

RENAISSANCE LITERATURE FIELD EXAMINATION

SPRING 2001

There are three sections to the examination:

A. Contemporary Approaches to Renaissance Literature

B. Renaissance Prose

C. Renaissance Drama (excluding Shakespeare)

This examination is four hours.

During this time you will be expected to answer **four** questions in total.

You must answer **one** question from part A and **three** from Parts B and C, but no more than two from any single section.

All questions are of equal value.

Renaissance Literature Field Examination

Part A: Contemporary Approaches to Renaissance Literature

1. Compare and contrast the conception of history in literary criticism of Renaissance literature with that in Renaissance literature, using examples from at least two major critics and one major writer.
2. Criticism of Renaissance literature has been particularly influenced by theories of performative identity. Discuss the conception of performative identity in at least two critics, and compare their ideas with reference to at least one literary text.
3. It has been said, most famously by Stephen Greenblatt, that the unconscious is a post Renaissance invention of western culture, and that therefore the fundamental presumptions of psychoanalytic literary criticism can not apply to Renaissance literature. Outline the controversy over psychoanalysis in Renaissance literary criticism, with reference to at least two critics, and make an argument for or against its validity with reference to at least two literary works.
4. Criticism of Renaissance literature often depends upon constructing a meaningful relationship between literary and non-literary documents. Analyze the construction of this relationship in works by two critics, and compare those constructions with reference to a work of literature and corresponding non-literary work(s).

Renaissance Literature Field Examination

Part B: Renaissance Prose

1. The revival of classical rhetoric is one of the distinctive features of early modern culture. Discuss how examples of Renaissance prose represent Quintilian's ideal of rhetoric as the practice of the "good man speaking well." Support your argument with analyses of works by at least two authors.
2. The forms of Renaissance prose are very diverse, but stylistic elements cross generic boundaries with ease. With reference to examples from two distinct prose genres (e.g., Romance and History, or theological writing and household manuals, or traveller's tales and political writing), identify common stylistic features, and discuss the differences in their effects in relation to conventions of their genres.
3. How are gender or class, or both, represented in selected works of Renaissance prose? Support your argument with analyses of works by at least two authors.
4. Compare and contrast the construction of truth in at least two genres of Renaissance prose. Discuss at least two works by at least two authors.

Renaissance Literature Field Examination

Part C: Renaissance Drama (excluding Shakespeare)

Note: Support your argument for each response with analyses of works by at least two authors, unless the answer stipulates otherwise. For the purposes of this constraint, collaborative works do not count as works by more than one author.

1. What is the relationship of materialism to other component aspects of ideology or society in Jacobean city comedy?
2. What powers does language have in plays from any distinctive period or genre of English Renaissance drama?
3. The spectacle of violence is a significant feature of late English Renaissance drama. What is the relationship between stage violence and any of the following: sex, speech, identity, theatricality, tragedy?
4. How do early modern English dramatists conceive of the relationship between the theatre, other kinds of performance, and society? Answer with reference to work by three playwrights of like period.