Old English and Literary Theory – Presentations

‘In Old English studies, the resistance to theory is played for the highest stakes, as both the theorists and their opponents take as their telos nothing less than the salvation of the field and the rescuing of literary artefacts from those who would destroy them’ (Seth Lerer).

In groups of three or four, present for 15-20 minutes on the uses of literary theory for the reading of Old English texts. Some questions you should consider during your presentation include:

- What are the broad outlines of the theory in question, and what aspects of it can be usefully applied to Old English texts?
- What are some examples of theoretical readings of Old English? How convincing are these readings?
- Can you apply your own knowledge of the literary theory you have studied this year to any of the Old English texts we have read? Give an example.

General


Psychoanalysis


Earl, James W. Thinking about Beowulf (Stanford, 1994).


Gender studies


Semiotics


Postcolonialism

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. The Postcolonial Middle Ages (Basingstoke, 2000).

Howe, Nicholas. ‘Anglo-Saxon England and the postcolonial void’ in Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages, ed Kabir and Williams (Cambridge, 2005), 25-47.

Lerer, Seth. “‘On fagne flor”: the postcolonial Beowulf, from Heorot to Heaney’ in Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages, ed Kabir and Williams (Cambridge, 2005), 77-102.