

SECOND PUBLIC EXAMINATION

**HONOUR SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
2008-2009
COURSE II**

PAPER A1 ENGLISH LITERATURE 600-1100

TRINITY TERM 2009

Tuesday, 19 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.**

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1. 'Old English literature is above all a literature of things useful for men to know, to think on, and remember: translations from the Bible, the great cycles of homilies, narrative texts salted with maxims, laws, documents dealing with bequests, medical recipes, and, failing these, charms. As well as being instructive, it had, and has, moments of great beauty for the ear and eye, intricate imagery, and strong narrative passages' (ANGUS CAMERON). Discuss any aspect of this statement, or its adequacy.
2. 'The myth of migration gave the English as a *folc* a common identity. ... In the absence of the political cohesiveness offered by nationhood, a myth of origin provides a people with some means of determining its organic status as a group' (NICHOLAS HOWE). Discuss with reference either to the use of Germanic legend in Old English poetry, or to the use of other origin myths.
3. 'To at least some Anglo-Saxons (poets as well as readers) poetic forms were a good deal less important than the weight of meaning they were meant to carry' (TOM SHIPPEY). Is this a fair view of poetry in the period?
4. 'The danger of putting poems into groups is that their individuality and that of their authors is diminished'. Discuss.
5. EITHER (a) 'The work's appeal is not wholly dependent on its plot, which is curiously undeveloped in some regards. At times one suspects that the poet and his audience cared just as much about the social world of *Beowulf*, with its gifts, speeches, protocols, ceremonies, and legendary associations, as about the fights with monsters' (ROBERT FULK, ROBERT BJORK AND JOHN NILES).
OR (b) '*Beowulf* is a tragedy' (A.G. BRODEUR). Discuss.
6. 'The most obvious and startling point about *Genesis B* is that the author approaches his subject from the psychological rather than from the dogmatic point of view' (ROSEMARY WOOLF). Discuss, with reference to other Biblical poetry if you wish.
7. 'If we assume that, because of their literary merits, Ælfric's or Cynewulf's saints' lives can be treated and enjoyed in isolation as we would enjoy, say, a life from Dr Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, then we do great violence to their hagiographical intentions' (MICHAEL LAPIDGE). Discuss.
8. 'King Alfred's *Boethius* survives its stylistic inadequacies because of the powerful portrait it succeeds in giving us of the man who is with justice called Alfred the Great' (ANNE PAYNE). Discuss, including other 'Alfredian' works if you wish.

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9. 'The stylistic innovations wrought by the ninth-century translators, including Alfred, helped to define English as a language of eloquence, worthy to be used not only for translations but for original composition too' (ROBERT STANTON). Discuss.
10. 'Ælfric was the most important homilist in Anglo-Saxon England and the most prolific writer of Old English. His chosen form, however, is not well-suited to modern tastes. Yet Anglo-Saxon homilies deserve more attention than has generally been paid to them' (JON WILCOX). Do you agree?
11. 'We need to understand Wulfstan on his own terms, and not simply as a less learned, less polished, less measured author than Ælfric: it is an over-simplification to say that while Ælfric wrote for the cloister, Wulfstan wrote for the court. It is truer to say that while Ælfric teaches and explains, Wulfstan preaches and proclaims. For all that, Wulfstan's is a unique voice from a troubled time, and deserves to be heard' (ANDY ORCHARD). Discuss.
12. 'Fæmne æt hyre bordan geriseð; widgongel wif word gespringeð, oft hy mon wommum bilihð' (MAXIMS I; 'A woman should be at her embroidery; a roaming woman causes talk; often people slander her with shameful stories'). How characteristic is this of the representation of women in Old English poetry?
13. 'Wyrd bið wended hearde, wealleð swiðe geneahhe' (SOLOMON AND SATURN; 'fate is hard to alter, it surges up very often'). Discuss with reference to any relevant Old English literature.
14. EITHER (a) In what sense is it possible to say that Old English literature had an afterlife?
OR (b) 'For several of the most significant and influential twentieth-century writers of English verse, Old English literature has proved to be a storehouse of technique, imagery, and subject material that has shaped their style, idiom and theory of poetic language' (CHRIS JONES). Discuss.
15. Write on the importance of any one or two manuscripts for an appreciation of Old English literature.
16. Discuss one of the following with reference to Old English literature: the writing of history; the concept of authorial identity; the sense of place; marvels; the cultural significance of riddles or gnomes.