



UNIVERSITY
OF
JOHANNESBURG

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

MAIN EXAMINATION: JUNE 2015

COURSE: ENGLISH HONOURS: TIME: 4 HOURS
Modernist/Contemporary Literature

COURSE CODE: ENG8X02 MARKS: 200

FIRST EXAMINER:

1. Prof. K. Scherzinger
Prof. R. Frenkel
Dr J. Starfield
Dr B. Grogan
Dr S. Mngadi
Mrs D. Labuschagne
2. Prof. ~~D. Levey~~ (UNISA)

THIS PAPER CONSISTS OF SIX (6) PAGES

Instructions:

1. Please answer two questions. Each question is worth 100 marks.
2. Please note that you may not repeat material covered in your term essays for this module.
3. Please answer each question in a separate answer book, and write the number of the question on the front of the answer book.

1. Modernism

One of the rallying cries of modernism was Ezra Pound's "Make it new!" Write an essay in which you explore how at least two of the writers you have studied in this module responded to this exhortation.

2. Yeats

Write a detailed analysis of ONE of the poems below. In the course of your essay, you should indicate in what ways and to what extent it reflects a) Yeats's abiding preoccupations and b) modernist concerns.

Leda and the Swan (1924)

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

OR

The Second Coming (1920)

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

3. Eliot

EITHER

3.1

By way of a detailed analysis of T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", discuss the extent to which Eliot's poetics is reflected in the poem as a precursor to poststructuralist concerns. Your discussion must include definitions of relevant terms and concepts.

OR

3.2

Jeffrey Alexander observes that "trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society" (2004: 2). In many ways, T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* is just that – a construction of cultural trauma that attempts to assimilate catastrophic events through myth.

Using these observations as a starting point, provide a careful analysis of the poem that demonstrates the ways in which its various images and allusions suggest that this attempt at assimilation is doomed from the outset.

4. Faulkner

The salient technical feature of *The Sound and the Fury* is the use of different points of view in the presentation of the breakup of the Compson family. The story is told through one obsessed consciousness after another, as we pass from Benjy's near-mindedness to the obsessed mind of Quentin and then to the very differently obsessed mind of Jason. [...] We learn what it is like to live in such a family through being forced to share the minds of the three brothers in their special kinds of obsession. The sense of "entrapment" is overpowering. (Cleanth Brooks)

Write an essay in which you discuss the different perspectives and obsessions of the Compson brothers and their significance for *The Sound and the Fury*. In the course of your essay, consider the way in which the novel's representation of these obsessive points of view exemplifies literary modernism.

5. Fowles

5.1

For I have returned, albeit deviously, to my original principle: that there is no intervening god beyond whatever can be seen, in that way, in the first epigraph to this chapter; thus only life as we have, within our hazard-given abilities, made it ourselves, life as Marx defined it – *the actions of men (and of women) in pursuit of their ends*. The fundamental principle that should guide these actions, that I believe myself always guided Sarah's, I have set as the second epigraph. A modern existentialist would no doubt substitute 'humanity' or 'authenticity' for 'piety'; but he would recognize Arnold's intent.

[. . .]

He walks towards an imminent, self-given death? I think not; for he has at last found an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness, on which to build; he has already begun, though he would still bitterly deny it, though there are tears in his eyes to support his denial, to realize that life, however advantageously Sarah may in some ways seem to fit the role of Sphinx, is not a symbol, is not one riddle and one failure to guess it, is not to inhabit one face alone or to be given up after one losing throw of the dice; but is to be, however inadequately, emptily, hopelessly into the city's iron heart, endured.

John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Chapter 61

In the final chapter of his novel, Fowles returns to the existential question of "authenticity". Discuss the significance of this question for Fowles's treatment of the concepts of freedom and the human condition, "after the death of a certain god".

OR

5.2

In re-imagining the Victorian Age – its provincial life, documents, literature and its commentators – John Fowles reveals a complex textuality underlying its conventional social surface.

Taking the above into account, analyse the various ways in which Fowles uses *pastiche* and a self-conscious narrative to reveal the *heteroglossia* of the Victorian Age.

6. Auster

In Auster's work, the trope of the locked room primarily evokes the mystery of the self. And the most mysterious and paradoxical is the writer's self. On the one hand the writer is a mythical, solitary figure, whose life goes on behind his skull. But he is also refracted into the multiple selves of his fictional characters and goes on living in the infinite spaces that extend beyond of the door of his room. This duality is conveyed in the final episode, in which the narrator destroys the pages of Fanshawe's red notebook. Fanshawe's words cancel themselves out and are erased before they can be deciphered. But the narrator's words are not – they form the three stories of *The New York Trilogy*.

Using this quotation from Ilana Shiloh's chapter on 'Locked Room' mysteries, discuss the extent to which her approach to Auster illuminates the evocation of the author-narrator-character relationship in the component parts of *The New York Trilogy*.

7. Pynchon

Using the passage below as a starting point, discuss the ways in which Pynchon's novel subverts traditions of narrative logic.

So began, for Oedipa, the languid, sinister blooming of The Tristero. Or rather, her attendance at some unique performance, prolonged as if it were the last of the night, something a little extra for whoever'd stayed this late. As if the breakaway gowns, net bras, jewelled garters and G-strings of historical figuration that would fall away were layered dense as Oedipa's own street-clothes in that game with Metzger in front of the Baby Igor movie; as if a plunge towards dawn

indefinite hours long would indeed be necessary before The Tristero could be revealed in its terrible nakedness. Would it smile, then, be coy, and would it flirt away harmlessly backstage, say goodnight with a Bourbon Street bow and leave her in peace? Or would it instead, the dance ended, come back down the runway, its luminous stare locked to Oedipa's, smile gone malign and pitiless; bend to her alone among the desolate rows of seats and begin to speak words she never wanted to hear?

8. Marachera

Dambudzo Marechera is considered one of the most prominent postcolonial African writers. He was deeply influenced by modernist writers like James Joyce. Discuss how *The House of Hunger* can be considered both a modernist and postcolonial novel.

9. Blackburn

Julia Blackburn's *The Book of Color* is a richly textured surreal family biography set in the Indian Ocean. Discuss how the novel deals with issues of identity and belonging in a transnational frame.

END OF PAPER

FINAL SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTION PAPER APPROVAL FORM



1. Department:	English	
2. Module name:	English Honours: Lit Theory JUNE 2015	
3. Name of Internal Assessor:	Dr B. Grogan	
4. Name of External Moderator:	Prof. David Levey (UNISA)	
5. Did you receive a summary of the content of the module?	X Yes	No
6. COMMENTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE QUESTION PAPER		
6.1 Is the paper fair?		
Without doubt. It offers considerable challenges, but numerous choices of essay topic are provided for students to answer.		
6.2 Does the paper adequately assess the main aspects of the module contents?		
All aspects are dealt with thoroughly.		
6.3 Does the paper assess the students at an appropriate level?		
Yes, for English at NQF Level 8. I would like to congratulate the examiners on devising a paper that is creative and stimulating, while being rigorous as well.		
6.4 Is the length of the question paper satisfactory?		
Yes, though I wonder about the fact that three hours are provided for two answers in this paper while four hours are allowed for two essays in ENG8X02.		
6.5 Do you propose any changes to the question paper? If so, please supply details.		
Some changes in wording suggested, in the interests of greater clarity.		

Signature: Levey _____

Date: 2015-04-17 _____

