

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Summer examinations 2017-18

North American Women Writers (**Resit without Residence for student 1517199**)

Time allowed: 2 hours
SEEN Examination Paper

There are TWO sections to this paper. You must answer ONE question from EACH section.

Read carefully the instruction on the answer book and make sure that the particulars required are entered fully on each answer book.

Do not substantially repeat material from assessed or unassessed essays, or between exam answers.

Section A

Write a critical analysis and interpretation of ONE of the following passages, paying particular attention to the author's use of language, deployment of themes, and narrative strategies, in relation to the text's cultural context.

1. "But, O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by law, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely! If slavery had been abolished, I, also, could have married the man of my choice; I could have had a home shielded by the laws; and I should have been spared the painful task of confessing what I am now about to relate; but all my prospects had been blighted by slavery. I wanted to keep myself pure; and, under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me. I felt as if I was forsaken by God and man; as if all my efforts must be frustrated; and I became reckless in my despair" (Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*).
2. "124 was spiteful. Full of baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old – as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard). Neither boy waited to see more; another kettleful of chickpeas smoking in a heap on the floor; soda crackers crumbled and strewn in a line next to the doorsill. Nor did they wait for one of the relief periods: the weeks, months even, when nothing was disturbed. No. Each one fled at once – the moment the house committed what was for him the one insult not to be borne or witnessed a second time. Within two months, in

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the dead of winter, leaving grandmother, Baby Suggs; Sethe, their mother; and their little sister, Denver, all by themselves in the gray and white house on Bluestone Road. It didn't have a number then, because Cincinnati didn't stretch that far. In fact, Ohio had been calling itself a state only seventy years when first one brother and then the next stuffed quilt packing into his hat, snatched up his shoes, and crept away from the lively spite the house felt for them" (Toni Morrison *Beloved*).

3. "As I walk along the passages I wish I could see what is behind the cardboard. They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it. Was it that evening in the cabin when he found me talking to the young man who brought me my food? I put my arms round his neck and asked him to help me. He said, 'I didn't know what to do, sir.' I smashed the glasses and plates against the porthole. I hoped it would break and the sea come in. A woman came and then an older man who cleared up the broken things on the floor. He did not look at me while he was doing it. The third man said drink this and you will sleep. I drank it and I said, 'It isn't like it seems to be.' – 'I know. It never is,' he said. And then I slept. When I woke it was a different sea. Colder. It was that night, I think, that we changed course and lost our way to England. This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England." (Jean Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea*).
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4. "Turning from the window, her gaze wandered contemptuously over the dull attire of the women workers. Drab colors, mostly navy blue, black, brown, unrelieved, save for a scrap of white or tan about the hands and necks. Fragments of a speech made by the dean of women floated through her thoughts – 'Bright colors are vulgar' – 'Black, gray, brown, and navy blue are the most becoming colors for colored people – 'Dark-complexioned people shouldn't wear yellow, or green or red.' – The dean was a woman from one of the 'first families' – a great 'race' woman; she, Helga Crane, a despised mulatto, but something intuitive, some unanalysed driving spirit of loyalty to the inherent racial need for gorgeousness told her that bright colours were fitting and that dark-complexioned people *should* wear yellow, green, and red. Black, brown, and gray were ruinous to them, actually destroyed the luminous tones lurking in their dusky skins. One of the loveliest sights Helga had ever seen had been a sooty black girl decked out in a flaming orange dress, which a horrified matron had next day consigned to the dyer. Why, she wondered, didn't someone write *A Plea for Color?*" – (Nella Larsen *Quicksand*).
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Section B

Answer ONE of the following questions. Your answer should be based on a discussion of TWO or THREE texts on the module. Do not attempt to cover more than THREE texts at length.

1. Write an essay comparing or contrasting how TWO to THREE of the novels on the module theorise the role that the plantation had in shaping ideas of race and sexuality.

2. Write an essay comparing how TWO or THREE novels on the course theorise the legacies of slavery: what racial regimes have followed on from slavery? To what extent is it possible to say that that freedom resulted from the end of slavery?

3. Write an essay analysing how TWO or THREE novels on the module depict the relationship between specific sites or places and social or political systems. To what extent does space shape politics, according to these authors?

4. Write an essay that considers how TWO or THREE novels on this module think through the relationship between gender, sex, race, and class in shaping identity.

(End)