

DENB 2401
DEML 2401

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2007
COURSE II**

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND MODERN LANGUAGES 2007
PAPER A1. ENGLISH LITERATURE 600-1100**

TRINITY TERM 2007

Tuesday 15 May 2007, 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.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.

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

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1. 'The surviving remains of Old English literature are the flotsam and jetsam of a vanished world, manuscripts and fragments of texts divorced from their original context, most of them second- or third-hand copies of unknown originals, many of them saved from oblivion only by chance or neglect' (ROY LIUZZA). Discuss any aspect of this quotation, focusing on a particular text or texts if you wish.
2. 'Anglo-Saxon scribes were compilers and organizers as well as copyists. Each major Old English literary manuscript gives evidence of editorial planning' (J.R. HALL). Discuss, concentrating on one manuscript if you wish.
3. 'Old English verse is intensely and extensively traditional, and the critic has customarily praised verse not for its original formulation of a thought but for the power generated by the deep, traditional resonances of the phrase in its present context' (CAROL PASTERNAK). Discuss.
4. 'The function of heroic literature, or rather heroic song, was to celebrate and so perpetuate heroic conduct' (MICHAEL ALEXANDER). Is this a useful perspective on Old English heroic poetry?
5. 'The female agent is a double agent: she moves in the "real" world of Anglo-Saxon society, but we can only perceive her in that penumbral, nether world to which she is relegated by clerical culture' (CLARE LEES AND GILLIAN OVERING). Discuss.
6. 'The *Beowulf* poet does his best to attach his pagan champion to as many peoples as possible - Danes, Geats, Swedes, Wulfings and Wægmundings - as if to make him the more authentically representative of the culture and traditions of central Scandinavia: an archetypal Northman' (ROBERTA FRANK). Discuss the 'Germanic' aspect of Old English heroic poetry in the light of this comment.
7. 'The appeal [of the Old English elegies] is understandable: they treat of universal relationships ... in a hauntingly beautiful way, with an element of mystery and riddling that is particularly attractive to an age that has taken to its heart the poetry of John Donne' (STANLEY GREENFIELD). Discuss.
8. 'Unity in the *Cynewulf* corpus, if there is any, is not to be sought in any uniformity of structure or genre. The four signed poems do share, however, a uniformity of style' (EARL ANDERSON). Discuss.

9. EITHER, 'All the Biblical verse is careful, learned, essentially literary work; yet the cross-correspondences, the sudden insertions of material or the sudden switches of theme ... indicate that we are dealing with a sophisticated variety of successive recomposition' (GEOFFREY SHEPHERD). Discuss, focusing on one Biblical poem if you wish.

OR, 'Those who allegorize *Judith* may be misinterpreting the poem because they ignore the clear political purpose behind it' (KARMA LOCHRIE). Discuss the question of political purpose, with reference to *Judith* or to Old English Biblical poetry more generally.

10. 'The Old English saint's life ... centres on the moment of greatest emotional and spiritual turmoil for the saint. It distils the fact of sainthood into the particulars of an individual moment or event so that a particular Christian truth can be told' (ROBERT BJORK). Discuss.
11. 'Homilies and saints' lives are not primarily historical, literary or theological documents but cultural works. ... Their characteristics of traditionality, didacticism and aesthetics are best explored by methods of cultural analysis that challenge the conventionally separate spheres of history, literature and theology' (CLARE LEES). Discuss.
12. EITHER, 'Arguably the greatest of Alfred's achievements was to place reading in all of its various senses - the understanding of written texts but also the giving of counsel and the understanding of obscure matters - at the heart of public life' (NICHOLAS HOWE). Discuss.
- OR, 'Ure ieldran ... lufodon wisdom ond ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan'. Consider the pursuit of wisdom in the light of this comment by King Alfred, with reference either to his own works or to those of others.
13. 'Ælfric's prose can be judged by the standards of all time but can be appreciated only in terms of the thought, outlook and taste of its own day and of the circumstances, aims and cast of mind of its author' (PETER CLEMOES). Discuss.
14. 'Wulfstan's was not a subtle mind, though it was an able one. His intellectual range was narrow, his activities prodigious. He presents a figure of abounding energy and concentrated purpose' (DOROTHY WHITELOCK). Discuss.

15. 'There are tendrils of sense and beauty in all the didactic poems in Old English, and the tendrils are worth following both for critics and historians; they lead us to a better understanding of the nature of poetry for Anglo-Saxons, and perhaps to some awareness of their cultural preoccupations' (TOM SHIPPEY). Discuss.
16. 'We are inclined to wonder how men could be at once so original that they handled no predecessor without pouring new life into him, and so unoriginal that they seldom did anything completely new' (C.S. LEWIS). Is Lewis's comment on the treatment of sources and genres by medieval authors fair?
17. Write on ONE of the following with reference to Old English literature: history; the monstrous; translation; authorship; oral tradition.