



FINAL EXAM

ENGLISH 223:
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE IN ENGLISH:
NARRATIVE IDENTITIES IN POST-WAR WORLD LITERATURE

DR. SYRINE C. HOUT
SPRING 2001

TIME ALLOWED: 2 and a half hours

Readings: 22 texts; 12 authors

First Love (Samuel Beckett)
The Loved One (Evelyn Waugh)
"The Garden of Forking Paths," "The Shape of the Sword," "The Secret Miracle" (Jorge Luis Borges)
"The Guest," "The Silent Men" (Albert Camus)
"The Square," "Moderato Cantabile," "The Afternoon of Mr. Andesmas" (Marguerite Duras)
The Cloven Viscount, *The Non-Existent Knight* (Italo Calvino)
The Quiet American (Graham Greene)
The Thief and the Dogs (Naguib Mahfouz)
The Crying of Lot 49 (Thomas Pynchon)
"A Souvenir of Japan" (Angela Carter)
"A Pair of Tickets" (Amy Tan)
"Bon Voyage, Mr. President," "I Only Came to Use the Phone," "Seventeen Poisoned Englishmen," "Tramontana," "The Trail of Your Blood in the Snow" (from *Strange Pilgrims* by Gabriel Garcia Márquez)

Directions:

Choose one of the following three comparative essay questions. Select 4 different authors (more than one text by the same author is allowed as long as 4 authors are discussed) for your essay question. Develop a sophisticated thesis and back it up by means of concrete examples. Make an outline first. Keep in mind the intimate link between structure and content of literary texts in answering the question. Have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion in a creative, cogent essay. Please write legibly and proofread before turning in your exam.

Essay Questions:

1. In *Heart of Darkness* (1902) Joseph Conrad wrote: "Life is the mysterious arrangement of a merciless logic for a futile purpose." Depressing as it may seem, this definition of (post)modern human life applies to a great number of texts we have read this semester. Compare 4 texts which, in your opinion, vividly illustrate Conrad's concepts of the "mysterious arrangement," the "merciless logic," and the "futile purpose." Focus on specific episodes which help you demonstrate the Conradian definition of life.



2. African-American critic bell hooks wrote: "At times home is nowhere. At times one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations." How does this postmodern definition of 'home' apply to 4 texts read this semester? What and where is home? Is it necessarily contrasted with some other concept?
3. This semester we witnessed numerous acts of premeditated murder which were either successfully accomplished or merely attempted. Many of these acts are central to the narratives in question in both thematic and stylistic terms. To what extent do 4 examples of your choice relate to the general definition and practice of violence? How is the latter understood, justified, and/or punished? By whom?

GOOD LUCK!