

DENB 2407

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2005

COURSE II

Paper A4 Old and Middle English Texts

Thursday, 26 May 2005, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Time allowed — Three hours

Answer Question 1. and two others. You may write on the same text in more than one answer, but you should not repeat material. You should pay careful attention in your answers to the precise terms of the question.

Trinity Term 2005

Do not turn over until told that you may do so.

Answer Question 1. and *two* others. You may write on the same text in more than one answer, but you should not repeat material. You should pay careful attention in your answers to the precise terms of the question.

1. Translate **three** of the following passages, and comment briefly on matters of textual and linguistic interest, and particularly on any words or phrases whose meaning is debatable.

(a)

Storm up gewat
heah to heofonum, herewopa mæst;
laðe cyrmdon (lyft up geswearc)
fægum stæfnum. Flod blod gewod:
5 randbyrig wæron rofene, rodor swipode
meredeaða mæst. Modige swulton,
cyningas on corðre. Cyrm swiðrode
wæges æt ende; wigbord scinon.
Heah ofer hæleðum holmweall astah,
10 merestream modig.

7 Cyrm *Cosijn*] cyre
8 wæges *Grein*] sæs

(b)

- He beléac þa his tempel, mid geleafan onbryrd,
and ferde eft ongear mid þam ilcan gewrite
to þam arwurðan biscope, and him ealle asæde
be his godes geancyme, and be his modes smeauge,
5 and feoll to his fotum, fulluhtes biddende,
and þæt he hine betæhte þam heofonlican Gode,
þurh þæs mihte þe he afigde þæra hæþenra godas.
He bæd þa swa lange mid geleafan þone biscope
þæt he hine cristnode; and he clænlice lyfode
10 syððan of þam dæge on swiðlicre forhæfdnysse,
and ealle worulþing forlét, and wunode mid þam biscope.

- 3 biscope C. ealle] eal C. asæde] sæde C.
7 þe] om. C. (*rightly?*) godes altered to godas R; godes C.
8 þone] ðane C.
9 þæt] oð ðæt C. leofode C.

(c)

- Hwa se eauer deieð ine Godd & o Godes rode, þeos twa ha mot þolien,
scheome for him & pine. Scheome ich cleopie eauer her beon itald unwurð
& beggin as an hearlot, 3ef neod is, hire liueneð & beon oþres beodes mon,
as 3e beoð, leoue sustren, & þolieð ofte danger of swuch oðerhwile þe mahte
5 beon ower þreal—þis is þet eadi scheome þet ich of talie. Pine ne trukeð ow
nawt. I þeos ilke twa þing þet al penitence is in, blissið ow & gleadieð for
azein þeos twa ow beoð twafald blissen izarket: azein scheome, menske;
azein pine, delit & reste buten ende. *Ysaías: In terra, inquit, sua duplicia*
possidebunt: ha schulen, seið Ysaie, in hare ahne lond wealden twauald blisse
10 azein twauald wa þet ha her dreheð.

(d)

In dreȝ droupyng of dreme draueled þat noble,
As mon þat watz in mornyng of mony þro þoȝtes,
How þat destiné schulde þat day dele hym his wyrde
At þe grene chapel, when he þe gome metes,
5 And bihoues his buffet abide withoute debate more;
Bot quen þat comly com he keuered his wyttes,
Swenges out of þe sweuenes, and swarez with hast.
Þe lady luflych com lazande swete,
Felle ouer his fayre face, and fetly hym kyssed;
10 He welcumez hir worþily with a wale chere.

3 dele hym *supplied*

6 com *supplied*

2. **Either (a)** 'There is some reason to think of Aelfric's work as a collection of homilies since so much of it is exegetical, but the abbot himself shunned the term in reference to his own writing because it had a special meaning which, however applicable to his sources, was not appropriate to his own adaptations' (M. McC. GATCH). Does the term 'homily' adequately identify the genre of the three texts by Ælfric set for this paper ?

Or (b) 'However much Ælfric tried to cast his homilies in the voice of any preacher addressing a lay audience, his mind at times returned to the mode of a personal address to a reader.' Discuss **one or more** of Homilies 14, 20 and 21 in the light of this comment.

Or (c) '[T]he main spirit and style of Ælfric's work is truly much closer to prose than to poetry. Nevertheless I find a prose printing of the rhythmical form disturbing' (J. C. POPE). Discuss Ælfric's use of rhythmical prose in any **one or more** of the texts you have studied for this paper.

3. **Either (a)** 'There is much to suggest that *Exodus* was composed in a monastery' (P. J. LUCAS). What evidence and arguments seem to you to be of value in attempting to determine the environment in which the Old English *Exodus* came into being ?

Or (b) 'Those who would too closely imitate the old exegetes in the way they read the poem do it no service, and perhaps neglect the powerful and valid religious experience the poem offers' (E. B. IRVING). Assess the extent to which the interpretation of the Old English *Exodus* should be founded upon a knowledge of either scriptural exegesis or 'heroic' verse traditions or both.

Or (c) Is a reading of the Old English *Exodus* enhanced by considering it in its context in the manuscript in which it is preserved ?

4. Either (a) '[T]he *Ancrene Wisse*'s peculiar style...was shaped by its author's culturally determined assumptions about women. The creation of this apparently gender-neutral text, I believe, was governed by its male author's view of women as daughters of Eve, inescapably rooted in their bodies' (E. ROBERTSON). How helpful is this view of the authorship of *Ancrene Wisse* for an interpretation of the work ?

Or (b) 'The "Inner Rule" shares no distinctive features with the "rule" as a genre, and could even be seen, to some extent, as defined in opposition to it; its main debt is to other genres of religious writing.' Discuss problems in the generic classification of *Ancrene Wisse*.

Or (c) 'If simile is rare, metaphor...is a condition of the thought and expression of this writer' (G. SHEPHERD). Examine metaphorical modes of expression in *Ancrene Wisse*.

5. Either (a) 'The obvious explanation of why the *Gawain*-poet's vocabulary falls back so often on cognates of "court" when he talks about God or about right and wrong is that he identified himself with an audience for whom these words instantly evoked a familiar *locus* of shared experience and values, a place from which they could orientate themselves when forced out into unfamiliar territory' (A. PUTTER). Are there reliable grounds for making assumptions about either the author or the 'audience', or both, that illuminate a reading of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ?

Or (b) '[W]hen we know a poet's exact source, [...] we have something like a modern author's notebooks and rough drafts; we can specify exactly what changes the poet made and thus define more clearly his artistic methods and purposes. The other versions of the tale, the poem's more distant analogues, are in some ways even

more valuable' (L. D. BENSON). Discuss the value of the study of the 'sources and analogues' of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Or (c) 'Of all the metrical forms available to fourteenth-century poets, the alliterative line is, from the point of view of its rhythm, the least constricting, in that it allows more freedom than any other to the natural movement of the language' (T. TURVILLE-PETRE). What kinds of flexibility do you find in the metre of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and to what extent can this be related to variation of such matters as pace and tone ?

6. Write on **one** of the following, with reference to any **one or more** of the texts set for this paper:

(a) punctuation, capitalization, layout or other devices used in the manuscript(s) to guide a reader's response to the text;

(b) modern editorial punctuation and its effect for a reader.

7. Do we need to have in dealing with Old and Middle English works a different conception of 'the text' from that which has been appropriate in more modern times ?

8. Hwæt, we feor ond neah gefrigen habbað
 ofer middangeard Moyses domas
 ...
 hæleðum secgan. Gehyre se þe wille !

 If 3e wyl lysten þis laye bot on littel quile,
 I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde.

Discuss the extent to which we must in our interpretation of any **one or more** of the texts set for this paper reckon with a practice of oral delivery of texts in the Old and Middle English periods.