

DENB 2407

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2006

COURSE II

A4 Old and Middle English Texts

TRINITY TERM 2006

Wednesday 24 May, 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Time allowed – Three hours

Answer 1 question 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 quotations and questions.

Do *not* turn over until told to do so

- d) Þe knyȝt kachez his caple, and com to þe lawe,
 Liȝtez doun luflyly, and at a lynde tachez
 Þe rayne and his riche with a roȝe braunche.
 Þenne he boȝez to þe berȝe, aboute hit he walkez,
 Debatande with hymself quat hit be myȝt. 5
 Hit hade a hole on þe ende and on ayȝer syde,
 And ouergrowen with gresse in glodes aywhere,
 And al watz holȝ inwith, nobot an olde caue,
 Or a creuisse of an olde cragge; he couȝe hit noȝt deme
 with spelle, 10
 'We! Lorde,' quoth þe gentyle knyȝt,
 'Wheȝer þis be þe grene chapelle?
 Here myȝt aboute mydnyȝt
 Þe dele his matynnes telle!'

13 Here] he.

2. *EITHER* (a) 'No other Old English poem has such violent metaphors or so many new and startling kennings' (EDWARD IRVING). Discuss this comment on *Exodus*.

OR (b) 'The only critical judgement concerning the Old English *Exodus* which has not been debated is that it is an extraordinarily difficult poem' (JAMES EARL). Discuss.

OR (c) How useful is it to see *Exodus* as an articulation of an Anglo-Saxon migration myth?

3. *EITHER* (a) 'hy on gedwyldum adreogað heora lif, swa swa þa Englisca men doð þe to ðam Deniscum gebugað'. To what extent can Ælfric be seen as addressing specifically English and topical concerns in his writing?

OR (b) To what extent does an understanding of Ælfric's sources enhance our sense of what he attempted or achieved?

4. *EITHER* (a) 'Nearly eight hundred years ago an anonymous cleric wrote by request a book for a small group of unknown women to whom he acted as spiritual director' (GEOFFREY SHEPHERD). Should we read such indications in the *Ancrene Wisse* as fact or fiction?

OR (b) 'The anchoritic ideal may well call forth from us condemnation and revulsion. For does it not involve a perverse, unhealthy thwarting of natural impulse?' (HUGH WHITE). To what extent does the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* escape such criticisms, and how?

5. *EITHER* (a) 'The most puzzling, and hence the most variously interpreted, element in *Sir Gawain* is the double figure of the Green Knight-cum-Bertilak' (W.A. DAVENPORT). Discuss.

OR (b) How does an awareness of the analogues and possible sources for the plot illuminate *Sir Gawain*?

6. 'Biblical interpretation and adaptation was one of the most productive and imaginative techniques in medieval literature'. To what extent do the set texts show this kind of imagination?

7. What are the dangers and attractions of interpreting a medieval work in the light of *EITHER* the manuscript context *OR* modern notions of genre? You should answer with particular reference to the set texts.

8. In what ways can any ONE or MORE of the texts set for this paper be seen as stylistically idiosyncratic, or strikingly different in style from other works of their time written in the same form?

9. What challenges do the set texts pose to an editor, and why are they important? You may answer with reference to ONE or MORE of the set texts.