

## Prelims 2 Introductory lecture: Conquest & Transformation

### 1. God : from triumph to suffering

Ongyrede hine **þa geong hæleð** (**þæt wæs God ælmihtig**),  
**strang ond stiðmod**; gestah he on gealgan heanne,  
modig on manigra gesyhðe, þa he wolde mancyn lisan.

**Se Sunu wæs sigorfæst on þam siðfate,**  
**mihtig ond spedig**, þa he mid manigeo com,  
gasta weorode, on Godes rice,  
Anwealda ælmihtig, englum to blisse  
ond eallum ðam halgum þam þe on heofonum ær  
wunedon on wuldre, þa heora Wealdend cwom,  
ælmihtig God, þær his eðel wæs.

*The Dream of the Rood* (?C8th), lines 39-41, 150-6.

“Moder, thou rewe al of thy bern;  
Thou wosshe awai the bloody tern.  
Hit doth me worse then my ded.”

**“Sone, hou may Y teres werne?  
Y se the bloody stremes erne  
From thin herte to my fet.”**

“Moder, nou Y may the seye,  
Betere is that Ich one deye  
Then al monkunde to helle go.”

**“Sone, Y se thi bodi byswongen,  
Fet ant honden thourhout stongen —  
No wonder thah me be wo.”**

“Moder, now Y shal the telle  
Yef Y ne deye, thou gost to helle;  
**Y thole ded for thine sake.”**

“Mother, you suffer much for your child; wash away your bloody tears. It pains me worse than my death.” **“Son, how may I hold back tears? I see the bloody streams flow from your heart to my feet.”** “Mother, now I may explain to you, it’s better that I die one day than for all mankind to go to hell.” **“Son, I see your body tormented, feet and hands pierced through — it’s no wonder I’m distraught.”** “Mother, now I will tell you that if I don’t die, you’ll go to hell; I suffer death for your sake.”  
‘Stond wel, moder, under rode’ (c.1250), lines 19-33.

### 2. The fighting man : from pagan warrior to Christian sacrifice to chivalric knight and celebrated lord

Béowulf mapelode bearn Ecgbéowes:

“Ne sorga, snotor guma· sélre bið aégþwaém  
þæt hé his fréond wrece þonne hé fela murne·  
úre aégþwylc sceal ende gebídan  
worolde lífes: **wyrce sé þe móte  
dómes aér déaþe**· þæt bið drihtguman,  
unlifendum æfter sélest.”

Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow: ‘Do not sorrow, venerable man: it is better for everyone that he avenge his friend rather than mourn too much. Each one of us must await the end of this worldly life, and **let him who may gain glory before death**: that is best for the unliving warrior afterwards.’

*Beowulf* (?c.750), 1383-9

“Ic gepance þe, ðeoda Waldend,  
ealra þæra wynna þe ic on worulde gebad.  
Nu ic ah, milde Metod, mæste þearfe  
þæt þu minum gaste godes geunne,  
þæt min sawul to ðe siððian mote,  
on þin geweald, þeoden engla,  
mid friþe ferian. **Ic eom frymði to þe  
þæt hi helsceaðan hynan ne moton.**  
**Ða hine heowon hæðene scealcas...**

“I thank you, Lord of nations, for all the joys which I have received on earth. Now I have, kind Creator, the greatest need that you might grant favour to my spirit, so that my soul may travel to you, ruler of angels, to go in peace into your power. **I entreat you to ensure that the hellish enemy may not seize it.** Then the heathen warriors cut him down...

*The Battle of Maldon* (c.1000), lines 173-81

He confesses his sins and prays for God’s pardon [*Cleimet sa culpe, si priet Deu mercit*]: “True Father, who never lied... protect my soul from all perils for the sins that I have committed in my lifetime!” He offers his right gauntlet to God; Saint Gabriel took it from his hand. ... God sends his angel Cherubin and Saint Michael of the Sea of Peril; together with them comes Saint Gabriel. **They carry the count’s soul to paradise** [*L’anme del cunte portent en pareis*].

*The Song of Roland* (c.1100), ed./trans. Brault, 2383-96

Now hear if you will of **the great joy and the great ceremony, the nobility and the magnificence** that were displayed at the court. Before the hour of terce had sounded, King Arthur had dubbed four hundred knights and more, all sons

of counts and kings; he gave each of them three horses and two pairs of mantles, to improve the appearance of his court. The king was very powerful and generous ... On a tapestry in the middle of the courtyard there were thirty hogsheads of white sterlings ... There everyone helped themselves; each person carried off that night as much as he wished...

*Erec and Enide* (c.1175), in Chrétien, *Arthurian Romances*, 118-19

On that day at Windsor Alexander experienced all the joy and happiness he could want. His honours and joys were threefold: one was in capturing the castle; another was the reward promised him by King Arthur for ending the hostilities: the finest kingdom in Wales, of which he was made king that day in Arthur's halls; but the greatest joy was the third: that his sweetheart was queen of the chessboard where he was king. ... So Cligés was born, in whose memory this story was composed in writing. [*Nez est Cligés, an cui mimoire / Fu mise an escrit ceste estoire.*]

*Cliges* (c.1180), in Chrétien, *Arthurian Romances*, 151

**It was a king bi are-dawes  
That in his time were gode lawes  
He dede maken an ful wel holden...**

Panne was Engeland at hayse –  
Michel was svich a king to preyse  
Pat held so Engeland in grith! ...  
Havelok bilefte wit joye and gamen  
In Engeland and was ther-inne  
Sixti winter king with winne ...  
He geten children hem bitwene  
Sones and doughtres rith fivetene,  
Hwar-of the sones were kinges alle,  
So wolde God it sholde bifalle ...

**There was a king in the olden days, whose time saw excellent laws that he  
passed and thoroughly held and enforced ...** Then England was trouble-free –  
greatly should such a king be praised, who so held England in peace! ...  
Havelok remained in England amid joy and celebration, and was its king for  
sixty brilliant winters ... They had children between them, easily fifteen sons  
and daughters, of whom all the sons became kings, as God willed it...

*Havelok the Dane* (c.1290), 27-61; 2963-81

... 'Nú ic suna mínum syllan wolde  
gúðgewaédu þaér mé gifeðe swá  
aénig yrfeward æfter wurde  
líce gelenge· ic ðás léode héold  
fiftig wintra...'

Now I would have wanted to give this  
war-gear to my son, if I had been  
granted any heir to my body, living  
after me. I ruled this land for fifty  
winters ...  
*Beowulf*, 2730-4

### 3. Interiority and selfhood : from uncertain penance to psychological confession

Nu bið ælc mann gefullod on naman þære halgan þrynnysse. and **he ne mot na beon eft gefullod.** þæt ne sy  
forsewen þære halgan ðrynnysse to-clypung. ac **seo soðe behreowsung and dædbot mid geswicennyssum yfeles** us  
apwyhð eft fram his synnum. þe we æfter urum fulluhte gefremedon. *Ælfric, Lives of Saints* (c.995), l. 270-2

(Now every man is baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, and **he cannot be baptized a second time**, so that the  
invocation of the Holy Trinity is not brought into contempt; but **true contrition and penance, with abstention from  
evil**, washes us again from the sins which we have committed after our baptism.)

Gýf læwede man oðerne slihð · buton gilte · fæste vii · gear. on hlafe & on wætere. & þa .iiii · swa his scrift him tæce ·  
& æfter þara ·vii· geara bote · **æfre geornlice he reowsige · his misdæda. be þam dæle þe he mæge. forðam hit is  
uncuð · hu andfænge his bót wære mid gode ·**

*Old English Penitential Handbook*

(If a lay person slays another without fault, he is to fast 7 years on bread and water and then 4 years as his confessor  
instructs him, and after those 7 years of repentance, he is **ever to repent his misdeeds diligently, to the extent that  
he may; for it is unknown how acceptable his penance was to God.**)

What is assigned to the penitent according to the canons in the way of fasting, mortification of the flesh, distribution  
of alms, and assiduous prayer are the fruits of true penance which we demand from the penitent. **There is no other  
way of knowing whether he is a true penitent or not** [*Non enim aliter potest cognosci, verusne esset penitens  
necne*].  
Bonizo of Sutri (c.1045-95)

The time when we consent to what is unlawful is in fact when **we in no way draw back** [*nequaquam retrahimus*] from  
its accomplishment and are inwardly ready, if given the chance, to do it. Anyone who is found in this disposition  
incurs the fullness of guilt; the addition of the performance of the deed adds nothing to increase the sin.

Peter Abelard, *Scito te ipsum: Know Yourself* (c.1135), 14-15.

**Schrift schal beo wreiful, bitter mid sorhe, ihal, naket, ofte imaket, hihful, eadmod, scheomeful, dredful ant  
hopeful, wis, soð, ant willes, ahne ant studeuest, bipoht biuore longe.** ... 3ef þu heatest ti sunne, hwi spekest tu  
menskeliche prof? **Hwi hudest tu his fulðe?** Spec hit scheome schendfulliche ant tuk hit al to wundre, als wa as þu

wel wult schende þen schucke. ‘Sire,’ ha seið, þe wummon, ‘Ich habbe ihaued leofmon’, oðer ‘Ich habbe ibeon’, ha seið, ‘fol of me seoluen’. Þis nis nawt naket schrift. Biclute þu hit nawt. **Do awei þe totagges! Vnwrih þe ant sei, ‘Sire, Godes are! Ich am a ful stod-meare, a stinkinde hore!’** 3ef þi fa a ful nome ant cleope þi sunne fule.

*Ancrene Wisse* (c.1225), Part 5: 115, 120

**(Confession must be accusatory, bitter with sorrow, whole, naked, made often and quickly, humble, full of shame, fearful and hopeful, wise, truthful, and willing, our own, determined, long-considered beforehand. ... If you hate your sin, why do you speak fairly of it? Why do you hide its filth?** Speak about its shame contemptuously and abuse it beyond measure, as though you truly wanted to destroy the devil. ‘Sir,’ she says, the woman, ‘I have had a lover’; or ‘I have made’, she says, ‘a fool of myself’. This is not naked confession. Do not conceal it. **Get rid of the equivocations! Expose yourself and say, ‘Sir, for God’s mercy! I am a foul breed-mare, a stinking whore!’** Give your enemy a foul name, and call your sin foul.)

If þou do þe good and speke þe good, men supposeth þat þou louest God. Forþi loke wel þat þi þoght be in God, or els þou dampnest þi self and deceyuest þo men. **No thyng þat I do withouten proueth þat I loue God, for a wikked man myght do as myche penaunce in body, als myche wake and fast as I do.** How may I þan wene þat I loue, or hold me better þan anoper, for þat þat euery man may do? Certes my hert, whether hit loue my God or nat, wot no man bot God. **Than can non tel me if I loue God, for noght þat þat may se me do. Wherfor loue is in þe wil verraili, nat in werke bot as signe of loue.**

Richard Rolle, *The Form of Living* (1340s), 20.

#### 4. Fiction and the love-plot: a new development

*Pur amistié e pur amies / Funt chevaliers chevaleries* : It’s for love and for lovers that knights do knightly deeds

Wace, *Roman de Brut* (c.1155), lines 10771-2

Guigemar’s quest is to find the lady ‘Who will suffer such great pain and such sorrow for your love that no woman ever suffered so much; and you will do as much for her, so that all those who love, or have ever loved, or will love in the future, will be astonished.’

Marie de France, *Guigemar* (1180s), lines 115-21

*De Tristram e de la reïne,  
De lur amur que tant fu fine,  
Dunt il eurent meinte dolur,  
Puis en mururent en un jur.*

Of Tristan and of the queen,  
of their love which was so pure,  
from which they suffered so much pain,  
for which they eventually died on the same day.

Marie de France, *Chevrefoil*, lines 7-10

**She gave him her love and her body [S’amur e sun cors li otreie]. Now Lanval is on the right track! She gave to him one more gift: there was nothing he could want that he would not have as he desired; however lavishly he gave or spent, she would find enough for him.** Lanval is very well set up: for the more richly he spends, the more gold and silver he will have. ... [*The lady comes to court to prove the truth of his claim that she is more beautiful than the queen:*] The lady entered the palace, where no one so beautiful had ever been before. She dismounted before the king, so that all could clearly see her. She let her cloak fall to the ground, so that they could see her better.

Marie de France, *Lanval*, lines 133-42, 601-6

At Nantes in Brittany there lived a lady who was much praised for beauty and learning, and for her perfect manners. Every knight in the land with any pretention to valour, having seen her just once, would fall in love with her and beg for her favour. ... There were four particular barons in Brittany... all very handsome, and brave and valiant knights, generous, courtly and extravagant. ... **These four loved the lady, and took pains to do noble deeds, each one doing everything he could to win her and have her love.** Each one begged to have her for himself, and took great pains about it; each one thought he could prove himself to be better than the others. **The lady was extremely sensible: she took her time and carefully considered them, in order to decide which one would be the best to love. But they were all so valiant that she could not choose which was best....** They were each ignorant of the others, but no one could distinguish between them.

Marie de France, *Chaitivel*, lines 9-16, 33-60

**A leafdi wes mid hire fan biset al abuten**, hire lond al destruet, ant heo al poure inwið an eorðene castel. **A mihti kinges luue wes þah biturnd upon hire swa unimete swiðe** þet he for wohlech sende hire his sonden, an efter oðer, ofte somet monie; sende hire beawbelez baðe feole ant feire, sucurs of liueneð, help of his hehe hird to halden hire

castel. **Heo underfeng al as on unrecheles, ant swa wes heard iheortet þet hire luue ne mahte he neauer beo þe nerre.**

*Ancrene Wisse, Part 7: 146-7*

(A lady was set upon on all sides by her enemies, her land all destroyed, and she herself impoverished inside an earthen castle. A mighty king's love was nevertheless so excessively set upon her that he sent messengers to court her, one after another, often many together; he sent her many gorgeous gifts, help with provisions, the aid of his noble army to defend her castle. She received it all as one who cared nothing for it, and was so hard-hearted that he could never come nearer to her love.)

**‘þi luue,’ he seið, ‘oðer hit is forte 3eouen allunge, oðer hit is to sullen, oðer hit is to reauin ant to neomen wið strengðe. 3ef hit is forte 3eouen, hwer maht tu biteon hit betere þen upo me? Nam Ich þinge feherest? Nam Ich kinge richest? Nam Ich hest icunnet? Nam Ich weolie wisest? Nam Ich monne hendest? Nam Ich þinge freoest? ... 3ef þi luue nis nawt to 3eouene, ah wult þet me bugge hire – buggen hire? Hu? Oðer wið oðer luue oðer wið sumhwæt elles. Me suleð wel luue for luue; ant swa me ah to sulle luue, ant for na þing elles. 3ef þin is swa to sullen, Ich habbe iboht hire wið luue ouer alle oþre ... Sete feor o þi luue; þu ne schalt seggen se muchel þet Ich nule 3eoue mare. ... 3ef þu art se swiðe anewil, ant swa ut of þi wit þet tu, þurh nawt to leosen, forsakest swuch bi3ete, wið alles cunnes selhðe, lo! Ich halde her heatel sweord upo þin heued to dealen lif ant sawle, ant bisenchen ham ba into þe fur of helle, to beon þer deofles hore schentfulliche ant sorhfulliche world abuten ende.’** (149-50)

**(‘Your love,’ he says, ‘is either wholly to be given, or it is for sale, or it is to be seized and taken by force. If it is to be given, where can you bestow it better than upon me? Am I not the most beautiful? Am I not the richest king? Am I not the highest born? Am I not the wisest man? Am I not the most courtly? Am I not the most generous? ... If your love is not to be given, but you want me to buy it – buy it? How? Either with other love, or with something else. One can well exchange love for love, and so one ought to sell love, and not for anything else. If yours is thus for sale, I have bought it with a love which surpasses all others ... Set a price on your love; you cannot say so much that I will not give more. ... If you are so stubborn, and so out of your mind that even with nothing to lose, you forsake such benefits, with all kinds of happiness, then see: I hold here a cruel sword over your head to separate body and soul, and send both down into the fires of hell, to be the devil’s whore in disgrace and sorrow for eternity.’)**

#### **Coda. Love and the individual: a matter for tragedy**

‘What is the point of sustaining a love that can never bring me any reward? So much pain, so much suffering I’ve had for her love; I must be able to draw back from it.’

*Thomas, Tristan (c.1170), lines 94-8*

Tristan thought to abandon Yseut, and cut out the love from his heart... by marrying the other Yseut. But if the first Yseut had never been, he would never have loved the other one: because he had so loved Yseut, he longed to love this new Yseut. But ... if he could have had the queen, he would not have loved Yseut the maiden. lines 358-71

**A strange kind of love bound these four together [Entre aus quatre ot estrange amor]:** each of them suffered anguish and sorrow; one and all they lived with sadness, and none had any delight from any other. ... I do not know which of the four I should say experienced the greatest anguish. lines 1012-86

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