

St. Joseph's Evening College (Autonomous)

II Semester M A English/ End Semester Examinations – March/April 2018

European Classics Revisited – II

Time: 2 1/2 Hours

Max. Marks: 70

Instructions

Answer all questions as specified

Please proof-read your responses and make sure they are error-free

Section – I

1. Answer any one of the following questions: 1x15 =15

- a. What, in your opinion, makes European literature different from the literatures of other regions? Substantiate your answer from some of the texts you have studied.
- b. Bring out the conditions that impart a unique quality to the literature of Europe. Illustrate your answer with examples from the texts prescribed.

Section – II

2. Answer any **three** of the following: 3x10=30

- a. One of the important themes of 'The Overcoat' is its self-reflexivity and constant reference to itself as a work of art. Discuss.
- b. Critically examine Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman' as an attempt to pose the problem of the "little man" whose happiness is destroyed by the great leader in pursuit of ambition.
- c. How does Sartre substantiate his extraordinary claim that an artist cannot both reveal and create at the same time?
- d. Some critics are of the view that *Madame Bovary* became a famous novel because it dealt with a theme that no one dared to even speak about, let alone write at the time. What is your response to this observation?

Section III

The questions in this section are based on brief excerpts from the texts you have studied. Answer any three 3 x 5 = 15

Identify the literary work from which the following is excerpted. What is the phenomenon being described here? What clues do you find here as to the strategy chosen by Boccaccio's characters to quarantine themselves, thus providing the overarching structure in which the 100 tales are embedded?

These facts, and others of the like sort, occasioned various fears and devices amongst those who survived, all tending to the same uncharitable and cruel end; which was, to avoid the sick, and everything that had been near them, expecting by that means to save themselves. And some holding it best to live temperately, and to avoid excesses of all kinds, made parties, and shut themselves up from the rest of the world ; eating and drinking moderately of the best, and diverting themselves with music, and such other entertainments as they might have within doors ; never listening to anything from without, to make them uneasy. Others maintained free living to be a better preservative, and would baulk no passion or appetite they wished to gratify, drinking and revelling incessantly from tavern to tavern, or in private houses (which were frequently found deserted by the owners, and therefore common to every one), yet strenuously avoiding, with all this brutal indulgence, to come near the infected. And such, at that time, was the public distress, that the laws, human and divine, were no more regarded ; for the officers, to put them in force, being either dead, sick, or in want of persons to assist them, everyone did just as he pleased. A third sort of people chose a method between these two : not confining themselves to rules of diet like the former, and yet avoiding the intemperance of the latter ; but eating and drinking what their appetites required, they walked everywhere with odours and nosegays to smell to ; as holding it best to corroborate the brain : for the whole atmosphere seemed to them tainted with the stench of dead bodies, arising partly from the distemper itself, and partly from the fermenting of the medicines within them.

4. Read this brief excerpt from *Madame Bovary*. What does this tell you about Flaubert's powers of observation as a novelist celebrated for his realism?

As to Charles, he did not stop to ask himself why it was a pleasure to him to go to the Bertaux. Had he done so, he would, no doubt, have attributed his zeal to the importance of the case, or perhaps to the money he hoped to make by it. Was it for this, however, that his visits to the farm formed a delightful exception to the meagre occupations of his life? On these days he rose early, set off at a gallop, urging on his horse, then got down to wipe his boots in the grass and put on black gloves before entering. He liked going into the courtyard, and noticing the gate turn against his shoulder, the cock crow on the wall, the lads run to meet him. He liked the granary and the stables; he liked old Rouault, who pressed his hand and called him his saviour; he liked the small wooden shoes of Mademoiselle Emma on the scoured flags of the kitchen—her high heels made her a little taller; and when she walked in front of him, the wooden soles springing up quickly struck with a sharp sound against the leather of her boots.

She always accompanied him to the first step of the stairs. When his horse had not yet been brought round she stayed there. They had said "Good-bye"; there was no more talking. The open air wrapped her round, playing with the soft down on the back of her neck, or blew to and fro on her hips the apron-strings, that fluttered like streamers. Once, during a thaw the bark of the trees in the yard was oozing, the snow on the roofs of the outbuildings was melting; she stood on the threshold, and went to fetch her sunshade and opened it. The sunshade of silk of the colour of pigeons' breasts, through which the sun shone, lighted up

with shifting hues the white skin of her face. She smiled under the tender warmth, and drops of water could be heard falling one by one on the stretched silk.

5. After identifying the source of this excerpt, comment on the significance of the moment described here.

Yevgeny rushes on, awaited

By destiny with unrevealed

Tidings, as in a letter sealed.

He scours the suburb; and discerning

The bay, he knows the house is near;

And then stops short; ah, what is here!

Retreating, and again returning,

He looks--advances--looks again.

'Tis there they dwelt, the marks are plain;

There is the willow. Surely yonder

The gate was standing, in the past;

Now, washt away! No house!--O'ercast

With care, behold Yevgeny wander

Forever round and round the place,

And talk aloud, and strike his face

With his bare hand. A moment after,

He breaks into a roar of laughter.

6. Name the source of the following passage. Why are these observations significant to the story?

There exists in St. Petersburg a powerful foe of all who receive a salary of four hundred rubbles a year, or thereabouts. This foe is no other than the Northern cold, although it is said to be very healthy. At nine o'clock in the morning, at the very hour when the streets are filled with men bound for the various official departments, it begins to bestow such powerful and piercing nips on all noses impartially that the poor officials really do not know what to do with them. At an hour when the foreheads of even those who occupy exalted positions ache with the cold, and tears start to their eyes, the poor titular councillors are sometimes quite unprotected. Their only salvation lies in traversing as quickly as possible, in their thin little

cloaks, five or six streets, and then warming their feet in the porter's room, and so thawing all their talents and qualifications for official service, which had become frozen on the way.

Section IV

7. Read the following brief excerpt from a critical assessment of Pushkin's 'The Bronze Horseman' and comment on the extent to which the observations here bear out your own reading experience. What would you like to challenge here and/or add to the themes being discussed here? **10**

Pushkin highlights the difference between immortality and mortality in his poem, particularly through the contrast of the dying men and the two objects made of solid stone: the lions and the Bronze Horseman. In the poem, all of the people who die are seen as a single unit, without individual opinions or voices. On the other hand, the sentry lions "stood at guard / Like living things, and kept their ward / With paw uplifted," an act that they will continue to perform for essentially eternity. In the same vein, the Bronze Horseman is also an immortal figure, stable on a slab of granite. When Yevgeny begins to flee from the figure, he realizes that, "no matter / Where he may wander at his will, / Hard on his track with heavy clatter / There the bronze horseman gallops still." This represents the idea that Peter the Great, while dead, will in essence be able to live on and remind the people the things for which he stood through the immortality of the statue.

However, Pushkin attempts to give a voice to the common people, represented by Yevgeny, through the writing of the poem. In a sense, he is immortalizing the beliefs and views of these people, who otherwise would not have been heard, especially centuries later. He therefore is creating his own "bronze horseman," this time standing for the common people.

In the poem, not everything is straightforward; in fact, most of the concepts introduced by Pushkin are extremely ambiguous. For instance, as shown by the fact that many interpretations differ on whether the common people or the state ultimately triumphs, Pushkin relates the idea that at times, a victory by the state or by the people can be indistinct. At times, a victory by the state can mean that the state will have the authority to do what it believes is best for the people, even if the people cannot see it themselves, while at other times, a victory by the people means a change in state, which can also mean reform and progress for the state as a whole. Similarly, the images that Pushkin presents depicting the beauty and horror of St. Petersburg are vague as well. In the foreword of the poem, Pushkin describes the area as "desolate," "lonely," and "[having] no share / Of sunshine." However, it transforms into a city "in pride and splendour blazing." The reference to St. Petersburg's dark and lonely history gives the impression that while the city was, at that time, great and full of glory, it had just recently been the opposite and insinuates that greatness, grandeur, and power can change in extremely short periods of time. In doing so, Pushkin therefore relates the idea that power and obscurity are, in fact, much more interrelated than they appear to be.