

TRANSFER EXAM

Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literature, NTHU, July 13, 2016

Read the two passages below and answer the following questions.

PASSAGE 1

Judging by the Cover (Bonney Gainley)

Spring is in the air, and those about to graduate are looking for jobs just like many of the rest of us. Competition is tough, so jobs seekers must carefully consider their personal choices.

Every person has a need to be accepted, ideally just as he or she is. Our family and friends may do that, but the workplace does not. An editorial a while back in one of our high school newspapers claimed it is unfair for professions such as business, public relations, teaching and others to discourage visible tattoos. While not specifically mentioned, piercings and perhaps even certain hairstyles or garments would fall into the same category.

They say you can't judge a book by its cover, yet some people "cover" themselves in way intended to convey certain messages. The message may be, "my uniform says I am a police officer" or "I like the latest fashions" or "I am a gang member."

We make assumptions about people based on their appearance every day, and often we assume exactly what they want us to assume. Just as people project messages about themselves with their appearance, so do businesses. Dress codes and standards exist in the professional world for a number of reasons. Sometimes the issue is safety; sometimes it is a matter of what clients will accept. As long as parents don't want pre-school teachers waving visible skull or profanity tattoos in front of their small children, those tattoos will be deemed inappropriate for that profession.

Some say this is an issue of human rights and freedom, but it is really about free enterprise. The bottom line is that businesses exist to make money. Whether it seems fair or not, most employers do care about the personal appearances of the people they hire because those people represent the business to its customers.

Discrimination on the basis of factors an applicant can't control is wrong and illegal. Choosing the candidate who displays the attributes and skills that best match a job description is not. Just as runner would put themselves at a disadvantage by choosing to run the 100 meter in combat boots, people who choose to wear rings through their noses are putting themselves at a disadvantage in the professional job

market. Each of us can choose whether to conform to the rules of any organization, but that organization is also free to choose whether they want us associated with it.

I don't personally have issues with visible tattoos or piercings, but as a hiring manager I was paid to choose the people who would make the best impression on our customers. It comes down to this—there are plenty of well-qualified applicants and most present themselves in a way my industry considers professional, so there was no compelling reason to choose someone who might offend my customers or poorly represent my company. Even though I may be open minded, I can't count on my customers to be.

If people continue to tattoo and pierce, attitudes about the appropriateness of those adornments in the professional workplace will change over time, in the same way that pants have become appropriate for women, for example. When tattoos and piercings are generally accepted in the business world, there will be new things that aren't—maybe nudity or some other trend we can't even imagine. Whether our personal choices will be accepted or not, we each have the right to make them, but must also be willing to accept the related consequences.

How we dress, tattoo or pierce is an expression of who we are and a message to the people we encounter. Freedom of choice is a dual-edged sword—individuals are free to present their desired image, and others are free to react to it.

There is nobody to blame but yourself if your set of choices does not match those desired by your preferred employers. No organization should have to change to accommodate a candidate simply because that person is unwilling to respect its standards as long as its standards are legal.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the author trying to say in this essay? Using your own words, summarize the essay in 150 words. (20%)
2. Some people believe that no one should be discriminated based on how he or she dresses in the workplace. Do you agree? Explain your answer in 200-250 words. (30%)

PASSAGE 2

British critic Michael Billington reflects Shakespeare's popularity recently in his column for *The Guardian*:

What is it about Shakespeare's plays that keeps them so constantly performed and studied at a time when the idea of a western canon is in question? Is the hierarchical status given to Shakespeare's tragedies due for urgent reassessment? And how should we stage his plays in a period of rapid social change and shifting theatrical techniques?

Aside from the obvious richness of plot, language and character, two things especially strike me. One is that Shakespeare, like his contemporary Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, displays a pioneering freedom that anticipates many of the developments of his chosen form. Just as Cervantes gives us magic realism and a self-referential narrative *avant la lettre*, so Shakespeare plays with time, space, direct address, inner consciousness, cosmic despair and metaphysical absurdity in ways that prefigure future drama. When Peter Brook directed *King Lear* in 1962, critics commented on the Beckettian nature of the moment when Alan Webb's blinded Gloucester fell to the ground believing he was hurling himself off a Dover cliff. Brook wasn't, however, imposing Beckett on Shakespeare: the great modernist was always present in his predecessor.

A second key Shakespeare quality is an ambivalence that allows his plays to change their meaning according to when and where they are produced. *Hamlet* is the most famous example. As Oscar Wilde remarked, there is no such thing as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: the role is defined by the temperament of the leading actor. The play also changes according to historical and geographical circumstance. The western tradition is, by and large, to see it as a study of existential doubt. In contrast, at the Taganka Theatre in Moscow in the Soviet era, it became a portrait of obsessive state surveillance with characters constantly observed from behind a vast mobile curtain.

QUESTION

Do you agree with Billington? Explain your thoughts in 400 words. (50%)