



BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

1996

**COMPARATIVE
LITERATURE**

DISTINCTION COURSE

(50 Marks)

*Time allowed—Three hours
(Plus 5 minutes' reading time)*

DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Attempt **THREE** questions, **ONE** from each Section.
- Question 1 is **COMPULSORY**.
- All questions are of equal value.
- Do **NOT** use substantially the same material in more than one answer.
- Answer each question in a *separate* Writing Booklet.
- You may ask for extra Writing Booklets if you need them.

SECTION I

QUESTION 1. This question is **COMPULSORY**.

The following four passages are translations from Book 8 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Erysichthon has offended Ceres, the goddess of the grain and of fertility, by cutting down an oak tree that was sacred to her, despite being warned against doing so. To punish him, Ceres sends a nymph (or oread) to tell the goddess of Famine to infect Erysichthon, lending her a chariot drawn by dragons for the journey.

Read the four passages below carefully and answer the question that follows.

TRANSLATION 1

She looked for Famine
 And found her, in a stony field, her nails
 Digging the scanty grass, and her teeth gnawing
 The tundra moss. Her hair hung down all matted,
 Her face was ghastly pale, her eyes were hollow,
 Lips without color, the throat rough and scaly,
 The skin so tight the entrails could be seen,
 The hip-bones bulging at the loins, the belly
 Concave, only the place for a belly, really,
 And the breasts seemed to dangle, held up, barely,
 By a spine like a stick-figure's; and her thinness
 Made all her joints seem large; the knees were swollen
 Balloons, almost, the ankles lumpy tubers.
 Keeping far off, the messenger of Ceres
 Called her commands, and though she stayed no longer
 Than possible, and kept the utmost distance
 Between them, still she seemed to feel pollution,
 The taint of hunger, and soared high in air
 And drove the dragons back to Thessaly.

Famine, whose task is always opposite
 To that of Ceres, none the less obeyed her,
 Flew through the air on the wind's wings, and came
 To Erysichthon's palace, where the king,
 In the dead of the night, was lying sunk in slumber.
 She twined her skinny arms around him, filled him
 With what she was, breathed into his lips, his throat,
 And planted hunger in his hollow veins,
 Then, with her duty done, fled from the land
 Of harvests to her sterile home, the caverns
 She knew so well.

ROLFE HUMPHRIES, 1955

'Metamorphoses', Ovid, trans. Indiana Uni Press, 1955, pp106-7.

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

TRANSLATION 2

Where seeking long for Famin, shee the gaptoothd elfe did spye
 Amid a barreine stony feeld a ramping up the grasse
 With ougly nayles and chanking it. Her face pale colourd was.
 Hir heare was harsh and shirle, her eyes were sunken in her head.
 Her lyppes were hore with filth, her teeth were furd and rusty red.
 Her skinne was starched, and so sheere a man myght well espye
 The verie bowels in her bulk how every one did lye.
 And eke above her courbed loynes her withered hippes were seene.
 In stead of belly was a space where belly should have beene.
 Her brest did hang so sagging down as that a man would weene
 That scarcely to her ridgebone had her ribbes been fastened well.
 Her leannesse made her joynts bolne big, and kneepannes for to swell.
 And with exceeding mighty knubs her heeles behynd boynd out.
 Now when the Nymph behild this elfe afarre, (she was in dout
 To come too neere her:) shee declarde her Ladies message. And
 In that same little whyle although the Nymph aloof did stand,
 And though shee were but newly come, yit seemed shee to feele
 The force of Famin. Whereuppon shee turning backe her wheele
 Did reyne her dragons up aloft: who streyght with courage free
 Conveyed her into Thessaly. Although that Famin bee
 Ay contrarye to Ceres woork, yit did shee then agree
 To do her will and glyding through the Ayre supported by
 The wynd, she found th'appointed house: and entring by and by
 The caytifs chamber where he slept (it was in tyme of nyght)
 Shee hugged him betweene her armes there snorting bolt upryght,
 And breathing her into him, blew uppon his face and brest,
 That hungar in his emptie veynes myght woorke as hee did rest.
 And when she had accomplished her charge, shee then forsooke
 The frutefull Clymates of the world, and home again betooke
 Herself untoo her frutelesse feelds and former dwelling place.

ARTHUR GOLDING, 1567

TRANSLATION 3

She went to look for Hunger, whom she found in a stony field, tearing up a few scant grasses with her nails and teeth. The creature's face was colourless, hollow-eyed, her hair uncared for, her lips bleached and cracked. Scabrous sores encrusted her throat, her skin was hard and transparent, revealing her inner organs. The brittle bones stuck out beneath her hollow loins, and instead of a stomach she had only a place for one. Her breast, hanging loose, looked as if it were held in position only by the framework of her spine. Her joints seemed large in contrast with her skinny limbs, the curve of her knees made a real swelling, and her anklebones formed protuberances that were out of all proportion. When the oread saw her, she did not venture to go up close, but delivered the goddess's orders from a distance and, in a very short time, though she had only just come, and though she remained a good way off, she seemed herself to feel the pangs of hunger. Turning her team, she drove the dragons back through the air to Haemonia.

Although she is always opposed to Ceres' activities, Hunger obeyed the goddess's instructions. The wind carried her through the air till she came to the house she had been told to visit. Immediately she entered the bedroom of the scoundrel Erysichthon. Finding him sound asleep (for it was night-time), she flung both her arms around him, insinuated herself into her victim, breathing into his lips, his throat, his heart, and spread famishing hunger through his hollow veins. When she had carried out her orders, she left the fertile world again, and returned to her poverty-stricken home and her accustomed haunts.

MARY M. INNES, 1955

'Metamorphoses', Ovid, trans. Penguin, 1955, pp200-1

Question 1 continues on page 4

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

TRANSLATION 4

There in a stony Field the Fiend she found,
 Herbs gnawing, and Roots scratching from the Ground.
 Her Efelock Hair in matted Tresses grew,
 Sunk were her Eyes, and pale her ghastly Hue,
 Wan were her Lips, and foul with clammy Glew.
 Her Throat was furr'd, her Guts appear'd within
 With snaky Crawlings thro' her Parchment Skin.
 Her jutting Hips seem'd starting from their Place,
 And for a Belly was a Belly's Space.
 Her Dugs hung dangling from her craggy Spine,
 Loose to her Breast, and fasten'd to her Chine.
 Her Joints protuberant by Leanness grown,
 Consumption sunk the Flesh, and raised the Bone.
 Her Knees large Orbits bunch'd to monstrous Size,
 And Ancles to undue Proportion rise.

This Plague the Nymph, not daring to draw near,
 At Distance hail'd, and greeted from afar.
 And tho' she told her Charge without Delay,
 Tho' her Arrival late, and short her Stay,
 She felt keen Famine, or she seem'd to feel,
 Invade her Blood, and on her Vitals steal.
 She turn'd from the Infection to remove,
 And back to *Thessaly* the Serpents drove.

The Fiend obey'd the Goddess's Command,
 (Tho' their Effects in Opposition stand)
 She cut her Way, supported by the Wind,
 And reach'd the Mansion by the Nymph assign'd.

'Twas night, when entering *Erysichthon's* Room,
 Dissolv'd in Sleep, and thoughtless of his Doom,
 She clasp'd his Limbs, by impious Labour tir'd,
 With battish Wings, but her whole self inspir'd;
 Breath'd on his Throat and Chest a tainting Blast,
 And in his Veins infus'd an endless Fast.

The Task dispatch'd away the Fury flies
 From plenteous Regions, and from rip'ning Skies;
 To her old barren North she wings her Speed,
 And Cottages distress'd with pinching Need.

SAMUEL GARTH, JOHN DRYDEN, and others, 1732

Using THREE of the preceding passages, write an essay saying what the principal differences are in the use of language in the three translations you are discussing AND what the effects of these differences are.

SECTION II

Attempt ONE question.

Answer *EITHER* on two or three longer works *OR* on one longer work *and* four or five poems or extracts.

Your answer must make reference to works from MORE THAN ONE module.

EITHER

QUESTION 2

‘The power of literature is in its unreality: in the way it turns the world upside down.’

To what extent is this true of the literature you have studied in this course?

OR

QUESTION 3

‘Literature provides not only social commentary but also a metaphorical mirror for the self.’

Write an essay developing an argument which challenges or comments on this view.

OR

QUESTION 4

‘The value of literature is not in what it tells us but in how and what it makes us think.’

Discuss.

SECTION III

Attempt ONE question.

EITHER

QUESTION 5. The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

‘Life can be truly depicted only by transforming it into art.’ —FLAUBERT

Examine some of the implications of this statement in an analysis of the literary techniques used to transform life into art in AT LEAST TWO novels from this module.

OR

QUESTION 6. The Nineteenth-Century European Novel

Can we legitimately define ‘realism’ in the nineteenth-century European novel as ‘a *truthful* representation of contemporary life and manners’, when wrongdoers in these works are inevitably punished, either by society, or by their own consciences?

Discuss this question with reference to AT LEAST TWO novels you have studied in this module.

OR

QUESTION 7. Poetry and Religious Experience

‘Neither science nor technology is enough to awaken people. It is the artist’s gift to do the awakening, to get into the minds and hearts and imagination and bodies of people . . . not out of an ego-inflated or ego-deflated stance, but as a shout of joy simply because we are created.’

Use this statement as a starting point to discuss the nature of religious poetry. Make close reference in your discussion to FOUR OR FIVE poems or extracts.

‘Hildegard of Bingen’s book of Divine Works’, ed. M Fox, Bear & Co, 1987, p.xii

OR

QUESTION 8. Poetry and Religious Experience

Blindly they saw themselves and deaf they heard—
 But who can speak of this? I know if I
 Betrayed my knowledge I would surely die;
 If it were lawful for me to relate
 Such truths to those who have not reached this state,
 Those gone before us would have made some sign;
 But no sign comes, and silence must be mine.
 Here eloquence can find no jewel but one,
 That silence when the longed-for goal is won.
 The greatest orator would here be made
 In love with silence and forget his trade.
 And I too cease: I have described the Way—
 Now, you must act—there is no more to say.

(Closing lines of *The Conference of the Birds*, Farid Ud-din Attar, twelfth-century Persian Sufi poet. Davis & Darbandi, Penguin 1984)

Use the above quotation as a starting point to show some of the ways that the literature of religious experience deals with the concepts of doubt and/or transcendence. Make close reference in your discussion *EITHER* to FOUR OR FIVE poems or extracts, *OR* to *An Imaginary Life* and TWO OR THREE poems or extracts.

OR

QUESTION 9. Satiric Voices

Does satire aim to make the reader a wiser person, or a better person?

Discuss this question, with close reference *EITHER* to THREE major works from this module *OR* to TWO major works and several shorter ones such as fables.

OR

QUESTION 10. Satiric Voices

This is the first stanza of a poem called 'Ethics for Everyman' by Roger Woddis.

Throwing a bomb is bad.
 Dropping a bomb is good.
 Terror, no need to add,
 Depends on who's wearing the hood.

Are the values expressed in satire absolute, or do they depend on where the reader already stands in relation to what is being satirised?

Discuss this question, with close reference *EITHER* to THREE works from this module *OR* to TWO major works and several shorter ones such as fables.

OR

QUESTION 11. Post-Colonial Voices

‘What characterises the post-colonial experience in any cultural setting is not simply the history of colonial oppression but the struggle for control of the word.’

Write an essay about the way in which the ones who control the word control our view of reality. Refer closely to TWO OR THREE post-colonial works in your answer.

OR

QUESTION 12. Post-Colonial Voices

‘In the attempt to deal with the bridging of gaps, post-colonial literature only emphasises states of separation.’

Choose TWO OR THREE post-colonial works and write an essay responding to this statement, referring closely in your answer to the works you have chosen.