

國立中央大學八十四學年度碩士班研究生入學試題卷

所別：英美語文研究所

組 科目：英美文學史

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General Directions: There are two sections in this examination. Please answer any two of the questions from Section I, any one from Section II.

Section I: Answer any two of the following questions; 30% each.

1. Walter Pater wrote in *The Renaissance*: "One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions*, where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, freshening writings of Voltaire."

Why does Pater equate literature with death? Describe the "awakening" of your literary sense. Why do you want to study literature? What is the awakening of intellectual excitement?

2. In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the character Ariel sings a song that has haunted all of Western literature ever since.

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.
Ding dong--Hark now I hear them
Ding dong bell.

Analyze this song. What is it about? How does it relate to the play *The Tempest*? Who is Ariel? Who is "thy father"?

3. In T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Eliot begins the poem,

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

Eliot is echoing the beginning of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, where Chaucer wrote,

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour. . .

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How do these two literary works reflect one another? Why is April the "cruellest month" for Eliot? How has the world changed for Eliot, the later poet, and how does his literature reflect that change?

4. In "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" (1867), Karl Marx wrote,

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that those properties are the product of human labour. It is as clear as noon-day, that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by Nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. But so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was.

Analyze this passage. What is literary about the rhetoric Marx is using to describe the fetishism of commodities. Marx was living in England when he wrote this essay, and he was aware of the English love of "Nonsense." What is the literature of "Nonsense" or "Nonsense Literature" (i.e., Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear) and how can it be read in Marx's extremely important theory of the commodity? Can literature, meaning a story or a poem, be read as a fetishized commodity?

5. As a Chinese student of English and American literature, is there a difference between the way the West treats "literature" and the way the East, in this case Chinese culture, treats or thinks about literature? What are the differences? What are the similarities?

Section II: Answer any one of the following questions; 40%.

1. Compare a major 19th-century with a major 20th-century American poet. Work through a detailed reading of a poem by each and build up a general statement about their work and their century.
2. Compare a major 19th-century with a major 20th-century American novelist. Work through a detailed reading of a novel by each and build up a general statement about their work and their century.