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PAPER - IV

LITERATURE FROM 1914 TO 2000

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Paper - IV

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PAPER IV (Literature from 1914 to 2000)

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PAPER IV

LITERATURE FROM 1914- 2000

The Modern Period (1901 or 1914--19 39) Picasso, Three Musicians, 1921

Key periods:

- 1901-1910 Edwardian period
- 1910-1914 Georgian period
- 1914-1939 Modern period

The entry into the 20th century was a time of frightening change for intellectual Britain. Victoria, who had held the realm stable for more than 60 years, was gone. Freud was exposing the workings of individuals' thoughts and desires. Einstein published his theory of relativity, apparently undermining the Newtonian view of the universe. Painters like Picasso were pulling the human form apart into geometric shapes. War ravaged Europe; revolution would topple monarchies in Russia and Spain. The greatest monument to human industry and progress ever conceived, H.M.S. Titanic, hit an iceberg, and you know the rest.

Motorcars, gas and electric light, photography, phonographs, the telephone, the telegraph—technology changed the way people lived and increasingly seemed to depersonalize human existence. Women were chaining themselves to the railings outside Parliament to demand the right to vote, and were taken to prison and brutally force-fed when they tried hunger strikes. The British empire was vast, and grand, and unmanageable—and eventually, its components on the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia would strike out for their own independence.

A strong crop of British authors emerged during the 20th century. From "The Waste Land" to 1984, 20th century British writers helped shape the modern and postmodern movements in art and literature. While they have been strong in number, the majority of great works came during the first half of the century. Unparalleled economic and geopolitical catastrophes helped mold a generation raised with great hardship and little hope. World Wars I and II and the severe economic depression in between encouraged the exploration of themes like

destitution, despair, cynicism and loss. Instead of "faith and doubt," it was a period of "doubt in faith"--for it seemed to most intellectuals that in a world where people gassed each other and perpetrated the most awful kinds of atrocities, faith was irrelevant.

BLAST manuscript courtesy of U Delaware LibrariesIn this culture, where it seemed that individualism and every man for himself dominated, it is easy to see why this was perceived as an age of isolation where connection with others, with society, was viewed as a near-impossibility. The poets, dramatists, and novelists of the period adopted Pound's slogan "Make it new!" – not "Make new art" but a cry to rebel against Victorian convention, to despise the middle class reading public, to make art more deliberately obscure, and to discriminate between highbrow (hard, difficult, obscure) writing and lowbrow (easily accessible, appealing to popular taste) writing. Periodicals like Blast! (which only lasted two issues) showed that modern artists would revolutionize even the way writing looked to shake up the certainties of the past. The Blast! Manifesto (pp. 1093-1096) includes the defiant statements "The artist of the modern movement is a savage" and "There is no vulgarity in revolt" and celebrates machinery as the new imagery of nature.

The Norton Anthology of British Literature website notes that "In England, this outbreak of modernist experiment influenced a loosely interrelated network of groups and individuals, many of them based in London. In anglophone literature, "modernism" more nearly describes an era than a unitary movement. But what connects the modernist writers—aside from a rich web of personal and professional connections—is a shared desire to break with established forms and subjects in art and literature. Influenced by European art movements, many modernist writers rejected realistic representation and traditional formal expectations. In the novel, they explored the Freudian depths of their characters' psyches through stream of consciousness and interior monologue. In poetry, they mixed slang with elevated language, experimented with free verse, and often studded their works with difficult allusions and disconnected images. Ironically, the success of modernism's initially radical techniques eventually transformed them into the established norms that would be resisted by later generations...[In the early period of modernism,] Poetic doctrine included the use of plain speech,

proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.

"Great difficulties and responsibilities" and the sense of the necessity of the changes a work of art makes--how its ripples disturb and derange everything that has happened before--are hallmarks of this period. As Yeats wrote in "Easter 1916," everything is "All changed, changed utterly: / A terrible beauty is born." And that terrible beauty is the modern period of British literature.

Many historians have characterized the period between the two world wars as the United States' traumatic "coming of age," despite the fact that U.S. direct involvement was relatively brief (1917-1918) and its casualties many fewer than those of its European allies and foes. John Dos Passos expressed America's postwar disillusionment in the novel Three Soldiers (1921), when he noted that civilization was a "vast edifice of sham, and the war, instead of its crumbling, was its fullest and most ultimate expression." Shocked and permanently changed, Americans returned to their homeland but could never regain their innocence.

Nor could soldiers from rural America easily return to their roots. After experiencing the world, many now yearned for a modern, urban life. New farm machines such as planters, harvesters, and binders had drastically reduced the demand for farm jobs; yet despite their increased productivity, farmers were poor. Crop prices, like urban workers' wages, depended on unrestrained market forces heavily influenced by business interests: Government subsidies for farmers and effective workers' unions had not yet become established. "The chief business of the American people is business," President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed in 1925, and most agreed.

In the postwar "Big Boom," business flourished, and the successful prospered beyond their wildest dreams. For the first time, many Americans enrolled in higher education – in the 1920s college enrollment doubled. The middle-class prospered; Americans began to enjoy the world's highest national average income

in this era, and many people purchased the ultimate status symbol – an automobile. The typical urban American home glowed with electric lights and boasted a radio that connected the house with the outside world, and perhaps a telephone, a camera, a typewriter, or a sewing machine. Like the businessman protagonist of Sinclair Lewis's novel Babbitt (1922), the average American approved of these machines because they were modern and because most were American inventions and American-made.

Americans of the "Roaring Twenties" fell in love with other modern entertainments. Most people went to the movies once a week. Although Prohibition – a nationwide ban on the production, transport, and sale of alcohol instituted through the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution – began in 1919, underground "speakeasies" and nightclubs proliferated, featuring jazz music, cocktails, and daring modes of dress and dance. Dancing, moviegoing, automobile touring, and radio were national crazes. American women, in particular, felt liberated. Many had left farms and villages for homefront duty in American cities during World War I, and had become resolutely modern. They cut their hair short ("bobbed"), wore short "flapper" dresses, and gloried in the right to vote assured by the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, passed in 1920. They boldly spoke their mind and took public roles in society.

Western youths were rebelling, angry and disillusioned with the savage war, the older generation they held responsible, and difficult postwar economic conditions that, ironically, allowed Americans with dollars – like writers F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound – to live abroad handsomely on very little money. Intellectual currents, particularly Freudian psychology and to a lesser extent Marxism (like the earlier Darwinian theory of evolution), implied a "godless" world view and contributed to the breakdown of traditional values. Americans abroad absorbed these views and brought them back to the United States where they took root, firing the imagination of young writers and artists. William Faulkner, for example, a 20th-century American novelist, employed Freudian elements in all his works, as did virtually all serious American fiction writers after World War I.

Despite outward gaiety, modernity, and unparalleled material prosperity, young Americans of the 1920s were "the lost generation" – so named by literary portraitist Gertrude Stein. Without a stable, traditional structure of values, the individual lost a sense of identity. The secure, supportive family life; the familiar, settled community; the natural and eternal rhythms of nature that guide the planting and harvesting on a farm; the sustaining sense of patriotism; moral values inculcated by religious beliefs and observations – all seemed undermined by World War I and its aftermath.

Numerous novels, notably Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926) and Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise (1920), evoke the extravagance and disillusionment of the lost generation. In T.S. Eliot's influential long poem The Waste Land (1922), Western civilization is symbolized by a bleak desert in desperate need of rain (spiritual renewal).

The world depression of the 1930s affected most of the population of the United States. Workers lost their jobs, and factories shut down; businesses and banks failed; farmers, unable to harvest, transport, or sell their crops, could not pay their debts and lost their farms. Midwestern droughts turned the "breadbasket" of America into a dust bowl. Many farmers left the Midwest for California in search of jobs, as vividly described in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath (1939). At the peak of the Depression, one-third of all Americans were out of work. Soup kitchens, shanty towns, and armies of hobos – unemployed men illegally riding freight trains – became part of national life. Many saw the Depression as a punishment for sins of excessive materialism and loose living. The dust storms that blackened the midwestern sky, they believed, constituted an Old Testament judgment: the "whirlwind by day and the darkness at noon."

The Depression turned the world upside down. The United States had preached a gospel of business in the 1920s; now, many Americans supported a more active role for government in the New Deal programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Federal money created jobs in public works, conservation, and rural electrification. Artists and intellectuals were paid to create murals and state handbooks. These remedies helped, but only the industrial build-up of World War II renewed prosperity. After Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor on

December 7, 1941, disused shipyards and factories came to bustling life mass-producing ships, airplanes, jeeps, and supplies. War production and experimentation led to new technologies, including the nuclear bomb. Witnessing the first experimental nuclear blast, Robert Oppenheimer, leader of an international team of nuclear scientists, prophetically quoted a Hindu poem: "I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds."

MODERNISM

The large cultural wave of Modernism, which gradually emerged in Europe and the United States in the early years of the 20th century, expressed a sense of modern life through art as a sharp break from the past, as well as from Western civilization's classical traditions. Modern life seemed radically different from traditional life – more scientific, faster, more technological, and more mechanized. Modernism embraced these changes.

In literature, Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) developed an analogue to modern art. A resident of Paris and an art collector (she and her brother Leo purchased works of the artists Paul Cézanne, Paul Gauguin, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Pablo Picasso, and many others), Stein once explained that she and Picasso were doing the same thing, he in art and she in writing. Using simple, concrete words as counters, she developed an abstract, experimental prose poetry. The childlike quality of Stein's simple vocabulary recalls the bright, primary colors of modern art, while her repetitions echo the repeated shapes of abstract visual compositions. By dislocating grammar and punctuation, she achieved new "abstract" meanings as in her influential collection Tender Buttons (1914), which views objects from different angles, as in a cubist painting:

A Table A Table means does it not my

dear it means a whole steadiness.

Is it likely that a change. A table

means more than a glass even a

looking glass is tall.

Meaning, in Stein's work, was often subordinated to technique, just as subject was less important than shape in abstract visual art. Subject and technique became inseparable in both the visual and literary art of the period. The idea of form as the equivalent of content, a cornerstone of post-World War II art and literature, crystallized in this period.

Technological innovation in the world of factories and machines inspired new attentiveness to technique in the arts. To take one example: Light, particularly electrical light, fascinated modern artists and writers. Posters and advertisements of the period are full of images of floodlit skyscrapers and light rays shooting out from automobile headlights, moviehouses, and watchtowers to illumine a forbidding outer darkness suggesting ignorance and old-fashioned tradition.

Photography began to assume the status of a fine art allied with the latest scientific developments. The photographer Alfred Stieglitz opened a salon in New York City, and by 1908 he was showing the latest European works, including pieces by Picasso and other European friends of Gertrude Stein. Stieglitz's salon influenced numerous writers and artists, including William Carlos Williams, who was one of the most influential American poets of the 20th century. Williams cultivated a photographic clarity of image; his aesthetic dictum was "no ideas but in things."

Vision and viewpoint became an essential aspect of the modernist novel as well. No longer was it sufficient to write a straightforward third-person narrative or (worse yet) use a pointlessly intrusive narrator. The way the story was told became as important as the story itself.

Henry James, William Faulkner, and many other American writers experimented with fictional points of view (some are still doing so). James often restricted the information in the novel to what a single character would have known. Faulkner's novel The Sound and the Fury (1929) breaks up the narrative into four sections,

each giving the viewpoint of a different character (including a mentally retarded boy).

To analyze such modernist novels and poetry, a school of "new criticism" arose in the United States, with a new critical vocabulary. New critics hunted the "epiphany" (moment in which a character suddenly sees the transcendent truth of a situation, a term derived from a holy saint's appearance to mortals); they "examined" and "clarified" a work, hoping to "shed light" upon it through their "insights."

POETRY 1914-1945: EXPERIMENTS IN FORM

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

Ezra Pound was one of the most influential American poets of this century. From 1908 to 1920, he resided in London, where he associated with many writers, including William Butler Yeats, for whom he worked as a secretary, and T.S. Eliot, whose Waste Land he drastically edited and improved. He was a link between the United States and Britain, acting as contributing editor to Harriet Monroe's important Chicago magazine Poetry and spearheading the new school of poetry known as Imagism, which advocated a clear, highly visual presentation. After Imagism, he championed various poetic approaches. He eventually moved to Italy, where he became caught up in Italian Fascism.

Pound furthered Imagism in letters, essays, and an anthology. In a letter to Monroe in 1915, he argues for a modern-sounding, visual poetry that avoids "clichés and set phrases." In "A Few Don'ts of an Imagiste" (1913), he defined "image" as something that "presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." Pound's 1914 anthology of 10 poets, Des Imagistes, offered examples of Imagist poetry by outstanding poets, including William Carlos Williams, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), and Amy Lowell.

Pound's interests and reading were universal. His adaptations and brilliant, if sometimes flawed, translations introduced new literary possibilities from many cultures to modern writers. His life-work was The Cantos, which he wrote and published until his death. They contain brilliant passages, but their allusions to works of literature and art from many eras and cultures make them difficult. Pound's poetry is best known for its clear, visual images, fresh rhythms, and muscular, intelligent, unusual lines, such as, in Canto LXXXI, "The ant's a centaur in his dragon world," or in poems inspired by Japanese haiku, such as "In a Station of the Metro" (1916):

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, to a well-to-do family with roots in the northeastern United States. He received the best education of any major American writer of his generation at Harvard College, the Sorbonne, and Merton College of Oxford University. He studied Sanskrit and Oriental philosophy, which influenced his poetry. Like his friend Pound, he went to England early and became a towering figure in the literary world there. One of the most respected poets of his day, his modernist, seemingly illogical or abstract iconoclastic poetry had revolutionary impact. He also wrote influential essays and dramas, and championed the importance of literary and social traditions for the modern poet.

As a critic, Eliot is best remembered for his formulation of the "objective correlative," which he described, in The Sacred Wood, as a means of expressing emotion through "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events" that would be the "formula" of that particular emotion. Poems such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915) embody this approach, when the ineffectual, elderly Prufrock thinks to himself that he has "measured out his life in coffee spoons," using coffee spoons to reflect a humdrum existence and a wasted lifetime.

The famous beginning of Eliot's "Prufrock" invites the reader into tawdry alleys that, like modern life, offer no answers to the questions of life:

Let us go then, you and I,

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table;

Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

The muttering retreats

Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels

And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:

Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

To lead you to an overwhelming question...

Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

Let us go and make our visit.

Similar imagery pervades The Waste Land (1922), which echoes Dante's Inferno to evoke London's thronged streets around the time of World War I:

Unreal City,

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many

I had not thought death had undone so many... (I, 60-63)

The Waste Land's vision is ultimately apocalyptic and worldwide:

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal (V, 373-377)

Eliot's other major poems include "Gerontion" (1920), which uses an elderly man to symbolize the decrepitude of Western society; "The Hollow Men" (1925), a moving dirge for the death of the spirit of contemporary humanity; Ash-Wednesday (1930), in which he turns explicitly toward the Church of England for meaning in human life; and Four Quartets (1943), a complex, highly subjective, experimental meditation on transcendent subjects such as time, the nature of self,

and spiritual awareness. His poetry, especially his daring, innovative early work, has influenced generations.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Robert Lee Frost was born in California but raised on a farm in the northeastern United States until the age of 10. Like Eliot and Pound, he went to England, attracted by new movements in poetry there. A charismatic public reader, he was renowned for his tours. He read an original work at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961 that helped spark a national interest in poetry. His popularity is easy to explain: He wrote of traditional farm life, appealing to a nostalgia for the old ways. His subjects are universal – apple picking, stone walls, fences, country roads. Frost's approach was lucid and accessible: He rarely employed pedantic allusions or ellipses. His frequent use of rhyme also appealed to the general audience.

Frost's work is often deceptively simple. Many poems suggest a deeper meaning. For example, a quiet snowy evening by an almost hypnotic rhyme scheme may suggest the not entirely unwelcome approach of death. From: "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (1923):

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village, though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

Born in Pennsylvania, Wallace Stevens was educated at Harvard College and New York University Law School. He practiced law in New York City from 1904 to 1916, a time of great artistic and poetic activity there. On moving to Hartford, Connecticut, to become an insurance executive in 1916, he continued writing poetry. His life is remarkable for its compartmentalization: His associates in the insurance company did not know that he was a major poet. In private he continued to develop extremely complex ideas of aesthetic order throughout his life in aptly named books such as Harmonium (enlarged edition 1931), Ideas of Order (1935), and Parts of a World (1942). Some of his best known poems are "Sunday Morning," "Peter Quince at the Clavier," "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," and "The Idea of Order at Key West."

Stevens's poetry dwells upon themes of the imagination, the necessity for aesthetic form, and the belief that the order of art corresponds with an order in nature. His vocabulary is rich and various: He paints lush tropical scenes but also manages dry, humorous, and ironic vignettes.

Some of Stevens's poems draw upon popular culture, while others poke fun at sophisticated society or soar into an intellectual heaven. He is known for his exuberant word play: "Soon, with a noise like tambourines / Came her attendant Byzantines."

Stevens's work is full of surprising insights. Sometimes he plays tricks on the reader, as in "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" (1931):

The houses are haunted

By white night-gowns.

None are green,

Or purple with green rings,

Or green with yellow rings,

Or yellow with blue rings.

None of them are strange,

With socks of lace

And beaded ceintures.

People are not going

To dream of baboons and periwinkles.

Only, here and there, an old sailor,

Drunk and asleep in his boots,

Catches tigers

In red weather.

This poem seems to complain about unimaginative lives (plain white nightgowns), but actually conjures up vivid images in the reader's mind. At the end a drunken sailor, oblivious to the proprieties, does "catch tigers" – at least in his dream. The poem shows that the human imagination – of reader or sailor – will always find a creative outlet.

William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

William Carlos Williams was a practicing pediatrician throughout his life; he delivered over 2,000 babies and wrote poems on his prescription pads. Williams was a classmate of poets Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle, and his early poetry reveals the influence of Imagism. He later went on to champion the use of colloquial speech; his ear for the natural rhythms of American English helped free American poetry from the iambic meter that had dominated English verse since the Renaissance. His sympathy for ordinary working people, children, and everyday events in modern urban settings make his poetry attractive and accessible. "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1923), like a Dutch still life, finds interest and beauty in everyday objects.

So much depends upon a red wheel barrow glazed with rain water beside the white chickens.

Williams cultivated a relaxed, natural poetry. In his hands, the poem was not to become a perfect object of art as in Stevens, or the carefully re-created Wordsworthian incident as in Frost. Instead, the poem was to capture an instant of time like an unposed snapshot – a concept he derived from photographers and artists he met at galleries like Stieglitz's in New York City. Like photographs, his poems often hint at hidden possibilities or attractions, as in "The Young Housewife" (1917).

At ten a.m. the young housewife moves about in negligee behind the wooden walls of her husband's house. I pass solitary in my car. Then again she comes to the curb, to call the ice-man, fish-man, and stands shy, uncorseted, tucking in stray ends of hair, and I compare her To a fallen leaf.

The noiseless wheels of my car rush with a crackling sound over dried leaves as I bow and pass smiling.

He termed his work "objectivist" to suggest the importance of concrete, visual objects. His work often captured the spontaneous, emotive pattern of experience, and influenced the "Beat" writing of the early 1950s.

Like Eliot and Pound, Williams tried his hand at the epic form, but while their epics employ literary allusions directed to a small number of highly educated readers, Williams instead writes for a more general audience. Though he studied

abroad, he elected to live in the United States. His epic, Paterson (five vols., 1946-58), celebrates his hometown of Paterson, New Jersey, as seen by an autobiographical "Dr. Paterson." In it, Williams juxtaposed lyric passages, prose, letters, autobiography, newspaper accounts, and historical facts. The layout's ample white space suggests the open road theme of American literature and gives a sense of new vistas even open to the poor people who picnic in the public park on Sundays. Like Whitman's persona in Leaves of Grass, Dr. Paterson moves freely among the working people.

-late spring, a Sunday afternoon! - and goes by the footpath to the cliff (counting: the proof) himself among others - treads there the same stones on which their feet slip as they climb,

paced by their dogs! laughing, calling to each other -

Wait for me!

(II, i, 14-23)

BETWEEN THE WARS

Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962)

Numerous American poets of stature and genuine vision arose in the years between the world wars, among them poets from the West Coast, women, and African-Americans. Like the novelist John Steinbeck, Robinson Jeffers lived in California and wrote of the Spanish rancheros and Indians and their mixed traditions, and of the haunting beauty of the land. Trained in the classics and well-read in Freud, he re-created themes of Greek tragedy set in the rugged coastal seascape. He is best known for his tragic narratives such as Tamar (1924), Roan Stallion (1925), The Tower Beyond Tragedy (1924) – a re-creation of Aeschylus's Agamemnon – and Medea (1946), a re-creation of the tragedy by Euripides.

Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962)

Edward Estlin Cummings, commonly known as e.e. cummings, wrote attractive, innovative verse distinguished for its humor, grace, celebration of love and

eroticism, and experimentation with punctuation and visual format on the page. A painter, he was the first American poet to recognize that poetry had become primarily a visual, not an oral, art; his poems used much unusual spacing and indentation, as well as dropping all use of capital letters.

Like Williams, Cummings also used colloquial language, sharp imagery, and words from popular culture. Like Williams, he took creative liberties with layout. His poem "in Just –" (1920) invites the reader to fill in the missing ideas:

in Just –

Spring when the world is mud- luscious the little lame balloonman whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come running from marbles and piracies and it's spring...

Hart Crane (1899-1932)

Hart Crane was a tormented young poet who committed suicide at age 33 by leaping into the sea. He left striking poems, including an epic, The Bridge (1930), which was inspired by the Brooklyn Bridge, in which he ambitiously attempted to review the American cultural experience and recast it in affirmative terms. His luscious, overheated style works best in short poems such as "Voyages" (1923, 1926) and "At Melville's Tomb" (1926), whose ending is a suitable epitaph for Crane:

monody shall not wake the mariner.

This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.

Marianne Moore (1887-1972)

Marianne Moore once wrote that poems were "imaginary gardens with real toads in them." Her poems are conversational, yet elaborate and subtle in their syllabic versification, drawing upon extremely precise description and historical and scientific fact. A "poet's poet," she influenced such later poets as her young friend Elizabeth Bishop.

William Faulkner (AP Images)

William Faulkner

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

One of many talented poets of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s – in the company of James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, and others – was Langston Hughes. He embraced African-American jazz rhythms and was one of the first black writers to attempt to make a profitable career out of his writing. Hughes incorporated blues, spirituals, colloquial speech, and folkways in his poetry.

An influential cultural organizer, Hughes published numerous black anthologies and began black theater groups in Los Angeles and Chicago, as well as New York City. He also wrote effective journalism, creating the character Jesse B. Semple ("simple") to express social commentary. One of his most beloved poems, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1921, 1925), embraces his African – and universal – heritage in a grand epic catalogue. The poem suggests that, like the great rivers of the world, African ulture will endure and deepen:

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers. I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep. I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it. I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset I've known rivers Ancient, dusky rivers. My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

PROSE WRITING, 1914-1945: AMERICAN REALISM

Although American prose between the wars experimented with viewpoint and form, Americans wrote more realistically, on the whole, than did Europeans. Novelist Ernest Hemingway wrote of war, hunting, and other masculine pursuits in a stripped, plain style; William Faulkner set his powerful southern novels spanning generations and cultures firmly in Mississippi heat and dust; and Sinclair Lewis delineated bourgeois lives with ironic clarity.

The importance of facing reality became a dominant theme in the 1920s and 1930s: Writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and the playwright Eugene O'Neill repeatedly portrayed the tragedy awaiting those who live in flimsy dreams.

F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald's life resembles a fairy tale. During World War I, Fitzgerald enlisted in the U.S. Army and fell in love with a rich and beautiful girl, Zelda Sayre, who lived near Montgomery, Alabama, where he was stationed. Zelda broke off their engagement because he was relatively poor. After he was discharged at war's end, he went to seek his literary fortune in New York City in order to marry her.

His first novel, This Side of Paradise (1920), became a best-seller, and at 24 they married. Neither of them was able to withstand the stresses of success and fame, and they squandered their money. They moved to France to economize in 1924 and returned seven years later. Zelda became mentally unstable and had to be institutionalized; Fitzgerald himself became an alcoholic and died young as a movie screenwriter.

Fitzgerald's secure place in American literature rests primarily on his novel The Great Gatsby (1925), a brilliantly written, economically structured story about the American dream of the self-made man. The protagonist, the mysterious Jay Gatsby, discovers the devastating cost of success in terms of personal fulfillment and love. Other fine works include Tender Is the Night (1934), about a young psychiatrist whose life is doomed by his marriage to an unstable woman, and some stories in the collections Flappers and Philosophers (1920), Tales of the Jazz

Age (1922), and All the Sad Young Men (1926). More than any other writer, Fitzgerald captured the glittering, desperate life of the 1920s; This Side of Paradise was heralded as the voice of modern American youth. His second novel, The Beautiful and the Damned (1922), continued his exploration of the self-destructive extravagance of his times.

Fitzgerald's special qualities include a dazzling style perfectly suited to his theme of seductive glamour. A famous section from The Great Gatsby masterfully summarizes a long passage of time: "There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars."

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Few writers have lived as colorfully as Ernest Hemingway, whose career could have come out of one his adventurous novels. Like Fitzgerald, Dreiser, and many other fine novelists of the 20th century, Hemingway came from the U.S. Midwest. Born in Illinois, Hemingway spent childhood vacations in Michigan on hunting and fishing trips. He volunteered for an ambulance unit in France during World War I, but was wounded and hospitalized for six months. After the war, as a war correspondent based in Paris, he met expatriate American writers Sherwood Anderson, Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein. Stein, in particular, influenced his spare style.

After his novel The Sun Also Rises (1926) brought him fame, he covered the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the fighting in China in the 1940s. On a safari in Africa, he was badly injured when his small plane crashed; still, he continued to enjoy hunting and sport fishing, activities that inspired some of his best work. The Old Man and the Sea (1952), a short poetic novel about a poor, old fisherman who heroically catches a huge fish devoured by sharks, won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1953; the next year he received the Nobel Prize. Discouraged by a troubled family background, illness, and the belief that he was losing his gift for writing, Hemingway shot himself to death in 1961.

Hemingway is arguably the most popular American novelist of this century. His sympathies are basically apolitical and humanistic, and in this sense he is

universal. His simple style makes his novels easy to comprehend, and they are often set in exotic surroundings. A believer in the "cult of experience," Hemingway often involved his characters in dangerous situations in order to reveal their inner natures; in his later works, the danger sometimes becomes an occasion for masculine assertion.

Like Fitzgerald, Hemingway became a spokesperson for his generation. But instead of painting its fatal glamour as did Fitzgerald, who never fought in World War I, Hemingway wrote of war, death, and the "lost generation" of cynical survivors. His characters are not dreamers but tough bullfighters, soldiers, and athletes. If intellectual, they are deeply scarred and disillusioned.

His hallmark is a clean style devoid of unnecessary words. Often he uses understatement: In A Farewell to Arms (1929) the heroine dies in childbirth saying "I'm not a bit afraid. It's just a dirty trick." He once compared his writing to icebergs: "There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows."

Hemingway's fine ear for dialogue and exact description shows in his excellent short stories, such as "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." Critical opinion, in fact, generally holds his short stories equal or superior to his novels. His best novels include The Sun Also Rises, about the demoralized life of expatriates after World War I; A Farewell to Arms, about the tragic love affair of an American soldier and an English nurse during the war; For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), set during the Spanish Civil War; and The Old Man and the Sea.

William Faulkner (1897-1962)

Born to an old southern family, William Harrison Faulkner was raised in Oxford, Mississippi, where he lived most of his life. Faulkner created an entire imaginative landscape, Yoknapatawpha County, mentioned in numerous novels, along with several families with interconnections extending back for generations. Yoknapatawpha County, with its capital, "Jefferson," is closely modeled on Oxford, Mississippi, and its surroundings. Faulkner re-creates the history of the land and the various races – Indian, African-American, Euro-American, and various mixtures – who have lived on it. An innovative writer, Faulkner

experimented brilliantly with narrative chronology, different points of view and voices (including those of outcasts, children, and illiterates), and a rich and demanding baroque style built of extremely long sentences full of complicated subordinate parts.

The best of Faulkner's novels include The Sound and the Fury (1929) and As I Lay Dying (1930), two modernist works experimenting with viewpoint and voice to probe southern families under the stress of losing a family member; Light in August (1932), about complex and violent relations between a white woman and a black man; and Absalom, Absalom! (1936), perhaps his finest, about the rise of a self-made plantation owner and his tragic fall through racial prejudice and a failure to love.

Most of these novels use different characters to tell parts of the story and demonstrate how meaning resides in the manner of telling, as much as in the subject at hand. The use of various viewpoints makes Faulkner more self-referential, or "reflexive," than Hemingway or Fitzgerald; each novel reflects upon itself, while it simultaneously unfolds a story of universal interest. Faulkner's themes are southern tradition, family, community, the land, history and the past, race, and the passions of ambition and love. He also created three novels focusing on the rise of a degenerate family, the Snopes clan: The Hamlet (1940), The Town (1957), and The Mansion (1959).

NOVELS OF SOCIAL AWARENESS

Since the 1890s, an undercurrent of social protest had coursed through American literature, welling up in the naturalism of Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser and in the clear messages of the muckraking novelists. Later socially engaged authors included Sinclair Lewis, John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos, Richard Wright, and the dramatist Clifford Odets. They were linked to the 1930s in their concern for the welfare of the common citizen and their focus on groups of people – the professions, as in Sinclair Lewis's archetypal Arrowsmith (a physician) or Babbitt (a local businessman); families, as in Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath; or urban masses, as Dos Passos accomplishes through his 11 major characters in his U.S.A. trilogy.

Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951)

Harry Sinclair Lewis was born in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, and graduated from Yale University. He took time off from school to work at a socialist community, Helicon Home Colony, financed by muckraking novelist Upton Sinclair. Lewis's Main Street (1920) satirized monotonous, hypocritical small-town life in Gopher Prairie, Minnesota. His incisive presentation of American life and his criticism of American materialism, narrowness, and hypocrisy brought him national and international recognition. In 1926, he was offered and declined a Pulitzer Prize for Arrowsmith (1925), a novel tracing a doctor's efforts to maintain his medical ethics amid greed and corruption. In 1930, he became the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Lewis's other major novels include Babbitt (1922). George Babbitt is an ordinary businessman living and working in Zenith, an ordinary American town. Babbitt is moral and enterprising, and a believer in business as the new scientific approach to modern life. Becoming restless, he seeks fulfillment but is disillusioned by an affair with a bohemian woman, returns to his wife, and accepts his lot. The novel added a new word to the American language – "babbittry," meaning narrow-minded, complacent, bourgeois ways. Elmer Gantry (1927) exposes revivalist religion in the United States, while Cass Timberlane (1945) studies the stresses that develop within the marriage of an older judge and his young wife.

John Dos Passos (1896-1970)

Like Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos began as a left-wing radical but moved to the right as he aged. Dos Passos wrote realistically, in line with the doctrine of socialist realism. His best work achieves a scientific objectivism and almost documentary effect. Dos Passos developed an experimental collage technique for his masterwork U.S.A., consisting of The 42nd Parallel (1930), 1919 (1932), and The Big Money (1936). This sprawling collection covers the social history of the United States from 1900 to 1930 and exposes the moral corruption of materialistic American society through the lives of its characters.

Dos Passos's new techniques included "newsreel" sections taken from contemporary headlines, popular songs, and advertisements, as well as

"biographies" briefly setting forth the lives of important Americans of the period, such as inventor Thomas Edison, labor organizer Eugene Debs, film star Rudolph Valentino, financier J.P. Morgan, and sociologist Thorstein Veblen. Both the newsreels and biographies lend Dos Passos's novels a documentary value; a third technique, the "camera eye," consists of stream of consciousness prose poems that offer a subjective response to the events described in the books.

John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

Like Sinclair Lewis, John Steinbeck is held in higher critical esteem outside the United States than in it today, largely because he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1963 and the international fame it confers. In both cases, the Nobel Committee selected liberal American writers noted for their social criticism.

Steinbeck, a Californian, set much of his writing in the Salinas Valley near San Francisco. His best known work is the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel The Grapes of Wrath (1939), which follows the travails of a poor Oklahoma family that loses its farm during the Depression and travels to California to seek work. Family members suffer conditions of feudal oppression by rich landowners. Other works set in California include Tortilla Flat (1935), Of Mice and Men (1937), Cannery Row (1945), and East of Eden (1952).

Steinbeck combines realism with a primitivist romanticism that finds virtue in poor farmers who live close to the land. His fiction demonstrates the vulnerability of such people, who can be uprooted by droughts and are the first to suffer in periods of political unrest and economic depression.

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

During the exuberant 1920s, Harlem, the black community situated uptown in New York City, sparkled with passion and creativity. The sounds of its black American jazz swept the United States by storm, and jazz musicians and composers like Duke Ellington became stars beloved across the United States and overseas. Bessie Smith and other blues singers presented frank, sensual, wry lyrics raw with emotion. Black spirituals became widely appreciated as uniquely

beautiful religious music. Ethel Waters, the black actress, triumphed on the stage, and black American dance and art flourished with music and drama.

Among the rich variety of talent in Harlem, many visions coexisted. Carl Van Vechten's sympathetic 1926 novel of Harlem gives some idea of the complex and bittersweet life of black America in the face of economic and social inequality.

The poet Countee Cullen (1903-1946), a native of Harlem who was briefly married to W.E.B. Du Bois's daughter, wrote accomplished rhymed poetry, in accepted forms, which was much admired by whites. He believed that a poet should not allow race to dictate the subject matter and style of a poem. On the other end of the spectrum were African-Americans who rejected the United States in favor of Marcus Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement. Somewhere in between lies the work of Jean Toomer.

Jean Toomer (1894-1967)

Like Cullen, African-American fiction writer and poet Jean Toomer envisioned an American identity that would transcend race. Perhaps for this reason, he brilliantly employed poetic traditions of rhyme and meter and did not seek out new "black" forms for his poetry. His major work, Cane (1923), is ambitious and innovative, however. Like Williams's Paterson, Cane incorporates poems, prose vignettes, stories, and autobiographical notes. In it, an African-American struggles to discover his selfhood within and beyond the black communities in rural Georgia, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Illinois, and as a black teacher in the South. In Cane, Toomer's Georgia rural black folk are naturally artistic:

Their voices rise...the pine trees are guitars, Strumming, pine-needles fall like sheets of rain...

Their voices rise...the chorus of the cane Is caroling a vesper to the stars...(I, 21-24)

Cane contrasts the fast pace of African-American life in the city of Washington:

Money burns the pocket, pocket hurts, Bootleggers in silken shirts, Ballooned, zooming Cadillacs, Whizzing, whizzing down the street-car tracks. (II, 1-4)

Richard Wright (1908-1960)

Richard Wright was born into a poor Mississippi sharecropping family that his father deserted when the boy was five. Wright was the first African-American novelist to reach a general audience, even though he had barely a ninth grade education. His harsh childhood is depicted in one of his best books, his autobiography, Black Boy (1945). He later said that his sense of deprivation, due to racism, was so great that only reading kept him alive.

The social criticism and realism of Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, and Sinclair Lewis especially inspired Wright. During the 1930s, he joined the Communist party; in the 1940s, he moved to France, where he knew Gertrude Stein and Jean-Paul Sartre and became an anti-Communist. His outspoken writing blazed a path for subsequent African-American novelists.

His work includes Uncle Tom's Children (1938), a book of short stories, and the powerful and relentless novel Native Son (1940), in which Bigger Thomas, an uneducated black youth, mistakenly kills his white employer's daughter, gruesomely burns the body, and murders his black girlfriend – fearing she will betray him. Although some African-Americans have criticized Wright for portraying a black character as a murderer, Wright's novel was a necessary and overdue expression of the racial inequality that has been the subject of so much debate in the United States.

Zora Neale Hurston (1903-1960)

Born in the small town of Eatonville, Florida, Zora Neale Hurston is known as one of the lights of the Harlem Renaissance. She first came to New York City at the age of 16 – having arrived as part of a traveling theatrical troupe. A strikingly gifted storyteller who captivated her listeners, she attended Barnard College, where she studied with anthropologist Franz Boaz and came to grasp ethnicity from a scientific perspective. Boaz urged her to collect folklore from her native Florida environment, which she did. The distinguished folklorist Alan Lomax called her Mules and Men (1935) "the most engaging, genuine, and skillfully written book in the field of folklore."

Hurston also spent time in Haiti, studying voodoo and collecting Caribbean folklore that was anthologized in Tell My Horse (1938). Her natural command of colloquial English puts her in the great tradition of Mark Twain. Her writing sparkles with colorful language and comic – or tragic – stories from the African-American oral tradition.

Hurston was an impressive novelist. Her most important work, Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937), is a moving, fresh depiction of a beautiful mulatto woman's maturation and renewed happiness as she moves through three marriages. The novel vividly evokes the lives of African-Americans working the land in the rural South. A harbinger of the women's movement, Hurston inspired and influenced such contemporary writers as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison through books such as her autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road (1942).

LITERARY CURRENTS: THE FUGITIVES AND NEW CRITICISM

From the Civil War into the 20th century, the southern United States had remained a political and economic backwater ridden with racism and superstition, but, at the same time, blessed with rich folkways and a strong sense of pride and tradition. It had a somewhat unfair reputation for being a cultural desert of provincialism and ignorance.

Ironically, the most significant 20th-century regional literary movement was that of the Fugitives – led by poet-critic-theoretician John Crowe Ransom, poet Allen Tate, and novelist-poet-essayist Robert Penn Warren. This southern literary school rejected "northern" urban, commercial values, which they felt had taken over America. The Fugitives called for a return to the land and to American traditions that could be found in the South. The movement took its name from a literary magazine, The Fugitive, published from 1922 to 1925 at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and with which Ransom, Tate, and Warren were all associated.

These three major Fugitive writers were also associated with New Criticism, an approach to understanding literature through close readings and attentiveness to formal patterns (of imagery, metaphors, metrics, sounds, and symbols) and their suggested meanings. Ransom, leading theorist of the southern renaissance

between the wars, published a book, The New Criticism (1941), on this method, which offered an alternative to previous extra-literary methods of criticism based on history and biography. New Criticism became the dominant American critical approach in the 1940s and 1950s because it proved to be well-suited to modernist writers such as Eliot and could absorb Freudian theory (especially its structural categories such as id, ego, and superego) and approaches drawing on mythic patterns.

20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN DRAMA

American drama imitated English and European theater until well into the 20th century. Often, plays from England or translated from European languages dominated theater seasons. An inadequate copyright law that failed to protect and promote American dramatists worked against genuinely original drama. So did the "star system," in which actors and actresses, rather than the actual plays, were given most acclaim. Americans flocked to see European actors who toured theaters in the United States. In addition, imported drama, like imported wine, enjoyed higher status than indigenous productions.

During the 19th century, melodramas with exemplary democra ic figures and clear contrasts between good and evil had been popular. Plays about social problems such as slavery also drew large audiences; sometimes these plays were adaptations of novels like Uncle Tom's Cabin. Not until the 20th century would serious plays attempt aesthetic innovation. Popular culture showed vital developments, however, especially in vaudeville (popular variety theater involving skits, clowning, music, and the like). Minstrel shows, based on African-American music and folkways – performed by white characters using "blackface" makeup – also developed original forms and expressions.

Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953)

Eugene O'Neill is the great figure of American theater. His numerous plays combine enormous technical originality with freshness of vision and emotional depth. O'Neill's earliest dramas concern the working class and poor; later works explore subjective realms, such as obsessions and sex, and underscore his reading in Freud and his anguished attempt to come to terms with his dead mother, father,

and brother. His play Desire Under the Elms (1924) recreates the passions hidden within one family; The Great God Brown (1926) uncovers the unconsciousness of a wealthy businessman; and Strange Interlude (1928), a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, traces the tangled loves of one woman. These powerful plays reveal different personalities reverting to primitive emotions or confusion under intense stress.

O'Neill continued to explore the Freudian pressures of love and dominance within families in a trilogy of plays collectively entitled Mourning Becomes Electra (1931), based on the classical Oedipus trilogy by Sophocles. His later plays include the acknowledged masterpieces The Iceman Cometh (1946), a stark work on the theme of death, and Long Day's Journey Into Night (1956) – a powerful, extended autobiography in dramatic form focusing on his own family and their physical and psychological deterioration, as witnessed in the course of one night. This work was part of a cycle of plays O'Neill was working on at the time of his death.

O'Neill redefined the theater by abandoning traditional divisions into acts and scenes (Strange Interlude has nine acts, and Mourning Becomes Electra takes nine hours to perform); using masks such as those found in Asian and ancient Greek theater; introducing Shakespearean monologues and Greek choruses; and producing special effects through lighting and sound. He is generally acknowledged to have been America's foremost dramatist. In 1936 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature – the first American playwright to be so honored.

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)

Thornton Wilder is known for his plays Our Town (1938) and The Skin of Our Teeth (1942), and for his novel The Bridge of San Luis Rey (1927).

Our Town conveys positive American values. It has all the elements of sentimentality and nostalgia – the archetypal traditional small country town, the kindly parents and mischievous children, the young lovers. Still, the innovative elements such as ghosts, voices from the audience, and daring time shifts keep the play engaging. It is, in effect, a play about life and death in which the dead are reborn, at least for the moment.

Clifford Odets (1906-1963)

Clifford Odets, a master of social drama, came from an Eastern European, Jewish immigrant background. Raised in New York City, he became one of the original acting members of the Group Theater directed by Harold Clurman, Lee Strasberg, and Cheryl Crawford, which was committed to producing only native American dramas.

Odets's best-known play was Waiting for Lefty (1935), an experimental one-act drama that fervently advocated labor unionism. His Awake and Sing! , a nostalgic family drama, became another popular success, followed by Golden Boy, the story of an Italian immigrant youth who ruins his musical talent (he is a violinist) when he is seduced by the lure of money to become a boxer and injures his hands. Like Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby and Dreiser's An American Tragedy, the play warns against excessive ambition and materialism.

Unit I Section

The Wasteland. T.S. Eliot.

About the author

Thomas Stearns Eliot (September 26, 1888 - January 4, 1965), was an Anglo-American poet, dramatist, and literary critic. Eliot was born into a prominent Unitarian Saint Louis, Missouri family; his fifth cousin, Tom Eliot, was Chancellor of Washington University, and his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, was the school's founder. Eliot's major work shows few signs of St. Louis, but there was, in his youth, a Prufrock furniture store in town. Following his graduation from Harvard University in 1909, T.S. Eliot made his life and literary career in Britain, following the curtailment of a tour of Germany by the outbreak of World War I. After the War, in the 1920s, he would spend time with other great artists in the Montparnasse Quarter in Paris, France where he would be photographed by Man Ray. He dabbled in Buddhism and studied Sanskrit and was a student of G. I. Gurdjieff. Through the influence of Ezra Pound he came to prominence with the publication of a poem, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, in 1915. His style was very fresh and modernist. In 1922 came the publication of Eliot's long poem The Waste Land. Composed during a period of enormous personal difficulty for Eliot—his ill-fated marriage to Vivien Haigh-Wood was already foundering, and both he and Vivien suffered from precarious health—The Waste Land offered a bleak portrait of post-World War I Europe, sometimes laced with disgust, but also hesitantly gesturing towards the possibility of (religious?) redemption. Despite the

famous difficulty of the poem—its slippage between satire and prophecy, its abrupt and unannounced changes of speaker, location and time, its elegaic but intimidating summoning up of a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures—the poem has nonetheless become a familiar touchstone of modern literature. Here are some of its perhaps most famous phrases: "April is the cruellest month"; "I will show you fear in a handful of dust"; "Shantihshantihshantih." Ezra Pound contributed greatly to the poem with his editorial advice (the facsimile edition of the original manuscript with Pound's queries and corrections, published in 1971, is essential reading for admirers of the

poem); in acknowledgement, Eliot later dedicated the poem to him: "For Ezra Pound. 'Il migliorfabbro'" (the better craftsman). Eliot's later work, following his conversion to Anglicanism on June 29, 1927, is often but by no means exclusively religious in nature. This includes such works as The Hollow Men, Ash-Wednesday, The Journey of the Magi, and Four Quartets. Eliot considered Four Quartets to be his masterpiece, as it draws upon his vast knowledge of mysticism and philosophy. It consists of four poems, "Burnt Norton," "The Dry Salvages," "East Coker," and "Little Gidding." Each of these runs to several hundred lines total and is broken into five sections. Although they resist easy characterization, they have many things in common: each begins with a rumination on the geographical location of its title, and each meditates on the nature of time in some important respect— theological, historical, physical. and on its relation to the human condition. A reflective early reading suggests an inexact system ticity among them; they approach the same ideas in varying but overlapping ways, although they do not necessarily exhaust their questions. "Burnt Norton" asks what it means to consider things that aren't

the case but might have been. We see the shell of an abandoned house, and Eliot toys with the idea that all these "merely possible" realities are present together, but invisible to us: All the possible ways people might walk across a courtyard add up to a vast dance we can't see: Children who aren't there are hiding in the bushes. Eliot's plays, mostly in verse, include Murder in the Cathedral (1935), The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1949), The Confidential Clerk (1953) and The Elder Statesman (1958). Murder in the Cathedral is a frankly religious piece about the death of St Thomas Becket. He confessed to being influenced by, among others, the works of 17th century preacher, Lancelot Andrewes. Later, he was appointed to the committee formed to produce the "New English" translation of the Bible. In 1939 he published a book of poetry for children, Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, which after his death became the basis of the hit West End and Broadway musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber, Cats. On November 4, 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. After his death, his body was cremated and, according to Eliot's wishes, the ashes taken to St Michael's Church in East Coker, the village from which Eliot's ancestors emigrated to America. A simple plaque commemorates him. As a note of trivia,

late in his life, Eliot became somewhat of a penpal with comedian Groucho Marx. Eliot even requested a portrait of the comedian, which he then proudly displayed in his home. "The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock" is a greatly quoted and referenced piece. References have appeared in Hill Street Blues and The Long Goodbye by private-eye novelist Raymond Chandler. 1. The Burial of the Dead. 2. A Game of Chess. 3. The Fire Sermon. 4. Death by Water. 5. What the Thunder Said.

The Waste Land, T. S. Eliot's masterpiece, is a long, complex poem about the psychological and cultural crisis that came with the loss of moral and cultural identity after World War I. When it was first published, the poem was considered radically experimental. Eliot dispenses with traditional verse forms and instead juxtaposes sordid images of popular culture with erudite allusions to classical and ancient literature and myths. The title is indicative of Eliot's attitude toward his contemporary society, as he uses the idea of a dry and sterile wasteland as a metaphor for a Europe devastated by war and desperate for spiritual replenishment but depleted of the cultural tools necessary for renewal.

The poem is deliberately obscure and fragmentary, incorporating variant voices, multiple points of view, and abrupt shifts in dramatic context. The motif of moral degeneration, however, is prevalent throughout the poem, the premise being that contemporary Europe, obsessed with novelty, trends, materialism, and instant gratification, lacks the faith and substance to reaffirm its cultural heritage, to reestablish the sense of order and stability that historical continuity once provided. In an attempt to counter the cultural deficit of the present with the rich cultural heritage of the past, Eliot combines images from pagan rituals and religious texts with ancient fertility rituals and allusions to legends of the Grail. These images of ceremony and tradition are set against bleak images of modern life, where spiritual death breeds cultural death, and the ashen landscape reflects a barren world void of transcendental value.

Describing a series of failed encounters between various men and women, Eliot creates composites of fertility archetypes who ironically are incapable of offering spiritual nourishment to a dying world. The characters drift in and out of meaningless relationships; the men and women are impotent, shallow, vain,

excruciatingly ordinary. Culture is reduced to common clichés; the well of redemption becomes a "dull canal." The world is filled with "a heap of broken images" where "the dead tree gives no shelter." The only salvation appears to be in personal responsibility, self-control, and a faith in cultural continuity based on common Western European values.

The poem is an elitist document. Eliot provides copious footnotes, and the text is loaded with difficult literary, historical, and anthropological allusions; it is meant to be understood only by a few. As an account of the dilemma faced by the West of its being threatened by the loss of its privileged, white, patriarchal position of cultural dominance in the first half of the twentieth century, The Waste Land is indispensable.

The Waste Land

By T. S. Eliot

FOR EZRA POUND

IL MIGLIOR FABBRO

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee

With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.

Bin gar keineRussin, stamm' ausLitauen, echtdeutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,

My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,

Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,

And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,

And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

There is shadow under this red rock,

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),

And I will show you something different from either

Your shadow at morning striding behind you

Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;

I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind,

Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;

"They called me the hyacinth girl."

—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,

Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither

Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,

Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

Oed' und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,

Had a bad cold, nevertheless

Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,

With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,

Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,

To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours

With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!

"You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

"Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,

"Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!

"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

II. A Game of Chess

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,

Glowed on the marble, where the glass

Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines

From which a golden Cupidon peeped out

(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)

Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra

Reflecting light upon the table as

The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,

From satin cases poured in rich profusion;

In vials of ivory and coloured glass

Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,

Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused

And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air

That freshened from the window, these ascended

In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,

Flung their smoke into the laquearia,

Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.

Huge sea-wood fed with copper

Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,

In which sad light a carvéd dolphin swam.

Above the antique mantel was displayed

As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene

The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king

So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale

Filled all the desert with inviolable voice

And still she cried, and still the world pursues,

"Jug Jug" to dirty ears.

And other withered stumps of time

Were told upon the walls; staring forms

Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.

Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair

Spread out in fiery points

Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

Nothing again nothing.

"Do

"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

"Nothing?"

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

But

O OOO that Shakespeherian Rag—

It's so elegant

So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"

"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

"With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?

"What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said—

I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.

He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you

To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.

You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,

He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.

And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,

He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.

Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.

Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.

Others can pick and choose if you can't.

But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.

(And her only thirty-one.)

I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,

It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.

(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)

The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.

You are a proper fool, I said.

Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,

What you get married for if you don't want children?

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,

And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.

Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.

Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. The Fire Sermon

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf

Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind

Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,

Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends

Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;

Departed, have left no addresses.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,

Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation

Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

While I was fishing in the dull canal

On a winter evening round behind the gashouse

Musing upon the king my brother's wreck

And on the king my father's death before him.

White bodies naked on the low damp ground

And bones cast in a little low dry garret,

Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.

But at my back from time to time I hear

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring

Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water

Et O cesvoixd'enfants, chantantdans la coupole!

Twit twittwit

Jug jugjugjugjugjug

So rudely forc'd.

Tereu

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter noon

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back

Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting,

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,

Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives

Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights

Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

Out of the window perilously spread

Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)

Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs

Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—

I too awaited the expected guest.

He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,

A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,

One of the low on whom assurance sits

As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,

Endeavours to engage her in caresses

Which still are unreproved, if undesired.

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;

Exploring hands encounter no defence;

His vanity requires no response,

And makes a welcome of indifference.

(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all

Enacted on this same divan or bed;

I who have sat by Thebes below the wall

And walked among the lowest of the dead.)

Bestows one final patronising kiss,

And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,

Hardly aware of her departed lover;

Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."

When lovely woman stoops to folly and

Paces about her room again, alone,

She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,

And puts a record on the gramophone.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"

And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.

O City city, I can sometimes hear

Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

The pleasant whining of a mandoline

And a clatter and a chatter from within

Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls

Of Magnus Martyr hold

Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

The river sweats

Oil and tar

The barges drift

With the turning tide

Red sails

Wide

To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.

The barges wash

Drifting logs

Down Greenwich reach

Past the Isle of Dogs.

Weialalaleia

Wallalaleialala

Elizabeth and Leicester

Beating oars

The stern was formed

A gilded shell

Red and gold

The brisk swell

Rippled both shores

Southwest wind

Carried down stream

The peal of bells

White towers

Weialalaleia

Wallalaleialala

"Trams and dusty trees.

Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees

Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart

Under my feet. After the event

He wept. He promised a 'new start.'

I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate Sands.

I can connect

Nothing with nothing.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing."

la la

To Carthage then I came

Burning burningburningburning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

IV. Death by Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,

Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell

And the profit and loss.

A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell

He passed the stages of his age and youth

Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew

O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. What the Thunder Said

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces

After the frosty silence in the gardens

After the agony in stony places

The shouting and the crying

Prison and palace and reverberation

Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead

We who were living are now dying

With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water

If there were water we should stop and drink

Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand

If there were only water amongst the rock

Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit

Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit

There is not even silence in the mountains

But dry sterile thunder without rain

There is not even solitude in the mountains

But red sullen faces sneer and snarl

From doors of mudcracked houses

If there were water

And no rock

If there were rock

And also water

And water

A spring

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only

Not the cicada

And dry grass singing

But sound of water over a rock

Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees

Drip drop drip drop dropdropdrop

But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you

Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded

I do not know whether a man or a woman

—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air

Murmur of maternal lamentation

Who are those hooded hordes swarming

Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Ringed by the flat horizon only

What is the city over the mountains

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

Only at nightfall, aetherealrumours

Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA

Damyata: The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

Gaily, when invited, beating obedient

To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascosenelfocochegliaffina

Quandofiamutichelidon—O swallow swallow

Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantihshantihshantih

The Waste Land: T. S. Eliot's as a Journey of Realization and Revelation

The Waste Land, by T. S. Eliot, appeared at a time when European society was not quite

sure what to do with itself. Europe had just emerged from World War I, a war which had

traumatized the continent and its society. Many felt the world was chaotic and inhumane. A

sense of disillusionment and cynicism became pronounced and nihilism1 grew in popularity. This

was also a time of personal difficulty for Eliot due to his failing marriage and the disorder of his

nerves. Eliot expressed all of these feelings in his poem. In fact, The Waste Land soon became

known as "the work that best expressed the mood of a postwar generation disillusioned by the

loss of ideals and faith in progress" (Dupree 7). The Waste Land does not, however, express only

despair in the condition of modern society. Conscious of its actual degradation, Eliot sought a

means to escape it. He did a great deal of research concerning fertility rituals and myths and

indicated that "his reading in these and similar studies provided a way of seeing behind present-

day actions a substratum of past beliefs and practices that, though now lost to consciousness,

continue to inform our daily lives in hidden but signifi ant ways" (Dupree 8). As Delmore

Schwartz states, "Eliot's theme is the rehabilitation of a system of beliefs, known but now

discredited" (209). Eliot felt that man needed to be brought back to these old beliefs, but was

wary of stating this openly, fearing a direct approach would prevent the poem from being read.

The modern man had become too hardened to accept Christian principles directly and, instead,

must gradually be made aware of his condition. In order to achieve this, Eliot chronicled his

journey of realization and revelation in the form of The Waste Land, using the protagonist of the

poem to represent his own passage to spiritual awareness and to convince man of the degradation

of society and the need for reform.

The poem begins with the protagonist musing on spring:

April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers. (1, 1-7)2

This passage is an indication of the extent of the degradation of man. He has sunken so low into

depravity that he prefers to live a life of ignorance and to disregard the fact that he is living a

half-life. April, the month in which spring begins, is no longer a joyous time in which new life is

celebrated, but a cruel time of rebirth that reminds man that his own life is terribly empty.

The protagonist then addresses man directly, stating, "you know only / a heap of broken

images, where the sun beats, / and the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / and the

dry stone no sound of water" (I, 21-24). He then invites us into "the shadow of this red rock" (I,

26), an allusion to the Book of Isaiah, in which the Messiah's future coming is likened to "an

hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as

the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (KJV Bible, Isa. 32:2). Under this red rock, he will

show the way to escape the mundane life man has brought upon himself.

The speaker then recalls the time he first realized the emptiness of his life. In the springtime, he says, he gave his lover hyacinths. Looking at her, with her arms full of flowers and her hair dripping wet, he expected to see happiness and fulfillment, but saw nothing. At this point, he realizes that true joy cannot be found in transitory things. The world holds nothing for him- "Oed' und leer das Meer" (1, 42)-desolate and empty is the sea. It is possible that Eliot came to this same realization through a similar cause, as he and his wife had a very unhappy relationship.

The protagonist then .akes us on a journey through society, a journey that illustrates the full extent of human degradation and spiritual emptiness. In the first scene of "A Game of Chess," a wealthy couple is shown at home, living meaningless lives composed of dull routines. Their relationship is forced and artificial, each so self-absorbed that neither can communicate with the other.

In the second scene of this section, the extent of degradation is further revealed. A woman is in a pub discussing with a group of friends the advice she gave her friend Lil when

Lil's husband, Alfred, was discharged from military service. She says she pointed out that Alfred,

having been in the service for four years, "wants a good time" and told Lil, "if you don't give it to

him, there's others will"(II, 148-149). She then rebuked Lil for looking "so antique" (II, 156), and

Lil replied that it was because she had an abortion. She had already given birth to five children

and did not want more. In this scene, sex is reduced to a duty a wife must perform to please her

husband, and children are an obligation, not a joy.

In "The Fire Sermon," the depravity of man is further illustrated. A woman is shown in

her apartment eating dinner with her lover. Their encounter after dinner is described thusly:

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,

Endeavours to engage her in caresses

Which still are unreproved, if undesired

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once:

Exploring hands encounter no defense;

His vanity requires no response,

And makes a welcome of indifference. (III, 235-242)

When he leaves, "her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: 'Well now that's done: and

I'm glad it's over'."(III, 252) This attitude of indifference can be seen as even more depraved than

lust and expresses the apathetic attitude of many after the war.

However, there is still hope. Sometimes, the protagonist can hear "the pleasant whining

of a mandoline" (III, 261) near the walls of Magnus Martyr, a church "where fishmen lounge at

noon" (III, 263). This brief glimpse of hope is an indication of the source of a meaningful life.

The "fishmen" remind us of Jesus' disciples, the "fishers of men" (KJV Bible, Matt. 4:19), who

were exhorted to journey throughout the earth, telling men of the gospel of Christ and the way to

salvation.

In "Death by Water," the way of escape from the degradation of society is revealed. The

protagonist tells us of Phlebas the Phoenician, who experienced death by water, which can be

seen as a representation of baptism, the shedding of the sinful nature, and the acceptance of the

"Living Water" (KJV Bible, John 7:38) of Christ. Phlebas is now dead to the world. He has

forgotten "the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / and the profit and the loss" (IV, 313-314). He

is no longer affected by the sin of modern society but lives separate from it. The narrator then

addresses the reader: "Gentile or Jew / 0 you who turn the wheel and look to windward, /

Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (IV, 319-321). With this address, the

narrator reminds us that we are as mortal as Phlebas, and we also require this "Living Water."

This passage is a direct contrast to "The Fire Sermon" quenching the fires of lust with the

"Living Water" that provides spiritual cleansing. To truly experience life, our sinful nature must

die.

The protagonist concludes by explaining his own realization that, like "Jerusalem Athens

Alexandria" (V. 374), modern society is deteriorating: "London Bridge is falling down" (V, 426).

At this time, he has a decision to make: "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (V, 425) Will he

avoid the decay of society and abandon his meaningless life for one with significance? His

decision is evident in the last stanza of the poem. Amid the madness of the ruin of society, the

protagonist finds "Shantihshantihshantih" (V, 433)-a peace that passes understanding. Like

Phlebas, he has chosen to bid farewell to his dishonest, worldly self and surrender to the Living

Water that has the power to quench the fires of corruption. It is through this passage that Eliot

suggests his own discovery and his decision to experience the peace that passes understanding by

surrendering the corrupt part of himself. The poem, composed of seemingly fragmented ideas

and stream-of-consciousness thoughts, ends on a note of peace, a peace that Eliot has attained

and wishes modern man to experience.

Passage:

1. *The Waste Land,* Eliot's first long philosophical poem, can now be read simply as it was written, as a poem of radical doubt and negation, urging that every human desire be stilled except the desire for self-surrender, for restraint, and for peace. Compared with the longing expressed in later poems for the "eyes" and the "birth," the "coming" and "the Lady" (in "The Hollow Men," the Ariel poems, and "Ash-Wednesday"), the hope held out in *The Waste Land* is a negative one. Following Hugh Kenner's recommendation, we should lay to rest the persistent error of reading *The Waste Land* as a poem in which five motifs predominate: the nightmare journey, the Chapel, the Quester, the Grail Legend, and the Fisher King. The motifs are indeed introduced, as Eliot's preliminary note to his text informs us, but if (as this note says) "the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend," the plan can only have been to question, and even to propose a life without hope for, a quest, or Chapel, or Grail in the modern waste land. The themes of interior prison and nightmare city--or the "urban apocalypse" elucidated by Kenner and Eleanor Cook--make much better sense when seen as furnishing the centripetal "plan" and "symbolism," especially when one follows Cook's discussion of the disintegration of all European cities after the First World War and the poem's culminating vision of a new Carthaginian collapse, imagined from the vantage point of India's holy men. A passage canceled in the manuscript momentarily suggested that the ideal city, forever unrealizable on earth, might be found (as Plato thought) "in another world," but the reference was purely sardonic. Nowhere in the poem can one find convincing allusions to *any* existence in another world, much less to St. Augustine's vision of interpenetration between the City of God and the City of Man in *this* world. How, then, can one take seriously attempts to find in the poem any such quest for eternal life as the Grail legend would have to provide if it were a continuous motif--even a sardonic one?

   It seems that only since Eliot's death is it possible to read his life forward--understanding *The Waste Land* as it was written, without being deflected by our knowledge of the writer's later years. Before Eliot's death the tendency was to read the poem proleptically--as if reflecting the poems of the later period. This is how Cleanth Brooks, writing the first fully elucidative essay on *The Waste Land,* read it, stressing the Grail legends, the longing for new life, rather than the purely negative aspects of the theme. Thus Brooks interpreted

the Sibyl's appeal for death at the beginning of the poem as exactly parallel to the Magus's appetite for death in the Ariel poems (the Magus's, of course, filled with the pain of knowing that Christ had subjected himself to weak mortality and not knowing yet the Resurrection). To make the Sibyl and the Magus parallel was to read Eliot's development backward--perhaps an irresistible temptation when the pattern in his life was so little known and when (as then in 1939) Brooks was acquainted with the man at work on *Four Quartets*, who had recently produced the celebrated *Murder in the Cathedral*. It was also irresistible, in a culture still nominally Christian, to hope that *The Waste Land* was about a world in which God was not dead. But the poem was not about such a world.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. How does Eliot describe the physical "Waste Land" in this poem? What are some of its main features, and how are they connected to the symbolic wasteland that Western culture has become for Eliot?
2. Why does Eliot choose to conclude this poem by discussing the Hindu values of giving, compassion, and self-control? According to the poem, what can we learn from these values?
3. What does Eliot mean in the final moments of the poem when he writes, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (431)? What are the fragments? What are the ruins? And what does shoring mean, anyway?
4. Why does Eliot tell us in a footnote that the blind prophet Tiresias is the most important character in the poem? How is Tiresias best suited to narrate "The Waste Land"? Do you think the speaker of the poem is *always* Tiresias, who is both a man and a woman and lives many different lives?
5. On the whole, how much hope does Eliot allow us to have in this poem? Is it all purely, "We're done, and it's a shame," or is there the possibility for something good to happen in the future?
6. How much does "The Waste Land" still apply today? Do we still face any of the problems Eliot talks about in this poem, or would he be overjoyed to be alive today and to see how far we've come?
7. Does the poem show any sympathy for the woman in the pub in lines 139-172, or for the young woman in lines 222-248? Are they still redeemable as characters, or is Eliot simply using them as examples of how far we've sunk as a society?
8. Is it really possible for today's readers to get behind what Eliot is doing in this poem, or are we too invested in pop culture to care about his supposedly elitist ideas anymore?
9. Is there any upside to thinking the way Eliot does? Is his thinking undemocratic? Does he expect everyone to be as smart as he is? What are the upsides and downsides of living in a modern world where important decisions tend to be made by applause meters instead of experts?
10. Is there something to Eliot's theory that life makes more sense when everyone knows the same stories? For example, have you ever compared your life to an episode of a TV show in order to have your experience make sense to someone else? Is this still a valuable way of relating to one another?

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. According to this poet, what is the cruelest month?
(a) April
(b) August
(c) July
(d) June

2. What does the cruelest month breed?
(a) Loneliness
(b) Lambs
(c) Lilacs
(d) Love

3. What does the cruelest month mix together?
(a) Memory and Desire
(b) Beauty and Hatred
(c) The Past and the Future
(d) Love and Death

4. What does the poet say keeps us warm in the winter?
(a) Snow
(b) Fires
(c) Hope
(d) Embraces

5. What does the poet say summer does to us?
(a) Surprises us
(b) Leaves us
(c) Encourages us
(d) Baths us

6. Where does the narrator spend his summers?
(a) The Maldahasee
(b) The Sternbergersee
(c) The Tatnoogeese
(d) The Gerbertensee

7. In the Burial of the Dead, what is drunk at Hofgarten?
(a) Cider

(b) Wine
(c) Coffee
(d) Whiskey

8. In the Burial of the Dead, why are German phrases added to the poem?
(a) To paint a vivid picture
(b) To fit the rhyme scheme
(c) To symbolize the war
(d) To confuse the reader

9. In the Burial of the Dead, what frightens Marie?
(a) Sledding
(b) A mountain
(c) A bear
(d) The snow

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 1 The Second coming

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Summary

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening "gyre" (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold"; anarchy is loosed upon the world; "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst "are full of passionate intensity."Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; "Surely the Second Coming is at hand." No sooner does he think of "the Second Coming," then he is troubled by "a vast image of the Spiritus Mundi, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx ("A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun") is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker's sight, but he knows that the sphinx's twenty centuries of "stony sleep" have been made a nightmare by the motions of "a rocking cradle." And what "rough beast," he wonders, "its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Form

"The Second Coming" is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from

the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as "man" and "sun."

Commentary

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, "The Second Coming" is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a "rough beast," the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book A Vision. This theory issued in part from Yeats's lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in A Vision centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals "gyres") captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre

into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual's development).

"The Second Coming" was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats's poems, Richard J. Finneran quotes Yeats's own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take its character from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world's trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, democracy, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre—which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the science and democracy of the outer gyre. The "rough beast" slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age; the speaker's vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

This seems quite silly as philosophy or prophecy (particularly in light of the fact that it has not come true as yet). But as poetry, and understood more broadly than as a simple reiteration of the mystic theory of A Vision, "The Second Coming" is a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history, and about the conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The poem may not have the thematic relevance of Yeats's best work, and may not be a poem with which

many people can personally identify; but the aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats's work as a whole.

Passage:

1. Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, "The Second Coming" is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a "rough beast," the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

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Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What is the main theme of William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming"?
2. How is "The Second Coming" a prophetic poem?
3. What is the "vast image" he sees in "The Second Coming"?
4. Write a critical appreciation of W.B. Yeats' poem 'The Second Coming'.
5. In William Butler Yeats' poem "The Second Coming," what does the poet imagine?
6. Why do you think Yeats put so many confusing symbols in the poem? Many poets, when they use symbolism, try to make everything relate to each other. But what does falconing have to do with a sphinx or a "blood-dimmed tide," and what does either of them have to do with a sphinx and the "indignant desert birds"? Most people who read this poem want to make these things correspond to something real in the world. But we have to consider that Yeats did not want his poem to be interpreted in this way.
7. How would you explain the poem's relationship to the Bible? Most of the symbols are very general and timeless, like something out of the Book of Revelation. But it's also easy to tell that this is *not* the Bible. For one thing, Christ doesn't show up at the end, but a "rough beast." Does the poet sound like a religious man, and, if so, what kind?
8. Why does Yeats think of history as this swirling vortex, the gyre? Because the gyre moves further and further from its center, does it mean that things are always getting worse? It should be mentioned that Yeats's idea was highly original and not shared by everyone. There are still plenty of people, even today, who think that history is linear (except for a few blips like wars), and that society is constantly improving itself.
9. Is it possible that the appearance of the "rough beast" could be good for the world, in the end? After all, if the world is already so violent that "innocence is drowned," things can't get much direr. Maybe Yeats thinks it's like tearing down an old building in order to put up a new one. But, then again, there's nothing in the poem about society rebuilding itself.
10. Do you think the poem could apply to the entire world, or is it only intended for Christian Europe? People in other civilizations, for example the Middle East, have found this to be a very compelling poem, and they have made it fit into their own views of history. Maybe it speaks most directly to people with an "apocalyptic" outlook, who think that big, sweeping changes are on the horizon.

Multiple Choice Question:

1. The epigraph of The Waste Land is borrowed from?

(A) Virgil

(B) Fetronius

(C) Seneca

(D) Homer

2. Who called 'The Waste Land 'a music of ideas'?

(A) Allen Tate

(B) J. C. Ransom

(C) I. A. Richards

(D) F. R Leavis

3. T. S. Eliot has borrowed the term 'Unreal City' in the first and third sections from?

(A) Baudelaire

(B) Irving Babbit

(C) Dante

(D) Laforgue

4. Which of the following myths does not figure in The Waste Land?

(A) Oedipus

(B) Grail Legend of Fisher King

(C) Philomela

(D) Sysyphus

5. Joe Gargery is Pip's?

(A) brother

(B) brother-in-Jaw

(C) guardian

(D) cousin

6. Estella is the daughter of?

(A) Joe Gargery

(B) Abel Magwitch

(C) Miss Havisham

(D) Bentley Drumnile

7. Which book of John Ruskin influenced Mahatma Gandhi?

(A) Sesame and Lilies

(B) The Seven Lamps of Architecture

(C) Unto This Last

(D) Fors Clavigera

8. Graham Greene's novels are marked by?

(A) Catholicism

(B) Protestantism

(C) Paganism

(D) Buddhism

9. One important feature of Jane Austen's style is?

(A) boisterous humour

(B) humour and pathos

(C) subtlety of irony

(D) stream of consciousness

10. The title of the poem 'The Second Coming' is taken from?

(A) The Bible

(B) The Irish mythology

(C) The German mythology

(D) The Greek mythology

Unit IV Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 2 The Tower

The Tower-text

W. B. Yeats, 1865 - 1939

I

What shall I do with this absurdity—

O heart, O troubled heart—this caricature,

Decrepit age that has been tied to me

As to a dog's tail?

Never had I more

Excited, passionate, fanatical

Imagination, nor an ear and eye

That more expected the impossible—

No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly,

Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulben's back

And had the livelong summer day to spend.

It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,

Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend

Until imagination, ear and eye,

Can be content with argument and deal

In abstract things; or be derided by

A sort of battered kettle at the heel.

II

I pace upon the battlements and stare

On the foundations of a house, or where

Tree. like a sooty finger, starts from earth;

And send imagination forth

Under the day's declining beam, and call

Images and memories

From ruin or from ancient trees,

For I would ask a question of them all.

Beyond that ridge lived Mrs. French, and once

When every silver candlestick or sconce

Lit up the dark mahogany and the wine,

A serving-man, that could divine

That most respected lady's every wish,

Ran and with the garden shears

Clipped an insolent farmer's ears

And brought them in a little covered dish.

Some few remembered still when I was young

A peasant girl commended by a song,

Who'd lived somewhere upon that rocky place,

And praised the colour of her face,

And had the greater joy in praising her,

Remembering that, if walked she there,

Farmers jostled at the fair

So great a glory did the song confer.

And certain men, being maddened by those rhymes,

Or else by toasting her a score of times,

Rose from the table and declared it right

test their fancy by their sight;

it they mistook the brightness of the moon

r the prosaic light of day—

usic had driven their wits astray—

nd one was drowned in the great bog of Cloone.

trange, but the man who made the song was blind;

'et, now I have considered it, I find

'hat nothing strange; the tragedy began

Vith Homer that was a blind man,

And Helen has all living hearts betrayed.

O may the moon and sunlight seem

One inextricable beam,

For if I triumph I must make men mad.

And I myself created Hanrahan

And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn

From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages.

Caught by an old man's juggleries

He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro

And had but broken knees for hire

And horrible splendour of desire:

I thought it all out twenty years ago:

Good fellows shuffled cards in an old bawn;

And when that ancient ruffian's turn was on

He so bewitched the cards under his thumb

That all but the one card became

A pack of hounds and not a pack of cards,

And that he changed into a hare.

Hanrahan rose in frenzy there

And followed up those baying creatures towards—

O towards I have forgotten what—enough!

I must recall a man that neither love

Nor music nor an enemy's clipped ear

Could, he was so harried, cheer;

A figure that has grown so fabulous

There's not a neighbour left to say

When he finished his dog's day:

An ancient bankrupt master of this house.

Before that ruin came, for centuries,

Rough men-at-arms, cross-gartered to the knees

Or shod in iron, climbed the narrow stairs,

And certain men-at-arms there were

Whose images, in the Great Memory stored,

Come with loud cry and panting breast

To break upon a sleeper's rest

While their great wooden dice beat on the board.

As I would question all, come all who can;

Come old, necessitous, half-mounted man;

And bring beauty's blind rambling celebrant;

The red man the juggler sent

Through God-forsaken meadows; Mrs. French,

Gifted with so fine an ear;

The man drowned in a bog's mire,

When mocking Muses chose the country wench.

Did all old men and women, rich and poor,

Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,

Whether in public or in secret rage

As I do now against old age?

But I have found an answer in those eyes

That are impatient to be gone;

Go therefore; but leave Hanrahan,

For I need all his mighty memories.

Old lecher with a love on every wind,

Bring up out of that deep considering mind

All that you have discovered in the grave,

For it is certain that you have

Reckoned up every unforeknown, unseeing

Plunge, lured by a softening eye,

Or by a touch or a sigh,

Into the labyrinth of another's being;

Does the imagination dwell the most

Upon a woman won or a woman lost?

If on the lost, admit you turned aside

From a great labyrinth out of pride,

Cowardice, some silly over-subtle thought

Or anything called conscience once;

And that if memory recur, the sun's

Under eclipse and the day blotted out.

III

It is time that I wrote my will;

I choose upstanding men

That climb the streams until

The fountain leap, and at dawn

Drop their cast at the side

Of dripping stone; I declare

They shall inherit my pride,

The pride of people that were

Bound neither to Cause nor to State,

Neither to slaves that were spat on,

Nor to the tyrants that spat,

The people of Burke and of Grattan

That gave, though free to refuse—

Pride, like that of the morn,

When the headlong light is loose,

Or that of the fabulous horn,

Or that of the sudden shower

When all streams are dry,

Or that of the hour

When the swan must fix his eye

Upon a fading gleam,

Float out upon a long

Last reach of glittering stream

And there sing his last song.

And I declare my faith:

I mock Plotinus' thought

And cry in Plato's teeth,

Death and life were not

Till man made up the whole,

Made lock, stock and barrel

Out of his bitter soul,

Aye, sun and moon and star, all,

And further add to that

That, being dead, we rise,

Dream and so create

Translunar Paradise.

I have prepared my peace

With learned Italian things

And the proud stones of Greece,

Poet's imaginings

And memories of love,

Memories of the words of women,

All those things whereof

Man makes a superhuman

Mirror-resembling dream.

As at the loophole there

The daws chatter and scream,

And drop twigs layer upon layer.

When they have mounted up,

The mother bird will rest

On their hollow top,

And so warm her wild nest.

I leave both faith and pride

To young upstanding men

Climbing the mountain-side,

That under bursting dawn

They may drop a fly;

Being of that metal made

Till it was broken by

This sedentary trade.

Now shall I make my soul,

Compelling it to study

In a learned school

Till the wreck of body,

Slow decay of blood,

Testy delirium

Or dull decrepitude,

Or what worse evil come—

The death of friends, or death

Of every brilliant eye

That made a catch in the breath—

Seem but the clouds of the sky

When the horizon fades,

Or a bird's sleepy cry

Among the deepening shades.

Summary and Analysis of The Tower

The speaker decries the absurdity of the contrast between his old body and his young spirit. He feels more passionate and inspired than ever - even more so than when he was a boy and went fishing in the mountains of Western Ireland. Nevertheless, he feels he must say goodbye to poetry and choose reason instead: it is more becoming to his age. He walks to and fro atop a castle and looks out over the countryside. He sees where the wealthy Mrs. French once lived. Her servant, who knew her wishes well, once cut off the ears of a rude farmer and brought them to her on a covered dish.

When the speaker was young, some men spoke of a legendary peasant girl, who was the most beautiful in the area. One drunk man talked of her often, and in the middle of a drinking session got up to seek her out. He mistook the moon for her lovely face, and drowned in a lake. The man who told the speaker these songs was blind, like Homer.

The girl may well be mistaken for the sun or moon, because, says the speaker, she has betrayed all living men. The speaker himself created Hanrahan twenty years ago. The character was destined to stumble through villages, lamed. When it was the speaker's turn at cards, he shuffled the pack into a pack of hounds, which then turned into a hare. Hanrahan followed these creatures—The speaker interrupts his own story, crying "enough!" He must remember a man so distraught that neither love nor music nor clipped ears could make him feel better. This man is a ruined master of the house. Before the house went to ruin, servants dressed for war came to the house. The speaker questioned them all, wondering whether they raged against age as he now does. They give no satisfactory answer. The speaker is happy to be left with Hanrahan. He calls up Hanrahan, from the knowledgeable dead, to tell him whether one thinks more often of a woman won or lost. A woman, once lost, is an irretrievable mistake.

The speaker draws up his will, leaving men who fish tirelessly his pride. His pride is not political, or tied up with slaves or tyrants, but that of Grattan and Burke. His pride is as refreshing as an unexpected shower, as poignant as a swansong. He mocks Plato and Plotinus. He is prepared to die with a combination of ancient poetry and of the love of women, both of which make man a superhuman. He leaves his faith and pride to these young fishermen. He will now prepare his body and his mind for death, or, worse, the death of those whom he has loved.

Analysis

In one of the most complicated poems of his career, Yeats tries to come t· terms with his age and with the changes his country is undergoing. "The Tower" is presented in a fragmented style, a proto-modernist device that shows Yeats' move away from romantic Irish mythology toward a sparser approach. This change was partially affected by his friendship with Ezra Pound, who encouraged Yeats to seek out alternatives to the flowery language that characterized his earlier collections.

The ideal of manhood and youth is introduced in the first stanza through the representation of the speaker: a young man. This image is pastoral, with the young man fishing in the fertile streams of Ireland. The iconic mountain of Ben Bulben tells the reader that this is western Ireland, where Yeats used to vacation during summers away from London. The speaker's turn to Plato and reason seems forced. Put together with the narrative element of cutting off the farmer's ears, the implication is that the speaker's decision is unnatural and made in a top-down fashion. The poet can impose rules on himself, just as the rich can on the poor.

The lovely peasant girl, whom the speaker also refers to as Helen (as in Helen of Troy), is undoubtedly Maude Gonne. Gonne, a revolutionary who was the great love of Yeats' life, did not return his love. She appears often in Yeats' poetry, often symbolized by or associated with a moon: something lovely, feminine,

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The lovely peasant girl, whom the speaker also refers to as Helen (as in Helen of Troy), is undoubtedly Maude Gonne. Gonne, a revolutionary who was the great love of Yeats' life, did not return his love. She appears often in Yeats' poetry, often symbolized by or associated with a moon: something lovely, feminine,

untouchable, and capable of causing madness. The peasant who drowns in pursuit of her is proof of her power.

The speaker breaks away from the narrative of the girl to present a new character who meets a similarly grim fate. This is yet another modernist device. The speaker breaks down the illusion that the poem is or could be truthful, and displays his ability to create characters at will. Hanrahan is an intertextual character, appearing in other Yeats works. He is an Irish peasant everyman, suffering the afflictions of lameness (whether physical or moral) and alcoholism that were rampant in early 20th-century Ireland. Hanrahan shows a flash of glory, however, in the transfiguration of cards into a pack of hounds. This is an allusion to Cuchulain's (a famous hero of Irish mythology) hounds, which were part of his army. These are quickly turned into a hare, an object of English-style hunting, so the peasant's empowerment is all too brief.

The hare symbol transitions into a description of a great house. In Ireland, a large ruined or empty house always refers to the Protestant Ascendancy: English families that lived in Ireland and formed a ruling elite. Most of these manors were destroyed by the IRA during the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921. In "The Tower," ghosts of warlike men haunt the house, and it is these ghosts, as well as other people who were old in the speaker's childhood, that he queries about age. They do not wish to answer, so he dismisses their memory, saying he needs only Hanrahan to answer. The poem finishes with the question of Maude Gonne again. Even a reader who does not know the biographical details can read in the title of the poem that Yeats is in mourning over a lost woman. The phallic image is as lonely as can be.

Unit I Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 1"Byzantium"

"Byzantium"-Text

The unpurged images of day recede;

The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;

Night resonance recedes. night-walkers' song

After great cathedral gong;

A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains

All that man is,

All mere complexities,

The fury and the mire of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,

Shade more than man, more image than a shade;

For Hades' bobbin bound in mummy-cloth

May unwind the winding path;

A mouth that has no moisture and no breath

Breathless mouths may summon;

I hail the superhuman;

I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,

More miracle than bird or handiwork,

Planted on the starlit golden bough,

Can like the cocks of Hades crow,

Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud

In glory of changeless metal

Common bird or petal

And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit

Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,

Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,

Where blood-begotten spirits come

And all complexities of fury leave,

Dying into a dance,

An agony of trance,

An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,

Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,

The golden smithies of the Emperor!

Marbles of the dancing floor

Break bitter furies of complexity,

Those images that yet

Fresh images beget,

That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

Source: The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (1989)

Summary

At night in the city of Byzantium, "The unpurged images of day recede." The drunken soldiers of the Emperor are asleep, and the song of night-walkers fades after the great cathedral gong. The "starlit" or "moonlit dome," the speaker says, disdains all that is human—"All mere complexities, / The fury and the mire of human veins." The speaker says that before him floats an image—a man or a shade, but more a shade than a man, and still more simply "an image." The speaker hails this "superhuman" image, calling it "death-in-life and life-in-death." A golden bird sits on a golden tree, which the speaker says is a "miracle"; it sings aloud, and scorns the "common bird or petal / And all complexities of mire or blood."

At midnight, the speaker says, the images of flames flit across the Emperor's pavement, though they are not fed by wood or steel, nor disturbed by storms. Here, "blood-begotten spirits come," and die "into a dance, / An agony of trance, / An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve," leaving behind all the complexities and furies of life. Riding the backs of dolphins, spirit after spirit arrives, the flood broken on "the golden smithies of the Emperor." The marbles of the dancing floor break the "bitter furies of complexity," the storms of images that beget more images, "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea."

Form

The pronounced differences in "Byzantium" 's line lengths make its stanzas appear very haphazard; however, they are actually quite regular: each stanza constitutes eight lines, and each rhymes AABBCDDC. Metrically, each is quite complicated: the lines are loosely iambic, with the first, second, third, fifth, and

eighth lines in pentameter, the fourth line in tetrameter, and the sixth and seventh line in trimeter, so that the pattern of line-stresses in each stanza is 55545335.

Commentary

We have read Yeats's account of "Sailing to Byzantium"; now he has arrived at the city itself, and is able to describe it. In "Sailing to Byzantium" the speaker stated his desire to be "out of nature" and to assume the form of a golden bird; in "Byzantium," the bird appears, and scores of dead spirits arrive on the backs of dolphins, to be forged into "the artifice of eternity"—ghostlike images with no physical presence ("a flame that cannot singe a sleeve"). The narrative and imagistic arrangement of this poem is highly ambiguous and complicated; it is unclear whether Yeats intends the poem to be a register of symbols or an actual mythological statement. (In classical mythology, dolphins often carry the dead to their final resting-place.)

In any event, we see here the same preference for the artificial above the actual that appeared in "Sailing to Byzantium"; only now the speaker has encountered actual creatures that exist "in the artifice of eternity"—most notably the golden bird of stanza three. But the preference is now tinged with ambiguity: the bird looks down upon "common bird or petal," but it does so not out of existential necessity, but rather because it has been coerced into doing so, as it were—"by the moon embittered." The speaker's demonstrated preoccupation with "fresh images" has led some critics to conclude that the poem is really an allegory of the process by which fantasies are rendered into art, images arriving from the "dolphin-torn, the gong-tormented sea," then being made into permanent artifacts by "the golden smithies of the Emperor." It is impossible to say whether this is all or part of Yeats's intention, and it is difficult to see how the prevalent symbols of the afterlife connect thematically to the topic of images (how could images be dead?). For all its difficulty and almost unfixed quality of meaning—the poem is

difficult to place even within the context of A Vision—the intriguing imagery and sensual language of the poem are tokens of its power; simply as the evocation of a fascinating imaginary scene, "Byzantium" is unmatched in all of Yeats.

Passage:

1. Just for a moment, I want to point out a sexual crosscurrent that may or may not be present in Yeats's choice of imagery. While Yeats liked women, liked sex and liked sensuality, one might be forgiven for also pointing out that, like many men, Yeats may also have been conflicted. Use of words like blood, mire and complexity all suggest the female body, sex, and reproduction. It's certainly not a stretch to suggest that a woman's reproductive organs could be construed as "a mire" — a damp and heated swamp Sex, menstruation, child-birth, all involve bodily fluids (and a variety of complexities) that might have alternately attracted and repelled Yeats. I wouldn't call it misogyny, just "issues" (if you know what I mean). In that respect, it wouldn't be a coincidence that Yeats uses the word "beget". He is, after all, referring to physical life when he refers to "Those images", and the necessity that it procreate/beget new life (fresh images) in the mire—the womans' body—of her blood, fury and complexity. If this surmise is true, then it makes perfect sense that he would write (in an unpublished sketch): "now I will take off my body". In other words, Yeats wants sex without the blood, mire and messiness of sex. Perhaps *Byzantium* reveals Yeats' conflicted attraction and repulsion to sex and women (if subliminally), and not just his spiritual aspirations. It's not that he wants to escape the pleasure of sexuality, it's the blood and messiness that repels him. He wants an idealized world of sensuality that is "clean" and changeless.
2. The guide, presumably, has taken Yeats to see the miracle bird — the "artificial bird [that sings] upon a tree of gold in the presence of the emperor". Many critics assume that the guide is meant to take "Yeats" to the afterlife. Not so, in my opinion. Why would such a guide be merry (or be a Mummy)? I think it more likely that the guide is pleased because he has been summoned

to take the poem's narrator to something of profound beauty and elegance. Interpreting the poem this way clears up another conundrum that has troubled readers since the poem's publication: Why does the narrator need two guides — the mummy *and* a miracle bird? The answer is that the conundrum arises from misinterpretation — neither the guide nor the bird are meant to guide the narrator into the afterlife.

The third stanza, in the middle and heart of the poem, brings us back to the comment that apparently prompted Yeats to write *Byzantium:* "*...a goldsmith's bird is as much nature as a man's body, especially if it only sings like Homer and Shakespeare of what is past or to come to Lords and Ladies.*"

The first thing Yeats tries to clarify is that the bird isn't just a "goldsmith's bird", but a miracle — a bird imbued with not just mechanical wonder but something akin to life and intelligence.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. "The Irish Airman foresees his Death" is a good example of the way in which Yeats combines the political with the personal and the mystical. How does the airman's involvement in World War I relate to his "lonely impulse of delight," and what does the "lonely impulse of delight" say about his understanding of the war? What does the poem itself seem to say about the war?
2. Yeats's style is quite unique among both nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets. What characterizes his poetic style? What kind of consciousness seems to be indicated by his rough meters, half-rhymes, and frequent violations of formal constraints? How do these traits affect, enhance, or interfere with his aesthetic articulation of his themes?
3. What is occurring in Byzantium, now that the speaker has arrived there, as he said he wanted to in "Sailing to Byzantium"?
4. How does the poem explore the distance between ordinary human affairs and the world of art and artistic production?
5. So if he never visited the city, where did Yeats get his inspiration to write about Byzantium?
6. One of the important themes in Yeats's writing is his exploration of the relationship between the natural and the artificial, and particularly the relationship between nature and art. With particular reference to the two Byzantium poems, describe how Yeats characterizes this relationship. Does he prefer the natural to art, or art to nature?
7. Some of Yeats's least accessible poems are his works of visionary history, which often incorporate themes from A Vision and seem, on the surface, thematically irrelevant to contemporary readers. How can these poems best be understood—in other words, should they be read today strictly for their magnificent language, or is there a way in which they embrace more universal elements of human experience than their occult, mythological frame of reference might imply? (Think especially about "Leda and the Swan" and "The Second Coming.")
8. If you have read John Keats's great "Ode to a Nightingale," compare it to Yeats's equally great "Sailing to Byzantium." In what ways does the Yeats

poem seem designed to refute the Keats poem? How does the singing golden bird differ from Keats's singing nightingale?

9. "Adam's Curse" is one of Yeats's finest early poems, and one of his simplest and most moving love poems. How does the style of the poem mirror its explicit statement about beauty? How does it connect the labor of living with weariness in life and in love?
10. Compare and contrast "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," a very early poem by Yeats, with "The Circus Animals' Desertion," written not long before he died. What, if anything, do these poems have in common? How are they different? What does each poem say about the human heart, and how does the difference between those statements indicate Yeats's development as a poet?

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. Which poem of Yeats provided the title for a book by Chinua Achebe?

- Sailing to Byzantium
- Easter 1916
- The Second Coming
- Leda and the Swan

2. Complete the line from 'Easter 1916': All changed, changed utterly, a

3. Which 2001 movie featured prominently a line from Yeats' Poem 'Stolen Child'?

- Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within
- Lord of the Rings
- A.I.
- A Beautiful Mind

4. Yeat's tombstone contains the concluding lines of which of his poems?

5. One of Yeats' later poems, 'Gather Around Me, Parnellites' dealt with the memory of Charles Stuart Parnell. Who was Parnell?

- A Leader of the Easter Rebellion
- A contemporary poet of the time.
- Yeats' Father in Law
- A 19th century political revolutionary

6. Which bird completes the titles of 'Leda and the _____' and 'The Wild _____ at Coole'?

7. Which of these is not a dated title of a Yeats poem?

- Coole Park, 1929
- Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen
- September 1913
- November 1918: Reflections

8. Which Irish folk hero and Red Branch leader's 'Fight With the Sea' was the subject of an early Yeats' poem?

- Cuchulain
- Finian
- Finn Maccool
- Countess Cathleen

9. Complete the opening line of 'Sailing to Byzantium': 'That is no country for _____'

10. In a poem by Yeats, he catches a fish which turns into a beautiful woman who promptly runs away from him.

- Aengus
- Finn Maccool
- Cuchulain
- Fenian

Unit I Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 2"Sailing to Byzantium"

"Sailing to Byzantium-Text

I

That is no country for old men. The young

In one another's arms, birds in the trees,

—Those dying generations—at their song,

The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,

Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long

Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.

Caught in that sensual music all neglect

Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,

A tattered coat upon a stick, unless

Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing

For every tatter in its mortal dress,

Nor is there singing school but studying

Monuments of its own magnificence;

And therefore I have sailed the seas and come

To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire

As in the gold mosaic of a wall,

Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,

And be the singing-masters of my soul.

Consume my heart away; sick with desire

And fastened to a dying animal

It knows not what it is; and gather me

Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take

My bodily form from any natural thing,

But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make

Of hammered gold and gold enamelling

To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;

Or set upon a golden bough to sing

To lords and ladies of Byzantium

Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Source: The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (1989

Summary

The speaker, referring to the country that he has left, says that it is "no country for old men": it is full of youth and life, with the young lying in one another's arms, birds singing in the trees, and fish swimming in the waters. There, "all summer long" the world rings with the "sensual music" that makes the young neglect the old, whom the speaker describes as "Monuments of unageing intellect."

An old man, the speaker says, is a "paltry thing," merely a tattered coat upon a stick, unless his soul can clap its hands and sing; and the only way for the soul to learn how to sing is to study "monuments of its own magnificence." Therefore, the speaker has "sailed the seas and come / To the holy city of Byzantium." The speaker addresses the sages "standing in God's holy fire / As in the gold mosaic

of a wall," and asks them to be his soul's "singing-masters." He hopes they will consume his heart away, for his heart "knows not what it is"—it is "sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal," and the speaker wishes to be gathered "Into the artifice of eternity."

The speaker says that once he has been taken out of the natural world, he will no longer take his "bodily form" from any "natural thing," but rather will fashion himself as a singing bird made of hammered gold, such as Grecian goldsmiths make "To keep a drowsy Emperor awake," or set upon a tree of gold "to sing / To lords and ladies of Byzantium / Or what is past, or passing, or to come."

Form

The four eight-line stanzas of "Sailing to Byzantium" take a very old verse form: they are metered in iambic pentameter, and rhymed ABABABCC, two trios of alternating rhyme followed by a couplet.

Commentary

"Sailing to Byzantium" is one of Yeats's most inspired works, and one of the greatest poems of the twentieth century. Written in 1926 and included in Yeats's greatest single collection, 1928's The Tower, "Sailing to Byzantium" is Yeats's definitive statement about the agony of old age and the imaginative and spiritual work required to remain a vital individual even when the heart is "fastened to a dying animal" (the body). Yeats's solution is to leave the country of the young and travel to Byzantium, where the sages in the city's famous gold mosaics (completed mainly during the sixth and seventh centuries) could become the "singing-masters" of his soul. He hopes the sages will appear in fire and take him away from his body into an existence outside time, where, like a great work of art, he could exist in "the artifice of eternity." In the astonishing final stanza of the poem, he declares that once he is out of his body he will never again appear in the

form of a natural thing; rather, he will become a golden bird, sitting on a golden tree, singing of the past ("what is past"), the present (that which is "passing"), and the future (that which is "to come").

A fascination with the artificial as superior to the natural is one of Yeats's most prevalent themes. In a much earlier poem, 1899's "The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart," the speaker expresses a longing to re-make the world "in a casket of gold" and thereby eliminate its ugliness and imperfection. Later, in 1914's "The Dolls," the speaker writes of a group of dolls on a shelf, disgusted by the sight of a human baby. In each case, the artificial (the golden casket, the beautiful doll, the golden bird) is seen as perfect and unchanging, while the natural (the world, the human baby, the speaker's body) is prone to ugliness and decay. What is more, the speaker sees deep spiritual truth (rather than simply aesthetic escape) in his assumption of artificiality; he wishes his soul to learn to sing, and transforming into a golden bird is the way to make it capable of doing so.

"Sailing to Byzantium" is an endlessly interpretable poem, and suggests endlessly fascinating comparisons with other important poems—poems of travel, poems of age, poems of nature, poems featuring birds as symbols. (One of the most interesting is surely Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," to which this poem is in many ways a rebuttal: Keats writes of his nightingale, "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! / No hungry generations tread thee down"; Yeats, in the first stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium," refers to "birds in the trees" as "those dying generations.") It is important to note that the poem is not autobiographical: Yeats did not travel to Byzantium (which was renamed Constantinople in the fourth century A.D., and later renamed Istanbul), but he did argue that, in the sixth century, it offered the ideal environment for the artist. The poem is about an imaginative journey, not an actual one.

Passage:

1. "Sailing to Byzantium" is one of Yeats's most inspired works, and one of the greatest poems of the twentieth century. Written in 1926 and included in Yeats's greatest single collection, 1928's *The Tower*, "Sailing to Byzantium" is Yeats's definitive statement about the agony of old age and the imaginative and spiritual work required to remain a vital individual even when the heart is "fastened to a dying animal" (the body). Yeats's solution is to leave the country of the young and travel to Byzantium, where the sages in the city's famous gold mosaics (completed mainly during the sixth and seventh centuries) could become the "singing-masters" of his soul. He hopes the sages will appear in fire and take him away from his body into an existence outside time, where, like a great work of art, he could exist in "the artifice of eternity." In the astonishing final stanza of the poem, he declares that once he is out of his body he will never again appear in the form of a natural thing; rather, he will become a golden bird, sitting on a golden tree, singing of the past ("what is past"), the present (that which is "passing"), and the future (that which is "to come").

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Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Does Byzantium sound like a place where you'd want to spend any time?
2. Is Byzantium an actual place in the poem, or is it a mental state? What reasons do you have for your opinion?
3. What does our speaker think of nature? Is it a good thing? A bad and scary thing? Why?
4. What's so great about art, anyway? What function does it serve for the speaker of the poem?
5. What is the thesis of the poem "Sailing to Byzantium" by William Butler Yeats?
6. How are nature, and by association the natural world, depicted in Yeats's poem "Sailing to Byzantium"
7. Describe the criticism of modern life in the first stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium".
8. "The artifice of eternity" in sailing to Byzantium,what does the word "artifice" mean?
9. How did the author use the diction and literary devices in the poem "Sailing to Byzantium"?
10. In "Sailing to Byzantium," how are themes of mortality and immortality developed?

Multiple Choice Questions:

Question 1: Through the use of various poetic techniques, Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" describes the metaphorical journey of a man pursuing his own vision of _____ as well as his conception of paradise.

Kalachakra Prophecy Time Immortality

Question 2: _____'s novel *The Dying Animal* also takes its title from the poem.

Philip Roth The Plot Against America Philip Roth bibliography The Human Stain

Question 3: **"Sailing to Byzantium"** is a poem by _____, first published in the 1928 collection *The Tower*.

Thomas Westropp Bennett James Campbell, 1st Baron Glenavy Andrew Jameson (politician) William Butler Yeats

Question 4: But for Yeats, who has a taste for the _____, obscurity has a charm all its own.

Religion New Age Esotericism Mysticism

Question 5: Musician _____ uses "Sailing to Byzantium" as a track title on *Immortal Memory* (2004), while Juilliard-trained composer Michael Brown has set Yeats's work to music.

Brendan Perry The Serpent's Egg Dead Can Dance Lisa Gerrard

Question 6: It depicts a portion of an old man's journey to _____.

Byzantine navy Hagia Sophia Byzantine Empire Constantinople

Question 7: The poem figures prominently in the _____ novel *Plowing the Dark*, see esp.

The Echo Maker Richard Powers United States Illinois

Question 8: _____'s novella, *Sailing To Byzantium*, uses Yeats's title and builds upon its themes.

(Science fiction (Frederik Pohl (Robert Silverberg (Isaac Asimov

Unit I Section (b)

W.B Yeats

Poem 1 The Second coming

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Summary

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening "gyre" (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold"; anarchy is loosed upon the world; "The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned." The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst "are full of passionate intensity."Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; "Surely the Second Coming is at hand." No sooner does he think of "the Second Coming," then he is troubled by "a vast image of the Spiritus Mundi, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx ("A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun") is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker's sight, but he knows that the sphinx's twenty centuries of "stony sleep" have been made a nightmare by the motions of "a rocking cradle." And what "rough beast," he wonders, "its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Form

"The Second Coming" is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as "man" and "sun."

Commentary

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, "The Second Coming" is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a "rough beast," the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book A Vision. This theory issued in part from Yeats's lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in A Vision centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice

versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals "gyres") captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual's development).

"The Second Coming" was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats's poems, Richard J. Finneran quotes Yeats's own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take its character from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world's trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, democracy, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre—which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the science and democracy of the outer gyre. The "rough beast" slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age; the speaker's vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

This seems quite silly as philosophy or prophecy (particularly in light of the fact that it has not come true as yet). But as poetry, and understood more broadly than as a simple reiteration of the mystic theory of A Vision, "The Second Coming" is a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history, and about the

conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The poem may not have the thematic relevance of Yeats's best work, and may not be a poem with which many people can personally identify; but the aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats's work as a whole.

Unit II

John Osborne

Look Back in Anger

John Osborne

Look Back in Anger

Look Back in Anger Study Guide

Look Back in Anger is considered one of the most important plays in the modern British theater. It was the first well-known example of "Kitchen Sink drama," a style of theater that explored the emotion and drama beneath the surface of ordinary domestic life. Jimmy Porter, the play's main character, became the model for the "Angry Young Man," a nickname given to an entire generation of artists and working class young men in post-World War II British society.

Osborne wrote the play in only a few weeks in May of 1955. The play was first rejected by many of the agents and theater companies that Osborne approached about producing it. George Divine, the creative producer for the struggling Royal Court Theater, decided to gamble on the play and staged its first production. The play opened on May 8, 1956. It received mixed reviews from English theater critics. yet it won a rave review from the Times. This established the play's notoriety and helped it eventually build an audience.

The two iconic motifs of the play are the aforementioned concepts of the Angry Young Man and the Kitchen Sink drama. The Angry Young Man motif came to be associated with a group of young writers and artists -- John Osborne and Kingsley Amis being foremost amongst them -- that the cultural public believed

to personify an anger, boredom, and frustration with British cultural life that many working class families felt during this time.

The idea of the Kitchen Sink drama was also a revelation for British theater. The stylings of most British theater before Look Back in Anger favored Victorian dramas and comedies or stagings of classical plays. In a general sense, the Victorian plays dealt mostly with polite themes from the late 19th and early 20th century upper ruling class. In contrast, Osborne's play depicted the raw emotions and living conditions of the working class. This style of theater was given the name "Kitchen Sink" because of its focus on the interior domestic and emotional lives of ordinary people. In the case of Look Back in Anger, the kitchen is literally a part of the set.

The cultural backdrop to the play is the rise and fall of the British empire. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the peak of power and influence of British colonialism. By the 1950's, two World Wars, which devastated the British economy, and the rise of the United States as the new world military and political power meant that the British empire had entered a steep decline. Jimmy Porter is representative of an entire culture that remained nostalgic for this past glory. He idealizes the worthy causes of the past even while he mocks those who cannot understand why the times have changed as much as they have.

Look Back in Anger is a play that appeared in a time of crucial transition from Britain's Victorian past into the modern twentieth century. Jimmy's rage and anger is his expression of pent-up emotion and his need for life in a world that has become listless and uninteresting. That anger became a symbol of the rebellion against the political and social malaise of British culture. His anger is destructive to those around him and the psychological violence of the play received a great deal of criticism. Critics today agree, however, that the play is central to an understanding of British life in the twentieth century and, thus, a crucial piece of literature in the British canon.

Look Back in Anger Summary

Look Back in Anger begins in the attic flat apartment of Jimmy Porter and Alison Porter. The setting is mid-1950's small town England. Jimmy and Alison share

their apartment with Cliff Lewis, a young working class man who is best friends with Jimmy. Cliff and Jimmy both come from a working class background, though Jimmy has had more education than Cliff. They are in business together running a sweet-stall. Alison comes from a more prominent family and it is clear from the beginning that Jimmy resents this fact.

The first act opens on a Sunday in April. Jimmy and Cliff are reading the Sunday papers while Alison is ironing in a corner of the room. Jimmy is a hot tempered young man and he begins to try and provoke both Cliff and Alison. He is antagonistic towards Cliff's working class background and makes fun of him for his low intelligence. Cliff is good natured and takes the antagonism. Jimmy attempts to provoke his wife, Alison, by making fun of her family and her well-heeled life before she married him. Jimmy also seems to display a nostalgia for England's powerful past. He notes that the world has entered a "dreary" American age, a fact he begrudgingly accepts. Alison tires of Jimmy's rants and begs for peace. This makes Jimmy more fevered in his insults. Cliff attempts to keep peace between the two and this leads to a playful scuffle between the two. Their wrestling ends up running into Alison, causing her to fall down. Jimmy is sorry for the incident, but Alison makes him leave the room.

After Jimmy leaves, Alison confides to Cliff that she is pregnant with Jimmy's child, though she has not yet told Jimmy. Cliff advises her to tell him, but when Cliff goes out and Jimmy re-enters the room, the two instead fall into an intimate game. Jimmy impersonates a stuffed bear and Alison impersonates a toy squirrel. Cliff returns to tell Alison that her old friend, Helena Charles, has called her on the phone. Alison leaves to take the call and returns with the news that Helena is coming to stay for a visit. Jimmy does not like Helena and goes into a rage in which he wishes that Alison would suffer in order to know what it means to be a real person. He curses her and wishes that she could have a child only to watch it die.

Two weeks later, Helena has arrived and Alison discusses her relationship with Jimmy. She tells of how they met and how, in their younger days, they used to crash parties with their friend Hugh Tanner. Jimmy maintains an affection for Hugh's mother, though his relationship with Hugh was strained when Hugh left to travel the world and Jimmy stayed to be with Alison. Jimmy seems to regret that he could not leave, but he is also angry at Hugh for abandoning his mother. Helena inquires about Alison's affectionate relationship with Cliff and Alison tells her that they are strictly friends.

Cliff and Jimmy return to the flat and Helena tells them that she and Alison are leaving for church. Jimmy goes into an anti-religious rant and ends up insulting Alison's family once again. Helena becomes angry and Jimmy dares her to slap him on the face, warning her that he will slap her back. He tells her of how he watched his father die as a young man. His father had been injured fighting in the Spanish Civil War and had returned to England only to die shortly after. Alison and Helena begin to leave for church and Jimmy feels betrayed by his wife.

A phone call comes in for Jimmy and he leaves the room. Helena tells Alison that she has called Alison's father to come get her and take her away from this abusive home. Alison relents and says that she will go when her father picks her up the next day. When Jimmy returns, he tells Alison that Mrs. Tanner, Hugh's mother, has become sick and is going to die. Jimmy decides to visit her and he demands that Alison make a choice of whether to go with Helena or with him. Alison picks up her things and leaves for church and Jimmy collapses on the bed, heartbroken by his wife's decision.

The next evening Alison is packing and talking with her father, Colonel Redfern. The Colonel is a soft spoken man who realizes that he does not quite understand the love that exists between Jimmy and Alison. He admits that the actions of him and his [illegible] blame for their split. The Colonel was an officer in the British [illegible] served in India and he is nostalgic for his time there. He considers his service to be some of the best years of his life. Alison observes that her father is hurt because the present is not the past and that Jimmy is hurt because he feels the present is only the past. Alison begins to pack her toy squirrel, but then she decides not to do so.

Helena and Cliff soon enter the scene. Alison leaves a letter for Jimmy explaining why she has left and she gives it to Cliff. After Alison leaves, Cliff becomes angry and gives the letter to Helena, blaming her for the situation. Jimmy returns, bewildered that he was almost hit by Colonel Redfern's car and that Cliff pretended not to see him when he was walking by on the street. He reads Alison's letter and becomes very angry. Helena tells him that Alison is pregnant, but Jimmy tells her that he does not care. He insults Helena and she slaps him, then passionately kisses him.

Several months pass and the third act opens with Jimmy and Cliff once again reading the Sunday papers while Helena stands in the corner ironing. Jimmy and Cliff still engage in their angry banter and Helena's religious tendencies have

taken the brunt of Jimmy's punishment. Jimmy and Cliff perform scenes from music-hall and comedy shows but when Helena leaves. Cliff notes that things do not feel the same with her here. Cliff then tells Jimmy that he wants to move out of the apartment. Jimmy takes the news calmly and tells him that he has been a loyal friend and is worth more than any woman. When Helena returns, the three plan to go out. Alison suddenly enters.

Alison and Helena talk while Jimmy leaves the room. He begins to loudly play his trumpet. Alison has lost her baby and looks sick. Helena tells Alison that she should be angry with her for what she has done. but Alison is only grieved by the loss of her baby. Helena is driven to distraction by Jimmy's trumpet playing and demands that he come into the room. When he comes back in, he laments the fact that Alison has lost the baby but shrugs it off. Helena then tells Jimmy and Alison that her sense of morality -- right and wrong -- has not diminished and that she knows she must leave. Alison attempts to persuade her to stay, telling her that Jimmy will be alone if she leaves.

When Helena leaves. Jimmy attempts to once again become angry but Alison tells him that she has now gone through the emotional and physical suffering that he has always wanted her to feel. He realizes that she has suffered greatly, has become like him, and becomes softer and more tender towards her. The play ends with Jimmy and Alison embracing, once again playing their game of bear and squirrel.

Look Back in Anger Character List

Jimmy Porter

Jimmy Porter is the play's main character. He is the "Angry Young Man" who expresses his frustration for the lack of feelings in his placid domestic life. Jimmy can be understood as both a hero for his unfiltered expressions of emotion and frustration in a culture that propagated unemotional resignation. He can also be considered a villain for the ways in which his anger proves to be destructive to those in his life.

Cliff Lewis

Cliff is a friend to both Jimmy and Alison. Cliff lives with them in their attic apartment. He is a working class Welsh man and Jimmy makes sure to often point

out that he is "common" and uneducated. Cliff believes this is the reason that Jimmy keeps him as a friend. He is quite fond of Alison and they have a strange physically affectionate relationship throughout the play.

Alison Porter

Alison Porter is Jimmy's wife. She comes from Britain's upper class, but married into Jimmy's working class lifestyle. The audience learns in the first act that she is pregnant with Jimmy's child. Jimmy's destructive anger causes her great strain and she eventually leaves him. Her child miscarries and she comes back to Jimmy to show him that she has undergone great suffering.

Helena Charles

Helena Charles is Alison's best friend. She lives with them in their apartment while visiting for work. Helena is from an upper class family. She is responsible for getting Alison to leave Jimmy. She and Jimmy then begin an affair. Her sense of morality leads her to leave. She can be considered the play's moral compass.

Colonel Redfern

Colonel Redfern is Alison's father. He represents Britain's great Edwardian past. He was a military leader in India for many years before returning with his family to England. He is critical of Jimmy and Alison's relationship, but accepts that he is to blame for many of their problems because of his meddling in their affairs.

Look Back in Anger Glossary

Anglican

The Anglican Church is the largest Protestant denomination in Britain.

Angry Young Man

An Angry Young Man was a term given to a group of mid-twentieth century British writers who exhibited anger and frustration with modern British culture. Jimmy Porter is the model Angry Young Man.

chivalry

Chivalry is the medieval term related to the institution of knighthood. It is often related to virtues such as bravery and self-sacrifice.

Cockerel

A cockerel is a young rooster.

Dark Ages

The "Dark Ages" is a term for medieval European society.

Edwardian Age

The Edwardian Age corresponds to the height of the British empire and colonial expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century.

flat

A flat is a British term for a small apartment.

genuflect

A term to denote one that bends or bows at the knees.

H-bom

H-bomb is a short hand term for hydrogen bomb.

half crown

A half crown is a denomination of British currency.

indiarubber

This term alludes to one of Britain's most important exports from their Indian colonies - rubber.

Liberal

A Liberal is a member of the Liberal British political party. This party is in opposition to the more conservative Tory party.

misogynist

A misogynist is a person who shows a hatred towards women. Jimmy Porter's character has been criticized for his misogynistic attitudes.

Parliament

Parliament is the democratic governing body of the United Kingdom.

Port Said

Port Said is an Egyptian shipping port on the Suez Canal. The Canal was an integral British shipping territory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

posh

Posh is a British term for "trendy," or "popular."

pusillanimous

Pusillanimous is a negative connotation for a mean spirited or cowardly person.

Sweet Stall

A sweet stall is a small shop that sells candy and other confections.

sycophantic

To be sycophantic is to be a servile self-seeker who attempts to gain advantage by flattering important people.

Victorian

The Victorian Age was a period in British history in the late nineteenth century of great British expansion and cultural influence.

Welsh

A Welsh person is a person from the country of Wales. It often denotes a working class background.

Look Back in Anger Themes

The Angry Young Man

Osborne's play was the first to explore the theme of the "Angry Young Man." This term describes a generation of post-World War II artists and working class men who generally ascribed to leftist, sometimes anarchist, politics and social views. According to cultural critics, these young men were not a part of any organized movement but were, instead, individuals angry at a post-Victorian Britain that refused to acknowledge their social and class alienation.

Jimmy Porter is often considered to be literature's seminal example of the angry young man. Jimmy is angry at the social and political structures that he believes has kept him from achieving his dreams and aspirations. He directs this anger towards his friends and, most notably, his wife Alison.

The Kitchen Sink Drama

Kitchen Sink drama is a term used to denote plays that rely on realism to explore domestic social relations. Realism, in British theater, was first experimented with in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by such playwrights as George Bernard Shaw. This genre attempted to capture the lives of the British upper class in a way that realistically reflected the ordinary drama of ruling class British society.

According to many critics, by the mid-twentieth century the genre of realism had become tired and unimaginative. Osborne's play returned imagination to the Realist genre by capturing the anger and immediacy of post-war youth culture and the alienation that resulted in the British working classes. Look Back in Anger was able to comment on a range of domestic social dilemmas in this time period. Most importantly, it was able to capture, through the character of Jimmy Porter,

the anger of this generation that festered just below the surface of elite British culture.

Loss of Childhood

A theme that impacts the characters of Jimmy and Alison Porter is the idea of a lost childhood. Osborne uses specific examples -- the death of Jimmy's father when Jimmy was only ten, and how he was forced to watch the physical and mental demise of the man -- to demonstrate the way in which Jimmy is forced to deal with suffering from an early age. Alison's loss of childhood is best seen in the way that she was forced to grow up too fast by marrying Jimmy. Her youth is wasted in the anger and abuse that her husband levels upon her.

Osborne suggests that a generation of British youth has experienced this same loss of childhood innocence. Osborne uses the examples of World War, the development of the atomic bomb, and the decline of the British Empire to show how an entire culture has lost the innocence that other generations were able to maintain.

Real Life

In the play, Jimmy Porter is consumed with the desire to live a more real and full life. He compares this burning desire to the empty actions and attitudes of others. At first, he generalizes this emptiness by criticizing the lax writing and opinions of those in the newspapers. He then turns his angry gaze to those around him and close to him, Alison, Helena, and Cliff.

Osborne's argument in the play for a real life is one in which men are allowed to feel a full range of emotions. The most real of these emotions is anger and Jimmy believes that this anger is his way of truly living. This idea was unique in British theater during the play's original run. Osborne argued in essays and criticisms that, until his play, British theater had subsumed the emotions of characters rendering them less realistic. Jimmy's desire for a real life is an attempt to restore raw emotion to the theater.

Sloth in British Culture

Jimmy Porter compares his quest for a more vibrant and emotional life to the slothfulness of the world around him. It is important to note that Jimmy does not

see the world around him as dead, but merely asleep in some fundamental way. This is a fine line that Osborne walks throughout the play. Jimmy never argues that there is a nihilism within British culture. Instead, he sees a kind of slothfulness of character. His anger is an attempt to awaken those around him from this cultural sleep.

This slothfulness of emotion is best seen in the relationship between Alison and Cliff. Alison describes her relationship with Cliff as "comfortable." They are physically and emotionally affectionate with each other, but neither seems to want to take their passion to another level of intimacy. In this way, their relationship is lazy. They cannot awaken enough passion to consummate their affair. Jimmy seems to subconsciously understand this, which is the reason he is not jealous of their affection towards one another.

The Rise and Fall of the British Empire

The character of Colonel Redfern, Alison's father, represents the decline of and nostalgia for the British Empire. The Colonel had been stationed for many years in India, a symbol of Britain's imperial reach into the world. The Edwardian age which corresponded to Britain's height of power, had been the happiest of his life. His nostalgia is representative of the denial that Osborne sees in the psyche of the British people. The world has moved on into an American age, he argues, and the people of the nation cannot understand why they are no longer the world's greatest power.

Masculinity in Art

Osborne has been accused by critics of misogynistic views in his plays. Many point to Look Back in Anger as the chief example. These critics accuse Osborne of glorifying young male anger and cruelty towards women and homosexuals. This is seen in the play in specific examples in which Jimmy Porter emotionally distresses Alison, his wife, and delivers a grisly monologue in which he wishes for Alison's mother's death.

Osborne, however, asserts that he is attempting to restore a vision of true masculinity into a twentieth century culture that he sees as becoming increasingly feminized. This feminization is seen in the way that British culture shows an "indifference to anything but immediate, personal suffering." This causes a

deadness within which Jimmy's visceral anger and masculine emotion is a retaliation against.

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Look Back in Anger Quotes and Analysis

"People like me don't get fat. I've tried to tell you before. We just burn everything up."

—Look Back in Anger, 12.

This quote, spoken by Jimmy, is a glimpse into his character and his anger. Though his quote, literally, is meant to convey the kind of physical energy that Jimmy has in his everyday life, on another level the quote is meant to suggest the kind of destruction that Jimmy brings to the lives of those around him. The word "burn" has a double meaning in this way; on the one hand it is meant to represent a burning of physical, bodily energy. On the other hand, it is meant to convey destruction -- how Jimmy's frenetic quest for real life destroys the lives of those to whom he is closest.

"If you could have a child, and it would die...if only I could watch you face that."

—Look Back in Anger, 37.

This quote, spoken by Jimmy, demonstrates his vicious anger towards Alison. The quote is an example of dramatic irony as well as foreshadowing. It foreshadows future events in the play in which Alison loses her pregnancy, Jimmy's child, to miscarriage. It is dramatic irony in that the audience already knows that Alison is pregnant when Jimmy speaks this line, but he does not realize this fact. Without the suffering of losing something close and important to her, Jimmy sees Alison as an incomplete or unborn person, incapable of true emotion and life.

"Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm. Just enthusiasm - that's all. I want to hear a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah!...Hallelujah! I'm alive!"

—Look Back in Anger, 15.

Jimmy is primarily concerned with a way to live a real, enthusiastic, and emotional life. The desire for emotion expresses itself in his anger towards his wife and their domestic existence. This quote is a reference to black gospel religion which Jimmy associates with things such as jazz music (Jimmy also plays the trumpet, a similar reference). This use of a religious phrase should be compared to Jimmy's antagonism towards traditional English Anglicanism, which Jimmy firmly rejects. It should also be noted that most of the play occurs on a Sunday, suggesting that in Jimmy's righteous anger is a modern attempt to find the kind of real life that traditional religion sought to convey for its believers.

"If you've no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's. I must be getting sentimental. But I must say it's pretty dreary living in the American Age -- unless you're an American of course."

—Look Back in Anger, 17.

Jimmy is a character that is not of his age. He derides his father-in-law for being an old "Edwardian." This Edwardian Age is a reference to the reign of King Edward VII in Great Britain, a brief period at the beginning of the 20th century where a fashionable British elite influenced the art and fashions of continental Europe. Jimmy, however, is also in many ways a sentimental Edwardian. He views himself as a descendant of this more fashionable age, stuck in a time in which the world around him does not understand his passions and motivations. In comparison, the American Age is "dreary," meaning that the fashion and culture of this previous age has been wiped away by the rise of America as a great world superpower.

"It's what he would call a question of allegiances, and he expects you to be pretty literal about them. Not only about himself and all the things he believes in, his present and his future, but his past as well."

--Look Back in Anger, 42.

In this quote, Alison attempts to explain Jimmy's character and motivations to her friend Helena. Jimmy's allegiances are a result of his intense character and desire for raw emotion. Casual acquaintances will not do for him. Such relationships lack power and realness. Jimmy expects all of those he cares about to be committed to those things as well. Alison's break with Jimmy occurs when she goes to church with Helena, a rejection of Jimmy's secularism. He takes this action very personally as an affront to him.

"Jimmy went into battle with his axe swinging round his head -- frail, and so full of fire. I had never seen anything like it. The old story of the knight in shining armour (sic) -- except that his armour didn't really shine very much."

--Look Back in Anger. 45

This quote, spoken by Alison, is her attempt to explain to Helena why she fell so madly in love with Jimmy as a young girl. This quote allows Osborne to explore the idea of chivalry, an idea found in medieval English literature and a trait that has deep roots in English mythology. Osborne is questioning whether the idea of male chivalry can still exist in a feminized modern world. While Jimmy is compared to a knight, he is described as a poor knight with dull armor, and his modern chivalrous acts seems to do more harm than good.

"One day, when I'm not longer spending my days running a sweet-stall, I may write a book about us all. ...It'll be recollected in fire, and blood. My blood."

—Look Back in Anger, 54.

Jimmy expresses his anger through the use of language that could be almost considered biblical. Jimmy uses the word "blood" throughout the play to describe his relationships. "Blood" signifies sacrifice and violence. Jimmy feels as though he has sacrificed much of his life to a lifeless relationship with Alison. Thus, this quote illustrates the way in which Jimmy feels he has shed his blood for his dull domestic life. This quote also demonstrates the violence that Jimmy expresses to Alison. Though there is never any real physical violence in the play, the metaphorical use of the word "blood" demonstrates the deep psychological violence that both Allison and Jimmy perpetrate on each other.

"Why, why, why, why do we let these women bleed us to death?"

—Look Back in Anger, 84.

This is Jimmy's expression of his antagonism towards women. Jimmy uses imagery throughout the play to describe women in often mean-spirited and sometimes violent ways. Some critics of the play accuse Osborne of misogynistic language and. Osborne wrote later that much of the play was a reaction to what he saw as a feminized world in which personal suffering is glorified and the idea of male nobility is diminished. Again, the idea of blood is used here. Jimmy feels as though the idea of shedding blood for the love and attention of women has replaced the idea of shedding blood for a noble sacrifice.

"I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. ...There aren't any good, brave causes left."

—Look Back in Anger, 84.

This quote demonstrates a central theme of the play: the way in which past and present are intertwined. Jimmy often sees himself as a product of Britain's great past, its empires and conquests. In this quote, Jimmy uses the specific example of the British defeat of the Nazi's in World War II as Britain's last great cause. In this past, he sees a noble and fulfilling state of being. The present, on the other hand, is an unfulfilling time in which the British age has been replaced by a "dreary" American age. Jimmy is, of course, idealizing the past, yet this nostalgia causes him to feel even more anger and dissatisfaction towards the present.

"There are cruel steel traps lying about everywhere, just waiting for rather mad, slightly satanic, and very timid little animals."

—Look Back in Anger, 96.

In this quote, one of the last lines of the play, Jimmy and Alison have reverted to their fantasy world of bears and squirrels. This is a fitting ending for the play since both Jimmy and Alison have come to a point in which they can no longer face the pain and intense emotion of real life. This is what Jimmy calls the "pain of being alive." Escape, therefore, is the only option left for them. They retreat into a fantasy world. This world is the only stable option within which these

characters can live. Through this idea, Osborne suggests that fiction is the only answer to the cruelties of real life.

Look Back in Anger Summary and Analysis of Act I (pages 1 - 25)

Summary

The play opens with a description of the setting and the scene. Act I takes place on an evening in April. The setting is the Porter's attic apartment. It is a small room with simple, sparse furniture. It is cluttered with items such as "books, neckties, and odds and ends, including a large, tattered toy teddy bear and soft, woolly squirrel." There is a large window in the attic, but the only light comes from a skylight, so the room is somewhat dim. As the curtain rises, the audience sees Jimmy Porter and Cliff Lewis seated in two shabby armchairs. They are reading newspapers which cover the top half of their bodies so that the audience can only see their legs. Jimmy is smoking a cigar and wearing a tweed jacket and flannel pants.

The opening of the play gives detailed descriptions of the disposition of each character. Jimmy, who is about 25 years old, is described as "a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty: restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike." Cliff, who is about the same age as Jimmy, is almost the opposite of Jimmy. He is relaxed, "almost to lethargy," and easy going. Cliff demands other people's love, while Jimmy mostly repels it.

Also in the attic is Alison Porter, Jimmy's wife. She is a tall, slim, dark girl whose personality is not immediately apparent to the audience. She "is tuned in a different key, a key of well-bred malaise that is often drowned in the robust orchestration of the other two." She is ironing a pile of laundry.

Jimmy throws his paper down in disgust. He complains that all the book reviews sound the same and that the papers provide no intellectual stimulation. He asks Cliff antagonistically if the papers make him feel ignorant. He calls Cliff "a peasant." The audience comes to understand that Cliff has not received the same education that Jimmy has received. Jimmy then turns his antagonism towards Alison who is only half listening to his rantings. Cliff tries to deflect some of

Jimmy's anger away from her. but Jimmy keeps on with his ranting. Jimmy obviously feels that Alison is not as brilliant as she and others think she is. Jimmy then becomes upset that nobody is listening to him when he speaks and he steals the newspaper from Cliff.

Jimmy tells the other two that he is hungry and Cliff mocks him for always wanting food. Cliff tells him that he will end up being fat one day. but Jimmy tells him that won't happen because "We just burn everything up." He demands that Cliff make him some tea, and Cliff complains because he's already had a potful that day. Cliff then complains that Jimmy had creased his paper and Jimmy tells him that "I'm the only one who knows how to treat a paper, or anything else, in this house."

Cliff is kind to Alison. He tells her to leave the laundry and come sit down and she comes over where Cliff, in a flirting manner, bites her fingers and tells her she's beautiful. Jimmy is not bothered by this. He only looks at her and says, "That's what they all tell me." They begin to discuss the articles in the paper by the Bishop of Bromley who urges all Christians to support the manufacture of the H-bomb and denies the existence of class distinctions. Jimmy discusses some of the other odd articles in the paper. A woman had several ribs broken and her head kicked when a crowd rushed to the stage at a meeting of an American evangelist. He mocks an article on love advice for young women. When Alison suggests that they go to the movies, Jimmy declares that he will not have his evening ruined. He then goes on a rant about a journalist who wrote a poor piece in the paper. Jimmy proclaims that nobody reads the paper because "Nobody can be bothered. No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth."

Cliff's trousers are wrinkled and Alison offers to iron them. Cliff wants a pipe, but cannot stand the smell of it and so starts to smoke a cigarette even though Jimmy warns him they will upset his ulcers. Jimmy begins to reflect on the state of the English nation. He remembers an old saying about England: "...we get our cooking from Paris (that's a laugh), our politics from Moscow, and our morals from Port Said." He knows that he shouldn't be very patriotic, but he says sarcastically that he can't help but idealize Alison's father's time spent in the British army in India. He decides that "it's pretty dreary living in the American Age -- unless you're an American of course."

Cliff and Jimmy discuss whether Alison's friend Webster might come over to visit. Jimmy hopes not, but Alison notes that he is the only person that

understands him. Jimmy says that Webster exhilarates him in the same way that one of his old girlfriends, Madeline. did. Jimmy talks about Alison's brother, Nigel. Nigel was a soldier in the British army and is moving up in the world. Jimmy thinks he'll be in Parliament one day, though he also believes that Nigel "seek(s) sanctuary in his own stupidity." Jimmy continues to disparage Alison and her family. He calls them "sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous." Jimmy then tries to explain what the word "pusillanimous" means. He tells her it means "Wanting of firmness of mind, of small courage, having a little mind, mean spirited, cowardly, timid of mind." He tells her that this word describes her perfectly. Alison's face contorts in anger, but the feeling passes and she returns to ironing.

The concert that Jimmy wants to listen to comes on the radio and Alison finishes ironing Cliff's pants. Alison keeps ironing and Jimmy complains that he can't hear the music because of the noise. He angrily turns off the radio and Alison chides him for acting like a child. He begins to yell about how loud women are and describes her clumsiness by telling her she is like "a dirty old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb fat and gristle." Church bells start ringing outside and this noise upsets Jimmy even more. Cliff, trying to improve the mood, pretends to dance with Jimmy to the bells and grips him in a vice while Jimmy protests.

Analysis

The play begins with Osborne's very specific stage directions. Osborne attempts to give definition to each character through an analysis of their physical traits and their emotional makeup. Jimmy is a study in dualisms: he is angry and bitter, yet he is also tender and intense in his zealous love. Osborne attempts to paint Jimmy as a very masculine character, though the audience is left to decide how much of that is real and how much of that is an act. Alison Porter is described as a woman that has been beaten down by life. Osborne uses the word "malaise" to describe her, denoting the fact that her life has not turned out as she hoped it would. Cliff is described as a likable man, unimposing in his physical characteristics. He is the opposite of the kind of person that Jimmy aspires to be, yet Jimmy is much more like him than he knows or cares to admit. Cliff seems to innately understand this relationship and, therefore, suffers Jimmy's abuse with good nature. The opening scene uses stereotypical gender references to define the characters. Jimmy is smoking a pipe and reading a paper while Alison is ironing. These represent the

way in which both of the characters have attempted to fit into societal roles and expectations that have both made them miserable and angry.

The play opens in April, a reference to T.S. Eliot's line from The Waste Land: "April is the cruellest (sic) month." Eliot is mentioned several other times in the play and is used as a definitive English cultural reference for Jimmy. This love/hate relationship with British culture is characteristic of Jimmy's attempts to retain a vibrant patriotism even while being pessimistic about the state of English affairs.

Their apartment flat is a symbol of 1950's domesticity. The staging of the play is important for understanding the mood of domestic disturbance. The room is filled with old furniture, half-read newspapers, and pieces of worn clothing. This is representative of the characters and the characters' lifestyle. Like a piece of junk or old furniture, Jimmy, Cliff, and Alison have literally been stowed away in an attic, out of sight from the upper class culture. Their emotions and ambitions do not fit in with the upper class world and this causes a great amount of consternation for Jimmy. The cramped space contains all of the trappings of a meager domestic life. Jimmy's political and social persuasions become evident here as well when he mocks a faux column in the paper written by the "Bishop of Bromley." He considers himself unconventional and untied to traditional British politics and even declares that no political party would want him. Though his politics often align with the Liberal party, he is also a bit of an anarchist, opposed to any kind of organization whether it be politics or religion.

The playful banter between Cliff and Jimmy belies the deep tension and anger beneath the surface of the relationships between the three characters. This soon turns to anger and one of the play's key themes is revealed. Jimmy is concerned, above all, with "enthusiasm" and "living." He portrays others as slothful and lazy. Alison and Cliff are, presumably, included in this judgment. Jimmy has clear memories of several people who excited him in the past -- Alison's friend Webster and his former girlfriend Madeline. The reason, he alludes, that these people understood him was precisely because they understood his need for a more enthusiastic mode of living. Jimmy's anger is a result of his inability to excite similar feelings in the people around him.

The play's title alludes to a running theme: anger over the political, military, and social prominence of the British past. Jimmy's comment about the "American age" illuminates his nostalgia for the former British empire. He is at once both

antagonistic towards those that refuse to believe that such an empire does not exist anymore, such as Alison's father who he derides as a fool, and yet he is also fiercely patriotic, an emotion he equates with living a real life. The British empire, thus, represents for Jimmy a point in history in which the Englishman was allowed to truly live as himself. This American age is "dreary" in comparison -- "unless you're an American."

Look Back in Anger Summary and Analysis of Act I (pages 26 - 38)

Summary

Cliff and Jimmy wrestle and Jimmy pushes Cliff into Alison and her ironing board. They fall to the floor together and Alison burns her arm on the iron. Jimmy tries to apologize, but Alison yells for him to leave the room. He goes into his room and begins to play his trumpet. Cliff sits down with her and gets some soap to wash the wound. Alison confides to him that "I don't think I can take much more...I don't think I want anything more to do with love."

Cliff tells Alison that she is too young to give up, but she responds that these days she cannot remember what it was like to be really young and carefree. She knows Jimmy feels the same way. As Cliff continues to bandage her arm, she tells him that she is pregnant and that she has not told Jimmy. He asks her if it is "too late to avert the situation," and she tells him she doesn't know. He urges her to tell Jimmy because Jimmy does love her, even though he is cruel. She believes that Jimmy will suspect that she is attempting to trap him in a life with her. She tells Cliff that Jimmy has "his own private morality" and that he had been angry when he had slept with her on their wedding night and found out she was a virgin, as if "an untouched woman would defile him."

Cliff tells her that he understands Jimmy in some way. They both come from working class people and Jimmy likes him for that. In Jimmy's words, it is because Cliff is "common as dirt...." Jimmy reenters the room and sees Cliff and Alison touching and close together on the couch, but he doesn't say anything and sits down to read the paper. He makes fun of the two of them and how physically affectionate they are with each other. Jimmy tells Cliff that he's just a "randy little mouse" and Cliff begins to run and dance around the flat like a mouse. He grabs Jimmy's foot and they begin to tussle. When they finish playing, Alison gives Cliff a half a crown for cigarettes and he exits to go to the store.

Jimmy enters again in an apologetic mood. He tells Alison that he is sorry that he pushed her down. He tells her that "There's hardly a moment when I'm not – watching and wanting you." He acknowledges that sometimes he takes her for granted and Alison warms to his affection. Jimmy suggests that they have sex, but Alison shyly reminds him that Cliff will return soon. Jimmy reflects that Cliff is probably the only friend he has, though he remembers all his former friends from school. He and Alison tease each other, him calling her a squirrel and she calling him a bear. She makes squirrel noises as they hug each other.

Cliff enters and tells them he couldn't even leave the house because Mrs. Drury, their landlord, wouldn't let him get away. Cliff tells Alison that she has a call from Helena Charles. Alison leaves to take the call. Jimmy tells Cliff that this is one of Alison's old friends and he calls her a "bitch." He explains that she is one of his "natural enemies." Jimmy reflects that he has "had enough of this 'expense of spirit' lark, as far as women are concerned." He thinks that they have a "cause" and that plenty of women have a "revolutionary fire" to them. Most people don't like him because he's got a "strawberry mark" to him as a "right-wing deviationist." He goes through Alison's purse and finds a letter from her mother. He is angry because Alison and her mother write letters but never mention his name because it's a "dirty word" to them.

Alison reenters and tells Jimmy that Helena is coming to stay with them while she is in town. Jimmy is angry. He starts to verbally assault his wife, telling her that if only she "could have a child, and it would die...Let it grow, let a recognisable (sic) human face emerge from that little mass of indiarubber and wrinkles" than she would understand the ways of the world. He tells her that she devours his passion as a python devours an animal. Alison stands over the stove and trembles as Cliff watches the scene.

Analysis

Jimmy's trumpet playing is an allusion to the twentieth century British fascination with Black American jazz culture. When Jimmy plays the trumpet, it represents his affinity for a culture which he believes is truly alive. This is a common theme in several works of mid-twentieth century white English culture, from literature to popular music. Osborne here suggests that black jazz culture is an embodiment of a "natural" humanity. Jimmy's anger is a result of not being able to live in such a humanity and his trumpet playing is an symbol of his attempt to connect with such a life.

Alison's own fear is revealed in her private conversation with Cliff. She tells Cliff that she is afraid to tell him of her pregnancy because she does not want to "trap him." This is an ironic statement since Jimmy is already trapped in a sleepy, domestic life that he does not want. Such a statement also demonstrates the tension that is at the heart of the character of Alison. On the one hand, she is dedicated to the conservative familial structure of her upbringing. On the other hand, she is in love with Jimmy and wants more than all to put his needs above her own.

Alison and Cliff's affectionate relationship is also revealed in this scene. It is a strange relationship because the two seem to have a close physical connection -- they often touch and hug -- yet this does not seem to inspire any jealousy or emotion in Jimmy. This relationship between the three shows how Cliff's character is integral to Jimmy and Alison's relationship with each other. Alison is able to get the affection that she desires from Cliff while Cliff also provides the masculine friendship and confidence that Jimmy desires. Jimmy seems to unconsciously understand that the two will not consummate their affair because of the very malaise that Jimmy accuses them of having.

Jimmy becomes angry at Alison for allowing Helena to stay with them during her visit and his rant towards her at the end of the first act is one of his most vicious. This rant makes clear what Jimmy deems necessary in order to be truly alive. One must suffer as he did when he watched his father die in order to understand what it truly means to live. The audience sees that the death of Jimmy's father is integral to his own understanding of himself. This will be explored further in Act II. When Jimmy tells Alison that he wishes that she could see her child die, it is a moment of both dramatic irony and foreshadowing. It is ironic because the audience already knows that Alison is present. Jimmy's attack on her foreshadows the death of her child and her future hardships.

Jimmy's anger is representative of Osborne's critique of the feminization of society in the 1950's. Osborne later wrote that Jimmy's anger is a manifestation of the subliminal anger felt by a generation of men domesticated by a feminine culture. Jimmy's anger is Osborne's attempt to return genuine masculine emotion to cultural life. This is one of the reasons that Osborne's play received such attention and critical reception, both good and bad. Some critics argued that his attempt was ultimately misogynistic.

Look Back in Anger Summary and Analysis of Act II - Scene I (Pages 39 - 49)

Alison tells her about the months they lived with Hugh. They would go and crash the parties of the wealthy families they had known in London. They would invite themselves in and help themselves to all the food and drink and cigars of the party. Out of all the parties they crashed, only one family kicked them out when Hugh tried to seduce a young girl. These old money families were too polite to turn them away and, besides, Alison believes they felt sorry for them. She recounts to Helena the first time that she and Jimmy met at a party. It had been soon after her mother and father returned from India. Because they were distant, she immediately gravitated towards this young man. "Everything about him seemed to burn, his face, the edges of his hair glistened and seemed to spring off his head, and his eyes were so blue and full of the sun." She believes that because her family distrusted Jimmy he did everything he could to take her from them and marry her. After a few months, Hugh decided that he wanted to move overseas in order to work on his novel. He believed "England was finished for us, anyway." Jimmy did not want to go and told Hugh that he should not leave his poor, frail mother, but Hugh decided to leave anyway. A bitter fight broke out between the two of them.

Helena changes the conversation and tells Alison that she must either tell Jimmy that he is going to be a father or else leave him. Alison points towards the stuffed squirrel and teddy bear in the corner of the room and tells Helena that those animals represent the two of them. She tells her about the game they play in which she pretends to be a squirrel and he pretends to be a bear. "It was the one way of escaping from everything...We could become little furry creatures with little furry brains. Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other." Helena warns that she must fight Jimmy or else he will kill her. Cliff enters.

Cliff yells to Jimmy to come in and get his tea. Cliff asks Helena and Alison where they are going, and they tell him they are going to church. They invite him, but he stammers and tells them that he hasn't yet read the papers. Jimmy enters and begins bantering with Cliff. He asks him why he would want to read the papers since he has no intellect or curiosity and is nothing but "Welsh trash." Cliff, with good nature, agrees. Jimmy then turns his venom towards Alison's friends and family, those "old favourites (sic), your friends and mine: sycophantic, phlegmatic, and, of course, top of the bill -- pusillanimous."

Analysis

Helena Charles is introduced. She is, in many ways, the opposite of Alison, though both share a common upbringing. Helena is upper class and self assured while Alison is working class and tired. Alison lacks Helena's sophistication because of her relationship with Jimmy, though she had once had it. Like Alison, Helena takes on a domestic role while with the Porters, but the audience sees that she is not a domesticated female figure. She works as an actress, a profession which leads her into a certain bohemian kind of lifestyle.

Alison's line that "things seem to be very different" when Helena is in the house foreshadows a conversation that will have consequences later on. It is ironic that Alison tells her that things are different here and that she means it in a good way. Cliff will later utter a similar phrase yet he will mean it negatively. It is an example of the way the men of the play seem to feed off of and find normalcy in Jimmy and Alison's contentious relationship. The women, on the other hand, find a lack of peace, a motif that both women experience after their relationships with Jimmy.

In attempting to explain her relationship to Cliff, Alison actually proves how Jimmy is partly right in his assessment that both of them have not found a way to truly live, embracing a slothfulness to their lives instead. Alison suggest that while their relationship is both emotional and physical, they are too comfortable in the way things are between them to be consumed with any real passion towards each other. Jimmy, it would seem, also suffers from this emotional slothfulness, though he would not admit it, since he does not seem to want to summon the emotion of jealousy. The audience is left to wonder if Cliff feels the same way about Alison as she feels towards him.

In this part of Act II, Alison explains to Helena why she is with Jimmy. This scene allows Osborne to explore the idea of masculine chivalry in the twentieth century. Alison uses her stories of meeting Jimmy and the party crashing that she, Jimmy, and Hugh undertook as an allusion to English folklore. In Alison's telling of the event, Jimmy becomes a knight in shining armor, though Alison admits his armor never shone very brightly. He is alternately noble while charming and courting her and then barbaric in storming the gates of the refined culture of Alison's family's friends. Jimmy is thus linked to a British past even though he continually alludes to the fact that the past is gone.

It is in this scene that Alison explains the symbolism of the bear and squirrel. It is ironic that Alison explains their game as an "unholy priesthole of being animals to

one another," since it is arguable that in their normal relationship Jimmy often expresses his emotion in wild animalistic ways. She explains that by taking on the persona of these stuffed animals they both are able to have "dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other." Their games of squirrel and bear show how the only way that both can truly love each other is to completely detach themselves from the world. It is also an expression of a lost childhood that both share. The conditions of their real lives is often too much to bear, and so the game offers a time of retreat into a childishness that neither had growing up.

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Look Back in Anger Summary and Analysis of Act II - Scene I (Pages 50 - 63)

Summary

Jimmy tells the group that he has made up a song entitled "You can quit hanging round my counter Mildred 'cos you'll find my position is closed." He begins to sing the verse. It's a song about how he is tired of women and would rather drink and be alone than have to deal with their problems. He turns to Helena and tells her that he also wrote a poem, one that she will like because "It's soaked in the theology of Dante, with a good slosh of Eliot as well." It is entitled "The Cess Pool," and Jimmy says he is "a stone dropped in it...."

Helena confronts him and asks him why he must be such an unpleasant person to be around all the time. Jimmy becomes delighted that she has taken his bait and continues to goad her on. He sees Alison dressing in the mirror in the corner of the room and asks her where she is going. She tells him she is going to church and Jimmy is genuinely surprised. He asks her if she has lost her mind. "When I think of what I did, what I endured to get you out -- ..." Alison bursts into anger at this, sarcastically telling Jimmy that she remembers how he rescued her from her family so that she would never have to suffer with them again.

Jimmy then goes on a rant on Alison's mother. He tells how "There is no limit to what the middle-aged mummy will do in the holy crusade against ruffians like me." He is trying to prod Alison into anger. He recounts how Alison's mother was suspicious of his long hair and how she hired detectives to watch him. Cliff tries to calm the situation, but Jimmy tells him that fighting is all he's good at now. Jimmy accuses Alison of having been influenced by Helena, that "genuflecting

sin jobber...." Helena tries to tell Jimmy to back off his anger, but this only makes him more eager to fight. He tells Alison that her mother should die and that when the worms eat her they'll get a bad case of indigestion for their troubles. He looks at Helena and asks her what is wrong and she tells him that she feels "Sick with contempt and loathing." Jimmy tells them that one day, when he is done running his sweet-stall, he will write a book about everyone in the room, a recollection of their time together "in fire, and blood. My blood."

Helena asks why Jimmy is being so obstinate. She asks him if he thinks the world has treated him badly and Alison interjects, telling her to not take away his suffering because "he'd be lost without it." Jimmy tries to figure out why Helena is still staying with them since her play finished eight days earlier. He believes that she is up to no good and trying to influence Alison in some way. He tells Helena that the last time she was in a church was on their wedding day. They had had to sneak away to a church where the vicar didn't know Alison's father so they could be secretly married. Her parents, however, found them anyway and were the only people in the church when the two were married. Jimmy tells Alison that Helena is nothing but a cow and, further more, a "sacred cow as well." Cliff tries to tell Jimmy that he's gone too far, but Jimmy doesn't listen.

Jimmy then gives a monologue on Helena's life. He says that she is "an expert in the New Economics -- the Economics of the Supernatural." Her type has thrown out "Reason and Progress" and look towards the past, the Dark Ages, to find a way around the dark problems of the twentieth century. Her spirituality, he says, cuts her off "from all the conveniences we've fought to get for centuries." She is full of "ecstatic wind...." Helena calmly tells him that she will slap his face and, sensing a challenge, Jimmy rises and starts to slowly move his face towards her. He asks her if she's ever watched someone die. She starts to move away, but he makes her face him. He tells her that if she hits him and tries "to cash in on what she thinks is my defenceless (sic) chivalry by lashing out with her frail little fists, I lash back at her." He asks her again if she has ever seen someone die. She answers "no." Jimmy then proceeds to tell her about how he watched his father die for a year when he was ten years old. His father had come home from the war in Spain where "certain god-fearing gentlemen...had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long to live." Jimmy recounts how his family had abandoned the old man and only Jimmy had been there to listen to his father's ramblings; "the despair and the bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man." He tells Helena that "I knew more about -- love...betrayal...and death, when I was ten

years old than you will probably ever know all your life." Helena rises, tells Alison that it's time to go, and exits.

Jimmy addresses Alison in a whisper. He wants to know why his suffering means nothing to her. He calls her a "Judas" and a "phlegm" and, finally fed up, Alison throws a glass across the room where it shatters. She tells him that all she wants is peace and goes to the bed to put on her shoes while Jimmy continues to rant. Jimmy responds that "My heart is so full, I feel ill -- and she wants peace!" Jimmy asks which of them is really the angry and disturbed one. He turns to Cliff and tells him that he wishes that he would try loving her so he could know the difficultly of it. He tells Alison that he wants to be there when she comes groveling back to him. Helena enters with two prayer books and tells Jimmy that there is a phone call for him. Jimmy exits.

Helena turns on Cliff now and asks him why he does nothing when Jimmy is so angry. He tells her that, though things are always bad, they have been worse since she arrived. He tells her that most of the time things are like "a very narrow strip of plain hell. But where I come from we're used to brawling and excitement." He tells her that he loves both Alison and Jimmy very much and that he pities everyone involved.

Helena tells Alison that she has sent a wire to Alison's father to come and get her. She asks if Alison will agree to leave Jimmy and return home and Alison says that she will. Alison seems numb and distant and Helena knows that she must take charge of the situation. Jimmy enters solemnly. He tells Cliff that Hugh's mom has had a stroke and is dying and that he must leave to go see her. Cliff leaves to make arrangements for Jimmy's trip. Jimmy becomes nostalgic and remembers how Hugh's mother had gushed over how beautiful Alison was after they had been married. Jimmy tells Alison that he needs her to come with him. Church bells ring and Alison stands in the middle of the room, undecided on whether to leave with Helena or stay with Jimmy. She walks over to the table and picks up her prayer book and leaves. Jimmy, stunned, leans on the chest of drawers and picks up the teddy bear. He throws it across the room and then falls on the bed, burying himself in the covers.

Analysis

Alison's declaration that she is attending church with Helena is one of the only times in the play that Jimmy expresses genuine surprise and shock at his wife's

actions. Even when she leaves him and withholds the information from him that she is pregnant, it is apparent that those are all things he can accept because it fits into the portrayal that he has of her in his mind. Going to church, however, is not one of those things. In fact, Jimmy equates church going with Alison's past, a past that like a knight in shining armor, he rescued her from.

Alison's church going also relates to the issue of allegiances that she discussed with Helena earlier in the act. Jimmy, she tells Helena, is a fiercely loyal man. He expect that those in his life will also be loyal to the same things, whether it is the political viewpoints he takes or his previous lovers. By going to church, Jimmy considers this a breach of allegiance to him and this proves to be a justification for his further vicious humiliation of her.

This part of Act II also allows Osborne to demonstrate Jimmy's misogynistic viewpoints, some of which it is alleged Osborne personally shared with his character. His attacks on Alison's mother are the best demonstration of this in the play. Jimmy is particularly cruel to older, upper class women. Alison's mother is the archetype of such a character. Jimmy hurls insults at her and ends his rant in a grisly depiction of her death. It is revealed here that Alison's mother took extreme steps, including hiring a private detective, to try and stop Alison's relationship with Jimmy. This seems to have been the catalyst for Jimmy's extreme hatred of all women like her mother.

Jimmy then turns his hatred towards Helena and begins to attack her character and her worldview. Because she is churchgoing and seemingly respectable, Jimmy accuses her of living in a dark age. Here, Jimmy claims to hold an understanding of the world that Helena and most everyone else in the world does not hold. He understands that traditional morality has no meaning in the modern world. At best, Jimmy understands the church to be simply a puppet of political and social power; the audience is reminded of Jimmy's mockery of church figures through the Bishop of Bromley in the first act. At worst, the church has become irrelevant.

To demonstrate this irrelevance of morality, Jimmy confronts Helena and dares her to slap his face. He tells her that he has no chivalry now and will hit her if she hits him. Helena is forced to make a choice: either slap his face in a moment of violence and abandon her moral center or abandon her sense of bourgeois feminist pride by letting him attack her. In the end, Jimmy does not give her a chance to choose because he moves the conversation deeper. He asks her if she has experienced death. In this way, Jimmy is attempting to make Helena just like

hated Jimmy and believed that he was a criminal. He admits that "All those inquiries, the private detectives -- the accusations. I hated every moment of it." Alison says that she believes her mother was only trying to protect her and the Colonel says that he wishes they had never interfered with their daughter's life.

The Colonel proffers the idea that perhaps he and Alison are to blame for everything that has happened. Alison is shocked at this, but the Colonel explains to her that she is like him. He tells her that she likes "to sit on the fence because it's comfortable and more peaceful." She reminds him that he had threatened her, but that she was the one that married him anyway.

Alison tells the Colonel what Jimmy said about him and her mother. She tells the Colonel that Jimmy called her mother an "overprivileged old bitch" and called the Colonel a plant left over "from the Edwardian Wilderness that can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more." The Colonel asks her why he married her if he felt like this. Alison answers that this is "the famous American question -- you know, the sixty-four dollar one!" She says that he perhaps married her for revenge. Perhaps, she thinks, Jimmy thought that "he should have been another Shelley, and can't understand now why I'm not another Mary, and you're not William Godwin." She says that when she met Jimmy he threw down a gauntlet for her; a challenge that she felt compelled to rise up and meet. The Colonel only answers that he doesn't understand why young people cannot simply marry for love.

The Colonel concedes to Alison that, perhaps, Jimmy is right in calling him an old Edwardian. He tells her the story of how he left England in 1914 to command the Maharajah's army in India. He loved India and did not return to Britain until 1947. He discovered that, by then, the England he had left was no longer there. He remembers how happy he was in India and remembers the "last day the sun shone was when that dirty little train steamed out of that crowded, suffocating Indian station...I knew in my heart it was all over then." Alison hears the story and cannot help but compare the two men in her life: "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it."

Alison picks up the squirrel from the dresser and begins to put it in her suitcase, then she stops and puts it back. For a moment, "she seems to be standing on the edge of choice." She makes a choice and goes to her father, leans against him and weeps. The Colonel tells her she's taking a big step in deciding to leave with him.

Alison finishes packing her bag. Helena enters and Alison and the Colonel prepare to leave. The Coionel asks if Helena is coming with them, and she tells him that she is not and that she has a job interview the next day in Birmingham and will stay one more night. Cliff enters and Alison introduces the two men. The Colonel takes Alison's bag and exits.

Cliff asks Alison if she wants to stay and tell Jimmy about her departure. She hands Cliff a letter, an action that Cliff calls "conventional," and she leaves. Cliff and Helena are alone in the apartment. Cliff tells Helena that the apartment is going to be "really cock-eyed" now. Helena wonders if Jimmy will look up one of his old girlfriends. Madeline, but Cliff doesn't think so. Cliff loses his sense of good humor for the first time and he snaps at Helena. Helena tells him that "I've never seen so many souls stripped to the waist" because of Jimmy. Cliff decides to meet Jimmy at the train station and he says that he might have a few drinks or even pick up a prostitute and bring her back to the apartment. He throws Alison's letter at Helena and tells her to give it to Jimmy.

Helena goes to the dresser and picks up the bear. She falls on the bed clutching it. Suddenly, Jimmy bursts in the room "almost giddy with anger...." He yells at her that the Colonel almost ran him down with his car and that Cliff walked away from him on the street without speaking. Helena throws the letter at him and he opens it. He reads the first few lines. Alison expresses that she desperately needs peace and that she needs time. She ends the letter by writing that "I shall always have a deep, loving need of you...."

Jimmy is incensed. He calls her a phony. He wants to know why Helena is still here at the apartment. She tells him that Alison is pregnant with his child. He is taken aback by this news but then he gets in Helena's face and tells her he doesn't care. He dares Helena to slap his face and recounts how for the past eleven hours he watched Hugh's mother die. He tells her that when he goes to the funeral, he will be alone because "that bitch won't even send her a bunch of flowers...." He believes that Alison did not take Hugh's mother seriously and so he doesn't care if she is going to have a baby. He tells Helena to leave and she slaps his face. He is surprised at first, but then he lets the painful emotions of the situation come over him. He lets out a "muffled cry of despair" and then Helena grabs him and they passionately kiss.

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Analysis

The second scene of Act II is written to provide a respite from the emotional intensity of previous scenes. Colonel Redfern is, perhaps, the play's most sympathetic character. He is described as a former military man. This description suggests his strict rigidity in matters of emotion. It implies that the Colonel is unyielding in his attitude towards Jimmy and Alison's relationship. His previous military life, therefore, is meant to be the antithesis to Jimmy's radical emotional out bursts.

The audience realizes, however, when the Colonel's character appears in this scene, that his strict rigidity and lack of emotion is a fictionalized caricature created in Jimmy's mind. The Colonel's physical characteristics are described as relaxed and softened. He is worried about his daughter and he shows a range of emotion towards her. The fact that he has come to her rescue with such short notice suggests that Jimmy does not quite understand the complexity of his motivations.

Jimmy is partly correct, however, in his assessment that the Colonel represents the past. Alison relays Jimmy's insults towards him. She tells him that Jimmy believes he is a leftover from the "Edwardian Wilderness." The Edwardian period in British culture was a period in the early twentieth century during the reign of King Edward VII in which elite British culture was influential in both fashion and ideas throughout Continental Europe. This period in British history represents both the high water mark of British culture but also the beginning of the end for the prominence of Great Britain. In a few decades, this prominence would wane when countries such as India and Egypt gained their freedom from British colonialism and when the British economy was devastated by World War II.

The Colonel symbolizes the softening of the British character. Just as the Colonel is resigned and withdrawn, Osborne is suggesting that British culture and character is resigned and withdrawn in this new American age. Jimmy expresses this resignation later in the play when he tells Cliff that there are no great causes to fight for anymore. The Colonel's generation, he says, was the last generation to believe unquestionably in an absolute right. Now, the Colonel is confused by the world around him. He does not understand the new British generations. Osborne argues that this attitude mirrors the collective British conscience which cannot understand the angry young men populating its working classes.

This scene in the play is in some ways the least consequential. It's function is largely symbolic. Critics have noted that the kiss that Jimmy and Helena share at the end of the scene is forced and rushed and ultimately unneeded. The point of the scene is to provide a complex understanding of Jimmy's view of the past. The scene can be summed up in Alison's observation that Jimmy and the Colonel are alike in many ways. The Colonel is upset because the present is not like the past. He sees his best days as behind him. Jimmy is upset because he views the present as the same as the past and sees no future for himself or anyone else. This is the same problem viewed from different angles. Osborne's point here is that the past has definite consequences for the present. In the Colonel's case, the past creates resignation and bewilderment in the present. For Jimmy, the past creates stagnation and anger.

Look Back in Anger Summary and Analysis of Act III - Scene 1

Summary

The scene opens several months later. Jimmy and Cliff sit in their armchairs with the Sunday papers. Helena, whose things now occupy the apartment, is ironing in a corner. Jimmy is smoking a pipe. Cliff tells him to put it out. Helena notes that she likes the pipe and this pleases Jimmy. Jimmy begins to tell them of an outrageous tabloid story in one of the papers: a cult in the Midlands is partaking in "grotesque and evil practices." The cult is drinking the blood of a white cockerel and making "midnight invocations to the Coptic Goddess of fertility." Jimmy wonders if perhaps this is what Mrs. Drury, their landlord, does in her spare time. Jimmy wonders if someone is performing evil magic upon him and then, humorously, suggests that Alison's mother is performing voodoo rituals to cause him pain. Helena tells Jimmy that he should perform the rituals on her, and Jimmy suggests that Cliff could be the voodoo doll.

Jimmy notes in a "brooding excursion" how sacrifice is really not a big deal because most people only sacrifice the things they didn't want to begin with. He ponders that "we shouldn't be admiring them. We should feel rather sorry for them." Returning to the playful banter, Jimmy suggests they make a loving cup from Cliff's blood, which wouldn't be very good since his blood is so common. He suggests making the cup from Helena's blood instead, a "pale Cambridge blue...."

Jimmy turns his attention back to the paper, telling Cliff to finish his because he doesn't understand what the writers are talking about anyway. He relates a story he read about a Yale professor coming to England to prove that Shakespeare changed his sex while writing The Tempest. Helena laughs at this and Jimmy asks her if anything is wrong. She only says that she is not used to being around him and that she can't tell whether he is serious or not. He asks her if she is going to church and she tells him she is not, unless he wants to go. Jimmy gets a cold look in his eyes and begins to question her on whether she feels sinful for living with him. He then quickly turns back to badgering Cliff. Jimmy then asks Helena if he saw her talking to the Reverend the other day. She says she did talk to him and Jimmy asks if " this spiritual beefcake would make a man of me?" He says, "I was a liberal skinny weakling...but now everyone looks at my superb physique in envy. I can perform any kind of press there is without betraying the least sign of passion or kindliness." Helena asks if they can have just one day without talking about politics or religion and Cliff echoes the sentiment.

Jimmy changes the subject by saying he thought of a new title for a song for a traveling act: "My mother's in the madhouse -- that's why I'm in love with you." He had previously thought of a name for his act with Helena -- Jock and Day -- but thinks that the name might be too intellectual He suggests "T.S. Eliot and Pam" instead. Jimmy then starts in on a routine that all of them obviously know well. Cliff and Jimmy begin a comedy sketch about "nobody" in which Cliff is looking for "nobody" and Jimmy keeps telling him that he hasn't seen "nobody." Helena chimes in as a character and when Jimmy asks her who she is, she says "nobody" -- the punch line to the skit. Jimmy and Cliff start to do a "Flanagan and Allen" routine and sing a song: "So don't be afraid to sleep with your sweetheart, / Just because she's better than you...."

Jimmy then stops and tells Cliff that he kicked his ankle and that the routine is no good. Cliff pushes him hard and he falls. Jimmy jumps up and they start to wrestle until Cliff pushes him off. Cliff complains that his only clean shirt is dirty now and Helena offers to wash it for him. Cliff hesitates but then takes the shirt off and lets Helena launder it for him. When she exits, Jimmy notes that Cliff doesn't like Helena very much. Cliff answers that, at one time, Jimmy didn't like her either.

Cliff then tells Jimmy that he is thinking of leaving. He says he is tired of the sweet stall and that he would not be such a burden on Helena if he left. Jimmy takes this news casually and tells him that maybe he can find one of Helena's "posh girl friends with lots of money, and no brains" to take care of him. Jimmy

tells him that he's been a good friend but that he is prepared for him to leave. He tells him that he's looking for something from Helena that she could never give and that he's worth "a half a dozen Helenas to me or to anyone." Jimmy wonders "why, why, why do we let these women bleed us to death?" He thinks, "people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids." He thinks that if they should all die in a nuclear explosion it will "just be for the Brave New-nothing-very-much-thank-you."

Helena enters and gives Cliff his shirt. Jimmy tells him to dry it quickly so they can all go out for drinks. Jimmy tells Helena to cheer up and that he wished her "heart stirred a little" when she looked at him. She tells him that it does and that she knows Cliff is leaving. Jimmy tells her that he's been a good friend, that "he's had to learn how to take it, and he knows how to hand it out." Helena goes over and sits on the arm of his chair, running her hand through his hair. He tells her that she had always put out her hand for him and that she has made a good enemy. "But then, when people put down their weapons, it doesn't mean they've necessarily stopped fighting." Helena tells him that she loves him.

Helena and Jimmy share a tender moment, embracing. He tells her that they should leave and start their act, "T.S. Eliot and Pam," and that he'll "close that damned sweet-stall and...start everything from scratch." Helena tells him that this is wonderful. She goes to change out of her shirt and Jimmy goes to hurry up Cliff when there is a knock at the door. Jimmy opens it and finds Alison, standing in a raincoat and looking ill. Jimmy tells Helena that she has a visitor and walks out of the room, leaving the two women together.

Analysis

This opening scene of Act III mirrors the play's first scene. It is, once again, a domestic scene. Jimmy and Cliff are in their same places. They read the papers and Jimmy complains about the lack of imagination in what are supposed to be the "posh" papers. Helena irons in a corner just as Alison did in Act I. This suggests that, even though the audience witnessed a great disturbance in previous scenes, things have changed only slightly in their lives.

The concept of blood plays an important role in this scene. In the previous act, Jimmy made the comment that he would one day write a book from his own blood. This idea of blood symbolizes the sacrifice that he believes he is making by

Summary

When the curtain rises on the second scene, it is only moments later and Jimmy is in Cliff's room playing his trumpet. Helena is pouring Alison a cup of tea. She picks up Jimmy's pipe and places the ashes in a tray. Alison comments on how one has to get used to Jimmy's smoking. Helena gives her the tea to help her feel better. Alison tells her that she feels mad for coming, that even as she was buying her train ticket she couldn't believe that she was making the trip to this place. She tells Helena that she came "to convince myself that everything I remembered about this place had really happened to me once." In despair, Alison cries out that Helena must want her a thousand miles away.

Helena tells her that this is not the case and that she has more right to be here than she does. Alison tells her not to bring out the rule book that "even I gave up believing in the divine rights of marriage long ago...They've got something different now -- constitutional monarchy. You are where you are by consent. And if you start trying any strong arm stuff, you're out. And I'm out." Alison tells Helena that she knows she's done something wrong by coming to their apartment and doesn't want there to be a breach between her and Jimmy. Helena tells her that she believes her and that it is Alison that should chastise her for her behavior. Alison protests that "you talk as though he were something you'd swindled me out of..." and Helena responds, "you talk as if he were a book or something you pass around to anyone who happens to want it for five minutes." Helena admits that she knows what she is doing is wrong, but that at least she believes in right and wrong.

Alison asks her if the reason she called for her father those months ago was because she was in love with Jimmy. Helena tells her it is true. Alison says it was difficult to believe at first but that then she understood. Helena says that she has discovered what is wrong with Jimmy -- "he was born out of his time." Alison agrees. Helena continues that Jimmy belongs "in the middle of the French Revolution" and that "he'll never do anything, and he'll never amount to anything." Alison adds that he is "an Eminent Victorian." Helena then tells her that things are over between her and Jimmy. She still believes in good and evil and she knows she cannot continue to live in this way with him. "It's quite a modern, scientific belief now, so they tell me," she says. "And, by everything I have ever believed in, or wanted, what I have been doing is wrong and evil."

Alison begs her to stay because Jimmy will have no one. Helena tells her she can do what she wants, but that she'd be a fool to return to Jimmy and that he'll find someone to take care of him like "one of the Renaissance popes." She tells Alison that seeing that she lost her baby is "like a judgment on us." Alison again begs her not to leave and Helena begins to yell at Jimmy to stop playing the trumpet so loudly. She demands that Jimmy join them.

When Jimmy enters he sees Alison. There is a cold concern in his voice as he asks if she needs something from being ill. Helena begins to mention that she's lost the baby, but Jimmy stops her and tells her he knows what has happened. Jimmy begins to gain authority in the room when Helena stops him and begins to tell him that she's leaving. She tells him that she sees that what they are doing is wrong and that, though she loves him, she can't take part "in all this suffering."

Jimmy speaks in a "low, resigned voice." He tells them they are both trying to escape the pain of being alive and that one cannot fall into love "without dirtying up your hands." He tells her that if she can't mess up her "nice, clean soul" than she should give up the idea of life "and become a saint." As Helena leaves, Jimmy leans against the window and cries, "Oh, those bells!" Alison begins to leave but Jimmy stops her. He tells her she denied him something when she didn't send any flowers to the funeral. It's an "injustice...The wrong people going hungry, the wrong people being love, the wrong people dying!"

He wonders if he is wrong to believe that there is "a kind of burning virility of mind and spirit that looks for something as powerful as itself," like a bear that looks for its own herd. He asks her if she remembers the night they met. He tells her he admired her relaxed spirit and that he knew she was what he wanted. He realized, however, that one has to tear "your guts out" in order to relax and that she'd never worked in her life for anything. Alison moves to the table and cries silently.

Alison cries out that none of it matters. She wants to be "a lost cause" and "corrupt and futile." She tells him when she lost the child she wished he could have seen her, "so stupid, and ugly and ridiculous. This is what he's been longing for me to feel...I'm in the fire and all I want is to die!" She tells him she is "in the mud at last!" Realizing her pain, he stops her and kneels with her. He tries to comfort her and then, with a "mocking, tender irony" begins to tell her that they'll be together as a bear and a squirrel. He tells her he's "a bit of a soppy, scruffy sort of a bear" but that he'll protect her from the cruel traps even though she's "none

too bright." She laughs a bit and then softly adds, "Oh, poor, poor, bears!" They embrace as the curtain closes.

Analysis

The second scene of the Third Act brings closure to the emotions and confusion that the characters have felt up to this point. Cliff has decided to leave. His motivations are not completely understood; he claims that things have simply changed too much for him, though it may also be the case that his realization that Jimmy will never change no matter which woman he is with has worn him down. It could also be that he realizes his relationship with Alison is over. Cliff moves on in his life; Jimmy does not.

Alison and Helena come to a deeper understanding of Jimmy and his motivations. Helena claims that she sees Jimmy as still being stuck in "the French Revolution," meaning that his extreme emotion and turmoil seems to bring anarchy to his life and to the lives of those around him. Alison has a slightly different view; she understands him as an "Eminent Victorian," meaning that he is chiefly nostalgic for an idealized past. Alison realizes this judgment on her husband is an echo of the previous conversation she held with her father. In both cases, Alison comes to understand Jimmy's life is lived in the suffering he experienced at the death of his father.

Helena's conclusion at the end of the play establishes her as the moral compass of all the characters. The audience was meant to question her morality at the end of Act II and in this act Alison becomes her interlocutor. Alison tells her on the one hand that she should not feel guilty for staying with Jimmy while on the other hand her questions and reassurance makes Helena reevaluate her decisions. In the end, it is her sense of wrong-doing -- stealing Alison's husband from her -- that makes her leave to start her own new life. This morality is represented by the church bells that ring throughout various scenes of the play and which ring at the end. With her renewed sense of right and wrong Helena represents an alternative to the subjective meaninglessness that Jimmy projects onto the modern world. Helena retains her moral center.

In this final scene, Jimmy's power over the other people in his life is contrasted with his helplessness. Alison begs Helena to stay with Jimmy precisely for the reason that he will have no one to care for him if she leaves. The images of earlier scenes -- of Alison or Helena ironing -- take on a different meaning now. They

were participating in such domestic activity not because Jimmy forced them to do so, but because they feel a tenderness for a man who is ultimately helpless. Helena is able to let this tenderness go as she leaves; Alison is not able to forget Jimmy.

This leads to the play's end. Alison makes Jimmy realize she has become the person he wanted her to be. In Act I, Jimmy berated Alison as something less than a human being because she had not gone through the kind of suffering that he had once gone through at the death of his father. Now, with the death of her unborn child, Alison tells him that she understands suffering. Jimmy's ultimate reaction to this news, and to Alison herself, is left unexplored. Their immediate reaction, however, is to return to their game of bear and squirrel. They now both understand, even if not consciously, that the only way to escape the suffering of the real world is to create a fantasy world that is just as powerful and stable. This is Osborne's ultimate statement with the play: the only way for people of modernity to truly understand and cope with the world around them is to create fiction. As a playwright, this is the course that Osborne himself has charted with Look Back in Anger. His fiction, no matter how realistic, is a diversion from the rest of the world.

Look Back in Anger The Kitchen Sink Drama: Perspectives and Criticism

The 1950's through the 1970's saw the rise of one of the most important movements in modern British theater: the Kitchen Sink drama. These types of plays had several characteristics that distinguished them as a break from the forms of theater before them. They can be compared against theatrical movements such as avantgarde theater, or the theater of the absurd, characterized by the plays of authors such as Samuel Beckett.

Perhaps the first, and most notable, characteristic of these Kitchen Sink dramas was the way in which they advanced a particular social message or ideology. This ideology was most often leftist. The settings were almost always working class. The previous trend in Victorian theater had been to depict the lives of the wealthy members of the ruling classes. These classes of people were often conservative in their politics and their ideologies. This was not the case for Kitchen Sink theater. The Kitchen Sink drama sought, instead, to bring the real lives and social inequality of ordinary working class people to the stage. The lives of these people were caught between struggles of power, industry, politics, and social homogenization.

Another chief characteristic of the Kitchen Sink drama was the way in which its characters expressed their unvarnished emotion and dissatisfaction with the ruling class status quo. This can be seen clearly in the play considered to be the standard bearer of this Kitchen Sink genre: John Osborne's Look Back in Anger. In Osborne's play, Jimmy Porter plays the role of the Angry Young Man. He is angry and dissatisfied at a world that offers him no social opportunities and a dearth of emotion. He longs to live a "real life." He feels, however, that the trappings of working class domesticity keep him from reaching this better existence. His anger and rage are thus channeled towards those around him. Osborne's play is a study in how this pent up frustration and social anger can wreak havoc on the ordinary lives of the British people.

Some critics have noted the irony in the term "Kitchen Sink drama." The domestic world during this time was believed to be the domain of the feminine. Almost all of the major Kitchen Sink works which take place in the mid-twentieth century, however, are centered around a masculine point of view. These plays rarely centered around the emotions and tribulations of its women characters. The power dynamic between male and female often assumed to be masculine and is an unexamined critical component in many of these plays. Women are often assumed to serve the men of their household and, when conflicts do arise, it is often the man who is portrayed as the suffering protagonist. Women's suffering is always a result of the suffering of the male.

Though Kitchen Sink dramas gained notoriety in twentieth century British culture for their unflinching anger and criticism directed towards the social, political, and economic establishment, the plays were also significant for the way they depicted the most intimate aspects of domestic life. This was in stark contrast to popular classical or Victorian dramas and comedies which largely centered around the public lives of socially established characters. Before the Kitchen Sink dramas, commentators have noted that in the mid-twentieth century, British theater still produced plays as if it were the nineteenth century. The Kitchen Sink drama, in contrast, moved the action and emotion of the theater from depictions of the public space of people's lives into the most intimate of settings. The kitchen was considered to be the realm of the domestic, of females and servants, and Victorian drama often excluded any mention of it. Kitchen Sink dramas, however, turned this notion around and made the kitchen the center of familial and social life. In the case of the Porter's attic apartment, the kitchen and living spaces were all one room on the stage. The boundaries of intimate domestic life and public life were blurred and created a realism not seen before in British theater.

Whether social or domestic, the Kitchen Sink drama changed the trajectory of British theater. Though many of the authors considered to have written in this genre such as Osborne, Arnold Wesker, Shelagh Delaney, and John Arden never claimed the title of Kitchen Sink dramatist, these author's plays contained themes of common life that deeply resonated with British culture of the period. These types of plays signaled a resolute shift of British theater into the 20th century.

assage:

In his contemporary England, Jimmy sees only political decay and the pretense of continued health. As an intelligent, articulate, and educated twenty-five-year-old, Jimmy has not been able to find work that matches his skills, so he earns a meager living running a street-corner candy stand with Cliff as his partner. Part of him reaches for more success, symbolized most eloquently in his frequent, offstage riffs on his jazz trumpet, but part of him mistrusts success because he does not trust aspiration in a country where aspiration is associated with all that is false and hollow. From his demeaning social position, Jimmy lashes out at all the self-important people around him. His anger strikes at everything associated with British bureaucracy, but, unhappily, it also overflows into mistreatment of his wife and his friend Cliff.

A more psychological and domestic interpretation of the play often points to Jimmy's pain over his father's death. When Jimmy was ten years old, he spent a year watching his father die. To him, the rest of the family did not seem to care, and Jimmy sees a similar lack of sensitivity in Alison. He calls her "Lady Pusillanimous" (meaning cowardly), a "monument to non-attachment," and in one of his verbal tirades even wishes that some catastrophe would shock her out of her lethargy, even something horrible such as having a child die. This is indeed what happens, and that tragedy serves, ironically, as the reconciling force in their marriage.

Jimmy's anger cools a little at the end of the play but only because his conflict with Alison is resolved at a very great price. When Alison discovers that she is pregnant, an old friend, Helena Charles, comes to stay with the Porters, and Jimmy's badgering intensifies; his harassment is eventually directed toward Helena. In reaction, Helena convinces Alison that she should leave Jimmy and live again with her father, and Alison leaves. At the end of act 2, however, Helena is drawn by some strange attraction to Jimmy and offers herself to him, becoming his mistress. When act 3 begins, it is Sunday afternoon again and Jimmy and Cliff are once more reading their Sunday papers. Now, however, in a mirror image of the opening of the play, Helena has replaced Alison at the ironing board.

Both the resolution of the conflict and the end of the play come as Alison returns, having lost both the baby and her fertility. In a scene that some critics find insufficiently motivated, Helena leaves and gives Jimmy back to Alison.

The play ends with Jimmy and Alison reconciling, in part because Jimmy is satisfied that Alison's pain has brought her more in tune with his own suffering. The reconciliation is richly ambiguous. Have Jimmy and Alison repaired a marriage worth saving, or have they simply hid from problems they cannot face and handle? The enduring quality of *Look Back in Anger* is that either of these readings, and more, can be defended.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. What themes of the play are represented by Osborne's meticulous description of the Porter's attic apartment?
2. What does Jimmy and Alison's playful game of bear and squirrel represent?
3. Why or why not is Helena Charles the moral compass of the play?
4. Though Jimmy is antagonistic towards those that reminisce for England's past, he also has a strong sense of nostalgia for previous ages. Why do you think this is the case?
5. What imagery does Osborne use to explore the ideas of modern chivalry?
6. Do you believe that Osborne is misogynistic in the play?
7. What is the purpose of Cliff's character in the play?
8. Why does Jimmy see suffering as a crucial event for living a "real" life?
9. Discuss Osborne's view of religion in the play?
10. As Alison prepares to leave, she tells her father that, "You're hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it." What does Alison mean by this?

Multiple Choice Questions:

1. How many rooms does the Porter's apartment have?
(a) Three
(b) Two
(c) Five
(d) One

2. Which of the following do the Porters have in the house?
(a) A television
(b) A gas stove
(c) A chest of drawers
(d) A leather armchair

3. What is Cliff's surname?
(a) Lewis
(b) Jones
(c) Porter
(d) Rhys

4. How old are both Cliff and Jimmy?
(a) 25
(b) 32
(c) 28
(d) 31

5. How many leather armchairs do the Porters have?
(a) Two
(b) Six
(c) Five
(d) Four

6. What is Alison doing at the beginning of the scene?
(a) Making a phone call
(b) Reading
(c) Dancing
(d) Ironing

7. What is Jimmy reading?
(a) A magazine
(b) A novel

(c) A tin label
(d) A newspaper

8. What does Jimmy think is bad quality in this chapter?
(a) Televison
(b) Carpets
(c) Armchairs
(d) Newspapers

9. What part of Alison does Cliff kiss?
(a) Her hand
(b) Her belly button
(c) Her foot
(d) Her lips

10. Where does Cliff put Alison's fingers?
(a) In the gas stove
(b) In his mouth
(c) Up his jumper
(d) Down his pants

Unit III

Aldous Huxley

Meditations on the moon

Pleasures

Selected snobberies

Aldous Leonard Huxley /ˈ hʌ ksli/ (26 July 1894 – 22 November 1963) was an English writer, philosopher and a prominent member of the Huxley family.

He was best known for his novels including Brave New World, set in a dystopian London, and for non-fiction books, such as The Doors of Perception, which recalls experiences when taking a psychedelic drug, and a wide-ranging output of essays. Early in his career Huxley edited the magazine Oxford Poetry, and published short stories and poetry. Mid career and later, he published travel writing, film stories, and scripts. He spent the later part of his life in the U.S., living in Los Angeles from 1937 until his death. In 1962, a year before his death, he was elected Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature.[1]

Huxley was a humanist, pacifist, and satirist. He later became interested in spiritual subjects such as parapsychology and philosophical mysticism,[2][3] in particular Universalism.[4] By the end of his life, Huxley was widely acknowledged as one of the pre-eminent intellectuals of his time.[5] He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in seven different years.[6]

Early life

Aldous Huxley was born in Godalming, Surrey, England, in 1894. He was the third son of the writer and schoolmaster Leonard Huxley and his first wife, Julia Arnold, who founded Prior's Field School. Julia was the niece of poet and critic Matthew Arnold and the sister of Mrs. Humphrey Ward. Aldous was the grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley, the zoologist, agnostic, and controversialist ("Darwin's Bulldog"). His brother Julian Huxley and half-brother Andrew Huxley also became outstanding biologists. Aldous had another brother, Noel Trevelyan Huxley (1891–1914), who committed suicide after a period of clinical depression.

Career

Huxley completed his first (unpublished) novel at the age of 17 and began writing seriously in his early 20s, establishing himself as a successful writer and social satirist. His first published novels were social satires, Crome Yellow (1921), Antic Hay (1923), Those Barren Leaves (1925), and Point Counter Point (1928). Brave New World was Huxley's fifth novel and first dystopian work. In the 1920s he was also a contributor to Vanity Fair and British Vogue magazines.

Bloomsbury Set

Left to right: Bloomsbury Group members – Lady Ottoline Morrell, Maria Nys, Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, and Vanessa Bell

During World War I, Huxley spent much of his time at Garsington Manor near Oxford, home of Lady Ottoline Morrell, working as a farm labourer. There he met several Bloomsbury figures, including Bertrand Russell, Alfred North Whiteheadand Clive Bell. Later, in Crome Yellow (1921) he caricatured the Garsington lifestyle. Jobs were very scarce, but in 1919 John Middleton Murry was reorganising the Athenaeum and invited Huxley to join the staff. He accepted immediately, and quickly married the Belgian refugee Maria Nys, also at GarsingtonThey lived with their young son in Italy part of the time during the 1920s, where Huxley would visit his friend D. H. Lawrence. Following Lawrence's death in 1930, Huxley edited Lawrence's letters (1932).

Works of this period included important novels on the dehumanising aspects of scientific progress, most famously Brave New World, and on pacifist themes (for example, Eyeless in Gaza). In Brave New World, set in a dystopian London, Huxley portrays a society operating on the principles of mass production and Pavlovian conditioning. Huxley was strongly influenced by F. Matthias Alexander and included him as a character in Eyeless in Gaza.

Starting from this period, Huxley began to write and edit non-fiction works on pacifist issues, including Ends and Means, An Encyclopedia of Pacifism, and Pacifism and Philosophy, and was an active member of the Peace Pledge Union.

All twenty-one of Aldous Huxley's short stories, ranging from the five pages of "The Bookshop" and the six pages of "Fard" to the thirty-eight pages of "Happily Ever After" and "Chawdron," are gathered in Collected Short Stories. which remains one of Huxley's books readily available to readers. Omitted from Collected Short Stories are three novelettes scattered in Huxley's five principal early story collections: "Farcical History of Richard Greenow" (in Limbo), "Uncle Spencer" (in Little Mexican), and "After the Fireworks" (Brief Candles). In nearly all these works, as in his longer fiction, Huxley's witty prose style is used to expose, with irony and satire, the gap between the ideal and the real in various societies, individual human personalities, and human behavior. An example of how Huxley's prose style skewers the greed, indolence, and parasitism of the British aristocracy can be found in the following sentence describing the forebears of Baron Badgery—Huxley frequently uses comic names for satire—in the opening of "The TillotsonBanquet":They had been content to live and quietly to propagate their species in a huge machiolated Norman castle, surrounded by a triple moat, only sallying forth to cultivate their property ar d to collect their rents.

With adroit irony, Huxley counterbalances his hallmark polysyllabism in "propagate" and "machiolated" with the plainer, parallel, and alliterating "cultivate" and "collect"; he counterbalances the lazy pacifism behind the moated castle with the warlike "sallying forth" not for glory but for money. The pervasive reversal structure or ironic surprise ending of the stories, like Huxley's prose style, helps convey the discrepancy between what people say or think and what they do, between plans or intentions and results, or between appearances and realities.

Frequently in the stories a main character attempts to impose on the world an oversimplified idealistic mental construct that must and does fail. Indeed, a recurrent theme is the duality in life between mind and body, idealism and pragmatism, or spirituality and high culture versus the physical world or materialism. Such duality is ingrained in the title character of "Farcical History of Richard Greenow," who suffers a dissociative personality split between a male, antiwar, hard-edged, intellectual essayist of moderate means and a female, jingoistic, sentimental, middlebrow, monetarily successful novelist. In "The Death of Lully," based on real persons and events, the spirituality of the title character, which drives him to Christian martyrdom in Muslim North Africa, contrasts with the carnality of a young couple on his sea-going transport, as well as with the commercialism of the captain, who wonders how to profit financially from his famous dying passenger. In "Sir Hercules," the title character, a British baron,

whose dwarf stature contradicts his given forename, attempts to build a miniaturized utopia on the family estate, with his equally diminutive, attractive, and aesthetically oriented wife; ironically, their son grows up large, loutish, cruel, and insensitive, spurring his parents' suicide. In "The Monocle," the title helps symbolize the story's theme of defective or partial vision, which almost all the characters have, derived from their single, usually egocentric, focus on something, including young Gregory, the main character, who wears the monocle to appear to be more detached and upperclass than he really is, as well as the intellectual Spiller, who actualizes his name by his continual talk, often oblivious to his immediate surroundings. In "Fairy Godmother," the rich Mrs. Escobar attempts to create the fairytale role of the story's title for herself, heedless of the rarity of her good deeds toward the family she is giving charity to, as well as of the reality of what a young child might really want as a gift. Finally, in "The Claxtons," the parent Claxtons, especially the wife, endeavor to create an idealized spiritual, vegetarian, economical household, despite Mrs. Claxton's real envy of her rich relations and eventually her clandestine dietary cheating.

Unit III

Essay 1 Meditation On The Moon

By Aldous Huxley

Materialism and mentalism - the philosophies of 'nothing but.' How wearily familiar we have become with that 'nothing but space, time, matter and motion', that 'nothing but sex', that 'nothing but economics'! And the no less intolerant 'nothing but spirit', 'nothing but consciousness', 'nothing but psychology' - how boring and tiresome they also are! 'Nothing but' is mean as well as stupid. It lacks generosity. Enough of 'nothing but'. It is time to say again, with primitive common sense (but for better reasons), 'not only, but also'.

Outside my window the night is struggling to wake; in the moonlight, the blinded garden dreams so vividly of its lost colours that the black roses are almost crimson, the trees stand expectantly on the verge of living greenness. The white-washed parapet of the terrace is brilliant against the dark-blue sky. (Does the oasis lie there below, and, beyond the last of the palm trees, is that the desert?) The white walls of the house coldly reverberate the lunar radiance. (Shall I turn to look at the Dolomites rising naked out of the long slopes of snow?) The moon is full. And not only full, but also beautiful. And not only beautiful, but also . . .

Socrates was accused by his enemies of having affirmed, heretically, that the moon was a stone. He denied the accusation. All men, said he, know that the moon is a god, and he agreed with all men. As an answer to the materialistic philosophy of 'nothing but' his retort was sensible and even scientific. More sensible and scientific, for instance, than the retort invented by D. H. Lawrence in that strange book, so true in its psychological substance, so preposterous, very often, in its pseudo-scientific, form, Fantasia of the Unconscious. 'The moon,' writes Lawrence 'certainly isn't a snowy cold world, like a world of our own gone cold. Nonsense. It is a globe of dynamic substance, like radium, or phosphorus, coagulated upon a vivid pole of energy.' The defect of this statement is that it happens to be demonstrably untrue. The moon is quite certainly not made of radium or phosphorus. The moon is, materially, 'a stone'. Lawrence was angry (and he did well to be angry) with the nothing-but philosophers who insist that the moon is only a stone. He knew that it was something more; he had the empirical certainty of its deep significance and importance. But he tried to explain this empirically established fact of its significance in the wrong termsin terms of

matter and not of spirit. To say that the moon is made of radium is nonsense. But to say, with Socrates, that it is made of god-stuff is strictly accurate. For there is nothing, of course, to prevent the moon from being both a stone and a god. The evidence for its stoniness and against its radiuminess may be found in any children's encyclopaedia. It carries an absolute conviction. No less convincing, however, is the evidence for the moon's divinity. It may be extracted from our own experiences, from the writings of the poets, and, in fragments, even from certain textbooks of physiology and medicine.

But what is this `divinity"? How shall we define a `god"? Expressed in psychological terms (which are primary - there is no getting behind them), a god is something that gives us the peculiar kind of feeling which Professor Otto has called `numinous' (from the Latin numen, a supernatural being). Numinous feelings are the original god-stuff', from which the theory-making mind extracts the individualized gods of the pantheons, the various attributes of the One. Once formulated; a theology evokes in its turn numinous feelings. Thus, men's terrors in face of the enigmatically dangerous universe led them to postulate the existence of angry gods; and. later; thinking about angry gods made them feel terror, even when the universe was giving them. for the moment, no cause of alarm. Emotion, rationalization, emotion - the process is circular and continuous. Man's religious life works on the principle of a hot-water system.

The moon is a stone; but it is a highly numinous stone. Or, to be more precise, it is a stone about which and because of which men and women have numinous feelings. Thus, there is a soft moonlight that can give us the peace that passes understanding. There is a moonlight that inspires a kind of awe. There is a cold and austere moonlight that tells the soul of its loneliness and desperate isolation, its insignificance or its uncleanness. There is an amorous moonlight prompting to love - to love not only for an individual but sometimes even for the whole universe. But the moon shines on the body as well as. through the windows of the eyes, within the mind. It affects the soul directly; but it can affect it also by obscure and circuitous ways - through the blood. Half the human race lives in manifest obedience to the lunar rhythm; and there is evidence to show that the physiological and therefore the spiritual life, not only of women, but of men too, mysteriously ebbs and flows with the changes of the moon. There are unreasoned joys, inexplicable miseries, laughters and remorses without a cause. Their sudden and fantastic alternations constitute the ordinary weather of our minds. These moods, of which the more gravely numinous may be hypostasized as gods, the lighter, if we will, as hobgoblins and fairies, are the children of the blood and

humours. But the blood and humours obey, among many other masters, the changing moon. Touching the soul directly through the eyes and, indirectly, along the dark channels of the blood, the moon is doubly a divinity. Even dogs and wolves, to judge at least by their nocturnal howlings, seem to feel in some dim bestial fashion a kind of numinous emotion about the full moon. Artemis, the goddess of wild things, is identified in the later mythology with Selene.

Even if we think of the moon as only a stone, we shall find its very stoniness potentially a numen. A stone gone cold. An airless, waterless stone and the prophetic image of our own earth when, some few million years from now, the senescent sun shall have lost its present fostering power.... And so on. This passage could easily be prolonged-a Study in Purple. But I forbear. Let every reader lay on as much of the royal rhetorical colour as he finds to his taste. Anyhow, purple or no purple, there the stone is-stony. You cannot think about it for long without finding, yourself invaded by one or other of several essentially numinous sentiments. These sentiments belong to one or other of two contrasted and complementary groups. The name of the first family is Sentiments of Human Insignificance, of the second, Sentiments of Human Greatness. Meditating on that derelict stone afloat there in the abyss, you may feel most numinously a worm, abject and futile in the face of wholly incomprehensible immensities. "The silence of those infinite spaces frightens me."

You may feel as Pascal felt. Or, alternatively, you may feel as M. Paul Valery has said that he feels. "The silence of those infinite spaces does not frighten me." For the spectacle of that stony astronomical moon need not necessarily make you feel like a worm. It may, on the contrary, cause you to rejoice exultantly in your manhood. There floats the stone, the nearest and most familiar symbol of all the astronomical horrors; but the astronomers who discovered those horrors of space and time were men. The universe throws down a challenge to the human spirit; in spite of his insignificance and abjection, man has taken it up. The stone glares down at us out of the black boundlessness, a memento mori. But the fact that we know it for a memento mori justifies us in feeling a certain human pride. We have a right to our moods of sober exultation.

1931

Passage:

1. The moon is a stone; but it is a highly numinous stone. Or, to be more precise, it is a stone about which and because of which men and women have numinous feelings. Thus, there is a soft moonlight that can give us the peace that passes understanding. There is a moonlight that inspires a kind of awe. There is a cold and austere moonlight that tells the soul of its loneliness and desperate isolation, its insignificance or its uncleanness. There is an amorous moonlight prompting to love - to love not only for an individual but sometimes even for the whole universe. But the moon shines on the body as well as, through the windows of the eyes, within the mind. It affects the soul directly; but it can affect it also by obscure and circuitous ways - through the blood. Half the human race lives in manifest obedience to the lunar rhythm; and there is evidence to show that the physiological and therefore the spiritual life, not only of women, but of men too, mysteriously ebbs and flows with the changes of the moon. There are unreasoned joys, inexplicable miseries, laughters and remorses without a cause. Their sudden and fantastic alternations constitute the ordinary weather of our minds. These moods, of which the more gravely numinous may be hypostasized as gods, the lighter, if we will, as hobgoblins and fairies, are the children of the blood and humours. But the blood and humours obey, among many other masters, the changing moon. Touching the soul directly through the eyes and, indirectly, along the dark channels of the blood, the moon is doubly a divinity. Even dogs and wolves, to judge at least by their nocturnal howlings, seem to feel in some dim bestial fashion a kind of numinous emotion about the full moon. Artemis, the goddess of wild things, is identified in the later mythology with Selene.

2. Socrates was accused by his enemies of having affirmed, heretically, that the moon was a stone. He denied the accusation. All men, said he, know that the moon is a god, and he agreed with all men. As an answer to the materialistic philosophy of 'nothing but' his retort was sensible and even scientific. More sensible and scientific, for instance, than the retort invented by D. H. Lawrence in that strange book, so true in its psychological substance, so preposterous, very often, in its pseudo-scientific, form, Fantasia of the Unconscious. 'The moon,' writes Lawrence 'certainly isn't a snowy cold world, like a world of our own gone cold. Nonsense. It is a globe of dynamic substance, like radium, or phosphorus, coagulated upon a vivid pole of energy.' The defect of this statement is that it happens to be demonstrably

untrue. The moon is quite certainly not made of radium or phosphorus. The moon is, materially, 'a stone'. Lawrence was angry (and he did well to be angry) with the nothing-but philosophers who insist that the moon is only a stone. He knew that it was something more; he had the empirical certainty of its deep significance and importance. But he tried to explain this empirically established fact of its significance in the wrong termsin terms of matter and not of spirit. To say that the moon is made of radium is nonsense. But to say, with Socrates, that it is made of god-stuff is strictly accurate. For there is nothing, of course, to prevent the moon from being both a stone and a god. The evidence for its stoniness and against its radiuminess may be found in any children's encyclopaedia. It carries an absolute conviction. No less convincing, however, is the evidence for the moon's divinity. It may be extracted from our own experiences, from the writings of the poets, and, in fragments, even from certain textbooks of physiology and medicine.

Unit III

Essay 2 Pleasure

WE have heard a great deal, since 1914, about the things which are a menace to civilization. First it was Prussian militarism; then the Germans at large; then the prolongation of the war; then the shortening of the same; then, after a time, the Treaty of Versailles; then French militarism-with, all the while, a running accompaniment of such minor menaces as Prohibition, Lord Northcliffe, Mr. Bryan, Comstockery...

Civilization, however, has resisted the combined attacks of these enemies wonderfully well. For still, in 1923, it stands not so very far from where it stood in that "giant age before the flood" of nine years since. Where, in relation to Neanderthal on the one hand and Athens on the other, where precisely it stood then is a question which each may answer according to his taste. The important fact is that these menaces to our civilization, such as it is - menaces including the largest war and the stupidest peace known to history - have confined themselves in most places and up till now to mere threats, barking more furiously than they bite.

No, the dangers which confront our civilization are not so much the external dangers - wild men, wars and the bankruptcy that wars bring after them. The most alarming dangers are those which menace it from within, that threaten the mind rather than the body and estate of contemporary man.

Of an the various poisons which modern civilization, by a process of auto-intoxication, brews quietly up within its own bowels, few, it seems to me, are more deadly (while none appears more harmless) than that curious and appalling thing that is technically known as "pleasure". "Pleasure" (I place the word between inverted commas to show that I mean, not real pleasure, but the organized activities officially known by the same name) "pleasure" what nightmare visions the word evokes! Like every man of sense and good feeling. I abominate work. But I would rather put in eight hours a day at a Government office than be condemned to lead a life of "pleasure": I would even, I believe, prefer to write a million words of journalism a year.

The horrors of modern "pleasure" arise from the fact that every kind of organized distraction tends to become progressively more and more imbecile. There was a time when people indulged themselves with distractions requiring the expense of a certain intellectual effort. In the seventeenth century, for example, royal personages and their courtiers took a real delight in listening to erudite sermons (Dr. Donne's, for example) and academical disputes on points of theology or metaphysics. Part of the entertainment offered to the Prince Palatine, on the occasion of his marriage with James I's daughter, was a syllogistic argumentation, on I forget what philosophical theme, between the amiable Lord Keeper Williams and a troop of minor Cambridge logicians. Imagine the feelings of a contemporary prince, if a loyal University were to offer him a similar entertainment!

Royal personages were not the only people who enjoyed intelligent pleasures. In Elizabethan times every lady and gentleman of ordinary culture could be relied upon, at demand, to take his or her part in a madrigal or a motet. Those who know the enormous complexity and subtlety of sixteenth-century music will realize what this means. To indulge in their favourite pastime our ancestors had to exert their minds to an uncommon degree. Even the uneducated vulgar delighted in pleasures requiring the exercise of a certain intelligence, individuality and personal initiative. They listened, for example, to Othello, King Lear, and Hamlet - apparently with enjoyment and comprehension. They sang and made much music. And far away, in the remote country, the peasants, year by year, went through the traditional rites - the dances of spring and summer, the winter

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mummings, the ceremonies of harvest home - appropriate to each successive season. Their pleasures were intelligent and alive, and it was they who, by their own efforts, entertained themselves.

We have changed all that. In place of the old pleasures demanding intelligence and personal initiative, we have vast organizations that provide us with ready-made distractions - distractions which demand from pleasure seekers no personal participation and no intellectual effort of any sort. To the interminable democracies of the world a million cinemas bring the same stale balderdash. There have always been fourth-rate writers and dramatists; but their works, in the past, quickly died without getting beyond the boundaries of the city or the country in which they appeared. Today, the inventions of the scenario-writer go out from Los Angeles across the whole world. Countless audiences soak passively in the tepid bath of nonsense. No mental effort is demanded of them, no participation; they need only sit and keep their eyes open.

Do the democracies want music? In the old days they would have made it themselves. Now, they merely turn on the gramophone. Or if they are a little more up-to-date they adjust their wireless telephone to the right wave-length and listen-in to the fruity contralto at Marconi House, singing "The Gleaner's Slumber Song."

And if they want literature, there is the Press. Nominally, it is true, the Press exists to impart information. But its real function is to provide, like the cinema, a distraction which shall occupy the mind without demanding of it the slightest effort or the fatigue of a single thought. This function, it must be admitted, it fulfils with an extraordinary success. It is possible to go on for years and years, reading two papers every working day and one on Sundays without ever once being called upon to think or to make any other effort than to move the eyes, not very attentively, down the printed column.

Certain sections of the community still practise athletic sports in which individual participation is demanded. Great numbers of the middle and upper classes play golf and tennis in person and, if they are sufficiently rich, shoot birds and pursue the fox and go ski-ing in the Alps. But the vast mass of the community has now come even to sport vicariously, preferring the watching of football to the fatigues and dangers of the actual game. All classes, it is true, still dance; but dance, all the world over, the same steps to the same tunes. The dance has been scrupulously sterilized of any local or personal individuality.

These effortless pleasures, these ready-made distractions that are the same for everyone over the face of the whole Western world, are surely a worse menace to our civilization than ever the Germans were. The working hours of the day are already, for the great majority of human beings, occupied in the performance of purely mechanical tasks in which no mental effort, no individuality, no initiative are required. And now, in the hours of leisure, we turn to distractions as mechanically stereotyped and demanding as little intelligence and initiative as does our work. Add such leisure to such work and the sum is a perfect day which it is a blessed relief to come to the end of.

Self-poisoned in this fashion, civilization looks as though it might easily decline into a kind of premature senility. With a mind almost atrophied by lack of use, unable to entertain itself and grown so wearily uninterested in the ready-made distractions offered from without that nothing but the grossest stimulants of an ever-increasing violence and crudity can move it, the democracy of the future will sicken of a chronic and mortal boredom. It will go, perhaps, the way the Romans went: tho Romans who came at last to lose, precisely as we are doing now, the capacity to distract themselves; the Romans who, like us, lived on readymade entertainments in which they had no participation. Their deadly ennui demanded ever more gladiators, more tightrope-walking elephants, more rare and far-fetched animals to be slaughtered. Ours would demand no less; but owing to the existence of a few idealists, doesn't get all it asks for. The most violent forms of entertainment can only be obtained illicitly; to satisfy a taste for slaughter and cruelty you must become a member of the Ku Klux Klan. Let us not despair, however; we may still live to see blood flowing across the stage of the Hippodrome. The force of a boredom clamouring to be alleviated may yet prove too much for the idealists.

Passage:

1. The party in Huxley's novels provides, as we have seen, a privileged narrative space for the exploration of key aspects of modernity as perceived by him in the twenties and thirties. In this chapter I have analysed the fictional treatment within three novels of a series of social and aesthetic questions that are to some extent peculiar to Huxley, yet which also resonate with a much broader series of cultural engagements with the possibilities of pleasure in a modern world profoundly marked by the experience of the First World War. Huxley's parties are marked by the compulsion to repeat, as texts circulate and re-circulate through quotation and allusion, sexual energies encounter various forms of paralysis and obsessive return, and the repetitions and rituals that enable and constrain social relations achieve particularly visible and significant expression. Parties in this version of the modern world are both profoundly unsatisfactory and completely unavoidable, expressing as they do both the contradictions and the seductions of modernity. As Walter Bidlake, speaking for many of Huxley's characters, finally observes: 'There was a part of his mind that wanted him to give up the party and stay at home. But the other part was stronger'.

2. Spandrell's uncanny memories recur later in the novel, becoming associated with his teenage reading of pornography focussed on young girls, 'what shame he had felt, and what remorse!' (PCP, p. 371) and his attempt to ward off these feeling of desire and shame by thinking about his mother, and indeed praying to her to help him resist temptation. This subtle and painful psychological battle with himself is cut short by his mother's remarriage: she is no longer available to him and he is left damaged and disgusted with himself and the world. The uncanny gives way to the obsessive and the destructive as the defining qualities of his psychological and sexual being. Mark Rampion makes it clear that such a psychological state can ultimately lead to nothing other than death. Rampion makes the metaphorical statement, 'He refuses to be a man. Not a man – either a demon or a dead angel. Now he's dead' (PCP, p. 567) just moments before Spandrell does in fact suffer a sudden and violent death.

Multiple Choice Questions:-

1. The author implies that the answers to the questions in sentence two would reveal that human beings

- A. are less human when they seek pleasure
- B. need to evaluate their purpose in life
- C. are being alienated from their true nature by technology
- D. have needs beyond physical comforts
- E. are always seeking the meaning of life

2. The author would apparently agree that playing poker is

- A. often an effort to avoid thinking
- B. something that gives true pleasure
- C. an example of man's need for society
- D. something that man must learn to avoid
- E. inhuman

3. The author makes his main point with the aid of

- A. logical paradox
- B. complex rationalization
- C. observations on the connection between art and science
- D. scientific deductions
- E. extended simile

4. In the context of the final sentence the word "subtle" most nearly means

- A. not obvious
- B. indirect

- C. discriminating
- D. surreptitious
- E. scientific

5. The first sentence of passage one contains an element of

- A. paradox
- B. legend
- C. melancholy
- D. humor
- E. self-deprecation

6. By calling America an "imaginary country" the author of passage two implies that

- A. America has been the subject of numerous works for children
- B. he has never seen America
- C. his current vision of that country is not related to reality
- D. America has stimulated his imagination
- E. his childhood vision of that country owed nothing to actual conditions

7. Both passages make the point that

- A. imaginary travel is better than real journeys
- B. children's books are largely fiction
- C. the effects of childhood impressions are inescapable
- D. books read early in life can be revisited in the imagination many years later
- E. the sight of imaginary places evokes memories

8. Both passages list a series of places, but differ in that the author of passage one

- A. has been more influenced by his list of locations
- B. never expects to visit any of them in real life, whereas the writer of passage

two thinks it at least possible that he might

C. is less specific in compiling his list

D. wishes to preserve his locations in his mind forever, whereas the author of passage two wishes to modify all his visions in the light of reality.

E. revisits them more often

Unit III

Essay 3 Selected Snobberies

That certain snob appeal Essay: People who look down their noses at one thing or another should be honored for a healthy, life-confirming sense of individuality.

An anxious woman was wandering near my house looking for her cat.

"It's a Somali cat," she said. "Very rare. Long ears."

Never found the cat, but maybe I found something else: a new snobbery. Rare Somali cats.

Somalia? I've been there, but don't recall ever seeing one of those fine cats. But those were difficult times, and maybe all the cats were eaten. That could be why they're so rare.

Some people collect snobberies, make lists of them the way bird-watchers do with birds. Aldous Huxley, the late English writer, was one such. Huxley identified the 19th-century adolescent "Consumption Snobbery," the desire "to fade away in the flower of youth" in romantic emulation of the glum poet John Keats.

Death and disease snobberies have not faded, not in Baltimore at least. Richard Oloizia, of the fiction department at the Enoch Pratt Central Library, reports that one of the authors most popular with young girls who visit the library these days is Lurlene McDaniel. "She writes novels about teen-agers in which the main character almost always dies, or has a serious illness."

The English, a creative people who invented soccer and other popular games, also invented snobbery, which is also a game, though some people live or die by it. G.B. Shaw called snobbery the great strength of the English nation, but didn't explain why. How Irish.

The English are accomplished snobs. They know when to take up a snobbery and, more importantly, when to drop it. Americans aren't entirely competent snobs. This infers no moral superiority so much as slowness to perceive when too many people have gotten into the "in group." Moreover, some Americans still think golf separates them from the hoi polloi. Or cell phones.

There is no end to the snobberies. There are opera snobs (they complain about surtitles) and jazz snobs (they complain when the musician gets too close to the melody). There are radio snobs (NPR only) and television snobs (they never watch). There are even adoption snobs (is this the season for Chinese babies or Brazilian?).

Art snobbery endures. It's usually an expression of culture snobbery, but sometimes of possession snobbery, if the snob in question is rich enough to buy the stuff.

Wine snobbery came to these shores from the Old World really only within the past three decades or so. Murray Milner, a sociologist at the University of Virginia, who studies social status, regards it as an enduring snobbery: "People becoming obsessed with being a connoisseur as a way to signal their 'in-ness,' their sophistication. To be a wine snob you have to learn a whole set of norms about wines." And a new language.

Beer snobs try but don't attract the same hateful respect wine snobs do. They are more like beer nerds, though they do have an argot: "Sports a fine reddish/deep amber/honey color, off-white foam, average head retention; the nose is delightfully fruity and berry-like right from the start. ..."

People can be snobs about the oddest things. Ignorance, for instance. How many times have you heard educated people boast of their lack of knowledge of machines, especially computers? What else is that but ignorance snobbery?

Snobberies come and go. Two newer ones have to do with recycling and fly fishing. Both are derivatives of eco-snobbery. Recycling snobs are like anti-smoking zealots: They have a religious fervor. "That goes in the blue bin, fella! Not the white bin! Get it right!"

Torquemada probably recycled.

Certain yuppie fishermen in Washington State, I've read, will fish only for the declining wild steelhead trout. Other fish need not apply. Imagine, fishing snobs!

It gets worse, for within this limited group of anglers is a smaller clique who fish with unbarbed hooks. It doesn't matter to them that they may die before ever

He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went: his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead!

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I.
Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,

feeling the tug of a steelhead trout. This could be an ultra eco-snobbery. Or maybe even a glimpse of the rare stupidity snobbery.

None of this should be taken for disapproval of snobbery. Not at all.

Snobbery is evidence of social and economic vitality. Preoccupation with fashions in clothes, cars, mates, mannerisms, language or personal style may seem like lunatic obsessions, but they are not entirely negative. Money lavishly spent for the empty purpose of raising oneself above one's neighbors helps all: It costs money to keep up; it creates jobs.

Knowledge is acquired when we succeed in fitting a new experience into the system of concepts based upon our old experiences. Understanding comes when we liberate ourselves from the old and so make possible a direct, unmediated contact with the new, the mystery, moment by moment, of our existence. The new is the given on every level of experience — given perceptions, given emotions and thoughts, given states of unstructured awareness, given relationships with things and persons. The old is our home-made system of ideas and word patterns. It is the stock of finished articles fabricated out of the given mystery by memory and analytical reasoning, by habit and the automatic associations of accepted notions. Knowledge is primarily a knowledge of these finished articles. Understanding is primarily direct awareness of the raw material. Knowledge is always in terms of concepts and can be passed on by means of words or other symbols. Understanding is not conceptual, and therefore cannot be passed on. It is an immediate experience, and immediate experience can only be talked about (very inadequately), never shared. Nobody can actually feel another's pain or grief, another's love or joy or hunger. And similarly nobody can experience another's understanding of a given event or situation. There can, of course, be knowledge of such an understanding, and this knowledge may be passed on in speech or writing, or by means of other symbols. Such communicable knowledge is useful as a reminder that there have been specific understandings in the past, and that understanding is at all times possible. But we must always remember that knowledge of understanding is not the same thing as the understanding, which is the raw material of that knowledge. It is as different from understanding as the doctor's prescription for penicillin is different from penicillin. Understanding is not inherited, nor can it be laboriously acquired. It is something which, when circumstances are favorable, comes to us, so to say, of its own accord. All of us are knowers, all the time; it is only occasionally and in spite of ourselves that we directly understand the mystery of given reality. Consequently we are very

seldom tempted to equate understanding with knowledge. Of the exceptional men and women, who have understanding in every situation, most are intelligent enough to see that understanding is different from knowledge and that conceptual systems based upon past experience are as necessary to the conduct of life as are spontaneous insights into new experiences. For these reasons the mistake of identifying understanding with knowledge is rarely perpetrated and therefore poses no serious problem. How different is the case with the opposite mistake, the mistake of supposing that knowledge is the same as understanding and interchangeable with it! All adults possess vast stocks of knowledge. Some of it is correct knowledge, some of it is incorrect knowledge, and some of it only looks like knowledge and is neither correct nor incorrect; it is merely meaningless. That which gives meaning to a proposition is not (to use the words of an eminent contemporary philosopher, Rudolf Carnap) "the attendant images or thoughts, but the possibility of deducing from it perceptive propositions, in other words the possibility of verification. To give sense to a proposition, the presence of images is not sufficient, it is not even necessary. We have no image of the electro-magnetic field, nor even, I should say, of the gravitational field; nevertheless the proposition which physicists assert about these fields have a perfect sense, because perceptive propositions are deductible from them." Metaphysical doctrines are propositions which cannot be operationally verified, at least on the level of ordinary experience. They may be expressive of a state of mind, in the way that lyrical poetry is expressive; but they have no assignable meaning. The information they convey is only pseudo-knowledge. But the formulators of metaphysical doctrines and the believers in such doctrines have always mistaken this pseudo-knowledge for knowledge and have proceeded to modify their behavior accordingly. Meaningless pseudo-knowledge has at all times been one of the principal motivators of individual and collective action. And that is one of the reasons why the course of human history has been so tragic and at the same time so strangely grotesque. Action based upon meaningless pseudo-knowledge is always inappropriate, always beside the point, and consequently always results in the kind of mess mankind has always lived in — the kind of mess that makes the angels weep and the satirists laugh aloud. Correct or incorrect, relevant or meaningless, knowledge and pseudo-knowledge are as common as dirt and are therefore taken for granted. Understanding, on the contrary, is as rare, very nearly, as emeralds, and so is highly prized. The knowers would dearly love to be understanders; but either their stock of knowledge does not include the knowledge of what to do in order to be understanders: or else they know theoretically what they ought to do, but go on doing the opposite all the same. In either case they cherish the comforting delusion that knowledge and, above all, pseudo-knowledge

are understanding. Along with the closely related errors of over-abstraction, overgeneralization and over-simplification, this is the commonest of all intellectual sins and the most dangerous. Of the vast sum of human misery about one third, I would guess, is unavoidable misery. This is the price we must pay for being embodied, and for inheriting genes which are subject to deleterious mutations. This is the rent extorted by Nature for the privilege of living on the surface of a planet, whose soil is mostly poor, whose climates are capricious and inclement, and whose inhabitants include a countless number of microorganisms capable of causing in man himself, in his domestic animals and cultivated plants, an immense variety of deadly or debilitating diseases. To these miseries of cosmic origin must be added the much larger group of those avoidable disasters we bring upon ourselves. For at least two thirds of our miseries spring from human stupidity, human malice and those great motivators and justifiers of malice and stupidity, idealism, dogmatism and proselytizing zeal on behalf of religious or political idols. But zeal, dogmatism and idealism exist only because we are forever committing intellectual sins. We sin by attributing concrete significance to meaningless pseudo-knowledge; we sin in being too lazy to think in terms of multiple causation and indulging instead in oversimplification, over-generalization and over-abstraction; and we sin by cherishing the false but agreeable notion that conceptual knowledge and, above all, conceptual pseudoknowledge are the same as understanding. Consider a few obvious examples. The atrocities of organized religion (and organized religion, let us never forget, has done about as much harm as it has done good) are all due, in the last analysis, to "mistaking the pointing finger for the moon" — in other words to mistaking the verbalized notion for the given mystery to which it refers or, more often, only seems to refer. This, as I have said, is one of the original sins of the intellect, and it is a sin in which, with a rationalistic bumptiousness as grotesque as it is distasteful, theologians have systematically wallowed. From indulgence in this kind of delinquency there has arisen, in most of the great religious traditions of the world, a fantastic overvalution of words. Over-valuation of words leads all too frequently to the fabrication and idolatrous worship of dogmas, to the insistence on uniformity of belief, the demand for assent by all and sundry to a set of propositions which, though meaningless, are to be regarded as sacred. Those who do not consent to this idolatrous worship of words are to be "converted" and, if that should prove impossible, either persecuted or, if the dogmatizers lack political power, ostracized and denounced. Immediate experience of reality unites men. Conceptualized beliefs, including even the belief in a God of love and righteousness, divide them and, as the dismal record of religious history bears witness, set them for centuries on end at each other's throats. Over-simplification,

over-generalization and over-abstraction are three other sins closely related to the sin of imagining that knowledge and pseudo-knowledge are the same as understanding. The over-generalizing over-simplifier is the man who asserts, without producing evidence, that "All X's are Y," or, "All A's have a single cause, which is B." The over-abstractor is the one who cannot be bothered to deal with Jones and Smith, with Jane and Mary, as individuals, but enjoys being eloquent on the subject of Humanity, of Progress, of God and History and the Future. This brand of intellectual delinquency is indulged in by every demagogue, every crusader. In the Middle Ages the favorite over-generalization was "All infidels are damned." (For the Moslems, "all infidels" meant "all Christians"; for the Christians, "all Moslems.") Almost as popular was the nonsensical proposition, "All heretics are inspired by the devil" and "All eccentric old women are witches." In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the wars and persecutions were justified by the luminously clear and simple belief that "All Roman Catholics (or, if you happened to be on the Pope's side, all Lutherans, Calvinists and Anglicans) are God's enemies." In our own day Hitler proclaimed that all the ills of the world had one cause, namely Jews, and that all Jews were subhuman enemies of mankind. For the Communists, all the ills of the world have one cause, namely capitalists, and all capitalists and their middle-class supporters are subhuman enemies of mankind. It is perfectly obvious, on the face of it, that none of these over-generalized statements can possibly be true. But the urge to intellectual sin is fearfully strong. All are subject to temptation and few are able to resist. There are in the lives of human beings very many situations in which only knowledge, conceptualized, accumulated and passed on by means of words, if of any practical use. For example, if I want to manufacture sulphuric acid or to keep accounts for a banker, I do not start at the beginnings of chemistry or economics; I start at what is now the end of these sciences. In other words, I go to a school where the relevant knowledge is taught, I read books in which the accumulations of past experience in these particular fields are set forth. I can learn the functions of an accountant or a chemical engineer on the basis of knowledge alone. For this particular purpose it is not necessary for me to have much understanding of concrete situations as they arise, moment by moment, from the depths of the given mystery of our existence. What is important for me as a professional man is that I should be familiar with all the conceptual knowledge in my field. Ours is an industrial civilization, in which no society can prosper unless it possesses an elite of highly trained scientists and a considerable army of engineers and technicians. The possession and wide dissemination of a great deal of correct, specialized knowledge has become a prime condition of national survival. In the United States, during the last twenty or thirty years, this fact seems to have been

forgotten. Professional educationists have taken John Dewey's theories of "learning through doing" and of "education as lifeadjustment," and have applied them in such a way that, in many American schools, there is now doing without learning, along with courses in adjustment to everything except the basic twentieth-century fact that we live in a world where ignorance of science and its methods is the surest, shortest road to national disaster. During the past half century every other nation has made great efforts to impart more knowledge to more young people. In the United States professional educationists have chosen the opposite course. At the turn of the century fifty-six per cent of the pupils in American high schools studied algebra; today less than a quarter of them are so much as introduced to the subject. In 1955 eleven per cent of American boys and girls were studying geometry; fifty years ago the figure was twenty-seven per cent. Four per cent of them now take physics, as against nineteen per cent in 1900. Fifty per cent of American high schools offer no courses in chemistry, fifty-three per cent no course in physics. This headlong decline in knowledge has not been accompanied by any increase in understanding; for it goes without saying that high school courses in life adjustment do not teach understanding. They teach only conformity to current conventions of personal and collective behavior. There is no substitute for correct knowledge, and in the process of acquiring correct knowledge there is no substitute for concentration and prolonged practice. Except for the unusually gifted, learning, by whatever method, must always be hard work. Unfortunately there are many professional educationists who seem to think that children should never be required to work hard. Wherever educational methods are based on this assumption, children will not in fact acquire much knowledge; and if the methods are followed for a generation or two, the society which tolerates them will find itself in full decline. In theory, deficiencies in knowledge can be made good simply by changing the curriculum. In practice, a change in the curriculum will do little good, unless there is a corresponding change in the point of view of professional educationists. For the trouble with American educationists, writes a distinguished member of their profession, Dr. H. L. Dodge, is that they "regard any subject from personal grooming to philosophy as equally important or interchangeable in furthering the process of self-realization. This anarchy of values has led to the displacement of the established disciplines of science and the humanities by these new subjects." Whether professional educationists can be induced to change their current attitudes is uncertain. Should it prove impossible, we must fall back on the comforting thought that time never stands still and that nobody is immortal. What persuasion and the threat of national decline fail to accomplish, retirement, high blood pressure and death will bring to pass, more slowly, it is true, but much more

surely. The dissemination of correct knowledge is one of the essential functions of education, and we neglect it at our peril. But, obviously, education should be more than a device for passing on correct knowledge. It should also teach what Dewey called life adjustment and self-realization. But precisely how should self-realization and life adjustment be promoted? To this question modern educators have given many answers. Most of these answers belong to one or other of two main educational families, the Progressive and the Classical. Answers of the Progressive type find expression in the provision of courses in such subject as "family living, consumer economics, job information, physical and mental health, training for world citizenship and statesmanship and last, and we are afraid least" (I quote again the words of Dr. Dodge) "training in fundamentals." Where answers of the Classical type are preferred, educators provide courses in Latin, Greek and modern European literature, in world history and in philosophy — exclusively, for some odd reason, of the Western brand. Shakespeare and Chaucer, Virgil and Homer — how far away they seem, how irrevocably dead! Why, then, should we bother to teach the classics? The reasons have been stated a thousand times, but seldom with more force and lucidity than by Albert Jay Nock in his Memoirs of a Superfluous Man. "The literatures of Greece and Rome provide the longest, the most complete and most nearly continuous record we have of what the strange creature Homo sapiens has been busy about in virtually every department of spiritual, intellectual and social activity. Hence the mind that has canvassed this record is much more than a disciplined mind, it is an experienced mind. It has come, as Emerson says, into a feeling of immense longevity, and it instinctively views contemporary man and his doings in the perspective set by this profound and weighty experience. Our studies were properly called formative, because, beyond all others, their effect was powerfully maturing. Cicero told the unvarnished truth in saying that those who have no knowledge of what has gone before them must for ever remain children. And if one wished to characterize the collective mind of this period, or indeed of any period, the use it makes of its powers of observation, reflection, logical inference, one would best do it by the word 'immaturity.' " The Progressive and the Classical approaches to education are not incompatible. It is perfectly possible to combine a schooling in the local cultural tradition with a training, half vocational, half psychological, in adaptation to the current conventions of social life, and then to combine this combination with training in the sciences, in other words with the inculcation of correct knowledge. But is this enough? Can such an education result in the self-realization which is its aim? The question deserves our closest scrutiny. Nobody, of course, can doubt the importance of accumulated experience as a guide for individual and social

conduct. We are human because, at a very early stage in the history of the species, our ancestors discovered a way of preserving and disseminating the results of experience. They learned to speak and were thus enabled to translate what they had perceived, what they had inferred from given fact and home-grown phantasy, into a set of concepts, which could be added to by each generation and bequeathed, a treasure of mingled sense and nonsense, to posterity. In Mr. Nock's words "the mind that has canvassed this record is an experienced mind." The only trouble, so far as we are concerned, is that the vicarious experience derived from a study of the classics is, in certain respects, completely irrelevant to twentieth-century facts. In many ways, of course, the modern world resembles the world inhabited by the men of antiquity. In many other ways, however, it is radically different. For example, in their world the rate of change was exceedingly slow; in ours advancing technology produces a state of chronic revolution. They took infanticide for granted (Thebes was the only Greek city which forbade the exposure of babies) and regarded slavery as not only necessary to the Greek way of life, but as intrinsically natural and right; we are the heirs of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century humanitarianism and must solve our economic and demographic problems by methods less dreadfully reminiscent of recent totalitarian practice. Because all the dirty work was done by slaves, they regarded every form of manual activity as essentially unworthy of a gentleman and in consequence never subjected their overabstract, over-rational theories to the test of experiment; we have learned, or at least are learning, to think operationally. They despised "barbarians," never bothered to learn a foreign language and could therefore naïvely regard the rules of Greek grammar and syntax as the Laws of Thought; we have begun to understand the nature of language, the danger of taking words too seriously, the ever-present need for linguistic analysis. They knew nothing about the past and therefore, in Cicero's words, were like children. (Thucydides, the greatest historian of antiquity, prefaces his account of the Peloponnesian War by airily asserting that nothing of great importance had happened before his own time.) We, in the course of the last five generations, have acquired a knowledge of man's past extending back to more than half a million years and covering the activities of tribes and nations in every continent. They developed political institutions which, in the case of Greece, were hopelessly unstable and, in the case of Rome, were only too firmly fixed in a pattern of aggressiveness and brutality; but what we need is a few hints on the art of creating an entirely new kind of society, durable but adventurous, strong but humane, highly organized but liberty-loving, elastic and adaptable. In this matter Greece and Rome can teach us only negatively — by demonstrating, in their divergent ways, what not to do. From all this it is clear that a classical education

in the humanities of two thousand years ago requires to be supplemented by some kind of training in the humanities of today and tomorrow. The Progressives profess to give such a training; but surely we need something a little more informative, a little more useful in this vertiginously changing world of ours, than courses in present-day consumer economics and current job information. But even if a completely adequate schooling in the humanities of the past, the present and the foreseeable future could be devised and made available to all. would the aims of education, as distinct from factual and theoretical instruction, be thereby achieved? Would the recipients of such an education be any nearer to the goal of self-realization? The answer, I am afraid, is, No. For at this point we find ourselves confronted by one of those paradoxes which are of the very essence of our strange existence as amphibians inhabiting, without being completely at home in, half a dozen almost incommensurable worlds — the world of concepts and the world of data, the objective world and the subjective, the small, bright world of personal consciousness and the vast, mysterious world of the unconscious. Where education is concerned, the paradox may be expressed in the statement that the medium of education, which is language, is absolutely necessary, but also fatal; that the subject matter of education, which is the conceptualized accumulation of past experiences, is indispensable, but also an obstacle to be circumvented. "Existence is prior to essence." Unlike most metaphysical propositions, this slogan of the existentialists can actually be verified. "Wolf children," adopted by animal mothers and brought up in animal surroundings, have the form of human beings, but are not human. The essence of humanity, it is evident, is not something we are born with; it is something we make or grow into. We learn to speak, we accumulate conceptualized knowledge and pseudo-knowledge, we imitate our elders, we build up fixed patterns of thought and feeling and behavior, and in the process we become human, we turn into persons. But the things which make us human are precisely the things which interfere with self-realization and prevent understanding. We are humanized by imitating others, by learning their speech and by acquiring the accumulated knowledge which language makes available. But we understand only when, by liberating ourselves from the tyranny of words, conditioned reflexes and social conventions, we establish direct, unmediated contact with experience. The greatest paradox of our existence consists in this: that, in order to understand, we must first encumber ourselves with all the intellectual and emotional baggage which is an impediment to understanding. Except in a dim, pre-conscious way, animals do not understand a situation, even though, by inherited instinct or by an ad hoc act of intelligence, they may be reacting to it with complete appropriateness, as though they understood it. Conscious understanding is the privilege of men and women, and it

is a privilege which they have earned, strangely enough, by acquiring the useful or delinquent habits, the stereotypes of perception, thought and feeling, the rituals of behavior, the stock of second-hand knowledge and pseudo-knowledge, whose possession is the greatest obstacle to understanding. "Learning," says Lao-tsu, "consists in adding to one's stock day by day. The practice of the Tao consists in subtracting." This does not mean, of course, that we can live by subtraction alone. Learning is as necessary as unlearning. Wherever technical proficiency is needed, learning is indispensable. From youth to old age, from generation to generation, we must go on adding to our stock of useful and relevant knowledge. Only in this way can we hope to deal effectively with the physical environment, and with the abstract ideas which make it possible for men to find their way through the complexities of civilization and technology. But this is not the right way to deal with our personal relations to ourselves or to other human beings. In such situations there must be an unlearning of accumulated concepts; we must respond to each new challenge not with our old conditioning, not in the light of conceptual knowledge based on the memory of past and different events, not by consulting the law of averages, but with a consciousness stripped naked and as though newborn. Once more we are confronted by the great paradox of human life. It is our conditioning which develops our consciousness: but in order to make full use of this developed consciousness, we must start by getting rid of the conditioning which developed it. By adding conceptual knowledge to conceptual knowledge, we make conscious understanding possible; but this potential understanding can be actualized only when we have subtracted all that we have added. It is because we have memories that we are convinced of our self-identity as persons and as members of a given society.

The child is father of the Man; and I could wish my days to be Bound each to each by natural piety.

What Wordsworth called "natural piety" a teacher of understanding would describe as indulgence in emotionally charged memories, associated with childhood and youth. Factual memory — the memory, for example, of the best way of making sulphuric acid or of casting up accounts — is an unmixed blessing. But psychological memory (to use Krishnamurti's term), memory carrying an emotional charge, whether positive or negative, is a source at the worst of neurosis and insanity (psychiatry is largely the art of ridding patients of the incubus of their negatively charged memories), at the best of distractions from the task of understanding — distractions which, though socially useful, are none the less obstacles to be climbed over or avoided. Emotionally charged memories cement the ties of family life (or sometimes make family life impossible!) and

serve, when conceptualized and taught as a cultural tradition, to hold communities together. On the level of understanding, on the level of charity and on the level, to some extent, of artistic expression, an individual has it in his power to transcend his social tradition, to overstep the bounds of the culture in which he has been brought up. On the level of knowledge, manners and custom, he can never get very far away from the persona created for him by his family and his society. The culture within which he lives is a prison -- but a prison which makes it possible for any prisoner who so desires to achieve freedom, a prison to which, for this and a host of other reasons, its inmates owe an enormous debt of gratitude and loyalty. But though it is our duty to "honor our father and our mother," it is also our duty "to hate our father and our mother, our brethren and our sisters, yea and our own life" — that socially conditioned life we take for granted. Though it is necessary for us to add to our cultural stock day by day, it is also necessary to subtract and subtract. There is, to quote the title of Simone Weil's posthumous essay, a great "Need for Roots"; but there is an equally urgent need, on occasion, for total rootlessness. In our present context this book by Simone Weil and the preface which Mr. T. S. Eliot contributes to the English edition are particularly instructive. Simone Weil was a woman of great ability, heroic virtue and boundless spiritual aspiration. But unfortunately for herself, as well as for her readers, she was weighed down by a burden of knowledge and pseudo-knowledge, which her own almost maniacal over-valuation of words and notions rendered intolerably heavy. A clerical friend reports of her that he did not "ever remember Simone Weil, in spite of her virtuous desire for objectivity, give way in the course of a discussion." She was so deeply rooted in her culture that she came to believe that words were supremely important. Hence her love of argument and the obstinacy with which she clung to her opinions. Hence too her strange inability, on so many occasions, to distinguish the pointing finger from the indicated moon. "But why do you prate of God?" Meister Eckhart asked; and out of the depth of his understanding of given reality, he added "Whatever you say of Him is untrue." Necessarily so: for "the saving truth was never preached by the Buddha," or by anyone else. Truth can be defined in many ways. But if you define it as understanding (and this is how all the masters of the spiritual life have defined it), then it is clear that "truth must be lived and there is nothing to argue about in this teaching; any arguing is sure to go against the intent of it." This was something which Emerson knew and consistently acted upon. To the almost frenzied exasperation of that pugnacious manipulator of religious notions, the elder Henry James, he refused to argue about anything. And the same was true of William Law. "Away, then, with the fiction and workings of discursive reason, either for or against Christianity! They are only the wanton spirit of the mind,

whilst ignorant of God and insensible of its own nature and condition. . . For neither God, nor heaven, nor hell, nor the devil, nor the flesh, can be any other way knowable in you or by you, but by their own existence and manifestation in you. And any pretended knowledge of any of those things, beyond and without this self-evident sensibility of their birth within you, is only such knowledge of them as the blind man hath of the light that has never entered into him." This does not mean, of course, that discursive reason and argument are without value. Where knowledge is concerned, they are not only valuable; they are indispensable. But knowledge is not the same thing as understanding. If we want to understand, we must uproot ourselves from our culture, by-pass language, get rid of emotionally charged memories, hate our fathers and mothers, subtract and subtract from our stock of notions. "Needs must it be a virgin," writes Meister Eckhart, "by whom Jesus is received. Virgin, in other words, is a person, void of alien images, free as he was when he existed not." Simone Weil must have known, theoretically, about this need for cultural virginity, of total rootlessness. But, alas, she was too deeply embedded in her own and other people's ideas, too superstitious a believer in the magic of the words she handled with so much skill, to be able to act upon this knowledge. "The food," she wrote, "that a collectivity supplies to those who form part of it has no equivalent in the universe." (Thank God! we may add, after sniffing the spiritual nourishment provided by many of the vanished collectivities of the past.) Furthermore, the food provided by a collectivity is food "not only for the souls of the living, but also for souls yet unborn." Finally, "the collectivity constitutes the sole agency for preserving the spiritual treasures accumulated by the dead, the sole transmitting agency by means of which the dead can speak to the living. And the sole earthly reality which is connected with the eternal destiny of man is the irradiating light of those who have managed to become fully conscious of this destiny, transmitted from generation to generation." This last sentence could only have been penned by one who systematically mistook knowledge for understanding, home-made concepts for given reality. It is, of course, desirable that there should be knowledge of what men now dead have said about their understanding of reality. But to maintain that a knowledge of other people's understanding is the same, for us, as understanding, or can even directly lead us to understanding, is a mistake against which all the masters of the spiritual life have always warned us. The letter in St. Paul's phrase, is full of "oldness." It has therefore no relevance to the ever novel reality, which can be understood only in the "newness of the spirit." As for the dead, let them bury their dead. For even the most exalted of past seers and avatars "never taught the saving truth." We should not, it goes without saying, neglect the records of dead men's understandings. On the contrary, we ought to know all about them.

But we must know all about them without taking them too seriously. We must know all about them, while remaining acutely aware that such knowledge is not the same as understanding and that understanding will come to us only when we have subtracted what we know and made ourselves void and virgin. free as we were when we were not. Turning from the body of the book to the preface, we find an even more striking example of that literally preposterous over-valuation of words and notions to which the cultured and the learned are so fatally prone. "I do not know," Mr. Eliot writes, "whether she [Simone Weil] could read the Upanishads in Sanskrit — or. if so, how great was her mastery of what is not only a highly developed language, but a way of thought, the difficulties of which become more formidable to a European student the more diligently he applies himself to it." But like all the other great works of Oriental philosophy, the Upanishads are not systems of pure speculation, in which the niceties of language are all important. They were written by Transcendental Pragmatists, as we may call them, whose concern was to teach a doctrine which could be made to "work," a metaphysical theory which could be operationally tested, not through perception only, but by a direct experience of the whole man on every level of his being. To understand the meaning of tat tvamasi, "thou art That," it is not necessary to be a profound Sanskrit scholar. (Similarly, it is not necessary to be a profound Hebrew scholar in order to understand the meaning of "thou shalt not kill.") Understanding of the doctrine (as opposed to conceptualized knowledge about the doctrine) will come only to those who choose to perform the operations that permit tat tvamasi to become a given fact of direct, unmediated experience, or in Law's words "a self-evident sensibility of its birth within them." Did Simone Weil know Sanskrit, or didn't she? The question is entirely beside the point — is just a particularly smelly cultural red herring dragged across the trail that leads from selfhood to more-than-selfhood, from notionally conditioned ego to unconditioned spirit. In relation to the Upanishads or any other work of Hindu or Buddhist philosophy, only one question deserves to be taken with complete seriousness. It is this. How can a form of words, tat tvamasi, a metaphysical proposition such as Nirvana and samsara are one, be converted into the direct, unmediated experience of a given fact? How can language and the learned foolery of scholars (for, in this vital context, that is all it is) be circumvented, so that the individual soul may finally understand the That which, in spite of all its efforts to deny the primordial fact, is identical with the thou? Specifically, what methods should we follow? Those inculcated by Patanjali, or those of the Hinayana monks? Those of the Tantriks of northern India and Tibet, those of the Far Eastern Taoists, of the followers of Zen? Those described by St. John of the Cross and the author of The Cloud of Unknowing? If the European student wishes to remain

shut up in the prison created by his private cravings and the thought patterns inherited from his predecessors, then by all means let him plunge, through Sanskrit, or Pali, or Chinese, or Tibetan, into the verbal study of "a way of thought, the difficulties of which become more formidable the more diligently he applies himself to it." If, on the other hand, he wishes to transcend himself by actually understanding the primordial fact described or hinted at in the Upanishads and the other scriptures of what, for lack of a better phrase, we will call "spiritual religion," then he must ignore the problems of language and speculative philosophy, or at least relegate them to a secondary position, and concentrate his attention on the practical means whereby the advance from knowledge to understanding may best be made. From the positively charged collective memories, which are organized into a cultural or religious tradition, let us now return to the positively charged private memories, which individuals organize into a system of 'natural piety." We have no more right to wallow in natural piety — that is to say, in emotionally charged memories of past happiness and vanished loves — than to bemoan earlier miseries and torment ourselves with remorse for old offenses. And we have no more right to waste the present instant in relishing future and entirely hypothetical pleasures than to waste it in the apprehension of possible disasters to come. "There is no greater pain," says Dante, "than, in misery, to remember happy times." "Then stop remembering happy times and accept the fact of your present misery," would be the seemingly unsympathetic answer to all those who have had understanding. The emptying of memory is classed by St. John of the Cross as a good second only to the state of union with God, and an indispensable condition of such union. The word Buddha may be translated as "awakened." Those who merely know about things, or only think they know, live in a state of self-conditioned and culturally conditioned somnambulism. Those who understand given reality as it presents itself, moment by moment, are wide awake. Memory charged with pleasant emotions is a soporific or, more accurately, an inducer of trance. This was discovered empirically by an American hypnotist, Dr. W. B. Fahnestock, whose books Statuvolism, or Artificial Somnambulism, was published in 1871. "When persons are desirous of entering into this state [of artificial somnambulism] I place them in a chair, where they may be at perfect ease. They are next instructed to throw their minds to some familiar place it matters not where, so that they have been there before and seem desirous of going there again, even in thought. When they have thrown the mind to the place, or upon the desired object, I endeavor by speaking to them frequently to keep their mind upon it. . . This must be persisted in for some time." In the end, "clairvoyancy will be induced." Anyone who has experimented with hypnosis, or who has watched an experienced operator

inducing trance in a difficult subject knows how effective Fahnestock's method can be. Incidentally, the relaxing power of positively charged memory was rediscovered, in another medical context, by an oculist, Dr. W. H. Bates, who used to make his patients cover their eyes and revisit in memory the scenes of their happiest experiences. By this means muscular and mental tensions were reduced and it became possible for the patients to use their eyes and minds in a relaxed and therefore efficient way. From all this it is clear that, while positively charged memories can and should be used for specific therapeutic purposes, there must be no indiscriminate indulgence in "natural piety"; for such indulgence may result in a condition akin to trance — a condition at the opposite pole from the wakefulness that is understanding. Those who live with unpleasant memories become neurotic and those who live with pleasant ones become somnambulistic; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof — and the good thereof. The Muses, in Greek mythology, were the daughters of Memory, and every writer is embarked, like Marcel Proust, on a hopeless search for time lost. But a good writer is one who knows how to "donner un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu." Thanks to this purer sense, his readers will react to his words with a degree of understanding much greater than they would have had, if they had reacted, in their ordinary self-conditioned or culture-conditioned way, to the events to which the words refer. A great poet must do too much remembering to be more than a sporadic understander; but he knows how to express himself in words which cause other people to understand. Time lost can never be regained; but in his search for it, he may reveal to his readers glimpses of timeless reality. Unlike the poet, the mystic is "a son of time present." "Past and present veil God from our sight," says Jalal-ud din Rumi, who was a Sufi first and only secondarily a great poet. "Burn up both of them with fire. How long will you let yourself be partitioned by these segments like a reed? So long as it remains partitioned, a reed is not privy to secrets, neither is it vocal in response to lips or breathing." Along with its mirror image in anticipation, emotionally charged memory is a barrier that shuts us out from understanding. Natural piety can very easily be transformed into artificial piety; for some emotionally charged memories are common to all the members of a given society and lend themselves to being organized into religious, political or cultural traditions. These traditions are systematically drummed into the young of each successive generation and play an important part in the long drama of their conditioning for citizenship. Since the memories common to one group are different from the memories shared by other groups, the social solidarity created by tradition is always partial and exclusive. There is natural and artificial piety in relation to everything belonging to us, coupled with suspicion, dislike and contempt in relation to everything belonging to them. Artificial piety may be

fabricated, organized and fostered in two ways -- by the repetition of verbal formulas of belief and worship, and by the performance of symbolic acts and rituals. As might be expected, the second is the more effective method. What is the easiest way for a skeptic to achieve faith? The question was answered three hundred years ago by Pascal. The unbeliever must act "as though he believed, take holy water, have masses said etc. This will naturally cause you to believe and will besot you." (Celavousabêtira — literally, will make you stupid.) We have to be made stupid, insists Professor Jacques Chevalier, defending his hero against the critics who have been shocked by Pascal's blunt language; we have to stultify our intelligence, because "intellectual pride deprives us of God and debases us to the level of animals." Which is, of course, perfectly true. But it does not follow from this truth that we ought to besot ourselves in the manner prescribed by Pascal and all the propagandists of all the religions. Intellectual pride can be cured only by devaluating pretentious words, only by getting rid of conceptualized pseudo-knowledge and opening ourselves to reality. Artificial piety based on conditioned reflexes merely transfers intellectual pride from the bumptious individual to his even more bumptious Church. At one remove, the pride remains intact. For the convinced believer, understanding or direct contact with reality is exceedingly difficult. Moreover, the mere fact of having a strong reverential feeling about some hallowed thing, person or proposition is no guarantee of the existence of the thing, the infallibility of the person or the truth of the proposition. In this context, how instructive is the account of an experiment undertaken by that most imaginative and versatile of the Eminent Victorians, Sir Francis Galton! The aim of the experiment, he writes in his Autobiography, was to "gain an insight into the abject feelings of barbarians and others concerning the power of images which they know to be of human handiwork. I wanted if possible to enter into these feelings. . . It was difficult to find a suitable object for trial, because it ought to be in itself quite unfitted to arouse devout feelings. I fixed on a comic picture, it was that of Punch, and made believe in its possession of divine attributes. I addressed it with much quasi-reverence as possessing a mighty power to reward or punish the behavior of men toward it, and found little difficulty in ignoring the impossibilities of what I professed. The experiment succeeded. I began to feel and long retained for the picture a large share of the feelings that a barbarian entertains toward his idols, and learned to appreciate the enormous potency they might have over him." The nature of a conditioned reflex is such that, when the bell rings, the dog salivates, when the much worshiped image is seen, or the much repeated credo, litany or mantram is pronounced, the heart of the believer is filled with reverence and his mind with faith. And this happens regardless of the content of the phrase repealed, the nature of the image to which obeisance has been made.

He is not responding spontaneously to given reality; he is responding to some thing, or word, or gesture, which automatically brings into play a previously installed post-hypnotic suggestion. Meister Eckhart, that acutest of religious psychologists, clearly recognized this fact. "He who fondly imagines to get more of God in thoughts, prayers, pious offices and so forth than by the fireside or in the stall in sooth he does but take God, as it were, and swaddle His head in a cloak and hide Him under the table. For he who seeks God in settled forms lays hold of the form, while missing the God concealed in it. But he who seeks God in no special guise lays hold of him as He is in Himself, and such an one lives with the Son and is the life itself." "If you look for the Buddha, you will not see the Buddha." "If you deliberately try to become a Buddha, your Buddha is samsara." "If a person seeks the Tao, that person loses the Tao." "By intending to bring yourself into accord with Suchness, you instantly deviate." "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." There is a Law of Reversed Effort. The harder we try with the conscious will to do something, the less we shall succeed. Proficiency and the results of proficiency come only to those who have learned the paradoxical art of simultaneously doing and not doing, of combining relaxation with activity, of letting go as a person in order that the immanent and transcendent Unknown Quantity may take hold. We cannot make ourselves understand; the most we can do is to foster a state of mind, in which understanding may come to us. What is this state? Clearly it is not any state of limited consciousness. Reality as it is given moment by moment cannot be understood by a mind acting in obedience to post-hypnotic suggestion, or so conditioned by its emotionally charged memories that it responds to the living now as though it were the dead then. Nor is the mind that has been trained in concentration any better equipped to understand reality. For concentration is merely systematic exclusion, the shutting away from consciousness of all but one thought, one ideal, one image, or one negation of all thoughts, ideals and images. But however true, however lofty, however holy, no thought or ideal or image can contain reality or lead to the understanding of reality. Nor can the negation of awareness result in that completer awareness necessary to understanding. At the best these things can lead only to a state of ecstatic dissociation, in which one particular aspect of reality, the so-called "spiritual" aspect, may be apprehended. If reality is to be understood in its fullness, as it is given moment by moment, there must be an awareness which is not limited, either deliberately by piety or concentration, or involuntarily by mere thoughtlessness and the force of habit. Understanding comes when we are totally aware — aware to the limits of our mental and physical potentialities. This, of course, is a very ancient doctrine. "Know thyself" is a piece of advice which is as old as civilization, and probably a great deal older. To follow that advice, a man

must do more than indulge in introspection. If I would know myself, I must know my environment; for as a body, I am part of the environment, a natural object among other natural objects, and, as a mind, I consist to a great extent of my immediate reactions to the environment and of my secondary reactions to those primary reactions. In practice "know thyself" is a call to total awareness. To those who practice it, what does total awareness reveal? It reveals, first of all, the limitations of the thing which each of us calls "I," and the enormity, the utter absurdity of its pretensions. "I am the master of my fate," poor Henley wrote at the end of a celebrated morsel of rhetoric, "I am the captain of my soul." Nothing could be further from the truth. My fate cannot be mastered; it can only be collaborated with and thereby, to some extent, directed. Nor am I the captain of my soul; I am only its noisiest passenger — a passenger who is not sufficiently important to sit at the captain's table and does not know, even by report, what the soul-ship looks like, how it works or where it is going. Total awareness starts, in a word, with the realization of my ignorance and my impotence. How do electro-chemical events in my brain turn into the perception of a quartet by Haydn or a thought, let us say, of Joan of Arc? I haven't the faintest idea — nor has anyone else. Or consider a seemingly much simpler problem. Can I lift my right hand? The answer is, No, I can't. I can only give the

order; the actual lifting is done by somebody else. Who? I don't know. How? I don't know. And when I have eaten, who digests the bread and cheese? When I have cut myself, who heals the wound? While I am sleeping. who restores the tired body to strength, the neurotic mind to sanity. All I can say is that "I" cannot do any of these things. The catalogue of what I do not know and am incapable of achieving could be lengthened almost indefinitely. Even my claim to think is only partially justified by the observable facts. Descartes's primal certainty, "I think, therefore I am," turns out, on closer examination, to be a most dubious proposition. In actual fact it is I who do the thinking? Would it not be truer to say, "Thoughts come into existence, and sometimes I am aware of them"? Language, that treasure house of fossil observations and latent philosophy, suggests that this is in fact what happens. Whenever I find myself thinking more than ordinarily well, I am apt to say, "An idea has occurred to me," or, "It came into my head," or, "I see it clearly." In each case the phrase implies that thoughts have their origin "out there," in something analogous, on the mental level, to the external world. Total awareness confirms the hints of idiomatic speech. In relation to the subjective "I," most of the mind is out there. My thoughts are a set of mental, but still external facts. I do not invent my best thoughts; I find them. Total awareness, then, reveals the following facts: that I am profoundly ignorant, that I am impotent

to the point of helplessness and that the most valuable elements in my personality are unknown quantities existing "out there," as mental objects more or less completely independent of my control. This discovery may seem at first rather humiliating and even depressing. But if I wholeheartedly accept them, the facts become a source of peace, a reason for serenity and cheerfulness. I am ignorant and impotent and yet, somehow or other, here I am, unhappy, no doubt, profoundly dissatisfied, but alive and kicking. In spite of everything, I survive, I get by, sometimes I even get on. From these two sets of facts — my survival on the one hand and my ignorance and impotence on the other — I can only infer that the not-I, which looks after my body and gives me my best ideas, must be amazingly intelligent, knowledgeable and strong. As a self-centered ego, I do my best to interfere with the beneficent workings of this not-I. But in spite of my likes and dislikes, in spite of my malice, my infatuations, my gnawing anxieties, in spite of all my overvaluation of words, in spite of my self-stultifying insistence on living, not in present reality, but in memory and anticipation, this not-I, with whom I am associated, sustains me, preserves me, gives me a long succession of second chances. We know very little and can achieve very little; but we are at liberty, if we so choose, to co-operate with a greater power and a completer knowledge, an unknown quantity at once immanent and transcendent, at once physical and mental, at once subjective and objective. If we co-operate, we shall be all right, even if the worst should happen. If we refuse to co-operate, we shall be all wrong even in the most propitious of circumstances. These conclusions are only the first-fruits of total awareness. Yet richer harvests are to follow. In my ignorance I am sure that I am eternally I. This conviction is rooted in emotionally charged memory. Only when, in the words of St. John of the Cross, the memory has been emptied, can I escape from the sense of my watertight separateness and so prepare myself for the understanding, moment by moment, of reality on all its levels. But the memory cannot be emptied by an act of will, or by systematic discipline or by concentration — even by concentration on the idea of emptiness. It can be emptied only by total awareness. Thus, if I am aware of my distractions — which are mostly emotionally charged memories or phantasies based upon such memories — the mental whirligig will automatically come to a stop and the memory will be emptied, at least for a moment or two. Again, if I become totally aware of my resentment, my uncharitableness, these feelings will be replaced, during the time of my awareness, by a more realistic reaction to the events taking place around me. My awareness, of course, must be uncontaminated by approval or condemnation. Value judgments are conditioned, verbalized reactions to primary reactions. Total awareness is a primary, choiceless, impartial response to the present situation as a whole. There are in it no limiting conditioned reactions

to the primary reaction, to the pure cognitive apprehension of the situation. If memories of verbal formulas of praise or blame should make their appearance in consciousness, they are to be examined impartially as any other present datum is examined. Professional moralists have confidence in the surface will, believe in punishments and rewards and are adrenalin addicts who like nothing better than a good orgy of righteous indignation. The masters of the spiritual life have little faith in the surface will or the utility, for their particular purposes, of rewards or punishments, and do not indulge in righteous indignation. Experience has taught them that the highest good can never, in the very nature of things, be achieved by moralizing. "Judge not that ye be not judged" is their watchword and total awareness is their method. Two or three thousand years behind the times, a few contemporary psychiatrists have now discovered this method. "Socrates," writes Professor Carl Rogers, "developed novel ideas, which have proven to be socially constructive." Why? Because he was "notably non-defensive and open to experience. The reasoning behind this is based primarily upon the discovery in psychotherapy that if we can add to the sensory and visceral experiencing, characteristic of the whole animal kingdom, the gift of a free undirected awareness, of which only the human animal seems fully capable, we have an organism which is as aware of the demands of the culture as it is of its own physiological demands for food and sex, which is just as aware of its desire for friendly relationships as it is aware of its desire to aggrandize itself; which is just as aware of its delicate and sensitive tenderness toward others as it is of its hostilities toward others. When man is less than fully man, when he denies to awareness various aspects of his experience, then indeed we have all too often reason to fear him and his behavior, as the present world situation testifies. But when he is most fully man, when he is his complete organism, when awareness of experience, that peculiarly human attribute, is fully operating, then his behavior is to be trusted." Better late than never! It is comforting to find the immemorial commonplaces of mystical wisdom turning up as a brand-new discovery in psychotherapy. Gnosceteipsum — know yourself. Know yourself in relation to your overt intentions and your hidden motives, in relation to your thinking, your physical functioning and to those greater not-selves, who see to it that, despite all the ego's attempts at sabotage, the thinking shall be tolerably relevant and the functioning not too abnormal. Be totally aware of what you do and think and of the persons with whom you are in relationship, the events which prompt you at every moment of your existence. Be aware impartially, realistically, without judging, without reacting in terms of remembered words to your present cognitive reactions. If you do this, the memory will be emptied, knowledge and pseudo-knowledge will be relegated to their proper place, and you will have

understanding — in other words, you will be in direct contact with reality at every instant. Better still, you will discover what Carl Rogers calls your "delicate and sensitive tenderness toward others." And not only your tenderness, the cosmic tenderness, the fundamental all-rightness of the universe — in spite of death, in spite of suffering. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." This is the utterance of someone who is totally aware. And another such utterance is, "God is love." From the standpoint of common sense, the first is the raving of a lunatic, the second flies in the face of all experience and is obviously untrue. But common sense is not based on total awareness; it is a product of convention, of organized memories of other people's words, of personal experiences limited by passion and value judgments, of hallowed notions and naked self-interest. Total awareness opens the way to understanding, and when any given situation is understood, the nature of all reality is made manifest, and the nonsensical utterances of the mystics are seen to be true, or at least as nearly true as it is possible for a verbal expression of the ineffable to be. One in all and all in One; samsara and nirvana are the same; multiplicity is unity, and unity is not so much one as not-two; all things are void, and yet all things are the Dharma-Body of the Buddha — and so on. So far as conceptual knowledge is concerned, such phrases are completely meaningless. It is only when there is understanding that they make sense. For when there is understanding, there is an experienced fusion of the End with the Means, of the Wisdom which is the timeless realization of Suchness with the Compassion which is Wisdom in action. Of all the worn, smudged, dog's-eared words in our vocabulary, "love" is surely the grubbiest, smelliest, slimiest. Bawled from a million pulpits, lasciviously crooned through hundreds of millions of loud-speakers, it has become an outrage to good taste and decent feeling, an obscenity which one hesitates to pronounce. And yet it has to be pronounced, for, after all, Love is the last word.

Multiple Choice Question :

1. Where does this story take place?
(a) Washington
(b) London
(c) Paris
(d) New York

2. What does the abbreviation D.H.C. stand for?
(a) Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning
(b) Dispatching Hatching and Conditions
(c) Director of Hatching and Conditions
(d) Dispatching Hatcheries and Conditions

3. Which room is located on the ground floor?
(a) Neo-Pavlovian conditioning room
(b) Elementary class consciousness
(c) Embryo store
(d) Fertilizing room

4. Which of the following is NOT one of the groups of people?
(a) Sigma
(b) Betas
(c) Alphas
(d) Gammas

5. Which of the following groups of people are not divided into about seventy-two identical embryos?
(a) Gammas
(b) Alphas
(c) Betas
(d) Deltas

6. The process of an egg's normal growth is checked with X-rays, cold, and alcohol it is called?
(a) Arrested development
(b) Bokanovsky's process
(c) Budding
(d) Stabilization

7. Which of the following is a major instrument of social stability according to the director?

(a) Stabilization
(b) Budding
(c) Arrested development
(d) Bokanovsky's process

Unit IV

George Orwell – 1984

GEORGE ORWELL BIOGRAPHY

Early Years

George Orwell is the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair, born in 1903 in Motihari, Bengal, India, during the time of the British colonial rule. Young Orwell was brought to England by his mother and educated in Henley and Sussex at schools.

The Orwell family was not wealthy, and, in reading Orwell's personal essays about his childhood, readers can easily see that his formative years were less than satisfying. However, the young Orwell had a gift for writing, which he recognized at the age of just five or six. Orwell's first published work, the poem "Awake Young Men of England," was printed in the Henley and South Oxfordshire Standard when he was eleven years old.

Orwell attended Eton College. Because literature was not an accepted subject for boys at the time, Orwell studied the master writers and began to develop his own writing style. At Eton, he came into contact with liberalist and socialist ideals, and it was here that his initial political views were formed.

Adult Years

Orwell moved to Burma in 1922, where he served as an Assistant Superintendent of Police for five years before he resigned because of his growing dislike for British Imperialism. In 1928, Orwell moved to Paris and began a series of low paying jobs. In 1929, he moved to London, again living in what he termed "fairly severe poverty." These experiences provided the material for his first novel, Down and Out in Paris and London, which he placed with a publisher in 1933.

About this time, while Orwell was teaching in a small private school in Middlesex, he came down with his first bout of pneumonia due to tuberculosis, a condition would plague him throughout his life and require hospitalization again in 1938, 1947, and 1950.

In 1933, Orwell gave up teaching and spent almost a year in Southwold writing his next book, Burmese Days. During this time, he worked part time in a bookshop, where he met his future wife, Eileen O'Shaughnessy. He and Eileen were he married in 1936, shortly before he moved to Spain to write newspaper articles about the Spanish Civil War.

In Spain, Orwell found what he had been searching for — a true socialist state. He joined the struggle against the Fascist party but had to flee when the group with which he was associated was falsely accused of secretly helping the Fascists.

By 1939, Orwell had returned to England. In 1941, he took a position with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) as the person in charge of broadcasting to India and Southeast Asia. Orwell disliked this job immensely, being, as he was, in charge of disseminating propaganda to these British colonies — an act that went against both his nature and his political philosophy. In 1943, Orwell took a job more to his liking, as the literary editor of The Tribune.

Shortly after Orwell and Eileen adopted a son in 1944, Orwell became a war correspondent for the Observer in Paris and Cologne, Germany. Tragically, Eileen died in the beginning of that year, just before the publication of one of his most important novels, Animal Farm. Despite the loss of his wife and his own battle with poor health, Orwell continued his writing and completed the revision of 1984 in 1948. It was published early the next year with great success.

Orwell remarried in 1949 to Sonia Brownell, only a year before his own death of tuberculosis. He is buried in the churchyard of All Saints, Sutton Courtenay, Berkshire.

Literary Writing

Orwell's writing career spanned nearly seventeen years. Ironically, although Orwell didn't consider himself a novelist, he wrote two of the most important literary masterpieces of the 20th century: Animal Farm and 1984. While these are the most famous novels of his career, his memoirs, other novels, and essential work as an essayist all contribute to the body of work that makes up important twentieth century literature.

In Orwell's writing, he sought truth. Even his fiction has elements of the world around him, of the wars and struggles that he witnessed, of the terrible nature of politics, and the terrible toll that totalitarianism takes on the human spirit. From the time he began to write at the age of twenty-four, Orwell longed to capture the struggles of "real" people, to live among the less fortunate, and to tell their stories. Of his own writing, Orwell has said that he writes because there is some kind of lie that he has to expose, some fact to which he wants to draw attention. Orwell certainly does this in 1984, a novel fraught with political purpose, meaning, and warning.

Winston Smith is a member of the Outer Party. He works in the Records Department in the Ministry of Truth, rewriting and distorting history. To escape Big Brother's tyranny, at least inside his own mind, Winston begins a diary — an act punishable by death. Winston is determined to remain human under inhuman circumstances. Yet telescreens are placed everywhere — in his home, in his cubicle at work, in the cafeteria where he eats, even in the bathroom stalls. His every move is watched. No place is safe.

One day, while at the mandatory Two Minutes Hate, Winston catches the eye of an inner Party Member, O'Brien, whom he believes to be an ally. He also catches the eye of a dark-haired girl from the Fiction Department, whom he believes is his enemy and wants him destroyed. A few days later, Julia, the dark-haired girl whom Winston believes to be against him, secretly hands him a note that reads, "I love you." Winston takes pains to meet her, and when they finally do, Julia draws up a complicated plan whereby they can be alone.

Alone in the countryside, Winston and Julia make love and begin their allegiance against the Party and Big Brother. Winston is able to secure a room above a shop where he and Julia can go for their romantic trysts. Winston and Julia fall in love, and, while they know that they will someday be caught, they believe that the love and loyalty they feel for each other can never be taken from them, even under the worst circumstances.

Eventually, Winston and Julia confess to O'Brien, whom they believe to be a member of the Brotherhood (an underground organization aimed at bringing down the Party). their hatred of the Party. O'Brien welcomes them into the Brotherhood with an array of questions and arranges for Winston to be given a copy of "the book," the underground's treasonous volume written by their leader, Emmanuel Goldstein, former ally of Big Brother turned enemy.

Winston gets the book at a war rally and takes it to the secure room where he reads it with Julia napping by his side. The two are disturbed by a noise behind a painting in the room and discover a telescreen. They are dragged away and separated. Winston finds himself deep inside the Ministry of Love, a kind of prison with no windows, where he sits for days alone. Finally, O'Brien comes. Initially Winston believes that O'Brien has also been caught, but he soon realizes that O'Brien is there to torture him and break his spirit. The Party had been aware of Winston's "crimes" all along; in fact, O'Brien has been watching Winston for the past seven years.

O'Brien spends the next few months torturing Winston in order to change his way of thinking — to employ the concept of doublethink, or the ability to simultaneously hold two opposing ideas in one's mind and believe in them both. Winston believes that the human mind must be free, and to remain free, one must be allowed to believe in an objective truth, such as $2 + 2 = 4$. O'Brien wants Winston to believe that $2 + 2 = 5$, but Winston is resistant.

Finally, O'Brien takes Winston to Room 101, the most dreaded room of all in the Ministry of Love, the place where prisoners meet their greatest fear. Winston's greatest fear is rats. O'Brien places over Winston's head a mask made of wire mesh and threatens to open the door to release rats on Winston's face. When Winston screams, "Do it to Julia!" he relinquishes his last vestige of humanity.

Winston is a changed man. He sits in the Chestnut Tree Café, watching the telescreens and agonizing over the results of daily battles on the front lines. He has seen Julia again. She, too, is changed, seeming older and less attractive. She admits that she also betrayed him. In the end, there is no doubt, Winston loves Big Brother.

Introduction

George Orwell's 1984, like many works of literature, unmistakably carries with it literary traditions reaching back to the earliest of storytellers. Among the literary traditions that Orwell uses is the concept of utopia, which he distorts effectively for his own purposes. Utopia, or Nowhere Land, is an ideal place or society in which human beings realize a perfect existence, a place without suffering or human malady. Orwell did not originate this genre. In fact, the word utopia is taken from Sir Thomas More's Utopia, written in 1516. The word is now used to describe any place considered to be perfect.

In 1984, Orwell creates a technologically advanced world in which fear is used as a tool for manipulating and controlling individuals who do not conform to the prevailing political orthodoxy. In his attempt to educate the reader about the consequences of certain political philosophies and the defects of human nature, Orwell manipulates and usurps the utopian tradition and creates a dystopia, a fictional setting in which life is extremely bad from deprivation, oppression, or terror. Orwell's dystopia is a place where humans have no control over their own lives, where nearly every positive feeling is squelched, and where people live in misery, fear, and repression.

The dystopian tradition in literature is a relatively modern one and is usually a criticism of the time in which the author lives. These novels are often political statements, as was Orwell's other dystopian novel, Animal Farm, published in 1945. By using a dystopian setting for 1984, Orwell suggests the possibility of a utopia, and then makes very clear, with each horror that takes place, the price humankind pays for "perfect" societies.

Historical Background

Orwell wrote 1984 just after World War II ended, wanting it to serve as a warning to his readers. He wanted to be certain that the kind of future presented in the novel should never come to pass, even though the practices that contribute to the development of such a state were abundantly present in Orwell's time.

Orwell lived during a time in which tyranny was a reality in Spain, Germany, the Soviet Union, and other countries, where government kept an iron fist (or curtain) around its citizens, where there was little, if any freedom, and where hunger, forced labor, and mass execution were common.

Orwell espoused democratic socialism. In his essay, "Why I Write," published in 1947, two years before the publication of 1984, Orwell stated that he writes, among other reasons, from the "[d]esire to push the world in a certain direction, to alter other peoples' idea of the kind of society that they should strive after." Orwell used his writing to express his powerful political feelings, and that fact is readily apparent in the society he creates in 1984.

The society in 1984, although fictional, mirrors the political weather of the societies that existed all around him. Orwell's Oceania is a terrifying society reminiscent of Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union — complete repression of the human spirit, absolute governmental control of daily life, constant hunger, and the systematic "vaporization" of individuals who do not, or will not, comply with the government's values.

Orwell despised the politics of the leaders he saw rise to power in the countries around him, and he despised what the politicians did to the people of those countries. Big Brother is certainly a fusing of both Stalin and Hitler, both real and terrifying leaders, though both on opposite sides of the philosophical spectrum. By combining traits from both the Soviet Union's and Germany's totalitarian states, Orwell makes clear that he is staunchly against any form of governmental totalitarianism, either from the left or the right of the political spectrum.

By making Big Brother so easily recognizable (he is physically similar to both Hitler and Stalin, all three having heavy black mustaches and charismatic speaking styles), Orwell makes sure that the reader of 1984 does not mistake his intention — to show clearly how totalitarianism negatively affects the human spirit and how it is impossible to remain freethinking under such circumstances.

The Role of the Media

Orwell spent time in Spain during the time of Franco's Fascist military rebellion. Although he was initially pleased with what he considered to be the realization of socialism in Barcelona, he quickly saw that dream change; such a political climate could not maintain that kind of "ideal" political life. The group with which Orwell was associated was accused of being a pro-Fascist organization, a falsehood that was readily believed by many, including the left-wing press in England. As a reflection on this experience, in 1984, Orwell creates a media service that is nothing more than a propaganda machine, mirroring what Orwell, as a writer, experienced during his time in Spain.

Orwell worked with the BBC during World War II when certain kinds of restrictions limiting what news could be disseminated were common, and he became disturbed by what he perceived to be the falseness of his work. It is noteworthy that Winston Smith, the main character in 1984, works in the media and is responsible for creating what is, essentially, deceptive propaganda. In fact, it is Winston's position in the media that gives the reader the most insight into the duplicity of the society in which he lives and therefore, the society that Orwell most condemns.

The Setting

The setting of 1984 is Oceania, a giant country comprised of the Americas; the Atlantic Islands, including the British Isles; Australia; and the southern portion of Africa. Oceania's mainland is called Air Strip One, formerly England. The story itself takes place in London in the year 1984, a terrifying place and time where the human spirit and freedom are all but crushed. In the novel, war is constant. The main character, Winston Smith, born before the World War II, grew up knowing only hunger and political instability, and many of the things that he experiences are hyperboles of real activities in wartime Germany and the Soviet Union.

It is important to remember that Orwell based 1984 on the facts as he knew them; hunger, shortages, and repression actually happened as a result of the extreme governmental policies of these countries. The war hysteria, the destruction of the family unit, the persecution of "free thinkers" or those who were "different" or not easily assimilated into the party doctrine, the changing of history to suit the party's agenda, were all too real. Orwell's speculation of the future is actually a creative extension of how the masses were treated under Franco, Hitler, and Stalin.

By setting 1984 in London, Orwell is able to invoke the atmosphere of a real war-torn community, where people live in "wooden dwellings like chicken houses" in bombed-out clearings. His intent clearly was to capitalize on a memory that every reader, especially a British reader, was likely to have. London in 1984, then, becomes not just a make-believe place where bad things happen to unknown people, but a very real geographical spot that still holds some connection for the modern reader.

In 1984, the world is sliced into three political realms — the super states of Oceania, Eastasia, and Eurasia. Orwell drew these lines fairly consistent with the political distribution of the Cold War era beginning after World War II. Each of these three states is run by a totalitarian government that is constantly warring on multiple fronts. By creating an entire world at war, Orwell not only creates a terrifying place, but he also eliminates the possibility of escape for Winston, who is forced to live within his present circumstances, horrible and unremitting as they are.

Oceania's political structure is divided into three segments: the Inner Party, the ultimate ruling class, consisting of less than 2 percent of the population; the Outer Party, the educated workers, numbering around 18 to 19 percent of the population; and the Proles, or the proletariat, the working class. Although the Party (Inner and Outer) does not see these divisions as true "classes," it is clear that Orwell wants the reader to see the class distinctions. For a socialist such as Orwell, class distinctions mean the existence of conflict and class struggle. In Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, for example, the few people who comprised the ruling class had a much higher standard of living than the masses, but in these nations, as in 1984, revolt was all but impossible.

Character List

Winston Smith

Winston, the novel's protagonist, is staunchly against the Party. He finds unobtrusive methods to rebel, or at least he believes them to go unnoticed. He main desire is to remain human under inhuman circumstances.

Julia

Winston's love-interest and ally. Julia also works in the Ministry of Truth. She is against the Party's doctrines, but she merely wants to break the rules, not change the society.

O'Brien

Member of the Inner Party. A mysterious figure, O'Brien is at once Winston's enemy and his ally and is the reason for Winston's ultimate indoctrination to the Party. O'Brien is a personification of the Party, and much of the Party's doctrine is revealed through him.

Big Brother

Leader of the Party. Big Brother is a god-like figure, all-present, all-powerful, and eternal — yet quite intangible.

Emmanuel Goldstein

Leader of the Brotherhood. Orwell leaves ambiguous whether the Brotherhood actually exists or is merely propaganda perpetuated by the Party. Nevertheless, Goldstein, whether he exists or not, figures prominently as a foil to Big Brother.

Mr. Charrington

Owner of the shop where Winston rents the room and a member of the Thought Police.

Parsons

Winston's neighbor who ends up in the Ministry of Love with Winston, turned in by his own children.

Syme

A Newspeak expert who works with Winston in the Ministry of Truth and is vaporized.

Ampleforth

A poet-of-sorts who works with Winston in the Ministry of truth and also winds up in the Ministry of Love.

Character Analysis Winston Smith

Winston Smith is the protagonist of 1984. He is the character that the reader most identifies with, and the reader sees the world from his point of view. Winston is a kind of innocent in a world gone wrong, and it is through him that the reader is able to understand and feel the suffering that exists in the totalitarian society of Oceania.

Even Winston's name is suggestive. Winston is taken from Winston Churchill, the exalted leader of wartime England, and Smith is the most common last name in the English language, thus allowing readers to see him as Orwell intended: an ordinary man who makes a valiant effort in extraordinary circumstances. A reader cannot resist identifying with Winston: He is ordinary, yet he finds the strength to try and make his circumstances better. He represents the feelings in every human being, and it is for this reason that a reader hopes that things will change. Orwell characterizes Winston as a complete, sympathetic human being, and in doing so gives the reader a stake in the outcome of the novel.

Because Winston is so real, so common, it is easy for readers to identify with him and to imagine themselves in his place. Perhaps Winston carries even more weight for today's reader, who can imagine the possibility of a society like Winston's, the value of technology over humanity.

Even though Winston's life is replete with misery and pain, Orwell allows him a brief time of happiness and love. During this time, there is hope for Winston, and subsequently, hope for the future. But Orwell makes certain that there is no happy ending. Totalitarianism does not permit such an ending; Winston must be crushed. If Winston were to escape, Orwell's agenda of showing the true nature of totalitarianism would have been lost.

Readers identify so closely with Winston because he has individuality and undying self-determination. Winston embodies the values of a civilized society: democracy, peace, freedom, love, and decency. When Winston is destroyed, these things are destroyed with him, and so goes the reader's faith that these values are undying and a natural part of being human. Winston represents the struggle between good and bad forces, and there is no mistaking where the lines are drawn.

Ultimately, Winston loses his spirit and his humanity, the two characteristics that he fought so hard to keep. Orwell insists that Winston's fate could happen to anyone, and it is for this reason that Orwell destroys Winston in the end, so that the reader may understand Orwell's warning and see that the society of 1984 never come to pass.

Character Analysis Julia

Julia is Winston Smith's love-interest and his ally in the struggle against Big Brother. She represents the elements of humanity that Winston does not: pure sexuality, cunning, and survival. While Winston simply manages to survive, Julia is a true survivalist, using any means necessary to conduct her self-centered rebellion. Her demeanor is that of a zealous Party follower, but just under that thin surface is an individual with unchecked human desires and a willful spirit, which ultimately results in her capture.

While Winston enjoys sex and intimacy, Julia is an outwardly sexual being and sleeps with Party members regularly — at least before she meets Winston. She does not do this to destroy the Party but to quench her own desires, and that is the fundamental difference between Winston and Julia. His rebellion is as much for future generations as it is for himself; her rebellion is purely incidental to her own desires.

Julia is far more intuitive and realistic than Winston. She understands the Party better than he does and is more cunning in the ways that she defies Party doctrine. While Winston is emotional about the Party and its potential downfall, Julia feels his wishes are merely fantasy and is apathetic to the Party's dogma. She busies herself with getting around the Party, unlike Winston, who wishes to attack the Party at its center.

Julia uses sex to attack the Party, but it is far less effective a weapon than love. When Julia and Winston fall in love, they commit the ultimate offense against the Party. Note that the couple was caught at their happiest moment, the moment where they let down their guard and felt like an ordinary couple. Both had been watched for years and could have been captured at any time. But not until their love was strong did the Party intervene. Separating the couple diminishes their

effectiveness: As individuals they do not understand the party wholly, nor are they capable of resistance.

Superficially, Julia seems like an uncomplicated character. She functions as a sounding board for Winston, but she is far more complicated than that. Winston has real antipathy toward women resulting from the Party's indoctrination and from its stringent sexual codes. Winston can remember a time when affection was shown for affection's sake and is angry at women for what the Party has done to them. Julia does not follow these strict sexual codes and, in fact, breaks them at every opportunity. She shows Winston, who once imagined raping and killing her, that the Party cannot get to the most intimate places in a human being's mind; she is his proof that the feelings that he has been having are valid. Julia gives Winston hope, and it is the continuation of this hope that gets them both destroyed.

Character Analysis O'Brien

O'Brien is a prominent leader in the Inner Party, although his official title is not clear. He seems to be close to Big Brother and may even be part of a collective that makes up Big Brother. O'Brien seems to be a co-conspirator and friend to Winston Smith until the third part of the novel, when he is revealed as a zealous Party leader who had been closely watching Winston for years.

O'Brien represents the Party and all of its contradictions and cruelty. He functions largely to bring the reader into the inner chambers of the Party so that its mechanisms can be revealed. Without O'Brien, the Party would be as mysterious to the reader as it is to Winston and Julia.

While Winston is characterized as an individual, a small man in a large society, O'Brien is bigger than life and remains so throughout the novel. This effect is partly a result of his mysteriousness and partly because the novel hinges on O'Brien's "turnabout" actions; if he were given more time on the page, his true nature would have been revealed too soon.

O'Brien is not only duplicitous in nature, but he also seems to be able to employ doublethink very well. Whether or not he truly believes contradictory notions simultaneously, he is determined to teach Winston to do so. There is no evidence to sustain the idea that O'Brien truly believes in the concepts that he forces upon Winston beyond his statement to Winston in the Ministry of Love that the Party had gotten him (O'Brien) long ago.

This statement illustrates a consciousness that would be dangerous for an Outer Party member to have, so it is possible that O'Brien shares the same consciousness as Winston, but because of his status in the Party, has no reason to want society to change. He is not the individual being tortured, though he would have Winston and the reader believe that the "rehabilitation" once happened to him as well.

O'Brien is often seen as a father figure and a friend to Winston. O'Brien is trying, through torture, to make Winston "perfect," to "save" him. If Winston would simply embrace the Party's doctrine, he would be "clean." But it is not really Winston that O'Brien and the Party want to change; the Party wants to purify all thought, believing that one stray thought has the potential to corrupt the Party.

The character of O'Brien is not so different from many of the contemporary leaders of the 20th century. For example, Hitler and Stalin used this kind of torture to keep their power and did it in the name of "purity." O'Brien represents these leaders and others, who use cruelty and torture as their primary method of control.

Character Analysis Big Brother and Emmanuel Goldstein

Big Brother and Emmanuel Goldstein are the conceptual leaders of the opposing forces in Oceania: Big Brother is the titular head of Oceania, and Goldstein is the leader of his opponents, the Brotherhood. They are similar in that Orwell does not make clear whether they actually exist.

Using doublethink, O'Brien tells Winston Smith that Big Brother does and does not exist. Big Brother does exist as the embodiment of the Party, but he can never die. O'Brien will not tell Winston whether Goldstein and the Brotherhood exists, but it is likely that both are merely Party propaganda; the fact that O'Brien claims to have written Goldstein's book is a good indication of this.

Big Brother is aptly named for his position in Oceania — a name of trust, protection, and affection — another example of doublethink. Big Brother, or, the Party, is as unlike a benevolent big brother as Hitler or Stalin. Orwell gave Emmanuel Goldstein a traditionally Jewish name that is suggestive of the power structure in World War II. Noteworthy is that Emmanuel literally means "God."

It makes no difference in Winston's life whether these two forces exist. Winston's fate is sealed, as is the fate of the society in which he lives, regardless of their

existence. Big Brother and Goldstein exist in effect, and that is the only thing that matters to Winston. Orwell intended for these figures to represent totalitarian power structures; in essence, they are both the same. O'Brien, in his incarnation as a Brotherhood leader, asks Winston and Julia if they are willing to commit atrocities against the Party, many of which are no better that the atrocities that the Party commits against its people. Political extremism, as Orwell shows, is not positive under any name.

1984 A Satire of Totalitarian government and Dictatorship

Nineteen Eighty-Four, a grim satire directed against totalitarian government, is the story of Winston Smith's futile battle to survive in a system that he has helped to create. The novel is set in 1984 (well into the future when the novel was written) in London, the chief city of Airstrip One, the third most populous of the provinces of Oceania, one of three world powers that are philosophically indistinguishable from, and perpetually at war with, one another.

Smith, thirty-nine, is in marginal health, drinks too much, and lives alone in his comfortless apartment at Victory Mansions, where he is constantly under the eye of a television surveillance system referred to as Big Brother. Smith's wife, Katharine, who lived with him briefly in a loveless marriage—the only kind of marriage permitted by the government—has long since faded from Smith's life, and his day-to-day existence has become meaningless, except insofar as he has memories of a time in his childhood before his mother disappeared. In the midst of this meaningless existence, Smith is approached clandestinely by Julia, a woman who works with him in the Ministry of Truth. She passes him a note that says, "I love you."

The next several months are passed with "secret" meetings between Winston and Julia. From Mr. Charrington, a shopkeeper from whom Winston has bought a diary and an ornamental paperweight, they secure what they believe is a room with privacy from Big Brother's surveillance. During these months together, Winston and Julia begin to hope for a better life. Part of this hope leads them to seek out members of the Brotherhood, an underground resistance movement purportedly led by Emmanuel Goldstein, the official "Enemy of the People." In their search for the Brotherhood, Winston and Julia approach O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party, a man who they believe is part of Goldstein's Brotherhood. Smith trusts only Julia, O'Brien, and Mr. Charrington. He feels that he can trust no one else in a society in which friend betrays friend and child betrays parent.

Both he and Julia know and articulate their knowledge that, in resisting the government and Big Brother, they have doomed themselves. Still, they seem to hope, much as the oppressed animals in Orwell's Animal Farm embrace hope in a hopeless situation.

Winston and Julia's small hopes are destroyed when they are arrested by the Thought Police, who surround them in their "private" apartment. They are further disillusioned when they learn that Mr. Charrington is a member of the Thought Police and that their every movement during the past months has been monitored. Winston realizes further, when he is later being tortured at the Ministry of Love, that O'Brien is supervising the torture.

Evident in both the Ministry of Truth, where history is falsified and language is reduced and muddied, and in the Ministry of Love, where political dissidents and others are tortured, is Orwell's preoccupation with the effects of paradoxical political language. Even the slogans of the Party are paradoxical: "War Is Peace," "Freedom Is Slavery," and "Ignorance Is Strength." The Ministry of Truth, particularly, is concerned with reducing language, moving toward an ideal language called Newspeak. To clarify the purpose of the language purges, Orwell includes an appendix, "The Principles of Newspeak," in which he explains that Newspeak, the official language of Oceania, has been devised "to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism." Once Newspeak is fully adopted, "a heretical thought—that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc—should be literally unthinkable." It is because Winston Smith still knows Oldspeak that he has been able to commit Thought Crime.

In the Ministry of Love, Smith comes to understand how totalitarian control works, but he continually wonders about the reasons for it. Why, for example, should Big Brother care about him? It is O'Brien who provides Smith with the answer: power. Power, as O'Brien explains, is an end in itself. Power will destroy everything in its path. O'Brien concludes that, when all else is gone, power will remain:But always—do not forget this, Winston—always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.

The purpose, then, of totalitarian government becomes only that of sustaining its feeling of power.

Still, even late in the novel, when O'Brien forces Smith to look into a mirror at his naked, tortured body and his "ruined" face, Smith clings to the idea of his humanity. He says to O'Brien, "I have not betrayed Julia." Yet Smith is stripped of this last tie to his humanity before Orwell's blea vision is complete.

After a brief time of physical recovery, Smith wakes from a dream, talking in his sleep of his love for Julia. He has retained some part of his will and concludes of Big Brother and the Party: "To die hating them, that was freedom." Whatever he says in his sleep is, of course, being monitored by Big Brother. As a result, Smith faces his ultimate horror, the horror that makes him betray Julia. Physically and mentally ruined, Smith is released from the Ministry of Love to await the death that O'Brien has promised him. Smith retains only enough self-awareness to tell Julia, during their final brief meeting, that he has betrayed her. She, too has betrayed him.

Winston's final defeat is encapsulated in the last words of the novel, seconds after the "long-hoped-for bullet" is "entering his brain." He has become convinced of the insanity of his earlier views; his struggle is finished: "He loved Big Brother."

Externally, Winston Smith appears well adjusted to his world. He drinks the bitter victory gin and smokes the vile victory cigarettes. In the morning, he does his exercises in front of the telescreen, and when the instructor speaks to him over the two-way television, he bends with renewed vigor to touch the floor. His apartment is dingy and rickety, but at thirty-nine years old, he is scarcely old enough to remember a time when housing had been better. He has a decent job at the Ministry of Truth because he has a good mind and the ability to write newspeak, the official language. He is a member of the outer ring of the Party.

One afternoon, after giving up his lunch at the ministry, Winston has a little free time to himself. He goes to an alcove out of reach of the telescreen and furtively takes out his journal. It is a noble book with paper of fine quality, unobtainable at present. It is an antique, bought on an illicit trip to a secondhand store run by old Mr. Charrington. Although it is not illegal to keep a diary—there are no laws in Oceania—it makes him suspect. He writes ploddingly about a film he had seen about the valiant Oceania forces strafing shipwrecked refugees in the Mediterranean.

Musing over his writing, Winston finds to his horror that he had written a slogan against Big Brother several times. He knows this act is a crime, even if the writing

is due to his drinking gin. Even to think of such a slogan is a crime. Everywhere he looks, on stair landings and on store fronts, are posters showing Big Brother's all-seeing face. Citizens are reminded a hundred times a day that Big Brother is watching their every move.

At the Ministry of Truth, Winston plunges into his routine. He has the job of rewriting records. If the Party makes an inaccurate prediction about the progress of the war, or if some aspect of production does not accord with the published goals of the ninth three-year plan, Winston corrects the record. All published material is constantly changed so that all history accords with the wishes and aims of the Party.

There is a break in the day's routine for a two-minute hate period. The face of Goldstein, the enemy of the Party, appears on the big telescreen, and a government speaker works up the feelings of the viewers; Goldstein is accused of heading a great conspiracy against Oceania. Winston loudly and dutifully drums his heels as he takes part in the group orgasm of hate.

A bold, dark-haired girl, wearing a red chastity belt, often seems to be near Winston in the workrooms and in the commissary. Winston is afraid she might be a member of the thought police. Seeing her outside the ministry, he decides she is following him. For a time, he plays with the idea of killing her. One day, she slips a little note to him, confessing that she loves him.

Winston is troubled. He is married, but his wife belongs to the Anti-Sex League. For her, procreation is a Party duty. Because the couple produced no children, they split up; Winston's wife left him. Now this girl at work—her name is Julia—speaks of love. Winston has a few private words with her in the lunchroom, being careful to make their conversation look like a chance meeting. Julia quickly names a place in the country for a rendezvous. Winston meets her in the woods and, far from a telescreen, they make love. Julia boasts that she had been the mistress of several Party members and that she has no patience with the Anti-Sex League, although she works diligently for the group. She also buys sweets on the black market.

Winston again visits Mr. Charrington's antique shop, and the proprietor shows Winston an upstairs bedroom preserved as it had been before the Revolution. Although it is madness to do so, Winston rents the room and, thereafter, he and

Julia have a comfortable bed for their brief meetings. Winston feels happy in the old room, which has no telescreen to spy on them.

At work, Winston sometimes sees O'Brien, a kindly looking member of the Inner Party. Winston deduces from a chance remark that O'Brien is not in sympathy with all the aims of the Party. When they can, Winston and Julia go to O'Brien's apartment. He assures them that Goldstein is really the head of a conspiracy that eventually will overthrow the Party. Julia tells of her sins against Party discipline, and Winston recounts his evidence that the Party distorts facts in public trials and purges. O'Brien then enrolls them in the conspiracy and gives them Goldstein's book to read.

After an exhausting hate week directed against another enemy, Eurasia, Winston reads aloud to the dozing Julia, both comfortably lying in bed, from Goldstein's treatise. Suddenly, a voice rings out and orders them to stand in the middle of the room. Winston grows sick when he realizes that a hidden telescreen has recorded the actions at O'Brien's apartment. Soon the room is filled with truncheon-wielding police officers. Mr. Charrington comes in, no longer a kindly member of the simple proletariat, but a keen, determined man and a member of the thought police. One of the guards hits Julia in the stomach, and the others hurry Winston off to jail.

Winston is tortured for days—beaten, kicked, and clubbed until he confesses his crimes. He willingly admits to years of conspiracy with the rulers of Eurasia and tells everything he knows of Julia. In the later phases of his torture, O'Brien is at his side constantly. O'Brien keeps him on a rack with a doctor in attendance to keep him alive. He tells Winston that Goldstein's book is a Party production, written in part by O'Brien himself.

Through it all, the tortured Winston has one small triumph: He still loves Julia. O'Brien knows about Winston's fear of rats and brings in a large cage filled with rodents; he fastens it around Winston's head. In his unreasoning terror, Winston begs him to let the rats eat Julia instead. Winston still hates Big Brother, then says so. O'Brien patiently explains that the Party wants no martyrs—they strengthen opposition—nor do the leaders want only groveling subjection. Winston must think right. The proletariat, happy in its ignorance, must never have a rousing leader. All Party members must think and feel as Big Brother directs.

Winston is finally released, now bald and without teeth. Because he had been purged and because his crime had not been serious, he is given a small job on a subcommittee. Most of the time, he sits solitary in taverns and drinks victory gin. He even sees Julia once. Her figure has coarsened and her face is scarred. The two have little to say to one another.

One day, a big celebration takes place in the tavern. Oceania has achieved an important victory in Africa. Suddenly, the doddering Winston feels himself purged—he now believes. Now he can be shot with a pure soul, for at last he loves Big Brother.

Passage:

1. The aims of these three groups are entirely irreconcilable. The aim of the High is to remain where they are. The aim of the Middle is to change places with the High. The aim of the Low, when they have an aim–for it is an abiding characteristic of the Low that they are too much crushed by drudgery to be more than intermittently conscious of anything outside their daily lives–is to abolish all distinctions and create a society in which all men shall be equal. Thus throughout history a struggle which is the same in its main outlines recurs over and over again. For long periods the High seem to be securely in power, but sooner or later there always comes a moment when they lose either their belief in themselves or their capacity to govern efficiently , or both. They are then overthrown by the Middle, who enlist the Low on their side by pretending to them that they are fighting for liberty and justice. As soon as they have reached their objective, the Middle thrust the Low back into their old position of servitude, and themselves become the High. In the crucial years, the fact that the Party was not a hereditary body did a great deal to neutralise opposition. The older kind of Socialist, who had been trained to fight against something called ' class privilege', assumed that what is not hereditary cannot be permanent. He did not see that the continuity of an oligarchy need not be physical, nor did he pause to reflect that hereditary

aristocracies have always been shortlived, whereas adoptive organisations such as the Catholic Church have sometimes lasted for hundreds or thousands of years. The essence of oligarchical rule is not father-to-son inheritance, but the persistence of a certain world-view and a certain way of life, imposed by the dead upon the living. A ruling group is a ruling group so long as it can nominate its successors. The Party is not concerned with perpetuating its blood but with perpetuating itself. Who wields power is not important, provided that the hierarchical structure remains always the same."

2. These words are the official slogans of the Party, and are inscribed in massive letters on the white pyramid of the Ministry of Truth, as Winston observes in Book One, Chapter I. Because it is introduced so early in the novel, this creed serves as the reader's first introduction to the idea of doublethink. By weakening the independence and strength of individuals' minds and forcing them to live in a constant state of propaganda-induced fear, the Party is able to force its subjects to accept anything it decrees, even if it is entirely illogical—for instance, the Ministry of Peace is in charge of waging war, the Ministry of Love is in charge of political torture, and the Ministry of Truth is in charge of doctoring history books to reflect the Party's ideology.That the national slogan of Oceania is equally contradictory is an important testament to the power of the Party's mass campaign of psychological control. In theory, the Party is able to maintain that "War Is Peace" because having a common enemy keeps the people of Oceania united. "Freedom Is Slavery" because, according to the Party, the man who is independent is doomed to fail. By the same token, "Slavery Is Freedom," because the man subjected to the collective will is free from danger and want. "Ignorance Is Strength" because the inability of the people to recognize these contradictions cements the power of the authoritarian regime.

Short and Long Answer Questions:

1. Although O'Brien confirms the existence of Big Brother, he refuses to confirm or deny the existence of the Brotherhood. Discuss the role of the Brotherhood in the dynamics of Oceania's society and in the novel.
2. Orwell wrote *1984* as a warning. Explain what he was warning people about. Be sure to examine the influence of political climates in the world during the time when Orwell wrote.
3. Explain in what ways Julia differs from Winston. Consider her behavior, her motivation, and her goals.
4. *1984* is rife with irony (that is, things being different from what is expected) and doublethink (being able to absolutely believe in two opposing ideas simultaneously). Divide a piece of paper into two columns. On one side, list as many examples of doublethink as you can; on the other, list examples of irony. Discuss what you think Orwell's purpose was in using both.
5. Take a look at the three Ingsoc mantras: war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength. The first two are natural opposites (at least last time we checked). But what about that last one? Orwell seems to be saying that ignorance is the opposite of strength. Why not say "weakness is strength?" Does *1984* make a successful argument for ignorance being the same thing as weakness?
6. What is the effect of having the story broken into three, distinct parts?
7. Describe Julia's character as it relates to Winston. How is she different from him? How is she similar to him? How does Julia's age make her attitude toward the Party very different from Winston's?
8. Discuss the idea of doublethink. How important is doublethink to the Party's control of Oceania? How important is it to Winston's brainwashing?
9. 1984 is full of images and ideas that do not directly affect the plot, but nevertheless attain thematic importance. What are some of these symbols and motifs, and how does Orwell use them?
10. What role does Big Brother play within the novel? What effect does he have on Winston? Is Winston's obsession with Big Brother fundamentally similar to or different from his obsession with O'Brien?

Multiple Choice Question :

1. What is Winston's apartment called?
(a) Grenadier Apartments.
(b) Oceania View.
(c) London House.
(d) Victory Mansions.

2. What is the official language of Oceania?
(a) Newspeak.
(b) Newglish.
(c) Newtalk.
(d) Newlang.

3. What is the most frightening ministry of Oceania's government?
(a) The Ministry of Love.
(b) The Ministry of Peace.
(c) The Ministry of Plenty.
(d) The Ministry of Fear.

4. How does Victory Gin smell?
(a) Harsh, like nitric acid.
(b) Sickly and oily.
(c) Warm and inviting.
(d) Gross and disgusting.

5. What is the name of the television-like appliance constantly watching Oceania's citizens?
(a) The televisionary.
(b) The viewscreen.
(c) The eye of Big Brother.
(d) The telescreen.

6. What important thing does Winston do when he comes home in Part 1, Chapter 1?
(a) He starts a diary.
(b) He makes a plan to assassinate Big Brother.
(c) He gets drunk.
(d) He attempts suicide.

7. The Enemy of the People is...
(a) Emmanuel Silverstein.
(b) Emmanuel Golden.
(c) Emmanuel Goldfinch.
(d) Emmanuel Goldstein.

8. During the Two Minutes Hate, what does everyone in the room do?
(a) Fight with each other.
(b) Scream, yell, and throw objects at the telescreen.
(c) Sit in quiet hatred.
(d) Sing the national anthem.