

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON**

University of London

**EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS**

For The Following Qualification:–

*B.A.*

**The Modern Period II**

**COURSE CODE : ENGLE53**

**DATE : 13-MAY-05**

**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 work 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 you 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. It's a question of using the poet's proper materials, with which he's equipped by nature, i.e., immediate, intense physical reactions, a sense of metaphor and decoration in everything – to express something not of them – something, I suppose, *spiritual*. But it proceeds from the material, the material eaten out with acid, pulled down from underneath, made to perform and always kept in order, in its place.

(Elizabeth Bishop)

Consider Bishop's poems in the light of this quotation.

2. In Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire*, Kinbote, annotating Shade's poem, writes:

Instead of the wild poetry promised here, we get a jest or two, a bit of satire, and at the end of the canto a wonderful radiance of tenderness and repose.

Consider the variety of Nabokov's writing within his work. You may, if you wish, confine yourself to *Lolita*.

3. Mirrors in *Vertigo* remind us of the other side. They warn us of the incompleteness of what we can see directly.

(Lesley Brill)

Write an essay on 'the incompleteness of what we can see directly' in Hitchcock. You may, if you wish, confine yourself to *Vertigo*.

**TURN OVER**

4. If you press me for a definition, I'd say what goes on in my plays is realistic, but what I'm doing is not realism.

(Harold Pinter)

Discuss 'realism' and the 'realistic' in Pinter's plays.

## SECTION B

5. 'Man is a history-making creature, who can neither repeat his past nor leave it behind' (W. H. Auden). Write an essay on how some works of the period negotiate with the past.
6. How has an awareness of a specific readership, or a lack of readership, affected the work of any one or more authors of the period?
7. 'A radical in poetry may be someone using conventional form, as well as challenging it' (Eavan Boland). Discuss the relation between the radical and the conventional in the work of one or more poets of the period.
8. Words can do anything; by the same token, they can do nothing.  
And so, since fiction is helpless in the face of reality, only the fiction of helplessness will be real.

(Samuel Beckett)

Consider some works of the period that confront the idea of helplessness.

9. Viciousness in the kitchen!  
The potatoes hiss

(Sylvia Plath)

Write an essay on the use of everyday or domestic objects in the work of one or more authors of the period.

10. 'Style is not neutral; it gives moral directions' (Martin Amis). Write an essay about stylistic direction in two or more works of the period.
11. Far from appearing antithetical to the human organism and set of values, the technological factor must be seen as co-extensive with and intermingled with the human.

(Rosi Braidotti)

What relations have you found between the human and the technological in some works of the period?

**CONTINUED**

12. Hermione Lee has spoken of Angela Carter's 'edgy refusal to please'. How have one or more of the women authors with whose work you are familiar refused to please?
13. Edgar Allan Poe's original name for the detective story was 'tale of ratiocination'. Is intellectual exercise the principal pleasure of the detective stories you have read?
14. A culture that never encounters any others becomes first inward-looking, and then stagnant, and then rotten. We are responsible for bringing fresh streams of story into our own cultures from all over the world.

(Philip Pullman)

Discuss two works that take this responsibility seriously.

15. 'Whither goest thou America, in thy shiny car in the night?' (Jack Kerouac). Write about the treatment of national destiny in some works of the period.
16. God said to Abraham 'kill me a son'  
Abe said 'Man, you must be putting me on.'

(Bob Dylan, *Highway 61 Revisited*)

Write an essay about one or more works of the period that have revisited earlier works in ways that you find interesting.

17. 'As regards the central "revelation," the "postmodern" strategy is both to approach and to avoid it' (Pierre-Yves Petillon).
- Either: (a) Write on revealing and concealing in two or more works of the period.
- Or: (b) Write an essay on at least two works of the period that employ what you consider to be 'postmodern' strategies.
18. 'Irony may be the only way we can be serious today' (Linda Hutcheon). Consider this claim in relation to two or more works of the period.
19. 'Conspiracy offers coherence' (Don DeLillo). Write about the relationship between conspiracy and coherence in some works of the period.
20. How important is the talking in talking pictures?
21. Write about the ways in which some drama of the period has looked back, or forward, or directly at the present, in anger.

**TURN OVER**

22. 'Contemporary art challenges taste more than any other kind ... it scares you. The fright is part of the fun' (Clement Greenberg). Write an essay on one or more works of the period that have challenged your taste or frightened you.

23. John Updike said in an interview that 'you introduce topical material into a novel at your own peril'. Do you?

24. One of Philip Roth's narrators observes:

Being by myself allowed me to be as emotional as I felt without having to put up a manly or mature or philosophical front.

Write an essay on men in company, or men by themselves, or both, in some works of the period.

25. Today, the dimension of time has been shattered, we cannot live or think except in fragments of time each of which goes off along its own trajectory and immediately disappears.

(Italo Calvino)

Write an essay on the consciousness of time in two or more works from the period.

26. Either: (a) Analyse the characteristics of the artistic output of a particular decade.

Or: (b) Discuss the shape of one career that spans two or more decades.

27. Toni Morrison writes of two young girls in her novel *Sula*:

Because each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be.

Either: (a) Consider the creative possibilities of childhood in one or more works of the period.

Or: (b) Write an essay on one or more works of the period that explore the creative possibilities that emerge from exclusion due to gender, class, race or sexuality.

**CONTINUED**

28. A third Welch property now manifested itself, a young ginger cat called Id. It was the only survivor of a litter of three: the other two Mrs Welch had christened Ego and Super-Ego. Trying his best not to think of this, Dixon bent and tickled Id under the ear. He admired it for never allowing either of the senior Welches to pick it up. 'Scratch 'em' he whispered to it; 'pee on the carpets.' It began to purr loudly.

(Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*)

Write an essay on the anarchic tendencies you find in some comedy of the period.

29. 'Everything in the book happened, although of course in another order' (Bruce Chatwin). Write on some of the non-fiction prose you have read in the light of this comment.
30. In 1985, Patrick Wright spoke of 'the sense of history, tradition and cultural identity which plays such an influential part in the British national imagination'. What have some of the works you have studied made of the British (or English, or Scottish, or Welsh, or Irish) national imagination?
31. Write about humiliation, or joy, or madness, in two or more works of the period.
32. Give an account of a genre that has emerged since 1945, or give an account of a genre that has changed radically since 1945.
33. Make a case for brevity, or expansiveness, in some works of the period.
34. Discuss the presentation of one of the following in two or more works of the period: the supernatural, AIDS, tourism, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, siblings, consumerism, utopias, dystopias, the atomic bomb, science, religion, radio, TV, 'sex, drugs and rock and roll'.

**END OF PAPER**