

Language Myths in the Middle Ages c. 400-1400

University of Oslo, 16–18 August 2017

Venue: Professorboligen

This is the inaugural conference of the project ‘Myths about Language in the Middle Ages’, which began on 1 August 2017. The project adopts a comparative perspective on the important but understudied topic of medieval myths about language. All across Europe, people told myths about their language in order to describe its place in the world. They did so to understand its origin and character, but also to argue that their native language was an equally worthy medium of literature as the dominant languages, such as Latin. These myths are rarely studied, but they were a crucial component in the development of the languages of modern Europe and beyond. Rita Copeland and Albert Russell Ascoli will serve as respondents during the conference.

Wednesday

- 10:00-10:30 Opening: Myths about Language in the Middle Ages
Mikael Males (University of Oslo)
- 10:30–11:00 The Reception of Inspired Greek in the West
Mikael Males (University of Oslo)
- 11:00–11:30 Break
- 11:30–12:15 Chair: Klaus Johan Myrvoll
The First Inventors of Language in Byzantine Thought
Eric Cullhed (Uppsala University)
- 12:15–14:00 Lunch
- 14:00–14:45 Chair: Jens Erland Braarvig
‘In the Armenian Idiom’: The Translation of the Bible and ‘Myths’ of Linguistic Identity
Sergio La Porta (Fresno State University)
- 14:45–15:30 The Dual Nature of Late Medieval Hebrew: Between Literary Vernacular and Mythical Language of Creation
Yossef Schwartz (Tel Aviv University)
- 15:30–16:00 Break
- 16:00–16:45 Chair: Amund Bjørnsnøs
The Wind of Babel: Mytho-Poetic Origins of Arabic Linguistic and Ethnic Difference in Medieval Spain
Michelle M Hamilton (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities)
- 19:00 Dinner

Thursday

Chair: Jan Erik Rekdal

10:00–10:45 *Divisio linguarum* and *origo litterarum* Narratives among the Slavs
Julia Verkholtantsev (University of Pennsylvania)

10:45–11:15 Break

11:15–12:00 National Self-Assertion and the Medieval Irish Myth of Language Origins
Michael Clarke (National University of Ireland, Galway)

12:00–14:00 Lunch

Chair: Jon Gunnar Jørgensen

14:00–14:45 Irish Glosses and Linguistic Mythography
Nicolai Engesland (University of Oslo)

14:45–15:30 The Anglo-Saxon Mission at Fulda and (Re)Creation of a Common Germanic Past
Anna Grotans (The Ohio State University)

15:30–16:00 Break

Chair: Karl G. Johansson

16:00–16:45 The Quest for the Primordial Script of the Gods in Early Modern Japan
Mark Teeuwen (University of Oslo)

No evening program

Friday

Chair: Unn Falkeid

10:00–10:45 Making Language
Albert Russell Ascoli (University of California, Berkeley)

10:45–11:15 Break

11:15–12:00 Biblical Myths, Original Narratives, and the Making of the *vulgare illustre* in Dante's
De vulgari eloquentia
Paolo Borsa (University of Milan)

12:00–14:00 Lunch

Chair: Elise Kleivane

14:00–14:45 Old Books and *bis boc*: Thirteenth-Century Anglophones Mythologizing Themselves
Tom O'Donnell (Fordham University)

- 14:45–15:30 The Language of the Gods and *norræna inusitata*
Jonas Wellendorf (University of California, Berkeley)
- 15:30–16:00 Break
- Chair: Karoline Kjesrud
- 16:00–16:45 The Runes Restored: Philology, Faith, and Myth in Johannes Bureus' Research on the
History of Writing
Matthew Norris (Lund University)
- 16:45–17:30 Conclusion
- 17:30 Reception at Professorboligen
- 19:00 Dinner