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**The Rise and Fall of Dynasties as Reflected in Late Medieval German  
Literature: *Melusine, Fortunatus, and Huce Scheppel***

**Albrecht Classen**

**Abstract**

In the late Middle Ages, aristocratic and urban circles competed against each other for esteem, legitimacy, authority, and fame. Family chronicles gained significant importance in that process, but we can also identify a definite discourse on dynastic interests in historiographical terms in contemporary literature. This study illuminates in three cases how individual authors conceived of the notion of dynasty and traced the rise and/or fall of their protagonists. Even in the case of an utter demise, the topic itself, the emergence and development of a dynasty, appealed to the wider readership, as reflected in some of the major late medieval German prose narratives and novels. The concept of a mythical origin of the family was particularly attractive, but also the miraculous rise from a low social status to the rank of a king, unheard of in reality, of course.

**Keywords:** Late medieval dynasties, Early modern novels, Elisabeth von Nassau-Saarbrücken, Thüring von Ringoltingen, Melusine, Fortunatus.