

Essay Questions – THAP 2632

1.
Sontag's essay provides a polemic against interpretation. What does she mean by this – that is, what does she mean by being 'against interpretation'? Is she suggesting we do away with art criticism or interpretation all together? Or is her rejection of 'interpretation' more complex? Your response should provide an overview of what Sontag is *specifically* against in relation to interpretation.
2.
Sontag concludes her essay with the following: "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotic's of art." What does she mean by this? Discuss. Also, what are the strengths of this 'erotic's of art' in place of a 'hermeneutics'? How might such an approach be useful in discussing art or cinema? Indeed, is this approach useful at all in your opinion?
3.
Duchamp negates 'painting-painting' for an art of contemplation. Paz argues that after Duchamp we are "no longer condemned to see, but free to contemplate." Discuss, with emphasis on what you think the ramifications of this 'negation of painting-painting' are for art.
4.
What is important or radical about Paz's argument that Duchamp's work is actually the extension of an 'iconographic tradition'. How does Paz evidence this claim, i.e., how does he reveal the iconographic tradition in Duchamp's work?
5.
Desire and eroticism are key forces at play in *The Bride Stripped Bare of Her Bachelors, Even* and *Etant Donnes* – Discuss
6.
Duchamp – avant-garde artist, Renaissance man, classicist, or all of the above? Discuss.
7. What is semiotics and how do semioticians such as Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco apply it? In your answer be sure to provide a close analysis of one or more of Barthes or Eco's essays.
8. Provide a broad definition of semiotics. Follows this with a semiotic analysis of a piece of cultural material (whether artistic or otherwise) of your choice.
9.
In *The Conspiracy of Art* Jean Baudrillard mounts a scathing critique of contemporary art, dismissing its claim for 'exceptionalism'. He argues that contemporary art is certainly contemporary – 'all too contemporary' and no different from everything else. Provide some examples of the ways in which Baudrillard views art as being to complicit with contemporary Western Culture. Do you have any objections to his argument, what are its strengths?

10.

Michel Foucault describes Magritte's *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe) as a 'calligram' or 'unraveled calligram'. Foucault goes on to provide three interpretations of what Magritte's calligram might 'mean'. Discuss this calligram and these three interpretations. Provide also a summary of Foucault's discussion generally.

11.

Frame your own question. Discuss with me.