

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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HXE 211- Literary Criticism

Masa : 3 jam

THIS EXAMINATION PAPER CONTAINS FIVE [5] QUESTIONS IN SIX [6] PAGES.

SECTION A:

Answer **TWO** [2] questions, based on the following passages.

Passage 1

Isabel's cheek burned when she asked herself if she had really married on a factitious theory, in order to do something finely appreciable with her money. But she was able to answer quickly enough that this was only half the story. It was because a certain ardour took possession of her - a sense of the earnestness of his affection and a delight in his personal qualities. He was better than anyone else. This supreme conviction had filled her life for months, and enough of it still remained to prove to her that she could not have done other-wise. The finest - in the sense of being the subtlest - manly organism she had ever known had become her property, and the recognition of her having but to put out her hands and take it had been originally a sort of act of devotion. She had not been mistaken about the beauty of his mind; she knew that organ perfectly now. She had lived with it, she had lived in it almost - it appeared to have become her habitation. If she had been captured it had taken a firm hand to seize her; that reflection perhaps had some worth. A mind more ingenious, more pliant, more cultivated, more trained to admirable exercises, she had not encountered; and it was this exquisite instrument she had now to reckon with.

She lost herself in infinite dismay when she thought of the magnitude of *his* deception. It was a wonder, perhaps, in view of this, that he didn't hate her more. She remembered perfectly the first sign he had given of it - it had been like the bell that was to ring up the curtain upon the real drama of their life. He said to her one day that she had too many ideas and that she must get rid of them. He had told her that already, before their marriage; but then she had not noticed it: it had come back to her only afterwards. This time she might well have noticed it, because he had really meant it. The words had been nothing superficially; but when in the light of deepening experience she had looked into them they had then appeared portentous. He had really meant it - he would have liked her to have nothing of her own but her pretty appearance. She had known she had too many ideas; she had more even than he had supposed, many more than she had expressed to him when he had asked her to marry him. Yes, she *had* been hypocritical; she had liked him so much. She had too many ideas for herself, but that was just what one married for, to share them with someone else. One couldn't pluck them up by the roots, though of course one might suppress them, be careful not to utter them. It had not been this, however, his objecting to her opinions; this had been nothing. She had no opinions - none that she would not have been eager to sacrifice in the satisfaction of feeling herself loved for it. What he had meant had been the whole thing - her character, the way she felt, the way she judged. This was what she had kept in reserve; this was what he had not known until he had found himself - with the door closed behind, as it were - set down face to face with it. She had a certain way of looking at life which he took as a personal offence. Heaven knew that now at least it was a very humble, accommodating way! The strange thing was that she should not have suspected from the first that his own had been so different. She had thought it so large, so enlightened, so perfectly that of an honest man and a gentleman. Hadn't he assured her that he had no superstitions, no dull limitations, no prejudices that had lost their freshness? Hadn't he all the appearance of a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small considerations, caring only for truth and knowledge and believing that two intelligent people ought to look for them together and, whether they found them or not, find at least some happiness in the search? He had told her he loved the conventional; but there was a sense in which this seemed a noble declaration. In that sense, that of the love of harmony and order and decency and of all the stately offices of life, she went with him freely, and his warning had contained nothing ominous. But when, as the months had elapsed, she had followed him further and he had led her into the mansion of his own habitation, then, *then* she had seen where she really was.

She could live it over again, the incredulous terror with which she had taken the measure of her dwelling. Between those four walls she had lived ever since; they were to surround her for the rest of her life. It was the house of darkness, the house of dumbness, the house of suffocation. Osmond's beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond's beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window and mock at her. Of course it had not been physical suffering; for physical suffering there might have been a remedy. She could come and go; she had her liberty; her husband was perfectly polite. He took himself so seriously; it was something appalling. Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers. She had taken him seriously, but she had not taken him so seriously as that. How could she - especially when she had known him better? She was to think of him as he thought of himself - as the first gentleman in Europe. So it was that she had thought of him at first, and that indeed was the reason she had married him. But when she began to see what it implied she drew back; there was more in the bond than she had meant to put her name to.

(From The Portrait of A Lady by Henry James)

EITHER

1. [a] The idea of femininity seems to present women as passive, docile and above all selfless.
Based on the given passage, how does the character Isabel, react to this idea of femininity?

[100 marks]

OR

- [b] Discuss how the process of self-definition for Isabel is complicated by the patriarchal definitions she faces.

[100 marks]

Passage 2

'You think we don't fear death? We do. My legs almost refused to move when Robson called out to me. Each minute, I waited for a bullet to enter my heart. I've seen men piss on themselves and others laugh with madness at the prospect of a fight. And the animal groan of dying men is a terrible sound to hear. But a few shall die that the many shall live. That's what crucifixion means today. Else we deserve to be slaves, cursed to carry water and hew wood for the whiteman for ever and ever.

Choose between freedom and slavery and it is fitting that a man should grab at freedom and die for it. We need ---'

He suddenly stopped speaking, pacing, and for the first time seemed aware of Mugo. Mugo sat rigidly in his seat, staring at the ground, sure that the homeguards would get him tonight. Kihika was mad, mad, he reflected, and the thought only increased his terror.

'What do you want?' Keep him talking. A mad man was not dangerous as long as he was talking.

'We want a strong organization. The whiteman knows this and fears. Why else has he made our people move into these villages? He wants to shut us from the people, our only strength. But he will not succeed. We must keep the road between us and the people clear of obstacles. I often watched you in old Thabai. You are a self-made man. You are a man, you have suffered. We need such a man to organize an underground movement in the new village.'

Mugo winced at every word from Kihika.

'I - I have never taken the oath,' he protested, weakly.

'I know that,' Kihika said. 'But what is an oath? For some people you need the oath to bind them to the Movement. There are those who'll keep a secret unless bound by an oath. I know them. I know men by their faces. In any case how many took the oath and are now licking the toes of the whiteman? No, you take an oath to confirm a choice already made. The decision to lay or not to lay your life for the people lies in the heart. The oath is the water sprinkled on a man's head at baptism.'

'You ask why we fought, why we lived in the forest with wild beasts. You ask why we killed and spilt blood.

'The whiteman went in cars. He lived in a big house. His children went to school. But who tilled the soil on which grew coffee, tea, pyrethrum, and sisal? Who dug the roads and paid the taxes? The whiteman lived on our land. He ate what we grew and cooked. And even the crumbs from the table, he threw to his dogs. That is why we went into the forest. He who was not on our side, was against us. That is why we killed our black brothers. Because, inside, they were whitemen. And I know even now this war is not ended. We get Uhuru today. But what's the meaning of "Uhuru"? It is contained in the name of our Movement: Land and Freedom. Let the Party that now leads the country rededicate itself to all the ideals for which our people gave up their lives. The Party must never betray the Movement. The Party must never betray Uhuru. It must never sell Kenya back to the Enemy! Tomorrow we shall ask: where is the land? Where is the food? Where are the schools? Let therefore these things be done now, ' for we do not want another war ... no more blood in my ... in these our hands...'

(From A Grain of Wheat by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o)

EITHER

2. [a] Discuss how the discourse of the above passage reinforces the idea of being in control against the idea of being controlled.

[100 marks]

OR

- [b] Based on the above passage, explain the negativity of the 'Other' in terms of European imperialism.

[100 marks]

SECTION B:

Answer any **TWO [2]** questions.

3. The following poem exemplifies the classic dichotomy that is the cornerstone of the self/other relationship as theorised in Orientalism. Discuss.

Wole Soyinka

Telephone Conversation

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. 'Madam,' I warned,
'I hate a wasted journey - I am African.'
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was, fowly
'HOW DARK?' . . . I had not misheard. . . . 'ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?' Button B. Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar-box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It was real! Shamed
By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfoundment to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis -
'ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?' Revelation came.
'You mean - like plain or milk chocolate?'
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,
I chose. 'West African sepia' - and as afterthought,
'Down in my passport.' Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. 'WHAT'S THAT?' conceding
'DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS.' 'Like brunette.'
'T H A T'S D A R K, I S N'T I T ? Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
Are a peroxide blonde. Friction, caused-
Foolishly madam - by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black -One moment madam!' - sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears - 'Madam,' I pleaded, 'wouldn't you rather
See for yourself?'

[100 marks]

4. Analyse the following poem paying particular attention to the way the female gender is portrayed.

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 someone who has just gone through the door
And who has just switched off the light
Forgetting she was there.

Alan Brownjohn

[100 marks]

5. Discuss how the difference between "we" and "they" in the following poem subscribes to a view of the "other" as always inferior to the "self" as highlighted in post colonial theory.

Slivery rice-fields whisper wide
How for home and freedom their owners died.

We have set the torch to their bamboo town,
And out they come in a scampering rush,
Little brown men with spears.

Shoot!

Down they go in crush, Sickening smears,
Hideous writhing huddles and heaps
Under the palms and the mango-tress.

More, still more! Shoo 'em down
Like brown jack-rabbits that scoot
With comical leaps
Out of the brush.

No Loot?

No prisoners, then. As for these –
Hush!

[100 marks]