

# 國立成功大學

## 112學年度碩士班招生考試試題

編 號： 13

系 所： 外國語文學系

科 目： 英文閱讀與評析

日 期： 0206

節 次： 第 1 節

備 註： 不可使用計算機

※ 考生請注意：本試題不可使用計算機。請於答案卷(卡)作答，於本試題紙上作答者，不予計分。

**NOTE: Write a critical analysis of the following passage. Don't just retell or summarize the essay and be sure to make specific reference to the article itself in developing your analysis.**

Among the issues you *might* consider: why does Toni Morrison struggle with a language that evokes hidden signs of racial superiority? How are literary whiteness and blackness constructed and what the consequences are of such a construction? (You do not have to try to answer these questions; you may write about other aspects of the passage if you prefer.)

Remember your essay writing will be graded based on whether you can offer a perceptive analysis of the text, how well you organize and support your ideas, and most importantly, your writing competency. 100%

From Toni Morrison, "Preface". *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination*, 1992.

Many other examples of these narrative gearshifts—metaphors; summonings; rhetorical gestures of triumph, despair, and closure dependent on the acceptance of the associative language of dread and love that accompanies blackness—were piling up in my file. Examples I thought of as a category of sources of imagery, like water, flight, war, birth, religion, and so on, that make up the writer's kit.

These musings on Marie Cardinal's text are not in themselves wholly necessary for the book's appreciation, being simply illustrations of how each of us reads, becomes engaged in and *watches* what is being read all at the same time. I include the thoughts I had while reading this particular work because they identify the stages of my interest, first, in the pervasive use of black images and people in expressive prose; second, in the shorthand, the taken-for-granted assumptions that lie in their usage; and finally, to the subject of this book: the sources of these images and the effect they have on the literary imagination and its product.

The principal reason these matters loom large for me is that I do not have quite the same access to these traditionally useful constructs of blackness. Neither blackness nor "people of color" stimulates in me notions of excessive, limitless love, anarchy, or routine dread. I cannot rely on these metaphorical shortcuts because I am a black writer struggling with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive "othering" of people and language which are by no means marginal or already and completely known and knowable in my work. My vulnerability would lie in romanticizing blackness rather than demonizing it; villifying whiteness rather than reifying it. The kind of work I have always wanted to do requires me to learn how to maneuver ways to free up the language from its sometimes sinister, frequently lazy, almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains. (The only short story I have ever written, "Recitatif," was an experiment in the removal of all racial codes from a narrative about two characters of different races for whom racial identity is crucial.)

Writing and reading are not all that distinct for a writer. Both exercises require being alert and ready for unaccountable beauty, for the intricateness or simple elegance of the writer's imagination, for the world that

imagination evokes. Both require being mindful of the places where imagination sabotages itself, locks its own gates, pollutes its vision. Writing and reading mean being aware of the writer's notions of risk and safety, the serene achievement of, or sweaty fight for, meaning and response-ability.

Antonia S. Byatt in *Possession* has described certain kinds of readings that seem to me inextricable from certain experiences of writing, "when the knowledge that we *shall know* the writing differently or better or satisfactorily runs ahead of any capacity to say what we know, or how. In these readings, a sense that the text has appeared to be wholly new, never before seen, is followed, almost immediately, by the sense that it was *always there*, that we, the readers, knew it was always there, and have *always known* it was as it was, though we have now for the first time recognised, become fully cognisant of, our knowledge."

The imagination that produces work which bears and invites rereadings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, implies a shareable world and an endlessly flexible language. Readers and writers both struggle to interpret and perform within a common language shareable imaginative worlds. And although upon that struggle the positioning of the reader has justifiable claims, the author's presence—her or his intentions, blindness, and sight—is part of the imaginative activity.

For reasons that should not need explanation here, until very recently, and regardless of the race of the author, the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white, I am interested to know what that assumption has meant to the literary imagination. When does racial "unconsciousness" or awareness of race enrich interpretive language, and when does it impoverish it? What does positing one's writerly self, in the wholly racialized society that is the United States, as unraced and all others as raced entail? What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level *always* conscious of representing one's own race to, or in spite of, a race of readers that understands itself to be "universal" or race-free? In other words, how is "literary whiteness" and "literary blackness" made, and what is the consequence of that construction? How do embedded assumptions of racial (not racist) language work in the literary enterprise that hopes and sometimes claims to be "humanistic"? When, in a race-conscious culture, is that lofty goal actually approximated? When not and why? Living in a nation of people who *decided* that their world view would combine agendas for individual freedom *and* mechanisms for devastating racial oppression presents a singular landscape for a writer. When this world view is taken seriously as agency, the literature produced within and without it offers an unprecedented opportunity to comprehend the resilience and gravity, the inadequacy and the force of the imaginative act.

Thinking about these matters has challenged me as a writer and a reader. It has made both activities harder and infinitely more rewarding. It has, in fact, elevated and sharpened the delight I take in the work that literature, under the pressure that racialized societies level on the creative process, manages to do. Over and over again I am amazed by the treasure trove that American literature is. How compelling is the study of those writers who take responsibility for *all* of the values they bring to their art. How stunning is the achievement of those who have searched for and mined a shareable language for the words to say it.