

EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

For The Following Qualification:-

B.A.

Scand. Studs. SC5571: Modern Icelandic Literature: Special Topics

COURSE CODE : SCAN5571

UNIT VALUE : 0.50

DATE : 12-MAY-03

TIME : 10.00

TIME ALLOWED : 3 Hours

Answer **ONE** question from SECTION A and **ONE** question from SECTION B. Both questions carry equal marks.

Candidates must avoid any duplication of material within this paper, and must not cover the same ground as in an assessed or extended essay.

SECTION A.

1. The post-nationalist critique of canonisation has its roots in cultural materialism and the economics of literature. Consider the influence this critique has had on Icelandic authors and literary critics, as well as its implications for a small country like Iceland.
2. Icelandic literary histories have tended to gloss over the period 1945-1970 in Icelandic prose, which is considered noteworthy only for Laxness' formal experiments with the novel. How far do you think this view is warranted?
3. Discuss the main characteristics and influence of Sigurður Nordal's large-scale nation-building exercise through the creation of an Icelandic cultural politic and literary canon.
4. John Guillory has argued that 'lack of access to the means of literary production as well as the means of consumption (i.e., the knowledge and access required to read certain texts) is at the heart of women's exclusion from the canon, rather than any white male chauvinist plot'. How true is this for Iceland?
5. Nationalist canons are meant to reflect a 'national identity'. Based on the works read on the course, how would you characterise the 'national identity' reflected by the Icelandic canon, and how has it changed over time?
6. Guillory states that 'canonicity is not a property of a work itself, but of its transmission via the syllabus', and posits the 'pedagogic imaginary' as the creator of a tradition 'through a narrative of reputations'. Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson has made a similar claim, arguing that Icelandic literary history is a 'saga um snillinga, saga útvalinna stórstjarna'. Consider these views in relation to the Icelandic canon: who are its major 'stars' and what is their supposed 'genius' comprised of?
7. Compare and contrast the important role played by the Icelandic 'alþýða' and 'alþýðuhefð' in the literary views of critics as various as Sigurður Nordal, Halldór Laxness and Matthías Viðar Sæmundsson, and examine the underlying reasons for its importance.

SECTION B.

8. *Íslandsklukkan* is generally regarded as constituting a major turning-point in Laxness' career. Consider the validity of this view with specific reference to Laxness' changing attitudes to Icelandic nationalism.

9. Demonstrate the changes in the dominant literary ideology that have occurred over time by comparing the different ways in which critics have interpreted and assessed the work of EITHER Jónas Hallgrímsson OR Halldór Laxness.
10. Consider the validity of the following statement:
'Jónas Hallgrímsson did not recreate Icelandic poetry all by himself, although we are given this impression by Icelandic literary histories. His texts had already been thought by others before he composed them. Jónas's poetry was at the same time a literary and a political necessity'.
11. 'Literary history is perhaps more than anything else a narrative of gaps and exclusions, creating a smooth surface under which flow the currents of an untold history which occasionally reminds us of its submerged existence'. Consider the 'gaps and exclusions' of Icelandic literary history with specific reference to THREE works read on the course.
12. 'Women characters and femininity have never been considered noteworthy as a topic of literature'. Discuss this statement in relation to AT LEAST TWO works read on the course. In your discussion, include a consideration of how the authors in question have dealt with this obstacle in their writing.
13. Helga Kress has claimed that, until recently, Hulda was the only woman writer who was, on occasion, canonised, as a kind of 'token representation of her gender'. Examine this claim.