
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

Second Semester Examination
Academic Session 2006/2007

April 2007

**HET 224 – STYLE IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE IN
ENGLISH**

Duration : 3 hours

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

Answer FOUR questions: TWO from Section A and TWO from Section B. Each question carries 100 marks. Do not repeat what has been exemplified and elaborated upon in another question.

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Section A

1. Examine the points of view being used in the following text and discuss the reasons why the writer makes use of them.

'My mind suddenly filled with all kinds of thoughts. Had we, Viji and I, overlooked some detail? Did this woman, who stood before me, know the truth? I vowed then and there to have nothing to do with Viji. I looked up and almost recoiled in surprise, for the familiarity I had read into her face, wasn't there any more. Could the woman have given birth to two girls so entirely different? Now, when she needed most to reassure, she swayed before my eyes like a statue of doubtful origins.

My wife spoke.

"Viji has been telling all kinds of stories. Specially about me. About how I ill-treat her, look on her as a servant. Worse still she has told them I don't want anyone in our house except you. You tell her the truth."

She went away to the kitchen. At moments of crisis she always made a hot drink for herself.

"You married my daughter but you don't want me in the house," my mother-in-law said. "Even as a visitor for a day or two."

"This house is open to everyone," I said.

"All a show," she said.

There is no need to repeat the rest: there were accusations mainly against my wife. The rock melon hadn't been understood. I saw behind my mother-in-law's shoulder Vasu leering at me. No more that glow of admiration, only an ugly contempt. Was that what I had become?

(K.S. Maniam "The Rock Melon")

2. Examine the direct speech uttered by the character Cik Gu Nab in the following excerpt and determine what kind of a person the speaker is and what purpose she serves in the story.

"Che Yam," began Cik Gu Nab, trying to put the matter across as delicately as possible, "we mean our sisters no harm, in fact we are very happy if each one of us goes about doing her own thing. As we often say, each woman to their own *rizq*. In fact, we feel very bad about having to come to you. We don't like to backbite our own sister."

Cik Gu Nab cleared her throat and looked at the others for assent. Having got it in the form of gravely nodding heads, Cik Gu Nab continued: "Cik Yam, the problem now is that one of our own sisters is not doing her own thing at all, but instead meddling with other people's."

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The Imam's wife Cik Yam listened attentively.

"Who do you mean, Cik Gu Nab?" Cik Yam asked, "er, this troublemaker?", wondering what this meandering of Cik Gu Nab's was leading up to. Cik Gu Nab was known to favour a touch of melodrama and to use it to maximum effect always.

"Why, Che Yam, we mean Mariah, of course, the nasi seller! Don't tell me you don't know what she's been up to!" Cik Gu Nab looked peeved at Cik Yam's ignorance of important village matters.

What can Mariah possibly up to, thought Cik Yam. Mariah was apt to go around in her short and loud kebaya, but she was always properly covered by her kain lepas. If she hadn't been so, the Imam would have reminded Cik Yam to pay her a visit. So it couldn't have been the kain lepas.

"No, I don't know, Cik Gu Nab. What has she been up to?" Cik Yam smiled sweetly. Cik Yam knew about most village matters, but not quick enough, it would seem. She was always too busy with housework to gossip. Besides, it was not considered proper for the Imam's wife to be caught gossiping.

"Cik Yam," continued Cik Gu Nab, "Mariah has been enticing our men to abandon their homes for her kedai merpati. You know her nasi cannot be that special. Why, I am sure for one she cannot beat your nasi belauk." (Cik Yam readily agreed.) "But why do all these men seem hell-bent on eating breakfast at her place?" I reckon, I mean we reckon she has put "something" (Cik Gu Nab put heavy emphasis on the word something) in her nasi." Cik Gu Nab paused for her breath.'

(Che Husna Azhari "Mariah")

3. "I stood outside the orderly room, and I heard Grossbart weeping behind me. Over in the barracks, in the lighted windows, I could see the boys in their T shirts sitting on their bunks talking about their orders, as they'd been doing for the past two days. With a kind of quiet nervousness, they polished shoes, shined belt buckles, squared away underwear, trying as best they could to accept their fate. Behind me, Grossbart swallowed hard, accepting his. And then, resisting with all my will an impulse to turn and seek pardon for my vindictiveness, I accepted my own.

Discuss why the short story "Defender of the Faith" by Philip Roth ends in the manner stated above.

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Section B

4. Discuss how the style employed in V.S Naipul's *The Mimic Men* helps to illuminate its central theme.
5. Terry Eagleton states in his book *Literary Theory* (1996) that ideology refers to "those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power" (p.15). Discuss how ideology can affect the style of the novel, *The Mimic Men* or any literary text that you have studied in this course.
6. The ways that women are being represented in *The Mimic Men* serve an instance of 'sexual politics', a phrase made famous by Kate Millet. Discuss some of the examples of sexual politics that can be found in the novel.