

ENGLISH 1100
PRACTICE EXAMINATION
RUTH BRADLEY-ST-CYR

3 hours/open book/no electronic devices

PLEASE READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE BEGINNING.

This exam has two parts. Complete both parts.

You have three hours to complete the exam. This is ample time to read, think, prewrite, draft, and revise, providing you budget your time wisely. You should be spending approximately one hour on Part One and two hours on Part Two. You may use all the textual resources you have with you.

Part One (35%)

Goal: to demonstrate critical reading, paraphrasing, and summarizing skills.

Instructions: Read the essay that accompanies the exam. Answer the following questions. Evaluation will be based on your demonstration of your ability to read critically. This may include such criteria as identification and articulation of thesis/main idea and the ability to identify and summarize the main points of the argument.

1. Identify the thesis, the evidence used to support the thesis, and the conclusion of “A touch too pink?” (7 marks)
2. Identify the following: (2 marks each; 8 marks total)
 - a. What is the ethnic group talked about in the article?
 - b. Where does this group originate?
 - c. What is the dictionary definition of the term Ismaili? (state which dictionary)
 - d. To which genre does the film *Touch of Pink* belong?
3. Write a paraphrase of the paragraph that begins, “The film follows the coming-out journey of Alim...” (10 marks)
4. Summarize the two opposing points of view about the film. (10 marks)

Part Two (65%)

Goal: to write a coherent, well crafted essay that demonstrates your understanding of the writing process and the skills necessary to produce clear, effective expository prose.

Instructions: Choose ONE of the following three questions and write a well-crafted essay response of at least six or seven paragraphs (three to five pages). Your essay must make effective use of a minimum of two citations from the reading. All citations must be properly documented in MLA style in terms of both in-text citations and references/works cited at the end of your exam paper.

The essay will be evaluated based on:

1. Thesis statement
2. Argument (logic, development, evidence, organization, introduction, conclusion)
3. Grammar, punctuation, style, and spelling
4. Quotations and documentation

The final version of your essay must be **written in ink** and **double-spaced**.

1. How should racial/religious rights be balanced with gay rights? Refer to Canadian norms, such as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, in your essay.
2. “Can a film which suggests that even some straight people are gay break out?” Determine what this film is trying to do and then compare and contrast it with other movies or popular culture with which you are familiar. Be specific.
3. Define your perspective on freedom of speech. Is it okay for someone “to actively discourage” other people from attending a movie, reading a book, listening to a song, or otherwise evaluating a cultural product for themselves? Are they merely expressing their own freedom of speech or impeding that of other people?

Sunday, July 24, 2004

A touch too pink?

Some members of Canada's Ismaili community are seeing red over the gay-themed film *Touch of Pink*

By KAMAL AL-SOLAYLEE

The Globe and Mail

The post-release picture that *Touch of Pink* is painting is not as rosy as its title suggests or its romantic-comedy pedigree will have you think. Despite strong reviews and respectable (if lower than expected) returns at the box office in Toronto and Vancouver, where it opened last Friday, the gay-themed South Asian comedy is proving too divisive for some and, for others, downright offensive. *Touch of Pink* is a touch too much in some quarters and not pink enough in others.

The gay community (ethnic and otherwise) is embracing it as a heartfelt, albeit predictable, gay coming-out story that treads the same grounds as, for example, *The Wedding Banquet*. Some members of filmmaker Ian Iqbal Rashid's Ismaili community, on the other hand, are taking strong exceptions to it—not so much for its gay content as for its portrayals of them as crass nouveau riche and sexual hypocrites.

The film follows the coming-out journey of Alim, an Ismaili Muslim Canadian who works as a film-set photographer in London where he shares his real life with his white partner and his imaginary one with the ghost of Cary Grant, a manifestation of Alim's lifelong fascination with Hollywood lore. His life is turned upside down when his mother pays him a visit and, later, when he returns to Toronto for the family wedding of his cousin (a dentist) complete with status-obsessed mother and circle of friends.

In an open e-mail letter to "Ismaili friends, family members, relatives and acquaintances," community member Naaznin Rajani has urged the Ismaili Council to actively discourage other Ismailis from attending the movie. Describing the experience of watching *Touch of Pink* with a friend, Rajani writes that both were "thoroughly humiliated, very insulted, ashamed of ourselves as to how our Ismailis are being portrayed." Rajani suggests the film depicts Ismailis as "racist as well, not building bridges with dhorias [white people]."

"For every letter that has been critical, I have received dozens thanking and congratulating me for making this film," Rashid responded. "The story of *Touch of*

Pink is very much the story of my life. The events and characters are based on my personal history. I love my family and my community and what I wanted to portray was an honest, affectionate and entertaining story which doesn't shy away from the hypocrisies and debates that exist in every community."

Critical response from within the South Asian cultural community has fallen more within Rashid's line of thinking than Rajani's. Reviewing the film for mybindi.com, an on-line resource for "cool" South Asian culture, Mohit Rajhans praised Rashid on his sensitive handling of the community. "I was really proud of the way Ian treated this angle of the South Asian community, as he did it with dignity and without a lot of stereotypes," Rajhans writes. "For Canadians, finally a film can be shown in the world market that depicts South Asians as just another minority group living in Canada, which suffers from modern-day issues and not the back-dated conflicts that have been prominent on screen."

The polarized responses to the film indicate more than artistic differences. While the South Asian and Muslim community in general has made tentative steps toward tolerating, if not accepting, homosexuality, the fact remains that *Touch of Pink* is more in-your-face than the community is comfortable with at this stage. This is still a community, as Rashid points out in an e-mail, where there's no word for homosexual in Kutchi, his native tongue.

In her letter, Rajani doesn't take issue with Alim's sexuality—"I know for a fact that there are Ismailis out there who... belong in that society"—but instead with his lack of discretion, especially in a scene where he kisses his boyfriend during a traditional Muslim wedding. "I haven't seen that happening in real life in our community," she writes. Another scene that depicts a kiss between Alim and his soon-to-be-married male cousin is also hitting a nerve in the community.

For its Canadian co-producer Jennifer Kawaja of Sienna Films, the questions that *Touch of Pink* deals with, and by extension its difficulty attaining the instant box-office glory of similar movies such as *Mambo Italiano*, go beyond the comfort level of one community. "The question is, can an explicitly gay film [one that has kissing] . . . cross over and break out?" ponders Kawaja, pointing out that *Mambo* doesn't feature any on-screen kissing between its gay characters.

"Can a film which suggests that even some straight people are gay break out? Add to that, will the communities it's about—the Muslim community for example—come out within the context that immigrant communities tend to be more conservative while they are struggling to make it into Canadian society?"

In artistic terms, a hard-to-categorize film, or one where a target audience can't be clearly identified, may be a sign of its creative complexities. *Touch of Pink* is at once a romantic comedy, a gay coming-out story, an ethnic identity quest, and a whimsical homage to Hollywood's Golden Age—but that may also be its cross to bear at the box office.

“My sense is that for most people in Canada, the idea of seeing a loving, gay relationship on a big screen is a first,” says the film's Canadian distributor Hussain Amarshi of Mongrel Media. “Straight people don't seem to be seeking out gay romantic comedies, unless they are watered down like *Mambo Italiano*. *Touch of Pink*, by being brave and forthright about gay relationships, is stretching the boundaries in significant ways. Suddenly a kiss is not just a kiss.”

How the movie fares domestically at the box office in the weeks to come (assuming it holds over and expands nationwide) will depend on whether Canadian audiences of various cultural and sexual identities can be persuaded to think otherwise.

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