

## Call for Paper

### Fribourg Colloquium

Medieval Institute, University of Fribourg  
 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> september 2023

### Political Poetry in European Literature from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries

At the beginning of the second book of ‘De vulgari eloquentia’, Dante discusses the question of which themes deserve to be treated by the best poets in the venerable vernacular, and names three main themes (*magnalia*): *salus videlicet, venus et virtus* (II ii 8), so the fitness for arms (*armorum probitas*), the passion of love (*amoris accensio*) and the righteousness of the will (*directio voluntatis*). This list of themes – weapons, love and moral-didactic poetry – thus excludes, among others, the genre of political poetry, although it was very much cultivated in Dante’s homeland of Italy. Presumably the reason for this omission is that in the eyes of the Florentine poet, political poetry is a hybrid genre, either because moral, social and military themes flow together in it, or because political poetry sometimes appears as fictional or allegorically dressed-up love songs and thus as a variant or subgenre of erotic poetry. For Dante, the *magnalia* must be treated by the best poets in each case in their pure form or else in the form of themes derived directly and immediately from them (Dve II iv 9); political poetry, on the other hand, is invaded by a dimension of the contingent and accidental. Political poetry, insofar as it mostly relates to specific historical events, is partisan and directed towards a practical purpose (be it exhortatory, persuasive, propagandistic or defamatory).

The reflections on the *magnalia* in ‘De vulgari eloquentia’ cannot necessarily be assigned to literary traditions other than Italian lyric poetry; nevertheless, they allow us to narrow down and characterize the field of political poetry as a whole. On this basis, the Fribourg Colloquium aims to explore European traditions of political poetry by gathering experts in medieval poetry who deal with lyrical traditions of different languages and geographical regions, between Iceland and the Caucasus, and inviting them to comparative discussions. The focus is on the period between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Besides the vernacular languages, the ‘sacred’ and/or ‘imperial’ languages (Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew) are also considered.

What is the status of political poetry in a specific literary tradition or within related traditions? What are the formal characteristics of political poetry (metrical forms, mis-en-texte, mise-en-page)? Who are the authors and for what audience are the texts intended? Under what conditions were the texts handed down? Are they in dialogue with visual media? And around which historical events do political poems emerge? Can cross-linguistic and/or transnational themes and debates be discerned? Under what conditions can we speak of political propaganda in verse?

The Fribourg Colloquium will attempt to provide answers to these and other questions in order to begin sketching the first outlines of an overall picture of European political poetry in the high and late Middle Ages.

Every two years the Medieval Institute of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) organizes an interdisciplinary colloquium in order to bring together researchers and specialists from different fields to focus on a specific theme in medieval studies. The colloquium will be attended by approximately 12–15 researchers from the various fields of medieval studies, such as linguistics and literature (Romance studies, German studies, English studies, Nordic studies, Slavic studies), history, philosophy, art history and theology. The presentations can be given in French, German, English or Italian. A time slot of 45 minutes is allocated for each contribution, which includes both the presentation time of approx. 30 minutes and the time for discussion. As is customary at the Fribourg Colloquium of the Medieval Institute, the results of the event will be published in the Institute's own book series "Scrinium Friburgense", published by Reichert Verlag (Wiesbaden).

All expenses, including travel, accommodation and meals will be covered.

Presentation proposals with a one-page synopsis are requested by **5 March 2023** to:

Prof. Dr. Paolo Borsa  
 Letteratura e filologia italiane  
 Universität Freiburg  
[paolo.borsa@unifr.ch](mailto:paolo.borsa@unifr.ch)

or  
 Medieval Institute  
 University of Fribourg  
[iem@unifr.ch](mailto:iem@unifr.ch)

The organizers will draw up a conference programme on the basis of the proposals received and provide feedback to the senders in short term.

The organizers:

Prof. Dr. Paolo Borsa (Letteratura e filologia italiane)  
 Prof. Dr. Hugo O. Bizzarri (Filología hispánica)  
 Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Dutton (English Philology)  
 Prof. Dr. Cornelia Herberichs (Germanistische Mediävistik)  
 Prof. Dr. Marion Uhlig (Langues et littératures françaises du Moyen Âge)  
 Dr. Martin Rohde (Manager of the Medieval Institute)

More information: [www.unifr.ch/mediaevum/fr/manifestation/colloques-fribourgeois/](http://www.unifr.ch/mediaevum/fr/manifestation/colloques-fribourgeois/)