

Call for Papers Future Thinking in Late Antiquity

Panel Organiser: Michael Hanaghan (ACU) michael.hanaghan@acu.edu.au

15th Celtic Conference in Classics: 9-12 July 2024, Cardiff, Wales
<https://cardiffccc.wixsite.com/cardiffccc2024>

From 800BC until 300CE ancient humans used a wide variety of means to divine the future: animals were sacrificed, their entrails read as portending success or failure, the flight of birds was carefully watched, and future significance was read into a wide range of spontaneous forms of human behaviour and environmental phenomena, from sneezes to lightning strikes. In the fourth century these traditional Greco-Roman forms of divination fell out of favour, were explicitly and repeatedly banned by law, and ultimately challenged by Christian conceptions as to who could read the future and how.

This panel explores how Late Antique thinkers, authors, and practitioners understood future thinking, broadly conceived to include a wide range of practices and thought systems, including divination, astrology, dreams, prayer, omens, and visions. It welcomes papers that are either interested in literary evidence or material culture, and that may be philosophical, historical, or literary in their focus. It aims to answer the following questions:

1. How did the changing political, material, and social fortunes of Late Antique societies enhance the authority of their approaches to future thinking?
2. What texts influenced Late Antique attitudes to divination and in what ways?
3. How did Late Antique thinkers and practitioners embrace or distance themselves from traditional Greco-Roman divinatory practice, including by rewriting, reinterpreting, or selectively alluding to Classical texts?
4. Did these changes influence the marked increase in future thinking in distinctly Christian genres, such as martyrdom and hagiographical literature, and if so how?
5. How were Late Antique forms of future thinking continuous and discontinuous with classical ones?
6. What strategies of legitimisation and de-legitimisation did Christian and non-Christian intellectuals use to critique each other's views on future thinking?
7. How did Late Antique thinkers and practitioners look to control decision-making regarding future thinking, at both an individual and collective level?

Keynote Speakers:

Prof. Peter Struck is Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Divination and Human Nature: A Cognitive History of Intuition in Antiquity* (Princeton University Press, 2016) and co-editor along with Prof. Sarah Iles Johnston of *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Brill, 2005). He has published numerous article length studies on divination and dreams in both Classical and Late Antiquity.

Prof. Bronwen Neil, FAHA is Professor of Ancient History at Macquarie University. She is the author of *Dreams and Divination from Byzantium to Baghdad (400-1000 CE)* (Oxford, 2021). She held an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship on "Dreams, Prophecy and Violence from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam" (2014-2019) and is currently working on dreams, crisis, and apocalypticism in the Eastern Roman empire.

Please send abstracts of 250 words to the panel organiser Michael Hanaghan (michael.hanaghan@acu.edu.au) by 1 February 2024. Please indicate on your proposal if your presentation will be for forty minutes or twenty minutes. The conference will take place in person at Cardiff University. There will be some limited support of hybrid presentations.