Set by Gale Owen-Crocker & Anke Bernau

Two Hours

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

MEDIEVAL WOMEN

27 January 2006

14.00 – 16.00

Answer TWO questions, one from each section.

Avoid duplication of material (including material used in coursework and in answering other parts of the examination). The use of dictionaries is prohibited.

Section A

Write a critical commentary on ONE of the following (40%).
Text of Old English poetry is provided in the original language as reference for candidates who wish to use it. Those who do not will not be penalised.

1. **Adapted from Parfitt and Brugmann, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery on Mill Hill, Deal, Kent* (1997)**

Grave 25B Female 20-25 years
Smoky quartz ball in silver-gilt sling – between knees
Silver-gilt perforated spoon or skimmer – between thighs
Strap-end – between knees
Strap-end – between ball and spoon
?Clasp – left hip
?Buckle plate – mid waist
Pair of gilded small square-headed brooches decorated with garnets – right waist
Copper alloy fitting with leather – right waist
Copper alloy buckle – mid waist
Bronze S-shaped brooch – right chest
Iron rod – right shoulder
Iron knife – beyond left waist
Shale ?spindle whorl – left waist
Iron rods with textile remains – left waist
Silver Kentish disc brooch – under chin
35 beads, amber and glass – neck and right shoulder
40 beads, glass and amber – lower right chest

2. **From Bede's *Ecclesiastical History***
' … When her bones were to be taken up from the grave so many years later, a pavilion was raised over it, and the whole community stood around it chanting, the brothers on one side, the sisters on the other. The abbess herself, with a few others, went in to take up and wash the bones, when we suddenly heard her cry out in a loud voice, "Glory to the name of the Lord!" Shortly afterwards they opened the door of the pavilion and called me in. There I saw the body of the holy virgin taken from its grave and laid on a bed as though asleep, and when they had uncovered her face, they showed me that the incision which I had made had healed. This astounded me, for in place of the open gaping wound with which she was buried, there remained only the faint mark of a scar. All the linen cloths in which the body had been wrapped appeared as fresh and new as on the day when they had been placed around her pure body.'
It is said that when she was affected by this tumour and pain in her jaw and neck, she welcomed pain of this kind and used to say:" I realise very well that I deserve this wearisome disease in my neck, because I remember that when I was a girl, I used to wear the needless burden of jewellery."

3. **From an anonymous *Life of St Euphrosyne***

When Smaragdus, who was previously called Euphrosyne, perceived that the day of her death had come, she said to [her father], 'God Almighty has directed my poor life well and has fulfilled my desire that I be allowed to end the course of my life as a man. It was not accomplished through my might, but through the help of Him who preserved me from the fiend's cunning. Now, with my time ending, the path of righteousness holds a crown of glory for me. No longer should you be anxious about your daughter, Euphrosyne. Truly, I am her poor self and you are my father, Paphnuntius. Just now, you have seen me, and your yearning has been fulfilled. But, do not let anyone know about this, and do not permit any person to wash and prepare my body, except yourself. I also told the abbot that I had many possessions, and promised him that I would give them to this place, if I remained here. Grant what I have promised, because this place is worthy of the honor, and pray for me.'
Having said this, she yielded up her spirit.

4. **From *Judith***

Then Holofernes,
The goldfriend of men, was in glee o'er his cups;
Laughed he and shouted, he bawled and he called,
That men far off the mirth might hear,
How the stout-hearted cheered and stormed,
How, rampant and raving, he roused with his urging
The bench-sitting barons to clamour blithely.
So the hateful one through the whole day
Deluged with wine all of the drinkers,
The strong-souled wealth-lord, till in stupor they lay,
So drenched all his dukes as if death had them slain
Glutted with good things. The prince gave order
To fill for the feasters until the day faded,
The darksome night neared them. Then the pernicious one
Bade the blest maid be brought in haste,
The ring-adorned, to his resting-place,
The bracelet-laden.

Ða wearð Holofernus,
goldwine gumena, on gytesalum;
hloh and hlydde, hlynede and dynede
þæt mihten fira bearn feorran gehyran,
hu se stiðmoda styrmde and gylede,
modig and medugal manode geneahhhe
bencsittende þæt hi gebærdon wel.
Swa se inwidda ofer ealne dæg
drihtguman sine drencte mid wine,
swiðmod sinces brytta, oð þæt hie on swiman lagon,

oferdrencte his duguð ealle, swylce hie wæron deaðe geslegene,
agrotene goda gehwylces. Swa het se gumena baldor
fyllan fletsittendum, oð þæt fira bearnum
nealæhte niht seo þystre. Het ða niða geblonden
þa eadigan mægð ofstum fetigan
to his bedreste beagum gehlæste,
hringum gehrodene.

5. **From *Genesis B***

'Urge him earnestly to perform thy counsel, lest ye two should perforce grow hateful to God, your Ruler. If thou dost carry out that design, best of women, I will conceal from your Lord that Adam spoke so much insult, evil words, unto me. He accuses me of lies, says that I am a messenger zealous to work cruel injuries, not at all God's angel. But I know so well all the condition of angels, the high vaults of heaven. So long was the time that I have zealously served God, my Master, with loyal heart; I am not like a devil.'
Thus with lies he led her on, and with wiles won the woman to that evil, until within her the serpent's thought began to stir – God had assigned her a weaker mind – so that she began to yield her heart to those promptings. Wherefore against God's command she received the grievous fruit of the tree of death from the foe.

' … span þu hine georne
þæt he þine lare læste, þy læs gyt lað gode,
incrum waldend, weorðan þyrfen.
gif þu þæt angin fremest, idesa seo betste,
forhele ic incrum herran þæt me hearmes swa fela
adam gespræc, eargra worda.
tyhð me untryowða, cwyð þæt ic seo teonum georne,
gramum ambyhtsecg, nales godes engel.
ac ic cann ealle swa geare engla gebyrdo,
heah heofona gehlidu. wæs seo hwil þæs lang
þæt ic geornlice gode þegnode
þurh holdne hyge, herran minum,
drihtne selfum. ne eom deofle gelic.'
lædde hie swa mid ligenum and mid listum speon
idese on þæt unriht, oð þæt hire on innan ongan
weallan wyrmes geþeaht, hæfde hire wacran hige
metod gemearcod, þæt heo hire mod ongan
lætan æfter þam larum forþon heo æt þam laðan onfeng
ofer drihtnes word deaðes beames
weorcsumne wæstm.

6. **From *Encomium Emmae Reginae***

… [T]he English nobles, lacking confidence in the legation previously sent, met them before they crossed the sea, deeming that the best course was for them to make amends to the king and queen, and to place themselves

devotedly under their dominion. When [Harthacnut] and his mother had been apprised by these men, and when he had a last reached a port on the other side of the sea, he was most gloriously received by all the inhabitants of that country, and thus by the grace of the divine favour the realm which was properly his was restored. After the events described, he arranged all his affairs in the calm of peace, and being gripped by brotherly love, sent messengers to Eadweard and asked him to come and hold the kingdom together with himself.
Obeying his brother's command, he was conveyed to England, and the mother and both sons, having no disagreement between them, enjoy the ready amenities of the kingdom. Here there is loyalty among sharers of rule, here the bond of motherly and brotherly love is of strength indestructible. All these things were granted them by Him, who makes dwellers in a house be of one mind, Jesus Christ, the Lord of all, who abiding in the Trinity, holds a kingdom which flourishes unfading. Amen.

7. **From *Holy Maidenhood***

[Maidenhood] is also the virtue that keeps our brittle vessel – that is, our feeble flesh, as St Paul teaches – in whole holiness. And as that sweet and most precious of all ointments called balm keeps the dead body that is laved with it from rotting, so does maidenhood keep the maiden's living flesh without taint. It also guards her limbs and her five senses (sight and hearing, tasting and smelling and the feeling in every part) on which God through his grace has bestowed so much love, so that they are not marred and do not dissolve through bodily lust into fleshly filth: so that they may not be like those of whom it is written through the prophet, thus, "that they rotted in their dung like beasts of burden", that is, every woman who is a slave to her man and lives in dung – he and she both. But it is not meant by this that they rot in it if they keep their marriage lawfully; but the same sorry wretches who, unwedded, wallow in the foul dung are the devil's beasts of burden; he rides them and spurs them to do everything he wants. They wallow in dung and rot there until they rise up through repentance, and restore themselves with true confession and with penance.

8. **From 'St Margaret'**

Her foster-mother was one that comforted her, came to the prison and brought her bread as food and spring-water to drink, so that she stayed alive. She, then, and many others watched through a window as she said her prayers. And suddenly out of a corner a demon of hell in the shape of a dragon came toward her, so hideous that they were horror-struck at the sight. The evil creature glistened as though he was all covered in gold. His hair and long beard gleamed with gold all over, and his gruesome fangs seemed of black iron. His two eyes, big as buckets, more blazing than stars or gemstones, stared out of his horned head on each side of his high, hooked nose. From his disgusting mouth fire sparked out, and from his nostrils billowed smothering smoke, terrible to taste. And he darted out his tongue, so

long that he swung it around his neck, and it seemed as though a sharp sword shot out of his mouth, which flared like a flame and set everything on fire. And the whole place became full of a strong and stinking stench; and everything shone and shimmered from the monster's shadow. He stretched himself out, and moved toward this meek maiden, and yawned his wide maw menacingly, and started to crane and draw back his neck, as though he meant to swallow her up.

9. **From Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*:**

And at once I saw the red blood trickling down from under the garland [the crown of thorns], hot, fresh, and plentiful, just as it did at the time of his passion when the crown of thorns was pressed on to the blessed head of God-and-Man, who suffered for me. And I had a strong, deep conviction that it was he himself and none other that showed me this vision.

At the same moment the Trinity filled me full of heartfelt joy, and I knew that all eternity was like this for those who attain heaven. For the Trinity is God, and God the Trinity; the Trinity is our Maker and keeper, our eternal lover, joy and bliss – all through our Lord Jesus Christ. This was shown me in this first revelation, and indeed, in them all; for where Jesus is spoken of, the blessed Trinity is always to be understood as I see it.

Section B

Write an essay on ONE of the following questions. All questions refer to the Middle English texts studied on the course (60%).

10. 'Representations of women in medieval texts are always also ideological constructs.' Do you agree? Discuss with reference to at least TWO Middle English texts studied on the course.

11. 'Virginity is a paradoxical condition, both perfect and monstrous, defined by both absence and presence' (Bernau, Salih, Evans). Discuss this statement with reference to at least **TWO** Middle English texts studied on the course.

12. '[I]dentity … is the performance of the self through the medium of the socially interpreted body' (Clare Sponsler). Discuss the ways in which identity (for instance, that of virgin/ mystic/ author) is performed in at least **TWO** Middle English texts covered on the course.

13. 'Affective piety encouraged worshippers to formulate spiritual experiences in terms of their own everyday lives; they used their senses, their emotions, their imaginations' (Rosalynn Voaden). Discuss this statement with reference to **either** *The Book of Margery Kempe* **or** the writing of Julian of Norwich, **or** to with reference to both.

14. What are some of the problems of reading the work of women writers as authentic, unadulterated expressions of medieval female experience? Discuss with reference to *The Book of Margery Kempe* **and/or** Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*.

15. What is the relationship between genre and gender? Discuss with reference to **TWO** Middle English texts studied on the course.

16. 'We are all born with bodies, but although they are thus native to us, and we innate to them, they are not thereby "natural", distanced as they are from "nature" by a multiplicity of psychic, sexual, social and political codes' (Sarah Kay). Discuss some of the codes involved in the representation of women in the Middle English texts covered on this course.

17. Discuss the ways in which the identities of virgin and of wife/mother are constructed as both oppositional and as analogous in at least TWO Middle English texts studied on the course.

END OF EXAMINATION PAPER