Mediated Narratives of Nation

The presentation discusses what role historical culture and historical consciousness plays in the narrating of a nation. It suggests approaches how to study historical culture from a perspective that takes into account the production as well as the reception context of historical culture in narrating nation. It calls for studies that analyse the relationship between academic history and other forms of historical culture, namely media representation of history. The presentation emphasises the importance of mediated and aesthetic forms of historical culture in creating a view of the history of a nation. The empirical examples of the presentation are from history documentary films.

#### Viita-aho: Changing national museums producing national identity and narratives of history

In this presentation, I investigate museums as political actors and their practices from the perspective of social impact. In contemporary, museums have to reply to the national requirements, but they are also a part of the international museum field, which is currently in the process of rewriting the museum definition. This creates an interesting point in time for the national museums, which find themselves not only in the process of redefining their purposes as museums, but in the midst of global and local tensions, national and international audiences, and a task of redefining national identity as well. The presentation focuses on the permanent exhibition 'The Story of Finland' (2017) in the Finnish National Museum FNM. In the exhibition, the FNM illustrates historical highlights of the 100 years old independent Finland and expands the cultural history perspectives. Finland is depicted here through overcoming difficulties as one nation. 'The Story of Finland' was created collaboratively with historic researchers, visual professionals, and the FNM. However, while the recent research is thoroughly consulted, a lot was excluded from the experience-oriented exhibition. This raises questions on the role of knowledge in changing national museums and especially induces to ask: with what criteria selections (exclusions and inclusions) were made, how historical research was popularized, and what kind of nationality gets depicted in the exhibition? The presentation introduces the exhibition and the interview materials searching to answer these questions.

#### Marti: 'The reception of the Finnish National Museum's exhibition "The Story of Finland"'

In this paper, I focus on the reception of historical culture by investigating museum visitors' experiences in the exhibition 'Story of Finland' (2017) at the Finnish National Museum. I'm especially interested in what kind of emotions the exhibition evokes amongst the visitors and how they see the essence of historical knowledge represented by a public museum. The research data consists of a questionnaire filled in by the visitors of the Finnish National museum in December 2021 and interviews that were made with two focus groups, one of which consisted of Finnish-speaking citizens and one of Russian-speaking Finnish citizens. The comparison is interesting as the Russian-speaking minority is the biggest foreign language group in Finland but the national narrative of Finland, as well as the Finnish national identity, have traditionally been based on the exclusion of Russia and Russianness. The presentation introduces the main findings from the research data.

## Mähkä: Ice Hockey as Finnish Cultural History

Finland's 1995 World Championship in ice hockey has been seen as a key moment in the country's history of the last decades. Not only was it the first ever for Finland, but it happened as the country had hit economic depression of devastating economic and social consequences a few years earlier. The championship led ice hockey, already a very popular sport in the country, to become a reference point for a great variety of national, international, social and cultural topics. It was clear that ice hockey had entered Finnish cultural history at a very notable scale. Drawing on a variety of media sources, my paper discusses discourses of ice hockey's reflection of Finnish national history and culture. My examples highlight the variety of meanings given to ice hockey and the nation seemingly in love with it, from hyperbolic comparisons to Finland's war effort in World War Two to more level-headed appraisals, carnivalistic public events to subversive and even downright hostile rhetoric. All these stances and ideas together highlight ice hockey's relevance for understanding Finnish cultural history since the 1990s.

## Perceptions of "race" and AIDS activism in Europe

*The initial public discussions around AIDS were marked by an infodemic: the dominant approach to AIDS imputed it to specific "risk groups", including people of colour. This belief was widespread in mainstream media and, to an extent, influenced AIDS-related policymaking in Europe during the 1980s. Simultaneously, the same decade witnessed the proliferation of civil society groups that aimed to support people living with AIDS. Nevertheless, those groups were not necessarily impervious to race-related prejudice.*

*The panel papers resonate with research on racism, which has extensively used the notion of belief to study perceptions of "race" based on diverse sources, including ideological texts and the findings of scientific communities (for instance: K. M. Hoffman, 2016). The proposed session approaches belief in two ways. First, it explores the ways in which some AIDS activists who developed anti-racist beliefs defined the latter. Nikolaos Papadogiannis shows how Hydra collaborated with social scientists in working with Polish sex workers in Berlin in the 1990s, aiming to produce beliefs that disentangled prevention of AIDS from racism. Second, the session analyses how those antiracist AIDS activists tried to create communities of anti-racist beliefs to help circulate the latter among other activists and state institutions. These communities would reshape the practice of the main civil society groups supporting people living with AIDS and the policies state institutions dealing with the latter. In this vein, they tried to infuse AIDS awareness campaigns with anti-racism and encourage state policies dealing with AIDS that would be inclusive for people of colour. In particular, Nikolaos Papadogiannis shows how Hydra, one of the most important sex worker rights' group in the Federal Republic of Germany, fought against racist bias against migrant sex workers, prejudice which AIDS exacerbated. Hydra promoted its anti-racist beliefs within an association of campaigners dealing with AIDS in Berlin and in the state-sponsored AIDS-Advice Centre. Christophe Broqua shows the effort of the activist group Migrants against AIDS to influence the campaigns of one of the most important AIDS activist organisations in France, Act-Up Paris, and render the campaigns of the latter more cognisant of racist issues. Similarly, Sue Lemos analyses how Black and Brown AIDS activists in the UK challenged state policies towards AIDS that rested upon racism. Lemos also shows how those activists aimed to infuse with anti-racism the action of voluntary sector organisations working with people with AIDS. Finally, Rachel Love studies in the case of Italy the ways and the extent to which anti-racist activists intersected with AIDS campaigners and forged with the latter a community in which campaigns about AIDS were bereft of racist prejudice. The discussion will hopefully help all four speakers explore whether these anti-racist initiatives in each of those countries were part of a broader, transnational community fighting against racism in Europe.*



## Broqua: Sequal and postcolonial minorities: an impossible convergence of struggles against AIDS?

My talk explores the relations between two AIDS activist groups in France in the 1990s, Act-Up Paris and Migrants Against AIDS. Act Up-Paris was created in 1989 on the model of its New York counterpart. From the outset, it has officially defined itself as “an association that comes from the homosexual community and seeks to defend all populations affected by AIDS in an equitable manner”. At the end of the 1990s, it became one of the two main organisations fighting against AIDS in France (the other being Aides, which was older and more moderate than Act-Up Paris). At that point, a new association appeared: Migrants Against AIDS. The prohibition in France of “ethnic statistics” (based on origin or skin colour) prevented the proper measurement of and tackling of the epidemic in the population of migrants from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. Migrants Against AIDS protested the negligence of the public authorities in the face of the HIV epidemic affecting migrants. They also criticised various actors for their hegemony in the fight against AIDS, including predominantly “homosexual” associations that received most of the funding for the fight against AIDS and defined its direction. The overarching argument of this paper is that the relations between Act Up-Paris and Migrants Against AIDS were ambivalent and sometimes conflictual. As my talk demonstrates, Migrants Against AIDS were critical towards Act-Up Paris, despite employing methods resembling the ones that the latter organisation employed. Meanwhile, Act-Up Paris aimed to make Migrants Against AIDS its ally, as it did with other representatives of minorities affected by AIDS (for example, drug users). This presentation is based on an ethnographic survey carried out during the 1990s.

## Love: Mutual Aid, Anti-Racism, and AIDS Activism in Italy

This paper investigates possible parallels and intersections between AIDS activism and anti-racist movements in Italy during the late 1980s and 1990s. This was a watershed period for, on the one hand, mutual aid efforts and anti-racist movements, and on the other, prejudice, racism, and xenophobia towards immigrants. Lila (Lega italia per la lotta contro l’AIDS), inspired in part by the People With AIDS Self-Empowerment Movement, was founded in 1987 to advocate for the human and civil rights of people with AIDS in Italy. 1988 also witnessed growing public awareness of AIDS through increasing, if much-belated, coverage in the mass media and state policy. At the same time, the years between 1989 and 1992 represented a turning point for advocacy for and racism towards immigrants in Italy, with key events including: the murder of Jerry Masslo, a South African asylum-seeker working near Caserta, which provoked the first mass anti-racist movement in Italy and the expansion of protection for refugees through the Martelli Law; the arrival of mass immigration from Albania with the end of the Cold War; and the debut of the first right-wing anti-immigration party platforms. This paper explores whether and how anti-racist and AIDS activist movements intersected. I question whether mutual aid efforts and occupied spaces like centri sociali might have fostered solidarity with and provided material help to diverse marginalized communities—including people with AIDS, immigrants, drug users, and the queer community—and whether they theorized possibilities for intersectional politics across these groups. I may also explore whether Christian left actors grouped immigrants and people with AIDS together in their rhetorical justification of their charity practices, as well as how mass media and right-wing political actors xenophobically conflated immigration with drug abuse and stigmatized AIDS as a distinctly “foreign” threat.

## Papadogiannis: Sex worker activists, AIDS and anti-racism in Berlin, 1980s-1990s

Initial public discussions about AIDS in the Federal Republic of Germany stigmatised the so-called “risk groups”, including sex workers, non-white migrants, and gay cismen. My paper explores the attitudes of the West German sex workers’ rights movement towards such AIDS-related stigma. It focuses on Hydra e.V., based in Berlin, which played a key role in networking sex worker activists at the national and European levels. My talk studies the era between the early-to-mid 1980s, when public discussions about AIDS emerged in the Federal Republic of Germany, to the early 1990s. In the latter period, public debates around AIDS growingly shifted their focus from “risk groups” to “risk practices” that an individual, regardless of their social background, could pursue. My presentation offers two interconnected arguments: Although Hydra did identify as an AIDS activist group, AIDS campaigns served for Hydra as a critical tool to address varying subjects. These included mainstream publics, such as the Senate of Berlin, and national as well as transnational counterpublics, namely sex workers’ rights activists in Germany and across Europe. In so doing, Hydra promoted intersectional solidarity, aiming to bring together sex workers, local and migrant ones, regardless of their gender and sexual orientation. All those sex workers were labelled as “AIDS risk groups” due to their profession and/or “race” in public discourses. My talk helps bridge the history of sex work with the expanding research on anti-racist subjects in Europe in the 1980s-1990s. Moreover, in highlighting Hydra’s transnational connections, I intend to help revise the tendency of research on AIDS activism (in the narrow or broad sense) in the 1980s-1990s to focus on developments within the confines of nation-states. The presentation is based on the magazine of Hydra, its pamphlets and correspondence with other groups and oral testimonies of its members.

## Beliefs and Unbeliefs in Narrative Cinema

*This panel focuses on narrative cinema as a cultural instrument of conveying, preserving and channeling beliefs. In this panel we present different ways of studying these beliefs through cultural historical methodology. Through narrative cinema it is possible to study habits and attitudes of different eras and, through broader film historical perspectives, also analyse historical changes. We connect film material to its social and artistic research context, such as Finland in the 1960s and the beginning of the development of the Nordic welfare state. Through these contexts, we look at the kind of beliefs about the world outside the film that audiovisual culture products convey to contemporaries and preserve for researchers. Film is a powerful cultural product because its field of influence is so wide. The diversity of the film crews, the breadth of the stories, and the variety of interpretations makes cinema a research subject capable of answering a wide range of research questions. Movie narration includes numerous time levels for research. In this way, it is possible to study both short- and long-term cultural-historical themes through cinema. This panel explores the conventions of fiction film narration and studies how through these historical audiovisual storylines it is possible to outline other narrative features in general. This gives us access to broader cultural narratives such as attitudes towards death or mental illnesses. In this way, cinematography also provides tools for analyzing other cultural narratives and the manifestations of beliefs they convey.*

## Rosenholm: Sensational Death -The role of media in 1960s Finnish crime films

In the 1960s, amidst of becoming a Nordic welfare state, Finnish society encountered rapid industrialization and urbanization. The changes, such as building a hospital infrastructure, influenced culture of death as well. Death became increasingly institutionalized, professionalized, and privatized. In turn, everyday deaths became hidden, given more room to mediated deaths in public imagination. At the same time, rising popularity of yellow press, television programming, and New Wave cinema that eagerly explored both sex and death, encouraged sensational imaging of death. In this paper, I discuss the role of media in communal imaging of sensational death through

film director Matti Kassila's Inspector Palmu crime films (1960-1969). Particularly the last two films of the series, *The Stars Will Tell*, Inspector Palmu (1962) and *Vodka*, Inspector Palmu (1969), manage the theme at two different levels. First, the films that revolve around murder cases participate in giving sensational death a central role. Second, both stories represent media's relationship with sensational death. In *The Stars Will Tell*, a tabloid journalist discovers a body and starts chasing a sensational murder story. In *Vodka*, a young television journalist is murdered, and his death is later covered on television. The representation of media practices shows how media observes, participates, and makes their own interpretations of these deaths, and in process they turn deaths into a sensational phenomenon. This paper explores connectivity of the films to the privatization of death and the role media played on conveying death in the 1960s. I pay attention to the borders of public and private in the film representations of death as an experience and I ask what kind of death-related emotions the films allowed or expected. Through these questions, I use films to explore changing cultural attitudes in the 1960s Finland.

### [Kallioniemi: Mental illness in the narrative of Finnish crime films in the 1960s](#)

In the film *Inspector Palmu's Mistake* (*Komisario Palmun erehdys*, Kassila 1960) a high society socialite Bruno Rygseck invites his upper-class circle of friends to join a party game where everyone has to commit a crime. As a result, Bruno himself is murdered. The story of the film depicts Bruno's alcohol-drenched lifestyle as a play with death that can't go well. When it is revealed that the murderer is his relative, mental illness is given as an all-encompassing explanation for both the murder and Bruno's unrestrained behavior. The film deals with the decade of the rich upper class by intertwining mental health problems, unexplained evil and homicide. Underlying the murder is a mental illness of fragmented identity and a self-image projected outside oneself. A similar story structure is also found in the next Palmu-film, *It's Gas, Inspector Palmu!* (*Kaasua, komisario Palmu!*, Kassila 1961), which I will also briefly address in my paper. In this presentation, I examine the beliefs related to mental health that Finnish crime films construct and reproduce in the early 1960s. What happens when a crime is presented as the act of a sick individual? By what film conventions is this narrative of the decadent upper class constructed? What is the relationship of this film narrative to the Finnish reality of the early 1960s?

### [Tiburcio Moreno: Occultism, Deviant Rituals and Modernity in Spanish Horror Cinema during the Late-Franco Dictatorship](#)

After the bloody confrontation in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), Francisco Franco imposed a dictatorship based on Catholicism and the purge of those impure individuals who did not follow this faith and its rules. Education, public spaces, and strict surveillance of the Catholic Church were some of the instruments used by the government to impose it. As Julián Casanova and Eduardo González Calleja state, Catholicism and the role of the Catholic Church facilitated the violent repression of the defeated and those considered internal enemies (communists, anarchists, liberals...) by the traditionalist forces, who justified their actions as a fair punishment for sinners and traitors to the nation. From the 1960s onwards, Spain experienced a period of modernization and liberalization, which resulted in the relaxation of customs and new attitudes similar to European models. In that same period, Spanish horror cinema experienced a boom thanks to a large production of B-movies with graphic violence and sexual images. As authors such as Javier Pulido, Antonio Lázaro-Reboll or Ian Olney state, this genre also reflected the conflicts between modernity and tradition and the anxieties that modern values, embraced mainly by the younger generations, provoked. Satanism and paganism in these films usually preceded confrontations with evil monsters and brutal attacks on victims and protagonists. In several cases such as *La noche del terror ciego* (Armando de Ossorio,

1972), or *El espanto surge de la tumba* (Carlos Aured, 1972), rituals are performed by privileged monsters to gain more power from the forces of the devil. However, in other cases such as *Exorcismo* (Juan Bosch, 1975) or *La endemoniada* (Armando de Ossorio, 1975), the ritual precedes the transgression of social norms and Catholic morality. This paper aims to analyze the different representations of rituals as allegorical figures of anxieties and conflicts in the last years of Franco's dictatorship (1968-1975). They will be analyzed from a double perspective. From a cinematographic perspective, we will study their configuration as a distorted Catholic mass through symbols (altar, status) and practices (a priest-like leader guides the ceremony), as well as the differences between the different monstrosities (witches, spiritual leaders, nobles...) and their types. From a historical perspective, these sacrilegious acts symbolized the public discourses about moral deviance and encapsulated the fear of modernity. Indeed, their transgressive nature configured them as allegorical symbols of the social unrest between an authoritarian and repressive government and increasing sectors of society that distanced themselves from Francoist ideals and demanded deep political, social and cultural transformations.

## The material and visual culture of faith: objects and images, their usages and power in Ancient times I

### [Krikona: Symbols of Faith in Athenian Democracy](#)

The present paper constitutes a contribution to the proposed topic 'material and visual culture of faith: objects and images, their usages and power', addressing a vital aspect of the fifth-century BCE Athenian politics; that is the process through which the democratic identity was formed, promoted, and boosted in Attica. Due to the fact that the military force of the Athenian state appeared to derive from its constitution, according to the fifth-century democratic narrative, it was highly necessary that democracy would be supported not only by state laws but also by religious practices. The Athenian constitution of the late sixth century, considered democratic already from the early fifth century, put forward the political balance between the main two competitive social groups of the state, namely the aristocrats and the "plēthos" (ho demos, ochlos, hoi polloi). The virtues that democracy entailed, equality, solidarity, and freedom, were delivered and promoted through an extensive visual culture that included several myths and political cults, such as the myths of autochthony, Amazonomachy, Centauromachy as well as the cults of the Tyrannicides, Theseus, and the ten Eponymous Heroes. All these aspects of the democratic religion in classical Athens were depicted in the most central spots of the city, mainly on monumental buildings and sculptures of the Acropolis and the Agora, in order to raise political consciousness and confidence of all Athenians as well as faith and allegiance to the democratic constitution. Aiming at the completion of the political unification based on the ultimate political ideal of equality, the Athenian citizenry, as a bound community that had overcome the main obstacles of their social struggle (the criteria of descent and income for the admission in the citizen body of Athens), defended the political and economic interests of their state through their first naval League, dominating in the Aegean.

### [Zaharia: Divergent beliefs and political stakes around the ritual bronzes in Pre-imperial China](#)

The ritual bronzes for royal and aristocratic use in early China have a history that recommends them as genuine paradigms of prestigious objects. During the Shang-Ying dynasty (c. 1600-1046 BC), these lavish objects, present at the table as well as in the inventory of royal tombs, are part of a complex of objects and customs with a double religious and political function, along with the divination bones and the funeral sacrifices. Their role is to ensure the relationship between the sovereign and the

ancestral spirits of the royal clan. Their use is therefore reserved for the royal family, the only one capable and entitled to communicate with the spirit world and to benefit from their protection and guidance. The status of these objects evolved, coming to be identified with the idea of political and religious authority delegated by the king to provincial governors in the era of the next dynasty, western Zhou (1046-771 BC). A new quality is thus associated with the bronze vessels: they become symbols of a mandate to exercise administrative, military, and religious power no longer reserved to the royal family, a sort of “democratization” of their function, but still fueled by the royal charisma. The analysis we propose refers to the third major transformation in the significance of the bronze vessels inside the system of political and religious beliefs that characterizes the period of dissolution of political unity known as the Eastern Zhou (771-221 BC). Their status as objects of power, associated with the divine will, is maintained in this age, but several sources suggest the emergence of divergent perspectives on how their functioning is interpreted as symbols of authority. In this period when political stakes are evolving, in which new categories of power specialists appear, an age when ritualism and realism are confronted in defining the sources of authority, the belief in the role of the bronze cauldrons as sources of power is not shared identically by all the actants of the political field. We will investigate the content, origins, and stakes of these divergent beliefs, based on episodes extracted from ancient sources, primarily the Spring and Autumn Annals and its main classical commentaries.

#### [Gleich: Objects with biographies in the Homeric epics. Their usages and power](#)

The ancient historical research could show very well on the basis of the Homeric epics how the past could embed itself in objects due to biographies and the objects thus became carriers of the past. In this context also the consideration of Iris Därmann is interesting, which says that titles, offices, skills, prestige and reputation associated with the thing can be given to a new person through a transfer. Therefore, the aim of my paper is to investigate, on the basis of Homeric objects, how the belief in a certain power (in the broadest sense) of individual objects was constructed through their biography. It will be shown that genealogy, for example the previous owners of a thing and/or the divine origin are essential criteria within Homeric discourse that define the belief in a certain force of things. The hypothesis of the paper is that the belief in a special power of objects has a direct influence on their value, but also that the biography can change their "status" and their form of "capital". It will be shown that in the Homeric discourse the construction of the belief in a certain power, in a certain prestige or in a concrete reputation, which is supposed to be inherent in a thing, could go so far that by the most different kinds of transfer of a thing these characteristics could pass to the future owner. This is accompanied by the hypothesis that in certain discourses the personification of the thing with simultaneous objectification of the person and the transfer of the social substance to another person can be observed. It should also become clear in my paper that through the constant repetition of a biography of a thing within the Homeric discourse, the belief in its special power, which can then change the habitus of a person, is controlled. In a final step the way in which belief in a particular power of a thing caused Homeric characters to act will be explored.

## **The epidemic as a belief system: the cultural and political wars of the Covid-19 pandemic in historical perspective**



## Terzioglu: Infodemics in Turkey: The Social Factors Shaping the Attitudes on Conspiracy Theories on the COVID-19

Turkey has been one of the hardest hit countries by the COVID-19 pandemic, with around 9.2 million patients and more than 80.000 deaths since March 2019. Last-minute announcements of lockdowns, lack of transparency in sharing statistics on Corona patients and inconsistencies in implementing measures against the pandemic, including the vaccinations, have increased the people's mistrust against the government's health authorities and clinicians. As a result, an excessive amount of false or unreliable information has spread, causing infodemics. Analyses of articles in Italy illustrate this spread of falsehoods as well as trace the source back to a lack of health literacy (Moscadelli et al, 2020). However, infodemics is rarely studied through the laypeople's perspectives in Turkey. In this framework, this research is based on a survey, shared in social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook and filled out by 324 people from Turkey, and an extensive social media analysis. The survey explores the social and cultural factors shaping the attitudes on various common conspiracy theories about the COVID, such as "Corona is a virus invented by the Chinese government to dominate the world" and "Corona is invented by the World Health Organization to control the population". The participants' age, gender, educational level, occupation, political perspective and religious beliefs are considered as their principal characteristics. The initial results display that the belief in different conspiracy theories vary between %15-%30, %30 corresponding to the people who agree with the statement that "Corona is deliberately produced by the scientists". The ratio of women who agree with conspiracy theories are generally lower than men, whereas people who define themselves as "nationalist" and "patriotic" tend to agree with most conspiracy theories. Our talk will delve further into these correlations and discuss possible explanations on them based on the existing social science literature on infodemics.

## Tepora: Society of Rumour: The Emotional Production of Knowledge in Second World War Finland with a Comparison to the Covid-19 Pandemic

One of the overarching phenomena of the Covid-19 pandemic has been the transnational dissemination of rumour and conspiracy theories concerning the origins of the virus, the vaccine, and the motives of the powers that be behind the social restrictions. In Finland, the cultural imagery and vocabulary the media adopted to describe the 'collective effort' to confine the pandemic and the perceived disinformation concerning it, became instantly rooted in the Second World War experiences. Especially the Winter War (1939–40) rhetoric of unity and eventually 'rebuilding' resonated at the onset of the pandemic in the spring of 2020 and during the relatively quiet summer of 2020. The commemorated war experience seemed to offer a social precedent to the global pandemic although the Finnish rhetoric could not have been fully understandable in any other society. Interestingly, also the wartime dissemination of rumour as a means of crisis-driven knowledge production could have offered an antecedent to the Covid-19 rumour. In this paper, I will look at the varieties of rumour during the Winter War. By going through the wartime records of public opinion, or the 'reports on public mood', I will dissect the motives, emotions and contents of the rumour and conspiracy theories. Reflecting the results of the classic studies on the sociology of the rumour, the Finnish wartime grapevine can be divided into four categories, which are 1) fear; 2) hate; 3) hope; 4) miracle. In the end, I will compare the motives and the emotions of the wartime rumour with that of a pandemic-driven society. Differences in the availability of the media and the wartime administration of censorship form key contrasts. However, similarities are marked between the grapevine of the war and pandemic that seem to be rooted in the production of emotionally meaningful and socially shared counter-knowledge to the 'official' information.

## Radchenko: Sanitizing religion: belief discourse on anti-COVID-19 measures among Russian Orthodox Christians

Anti-COVID measures in Russia throughout the course of pandemic included a variety of limitations to performing of religious rituals and practices, including social distancing, demand to wear face masks, changes in the order of Communion, limitations to pilgrimage, putting monasteries on forced quarantine and finally, closing of churches for believers. These restrictions resulted in fierce online discussions within Russian Orthodox church, between supporters of measures induced by governmental bodies and church administration, and "dissenters" who chose to stay loyal to tradition rather than to the institutional authorities and who relied rather on miraculous if not magic healing and protecting qualities of objects and practices related to church life, from the space of churches and sound of church bells to vernacular apotropaic practices. However, both sides appealed to the same Christian values and beliefs. In this presentation I'll discuss the discursive strategies of Orthodox COVID dissenters to investigate the ways in which different types of believers (from clergy to practicing parishioners to nominal Christians) balanced between belief in the purgating divine power and (un)belief in sanitary measures, legitimized their point of view, constructed their own "militant church" and sought sense of safety. Contemporary Russian Orthodox believers are very diverse; my key point will be to demonstrate how these strategies fluctuate among communities and act as bridges (or borders) between them in times of "corona" crisis.

## Beliefs on paper: Spreading knowledge with the press

### Huistra: Who invented the printing press? On the construction of historical facts in the nineteenth century

Who invented the printing press? In the nineteenth century, this was a hotly debated question with two main contenders for one title: Johannes Gutenberg from Mainz, Germany, and Laurens Janszoon Coster from Haarlem, the Netherlands. From a twenty-first century perspective, the facts are clear: the Oxford Companion to the Book names Gutenberg as the inventor, while Coster receives mention only as a 'legendary inventor of the art of printing'. From a nineteenth-century perspective, it is very unclear what was fact and what was mere belief. The debate on the invention of the printing press serves as my entry point to investigate the construction of historical fact, and how it was separated from belief. Coster's fate is telling. At some point in time and place – the Netherlands throughout the largest part of the nineteenth-century – his claim to the invention of printing was a fact. But if we move away from this point – to the German lands, or the twentieth century – the fact is relegated to the status of belief. The question here is not whether the fact was true or not. Nor is it the question why people wanted this specific fact to be true: nineteenth-century cultural nationalism forms a sufficient answer. Instead, the question in my paper will how a belief could be made into a fact. To do so, I will focus on one crucial episode in the construction of this particular fact: the unveiling of the Coster statue in Haarlem in 1856. For the defenders of Coster's claim the statue itself and the accompanying songs, marches, and festivities were ways of turning what they knew to be true into public knowledge, and thus a fact. Therefore, following their moves will enlarge our understanding of what counted as historical fact in the nineteenth century.

## Hakkarainen: Religion and moral training in early nineteenth-century children's books: A brief look into the German cultural influences in imperial Russia

Since the early modern era children's literature was dominated by religious narratives and served above all religious training. Yet, with the expanding print culture and growing literacy in the first half of the nineteenth-century, children's literature became more diverse and also received more secular content. At the turn of the 19th century, new educational ideas emerged in Europe. The German-language pedagogical discussions, especially, were influenced by the Enlightenment, philanthropism, humanism, and the Romantic movement. Under the rule of Catherine the Great and Alexander I, Russia implemented a school system that was created after the Austrian and German models, and German became the primary language of education. This increased the transmission of pedagogical ideas and cultural influences from German-speaking Central Europe to the Russian Empire. This paper bases on a case study on the city of Vyborg, situated in Old Finland, which was part of the Russian Empire and belonged to the Grand Duchy of Finland since 1812. German-language ABC books, tales and picture books (Bilderbücher) were read in the city and often transported from abroad. Moreover, this paper suggests that the German-language pedagogical ideas and children's literature served also as models for printing new books in the Finnish language for children. Consequently, looking into the children's literature help us to understand how belief was formed and transformed in the early nineteenth century by the transnational print culture. In the era of transition, Christian narratives and learning exercises still played a major part in evoking and sustaining religious belief among children. However, there was also new secular content emerging with the religious substance, which created a novel framework for moral training and social learning of cultural norms and values.

## Hara: East-West comparison of popular prints – Images d'Epinal in France and Ôtsu-e, Nishiki-e in Japan

In the early 18th century, Epinal prints were mainly religious ones depicting Christ and the saints, and in the 19th century prints depicting both religious lessons and non-religious heroes such as Napoleon appeared, as well as social and political affairs that were later adopted by newspapers. From the middle of the 19th century, the market for Epinal prints extended throughout Western Europe in several languages, and similar popular prints were sold in England, Germany, Italy, and so on with the same kind of tendencies towards non-religious prints. Japanese Ôtsu-e can be compared with Images d'Epinal in that they are also folk paintings. Ôtsu-e started as Buddhist religious paintings in the early 18th century. From the end of the 18th century to the 19th century, non-religious lesson paintings appeared, and Nishiki-e, which were born in the middle of the 19th century, began to take up non-religious subjects. Chinese New Year Nian-hua pictures were also amulets of Gard-Gods, Menshen, Confucianism, and Buddhist saints at the outset, and later non-religious subjects and story paintings with phrases appeared. Nian-hua spread to Chinese character culture areas such as the Korean Peninsula and northern Vietnam, but to a lesser extent in Japan because of the existence of Ôtsu-e and Nishiki-e. Although the formation of the modern nation-state itself began in Western Europe and spread to other regions, it is important that the transition of the main subjects of folk prints from religious to non-religious matters in both Europe and East Asia, happened at about the same time, from the beginning to the middle of the 19th century, embodying the secularization of the modern world at the people's level.



## The negotiation of religious beliefs and identities in the ancient and late antique Mediterranean I

### [Bay: 'From Faith to Faith': Reading Fides between Classicism & Christianization in Late Antique Historiography](#)

Virtually all scholarship that has dealt with the late-4th century work called *On the Destruction of Jerusalem* (*De Excidio Hierosolymitano*), aka 'Pseudo-Hegesippus,' has pointed out its hybrid identity as a work in the classical historiographical tradition yet written from an overtly Christian perspective (Bell 1977; Estève 1987; Somenzi 2009; Sehlmeier 2011). Following up on a brief comment made by Dominique Estève in 1987, this paper shows how the semantics of *fides* within this Latin text illustrates this multiculturalism. However, I also argue that the issue does not end there. The fluidity of *fides* within *De Excidio*, fluctuating between Christian "faith" and the more classical notion of "trustworthiness, faithful character/action," has a great deal to tell us about Christianity as a movement, late antiquity as a moment, and Latin as a growing language within the later Roman Empire. As a starting point, this paper puts the salient textual data from Pseudo-Hegesippus into conversation with Teresa Morgan's recent book, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford 2015), by far the most extensive treatment to date of "faith" language and concepts between Christians and their ancient Roman environment. The paper shows how an author writing history in late antiquity could borrow from two identifiable-if-overlapping semantic basins surrounding two different uses/notions of *fides* while maintaining a narrative and ideological consistency. Simply put, this paper seeks to demonstrate via case study how *fides* moved from a distinctly Roman concept in classical antiquity to being a decidedly Christian gloss by late antiquity, and thus to contribute to our understanding of that sea change and how it relates to "belief," in antiquity and today.

### [Reese: "You have nothing understood at all": Contesting the concept of god in the religious debate between pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity](#)

From the second century onwards, pagan and Christian intellectuals were deeply involved in a competitive discussion on the 'truth' of their own religious beliefs and the alleged inappropriateness and absurdity of the concepts of their respective opponents. This debate was centred around reflections on the 'true' nature of god and the conclusions for the religious practices that were to be drawn thereof, frequently intermingled with the polemical reproach that the opponents did not understand anything at all about the discussed issues. A revealing case of attacking and counter-attacking the opponent's beliefs is provided by the works of two authors from Late Antiquity, the emperor Julian's 'Against the Galileans' and Cyril of Alexandria's response 'Against Julian' which will be used as examples. It can be shown that both authors were well aware of the importance of this concept for their opposed religious systems. Therefore, both of them deliberately used it as a starting point for their attacks which opened a gateway for extensive critique, since the misunderstanding of god led to consecutive errors, such as misdirected worship and inappropriate cultic rituals. Contesting the concept of god was thus a method to present the opponents religion as a ridiculous accumulation of errors and misbeliefs. Besides the fierce criticisms, my analysis will also focus on the revealing parallels between Julian's and Cyril's works, such as the quoted authorities, rhetorical strategies, and structural similarities. This approach will not only contribute

to a better understanding of the aforementioned texts, but also to the mechanisms of religious polemics which constitute an important field of the cultural history of Late Antiquity.

### Pop: Is the universe spheric or rectangular? Cosmas Indicopleustes and his cosmographical interpretation

This paper proposes a debate on a process of cultural translatio from the ancient scientific thinking on the shape of the universe (Ptolemy's spheric vision) towards a distinct new vision based on a rectangular image which appears in the Christian Topography written by Cosmas Indicopleustes (6th century A.D.). Our purpose is to find out the reasons for this vision which uses Christian religious interpretations of literal level, more convenient for a more common understanding specific for the 6th century. We will briefly refer to Cosmas education, his connections with the Antiochene religious school and also to the role of some theologians belonging to this religious school as Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia who encouraged a more concrete interpretation of the Sacred texts during the 4th - 5th centuries. Later on, after their death, these theologians were considered as initiators of the Nestorian heretic movement. The Antiochene school was influenced especially by the Aristotelian thought in comparison to the school of Alexandria where the dominant heritage was the neo-platonic paradigm. These distinct philosophical influences oriented the religious interpretations towards a more literal or a more allegoric way of understanding the Sacred texts and the vision of the universe. There were also connections between the Antiochene school and other centres as Edessa and Nissibis and Cosmas was the disciple of one of the leaders of these centres. Taking into consideration these aspects, Cosmas' vision becomes more relevant for an entire process of cultural translatio. From the cultural history perspective this symbolic rectangular shape of the universe could be interpreted as an archetypal image that could have been reused during these early Christian centuries in order to make a clearer distinction between Christian cosmography and the ancient Greek one.

## The Nature of Belief: Environment and Religion in the Early Modern Republic of Venice

*In early modern Europe, religion significantly shaped the ways in which people experienced the environment. Moving from studies on materiality and the relationship between religion, matter and environment (Thomas 1983, Walker Bynum 2011, Reinburg 2019, Ivanič 2021), this panel aims to show how Christianity had an impact on everyday encounters between individuals and nature in the Italian peninsula, with a specific focus on the Republic of Venice. After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), religious authorities promoted control over forms of belief related to nature. On one hand, the Roman Church channelled practices and beliefs fuelling so the devotion of specific cults. Followers of certain divine figures forged their identity in line with orthodox practices grounded in the connection with the non-human and the environment. The will to be in harmony with God's Creation influenced religious practices and devotions reaching everyday life. On the other hand, religious authorities focused their effort on detecting and condemning the excessive effects people attributed to the interactions with the material world. The perception of landscapes was in fact profoundly influenced by the divine, through miracles and apparitions. Various sites marked the presence of divine grace in the Venetian landscape, where churches were built to commemorate holy interventions. During the early modern period, the fame of miraculous powers made springs and woods sites of pilgrimages, which were central to the local religious system. Beliefs in the physical properties that Marian apparitions transmitted to matter defined attitudes towards materiality and nature. Despite the effort of religious authorities, discussions about miraculous properties of natural substances propagated in cities and towns, spreading the fame of cults well-outside inquisitorial and bishopric courts. Theologians settled the reality of alleged apparitions in local shrines, while bishops and inquisitors monitored the dissemination of miraculous tales, although the mechanism of oral communication undermined the chances of effective censorship. The three papers will*

*adopt different interdisciplinary methodologies and they will cross-analyse a vast array of sources, including visual and material culture, treaties, devotional books, inquisitorial investigations on miracles, amongst others. The main task of the panel will assess the construct of the dynamic network of beliefs and religious meanings that in the early modern period informed the experience of nature.*

### Corso: The matter of religion: public debate on the divine presence in the sixteenth-century Republic

During the sixteenth century, many dramatic events elicited the spread of news about apparitions and miracles on the territories of the Republic of Venice. In the first decades, wars and massacres brought sorrows and fears. Recurrent food shortage determined a diffuse condition of physical sickness among the rural population along the whole century, yielding between 1575-1577 the spreading of the plague. The century finally closed with a severe period of famine. In such a troubled century, religion offered an easily accessible means of relief. As wars, famines and diseases cast their mortal effects on people, rumours of divine visions and miracles mounted in the Mainland. Miraculous tales drew suspicion from the Church, especially when involving beliefs in the Virgin Mary. Peasant communities were distinctively engaged with the Virgin by such a profound devotion that it presented the religious authorities with the frequent threat to exceed the proper limit of faith. Alleged apparitions of the Virgin transmuted the physical quality of matter. Miraculous powers imbued the surrounding elements in sites where visions took place. The cortex of the trees turned into a therapeutic resource, as worshippers ingested it to cure fever and other ailments. The clergy had thus to enforce a strict vigilance on rumours of apparitions and miraculous events to draw limits on the material medium where divine presence could rightfully reside. Bishops and inquisitors opposed witnessing of alleged miraculous events against a theologically defined repertoire of pieces of evidence and signs which set the normative reference of approved beliefs. Although the effort, discussion about the physical manifestation in material substances of otherworldly properties propagated through villages and towns and spread the fame of cults well beyond the control of the Church.

### Toffolon: Holy Spas. Ecology, Religion and Medicine in Early Modern Venice

In recent years, various studies have focused on the ways the natural world shaped religion and how the environment forms a context for beliefs and practices. Based on the findings of ecologists, a number of scholars has called attention to the interconnectedness of humans, non-humans and the environment. Moreover, the historiography on materiality has investigated the centrality of the matter and has contributed to a renewed definition of medieval and early modern devotions. By adopting a microhistorical approach, I will discuss a case study related to a Marian apparition on a thermal water source in Monteortone, near the Paduan baths of Abano. The presence of a water source in apparition stories is quite common, but sacred sources are rarely mineral or thermal water sources. Furthermore, very few thermal sites are also sacred places – and here stands the peculiarity of the case of Monteortone, a thermal water source that became (also) a sacred place. By examining images and printed sources, my interpretation will attempt to grasp the centrality of natural settings in miracle narratives, shedding light on the relation between religion, environment and matter. Moreover, by analysing the various uses of the same water and the descriptions of the Monteortone site in guides and treatises, I will highlight the construction of the differentiation between miraculous and thermal waters, the overlap between medical and religious aspects and its shifts over time.

### Zanon: Sainthood and Environment: Shaping Religious Beliefs around Nature

This paper sheds light on the central role played by natural factors in the development of new religious devotions in pre-modern Europe. By analysing the cult of San Francesco di Paola, the paper explores factors that have influenced the perception of saints and therefore favoured the diffusion of their devotions. Certain saints offered protection against the dangerous maritime environment to inhabitants along the coast. The same saints were venerated inland for different reasons, often by those who sought protection from disease. Urban communities feared plague, while rural communities were repeatedly affected by epidemics of cattle plague. In particular, the paper will consider the miracles of San Francesco di Paola in connection to natural disasters or difficulties to domesticate natural elements; his relationship with animals; and the function of the proto-veganism practiced by the saint and his order, in a vow of abstinence from meat and animal by-products. The centrality of the landscape for this religious cult is also attested by the prominence in paintings of the natural background behind the figure of the saint. The paper argues that the cult of San Francesco di Paola became so widespread because of its capacity to adapt to environmental issues of relevance to specific contexts, and it will demonstrate how the environment and its perception amongst the population shaped Catholic piety, and fuelled the devotion towards certain saints that were related to particular landscapes and ecosystems.

## The material and visual culture of faith: objects and images, their usages and power in Ancient time II

### Bottez and Constantin: A Medallion Issued by the Koinon Thrakon, Discovered in Istros

In 2019 a circular bronze piece was discovered in the Acropolis Centre-South Sector (coordinated by the University of Bucharest) in Istros (Istria, Constanța County, Romania). After it was restored, we established that it was a rare medallion issued by the Koinon Thrakon (the federation responsible for the celebration of the imperial cult in Province Thracia) during the reign of Emperor Caracalla, probably during the latter's visit to the issuing city. The mention, in the legend, of the Alexandria Pythia, indicates that imperial games were organized under the umbrella of these famous local traditional games, and that the medallion was minted for the occasion. This discovery raises several questions. One of them is how the medallion got to Istros, and whether this has anything to do with the new role assumed by imperial games – in this case associated to traditional ones – at a regional, trans-provincial level. Also, how did the inhabitants of Istros relate to this religious phenomenon – did they take part in such far-away competitions? Would such a participation represent an important factor in their identity-building process?

### Țârlea and Iliescu: A Display of Faith: The sign of the cross in household contexts from Scythia Minor during the Late Roman period (4th – 6th centuries AD)

The paper aims to identify and discuss some of the ways in which the new official religion of the Roman Empire, and its “trademark”, the sign of the cross, pervades the everyday life and become embedded in the material culture of the period, based on a specific case study. The archaeological excavations conducted in Histria/Istros by a team from the University of Bucharest bring a better insight into the life of this ancient city from the Western Coast of the Black Sea (the province of Scythia Minor) during its last phase of existence. The Late Roman/Early Byzantine insula, currently under research, offered so far rich and varied archaeological materials, among which of special interest for this presentation are objects bearing the sign of the cross or shaped as a cross. These

items, such as fine tableware decorated with stamped crosses, lamps with cross-shaped handles, bronze weights marked with the cross, metal cross-shaped elements belonging to hanging devices, clothes fasteners decorated with the sign of the cross etc., seem to be used on a daily basis by the inhabitants and as such represent a constant element in their life. Based on these observations, and placing this case study in the larger context of the Roman world, the authors intend to discuss the role and significance of the sign of the cross in household, everyday life, contexts, as a constant reminder, a protection, and a statement of belief, but also as a reflection of these people's place in the larger socio-economical, ideological, and political network of the Roman Empire.

#### [Gouws: Beliefs and practices in ritual behaviour of the/Xam people in the Middle-Vaal region, South Africa](#)

Scholars have long studied the ontological and epistemological foundations of reality, myths and practices in ritual behaviour. There is no single understanding and representation of reality, and what is "reality", is historically malleable, and shaped by intersectional cultural, social processes and fear factors. Cultural history is particularly well equipped to offer a contribution to the quest for understanding the /Xam people's modes of representation of reality, their myths, beliefs, and practices in ritual behaviour, represented in their rock art. The Vaal triangle in South Africa, has several collections of rock art, both paintings/pictographs and engravings/petroglyphs, on islands and in the vicinity of the Vaal River and its tributaries. The Middle-Vaal region, being part of the Late Stone Age hunting site of the /Xam people and later migrants, has a variety of both documented and undocumented prehistoric rock art sites. These sites date back to the era before the arrival of the missionaries and explorers during the nineteenth century. In this paper the researcher will discuss practices in ritual behaviour, with specific reference to one /Xam ceremonial site with petroglyph and two pictograph sites, one being on an island in the Vaal River, and one a hunting site. The /Xam in this region ceased to exist as communities towards the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth. During the past decade, the researcher witnessed the fading and disappearance of some said rock art (all on private property and inaccessible to the public) and tried to document the few remains in the Middle-Vaal region, South Africa.

#### [Căpiță and Țârlea: In Things We Trust. Disbursements in favour of the sacred in Mycenaean Greece](#)

Arguably, the Mycenaean kingdoms are the first complex polities on the European continent. The archaeological and epigraphic data available now seems to demonstrate that the Mycenaean world was much more mundane, and that significant information is still pointedly absent. One of the questions that are still a matter of debate is related to the relation between the king and the priesthood. We know that the Mycenaean palaces made distributions of staple goods to priests, that there are a number of gods (such as po-ti-ni-ja), and that the temples had at their disposal craftsmen and working force. At the same time, the palace archives register the fact that „temple bronze“ was seized by the palace in a period of turmoil. To further complicate the matter, the protection of the palace seems to be limited, since it cannot impose its will in the relation between the temple and the local communities. The temple is also absent from the archaeological record; with the exception of two debatable situations (at Mycenae and at Pylos), we do not know how a Mycenaean temple looked like. Our working hypothesis is that the temple is an autonomous structure similar to the local communities. As such, it enjoyed a certain economic relation with the palace, but it had to provide similar services and goods. The land belonging to the temples and the goods are in an ambiguous situation, between the clear possession by the palace and the stark autonomy of local communities that are in a position to negotiate with the palace. The goods that the palace

is providing to the temples are the only means to ideologically associate the wa-na-ka with the world of the sacred. The good vehiculated are significant only in terms of indicating a political hierarchy, and do not imply any real authority of the palace over the temples.

## Narratives of illness: knowledge, politics, and beliefs

### [Vesterberg: How an epidemic became a plague: Belief and unbelief in early 18th-century Sweden](#)

During the beginning of the 18th century an epidemic was spreading in Northern Europe. Previous research has called this epidemic the “Great Northern War plague outbreak” (1700-1721), often with emphasis on increased contamination in the regions surrounding the Baltic Sea between 1709-1712. Regarding Sweden it has been described as the last major plague outbreak in the country (1710-1713). However, while this identity might be epidemiologically true, it does not mean that it was how the epidemic was perceived. Belief and unbelief in the epidemic could vary in relation to individual and local opinions, demands and ideas. A cultural history of the plague thus necessitates two fundamental questions: how does an epidemic receive a specific identity and how does this process of identification shape culture? The purpose of this paper is to present a case-study focusing on how the epidemic was negotiated in Sweden 1710-1713, with specific focus on Gothenburg. The study is concerned with how plague identification was performed on three levels: within national regulations and prescriptions, how these regulations were negotiated on the local level, and finally the implications of this negotiation for the city’s identity beyond the epidemic. As an international port-city or “borderland”, Gothenburg during the beginning of the 18th century exemplifies the implications of plague identification in a global framework, where the plague was negotiated at the intersection between political, economic, and religious concerns. Drawing on the writing of Mary Douglas, the paper argues that, as the identity of the epidemic changes within the city, from an abstract idea (epidemic) to a material threat (plague), a countercultural identity emerges where the urban space is described in relation to cleanliness and health.

### [Karimäki: Who is responsible and what needs to change?—Politicians, knowledge and epidemics during the 20th and 21st centuries](#)

As Peter Baldwin argues in *Disease and Democracy* (2005) national public health strategies adopted during the previous grave epidemic, the AIDS era, were remarkably similar to those that had governed contagious disease for at least the last century, and continues that, like generals fighting the previous war, surgeons general and their counterparts wheeled out the inherited preventive artillery when faced with a new disease. Responses thought to be dictated by the nature of the new threat were in fact influenced by past decisions. In this presentation epidemics such as the Spanish Flu, AIDS, SARS and now COVID-19 are reflected through the eyes of parliamentarians. In dealing with the latest pandemic, do they resort to timehonored rhetoric and past solutions. Has the understanding of responsibility changed over time and how? Over time, how did the MPs reconcile the individual’s claim to autonomy and liberty with the community’s concern with safety? Are there to be found ideological or partisan differences in how individual rights and the public good are pursued simultaneously? The Finnish parliament serves as the case study when investigating longitudinal continuity and change on the use of knowledge and understanding the underlying beliefs when responding to epidemics. Speeches given in parliament provide a vast primary source for charting the modes of representation of reality and understanding the social processes of discovering the way belief and unbelief have prompted political action and decision making.



Tigani Sava: “Una illusione, una diceria, un intrigo... una cosa tutta politica”: beliefs, emotions, faith and the ‘myths of poisoning’ during the 1836-37 cholera epidemic of the Two Sicilies

This paper explores the outbreak of the cholera pandemic in the kingdom of the Two Sicilies under the reign of Ferdinand II of Bourbon, who succeeded his father Francesco I in 1830. The ‘blue disease’ struck the Bourbon kingdom between 1836 and 1837, aggravating its vulnerable conditions and putting a shaky throne at risk. It not only caused many casualties, but also aggravated the kingdom's cultural backwardness, reinforced by fears, superstitions, false beliefs and fake news, which provided the cultural substrate for the spread of conspiracy theories (poisoning plots) and the rise of popular uprisings (cholera riots). This article aims to provide an innovative cultural reading of the cholera epidemic, with some forays into the history of emotions, with particular reference to the relationship between fear, divine wrath and moral culpability. It examines the perception of cholera-morbus in the circle of scientists of the Bourbon court and the responses of the Catholic clergy about its nature and the methods of treatment and prevention. Furthermore, it also focuses on how the epidemic generated social divisions and threatened the stability of society, and how it was exploited both by revolutionary propaganda, to influence political change, and, at the same time, by royalists, who wanted to save the kingdom from the liberal revolution. A wide range of sources will be analyzed, such as medical reports, contemporary chronicles, sermons, popular instructions, journal articles, letters, legislative acts, narratives, such as an unknown anti-cholera poetic manual.

Wilson: Beliefs and experienced health and illness (Finland and Sweden ca 1750-1850)

In my dissertation I study how the beliefs connected to health and illness contributed to the shaping of people’s lifestyle ca. 1750–1850, and specifically the bourgeoisie and nobility in Finland and Sweden. My material consists out of egodocuments, such as personal letters and diaries. For this paper I will focus on the way medical knowledge was shared and integrated within this community of people during a time when science and medicine was developing fast, but there still weren’t many effective medicines, and physicians struggled to find the right cures and treatments for specific illnesses. What knowledge did people rely on to treat their illnesses or keep healthy, and how was this knowledge manifested within their peers? I focus on the cultural perspective on this matter and look at the understanding of illness and health as something constructed within the social and cultural context where it is experienced. The beliefs about health and illness were present in the everyday lives and the routines of these individuals and they were passed from one to another through for example correspondence, and they contributed to the culture of the community. The last two years we have seen, through the pandemic, how different beliefs regarding the virus and how to stay healthy are shared and shapes the communities of people around the world. The same kind of beliefs regarding health and illness were a big part of the culture in earlier communities, and in the end of my paper I want the readers to have a better understanding of this and get a historical perspective on how these beliefs coloured communities and culture in a way that has been surprisingly ignored in earlier cultural historical research.

## Communicating reality: How media shaped knowledge and beliefs I

Hylkema: Illusion, Belief and Disbelief in the Reception of George Psalmanazar’s Imposture

Much has been written about George Psalmanazar, whose false claim to be a native of Formosa – today’s Taiwan – made him famous almost overnight when he first arrived in London in 1703.

However, most studies of Psalmanazar have taken their lead from his memoirs (1764) and have focused on the success of his deceptions. But were his audiences really quite as gullible as Psalmanazar claimed? This paper will argue that the reception of Psalmanazar's imposture was far more complex than previously assumed, especially after his infamous clash with the Royal Society in February 1704, and provides valuable insights in different modes of deception and being deceived in early 18th-century England. The paper will first consider a number of responses by Psalmanazar's contemporaries, including John Locke, Richard Gwinnett and Sir Richard Steele, and place these in the wider context of the games that the art and literature of the period played with their audiences' perceptions of reality and authenticity. My discussion will particularly address the impact of artistic illusionism, a major discourse in 17th-century art theory, on how Psalmanazar's imposture was experienced by those around him but also consider how their responses related to the early Enlightenment's growing emphasis on scepticism and its general distaste of fakery. The paper will end with Psalmanazar's appearance in Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729) and discuss this in terms of the rhetorical strategies employed in satire and the genre's game with belief and disbelief, and the boundaries between them.

[Pérez Sancho: Ignorance, omissions and resistance. Information, Governmentality and the management of uncertainty in Hispanic Monarchy at the end of the Ancien Régime](#)

The Hispanic Monarchy, as well as other European states, developed, especially during the enlightened period, a rationalizing initiative expressed in a hunger for information about the governed realities. This issue had its manifestation in an information policy that longed to gather information, especially of an economic nature, to govern based on an exact knowledge of reality. Through the analysis of governmental practice, examined and studied from the case of the north of the peninsula, we can discover the wide difficulties, both in the matter of compilation and of information dissemination and political communication and the forms and means of resistance or omission that are revealing of the characteristics of the long process of State building in Spain. From a plurality of documentary sources from Spanish archives, we analyze the different initiatives, their characteristics and means, the structural problems and their results that demonstrate the enormous complexity that determined the governmental capacity to knowledge.

[Annanurova: In between of illusion and reality of knowledge: Belief and stereoscopic photographs at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries](#)

The field of meanings of the pair "belief/unbelief" is related to others such as "trust/distrust", "credibility/incredibility", "illusion/reality", "documentality/fiction" etc. The photographic image is often considered as "document" and as image capable of confirming facts. However, photography has complex relationships with the "truth" and "faith". That could be said for the various photographic practices, but stereoscopic photography may be one of the most eloquent examples. Almost since its invention stereo photography was deliberately used in order to organize, catalog, describe and arrange the world being belonged to the formation of a system of knowledge. Many companies such as Underwood and Underwood in the United States, Britain, Japan, Canada; Granberg Corporation in Sweden; stereographic publishing house Svet (Light) in Russia and many others sent their photographers to create a global "topographical atlas" and proceed the process of the "inventory control". The researches emphasize that the physical storage for stereoscopic views was a "file cabinet" where a whole geographical system was stored and which "holds out the possibility of storing and cross-referencing bits of information and of collating them through the particular grid of a system of knowledge" (Rosalind Krauss). This system was involved in different scientific and educational processes and was part of complex discursive formations including



colonial ones. At the same time stereo photography has a very ambiguous nature, its unique visual experience often described in terms of “reality”, no longer has anything like the “truth” or “realism”, being based on a radical abstraction of the optical experience. The observer is the subject who produces the stereoscopic effect as a result of the structure of the body, and at the same time is engaged by this strictly illusionary system. Analyzing particular images and accompanying texts I will try to explore how the quality of three-dimensionality made possible to include stereoscopic photographs in partly opposite logics, to describe them simultaneously through the concepts of “illusion” and “reality” and the impact it had for the system of knowledge at the turn of XIX-XX centuries.

## The negotiation of religious beliefs and identities in the ancient and late antique Mediterranean II

### Jacobson: “Ancient temples collapsed”: Plague as Impetus for the Christianization of Urban Space in Late Antique Rome and its Representation in Later Media

In November of 589 CE, heavy rains descended on Rome causing the Tiber to overflow its banks, flooding the city, and leaving disaster in its wake. By January, a plague befell Rome; within a month Pope Pelagius II was dead. Gregory, bishop of Tours, provides the only known contemporary account of these events, describing them in distinctly apocalyptic terms. Invoking the prophet Ezekiel to imbue Pelagius’ death with a specifically Christian flourish, he proclaims the crisis at Rome to be a test of faith rectifiable through widespread Christian belief and practice, alongside leadership by the Roman deacon and pope-elect, Gregory. Immediately—even before his papal confirmation—Gregory I called for three days of repentance and prayer that would culminate at dawn on the third day with a *laetania septiformis*: a seven-form penitential procession integrating the entirety of Christian Rome. This salvific ritual was performed twice under Gregory I, but never again repeated. Questions surrounding the occurrence and discontinuation of the *laetania septiformis* as an ad hoc Roman Christian ritual used in times of civic crisis evade medieval authors. To circumvent this lacuna when crafting their increasingly apocryphal hagiographies for Gregory I, I argue these authors adopt poetic license in accordance with the ancient Roman tradition of animating the past through remembrance, itself integral to the narrative process of *historia* and a building block of belief. One popular remembrance of the *laetania septiformis* recounts the archangel Michael’s appearance to Gregory I from atop Hadrian’s mausoleum in a sign of the ritual’s success. Despite the processional route and mausoleum never coming into proximity historically, Michael’s appearance is widely remembered in medieval textual and visual representations as the procession’s dramatic climax and the catalyst for the pagan monument’s Christianization; thus, redescribing the incomprehensible trauma of plague as a pestilence rectifiable through Christian belief and urban ritual.

### Bozia: “Who, unless foolish, would believe that these are gods and not merely statues?”: State of spiritual (dis)belief in the Roman Empire

The perspectival controversy between Christians and pagans in the first centuries of the common era seemingly springs from their differences in consideration of the divine and the pagan belief in statues—the former refusing to believe in the pagan divine system and the latter having developed an interactive morphology of divinity that relied on an anthropocentric nature of belief. This paper comparatively examines Strabo, Varro, Lucian, Dio, and the early Christian Apologists. I argue that they all discuss the divine and unanimously reconsider the culture of religious beliefs and the

framework of conventions that render one more or less credible. Celsus in Origen contra Celsum, 7.62 states: "who, unless foolish, would believe that these are gods and not merely statues?" Nonetheless, Origen insists that Christianity does not sanction the creation of idols or images to depict their god (7.64). One expects the contradistinctions above between pagans and Christians. However, the spiritual reality becomes less clear-cut when we read Lucian in *De Sacrificiis* vocalizing the Christian argument in a non-Christian text, saying that it is not enough that pagans build temples so that gods are not houseless and raise statues. Still, they also come to believe that what they behold is not ivory or gold but the god himself. Additionally, Varro, Dio, and Strabo argue that mythology, literature, and art facilitate people's belief in the existence of gods even though they do not claim to be religious authorities. In closing, this paper argues that Imperial authors and the Christian Apologists reconsider the human factor in religion and the need for (im)materiality and (in)tangibility respectively as conditions of belief and consequently redefine the conceptual system of spirituality.

### Liṭu: Religious belief and unbelief in Herodotus' Histories

Herodotus' place as the first Greek author who develops an extended historical narrative on an almost contemporary conflict (the wars between the Greeks and the Persians) and who, in search for explanations, explores the past and practices of the communities involved is well known. Modern views of Herodotus spread from Hartog's anthropological take on identity and *altérité* being central to the Greek view of the world to more recent evaluations that point to the accuracy of a quantity of the information provided by Herodotus on foreign and faraway non-Greek communities. Equally well known is the role of the wondrous in structuring his narrative, be it the exceptional status of the conflict itself or the marvelous lifestyles, happenings and sights of the *oikoumene* Herodotus talks about. On this background of wondrousness, that in itself requires an investment from Herodotus' audience in believing in the existence of the marvelous and in trusting the selection the author makes and the world he builds, there is a specific spectrum of practices translating religious belief and unbelief. This spectrum is meaningful to Greek, and especially Athenian, audiences, and is instrumental in aiding them to grasp the significance of the events as told by Herodotus. This paper aims at exploring a selection of specific situations that involve religious happenings and circumstances along Herodotus' Histories, such as the Scythians' Anacharsis and Skyles devious religious practices on the edges of the Greek world (in the Black Sea area), the bizarre, bordering on impious, behaviors of Spartan kings or the potential meaningfulness of sanctuaries of the goddess Demeter as places involved in important battles between the Greeks and the Persians. It ultimately aims at testing if manifestations of belief and unbelief in the field of religion are situational options for collective (communities) and individual agents involved in the critical and dynamic circumstances related in the Histories.

## Believing in the Celts?

*This panel will study and qualify the very notion of "Celts" throughout history, from ancient times to the modern and contemporary version of the term. Recent research tends to question the existence of both ancient Celts and their modern and contemporary counterparts. "Celto-sceptic" researchers – such as Jean-Louis Brunaux ; see for instance *Les Celtes : Histoire d'un mythe*<sup>1</sup> – go as far as claiming that the Celts and Celticism as a whole are but a modern invention that should be altogether abandoned by contemporary research. Although this view is far from being unanimously accepted by specialists – mythologists, historians, linguists, archaeologists, ethnologists, folklorists and anthropologists alike – a significant proportion of papers and studies published in the past decades tend to qualify and call into question the Celts as a people (or a group of peoples) as well as their alleged cultural, linguistic and historical unity. As early as 1955, J.R.R.*

*Tolkien had claimed that “To many, perhaps to most people outside the small company of the great scholars, past and present, ‘Celtic’ of any sort is, nonetheless, a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come”.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the warning did not prevent an entire generation of researchers (Celtophiles or Celtomanes, in French) to continue writing about the Celts, arguably with insufficient hindsight and critical thinking. Still to this day, the term Celt is commonly used by a number of scholars who fail to refer to proper definitions and critical examination: they believe in the Celts without further questioning. Interestingly enough, the word and concept showed increasingly popular in the 20th and 21st centuries among the general population, mainly as a tool for constructing or reconstructing “identity” in several nations or territories, including (but by no means limited to) Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Brittany and Galicia. The phenomenon is in part owed to thinkers and politicians who, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries tried to question, renew, recreate identities or even entire nations. To this day, the Gaelic Revival led by prominent figures such as W.B. Yeats probably remains the most famous example. Celtic music, Celtic art, Celtic sports, Celtic legends have gradually become a part of the Irish, Welsh, Scottish, Breton identities. Interestingly enough, the “Celtic” diaspora, especially in North America, seems to attach great importance to the notion and referring to one’s “Celtic” roots and ancestry is more than common in the United States and Canada, among other examples. Those preliminary remarks therefore raises the following question: should contemporary research believe in the Celts?*

### Robitaille: Reviving Irish Myths in James Stephens’s Irish Fairy Tales (1920)

Rooted in the Irish Revival movement, James Stephens published retellings of Irish myths in novel form, notably *Deirdre* (1923) and *In The Land of Youth* (1924), as well as original creations using elements of Irish myths and folklore, famously in *The Crock of Gold* (1912) and *The Demi-Gods* (1914). A contemporary of Yeats and Synge, Stephens was a strong supporter of the nationalist ideas sparked by Douglas Hyde’s speech in 1892: according to him, Ireland had to return to its “Celtic” roots and celebrate its culture and language to differentiate itself from the English ruler. In 1920, spurred by the translations published by his contemporaries Standish Hayes O’Grady and Lady Gregory, and the studies carried out by international Celticists like Kuno Meyer and Henri d’Arbois de Jubainville, he published *Irish Fairy Tales*, a collection of stories inspired from the Fenian cycle of tales. These are not translations, since Stephens was not proficient enough in Irish to carry out such a project, but rewritings of ancient tales. Even though Stephens retains the original narrative structures, he adapts the stories of Tuan Mac Cairill and Bran, to cite only two, to make them more relevant to his time. He removes repetitive genealogies and lists, and adds descriptions, dialogues, colours, and humour to the tales. Emphasising details and changing minor aspects of the narratives, Stephens thus transforms stern and complex texts into entertaining narratives, in turn tragic, comical or philosophical. In keeping with the spirit of the times, Stephens also focuses his collection on the theme of renewal. His carefully selected tales feature metamorphoses and changes that echo the literary and cultural movement in which he took part. The rebirth experienced by his characters also mirror the renaissance of the texts and tales themselves, through Stephens’s words and his contribution to what he perceived as the revival of “Celtic” culture.

### Cacheux: Rewriting Celtic History: the example of Stephen Lawhead

The end of the 20th century saw the rise of fantasy literature, rewriting famous myths and legends. Véronique Gely points out that “[...] myths make literary genres [...] myths should be considered as the origin of genres[...] ”, therefore illustrating a fraction of the mythocritical point of view, also exploited by Pierre Brunel. Stephen Lawhead, an American writer, distinguished himself by his writings which are strongly influenced by the world, history and Celtic culture. Largely inspired by the Mabinogi, the cosmogonic Welsh tales of the Celtic universe, his *Pendragon Cycle* deals in a syncretic way with both the Arthurian legend, and the myth of Atlantis. Alternating between the image of the barbarian and that of the nobility, the image of the Celt evolved over several

generations in a world where the Roman empire was dying. The author highlights well-known figures of the Arthurian legend and stages them in a supposedly historical context. Moreover, Lawhead's strong Christian influence marked his novels, and one might wonder how far this removed him from the historical reality of the time. Taliesin, the first novel of his cycle, was conceived as a precursor to the Arthurian legend. In this first volume, combining the myth of Atlantis with the one of the bard Taliesin until the birth of Merlin, the American author exploits the image of the Celt, transforms it, adapts it and turns it into an outstanding work, therefore making the Arthurian cycle accessible to a larger audience. It is interesting to see how the image of the Celt was used, perhaps manipulated by the author for this rewriting—an idea which could also be tackled through the concept of a creation or even the recycling of identity (both Celtic and American) and leads us to the following question: to what extent should we believe in Lawhead's fantasized vision of the Celts?

### Moigne: Don't judge a book by its cover, but a druid by his dress

Together with the building of our knowledge of Celtic society, those last centuries saw the (re-)creation of the image of the druid—a synthesis of romanticism, fantasy, and the few elements brought together by history. This stands as the principal illustration of the imaginary building of the Celtic tradition, around the druid's persona. Our knowledge about ancient druids—first and foremost their religious prerogatives—is rather limited. Consequently, it was (and still is) easy to fill in the gaps of tradition for those who wanted to recreate a druid order, i.e. rebuild a part of the ancient Celtic society and Celtic religion. Historical inaccuracies were counterbalanced by legends, and nowadays, by the so-called sacred ecology and fairy-faith. But this guesswork, in a sense a form of “do-it-yourself spirituality”, seems to unify modern Celtic pagans around the persona of the druid, dressed in a white frock adorned with esoteric symbols and wearing a long beard. The image now belongs to the Western-world imaginary and shows how triumphant myth can prove to be over history, and how forging can become forgery: from Conrad Celtis (1459 – 1508) and Aylett Sammes (c. 1636 – c. 1679) to the current Arch-Druid of the Gorsedd of Wales and the Great-Druid of Brittany, via John Aubrey (1626 – 1697, who wrote that Stonehenge was a *Templa Druidum*) and William Stukeley (the first real chief-druid of the Druid Order, 1722). The druid's robe will be used as a pretext to try and understand this way of intellectual and spiritual transmission, to explain how this imaginary pan-Celtic image of the druid was recreated, and how it is still alive: as a timeless and indefinite hierophant, from mythological times to historical ones, this example will stand as an illustration synthesizing the difficulties of Celtic studies, at the crossroads of historical reality, interpretation and cultural conditioning.

### Armao: Should we believe in “Celtic Music”?

The word “Celtic” has been quite appropriately qualified as a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come” by J.R.R. Tolkien. The idea seems all the more true when put in the context of cultural production, both modern and contemporary, and especially when applied to “Celtic music”. The denomination proved to be increasingly popular in the Western world, perhaps starting in 19th-century Northern America and spreading over Europe in the 20th century. Of course, this “Celtic music” is supposed to take its roots in the ancient music of the Celts—either Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Galician or Breton—and the quest for identity on both sides of the ocean undoubtedly played a great part in the popularization of this “Celtic” labelling. One might wonder, however, whether or not this “Celtic music” label is justified in historical terms—a topic that has been tackled recently by a number of scholars.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the very notion of “Celtic music” as a monolithic, homogenous label that would unite all artists that feel somehow connected

with the Celtic world and its alleged musical roots is questionable. This talk will focus on the example of Ireland (and, to some extent, the Irish diaspora in the United States) and question whether or not “Celtic music” is a label that is relevant, in historical, cultural and political terms as well as in terms of identity.

## The visual and material culture of beliefs in pre-modern times

### [Hella: Manuscripts of Ferrara–Florence \(1438–39\): Objects of Knowledge and Belief](#)

On 6 July 1439, a document sealing the union of Eastern and Western Churches was signed in Florence. Before that, representatives of the Churches had discussed and debated on theological matters separating the Churches. In these debates, manuscripts gained an important role. Not only the authoritative texts - Holy Scripture, Church Fathers, and Acts of ecumenical councils, - were used in the argumentation, but also the material objects containing the theological truth: manuscripts. The participants of the Council realized that the manuscripts had preserved the Christian teachings in different ways and forms when various readings were compared and interpreted differently by Greeks and Latins. In defining the correct teaching of the soon-to-be unified Church (if only for a short time), it first had to be solved, which manuscripts were the most authoritative and authentic ones and thus were true in matters of Christian faith and knowledge. In my paper, I will present the ways in which the participants of the Council of Ferrara–Florence, both Greek and Latin representatives, used manuscripts and what kind of meanings were given to them. I will concentrate especially on manuscripts as objects of knowledge and belief. Manuscripts were vital objects for Christianity as they contained the sacred authoritative texts. Manuscripts and the texts within them were, however, also liable to corruption caused by humans and nature as well. Thus, the foundations of theological knowledge rested on material objects. And when the objects, manuscripts, were called into question, knowledge was also called into question, and eventually, even belief was put to the test. I will discuss how in the Council of Ferrara–Florence (theological) knowledge and faith of the participants were (re)shaped by the material objects, the manuscripts.

### [Drăgan: Reasoning or Faith? Thomas Aquinas and Averroes – Traditions of Medieval Disputationes and Triumphs in Art](#)

The Arab philosopher Averroes (1126-1198), a great commentator of Aristotle, began to be considered a heretic in the Christian world only in the early 14th century, after he had been much cherished before. About one century and a half after Averroes, Thomas Aquinas, great theologian of the 13th century and a Dominican friar, was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church and a saint, after a life of masterful theological reasoning, summed up in the most influential writings of medieval Christianity. Although a direct confrontation between Thomas Aquinas and Averroes was not possible, the Italian art of the 14th and 15th centuries preserve several symbolic „encounters” between the two. The waning glory of Averroes was explicitly related to the ascension of St Thomas Aquinas. The paper attempts to build a coherent picture of the Italian Tre- and Quattrocento iconography that put St Thomas Aquinas and Averroes together in confrontational forms, which grew from, and further embedded traditions of strong advocacy for one’s theological superiority. From the medieval disputationes to the saintly glorification of the holder of the ultimate truth, the paper will explore the two-sided way of expressing authority (through reasoning and/or strong faith, respectively), in the context of a complex intellectual history.



## Prelipceanu: Eastern Christian Religious Visual Culture under Habsburg Monarchy

Transformations induced by the new geography of political and cultural frontiers during the 18th century were also manifest at the level of the religious visual culture. For example, Eastern Christians under the Habsburg monarchy developed their own visual culture. The newly formed Greek Catholic church in Transylvania followed during the first half of the 18th century the visual culture of the former Orthodox church. The same thing had happened in Ruthenia where the Greek Catholic church was established at the end of the 16th century. However, the Orthodox visual culture changed during the 18th century. These changes had two sources. The Orthodox under the Habsburg monarchy came under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Metropolitanate of Karlowitz. The Metropolitanate imposed changes in the traditional religious visual culture. A means to control whether these changes were really observed were the canonical visitations as proven by some Ruthenian visitations documents. In 1741 Serbian Patriarch Aresnyi IV Jovanovic invited painting teachers from the Kyiv Lavra in Imperial Russia to paint and teach in the Metropolitanate. Two years later he issued a decree demanding all religious painters in the Metropolitanate to follow the models of these painters. Otherwise, as in the case of the church in Gurasada in Transylvania the demands concerning the new painting were issued directly by the political authorities. At the same time, some of the changes were due to the specific church architecture imposed by the political authorities. The first part of our paper deals with the political and social context of the period and with the position of the Eastern Christians under Habsburg rule. The second part of our research is an analysis of the main changes introduced at the level of Eastern Christian religious art during this time. Most of them were borrowed from the Western religious art and as a consequence led to an intertwining between the Western and Eastern religious arts. We also analyse the channels that led to these transformations.

## Emotions and faith

### Felicio: Emotional judgement and public decisions: Seneca's stoic point of view

Ancient Stoic theory was interested in the role played by emotions in decision-making processes and had a keen eye for contemporary politics. If one takes emotions to be 'responses to areas of vulnerability (NUSSBAUM 2006 and De Ira 1.3.3) that involve an evaluation of the aspects of the world (Sen. De Ira 2.1), then it must be acknowledged that they influence both our public and private live beliefs. Fides (in the sense of the belief in the words of someone OLD 2b) had a special role among the core values and virtues of Ancient Rome (MEYER 2004). In Lucius Annaeus Seneca's tragedies, on the one hand, we found the concept of fides as a relevant part of the characters' constitution (Med. 164, 1004; Tro. 529,587; Oed. 672, 684); on the other hand, emotions (not seldom expressed in metatheatrical utterances by the characters themselves) also play their part in the characterization and in the plot. More recently, emotions have been growingly understood to be indispensable to cognitive processes themselves, simply because they cannot be separated from them (HUPPES-CLUYSENAER, 2018). However, in ancient times, Seneca was the only Stoic philosopher to have engaged with a profound meditation on the process of self-shaping (NUSSBAUM 1993), which, I would argue, compasses self-knowledge (including one's own emotions and beliefs). My paper shall investigate in a selection of Senecan philosophical and tragic texts how do beliefs (and, among them, the fides or the lack of fides), interfere in the emotions expressed by the tragic characters, i.e. in the emotional circumstances of the tragedy. Pondering Seneca's understanding of fides in relation to emotions shall contribute to current debates on the role of emotions and beliefs in the evaluation of the world.

### Brewer: Unbelief, Repression, and Emotions in Medieval Europe: Three Case Studies

Gerald of Wales records a case of 'wretched' (miser) priest whose superior berated him for performing mass with insufficient reverence. When pressed, the priest burst out in anger and attacked Christian dogma in toto, arguing that ancient people invented religion to control people through fear. The case suggests that unbelievers could actively repress their views in contexts where they expected they would attract reprobation. The miser also teaches us that the dominant emotions around such encounters were fear and anger—unbelievers could be afraid to speak up, but strong emotions (particularly anger) make it more difficult to maintain the façade of orthodoxy. Two other cases are worth noting in this regard. Simon of Tournai was a professor of theology at the University of Paris, who—eight sources variously allege—made a blasphemous outburst for which God struck him with illness and death. Three of the sources attribute strong rage to Simon. Gerald criticises Simon for propagating his views secretly among his friends, but says that blasphemers should be punished and ostracised, which incentivises silence. In a third case, that of Aude de Merviel from the inquisition register of Jacques Fournier, we see another kind of silence. Aude, when ill, confessed to her husband that she could not bring herself to believe in God and the Eucharist. Her husband threatened her with expulsion from the house. Aude called for a friend, Ermengarde, who told various people about Aude's disbelief in the Eucharist, but not her disbelief in God, which she herself confessed to before the inquisition. Fear of punishment in this world or the next incentivised silence for those who contemplated or adhered to broad-ranging forms of unbelief, and for those who heard them.

### Lahtinen: Experiences of the Darkness by the Light of the Beliefs

We tend to believe to what we see. But when the night falls and the nocturnal darkness obscures the surroundings, the sensory hierarchy changes and imagination starts to run wild. Things get different meanings in the dark. There has always been something very human in the ways we have portrayed darkness. We picture darkness by giving it an active role. Darkness falls, but sometimes it rises or grows. Darkness sneaks and obscures, leaving visions dim. Darkness hides, conceals and lurks. Darkness also fades in the light. Fear of the dark is considered as a primitive fear and terror of the darkness is said to be timeless. But quite often we are not afraid of the darkness per se, but all the things there might be hidden in the dark, concealed by the shadows of the night. However, the moon and stars have created their mystical splendor illuminating the night and human has tried to conquer the darkness by light. So, when encountered with darkness, how was it experienced in the past? This paper explores the ways in which the darkness was experienced in the long 18th century. I focus on the travellers of the era and their experiences of the darkness. The methodological approach taken in the paper is an emotional vocabulary. This research uses travel literature as a source material to study experiences of the past. How the travellers in the long 18th century experienced the darkness? What sort of emotions they felt towards nocturnal surroundings? Did the beliefs of the era affect the experience?

### Avsenik-Nabergoj: Emotions, the senses and faith in Slovenian folk prayers about the passion of Jesus

In this paper I will present part of my extensive and original research on the images of Jews in Slovenian folk prayers, which have appeared in all Slovenian provinces since the Middle Ages in a similar, mostly poetic form and are now available in four extensive collections edited by Karel Štrekelj (1895-1907); Vilko Novak (1983); Zmaga Kumer (1999); and Marija Stanonik (2013). The basis of the article is the observation that the motif of Jews as 'merciless torturers' of Jesus appears in most of the folk prayers based on the Gospel story of Jesus' passion, so we can speak of their

negative stereotypes in these types of prayers. The most popular and frequent type of Slovenian apocryphal prayers during Lent is the "Golden Our Father". The content is based on the Gospel account of Jesus' suffering, but the popular imagination has reshaped and added to the story in its own way to evoke more compassion for the suffering Christ and his mother Mary. The worst tortures for Jesus and Mary are caused by the Jews, who torture Jesus in various cruel ways not reported in the Gospels. The prayer often contains the apocryphal motif of Mary seeing in her prophetic dreams the terrible suffering of her son Jesus. Her weeping is associated with feelings of love and longing to wipe away her son's tears and relieve him of his pain. Since no one in previous research has noticed the extremely frequent occurrence of the stereotypical motif of Jews as Jesus' tormentors in Slovenian folk prayers, the article breaks new ground in this area. In searching for reasons for such frequent anti-Jewish depictions in Slovenia, it draws on the broader context of anti-Judaism in Europe in the centuries from the High Middle Ages onward.

## Communicating reality: How media shaped knowledge and beliefs II

[Marinello: It's funny because it's \(more\) real: "fake news" as comedy news on television](#)

The definition of "fake news" was applied in the past to different forms of communication, even to some which did not have the goal of deceiving the public: such is the case of the comedy news tv programs that emerged in the U.S. in the second part of the XX century, which aimed at provoking laugh with jokes about political, social and cultural events, and sometimes tried to overturn dominant narrations through the employment of irony and satire, enlightening the fallacy of news cycles and the absurdity of the political reality. These shows started as a mere parody of newscasts, but then became an autonomous voice in the representation of current affairs, blending information and entertainment. The case of Weekend Update, a segment inside the sketch comedy program Saturday Night Live (SNL), is particularly useful to capture the historical transformations of the genre as a whole: SNL has been on air since 1975, situating itself in the television mainstream while at the same time co-opting avantgarde comedic sensibilities. At the start of the XXI century, suffering competition in the fragmented "post-network" era and being influenced by the growing political polarization, Weekend Update started to assume a sharper, more critical point of view toward the political power, under the run of the leftist and feminist comedian Tina Fey. The peak of this process came in 2008, when Fey directed her satirical punch to Sarah Palin throughout an impersonation, one of comedy's most traditional genres. The success of the caricature, debated in a myriad of media outlets and described as more "real" than the "real" Palin, showed how new and old forms of comedy coexist and support each other on one side, and how television comedy reached enough maturity to shape the understanding of a political candidate on the other.

[Liu and Zeng: Songs into the Mind: Populism, Civil Society, and the Fans Culture of Teresa Teng between the Taiwan Strait](#)

Teresa Teng (Deng Lijun) has always been known as a "patriotic singer" in Taiwan during the Cold War. Her songs in the cultural Cold War context attempted to capture people's hearts and minds between the Taiwan Strait. From a diplomatic point of view, Teng's songs were another symbol of "The Three Principles of the People Reunite China". Teng performed in the military of Taiwan and mobilized overseas Chinese to donate for Taiwan in Malaysia, even claimed that "The Three Principles of the People" would not be realized in the Mainland China, she would never sing in the Mainland. Teng's love song culture was a kind of "war of the heart", which was one of Taiwan's few successful propagandas against the Mainland. Although Teng's songs were officially banned, her



songs had already spread to the north and south of Mainland China through radio stations and secret tapes. Teng's fans included many intellectuals and, particularly, university and college students. These fans also actively promoted the democratic and cultural enlightenment movement in Mainland China in the 1980s. As a result, Teng's songs were given renewed political significance. In addition, the popularity of Teng's songs changed the image of Taiwan that the Chinese Communist Party had previously propagated in the public's mind, reshaping Mainlanders' perception of Taiwan. The Hong Kong film "Comrades: Almost A Love Story (Tian Mimi)", named after Teng's songs, and made by Hong Kong director, Chan Ho-San, in the 1990s, narrates the significant impact of Teng on the relationship between the Chinese overseas. The hero and heroine met in Hong Kong, making a living together there. On New Year's Eve, they set up a stall to sell Teresa Teng's tapes, which were very popular among Mainlanders working in Hong Kong. Teng's songs transcended the political sphere and became the common and emotional memory of a generation of global Chinese. Finally, in New York, they met again after hearing news of Teng's death. For the audience, the depiction of the "ideal China" in Teng's songs not only heals the psychological wounds of Mainlanders who have endured political movements but also captures the unnamed nostalgia of overseas Chinese. Teresa Teng is still a cultural icon for which both sides of the Taiwan Strait compete. The official attitude toward Teng, however, has changed dramatically in Mainland China during the past decade. Teng nearly became an official cultural icon on both sides of the Strait. Many decades after her death, Teng still appears in the most searched hashtags of Mainland China's mainstream media. The Mainland narrative of Teng is one that emphasizes her "Chinese" identity by, for example, claiming that Teng spoke the Shandong dialect to promote her concept of cross-strait unification. Such an interpretation is certainly incorrect as far as Teng's original intentions are concerned, and is an attempt to recast her into a kind of "Chineseness" instead of "Taiwanese-ness".

#### [Aali: Believing in Science in Finland](#)

Not all believe in science. Or they might believe in some branches of science but not the other. In addition, they might believe some scientists but not others. In my recent research, I have focused on the ways historical science has been questioned in Finnish online discussions. One specific field that has been questioned is the academic study of Middle Ages. My particular interest is in the way right-wing populist sites and groups use the Finnish Middle Ages and Iron Age to promote their own political visions. In order to do so, they must disregard much of the contemporary academic research in Finnish history. In right-wing populist sites, not uniquely historical sciences have been discredited but also, for example, gender studies. I shall use as an example two articles published in Finnish right-wing populist sites. The articles discuss both the historical studies – or the way history is currently studied "wrong" – and other related scientific fields such the upper mentioned gender studies and population genetics. The first populist article discusses recent findings on Viking ancestry and the second text discusses a scientific article on archaeology that gives a new reading on a weapon burial found from Southern Finland. Some populist texts promote outright conspiracy theories but all of them promote distrust on science and universities. It is noteworthy that the populist discourses in Finnish populist sites are not uniquely local phenomenon but they draw from international discourses.

#### [Katona: Misconceptions in the historical knowledge in Hungary. Why they became popular in the 21th century?](#)

There are several misconceptions in the historical knowledge of the Hungarian public opinion that have long been refuted by historiography. According to their believers, the 'professional historians'

and especially the Hungarian Academy of Sciences have tried and are still trying to falsify the history of Hungary, and to hide the truth. They have numerous motivations to do so; partly because the historians, who serve foreign powers, deny the glorious chapters of the Hungarian history, and partly because they want to keep the historical sins against Hungary in secret. According to the believers of these conspiracy theories, the Hungarians are not Finno-Ugric, but descendants of the Huns and/or the Sumerians; the „Holy Crown” of Hungary has mystical powers, it is not originated in the 11th-12th centuries, but much older and it belonged to Attila, the king of the Huns; in the 17th century the Hungarian aristocrat and military leader, Miklós Zrínyi, didn't suffered an accident during hunting, but he was assassinated; Artúr Görgey, the Hungarian commander of the War of Independence in 1848-1849 didn't lay down the arms because the struggle against the superiority of the Russian army was hopeless, but because he committed treason; the Treaty of Trianon, which deprived Hungary of two-thirds of its territory in 1920, is due to the activities of members of the Freemasonry. In my lecture I'm looking for an answer to how historical misconceptions arise and become the beliefs of many. How should the professional historians relate to these. How it is possible that, despite all the refutations, the popularity of these conspiracy theories doesn't diminish, but explicitly increases in the beginning of the 21st century. Finally: why does the Hungarian Government support these misconceptions based on 'alternative facts'.

## The constraints of a violent life: experiences, beliefs and religion

[Morosini: Heretic condottieri, blasphemous soldiers: Italian Renaissance military beliefs and the case of Sigismondo Malatesta](#)

What were the religious beliefs of the Italian condottieri, the 15th century military captains? How the rules of military practice dealt with religious beliefs and how the captains' religiousness was perceived by their contemporaries? Soldiers and captains were known to be *bestemmiatori senza dio* (blasphemers without God), but how this widespread image reflected their true beliefs and religious experience? The subject is almost unexplored and the paper aims to share some light through the example of Sigismondo Malatesta (1417-1468), lord of Rimini and condottiero, whose supposed heresy was made famous thanks to the hatred between him and Pope Pius II. The paper will focus on two particular aspects. The first is the construction of the Tempio Malatestiano (Malatestian Temple), the new dome of the city, commissioned by Sigismondo and dedicated to the celebration of the Malatesta family, which is decorated with astrological symbols together with military images, and where the typical religious images are virtually absent. The second is the trial for heresy against Sigismondo, deeply wanted by Pius II: after being excommunicated two times (in 1460 and in 1462), Sigismondo was put on trial for heresy, found guilty in 1462, burned in effigy in Rome and ascribed within the damned in hell while he was still alive. The study of Sigismondo's example can help to analyze both how astrological and natural magic beliefs were embedded in the religious life of the military captains, and both how this series of practices and beliefs were perceived by the Roman Church.

[Fodor: "Thou shalt not kill": Romanian Soldiers and the Confrontation of their Religious Beliefs with the Reality of the Great War](#)

Christianity was originally built as a pacifist religion. Yet, the fathers of the church had to adapt the doctrine and accept war as a necessary evil (the just-war theory by Saint Augustine for instance) when the religion was recognized by the Imperial authorities. However, it has always been a dilemma both for Christian thinkers and for the soldiers as well, how could they respect the fifth

commandment when the possibility to murder someone was a permanent one. As long as military service was based on volunteering, this dilemma could have been avoided. The Great War left no such option, the general mobilization put men in the risk to murder their enemies on a daily basis. Thus, their religious beliefs were put to a test as confronted with the necessity of following the orders for winning the war or at least for defending their own lives. The paper tries to approach this dilemma through a study case on the Romanian soldiers. Our intention is to identify their thoughts and reactions on the battlefields and afterwards. Such an approach will contribute to a better understanding of how, or if, combatants managed to reconcile religious perceptions with their military obligations.

[Liliequist: The Swedish Menocchio: Lived experience and religious belief across time and culture \(download the handout here\)](#)

Separated by a century in time, the landmass of a continent and differing confessional communities, the religious attitudes and views of the Italian miller Menocchio (1532-1599) and the Swedish soldier-farmer Nils Olofsson Bååt (1637- 1696) still share numerous parallels and similarities. Both were repeatedly brought to trial for impious and heretic utterances and in court both presented and insisted on highly original understandings of the Creation and God's nature. While focus and themes differ in their accounts, there is a striking similarity in the tendency to bring down official abstract religious doctrines to a kind of pragmatic understanding based on everyday practical experiences. Is this only a coincidence or were Menocchio and Bååt representatives of what Carlo Ginzburg calls an oral peasant tradition of "religious materialism"? Or could this "materiality" be seen as a universal mode of thinking governed by a kind of "practical rationality" brought to the fore by their respective lived experiences? The latter requires a comparative approach, which is indeed the aim of this contribution. By comparing the specific cultural, social and personal situations under which Menocchio and Bååt lived, the manner in which subjective experience might have influenced their idiosyncratic thoughts and arguments will be discussed.

[Weber \(Dana\): Between Belief and Fiction: German Conceptions of Blood Brotherhood](#)

While conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Germany for a past project, I encountered several men – one of them an anthropologist - who told me that they had blood brotherhood relationships with other men. Blood brotherhood, to these interlocutors, signified a profound understanding and affinity shared with an exceptional friend beyond any cultural or social distinctions. While this is how this male relationship is popularly understood in German-speaking culture today, the social institution of blood brotherhood has been traced back to Eurasian prehistory and documented in numerous, especially pre-modern world cultures including the German one. In parallel with this male relationship's social and cultural development and reinterpretation, the earnest belief in it has been transported in numerous creative works throughout time. Examples can be found as early as in Norse mythology and Medieval literature. In current German popular imagination, this relationship has become "synonymous" with the bond shared between the fictional characters Winnetou, an Apache chief, and Old Shatterhand, a German frontiersman, created by best-selling Wild West adventure writer Karl May (1842-1912) at the end of the nineteenth century. (Koch and Hardacker 2016). While blood brotherhood as social relationship has already been researched historically and anthropologically, fictional narratives about it remain unexplored. My presentation focuses on blood brotherhood's conceptualization in three major works of modern German culture that exemplify how the belief in it has been reenergized and refashioned for the current era: the novels *Old Surehand* (1894-6) by Karl May and *Zauberberg* [*The Magic Mountain*, 1924] by Thomas Mann and Richard Wagner's music drama *Götterdämmerung* [*Dawn of the Gods*, 1876]. My

presentation will identify the main features of blood brotherhood as they transpire from these works in light of the socio-cultural contexts of their emergence during crucial periods of German national redefinition: the founding and apogee of the Wilhelminian Empire and the Weimar Republic. More specifically, I will analyze how German nineteenth-century dueling cultures, shifting gender perceptions, and new conceptions of the masculine body (as Claudia Bruns, Christopher Forth, Ute Frevert, and George L. Mosse have amply theorized them) have affected the modern refashioning of this relationship in narratives treading the thin line between belief and fiction.

## Women Philosophers between Doubt and Belief: Tullia d’Aragona, Margaret Cavendish and Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht

*This panel seeks to explore how three early modern women authors discuss and represent thoughts on philosophical doubt and religious belief in their various writings; in the love treatise Dialogo della infinità di amore by the Italian poet Tullia d’Aragona (c. 1501–1556), in the natural philosophy of the British Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673) and, in the theological poems of the Swedish poet Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht (1718–1763). Although writing in three separate centuries and in a variety of genres, the three women are all consequently making use of similar strategic rhetoric, creating a dialogue between themselves and the dominating ideas of their time and the past, be it Neoplatonism, Cartesianism or Enlightenment theory. Thus, at the same time as she is shaping her own philosophical position, d’Aragona repeatedly articulates doubt concerning ideas handed down by more dominating philosophical traditions, or the “class of philosophers” as she calls them. Instead, she gives room for thoughts inspired by Epicureanism, underlining the necessity of both bodily senses and individual experience to reach intellectual knowledge about love. Of specific interest is her argumentation on God’s decision to instore human with free will and its moral implications. Cavendish in her turn is aware of how our senses can be misleading and how artificial devices, such as scientific instruments, could magnify the error. On the other hand, strictly deductive modes of thinking could be as misleading. In Cavendish’s view, the sharp distinction between scientia and opiniones is simply invalid, as is the chasm between dogmatists and sceptics. Thus, she creates her own epistemological position within a constant play of opinions in which the privilege of human knowledge is called into question. Moving to the Enlightenment, Nordenflycht’s poems give preference to personal experience and shows a strategic use of doubt to critique what the poet sees as uncritical belief in religious authority. With various enlightenment philosophers as backdrop, Nordenflycht argues for the truth in personal experience and constructs a religious belief nurtured by philosophical doubt. This panel presents a timeline of women’s philosophical practice with the examples of these three prominent writers, unveiling both strategical and ideological similarities as well as differences between their respective representations of philosophical doubt and religious belief.*

### Vernqvist: “I want you to bow to experience”: Philosophical Doubt and the Importance of Experience and Free Will in Tullia d’Aragona’s Dialogo della infinità di amore

By going in extensive dispute with classical and contemporary writers on love and gender, like Plato and Marsilio Ficino, Tullia d’Aragona’s (c. 1551-1556) places her Dialogo della infinità di amore (1547) in the middle of the early modern debate on love and women. Through this dialogical rhetoric, doubt on a blind belief on solely intellectual experience is expressed repeatedly; for example, when the interlocutor Varchi asks if he should “bow for authority”, and the character Tullia answers: “No sir. I want you to bow to experience, which I trust by itself far more than all the reasons produced by the whole class of philosophers”. Thus, this paper traces how epicurean ideas, re-introduced through Bracciolini’s discovery of a manuscript of Lucretius De rerum natura 1417, influenced d’Aragona’s philosophy. Considering the significance given the relationship between the body, the senses, and the intellect, and at the same time her argumentation on God’s decision to instore human with free will and its moral implications, this paper shows how the incorporated

dismissal of women in for example Neoplatonic ideas – where the (female) body is connected to base and lascivious love in opposition to the ennobling and honest love of (male) souls – is countered and re-written by d’Aragona. Not only did her work pave way for and inspire other women writers but should also be considered in the history of the free-thinking movement.

### [Rosengren: The Constant Play of Opinions. Margaret Cavendish on Scientific Belief and Unbelief](#)

In her natural philosophy Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673) came out as an unorthodox rationalist. She was not averse to sensory knowledge, but aware of how our senses can mislead us and how artificial devices, such as scientific instruments, telescopes and microscopes, could magnify the error. However, strictly deductive modes of thinking in line of Cartesianism could be as misleading and artificial as the search for nature’s essence in a microscope. In the search of reliable facts, the sharp distinction between scientia (true and certain) and opinioniones (shifting and changeable) must be considered invalid, as is the chasm between dogmatists and sceptics, or believers and atheists. According to the metaphysics of Cavendish, everything in nature is knowledgeable and “no man, with all the force of logic, will ever be able to prove, that he is either the chief above all other creatures, or that he only knows and worships God, and no natural creature else” (Observations upon natural Philosophy (1666) “II:XIII Of the Knowledge of man”) The paper discusses Cavendish’s epistemological position in the constant play of opinions, a play in which the privilege of human knowledge is called into question.

### [Amundsen Bergström: Cure This Doubting Soul. Philosophical Doubt and Religious Belief in Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht’s](#)

In her poem 1744 poem “Wigtiga Frågor til en Lärde. Med Auktorens Egit Svar” [Important Questions to a Scholar. With the Author’s Own Reply], Swedish poet Hedvig Charlott Nordenflycht (1718–1763) describes herself as “infected with doubt”. The enlightenment philosophy developed by “Newton, Leibniz, Locke and Bayle”, she explains in the poem, has led her to question her religious beliefs. Is the Lutheran faith into which she was brought up, quite simply, unbelievable? This paper will discuss philosophical doubt as a recurrent and powerful theme in Nordenflycht's theological poems, written between 1744 and 1763. It will explore how doubt is used to critique what Nordenflycht sees as credulous belief in religious authority, but also address doubt as a philosophical method aimed at reconciling different belief systems. Lastly, it will consider personal experience and enlightenment theory as two sources of philosophical doubt, continuously brought together by Nordenflycht in her poetic attempts to outline a form of religious belief that is able to harbor doubt.

## Stereotypes and representations

### [Malmstedt: Shapeshifting and premodern perceptions of reality. Testimonies from a 17th century witch trial](#)

During the witch trials in the Swedish province of Bohuslän in the late 17th century, several testimonies and confessions emerged about witches who had taken the shape of various animals, such as birds, cats and dogs. These stories appeared in accusations as well as in confessions and in the testimonies of eyewitnesses. It seems to have been a widespread belief that some people could shape-shift, and as shapeshifting appeared among the grounds for verdicts in several cases it is likely



that also members of the local courts and the Court of Appeal shared this belief. There may have been connections to far older notions in Nordic culture about shape-shifting. In Old Norse mythology and literature there are examples of some people's supernatural ability to change form at will, their soul taking the shape of different animals. However, there were also testimonies of a belief that the Devil could appear in a variety of animal forms – a view then common across Christendom. The court never showed the slightest doubt on this front. Furthermore, the true nature of matter could also be hidden beneath the surface. During the trials several ordinary objects were revealed as disguised magical tools. The discrepancy between appearance and true nature seems to have been a recurring feature of the premodern worldview. Everyone seems to have been aware that reality had different layers, and that something's true essence was not always visible to the eye. The Church's teachings had emphasised this relationship, which was fundamental to the celebration of the Eucharist, where the nature of wine and bread was altered without any visible changes.

[Iannuzzi: "Addictedness to pretended witchcraft": Indigenous knowledge, European travellers and the future as an epistemological arena in eighteenth-century North America](#)

A complex negotiation of what gives knowledge a solid foundation took place, in eighteenth-century European culture, around the desire to know the future and the techniques employed to control it. The problem of not being able to know directly what does not fall under direct experience - addressed by historical disciplines in relation to the past and the spaces of uncertainty opened up by Pyrrhonic debates - was also projected onto the time to come. The predictability and pliability of the future called into question the epistemological foundations of the European system of disciplinary knowledge, which saw the progressive exclusion of beliefs considered irrational by scientists and philosophers. To those notions and techniques, on the other hand, large sectors of European societies continued to turn, as demonstrated by the perduring popularity of astrological almanacs. God's domain in the Christian religious sphere, the future was also at the centre of processes of secularisation of time that have been anything but unilinear. This paper seeks to illuminate a hitherto understudied aspect of the negotiation of the divide between belief and unbelief with regard to the future: the representation of the indigenous forms of knowledge with which Europeans come into contact in North America. Native American cultures were already an object of interest in the theorisations of progress and stadial development compiled in the "old world" by writers of treatises and encyclopaedias, well known to current historiography. More rarely existing scholarship has addressed how this related to conceptualisations of the future. In cross-cultural encounters the negotiation of the boundaries between knowledge and superstition is particularly evident. The knowability of the future became, in the accounts of European travellers, a privileged ground for comparison between systems of belief, and a field of religious and methodological contention. By reading texts written by English-speaking travellers with different cultural and religious backgrounds, such as John Lawson, Bernard Romans, and Jonathan Carver, this paper illuminates the role that the encounter with the American "otherness" played in the construction of a European epistemological monopoly on the possibility of conceiving and controlling the time to come.

[Gusarova: This is not what she really looks like: disbelieving the images of women](#)

The proposed paper will look at the unintentional overlaps in feminist and masculinist discourses concerning women's appearance. While feminist scholars have done much work examining and deconstructing the status of the woman as unreliable witness, especially in the context of testimonies dealing with sexual assault and harassment, and shown the 'truth' inherent in one's



words to be determined by power relations, this conclusion does not seem to extend to the 'truth' of one's image. Second-wave feminism's deep suspicion of fashion and beauty cultures as patriarchal capitalism's tools for subjugating women has been carried into the twenty first century with the only difference that nowadays the focus is not so much on clothes and make-up as on mediated images and the new technologies used to enhance and 'improve' them. The paper will look at such projects as Jezebel's one-time routine feature of exposing the excesses of Photoshop in order to ask who is meant to benefit from such unmasking, in which way and at whose expense? By scrutinizing the image of a particular celebrity, systemic pressures of today's globalized culture of appearances and the logic of media industry are, quite unhelpfully, addressed on the level of individual (ir)responsibility. Besides, such revelations effectively feed into misogynist representations of women as 'fakes' perpetuated in the so-called 'men's rights' communities. Comparing these otherwise strongly opposed discourses, I will highlight their similarities with regard to the intense mistrust of women's images they promote, and argue for more sustainable ways of criticizing the coercive media standards of perfection.

### [Moretti: A story of sorcery and maleficia: the perpetuation of witchcraft myths as a self-defence strategy in 18th-century Italy](#)

On the 19th of July 1724, Maria Rosa Bazzechi spontaneously presented herself in front of the vicar representing the Holy Office in Porto Ferraio in Tuscany (Italy). Maria Rosa accused herself of having written a pact with the devil in her own blood, of having practiced and taught sorcery and among other despicable acts, of having murdered children by drinking their blood. In seeking help and absolution from the vicar, she presented him and the rest of the tribunal with the story of a miserable life with abundant graphic details and in so doing, the life of a real woman who suffered incredibly and who tried to make her life better by using a little magic and creating a fantasy world to justify her miserable condition was revealed. This paper wants to discuss and analyse the reasons – psychological and social – behind Maria Rosa's sponte comparente, her cognitive perception of the supernatural universe of the time and it wants to analyse her need to publically express her inner emotions through a narrative based on witchcraft mythologies and folk memories belonging to a more ancient worldview stretching back nearly 300 years. In her elaborate confession, these mythologies and memories seem to have been used by Maria Rosa as metaphors to explain and justify her transgressions and her socially-unacceptable behaviour. On the other hand, could these metaphors be seen as ultimately representing a psychological coping mechanism through which she could make sense of her sad life?

### **Self-consciousness, faith and (self-) writing: an individual in manuscript tradition of Middle Ages and Modern period**

#### [Soshnikova: Women and Faith in the late 15th–early 16th Centuries in the French Manuscript and Printed Book](#)

The report focuses on the reflection of the subject of faith and the perception of women in Renaissance France in book culture and bases on the materials of the Russian National Library (RNL) and the National Library of France (BnF). In Renaissance France a woman and her status were commonly discussed in society. In view of "the woman question" ("querelle des femmes") there was a rapidly growing literature dedicated to women. A special topic in such literature was the connection of a woman with the Christian religion as well as the image of a woman, which was

formed in accordance with the religious views of the Renaissance society. A number of moral treatises on women and married life are preserved in the RNL and the BnF. Among them there are translations and adaptations of ancient authors works, galleries of biblical, pagan and Christian women. They pay great attention to the image of a woman in society and to the image that women were supposed to follow, the religiosity of a woman and her perception from the point of view of the religious ideas of the time. Some of the manuscripts from the RNL, which will be considered in the report, were the part of the royal library of the French king Louis XII and his wife Anne of Brittany, who was one of the key figures in France at that period. The image of the faithful queen was one of the topics in the manuscript books from the royal library. The Christian religion and the ancient past were closely intertwined in the light of humanistic thought. A number of manuscripts and printed books demonstrate how the synthesis of these motives has formed the female role model, an image-ideal, an image of a believing and devoted woman.

### [Perämäki: Belief and unbelief in times of crisis: faith in the wartime diaries of young Jewish women](#)

In the first decades of the 20th Century, most of the Jewish population living in Western Europe was quite secular and was not very devout in the practice of their own religion. They might only visit the synagogue in rare occasions, did not celebrate all the Jewish religious holidays, and were quite unorthodox in the religious education of their children. Many young Jews saw themselves more as nationals of their home countries, for example, than as Jews. This paper examines how the Second World War, and the Jewish persecution affected the religious identity of the young Jewish people living in German-occupied Western and Northern Europe. Many children and youngsters were forced to face their Jewish roots the first time when the persecution of the Jews began, and the discriminating Jewish laws valid in Germany since Adolf Hitler came into power in the 1930s came into effect in the occupied countries during the war. Especially the law that ordered the Jews to carry the yellow Star of David was a very devastating experience for the many secular young Jews who might not have even identified themselves as Jews before. The focus of the paper is on the diaries of young Jewish women from German-occupied France, the Netherlands and Norway. What did the diarists write about faith in their texts? What kind of religious identity, if any, did they have? How did the war and persecution change their relationship to faith and religion?

### [Shchukina: Beliefs of the Russian North in the collective written tradition of the middle of the XVIII –XX centuries](#)

Mythological beliefs influenced daily and cultural life of our ancestors, and, in part, appear nowadays. As time went on, the mythological principle turned, for instance, into the etiquettical ones. For example, when we yawn, we cover our mouth with our hand (because it is a rule of etiquette and not a way to protect yourself from evil spirits). It also entered every sphere of our life. For example, we sing lullabies to our children without thinking about their magical incantatory function. We call subconsciously “Domovoy, domovoy, play and give it back!” when we lose something. And there are a lot of similar examples. If we consider folklore as a system of rituals and genres, it can be noted, that all of them have a strong mythological basis. It can be traced in ritual folklore: in calendar ritualism, life cycle rituals (family and household rituals), other occasions (rituals on moving to a new house, buying cattle, as well as healing incantations and love spells); and in non-ritual folklore: mythological stories, proverbs, sayings, superstitions and omens/superstitious belief, and many others. This research work is based on the material of the folklore tradition of the headwaters of the Northern Dvina River – the central part of the Russian North. It is presented in written sources: records of collectors, personal records: personal diaries of

traditional bearers, local writers and local historians. The collective and local history activities of the traditional bearers are considered as a way to preserve the local folk heritage, to pass on “knowledge” to the next generations. The folklore material that was previously in oral form passed on to us as a written text, which creates favorable conditions for studying folk traditions of the past centuries.

## The invention of tradition: the role of beliefs in constructing heritage

Schwenke: [The preservation of the Greater Princess Vlei Conservation Area: the role of myth in forging collective memory and identity in Cape Town, South Africa](#)

In this paper I will address the cultural significance of the Greater Princess Vlei Conservation Area, consisting of a vast wetland (vlei or vleiland in the Afrikaans language) and two lakes, Princess Vlei and Little Princess Vlei, located in the vicinity of the City of Cape Town. On 12th October 2021, after about 12 years of consistent endeavours, this area was declared a provincial heritage site. The project “Dressing the Princess” became the catchphrase of the Princess Vlei Forum. Princess Vlei and Little Princess Vlei were once connected, but have separated and are now divided by several hundred meters. The origin of the name Princess Vlei is linked to the myth of the powerful woman chief of the Goringhaiqua. This was one of the groups within the indigenous Southern African tribe the Khoe or Khoi-Khoi. Her stronghold was a huge cave in the Constantia Mountain which runs along the Cape Peninsula. A historical incident now enters the legend of Princess Vlei. In 1510 the Portuguese explorer Dom Francisco d’ Almeida (c.1450–1510) and his men were involved in a conflict with the Khoe during which he and a large number of his crew succumbed. Legend has it that Princess Vlei was abducted and either murdered or taken to Portugal by the survivors. Her tears formed Princess Vlei or Little Princess Vlei and in retribution one person drowns there each year. The question is what made the community defend the area when in 2008 it came under threat of development? The geography of the area, environmental impact studies, historical incidents, racial segregation and apartheid, an indigenous ballet, a painting, a song and ultimately the myth of Princess Vlei, all contributed to forge a collective memory and identity. It is one of the few Khoe myths about a natural feature in the City of Cape Town that still persists today and which was instrumental in the preservation of this culturally historic and biodiverse space.

Van Vollenhoven: [The contested history of the capital city of South Africa: historical knowledge, belief and myth creation](#)

After the dawn of the democratisation of South Africa in 1994, government were under pressure to bring change to historical narratives in the country. This included name changes, the relocation of monuments and memorials and the changing of the school syllabus. These issues led to warm debates between the protagonists and antagonists of change. One of the most heated of these debates surrounded the possible name change of the capital city from Pretoria to Tshwane. The geographical area of the capital was inhabited since the Stone Age, as far back as 1 million years BP. The first Iron Age people moved into the area around 1450 AD. Roundabout ca 1630 these people were conquered by a Ndebele group under their chief Musi. Dutch farmers, later to be known as Afrikaners, settled in the area in 1839. The town of Pretoria was established in 1855 and was named after one of the Afrikaner heroes, Andries Pretorius. The town served as capital of various political institutions since 1860. As such, there is a strong socio-political importance attributed thereto. Since the name of the town is exclusively linked to what is perceived to be the policy of Apartheid (separate development), it is believed to be important that it should be changed. Tshwane is the

name of one of the sons of Musi. However, anthropological research questions his existence. The paper discusses the historical background to the names Pretoria and Tshwane as well as aspects of the debate around the possible name change. Lastly, it looks at the discourse between the two opposing parallel histories and how this leads to the deliberate creation of myths to promote a specific view.

### [Pascar: Reinterpretations of religious images in Romanian contemporary art. Faith, meanings and taboos](#)

In May 2015, in downtown Bucharest, a contemporary mural painting depicting Saint George was removed just less than a month after its completion, due to neighborhood orthodox parishioners considering it offensive. In spring of 2020, a marketing agency displayed several billboards throughout Bucharest with works of art designed by contemporary artist Wanda Hutira, portraying generic doctor figures with halos and other conventional saint symbols; once again, public reaction and pressure coming from the Orthodox Church and from the political arena pushed the agency to take the images down, soon after their exposure. In July 2021, a pastiche painting by contemporary artist Genu Berlo depicting Rublev's famous Holy Trinity icon, however upside down, was removed from an exhibition near Bucharest, because it was considered religiously inappropriate by some of the museum regular staff and management; moreover, a few days later, the whole exhibition was closed, as a reaction to the frequent on-site protests of a few local orthodox priests which considered that nude abstract paintings, like the ones exhibited there, were inadequate for displaying on the premises of a historical site. This paper aims to take a closer look at these artistic endeavors, on one side attempting to broaden the analysis of the artistic and figurative considerations behind the formalistic choices of such portrayals, and on another side trying to bring forth a cultural and an anthropological interpretation for some specific public and institutional reactions to these works of art, basing our inquiry on concepts such as transgression and taboo.

## The long durée of supernatural narratives and practices

### [Ohrvik: Layers of magical beliefs: A case of evil eye in a Norwegian police report from the 1950'ties](#)

Ever since the concept of disenchantment was introduced by Max Weber in a lecture in 1918, the "disenchantment of the world" have come to denote the opposition between religion and science where religion in modern society was devaluated in favor of scientific thought and reasoning. The idea of the disenchantment has been agreed upon and applied, discussed and criticized among scholars ever since its introduction. Among the most recent critics of the concept is the American historian of religion, Jason Josephson-Storm (2017), who has voiced critics of both the concept of disenchantment, which he labels a "myth", and the concept of re-enchantment. According to Josephson-Storm there has not been a decline in belief in magic and mysticism in the modern western world. Following Josephson-Storm's notions on modern magical beliefs, this paper will examine a newly released police record from a case in the north of Norway in the 1950'ties involving accusations of using "the evil eye". The paper will examine the police investigation and the questioning of the persons involved. How is magical belief conceptualized in the police report, and how does the authority react to claims of magical acts?

## Mihuț: The memory of the ancestors beyond the necropolis space. A case study from contemporary Romania

The commemoration of ancestors involves, as is well known, the staging of a set of rites that take place in sacred places, such as cemeteries, but also in domestic places, where once the defunct lived. Such human actions are an extension of the rites of passage related to death, in the sense defined by Arnold Van Gennep for more than a century, but they also reflect the social and cultural framework of their manifestation. The extent of the posthumous commemoration actions, expressing the size and cohesion of the domestic group, participates in its identity construction, as many specialists have pointed out since M. Halbwachs. Our study intends to analyse the evolution of these posthumous commemoration practices in the contemporary Romanian rural environment that is going through intense processes of economic, social, and cultural transformation after the fall of the communist regime. The analysis will stop at the materiality of this posthumous commemoration in a rural plain settlement in the Vrancea County (Vulturul commune) whose inhabitants, affected by the economic decline of the last 30 years, have largely chosen to go to work in the countries of EU. The aim of our approach is to explore the mechanisms of redefining the commemoration space involving both the necropolis and the household. We also intend to identify the possible relationship between these commemorative spaces constructed by the family groups and the social space, considering the latter concept as an area of competition with material and symbolic stakes (P. Bourdieu, 2020, *Habitus and field General Sociology*), but also as a space of constant social interaction (taking into account the development of the Goffman concept of social interaction by C. Camelleri and H. Malewska-Peyre (*Socialization and Identity Strategies*, 1997 (1980))).

## Gicu: Storytelling culture: popular belief systems in a mountain region in Romania at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century

In the history of folk narrative scholarship, the main prose genres have been folktale, legend, and myth. Following in the tradition of Herder and the Grimms, scholars draw fine distinctions between these folk prose genres. Thus, the most profound difference between folktales and other folk prose genres is considered to be the matter of belief. In traditional folktales, taking place in a clearly detached time-space, listeners are not supposed to believe in the story. On the other hand, myth is based on belief: for the bearer of a myth, the events described are true. An inherent true claim is also present in the legend, which generally reports of extraordinary events in the lives of ordinary humans, frequently in an encounter with the supernatural. In my presentation I will try to identify how these different systems of belief functioned among the peasant storytellers from Muscel, a mountain region in Romania. The time span of the analysis, from the end of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century, will allow me to identify how practices and beliefs were passed down by families of storytellers from one generation to the next, and also how the popular systems of belief were influenced by the modernization process that affected in that period the Romanian traditional rural world.

## Religion, women and their representation

### Kuha: Faith in the everyday lives of Lutheran clergymen's wives in late 17th-century Finland

In Lutheran culture after the Reformation, funeral sermons served both to commemorate the dead and inspire their audience through examples of pious Christian lives. The eulogies at the end of

funeral sermons describing the life course of the deceased are highly conventional, but they have been shown to also represent individual religious agency. This presentation will examine the life courses of Lutheran clergymen's wives described in eulogies and analyse what kinds of religious meanings were attached to different phases of female life in funeral sermons. The material is mainly from Finland that was at the time a part of the Swedish realm, a state committed to the Lutheran confession. After the Reformation, with the introduction of clerical marriage in the Protestant areas of Europe, clerical households became models of Christian family life and symbols of active spirituality. In funeral sermons, clergymen's wives were portrayed to have lived according to Lutheran values and fulfilled their vocation as devoted wives and loving mothers. They had lived in fear of God and active devotion that culminated in the spiritual experience on the deathbed. Using the concept of 'lived religion' as an analytical tool, I will examine how the life course of clergymen's wives portrayed in funeral sermons were used to create cultural scripts to be followed during the life course of an ideal female Christian.

#### [Ahonen: Gendered cultures of belief: Christina Rosenvinge's Eve, Lot's wife, Siren, and Echo](#)

This presentation will examine gendered cultures of belief through the works of Spanish singer-songwriter Christina Rosenvinge (b. 1964). Rosenvinge is a long-time figure in music, having worked in the field from the beginning of the 1980s until the present, mainly in Spain, but also in the United States. Hence, she has had a long and versatile career that has taken shape in different locations in different times. Rosenvinge uses concepts connected to identities in various ways in her music and even suggests new ways to understand them. Thus, here, the stories have a storyteller, and as Peter Burke suggests, through performative acts, the individual becomes a central improviser of culture, containing both linguistic and functional dimensions. The focus of my research is on how Rosenvinge has negotiated her place in music over the years and at the same time, through her work, raised broader ethical questions that surface in a specific historical context. In this presentation, I will explore her songs about the biblical and mythological characters: Eve, Lot's wife, Siren, and Echo. Rosenvinge posits these female figures as the protagonists in her songs and criticises the various moral beliefs attached to them. I will demonstrate the importance of examining the meaning of these songs from a cultural historical perspective. This type of analysis opens new horizons of understanding in a specific historical context, which is especially valuable in an ethical sense. This is because stories that suggest new perspectives and ways to act out broaden our understanding of ourselves and surroundings, and in this way, our sense of possible. Ethics are developed through our sense of possible and therefore, need to be redefined on a case-by-case basis. By doing so, the grand narratives that appear to us as natural can be revealed.

#### [Hägglund: Adopted nuns and the community of benefactors at the Birgittine monastery Nådendal](#)

The Birgittine monastery Nådendal (Lat. Vallis Gracie) was founded in the diocese of Turku in 1438. The monastery was a collaboration between the Swedish Council of the Realm, the bishop of Turku and the local nobility. The monastery was active for about a century until it was eventually closed down after the reformation in the 1520s. During its active period the monastery received many donations of landed estates from the laity living in the neighbouring parishes of the monastery. It was common practice that the donated property as well functioned as an entrance fee for a daughter of the donors. The daughters who became members of the female community in Nådendal were expected to pray for the welfare of the souls of their family members. However, those who did not have any daughters to send to the monastery did as well give donations for women to enter the community. In these cases, the donors declared that they had adopted the women and gave



them to the monastery as their own daughters. The practice was a means for people who did not have any daughters of their own to create a personal bond to the Birgittines and receive private prayers from a Birgittine sisters. From the perspective of the women, the adopting practice enabled women of lesser means to pay the entrance fee and join the monastic community. The women were expected to especially mention the persons who had paid their entry into the monastic community in their daily prayers. In this paper, I explore the practice of adopting women from the perspective of lived religion as an agent for the construction of a community of pious benefactors around a Birgittine monastery.

## Contemporary discussion on religion

[Trapletti: “My religion deserves respect as well as yours”](#): to claim the prerogatives as a religion to challenge the public relevance of religions

In western societies the relevance of christianity and its influence on the life of communities are debated. Some citizens, who do not recognize themselves in historically attested and mainstream christian traditions, argue that states and other public institutions are granting excessive 'privileges' to christian groups. This situation allows some churches to interfere also in the lives of those who are not believers. In the 21st century two new experiences grew in the U.S.A. public arena to oppose to the requests advanced by specific christian groups. They employed a 'mimetic tactic': instead of challenging religions from an explicitly secular point of view, the opposers simulated the physiognomy of a religious movement and claimed that what they were demanding were religious needs. The first case is the Pastafarian Church, founded in 2005 to counter the proposal to teach the Intelligent Design as a scientific theory in public schools: Pastafarians asked that their ministers (who wear pirate clothes) could teach pupils the hypothesis that the universe has been created by the Flying Spaghetti Monster, their drunk divinity, according to his Demential Design. Similarly, Pastafarians requested to be allowed to appear in official photos (as driver's licence photo) wearing a colader, their holy headgear, as well as catholic nuns can wear a veil, sikhs a turban, muslim women a hijab. The second case is The Satanic Temple, founded in 2012. It is a non-theistic group in the tradition of the so-called rationalist satanism. It demanded that school days should be opened by an inspirational speech dedicated to Satan, if the biblical ones were accepted; that monuments dedicated to Baphomet should be placed in public squares where christian ones are placed; and that satanic ministers should offer support in hospitals, prisons, in the army and everywhere ministers of other religions are admitted. It could be complained that Pastafarianism and The Satanic Temple are not true religions, but rather parodies. It could be suspected that these people do not actually aspire to the recognition of their alleged religious principles. But, in the name of the religious freedom, they invoked the equidistant behavior of the civil institutions. And the requests they made, that may appear abnormal to a part of the audience, could highlight that also the concessions to historical religions were inappropriate.

[Biano: Materializing the 'Return of Religion' in 1990s' narratives and cultures of Un/ Belief](#)

In the last three decades at least, it has become common sense to talk about “The Return of Religion” and to situate the peak and acceleration of such a return – whatever its meaning may be – at the beginning of the new century, more or less explicitly identifying 9/11 as the main turning point. It is possible to challenge this trope on different levels: theoretically, historically, sociologically. An effective path is to contextualize the different narratives and many genealogies of the concepts in which the rhetoric of “The Return of Religion” embodied, such as reenchantment,

desecularization, and, the most intriguing and ambiguous one, postsecularism. The Nineties is the decade during which a vast debate arose – reasoning around some shared concerns vaguely related to the secular-religious divide –and during which we assisted to radical changes in the narratives about beliefs and unbelief, not only related to religion. The presentation will highlight how narratives of the return of religion have both raised from and shaped a more complex and articulated network of signifying practices and representations related to the changes in the way different sectors of Western societies and people have thought themselves in relation to the sphere of un/belief – on a broader spectrum than just on the strictly religious ground – in the fields of intellectual, literary, and popular cultures.

### Cash: Belief and Unbelief in the Postsocialist Revivals of Christian Orthodoxy: Sketching the Outlines of Religious and Political Conservatism in Local Contexts

This paper reflects on a 2016 quantitative and qualitative study of Church-State Relations in the Republic of Moldova. The study was motivated by local and international concern that having developed over twenty-five years, the postsocialist religious revival was endangering the state's secular foundations and its commitments to civic and human rights. The results of that study predicted no immediate danger from revival, and has so far proved accurate: intensifying engagement with the Orthodox Church has not produced consistent patterns of belief that have generated or support an illiberal political turn. It is tempting to invoke the "Orthodox pattern" known from sociological studies and from theological reflections to explain away the multiplicity of divergences from expected correlations as inherent to Orthodoxy. After all, Orthodoxy anticipates incomplete and imperfect belief and practice. However, in this paper I attempt an ethnographic reading, by focusing on data concerning the beliefs, practices, and political views of middle-aged women. This social group is particularly important for the religious revival yet rather more liberal than other social groups on issues related to sex, divorce, and abortion. I take this data – concerning a set of inconsistencies that seems especially pronounced -- as a starting point to explore how and why the "Orthodox pattern" itself is created, normalized, and maintained. How and why is it to be expected that people's beliefs and practices will be inconsistent? How and why do social processes converge to yield a religiously and politically conservative society despite significant divergences in individual, and cohort-specific, practices and beliefs? How and why do older women become the most conservative segment of society? Attempting to answer these questions is important for understanding, inter alia, the local and cross-societal dynamics at play in the emergence, intensification, and subsidence of religious nationalism in past and present contexts.

### Collective Experiences Turning into Collective Belief. Socialist Generations in Finnish Society from 1918 until 1970s

*Collective memories are usually based on strong and violent experiences, such as war, discrimination, and the continued exclusion of society. If they are not deconstructed or dealt with between all parties, it tends to get stronger and pass from generation to generation – they become the core values, even beliefs of the ruling or oppressed group. The Civil War (1918) in Finland was silenced for decades in public by winners. Losers built their own interpretation at the bottom of their experiences. In this panel we examine how previous experiences of political exclusion influenced for decades in Finnish labour movement through three generations – children and youth of 1920s, 1940s and 1970s. First, Mervi Kaarninen examines Red children's experiences in 1920s, when winners of the Civil War strictly interpret political, moral and social conditions for a decent citizen. Secondly, Ulla Aatsinki studies, how socialist politicians recalled their social and political ideas and activity in the childhood and young in the frame of political heritage. Thirdly, Liisa Lulu examines how intergenerational family memories actualized into radical activity in the turn of 1960s and 1970s.*

*According to the papers it is obvious that the more time passed, the more significant experiences and memories of the Civil War became. It also reflected the total silence, that was not broken publicly and academically until 1960s.*

### Mervi Kaarninen: The memories and experiences on the Civil War through Children's eyes

In the spring of 1918, the Civil War in Finland divided the nation into winners and losers –Whites and Reds. These divisions affected almost all citizens, including children. The war tore the society apart, and the consequences of the war were the most severe in the families of the Red the losers. In this presentation I focus to analyse how the people who as a child lived through the war and it's the consequences. How they remembered the war and how they interpreted their experiences about 50 years after the end of the war. The construction of the childhood experiences began in childhood. Life stories include people's own perceptions of their lives. They are influenced both by the time of the event, the Civil War, and the time of the narration, the 1970s. I focus on the city of Tampere where the Civil War and its consequences were felt deeply. Tampere was a key industrial center in Finland. And the fall of "Red Tampere" marked the beginning of the end of Red rule in southern Finland. As research data, I use a large oral history collection entitled Tampere Political Heritage. The thematically structured interviews were conducted in 1972–76. They can be interpreted as life-story interviews including themes from early childhood until the 1970s. The Civil War and its aftermath were among the themes discussed and open a view on the war from a child's eyes.

### Ulla Aatsinki: Childhood as an ideological environment in politicians' memoirs

In this paper, I focus on Finnish socialist politicians' childhood experiences and memoirs on political values, and traditions. My aim is to find out how they 50 years later interpreted their childhood environment, experiences, and memories as the basis for their political activity and how they reflected them in relation to collective memories of labour movement. As a research material I use the collection of The Veteran Members of Parliament Oral History Archive, more closely interviews of politicians who were children in 1930's and 1940's. Most of them were MP after the second world war, generally from 1950s to 1970s. These veteran politicians lived their childhood at post-Civil War or post II WW era, when the ideological disagreements were deep and visible. In 1930's Finland was set up on the Civil War winners' ideological values including national, patriotic, and religious beliefs and excluding communist, later also social democratic, and secular ideologies and ideas. At the post war era in the 1940's the situation reversed, when communist movement became legal and right-wing organisations were disbanded. For working class children and youth these changes meant new kind of freedom to participate in political activity such as socialist child organisations.

### Liisa Lalu: "We are all children of the soldiers" –the 1970s youth communism as intergenerational memory of 1918 in Finland

In this paper, I examine the Marxist-Leninist movement of 1970s Finland through the intergenerational family memories of former youth activist. 1918 was the trauma of their grandparents, great-uncles, and -aunts – family memories are transmitted vertically, but also sideways. After liberal and radical 1968, the year of hope and rage, the revolt of the youth in Finland channeled into political parties. By 1971, many youths on the left had adopted Marxist-Leninist ideology and the authoritarian, pro-soviet minority of the Finnish Communist Party. "If the 1960s were a decade of peace and flowers, the 1970s were one of politics, comrades, and steel", historian Jukka Relander has described. 'We are all children of the soldiers', was how the prominent and controversial author Hannu Salama defined his generation. The more political and organized 1970s

in Finland also contained references to a more remote past. By the Marxist-Leninist turn many young people denied the national tradition of the elder generations. One reason was that the traumatic memory of the civil war of 1918 had not faded. The frontlines of the past were still dividing society, not only in politics but also in labour unions and schoolyards. This division and the dividing history seeped into the minds of radical youths and now they took the side of the lost ones: the reds and the proletariat.

## Beliefs in the natural world and in non-human agency

### Strachan: *Striking at the Heart of the Matter: Lightning and Belief in Ancient Rome*

For many in the ancient world, the awe-inspiring and terrifying power of lightning was in itself evidence enough that it was an altogether supernatural force. Such unpredictability and violence seen as worldly manifestations of a wrathful god, however, increased by orders of magnitude the terror it induced. Indeed, fear of lightning could conceivably be construed as the catalyst for religion in the first place. Cicero, who had a very slippery relationship with augury, argues in *De Divinatione* (2.42) that it is perfectly evident that the belief that thunder and lightning were caused by omnipotent Jupiter arose from the awe and fear it excited in primitive man. Petronius makes a similar suggestion in *Poemata* 3 in which he describes fear first creating gods in the world when thunderbolts fell from the sky and city walls were blown apart in flames. Lucretius devotes much time in his *De Rerum Natura* (1.931) to rationalising lightning as a natural phenomenon explicitly to alleviate such fear. Seneca and Pliny the Elder also made similarly gallant attempts. Their various explanations of 'pure substance', 'fiery vapours', and winds 'rolling in the hollow parts of the clouds' are often far off the mark, however, and even where they approach something more scientifically credible, such as Seneca's 'collocation of atoms' causing the fire which generates lightning, it is doubtful whether such explanations came as any consolation in the face of an actual storm. This paper will explore the ancient conversations surrounding lightning as an intrinsically metaphysical argument that struck at the heart of fundamental beliefs about how the world worked, what was happening in the heavens, and the nature of the forces behind observed phenomena.

### Conti: *Molding and Contesting Religious Beliefs in Late Antique Rome*

It is in such an age of change and transition as the later Roman times, between the 3rd and the 5th centuries C.E. that Christian identities took shape by contesting the "pagan" ones through texts composed and employed as a means of Christianization. Starting with the intellectuals known as "apologists", such as Tertullian or Minucius Felix, as well as with figures of clergymen such as preacher and bishop Maximus of Turin, early Christian writers offer the intriguing possibility to discuss how certain religious cultures were being shaped at the expense of others in the late-antique Roman world. Born in the period of emperor Theodosius' Edict of Thessalonica (380 C.E.) and died after the middle of the following century, Maximus of Turin composed and preached more than one hundred sermons that still await an exhaustive analysis and contextualization. It is through Maximus' preached word that we can reconstruct the themes, methods, and strategies used by a bishop of a Roman Church on the rise to construct Christian identities and beliefs in opposition to other identities labelled as pagan. In Sermon 1, for instance, Maximus elaborates on the primary role of Peter and Paul among the apostles, thus endorsing a specific political/ecclesiological perspective, while in a range of other sermons he dwells on listing and contesting a series of beliefs, practices, and rituals considered to be pagan while endorsing other models, such as those of the still close church of the martyrs, in order to promote certain behavioral models and refuse others.

This paper aims at discussing how primary - and in some cases little studied - figures of early Christian writers took part in the process of Christianization of a still far from Christian late Roman culture.

### Ebert: Barking at the Moon and other Erroneous Behaviour – Concurrent Modes of ‘Explaining’ the Natural and Social World during the Carolingian Age (ca. 750–950 CE)

In the 820s abbot Rabanus Maurus preached to his brothers in the monastery of Fulda (Germany) about the uselessness of barking at the eclipsing moon. Being responsible for the correct behaviour of his Christian community, Rabanus was deeply concerned about the erroneous ideas and practices that seem to have been accepted among people in his jurisdiction in case of extraordinary phenomena. Rabanus was a representative of the educated Carolingian world. In this world, experts explained the social and biophysical environment by using Christian ideas and beliefs. This was understood as ‘state of the art knowledge’. According to this expertise, natural phenomena as well as social or biophysical shocks (e.g., droughts, wars, epidemics, famine) could be explained as God’s punishment for human misbehaviour. Measures taken to mitigate shocks of this kind followed this perception and resulted in practices to regain the Almighty’s benevolence (e.g., prayers, fasting, rogations). However, administrative documents and letters from the Carolingian age indicate that explanations and practices existed among the population that competed to the ‘academic’ interpretation. Some individuals, for example, were accused for being “magicians” who stole grain and therefore should be murdered. Clerics argued with the accusers and tried to reason with them. By combining palaeoclimatological and historical data the paper will focus on exemplary extreme events during the Carolingian age that endangered people’s livelihood severely. After giving a brief overview of the natural and social context it will address the following aspects: What ‘facts’ and ‘alternative facts’ circulated during the time? Which (new) ideas were thought to solve problems most likely? How and by which means was interpretive dominance achieved? Which groups did benefit from this? Chances and limitations due to the historical and palaeoclimatological record?

### Terzea-Ofrim and Ofrim: Beliefs in the Magic-Healing Role of Thunderstones in the Romanian Popular Culture

According to Arjun Appadurai (1986: *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*), in archaic or pre-industrial societies, material objects were supposed to have the ability to communicate and the power to act on people. Their function and their value depended on the context in which they were inserted, the material objects obtaining their meaning only by the actions, the thoughts, the beliefs, the perceptions and the representations which emerged in the daily life of people. This paper aims to analyze the attitudes of the villagers of the past (18th-20th centuries), Romanian and European, towards the vestiges of prehistoric material culture discovered by chance during agricultural work. The archaeological objects (axes in polished and perforated stone, arrowheads in flint, stone and metal, chisels, scrapers, hammers, spindle weights, various tools, jewelry, etc.) were artifacts considered by locals to be stones that fell from the sky during thunderstorms, brought by lightning. These are the famous „lightning stones” („lightning arrows”) known also under the name of „thunderstones”. The belief in the magical, apotropaic and beneficial virtues of thunderstones is deeply rooted among peasants. The most common protective function of small prehistoric cut or polished stones was to ensure that lightning did not strike houses, stables or barns. They were fixed in the walls, on the roofs, or worn around the neck, like an amulet. Using ethnographic information and historiographic data, we try to find answers to the following questions: what did people think about the origin of these artifacts?; what meanings were



associated with such artifacts?; what was their place in the collective imagination?; what were the uses of these objects? How evolved the beliefs associated with these intriguing artefacts?

## The power of narrative: building and questioning myths in ancient times

Petorella: [In the Workshop of a Debunker: Rhetorical Techniques in Palaephatus' Περίάπιστων](#)

In Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata* – a 1 century AD manual which will play a prominent role in Late Antique and Early Modern rhetorical schools – the chapter on narration ends with the mention of a singular work: among the authors who mastered the techniques of refutation (ἀνασκευή), one must necessarily quote the Peripatetic Palaephatus, who wrote a whole book aimed at debunking ancient mythological tales. This *On Incredible Matters* (Περὶ ἀπίστων), probably composed at the end of the IV century BC, is, thus, still a seminal contribution to the art of refuting stories, so much to be worthy of being mentioned along with passages by Herodotus and Plato. Obviously, Palaephatus is not only a great name in the history of rhetoric. He is also, and above all, a philosopher wishing to rationalise the mythological heritage of Greek culture, by providing his readers with an agile collection of marvellous stories rationally explained. However, his sceptical approach is inevitably expressed through the weapons of rhetoric, which constitute an integral part of his ideological campaign: the refutation of myths relies on the persuasion of an audience, who needs to be guided from a willing suspension of disbelief into a proper radical unbelief. Therefore, the aim of my paper is to illustrate how, in Palaephatus' *On Incredible Matters*, the means of ancient rhetoric are put at the service of a thorough reinterpretation of mythological accounts and of their religious message. Particular attention will be paid to the literary tools displayed by the author and to the results that he wants to achieve in each case. Thanks to this rhetorical analysis, it will be possible to enter the workshop of the Greek debunker par excellence, thus acquiring a better comprehension of the mechanisms of dissemination of religious scepticism in the Ancient World.

Sulimani: [Incorporating Mythography in Universal History: Believing in Myths or Suspending Disbelief?](#)

In many ways, Diodorus Siculus' universal history is unique. One of its salient characteristics is that it comprises mythography, complying with Diodorus' statement that an author who wishes to compose a universal history must begin with the events of the earliest times, incorporate the myths, and make an attempt to recount the events until his own day. Diodorus further maintains that since the mythologies include the deeds of heroes who benefited mankind, they have an important role in the general purpose of history, that is, to encourage men to act justly, to praise the good, to denounce the evil and to present the readers with a store of experience from which they may be able to learn. Does Diodorus simply believe in the myths or does he have another purpose in incorporating them? This study concentrates on Diodorus' mythological section, which embraces the myths of various peoples, containing many historical details and allusions, anthropological discussions, real geographical information, as well as features of the genre of biography. It first examines Diodorus' comments revealing his attitude towards the myths, and then analyses his versions of various mythical stories. Comparing Diodorus' treatment of the myths with that of other authors, focus will be made on Plutarch's biographies of characters such as Theseus and Lycurgus. It will be argued that, while Diodorus is sceptic, admitting that the substance of the myths is fictitious, he acknowledges their importance. Thus, following Euhemerus, he presents the mythical figures as mortals who gained immortality because of their deeds, and shapes these deeds after



those of historical figures, notably Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. In his famous monograph, P. Veyne counts Diodorus among the “believers”. However, judging from Diodorus’ explicit remarks, his custom of conveying Hellenistic notions through mythical tales and his intention to provide his readers with role models to emulate, he seems to be willing to suspend disbelief, to use S.T. Coleridge’ phrase, asking his readers to do the same.

### Fischer: *The Political Influence of Pseudepigraphic Oracle Texts in Antiquity*

Pseudepigraphic oracle texts – that is texts which were ascribed to mythical seers of the past like the Sibyls, Orpheus, Bakis, Musaios etc. – have long been rather neglected by historians dealing with political and cultural processes. The strong dominance of a perspective highly influenced either by a Christian monotheistic world view or a strictly secular approach ensured that the presence of these texts and the well documented influence of their messages on some of the most important events of ancient history were either completely ignored or at least not taken seriously. This perspective of modern scholarship produced by “unbelievers” in the often politically very influential messages of such oracles in many cases caused an at least incomplete representation of events that in turn were once strongly influenced by “believers”. In our modern times which themselves have to deal with the full power of politically highly relevant information circulating among the people of the western world our point of view on these ancient events has to be adjusted. In my paper I will, on the one hand, show how some very important and rightfully famous events of ancient Greek and Roman history (i.e. the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, the Sicilian Expedition of the Athenians, the Catiline Conspiracy and the death of Julius Caesar) were strongly influenced by the presence and the messages of pseudepigraphic oracle texts. On the other hand, I will demonstrate how the Greek and Roman authorities dealt with the recurring problem of these texts and also were themselves influenced by them.

## In the public eye: belief and reputation as a matter of public discussion

### Ribuoli: *Italiae fidem imploraret (Pis. 80.1-2) Who believed in Cicero, Roman historians or his contemporaries? Or rather, why belief and unbelief make more history*

Rather than a simple and elegant title for a book, ‘Cicero as evidence’ has been a great problem for Roman historians since Cicero’s death. For the first time in the mediterranean world, his writings provided us explicit intelligence on both everyday and political life. Yet Roman historians have righteously doubted about him, especially on political matters: a politician himself, he conveyed in his texts a personal project for the Roman Republic intertwined with the actual state of political life. My paper will situate Cicero’s works at the focal point of two separate ‘communities of unbelief’: both his contemporaries and historians of later times were skeptical about Cicero. I will show the common features of two different cultures of suspicion: the ancient roman and Italian one, and the guild of historians’s. As many political crisis saw a general trust on Cicero’s political proposals, my paper will highlight how failure that sometimes ensued did not prevent future successes, through the moment that best shows this – how Cicero’s political influence grew up from Cesar’s military victory up to his assassination by Antony’s killers. In this historical setting - with a shift on Roman political opinion – my paper will then set out the features of two different historiographical interpretations given by two modern historians, Sir Ronald Syme and Ettore Lepore. Both dead around the end of the short 20th century, although with 20 years difference in age, their lack of satisfaction with Cicero’s historical accounts and with philological and marxist historiographical paradigmata’s brought them to look for newer approaches. Within an identical source framework,

Syme brought to perfection the prosopographical analysis, while Lepore founded on strong methodological basis the regional approach to ancient history. Throughout those samples, I will outline the thesis that skepticism constitutes the source of historical inquiry, both towards new sources and newer methods.

#### Jones: Trust and Mistrust in Athenian Public Administration during the Classical Period

This paper explores Classical Athenian attitudes to the (mis)conduct of public officials. It is often said that Athenians felt a deep level of mistrust toward office holders. Such mistrust is inferred from institutional design, for example from the tendency to delegate administrative responsibilities to boards of five or ten officials, or from the plethora of procedures instituted to hold officials to account. Evidence from legal cases arising from the latter procedures, including speeches delivered in court and references to the imposition of harsh penalties, has also been cited in support of the view that public officials worked under an atmosphere of suspicion. Yet, while it is legitimate to infer popular attitudes from institutional design, the degree to which Athenians mistrusted their officials has been exaggerated. This is in part because the preserved legal evidence pertains predominantly to trials of generals and ambassadors, who were subject to greater scrutiny and incurred harsher punishments than other officials. This paper thus seeks to portray the relationship between Athenians and office-holders in a different light. In addition to revising the scale of mistrust, this paper examines its cultural and discursive foundations. For example, embezzlement features prominently in depictions of misconduct (e.g. in Attic comedy), revealing underlying concerns about the handling of public property and the ability of the community to fund important collective rites. The final part of the paper changes focus and addresses the issue of trust as well as mistrust. Wealthier citizens were trusted to occupy certain offices, in particular those of a financial character, while poorer citizens were explicitly or de facto excluded from holding financial posts and other important offices. This paper thus also identifies the institutional rules and attendant cultural attitudes constraining eligibility for office.

#### Furlan: Ἀρρήτων ἀρρητότερα: unveiling the mysteries in Late Antiquity

Cover and uncover, hide and unveil: is the attempt of revealing 'the most unspeakable of secrets', 'ἀρρήτων ἀρρητότερα' (Eus. Praep. Evang. 4.8.2 = Porph. De phil. ex. or. fr. 305F Smith.), a paradox? The study assumes as its starting point the distinction between 'allegory' and 'allegoresis', defining 'allegoresis' as a systematic philosophical allegory, through which it was possible to transcend the literal meaning of texts and uncover multiple hidden levels of meaning, thus better understanding the nature of the divine and the cosmos (Ramelli-Lucchetta 2004, Struck 2004, Addey 2014, Radice 2014). Allegoresis, intended as a hermeneutical praxis, is examined in this paper as applied to the exegesis of myths, rituals and mystic deities. The aim of this contribution is to discuss and provide new insights into the dynamics of such philosophical allegorical interpretation carried out by selected authors and unveiling the encoded meaning of texts speaking of ancient mystery cults. The paper will focus on the context of Late Antiquity and case studies will include Porphyry (Philosophia ex Oraculis), Julian (Hymn to the Mother of the Gods and Hymn to King Helios) and Proclus (Hymns, Commentary on Plato's Cratylus). The process of disclosing divine truths through allegoresis can be paralleled with the process of unveiling the divine through the initiation, showing how in some texts mystery practices were deeply linked with philosophy thanks to allegorical interpretation, and how readers sought to understand further the meaning of religious traditions and rites. Highlighting the relationship between theology, philosophy and the mysteries, this contribution will also shed light on the reception of texts informing us about mystery cults and beliefs, and joins the contemporary

debate on 'philosophical religion' (also conceived as personal religion, Kindt 2015) and the reframing of the definition of 'theology' within Greek religion (Edinow-Kindt-Osborne 2014).

## Objects of faith: relics and amulets from the early modern age to the contemporary world

### Räsänen: Relics and lived religion

This paper considers the ways in which senses and emotions were involved in the processes to create, recognize and propagate holy matter in late medieval Dominican culture. The source corpus includes the canonization materials of the Dominican saints from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Clearly, the sources point out how the recognition of sacred materiality was not always a straightforward process and how the emotions did play a significant role in encountering objects. People may have sensed the presence of sacred in quite ordinary items, and some of those objects were consequently understood as saints' relics. Thus, through the senses people were able to perceive invisible holiness in different visible and hearable items. In my paper, I will especially focus on secular items which were transformed to relics in a sensual encounter with an item, a devotee and a saint, and ask, how the senses functioned in sacralizing an item and what kind of emotions were connected in these situations.

### Gabriel: Faith and Belief in Times of Epidemics: The Veneration of the Virgin Mary and Saint Pascal Baylón in the Viceroyalty of New Spain

While it seems clear that America was no disease-free paradise in pre-contact times, a combination of war, displacement, low fertility, and new pathogens resulted in enormous population losses. As was – and is – the case in other regions, people turned to saints or supernatural beings for help. Catholicism in colonial Spanish America undeniably had a focus on embodiments of the Virgin Mary. Ciudad de México' first patroness, the Señora de los Remedios, was closely associated with droughts, phenomena inseparably linked to epidemics. In 1577, during the huey cocoliztli epidemic, a large pro-cession was organized in her honor. When an infectious disease hit Yucatán in 1648, a statue of a re-gional version of Mary, the "Virgin of Izamal", was brought from her shrine to the capital city of Mérida on orders of the governor (who would later succumb to the epidemic). The "Virgin of Guadalupe" was proclaimed patroness of Ciudad de México because of her role during the 1737–1739 epidemic, but only after two other icons (those of the Señora de los Remedios and the Virgin of Loreto) had failed to end the crisis. While the Mary had been venerated in the Catholic world for hundreds of years, New Spain also featured its "own" saintly figures local populations believed in. Around 1650, the Cakchiquel Maya of the Guatemalan highlands increasingly turned to the veneration of Pascal Baylón, a Spanish priest who had died in 1592, and was said to have ended the deadly cumatz epidemic. By 1650, however, Baylón had not been canonized yet, and authorities repeatedly tried to suppress his cult. Nonetheless, even after the introduction of new medical procedures in the late 18th century, during epidemics, authorities proposed public veneration of (official) saints and looked for support by clerics; faith and medicine were two sides of the same medal.

## Seregina: “Foolish” or “wonderful” relics: the mid-16th century English travelers in Catholic Europe

In the 16th century Europeans lived among ever-shifting and changing confessional and religious landscape. Traditional rites and devotional practices were suddenly prohibited or severely criticized and discouraged, interiors of their parish churches changed, often drastically. Reactions to these changes in all countries affected by the Reformation and the Catholic Reform were ambivalent and often painful, and ranged from enthusiasm to outright hostility. The historians of the English Reformations have long been struggling to find out what ordinary English man and women thought of the changes in religious rites and practices that occurred in their country several times during the 1st half of the 16th century. However, the voices of the laymen and women are not easily distinguishable especially if those people were not evidently evangelical or “Papist”. Were they welcoming, hostile, or simply tired of changes and skeptical towards old and new doctrines and practices? The proposed paper will explore a mid-16th century description of the journey of the English Ambassadors to Rome in 1555 compiled by Thomas North, a young page in an ambassador’s household who were to become a well-known English scholar and translator. The manuscript known in two contemporary copies (Lambeth Palace MS 5076 and Harleian MS 252 from the British Library) reveals a considerable number of comments on religious practices the English travelers encountered in France, Italy and Germany. I will look into these comments to find out which situations and religious practices arose North’s skepticism, and how he chose to express it. I will also try to establish factors – religious, political and cultural – that encouraged his skepticism.

## Literary narratives of faith and truth

### Weber (Christian): Goethe as Cultural Historian: Transformations of Faith in Faust

My paper aims to reread Goethe’s Faust through the lens of a cultural historian. This opus magnum of modern literature can display, I argue, what otherwise remains largely invisible in scholarly historiography: Shifts in personal attitudes of belief/faith. These determine the perception of reality (what is/should be perceived as real or unreal) and are the secret driving force of cultural transformation. Tracing the tracks of Faust’s and his companion Mephistopheles’s time travels from the medieval ages to the modern times (before modernity) via a dreamy detour through antiquity, Goethe’s “tragedy” reviews the cultural history of mankind. Goethe even envisions, as I have argued elsewhere, a posthuman world. In Faust’s display of fundamental cultural changes and their undergirding theological/philosophical transformations, the question of belief/faith takes center-stage. Whether Faust throws his futile theological ‘knowledge’ overboard for the practicing of alchemistic and later scientific-technological magic or whether he escapes the troubles of his amorous Gretchen-adventure by resorting to the phantasmagoric dream-space of ancient myth and Helenian beauty, the future and the past ‘realities’ he (re)constructs can be upheld only if they are rooted in another kind of belief/faith system. Likewise, the play’s fiction can unfold its poetic magic only if the audience invests aesthetic trust and belief in the characters and perceives them as if real. (For example, Faust only works as a play if Mephistopheles is no longer believed to represent the traditional devil of Christian theology but is understood as a modern poetic figure.) This brief outline of Faust points to belief/faith as the crux of cultural history. In other words, all fundamental changes in human history, as exemplified in the inner conflicts and contradictions of the Faust character and as they become manifest in his relationship with Mephistopheles, are motivated or generated by transformations in underlying belief systems. My paper analyzes how Goethe represents and critiques in Faust seismic shifts of human faiths and beliefs by focusing on two

theological/philosophical interventions at epochal turning points: 1) the substitution of Greco-Roman mythology through Judeo-Christian theology, which is based on a thorough redefinition of “faith” conducted by Paul and Augustine, and 2) the emergence of German Idealism with Fichte’s “self-positing” ego as the maker and shaper of its own reality, which drew the criticism of Friedrich Jacobi, one of Goethe’s closest friends. Jacobi countered Fichte’s idealism by insisting on an indemonstrable “Glauben” (belief, rather than faith) that things must be real outside of the subject’s cognition. Hence, it is my paper’s agenda to show 1) how Faust’s Fichtean self-aggrandization leads to the demise of the Augustinian regime of faith as embodied in Gretchen’s fate and 2) how Jacobi’s criticism is the real thorn in the flesh of Fichte’s idealism as reflected in the problematic relationship between Faust (Fichte) and Mephistopheles (Jacobi).

### [Staab: Dissolution of Truth. A Cultural History of Cognition of Truth in 18th Century Theatre Theory](#)

The proposed paper examines semantics of cognition in the theatrical theories of 18th century (theatre) authors and critiques Friedrich Schiller, Christian Fürchtegott Gellert and Johann Friedrich Schink. First, a paradoxical simultaneity of semantics of depicting (representing, mirroring), revealing (unmasking, exposing) and staging (idealising, exaggerating, lying) is observed, which are equally described and demanded as forms of cognition of truth in theatre. Depending on the context of the theatrical theory or the imagined counterpart, the theatre serves at the same time as a place for the representation or unmasking of truth as a means of complementing secular laws, a place for the depiction of truth in order to uphold moral standards in the face of an immoral political class or a place for the manipulative fabrication of truth in order to create specific sentiments in the spectators. The thesis of this paper is that the partly contradictory semantics of the theatre's cognition, each of which is positioned in relation to questions of politics, law, religion and (moral) education, reflect the dissolution of class society in the 18th century and the reorganization into differentiating social subsystems, each with its own concept of and relationship to truth.

### [Attri: Construction of Reality and Belief in Literary Spaces: Retellings of Mythical Narratives](#)

The representation of reality formed through cultural history by different groups in a variety of contexts explains the construction of belief and faith. Human expression capable of objectivation serves as continuing catalogues of the thoughts formed and represented. “Myth said to be a relational phenomenon”, is understood primarily as a narrative method for exploring the human psyche/nature emerging from the hidden depths of the human mind. Bernard Batto elucidates on the generic definition of myth as a narrative concerning essential symbols that are constitutive of or is a model for human existence articulating definitive reality through ciphers. The elements of myth are meaningless if seen in isolation but acquire meaning within a given social and cultural context. These narratives in written or oral form constructs the idea of cultural roots and identity. The retellings of mythical narratives while enticing the actuality of mythical composition have been redefined according to new beliefs and realities. Why retellings of Mythical Narratives? This raises the question of how faith and belief circulate in the postmodern world through transformed mythical narratives. The research paper will focus on two retellings of Mahabharata that trace the social-cultural construct of the postmodern world making the writer create an alternate mythical text. M.T Vasudevan Nayar and Kavita Kane's writings on myths will form the basis of the study. The purpose of cultural value production through the retellings of mythical narratives in contemporary times makes us ponder on how reality was constructed in past, the meaning was formed, and how it is still in continuity. The paper will further contemplate on the question of the changed reality by

restructuring the myth. The framework for the study will be reader and author-oriented model of interpretations.

## Narratives of Unbelief as Resistance to Doubt in a Transhistorical Perspective

*The religious tales concerning doubt and unbelief are embedded in the religious narratives of different traditions. In many myths, the characters are presented as homines dubitantes who question the sacrality of the world and the divine agents. Different religious traditions present in their religious discourses individuals who doubt divine justice and even dispute the existence of divinities. These accounts of unbelief embedded in the religious literary tradition could be analysed as strategies whose aim is to establish a “resistance to doubt”. In this sense, these stories would be a narrative “compass” that, through accounts of unbelief, try to guide the individual at the crossroads arising from doubt. Such narratives can be observed in multiple historical contexts. In the Bible, one of the most prominent examples is the passage concerning the unbelief of Thomas as the figure of the apostle who doubts the resurrection of Christ (John 20:24-29). We can also quote the verse in Mark 9:24; “I believe, help my unbelief!”. In the Old Testament, we can point out the Book of Job in which it is depicted the model of the homo dubitans who questions divine justice. However, such stories whose function is to resist to doubt can be observed in other religious contexts. For instance, in the last verses of Book IV in the Bhagavad-Gītā when Krishna warns Arjuna that the path of knowledge does not come from doubt (BG IV, 39-40). In Ancient Greece, we can stand out the myths about the theomakhoi, those characters that question or even fight the gods, such as the titans Prometheus and Sisyphus. There are examples also in Greek drama such as Pentheus in Bacchae. This panel aims not only to identify these narratives of unbelief but also reflect on how these tales influenced individuals in a particular religious “chronotope”, both ancient and modern. How did individuals interpret these accounts of unbelief? Did they serve to appease individuals’ doubts, or did they increase them? What artistic representations were made based on these homines dubitantes? Is it possible to compare the role of these narratives transhistorically? Which theoretical approaches would improve the analysis of these narratives on unbelief? Papers interested in discussing these and related questions are cordially invited. There is the possibility of publishing the results of the joint discussion.*

### [Pinel Martínez: The Other Way Around: Skeptic Doubt as Way to Avoid Atheism in Classical Athens](#)

Nowadays, when one thinks of agnosticism, usually it is thought of as a sub-type of atheism or, at the very least, it is thought to entail practical atheism (e.g., Marmelada, 2014, 52). This, however, needs not be a universal dynamic, and with my intervention I intend to show how, in Ancient Greece, doubt and the consequent suspension of belief seem to have appeared as a way to avoid positive atheism. We may find an example of this in Athenian drama, which is rich in attitudes similar to theistic skepticism, Wykstra’s (1983) solution to the problem of evil. In these cases, the emphasis on the limitations of human knowledge is asserted in order to maintain belief in the existence of a divine plan which is unknowable. The paradox of evil, therefore, is not resolved in favor of atheism, but contested with a sort of skeptic epistemological stance. Using this kind of suspension of belief as a parallel example and an interpretative key, we intend to show that it is not necessary to deny the agnostic content of Protagoras B4 DK Diels-Kranz, like some scholars have done (Durán López, 2011, 184-186) in order to make it compatible with some other reflections Protagoras may have made on religion. Thus, we will try to show that the famous fragment of this sophist is a rejection of theological discourse, following the idea that the definition of the divine that had been taking shape from the end of the Archaic Age was starting to manifest some of its inherent paradoxes: once again, a paradox is met with a skeptic suspension of judgement. Following this interpretation,



agnosticism could have appeared as a sort of compromise solution with which the apparently inevitable conclusion of atheism is circumvented.

### [Bermejo-Rubio: Disturbing Skepticism versus Damage Control Functions and Meaning of the “Doubting Thomas” in the Fourth Gospel](#)

In the well-known pericope of the so-called “doubting Thomas” (John 20:24-29), a bold claim is put in the disciple’s mouth: “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe”. At first sight, one could think that Thomas is an inquisitive doubter, and that his “impious” statement represents an anomaly, and a serious challenge to the Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection. There are, however, good reasons to infer that such a reading would be perfunctory and naïve. After all, the verb πιστεύειν plays an extremely significant role in the Fourth Gospel, reflecting a central concern of the Gospel’s author. This is so to such an extent that the pericope of the doubting Thomas is immediately followed by this programmatic declaration: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31). In the light of this textual fact and of other narrative features of this work, the present paper aims at reexamining the meaning and functions of the Thomas story, which can be envisaged as a shrewd and successful strategy to cope with (and counteract) possible doubts emerging about the reliability of the reports concerning Jesus’ resurrection.

### [Alba López: Exegetical Approaches to the Doubting Thomas Pericope in Patristic Literature: Hilary of Poitiers’ exegesis of John 20 : 24-29 in the light of previous tradition](#)

When approaching the challenge of Thomas’s doubt (John 20:24-29), the Church Fathers who carried out an exegesis of this pericope drew from the theological strength and wealth of this motif in their confrontation against their rivals at the time. The main witnesses provided by authors such as Tertullian, Origen and Augustine of Hippo assume that Thomas touched Christ’s body in order to verify the truth of his resurrection, even though this is not explicitly stated at any point in the Johannine account. The authority of these figures has led specialists such as G. Most or B. Schliesser, among others, to make the bold claim that all Late Ancient exegetes (with the exception of Augustine, who made contradictory statements in that regard) maintained that physical contact took place, as opposed to the Johannine account. Contrary to this thesis, this paper is intended to highlight the thoughts of a key figure in the 4th century Latin West, Hilary of Poitiers, on the subject of doubting Thomas. Indeed, despite the fact that he was significantly influenced by Tertullian and Origen and, in turn, played no small role in shaping the works of Augustine, this author bucked the trend and provided us with an original exegesis of the passage that was scrupulously faithful to the description provided in the Fourth Gospel and which he applied in the context of his confrontation with his subordinationist opponents. By refusing to alter the original account in any way, Hilary of Poitiers chose not to make an unsupported claim with regards to the apostle’s actions in order to highlight the fact that the Son adapts to what he understands as the “weakness” of man’s intelligence (*Dominus ad omnem se intelligentiae nostrae imbecillitatem accommodat,*) making use of the “mystery of his invisible power” (*arcanum inuisibilis uirtutis*) to put the doubts of unbelievers to rest. Thus, Hilary uses the motif of doubting Thomas to reflect on the transformative effect of miracles and on the soteriological function of faith.

## Theory and methodology of cultural history

## Kokko and Harjula: Analysis of shared experiences in the social world: a new approach to cultural history

Beliefs are constructed via shared experiences. Our approach to the history of experiences offers a new approach to cultural history, as it explains the construction and change of socio-cultural structures via the circulation of experiential knowledge.

Our paper outlines a theoretical and methodological approach for the analysis of shared experiences in historical research. Our starting point is that the process of experiencing – is about giving socially and culturally shared meanings to the world. Thus, there are no experiences outside the social, cultural, or mediated. Experiences do not just reflect the reality, but they are the constructive units of human reality. We first theorize how socially mediated experiences shape the reality and construct the social and cultural structures. By developing the holistic social theory of Berger and Luckmann into the approach of history of experiences and combining it with Reinhart Koselleck's theorizations on historical time and space, the framework aims to explain and analyze the historical change of experience and experiencing. We develop methodological tools for approaching socio-culturally shared experiences. We conceptualize the temporal structures of experience as layers of experience by combining Berger and Luckmann's sedimentation process and Koselleck's theory of multi-layered temporalities of experience. The layers of experiences can be traced by exploring the sediments – shared meanings of experience – that are stored in different sign systems at a given historical context. We use the layer of experience to analyze shared experiences that have been institutionalized to the cultural and social structures on a certain historical era. This opens a view on how the social reality consists of overlapping and interlinked layers of experiences. As experience is always situational, we apply and develop the term scene of experiences to conceptualize the concrete socio-spatial setting for experiencing. The scene of experience combines the micro-level social processes of experience and the macro structures of culture and society. It connects the socio-cultural frameworks, the mediating structures and the human subject to explore how the reality is constructed in a particular situation.

## Hoegaerts: Embodied Utterances, Historical Sounds: Including the Human Voice in Cultural History

Work across disciplines in cultural studies has provided us with a number of approaches and strategies to deal with different aspects of the voices of the past. They show us ways to think about written documents as representatives of a language that existed (also) as a spoken one and was therefore modulated by pronunciation and the categories of identity that those entailed (be they the dialectic utterances of a young Parisian prostitute or the lofty elocution of a parliamentary representative). They show that the print culture of modernity, rather than replacing oral culture, presents us with the reflections of a multitude of 'listeners'. And they constitute a hefty toolbox to think about the intertwined embodied practices of singing and listening to musical voices – exposing the shifting sounds of gender, sexuality and race. What is 'missing' – or rather what is left for the cultural historian to discover – is how to mobilize and adapt such methods. How do we thoroughly historicize the voice, or integrate it in our historical research and how do we bring this knowledge to bear on the more mundane daily practices of voice...the constant talking, humming, murmuring, whispering and mumbling that went on off- stage, in living rooms, debating clubs, business meetings, and on the streets. In this paper, I will attempt to sketch out a strategy to do precisely that. Combining the methods of cultural history with tools from the fields of sound studies and performativity, I chart out a practical, 4-pronged, approach. These consist of ways to 'listen anew' to familiar sources as well as less conventional source-material. They also insist on a combination of

analytical approaches focusing on vocabulary, bodily practice and the 'particularity' of sound. Together, they hope to present a consistently historicizing approach that also critically engages with the sensory experience of the contemporary historian.

#### [Kartinen and Välimäki: Challenging Nonhuman Agency in Cultural History](#)

In recent years, cultural history has been challenged by posthumanism more than anything else in the past decades. Bluntly put, posthumanism challenges the very core of cultural history, its central focus the human and her centrality in the study of history. It is time to challenge posthumanism in history, and seriously ask if nonhuman agency can be of relevance in the study of history. In our paper presenting our recent work, we propose that shifting the focus away from the humans, as is ideally done in posthumanism, is politically potentially dangerous. Posthumanists aspire to embrace the non-human world by downplaying the role of humans and giving agency to all things and all beings great and small. Doing this, they surpass the fact of how powerful humans are in good and evil in their program of shaping the future of the planet earth, and increasingly, beyond it. We are convinced that by influencing humans we can improve the world for all beings and oppose the idea that beings only survive through human extinction. The global crises threatening all living things on earth can be mitigated and solved only in co-operation of all scientific disciplines, each focusing on their strengths. The strength of cultural history is not in radical theoretical experiments, but still in interpreting past events, actions and worldviews so that they enlighten present readers and explain how our culture and society came to be what it is.

## Words and the power of beliefs

#### [Immonen: Belief or Politics? A Case-Study of the Great Western Schism \(1378-1417\)](#)

The Great Western Schism was definitively one of the greatest crises the Catholic Church encountered in the Middle Ages. The Christendom was divided into rival factions under two, occasionally even three popes, centered around competing papal capitals in Avignon and Rome. Yet, while scholars unanimously acknowledge the severity of the institutional crisis within the church administration, opinions diverge widely on the impact of the Schism in society in general. Was the population at large indifferent at the face of the developments, or was the prevailing feeling that of anxiety and concern over one's salvation? Did the lay – or even ecclesiastical – elites perceive the crises in political or religious terms? The present paper will investigate the different answers given to these and similar questions by earlier scholarship; it seeks to individuate and highlight different interpretative traditions and analyze how these traditions have affected the answers given to the questions concerning the nature and the magnitude of the crises. In doing so, the present paper wishes to open viewpoints to discussions concerning the ways of interpreting religious crises on a more general level, as well. The presentation is divided into three parts. The first part draws a sketch of the Schism and its contexts. The second part discusses different interpretative traditions of the schism. The final section seeks to tie the different issues together and offer one viewpoint on how the crises of the Great Western Schism should be dealt with.

#### [Pobežin: Post-truth or pre-truth? Myth and History: a Very Long Engagement](#)

Since times ancient, myth has been known to make its way quite consistently into that literary genre which holds among its audience the air of a vessel that conveys the historical truth. Yet even the first rationalist historians who fathered the profession of historiography and turned their backs to the mythological tales never really could dismiss myth as pure imagination, thereby condemning it

to the status of pure fabulism. The principle has been proven over and over again: from Roman annalists who, in the late 3rd century BC, started writing their histories of the emerging Roman superpower to the German humanists who set out to write their own historical accounts of the nascent modern Germany – or, indeed, the biographical vitae authored as late as the early 20th century – we see the same phenomenon occur. Elements of the mythological found their way into what was supposed to be “evidence-based” texts. Divided into two parts, this paper will address some of the above-mentioned cases of historiographical texts (cherry-picked on the basis of the fact that their authors always had at their hand methodologically refined models), exploring the conditionals that might have expedited this marriage of myth and history. In the second part, the paper will touch upon modern tools that allow us to approach these texts, wary as we are, in pursuit of “truth”.

[Geybullayeva: Some lexical history or The Infinity of Lists: Halo, Fatma, Odins a radical transcendence sample in existential semiotics](#)

Transcendence is one of the key categories of philosophy and denotes "a state of being or existence above and beyond the limits of material experience." Transcendence comes from the Latin prefix *trans-*, meaning 'beyond,' and the word *scandere*, meaning 'to climb.' When you achieve transcendence, you have gone beyond ordinary limitations. The word is often used to describe a spiritual or religious state or a condition of moving beyond physical needs and realities." Cognitive-semiotic-linguistic analysis of sign and constituent components helps discover the itinerary-cultural history of the transcendence unit of word and sign. This paper contributes explicitly to the analytical context of how meaning and content are conveyed through signs and communication with transcultural references to the ancient or pre-medieval period. It looks at the symbols incorporated in the modern-day Azerbaijani cases of signs and their cross-cultural changes transferred through communication and dating back to a more ancient, pre-medieval period. What lies behind images and symbols, as to say, the ordinary, secular Azerbaijani word *odun* (wood): is it related to sacred for ancient Scandinavian *Odin*, or/ are they just homographs? And what about the case of *halo-hal-hello*? What is behind *Fat(i)ma*, a name associated as Muslim name and its Azerbaijani dialect version *Pad(i)ma*? What does transcendence mean – is it "communication before our eyes, but beyond our consciousness?" and how the process of transcendence takes place between belief and unbelief, sacred and desacralized. Thus, take one more step towards the idea of Umberto Eco, 'To make infinity comprehensible'.

## Building identities with beliefs

[Saarelainen: Cultural nationalism as systematic belief: Early Finnish romantics and transnational construction of modern Finnish culture](#)

Benedict Anderson described nations as imagined communities. Following this notion one can argue that nationhood is also a sort of belief system. A belief in national culture, language and folklore have in many ways defined the modern era. This paper will tackle the question, how early nineteenth-century Finnish public discourse debated about oral tradition and its connection with national culture. What kind of ideas, ideologies and aesthetics were attributed to the Finnish folklore? How these definitions were constructed, validated and propagated? The task is to understand how a systematic belief in ideas of cultural nationhood was constructed and how it affected the representation of 'Finnishness'. The romantic belief, or presupposition, was that the authentic and original oral poetry of the uneducated rural people could ground Finnish culture. Thus from the beginning of the century Finnish nationality was connected with oral poetry, which was

represented as a source for an original and authentic 'Finnishness'. Yet simultaneously, and paradoxically, the oral tradition itself was interpreted and defined by learned academics who operated transnationally. In other words, at same time as young academics took interest on marginal oral culture, they were also keen to observe and follow the latest philosophical, aesthetical and ethical debates in Europe. Thus a small educated fraction was in the core of determining how oral culture should be represented. Their belief in oral poetry became to define modern Finnish culture. My paper concentrates on these academic and transnational discourses that have since the nineteenth century influenced how oral culture have been understood. The goal is to track down construction of systematic and basically uncontested belief that various transnational ideologies could explain Finnish oral culture and define 'Finnishness'.

#### [Griffin: Neoliberalislam: Multiculturalism and Muslims in New Labour's Britain \(1997-2007\)](#)

Multiple works consider 'transparency' and 'secrecy' essential to understanding the conditions of contemporary life – particularly in relation to belief (Han 2015; Barbour 2017; Bell 2020; Dufourmantelle 2021). Yet, these accounts rest on a dehistoricised and global understanding of transparency and secrecy, detached from cultural, national, and political specificity. As such, these accounts eschew cultural and historical particulars significant for understanding importance of 'transparency' and 'secrecy' and the role of belief within them. My paper will examine the interrelationship between novels, multiculturalism, Islam, and New Labour through the lens of transparency and secrecy. Although the novel has been considered to have a unique relationship with the secret, its relationship with discourses of transparency has not been investigated (Foucault 1979, 2003; Derrida 2001; Rancière 2020; Deleuze 2007). My paper will argue that specific novels illustrate a changing public and political relationship with transparency and secrecy under New Labour – especially novels exploring the experiences of the Muslim South Asian diaspora in Britain. Transparency and secrecy were fundamental to New Labour's vision of a marketable multicultural Britain (Ibid.; Mandelson and Liddle 1996; Parekh et al. 2000). It was paramount for New Labour that Muslims evidence that they were 'true believers' and 'true followers' of a 'true theology' and 'true faith' in day-to-day life (Blair 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b). What comprised 'true' belief was defined through the values New Labour outwardly attached to 'transparency' and 'secrecy' in public and political life. This targeted discourse of multiculturalism culminated in an ideological apparatus I call neoliberalislam: a marketised, transparent conception of Islam and Muslim identity as 'faith without secrets'. Whilst the cultural impact of neoliberalislam can be detected in novels such as Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Gautam Malkani's *Londonistan* (2006), I will argue that Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) most significantly expresses British literary culture's entanglement with neoliberalislam and the properties of this ideology under New Labour.

#### [Burkett: Faith, belief and practice on British university campuses, c.1960](#)

Between the 1960s and the 1980s Britain is said to have become a secular society. During the same period, there was a significant growth in Britain's immigrant population and the flourishing of religious practice and beliefs beyond Christianity. Many scholars have discussed the importance of Christianity within British national identity and the extent to which the flourishing of other faiths challenged many of these ideas. Britain continues to be perceived as a Christian society which not only tends to erase large communities within the UK, but flattens and ignores the various places, both physical and virtual, in which conversations and negotiations were taking place around belief, faith and associated practices. One important area where these issues and discussions played out

was on university campuses. University campuses have always included international students, or 'overseas students' as they were known during this period. Between the 1960s and the 1990s the number of higher education institutions and students, including international students, increased dramatically around the world including in Britain. With the digitisation of student newspapers, we can now more readily gain an insight into how students understood, articulated, and were responding to, a number of issues, including faith and belief practices. The pages of student newspapers in this period contain a number of discussions of religious practices and belief systems. This paper will explore how students understood and articulated what were perceived as 'foreign' beliefs, and how understandings of both 'foreign' and 'British' faith and secularisation interacted with the experiences of overseas students, ideas of the student experience, national identity, 'race' and ethnicity.

[Repo: Rustic, gluttonous and excessive. Visualizing beliefs about lower class food culture in 16th century Italian genre paintings](#)

During the renaissance it was a common belief that social class determined the ideal nutrition for an individual. This belief derived from humoralism, a medical system based on the balance of bodily fluids, developed in ancient Greece, and was advocated by numerous dietary writers in the renaissance. According to contemporary dietetics, consuming foodstuffs "unproper" for one's class was unhealthy or even dangerous whereas sticking to foods suitable for one's stratum guaranteed a healthy and balanced life. The spread and strengthening of these beliefs led to intense stigmatization of affordable and easily accessible foods and the people who ate them. Two 16th century paintings, *Happy Company* by Bartolomeo Passerotti and *Ricotta Eaters* by Vincenzo Campi portray a caricature of the lower classes at the dining table: uninhibited, gluttonous and coarse. Foods depicted in the paintings – garlic, sausage, ricotta, halved fig – symbolize vulgarity, sexuality and rusticity and emphasize the distastefulness of the parties even more. In this paper, I will look at the different ways in which 16th century Italian genre paintings visualized the unflattering beliefs about lower class food culture and aroused affective reactions and emotions towards it. I will approach the questions by analyzing the paintings by Passerotti and Campi mentioned above. In my analysis I draw on Sara Ahmed's theories on emotions and their 'stickiness' and interpret the images as medium which attached or 'stick' emotions to people.