

# UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

*University of London*

## EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS

*For the following qualifications:-*

*M.A.*

**M.A. Comparative Literature: Modern Literary Theory (take home paper)**

COURSE CODE : **CLIT0001**

DATE : **To be collected from 10.00 on 4 June 2003 and  
returned by 17.00 on 6 June 2003**

# Modern Literary Theory Take Home Paper 2002-03

Collection Date: 4 June 2003 from 10 am onwards (Foster Court, Room 316)

Submission Date: 6 June 2003 by 5 pm (Foster Court, Room 316)

---

Answer TWO questions, beginning each answer in a fresh answer book. Answers should not be more than approximately 2,000 words. Footnotes and bibliographies are not required.

Do not base more than one answer in this or any other assessed piece of work on substantially the same material.

Feel free to illustrate your discussion of theoretical issues with reference to specific literary texts.

---

1.

*Either*

(a) Bakhtin argues that 'as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other.' Say what implications you think this contention has for the interpretation of literary texts.

*Or*

(b) Discuss Bakhtin's view that carnival celebrates 'the joyful relativity of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position', saying what implications you think it has for the interpretation of literary texts.

2.

*Either*

(a) Discuss what is at stake in the representation of women's bodies in literary texts, with reference to the work of at least one French feminist theorist you have studied.

*Or*

(b) To what extent can literary texts change our thinking about sexual difference? Your answer should refer to the work of one of the following: Cixous, Irigaray or Kristeva.

3.

Choose one theoretical text that you have studied on this course and discuss how far the ideas it puts forward are relevant outside the historical and cultural moment of its production.

4.

*Either*

(a) How valid, in your opinion, is Gilbert and Gubar's assertion in *The Madwoman in the Attic* that most women's writing contains a hidden story, and that this hidden story represents the woman writer's quest for self-definition ?

TURN OVER

Or

(b) 'Gender theory has made feminist literary theory look marginal, perhaps even out of date.' Discuss.

5.

Either

(a) 'What difference does it make who is speaking?' asks Michel Foucault at the conclusion of his essay "What is an Author?" With reference to any one or two literary texts, discuss the way Foucault reformulates the problem of authorship.

Or

(b) How do Foucault and Barthes differ in their analyses of the relationship of reading to authorship and readership?

6.

'The misfortune of the mad . . . is that their best spokesmen are those who betray them best,' writes Jacques Derrida in his critique of Michel Foucault's *History of Madness*. To what extent do you agree with Derrida that it is impossible to write on behalf of those diagnosed as mad?

7.

Either

(a) 'The strength and limitation of Jauss's notion of literary history is that it advocates a history of the uses to which literature has been put by its readers.' Discuss.

Or

(b) 'Iser's implied reader is so sophisticated and scholarly a spirit that there is no overlap with any actual reader.' Discuss.

Or

(c) 'Reader response theory is another version of the "death of the author",' Discuss.

8.

Either

(a) 'Is it appropriate to relate contemporary Indo-Anglian writing to the experience of colonialism when it draws on a multiplicity of influences, many of them much older than British colonialism?' (John Thieme *The Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English, 1996*). Discuss.

Or

(b) 'For Edward Said, a form of racialized knowledge of the Other (Orientalism) is deeply implicated in the operations of power (imperialism).' Discuss.

9.

'For Bourdieu it is the structure of the religious message that is the precondition of its ability to fulfil its social function'. Discuss the applicability of this contention to the study of literature.

CONTINUED

10.

*Either*

(a) 'To investigate the correlation between systems without taking into account the immanent laws of each system is methodologically pernicious' (Tynjanov and Jakobson). Discuss the usefulness of this statement for the study of literature.

*Or*

(b) Discuss the oscillation between prescriptive and descriptive aesthetics in either Russian Formalism or Czech Structuralism or both.

*Or*

(c) 'The Russian Formalists continue to be the radical extreme against which most subsequent criticism, knowingly or unknowingly, has reacted' (Peter Steiner). Discuss.

11.

'A dialectical insight into the significance of a history of reception opens the widest horizons' (Benjamin). Discuss with reference to Benjamin.

12.

*Either*

(a) 'Philosophy tells us that freedom and determination are inextricably linked; psychoanalysis that they are in tragic conflict.' Discuss this view with reference to Nietzsche and Freud. You may also use references to literary works.

*Or*

(b) 'Birth, family, violence: there is tragedy - and there is psychoanalysis.' Discuss this view of the Freudian message. You may also use references to literary works to develop your argument.

**END OF PAPER**