

BACCALAURÉAT GÉNÉRAL - SESSION 2007

ÉPREUVE	ANGLAIS LV.1	DURÉE : 3 heures
SÉRIE	L	COEFFICIENT : 4
<i>Ce sujet comporte 4 pages numérotées de 1/4 à 4/4.</i>		

L'usage de la calculatrice et du dictionnaire n'est pas autorisé.

Dès que ce sujet vous est remis, assurez-vous qu'il est complet.

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We were born and raised in Hartford, Connecticut. As Eric was fond of pointing out, only two interesting people ever spent time in Hartford: Mark Twain¹ (who lost a lot of money in a publishing house that went bust there), and Wallace Stevens², who coped with the tedium of being an insurance executive by writing some of the most experimental poetry imaginable.

"Outside of Twain and Stevens," Eric told me when I was twelve, "nobody of note ever lived in this city. Until we came along."

Oh, he was so wonderfully arrogant. He'd say anything outrageous if it upset our father, Robert Biddeford Smythe III. He fit his portentous³ name perfectly. He was a very proper, very Episcopalian insurance executive; a man who always wore worsted three-piece suits, believed in the virtues of thrift, and abhorred flamboyance or mischief-making of any kind. Our mother, Ida, was cut from the same stern material: the daughter of a Boston Presbyterian minister, ruthlessly practical, a triumph of domestic efficiency. They were a formidable team, our parents. Cut-and-dried, no-nonsense, reluctantly tactile. Public displays of affection were rare events in the Smythe household. Because, at heart, Father and Mother were true New England Puritans, still rooted in the nineteenth century. They always seemed old to us. Old and forbidding. The antithesis of fun.

Of course we still loved them. Because, after all, they were our parents - and unless your parents were savage to you, you *had* to love them. It was part of the social contract – or at least it was when I was growing up. Just as you had to accept their manifold limitations. I've often thought that the only time you truly become an adult is when you finally forgive your parents for being just as flawed as everyone else... and then acknowledge that, within their own boundaries, they did the best they could for you.

But loving your parents is far different from embracing their world-view. From the time Eric was in his teens he worked hard at infuriating Father (yes, he insisted we address him in that Victorian manner. Never Dad. Or Pop. Or anything hinting at easy conviviality. Always *Father*). Sometimes I think Eric's radical politics were less rooted in ideological conviction, and more to do with raising Father's blood pressure. The fights they used to have were legendary. Especially after Father discovered the copy of John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* under his son's bed. Or when Eric presented him with a Paul Robeson record on Father's Day.

My mother stayed out of all father/son arguments. To her, a woman had no business debating politics (one of the many reasons why she so hated Mrs.

¹ Mark Twain : American writer (1835-1910)

² Wallace Stevens : American poet (1879-1955)

³ Portentous: self-important, pompous.

Roosevelt, calling her “a female Lenin”). She was always lecturing Eric about respecting Father. But, by the time he was ready to enter college, she realized that her stern words no longer carried any import; that she had lost him. Which saddened her greatly. And I sensed that she was always a bit baffled as to why her only son –
40 whom she had raised so correctly – had turned into such a Jacobin. Especially as he was so astonishingly bright.

That was the only thing about Eric which pleased my parents – his exceptional intelligence. He devoured books. He was reading French by the age of fourteen, and had a working command of Italian by the time he entered Columbia. He could talk
45 knowledgeably about such abstract, abstruse subjects as Cartesian philosophy or quantum mechanics. And he played a mean boogie-woogie piano. He was also one of those maddening whiz-kids who got straight As in school with minimal work. Harvard wanted him. Princeton wanted him. Brown wanted him. But he wanted Columbia. Because he wanted New York, and all its ancillary freedoms.

50 “I tell you, S, once I get to Manhattan, Hartford won’t see me ever again.”

That wasn’t exactly true – because, despite his rebelliousness, he still remained a reasonably dutiful son. He wrote home once a week, he made brief visits to Hartford at Thanksgiving and Christmas and Easter, he never shoved Mother and Father out of his life. He simply reinvented himself completely in New York. To begin
55 with, he changed his name – from Theobald Ericson Smythe to plain old Eric Smythe. He got rid of all those Ivy League⁴ Rogers Peer clothes that my parents bought him, and started shopping at the local Army/Navy store. His skinny frame got skinnier. His black hair grew thick, bushy. He bought himself a pair of narrow rimless spectacles. He looked like Trotsky – especially as he took to wearing an Army
60 greatcoat and a battered tweed jacket. On the rare times my parents saw him, they were horrified by his transformed appearance. But, once again, his grades silenced them. Straight As. Elected to Phi Beta Kappa⁵ at the end of his junior year. High honors in English. Had he wanted to go to law school, or get a doctorate, he could have waltzed into any graduate program in the country. But instead, he moved
65 downtown to Sullivan Street, swept floors for Orson Welles for \$20 a week, and dreamed big dreams about writing plays that mattered.

Douglas Kennedy. *The Pursuit of Happiness*. Arrow Books, 2002

⁴ Ivy League: prestigious East-Coast American universities (Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Cornell, Dartmouth).

⁵ Phi Beta Kappa: honorary society whose members are elected on the basis of high academic achievement.

Vous traiterez les questions dans l'ordre, en indiquant clairement leur numéro sur votre copie. Vous répondrez aux questions en anglais et par des phrases complètes. Vous accompagnerez les citations de la mention de la ligne.

COMPRÉHENSION-EXPRESSION

1. Identify the different members of this family. (relationships and names if possible).
 - Which member of the family is the narrator?
2. Where is the family from? Justify by quoting from the text.
3. Read from line 8 to line 25.
 - What sort of parents did the children have? Use your own words. (20 words)
 - Describe the relationship the children had with their parents. (20 words)
4. Focus on lines 26 to 41. How did the son react first to his father's education and then to his mother's when he was a teenager? (40 words)
5. What allowed the son to free himself from his environment? Justify with elements from the text. (40 words)
6. What happened to the son once in New York? (40 words)
7. Considering the family environment, why do you think the son kept paying visits to his parents in Hartford? (40 words)
8. Can you point out a contradiction in the parents' attitude towards their son? (30 words)
 - Focus on line 61 to the end. What future did the son choose for himself? (20 words)
9. **Expression:** Le candidat traitera les deux sujets.
 - a) The son has just arrived home to spend a couple of days for a short visit to his parents. They want to talk about his future. Imagine the conversation. (150 words)
 - b) Do you agree with the son's choice of life? What would you do in his place ? (150 words)

TRADUCTION

Translate into French from line 36 (*She was always lecturing Eric...*) to line 41 (*...so astonishingly bright.*)