



Seminar

## VIRGINIA LANGUM

Pro Futura Scientia Fellow, SCAS.  
Reader (Docent) in English Literature, Umeå University

### *Medieval Exempla: New Corn from Old Fields?*

Thursday, 26 November, 4:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall  
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala  
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## ABOUT VIRGINIA LANGUM

Virginia Langum received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Cambridge in 2011, where she has also been Donaldson Bye-Fellow at Magdalene College. Prior to that, she earned her bachelor's degree in English from Trinity College Dublin, a master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University, New York, and a master's degree in Medieval and Renaissance Literature from the University of Cambridge. After a teaching fellowship at Wolfson College, University of Cambridge, she became a Postdoctoral Fellow at Umeå University. In 2013, she was admitted to the Pro Futura programme. She was promoted to Reader (Docent) in English Literature in 2015. She is a member of the Umeå Group for Premodern Studies and the Network for Medical Humanities. In 2015, Langum was also elected Member of the Young Academy of Sweden.

Langum has published articles on medieval literature, religion and the body. Most recently, she co-edited *Words and Matter: The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Parish Life* (Runica et Mediaevalia, 2015) and is currently editing *Visions of the North in Premodernity* (forthcoming with Brepols in 2016). During her stay at SCAS, Langum is working on various projects, including the monograph 'Medicine and the Seven Deadly Sins in Medieval Literature and Culture'. The book examines medical and naturalistic explanations of the sins in late medieval texts. Her work concerns the intersections of medical, religious and literary discourse in the later Middle Ages and beyond.

## ABSTRACT

Short illustrative tales, or *exempla*, were highly circulated within medieval Europe and survive in vast numbers. Beginning in the early thirteenth century, priests integrated these tales into sermons in order to improve their rhetorical impact and pedagogical utility. Often extracted and recopied from widely circulated collections, medieval *exempla*, along with other didactic texts, reveal shared beliefs and practices, according to some scholars. However, their vast reach is also a limitation, and other scholars have doubted the possibility of their literary, social or historical analysis. In this talk, I aim to outline the field of *exempla* scholarship, in order to determine what new areas of study might prove fruitful. I will take one widely circulated *exemplum* in order to investigate to what extent *exempla* might be localized to particular contexts.