

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

University of London

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For the following qualifications :-

B.A.

The Victorian Period

COURSE CODE : **ENGLN10**

DATE : **20-MAY-02**

TIME : **10.00**

TIME ALLOWED : **3 hours**

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TURN OVER

THE VICTORIAN PERIOD 2002

Answer Section A and one question each from Section B and Section C.

You may choose a passage in Section A from an author whose work you wish to discuss elsewhere. You may write in Section C on set works not used in answering Section B. Questions in Section C must be answered in relation to at least two works unless otherwise indicated.

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

SECTION A

1. Write on one of the following passages, commenting on the passage itself and relating it to other writing of the period.

(a)

On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway

Is then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish; — how can they this blight endure? 5
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance: 10
Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.

[Author's note] The degree and kind of attachment which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritances can scarcely be overrated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbour of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. 'Fell it!' exclaimed the yeoman, 'I had rather fall on my knees and worship it.' It happens, I believe, that the intended railway would pass through this little property, and I hope that an apology for the answer will not be thought necessary by one who enters into the strength of the feeling. 15 20

(William Wordsworth, 1844)

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(b)

Those who like to lay down the History-book, and to speculate upon what *might* have happened in the world, but for the fatal occurrence of what actually did take place (a most puzzling, amusing, ingenious, and profitable kind of meditation), have no doubt often thought to themselves what a specially bad time Napoleon took to come back from Elba, and to let loose his eagle from Golf San Juan to Notre Dame. The historians on our side tell us that the armies of the allied powers were all providentially on a war footing, and ready to bear down at a moment's notice upon the Elban Emperor. The august jobbers assembled at Vienna, and carving out the kingdoms of Europe according to their wisdom, had such causes of quarrel among themselves as might have set the armies which had overcome Napoleon to fight against each other, but for the return of the object of unanimous hatred and fear. This monarch had an army in full force because he had jobbed to himself Poland, and was determined to keep it: another had robbed half Saxony, and was bent upon maintaining his acquisition: Italy was the object of a third's solicitude. Each was protesting against the rapacity of the other, and could the Corsican but have waited in prison until all these parties were by the ears, he might have returned and reigned unmolested. But what would have become of our story and all our friends, then? If all the drops in it were dried up, what would become of the sea?

5

10

15

In the meanwhile the business of life and living, and the pursuits of pleasure, especially, went on as if no end were to be expected to them, and no enemy in front. When our travellers arrived at Brussels, in which their regiment was quartered, a great piece of good fortune, as all said, they found themselves in one of the gayest and most brilliant little capitals in Europe, and where all the Vanity Fair booths were laid out with the most tempting liveliness and splendour.

20

(William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, 1847)

(c)

XXX

What are we first? First, animals; and next
Intelligences at a leap; on whom
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,
And all that draweth on the tomb for text.
Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun:
Beneath whose light the shadow loses form. 5
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.
Intelligence and instinct now are one.
But Nature says: 'My children most they seem
When they least know me: therefore I decree 10
That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,
And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.
Then if we study Nature we are wise.
Thus do the few who live but with the day:
The scientific animals are they. — 15
Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

(George Meredith, *Modern Love*, 1862)

(d)

July 8. A service at St. Mary Abbots, Kensington. The red plumes and ribbon in two stylish girls' hats in the foreground match the red robes of the persons round Christ on the Cross in the east window. The pale crucified figure rises up from a parterre of London bonnets and artificial hair-coils, as viewed from the back where I am. The sky over Jerusalem seems to have some connection with the corn-flowers in a fashionable hat that bobs about in front of the city of David. When the congregation rises there is a rustling of silks like that of the Devils' wings in *Paradise Lost*. Every woman then, even if she had forgotten it before, has a single thought to the folds of her clothes. They pray in the litany as if under enchantment. Their real life is spinning on beneath this apparent one of calm, like the District Railway-trains underground just by — throbbing, rushing, hot, concerned with next week, last week. Could these true scenes in which this congregation is living be brought into church bodily with the personages, there would be a churchful of jostling phantasmagorias crowded like a heap of soap-bubbles, infinitely intersecting, but each seeing only his own. That bald-headed man is surrounded by the interior of the Stock Exchange; that girl by the jeweller's shop in which she purchased yesterday. Through this bizarre world of thought circulates the recitative of the parson — a thin solitary note without cadence or change of intensity — and getting lost like a bee in the clerestory.

(Thomas Hardy, notebook entry, 1888)

SECTION B

2. 'Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also' (Carlyle, 'Signs of the Times'). Discuss some of the ways in which Carlyle envisages the operation of 'machinery' in 'internal and spiritual' matters. You may confine your answer to 'Signs of the Times' if you wish.
3. 'They are always speaking of me as if I were a writer of philosophical treatises' (Tennyson). Discuss *In Memoriam* in the light of Tennyson's complaint about his critics.
4. Dickens confided to a friend, while writing *Dombey and Son*: 'You can hardly imagine what infinite pains I take'. What complexities and intricacies of design do you find in this novel?
5. 'The distinction of *Adam Bede* is to tell a story, and also to tell about telling the story' (Valentine Cunningham). Discuss the relationship between George Eliot the novelist and George Eliot the critic of fiction in this novel.
6. Henry James wrote that the 'great mystery' of Browning's career was 'the imperfect conquest of the poetic form by a genius in which the poetic passion had such volume and range'. Discuss this view.

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SECTION C

7. Compare the treatment of one of the following by two Victorian poets: childhood, landscape, science, urban life, war.
8. Discuss the work of any Victorian poet whose writing is associated with a particular locality or dialect.
9. Comment on the significance of one of the following to any Victorian poet or poets: Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley.
10. The poet Dora Greenwell, a friend of Christina Rossetti, was the author of an essay called 'An inquiry as to how far the spirit of poetry is alien, and how far friendly, to Christianity' (1875). How far is Christianity alien, and how far friendly, to the spirit of Victorian poetry? You may confine your answer to the work of one poet.
11. 'Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things' (Robert Browning, 'Bishop Blougram's Apology'). Use this comment as a starting-point for an essay on Browning's poetry.
12. The old gods are dethroned. Why should we go back to the antique moulds — classical moulds, as they are so improperly called. If it is a necessity of Art to do so, why then those critics are right who hold that Art is exhausted and the world too worn out for poetry. I do not, for my part, believe this: and I believe the so called necessity of Art to be the mere febleness of the artist. Let us all aspire rather to *Life* — and let the dead bury their dead.

(Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1845)

Write an essay on Elizabeth Barrett Browning's modernity.

13. Write on Tennyson as a poet of happiness, or misery.
14. Pre-Raphaelite poetry is extremely static — painterly it has sometimes been called. By comparison, Swinburne's poetry is nervous and in constant motion. But its movement is quite different from the cumulative poetry of Tennyson and Browning. Pilgrims, voyages, achievement; these are their apt symbolic *figurae*. But though Swinburne loved the sea more perhaps than any other English poet, he never saw it as something to be crossed or conquered. He dreamed himself not on it, a voyager, but in it, a swimmer.

(Jerome McGann)

Discuss this passage as a whole, or any of its separate judgments on Pre-Raphaelite poetry, on Tennyson and Browning, or on Swinburne.

CONTINUED

15. Arnold the Critic rightly distrusted poems which were victories to Arnold the Poet, but messages of despair to one who saw the need to get poetry usefully working, leavening the lump.

(Frank Kermode)

Discuss this view with reference either to Matthew Arnold's poetry, or to his criticism, or to both.

16. The rainbow shines, but only in the thought
Of him that looks. Yet not in that alone,
For who makes rainbows by invention?

(Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Discuss the relation between observation and subjectivity in Hopkins's writing. You may refer to his journal writings as well as his poetry if you wish.

17. The modern novel is preferred to the modern poem, because we do here feel an attempt to include these indispensable latest addenda---those phenomena which, if we forget on Sunday, we must remember on Monday.

(A. H. Clough)

Do you agree with Clough that Victorian fiction has an advantage over poetry because of its greater engagement with ordinary life?

18. Which social problems does the Victorian social-problem novel deal best with?
19. Write an essay on fiction for children, or about children, or on the relation between the two.
20. We have lived through a period of change---change spiritual, change moral, social, and political. The foundations of our most serious convictions have been broken up, and the disintegration of opinion is so rapid that wise men and foolish are equally ignorant where the close of this waning century will find us.

(J. A. Froude, 1882)

What reflections on this change do you find in literature of the late Victorian period?

TURN OVER

21. Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born

(Matthew Arnold)

How applicable do you find these lines to the work of any writer of Victorian fiction or non-fiction prose?

22. As the man beholds the woman
As the woman sees the man,
Curiously they note each other,
As each other only can.

(Bryan Waller Procter)

Discuss female characters in the work of any male author, or male characters in the work of any female author, of Victorian fiction or poetry.

23. George Eliot wrote of Dickens: 'he scarcely ever passes from the humorous and external to the emotional and tragic, without becoming as transcendent in his unreality as he was a moment before in his artistic truthfulness'. Discuss Dickens's fiction in the light of Eliot's comment.
24. 'George Eliot came to novel-writing late, after many years on the frontier of Victorian intellectual life' (Robin Gilmour). In what ways was Eliot's fiction enriched by her large intellectual grasp of the issues of the age?
25. According to a contemporary critic, Thackeray's novels located their action on 'the debatable land between the aristocracy and the middle classes'. Discuss Thackeray's attitudes to, and satire of, the English class system.
26. Charlotte Brontë told her future biographer, Mrs Gaskell, that
- none but those who had been in the position of a governess could ever realize the dark side of 'respectable' human nature.
- Discuss this 'dark side' as it appears in the work of any of the Brontë sisters.
27. 'Wild and yet domestic' was Dickens's verdict on Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*. Write on this combination of attributes in the work of Collins or any other Victorian novelist.
28. 'I know nothing of Political Economy, or the theories of trade. I have tried to write truthfully' (Elizabeth Gaskell). Discuss her fiction in the light of this statement.

CONTINUED

29. In his autobiography Trollope wrote:

I do not think it probable that my name will remain among those who in the next century will be known as the writers of English prose fiction.

What, in your view, has kept Trollope's fiction 'known' to the present day?

30. It has sometimes been conceived of novels that evolve their action on a circumscribed scene . . . that they cannot be so inclusive in their exhibition of human nature as novels wherein the scenes cover large extents of country, in which events figure amidst towns and cities, even wander over the four quarters of the globe. I am not concerned to argue this point further than to suggest that the conception is an untrue one in respect of the elementary passions.

(Thomas Hardy)

Write on Hardy's fiction in the light of this comment.

31. Literary historians sometimes speak of 'early', 'middle', and 'late' Victorian writing. How useful do you find such distinctions?

32. Write on the influence of Victorian popular culture in any of its forms on the literature of the period.

33. What ordering or structuring principles govern Victorian 'nonsense' writing? You may confine your answer to the work of one author.

34. Write on some Victorian literary representations of racial, religious, or social conflict.

35. O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there.

(Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Write on the representation of madness, or melancholy, or despair, in some Victorian literature.

36. Write an essay on one of the following, with reference to the work of one or more Victorian writers: political reform, Darwinism, the function of criticism, the influence of foreign literature, Evangelicalism, aestheticism, self-improvement.

END OF PAPER