

**ST. JOSEPH’S COLLEGE (AUTONOMOUS), BANGALORE – 27**

**ARTS & CULTURE JOURNALISM – VI SEMESTER EJP**

**SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION: MAY 2017**

**JN 6313 B – Journalism - Arts & Culture**

**Time- 21/2 hrs Max Marks- 70**

ATTACH THE QUESTION PAPER WITH THE ANSWER SCRIPT

**Instructions:**

1. **This paper has THREE SECTIONS and THREE printed pages.**
2. **This paper is for the VI Semester Journalism students who have opted for the Arts & Culture Elective.**
3. **You are allowed to use a dictionary.**
4. **You will lose marks for exceeding the suggested word-limits.**

**I. Read the following excerpt from a review of Elena Ferrante’s Neapolitan series by Joanna Biggs published in the London Review of books.**

**I was blind, she a falcon**

Are Elena Ferrante’s four Neapolitan novels even books? I began to doubt it when I talked about them with other people – mostly women. We returned to life too quickly as we spoke: who was your Lila, the childhood friend who effortlessly dazzled everyone? Or – a question not happily answered – were you Lila? S. said she had got back in touch with an estranged friend to give her the first volume in the series; K. felt that, impossibly, embarrassingly even, the books captured how she’d gone about finding an intellectual identity for herself. And we couldn’t stop talking about the experience of reading them: S. read under sodium-orange streetlight while smoking a cigarette outside a pub, unable to break off to go in to the friends waiting inside; E. had a week of violent dreams after she finished the first volume; A. had sleepless night after sleepless night to finish them, and walked to work the next morning her head still full of Naples; B. – a man – couldn’t go on reading as he started to feel bad about being a man. I got so confused about what was real and what was not while reading Ferrante on a train that I kept on forgetting that I hadn’t missed my station. The usual distance between fiction and life collapses when you read Ferrante. She knows it too: writing the Neapolitan quartet, she has said, was like ‘having the chance to live my life over again’.

Ferrante’s writing seems to say something that hasn’t been said before – it isn’t easy to specify what this is – in a way so compelling its readers forget where they are, abandon friends and disdain sleep. It would be enough to have books in which we recognise the truth of women’s lives in all its darkness, but the Neapolitan quartet also has an almost deranging narrative pleasure, delivered in a style that’s more of an admission that the author cares too much about the truth to bother with style. The publication of the fourth and final volume is a terrible moment. M. compared it to having sex with someone after you realise you’re in love with them: it almost can’t not be bad. For 1200 pages we have followed the lives of Lila and Lenù from academic dominance at school in their native, rough neighbourhood of Naples to dynastic marriages of one sort or another, political engagement, career-making, childbearing and now ageing; all the while, as Lenù, who tells their story, puts it, ‘continuously forming, deforming, reforming’ each other. ‘I was blind, she a falcon,’ Lenù has it in the first book, as if she didn’t know this to be the starting point for many reversals.

Ferrante’s first three novels finish when the crisis is over. The extent and so the mood of the Neapolitan quartet is different: since the moments of crisis are seen in the context of a life, there is a darker suggestion that recovery might only be temporary. The surface is always liable to rupture, and some people know this and others don’t. Rafaella Cerullo, or Lila, the narrator’s foil or alter ego in the quartet, is someone who knows this. In a Paris Review interview Ferrante described Lila as suffering from a ‘lack of boundaries’, which is evident from the first childhood scene of the first book, My Brilliant Friend, when she lures the narrator, her friend Elena Greco, or Lenù, ‘up the dark stairs that led, step after step, flight after flight, to the door of Don Achille’s apartment’. He’s the person in the neighbourhood the children are told not to go near. Lila and Lenù ‘climbed slowly towards the greatest of our terrors of that time, we went to expose ourselves to fear and interrogate it’. Lila throws stones back at the boys; Lila teaches herself to read; Lila outpaces her classmates academically; Lila goes from scrawny to Jackie Kennedy-esque; Lila is loved by the neighbourhood boys without any of that love being sought. For Lenù, life without Lila is drab: ‘I soon had to admit that what I did by myself couldn’t excite me, only what Lila touched became important.’ Lila’s lack of boundaries is first discernible as a disdain for proprieties and a youthful ignorance of the way things are done but it moves into something else at adolescence, when she begins having episodes of what she comes to call ‘dissolving margins’.

Speed is one of the defining qualities of reading Ferrante. Over the four books, she has made certain episodes (like the second summer of love on Ischia) agonisingly slow, while others (like Nino and Lila’s 23 days together) have been unbearably quick. The reader races along regardless. Ferrante is like a writer of genre rather than literary fiction in her handling of time; she has said she employs ‘all the strategies I know to capture the reader’s attention, stimulate curiosity’ – acknowledging rather than excusing the soapy twists of the last volume of the quartet.

How is it that a book written by Lenù can so entirely capture Lila’s experience? Ferrante’s direct, almost naive style is greedy, willing to adopt the habits of other genres – the thriller’s cliffhangers, the romance’s love triangles, the mystery’s plot twists – and to absorb voices other than its narrator’s. Lenù realises in the final volume of the quartet that she may even be writing just to beckon Lila in, to capture her, to be near her. ‘I wish for this intrusion,’ Lenù writes. ‘I’ve hoped for it ever since I began to write our story.’

**Now read these two approaches to reading a text.**

1. **The hermeneutics of suspicion**

Paul Ricoeur termed ‘the hermeneutics of suspicion’. ‘Hermeneutics’ (from the Ancient Greek for ‘translating’) denotes a method or system of interpretation, a way of finding out something. Students are taught to take an objective, almost hostile attitude to a text, to pick it to pieces and investigate it like a crime. They must not love it too much. The hermeneutics of suspicion is built on centuries of philosophical and pedagogical ideologies that separate body and mind, then rank the mind above the body.

1. **The Full-body reading**

Anna Wilson termed full-body reading as the kind that is excessive, feelings-y, full-body reading – often associated with reading for pleasure, gobbling up genre fiction such as horror and romance on a lunch break or in the bath; getting the shivers, getting aroused, weeping, the glow from a happy ending.

**I.A Answer ANY THREE of the following questions in 200 words. (3x15=45)**

1. ‘Ferrante’s writing seems to say something that hasn’t been said before – it isn’t easy to specify what this is – in a way so compelling its readers forget where they are, abandon friends and disdain sleep.’ Is this helpful in understanding the book’s premise? Explain.
2. Which of the reading approaches has Joanna Biggs employed in her review? Which would you prefer? Why?
3. Point out to an observation that Biggs makes in her review that has brought a larger argument about Ferrante’s writing to perspective. Explain.
4. Write a short review of a book that you have enjoyed reading using the Hermeneutics of suspicion approach.

**II. Write in 300 words the strangest eating adventure you have ever had. (1x20=20)**

**III. What aspects about travel writing did you find interesting this semester? Write in FIVE to SEVEN sentences. (1x5=5)**

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