

PHILOLOGY 5/6: Middle English Literature

Studiejaar/semester: 2011-12, 1e semester, herhaald in 2e semester
Docent: Drs. N.H.G.E. Veldhoen

PHILOLOGY 5/6: Middle English Literature

2011-12 Autumn Term, repeated in Spring Term

The course is concerned with texts in English from 1100 to 1500 AD from the various Middle English dialect areas, and covers a wide variety of genres: romance, religious instruction, fable, satire, fabliau, lyrical poetry, parody, allegory, myth and drama. We will read whole texts where possible, fragments where unavoidable, very little in translation. Every week 50 to 100 lines are "translated" carefully, and some cultural or literary background is studied. Each tutorial will consist of a close translation of a text-fragment (specified in the programme), discussion of the text as a whole and discussion of relevant background information. Leading points of consideration are suggested in the programme to focus your attention.

This course is not supported by Blackboard.

Assessment will be based on two essays written during the course, in which your familiarity with the background information must also be evident (* will be tested) and a written examination at the end consisting (only) of an "unseen" translation. The two essays and the exam-translation each contribute for 1/3 to the final course-mark. Topics for the essays will be suggested in advance.

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ABBREVIATIONS used in the programme:

- CEMEL Companion to Early Middle English Literature, Second, enlarged edition or Third edition, eds. N.H.G.E. Veldhoen & H. Aertsen, V.U. University Press, 1995 or 2009
- NA The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 8th edition, Volume I or Volume A, 2006
- TEAMS Please download from the Internet the text mentioned -- with Introduction and Notes/Commentary -- (free of charge) from: <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/Camelot/teams/tmsmenu.htm> Then click on TEAMS; go to Online Texts (on the left); go to View the Texts; click on initial letter of the title of the text (bottom page); select the text (plus Introduction, Notes, Commentary). /tmsmenu.htm
- Trehearne Old and Middle English c. 890-c.1400: An Anthology, Second edition, ed. Elaine Trehearne, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. The Third edition of 2010 can also be used, but the page-numbers are different.

PROGRAMME

It is taken for granted that you always study the headnotes for each text in TEAMS, Treharne, NA. Treharne, NA, TEAMS and CEMEL also contain bibliographical suggestions (for your essays).

- Week 1 Floris and Blancheflour I
13-09 Read Floris and Blancheflour, ll. 1-620 (TEAMS)
Translate ll. 261-338
Study Henk Aertsen, "Havelok the Dane: A Non-Courtly Romance", **only** (CEMEL) 1995: pp. 29-32 + 37-39/ 2009: pp. 31-34 + 39-41;
Chronological Table (handout).
Consider Why is nationalism a doubtful concept in the Middle Ages?
How does an "oriental" tale like Floris and Blancheflour connect with English history of the 13th century?
- Week 2 Floris and Blancheflour II
20-09 Read Floris and Blancheflour, ll. 621-1227 (TEAMS)
Translate ll. 621-689
Study N.H.G.E. Veldhoen, "Floris and Blancheflour: To Indulge the Fancy and to Hear of Love" (CEMEL)
Consider The nature of evil; the representation of evil as "other".
How is the love in Floris and Blancheflour Courtly Love?
How is the story of Fl&Bl "generalized" by symbolism?
- Week 3 Ancrene Wisse
27-09 Read Ancrene Wisse, Book 7: On Love (Treharne, pp. 318-323)
Translate ll. 247-270
Study Johan Kerling, "The Ancrene Wisse" (CEMEL)
Consider Parable, allegory. The literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical levels. The nature of religious instruction: teaching faith and conduct.
- Week 4 The Fox and the Wolf
04-10 Read The Fox and the Wolf, ll. 1-295 (Treharne, pp. 332-337)
Translate ll. 181-238
Study The Bestiary: "The Whale", ll. 1-56 (Treharne, pp. 350-351); Wim Tigges, "The Fox and the Wolf: A Study in Medieval Irony" (CEMEL)
Consider Use of nature as allegory. Clarification of Virtues and vices as sub-human and super-human. Does The Fox and the Wolf have any of the clear morality of the Fable? Or of the Bestiary? Is the burlesque of Christian ceremonies part of the satire against the friars?
- Week 5 Lyrical Poetry
11-10 Read Lyrical poems in Treharne: Ubi Sunt (pp. 328-330);
When the Turf is thy Tower (p. 408); Alysoun (p. 450);
Blow, Northerne Wynd (pp. 455-57).
Middle English Lyrics in NA: Western Wind (p. 437);
Sunset on Calvary (p. 369); I sing of a Maiden (pp. 369-70);
Adam Lay Bound (p. 370); Chaucer lyrics in NA: Troilus's Song (p. 316); Truth (p. 317); Complaint to his purse (p. 318).
Translate "Spring" (Treharne, p. 451)
Study Alasdair A. MacDonald, "The Middle English Lyrics: An Introduction" (CEMEL)
Consider Feudal relations in love and religion. How "subjective" are these poems compared to, for instance, Wordsworth's poetry? What are the conventional elements in each poem? How are "catalogues" used to "make love"? How courtly are the love-poems? Is there a significant difference between the conventions of secular and of religious poetry?

Week 6 Dame Sirip
 18-10 Read Dame Sirip, ll. 1-450 (Treharne, pp. 338-348)
 Translate ll. 25-102
 Study Keith Busby, "Dame Sirip and De Clerico et Puella" (CEMEL)
 Consider Urban culture. Fabliau: from exemplum to comic tale.
 Is there moral instruction in this tale? Is this a parody
 of romance? Or of the power of the word? Is the anti-
 feminist element essential?

25-10 **READING WEEK/Studieweek**

HAND IN ESSAY I 01-11

Week 7 Sir Orfeo
 01-11 Read Sir Orfeo, ll. 1-604 (Treharne, pp. 436-448)
 Translate ll. 405-476
 Study From "King Alfred's Translation of Boethius: Orpheus and
 Eurydice" (Treharne, pp. 17-19);
 Erik Kooper, "The Twofold Harmony of the Middle English Sir
 Orfeo" (CEMEL);
 Bart Veldhoen, "Psychology and the Middle English Romances",
 pp. 115-123 (handout).
 Consider Retelling classical tales. How does the classical Underworld
 differ from the Celtic Otherworld, and either from the
 Christian Heaven and Hell? In the transformation of tragedy
 to romance, how are the rituals different? What is the role
 of rash promises? Are these different from the heroic
 boasts in the epics? Why do we assume that the harping
 in Sir Orfeo is symbolic? Does the structure of the narrative
 delimit the significance?

Week 8 The Land of Cokaygne
 08-11 Read The Land of Cockayne, ll. 1-190 (Treharne, pp. 431-435)
 Translate ll. 113-176
 Study Wim Tigges, "The Land of Cockayne: Sophisticated Myrth"
 (CEMEL)
 Consider Bearing in mind that the cloister was commonly nicknamed
 "paradis" by monks, is The Land of Cockayne a vision of
 Paradise? Does the fact that this paradise is in the West
 rather than in the East (where the Judaeo-Christian one is)
 suggest an origin in Celtic fertility cults? Is Cockayne
 a satire (and therefore realistic) or a parody of idealism?

Week 9 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight I
 15-11 Read Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, the whole text in trans-
 lation (NA, pp. 160-213)
 Translate LL. 160-106 (Treharne, pp. 630-631)
 Consider How are ideals given shape? How is the "arming of the hero"
 (ll. 566-669) particularly courtly? How do the virtues of
 the Pentangle specify the courtly ideals? Why is the dis-
 tinction made between what Sir Gawain has on the outside
 of his shield and on the inside? Why is the prominent place
 of the games courtly? The structure of the romance seems
 very important: what does the double opening (and ending)
 -- of Troy and Christmas/New Year -- suggest? Or the fact
 that the midpoint l. 1263 makes Lady B. and Mary central?

- Week 10 Sir Gawain and the Green Knight II
 22-11 Read See "Read" last week
 Translate ll. 2309-2388 (Treharne, pp. 645-647)
 Study Bart Veldhoen, "Psychology and the Middle English Romances", pp. 101-115 (handout)
 Consider In order to discover what the nature of the test is to which King Arthur's court is submitted: What do the contrasts between courts and wildernesses suggest? Or the description of the seasons (ll. 500-533)? And the connection with the New Year? And the nature of the opponent? And the Beheading Game? And the girdle? And the confessions? Symbolism as parabolic drift rather than direct signifier.
- Week 11 William Langland, Piers the Ploughman
 29-11 Read William Langland, Piers Plowman, "Prologue", ll. 1-230 (Treharne, pp. 547-553)
 Translate ll. 123-208
 Study NA, pp. 331-333;
 William Langland, from The Vision of Piers Plowman, Passus 18 (NA, pp. 357-367)
 Consider How is Langland's allegory different from The Fox and the Wolf? What different allegorical techniques are used in Langland's Prologue and Passus 18? Langland's Prologue and the rise of the middle class and peasantry in the late fourteenth century. Does allegory slip easily into satire because it is based on doctrine?
- Week 12 The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle
 06-12 Read The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle, ll. 1-852 (TEAMS)
 Translate ll. 270-353
 Study Thomas Hahn's Introduction to The Wedding (TEAMS)
 Consider Vassalage, justice, justification of landed property, feudal monarchy, idealization of feudal bonds. King and knight, king and nation, lady and land. Note that courtly romances find the antagonists in aristocratic circles ("others" on their own level), whereas popular romances find antagonists among outsiders to society or traitors. How is The Wedding popular compared to Sir Gawain and the Green Knight or Sir Orfeo?
- Week 13 The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play
 13-12 Read The Second Shepherds' Play, ll. 1-1087 (NA, pp. 408-435)
 Translate ll. 274-338
 Study "Mystery Plays" and "The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play" (NA, pp. 406-408)
 Consider How does singing mark the episodes/structure of the play? Role of anachronisms. How is Mak differentiated from the other shepherds?
 Not didactic, but celebration. From winter misery and feudal misery to joy; from old dispensation to new. Connection of Mak episode to the whole?
 If the Gill-character player could double as Mary, which character could the Mak-player double as?

HAND IN ESSAY II 21-12 to tutor's pigeonhole.

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