

the fabric of the poem through its vocabulary, names, motifs, and turns of phrase. Why might the hand be of such interest to these heroic narratives, and how might the hand's emblematic centrality inform meditations on heroism – its qualities, weaknesses, duties and desires?

Selected Reading

R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles, eds., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th ed. University of Toronto Press, 2008

Fred C. Robinson, 'God, Death and Loyalty in The Battle of Maldon', in J. R. R. Tolkien, *Scholar and Storyteller*, ed. Mary Salu, Cornell University Press, 1979

Donald Scragg, ed., *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, Blackwell, 1991.

Ms Shu-han Luo received an M.St. degree in Medieval English Literature from Oxford University in 2011 following a B.A. from Yale in 2009. Her research interests include manuscripts and poetry of all periods, with particular emphasis on medieval and early modern verse.

Barry Livingstone writes: Why does a book about a British king have a French title? Why did a man in prison for theft, rape and murder choose to write about chivalry? Does Malory's version of the Arthurian legend celebrate the knightly code or condemn it? Addressing these issues, my paper argues that the unity of *Le Morte D'arthur* lies in its powerful themes: a doomed kingdom, divided loyalties, and the conflict of spiritual and martial values in defining true heroism.

Selected Reading

Eugène Vinaver (ed), *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, Oxford, 1954

— *Malory*, Oxford, 1970

Christina Hardyment, *Malory: The Life and Times of King Arthur's Chronicler*, London, 2005.

Barry Livingstone grew up in Africa, before moving to Britain for postgraduate work as a Commonwealth Scholar. An English teacher until his retirement, he now divides his time between Sussex and Normandy. He is currently working on a fantasy trilogy.

Caleb Woodbridge writes: *The Once and Future King*, a retelling of Malory, and *The Lord of the Rings*, with its quest, heroes and returning king, both draw on and rewrite Arthurian literature in different ways. But these texts were written in the shadow of the two World Wars and modern totalitarianism. How does this affect their representations of heroism? How do Arthur and Aragorn compare as kings and heroes, and what do they reveal about the religious and philosophical outlooks embedded in these texts?

Selected Reading

Margery Hourihan, *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature* Routledge, 1997

Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle Earth: How J. R. R. Tolkien created a new mythology*, 3rd revised edn., Harper Collins, 2005

Carl Phelpstead, *Tolkien and Wales: Language, Literature and Identity*, University of Wales Press, 2011.

Caleb Woodbridge recently completed his English Literature MA at Cardiff University. His MA thesis was titled 'Lord of the Kings: King Arthur, Medievalism and Religion in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*'.

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DAY CONFERENCE

Qualities of Heroism

Saturday 5 November 2011

The Seminar Room
Corpus Christi College
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Oxford

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Programme

- 10.00 Arrivals and coffee
- 10.30 Introductions

- 10.45 **Sophie Rudland**
Redeeming David Hartley's Christian Hero
- 11.20 **Elisabeth Gilbert**
Tropes of heroism in John Kennedy Toole's A Confederacy of Dunces
- 11.55 **Philip Gorski**
Heroism, Asceticism, and Christianity: A Comparison of Tolstoy's Fr Sergius and Dostoyevsky's Monk Ferapont

- 12.30 Lunch

- 13.20 **Shu-han Luo**
Heroism and hands: the metonymic representation of the heroic in Beowulf and The Battle of Maldon
- 13.55 **Barry Livingstone**
Concepts of Chivalry in Malory's Morte D'Arthur
- 14.30 **Caleb Woodbridge**
Quests, Kings and Hobbits: Heroism in T H White's The Once and Future King and J R R Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings
- 15.15 Tea
Work in progress
Plans
Prayer
- 16.00 Close

Sophie Rudland writes: Blake's prophetic poem *Milton* is often described as a triumphant redemption narrative of his favourite poet, John Milton. But does Satan take the more central role in this poem, and if so, what does this mean for its understanding of heroism? If we view *Milton* in terms of Blake's response to David Hartley's religio-scientific text, *Observations on Man* (1749), we see a complete rethinking of Hartley's concepts of perfection, self-annihilation, and his Christian message in general; so what qualities make the Christian heroic, and where is Jesus in all of this anyway?

Selected Reading

William Blake, *Milton*, ed. Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger R. Easson, 1979
 Richard C. Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature*, State University of New York Press, 1999
 Anne Kostelanetz Mellor, *Blake's Human Form Divine* (Berkeley etc.), London, University of California Press, 1974
 Peter A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Sophie Rudland is currently a doctoral student at the University of Warwick. Her research looks at David Hartley's religio-scientific text *Observations on Man* (1749), and how it impacts on the Christian philosophy of Romantic period writers.

Elisabeth Gilbert writes: Are you a hero only if society acknowledges you as such, or does it depend on your individual aims and actions? Ignatius Reilly, the protagonist of Pulitzer-Prize winning *A Confederacy of Dunces*, is described as a 'great woolly tanker' and 'bohemoth'. Yet the egocentric, obese, lazy and antisocial medievalist scholar knows it is his mission to save society. To emphasize the discrepancy between outer appearance and self-perception, author John Kennedy Toole mimics and mocks great heroes of the western world. But how do references to Abelard and Boethius, Dante and Conrad, Batman and Zorro combine to create a grotesque tableau of 1960s New Orleans and a world that can no longer deal with true heroes?

Selected Reading

John Kennedy Toole, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, 1980
 Elizabeth Bell, 'The Clash of World Views in John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*', *Southern Literary Journal* 21.1 (1988): 15-22
 Ray Browne, Marshall Fishwick, *The Hero in Transition*, Bowling Green, Ohio, 1983

Dr Elisabeth Gilbert is Senior Lecturer at the English Department of Cologne University, where she teaches modern English literature and essay writing. Her publications include works on Italian Renaissance poets and their international networks, as in *Luigi Alamanni – Politik und Poesie* (2005).

Philip Gorski writes: In Russian religious culture the ideal of the *podvig* is widely encountered. It may be defined as a great heroic deed or exploit, often ascetic in nature, undergone for Christ's sake. This paper will compare two representations of a *podvizhnik* in Russian literature: Tolstoy's Fr Sergius, and Monk Ferapont from Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. In addition, it will focus upon the narrative strategies that these two authors employ towards achieving their ideological and theological ends.

Philip Gorski is completing his research into 'Russian Literature, Holy Foolishness, and Orthodox Christianity' at the University of Nottingham. Recent publications include 'The Transfiguration, Politics and Orthodox Asceticism' in *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism*, eds. Peter Candler and Conor Cunningham, SCM Veritas 2010; 'The Uses and Abuses Of Prophecy: Five Russian Authors', *The Glass*, No. 19, Spring 2007.

Shu-han Luo writes: In *Maldon*, the symbolism of the hand reaches into the heroic ethos, first marked by Byrhtnoth commanding his warriors to 'think of hands and of courageous thoughts'. In *Beowulf* hands famously identify both hero and monster, and are furthermore intricately woven into

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