

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2008

COURSE II

PAPER A3 (a) CHAUCER, LANGLAND AND GOWER

TRINITY TERM 2008

**Friday, 16 May, 9.30 a.m.- 12.30 p.m.
Time allowed – Three hours**

Answer *two* 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.

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

1. Is it possible to arrive at a satisfactory critical evaluation of Chaucer's poetry without taking account specifically of 'its rich situation between contending social models, its subtle poise at the boundaries of rank and class awareness' (PAUL STROHM)?
 2. 'Intention, "entente", has been at the heart of tale after tale' (HELEN COOPER). Discuss in relation to any of Chaucer's works.
 3. 'Even if Chaucer was a conventional late medieval Christian, he was capable of thinking critically and imaginatively about the difficulty of inhabiting Christian belief, and the ease with which its demands could tip over into moral fastidiousness and self-loathing' (MARK MILLER). Discuss.
 4. 'Taketh the moralite, good men.' How desirable, or even possible, is this?
 5. 'I wot myself best how y stonde' How assertive is Chaucer in his dealings with previous authors?
 6. 'Radical stylistic variety ... is the central achievement of the *Canterbury Tales*' (C. DAVID BENSON). Discuss the functions performed by rhyme, metre or other aspects of stylistic variation and experimentation in any of Chaucer's works.
 7. Discuss how far the *Canterbury Tales* are anticipated in Chaucer's earlier work.
 8. For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose,
 Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose,
 That is an heresy ageyns my lawe,
 And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe
- To what extent is translation – in however broad or narrow a sense – a transgressive act for Chaucer?
9. 'I want to write ... about Silence...the things people don't say' (VIRGINIA WOOLF). Did Chaucer get there first?

10. EITHER (a) What in your view are the most important implications of manuscript study for our understanding of Chaucer's works?
OR (b) What have you found most useful in critical discussions about the dating of Chaucer's works?

11. EITHER (a) Discuss Chaucer's explorations of desire and its consequences
OR (b) How important an effect is pathos in Chaucer's works?

12. ... the Troian gestes, as they felle,
 In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
 Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write.

Is the scope for interpretation offered by Chaucer to his readers more limited in fact than it might at first appear?

13. What is compelling to Chaucer about how pagans 'might have lived, loved and philosophized' (A.J. MINNIS)?

14. Could Chaucer be regarded as postmodern?

15. 'The community ... is bound to its language ... a language is always an inheritance from the past ... there is nothing collective about speech. Its manifestations are individual and ephemeral.' (FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE). Discuss relationships between EITHER (a) 'inherited' language and 'ephemeral' speech OR (b) communities and individuals in Chaucer.

16. Does Chaucer view women primarily as a useful means of calling into question established discourses and systems of knowledge?