

DENB 2406

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

Honour School of English Language and Literature

COURSE II

PAPER A3 (b) CHAUCER, LANGLAND AND GOWER

TRINITY TERM 2006

Thursday, 25 May, 9.30 - 11.30 a.m.

Time allowed – Two hours

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

You may write on Langland or Gower, or on both of them in comparison with each other, or on either / both of them in comparison with Chaucer.

Do not turn over until told you may do so

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1. 'In the human community as seen in *Piers Plowman*, God is everywhere and always a mystery, faithfully present in the church...yet freely present where convention would never expect to look' (M. C. DAVLIN). Discuss.
2. 'Langland's poem was "appropriated" first by political insurgents, then by religious dissidents, and finally by Protestant reformers. But there is something in *Piers Plowman* that resists as much as it invites appropriation'. Discuss.
3. **EITHER (a)** 'Some critics would claim that each version of *Piers Plowman* is a separate poem in its own right; they may claim as much for every manuscript of each version'. Examine **either** claim **or both**.

OR (b) 'The nature of Langland's verbal revisions demonstrates that he cared not just for the broad substance of his message but for the details of his poetic art'. Does it?

4. Ac he þat speneth his speche and speketh for þe pore

 Shal haue grace of a good ende and greet ioye aftur (*Piers Plowman* C IX 46-50).
5. Many tyme þis metels haþ maked me to studie
 Of þat I sei3 slepyng – if it so be my3te (*Piers Plowman* B VII 144-5).
6. 'What, then, is to be said to the critic who...claims that it is ridiculous for a character engaged in a profane pursuit (love) to take part in a Christian ritual (confession) which is controlled by a pagan sage (Genius)?' (ALASTAIR MINNIS).
7. 'The elements which are metamorphosed within Gower's poetry are often the irreducibly minimal within the language' (CHRISTOPHER RICKS). Examine Gower's exploitation of 'minimal' elements in his handling of **either** linguistic structures **or** narrative structures **or both**.

8. ... somdel for good apprise
And eek somdel for lust and game
I have it mad (*Confessio Amantis* VIII 3060-2*).

Should we interpret *somdel* as referring to a part of Gower's intention in the whole work, or to different parts of the work?

9. '[Gower's] Amans can only speak from, and deepen, the fissures of a self already divided' (JAMES SIMPSON). Discuss dividedness of the self **or** society in *Confessio Amantis* **or** any other kind of 'division in Gower's work generally.

10. How important are the French and / or Latin works for a proper understanding of Gower?