

Textual Analysis
Admissions Application, 2015
MA Program in English and American Literature
National Taiwan University

- Read the following excerpt and discuss what happens in this part of the story and the ways in which it is presented. You may wish to address topics or issues you find pertinent to complicate your reading. Always refer to details of the text to substantiate your analysis.

“Anyway,” said the husband, “this one’s out of sight. Below deck. You wouldn’t know it was there if you hadn’t seen it coming on board.”

“I can see the awful people,” she said.

Near the stern of the boat noisy men with excited eyes pushed each other about like lads on a treat. They wore sacking robes and their heads and hands were covered by slap-happy bloodstained bandages, loose and trailing. The blood was not blood but vermilion paint. One man held a long trumpet. All had bare feet.

The husband said, “I wonder if they’re the professional mourners?”

She said, “It’s awful. They’re enjoying it.”

“Yes,” he said. “A bit wild. The afterlife for them is horrible, you know. The sleep of oblivion. Desolate. Frightening.”

“They’re *enjoying* being frightened,” she said. “They’re getting a kick.”

“Yes and no,” said the husband. “Yes and no. Don’t forget they’re surrounded by spirits.”

“Brandy.”

“No. Evil spirits. The trumpet is to frighten them away. Hong Kong isn’t all computerspeak and banking. Well, Lamma Island isn’t anyway. Superstition goes deep, deep.”

“It does with me too,” she said. “There’s something about travelling with a coffin.”

“I’m surprised at you, Ann.”

“Not bad luck exactly,” she said. “I don’t know. Inopportune. Time rolling on. And back.”

“Well so it does,” he said.