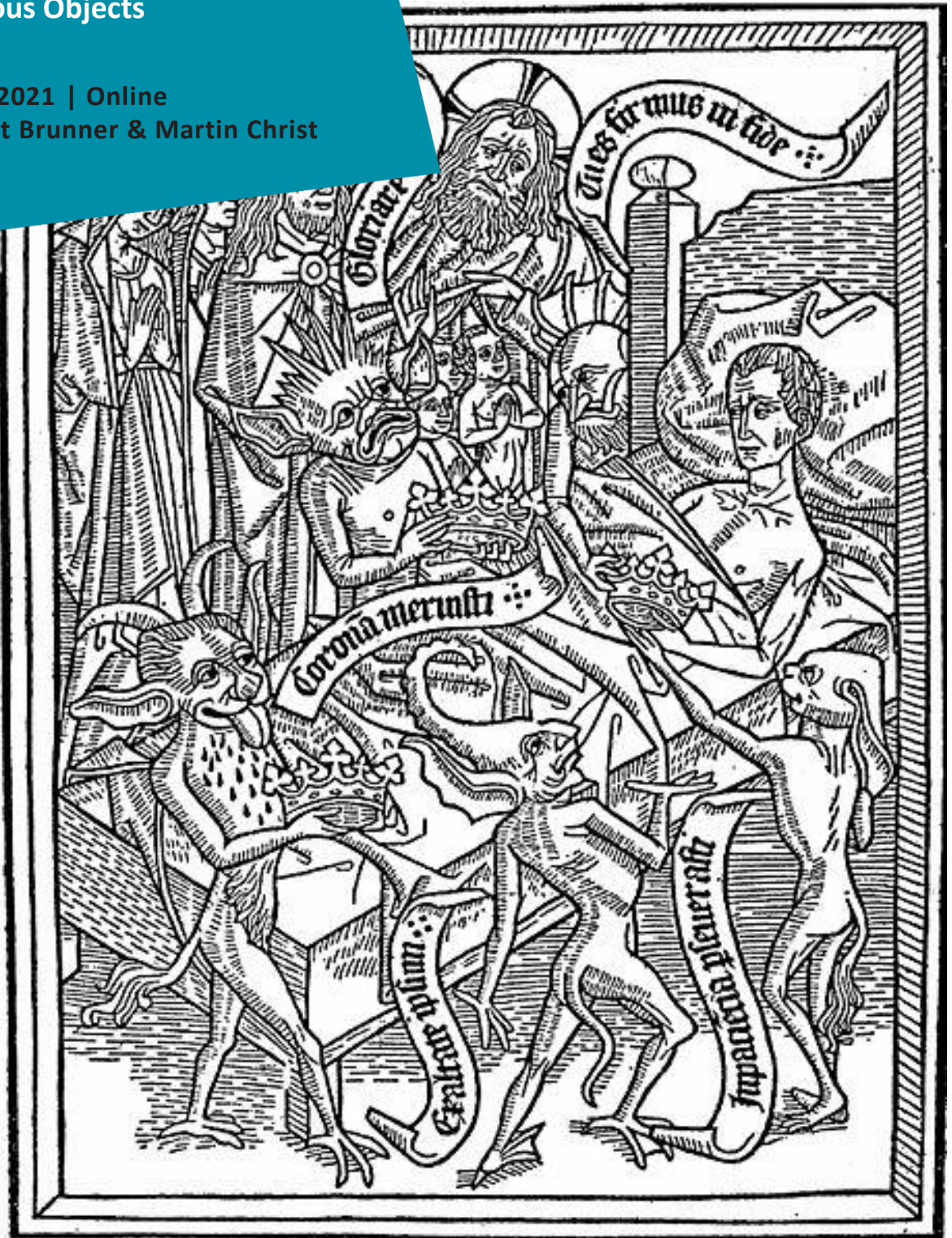


The Moment of Death in Early Modern Europe, c. 1450-1800

Contested Ideals, Controversial Spaces, and
Suspicious Objects

26/08/2021-27/08/2021 | Online

Organizers: Benedikt Brunner & Martin Christ



Ars Moriendi, c. 1460, woodcut, Netherlands, CC licence

Concept Note:

Both in our time and in the past, death was one of the most important aspects of anyone's life. The early modern period saw drastic changes in rites of death, burials and commemoration. The Reformation, European expansion, scientific advances and changes in public health and hygiene all contributed to the changing ways in which men and women in this period experienced death. This international and interdisciplinary conference expands the scholarship on death by focusing on perhaps the most important period connected to death: the last moments of life. By focusing on this particular moment in a range of European countries and their colonies, the conference investigates how men and women prepared for their death, how friends and family experienced the death of a person and what an early modern deathbed looked like. While the conference investigates the last moments in a bedchamber, it also contrasts them with extreme situations, such as the moments before an execution or prolonged deaths because of serious diseases.

The conference seeks to combine insights from history, art history, theology and other disciplines in order to shed light on this crucial moment in a person's life. It considers the whole early modern period in order to trace changes over a long period of time and investigates different national, regional and local contexts to enable meaningful comparisons.

The conference focuses on four broad aspects:

The Ideal Death: How did people prepare for their deathbed? What was a deathbed supposed to look like? How did theologians, scholars and elites envisage an ideal death? How was the deathbed depicted? Which models for an ideal death existed in the early modern period? Who was present around the deathbed?

Space and Time: Where did people die? How does the bedchamber fit into narratives of public and private? What did an early modern bedchamber look like, where was it positioned in the layout of the house? When did people die? Did it make a difference to die after a long period of illness or quickly? Were ideas of a 'good deathbed' 'exported' to non-European territories?

Objects and Rituals: What can the deathbed as an object tell us? Which objects were present around the deathbed and in the bedchamber? How was medicine used to try and prevent death? Which theological rituals were used around the deathbed? Which medical practices were employed around the deathbed?

Disruptions to the Deathbed: How was the 'ideal deathbed' appropriated, challenged and adapted? How did the scaffold, stake and battlefield differ from the deathbed? What were the last moments of heretics and criminals like? What was it like to die in captivity? What was it like for Europeans to die in colonies, far away from European centres?



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26.08.2021 - 27.08.2021

Format: 20-30 minute papers + 15-20 minutes discussion

Online Tool: Zoom/Webex; socialising on Wonder

Time Zone: Central European Time (UK time +1)

Thursday, 26 August

09:00-09:30: Welcome and Introduction (Benedikt Brunner, Martin Christ)

09:30-11:00: Contested Ideals

Alexandra Walsham: Last Legacies: Dying Words and the Making of Generational Memory in Early Modern England

Irene Dingel: Confessing in the Contexts of Dying and Narratives of Death

11:00-11:30 break

11:30-13:00: Catholic and Protestant Perspectives

Elizabeth Tingle: The Catholic Reformation and the Dying: Preparations for Death in France 1550-1700

Benedikt Brunner: The Deathbed in Early Modern Protestant Funeral Sermons

13:00-14:30: lunch break

14:30-16:00: Death and Disease I

Vanessa Harding: Deaths in Hospitals and Institutions in 16th and 17th century London

Louise Deschryver: Fleeing the Deathbed: Plague, Reformation and Deadly Calamities in sixteenth-century Antwerp

16:00-16:30: break

16:30-18:00 Death and Disease II

Martin Christ: Whose authority? Doctors and Clerics around the Early Modern Deathbed

Birgit Ulrike Münch: Behold, the Sinner. Lues Venera in Stradanus' *Nova Reperta* and Rescue in the Last Hour.

18:00-19:00 Keynote I: Erik Seeman: Deathbed Scenes in the Early Modern Atlantic World: Cross-Cultural Perspectives

19:00 onwards: Socialising on "Wonder"



Friday, 27 August

09:00-10:30: The Last Moments during Executions

Hillard von Thiessen: Ambiguity and Authenticity. Change of Persona in a Liminal Situation: Rodrigo Calderón on the Scaffold (1621)

Isabel Casteels: Shaping the Heretics' Last Moments: Audience Interference during Heresy Executions in the sixteenth-century Low Countries

10:30-11:00 break

11:00-12:30: Processes of Dying and their Afterlives

Violet Soen: Fashioning Fabritius' Last Hours on the Scaffold: Audiences and Afterlives of Calvinist Martyrs in the Dutch Revolt

Alexandra Bamji: Moment or Process? Death and Temporalities in Early Modern Italy

12:30-14:00 lunch break

14:00-15:30: Material Aspects

Imke Lichterfeld: Contested Kingship and a Controversial Coronation: The Symbolism of a Paper Crown for York

Adam Mezes: Making Things Right: The Material Aspects of Doing Away with Revenants

15:30-16:00: break

16:00-17:30: Visualizing an Ideal Death

Friedrich J. Becher: Miseraciones eius super omnia opera eius. Lucas Cranach the Elders "Der Sterbende" on the Brink of Reformation?

Vera Henkelmann: Candles of Death and the Death of the Virgin as a Model of the Ideal Death on the Threshold of the Early Modern Era

17:30-18:30 Keynote II: Cornelia Richter: Integration of Negativity. Resilient Trajectories in the Face of Death

18:30-19:30: Final Discussion

19:30 onwards: Socialising on "Wonder"



List of Participants:

Alexandra Bamji (Leeds)

Benedikt Brunner (Mainz)

Friedrich J. Becher (Bonn)

Isabel Casteels (Leuven)

Martin Christ (Erfurt)

Louise Deschryver (Leuven)

Maximilian Diemer (Munich)

Irene Dingel (Mainz)

Vanessa Harding (London)

Vera Henkelmann (Erfurt)

Imke Lichterfeld (Bonn)

Una McIlverna (Melbourne)

Adam Mezes (Budapest)

Birgit Ulrike Münch (Bonn)

Susanne Rau (Erfurt)

Cornelia Richter (Bonn)

Erik Seeman (Buffalo)

Violet Soen (Leuven)

Hillard von Thiessen (Rostock)

Elizabeth Tingle (Leicester)

Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge)

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