

STELLA MARIS COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS) CHENNAI 600 086
(For candidates admitted during the academic year 2004 – 05 & thereafter)

SUBJECT CODE: EL/PC/CT24

M. A. DEGREE EXAMINATION, APRIL 2007
BRANCH VII – ENGLISH
SECOND SEMESTER

COURSE : MAJOR – CORE
PAPER : CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THEORY
TIME : 3 HOURS
MAX. MARKS : 100

SECTION – A

I. Write short essays on any FOUR of the following in about 250 words each:
(4x10=40)

- What is Structuralism? Explain with examples.
- Define Organistic and Symbolistic formalism and attempt an essay on any two practitioners.
- Discuss New Historicism as a parallel reading of literary and non-literary texts.
- “Subalternity defines not the being of a subject but a subjected state of being” – Discuss.
- Distinguish the tenets of Deconstruction from Structuralism.
- Who are the New Critics and what is the thesis established by them?
- Analyse the scope and characteristic features of Post-Structuralism.

SECTION – B

II. Write an essay on any ONE of the following in about 750 words : (1x20=20)

- How does Roland Barthes assert the independence of the literary text in *The Death of the Author*?
- What according to Freud is common between creative writing and daydreaming?

III. Write an essay on any ONE of the following in about 750 words: (1x20=20)

- Comment on Umberto Eco’s style which earned for him the reputation that he is the most accessible of the critics in the structuralist tradition.
- Discuss Kolodny’s perception of Bloom’s “revisionary judgements and theory of influence.”
- Attempt an essay on Lyotard’s definition of the post-modern.

SECTION – C

(2x10=20)

Practical Criticism

Attempt a critical analysis of any two of the passages given. Specify the theory and its aspects / concepts used in your analysis.

A He Wishes For the Cloths of Heaven

Had I the heavens’ embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,

I would spread the cloths under your feet:
 But, being poor, have only my dreams;
 I have spread my dreams under your feet;
 Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

William Butler Yeats

Or

B. Life is Elsewhere

The window of the flat was open and the cool air of a spring night was streaming in. The room was again dark and the middle-aged man was lying motionless next to the girl. He listened to her breathing, her troubled tossing and turning, and when he thought she had fallen asleep he lightly caressed her arm, happy that he was able to provide her a first night of rest in the new era of her mournful freedom.

The guesthouse to which we compared this part of the novel also has an open window and through this window we still hear the sounds of the novel which we left some time ago. Do you hear the distant sound of Death, impatiently stamping its feet? Let it wait, we are still here in the flat, in another novel, in another story.

In our novel, too, this section was only a quiet interlude in which an anonymous man unexpectedly lights a lamp of kindness. Let us gaze at it for a few seconds more, that quiet lamp, that kindly light, before it vanishes from our sight...

Milan Kundera

C. Subarna Latha

“They can’t do that!” Sadhan sounded annoyed, “Not just like that.”

“Yes, they can. They did. They said they’d keep the boys since they were a part of their family. So I said they might keep my daughter as well for she was as much a part of their family as the boys. They then called a carriage and had me dropped here.”

“Couldn’t you do something? You could at least have cried and said you couldn’t live without seeing your children.”

Subarna looked straight at her father. “It is perfectly possible to live without seeing one’s children.” she said, each word hitting Nobokumar like a bullet. After a moment’s silence, he said, “But you have to think of your future.”

“How is it possible to think of everything, Baba? So many women are widowed every day. What if I, too . . .”

“Sh-sh-sh!” Nobokumar shuddered, “How could you utter such words, Subarna? Honestly, you’re just like your mother. You say anything that comes to your mind.”

“Why not, if it’s the truth?” Subarna looked at her father again, “Are you afraid to let me stay in your house, Baba?”

A lump rose in Nobokumar’s throat. He found himself unable to speak. But Sadhan took this opportunity to say, “Nobody’s afraid. We’re just surprised, that’s all. What could have happened to prompt them to do this?” Aunno spoke this time,

“It was because Pishi’s mother-in-law ran short of money. So she said go back to your father, and Pishi said why should I? Then her mother-in-law got angry and her husband brought her here.”

“Oh I see!” said Sadhan, “They had suggested only a visit? What was wrong with that? You could easily have spent a few days with us.”

“No, I didn’t want to visit you just because it suited them to send me packing.”

“I see. Well, the question now is, what are we going to do? Shouldn’t we speak to them, to try to find out more?”

“Of course!” Nobokumar turned, eagerly agreeing with his son, “We’ve got to speak to them. They can’t just shut the door on us. We have got to beg to be forgiven, and then may be – “

“Beg to be forgiven? Why?” Subarna’s voice cut through the air. Nobokumar started. He knew this voice well. What he hadn’t known was just how much of Satyavati lay hidden in her daughter.

“Because, dear girl,” he said, trying to placate the crazy woman, “we have to make them take you back. You cannot spend your entire life away from your husband and children just because of some silly row!”

Slowly, Subarna rose to her feet. “Even you are turning me away, Baba?” she asked wearily.

“Turn you away? Good heavens, no! How could you even think of such a thing? But your husband’s house is your real home, don’t you see? And it isn’t just you. Any woman.”

“Real home?” Subarna interrupted, a queer smile playing on her lips. “What is real about it, tell me? It’s little more than a house of cards, as far as I can see. One word from them, and I was out on the street, wasn’t I? And you expect me to go back there?”

Father and son fell silent. Sudheerbala, who had disappeared a while ago, now came in with two plates, laden with sweets. She placed one before Subarna.

“No!” Subarna cried, making everyone look up in surprise, “There is no need for this. Dada, go and find a carriage. It’s not too late for me to go back, I think”.

“Don’t be silly. Who said you have to go back this instant? You can stay here a couple of days, and then I’ll take you with me and speak to your mother-in-law. If I tell her we’re really sorry, may be she won’t mind your coming and staying for a couple of months. I mean, we’ve obviously got to be very careful in what we say ...”

Nobokumar couldn’t finish speaking. His last few words, harmless and innocuous, appeared to have had a strange effect on Subarna. Somewhere inside her, a dam had burst, washing away her carefully controlled emotions. “Why?” she was asking, banging her head against the wall, “Why should you all insult me? What did I ever do to deserve this? Why?”

All the pent up rage and frustration that had built up over the years ever since her marriage seemed to come out in that one word. But perhaps it wasn’t just that. Perhaps it was only an expression of the unspoken question that lay heavy within the entire race of oppressed womankind. Yes, that was the kind of age Subarnalata had lived in. Her hands were tied, her feet fettered.

Is that age over now? Who can tell? Who knows what darkness lurks behind the dazzling glow of progress and liberation in which thousands of enlightened women bask today? Who has seen the millions who still languish in that darkness, hitting their heads against a brick wall, screaming, “Why? Why?” Who has the courage to answer that question?

After the first few seconds of complete bewilderment, Nobokumar and Sadhan leapt to their feet, grabbing Subarna by her hands and dragging her away from the wall. “What do you think you’re doing? Have you gone totally mad?” They shrieked, bathing her head with cold water, Sudheerbala fanning her furiously.

In the midst of it all stood little Aunno, her eyes wide in fear and dismay, her mouth hanging open in amazement.

Ashapurnadevi

D. The Immigration Office

They are polite –
Perhaps uncertain if you come
A secret official,
Who, provoked by even a subtle diffidence
Of voice or gesture,
Can summarize a promising career.

They were polite, tentatively
Comprehensive too, enquiring into
Destination, origin, intention,
Locations of your interests,
As if they hoped to find some plan for
Mis-adventure, or whether you were merely powerful.
They found that I was just a citizen
With a vote: their politeness slumped,
And sought to disengage:
Keep them talking, I thought.
If not too long, you’ll find them informative,
Circumstantial.

I moved aside for a Lady
All dressed for travel; she looked
A thing so rare in all that governmentness.
The young man noted her arrival, saw it prudent
To retire behind some line of careful questioning.
She made her gambit
While she touched her holder, negligently
Took out her cigarettes, reflectively
Waited for light, confidently.
Such fluid dialogue.
His day was brightening.
Becoming very young
In the face of such a face.
And I felt constrained to leave,
To return with a fortnight’s grace.

Edwin Thumboo



