

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:–

B.A.

The Modern Period II

COURSE CODE : ENGLN53

DATE : 08–MAY–06

TIME : 14.30

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours

Answer three questions, one from Section A and two from Section B. In Section B, 'work' and 'works' include poetry, drama, film and song as well as fiction, and other varieties of prose; '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 these works, but you should base your answer on works produced within the period.

You may include in your answers to Section B discussions of works by the authors of the set texts not used in answering Section A. For example, if you have not answered on *Lolita* in Section A, and choose to answer on Nabokov in Section B, you may include *Lolita* in your discussion. If you have written your Section A answer on *Lolita*, you may refer to Nabokov's works in answering a question in Section B, providing you do not base your answer primarily on Nabokov.

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. Either: (a) The extraordinary thing about Miss Bishop is that she is both a public and a private poet, or perhaps it is that her poetry by its very existence renders obsolete these after all artificial distinctions (artificial insofar as poetry is concerned).

(John Ashbery)

Discuss Bishop's poetry in the light of this quotation.

- Or: (b) Marbles, buttons, thimbles, dice,
pins, stamps, and glass beads:
tales of the time.

(Octavio Paz, 'Objects and Apparitions',
translated by Elizabeth Bishop)

Write an essay on objects, or apparitions, or both, in Elizabeth Bishop's poetry.

2. Either: (a) How significant is vertigo in *Vertigo*?
- Or: (b) Dialogue should simply be a sound among other sounds, just something that comes out of the mouths of people whose eyes tell the story in visual terms.

(Alfred Hitchcock)

Explore the relationship between sound and image in Hitchcock.

TURN OVER

3. Either: (a) Write an essay on the significance of repetition in *Lolita*.
- Or: (b) When my mother, in a livid wet dress, under the tumbling mist (so I vividly imagined her), had run panting ecstatically up that ridge above Moulinet to be felled there by a thunderbolt, I was but an infant, and in retrospect no yearnings of the accepted kind could I ever graft upon any moment of my youth, no matter how savagely psychotherapists heckled me in my later periods of depression.

(Nabokov, *Lolita*)

Write about the relationship between style and sexuality in Nabokov.

4. Either: (a) 'Nothing is funnier than unhappiness, I grant you that' (Nell, in *Endgame*). Use Nell's comment as the starting point for an essay on Beckett's humour.
- Or: (b) In what ways was Beckett an innovative dramatist?

SECTION B

5. The screech and mechanical uproar of the big city turns the citified head - fills citified ears - as the song of birds, wind in the trees, animal cries, or as the voices and songs of his loved ones once filled his heart. He is sidewalk-happy.

(Frank Lloyd Wright)

Show how two or more authors of the period explore the aesthetics of the city.

6. I've never understood why people consider youth a time of freedom and joy. It's probably because they have forgotten their own.

(Margaret Atwood)

Write an essay on two or more representations of adolescence in the period.

7. 'In laughter we always find an unavowed intention to humiliate and consequently to correct our neighbour' (Henri Bergson). Do you agree? Answer with reference to two or more comic works of the period.
8. Explore the relationship between music and text in the work of any author or authors of the period.

CONTINUED

9. 'Every work of art is an uncommitted crime' (Theodor Adorno). Discuss the relationship between art and crime in any two or more authors of the period.

10. That idea of ruin and dereliction, of out-of-placeness, was something I felt about myself, attached to myself [...] Jack, however, I considered to be part of the view. I saw his life as genuine, rooted, fitting: men fitting the landscape.

(V.S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival*)

Write an essay on exile, or on belonging, or on landscape, in the work of any two or more authors of the period.

11. Someone plays with me,
Plants me in the all-electric kitchen,
Is this what Mrs. Rombauer said?
Someone pretends with me –
I am walled in solid by their noise –
Or puts me upon their straight bed.

(Anne Sexton, 'Self in 1958')

Is the self represented in particular ways in different decades? Answer with reference to at least two works. You may if you wish confine your answer to the work of one author.

12. The first thing the writer must learn about technique is that there is no such thing as technique in the abstract or *in vacuo*. Neither is it arrived at for good and all. Each new short story (if it is of any value) will make a whole fresh set of demands: no preceding story can be of any help.

(Elizabeth Bowen)

Use Bowen's comments as a starting point for an essay on technique in the short stories of any author or authors of the period.

13. Referring to at least two authors of the period, discuss the representation of sexual desire or sexual acts.

14. I don't want realism. I want magic! Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them.

(Blanche DuBois, in Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*)

To what extent have authors of the period given us 'realism'? Answer with reference to two or more authors.

TURN OVER

15. I only concern myself with the absolute three-dimensional reality of the piece. That's why I insist that absolutely all of my plays are naturalistic.

((Edward Albee))

Write an essay on how one or more dramatists of the period have conformed to or departed from conventions of naturalism.

16. How to explain to these girls, if indeed that's what they are,
These Ruths, Lindas, Pats and Sheilas
About the vast change that's taken place
In the fabric of our society, altering the texture
Of all things in it?

(John Ashbery, 'Mixed Feelings')

Discuss the writing of at least two poets, showing how they respond to social change, vast or otherwise.

17. A film is – or should be – more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what's behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes later.

(Stanley Kubrick)

Do you agree? Answer with reference to two or more films of the period.

18. Everything is becoming science fiction. From the margins of an almost invisible literature has sprung the intact reality of the twentieth century.

(J.G. Ballard)

Consider at least two works of popular culture that seem especially prescient or prophetic.

19. 'Never before have gay men and women been so visible,' wrote Leo Bersani in 1995. Write about visibility, or invisibility, or both, in relation to homosexuality in the work of two or more writers of the period.

20. You have to distinguish between things that seemed odd when they were new but are now quite familiar, such as Ibsen and Wagner, and things that seemed crazy when they were new, and seem crazy now, like *Finnegans Wake* and Picasso.

(Philip Larkin)

Write an essay on the shock of the new in relation to any two or more works of the period.

CONTINUED

21. I had realized that the origin of my presence on Antigua – my ancestral history – was the result of a foul deed; but that was not what made me, at fourteen or so, stand up in school choir practice and say that I did not wish to sing ‘Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves; Britons never, never shall be slaves,’ that I was not a Briton and that until not too long ago I would have been a slave.

(Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*, 1991)

Either: (a) Write about the representation of the imperial past in writing of the period.

Or: (b) Discuss how two or more novelists depict the relationship between Britain and any of the former colonies.

22. In 1995 Dennis Epho mocked what he calls ‘the celebrated postmodern condition’ as ‘nothing but the hypocritical self-flattering cry of overfed and spoilt children of hypercapitalism’. Consider two or more ‘postmodern’ works of literature in the light of this attack.

23. What actually would be next: a masked hold-up, a smash, floods, a burst tyre, an electric storm with falling trees and meteorites, a diversion, a low-level attack by Communist aircraft, sheep, the driver stung by a hornet? He’d choose the last of these, if consulted. Hawking its gears, the bus crept on, while every few yards troupes of old men waited to make their quivering way aboard.

(Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim*)

Explore the theme of travel, modern or otherwise, in any two or more works of the period.

24. ‘I believe that there is something out there watching us. Unfortunately, it’s the government’ (Woody Allen). Write an essay on surveillance in any two or more works of the period.

25. ‘Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist’ (Ernest Gellner). Examine the representation of nationalism or of national identity in the work of at least two authors of the period.

26. It was too terrible, the baby was sitting on its pot and screaming, and the loo was littered with wet nappies, and everywhere smelt of babies.

(Margaret Drabble, *A Summer Birdcage*).

Write an essay on parenting, or on familial life, in any two or more works of the period.

TURN OVER

27. Later, with inch-thick specs,
Evil was just my lark:
Me and my coat and fangs
Had ripping times in the dark.
The women I clubbed with sex!
I broke them up like meringues.

(Philip Larkin, 'A Study of Reading Habits')

Write an essay on violence in the work of two or more authors of the period.

28. We live under continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed, destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror. It is fantasy, served out in large rations by the popular arts, which allows most people to cope with these twin spectres.

(Susan Sontag)

Discuss this statement in relation to any two or more works of the period.

29. Wars
flicker, earth licks its open sores,
fresh breakage, fresh promotions, chance
assassinations, no advance.

(Robert Lowell, 'Waking Early Sunday Morning')

Is the lesson of war always the same? Discuss with reference to two or more works of the period.

30. People passed me as I stood. Young men with dark suits and girls wearing hats and tailored-looking coats. The thought came to me in a most articulate way: 'How wonderful it feels to be an artist and a woman in the twentieth century'.

(Muriel Spark, *Loitering With Intent*)

Explore artistic self-consciousness in two or more female authors of the period.

END OF PAPER