

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

B.A.

The Modern Period II

COURSE CODE : ENGLN53

DATE : 06–MAY–04

TIME : 10.00

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours

Answer three questions, one from Section A and two from Section B. In Section B 'work' and 'works' include drama, film and song as well as fiction and other varieties of prose and poetry; 'authors' includes those producing works in all these forms; and 'the period' means 'since 1945'. If an author of the period produced significant works before the period, you may discuss those works, but should base your answer on works produced within the period.

Candidates must not present substantially the same material in any two answers, whether in this paper or in other parts of the examination.

SECTION A

1. The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

(Elizabeth Bishop, 'One Art')

How does Bishop's poetry negotiate loss?

2. Above all *Lolita* seems to me an assertion of the power of the comic spirit to wrest delight and truth from the most outlandish materials. It is one of the funniest serious novels I have ever read.

(Charles Rolo, *Atlantic Monthly*, 1958)

Write on comedy in Nabokov. You may, if you wish, confine yourself to one novel.

3. In watching Hitchcock films one becomes conscious of issues of freedom, not only to the extent that the characters in the film enjoy it but in how far the spectator in the cinema is deprived of it.

(David Thomson)

Consider 'issues of freedom' in Hitchcock's films. You may, if you wish, restrict your answer to *Vertigo*.

4. 'I'm rather hostile toward audiences,' Harold Pinter has remarked; 'I don't much care for large bodies of people collected together.' Write on hostility, either towards the audience, or between the characters, or both, in Pinter.

SECTION B

5. Compare treatments of the Second World War in at least two works of the period.

TURN OVER

6. 'There's no substitute for the impact on the mind of the spectacle of death' (Arthur Miller). Write on the importance of 'the spectacle of death' in at least two works of the period.
7. Either: (a) 'We're trained so much in pure realistic theatre,' Edward Albee has said, 'that it's difficult for us to handle things on two levels at the same time.' Give an account of how some of the drama of the period operates on two levels at the same time.
- Or: (b) What do you take to be the major achievements of British, Irish, or American drama in the period?
8. Give an account of a form or genre which has notably declined or grown in importance during the period.
9. Discuss the significance of urban or regional location in works of the period.
10. Either: (a) Make a case for the interest and achievement of any experimental or avant-garde literary or artistic school or movement in the period.
- Or: (b) Make a case for the interest and achievement of any experimental or avant-garde individual writer in the period.
11. One of Stevie Smith's friends is reported to have said, 'With Stevie for a friend, one didn't need enemies.' Write on friendship and enmity in at least two works of the period written by women.
12. 'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*). Write on individuality and resemblance in at least two works of the period which deal with unhappy families.
13. What effect has biographical information or rumour about the author had on your understanding of any works of the period?
14. The English poet Basil Bunting said in 1977 that
- I don't go in for personal confessions. I like describing things I see, but if it goes beyond that, you can be fairly sure that it's not necessarily me that's supposed to be making these remarks.
- Take this comment, or part of it, as the starting point for an essay on the confessional, or the impersonal, in works of the period.
15. Make a case for the artistic achievement of any work or works of the period in which fantasy is used.

CONTINUED

16. What moves me is the irregular form... that affects us whenever we try to say something important to us – more than the meaning of what we are saying at a particular moment.

(John Ashbery)

Write an essay on the relation between form, emotion and meaning in at least two works of the period.

17. Analyse the relation between sound and vision in two or more films you have studied.
18. At the launch party for his autobiographical volume, *Experience*, Martin Amis's publisher claimed: 'this is a book which will still be read in 200 years time'. What works produced since 1945 will, in your view, enjoy such longevity? You may restrict yourself to one example.
19. Donald Davie remarks that the thinker Marshall McLuhan 'was personally devoted to the print culture whose demise he was compelled to predict'. Compare treatments of 'print culture' in at least two works of the period.
20. The 1990s American satirical magazine *The Onion*, in its spoof front page for Wednesday, August 15, 1945, offers the following headlines as summing up the era that was about to commence: 'War Over! 50 Years of Nuclear Paranoia Begin Today'; 'Returning GIs Vow to Spawn Whiniest Generation Ever'; 'Nation Shifts Focus to Washers, Dryers'. Take any of these headlines as the basis for an essay on at least two works of the period.
21. It has been argued that the energy and dynamism of fiction surges up from the genre's (supposedly) sub-literary depths. What writers of crime, detective, science fiction, horror, or romance novels would you justify including on a university literature course? You may restrict yourself to one author or genre.
22. Argue for the artistic achievement of a non-fictional work in prose.
23. Either: (a) The British novel, in recent decades, is commonly thought to have lagged behind its American, European and South American counterparts in terms of technical innovation. Is this, in your view, a fair judgement?
- Or: (b) The Booker Prize (ostensibly for the best 'British' work of fiction published in any year) has been awarded to South African, Australasian and Irish writers. What peculiar qualities have you observed in novels from any of these other-than-British traditions? You may restrict yourself to one tradition and one novelist.
24. 'A beginning is often that which is left behind' (Edward Said). Write on the handling of beginnings in some works of the period.

TURN OVER

25. You don't need a weather man
to know which way the wind blows

(Bob Dylan, 'Subterranean Homesick Blues')

Write on treatments of cultural change in at least two works of the period.

26. And here I am, the
center of all beauty!
writing these poems!
Imagine!

(Frank O'Hara, 'Autobiographia Literaria')

Discuss artistic self-consciousness in at least two works of the period.

27. There are also all forms of spiritual addiction. Anything that can be done chemically can be done in other ways – that is, if we have sufficient knowledge of the processes involved. Many policemen and narcotics agents are precisely addicted to power, to exercising a certain nasty sort of power over people who are helpless. The nasty sort of power: white junk I call it – rightness; they're right, right, right – and if they lost that power, they would suffer excruciating withdrawal symptoms.

(William Burroughs)

Analyse depictions of addiction, chemical or other, in works of the period.

28. Heaney's poems matter because their uncomplacent wisdom of trust is felt upon the pulses, his and ours, and they effect this because they themselves constitute a living relationship of trust between him and us.

(Christopher Ricks)

How important is trust in your reading of any author of the period?

29. Mailer never had a particular age – he carried different ages within him like different models of his experience: parts of him were eighty-one years old, fifty-seven, forty-eight, thirty-six, nineteen, et cetera, et cetera.

(Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night*, 1968)

Consider the treatment of age, or youth, or 'different ages', in at least two works of the period.

30. What would you claim to be the best comic novel written since 1945?

CONTINUED

31. A character in a novel by Susan Sontag says that

The past is the biggest country of all, and there's a reason one gives in to the desire to set stories in the past: almost everything good seems to be located in the past, perhaps that's an illusion, but I feel nostalgic for every era before I was born.

How nostalgically is the past used in the work of the period that you have studied? You should refer to at least two works.

32. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for.

(Jean-François Lyotard)

Write on the treatment of 'rules and categories' in any work you have studied which might be described as 'postmodern'.

33. Write an essay on one of the following in the period: the Catholic novel, the novel of working-class experience, the historical novel, the feminist novel, punk sf, chicklit, 'laddism' and fiction, the campus novel, the spy novel, magic realism.
34. What consequences do you see in British and American fiction of the landmark *Lady Chatterley* trials of 1959 (in the U.S.) and 1960 (in the U.K.)?
35. The last sixty years have been remarkable for the volume of critical commentary on fiction put into circulation. How, if at all, has this influenced the authors of fiction?
36. Compare the treatment of one of the following by two or more authors of the period: divorce, childhood, domesticity, violence, money, race, religion, tourism, recording technology, masculinity, femininity, Englishness.
37. Make a case for the artistic interest of the use of one of the following in at least two works of the period: criticism, rhyme, monologue, dialogue, stream of consciousness, autobiography, the absurd, invective, the short story.

END OF PAPER