

University of Durham

EXAMINATION PAPER

date

May/June 2009

exam code

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description

LITERATURE OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD – LEVEL 3

Time allowed: 3 hours

Examination material provided:

None

Additional Materials Permitted:

None

Instructions:

THIS IS A CLOSED BOOK EXAMINATION. YOU ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BRING ANY TEXTS INTO THIS EXAMINATION.

Answer THREE questions, ONE from Section A, ONE from Section B, and ONE from EITHER Section. Reference must be made to AT LEAST FOUR authors overall. DO NOT use substantially the same material in different answers, or in any other Final Honours papers or equivalents.

SECTION A

(Questions 1-12 are open questions to be answered with reference to any appropriate writers.)

- 1 'Any [...] attempts to summarize Romanticism inevitably end up over-systematising and simplifying the phenomenon' (Aidan Day). Consider this statement in relation to AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
- 2 'The tempest gathers ...' (Coleridge and Southey, The Fall of Robespierre). How is political AND/OR historical change imagined in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period?
- 3 'The prevailing attitude favored innovation against traditionalism' (M. H. Abrams). Consider this statement in relation to AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period. You may focus on innovation OR tradition if you wish.
- 4 'The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way' (William Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1802). Consider the depiction of common life AND/OR the imagination AND/OR the role of the poet in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
- 5 Consider ways in which isolation AND/OR melancholy are depicted in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.

- 6 Taking the Piranesi etching below as a starting-point, analyse the role of architecture AND/OR imprisonment AND/OR visions in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.



Giovanni Piranesi, *Carceri* (1761)

- 7 Examine the importance of childhood AND/OR the family AND/OR education AND/OR nature in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
- 8 'An emphasis on the expression of individual thought and feeling in the Romantic period is evident in the practice of Romantic writers and shapes their uses of literary form.' Discuss Romantic uses of 'literary form' in the light of this assertion, referring to the work of AT LEAST TWO writers.
- 9 Explore ways in which the work of ONE OR MORE writers of the Romantic period engages in a dialogue with another Romantic writer AND/OR engages with writing from the past AND/OR influences the work of ONE OR MORE writers from 1820 to the present day.
- 10 'The vaporous exultation, not to be confined!' (Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*). Examine the representation of oppression and liberty in the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.
- 11 '[Peacock] wrote about key subjects at key times, and with a degree of seriousness, and intelligence, that illuminates them still' (Marilyn Butler). In the light of this quotation, examine the prose of AT LEAST TWO writers of the Romantic period.

- 12 'In controversies about such issues as "the romantic ideology" (Jerome McGann) or "romantic ecology" (Jonathan Bate), conceptions of the "romantic" are not just an object of historical study but relate to arguments over the methods and assumptions of contemporary critics.' Discuss with reference to the work of AT LEAST TWO writers of the period.

SECTION B**(Questions 13–23 are on individual writers.)**

13 EITHER

- (a) 'Blake is the great anti-simplifier, always probing for contradiction, especially self-contradiction' (Michael Mason). Discuss. You may write on Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience AND/OR his other works; you may refer to Blake's illustrations if you wish.

OR

- (b) 'One King, one God, one Law' (Blake, The Book of Urizen). In what ways does Blake's writing explore tyranny AND/OR freedom? You may write on Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience AND/OR his other works; you may refer to Blake's illustrations if you wish.

14 EITHER

- (a) 'Thanks to the human heart by which we live, / Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears' (Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality'). Analyse Wordsworth's poetic strategies for representing 'the human heart' AND/OR the co-existence of 'joys' and 'fears'.

OR

- (b) 'Nature in Wordsworth is a narcissistic delusion, designed to persuade the poet and his readers of the essential goodness of existence'. Discuss. You may concentrate on The Prelude (1805), OR you may range more widely.

15 EITHER

- (a) 'Central to Coleridge's conversation poems is the capacity to enact imaginative movements out of and back to the transforming and transformed self'. Discuss.

OR

- (b) 'I have strange power of speech' (Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner). In the light of this quotation, explore the alliance between 'strangeness' and 'power' AND/OR a concern with expression in Coleridge's poetry.

16 EITHER

- (a) What part does uncanny or repressed knowledge play in Gothic fiction?

OR

- (b) 'The question now afloat in the world respecting THINGS AS THEY ARE, is the most interesting that can be presented to the human mind. While one party pleads for reformation and change, the other extols in the warmest terms the existing constitution of society' (William Godwin, Preface to Caleb Williams (1794)). Discuss ways in which Gothic fiction seeks to change or maintain 'Things as They Are'.

17 EITHER

- (a) 'Every ancient custom ought to be sacred unless it is prejudicial to Happiness' (Jane Austen, marginal note in Goldsmith's History of England). In the light of this quotation, discuss Austen's presentation of 'custom' AND/OR 'Happiness' in her fiction.

OR

- (b) 'Marianne was silent; it was impossible for her to say what she did not feel, however trivial the occasion; and upon Elinor therefore the whole task of telling lies when politeness required it, always fell' (Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility). Using this quotation as a point of departure, discuss the role of manners AND/OR narratorial irony in Austen's fiction.

18 EITHER

- (a) 'It is this which seems most revolutionary: an insistence that private and public are joined and, long before the 1960s, that personal and political are one' (Janet Todd). Examine the relationship between the private and the public in Wollstonecraft's writings. You may refer to ANY of her writings.

OR

- (b) 'It is time to effect a revolution in female manners' (A Vindication of the Rights of Woman). Consider the significance of Wollstonecraft's declaration in ANY of her writings.

19 EITHER

- (a) 'Factitious Art can ne'er attain / The grace of young Simplicity' (Charlotte Smith, 'The Jay in Masquerade'). With reference to ONE OR MORE women writers of the Romantic period, consider the significance of simplicity AND/OR art.

OR

- (b) 'To the man belongs the epic, with its grand manner, its sense of history, and its knowledge of good and evil; to the woman belongs the lyric, with its emphasis on individual feeling and domestic experience' (Helsing, Sheets, and Veeder). In the light of this quotation, examine the relationship between gender and genre in the poetry of Charlotte Smith AND/OR Felicia Hemans AND/OR Letitia Landon.

20 EITHER

- (a) '[Byron] seems fascinated with violence per se, especially with the crime of murder' (Paul Cantor).

'Byron's heroes [...] are all lovers – for most of them it is the ruling passion in their lives – and they remain faithful, in true romantic fashion, until death' (Peter Thorslev).

In the light of these two statements, explore Byron's poetic representations of violence AND/OR heroism AND/OR love. You may write on any area of his work.

OR

- (b) But as the torrent widens towards the ocean,
We ponder deeply on each past emotion.
(Byron, Don Juan, III. 2.)

With these lines in mind, discuss Byron's handling in his poetry of ONE OR MORE of the following: narrative voice; memory; regret; philosophizing; emotion. You may restrict your answer to Don Juan, if you wish, or you may range more widely.

21 EITHER

- (a) 'Shelley's poetry not only cherishes ideals; it also tests and questions them with artistry and eloquence'. Discuss.

OR

- (b) And what wert thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?
(Shelley, 'Mont Blanc')

Taking these lines as a point of departure, explore the characteristic methods and concerns of Shelley's poetic 'imaginings'.

22 EITHER

- (a) 'Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips' (Keats, 'Ode on Melancholy'). Use this quotation as a starting point for a discussion of the relationship between pain and pleasure AND/OR imagination and reality in Keats's poetry.

OR

- (b) 'With mind self-overaw'd' (Keats, 'Fancy'). Is it right to think of Keats's poetry as preoccupied with the self?

23 EITHER

- (a) 'Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts; but to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task' (William Hazlitt, 'On Familiar Style'). Discuss Hazlitt's work in relation to this quotation.

OR

- (b) Duncan Wu describes Hazlitt as an 'acute analyst of the cultural ferment we now call Romanticism.' Discuss.

END