FORTUNE AND HER WHEEL: 
A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC APPROACH

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a cognitive linguistic analysis of the concept of fortune and how it has changed over time. It examines the history of the word *fortune* and what meanings it has had, the representation of Fortune as a human-like personality that interacts with humans, and the use of the ‘wheel of fortune’ symbol to represent unpredictable changes in life. All three of these elements are shown to be part of the same larger process of conceptual change.

The pagan goddess Fortuna begins as a common blend that treats unpredictable events as the actions of a person-like entity. She gradually takes on more features and functions as her name is metonymically expanded to designate a variety of elements in the conceptual frame of RISK, e.g. positive and negative outcomes that result from Fortuna’s decisions are called ‘fortunes’.

Fortune’s wheel is a structure that relies on very basic primary metaphors such as REPETITION IS CIRCULAR MOTION, which the Romans use to talk about repeated reversals of fortune. They also represent Fortuna standing on a wheel, using the BALANCE schema to show her instability. These image schematic structures are thought of in a much more cohesive way by medieval thinkers who used the image of a person attached to the outer rim of a wheel, riding it around in a circle and going up and down at the same time. For the first time, that person’s moving viewpoint is what makes the wheel significant.

Over the course of later centuries the meanings of the word *fortune* come to be used in increasingly separate contexts, and so do different images of Fortune (as controller turning the wheel, or nude figure balancing on top of a wheel, rolling around but ready to be caught). As probability and randomness become more popular concepts, the wheel is blended with the image of a wheel used for gambling, with a focus on where the wheel will stop. It leaves open the possibility that Fortune may be controlling the wheel, but the more salient meaning is that by interacting with the wheel, an individual can win a fortune.
Preface

This dissertation is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Adriana Byrne.
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1 Introduction

Why do things happen the way that they do? How does the world work? How much power does an individual have in this world to change his or her own state? These life-defining abstract questions are almost impossible to grapple with, except through metaphors that rely on concrete physical experience. In Western Europe, imagining the concept ‘fortune’ in a physical form and thinking about how to deal with it has been essential to forming a cultural world-view. This is a study of how that concept has emerged and changed, as a result of generic conceptualization patterns that humans engage in. Its fundamental aim is to show the balance of ‘cognitively generic’ and ‘culturally specific’ factors in the development of fortune as a concept, a word, an imaginary personality and a force of change in human life. Against such a background, we can appreciate what elements of it have remained consistent and why, over the course of many centuries. This is not the story of a representational tradition lovingly preserved over time, but of a struggle. People have explicitly and vigorously denounced the personification Fortune in many ways, but in spite of our efforts to conceptualize the world operating without her kind of agency, she persists in a variety of forms. There seems to be a basic human need to explain the kinds of unpredictable events that Fortune has been associated with.

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, personifications of concepts represent new and exciting possibilities for research. They allow us to study a process by which earlier generations gave a shape and a form to phenomena that have no tangible shape or form, phenomena that affect human lives in crucial ways. The concept of fortune in particular is an excellent example of how a cognitive linguistic analysis draws our attention to generic patterns of conceptualization. It is a site where different areas of theory such as image schemas, viewpoint, embodiment, frames, blending, metonymy and primary metaphors can clearly intersect and build on each other’s explanatory power. Cognitive linguistics can also offer something new to historical linguistic and cultural studies by articulating reasons for some types of continuity and change over time. The more ‘primary’ (physical/sensory/pre-linguistic) an experience is,
the greater the likelihood that people will rely on it to express important abstract concepts and have difficulty finding other ways to talk about their ideas. This general pattern interacts in complex ways with factors such as cultural convention, individual creativity and the physical constraints of different representational media. This study will look for patterns and continuity that can be explained by cognitive linguistics. As my starting point in accounting for changes that occur, I will reference a few major historical shifts: 1) from Paganism to Christianity; 2) from a focus on the providential agency of God to the active agency of humans (while maintaining that both are powerful forces); 3) from a view of chance as ‘the unknown’ to ‘the random’. These changes will be looked at from the conceptual rather than cultural or historic perspective. In a sense, I will be tracing conceptualization in progress.

As cognitive linguists might reasonably expect, these shifts are reflected both in artistic representations of personified Fortune (especially the way that she interacts with a symbolic wheel or ball) and in the everyday speech of people using the word *fortune* (as well as words that are derived from it). The advent of Christianity in Europe was a catalyst for highly elaborate and tightly synthesized blending of Pagan and Christian conceptualizations that used wheel-related primary metaphors to describe the cosmos and causation. The presence of Fortune and her wheel mediating between God and humanity was a key to explaining how the mysteries of divine providence could be understood from a limited human viewpoint. Early modern humanists became more focused on the individual viewpoint than on the way it fit into the universe, inventing embodied ways that a person could interact with Fortune herself. The classical image of the goddess Fortuna balanced precariously on a wheel or ball was revived and repurposed with the idea that, though she rolled around constantly, she could be chased and caught. The advent of probability theory made it possible to develop a new conceptual frame for thinking about causation, one that did not require the presence of an active agent as the cause of every event. The popularity of Fortune as a personification that controlled chance events began to decline, but other senses of the word *fortune*, as well as the primary metaphors that had been synthesized in the medieval image of her wheel, continued to be used separately in different situations.
What I find compelling about this topic is the fact that these cultural changes are so clearly also changes in conceptualization and linguistic meaning. These parallel processes, if they are distinct processes at all, are unjustifiably carved up between different institutional disciplines. My project will necessarily be multifaceted and interdisciplinary. Because of this, I will need to devote a good deal of space to articulating a new methodological approach that blends together useful elements of existing analytical practices.

1.1 Methodology: the main ideas

My goal is to talk about something over and above individuals’ reasons for employing the cultural formula of Fortune and her wheel. What I am looking for could be called the ‘meaning’ of the image, working from cognitive linguist Mark Johnson’s explanation of that term. “Meaning requires a functioning brain, in a living body that engages in its environments – environments that are social and cultural as well as physical and biological.” (2008:152). This study will draw connections between embodied experiences in the world and discourse about abstract conceptions of that world. The well-catalogued specifics of cultural conventions surrounding the concept of fortune need to be analyzed using theoretical tools that allow me to make systematic generalizations about its motivation and structure. The key idea behind the theory is that no matter where other humans come from or how they live, we can understand something about them because we know what it feels like to have a human body. Eve Sweetser sums it up well when she states that “we never have experience of the world except as a viewpoint-equipped, embodied self among other viewpoint-equipped embodied selves” (2012:1). This holds true for all people no matter what other features make them dissimilar from each other, and something new can be said about cultural concepts and traditions if this shared embodied experience of perception is taken into account.

A good place to start my interdisciplinary project might be to state what it is not intended to be. It should not be taken as an attempt to draw clear lines of influence or cause and effect between individual works of
art or literature. It does not belong to the study of any particular time period, and is not nearly broad enough in scope to deal satisfactorily with all the details of historical context. It is not an attempt to explain the inner workings of the Roman, Anglo Saxon, Elizabethan or modern mind, or the minds of individual writers and artists. The labels ‘cognitive’ and ‘conceptual’ are not claims to absolute scientific authority on the way that brains work. It is not my goal to replace older methods of interpreting symbolism, typology, allegory or intertextual reference. The body of research already done on the topic of Fortune by art historians, medievalists and early modernists is an invaluable resource that I want my work to reference and harmonize with. I will combine cognitive analysis with a corpus-based survey of a large number of available texts, so that my conclusions are based in specific examples and observable trends.

1.2 Review of existing literature on Fortune

The body of English-language scholarship on Fortune in the middle ages is dominated by Howard Rollin Patch and his 1927 book *The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature*. Patch describes Fortuna as an imaginative tool for dealing with “the mutable and haphazard forces which we generalize and characterize as ‘chance’” (4) and sees the adoption of a stance toward her as a way to help “make up one’s mind as to the dependability and profit of things in general” (5). He goes on to discuss how people’s attitudes and belief or non-belief in Fortune reflect their Classical or Romantic temperament, which is a drastic oversimplification but gets at the idea that there are multiple ways of using the concept as a tool for thought and a component in forming a world-view. Patch is quite a useful source for my analysis, since he is concerned with the way that writers and visual artists have dealt with hugely abstract ideas through very physical kinds of representation. For example, he cares about whether characters are represented as being attached to Fortune’s wheel against their will or whether they try to climb it by choice, which makes a huge difference in conceptualizing what kind of limited agency humans might have even if they at first appear to be fully under Fortune’s control.
However, the approach that Patch takes is not without its problems. Jerold C. Frakes, author of *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages* (1988) criticizes Patch’s style of broad historical overview, which only briefly pauses to analyze specific examples. “Fortuna is treated as an isolated phenomenon whose significance across cultural, linguistic and ideological borders is of universal consistency, displaying at most only a linear development.” (1) Instead, Frakes proposes to analyze “fortuna as a complex element in a comprehensive philosophical and terminological system” (3). Focusing on the famous *Consolation of Philosophy* by the 6th century writer Boethius, Frakes examines the influences that it draws on and the ways that it has been interpreted by early medieval commentators and translators. He tracks the use of the word *fortuna* in opposition to *fatum, providentia* and *homo* within the texts, as well as the “inner semantic complex” of the term itself (4) and its various possible meanings. Frakes’ close reading and his principled approach to semantics add something to his study over and above what a miscellany of brief literary examples can provide. My aim is to combine his outline of the concept of fortune with the spatial/physical insights provided by Patch.

Vincenzo Cioffari and Pierre Courcelle are also well-known and useful sources. Cioffari has written several books on different conceptions of Fortune and Fate in the works of many high-profile medieval and early modern thinkers. I will reference one of his shorter articles, where he provides focused commentary on the portrayal of Fortune by Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli. Courcelle has done invaluable work collecting and analyzing images from manuscripts of the *Consolation of Philosophy*. I will be working from his text *La Consolation de Philosophie dans la Tradition Littéraire*, in the original French (since no translation was available). There are a number of important books in German, such as Alfred Doren’s *Fortuna im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, that are difficult to access and not translated. For this paper, at least, I will have to leave them aside.

In terms of historical coverage, Frederic Kiefer’s book *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* will be my main source for discussing the early modern period. Kiefer looks at trends not only in drama, but also in
religious and secular literature, visual art and architecture. To discuss later developments in the 18th and 19th centuries, I will mainly reference Elizabeth Campbell’s book *Fortune’s Wheel: Dickens and the Iconography of Women’s Time*. She provides some good information on where people like Dickens might have read about Fortune and her wheel from contemporary and 18th century sources, and points out surviving folk traditions around Fortune and fortune-telling that lasted into the Industrial Revolution.

1.3 **Cognitive linguistic theoretical grounding**

The foundation of cognitive linguistics as a discipline starts with Metaphor Theory, which was first formulated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their 1980 book *Metaphors We Live By*. Its major premise is that “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action” (Lakoff and Johnson 1). His 1993 article “Contemporary Theory of Metaphor” succinctly defines what he labels ‘conceptual’ (rather than linguistic) metaphors. He calls them “general mappings across conceptual domains … the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another” (Lakoff 203). The typical form of this mapping uses structures from physical domains involving objects and processes to shape abstract domains involving thoughts and emotions. For example, the very common conceptual metaphor CATEGORIES ARE CONTAINERS gives us the ability to make categorical syllogisms in logic (e.g. Socrates is inside the category of ‘men’ and that whole category is contained in the category of ‘mortals’), enables us to use set theory in mathematics, to make venn diagrams, and to complain about being ‘put in a box’ or getting rejected by the ‘in crowd’.

Some metaphors are considered more ‘primary’ than others. Joseph Grady and Christopher Johnson define ‘primary scene’ as a recurring type of sensory experience “which bring[s] together the source and target concepts in tightly coherent and predictable ways” (125) and ‘subscene’ as a “distinguishable aspect of the scene as a whole” (125), usually the non-physical, cognitive operations that are going on. Figure 1 illustrates Grady and Johnson’s idea of what happens when a child first forms the conceptual metaphor ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE. The primary scene is composed of both a
visible physical event and a closely correlated cognitive event. Other events, such as perceiving the object’s colour, are also simultaneously happening, but they are unrelated to the strong connection being formed between the manipulation of a complex object and coming to understand a complex abstract form of organization.

At the most basic level, every conceptual metaphor relies on at least one image schema, a structure that Lakoff and Johnson each discuss separately in their 1987 publications (Johnson’s *The Body in the Mind* and Lakoff’s *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*). It is classically defined as “a recurring dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience” (Johnson 1987: xiv), and Raymond Gibbs has called them “the essential glue that binds embodied experience, thought, and language.” (2005:113) The category includes perceptual/physical ‘gestalts’ such as PATH, CONTAINER and CONTACT that are basic to both interacting with the world that we encounter and to structuring abstract ideas and generalizations that come out of that interaction.

For example, the UP/DOWN image schema is important to this study, and is very significant to humans because we are bipedal and have to learn how to stand up and walk at a young age. Because of these early experiences, being upright is strongly tied to being active, in control, and successful. By extension, moving upward often indicates an increase in status or power, whereas moving downward is the opposite, a loss of these attributes. If human bodies were differently configured, for example if we were not bipeds, or if we were not subject to gravity in the same way, verticality might have a much more diminished or different salience in human cultures. The image-schematic structure of UP vs. DOWN acts as a framework for all kinds of abstract conceptions. The metaphor GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN is the conceptual basis for linguistic expressions such as ‘high and mighty’ or ‘feeling low’, and also for visual art, and mythic structures such as the cosmology of heaven and hell.

Gibbs writes that image schemas are too often treated as “pre-existing representational entities” but are best understood as “experiential gestalts which momentarily emerge from ongoing brain, body, and world
interactions” and involve “the embodied simulation of events” (114). Michael Kimmell has proposed that to be really useful as a tool in the study of human cultures, image schemas need to be treated as having both “context-bound and transcontextual functions” (297), with a recognition that “seemingly universal image schemas may become culturally augmented or nuanced through their usage context.” (286) His calls for “a socioculturally situated analysis” (288) of image schemas make a lot of sense in the context of the work that I am doing. For example, much of the structure of Fortune’s wheel bears remarkable similarities to the Buddhist conception of the bhavacakra or ‘wheel of life,’ which represents life and reincarnation as a repeated cycle, or the Taoist concept of Yin and Yang, which involves the constant cyclical changing of states (cf. Jennifer Lundin Ritchie’s 2010 MA thesis “An investigation into the Guodian Laozi”) and is often represented visually as a Taiji tu, a circular diagram. This would indicate that circularity and turning motions are a key part of the way that humans structure their understanding of the progression of personal and historical time, but each of these representations also has its own specialized philosophical and metaphorical functions.

I think that this combination of core similarities and extreme diversity can be elegantly explained by thinking about the ways that image schemas shape and interact with human points of view. The same CONTAINER schema can mean a lot of different things, depending on whether you imagine the container being large or small relative to yourself, whether you are inside or outside of it, whether someone else is also interacting with the container, and so on. Arie Verhagen’s entry “Construal and Perspectivization” in The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics has a good summary of theories about construal, viewpoint, and empathy with the perspective of others. Verhagen defines construal as a way to “impose structure on conceptualizations in ways that do not immediately follow from their content” (51), which humans are constantly doing without thinking about it. For example, it is a very human habit to construe stars as appearing in clusters or constellation rather than simply treating them as unconnected dots of light in the sky. We are also performing an act of construal when one object appears to us as the main ‘figure’ in a scene, distinguished from the mass of other things that make up the
‘ground’. “Consider, for instance, the expressions X is above Y and Y is below X; while these expressions denote the same spatial configuration, they are semantically distinct” (Verhagen 50). This is an example of figure/ground construal combined with the UP/DOWN image schema. This same type of construal can interact similarly with different image schemas, such as CENTRE/PERIPHERY, involving the construal of objects as closer or further away relative to the ‘centre’ of your own bodily position. Another important factor is the very special human ability “to take into account other minds in relation to an object of conceptualization” (59) which, I argue, starts with being able to imagine oneself in another person’s physical position and extends from there into thinking about their cognitive and emotional perspective.

Metaphor Theory has been refined and made capable of more sophisticated operations by Blending Theory, which was developed in the early 1990s by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. In this versatile model, concrete experiences do not have to be treated as always mapping unidirectionally onto abstract ones. Instead of focusing on broad domains of experience, they talk about mental spaces, which are described as “small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk” (102) that “[consist] of elements and relations activated simultaneously as a single integrated unit” (104). These flexible ‘packets’ can be brought together in a huge variety of combinations and permutations to create novel and conceptually useful blends. An example is provided in Figure 2. One of the most important and useful operations achieved through blending is ‘compression’, which helps us to express “global insights” (92) using a “human scale” of time and space (92) that makes them easy to conceptualize and communicate to others. Fortune is a beautiful example of compression, because in discussing her personality, her appearance, and the way that she uses her wheel, people have been able to think their way around enormous global-scale conceptualizations, such as the way that the universe operates.

I also plan to use the system of frame semantics developed primarily by Charles Fillmore, which harmonizes with Blending Theory. In his 1982 paper titled simply “Frame Semantics,” he explains his
definition of a frame: “I have in mind any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure into which it fits” (111). He gives examples such as the frames of JUDGING, or the COMMERCIAL EVENT that seem to underlie clusters of semantically related words, for example buy, sell, charge, pay, etc. You cannot call an action ‘buying’ unless there is also a person who gives you an item in exchange for currency (or something metaphorically treated as currency), and you cannot be selling unless someone is buying from you. Not only does the frame or base scene fundamentally shape the meanings of words relating to it, but “when one of the things in such a structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available” (111). For example, a metaphorical expression like ‘you need to sell your argument better’ invokes the whole COMMERCIAL EVENT frame, complete with a buyer who will give you something valuable if they accept your argument. A frame can be an input for a blend as well, and frames often provide most of the basis for the emergent structure of a blend.

Last but decidedly not least, I want to talk about the relation between frames and the operation known as metonymy, which Dancygier and Sweetser (forthcoming 2014) succinctly define as “the use of some entity A to stand for another entity B with which A is correlated.” (2, original emphasis) Antonio Barcelona outlines some ideas about metonymy that he sees as part of the “standard” cognitive linguistic view: “Metonymy is fundamentally conceptual in nature (like metaphor)… [but] involves elements which are experientially (and thus conceptually) contiguous (unlike metaphor)” (228). Like metaphors, metonymies are usually written in small capitals. For example, the expression ‘the office threw him a retirement party’ would be an ORGANIZATION FOR MEMBERS metonymy. Barcelona has argued (successfully, I think) against defining metonymic mappings as happening within conceptual domains in contrast to metaphoric “mappings across conceptual domains” (Lakoff 203, emphasis added), mostly because the boundaries of a conceptual domain are very difficult to define. Conceptual frames are a much better explanatory tool. Any semantic use of a frame is also metonymic in a way, because a single word (e.g. cage) can stand for the whole frame (of CAPTIVITY, in this example). The concept of fortune is
both expansive and coherent because of people’s ability to unconsciously interpret ‘frame metonymy’, where “one element of a frame is used to refer to either the frame as a whole or to other associated elements of the frame.” (Dancygier and Sweetser 2014:3) This makes it possible to talk about someone ‘seeking their fortune’ without having to specify whether a ‘fortune’ is a person’s destiny, a good situation that they want to be in, or a pile of money. It can be any of those, or a combination specified by context.

1.4 Methods of addressing diachronic change

The basis of my approach is the idea that there are concurrent changes in the concept of fortune, the word fortune and the representation of personified Fortune. I want to address both language change and the history of discourse about probability and chance.

My principles of semantic analysis come from Eve Sweetser’s book From Etymology to Pragmatics. In it, she writes that “[b]y studying the historical development of groups of related words, it should be possible to see what sorts of systematic structure our cognitive system tends to give to the relevant domains.” (9) Her ideas about language change are closely connected to Metaphor Theory and Blending Theory, focusing on the observable pattern that many words start out by referring to concrete things and develop new abstract meanings over time by a process of metaphorization. She is careful to explain that this approach does not stem from an anti-Saussurian desire to turn every etymology into some form of onomatopoeia:

[I]t is an arbitrary fact that the sequence of sounds [with] which we spell see (as opposed to the sound sequence spelled voir in French) is used in English to refer to vision. But, given this arbitrary fact, it is by no means arbitrary that see can also mean “know” or “understand,” as in I see what you’re getting at. There is a very good reason why see rather than, say, kick or sit, or some other sensory verb such as smell, is used to express knowledge and understanding. (5)
In French, the verb *voir* is also used to refer to the cognitive event of understanding as well as the sensory event of seeing, which already points to a cross-linguistic pattern of metaphors with a conceptual basis that cuts across surface-level differences between word forms.

Metonymy, like metaphor, can motivate semantic change over time. The process is known as metonymization, and may be even more prevalent than metaphorization because its effects are so useful and subtle. For example, saying that the cost of your renovations is ‘a concern’ contributes to metonymization in English, because you are using a word that formerly referred only to an emotion experienced by an individual, but can now be used to talk about things within a frame of REACTION that evoke the emotion. I think that metonymization is a crucial factor in the development of the word *fortune* and its ability to designate many elements of its underlying conceptual frame.

For related reasons I want to look at polysemy, the development of new meanings for the same phonological string. Currently, when people use the word *fortune* they are most often talking about personal wealth or a large amount of money, but this was not always the case. There have been a surprising number of meanings and forms of the word over the centuries, some of which have disappeared, while others have endured to the present day. Traugott and Dasher’s book *Regularity in Semantic Change* sets out the idea that “semantic change cannot be studied without drawing on a theory of polysemy because of the nature of change. Every change, at any level in a grammar, involves not ‘A > B,’ i.e. the simple replacement of one item by another, but rather ‘A > A ~ B’ and then sometimes ‘> B’ alone.” (11) They note that sometimes “polysemies continue to coexist over several hundreds of years” and that older and newer meanings “may influence each other” (12) but that there are also cases where “two polysemous meanings have lost their relationship so as to be associated with two homonymous lexemes.” (14) They provide some highly illustrative examples, like the case of the word *humor*. Many speakers of Present-Day English understand that in the context of ancient physiology, *humor* means a fluid thought to affect human physical health, personality and emotions. However, we also use the word
in a modern context that refers exclusively to emotions and personality without making reference to bodily fluids. The old meaning is not totally gone, but it is reserved for specific registers that involve reference to past modes of thought. I think that the word *fortune* is in a state similar to *humor*. In a very particular register it can be used with its old expansive meaning, which is tied to a complete system of beliefs that are currently thought to be quaint and obsolete. In a casual conversation without special context, *fortune* on its own is limited to money-related meanings.

Clearly, as with the concept of humor, part of the semantic change had to do with changing cultural ideas about how the world works. Gerda Reith’s sociological study of gambling, titled *The Age of Chance*, outlines a large-scale shift in Western culture from the belief that all salient events were caused by powerful deities and spirits to a mathematically-based idea of probability that did not require a conscious agent (supernatural or otherwise) to cause every observable effect. Reith also discusses how the present-day ‘gambling situation’ encourages magical-religious beliefs in players that are remarkably similar to those of ancient cultures, ascribing their wins or losses to the will of some unseen controlling force, or to the gambling apparatus itself.

My analysis will involve a small amount of close reading in individual literary works that I think are relevant, but I also want to do searches within large bodies of collected written works and (in more modern corpora) recorded speech. My approach will be corpus-based, not corpus-driven because I am using the corpus to test a hypothesis, not as the only source for the hypothesis.

The corpora that I want to use are varied in size and organization, but each one will add something important to this study. The *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (CMEPV) is an online collection of about 184 texts (as of 2006) that covers many of “the largest and most significant monuments of Middle English” according to the corpus website. It will be a major source for discussions and examples of medieval ideas about Fortune. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) quotation database will also be useful because it covers a long historical span and shows some information on changes in the frequency
of a word’s usage over time, though its sample sizes are limited. To get modern examples of usage I will search the British National Corpus (BNC, 100 million words from the 1980s to 1993), along with the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA, 450 million words from 1990-2012) and the Canadian Strathy Corpus (50 million words, 1980-2013). These three major corpora are available on linguist Mark Davies’ website and come with a very user-friendly search program. For a different perspective, I may also experiment with using Davies’ version of the Global Web-Based English corpus (GloWbE) which is made up of 1.9 billion words gathered from websites in 20 countries between 2012 and 2013.

The main research questions that I want to get information from these corpora about are:

1) During a given historical period, what forms of fortune are available for use, including fortuned, fortunous, fortunate, (un)fortunately, the noun fortune as in ‘spending a fortune’ etc.? These should be connected to the contemporary cultural framing of the concept.

2) In a given period, what words are most frequently collocates of fortune and what can they tell us about the way that people conceived of its qualities, or ways of interacting with it?

3) How does the frequency of fortune in English compare with that of other words that cover similar semantic ground, such as hap, luck, chance and randomness? Over time, increased use of other words to describe elements in the conceptual frame of RISK should be correlated with more restricted and separated meanings of fortune.

The main aims of my methodological approach are to build on existing work in cultural and sociological studies; to analyze cultural artifacts and linguistic expressions using the frames and embodied metaphors and that they rely on for their meaning; and to use diachronic data from a variety of sources to show how a cultural concept can change over time. Having established my methodology as well as some research questions, I will now move on an exploration of the specific topic that I have set out to study.
2 The transition from goddess to personification: a blend structure becomes more embodied through manipulation of viewpoint(s)

From a generalized animism that frames all salient events as being caused by human-like agency, Fortuna emerges (via blending that relies on established cultural frames) as a specific type of agent that causes events in specific physical ways (by bringing something to individuals, by steering them on a journey, or by various forms of interaction with a wheel). There are a number of primary metaphors (based on image schemas) that can be separately evoked by a physical wheel. In Roman culture these primary metaphors are often used separately to talk about different aspects of experiencing unexpected events. In the middle ages they are powerfully blended together, mostly through the technique of imagining first one, then multiple viewpoints attached to the wheel's rim.

2.1 Primary scenes and animism: what concepts of ‘chance’ facilitated the rise of Fortuna?

According to sociologist Gerda Reith, “in ancient, classical and ‘primitive’ thought, there was no such thing as chance! The random event was everywhere regarded as a sacred sign of the gods” (13). This statement sounds very bold, but briefly sketching a history of the concept reinforces the theory. The Latin word *casus* forms the root of the English word *chance*, which gives an initial impression that the ancient idea behind the word should line up with the modern one. However, the story is interestingly complicated by further context. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary*’s first and most literal definition of *casus* is “[a] falling down, fall, downward movement” pointing to its origins in the verb *cadere* (to fall). According to the *OLD*, there are many meanings of *casus* that appear to originate in metaphoric usage, such as “the end (of a season)” or the ending of a word, from which the grammatical term *case* is derived. The greatest number of major meanings listed in the entry for *casus* (9 out of 11) are translated as some combination of ‘accident’, ‘occurrence’, ‘opportunity’, ‘risk’ and ‘outcome’. They cluster around the idea of events
that are generically similar to the experience of oneself or something else falling: these events are not
caused by any visible deliberate action, they involve suspense about what the outcome will be, and they
conclude with a resolution of that suspense. All of these features are easily recognizable in the ways that
we use chance today. Reith jokes that “[t]he word ‘chance’ literally refers to that which falls to us” (14),
showing how the old etymology lines up with fairly current idiomatic language.

The key feature that made ancient ideas about casus different from modern ones about chance was an
assumption that if a significant, suspenseful event was not resolved by deliberate human action, the
outcome must be determined by some mysterious ‘other’ entity’s deliberate action. This is evidenced by
an extremely prevalent ancient method for making predictions about the future, called “cleromancy” or
“casting lots”. Reith describes the ritual as “the tossing of sticks, arrows or animal bones … and a
question addressed to a deity or fate. The formation of the falling objects would then be interpreted as the
‘answer’ of the god, for the disposal of the lot was always recognized as divine intervention.” (15) She
also mentions that “[i]nstances of conjunction of sacred ritual with gambling games occur frequently in
historical and anthropological literature” (45). Pointing to the clear similarity between casting lots and
throwing dice, Reith hypothesizes that gambling first developed as a way to increase “the individual’s
involvement in the ritual” (45), pitting their own predictive abilities against the divine powers in a
miniature drama of stakes and consequences.

In his introduction to Divination: Perspectives for a New Millennium, Patrick Curry writes that the
practice of rituals to answer questions about unknown future outcomes is “ubiquitous throughout human
history and societies” (1). While methods and implementations vary widely, from dream interpretation to
the examination of entrails, the key element is to find a pattern in something that was not directly caused
by human agency, and is therefore thought to be caused by some kind of hidden but human-like agency.
This broad similarity among methods, as well as “the avowals of diviners themselves, highly consistent
across both cultures and historical periods, that working with more-than-human spirits is absolutely
integral to divination” (Curry 8) reinforce the idea that nearly universally, when humans look for non-obvious causes in the world, they expect to find conscious minds like their own in control.

This robust pattern of attribution is one worth researching further. My guesses about the reasons behind it lead back to a “primary scene” or “recurring experience type” (Grady and Johnson 125) that nearly all humans have in the first stages of infancy. “Holding onto and manipulating physical objects is one of the things we learn earliest and do the most” according to Lakoff and Johnson (Philosophy in the Flesh 270). This type of activity simultaneously forms the “most fundamental case” (177) of causation (also referred to as ‘prototypical’) and the basis for one of the “most fundamental metaphors for our inner life” (270). In the process of learning to move and create perceptible changes in the world around us, “[s]elf-control and object-control are inseparable experiences” (270). This early connection means that the concepts of causation and agency are inevitably bound up together. Jean Piaget’s studies of childhood development give an indication of how long it takes for us to fully separate the primary scene of action from the “subscene” of intention. In his book The Child’s Conception of the World (1977) Piaget delineates stages of “animism” in childhood, the first of which lasts “on an average until the ages of 6 or 7” (179). A child at this stage “does not realise that there can be actions unaccompanied by consciousness. Activity is for him necessarily purposive and conscious. A wall cannot be knocked down without feeling it, a stone cannot be broken without knowing it” (177). In later years the set of things that are believed to be conscious narrows to things that move, then to things that appear to move independently of outside force, eventually taking on nuanced distinctions.

The connection between causation and consciousness remains strong for adults in the form of event-structuring conceptual metaphors like CAUSES ARE FORCES (e.g. ‘the situation compelled me to act’) and EVENTS ARE ACTIONS (e.g. ‘it rained on purpose to spoil the picnic’). It does not take much for our ideas about life and agency to be upset (e.g. watching a skilled ventriloquist, or swearing at a rock that tripped you). This could be the reason for various forms of animism, from the pantheons of gods to the
way that people in the present day see personalities in machines. It is a very reliable pattern of human thought, and it takes a lot of training to conceive of chance and probability in what we would think of as a scientific way, without assigning motives or emotions to various elements of an uncertain situation.

2.2 Framing gives rise to an ‘Empty Cause’ blend: emergence of fortuna, the concept and personality

The earliest recorded history of the goddess Fortuna is connected with the Roman king Servius Tullius, who is said to have reigned from about 578 to 535 BC. Plutarch’s *Moralia* records that Tullius instituted many “honors and titles of Fortune” (212) and built at least two temples to her out of gratitude, because “by her favor he was preferred from a captive and hostile nation to be king of the Romans” (212).

However, it is important to take Plutarch’s version with a grain of salt because it was written in 100 AD, and expresses a late Roman idea of the goddess as a fickle and arbitrary force of chance. He complains that “to this day, there are no temples built to Wisdom, Temperance” and other human virtues, but “the temples of Fortune are very ancient and splendid” (211). This type of opposition between admirable human efforts and the ‘quick fix’ of asking for Fortuna’s help has a long and complex history.

In his book *Religion of Numa* Jesse Benedict Carter claims that Fortuna was first worshipped as a goddess of the harvest and of pregnant women. “[S]he came into the world as a goddess of plenty and did not turn into a goddess of luck till centuries after her birth” (52). Frederic Kiefer also notes that “Fortune seems originally to have been a fertility goddess, an identification that survives in some of her ancient accoutrements: the cornucopia, sheaf of wheat, measure of fruit, and ear of corn.” (24, note 3) Carter hypothesizes that the change in Fortuna’s functions came about partly through the introduction of Greek concepts of luck or *tyche*, and that Latin words for good results were adapted to indicate something that

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1 based on Livy’s *Ab Urbe Condita* or *The History of Rome*

2 Livy writes that the mother of Tullius was captured in Corniculum during Rome’s war with the Latin League (I.i.xxxix)
would yield a good result, through an EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy. “The possibility of such a transition from fertility to good-luck is shown us in the phrase ‘arbor felix,’ which originally meant a fruitful tree and later a tree of good omen.” (52) This is a fairly plausible general theory, and Fortuna in particular seems to have been very well-suited to this change in meanings, as the development of her name suggests.

According to historian William Warde Fowler, the word fortuna was originally “formed adjectivally from fors” (62), as a kind of cognomen or nickname for the goddess. “Her full name was probably Fors Fortuna, a name which survived in two old temples across the river from Rome proper, in Trastevere ... Fortuna is thus merely the cult-name added to the old goddess Fors to intensify her meaning, which finally broke off” (Carter 51). William Smith’s A Smaller Latin-English Dictionary superficially defines fors as “chance, hap, luck, hazard”. However, Fowler interprets the word to mean “the incalculable element in human life ... distinguished from [the modern concept of] blind chance” (62). Kiefer says that fors was “etymologically associated with fero, ‘I bring’, by ancient authors” (2) and in his 1929 paper for Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, Patch connects fors with the proto Indo-European word “*[b]har; ‘she who brings’, after the word became feminine.” (139, n.26) This etymology “leaves one with the idea that originally Fortune merely bestowed, – bestowed anything.” (Patch 138-9) She is fundamentally very different from the the ‘di indigetes’, gods that were worshipped by the Romans before they began to conquer neighboring Latin tribes. “They were all deities of specialized activity, concerned with the practical affairs of Roman life, such as the hearth, the doorway, the cupboard, and the plow” (Patch 137-8). Fortuna stands out because she is “born from an abstraction concerned with no particular function of daily life” (Patch 138), though her bestowing powers could be appealed to in a variety of practical situations, for example when looking for a suitable husband, during a difficult pregnancy, or when preparing to harvest the crops.
The very formation of Fortuna as an imaginary entity could be considered similar to the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy. To address its complexity, I will borrow a special blend structure that Fauconnier and Turner use to discuss the personified figure of Death in their book *The Way We Think*. This structure is the “Empty General Cause” blend (292), whereby “we blend a space with an event with a space that has a cause and a caused event” (292). In other words, events that have no obvious material cause are blended with the more manageable type of event that is clearly caused by something else. “From the Event we read off a Cause that is tautologically and exclusively defined in terms of the event category” (291).

These blends import the unexplained event as both a cause and an effect, so that the death of a loved one from an unknown illness, for example, can be blamed on Death in and of itself. To elaborate on the characteristics of the agent that causes death, it is common to give the emergent construct features of the caused event, such as a skeletal, dead-looking body. Different interpretations can emphasize very different things through the selection of elements from the input spaces. As an example, Fauconnier and Turner discuss the differences between the pervasive image of the Grim Reaper (a skeleton with a scythe) and Milton’s description of a shadowy, hungry Death, born from the incestuous coupling of Lucifer and his daughter Sin. The more common blend is using the frame of agriculture and treating human lives metaphorically as plants that have to be harvested at the appropriate time. Milton shapes his image of Death using two distinct frames, the frame of eating and the frame of a family (parents and child. Death sustains himself by consuming human lives, and owes his existence to Sin. In other words if there were no such entity as Sin, human beings would not die – this piece of Christian doctrine is important to the story of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*.

Fortune is clearly an empty cause blend because like the Death that kills, she is a tautological construction. Fortune can give you good or bad fortune. She also shows a similar kind of flexibility in terms of her salient attributes. In the diagram below, I have laid out the basic operations involved in producing this Empty Cause blend. In one mental space, there is the experience of getting something. A healthy child is born, or fruit grows from a tree. While it would also be possible to treat the child or the
fruit as having grown by itself, people blended the acquisition of these things with the conceptual frame of GIVING AND RECEIVING, which involves three roles: a giver, a gift and a receiver. In this frame, something cannot be understood as a gift unless it has been given by a giver, a receiver cannot be considered to have received something unless someone gave it to them, and a giver cannot have given something unless it has been received by someone. The mental space of the real-world event has a potential receiver and gift in it, but no giver. Without the giver, the whole frame falls apart! To solve this problem, some other feature of the event must be applied to the giver. The result of the blend is a new entity “for which there is no referent in the world and no evidence other than the effects themselves” (291). See Figures 3-6.

In examining this initial causal tautology of Fortuna, her traditional symbols (the ‘sheaf of wheat, measure of fruit, and ear of corn’ mentioned by Kiefer) are easily identified as features from the event side of the blend. It is hard to determine whether she was initially thought of as female because the word for already had a female gender, or if the word had a female gender because it was already the name of the goddess. However, it is quite clear that the reason for having a goddess rather than a god would have been female fertility. The OLD etymologically connects the Sanskrit root of for, “bhṛtih ‘support’” to “Eng. birth” and the ‘missing link’ between these words is likely the verb ‘to bear’. This closeness in meaning between ‘bringer’ and ‘mother’ would facilitate a blend between the mother’s role in childbirth and the giver’s role in the GIVING AND RECEIVING frame. Strangely though, because of the blend’s tautological structure, she is a sort of mother who gives children to mothers. One notable feature of this blend is that it leaves out the very real and frightening possibilities of a failed harvest or miscarriage. I would guess that these unspeakable fears are the real reason why Fortuna exists. If they had always had healthy children and plentiful food, there would be no reason for Fortuna’s first worshippers to conceive of an entity that they could ask and thank for these gifts.
There is also a distinct possibility that Fortuna was influenced by the Greek concept of tyche, which also began life as a goddess who determined outcomes. John Ferguson’s *The Religions of the Roman Empire* describes a variety of approaches to the personality Tyche in ancient Greek literature. “She appears as a Nereid already in the Homeric hymn to Demeter and as a daughter of Ocean in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. … In a fragment Pindar calls Tyche one of the Moirai [fates]” (77). On the other hand, Aristotle used the word *tyche* simply to mean something like ‘coincidence’ (Frakes 26). The famous example of Aristotelian ‘tyche’ is the scenario of a farmer finding buried gold in his field, not as the result of divine intervention, but because someone else just happened to have buried it there. Increased contact with Greece after the year 150 BC might have led the Romans to blend Fortuna and Tyche together, treating them as different faces of the same goddess. The fact that the concept of tyche existed in both personified and non-personified forms was most likely an influence on the concept of fortuna.

As time went on, more and more everyday situations began to be considered appropriate times to ask for Fortuna’s help. This is probably because she was adopted by the Romans at a time when they were engaged in many new kinds of enterprises, all of which involved some element of uncertainty and the possibility of harmful outcomes. Fortuna gained a variety of new cognomina and specialized cults that associated her with journeys at sea, with the success of cities as a whole, with the personal success of notable individuals and their families, and not surprisingly, with gambling. People would appeal to her for help in risky endeavors or use divination to ask her what the results of a new venture might be.

### 2.3 Interacting image schemas and primary metaphors: origins of Fortune’s wheel

Fortuna’s three major symbolic tools in Roman representations are the cornucopia, the rudder, and less prominently, the wheel. The first two make a lot of practical sense. Fortuna distributes gifts from the horn of plenty, playing her role as a fertility goddess. She steers with the rudder, in her later role as a protector
of people on sea voyages and metaphorically, to conduct people through the journey of life. The wheel, though, does not appear to have such a straightforward purpose or practical source. What did people originally imagine Fortuna doing with it? In early representations it is even difficult to tell whether it is supposed to be a wheel, a circle or a ball. Patch briefly addresses but mostly avoids the question of “whether this ball was originally the sun or the moon” (1927:148). Both celestial bodies would intuitively fit Fortuna’s profile as a goddess of fertility in both humans and plants, both of which involved natural cycles that could be predicted using the sun and moon. There is little direct evidence for this origin story, but it is worth noting that the connection between changeable Fortune and the phases of the moon persisted in literature well into the early modern period.

The earliest known representation that could rightfully be called a ‘wheel of fortune’ (actually, two wheels) is a mosaic found in the ancient Greek city of Olynthos from the late 5th or early 4th century B.C., pictured in Fig. 7. According to the report of D.M. Robinson (505), the inscription below the circles reads ‘agathe [good] tyche’. This find supports the idea that the wheel did not originate with Fortuna the Latin fertility goddess, and was instead imported via a blend between Fortuna and Tyche.

Whether the two wheels in the image are supposed to represent the sun and moon is a matter of speculation. What stands out visually is the fact that each one has a clearly-defined centre and an edge, joined together by lines that look like spokes. The difference in the orientation of these spokes could be a way of representing the wheel turning. It is also tempting to view the small circle as a negative image of the large one, perhaps representing a form of bad tyche that is minimized.

Alternatively, like Yin and Yang, these two wheels might be more neutrally representing opposite states. Jennifer Lundin Ritchie describes the primary experiences that give rise to the two foundational Daoist concepts. “The [primary scene] for yang is a human standing up on a hill (the most vertical vantage point) in full sunlight, and for yin it is a human lying down in the shade created by the hill or by clouds blocking the sun (the least vertical vantage point).”(75) In the “full yin-yang blend” she describes how “the two
conditions alternate, initiated by the third input of the cycle of a day.” (75) Isabelle Robinet similarly describes “the endless cycles of Yin and Yang or movement and quiescence (*dong and jing) that engender each other” (934), and details some of the different ways that the Taiji tu or ‘Diagram of the Great Ultimate’ has been drawn to emphasize particular aspects of the interactions between Yin and Yang. The idea that each one contains the other has received a lot more attention than the idea of alternation, but that could be because temporal changes are just a lot harder to represent visually. Figure 8 is part of the image that Robinet cites as the “Diagram of the Continuation and Inversion of the Great Ultimate (‘Taiji shunni tu’) in Jindian dayao tu, 3a.”

There are two sets of concentric circles with their black and white parts placed in opposite positions, which might indicate a simple inversion by turning upside down, or some other kind of motion like a horizontal flip. The difficulties of visually representing and interpreting the Taiji tu are very similar to those experienced by writers attempting to trace the early meanings of Fortune’s wheel.

The wheel is both an interesting and a somewhat problematic symbol, because it can be used to symbolize so many different things. Patch describes the circular form as having “an almost limitless significance”, going on to detail some of the things that it can represent: “travel, guidance, the endless round of monotonous existence, changeableness, the sun, the earth, God, and eternity.” (149) The concept of a wheel in particular (as opposed to a generic circle) is a culturally-developed one composed of several image-schematic structures, each of which can have a variety of metaphorical meanings attached to them. The situation is somewhat analogous to that of the metaphor THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, which Joseph Grady (1997) has demonstrated to be composed of two underlying primary metaphors, ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE and PERSISTING IS REMAINING ERECT. Together, the two simpler metaphors explain why expressions like “this theory has a weak foundation” are felicitous, but a metaphorical expression that applied very specific features of a building to a theory, such as “I examined the walls of his theory,” would not be. Grady’s study of primary metaphors, and his
discussion of how “primary scenes” seem to influence the formation of conceptual metaphors, can provide some useful insights to help break down the complexities of the wheel.

Using Grady and Johnson’s idea of primary scenes and subscenes as a guiding principle, I will catalogue some of the major image schemas that are important to wheel symbolism and examine their possible origins. The most obvious one is the CYCLE schema, connected with repetition over time but also simply with change. There is a cross-cultural tendency to structure ideas about the world, its components and the processes that occur in it by means of wheel and circle metaphors, most of which also employ the primary metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS (part of a larger complex called the EVENT STRUCTURE METAPHOR). People observing natural cycles like the change of seasons would be able to explain their experience of repetition by referring to the smaller-scale “primary” experience of walking around in a loop and seeing the same locations multiple times. The simplest way to draw that path, regardless of actual terrain but getting across the basic idea, is a circle that comes back around to where it started. It could also be seen as representing the path that one part of a wheel’s edge follows in its regular motions. The most important differentiation between a wheel and any other circular object is that it turns, but turns on only one axis unlike a ball, and the turning ‘makes a difference’ somehow, even if that change is simply a realignment of the wheel’s parts relative to the objects around it. In the conceptualization of time it has been observed that people either talk about themselves as moving observers who travel through a landscape of time, or they talk about events and times moving towards them (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1999). When thinking about events that seem to be cyclical, it would be possible either to think of yourself moving around in circles, or of events moving toward you in a cyclical succession, like segments on the edge of a turning wheel.

The CENTRE/PERIPHERY schema can come into play when discussing the relative importance and power of entities in the world, or cause and effect. The basis for this is the experience of one’s own body, particularly of some place inside the body, where the ‘subject’ is located (cf. Lakoff and Johnson), a
centre from which one’s own will or motivation projects outward to the limbs and causes actions. Usually the centre represents a locus of control, but it is not always used in this way. For example, in the ‘Ptolemaic’ model of the universe (originating from Plato’s *Timaeus*) the earth is at the centre of the spheres, but it is a place where things are “imperfect and changing continually” (Linton 33), in contrast to “the celestial regions” which were “ordered perfectly and never changed” (33). If there is any kind of control directing events on earth in this model, it would come from the outside, not the centre. One could consider this version to be using a form of the CONTAINER schema. During one’s earthly life, the soul is trapped in a body, which is in turn trapped in the flawed ‘sublunary’ world, inside the moon’s sphere. Platonic philosophy was focused on an idea of a subject (the soul) that could live outside the physical self and the world of physical objects. Whether Plato intended it or not, the perfect outer spheres of his cosmology became strongly associated with his ideas about the world of perfect, non-physical ‘forms’, as well as Christian ideas about heaven being located above and outside the earth.

The orientation of a wheel in space has important image-schematic features too. A wheel resting flat on the ground implies a kind of equality among the people surrounding it, like King Arthur’s round table. If it is spun, a horizontally-oriented wheel could even be said to ‘point’ somewhere. Think of a lazy susan in the middle of a table. It would be turned in order to bring some part of its edge (say, the part that a specific plate is resting on) closer to you. By contrast, a rolling wheel rests on its edge in an unstable way, invoking a specific form of the BALANCE schema. As all cyclists (and unicyclists) know, the best way to keep a wheel from falling over is to keep it spinning. The vertically-oriented wheel also does interesting things with the UP/DOWN image schema, because it clearly has a top and a bottom, but the actual piece of a wheel’s edge that occupies the top or bottom spot is changing continually as it turns.

Another important part of the wheel’s symbolism that appears later than these primary metaphors is the fact that wheels can have a variety of functions, and the sight of one can call up several complex source domains or frames. First and foremost, a wheel is used for transportation and is often called up as part of
the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor (for example ‘I’m just spinning my wheels, not going anywhere in life’). Wheels are not an integral element of the frame, but are nevertheless closely linked with the JOURNEY frame’s main element, the PATH schema. Another ancient use for wheels was mechanical. The wheel itself is a simple machine, and was used from an early date for milling, transferring mechanical force within an apparatus, and so forth. Again, wheels are not essential components of the frame, but modern sayings like ‘I could see the wheels turning in his head’, or ‘wheels within wheels’ use the wheel to signal that the MACHINE frame is being used in a metaphor. It does not appear that Roman writers were very interested in the idea of Fortuna’s wheel as part of a machine, but certain medieval visual artists put a lot of work into representing the physical mechanism by which her wheel (or system of wheels) operated. Other frames that the wheel is linked to, in more historically specific ways, are gambling and torture. The simple gambling game of spinning a wheel and betting on where it would ‘point’ when it stopped seems to be very old, and the legend of St. Catherine of Alexandria made the practice of ‘breaking on the wheel’ famous. The coexistence of these different types of wheel in the popular imagination led people to create a lot of unusual blends, as I will discuss in section 3.2.

The positioning of the wheel among Fortuna’s symbols is significant. It is frequently down by her feet (cf. Fig. 9) or under her chair if she is seated, but in some versions she is standing on top of it. This configuration seems to emphasize both her power and control over the wheel (being on top of something still has the same implication today) and an idea of instability or possibly the unpredictable movements of Fortuna. There were also verbal descriptions of this scenario, such as this quote from Ovid: “how changeable she is on her unsteady wheel, which she ever keeps on its edge, under her wavering foot” (Ex Ponto IV.III 31-32, qtd. in Patch 1929:144). In image-schematic terms, the wheel relies on the BALANCE schema. Anyone who has stood on top of an unstable foundation like a ball (or ridden a unicycle) knows how difficult it is to avoid either falling off or rolling around. The ball has to stay in motion. What is also interesting about this is the way that it treats Fortuna herself as being somewhat
endangered, or in a precarious position. It treats her as a ‘type’ of the goal/valued object, but at the same
time, she would be holding the cornucopia and rudder that marked her as an outcome-decider.

Another possibility is that the wheel developed out of ideas about change and reversal. Fortuna was often
described as inverting, flipping or turning (vertere and versare) situations and states of affairs.
Conceptualizations of how she did this seem to vary, but the general formulation is somewhat similar to
the concepts of Yin and Yang (cf. Ritchie and Robinet, earlier in this section). Patch observes that Roman
writers like Ammianus Marcellinus use the turning wheel as a metaphor for change, where good and bad
fortune are always trading places, “semper alternans” (Res Gestae, XXXI, I, I., qtd 150). This is a neutral-
viewpointed description of a CYCLE schema, where there is some sense that the circularity of the wheel
and its turning motion create not only change, but repetition. There was also some separate use of the
metaphor GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN “The simple theme of falling from a high station is very
frequent” (Patch 1929: 153) in descriptions of people’s dealings with Fortuna, going from the sumnum (top/highest point) to the infimus (lowest point), and sometimes experiencing reversals in this situation too. However, this movement between top and bottom is not clearly linked to the wheel itself in the
Roman poetry.

2.4 The semantics of fortuna: reframing and metonymization

Metonymization expands the ways in which the word fortuna can be used, but the major change is in the
conceptual frame behind the word. There are all kinds of fertility deities, and any kind of god can help
predict or determine future events. Fortuna is special because she is conceived of as being able to bring
either positive or negative outcomes, and do so in an unpredictable way. The word fortuna in Latin
developed from fors, referring to the action of giving (cf. section 2.2). It became a way of referring
metonymically to various elements in the conceptual frame of GIVING AND RECEIVING, from the
giver to the thing that is received, to the fact of having received something. Words derived from fortuna,
such as fortunate, covered other aspects of the frame, but could also refer to the uncertainty of whether you would receive what you wanted from Fortuna.

One way to explain the change is to say that the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy which contributed to Fors Fortuna’s existence was pushing more and more features of the event ‘getting something’ into the blended space of Fortuna, so that her name came to mean, not just the ‘giver’/’bringer’, but also the ‘gift’ (especially if it consisted of money), and even in some cases, the whole event of getting something.

Another way to explain it is that, looking for a word general enough to cover all of the different types of positive outcomes that could be brought about by Fortuna, people began to designate them using the goddess’ name, in a new CAUSE for EFFECT metonymy. Either explanation involves a metonymic expansion coming full circle, so that the word’s meaning comes to encompass nearly all aspects of the GIVING AND RECEIVING frame. To make things even more complex, as Patch notes, “what we take as the abstraction ‘fortuna’ – good fortune, wealth, riches and the like, – is often personified, and this figure may easily be confused with the divinity” (1927:36), even by writers like Ovid. Patch’s distinction between the “goddess… meting out her gifts” (36) and the “type” of those gifts, a personification of someone’s ‘fortunes’ which often “suffers adversity” (37) makes some sense, but it could just as easily have been a case of the goddess herself temporarily taking on the qualities of the gifts, a fairly likely possibility given that her personality was at the heart of the whole conceptual package.

Even those who did not believe in Fortuna as a giver or a personality would have a hard time discussing their opinions without using the word fortuna to describe some aspect of what they meant. One example of this comes from “Appius Claudius Caecus (circa 300 BC)” in the “well-known saying, ‘Est unus quisque faber ipse fortunae suae’” (Fowler 65-6) which I roughly translate as ‘it is oneself who makes one’s own fortunes’. In the very act of denying that Fortuna plays a role in human lives, Caecus uses her name to designate the fairly abstract concept of a positive outcome or situation. There would not have been a lot of alternative vocabulary for this idea at the time. The word fortuna could be used from an
early date to designate simply one’s situation in life, state of well-being or possessions, especially if they were good (in a GIVER FOR GIFT/CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy). In a similar vein, fortunare could be used as an intransitive verb, meaning ‘to prosper’, or transitively, ‘to please or bless’ someone else. The transitive form most likely came first, as it mimics the action of Fortuna. Later it could have been metonymically transferred to the beneficiary in its intransitive form. The past participle fortunate (‘having been fortune’, not to be confused with the adverb form) covered the meanings ‘blessed’, ‘in a good situation’, and ‘wealthy’.

Gradually, Fortuna came to stand for more than just positive outcomes. She was still associated with the benefits that people could get in life, but she also represented potential losses, uncertainty and arbitrariness. One explanation for this is that people were becoming skeptical about whether any of the gods could really produce desired results for those who prayed and sacrificed to them. The evidence of experience likely suggested that prayer was not consistently effective. However, rather than dismiss all of the gods as non-existent, people paid more and more attention to the fallibility of Fortuna in particular, while at the same time beginning to blend her with the other gods of the Roman pantheon. According to Patch (1929) “The cult of Fortuna-Panthea looks almost like an organism in itself. Fortuna appears, her own qualities strongly marked enough to identify her, and also provided with attributes from many other deities” such as “the eagle of Jove; the dolphin of Neptune; the club of Hercules; the sistrum of Isis; the lyre of Apollo ... and many more symbols” (136) marking her as a ruling Pagan deity that could perform all manner of godly functions. In his Natural History, written circa 77 AD, Pliny the Elder calls Fortuna “a kind of intermediate deity, by which our skepticism concerning God is still increased” because she is invoked whenever people hope for success and blamed for everyone’s problems. “We are so much in the power of chance that chance itself is considered as a God and the existence of God becomes doubtful” (qtd. in Patch 1929:135). In a time of increased skepticism and competing worldviews, Fortuna seems to have become bigger and more powerful in the popular imagination as both the cause of and the solution for all kinds of troubles.
I think that the major factor in early semantic and conceptual changes to ‘fortuna’ came from a change in framing, from the giving and receiving of desirable things to a more complex frame that involved the giving of both desirable and undesirable things, as well as the possibility of withholding and taking away, all seen as being fundamentally beyond human control. Figure 10 is a diagram outlining the conceptual frame that underpins “reference to the possibility of an unwelcome outcome” (Fillmore and Atkins 79). This is the RISK frame, made by Charles Fillmore and Beryl Atkins in 1992. Unlike the GIVING AND RECEIVING frame that I described earlier, the frame of RISK has an explicit place in it for negative results. It is also more complex, and “requires two subframes, depending on whether the language accessing it does or does not explicitly represent the state of being at risk as resulting from someone’s action.” (79) The use of a circle to represent ‘chance’ and a square for ‘choice’ is borrowed from decision theory diagrams, and does not explicitly derive from the idea of Fortune’s wheel, although the case could be made that they come from the same conceptual basis of a stable flat-sided shape contrasted with an unstable circular one.

Some ways of talking about ‘risk-running’ focus only on the circle and its two branching paths, one leading to “an undesirable state of affairs, which we refer to as Harm” (80) and the other leading to a more preferred result, labeled G for ‘Goal’. This part represents the situation of simply being at risk without attending to the circumstances that led up to it. In frame-semantic terms, Fortuna begins as a means of getting closer to the goal in a risky situation and insuring oneself against the possibility of harm. Being an empty-cause blend, she also fills a role not included in this diagram, one that I will call the ‘outcome-decider’. I would like to locate this element of the frame inside the circle representing ‘chance’, to show that instead of the result being purely a matter of random chance (the modern concept) it would be a matter of decision-making on the part of Fortuna. The square part of the diagram represents the choice to take a risk, where human agency comes into play. The stick figure in the scene is labeled both Victim and Actor because a in some situations a person can deliberately choose whether they will become Fortune’s victim or not, particularly if they already possess a Valued Object that they are reluctant to lose.
The Valued Object does not necessarily have to be a physical object, but because of the framing, ‘possessions’ like happiness, power and even life are metaphorically treated as objects that are not intrinsic to the Actor.

It is not so surprising that in her role as an outcome-decider, Fortuna would sooner or later receive blame for harm that people experienced after praying to her. As the duality of positive and negative outcomes becomes attached to her, one would expect her to take on more threatening features. The poets who lament that she has caused harm sometimes refer to her as being cruel and treacherous, wounding men with darts and arrows, but more often than not they attribute the harm that she causes to seemingly non-threatening qualities, as outlined below by Patch:

She is blind (caeca)… she stands unsteadily—often on a globe… she remains in no place for long… her face is sometimes joyful, sometimes bitter… she is a harlot (meretrix)… she is a frail (fragilis), untrustworthy acquaintance
(1929:151)

There are descriptions of her being “varia” and “volubilis” (Patch 1927:38) in and of herself, with a double face or changing expression, and she often changes her mind, giving preferential treatment to one person only to decide later that she will favor someone else instead. Sometimes her changes are linked with the changing phases of the moon, or unpredictable currents and storms. If we return to the empty-cause blend, it is apparent that most of the new features applied to Fortuna still come from various ‘event’ spaces (travelling at sea, love relationships) that were thought to be governed by her power, though with greater acknowledgment of the possible bad results involved in each event. Other ones, such as her blindness, add some element of ‘manner’ to the RISK frame, indicating that the outcome-decider is indifferent, unreliable or incompetent. The way that she was thought to come and go with the wind also maps her to the ‘Valued Object’ element of the frame, because her presence is correlated one-to-one with experiencing good fortune. This again causes problems for Patch’s distinction between the goddess that bestows and the “type” (37) that personifies Fortune’s gifts.
As the ‘Harm’ part of the frame became more salient in discussions of risk, it became more common to talk about *mala fortuna*, or bad situations that occur unpredictably. Other words related to *fortuna* expressed specifically the variability or riskiness of future outcomes. *Fors sit an* and *fortasse*, both referencing the manner in which Fortuna bestows gifts, meant something like ‘perhaps’ and expressed uncertainty. The adjective *fortuitus* meant something like ‘unpremeditated’ or ‘accidental’, and the adverb *fortuito* meant ‘by chance’. Another adverb, *fortunate*, (not to be confused with the past participle) meant roughly what ‘fortunately’ means today, that what had occurred was both an unlikely result and a positive one.

For many centuries, the meanings of the word *fortuna* remained fairly consistent and broad. Jerold Frakes, describing the difficulties facing early translators of Latin, such as Notker Labeo and Alfred the Great, outlines the choices available to an interpreter who came across an instance of the word. It could mean either “Fortuna, the personified grantor of earthly goods and goddess of the pagan Romans; the transitory gifts of this grantor, which are themselves personified (in incomplete manner); the state of existence brought about by the presence or absence of these gifts” or “the abstraction of the concept of disorder (casus), of which *fortuna* is a specific manifestation” (Frakes 4). It would become difficult (and even potentially dangerous) to use such a loaded word in a world dominated by monotheistic Christianity. This new religion was threatened by the concept of fortuna not only in the form of a Pagan goddess, but also as a favored explanation for unpredictable events. In the Christian conception of the universe, nothing can happen without the involvement of God. The “infinite knowledge, power, and goodness” (Flint 150) of a God “who is also a Creator” (150) were thought to be manifested in the form of providence, whereby the divine power “knows what will happen” and “actively controls what will happen… with some end or purpose in mind, a good end attained in a morally exemplary way” (149-150). This particular theological understanding of causation does not seem to leave room for Fortuna’s style of arbitrary control.
2.5 **Boethius: a revolution in blending**

During its rise to dominance, early Christianity attempted to stamp out all references to the Pagan gods, including Fortuna. She is considered incompatible with a providential model of the universe. However, this opens up the difficult question of why bad things happen to good people (one part of the ‘problem of evil’) and the solutions that were acceptable to philosophers were not easy to explain to a lay person. Boethius is either the first or the most successful writer to blend together Platonic, Aristotelian, Christian and Pagan systems (among others) for explaining how God can allow undesirable events to happen, creating an accessible human-scale compression that could efficiently express very complex philosophical ideas.

The early church fathers were explicit in their pronouncements that Fortuna could not exist. In his summary of the patristic interpretation of Fortuna, Frakes cautions that their arguments do not form an entirely “unified picture ... except that Fortuna is never accepted as an actual deity” (21). Reactions range from the “borderline paganism” of Ausonius (23), who unapologetically refers to Fortuna in the style of classical poetry, to the “spleen” of Tertullian, who “rejected and vehemently attacked everything which he had held dear before his conversion” (21). In general, the Christian approach was to shut down the discussion of chance entirely, by stating that all things are caused by God. In his *Retractations*, Augustine even prescribes against using the word *fortuna* to discuss “a fortuitous outcome of events” and apologizes for having carelessly done so himself. He writes that “men have a very bad habit of saying ‘fortune willed this’ when they should say, ‘God willed this’” (qtd. in Kiefer 3). His *City of God Against the Pagans* expresses what Kiefer calls “an uncompromising attitude towards Fortune” (3), and describes the worship of a blind and arbitrary deity as ridiculously illogical. If she does not reasonably accept prayers and supplications, then what is the point of praying to her?

Kiefer characterizes Augustine as stating, in effect, that “what men call fortuitous is simply that part of the divine plan which they fail to comprehend” (4). This understanding fits well with the Aristotelian...
definition of *tyche* as simply a co-occurrence that was not predicted or known. However, as an 
explanation for “the frequency of suffering by the innocent in a world wholly made by a good God” 
(Koterski 133), it was not entirely satisfactory, as witnessed by the following centuries of philosophical 
debate on the problem of evil. To a scholar familiar with the idea that God must be understood as 
“transcending the limited and always insufficient forms that are the vehicles of imagination” (Koterski 
135) it might have made sense to explain chance events as simply having an unknown cause, but to a lay 
person who had experienced tragedy in spite of their pious and moral actions, there would not be much 
consolation in this answer.

A solution to the apparent incompatibility of Fortuna and God came in the 6th century AD, when “[t]he 
classical world was past and the medieval world had not yet begun” (Reiss 1). The Roman scholar and 
politician Boethius, a figure whose influence on Western culture and thought has been called “impossible 
to overestimate” (Reiss preface i), produced the *De Consolatio Philosophiae*. This work, which 
Boethius reportedly composed in prison before being executed for treason by the Gothic king of Rome, 
describes his mental journey from despair and anger at Fortuna to acceptance of divine providence. It is a 
scholars have felt prompted to inquire whether the philosopher was in truth a Christian” (18) because he 
blends God so completely with the Platonic idea of the *Summum Bonum*. In the *Consolatio*, Boethius 
“presented his views in a fashion as graphic as that of the later battles and tournaments of the Vices and 
Virtues… and the adventures of other personifications” (Patch 6). However, he carefully avoided 
representing Fortuna as anything other than imaginary. He has another personification, Lady Philosophy, 
describe what Fortuna would say, *if* she could talk to him. Philosophy uses the idea of Fortuna as a useful 
fiction, a kind of lever for lifting the protagonist’s mind out of despair. Once he is thinking about her in 
the right way, there is no longer a need to either worship or curse Fortuna.
Boethius’ novel approach made it “intellectually respectable … for an exponent of providence to include the once pagan goddess among the inhabitants of his mental world” (Kiefer 9). The very arbitrariness that would seem to make Fortuna the antithesis of an all-knowing, all-powerful God actually makes her a powerful tool for promoting a contemplative religious life. In a way she solves possible objections to the idea of an absolutely good divine will. Boethius claims that variability and inconstancy are the divinely-ordained state of the material world, which is only a small part of a larger ordered universe. Instead of being invested in material or social gains, a wise person should be able to separate himself from these concerns, which are “only shadows of the true good, or imperfect blessings” (Watts 65) and cultivate inner virtues, using philosophical thought to raise his mind beyond “the outmost pole of heaven” (Watts 86). This formulation set the pattern for both overtly Christian and more secular thought in medieval Europe.

Dante stands out for having produced one of the most coherent and explicit medieval representations of a Christian Fortune in the *Inferno*, describing how she carries out the divinely-ordained chaos of earthly life. He calls her “ministra e duce” (*Inf.* vii, 73-78, qtd. in Cioffari 2) of earthly splendor, and Cioffari interprets this version of Fortune as “an [angel-like] Intelligence possessing not only its own characteristics, but its own sphere of action, assigned to it by God” (1). The “primary duty” of this Intelligence “is to change the possession of external goods speedily and relentlessly. The reaction of human beings to this change is entirely immaterial. Whatever suffering Fortune causes is… unintentional and irrelevant” (Cioffari 2). A search of the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* yields many descriptions of God and Fortune working together, such as “honour and prosperyte / God and fortune lyst him graunte” [Lydgate’s *Reson and sensuallyte*, ed. from the Fairfax ms. 16 (Bodleian) and the Additional ms. 29, 729 (Brit. mus.) by Ernst Sieper] and even of ‘fortuning’ as an activity done by God. One sample describes a man who was “smytte thrugh þe hed with an Arowe; and yet God fortune lyst that he lyvit.” [*The Brut*, or *The chronicles of England*. Edited from Ms. Raw. B171, Bodleian Library, &c., by]
Friedrich W. D. Brie]. It was clearly safe for people in the middle ages to make references to *fortune* and being *fortuned* without fear of reverting to paganism.

Of course, this was not the only way to incorporate the old goddess into Christian cosmology. Kiefer points to the *Somme Le Roi* and “other medieval works which explicitly describe Fortune as in league with the devil” (15). Kiefer hypothesizes that like “gargoyles and other adornments of medieval churches” (16), frescoes and rose windows depicting the wheel of Fortune were intended to scare people onto the righteous path in life. The wheel may even have inspired “representations variously called wheels of the Seven Deadly Sins or wheels of the Vices” (Kiefer 16). Whether she played a role as an evil tempter or an agent of the divine will, Fortune was widely used as a conceptual tool for drawing people’s attention away from concern for personal loss or gain and towards an idea of the divinely-ordered universe. In moments of frustration, imagining the thoughtless or malicious actions of Fortune make more sense than ascribing everything directly to a hidden God that knows everything, sees everything, and directs it all according to an elaborate plan. Boccaccio, in his book *On the Fates of Illustrius Men*, writes a dialogue between himself and Fortune, telling her: “I do not have the clear insight by which I could reach the cause of creation. What is left for my purpose is that I come back to you, the source of much of human affairs” (139) In Fauconnier and Turner’s terms, the medieval personification of Fortune is a manageable “human scale” (92) way of exploring the same problem of evil that was concurrently the source of much abstruse and inaccessible philosophical debate.

2.6 Human viewpoints and the cycle schema: a wheel-shaped universe

In the Boethian interpretation, Fortuna and her wheel appear as a human-scale explanation for the ‘ups and downs’ that people experience in life, linking the cycles of the wheel and the cycles of nature to a larger universal structure composed of concentric circles or spheres, with *Providentia* or the *Summum Bonum* in a controlling position at the centre. Pierre Courcelle hypothesizes that the Boethian wheel of Fortune was especially effective at replacing the older Roman imagery because access to Pagan art and
literature was extremely limited, both by circumstance and deliberate proscription. “Boethius would consolidate the image of the wheel of Fortune in the Christian world, substituting it for the classical image” (Courcelle 135, my translation) that showed a wheel near or under Fortuna’s feet.

The *Consolatio* is the first known case where a writer brought together the Roman wheel of Fortune and its associated CYCLE schema, the idea of reversal and flipping as part of Fortuna’s activities in the world, and the GOOD IS UP/BAD IS DOWN metaphor that was already being used to talk about changes in people’s social position and emotions. The key quote is: “Ascende si placet, sed ea lege, ne uti cum ludicri mei ratio poscet, descendere iniuriam putes” (II, pr.ii, 30-31, qtd. in Patch 1927:151). In Victor Watts’ translation, it reads: “Yes, rise up on my wheel if you like, but don’t count it an injury when by the same token you begin to fall” (2p2.24-5). Patch explains the simple but brilliant innovation that this line introduces. “One may voluntarily ascend to the top, and therefore human figures are conceivably attached to the wheel.” (Patch 1927:151) The direct address invited the audience to imagine themselves being located on the rim of a vertically-oriented turning wheel, moving up and down as they traveled around the edge, as in Figure 11. “In literature, from the time of Boethius apparently, mankind was thought of as revolving on the wheel itself; and, although such an idea was foreign to Roman art, mediaeval drawings show actual men on the rim of the wheel turning at the will of the goddess.” (Patch 155) Instead of watching the wheel turn their fortunes around or roll from one place to another, medieval audiences would have a much more involved viewpoint, directly attached to it.

This innovation gives the wheel a really direct physical role in the interaction between Fortuna and human beings. It also means that the wheel could take over the symbolic functions of the rudder and cornucopia in interesting ways. Being in a good situation now meant being at the top of the wheel, so that gain was more about being in a good location than receiving items from the horn of plenty. Also, Fortune manipulated the wheel instead of the rudder, determining where people would go, but in a different way from before. This kind of motion seems unrelated to travel or goal-oriented activities, unlike the rudder
which would be linked to a PATH schema with the idea of getting from a starting point to an end point instead of going around in a circle. It drives home forcefully the idea that Fortune does not have a goal outside the process of raising people up and bringing them down.

Pierre Courcelle shows a very early visual representation of the Boethian wheel in the 11th century manuscript labeled Monte Cassino 189, reproduced in Figure 12. Courcelle hypothesizes that although it appears after a different work by Boethius (the De Arithmetica), “this image or its model originally decorated [a manuscript of] the Consolation, no doubt also at Mont Cassin” (141, my translation). Notably, Fortune is absent from the image. Instead, the left side of the wheel with the rising figure is labeled Fortunium and the right side with the falling figure is labeled Necessitas. In addition, the circular shape that the figures cling to is not very wheel-like in its appearance. In the middle its top and bottom are divided by a line, with the label Prosperitas on top and Aduersitas on the bottom. The image is clearly announcing itself as a representation or diagram of something abstract. It is accompanied by four short lines of poetry exhorting the king sitting on top to have mercy on those lying at the bottom because their positions can be reversed, and in general for humanity to seek a higher plane before they die. Combined with these instructive and diagrammatic elements, the image also has very lively representations of human beings, expressing by their faces and postures how it feels to be in each position. Though they are far removed in time from Roman images of Fortuna holding sheaves of wheat, the crown and scepter drawn on the top figure and the loin cloth on the bottom one seem like further contributions from the empty cause blend that gave rise to Fortune, where symbolic elements come from the real-life situation that is supposedly caused by the tautological construct. The physical trappings of power and poverty, as well as the emotional states that they bring about, have become an important ‘onstage’ part of the scene in a way that had not been represented visually before.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this very early representation is that it already labels the human figures according to what would become known as the ‘formula of four’: regnabo, regno, regnavi and
sum sine regno – ‘I will reign, I reign, I have reigned, and I am without reign’. Labels that designate the figures’ relation to the time of reigning is that it could be seen to represent both simultaneous differences in people’s situations and a sequence of events happening to each person. When one king reigns, there exist simultaneously a king who has reigned before him and a young successor who will reign after him. In another interpretation, each person’s life has a time in it when they are waiting in hopes of becoming wealthy and powerful, a time when they are at their peak, and a time when they feel themselves falling away from that peak towards the lowest possible point: old age, infirmity and death. Both of these complex ideas coexist in the simple representation of four figures. The labels themselves are marked ‘a, b, c’ and ‘d’, with ‘a’ being the king standing at the top and ‘d’ being the almost-nude figure at the bottom. If these indicate the order in which they are to be read, then the viewer’s eye was intended to travel from top to bottom rather than around the circle, ending with the bottom man who is ‘without reign’ letting go of the wheel and falling into empty space. The focus in this representation was apparently the reversal of top and bottom, putting less emphasis on the cyclic element of the conceptualization.

Later versions of this image, like the miniature from the Somme Le Roi in Figure 13, would take almost the opposite approach to the same formula. Fortune is very distinctly present and located in the middle of the wheel, controlling what happens to the four hapless figures on the edge. Each of them is firmly attached to the wheel, either sitting comfortably or holding on with their hands. Considering them as Actors in the RISK frame, they can be seen as persisting in their choice to be Victims of Fortune. Presumably, they had the option to climb onto the wheel or not, but only she can dictate who gets to the top, and how long they get to stay there. The apparent youth of the beardless rising figure and the bald head of the bottom one also clearly communicate the idea of one man’s progression through life. It is a remarkable synthesis involving the metaphorical representation of time as a circular path, a compression blend where multiple times are visible in the same place, and an identity decompression where viewers are invited to see themselves as one or all of the figures in the scene.
The poetic language used by Boethius implies that the wheel represented not only cycles of events in time, but some aspect of the universe ("orbis") as a whole, and that its motion, though apparently caused by Fortune, was ultimately controlled by divine providence, pictured as the hub of a wheel-shaped universe composed of concentric circles. Dante tried to incorporate Fortune into the Christian universe by describing her as turning her ‘sphere’ ("volve sua spera") which fits into a very ancient conception of the world as composed of spheres within spheres. This type of blending appears to have been integral in making Fortune acceptable within a Christian worldview.

The complications involved in creating a blend like this become clear when looking at the efforts of another writer, who tried to do the same thing in a more explicit way. King Alfred’s Anglo Saxon translation of the Consolatio contains a lengthy interpellation describing exactly how the operation of the universe can be described by analogy with the motion of a wheel on a moving cart. In the Modern English translation by Samuel Fox, it reads:

As on the axle-tree of a waggon the wheel turns, and the axle-tree stands still, and nevertheless supports all the waggon, and regulates all its progress—the wheel turns round, and the nave, being nearest to the axle-tree, goes much more firmly and more securely than the fellies do—so the axle-tree may be the highest good which we call God (221)

He goes on to describe how different classes of men can be located at different distances from the centre. The “most numerous class” are located on the “fellies” (223), pieces of the outer rim. The best men are closest to God at the nave of the wheel. In between are the “middle class of men” who are located on the spokes, with “one end… fixed in the nave, the other in the felly” (223). Their ability to look toward either end of the spoke is treated as analogous to “look[ing] with one eye to the heavens, and with the other to the earth” (223). This is where one might expect the analogy to completely fall apart. When imagining the structure that moved the stars and planets in their patterns, people in the middle ages relied on the concentric sphere model which had its “ultimate philosophical source” (Koterski 146) in Plato’s Timaeus.
They firmly believed Aristotle’s assertion that “the natural motion of the earth as a whole, like that of its parts, is towards the centre of the Universe: that is the reason why it is now lying at the centre.” (*On the Heavens* II.xiv)

If the earth was supposed to be the unmoving centre of the universe, how could it also be represented by the outer ‘felly’ of a wheel instead of the axle? Whatever the objections might be from a modern point of view, Alfred continues on to talk about the Aristotelian universe in the same sentence as the providential one: “the axle-tree regulates all the waggon. In like manner does the divine providence. It moves the sky and the stars, and makes the earth immovable” (225). Alfred was a model Christian thinker, as the popularity of his translated *Consolatio* suggests. Apparently, it would not have been unusual to accept two conflicting versions of the CENTRE/PERIPHERY schema, applied to different ‘dimensions’ of the universe. When talking about the abstract idea of cause and effect, *Providentia*, the prime mover that is not moved, was fixed in the centre of the universe, turning everything else around it. When talking about the earth and the heavens, things were organized in the opposite way. One’s own position on the motionless but ever-changing earth could either be construed as standing at the centre of the universe or clinging onto its edge.

This kind of synthesis was not entirely new. The 4th-century writer Sallustius claims in his treatise *On the Gods and the Cosmos* that “Fortune has power beneath the moon, since above the moon no single thing can happen by fortune” (qtd. in Ferguson 79 and Fowler 80). He restricts her influence to the moon’s sphere, which contains all the transitory, imperfect elements of everyday human life. Cross-culturally, the use of the moon as a landmark or boundary between the world of human experience and the transcendental world is just one of many interesting similarities between Fortune’s wheel (conceived of as part of the universe of spheres) and the Buddhist image of the bhavacakra (the wheel of becoming/life). Floating in the upper corner of the traditional bhavacakra image, the Buddha points to the moon, indicating that there is a goal outside of the cycle represented by the wheel of life. What follows is a brief
comparison of the two symbols, which should serve to highlight the diversity of complex structure that can grow out of very similar image-schematic conceptualizations.

The wheel of Fortune and the wheel of becoming were produced independently of each other, but their similar purpose (helping people to detach themselves emotionally from cycles of change in their lives) gives them similar image schematic structure. Both rely on a CENTRE/PERIPHERY schema, with the causes of events at the centre and caused events on the outer parts. An image of a bhavacakra is reproduced in Figure 14, showing just how many nested ‘outer parts’ it has. In the centre are three animals representing the three negative emotions that cause all types of suffering. The UP/DOWN image schema is used in almost exactly the same way as in the wheel of Fortune, with the best possible state of worldly life at the top, and the worst at the bottom. There is even a section near the middle where figures are depicted climbing up on the left side and being dragged downward on the right. The Buddhist version is more complicated, however, because it involves five realms that souls can pass through over the course of many lifetimes, and even virtuous life as a god is considered to be just another one of the “levels of suffering” (11) that can be transcended through Buddhist practice. The bhavacakra is held (and possibly being turned) in the hands of the death god, which symbolizes the ultimate ephemeral nature and futility of everything inside it. The Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) claims that “there is no need for [Death] to be drawn with ornaments and so forth as it is here. Once [he] had such a painting drawn with a skeleton rather than a monster, in order more clearly to symbolize impermanence” (12). This shows a remarkable degree of flexibility and a willingness to break with received tradition, showing that the Dalai Lama is focused on using the image to communicate concepts. The direct physicality of the symbolism is not as clear as with the wheel of Fortune, but there is a great deal of similarity in that it encourages meditation on life as a cycle, and the idea that “others travel in cyclic existence the same way” (40). Each person goes through similar stages of development in life, which have sub-cycles built into them as well as being part of a larger journey from birth to death (and back again, for Buddhists).
The differences between the wheels are also telling. An explicit turning motion, for example, is integral to Fortune’s wheel, but does not seem to be so strongly featured in the structure of the bhavacakra. People move around within it, in a cyclical manner going through many lives, but for the wheel itself to turn would not make much sense because it contains good and bad locations that have to stay at the bottom or top. In some sense a person can be both stationary in one part of the bhavacakra, living out a life in one of the realms, but at the same time be moving through a cycle of stages in life or “links of dependent-arising” (13), the series of tiny self-contained metaphorical scenes that populate the outermost edge. The Boethian wheel of Fortune ties together stages in life, degrees of privilege and vertical positioning in a much more intimate way. The idea of instability or unpredictability in the wheel’s movement seems to be almost absent from the bhavacakra. The major drama with the medieval wheel of Fortune is that it appears to move arbitrarily, in a way that undermines people’s expectations, but is actually controlled by the incomprehensible divine will. The positioning of human figures within the bhavacakra is based on where they have arrived by their own merit (karma), and while some areas within it (e.g., the demon realm) appear chaotic, the whole system is fairly ordered. Fortune turning the wheel is not only symbolic of impermanence, but also arbitrariness. Another important distinction is the western focus on individuals and the way that they experience things from their own viewpoint as they travel through the cycle, combined with a very strong concern for working out every feature of that experience to its detailed conclusion, and like King Alfred, attaching meanings to every physical and force-dynamic element of a turning wheel.
3 New words and more complex blends: losing the sense of coherent structure during and after the middle ages

The harmonized blend of Fortune and providence did not last, and people found more active and physical ways to imagine resisting the influence of Fortune. There is a correspondence between semantic change in the word *fortune* and changes in the representation of the figure that embodies the word's meaning, shifting away from a focus on Fortune’s power to cause events, and linking her more closely to caused outcomes and valued objects that human beings could actively seek out. Fortune’s status in the world is threatened first by Puritanical re-assertion of providential determinism, then by probabilistic and scientific models of the universe which left no room for any kind of supernatural outcome decider. As it becomes less acceptable in serious explanatory registers, different meanings of the word *fortune* come to be treated as separate homophones, and there are corresponding limitations on how the separated concepts are personified. For example, it makes little sense to talk about one's stockpile of money as having a personality. However, the ways that we use the word *fortune* in English today still reflect some very ancient patterns of thought, and where old meanings have fallen away, there is usually another word that has come in to reference the same element of the RISK frame (cf. section 2.4).

Fortune’s wheel is used so persistently as a way to talk about different types of change, for example changes in society and changes in one’s personal life, that innovative elaborations are required in order to convey details such as the manner of a particular person’s fall from the top, or the way in which someone could go through multiple cycles on the wheel over the course of their lives. Entailments also become an issue. If one person rises to the top of the wheel, does that mean that someone else has to fall? Over time the wheel is depicted as an increasingly complex machine or set of wheels and drive shafts. It becomes involved in blends that incorporate culturally-specific domains like torture, and later gambling. By at least the 19th century, it becomes conventional to think about a 'wheel of fortune' as a gambling device that a
human being can spin and watch rather than a thing that they are physically attached to. The primary metaphors that participated in the medieval wheel of Fortune do not disappear, but as in Roman times they are now used more separately to focus on different types of situations.

3.1 Polysemy becoming homonymy: changes to the English word *fortune* and the concept(s) that it represents

The late appearance of the word *fortune* in English is useful because in a relatively small sample (compared to most languages of the European continent), we can trace its initial stages of adoption and metonymization, followed by separation into homonyms. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word *fortune* entered the English language as a borrowing from 12th century French (the OED references Hatzfield and Darmesteter’s French dictionary). This was not the first time that the inhabitants of Britain had heard of the goddess. Martin Henig describes how, under Roman rule, the state-mandated worship of Fortune as a protector of the Emperor also took on personal significance for individuals.

“[T]here is plenty of evidence in inscriptions, statuary, coins and gems that many people in Roman Britain were very attached to Fortune.” (77) According to Henig, altars dedicated to her “presided in bath houses” (77) so that she could aid gamblers playing dice there, and protect “naked men [who] were vulnerable to mischance” (78). Jennifer Laing also notes that among archaeologists, “the Celtic Deity Rosmerta” is considered “the equivalent of Fortuna” (27) because she was also often represented with a cornucopia, and was worshipped at one cult centre alongside Greco-Roman gods like “Apollo, Silvanus, Mercury and Diana” (27). However, with the departure of Roman rulers, the invasion of the Anglo Saxons and the spread of Christianity, both Rosmerta and Fortuna disappeared almost entirely from the cultural landscape.

Despite the fact that Latin was known in England for centuries, the concept of fortune seems to have been either unfamiliar to the Anglo Saxons or uncomfortable for them to think about. King Alfred’s translation
of Boethius from around the year 880 A.D. alternates between translating *fortuna* as *woruldsælpa* (worldly goods) and as *wyrd*, a complex concept. Frakes attempts to explain the meanings of *wyrd* by outlining points made in E.G. Stanley’s book *The Search*, “a study of Old English paganism” (Frakes 90) and the way it was influenced by Romano-Christian culture. Stanley isolates five possible meanings for the word:

1) as the translation of *Parcae* [the fates, equivalent to the Greek Moirai]; 2) as the translation of *fatum*; 3) in connection with the poetic word *fræge*, signifying ‘final fate, doom, death’; 4) signifying ‘the working out of God’s will’; 5) signifying ‘that which happens or has happened, an event, occurrence, incident, fact’ and thus connected with the verb *weorpan* ['to become'] (Frakes 90).

Clearly, these definitions have no conceptual connection to the idea of arbitrary or contingent change, or the getting and losing of material wealth. *Wyrd* is simply a very different word from *fortuna*, and Alfred’s translation based around the use of *wyrd* shows that he was either intuitively or deliberately using a different conceptual framework. The connection between wealth and unpredictable events highlighted by *fortune* within the conceptual frame of RISK was not a universal given. It is not surprising that the message of Alfred’s translation is considerably different from that of the original text. “Wisdom [the translation of *Philosophia*] becomes the controlling principle of Alfred’s work, permeating every aspect of man’s existence—only by means of Wisdom ... does man gain earthly goods and only by the same means can he ultimately achieve the *summum bonum*” (Frakes 82). There were words in Old English that could provide a closer translation of *fortuna*, such as *gehæp*, a word related to Old Norse *happ*, roughly meaning ‘chance’. The fact that Alfred chose a different word is probably indicative of his religious convictions and unwillingness to discuss the idea of events that were not ordained by God.

When the word *fortune* does come into English, it seems to be imported wholesale as a fully-formed concept. The *OED*’s earliest example of *fortune* in an English text is estimated to be from the year 1300 and shows a familiarity with the Boethian scene of Fortune and her wheel, elaborated with an idea of
what happens when people get to the bottom: “Dame fortune turnes þan hir quele / And castes vs dun vntil a wele [a well].” [Cursor mundi (The cursur o the world). A Northumbrian poem of the XIVth century in four versions. Ed. by the Rev. Richard Morris. Lines 23719-23720]. Patch sees this as an English adoption of the “centrifugal idea” (160), an innovation that may have originated in French poetry. A number of texts from France describe people being thrown from the wheel (‘roe’) into the mud (‘boe’), indicating that they were thinking about the power of centrifugal force to throw people violently off of a moving wheel. It also expanded on the possibilities for using the UP/DOWN image schema in connection with the wheel, opening up new avenues for the qualitative description of what people could fall into at the bottom, and how it might be possible (or impossible) to climb back onto the wheel. The fact that the English Cursor Mundi references the French convention and even tries to produce a similar rhyme scheme gives a strong indication that the idea was borrowed from a French source and not a Latin one.

Another informative example of early usage comes from a manuscript of the Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester (quotes below from the 19th C. edition edited by William Aldis Wright). The original text was written in the mid-to-late 13th century and uses the word wate, which the OED traces to Old English hwata (augur) and hwatung (divination). The original line reads: “Alas alas þou luper wate · þat vilest me þus one” (line 802). A later copy (London University Library, MS 278, produced circa 1440) replaces wate with fortune, so that it reads: ‘Alas alas þou luper fortune’. The original use of the personal pronoun ‘thou’ to address wate appears to have been a temporary personification, but turning wate into fortune is taking that personification a lot further. The later MS also adds two lines after the statement, “god wate afterward · ha nadde in none dede [he did not have in any deed]” (line 8519). The addition may be based in a misreading or skipping of ‘god wate’, as the new lines do not make sense in the context of the character already lacking good wate. The new version reads: “ha nadde in none dede/ Suche fortune as he to fore had · In no place þer he come / Therfore grete pite was þat his fortune was him bynome”. This addition reinterprets the fairly process-oriented idea of ‘having wate in a deed’ as having fortune, a thing that can be both possessed and ‘bynome’ (taken away).
It appears that by the 14th century speakers of Middle English were using some version of the RISK frame, and they found various forms of the word *fortune* very useful for discussing the features of harm and uncertainty as well as reward. Based on my sorting of samples from the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* (CMEPV) using the AntConc concordancing program (see Table 1), the meanings of *fortune* in Middle English down in accordance with Frakes’ outline: “Fortuna, the personified grantor of earthly goods and goddess of the pagan Romans; the transitory gifts of this grantor, which are themselves personified (in incomplete manner); the state of existence brought about by the presence or absence of these gifts” and “the abstraction of the concept of disorder (casus), of which *fortuna* is a specific manifestation” (Frakes 4). In 78.1% of the tokens (825/1056) *fortune* is a noun. There are an additional 9 samples designating the negative side of fortune. The dominant form is *infortune*, with one token of *unfortune* and one of *misfortune*. The more prevalent way to indicate a harmful situation or event is to add an adjective like *grievous* or *horrible*, and these instances are difficult to count because such a wide variety of adjectives are used. It is also difficult to distinguish clearly which noun forms are being treated as animate and which are not, which confirms the idea of an ‘incomplete’ personification. Only 15 of the noun samples had forms of direct address to Fortune (*ah, alas, o, thee* and *thou*), and another 11 referred to her as *dame* or *lady* (plus one *queen*). The vast majority of samples make it fairly clear (in heterogeneous ways) that the personified Fortune is being referenced. Many examples can be found, such as “if fortune be favorable” (*Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden maonachi Cestrensis* Ed. Higden, Ranulf, d. 1364) where there is a certain degree of ambiguity in the adjectives and verbs being used. This is evidence that the word was highly polysemous at the time and that not much attention was given to specifying which meaning of *fortune* was being referenced in a text.

Qualitative adjectives applied to *fortune* seem to vary quite a lot, but *good* is by far the most popular, appearing in 21 tokens. Most of the tokens gave no sign that they were referring to a personified figure, though one token, “as good fortune wold [would/willed]” (*Morte Darthur*, Ed. David Nutt, 1889), breaks the pattern. The next most popular adjective was *false/fell*, appearing in 14 tokens. The expression ‘good
fortune’ (an inanimate thing that is usually ‘had’) would go on to become a fairly fixed unit in Present-Day English, as witnessed by the fact that good is the highest-frequency collocate of fortune (1 word distance, left and right) in each of the modern corpora that I searched (See Tables 6-8). The expression ‘false Fortune’ is always about the personification, and it is not found in the modern corpora with anything like the same frequency. Here we have a first example of a one meaning (a chance beneficial occurrence) splitting off from the polysemous family and becoming isolated.

Another 84 of the noun samples were preceded by quantitative adjectives (the, this, what, such, every, any, no and all) and these were almost exclusively used to mean unpredictable events and situations. There were 53 similar-looking samples that used possessive adjectives (his, my, thy, her and our), but these were no guarantee that the fortune under discussion would be an inanimate possession. In fact the personification of someone’s fortune could be quite detailed, as in this example: “his fortune hir whiel so ladde” (Gower, Confessio Amantis 5.3251). In general, fortune marked by a possessive adjective was the most flexible form, sometimes designating what could also be called a destiny, alternatively their possessions, their successes, or the events that happened to them because of fortune (which could be a personality or a force). The most popular uniform construction was “by fortune” (94 tokens) with an additional nine hits for variants like of, through, after and upon fortune. Only two samples involving ‘by fortune’ described someone having things done to them by Fortune. The rest appear to be referring to fortune in a more impersonal way, as “the abstraction of the concept of disorder” (Frakes 4). A majority of these samples come from Thomas Malory’s Morte Darthur and were often used to fill out the beginning of a metrical line, as in: “And by fortune sir Palamydes fond dame Bragwayne” (Morte Darthur, Ed. David Nutt, 1889). At other times, however, it appears to be used in earnest to help explain how and why events occurred.

The word fortune also developed some meanings and uses similar to Latin words derived from fortuna. 10.6% of them were adjectives (112/1056), and along with the standard fortunate (86 tokens), included
creative forms such as *fortunous* (‘impermanent’) and *fortunable* (‘lucky’) as well as the negative
*infortunate* (6 tokens) and *unfortunate* (2 tokens). The remaining 10.3% of the samples (109/1056) were
some form of the verb ‘to fortune’. Like the Latin *fortunare*, it could be used transitively in the sense of
‘to bless’, as in “Eolus *fortuned* ther passage” (*Edmund and Fremund* by John Lydgate, from Carl
Horstmann’s *Altenglische Legenden*) but I found no examples of an intransitive form meaning ‘to
prosper’. There were also instances of God ‘fortuning’ (cf. section 2.5) which meant something like
ordaining or deciding an outcome. Overall the more Latin-like type of usage was fairly rare, appearing in
only 6 excerpts, compared with the much more popular construction ‘it fortuned...’ which appeared 54
times. This already indicates that events could be thought of as happening on their own, without reference
to any divine agency, except in an indirect way.

Much like ‘by fortune’, the mention of ‘fortuning’ often serves to fill out a metrical line (sometimes with
the stock phrase ‘upon a day’), providing a rhythmic break between one described event and the next
while perhaps reminding the audience to continue framing the story’s events in terms of the RISK frame
underlying the concept of fortune. There is also a fairly grim use for the verb: “Provysed allway, that if it
*fortune* the said william to dye...” (Lease, 1535, of the prebenda! estate at Leighton Buzzard,
Bedfordshire, from Lincoln diocese documents, 1450-1544, ed. Andrew Clark). Most of the ‘fortuning’ in
legal documents is related to the possibility that specific individuals will die, produce no heirs, or fail to
pay their rent. The conditional future form ‘if it fortune’\(^3\), as well as an additional 13 examples of the
form ‘[subj.] fortune(d) to [verb]’ are almost exclusive to legal documents. Both the literary and legal
ways of using the verb ‘to fortune’ are deeply entrenched in specific genres with conventions that fell out
of use over time, and this might explain why the verb has not survived into Present-Day English.

The remaining 12 tokens of the verb form were past participles serving an adjectival function, and often
these were accompanied by an adverb like ‘well’ or ‘ill’, for example “he thought his nevewe wele

\(^3\) The OED defines the impersonal form (‘it fortunes/d’) as similar to “it happens or befalls”.
fortuned to haue such chois” (The Three Kings’ Sons, edited from its unique MS, Harleian 326, about 1500 A.D. by F.J. Furnivall). I found this especially interesting because it echoes the development of the Latin past participle fortunate and exists alongside the more directly-inherited adjective fortunate. The past participle probably faded away with the verb form or was absorbed by the adjective, but it did have a specialized, distinct meaning in Middle English.

One further point is that the adverb form fortunately appeared only once in my sample, and it was used in a way that would not come naturally to a modern speaker: “Thenne daryus, knowyng that he was fortunatly arryued vpon the crysten peple ...” (Caxton’s Blanchardyn and Eglantine, c. 1489: from Lord Spencer’s unique imperfect copy, Ed. Leon Kellner). It is a simple manner adverb rather than a sentence adverb, as we tend to use it today. The OED provides a few later examples of fortunately being used as a simple adverb, and their first sentence adverb appears in 1795. In all of the modern corpora that I investigated, shown in Tables 2-5, unfortunately is by far the most common form of word derived from fortune, used more commonly than fortune itself. Usually fortunately is the third most popular form.

At the same time hap had been in continuous use, often as a synonym for fortune. The OED lists hap itself as archaic, but it also forms the root of happy, which was used in the same sense as fortunate, as well as the verb happen which could fill roughly the same function as the verb form of fortune. In the process of searching the CMEPV by hand, I found 11 examples of the phrase ‘hap and fortune’ (in a number of variant spellings) and there could easily be more instances. Chance, the surviving form of Latin casus, also continued its life as both a noun and a verb, serving as an alternative to fortune when there might be less desire to evoke a personality. English speakers also began to make use of luck, a term from Low German, to talk about the state of one’s fortunes, especially in gambling situations. This happens in the 15th or 16th c., according to the OED. Luck appears to have become an extremely popular substitute for fortune, to the extent that ‘Lady Luck’, for the superstitious, has even taken on many characteristics of the original goddess. See Figure 15, the first Google Books NGram graph, which shows...
hap and fortune declining while luck, and especially chance, are on the rise. The French word random originated as a noun meaning “impetuosity, great speed, force, or violence (in riding, running, striking, etc.); chiefly in with (also in) great random” (OED). The dictionary lists random’s more modern meaning, “made, done, occurring, etc., without method or conscious choice” as appearing in 1655, and the first example of random having a technical meaning for statisticians comes from 1884. I have included a second Ngram graph (Figure 16) comparing the adjectives random and fortuitous to show how impressively the former has propagated. These increasingly popular new words take over most functions of the word fortune and its related words, leaving it to dominate a few specific functions such as the designation of wealth, positive outcomes, and the prediction of future outcomes.

The history that I have sketched is clearly a case where fortune’s “polysemous meanings have lost their relationship so as to be associated with… homonymous lexemes.” (14) As Traugott and Dasher cautioned, it “involves not ‘A > B,’ i.e. the simple replacement of one item by another, but rather ‘A > A ~ B’ and then sometimes ‘> B’ alone.” (11) Competing words that designate overlapping clusters of features within the conceptual frame of RISK continue to jostle for position, and the story of fortune is clearly not over. Alongside these changes in language that overlaid basically the same frame, I also think that there is something else going on at the conceptual level, that the thing holding it all together, the idea of Fortune the empty-cause blend, a personality that directs the outcome of events, was becoming less important.

3.2 Radical reframing of probability versus providence: decreasing need for an ‘intermediate deity’ of chance

The struggle between Fortune and human agency began in earnest during the early modern period. Kiefer describes Machiavelli and Shakespeare as imagining themselves in “hand-to-hand combat with Fortune” in a way that had not been expressed before (255). In The Prince, Kiefer points out passages where
Machiavelli expresses the belief that “men can actually prevail over circumstance” (Kiefer 200). One excerpt almost says it all: “Fortune is a woman and it is necessary, in order to keep her under, to cuff and maul her.” (92, qtd. in Kiefer 200). According to Cioffari, “Machiavelli, like his predecessors, gives an explanation of the variations of Fortune, with its complete cycle from good to bad. But instead of basing the reason for variation on influences beyond the control of man, he bases it on man's own character, accepting it as it is rather than as it should be.” (8) In this interpretation, human woes are solvable through human action, though our lack of action, rather than the power of Fortune, is to blame for those woes in the first place.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has a tragic hero who spends the entire play in a conceptual struggle with Fortune. Kiefer’s analysis is that over the course of the drama, his “sense of victimization” by Fortune (258) gives way to certainty of purpose as he “supplants Fortune with providence in his cosmology.” (260) He endures the “slings and arrows” (III.i.57) that she throws at him, but also makes a dirty joke about how Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are comfortably situated, not on top of Fortune’s head or under her feet, but “about her waist, or in the middle of her favors” (II.ii.214), applying the UP/DOWN image schema in a novel, bawdy way. The Player character in *Hamlet* also makes a speech about wanting the gods to demote Fortune: “Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel/and bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven” (II.ii.496). Such disrespectful treatment of Fortune was unprecedented.

Concurrently with change in the word’s use in recent centuries (where *fortune* began to designate gain or a good situation more than chance), it became increasingly popular to treat Fortune the personified figure as an emblem of wealth or positive outcomes (what Patch would call a ‘type’). However, this objectification only seems to have changed the way in which Fortune inspired people’s interest. No longer a controlling ‘dame’ in a heavy gown who could not be touched, Fortune was being represented as an attractive nude, tempting men to chase after her. This corresponds to many ancient descriptions of Fortuna moving about quickly as well, but the emphasis becomes much stronger and seems to be done
with the motive of spurring people to action. Instead of lamenting that Fortune is fickle, these representations encourage the enterprising man to seek out Fortuna and grab her. She is strongly representing the ‘Goal’ element of the RISK frame, and almost nothing else. In the Boethian version, Fortune comes and goes, and the things that she can bring to an individual (fame, wealth, honour) are handmaidens who travel with her. Later, it seems that she herself embodies those things, sometimes in a fairly gruesome way (cf. Figure 17), a Hogarth drawing of people buying up pieces of “Fortune’s golden haunches”).

How did the concept of fortune fall out of favor in spite of its demonstrated adaptability and its comfortable ‘human-scale’ compression of abstract ideas about causation? Elizabeth Campbell makes a guess that “the ascendancy of the iconoclastic and strictly-conscienced Puritans” (xvii) dealt a huge blow to Fortune, but I am skeptical that pure proscription would have been enough to harm the concept. The fiery Puritan John Calvin sternly rebuked anyone who referred to Fortune as a controller of events and tried to dilute the hands-on nature of God’s providential power, but even he relented somewhat in his attacks and acknowledged that there could be extenuating circumstances, “acknowledg[ing] the tendency of people to employ the name of Fortune in everyday speech, no matter what their theological principles” (Kiefer 23) and admitting that it would be acceptable for people to use the word fortune as long as they knew that the goddess was not real. In my view, what really did the damage to fortune as a concept was a revolutionary change of framing: what if the conceptual frame of RISK could operate without an agent controlling outcomes?

“The word ‘probability’ appeared in its modern form implying a numerical idea of randomness in the seventeenth century” (Reith 20). At around the same time that probability went from being a matter of guessing to a matter of mathematical calculation, “the phenomenon of gambling appeared suddenly to burst upon a startled society” (Reith 58) creating a perfect storm of intense conceptual innovation and cultural interest. Working out odds was not merely an intellectual exercise. It could mean the difference
between winning and losing huge sums of money! However, this ‘burst’ of activity would not have the immediate effect of changing the RISK frame. Even as mathematical ideas about quantifying probability developed, there would be no major debate over the question of whether divine providence really played a role in ‘chance’ outcomes until the nineteenth century. Evan Heimlich’s article in Divination: Perspectives for a New Millennium discusses how Darwin stirred up debate when he used the word ‘chance’ in the Origin of Species. Heimlich says that “he never mentioned randomness at all, or referred to variations as arbitrary or neutral. Instead Darwin asserted that progeny transmute according to causes of which ‘we are profoundly ignorant’” (150). It seems that he intended his use of chance to mean something similar to the Aristotelian use of tyche, an unknown cause. He was paraphrased by critics as having said that changes happened ‘randomly,’ partly because the word chance was still associated with Fortune and was too intermediate, harmonized as it was with ideas about providence. This in-between position did not satisfy either radical atheists for whom “both God and Fortune were ruled out, [and] the substitutes were law and arbitrariness” (148), or staunch religious conservatives, who were generally of Calvin’s frame of mind, wanting to attribute all outcomes exclusively to God. Poor Darwin was harshly criticized by both camps. In the long term, science and religion conspired to destroy the middle ground that had existed for so many centuries.

In spite of these competing orthodoxies, Reith makes a strong case for continuity between ancient and modern ways of dealing with the suspense of an unpredictable outcome. It is normal to think of all events as being caused by the will of some entity, and it is not easy to break out of this pattern. That is why the RISK frame has retained the ‘outcome-decider’ element for so long. The poem “Hap” by Thomas Hardy is an interesting example of someone coming to terms with the transition to secular ideas of randomness, and having difficulties with in-between-ness. He wishes that “some vengeful god” would tell him that he has suffered in life because of divine maliciousness. Instead, he has to find some less satisfying personalities to blame:
Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan....
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain. (lines 11-14)

It is interesting to note that the blindness and indifference of the ‘Doomsters’ makes them similar to Fortune, and that Hardy (or his character in the poem) cannot easily make a conceptual switch from a vengeful god to no god at all. Some kind of decider needs to be present in the RISK frame, even if it does not make decisions well or consistently.

There are some cultural moments even in the present day when the old medieval Fortune seems to make an appearance. The song “Luck be a Lady” from *Guys and Dolls* really shows how persistent the idea of Fortune’s ‘fickleness’ has been, and how it can adapt to new social contexts. Under the new name Lady Luck, the song describes her as being on a date with the main character in a gambling den. He asks her to behave in a ladylike way, and not to leave with “some other guy”. It sticks amazingly close to the model set by Boethius: “If after freely choosing her as the mistress to rule your life you want to draw up a law to control her coming and going, you will be acting without justification” (II p1, p. 23). Terry Pratchett’s description of “the Lady” in *The Colour of Magic* retains some of Fortune’s old menace and arbitrary command. “A few of the more daring members of the Gambler’s Guild had once experimented with a form of worship… and had all died of penury, murder or just Death within the week. She was the Goddess Who Must Not Be Named; those who sought her never found her” (259).

In addition, Reith talks about how “games of chance encourage a distinctive cognitive outlook among players” that she calls “the magical-religious worldview” (156), where some Fortune-like entity is perceived as capriciously controlling the outcomes of bets. This is an area of modern life where the concept seems to survive most powerfully. Reith uses a very pertinent quote from Piaget, who says: “it is generally sufficient to desire something outside our control... in order to have the impression of a sort of
hostile power seeking to mock us” (1977: 164, qtd. in Reith 166). In times of need or stress, when we forget our elaborate cultural explanations of probability on the one hand and providence on the other, we find ourselves in Fortune’s power again.

3.3 Not all viewpoints can be experienced at once: breakdown of Fortune’s wheel at the level of entailments

Partly as an influence of visual art, the consideration of multiple viewpoints in simultaneous motion led medieval writers to build a fairly complete vision of the stages of life, the differing states of various people at any given time, and the way that things tend to progress in the world at large. It had been popular since ancient times to talk about social order being inverted by Fortune, so that a slave could become a king, and vice versa. It was also very common for individual characters experiencing bad fortune to complain about being raised and cast down at the whim of Fortuna. These two things intersected in the De Casibus tradition (named for Boccaccio’s De Casibus Virorum Illustrium), where famous people from both ancient and recent history (and some fictional characters) would have their story told as an account of their sufferings on the wheel of Fortune, often following a predictable arc recognizable in modern tragedies, but sometimes going through unexpected reversals and various kinds of ups and downs. In other stories and poems, the plot would be mostly about the experience of an individual who is granted a vision of Fortune, and sees that there are many people at all times clinging to her wheel, hoping to climb to the top but being thrown down in spite of their efforts. These two kinds of story can intersect, but I think that there are two fundamentally different ideas operating in this kind of imagery depending on whether one is considering the neutral viewpoint and watching the multiple people who make up ‘the world’ or ‘society’ being spun around, or empathetically taking on the viewpoint of someone trying to climb up the wheel, hoping and fearing for their future. Sometimes the two are skillfully synthesized, but often when something very good or bad happens to someone in particular, the state of everyone else on the wheel is forgotten or neglected.
Boccaccio’s *Amorosa Visione* and the English *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (AMA) include literary explorations of what people at each stage would be thinking, and how even those at the bottom would have a reason to cling on in hopes of moving back up someday. Here is an example of a highly specific and kinetic description in the *AMA* that involves the hero Joshua trying to stop himself from falling to the lowest position on the wheel’s rim: “He fanged fast on the feleighes and folded his armes / But yet he failed and fell a fifty foot large; / But yet he sprang and sprent and spradden his armes” (231). On a larger scale, there is inconsistency in the description, and in the following paragraph I will analyze the way that it tries to incorporate both the constant motion of the wheel and the relatively static positioning of each person on it.

The major disconnect is between the *AMA*’s detailed description of where all of the Nine Worthies (heroic figures from the Bible and quasi-historical and epics) are located on the wheel and the final moment where King Arthur talks about being suddenly whirled around and crushed on the ground.

> About sho whirls the wheel and whirls me under,
>     Till all my quarters that while were quasht all to peces (3388-9)

This is very different from the gradual motion of one hero succeeding another, and there is no mention of what happens to Alexander (formerly at the bottom) or Charlemagne, waiting to take Arthur’s place. This shows how strongly the two different viewpoint-based ideas about the wheel and its physics were operating at the same time, even in works that were clearly attempting to synthesize them. One was a contextualizing function, showing that there are multiple people rising and falling in their state of life. The other function was purely individualistic, focused on the unique qualities of one person’s rise and fall.

The encounter with Fortune in the *AMA* is also notable for having a very violent ending. It is fairly unusual to describe people being maimed or killed by the wheel itself. Much more common is the idea that under the wheel is some kind of pit or prison, which people can fall into if they are thrown off the
wheel entirely. A couple of versions say that the pit is full of snakes or serpents (as in the Stanzaic Morte Arthure, and Kingis Quair) and other versions imply that the pit is a grave.

Other elaborations working out entailments included the following: depictions of Fortune’s castle on top of a mountain where the wheel was sometimes located (in one version it is on a cliff edge, and people have to climb up the slippery ice to get to it, but could be dropped all the way back down off the cliff once they have climbed onto the wheel); the addition of crank handles by which Fortune could turn the wheel; and systems of wheels within wheels that each controlled different aspects of fortune in the world. The system of multiply embedded wheels might have been an attempt to reconcile the imagery with the idea that a person could be doing well in some specific areas of life but badly in others, or that not everyone was striving for the same kind of success, so the one big wheel did not have everyone on it. There is quite a bit of focus on figuring out the wheel-as-machine. An image from the Hortus Deliciarum (Figure 18) is a nice illustration of entailments – the crown falling off as one figure falls down, the crank handle suited to a human-sized Fortune.

Often this machine seems to resemble a torture device, and the story of St. Catherine, who was miraculously saved from being killed by ‘breaking on the wheel’ (being tied to the flat side of a wheel and being beaten with a club until bones are broken), would have been in the back of many people’s minds. There was also a classical influence in the story of Ixion, whose torment in hell is to be attached to the flat side of a vertically-oriented wheel that is constantly turning. There has historically been a great deal of confusion when it comes to blends involving Fortune’s wheel and torture. The practice of breaking on the wheel is described by Jean Kellaway as “an ancient form of execution, presumably dating back almost as far as the invention of the wheel” (56). It reportedly involved tying a condemned prisoner across a wheel and using “an iron bar to attack the prisoner’s limbs, breaking each in several places.”(56) However, religious art depicting St. Catherine about to be broken on the wheel has almost never depicted this type of scenario. Often there is an elaborate device involving two or more wheels covered in spikes
(see Figure 19). One medieval fresco in the cathedral of Notre Dame, Le Puy (Figure 20) shows St. Catherine standing at the centre of a huge wheel, looking a lot like Fortune, despite the fact that in the story she is praying for an angel to come and destroy the wheel.

In a late 16th or early 17th century chapbook illustration depicting the famous death of Jean Calas, the artist has invented a way of attaching the victim to the rim of a wheel and having a horse pull on a rope attached to his arms while his feet are attached by rope to the ground (see Figure 21). It does not seem like this method was ever actually used, but it does show how influential Fortune’s wheel was, and that people could readily blend it with a brutal method of execution.

In the early modern period Fortune becomes less of a personality and more of a goal to be reached through vigorous activity. The image of her turning people around on a wheel does not disappear by any means, but the neo-classical idea of portraying her standing on a ball becomes increasingly popular. Sometimes, she is depicted standing on a wheel that is lying flat on the ground, perhaps indicating that she turns to face in different directions. Machiavelli’s Tercets on Fortune (mentioned by Kiefer) nicely synthesize both the new way of thinking about Fortune and the elaborate traditions of medieval wheel imagery. In his poem, “as many wheels are turning as there are/varied ways of climbing to those things which every living man/strives to attain” (line 61-63), and people climb onto them in hopes of success, only to face an inevitable downward turn. Amid conventional statements that this sad situation cannot be changed, Machiavelli also speculates that “a man/who could leap from wheel to wheel would always be happy/and fortunate” (115-117), perhaps hinting at his own strategy for dealing with the unpredictability of life.

As Fortune becomes more objectified, the wheel gains more of a personality. Sometimes the wheel itself is described as false, blind, and cruel, gaining attributes that would normally be applied to Fortune herself. Maybe it is significant that as Fortune’s role in turning the wheel is increasingly downplayed, her role as a decision-maker also fades. Nautical imagery comes back into the depiction (long after the rudder seems to
have disappeared) in the form of a cloth held out like a sail, indicating that she is being blown from place to place by the wind instead of moving by her own arbitrary volition. It may indicate that at the time, people were becoming skeptical about the idea of a divine outcome-decider and wanted to see themselves as the more intelligent and decisive participants in interactions with Fortune. Like Machiavelli in his *Tercets*, people also began to imagine themselves interacting with the wheel in new ways. Importantly, the focus was on the individual’s viewpoint, not the collective view of everyone on the wheel together, which could take multiple people into account.

Kiefer attributes this change partly to the blending of Fortuna and Occasio in early modern art. Occasio corresponds to the Greek idea of *kairos*, the moment of opportunity, which had to be seized before it slipped away. The idea was often personified in Roman art as a nude woman wearing a forelock (all her hair in the front, with the back of her head shaved) that people would try to grab. Looking to this classical precedent, early modern artists depicting Fortune would often imagine her nude with a forelock, like Occasio, and often standing on a ball, indicating that she rolled around quickly on it. (See Figure 22).

Instead of one wheel, by the early modern period we have at least three different versions. The Boethian wheel with its harmoniously blended image schemas continued to be represented in a variety of contexts, but some accounts would tend to highlight the viewpoint of an individual undergoing tortures on the wheel whereas others were focused on an often satirical depiction of society as a wheel, where various people hoping to gain political power were depicted as Fortune’s fools. Meanwhile humanist art had revived the classical rolling ball under Fortune’s feet, placing a vigorous emphasis on the image schema of a PATH and profiling Fortune herself as a very definite goal.
3.4 Moving away from the Boethian viewpoint: modern survivals and interpretations of wheel of fortune

How do people in the present day imagine the wheel of Fortune, if they think of it at all? My search of the COCA corpus found 189 examples of wheel as a collocate of fortune (at a max. distance of four words, left and right). 130 of these (69%) were direct references to the game show “Wheel of Fortune”. Another 14 referenced slot machines based on the show, and there was one mention of what sounded like a home version of the game from 1998. Interestingly, there were also 14 direct references to the flashy prize wheels often seen in carnivals and casinos, the ancestors of the game show wheel.

There were surprisingly only three mentions of the wheel in relation to fortune-telling, two of them referencing the tarot card depicting the wheel of Fortune and one describing a specially designed magazine quiz. Factoring out one ‘false positive’ result that involved the wheel of a car belonging to a man with the last name Fortune, that leaves 28 non-literal uses of the term ‘wheel of fortune’. Out of these, 9 were clearly using the metaphor of a carnival-wheel, which involves people taking a turn to spin it, the wheel stopping, and a final result (often a ‘win’ or ‘loss’). Here is one example: “when you think about casting, you have to ask yourself, ‘Where will the wheel of fortune stop, and on whom?’” (COCA: SPOK 1990, ABC_Primetime) Another 7 seemed very traditional in their description of the wheel, and alongside three examples discussing the formula of medieval and religious iconography, it was exciting to recognize some very embodied understandings of the old wheel. One description of a controversial politician especially stands out for its physicality and the way it preserves the idea of multiple people simultaneously attached to the wheel: “he had climbed high, while, according to the logic of the wheel of fortune, his enemies had fallen.” (COCA: FIC 2012, MassachRev) Another one preserves a very medieval sense of futility in human endeavor: “It’s like running in a never-ending marathon, or trying to stay at the top of Fortune’s wheel. Or, as Kim said, ‘there is no end game.’” (COCA: NEWS 2000, WashPost) Out of the remaining 12 results, 5 did not have enough context to interpret how the reference
was being used, such as puns about a Ferris wheel being a ‘wheel of fortune’. The other 7 were very interesting for their use of the wheel to discuss issues of competition, fairness and social equality.

Two in particular seemed to be using the term ‘wheel of fortune’ in a new, somewhat specialized way, to describe lawyers unscrupulously taking money from their clients for unsuccessful class-action lawsuits:

1) How about the Poland Spring water case, where the lawyers got $1.35 million in the wheel of fortune and the consumers got coupons to buy more of the water that the lawyers were alleging was defective? (COCA: SPOK 2005, NPR_Sunday)

2) we can not allow this tobacco bill to run into a pot of gold, a wheel of fortune for trial lawyers. (COCA: SPOK 1998, PBS_Newshour)

Discussions of professional sports are another area where the phrase seems to have a specialized meaning. They involve some notion that the athletes are (or should be) given an equal chance to succeed in competition:

3) Basically, the issue is fairness. Any other American can hire an agent. College athletes are the only group so prohibited. Says Walter Byers, “The wheel of fortune is badly unbalanced in favor of the overseers and against the players.” (COCA: MAG 1996, SportingNews)

4) all standard perks available to the pros just about anywhere they tee it up on the Tour’s $60 million wheel of fortune from January until late October. (COCA: NEWS 1995, WashPost)

The last three examples are all clearly inspired by some feature of context (a turning sculpture, a casino and a politician in Atlantic City) but they also seem to be talking about some feature of the wheel as a metaphor for the social order and the political ‘machine’.

5) One blade has tines like a rake and traces a set of lines on the sand it traverses; the other blade follows and wipes them away with its straight edge. Round and around it goes, this little wheel of fortune, this
tiny time machine. On a politician’s desk it could be a useful reminder that short-term strategies may be subject to the fearful symmetries of history. (COCA: MAG 1998, ArtAmerica)

6) In place of the East-West polarity, we’re faced with a vast and growing gulf between winners and losers. Mohegan Sun [a new Casino in Connecticut] defends the border between them by denying with great artistry that it exists. It’s a big, glamorous wheel of fortune designed to suggest that the difference between winning and losing is just a matter of chance. (COCA: NEWS 1996, NYTimes)

7) There was, for instance, Mayor James Ursry of Atlantic City. We talked to Ursry last fall about accusations that the political wheel of fortune was spinning some money his way. Mayor JAMES U[RS]RY: I’m poorer now than I was when I became Mayor. I mean, I don’t see anybody scratching my back, because I wouldn’t allow it DONALDSON voice-over: This winter, Ursry was indicted for accepting a $6,000 bribe. (COCA: SPOK 1990, ABC_Primetime)

The connection of the wheel of Fortune to actual gambling seems to appear surprisingly late in its history. Despite being associated with play and games, the wheel is often described in ancient texts as constantly turning, never landing on a specific spot (which would be necessary to determine if a gambler had won or lost). Gambling games at the time would have mainly been played with dice, and even if people sometimes gambled or did the equivalent of drawing lots to pick someone for a job by spinning a marked wheel and seeing who it pointed at, this use of the wheel does not appear to enter into the description of Fortune’s wheel. It is my guess that the invention of roulette and the popularization of wheel-based gambling coincided with the emergence of probability theory to create a powerful new way of associating wheels with the frame of RISK. “Roulette… [borrowed] an English wheel used in at least three games: roly-poly or rowlet, ace of hearts, and E/O (even and odd). The English had begun playing roly-poly in 1720, when they spun a small ball around a horizontal wheel with several slots” (Schwartz 103-104). Probably around the same time, the carnival prize wheel was becoming ubiquitous even in the lives of people who did not normally gamble, appearing in places as wholesome as the church fair.
By 1912, the former career gambler and con man John Philip Quinn (in his book *Gambling and gambling devices*) was familiar with several crooked wheel-based carnival games including “Wheel of Fortune or Chuck-A-Luck” (89), “Star Pointer” (136) and “Needle Wheel” (161), as well as games with a spinning pointer on a round board that could be rigged by means of a “Squeeze Spindle,” a device that had been “successfully employed in defrauding the unwary for nearly sixty years” (155). By this point, the spinning of a wheel would have been firmly associated with taking risks and trusting in Fortune or Lady Luck. However, the mechanics of this relation to a mysterious, intuitively-sensed outcome-decider made use of the wheel’s structure and functions in an almost entirely different way from the Boethian model of Fortune’s wheel, as I will explain in detail below.

First and foremost, the UP/DOWN image schema is almost entirely irrelevant to the structure of a wheel used for gambling, except in regard to esthetic decisions about where the pointer will be located. This is evident from the appearance of gambling and prize wheels in all kinds of orientations, from vertical to horizontal, and almost every degree of tilt in between. Unlike the old wheel of Fortune which moved people around into good or bad states in life, this wheel’s main function is to point to or indicate something when it stops spinning. The viewpoint of the human participants in this scene is very removed compared to what it once was. There are no people clinging to the wheel whose perspectives can be empathized with. Instead, each individual is free to focus on their own chance of winning or losing, independently of what happens to anyone else in the world, and free of any concern that they themselves will come to real harm. Removing human figures from the wheel takes away the frightening and torture-related aspects of the wheel. There is no prompting to imagine oneself falling down or getting hurt. People watching a prize wheel spin may still be very invested and focused on a specific part of the wheel’s rim, but only because they hope for the pointer to point at it or for the marble to fall into that slot. This is also why it would be possible for carnival game-runners to employ a spinning pointer and turn the ‘wheel’ itself into a stationary board. The players may experience ‘ups and downs’ as the process of spinning and stopping the wheel is reiterated, but that metaphor for states of emotion is almost completely
separated from the high or low position of any one segment of the wheel’s rim. I do think that the placement of a pointer at the top of a carnival-wheel is deliberately making use of the UP/DOWN schema, getting the players to look up at it and thereby signal both the impressiveness of the wheel and their own optimistic attitudes, but this is separate from the old use of the wheel’s top as the metaphoric location of success in life.

A second important factor in the idea of relating to Fortune or chance through a prize wheel is the question of who controls the wheel’s spinning. In reality, gambling games such as the ones described by Quinn often involve elaborate and ingenious hidden mechanisms allowing the game-runner to stop the wheel whenever he/she chooses, so that “[a]n unsophisticated player can never win except through the consent of the operator” (153). However, their design would give every indication that it was anyone’s game. People could step up and spin the wheel with their own hands, taking an active role in deciding their own fate, and the final stopping place of the pointer was under no obvious control. Unlike the medieval wheel that was clearly rotated by Fortune’s hands, a spinning prize wheel left the question of control open to a variety of interpretations. It could be an outcome predetermined by an ineffable God, or the result of intervention by some supernatural power like Fortune that either likes or dislikes you. It could even be that the wheel itself, already treated by medieval writers as having a bit of personality, or infused with the property of luck, was deciding for itself where to stop. The rational, modern idea that no personality or force controls a spinning wheel, that it is simply ‘random’ in the way that Victorian scientists had begun to use the word, may be the most elegant by our current standards, but it goes against the grain of a deeply-held cognitive premise that every significant effect in the world must be caused by some kind of willful, purposeful action.
4 Concluding Chapter

Resistance to the idea of Fortune comes in different forms: trying to replace her with an ordered system controlled by God; emphasizing human agency and making Fortune more of a passive object or goal; replacing Fortune with the concept of randomness, i.e. change that is not caused by a human-like agent. However, because Fortune is a very ‘human-scale’ blend that is easy to conceptualize, as opposed to the secret plans of God’s providence or the complexities of probability theory. It is hard to avoid thinking about unpredictable events as being caused by an active, Fortune-like agent. Changes in the way that Fortune was conceptualized can be seen in the variety of ways that Fortune the personality has been represented interacting with human beings and using her symbolic wheel. These changes in the concept also correspond to semantic change, for example the metonymization of the word fortune and its eventual splitting into different homophones, referring separately to an amount of money, a situation, and still occasionally, a personality.

The image of the wheel or ball brings together a number of disparate ideas that people had about Fortune’s activities (moving constantly, being unstable and changeable, causing the ‘ups and downs’ of life, and causing cyclical changes). Boethius is the writer that first synthesized a cohesive picture of the wheel and human beings’ position on its edge, blending it with the image of a universe composed of concentric circles or spheres. For a number of reasons, the blend did not remain stable. There are two different ways of seeing the wheel, as a representation of society (neutral viewpoint) and as a representation of an individual’s life (viewpoint located on the wheel), which do not quite fit together in terms of the logic of their entailments. Ideas about the specifics of how the wheel (or wheels) work have changed over time to reflect difficulties with this. The cultural associations of Fortune’s wheel have changed over time. A large vertical wheel where people can be in a good state at the top and a bad state at the bottom lent itself to associations with torture devices. During the 16th and 17th centuries, gambling
and prize wheels become the more salient image associated with Fortune’s wheel, possibly in a punning way at first (Fortune could let you win a fortune).

Currently, various aspects of Fortune and her wheel exist in disparate places. The adverbs unfortunately and fortunately are very widely used, as is the noun fortune, typically used to refer to an amount of money. The personality of Fortune persists in the form of Lady Luck, and in the magical-religious behaviors of people in high-pressure, high-risk situations. The wheel has also broken down into its component parts. People still think of themselves as ‘rising and falling’ as they go through positive and negative events in their lives, and they still describe repeated patterns of change as being cycles. The wheel of fortune itself is most commonly imagined to be a prize wheel that participants watch from a distance instead of clinging to the rim. However, even this image retains key elements of the medieval wheel, such as the idea that human agency has no power in certain areas of life, that people choose to take risks and have unreasonable hopes for their own success, and that the motion of the wheel should equalize or cancel out the unfairness of social stratification (though sometimes the wheel is ‘rigged’ or unevenly weighted in someone’s favor).

Fortune and her wheel are a remarkable instance where diverse aspects of human thinking about the structure of the world and the causes of unexpected events came together and were very elaborately articulated. It is important to note that none of the conceptual elements which make up the iconic image have really gone away, but they are now more commonly expressed in different forms. As I think this study has already indicated, Fortune is far from being an isolated example. Vast hordes of personified abstract concepts with shifting identities and symbolic tools used to populate the Western cultural imagination, and looking outside of Europe and North America, the possibilities for cross-cultural comparison are huge. A large-scale re-examination of this type of phenomenon using cognitive linguistics in conjunction with existing scholarship has the potential to tell us some very interesting new things about how the current state of our cultural concepts and beliefs came about.
Table 1: forms of *fortune* in the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse*

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<tr>
<th>Word form</th>
<th>Raw frequency</th>
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<td>Noun – <em>fortune</em> (with variant spellings)</td>
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<td>Adjective – <em>fortunate</em> +alternate forms</td>
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<td>In/un adjective – <em>in/unfortunate</em></td>
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<td>Verb – <em>fortuned/fortuneth/to fortune</em></td>
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<td>Total:</td>
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Table 2: top 14 results of a search in COCA for *fortu*

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Table 3: top 14 results of a search in the BNC for *fortu*

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Table 4: top 14 results of a search in the *Strathy Corpus of Canadian English* for *fortu*

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Table 5: top 10 results of a search in the *GloWbE* corpus for *fortu* (7 countries shown)

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Table 6: top 14 collocates of *fortune* in COCA within a distance of 4 words, left and right

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Table 7: top 14 collocates of *fortune* in the BNC within a distance of 4 words, left and right

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Table 8: top 14 collocates of *fortune* in *Strathy* within a distance of 4 words, left and right

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## Figures

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<th>Subscene 1: Physical manipulation of complex object</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Nonparticipant</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Person who manipulates object</td>
<td>Complex, structured physical object</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subscene 2: Formation of cognitive representation of object’s organization</th>
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<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Nonparticipant</th>
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<td>Person who forms cognitive representation of object</td>
<td>Cognitive representation of object’s (logical) organization</td>
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<th>(Perception of object’s color)</th>
<th>Perceiver of color</th>
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<th>Color of object</th>
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</table>

Figure 1: diagram of a primary scene involving manipulation of a complex object.

Joseph Grady and Christopher Johnson, *Figure 1*. From “Converging evidence for the notions of subscene and primary scene.” © Berkeley Linguistics Society, 1997. With permission.

---

**Input space 1: business**

- business people competing for status and money

**Input space 2: rats**

- lab rats running in a maze for small food rewards
- business people are lab rats racing each other (in a maze?) for small status and money rewards

**Blended space: the 'rat race'**

Figure 2: my diagram of a simple blend
Figure 3: my diagram of the basic situation that calls for an empty cause blend

Figure 4: one way of blending childbirth with the GIVING AND RECEIVING frame
Figure 5: another blend that complicates the situation further

Figure 6: an empty cause blend that puts together all of the inputs
Figure 7: my diagram of the mosaic from the ‘Villa of Good Fortune’ at Olynthos.

The original photo could not be included due to copyright restrictions, but can be found in:

Figure 8: my diagram of the reversed concentric half-circles in the Diagram of the Continuation and Inversion of the Great Ultimate (‘Taiji shunni tu’)

The original diagram could not be included due to copyright restrictions, but can be found in:
Figure 9: the wheel placed by the feet of Fortuna, under the rudder in her right hand

Archaeological Museum in Milan, (Italy). Roman goddess Fortuna (good luck); fresco from a Roman ara. Photo by Giovanni Dall'Orto, July 25 2003. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons.


Figure 10: diagram of the RISK frame

Charles Fillmore and Beryl Atkins, Figure 2.3. From “Towards a frame-based lexicon: the case of RISK.”

Figure 11: my diagram of the basic Boethian wheel of Fortune

Figure 12: the wheel (or circle) of non-personified fortune. From Monte Cassino ms. 189, fol. 74r.
Figure 13: a more traditional formula of four

Miniature depicting the Wheel of Fortune, from f.70r of MS S.30, Somme le Roi and miscellaneous texts (English, c.1320-30). By permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge.

<http://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/library/special_collections/manuscripts/medieval_manuscripts/medman/A/W/eb%20images/S30f70r.htm>
Figure 14: image of a Buddhist bhavacakra, or ‘wheel of life’

Photograph courtesy of the Huntington Archive of Photographic Art at The Ohio State University.

Larger, more detailed image available at <http://huntington.wmc.ohio-state.edu/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=showThisDetail&ObjectID=20000469&detail=largeZoom>
Figure 15: Google Books NGram graph showing relative frequencies of the words *fortune, luck, chance* and *hap* from the year 1500-2000 in the English *One Million Books* corpus.
Figure 16: Google Books NGram graph showing relative frequencies of the words *random* and *fortuitous* from the year 1500-2000 in the English *One Million Books* corpus
Figure 17: part of a Hogarth engraving, showing people buying up ‘Fortune’s golden haunches’

William Hogarth. The South Sea Scheme. 1721. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons.
<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Hogarth_-_The_South_Sea_Scheme.png>
Figure 18: image of Fortune turning her wheel with a crank

Figure 19: image of angels saving St. Catherine from being ‘broken’ between two spiked wheels

Figure 20: St. Catherine at the centre of a wheel in a 13th century fresco in Le Puy Cathedral, Auvergne.


Figure 17: “The cruel death of Calas, who was broke on the wheel at Toulouse, March 9th, 1762.”

Frontispiece of an English chapbook (late 18th or early 19th century).

Figure 22: an early modern engraving of Fortune with the features of Occasio

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The Strathy Corpus of Canadian English. See http://www.queensu.ca/strathy/projects.html, (c.1980-). Available online at http://corpus2.byu.edu/can/?r=v


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-- --. (2013) *Corpus of Global Web-Based English: 1.9 billion words from speakers in 20 countries.* Available online at http://corpus2.byu.edu/glowbe/.


**Secondary Sources**


Software Used

AntConc 3.3.5w (Windows). Dev. Laurence Anthony. Faculty of Science and Engineering. Waseda University, Japan. anthony@waseda.jp, July 16, 2012.