

中央大學英美語文學系  
94 學年度碩士班甄試入學考試  
【筆試試題】

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Directions:

Choose ONE of the questions below. Your answer should be in essay form, with a thesis statement and a detailed argument to support it, and with examples and explanation.

1. Compare and contrast how "dignity" and "Englishness" are defined in the two excerpts (they are from the same novel). Provide a detailed close reading in your answers, and include a discussion of how irony is used, even when the narrator is unaware of it. (Vocabulary key: *butler* = head servant in a household; *continentals* = Europeans; *Celts* = said to be descended from central and western European peoples, and now living in parts of Britain such as Ireland and Wales; *gent* = gentleman)
2. Compare and contrast the representation of desire and/or possession in the two excerpts (from different novels). Your answer should include a detailed close reading and may consider questions such as: What is the object of desire, and what connection does it have with the relation of self and other? How is the scene structured by the act of seeing (or imagination)? What metaphoric meanings are suggested by the language and imagery of each passage? (Vocabulary key: *secretary* = a writing desk; *sala* = a large room; *luminary* = lamp)



first excerpt:

I hope you will agree that my father not only manifests, but comes close to being the personification itself, of what the Hayes Society terms 'dignity in keeping with his position'. If one considers the difference between my father at such moments and a figure such as Mr Jack Neighbours even with the best of his technical flourishes, I believe one may begin to distinguish what it is that separates a 'great' butler from a merely competent one. We may now understand better, too, why my father was so fond of the story of the butler who failed to panic on discovering a tiger under the dining table; it was because he knew instinctively that somewhere in this story lay the kernel of what true 'dignity' is. And let me now posit this: 'dignity' has to do crucially with a butler's ability not to abandon the professional being he inhabits. Lesser butlers will abandon their professional being for the private one at the least provocation. For such persons, being a butler is like playing some pantomime role; a small push, a slight stumble, and the façade will drop off to reveal the actor underneath. The great butlers are great by virtue of their ability to inhabit their professional role and inhabit it to the

utmost; they will not be shaken out by external events, however surprising, alarming or vexing. They wear their professionalism as a decent gentleman will wear his suit: he will not let ruffians or circumstance tear it off him in the public gaze; he will discard it when, and only when, he wills to do so, and this will invariably be when he is entirely alone. It is, as I say, a matter of 'dignity'.

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of. Continentals – and by and large the Celts, as you will no doubt agree – are as a rule unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion, and are thus unable to maintain a professional demeanour other than in the least challenging of situations. If I may return to my earlier metaphor – you will excuse my putting it so coarsely – they are like a man who will, at the slightest provocation, tear off his suit and his shirt and run about screaming. In a word, 'dignity' is beyond such persons. We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman.

second excerpt:

There was a murmur of agreement, and for a moment all present seemed to be considering whether or not it would be proper to divulge to me the tale concerning this local personage. Then Mr Taylor broke the silence by saying:

'That's true what Harry says. You can tell a true gentleman from a false one that's just dressed in finery. Take

yourself, sir. It's not just the cut of your clothes, nor is it even the fine way you've got of speaking. There's something else that marks you out as a gentleman. Hard to put your finger on it, but it's plain for all to see that's got eyes.'

This brought more sounds of agreement around the table.

'Dr Carlisle shouldn't be long now, sir,' Mrs Taylor put in. 'You'll enjoy talking with him.'

'Dr Carlisle's got it too,' Mr Taylor said. 'He's got it. He's a true gent, that one.'

Mr Morgan, who had said little since his arrival, bent forward and said to me: 'What do you suppose it is, sir? Maybe one that's got it can better say what it is. Here we are all talking about who's got it and who hasn't, and we're none the wiser about what we're talking about. Perhaps you could enlighten us a bit, sir.'

A silence fell around the table and I could sense all the faces turn to me. I gave a small cough and said:

'It is hardly for me to pronounce upon qualities I may or may not possess. However, as far as this particular question is concerned, one would suspect that the quality being referred to might be most usefully termed "dignity".'

I saw little point in attempting to explain this statement further. Indeed, I had merely given voice to the thoughts running through my mind while listening to the preceding talk and it is doubtful I would have said such a thing had the situation not suddenly demanded it of me. My response, however, seemed to cause much satisfaction.

'There's a lot of truth in what you say there, sir,' Mr Andrews said, nodding, and a number of other voices echoed this.

'That Mr Lindsay could certainly have done with a little more dignity,' Mrs Taylor said. 'The trouble with his sort is they mistake acting high and mighty for dignity.'

'Mind you,' put in Mr Harry Smith, 'with all respect for what you say, sir, it ought to be said. Dignity isn't just

something gentlemen have. Dignity's something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get. You'll excuse me, sir, but like I said before, we don't stand on ceremony here when it comes to expressing opinions. And that's my opinion for what it's worth. Dignity's not just something for gentlemen.'

I perceived, of course, that Mr Harry Smith and I were rather at cross purposes on this matter, and that it would be far too complicated a task for me to explain myself more clearly to these people. I thus judged it best simply to smile and say: 'Of course, you're quite correct.'

This had the immediate effect of dispelling the slight tension that had built in the room while Mr Harry Smith had been speaking. And Mr Harry Smith himself seemed to lose all inhibitions, for now he leaned forward and continued:

'That's what we fought Hitler for, after all. If Hitler had had things his way, we'd just be slaves now. The whole world would be a few masters and millions upon millions of slaves. And I don't need to remind anyone here, there's no dignity to be had in being a slave. That's what we fought for and that's what we won. We won the right to be free citizens. And it's one of the privileges of being born English that no matter who you are, no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free and you're born so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me, sir.'

'Now now, Harry,' Mr Taylor said. 'I can see you're warning up to one of your political speeches.'

This brought laughter. Mr Harry Smith smiled a little shyly, but went on:

'I'm not talking politics. I'm just saying, that's all. You can't have dignity if you're a slave. But every Englishman can grasp it if only he cares to. Because we fought for that right.'

'This may seem like a small, out of the way place we have here, sir,' his wife said. 'But we gave more than our share in the war. More than our share.'



(2) Pauline was delighted to see Lucy so like herself again. She invented errands to keep her going. But late in the afternoon she thought her sister looked tired, and sent her upstairs to her own room to rest until supper time.

Lucy did not feel tired, she was throbbing with excitement, and with the feeling of wonder in the air. She put the blinds up high and sat down in a rocking-chair to watch the bewildering, silent descent of the snow, over all the neighbours' houses, the trees and gardens. She was alone on the upper floor. The daylight in her room grew greyer and darker. Lights in the house across the street began to shine softly through the storm. She tried to feel at peace and to breathe more slowly, but every nerve was quivering with a long-forgotten restlessness. How often she had run out on a spring morning, into the orchard, down the street, in pursuit of something she could not see, but knew! It was there, in the breeze, in the sun; it hid behind the blooming apple boughs, raced before her through the neighbours' gardens, but she could never catch up with it. Clement Sebastian had made the fugitive gleam an actual possession. With him she had learned that those flashes of promise could come true, that they could be the important things in one's life. He had never told her so; he was, in his own person, the door and the way to that knowledge.

Tonight, through the soft twilight, everything in her was reaching outward, straining forward. She could think of nothing but crowded streets with life streaming up and down, windows full of roses and gardenias and violets—she wanted to hold them all in her hands, to bury her face in them. She wanted flowers and music and enchantment and love,—all the things she had first known with Sebastian. What did it mean,—that she wanted to go on living again? How could she go on, alone?

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Suddenly something flashed into her mind, so clear that it must have come from without, from the breathless quiet. What if—what if Life itself were the sweetheart? It was like a lover waiting for her in distant cities—across the sea; drawing her, enticing her, weaving a spell over her. She opened the window softly and knelt down beside it to breathe the cold air. She felt the snowflakes melt in her hair, on her hot cheeks. Oh, now she knew! She must have it, she couldn't run away from it. She must go back into the world and get all she could of everything that had made him what he was. Those splendours were still on earth, to be sought after and fought for. In them she would find him. *If with all your heart you truly seek Him, you shall ever surely find Him.* He had sung that for her in the beginning, when she first went to him. Now she knew what it meant.

She crouched closer to the window and stretched out her arms to the storm, to whatever might lie behind it. Let it come! Let it all come back to her again! Let it betray her and mock her and break her heart, she must have it!



(2)

I had no definite purpose, no bad intention, but felt myself held to the spot by an acute, though absurd, sense of opportunity. Opportunity for what I couldn't have said, inasmuch as it wasn't in my mind that I might proceed to thievery. Even had this tempted me I was confronted with the evident fact that Miss Bordereau didn't leave her secretary, her cupboard and the drawers of her tables gaping. I had no keys, no tools and no ambition to smash her furniture. None the less it came to me that I was now, perhaps alone, unmolested, at the hour of freedom and safety, nearer to the source of my hopes than I had ever been. I held up my lamp, let the light play on the different objects as if it could tell me something. Still there came no movement from the other room. If Miss Tina was sleeping she was sleeping sound. Was she doing so—generous creature—on purpose to leave me the field? Did she know I was there and was she just keeping quiet to see what I would do—what I *could* do? Yet might I, when it came to that? She herself knew even better than I how little.

I stopped in front of the secretary, gaping at it vainly and no doubt grotesquely; for what had it to say to me after all? In the first place it was locked, and in the second it almost surely contained nothing in which I was interested. Ten to one the papers had been destroyed, and even if they hadn't the keen old woman wouldn't have put them in such a place as that after removing them from the green trunk—wouldn't have transferred them, with the idea of their safety on her brain, from the better hiding-place to the worse. The secretary was more conspicuous,

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more exposed in a room in which she could no longer mount guard. It opened with a key, but there was a small brass handle, like a button as well; I saw this as I played my lamp over it. I did something more, for the climax of my crisis; I caught a glimpse of the possibility that Miss Tina wished me really to understand. If she didn't so wish me, if she wished me to keep away, why hadn't she locked the door of communication between the sitting-room and the sala? That would have been a definite sign that I was to leave them alone. If I didn't leave them alone she meant me to come for a purpose—a purpose now represented by the super-subtle inference that to oblige me she had unlocked the secretary. She hadn't left the key, but the lid would probably move if I touched the button. This possibility pressed me hard and I bent very close to judge. I didn't propose to do anything, not even—not in the least—to let down the lid; I only wanted to test my theory, to see if the cover *would* move. I touched the button with my hand—a mere touch would tell me; and as I did so—it is embarrassing for me to relate it—I looked over my shoulder. It was a chance, an instinct, for I had really heard nothing. I almost let my luminary drop and certainly I stepped back, straightening myself up at what I saw. Juliana stood there in her nightdress, by the doorway of her room, watching me; her hands were raised, she had lifted the everlasting curtain that covered half her face, and for the first, the last, the only time I beheld her extraordinary eyes. They glared at me; they were like the sudden drench, for a caught burglar, of a flood of gaslight; they made me horribly ashamed. I never shall forget her strange little bent white tottering figure, with its lifted head, her attitude, her expression; neither shall I forget the tone in which as I turned, looking at her, she hissed out passionately, furiously:

"Ah you publishing scoundrell!"

I can't now say what I stammered to excuse myself, to explain; but I went toward her to tell her I meant no harm. She waved me off with her old hands, retreating before me in horror; and the next thing I knew she had fallen back with a quick spasm, as if death had descended on her, into Miss Tina's arms.