
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

First Semester Examination
Academic Session 2005/2006

November 2005

HXE 211 - Literary Criticism

Duration: 3 hours

Please check that this examination paper consists of SIX pages of printed material before you begin the examination.

Answer FOUR questions. Answer TWO questions from **Section A** and TWO questions from **Section B**. All questions carry the same marks.

...2/-

Section A

1. Discuss how the choice of themes and language in the following poem affirms explicit challenge to authority and highlights women's identity?

[100 marks]

Ain't I a Woman?

That man over there say
a woman needs to be helped into carriage
and lifted over ditches
and to have the best place everywhere.
Nobody ever helped me into carriages
or over mud puddles
or gives me a best place . . .
And ain't I a woman?
Look at me
Look at my arm!
I have plowed and planted
and gathered into barns
and no man could head me . . .
And ain't I a woman?
I could work as much
and eat as much as a man
when I could get to it
and bear the lash as well
and ain't I a woman?
I have born 13 children
and seen most all sold into slavery
and when I cried out a mother's grief
none but Jesus heard me . . .
and ain't I a woman?
that little man in black there say
a woman can't have as much right as a man
cause Christ wasn't a woman
Where did your Christ come from?
From God and a woman!

Man had nothing to do with him!
If the first woman God ever made
was strong enough to turn the world
upside down, all alone.

(From: Linthwaite, I. (ed.) *Ain't I a Woman: A Book of Women's Poetry from Around the World.*)

...3/-

2. Discuss how the stylistic features of this poem such as imagery and linguistic choices highlight the conscious and the unconscious aspects of the human psyche.

[100 marks]

WILLIAM BLAKE

[1757-1827]

The sick Rose

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

3. Discuss the poet's use of linguistic and structural devices in conveying his attitude toward "relationship and love".

[100 marks]

Since There's No Help (1619)

Michael Drayton

Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part, —
Nay, I have done, you get no more from me;
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes, —
Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou migh'st him yet recover.

...4/-

Section B

4. Below is an extract from *Hotel du Lac* by Anita Brookner. Discuss how the writer's choice of language and theme impact on the process of gender representation.

[100marks]

'I think you should marry me, Edith,' he said. She stared at him, her eyes widening in disbelief.

'Let me explain,' he said, rather hurriedly, taking a firm grip on his composure. 'I am not a romantic youth. I am in fact extremely discriminating. I have a small estate and a very fine house, Regency Gothic, a really beautiful example. And I have a rather well-known collection of famille rose dishes. I am sure you love beautiful things.

'You are wrong,' she said, her voice cold. 'I do not love things at all' 'I have a lot of business overseas,' he went on, ignoring her. 'And I like to entertain. I am away a certain amount of time. But I dislike having to come back to a house only occupied by the couple who live in it when I am not there. You would fit perfectly into that setting.'

A terrible silence installed between them. Edith concentrated her attention on the bill, fluttering unnoticed under the ashtray. When she spoke her voice was unsteady.

'You make it sound like a job specification,' she said. 'And I have not applied for the job.'

'Edith, what else will you do? Will you go back to an empty house?'

She shook her head, wordless.

'...I need a wife, and I need a wife whom I can trust. It has not been easy for me'

'And you are not making it easy for me,' she said.

'I am making it easy for you. I have watched you, trying to talk to these women. You are desolate...And when you think you are alone, your expression is full of sorrow. You face a life of exile of one sort or another.'

'But why should you think me such a hopeless case?'

...5/-

You are a lady, Edith. They are rather out of fashion these days, as you may have noticed. As my wife, you will do very well. Unmarried, I'm afraid you will soon look a bit of a fool.'

She studied him sadly. 'And what will I do in your fine house, when you are away?' she asked. And when you are not away, she thought, but kept the thought to herself.

'Whatever you do now, only better. You may write, if you want to... You will have a social position, which you need. You will gain confidence, sophistication. And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing me credit. You are not the sort of woman of whom men are afraid, hysterics who behave as though they are the constant object of scandal or desire...

She looked up at him. 'But I thought that men preferred that kind of woman...'

'In a sense, yes,' he replied. 'Men do like that kind of woman... They like the feeling that they have had to fight other men for possession... It is only when those other men get up and start fighting for possession all over again that they realize how fragile, and how tiring, that particular kind of partnership is. One gets no work done.'

'Again you are paying me the tremendous compliment of assuming that no one else will want me, ever.'

'...I am paying you the compliment of assuming that you will never indulge in the sort of gossipy indiscretions that so discredit a man. I am paying you the compliment of believing that you will not shame me, will not ridicule me, will not hurt my feelings...

'I am proposing a partnership... if you wish to take a lover, that is your concern, so long as you arrange it in a civilized manner.'

After a long pause, she looked up and said, 'It's getting cold. Shall we go back?'

5. Discuss whether the choice of theme and language in the following poem reinforces or challenges stereotypical conceptualizations of gender.

[100 marks]

In this city, perhaps a street.
In this street, perhaps a house.
In this house, perhaps a room
And in this room a woman sitting,
Sitting in the darkness, sitting and crying
For some who has just gone through the door
And who has just switched off the light
Forgetting she was there.

Alan Brownjohn

6. Discuss how the language of the following extract from *Cry the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton functions to stereotype the Orient.

[100 marks]

I say we shall always have native crime to fear until the native people of this country have worthy purposes to inspire them and worthy goals to work for. For it is not because they see neither purpose nor goal that they turn to drink and crime and prostitution. Which do we prefer, a law-abiding, industrious, and purposeful native people, or a lawless, idle, and purposeless people? The truth is that we do not know, for we fear them both. And so long as we vacillate, so long will we pay dearly for the dubious pleasure of not having to make up our minds. And the answer does not lie, except temporarily, in more police and more protection.