

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2002

COURSE II

Paper A2 English Literature 1100-1530

Wednesday 15 May 2002, 9.30 a.m.

Time allowed – Three hours

Answer *three* questions. You should pay careful attention in your answers to the precise terms of the quotations and questions. Candidates should not write on works by Chaucer which they intend to use in answers for paper A3(a), nor write on Langland and/or Gower if they are answering on these authors on paper A3(b).

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

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1. 'In very many medieval books ... whether their styles be simple or gorgeous, there is to our tastes something direct, impersonal and even solid in their explanation of what seems to us broken, private and elusive' (Stephen Medcalf). Discuss with reference to **two or more** Middle English texts.
2. 'A writer, drawing on varied motifs and images, is aware of their power of transformation, not only into one another, but also into the conceptual realm and then back into images again' (Peter Dronke). Discuss the ways in which Middle English writers move between literal and allegorical or symbolic means of expression.
3. When the stories can be described as romance, history, mirror for princes or repertoire of examples of good and bad conduct for gentle men and women, how do writers of Arthurian narratives exploit their generic lack of fixity?
4. 'The concoction of hybrids, mingling different registers and genres, seems to have been ... a fashion for elite audiences' (Michael Camille). Discuss, with reference to **at least two** writers.
5. 'The spiritual and ethical question of the ends of human aspiration is ... fought out in the struggle for possession of the terminology of sanctified relations – of sworn homage, of oaths taken and received, of trouthe in all its ramifications. Whether these terms are to remain fixed in their traditional meanings, or are to be appropriated to debased ends is a constant theme' (Paul Strohm). Discuss with reference to **at least two** writers.
6. Discuss ways in which the interaction between oral and literate culture finds expression in texts of this period.
7. 'A fascinating mixture of Latin, French, English and Welsh strands is being woven into a creative tradition in which the old continually begets the new' (Derek Brewer). Discuss the view of Lazamon's *Brut*.
8. How helpful is it to view *The Owl and the Nightingale* as a 'metadebate'?
9. 'Conceptions of virginity are very different from the twentieth-century sense of virginity as primarily a state of negation, of absence of sexual knowledge' (Jocelyn Wogan-Browne). Discuss the treatment of virginity in the *Katherine*-Group, together with other Middle English writings written for women by their spiritual advisers.

10. **Either (a)** Is it useful to attempt to distinguish ‘mysticism’ from ‘affective devotion’ in the writings of this period?

Or (b) Julian of Norwich’s ‘original treatments of sin and her conflicts with her church’s teaching were inextricably bound up with her representations of Christ’s humanity’ (David Aers). Do you agree?

11. ‘Langland *must* trust his readers with ... interpretative freedom because he does not know their individual spiritual needs; he *can* trust them because of his confidence that whatever answers they find will be within a context of orthodox Christianity’ (C. David Benson). Discuss.

12. ‘Gower capitalizes on the commonality of virtue established conventionally between the good lover and the good man, as well as on the potential for psychological probing made available since the thirteenth century by the Church’s penitential reforms’ (R.F. Yeager). Discuss.

13. ‘No single vision composes a monolithic or unifying perspective’ (Jesse M. Gellrich). Explore the ways in which the *Gawain*-poet employs shifting registers of language to express different perspectives and consider whether any single perspective is given priority. [Common authorship of the four poems in the *Gawain* manuscript is here assumed.]

14. David Aers has spoken of Troilus ‘Boethianizing in bed’. Why should Boethian discourse have seemed so appropriate for literary representations of love in this period by Chaucer and others?

15. David Burnley argues that, when reading Chaucer, one should not ‘deny oneself the pleasure and satisfaction of perceiving the stylistic perspective which the fourteenth-century London language had acquired from its multi-cultural background.’ Discuss ways in which Chaucer, together with other London-based writers of the period might exploit this variety.

16. Do you agree that, in ballads, it is the story above all that matters?

17. ‘The old fear that words and matter would be lost in oblivion was reinforced by the problems of finding an aesthetic order for the chaos of things in some “authentic” manner, without “lying” (Douglas Gray). Discuss with reference to **at least two** fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century writers.

18. ‘As “quick [living] books”, [the plays] were designed for a general audience which was more accustomed to hearing its literature than to reading it silently, and it is essential to grasp that both the conceptual substance and the imaginative qualities of such plays are inseparable from their theatricality’ (Richard Beadle). Discuss this comment on the mystery plays.

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19. 'Although the action of a morality play is frequently described as allegorical, the term is used loosely to describe how action, character, space and time are related to the real world through a tissue of metaphor. The use of *prosopopoeia*, or personification, in creating dramatic characters involves a fundamental rhetorical separation between the play world and the real world' (Pamela M. King). Discuss this view of the morality plays.

20. 'His poem may be said to belong to a philosophical tradition – a "tradition" which embraces a wider variety of genres than the so-called "dream vision"' (J. Norton-Smith). To what extent does King James I of Scotland conform to this 'tradition'?

21. **Either (a)** In the absence of a satisfactory title, is it best to describe Malory's writing(s) as an 'Arthuriad'?

Or (b) 'As the Freynshe booke sayth'. Consider Malory's treatment of written authority.

Or (c) 'Doo after the good and leve and evyl, and it shal brynge you to good fame and renomnee' (Caxton). How successful is Malory as a didactic writer?

22. 'Skelton will always remain an example for poets caught up in the coils of tradition, a decent way of writing, which they feel to be constricting their lives. It is better, always, to be a buffoon than a bore' (G.S. Fraser). Discuss.

23. 'Play is not conceived by humanists as an escape from the serious, but as a mode of civility, an enhancement of specifically human powers' (Stephen Greenblatt). Does study of writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries compared with the early Tudor humanists reveal similar or different attitudes to playfulness?

24. Discuss different treatments of the classical past by writers of this period.

25. J.A.W. Bennett, writing of *The Parlement of Foules*, spoke of 'that speculative curiosity about the relation of men and women to each other and to this visible world'. In what ways does writing about love encourage poets of this period to write encyclopaedias?

26. 'There developed a ... rhetoric of criticism of the clergy for any failure in their duty of instruction. And the laity were admitted, since it might closely concern their salvation, to have a stake in that criticism' (Fiona Somerset). Discuss the consequences of the use of English for anticlerical writing.

27. Quhy suld I than with dull forhed and vayn,
 With rude engyne and barrand emptive brayn,
 With had, harsk spech and lewit barbour tong'
 Presume to write quhar thy sweit bell is rung
 Or contyrfate sa precyus wordys deir? (Gavin Douglas)

Explore the ways in which Douglas and Dunbar reconcile native, 'homely' diction with the contemporary taste for aureation. (You may confine your discussion to **one** of these writers.)

28. 'The delyveraunce of tho trouthis to the lay peple in her modir langage schulde be veyn and ydil' (Reginald Pecock, describing the Trinity). What strategies did religious writers adopt for 'explaining' complex theological and philosophical concepts in English?

29. 'He shone like the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and remained for many days as the faithful witness in the church' (John Bale on Wyclif). In their writings, how did Lollards and Reformers set about creating mythologies about the past to justify themselves to their contemporaries?

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