

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, GALWAY
Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh

M.A. (Mode B) EXAMINATION 1998/99

EN522 MEDIEVAL AESTHETICS AND POETIC ART

PROFESSOR GEORGE WATSON
PROFESSOR ALASTAIR MINNIS
PROFESSOR KEVIN BARRY
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TIME ALLOWED: TWO HOURS

ANSWER TWO QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the ideas of poetic inspiration and visionary poetry in Platonic and Neoplatonic writings with reference to any or all of the following texts:
Plato, *Republic*, *Ion*, *Phaedrus*,
Plotinus, *Enneads*,
Proclus, 'On the Difficult Questions in the *Republic*: The Nature of Poetic Art'.
2. Write about the way in which Neoplatonism is transmitted to the Middle Ages through either or both of the following writers:
St Augustine (with reference to *On Christian Doctrine* and the *Confessions*)
Macrobius (with reference to the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*)
3. Does Averroes misunderstand Aristotle's *Poetics*?
4. Discuss the diversity of medieval responses to classical writing, drawing upon at least two different writers for discussion.
5. What sort of poetics do Geoffrey of Vinsauf and Matthew of Vendome prescribe?

Contd./...

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6. 'Do you realize,' I asked, 'that we start by telling children stories which are, by and large, untrue, though they contain elements of truth?' (Plato, *Republic*)

'The enemies of poetry further utter the taunt that poets are liars. This position they try to maintain by the hackneyed objection that poets write lies in their narratives [...].' (Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Gentile Gods*)

Write about falsehood and truth in medieval poetics.

7. Write about the diverse classifications of poetry during the Middle Ages.

8. 'Scholasticism is not interested in evaluating poetry. It produced no poetics and no theory of art. Hence the attempt to extract an aesthetics of literature and the fine arts from it is senseless and profitless, no matter how often it may be made by historians of art and literature.' (E.R. Curtius) Is this true?

9. Is there a relationship between Scholastic thought and Gothic architecture?

10. 'Beauty must include three properties: integrity of completeness -- since things that lack something are thereby ugly; right proportion or harmony; and brightness (claritas) -- we call things bright in colour beautiful.' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1a, 39, 8)
Discuss Thomas Aquinas' theory of beauty.

11. 'Theologians regularly drew upon the resources of secular literary theory, defining and modifying it in accordance with their special needs. When it proved inadequate, they went beyond it, thereby bringing out the uniqueness of Scripture. Consequently the study of the Bible occupied much of the most sophisticated literary theory of the later Middle Ages.' (A.J. Minnis) Write about Scholastic literary exegesis of the Bible.

12. 'For Aquinas, Jean de Meun, and Alan of Lille, Art's imitation of Nature is one of procedure.' Discuss the relationship of Nature and Art with reference to the works of Aquinas, and/or the *Romance of the Rose*, and/or the *Plaint of Nature*.

Contd./...

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13. Discuss Dante's response to classical literature in the *Divine Comedy*.

OR

Discuss the relationship between Dante's work and medieval literary commentaries, whether in relation to self-commentary, commentaries on the *Divine Comedy*, or both.

14. Discuss the influence of academic commentary upon vernacular literary production with reference to one or more of the following texts:

Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

Chaucer, *Boece*

Henryson, *Orpheus and Eurydice*

Hoccleve, *The Tale of Jerehlaus' Wife*

END.