

OLLSCOIL NA hÉIREANN, GAILLIMH
THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, GALWAY

3rd ARTS EXAMINATIONS 2000-2001

SEMESTER 1

HISTORY

Course HI 345 – WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL SOCIETY

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Time allowed: **TWO** hours

Answer **QUESTION ONE**;

ONE question from GROUP A and **ONE** question from GROUP B

Answer **Three** questions in total

QUESTION ONE

1. Comment on **TWO** of the following passages, identifying the author and textual context and explaining its significance for understanding aspects of the history of women in medieval society. Each passage you choose must be from a different pairing.

EITHER

- (a) 'This fraudulent excuse whereby men blame their sin on the "malice" of women began with Adam, and made him and all mankind forfeit, because when God rebuked him he sinfully blamed his sin on woman and attributed the fault to her. . . . So even though his fault was greater than the woman's he would not acknowledge any fault but attributed it to the woman.'

Or

- (b) Lady, it seems to me as if I were already before the all-powerful justice of the stern judge facing the intolerable vehemence of his wrath Most gentle Lady, whose intercession should I implore . . . ? Who can more easily gain pardon for the accused by her intercession than she who gave milk to him who justly punishes or mercifully pardons all and each one?

question 1, continued/

Either

(c) You have this little moral work as a reminder, so that as you read in spirit and body . . . you may be able to look upon me as if in a mirror. Then you may clearly see your duty to me. . . Read the words I address to you, understand them and fulfill them in action. . . . May that all-powerful one whom I mention frequently even in my unworthiness make both of you, my sons—along with my lord and master Bernard, your father—happy and joyful in the present world.

Or

(d) I acknowledge that, to defend the interests of my lord and master Bernard, and so that my service to him might not weaken in the March and elsewhere—so that he not abandon you and me, as some men do—I know that I have gone greatly into debt. . . . If there is still something to [re]pay after I die . . . make sure that everything is paid off either from my own resources, if any remain, or from your assets.

Either

(e) S: To a brothel you will be consigned.
H: It is better that the body be dirtied with any stain than that the soul be polluted with idolatry.
S: If you are so polluted in the company of harlots, you can no longer be counted among the virginal choir.
H: Lust deserves punishment, but forced compliance the crown. With neither is one considered guilty, unless the soul consents freely.

Or

(f) King Lothar departed from this world, rightly leaving the kingdom of Italy to be ruled by the will of the eminent queen whom he had made his wife. [Adelaide] was the daughter of the mighty Rudolph and had descended from a long line of renowned monarchs. . . . She possessed such pre-eminent natural abilities that she could have ruled worthily the state bequeathed to her, if the nation itself had not presently given evidence of vile treachery.

Either

(g) Countess Adela had also sent the king [Louis VI] one hundred well-equipped knights because her husband, count Stephen, had left on another pilgrimage [i.e., crusade] and her first-born sons, William and Thibaud, still in the tenderness of boyhood, were unable to command troops of knights.

Or

(h) I, Blanche, countess palatine of Troyes, make known to all . . . that my loyal and faithful Simon of Joinville has affirmed in my presence that he dowered his wife Ermengard with one-half of all that he holds [in fief] from me. At Ermengard's request, and on Simon's petition to me, I have received her in liege homage (*in ligiam feminam*) for that half, saving Simon's right [to administer it] for as long as he lives.

Either

(i) I do not hear these things, however, with my external ears, nor do I perceive them by the thoughts of my heart, nor by any combination of my five senses—but rather in my soul, with my external eyes open, so that I have never suffered the weakness of ecstasy in them, but alertly see them by day and by night.

Or

(j) [This image] indicates that . . . there are three divisions between the people: the rulers, those who are free from bonds of servitude, and the common people who are subject to their governors. . . . [This detail shows that] between the lesser power of the secular government [compared to spiritual authority] and the servitude of its subjects there must be thoughtful justice, and the two must touch each other with the hands of their joint labor in the single-minded and simple devotion of childlike innocence.

GROUP A [Choose ONE]

2. Discuss, with reference to specific persons and events, the social, economic, and political factors that made some women powerful political players in the years c. 750–1050.
3. How did changes in family structure, marriage practices, and/or inheritance customs affect aristocratic women's familial activities and their attendant political powers in the period c. 1000–1250 (to the extent that such changes did significantly affect women's activities and powers)?
4. 'Widowhood could be a time of greater vulnerability for women as well as a time of greater power'. Discuss with reference to specific persons.
5. What were the most important activities and social powers of **EITHER** peasant women **OR** townswomen and how did they change over women's life-cycle stages?
6. What were the most important consequences of the rise of cathedral schools and universities for the education of women (in relation to that of men) and for women's wider socio-political powers?
7. How did changing views of women's physiological constitution (when compared to that of men) affect medieval attitudes towards women in relation to men?

GROUP B [Choose ONE]

8. What different options did women have for living a religious life in the period c. 800–1250 and how did they arise?
9. Discuss the diverse functions performed by religious women for members of the wider society outside the walls of their 'monastic' communities as both 'religious' life-styles and society in general changed over time.
10. (a.) Analyse the role of gender in the spirituality and devotional practices of women religious in the period c. 750–1500.
OR
(b.) Discuss the participation of women in, and their contributions to, the most important developments in spirituality and devotional practices in the period c. 1200–1500.
11. Compare and contrast the career of Hildegard of Bingen to that of other religious women of the period c. 1100–1250.
12. Discuss the works written by a medieval woman of your choice and explain their historical significance.