Carolina Ruthenbürger, Düsseldorf: Retelling Queenly Adultery in the Medieval Latin, English, and German 'Alexander Romance'

While the 'Alexander Romance', a collection of historical and legendary texts first combined in Greek in the third century AD, may be best-known for relating the conquests of Alexander the Great, it does, in fact, also transmit one of the most popular stories of queenly adultery of the medieval period. Alexander's mother, Queen Olympias of Macedon, is at the centre of the beginning of the Romance, which posits a (pseudo-)divine genealogy for the hero. Alexander is not the son of Philip II of Macedon, but of the Egyptian pharaoh Nectanebo. Magically transformed into the shape of the god Ammon, Nectanebo deceives Olympias into adultery while her husband is away on the battlefield.

This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the Middle English alliterative *Alexander A*, the Middle High German *Alexander* by Rudolf of Ems, and their shared Latin source – the *Historia de preliis Alexandri Magni* in the redaction of I^2 –, to show how the persuasiveness of Nectanebo's deception and the queen's responsibility for the adulterous affair have been portrayed differently across high and late medieval versions of the European *Alexander* tradition.

By considering these texts in their material and cultural contexts, the paper will also explore how they may have been received by their medieval audiences, suggesting that they stimulated debates over the topic of 'female falsity', the limits of conquest, and the legitimacy of bastard kings.