



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**
FACULTÉ DES LETTRES

EXAMENS D'ADMISSION

2007

DEUXIÈME EXAMEN ÉCRIT: RÉSUMÉ

Graham Greene, 'Russian Roulette' (from 'The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard', *The Lost Childhood*, 1946)

1. Faites un RESUME EN ANGLAIS du texte ci-joint.

Evitez de reprendre trop souvent les mêmes termes que l'auteur du texte.

Longueur maximum conseillée: une page ½.

Cet examen consiste en un travail objectif de langue et ne requiert aucun commentaire de votre part.

2.1. Briefly state the meaning of each of the following phrases in its context:

1. the unchanging backcloth
2. quagmire of leaves
3. eased the medicine down
4. a wide arterial road
5. my fifth dose

**2.2. What is the reason for the narrator's repeated action, and what effect does it have on him?
Answer in no more than two sentences.**

La Faculté fournit les dictionnaires.

Vous n'êtes pas autorisé(e) à apporter votre dictionnaire personnel à l'examen.

agonies," Rilke wrote, "wrought on scaffolds, in torture chambers, madhouses, operating theatres, underneath vaults of bridges in late autumn. . . ."

1939 from *Another Mexico (The Lawless Roads)*

RUSSIAN ROULETTE

THE WILDERNESS OF GORSE, old trenches, abandoned butts was the unchanging backcloth of most of the adventures of childhood. It was to the Berkhamsted Common I had decamped for my act of rebellion some years before, with the intention, expressed in a letter left after breakfast on the heavy black sideboard, that there I would stay, day and night, until either I had starved or my parents had given in; when I pictured war it was always in terms of this Common, and myself leading a guerrilla campaign in the ragged waste, for no one, I was persuaded, knew its paths so intimately (how humiliating that in my own domestic campaign I was ambushed by my elder sister after a few hours).

Beyond the Common lay a wide grass ride known for some reason as Cold Harbour to which I would occasionally with some fear take a horse, and beyond this again stretched Ashridge Park, the smooth olive skin of beech trees and the thick last year's quagmire of leaves, dark like old pennies. Deliberately I chose my ground, I believe without any real fear—perhaps because I was uncertain myself whether I was play-acting; perhaps because so many acts which my elders would have regarded as neurotic, but which I still consider to have been under the circumstances highly reasonable, lay in the background of this more dangerous venture.

There had been, for example, perhaps five or six years before, the disappointing morning in the dark-room by the linen cupboard on the eve of term when I had patiently drunk a quantity of hypo under the impression that it was poisonous; on another occasion the blue glass bottle of hayfever lotion which, as it contained a small quantity of cocaine, had probably been good for my mood; the bunch of deadly nightshade that I had eaten with only a slight narcotic effect; the

twenty aspirins I had taken before swimming in the empty out-of-term school baths (I can still remember the curious sensation of swimming through wool); these acts may have removed all sense of strangeness as I slipped a bullet into a chamber and, holding the revolver behind my back, spun the chambers round.

Had I, at seventeen, romantic thoughts about my sister's government? Undoubtedly I must have had, but I think that at the most they simply eased the medicine down. Boredom, aridity, those were the main emotions. Unhappy love has, I suppose, sometimes driven boys to suicide, but this was not suicide, whatever a coroner's jury might have said of it: it was a gamble with five chances to one against an inquest. The romantic flavour—the autumn scene, the small heavy compact shape lying in the fingers—that perhaps was a tribute to adolescent love, but the discovery that it was possible to enjoy again the visible world by risking its total loss was one I was bound to make sooner or later.

I put the muzzle of the revolver in my right ear and pulled the trigger. There was a minute click, and looking down at the chamber I could see that the charge had moved into place. I was out by one. I remember an extraordinary sense of jubilation. It was as if a light had been turned on. My heart was knocking in its cage, and I felt that life contained an infinite number of possibilities. It was like a young man's first successful experience of sex—as if in that Ashridge glade one had passed a test of manhood. I went home and put the revolver back in the corner cupboard.

The odd thing about this experience was that it was repeated several times. At fairly long intervals I found myself craving for the drug. I took the revolver with me when I went up to Oxford, and I would walk out from Headington towards Elsfield down what is now a wide arterial road, smooth and shiny like the walls of a public lavatory. Then it was a sodden unfrequented country lane. The revolver would be whipped behind my back, the chambers twisted, the muzzle quickly and surreptitiously inserted beneath the black and ugly winter tree, the trigger pulled.

Slowly the effect of the drug wore off—I lost the sense of jubilation, I began to gain from the experience only the crude kick of excitement. It was like the difference between love and lust. And as the quality of the experience deteriorated, so my sense of responsibility grew and worried me. I wrote a very bad piece of free verse (free because it was easier in that way to express my meaning without lit-

erary equivocation) describing how, in order to give a fictitious sense of danger, I would "press the trigger of a revolver I already know to be empty." This piece of verse I would leave permanently on my desk, so that if I lost my gamble, there would be incontrovertible evidence of an accident, and my parents, I thought, would be less troubled than by an apparent suicide—or than by the rather bizarre truth.

But it was back at Berkhamsted that I paid a permanent farewell to the drug. As I took my fifth dose it occurred to me that I wasn't even excited: I was beginning to pull the trigger about as casually as I might take an aspirin tablet. I decided to give the revolver—which was six-chambered—a sixth and last chance. Twirling the chambers round, I put the muzzle to my ear for the last time and heard the familiar empty click as the chambers revolved. I was through with the drug, and walking back over the Common, down the new road by the ruined castle, past the private entrance to the gritty old railway station—reserved for the use of Lord Brownlow—my mind was already busy on other plans. One campaign was over, but the war against boredom had got to go on.

I put the revolver back in the corner cupboard, and going downstairs I lied gently and convincingly to my parents that a friend had invited me to join him in Paris.

1946 from "The Revolver in the Corner Cupboard,"
The Lost Childhood

FIRST TRAVELS

ARRIVED ABOUT NINE O'CLOCK at the Gare St.-Lazare, Easter 1924, went to an hotel, then on to the Casino to see Mistinguette, the thin insured distinguished legs, the sharp "catchy" features like the paper faces of the Ugly-Wuglies in *The Enchanted Castle* ("Walk on your toes, dear," the bonneted Ugly-Wugly whispered to the one with the wreath; and even at that thrilling crisis Gerald wondered how she could, since the toes of one foot were but the end of a golf club and of the other the end of a hockey stick"). The next night the Communists met in the slums at the end of a cul-de-sac. They kept on

reading out telegrams from the platform and everyone sang the *Internationale*; then they'd speak a little and then another telegram arrived. They were poor and pinched and noisy; one wondered why it was that they had so much good news coming to them which didn't make any difference at all. All the good news and the singing were at the end of an alley in a wide cold hall; they couldn't get out; in the little square the soldiers stood in tin helmets beside their stacked rifles. That night from the window of an hotel I saw a man and woman copulating; they stood against each other under a street lamp, like two people who are supporting and comforting each other in the pain of some sickness. The next day I read in the paper how the Reds had tried to get out, but the soldiers had stopped them; a few people were hurt, a few went to prison. . . .

The aeroplane rocked over Hanover, the last of the storm scattering behind it, dipped suddenly down five hundred feet towards the small air station, and soared again eastwards. Behind the plane the sun set along the clouds; we were above the sunset; looking back it lay below, long pale ridges of stained clouds. The air was grey above the lakes; they were sunk in the ground, like pieces of lead; the lights of villages in between. It was quite dark long before Berlin, and the city came to meet the plane through the darkness as a gorse fire does, links of flame through the heavy green night. A sky-sign was the size of a postage stamp; one could see the whole plan of the city, like a lit map in the Underground when you press a button to find the route. The great rectangle of the Tempelhof was marked in scarlet and yellow lights; the plane swerved away over the breadth of Berlin, turned back and down; the lights in the cabin went out and one could see the headlamps sweeping the asphalt drive, the sparks streaming out behind the grey Lufthansa wing, as the wheels touched and rebounded and took the ground and held. That was happiness, the quick impression; but on the ground, among the swastikas, one saw pain at every yard. . . .

Coming into Riga, I had deceived myself into thinking I was on the verge of a relationship with something new and lovely and happy as the train came out from the Lithuanian flats, where the peasants were ploughing in bathing-slips, pushing the wooden plough through the stiff dry earth, into the shining evening light beside the Latvian river. I had left Berlin in the hard wooden carriage at midnight; I hadn't slept and I'd eaten nothing all day. There was a Polish Jew in the



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

FACULTÉ DES LETTRES

EXAMENS D'ADMISSION

2006

DEUXIÈME EXAMEN ÉCRIT: RÉSUMÉ

Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh*, chap. 2 (1995)

1. Faites un RESUME EN ANGLAIS du texte ci-joint.

Evitez de reprendre trop souvent les mêmes termes que l'auteur du texte.

Longueur maximum conseillée: une page ½.

Cet examen consiste en un travail objectif de langue et ne requiert aucun commentaire de votre part.

2.1. Briefly state the meaning of each of the following phrases in its context :

1. bouts of sleeplessness
2. unleash a thin shriek
3. elusive mosquito-bites
4. breeze into
5. pushed right over the edge

2.2. Define in two sentences the motivation of Aurora's behaviour towards her grandmother and towards her mother.

La Faculté fournit les dictionnaires.

Vous n'êtes pas autorisé(e) à apporter votre dictionnaire personnel à l'examen.

*Palawan RUDDIE
The Moor's Last Sigk, 1885*

T W O

AT THE AGE OF thirteen my mother Aurora da Gama took to wandering barefoot around her grandparents' large, odorous house on Cabral Island during the bouts of sleeplessness which became, for a time, her nightly affliction, and on these nocturnal odysseys she would invariably throw open all the windows — first the inner screen-windows whose fine-meshed netting protected the house from midges mosquitoes flies, next the leaded-glass casements themselves, and finally the slatted wooden shutters beyond. Consequently, the sixty-year-old matriarch Epifania — whose personal mosquito-net had over the years developed a number of small but significant holes which she was too myopic or stingy to notice — would be awakened each morning by itching bites on her bony blue forearms and would then unleash a thin shriek at the sight of flies buzzing around the tray of bed-tea and sweet biscuits placed beside her by Tereza the maid (who swiftly fled). Epifania fell into a useless frenzy of scratching and swatting, lunging around her curvaceous teak boat-bed, often spilling tea on the lacy cotton bedclothes, or on her white muslin nightgown with the high ruffled collar that concealed her once swan-like, but now corrugated, neck. And as the fly-swatter in her right hand thwacked and thumped, as the long nails on her left hand raked her back in search of ever more elusive mosquito-bites, so Epifania da Gama's nightcap would slip from her head, revealing a mess of snaky white hair through which mottled patches of scalp could (alas!) all too easily be glimpsed. When young Aurora, listening at the door, judged that the sounds of her hated grandmother's fury (oaths, breaking china, the impotent slaps of the swatter, the scornful buzzing of insects) were nearing peak volume, she would put on her sweetest smile and

7

breeze into the matriarch's presence with a gay morning greeting, knowing that the mother of all the da Gamas of Cochin would be pushed right over the edge of her wild anger by the arrival of this youthful witness to her antique helplessness. Epifania, hair-a-straggle, kneeling on stained sheets, upraised swatter flapping like a broken wand, and seeking a release for her rage, howled like a weird sister, rakhshasa or banshee at intruding Aurora, to the youngster's secret delight.

'Oho-ho, girl, what a shock you gave, one day you will killofy my heart.'

So it was that Aurora da Gama got the idea of murdering her grandmother from the lips of the intended victim herself. After that she began making plans, but these increasingly macabre fantasies of poisons and cliff-edges were invariably scuppered by pragmatic problems, such as the difficulty of getting hold of a cobra and inserting it between Epifania's bedsheets, or the flat refusal of the old harriidan to walk on any terrain that, as she put it, 'tiltoed up or down'. And although Aurora knew very well where to lay her hands on a good sharp kitchen knife, and was certain that her strength was already great enough to choke the life out of Epifania, she nevertheless ruled out these options, too, because she had no intention of being found out, and too obvious an assault might lead to the asking of uncomfortable questions. The perfect crime having failed to make its nature known, Aurora continued to play the perfect granddaughter; but brooded on, privately, though it never occurred to her to notice that in her broodings there was more than a little of Epifania's ruthlessness:

'Patience is a virtue,' she told herself. 'I'll just bide-o my time.'

In the meanwhile she went on opening windows during those humid nights, and sometimes threw out small valuable ornaments, carved wooden trunk-nosed figures which bobbed away on the tides of the lagoon lapping at the walls of the island mansion, or delicately worked ivory tusks which naturally sank without trace. For several days the family was at a loss to understand these developments. The sons of Epifania da Gama, Aurora's uncle Aires-pronounced-Irish and her father Camoens-pronounced-

8

Cannons-through-the-nose, would awake to find that mischievous night-breezes had blown bush-shirts from their closets and business papers from their pending trays. Nimble-fingered draughts had untied the necks of the sample-bags, jute sacks full of big and little cardamoms and karni-leaves and cashews that always stood like sentinels along the shady corridors of the office wing, and as a result there were fenugreek seeds and pistachios tumbling crazily across the worn old floor made of limestone, charcoal, egg-whites and other, forgotten ingredients; and the scent of spices in the air tormented the matriarch, who had grown more and more allergic with the passing years to the sources of her family's fortune.

And if the flies buzzed in through the opened netting-windows, and the naughty gusts through the parted panes of leaded glass, then the opening of the shutters let in everything else: the dust and the tumult of boats in Cochin harbour, the horns of freighters and tug-boat chugs, the fishermen's dirty jokes and the throb of their jellyfish stings, the sunlight as sharp as a knife, the heat that could choke you like a damp cloth pulled tightly around your head, the calls of floating hawkers, the waiting sadness of the unmarried Jews across the water in Mattancheri, the menace of emerald smugglers, the machinations of business rivals, the growing nervousness of the British colony in Fort Cochin, the cash demands of the staff and of the plantation workers in the Spice Mountains, the tales of Communist troublemaking and Congresswallah politics, the names *Gandhi* and *Nehru*, the rumours of famine in the east and hunger strikes in the north, the songs and drum-beats of the oral storytellers, and the heavy rolling sound (as they broke against Cabral Island's rickety jetty) of the incoming tides of history. 'This low-class country, Jesus Christ, Aires-uncle swore at breakfast in his best gaitered and hattered manner. 'Outside world isn't dirty/filthy enough, eh, eh? Then what frightful bumbolina, what dash-it-all bugger-boy let it in here again? Is this a decent residence, by Jove, or a shithouse excuse-my-French in the bazaar?'

That morning Aurora understood that she had gone too far, because her beloved father Camoens, a little goateed sick of a man in a loud bush-shirt who was already a head shorter than his

beanpole daughter, took her down to the little jetty, and positively capering in his emotion and excitement so that against the improbable beauty and mercantile bustle of the lagoon his silhouette seemed like a figure out of a fantasy, a leprechaun dancing in a glade, perhaps, or a benign djinni escaped from a lamp, he confided in a secret hiss his great and heart-breaking news. Named after a poet and possessed of a dreamy nature (but not the gift), Camoens timidly suggested the possibility of a haunting.

'It is my belief', he told his dumbstruck daughter, 'that your darling Mummy has come back to us. You know how she loved fresh breeze, how she fought with your grandmother for air; and now by magic the windows fly open. And, daughter mine, just look what-what items are missing! Only those she always hated, don't you see? *Aires's elephant gods*, she used to say. It is your uncle's little hobby-collection of Ganeshas that has gone. That, and ivory.'

Epjaniã's elephant-teeth. Too many elephants sitting on this house. The late Belle da Gama had always spoken her mind. 'I think so if I stay up tonight maybe I can look once more upon her dear face,' Camoens yearningly confided. 'What do you think? Message is clear as day. Why not wait with me? You and your father are in a same state: he misses his Mrs, and you are glum about your Mum.'

Aurora, blushing in confusion, shouted, 'But I at least don't believe in blooming ghosts,' and ran indoors, unable to confess the truth, which was that she was her dead mother's phantom, doing her deeds, speaking in her departed voice; that the night-walking daughter was keeping the mother alive, giving up her own body for the departed to inhabit, clinging to death, refusing it, insisting on the constancy, beyond the grave, of love - that she had become her mother's new dawn, flesh for her spirit, two belles in one.

(Many years later she would name her own home *Elephantia*, so matters elephantine, as well as spectral, continued to play a part in our saga, after all.)



UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

FACULTÉ DES LETTRES

EXAMENS D'ADMISSION

2004

DEUXIÈME EXAMEN ÉCRIT: RÉSUMÉ

E. M. Forster, « Art for Art's sake »

1. Faites un RESUME EN ANGLAIS du texte ci-joint.

Evitez de reprendre trop souvent les mêmes termes que l'auteur du texte.

Longueur maximum conseillée: une page ½.

Cet examen consiste en un travail objectif de langue et ne requiert aucun commentaire de votre part.

2.1. Briefly state the meaning of each of the following phrases in its context :

1. in the swim
2. fix our hearts
3. harnessed the atom
4. our mudding race

2.2. Answer in a sentence or two the following questions :

1. What quality, according to Forster, does the work of art possess that society, politics and science do not ?
2. How does this quality of the art work differ from other manifestations of the same quality ?

La Faculté fournit les dictionnaires.

Vous n'êtes pas autorisé(e) à apporter votre dictionnaire personnel à l'examen.

Art for Art's Sake

E. M. FORSTER

An address delivered before the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York

I believe in art for art's sake. It is an unfashionable belief, and some of my statements must be of the nature of an apology. Fifty years ago I should have faced you with more confidence. A writer or a speaker who chose "Art for Art's Sake" for his theme fifty years ago could be sure of being in the swim, and could feel so confident of success that he sometimes dressed himself in esthetic costumes suitable to the occasion—in an embroidered dressing-gown, perhaps, or a blue velvet suit with a Lord Fauntleroy collar; or a toga, or a kimono, and carried a poppy or a lily or a long peacock's feather in his mediæval hand. Times have changed. Not thus can I present either myself or my theme today. My aim rather is to ask you quietly to reconsider for a few minutes a phrase which has been much misused and much abused, but which has, I believe, great importance for us—has, indeed, eternal importance.

Now we can easily dismiss those peacock's feathers and other affectations—they are but trifles—but I want also to dismiss a more dangerous heresy, namely the silly idea that only art matters, an idea which has somehow got mixed up with the idea of art for art's sake, and has helped to discredit it. Many things, besides art, matter. It is merely one of the things that matter, and high though the claims are that I make for it, I want to keep them

Copyright, 1949, by E. M. Forster. Reprinted from his volume *Two Cheers for Democracy* by permission of Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., and Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd.

in proportion. No one can spend his or her life entirely in the creation or the appreciation of masterpieces. Man lives, and ought to live, in a complex world, full of conflicting claims, and if we simplified them down into the esthetic he would be sterilised. Art for art's sake does not mean that only art matters, and I would also like to rule out such phrases as "The Life of Art," "Living for Art," and "Art's High Mission." They confuse and mislead.

What does the phrase mean? Instead of generalising, let us take a specific instance—Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for example, and pronounce the words, "*Macbeth* for *Macbeth*'s sake." What does that mean? Well, the play has several aspects—it is educational, it teaches us something about legendary Scotland, something about Jacobean England, and a good deal about human nature and its perils. We can study its origins, and study and enjoy its dramatic technique and the music of its diction. All that is true. But *Macbeth* is furthermore a world of its own, created by Shakespeare and existing in virtue of its own poetry. It is in this aspect *Macbeth* for *Macbeth*'s sake, and that is what I intend by the phrase "art for art's sake." A work of art—whatever else it may be—is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator. It has internal order. It may have external form. That is how we recognise it.

Take for another example that picture of Seurat's which I saw two years ago in Chicago—"La Grande Jatte." Here again there is much to study and to enjoy: the pointillism, the charming face of the seated girl, the nineteenth-century Parisian Sunday sunlight the sense of motion in immobility. But here again there is something more; "*La Grande Jatte*" forms a world of its own, created by Seurat and existing by virtue of its own poetry: "*La Grande Jatte*" pour "*La Grande Jatte*": *Part pour l'art*. Like *Macbeth* it has internal order and internal life.

It is to the conception of order that I would now turn. This is important to my argument, and I want to make a digression, and glance at order in daily life, before I come to order in art.

In the world of daily life, the world which we perforce inhabit, there is much talk about order, particularly from statesmen and politicians. They tend, however, to confuse order with orders, just as they confuse creation with regulations. Order, I suggest, is

something evolved from within, not something imposed from without; it is an internal stability, a vital harmony, and in the social and political category it has never existed except for the convenience of historians. Viewed realistically, the past is really a series of disorders, succeeding one another by discoverable laws, no doubt, and certainly marked by an increasing growth of human interference, but disorders all the same. So that, speaking as a writer, what I hope for today is a disorder which will be more favourable to artists than is the present one, and which will provide them with fuller inspirations and better material conditions. It will not last—nothing lasts—but there have been some advantageous disorders in the past—for instance, in ancient Athens, in Renaissance Italy, eighteenth-century France, periods in China and Persia—and we may do something to accelerate the next one. But let us not again fix our hearts, where true joys are not to be found. We were promised a new order after the first world war through the League of Nations. It did not come, nor have I faith in present promises, by whomsoever endorsed. The implacable offensive of Science forbids. We cannot reach social and political stability for the reason that we continue to make scientific discoveries and to apply them, and thus to destroy the arrangements which were based on more elementary discoveries. If Science would discover rather than apply—if, in other words, men were more interested in knowledge than in power—mankind would be in a far safer position, the stability statesmen talk about would be a possibility, there could be a new order based on vital harmony, and the earthly millennium might approach. But Science shows no signs of doing this: she gave us the internal combustion engine, and before we had digested and assimilated it with terrible pains into our social system, she harnessed the atom, and destroyed any new order that seemed to be evolving. How can man get into harmony with his surroundings when he is constantly altering them? The future of our race is, in this direction, more unpleasant than we care to admit, and it has sometimes seemed to me that its best chance lies through apathy, uninventiveness, and inertia. Universal exhaustion might promote that Change of Heart which is at present so briskly recommended from a thousand pulpits. Universal exhaustion would certainly be a new experience. The human race has never undergone it, and is still too perky to admit

that it may be coming and might result in a sprouting of new growth through the decay.

I must not pursue these speculations any further—they lead me too far from my terms of reference and maybe from yours. But I do want to emphasise that order in daily life and in history, order in the social and political category, is unattainable under our present psychology.

Where is it attainable? Not in the astronomical category, where it was for many years enthroned. The heavens and the earth have become terribly alike since Einstein. No longer can we find a reassuring contrast to chaos in the night sky and look up with George Meredith to the stars, the army of unalterable law, or listen for the music of the spheres. Order is not there. In the entire universe there seem to be only two possibilities for it. The first of them—which again lies outside my terms of reference—is the divine order, the mystic harmony, which according to all religions is available for those who can contemplate it. We must admit its possibility, on the evidence of the adepts, and we must believe them when they say that it is attained, if attainable, by prayer. "O thou who changest not, abide with me," said one of its poets. "*Ordina questo amor, o tu che m'ami*," said another: "Set love in order, thou who lovest me." The existence of a divine order, though it cannot be tested, has never been disproved.

The second possibility for order lies in the esthetic category, which is my subject here: the order which an artist can create in his own work, and to that we must now return. A work of art, we are all agreed, is a unique product. But why? It is unique not because it is clever or noble or beautiful or enlightened or original or sincere or idealistic or useful or educational—it may embody any of those qualities—but because it is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony. All the others have been pressed into shape from outside, and when their mould is removed they collapse. The work of art stands up by itself, and nothing else does. It achieves something which has often been promised by society, but always delusively. Ancient Athens made a mess—but the *Antigone* stands up. Renaissance Rome made a mess—but the ceiling of the Sistine got painted. James I made a mess—but there was *Macbeth*. Louis XIV—but there was *Phédre*. Art for art's sake? I should just think so, and