

Concours normalien étudiant Lettres – Session 2023

Département Littératures et Langage

Commentaire de texte en anglais

Durée : 3 heures

Aucun ouvrage autorisé

Commentez en anglais le texte suivant extrait de *The Remains of the Day* de Kazuo Ishiguro (1989) en portant une attention particulière aux procédés de distanciation ironique mis en œuvre par le narrateur.

Voir page 2

I hope you will agree that in these two instances I have cited from his career – both of which I have had corroborated and believe to be accurate – my father not only manifests, but comes close to being the personification itself, of what the Hayes Society¹ terms “dignity in keeping with his position”. If one considers the difference
5 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
10 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
15 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,
20 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
25 emotional restraint which only the English race are 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
30 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.

Day One – Evening