Introduction to Literary Studies (EKIP 403)

Home Exam

Anne Karppinen

Spring 2021

The home exam has 3 parts. Make sure you answer each. Style of answering is free unless specified in the instructions. However, write in complete sentences and try to avoid point-by-point answers.

Most of these tasks evaluate the development of your critical faculties, and thus original analysis is appreciated. Each student must hand in an exam that is their own work (i.e. not a collaboration – although discussing the topics with others is naturally ok), and has analysis that stems *from their own thinking*. If you have useful source texts at hand and feel the need to use them, MAKE SURE YOU MENTION IT IN YOUR ANSWERS (i.e. by citing the source in your text and including a bibliography at the end; you don’t need to show citations from the lecture slides). Plagiarism will lead to the disqualification of the entire exam.

Email your answers to me (karppinen.anne.m@gmail.com) by 1 March. If you have any questions or problems (or need an extension to the deadline), don’t hesitate to get in touch.

* Part 1: Structure in Poetry (10 points)

Read the following poem and identify its structural properties:

- does the poem conform to some traditional form? How are the stanzas and lines arranged?

- what kind of rhyme and metre does the poem have? Is there any other kind of structural repetition to be found?

What can I give thee back, O liberal

And princely giver, who hast brought the gold

And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,

And laid them on the outside of the wall

For such as I to take or leave withal,

In unexpected largesse? am I cold,

Ungrateful, that for these most manifold

High gifts, I render nothing back at all?

Not so; not cold,--but very poor instead.

Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run

The colours from my life, and left so dead

And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done

To give the same as pillow to thy head.

Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

* Part 2: Narration and Point of View (20 points)

Read the prose extract and answer the following questions:

- What kind of narrator does the passage have? (Who *tells*?)

- Whose point of view do we have access to? (Who *sees*?)

- Describe the relations between the two characters: how do they communicate with each other, and why do you think this is? Does the passage give you any indication of the differences between Kate and Olivia?

Kate burst open the door of Olivia’s bedroom and looked sharply round, with anticipatory distaste, expecting to see what indeed she saw. The customary richly rounded mould of blanket presented itself to her; the customary dark swirl upon the pillow marked the approximate position of her sister’s invisible face. She paused; but as usual this mould, this blot, remained inactive.

She said loudly: ‘Quarter to nine!’

Reluctant upheaval, slow collapse and elongation of the shape. Then in a languid way she said, ‘Well… many happies.’

At once Olivia replied alertly: ‘Thanks.’

Her voice cracked. She lay silent, plunging and groping through thick waves of torpor, and coming suddenly upon her birthday lying at the bottom, a shut, inviting shell, waiting to be picked up and opened. She unclosed one eye and looked at Kate.

‘A small token of esteem will await you at breakfast.’

‘Oh, *thank* you.’

Duty done, Kate reverted with a snap to harsh briskness. ‘That is, if you’re able to sit up and take notice by then. Really, I believe you’d never wake up at all. Now, don’t go off again. Remember what Mother said yesterday.’

‘What?’

‘She’d have to start calling you herself.’

Olivia gave a hoarse chuckle. ‘Thought for the day…’

‘Well, she will, too.’

‘Surely I’m allowed an extra half-hour on my birthday.’

Kate reflected, and in justice conceded this. ‘Well, buck up.’

Another five minutes, thought Olivia, and shut her eyes. Not to fall asleep again; but to go back as it were and do the thing gradually – detach oneself softly, float up serenely from the clinging delectable fringes. Oh, heavenly sleep! Why must one cast it from one, all unprepared, unwilling? Caught out again by Kate in the very act! You’re not trying, you could wake up if you wanted to: that was their attitude.

* Part 3: Essay (40 points)

Write an essay (min. 1000 words) on ONE of the following topics (a, b, or c). In all instances, make sure you analyse both *form* and *content*: what kinds of techniques are used (rhyme, metre, imagery, metaphor, sentence structure etc.) and what the poem / prose passage actually has to *say*.

a) Character and Theme in Poetry

Compare and contrast the two poems: what kinds of protagonists do you find, and what do the journeys they take tell you about the persons and their respective worlds? Pay special attention to the theme of confinement that is present in both poems. How does the juxtaposition of the two poems affect your reading (i.e. would your analysis be different if you had encountered the poems separately)?

**Wheelchair**  byElaine Feinstein (2002)

We’ve travelled on a bumboat on the green South China seas,

seen papaya, dates and coconuts in crotches of the trees

and in Hawker centres Singapore keep quietly policed

eaten hundred year old eggs and fishbrains wrapped in bamboo leaf.

We’ve seen coolies who sold goats milk and the men who plundered them

while the ghosts of Maugham and Coward haunt the new Raffles hotel;

but the most surprising feature of the perils we have passed

is you’ve travelled in a wheelchair with your left leg in a cast.

Most people would have had more sense, but we were both surprised

to find it rather soothing. And one day we surmised:

you needed an attention that I hardly ever pay

while I enjoyed the knowledge that you couldn’t get away.

Now the generator flickers far inland in Campuhan

and we lie inside our cottage cooled remotely by a fan,

or take a bath among the ferns and tall hibiscus trees.

Green rice grows in the paddy fields, we pick the coffee beans.

And outside, parked and ready, sits the chair that takes you round

to explore in a contentment that we’ve only rarely found.

**The Seashells of Bridlington North Beach** (for Mercy Angela) byJack Mapanje (2004)

She hated anything caged, fish particularly,

Fish caged in glass boxes, ponds, whatever;

‘Reminds me of prisons and slavery,’ she said;

So, when first she caught the vast green view

of Bridlington North Beach shimmering that

English Summer day, she greeted the sight like

A Sahara girl on parched feet, cupping, cupping,

Cupping the water madly, laundering her palms,

Giggling and laughing, then rubbing the hands

On her skirt, she threw her bottom on the sandy

Beach and let the sea breathe in and out on her

As she relaxed her crossed legs – ‘Free at last!’

She announced to the beach crowds oblivious;

And as the seascape rallied and vanished at her

Feet, she mapped her world, ‘The Netherlands

We visited must be here; Norway, Sweden there;

Beyond that Russia!’ Then gathering more seashells

And selecting them one by one, she turned

To him, ‘Do you remember eating porridge from

Beach shells once?’ He nodded, smiling at another

Memory of the African lakes they were forced to

Abandon. ‘Someday, perhaps I’ll take that home

To celebrate!’ She said staring into the deep sea.

Today, her egg-like pebbles, her pearls of seashells

Still sparkle at the windowsill; her wishes still ring,

‘Change regularly the water in the receptacles to

Keep the pebbles and seashell shinning – you’ll

See, it’s a lot healthier than feeding caged fish!’

b) Form and Content in Poetry

Below are two poems by contemporary American writers. Consider the poems from the point of view of their formal properties (rhyme, metre, etc.), and discuss which of them better communicates to you the speaker’s yearning to connect with nature (understood in the widest possible sense). Are form and content linked to each other, or can they be seen as separate entities in poetry?

**The Ride** by Richard Wilbur

The horse beneath me seemed

To know what course to steer

Through the horror of snow I dreamed,

And so I had no fear,

Nor was I chilled to death

By the wind’s white shudders, thanks

To the veils of his patient breath

And the mist of sweat from his flanks.

It seemed that all night through,

Within my hand no rein

And nothing in my view

But the pillar of his mane,

I rode with magic ease

At a quick, unstumbling trot

Through shattering vacancies

On into what was not,

Till the weave of the storm grew thin,

With a threading of cedar-smoke,

And the ice-blind pane of an inn

Shimmered, and I awoke.

How shall I now get back

To the inn-yard where he stands,

Burdened with every lack,

And waken the stable-hands

To give him, before I think

That there was no horse at all,

Some hay, some water to drink,

A blanket and a stall?

**A Blessing** by James Wright

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,

Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.

And the eyes of those two Indian ponies

Darken with kindness.

They have come gladly out of the willows

To welcome my friend and me.

We step over the barbed wire into the pasture

Where they have been grazing all day, alone.

They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness

That we have come.

They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.

There is no loneliness like theirs.

At home once more,

They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.

I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,

For she has walked over to me

And nuzzled my left hand.

She is black and white,

Her mane falls wild on her forehead,

And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear

That is delicate as the skin over a girl’s wrist.

Suddenly I realize

That if I stepped out of my body I would break

Into blossom.

c. Setting, Structure and Tone in Prose Fiction

Read the following short story, and discuss how Mansfield has achieved its humorous tone. Pay particular attention to the setting and the structure of the story.

**Pension Séguin** by Katherine Mansfield

The servant who opened the door was twin sister to that efficient and hideous creature bearing a soup tureen into the First French Picture. Her round red face shone like freshly washed china. She had a pair of immense bare arms to match, and a quantity of mottled hair arranged in a sort of bow. I stammered in a ridiculous, breathless fashion, as though a pack of Russian wolves were behind me, rather than five flights of beautifully polished French stairs.

“Have you a room?” The servant girl did not know. She would ask Madame. Madame was at dinner.

“Will you come in, please?”

Through the dark hall, guarded by a large black stove that had the appearance of a headless cat with one red all-seeing eye in the middle of its stomach, I followed her into the salon.

“Please to sit down,” said the servant girl, closing the door behind her. I heard her list slippers shuffle along the corridor, the sound of another door opening—a little clamour—instantly suppressed. Silence followed.

The salon was long and narrow, with a yellow floor dotted with white mats. White muslin curtains hid the windows: the walls were white, decorated with pictures of pale ladies drifting down cypress avenues to forsaken temples, and moons rising over boundless oceans. You would have thought that all the long years of Madame’s virginity had been devoted to the making of white mats—that her childish voice had lisped its numbers in crochet-work stitches. I did not dare to begin counting them. They rained upon me from every possible place, like impossible snowflakes. Even the piano stool was buttoned into one embroidered with P.F.

I had been looking for a resting place all the morning. At the start I flew up innumerable stairs as though they were major scales—the most cheerful things in the world—but after repeated failures the scales had resolved into the minor, and my heart, which was quite cast down by this time, leapt up again at these signs and tokens of virtue and sobriety. “A woman with such sober passions,” thought I, “is bound to be quiet and clean, with few babies and a much absent husband. Mats are not the sort of things that lend themselves in their making to cheerful singing. Mats are essentially the fruits of pious solitude. I shall certainly take a room here.” And I began to dream of unpacking my clothes in a little white room, and getting into a kimono and lying on a white bed, watching the curtains float out from the windows in the delicious autumn air that smelled of apples and honey … until the door opened and a tall thin woman in a lilac pinafore came in, smiling in a vague fashion.

“Madame Séguin?”

“Yes, Madame.”

I repeated the familiar story. A quiet room, removed from any church bells, or crowing cocks, or little boys’ schools, or railway stations.

“There are none of such things anywhere near here,” said Madame, looking very surprised. “I have a very beautiful room to let, and quite unexpectedly. It has been occupied by a young gentleman from Buenos Ayres whose father died, unfortunately, and implored him to return home immediately. Quite natural, indeed.”

“Oh, very!” said I, hoping that the Hamlet-like apparition was at rest again and would not invade my solitude to make certain of his son's obedience.

“If Madame will follow me.”

Down a dark corridor, round a corner I felt my way. I wanted to ask Madame if this was where Buenos Ayres père appeared unto his son, but I did not dare to.

“Here—you see. Quite away from everything,” said Madame.

I have always viewed with a proper amount of respect and abhorrence those penetrating spirits who are not susceptible to appearances. What is there to believe in except appearances? I have nearly always found that they are the only things worth enjoying at all, and if ever an innocent child lays its head upon my knee and begs for the truth of the matter, I shall tell it the story of my one and only nurse, who, knowing my horror of gooseberry jam, spread a coat of apricot over the top of the jam jar. As long as I believed it apricot I was happy, and learning wisdom, I contrived to eat the apricot and leave the gooseberry behind. “So, you see, my little innocent creature,” I shall end, “the great thing to learn in this life is to be content with appearances, and shun the vulgarities of the grocer and philosopher.”

Bright sunlight streamed through the windows of the delightful room. There was an alcove for the bed, a writing table was placed against the window, a couch against the wall. And outside the window I looked down upon an avenue of gold and red trees and up at a range of mountains white with fresh fallen snow.

“One hundred and eighty francs a month,” murmured Madame, smiling at nothing, but seeming to imply by her manner, “Of course this has nothing to do with the matter.” I said, “That is too much. I cannot afford more than one hundred and fifty francs.”

“But,” explained Madame, “the size! the alcove! And the extreme rarity of being overlooked by so many mountains.”

“Yes,” I said.

“And then the food. There are four meals a day, and breakfast in your room if you wish it.”

“Yes,” I said, more feebly.

“And my husband a Professor at the Conservatoire—that again is so rare.”

Courage is like a disobedient dog, once it starts running away it flies all the faster for your attempts to recall it.

“One hundred and sixty,” I said.

“If you agree to take it for two months I will accept,” said Madame, very quickly. I agreed.

Marie helped to unstrap my boxes. She knelt on the floor, grinning and scratching her big red arms.

“Ah, how glad I am Madame has come, “she said. “Now we shall have some life again. Monsieur Arthur, who lived in this room—he was a gay one. Singing all day and sometimes dancing. Many a time Mademoiselle Ambatielos would be playing and he’d dance for an hour without stopping.”

“Who is Mademoiselle Ambatielos?” I asked.

“A young lady studying at the Conservatoire,” said Marie, sniffing in a very friendly fashion. “But she gives lessons too. Ah, mon Dieu, sometimes when I am dusting in her room I think her fingers will drop off. She plays all day long. But I like that—that's life, noise is. That's what I say. You'll hear her soon. Up and down she goes!” said Marie, with extreme heartiness.

“But,” I cried, loathing Marie, “how many other people are staying here?”

Marie shrugged. “Nobody to speak of. There's the Russian gentleman, a priest he is, and Madame's three children—and that's all. The children are lively enough,” she said, filling the wash-stand pitcher, “but then there's the baby—the boy! Ah, you'll know about him, poor little one, soon enough!” She was so detestable I would not ask her anything further.

I waited until she was gone, and leaned against the window sill, watching the sun deepen in the trees until they seemed full and trembling with gold, and wondering what was the matter with the mysterious baby.

All through the afternoon Mademoiselle Ambatielos and the piano warred with the Appassionata Sonata. They shattered it to bits and re-made it to their heart's desire—they unpicked it—and tried it in various styles. They added a little touch—caught up something. Finally they decided that the only thing of importance was the loud pedal. The mysterious baby, hidden behind Heaven knows how many doors, cried with such curious persistence that I had to strain my ears, wondering if it was a baby or an engine or a far-off whistle. At dusk Marie, accompanied by the two little girls, brought me a lamp. My appearance disturbed these charming children to such an extent that they rushed up and down the corridor in a frenzied state for half-an-hour afterwards, bumping themselves against the walls, and shrieking with derisive laughter.

At eight the gong sounded for supper. I was hungry. The corridor was filled with the warm, strong smell of cooked meat. “Well,” I thought, “at any rate, judging by the smell, the food must be good.” And feeling very frightened I entered the dining-room.

Two rows of faces turned to watch me. M. Séguin introduced me, rapped on the table with the soup spoon, and the two little girls, impudent and scornful, cried: “Bon soir, Madame,” while the baby, half washed away by his afternoon's performance, emptied his cup of milk over his head while Madame Séguin showed me my seat. In the confusion caused by this last episode, and by his being carried away by Marie, screaming and spitting with rage, I sat down next to the Russian priest and opposite Mademoiselle Ambatielos. M. Séguin took a loaf of bread from a three-legged basket at his elbow and carved it against his chest. Soup was served—with vermicelli letters of the alphabet floating in it. These were last straws to the little Séguin's table manners.

“Maman, Yvonne’s got more letters than me.”

“Maman, Hélène keeps taking my letters out with her spoon.”

“Children! Children! Quiet, quiet!” said Madame Séguin gently. “No, don’t do it.”

Hélène seized Yvonne's plate and pulled it towards her.

“Stop,” said M. Séguin, who was like a rat, with spectacles all misted over with soup steam. “Hélène, leave the table. Go to Marie.” Exit Hélène, with her apron over her head.

Soup was followed by chestnuts and Brussels sprouts. All the time the Russian priest, who wore a pale blue tie with a buttoned frock coat and a moustache fierce as a Gogol novel, kept up a flow of conversation with Mademoiselle Ambatielos. She looked very young. She was stout, with a high firm bust decorated with a spray of artificial roses. She never ceased touching the roses or her blouse or hair, or looking at her hands—with a smile trembling on her mouth and her blue eyes wide and staring. She seemed half intoxicated with her fresh young body.

“I saw you this morning when you didn’t see me,” said the priest.

“You didn’t.”

“I did.”

“He didn't, did he, Madame?”

Madame Séguin smiled, and carried away the chestnuts, bringing back a dish of pears.

“I hope you will come into the salon after dinner,” she said to me. “We always chat a little—we are such a family party.” I smiled, wondering why pears should follow chestnuts.

“I must apologise for baby,” she went on. “He is so nervous. But he spends his day in a room at the other end of the apartment to you. You will not be troubled. Only think of it! He passes whole days banging his little head against the floor and walls. The doctors cannot understand it at all.”

M. Séguin pushed back his chair, said grace. I followed desperately into the salon. “I expect you have been admiring my mats,” said Madame Séguin, with more animation than she had hitherto shown. “People always imagine they are the product of my industry. But, alas, no! They are all made by my friend, Madame Kummer, who has the pension on the first floor.”