

## RMST202: Literatures and Cultures of the Romance World II

Midterm Examination, February 17, 2022

Pick *four* of the following passages. In each case, first identify the title and the author(s) of the text from which it is taken. Then comment briefly on how this specific passage relates to the text from which it is taken, examining the significance of the passage for the text as a whole and how it fits within that text's broader narrative or story. Last, but by no means least, you should discuss what the specific passage has to contribute to (and/or how it is illuminated by) the themes and concepts we have been discussing in the course.

Please note that, in every case, your focus should be on trying to understand and explain the passage in front of you.

You have 24 hours to write this exam (until 2pm Pacific Time on Friday, February 18), but in total it should not take you more than an hour and a half of focused concentration. You may consult the texts and/or any other material, but I do not particularly recommend you do so, as it will only slow you down. I expect you to write half a page or so (depending on font, size, and spacing etc.) or a couple of short paragraphs for each passage, and that *most of your attention will be on a careful and close reading of the passages themselves*.

When you are finished, email your exam script (ideally, in PDF format) to me at [jon.beasley-murray@ubc.ca](mailto:jon.beasley-murray@ubc.ca).

- 1) And how easy it is, amid this enviable peace, to start daydreaming. Reverie imposes its presence, unaided. Here, surrealism resumes all its rights. They give you a glass inkwell with a champagne cork for a stopper, and you are away! Images flutter down like confetti. Images, images everywhere. On the ceiling. In the armchairs' wickerwork. In the glasses' drinking straws. In the telephone switchboard. In the sparkling air. In the iron lanterns which light the room. Snow down, images, it is Christmas. Snow down upon the barrels and upon credulous hearts. Snow on to people's hair and on to their hands.
- 2) The action began; it seemed to me all the more obscure because in those days, when I read, I often daydreamed, for entire pages, of something quite different. And in addition to the lacunae that this distraction left in the story, there was the fact, when Mama was the one reading aloud to me, that she skipped all the love scenes. Thus, all the bizarre changes that take place in the respective attitudes of the miller's wife and the child and that can be explained only by the progress of a nascent love seemed to me marked by a profound mystery whose source I readily imagined must be in that strange and sweet name "Champi," which gave the child, who bore it without my knowing why, its vivid, charming purplish color. If my mother was an unfaithful reader, she was also, in the case of books in which she found the inflection of true feeling, a wonderful reader for the respect and simplicity of interpretation, the beauty and gentleness of the sound of her voice.

- 3) I enjoyed that feeling of being, through the book, cut in two: my body bathing in the throbbing well-being of the rain or of the silence, and my head thrust through a world that I was very often forced to transport a bit to the image of my own in order to broaden it all the more.

I preferred novels. I admired the gift, the power possessed by a man who wrote a novel.

I would really have liked to do otherwise one day. But how would I manage that?

I had never frequented those people with blond hair, blue eyes, pink cheeks, that were put in novels.

- 4) “Had fun enough? But you don’t realize what you’re doing! It’s disgusting!”

“What is disgusting?” asked my father astonished.

“You take a red-headed girl to the seashore, expose her to the hot sun which she can’t stand, and when her skin has all peeled, you abandon her. It’s too easy! What on earth shall I say to Elsa?”

- 5) Without any dignity—I’ve never learned to be dignified in love—for several months, obstinately, I persisted in linking my life to yours, not understanding why love should be incompatible with your career.

But now, now that I am dead, it occurs to me that possibly all men once in their lifetime long to make some great renunciation; to sacrifice regretfully something vital; to tear to pieces a butterfly, in order to feel themselves masters of their own destiny.

- 6) Despite the crude and overweening familiarity with which she treated her friend, I recognized her father’s obsequious and reticent gestures, his sudden qualms. Soon she stood up and pretended to be trying to close the shutters without success.

“No, leave them open, I’m hot,” said her friend.

“But it’s a nuisance, someone will see us,” answered Mlle. Vinteuil.

But she must have guessed that her friend would think she had said these words only to goad her into answering with certain others that she in fact wanted to hear, but that out of discretion she wanted to leave her friend the initiative of uttering. And so her face, which I could not see, must have assumed the expression that my grandmother liked so much, as she quickly added:

“When I say see us, I mean see us reading; it’s such a nuisance to think that whatever insignificant thing you may be doing, other eyes are watching you.”

- 7) This small incident left Agostino with the feeling once and for all that he no longer belonged to the world of children like the boy with the soccer ball, and that, anyway, he had sunk so low that he could no longer live without deceit and vexation. But it pained him not to be like the boys in the gang either. There was still too much delicacy in him. If he were like them, he sometimes thought, he wouldn't be so hurt by their crudeness, their vulgarity, their bluntness. So he found that he had lost his original identity without acquiring through his loss another.
- 8) "I must go now, Sofia, farewell!"
- And someone, something, is drawing her again into that watery channel down which she had found the way to come to a living woman in order to tell her the things she could not say to her before she died.
- Feeling light, she starts once again to slide down into infinity, knowing now that the dead cannot entirely depart until altogether free from terrestrial anxieties and that is why so often they return, giving out signs and messages through things, sounds, or magnetic fluids... poor signs, desperate messages, that the living most of the time do not see.
- 9) I went down the stairs slowly. I felt a strong emotion. I remembered the terrible expectation, the longing for life, when I had climbed them for the first time. I was leaving now without having known any of the things I had confusedly hoped for: life in its plenitude, joy, deep interests, love. I was taking nothing from the house on Calle de Aribau. At least, that's what I thought then.

*Good luck!*