

國立清華大學100學年度碩士班入學考試試題

系所班組別：外國語文學系（所）甲組 碩士班入學考試

科目：英文 科目代碼：3704 共四頁，第一頁 *請在【答案卷、卡】作答

Read the following passages and answer the questions.

Part I (50%)

'Meantime', says the King, rising to his feet and glowering at his audience, 'we shall express our darker purpose.'

Like King Lear's, my own—slightly less dark—purpose involves a redrawing and a reshaping of what may to some seem familiar ground. So the monarch's next lines are not inappropriate to my design. I am proposing to draw a map, or a series of maps, of recent developments in Shakespearean criticism in Britain. And I can begin with *King Lear*, and with those very lines, because in a crucial sense they focus precisely on Britain itself:

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided In three our kingdom

(I, i, 38-41)

If we insert this passage into the context of its own material history at the beginning of the seventeenth century, we can hardly fail to notice what might be called its *emblematic* force. The threatening words 'Give me the map there', and the consequent unfurling of a programme of brutal partition, pitch the play into the middle of a complex discursive arena in which the spectre of political and social disintegration confronts and interrogates King James's efforts to present the throne as the source and guarantee of social coherence.

To make this sort of manoeuvre, tucking the work back into its own time, is to invoke a kind of historicism. And whilst the release of the lines' emblematic dimension may lend them a surprising energy, the gambit's slightly self-conscious air perhaps proves disconcerting. It derives from the fact that, more than any other, a recourse to and engagement with history can be said to be the characteristic gesture of recent British and American Shakespearean criticism.

The use of history involved, however, is of a particular order. It differs radically from another sort still dominant on both sides of the Atlantic, which tends to focus on historical material as if it formed a 'background' against which literary texts might profitably be placed before being read. Whilst that procedure seems innocuous enough, a series of assumptions can be seen to fuel it and finally to shape its conclusions. Chief amongst them is a notion of the literary text as a privileged vehicle of communication, perhaps functioning most fruitfully when located in some kind of historical context, but in the end finally independent of it. A covert

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distinction between text and context, foreground and background, evidently operates here on behalf of some further and quite major presuppositions. One of them involves a simple projection of the values of our own near-universal literacy onto the past. Another reflects an undeclared investment in a view of history warped by its primary commitment to the academic study of literature.

One of the main concerns of what has come to be known as the New Historicism will be to renegotiate that distinction between foreground and background: to relocate and then re-read literary texts in quite a different relation to the other material signifying practices of a culture. As its name suggests, New Historicism's own history also involves a programme of radical readjustment. On the one hand it represents a reaction against a de-historicized idealism, in which an apparently free-floating and autonomous body of writing called 'literature' serves as the repository of the universal values of a supposedly permanent 'human nature'. On the other, it constitutes a rejection of the presuppositions of a 'history of ideas', which tends to regard literature as a static mirror of its time. Such a historicism's 'newness' lies precisely in its determination to reposition 'literature' altogether, to perceive literary texts as active constituent *elements* of their time, participants in, not mirrors of it; respondent to and involved with numerous other enterprises, such as the law, marriage, religion, government, all engaged in the production of 'texts' and the cultural meanings that finally constitute a way of life. And it will see these, and particularly the relations of power which operate between them, as equally determining features in respect of particular societies and their culture.

The whole project clearly owes something to the work of Foucault, and it finally calls, as Leonard Tennenhouse has argued, for a major 'unthinking' of our own appropriating, segregating procedures, particularly those by which we 'enclose Renaissance culture within our own discourse and thus make it speak our notion of sexuality, the family, and the individual' (*Power on Display*, 1986: 10). Shakespeare's plays, such an 'unthinking' suggests, function as part of a quite different discursive order whose contours, boundaries and dispositions of experience are hardly likely to match those we nowadays take for granted. They spring from and engage with a world quite distinct from our own: one in which, for instance, as Tennenhouse demonstrates, literary and political discourses have yet to be differentiated. Like other contemporaneous texts (the distinctions between them often invented by ourselves), Shakespeare's plays participate in their society in terms of their capacity to make sense in and of and for it. They thus take their place in an extensive symbolic field which must also include royal proclamations, parliamentary debates,

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architecture, music, song, letters and travellers' reports as aspects of a number of different rhetorical or 'textual' strategies available and consistently utilized for the production of meaning. Clearly, such a symbolic field also includes the potent texts that we call maps. (from Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare*)

Questions:

1. Summarize the main ideas of the **entire** passage in your own words (at least 250 words). (25%)
2. Write a critical response to the passage above. (25%)

Part II (50%)

Modernity, in its twentieth-century valence, describes an era in which writers grew suspicious of the abuses of history and historical consciousness, developing an awareness of our existential being as precisely that which persists despite lack of understanding and the absence of coherence in society. By such a view, any continuity with the past might be perceived—or inherited—as though it were only a burden. A crisis in the forward trajectory of culture occurs because the conventional, progressive form of historical consciousness has been all too skillful at forsaking evidence that might contradict its mythic mode of truth. Modernity as an era of atrocity fosters a paradox whereby literature's need to account for the detritus of injustice—revolutions of history and historical consciousness, epochal shifts from the feudal to the bourgeois economy as from a religious to a scientific orientation of human existence, or the radically negative experience of sufferings that proceed from religious and racial hatreds as also from colonial and imperialist enterprises—may place the literary text at odds, in some basic sense, with its own conditions of production.

If we have grown accustomed by now to efforts to cast suspicion on contemporary literature and culture, at least a portion of our suspicion would seem to be owing to the Holocaust. So much of the language of literary postness—including the postmodernist turn against the orthodoxy of representation, the deconstructionist perception of language's meanings as arranged along an arbitrary and historically contingent plane (rather than rooted in metaphysical, foundational inheritances), and the array of repeated apocalyptic prognostications about the death of lyric, the novel, or literature itself—had its birth in the era of post-Auschwitz sensibility.⁶ Although it may be too historically schematic to suggest that the Holocaust in and of itself brought about a revolution in literary praxis, the events of 1933–1945 have at the very least invested with renewed urgency literature's capacity to turn against itself. All of the many cultural and theoretical discourses of demise and their aftermath give privilege to an aesthetics of rupture, in which continuity in culture seems a suspect endeavor, at best archaically bound to unexamined mythic conceptions, at worst actively complicit with an epistemology of totality that softly or even strictly resembles totalitarian ambitions.

(from After Representation? Edo. Spargo and Ehrenreich)

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Questions:

1. Summarize the main ideas of the **entire** passage in your own words (no more than 200 words). (20%)
2. Write a critical response to the passage above. (30%)