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SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE 2008
COURSE I AND COURSE II
PAPER 2 AND B9 SHAKESPEARE**

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH AND MODERN LANGUAGES 2008
PART II, PAPER 5 SHAKESPEARE**

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF CLASSICS AND ENGLISH 2008
PART A, PAPER 2(b) SHAKESPEARE**

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF MODERN HISTORY AND ENGLISH 2008
PAPER (iv) AND (v) SHAKESPEARE**

TRINITY TERM 2008

Monday 12 May 2008, 9.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Time allowed – Three hours

Answer *three* questions. At least two of your answers must deal with more than one work by Shakespeare. 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

1. 'The greatness of Shakespeare's mind is not shown by the fact that he was acquainted with 20,000 words, but by the fact that he wrote about so great a variety of subjects and touched upon so many human facts and relations that he needed this number of words in his writings' (OTTO JESPERSEN). What has the study of Shakespeare's language revealed to you?

2. EITHER 'Shakespeare's weakness lies in his complete deficiency in the highest sphere of thought. His characters have no religion, no politics, no conscience, no hope, no convictions of any kind' (G.B. SHAW). Is this true?

OR 'Shakespeare is notably cautious, not to say cowardly, in his manner of uttering unpopular opinions. Throughout his plays the acute social critics, the people who are not taken in by accepted fallacies, are buffoons, villains, lunatics or persons who are shamming insanity or are in a state of violent hysteria' (GEORGE ORWELL). Is Shakespeare really so timid?

3. EITHER 'Shakespeare deepened the effect of his plays by taking out a key explanatory element, occluding the rationale, motivation or ethical principle that accounted for the action that was to unfold. The principle was not the making of a riddle to be solved, but the creation of a strategic opacity' (STEPHEN GREENBLATT). Discuss.

OR 'A play is a composition, not a story' (WILLIAM INGE). Is this true of Shakespeare's plays?

4. 'That which should be the business of a day takes up an age; and for one spot of ground which the stage should represent we are sometimes in more countries than the map can show' (JOHN DRYDEN). Why does Shakespeare elasticise the unities of time and space?

5. EITHER 'The prince is a *dramatic* figure: like the actor, he is required not so much to be as to appear' (NORTHROP FRYE). Analyse the theatrical component of Shakespearean royalty.

OR 'Kings are the slaves of history. History – the unconscious swarmlike life of mankind – uses every moment of a king's life as an instrument for its purpose' (LEO TOLSTOY). Is this true of Shakespeare's kings?

6. 'The subjects of Shakespeare's Histories are no subjects at all; each is but a row of pegs for the hanging of the cloth of gold that is to muffle them' (HENRY JAMES). Discuss.

7. 'Comedy dominated by wordplay is perilous because it demolishes categories and overthrows convictions' (R.W. MASLEN). Analyse the linguistic action of Shakespeare's comedies.

8. 'In promoting the mastery of passion, drama can provide a civilised equivalent for exorcism. The exorcism magically accomplished at the conclusion of Shakespeare's comedies is the purpose of the dramatic action, moving through release to clarification' (C.L. BARBER). Do you find this comic catharsis in Shakespeare's plays?

9. 'As Aristotle says rightly, the moving of laughter is a fault in comedy, a kind of turpitude that depraves some part of man's nature without a disease' (BEN JONSON). Is Shakespearean laughter an insult to human nature?

10. EITHER 'The tragic flaw of the Shakespearean hero is not hubris, the classical presumption that nothing can happen to you, but the anxiety of insufficiency, the determination to become self-sufficient' (W.H. AUDEN). Is Shakespeare's interest in his characters psychological rather than moral?

OR 'The revenger is fascinating because he or she stands on a whole series of borderlines: between civilisation and barbarity, between an individual's accountability to their own conscience and the community's need for the rule of law, between the conflicting demands of justice and mercy' (JONATHAN BATE). Discuss the passage across such borderlines in Shakespeare's plays.

11. EITHER 'Critics should distinguish between the sublime and the trivial, where dying is concerned. The variation tells us much about the place of death in Shakespearean tragedy, where we have dying of all kinds' (JOHN BAYLEY).

Discuss.

OR 'Shakespearean tragedy is concerned as much with displacement as with death. New epochs are coming into being, brashly ousting a more humane past' (PHILIP EDWARDS). Discuss.

12. 'Shakespeare's adherence to the real story and to Roman manners seems to have impeded the natural vigour of his genius' (SAMUEL JOHNSON). Do you agree with this view of the Roman plays?

13. 'The term "romances" is used in inverted commas here, as a way of signalling the imprecision of this nevertheless critically useful label' (ALISON THORNE).

EITHER Discuss the relationship between drama and romance in Shakespeare's late plays.

OR Which critical term in Shakespeare studies would you wish to see placed in inverted commas, and why?

14. 'Imagination is to reality what poetry is to prose: the former will always think of objects as massive and vertical, the latter will always try to extend them horizontally' (J. W. GOETHE). What different perspectives do poetry and prose contribute to Shakespeare's plays?

15. 'Plays are about the spaces in between the spoken word as much as about speech itself – about how people react as much as how they act' (RICHARD EYRE).

Discuss the subtext in Shakespeare.

16. 'There are three goddam sexes – men, women – and *actors*!' (ORSON WELLES). Discuss the relativity of gender in Shakespeare.

17. 'The sonnets can be interpreted as a drama. They have action and heroes. The action consists of lyrical sequences which slowly mount to a tragedy. There are three characters: a man, a youth and a woman. The fourth character is time' (JAN KOTT). Discuss.

18. 'Ovid, metamorphosis, paganism, and antiquity come as close as anything does to occupying the heart of Shakespeare's imagination' (LEONARD BARKAN).

Discuss.

TURN OVER

19. EITHER 'The Elizabethan relationship of actors and audience was a near-perfect accomplishment, a brilliant but perilous equilibrium' (ANNE BARTON). How do Shakespeare's plays use this relationship?
OR 'The Elizabethan playhouse had little provision for scenery. The building was primarily an auditorium, designed for speeches and gesture; acting in it was largely a form of oratory' (STEPHEN ORGEL). Discuss.
20. 'Analysis of Shakespeare's sources will not dull, but intensify, our admiration for his art' (GILBERT HIGHET). Do you agree?
21. 'The Shakespeare text, far from being a stable, coherent, monumental object, is in fact a mutable and multiple entity' (ANDREW MURPHY). Discuss.
22. EITHER 'Shakespeareans are divided into three classes: those who prefer to read Shakespeare in the book, those who prefer to see him on the stage, and those who run perpetually from book to stage gathering plunder' (VIRGINIA WOOLF). Are reading and performing Shakespeare compatible or conflicting activities?
OR 'The very term "director" is ominous, suggesting one who issues "directives" and propels rather than leads' (ALFRED HARBAGE). Discuss the director, either in the theatre or the cinema, as an interpreter of Shakespeare.
23. 'We should not interpret Shakespeare with an eye to the approval of posterity. Posterity may be wrong. Each age must rediscover and reinterpret the plays for itself, and if we are true to our own we cannot be far out' (F.E. HALLIDAY).
EITHER Discuss the way Shakespeare has been imagined and interpreted in any historical period.
OR Discuss Shakespeare as a product of his own period.
24. 'Shakespeare was distinguished from the other dramatic writers of his day only by his wit; they had all his other qualities but that; one writer had as much sense, another as much fancy, another as much knowledge of character, another the same depth of passion, and another as great a power of language' (WILLIAM HAZLITT). Was Shakespeare without rival?

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