

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
COURSE II

PAPER A1 ENGLISH LITERATURE 600-1100

TRINITY TERM 2011

Tuesday, 24 May, 9.30 am – 12.30 pm

Time allowed – Three hours

Answer *three* questions. You should pay careful attention in your answers to the precise terms of the quotations and questions.

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

1. 'To speak of pagan remains in this literature is reductive, if not wholly inappropriate, and one should pay careful attention to the interplay of Germanic and Christian elements.' (PATRIZIA LENDINARA)

EITHER (a) Can we speak of 'pagan remains' in Old English literature?

OR (b) Discuss 'the interplay of Germanic and Christian elements' in any areas of Old English literature that interest you.

2. 'Mod sceal þy mare þe ure mægen lytlað.' (THE BATTLE OF MALDON)

3. '[T]he great beauty, the real value of *Beowulf* is in its dignity of style. While the main story is simplicity itself, the merest commonplace of heroic legend, all about it, in the historic allusions, there are revelations of a whole world of tragedy, plots different in import from that of *Beowulf*, more like the tragic themes of Iceland.' (W. P. KER)

4. 'For the Anglo-Saxons, nostalgia took the form of a longing for things longer ago and farther away [...] Nostalgia was the primary mode in which they conceived of their northern ancestral past.' (J. D. NILES)

5. 'Wandering, exodus, enforced captivity, spiritual struggle in a figuratively bounded place: these are the settings of Christian experience and history.' (NICHOLAS HOWE)

6. EITHER (a) 'The narrative fabric of hagiography, whether rendered as poetry or as prose, is in fact the superhuman, the marvellous and the fanciful. Enduring torture, encountering forces of evil, finding the iconic gesture at the point of death – these are not only the stuff of Star Wars.' (PATRICK W. CONNER)

OR (b) 'Like texts, saints' bodies carry the potentiality of spiritual meaning but require that a skilled interpreter read beyond their naked surfaces.' (SHARI HORNER)

7. '[W]ithin the ideological world of traditional Old English poetry, heroic action is the prerogative of men, not women.' (HUGH MAGENNIS)

8. EITHER (a) 'Leaorniað forþam wisdom, and þonne ge hine geleornod habban ne forhogiað hine þonne. Þonne secge ic eow buton ælcum tveon þæt ge magon þurh hine becuman to anwealde þeah ge no þæs anwealdes ne wilnigan' ('Learn wisdom therefore, and when you have learnt it do not neglect it. Then I say to you without any doubt that you can through it come to power though you do not desire power') (OLD ENGLISH BOETHIUS)

OR (b) 'The gnomic poems teach us – if they teach us anything – that all meaning is contextual, that every situation is in some sense new.' (ELAINE TUTTLE HANSEN)

9. 'Þonne þincð þam ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealdan gerecednisse; ac hit ys swiðe feor þam' ('Then it seems to the unlearned that all the meaning is contained in the simple narrative; but it is very far from that') (AELFRIC, PREFACE TO GENESIS).

10. EITHER (a) 'The common thread running through the poetic uses of runes [...] is ambiguity: the careful orchestration of antithetical elements.' (ROBERT DINAPOLI)

OR (b) ‘Old English poetry [...] relies on its audience’s ability to decipher metaphorical language, to fill out many details that remain unexpressed, and to savour whatever satisfaction resides in the solving of upscale crossword puzzles.’ (J. D. NILES)

11. 'Ond him all Anglecynn to cirde, þæt buton Deniscra monna hæftniede was' ('And all the English race turned to him [Alfred], except what was in captivity to Danish men') (THE ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE ENTRY FOR 886)

Discuss ways in which the 'nation' is imagined in Old English prose AND/OR poetry.

12. 'Hwæt, we þæt gehyrdon þurh halige bec'
(‘Lo, we heard it through holy books’)
(FATES OF THE APOSTLES)

How important is orality AND/OR manuscript culture to Old English literature?

13. 'Old English poetry illustrates the most widespread leakage between and among its traditional verse genres.' (JOHN MILES FOLEY)

14. 'The [Alfredian] translations each have their own fascinations and merits. As works themselves, they deserve attention and intensive study.' (NICOLE DISCENZA GUENTHER)

You may answer this question on any translations into or from Old English.

15. þær wæs helm monig
 eald and omig, earmbeaga fela
 searwum gesæled.
(‘There was many a helmet, old and rusty, many armbands, skilfully twisted’)
 (BEOWULF)

How do archaeological finds enrich our understanding of Old English literature?