

**UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON**

University of London

**EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS**

For The Following Qualification:-

*M.A.*

**M.A. Comparative Literature : Modern Literary Theory Take home**

**COURSE CODE : CLIT0001**

**Collection Date: 8 June 2004 from 10am onwards**  
**Return Date: 10 June 2004, by 5pm**

## Modern Literary Theory Take Home Paper 2003-04

**Collection Date: Collect 8 June 2004 from 10 am onwards (Foster Court, Room 316)  
Submit 10 June 2004 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 SUBSTANTIALLY BASE MORE THAN ONE ANSWER IN THIS OR ANY OTHER ASSESSED PIECE OF WORK ON THE SAME MATERIAL.**

**DO FEEL FREE TO ILLUSTRATE YOUR DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL ISSUES WITH REFERENCE TO SPECIFIC LITERARY TEXTS.**

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1. EITHER (a) Discuss Bakhtin's view that carnival constructs 'a second world and a second life beyond everything official', and consider what uses it may have for the analysis of literary texts.

OR (b) 'The notion of heteroglossia is central to Bakhtin's theory of the novel.' Discuss, making specific reference to ONE OR TWO novels.

2. EITHER (a) Analyse and discuss the importance of 'writing the body', with reference to AT LEAST ONE of the French feminist thinkers you have studied (Cixous, Irigaray, Kristeva).

OR (b) Critically examine the notion of 'sexual difference' with close reference to relevant theorists.

OR (c) 'Writing is precisely the *very possibility of change*' (Cixous). Discuss with reference to at least ONE feminist theorist of your choice.

OR (d) How has feminism engaged with psychoanalytic theory in developing its critique of the sex-gender system?

3. To what extent is reading literature a political act?

4. EITHER (a) 'Structuralism and poststructuralism are merely textual aestheticism, with no ethical or political dimension.' Discuss, with reference to EITHER structuralist OR poststructuralist work.

OR (b) 'Writing is the destruction of all voice, of all origin.' In the light of this comment, discuss the idea of writing as it appears in structuralist AND/OR poststructuralist work.

5. Discuss the relationship between individuals, as sexual subjects, and the social whole as described by ANY TWO of the following theorists: Freud, Foucault, Rubin, Butler, Mulvey, Haraway.

**TURN OVER**

6. EITHER (a) 'If, as Spivak assures us, the subaltern "cannot speak", it is surely not even worth our while trying to excavate the subaltern's voice.' Discuss, referring to the work of ANY ONE significant literary writer.

OR (b) 'Postcolonial theory offers a convincing "way into" texts written by writers who are angry about political injustice, but it does not much help us with the more subtle areas of artistic expression.' Discuss, referring to the work of ANY ONE significant literary writer.

OR (c) 'The blind spot of postcolonial theory is that it takes for granted that one size fits all, namely, that one critical perspective can be applied to the cultural landscape of entire continents which were once colonised by Europe; but common sense suggests that Africa, Latin America, Asia can't all simply be lumped together.' Discuss, referring to the work of ANY ONE significant literary writer.

7. EITHER (a) 'Russian Formalism does little more than transfer the poetics of the avant-garde to the category of literature in general.' Discuss.

OR (b) Discuss the validity of Czech Structuralism's claim to be a truly sociological poetics.

8. EITHER (a) 'The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of our material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises' (Marx). Discuss to what extent this statement can help or hinder the analysis of literature.

OR (b) To what extent, in your view, does a Marxist approach to literature call into question the hermetic self-sufficiency of the various disciplines and their subjects?

OR (c) 'The dilemma of Marxist approaches to literature is that the gains in social and historical understanding of literary texts are at the expense of esthetic valuation.' Discuss.

9. EITHER (a) 'Freud reads the arts as a treasure chest of signs of his own cultural pessimism; Nietzsche sees pessimism as a sign of a decadence to be overcome.' Discuss with reference to the works by Freud AND Nietzsche you have read for this course.

OR (b) 'What Freud and Nietzsche have in common is their capacity to turn their chosen discipline into a means of cultural diagnosis.' Discuss with reference to the works by Freud AND Nietzsche you have read for this course.