

國立中央大學八十四學年度碩士班研究生入學試題卷

所別：英美語文研究所

組 科目：文學作品分析

共 2 頁 第 1 頁

84
英
文
系
研
究
生
入
學
試
題
卷

Answer only two of the four parts. You have fifty minutes to complete each part.

PART I (50% 50 minutes)

In her book Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft charged that women's education was inadequate as long as it kept women's minds underdeveloped. Arguing that women were only concerned about their beauty and pleasure, Wollstonecraft suggested that a solid education for women was imperative so that women could undertake more responsibilities—including those of mothers and wives.

"The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. One cause of this barren blooming I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled [cheated] by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love."

Question:

In what ways does the above passage demonstrate that women's education is inadequate? Consider to what extent Wollstonecraft is successful in attributing responsibility to men or to women, what answers she aims at evoking from her readers, and if there are any contradictions and ambiguities in her argument.

PART II (50% 50 minutes)

In the following speech, taken from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1902), the narrator Marlow appears as an unreflecting observer of the oppression and dismal living conditions of the people of Africa under imperialist rule.

"The were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now—nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air—and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of eyes under the trees."

Critical comment

One of Conrad's critics (Edward Said) provides the following comments on the rhetorical, formal, and ideological complexities of Conrad's text: 1) that the form of Conrad's narrative is "circular;" 2) that Marlow's language is "contradictory," "vague," and full of "misstatements;" 3) that Marlow's language employs rhetorical devices that "make peculiar events seem more peculiar;" and 4) that Conrad "does not give us the sense that he could imagine a fully realized alternative to imperialism: the natives he wrote about in Africa, Asia, or America were incapable of independence, and because he seemed to imagine that European tutelage was a given, he could not foresee what would take place when it came to an end."

Question:

Considering at least two of Said's comments on Heart of Darkness discuss how they correspond to or contradict Marlow's speech in the passage cited above.

國立中央大學八十四學年度碩士班研究生入學試題卷

所別：英美語文研究所 組 科目：文學作品分析 共 2 頁 第 2 頁

參考
書目

PART III (50% 50 minutes)

Robert Schenkkan's The Kentucky Cycle has been considered the most successful "epic" drama of American history to be produced in the late twentieth century. The play depicts the tragic life of six generations of Americans and their struggle to survive in Kentucky. The following speech is by Mary Anne, the wife of a miner, whose anger against the indifference of the mining company toward the deaths of miners prompts her to call for a general strike and the organization of a Union.

"What's hard-dyin'?: I'll tell you what's hard: waitin' for that knock on the door and some long face from the Company sayin' they're sorry, ma'am, but there's been an accident—that's hard. Watchin' your son go down into the dark mine in the mornin' and not knowin' whether you'll ever see him again—that's hard. Buryin' a baby you just....I buried four children in this ground, you hear me, four babies, and I didn't have no choice about it. But I got a choice now, and I ain't burying another one! They can bring in a hundred goddamn armies and it can't be nothing worse than what we've known. It won't never stop unless we say it stops, and I say it stops now. Right now. Right here. Stand up!"

Note

However, despite Mary Anne's brave speech and actions, the Union fails and her family, children, and grandchildren die in poverty and misery. The end of the play depicts the total destruction of the environment in Kentucky.

Question:

Given the catastrophic ending of the play, what do you think is the purpose and message of Mary Anne's brave speech? Is the message optimistic, positive, calling for "resistance at all costs?" Or is the message negative, ambiguous, suggesting that death is better than living in misery? In assessing the positivity/negativity of her speech consider carefully Mary Anne's emphasis on images of death (i.e., "dyin," "buried," "burying").

PART IV (50% 50 minutes)

One of the most well known twentieth-century critics of literature and culture, Mikhail Bakhtin, expressed his view on cultural "outsidedness" in this manner:

"In the realm of culture, outsidedness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that a foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully, because there will be cultures that see and understand even more)....We raise questions for a foreign culture, one that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions on it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths."

Question (Answer one of the two)

1. According to Bakhtin's statement, a foreign culture can be understood only in the eyes of another culture. Do you think that Bakhtin's statement applies also to the study of literature? Could we say that "in the realm of literature, outsidedness is the most powerful force of understanding?" Notwithstanding the difficulty of understanding a foreign language, are there elements in a literature of a specific culture that a foreigner can understand better than the native speaker of this culture?
2. Considering that the West has often oriented its forces against non-Western countries (i.e., colonialist and imperialist forces), how should one examine Western (i.e., English) literature from the perspective of a "foreign" (i.e., Chinese, Taiwanese) culture? You may draw examples from literature or films you know that explore comparative approaches to Eastern and Western cultures.