

University of London

**EXAMINATION FOR INTERNAL STUDENTS**

For The Following Qualification:–

*M.A.*

**French G21: Literary Theory Take–Home Paper**

**COURSE CODE : FRENG021**

**DATE : 10–MAY–05**

**TIME : 10.00**

## MA IN FRENCH STUDIES

### LITERARY THEORY

Answer *THREE* questions, *EACH* taken from a *DIFFERENT SECTION* of the paper.

You may answer in *English* or in *French*, but no special credit will be given for writing in *French* rather than in *English*.

**DO NOT BASE YOUR ANSWERS ON THIS PAPER, OR AN ANSWER ON THIS PAPER AND ONE IN AN OPTION PAPER, OR YOUR DISSERTATION, ON THE SAME TEXT OR ON SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME MATERIAL.**

*No answer should be longer than 1500 words.*

*The examination lasts 55 hours (i.e. it begins at 10:00 a.m. on Day 1, and all answers must be returned by 5:00 p.m. on Day 3). **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.***

*For further guidelines, see the MA information sheet: Take-home examination in Literary Theory.*

### SECTION A

1. Explain and discuss Genette's notion that in literature 'l'accent de vérité' is 'à mille lieues de toute espèce de réalisme'. Your answer should refer to 'Vraisemblance et motivation' AND ONE or MORE other texts, literary and/or theoretical.
2. Analyse and discuss the extent to which Barthes's *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* 'established a general historical narrative that facilitates thinking about literature'. (You may, if you wish, refer to additional texts studied for this course.)
3. Compare and contrast the theories of Jakobson and Shklovsky, commenting on their debt to Saussure, and assessing their relative success in defining what constitutes the 'literary'.
4. Discuss the relevance of gender to the concept of the 'author', with reference to TWO or MORE texts studied on this course.

**TURN OVER**

## SECTION B

5. 'To make the artist the unconscious spokesperson of a social group to which a work of art reveals what it unknowingly thinks or feels is to condemn oneself to assertions which would not be out of place in the wildest metaphysics.' To what extent is this a justified view of Marxist literary criticism? Answer with reference to TWO or MORE texts studied for this course.
6. To what extent do the production and reading of literature fit the Marxist notion that the motive of all social life is ultimately a material one? Answer with reference to TWO or MORE texts studied for this course.
7. To what extent do different theories of Marxist ideology result in different conceptions of the literary text? Answer with reference to TWO or MORE texts studied for this course.
8. To what extent can Marxist theory provide a basis for the analysis of postcolonial texts? Answer with reference to TWO or MORE texts studied for this course.

## SECTION C

9. Explain and assess Lacan's assertion in *La Signification du phallus* that the phallus 'est le signifiant destiné à désigner dans leur ensemble les effets de signifié, en tant que le signifiant les conditionne par sa présence de signifiant'. You may include in your discussion, if you wish, other texts studied on this course.
10. In your view, can works of psychoanalytical theory enrich our understanding of literary texts? Your answer should refer to ONE or MORE theoretical texts studied for this section of the course AND ONE or MORE literary and/or filmic texts.
11. 'Kristeva's "Stabat Mater" does not contest the law of the father but re-assesses the effects of the phallus.' Discuss.
12. How, in your view, does Irigaray use the notion of 'le deux' to challenge Lacan's specular account of the imaginary?

**CONTINUED**

## SECTION D

13. 'Comment ces cinq semaines de plénitude, après le court flottement dont j'ai parlé, se sont-elles vidées de leur substance à tel point que je me demanderais pour un peu si je ne les ai pas rêvées?' (Leiris, *Fibrilles*). Discuss Leiris's exploration of possible answers or objections to this question about his visit to China in the early years of the revolution.
14. 'Travailler sans directives données de l'extérieur, sans idées préconçues – ou presque – et comme s'il allait à la découverte, c'est sans doute le meilleur moyen pour l'artiste ou l'écrivain d'échapper aux stéréotypes et de faire œuvre vraiment authentique et créatrice. [...] Très précisément, c'est cette façon d'avancer comme on débroussaille à coups de machette qui s'appelle « créer »' (Leiris, 'Congrès culturel de La Havane'). Discuss the view that Leiris's writing, in the works you have read, fits this description of revolutionary art.
15. 'The Manichean system of racism and colonization, apparently dividing colonizer from colonized, in fact generates dynamic mutual mental relations between colonizer and colonized which bind them in the colonial drama.' Discuss Sartre's 'Orphée noir' AND/OR his preface to Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* in the light of this assertion.
16. 'A travers la lutte de l'intellectuel contre ses propres contradictions, en lui et hors de lui, la société historique prend un point de vue encore hésitant, trouble, conditionné par les circonstances extérieures, sur *elle-même*.' In the light of this remark, discuss the role and situation of the intellectual as theorised by Sartre in *Questions de méthode* AND/OR *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels*.

**END OF PAPER**