
UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

First Semester Examination
Academic Session 2006/2007

October/November 2006

HXE 211 – LITERARY CRITICISM

Duration: 3 hours

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

Answer FOUR questions. Choose any TWO questions from Section A and TWO from Section B.

Section A

1. The phrase “white man’s burden” is a euphemism for imperialism as it helps to justify the policy as a noble enterprise. How far is this reflected in Rudyard Kipling’s classic poem “The White Man’s Burden” (1899)?

[100 marks]

2. In *Malayan Trilogy* (1956) Anthony Burgess aims to debunk the myth of the exotic East on the one hand and the fallacy of British superiority on the other. To what extent would you agree with the above proposition?

[100 marks]

3. Helen Tiffin (1987) argues that one of the many ways in which postcolonial literature can investigate colonial domination is through the use of what she calls “canonical counter-discourse”, a strategy whereby “a post-colonial writer takes up a character or characters, or the basic assumptions of a British canonical text, and unveils (its colonialist) assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes”. How does Jean Rhys attempt to do this in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)?

[100 marks]

Section B

4. What do you understand by the phrase “a postmodern fiction”? Discuss it, with examples, in relation to the quotation below:

“Once we knew that fiction was about life and criticism was about fiction – and everything was simple. Now we know that fiction is about other fiction, is criticism in fact, or metafiction. And we know that criticism is about the impossibility of anything being about life, really, or even about fiction, or, finally, about anything. Criticism has taken the very idea of ‘aboutness’ away from us. It has taught us that language is tautological, if it is not nonsense, and to the extent that it is about anything it is about itself. Mathematics is about mathematics, poetry is about poetry and criticism is about the impossibility of its own existence” (Robert Scholes, 1975).

[100 marks]

5. In your opinion, what makes Julian Barnes’ short story entitled “The Stowaway” (1990) a postmodern text?

[100 marks]

6. Discuss some of the ways in which Philip K. Dick questions and destabilizes the status of a human being in his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968)?

[100 marks]