

DENB 2402

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
2006
COURSE II

PAPER A2 ENGLISH LITERATURE 1100-1530

TRINITY TERM 2006

Wednesday, 17 May, 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.

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

1. With specific reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts, evaluate the critical usefulness, or otherwise, of the term(s) 'medieval' AND/OR 'renaissance' in relation to any literature written during the period covered by this paper.

2. To lewet and Englis men I tel
That understandes quat I spel.
(*Cursor Mundi*).

With specific reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts, discuss some of the relationships between English and any other language(s) during the period covered by this paper.

3. "'Translate" in the Middle Ages did not have the narrow meaning it does today' (JUDITH WEISS). Discuss with specific reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts.

4. What do you understand by the term 'humanism'? Discuss its applicability to ONE OR MORE authors/texts of this period.

5. '[I]n the context of a love relationship, Boethius does not help' (HELEN COOPER). With reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts, account for the influence of Boethius on literature written during this period.

6. 'Fifteenth-century critical discourse tends to ask itself more explicitly what it is doing when it recreates past literature than do earlier medieval texts' (LOUISE FRADENBURG). Test the validity of this observation against your experience of reading fifteenth-century and/or earlier texts.

7. What are the critical benefits of gendered readings of the literature of this period? Answer with reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts.

8. Discuss some of the relationships between 'chronicle' and 'romance' in this period, with reference to TWO OR MORE texts.

9. Discuss generic decorum and/or fluidity in writing of this period, with specific reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts.

10. What is significant about the choice of particular verse forms or prose during this period? Answer with reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts.

DENB 2402

11. 'It is now generally considered that [La3amon] was a creative artist who may have "compiled" his material from various Welsh, French, English and Latin sources, both oral and written ... a trash-bin rummager for any old bits of fact and fiction' (ROSAMUND ALLEN). To what extent is this a productive critical perspective on La3amon?

12. 'Whether in the virgin's tower ... or the allegorical household ... enclosure continues to function as a richly ambivalent image of a social practice which offered both opportunities and restrictions for women' (LESLEY JOHNSON and JOCELYN WOGAN-BROWNE). Discuss in relation to *Ancrene Wisse* OR any other text(s).

13. Which critical contexts - whether medieval, contemporary or both - best help us to make sense of *The Owl and the Nightingale*?

14. 'The action of romance finds its place between the celebration and the critique of imperialism; between the centre and the periphery; between the individual and the collective; and finally, between familial bonds and the promise of a body politic built on more disinterested foundations.' Discuss any or all aspects of this observation in relation to ONE OR MORE romances.

15. Discuss relationships between East and West and/or Christian and non-Christian cultures, as represented in *Mandeville's Travels* AND/OR any other text(s) from this period.

16. 'In approaching Middle English lyrics ... it is essential that expectations generated by the nineteenth-century notion of a lyric, defined ... as "the expression by the poet of his own feelings", should be set aside' (THOMAS G. DUNCAN). Discuss the implications of this statement for our reading of religious AND/OR secular lyrics.

17. Discuss the most profitable ways of identifying AND/OR critically discussing ballads AND/OR carols from this period.

18. 'Not only do vernacular texts derive material from an array of Latin systems of thought, they generate their own systems - to the extent that I propose that we abandon our patronizing uses of terms like *popular theology* to describe these texts, and speak instead of *vernacular theology*' (NICHOLAS WATSON). Discuss with reference to ONE OR MORE texts.

19. Lo, which a greet thing is affeccoun!
Men may dyen of ymaginacioun,
So depe may impressioun be take.
This sely carpenter bigynneth quake;
(Chaucer, 'The Miller's Tale').

Discuss the benefits and/or dangers of 'ymaginacioun' as these were presented in ONE OR MORE texts of this period.

20. **Either (a)** 'There is typically an excess of "phenomenon" over "interpretation", making for a dramatic sense of immersedness in ongoing events ... We find that the poems adopt metres and a narrative-descriptive method which emphasize the sheer impact of phenomena on the consciousness to which they are exposed' (NICK DAVIS on the works of the *Gawain*-poet). Discuss with reference to EITHER the poems of Cotton Nero A.x OR at least TWO other alliterative poems.

Or (b) 'Polished demonstrations of poetic control that dramatise human beings' utter lack of control.' Discuss this paradox in relation to the poems of Cotton Nero A.x.

21. **Either (a)** 'Explicit hic dialogus petri plowman' ['Here ends the dialogue of Piers Plowman'] (Colophon of Trinity College, Cambridge MS B. 15. 17). Does *Piers Plowman* go beyond the genre of the inconclusive debate?

Or (b) 'From reason to affective knowledge' (JAMES SIMPSON). Is this an accurate indication of the narrative trajectory of *Piers Plowman*?

22. '[H]is unflagging conservatism admits no discussion' (WINTHROP WETHERBEE). Assess this judgment of Gower's poetry.

23. 'Despite, or because of, recent critical attention to the political contexts and engagements of Hoccleve's poetry, what we now need is a renewed appreciation of its literariness: its intertextuality, or its frequent origins in translation, or its use of penitential habits of thought.' Discuss what seem to you to be the most important elements of a full critical picture of Hoccleve's achievements.

24. 'Margery, or at least people like Margery, were an important part of the Church, but ultimately it was that Church and the authority of its consecrated leaders in Christ, which was the real truth and the real concern of *The Book*' (SARAH REES JONES). Discuss *The Book of Margery Kempe* in the light of this quotation.

DENB 2402

25. 'Malory is best understood as a practitioner of *compilatio*, a literary beneficiary of the *Canterbury Tales*, and a writer whose work was contemporary with the cycles of medieval drama.' Discuss.

26. '[B]ei taken þe myraclis of God in idil aftur þeire owne lust' (*A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*). Discuss the implications of this criticism for our understanding of the achievements and limitations of medieval religious drama.

27. Are 'morality' plays AND/OR Tudor interludes more profitably studied in the context of literary allegory than in relation to the 'mystery' cycles?

28. With reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts, discuss the critical potential AND/OR limitations of the concept of a 'Chaucerian' OR 'Langlandian' tradition.

29. **Either (a)** 'Dunbar paid little heed to the political frontier between England and Scotland, and recognized a single language-community, transcending local ones' (PRISCILLA BAWCUTT). Assess the relationship between 'local' and wider literary concerns in the work of Dunbar OR any other Scottish writer(s).

Or (b) Discuss vernacular authority and/or stylistic diversity in the work of Henryson OR any other Scottish writer(s).

30. What seem to you the most significant effects of print or manuscript culture on the reading and/or writing of English literature during this period? Answer with reference to ONE OR MORE authors/texts.

31. 'Straddling provincial and international literary worlds, as represented by ecclesiastical satire and vatic humanism respectively, Skelton presents distinctive challenges to anyone seeking an integrated critical view of his achievement.' Discuss.

32. 'Will there be any end to disputing? For the very problems with which they are assaulted afford them no end of material with which to strike back ... [H]ow soon are the heretics going to succumb, since they have been trained in the same school of tactics?' (THOMAS MORE, 'Letter to Dorp', 1515). Discuss with reference to the literature of **either** the Wycliffite **or** the Reformation controversies.