CAIUS ENGLISH ADMISSIONS WRITTEN TEST

Time allowed: 60 minutes

Please read the following passages carefully, considering them individually and in combination, and then produce a written response to them.

Your response should include – but need not be limited to – the following considerations:

1) how does passage (a) illuminate passage (b)?
2) how does passage (b) illuminate passage (a)?
3) how do the formal features of the passages contribute to their overall meaning?

You may write your response as a single essay or as separate answers to these questions.

Passage (a) is taken from a critical essay; passage (b) is a complete poem.

PLEASE TURN OVER

(a)

The entertainment of possibilities in literature – and literature, in one crucial aspect, just is the entertainment of possibilities – resembles doubting, and is probably a good school for informed doubt. But it is not doubt, precisely because, in literature, alternatives are in play but not in contention. We are interested not in the choices we are going to make but the choices we could make, and we could always go back on our interpretative decisions. Indeed, we shall be better readers if we do go back on them, and there is no equivalent in practical life for the sheer, disinterested attraction of this multiplication of chances.

It's true that in many applications of literature – on the stage or on the screen – certain decisions are made which cannot be reversed and so form part of the life of the director or the actor. Once you have settled on the intonation [...] there is no going back when the word is said, the die is cast. But the text remains, like a musical score, always ready for another, quite different performance.

(b)

THE MARCHERS

A Collage for Diane di Prima

by walking together they will not feel all alone
their keynote was joyful lending an aspect to their ardors
that drizzle will not dim in spite of their protest
they were for protest
they were for legalization and banners under umbrellas
and all against jails
the drizzle that gathered at dusk in the plaza
was permissive and joyful
they distributed leaflets at large and unfurled all their banners
they carried a coffin and auctioned banned books
they agreed that the public had not understood
ALL YOU NEED TO MAKE LOVE IS THE LOVERS
ALL YOU NEED TO MAKE PLAYS IS THE PLAYERS
ALL YOU NEED TO MAKE JOYS IS THE JOYFUL
ALL YOU NEED TO MAKE WORK IS THE WORKERS
ALL YOU NEED TO MAKE PROTEST IS PEOPLE
the main thing was to make them a ritual
by walking together with their coffin to lend them an aspect
in the plaza at dusk that the drizzle will not dim
in spite of their ardors
the main thing was to make them an ardor
that the drizzle will not dim in spite of their coffin
the main thing was to make them a coffin
by walking together and lend them an aspect
of a ritual by which they were joyful
by walking together they will not feel all alone