

M.EP.02b/05b Hauptseminar: The Cosmic Conflict in Old English Literature

Term:	Summer 2015	Instructor:	Dr P. S. Langeslag
Time:	Thu 10–12	Office:	SEP 2.306
Room:	SEP 0.244 (Medienraum)	Phone:	0551/3919706
Credits:	6 (for 2b: incl. lecture)	Office hours:	Wed 2–3
Prerequisites:	for 2b: none; for 5b: 2b	E-mail:	planges@gwdg.de

Course Description

Apocalyptic narratives were not invented on a Hollywood soundstage. In medieval Catholic theology, the world was created with its destruction in mind, as the final cause of human existence lay beyond the visible universe. Life on earth was like the disheartening second-last round in the perfectly choreographed boxing match of salvation history, and human history could only properly be understood through that teleological lens.

Accordingly, Old English writings are full of references to the world's creation, destruction, and other divine interventions in the epic drama that gave meaning to the human condition. Lucifer's rebellion, Christ's intercession, Judgement Day, heaven, and hell were given ample airtime in poetry, homilies, scribbles, visions, and dialogues. In this seminar, we will study the theological framework of medieval cosmology and salvation history as well as the main divine interventions it entailed. To this end, we will read Old English accounts of the major clashes between the camps of God and Satan from the fall of the angels to the final reckoning, and the divine vision that was discerned behind it all. Texts will include *Ælfric's De sex etatibus huius seculi*; *Christ and Satan*; *Genesis A* and *B*; *Judgement Day I*; and *Soul and Body I*.

Please note: this course requires extensive weekly reading in Old English! Newly arrived students with insufficient background in Old English language may substitute B.EP.204 Introduction to Medieval English Literature and Culture to fulfil the requirements of this module.

Aims

Students will improve their knowledge of and skills in

- Old English reading comprehension;
- Medieval theology and cosmology.

Assessment

Students in the Basismodul have a choice of assessment: one final exam or one 5,000-word term paper. Students in the Aufbaumodul will write a 7,500-word term paper. The exam runs 90 minutes and includes open questions from the lecture series (33% of assessment) as well as seminar material involving translation, commentary, and open questions on theology, narrative, culture, and language.

Required Texts and Resources

Texts for this course will be made available on StudIP. Readings marked "cf." in the schedule below are from the canonical Bible, widely available; for our purposes, any translation will do, though Douay-Rheims is preferable because it follows the Latin Vulgate. Handouts, lecture slides, and lists of key concepts will be made available at studium.langeslag.org/cc15, so bookmark this site right away.

Schedule

wk	date	topic	reading	in the original
1	16 Apr	The Great Struggle		
2	23 Apr	The Meaning of History	<i>Ælfric, De sex etatibus huius seculi</i> (Tristram)	all
3	30 Apr	The Deepest Fall	<i>Christ and Satan</i> ll. 1–364 (Finnegan/Bradley–Gutenberg); <i>Genesis A–B</i> ll. 1–102, 246–337 (Anlezark)	<i>CaS</i> 1–
4	7 May	Creation Perverted	<i>Genesis B</i> ll. 338–851 (Anlezark); cf. Gn 1–3	<i>GenB</i> 409–452
5	14 May	ASCENSION DAY — NO CLASS	<i>Genesis A</i> ll. 1248–76 (Anlezark); <i>Beowulf</i> ll. 1258–78 (Swanton); cf. Gn 6–9	all
6	21 May	Gods and Giants	<i>Genesis A</i> ll. 1229–1554 (Anlezark); <i>Beowulf</i> ll. 53–146, 1251–1622 (Swanton); cf. Gn 6–9	<i>GenA</i> 1248–76; <i>Beo</i> 64–114, 1258–78
7	28 May	READING WEEK — NO CLASS	<i>Christ and Satan</i> ll. 365–440 (Finnegan/Bradley)	<i>CaS</i> 383–440
8	4 June	The Proxy Wars	<i>Ælfric on Job</i> ll. 1–86+ (Godden); cf. <i>Iob</i>	<i>Job</i> ll. 1–86+
9	11 June	Battleground Earth	<i>Christ and Satan</i> ll. 665–729 (Finnegan/Bradley); review <i>The Dream of the Rood</i> (Pope); cf. Mt 4, 27; Mc 1, 15; Lc 4, 23; Io 19	all
10	18 June	Hell Defeated	<i>The Gospel of Nicodemus</i> chs. 18–26 (Cross); <i>Christ and Satan</i> ll. 365–511 (Finnegan/Bradley)	<i>CaS</i> 365–511
11	25 June	Signs of the End	<i>The Fifteen Days Before Judgement</i> (Warner); <i>Muspilli</i> (Bell/Braune); <i>Vǫluspá</i> (Orchard); cf. <i>Apc</i> 4–11	<i>Fifteen Days</i>
12	2 July	Judgement Day	<i>Judgement Day I</i> (Krapp & Dobbie); cf. <i>Apc</i> 12–20	all
13	9 July	Repent!	<i>Soul and Body I</i> (Krapp/Moffat); <i>Judgement Day II</i> (Caie); cf. <i>Apc</i> 12–20	<i>Soul</i>
14	16 July	Death, Where Is Thy Sting?	<i>Christ and Satan</i> ll. 512–664; cf. Mt 28; Mc 16; Lc 24; Io 20–21; Apc 21–22	all
15	23 July	EXAM: KWZ 0.602 @ 10:15–11:45		

References and Further Reading

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