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BERTOLT BRECHT

Mother Courage

Unit-I
Bertolt Brecht 1898-1956

His life and His Times

Eugen Berthold Brecht was born in Augsburg on 10 February 1898.

The end of the first world war was still not in sight and Brecht was not yet out of his teens when he was drafted into the army in 1917 and posted to an Augsbarg military hospital as a medical orderly.

These were momentous times for Germany which was knee-deep into the war. The strain of the prolongation of the war and the effects of the blockade by the Allies had begun to be felt. There was a general discontent, especially among the working classes. Strikes broke out all over Germany in the January of 1918. In August, the initiative on the military front passed to the side of the Allies and the German collapse began. Mutinees spread throughout the armed forces. The Kaiser was forced to abdicate. A republican govt headed by the majority Socialists was elected on Nov. 10,1918, by a general assembly of workers' and soldiers' councils.

It was a most propitious time for radical changes but the leaders of the German Social Democratic movement failed to take advantage of the opportunities. They made many mistakes and the advantage once again passed into the hands of the same elements that had plunged the country into the war. The infant Weimar Republic died a premature death. Hitler played a major role in the abortive Munich Brauhaus Putsch of 1923.

These grave political upheavals adversely affected the German economy too. One and a half million workers were unemployed, and the German Mark stood grossly devalued. The middle classes found themselves suddenly expropriated by the state. At this moment, American capital also moved in to play its own mischief.

Young Brecht did not remain unaffected by what was happening around him but his political understanding had not yet matured. Even as a school boy he was not much moved by the war euphoria that was sought to be created in the country. He once got himself into trouble over a pacifist essay in which he stated that only blockheads could think of death lightly. Whatever enthusiasm for war might have been left within him was forever crushed out in the horrifying experiences to which he was exposed as a medical orderly in the army.

Brecht lost interest in medical science and felt attracted towards arts and literature. But there was as much confusion prevailing in the field of artistic activity as in the political field. World shaking changes were being planned through the medium of art. The futurists and dadaists dreamt that art would somehow bring about a new " revolution" of man, with other than political or social weapons. Brecht was not attracted by these armchair revolutionaries. Nor did he like the pacifist strain and the rhetoric and pathos of the expressionist theatre. He demanded of the theatre a socially and culturally responsible repertoire and production. He felt that the foundations of the existing chaotic society had scarcely been touched by these various "isms". The one question that he asked at this time was: what had these productions got to do with the tumultuous events taking place outside the theatre?

When Brecht failed to get an answer to the problems that bothered him, he gradually began to turn towards Marxism. The reason why he did so is not far to seek : despairing eyes everywhere had started turning towards Russia, where the hopes of mankind rested upon the building of a new social order.

Brecht began to write dramatic criticism and theory when he was drama critic for the newspaper *Der Volkwille* in Augsburg from 1919 to 1921, and continued to do so through the twenties but the main body of his theoretical writings began in 1931 in the form of explanatory notes to the opera, *Rise and Fall of the Town of Mahagonny,* wherein he announced, "Modern Theatre is epic theatre."

Brecht came to be recognized as a major theoretician of drama in the twentieth century. However, it needs to be acknowledged that he was not the first to use the term "epic theatre". As early as 1929, Piscator used the term in his essay *The Political Theatre.* Epic Theatre discarded the closed, tightly knit "well made" play for a loose-linked, episodic and open structure.

It is not very easy to describe his epic theatre because throughout his life his concept of it kept changing and developing. He never regarded either his plays or his theoretical statements as final. He believed in change. He considered all his efforts as experiments. Therefore, even when his concept of epic theatre was fully mapped out and constructed, it was to be subjected to many crucial alterations.

Brecht first tabulated his ideas on epic theatre in his Notes on the opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahgonny (1930)* where he set out the contrast beween the dramatic Aristotelian theatre and epic theatre in a list which is reproduced here:

DRAMATIC THEATRE	EPIC THEATRE
plot	narrative
implicates the spectator in a stage situation	turns the spectator into an observer, but
wears down his capacity for action	arouses his capacity for action
provides him with sensations	forces him to take decisions
experience	picture of the world
the spectator is involved in something	he is made to face something
suggestion	argument
instinctive feelings are preserved	brought to the point of recognition
the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience	the spectator stands outside, studies
the human being is taken for granted	the human being is the object of the inquiry
he is unalterable	he is alterable and able to alter
eyes on the finish	eyes on the course
one scene makes another	each scene for itself
growth	montage
linear development	in curves
evolutionary determinism	jumps
man as a fixed point	man as a process
thought determines being	social being determines thought
feeling reason	

This table shows graphically the major shifts of emphasis which distniguish his "epic theatre"from the traditional dramatic theatre and brings out all those points which would give his epic theatre the "provocative effect" which he was so much after.

Brecht was a rebel. A convenient starting point for a discussion of his epic theatre, therefore, would be to examine first what he rebelled against.

The theatre as he found it in Germany around 1920 and as it still remains in many parts of the world to this day- a theatre in which fantastic productions of the classics alternate with empty photographic replicas of everyday life, whether in melodrama or drawing-room comedy, a theatre which oscillates between emotional uplift and afterdinner entertainment.

John Willett is also of the view that

> *The basis of Brecht's theoretical writing is his strong dislike of the orthodox theatre, and especially of the ranting and pretentious German classical stage.*

Willett discovered remarkably close parallels between Brecht's evolution and the history of his country. He also found that the distinctive clarity and detachment so characteristic of Brecht's style enter his work with his

growing interest in Marxism. As stated earlier, Brecht began setting down his ideas on the theory of the theatre soon after he moved to Berlin in the mid 1920's. His theory evolved out of constant practical experience with the stage and with living actors and directors. His basic ideas were already extensively developed at the end of the Twenties. They can be found in postscripts and notes to various plays of that period, prominent among them being *The Threepenny Opera, Rise and Fall of the Town of Mahagonny, and A Man's a Man*. A study of his statements on theatre in a chronological order also shows that his own theory kept on developing and envolving as his understanding of the Marxist theory improved and his commitment deepened. He learnt to apply the theory to concrete social conditions more and more accurately as he gained experience as a dramatist.

Brecht's Ideology and his Theory of Drama

The most obvious feature of Brecht's theory is its reflection of a consistent social and political point of view. Where the other politically-minded artists show their attitude only in the message of their work, or even in public gestures to which their work bears no special relation, with Brecht it seems to go deeper into his writing, his theories and his productions, and to shape them down to the last small detail. The social element in Brecht's work is among the most important elements. No creative writer's politics were ever less independent of his work. His entire dramatic theory is informed with the perspective that theatre is to be used as an instrument in the struggle to change the world.

Brecht digested Marxism in his own way instead of accepting the politicians' ready-made aesthetic line. However he might subordinate himself on political matters, he would not accept the interference of amateurs in his own field. While he conceded that politics must be supreme in taking any sort of policy decisions, Brecht did not want all playwriting to be turned into political propaganda. He was against forcing ideas down people's throats. The state must repose confidence in the people.Brecht blamed the government commissions with their unaesthetic administrative methods and their cheap Marxist jargon as being responsible for the alienation of the artists (Marxists included) and stopping the Academy from taking up a responsible position on the aesthetic question.

Brecht believed that for a truly socialist art the question of quality was politically decisive. He did not compromise his standards despite being wholeheartedly politically committed. Martin Esslin tried to prove that there existed a cleavage between Brecht's subjective intentions and his objective achievement, that is, between his theory of drama and the actual impact of his plays upon the audience. Esslin makes an attempt to deny Brecht's drama its political content by declaring that this cleavage is a mystery which lies at the very base of all creative activity. Says Esslin :

> *A really creative writer's power springs from sources that lie far below the sphere of conscious and rational thought. In committing himself, such a writer can only commit a relatively unimportant part of his personality. His commitment will furnish him with an incentive to write and it will influence his choice of subject matter. But as to the substance of what he has to say, the political ties of such a major creative writer will remain relatively unimportant.*

Esslin overlooks that ideology is not restricted merely to conscious and rational thought but manifests itself in all the preferences, attachments ,biases and prejudices (whether conscious or unconscious) which are governed by class interests. In this broader sense, ideology is not a superficial and easily detachable element in a work of art. Further, there is no water-tight division between "thought" and "emotion" as suggested by Esslin. All emotional responses do not emerge from a deeper centre of being which is the "unconscious" and all thoughts are not mechanical impositions on the emotions. Through this bifurcation of reason and emotion Esslin has tried to deny the value of Brecht's theory of drama and dismiss it as irrelevant to his practice. He suggests that theory is useless because it corresponds to his conscious thought. Practice is what really matters according to Esslin since it corresponds to the deeper layers of the writer's being uncovered only in his creative art.

Esslin's dictum that all great writing must be "true" is eminently sensible. This should really mean that art must convey some truth about human nature or some aspect of social reality. However, according to Esslin, in the

statement of artistic truth commitment to a political idealogy has a very limited role to play. He is of the view that ideology very soon comes into conflict with reality because political ideologies are mostly concerned with some isolated and oversimplified aspect of reality. He urges the truly creative writer to break out of the narrow limits of the creed to which he has committed himself.

Esslin is advocating here precisselly that attitude towards art which Brecht has attacked in his theory : an uncritical emotional atttitude as against a critical, detached and rational one. Esslin finds it difficult to accept that the genuine insight into the dilemmas of the human condition in Brecht's theatre is a product of Brecht's commitment to Marxism. Esslin, perhaps unconsciously, is making an attempt to separate the form and content of Brecht's theatre and tends to move towards pure formalism. He overlooks the organic relationship between the form and content of Brecht's epic theatre.

Brecht's art was, as stated earlier, a response to his times : the social political climate that saw the rise of Fascism in Germany. His theory of drama can best be understood by viewing it as a part of his struggle against Fascism which was threatening to become a dominant force in Germany when Brecht started his dramatic carear. He tried to shape the theatre into an effective cultural weapon in the fight against Fascism. If he became a Marxist, it was because he came to believe that literature could not be viewed as an individual undertaking independent of the common cause of the working classes . Traditional drama had exhausted itself and its theatrical conventions had become shackles that did not allow a gifted dramatist to capture the living reality of his times and ensure an alert and intelligent response from the audience. Traditional drama tended to recapture in the name of reality not the objective reality constituted by the interaction of forces shaping contemporary social life, but the censured version of it which had been imprinted on the minds of the people through constant conditioning. The traditional theory of imitation merely served to provide a rationale for this substitution of false consciousness for an authentic vision of the conditions of our existence. A new type of drama, Brecht felt, was needed to shatter the false consciousness which had taken such a firm hold on the minds of the people that they had honestly started taking it as the true vision of their life. The new type of drama, Brecht realized, must evoke a different response from audience.

The new theatrical style Brecht had in mind had simply to correspond to the whole radical transformation of the mentality of the time. He gave this new theatrical style suiting the requirements of the time the name Epic Theatre. The essential point of the epic theatre, according to Brecht was that it appealed less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience in a readymade form, the spectator must come to grips with things. To remove the kind of misunderstanding that Martin Esslin still developed regarding the new theatre, Brecht stressed that it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre.

"Form" and "Content" Relationship

Brecht anticipated Esslin and raised the issue of form and content. To him the two were complementary, not separate. He was of the opinion that progress in theatrical technique was progress only when it helped to realise the material. The same was true of playwriting. The traditional dramatic form wasn't suitable for Brecht because contemporary subjects could not be expressed in the old 'major' form. The traditional dramatic form reqiured the spectator to identify himself with the chief characters or at least feel deeply involved in the whole situation in which they were placed, assuming that it was an adequate representation of the real world in which he himself lived. The spectator's understanding of the situation was dependent upon the empathy he was able to feel with the characters and their situation. Brecht felt that this needed to be put an end to and the traditional dramatic form replaced with a new major form. This new major form emerged as the "epic production". It was to be devised in such a manner that one could not identify oneself with the characters through empathy. The choice of dramatic means must take account of the changed character of the subject-matter. In the traditional theatre the actors would go into a trance and take the audience with them. In epic theatre, they were required to consciously, suggestively, descriptively demonstrate their knowledge of human relations, of human behaviour and of human capacities. Brecht did not want the spectator to identify himself

automatically with the role being played on the stage but to glimpse this phenomenon in all its strangeness and incomprehensibility. This would involve use of a new technique by the dramatist marked by stylization and provision of many deliberate bumps and discontinuities in the action of the play. These were called "alienation effects".

But more about these "alienation-effects" later. Let us for the time being return to form and subject matter once again. Brecht felt the need of a complete change in the theatre's purpose. Only a new purpose could lead to a new art. This new purpose was pedagogic. That is to say, the form of the new drama had to be that of an artifact. The work of art must always look to be an instrument forged with a purpose and not a naturally grown object with its own inherent logic of growth. Thus, in certain ways, the concept of organic form was rejected by Brecht. He was of the view that the present day world could only be described to the present-day people if it was described as capable of transformation. He felt that the traditional theatre had failed to do this because it merely gave "a static presentation of a given Nature in order to gain the audience's empathy" whereas he wanted the audience to be provoked into indignation against the existing state of affairs and into thinking about the roots of the problems confronting them. The traditional Aristotelian theatre, which invokes the concept of mimesis, is the theatre of illusion, trying to recreate a spurious present by pretending that the events of the play are actually taking place at the time of each performance. But Brecht felt that by invoking the concept of mimesis, hidden reality cannot be brought out and the audience cannot be provoked or forced to recognize those inter-relationships which they would ordinarily ignore in their lazy view of reality. To achieve this end, he came out with his concept of epic theatre. Epic theatre is strictly historical, constantly reminding the audience that it is merely getting a report of past events. Brecht thus attempted to raise art to a higher plane of creative significance than illusionism by repudiating the mimetic theory.

The traditional theatre invoking the Aristotelian concept of mimesis was illusionistic and the Brechtian theatre seeking to show the world as capable of being changed is critical and dialectical and therefore dynamic.

Brecht did not believe that the universe is monistic and deterministic but he did not believe it to be pluralistic either. Through a scientifically explanatory analysis of the historical development of the universe, he showed that it was following a certain definite course of development.

Brecht's Concept of Realism

Brecht developed a dynamic concept of Realism. In the essay 'The Popular and the Realistic' written sometimes an 1938, he said that it was in the interest of the people, the broad working masses, that literature should give them a truthful representation of life. According to Brecht "truthful representations of life are in fact only of use to the broad working masses ; so that they have to be suggestive and intelligible to them, i.e. popular." Powerful institutions with a vested interest in preventing the people from developing fully had reduced the conception of "popularity" to something static, without background or development. As opposed to this, Brecht's conception of "popularity" refers to the people who are not only fully involved in the process of development but are actually taking it over, forcing it, deciding it. So "popular" in the Brechtian sense means "intelligible to the broad masses, taking over their own forms of expression and enriching them/adopting and consolidating their standpoint/representing the most progressive section of the people in such a way that it can take over the leadership; thus intelligible to other sections too/linking with tradition and carrying it further/handing on the achievements of the section now leading to the section of the people that is struggling for the lead."

While explaining what he meant by Realism, Brecht also subtly brought in the related issues of "form" and "content." He said that literary works could not be taken over like factories,or literary forms of expression like industrial methods. Realist writing, he said, is conditioned by the question of how, when and for what class it is made use of. He felt that the realism to be achieved by a dramatist writing for a people fighting to change the real world had to be a new type of realism. Accordingly, the old techniques and forms by which it is generally recognized have to be given up. In the changed historical context, it would be harmful to take over mechanically the forms that have emerged in the writings of great masters of the past like Balzac and Tolstoy. The very

purpose of realism would be defeated if this is done. Brecht did not want a realist writer to cling to 'well-tried' rules for telling a story, worthy models set up by literary history, eternal aesthetic laws.To put living reality in the hands of living people in such a way that it can be mastered, Brecht recommended making a lively use of all means, old and new, tried and untried, deriving from art and deriving from other sources. Realism, he said, could not be ascribed to a particular historical form of novel belonging to particular period even if the practitioner be a Balzac or a Tolstoy. Brecht rejected purely formal and literary criteria of realism. His conception of realism was broad and political, free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention. Realism to Brecht meant laying bare society's causal network/showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human sociaty/ emphasizing the dynamics of development/concrete and so as to encourage abstraction.

Brecht was of the view that Realism was not a pure question of form. Therefore, by simply copying the methods of great realist writers of the past like Balzac or Tolstoy, we should cease to be realists ourselves. With the passage of time, new problems loom up and demand new techniques. Since reality is not static, to represent it the means of representation must alter too. The new springs from the old, but that is just what makes it new. Brecht warned that the oppressors do not always appear in the same mask and the masks cannot always be stripped off in the same way. The people of today are not what the people of yesterday were. The means, the methods of presenting them must change too. According to Brecht, it is harmful to take over the means and methods mechanically. He cited Shelley, Cervantes, Swift, Dickens, Voltaire etc. as realists who adopted quite different forms from Balzac and Tolstoy and yet were masters of Realism in their own right. Tying a great conception like Realism to a few names, however famous they might be, was dangerous, and so was the bundling together of a few forms to make a universally applicable creative method, even if those forms were useful in themselves, said Brecht. He wanted literary forms to be checked against reality, not against aesthetics because " there are many ways of suppressing truth, and many ways of stating it."

The relationship between "form" and "content" is dialectical, said Brecht. He did not consider reality a static concept because he was not afraid to learn from the people. In fact, his experiments in the theatre which repeatedly involved the exploding of conventional forms found their chief support in the most progressive sections of the working class. His experience was that the workers judge everything by the amount of truth contained in it; they welcomed any innovation which helped the representation of truth,of the real mechanism of society and they rejected whatever seemed like playing, like machinery working for its own sake, i.e. no longer, or not yet, fulfilling a purpose. According to Brecht, one need never be afraid of putting bold and unaccustomed things before the people, so long as they have to do with reality. On the other hand, when he tried to make certain subtleties in marching songs easier, they came out with the comment that there was a sort of twist in that. Brecht's conclusion is that the proletariat reject the modernist experimental stuff not because its form is new and complex but because the same old things are attempted to be smuggled in attractive new forms. His comment was that it was very wrong to make a few misconceived stylizations a pretext for rejecting a style of representation which so often attempted successfully to bring out the essential and to encourage abstraction. The proletariat would no more be satisfied with naturalism's superficial representation of reality. They don't believe in a "universally applicable creative method." They know that they need different methods to reach their objective. So the criteria for the popular and the realistic must not be deducted from existing realist works, for such an approach would lead to purely formalistic criteria. He wanted the artist to keep pace with reality's headlong development.

Epic Theatre V/S Aristotelian Theatre: Reason V/S Emotion

Brecht was against a quasi-mystical, quasi-hypnotic mass emotional experience in the theatre generated by empathy. He was against empathy because empathy required self identification on the part of both the actor and the spectator -- of the actor with his part and of the spectator with what was happening on the stage. The spectator feels reconciled to an eternal and just world order. Catharsis brings about a state of satisfied equilibrium,

an acceptanec of the world order as it is.Therefore Brecht, in the initial stages of the development of his epic theatre, placed greater emphasis on appeal to reason. But this was purely for technical reasons, to make an immediate point, and did not amount to a denial of emotions. What Brecht was opposing was not emotion as such but those emotions which simply carried the audience away. He certainly wanted emotions to be aroused in the audience but he also wanted these emotions to be "clarified". Brecht felt strongly that the play should not leave the audience in a baffled state about the roots of the emotions being experienced by them. They must experience the emotion, but not lose their heads. At the same time no worthwhile feeling must be weakened when it is brought clearly and critically to the conscious level.

Brecht wanted drama to be something more than an idle entertainment. He wanted that it should have a powerful impact on the audience so that their dormant energies are activized. He was opposed to empathy because it is uncritical emotional identification. He wanted his audiance ot be more sensitive and alert to their world and to feel as acutely as possible the pressures of this world. But this acute perception had to be both emotional and intellectual. It had to be a critical feeling, not mere self-indulgence.

Brecht's rejection of empathy does not thus mean getting rid of every emotional element. He did not want either the public or the actor to be stopped from taking part emotionally. The representation of emotion must not be hampered, nor must the actor's use of emotions be frustrated. If the existing conditions deny freedom and are marked by injustice, Brecht would like to arouse through his plays righteous indignation against the existing state of affairs .Of course this indignation would be based on intelligence and would not be a blind reaction.

Brecht said in answer to a question by an unidentified actor that an impression had been created that the actor ought not to be completely transformed into the character portrayed but should stand alongside it criticizing and approving, that acting was something purely technical and more or less inhuman. Perhaps he was taking too much for granted when writing. He therefore, explained that he believed that the stage of a realistic theatre must be peopled by live, three dimensional, self contradictory people, with all their passions, unconsidered utterances and actions. The stage to him was not a zoological museum full of stuffed animals.

But he was against a complete fusion of the actor with his role which led to his making the character so natural, so impossible to conceive any other way, that the audience had simply to accept it as it stood, with the result that a completely sterile atmosphere was engendered. This was Naturalism, not Realism. On the contrary, he was keen to bring about a change in existing human nature. To achieve this purpose, means must be found of shedding light on the human being at that point where he seemed capable of being changed by society's intervention. This meant quite a new attitude on the part of the actor whose art upto now had been based on the assumption that people were what they were, and would remain so whatever it might cost society or themselves. The change he demanded of the actor was not a cold or mechanical operation. He did not think that art had anything cold or mechanical about it. The change had to be an artistic one. It could not take place unless he had real contact with his new audience and a passionate concern for human progress. Brecht's opposition to red-hot temperamental acting should not be misrepresented as an advocacy of a position where the actor does not feel the emotions he is portraying. He does get stimulated by the material on which he is working, but retains mastery over it.

Far from denying emotion to his theatre, Brecht was against the artificial bifurcation of emotions and intellect as it would blunt the revolutionary edge of emotions. What he was attacking was not emotions as such but stock responses, readymade emotions which the traditional theatre sought to exploit. He did not reject empathy out of hand; rather, he was opposed to the concept of a theatre in which the spectator identified himself with the characters on stage in a thoughtless way, surrendering himself to the illusion and thereby promoting a fatalistic acceptance of the ways of the world both in the theatre and outside it.

Brecht believed that in the Aristotelian form, the stage becomes equivalent in function to the Church. It supplies an opium, drugs the spectator into unconsciousness of true reality and persuades him that the most

intolerable situations can be endured because they are endurable in the theatre. Catharsis restores the spectator to health. He is no longer troubled by the conditions of actual living and ceases to have the desire to change them. Brecht felt that such a theatre did not fulfil the special requirements of his own times. Therefore, he came out with his ‘epic’ theatre.

Epic theatre makes no thoughtless use of the spectator’s self-yielding empathy as does the Aristotelian theatre. It has an essentially different relationship to certain psychical effects such as catharsis. It does not deliver up its heroes to the world as though to an inescapable destiny. It does not deliver up the spectator to a suggestive theatrical experience. As it seeks to teach the spectator a particular and practical attitude which aims at altering the world, epic theatre must provide him even while in the theatre with a standpoint fundamentally different from the one to which he is accustomed.

Since theatre for Brecht was an instrument of social change, he needed a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself. Thus, Brecht’s oppostion to Aristotelian “empathy” was not an opposition to emotional effects as such but to mindless and passive emotional indulgence leading to mere adjustment with the world as it is.

Alienation Effects

‘Alienation-effect’ was evolved by Brecht to secure a release of only those feelings in the spectator which were socially useful. He wanted to educate spectators to a new attitude that would be distanced, thoughtful, experimental,the reverse of illusory empathy and identification. This concept is of central importance in epic theatre. When his concept of epic theatre was still in the process of evolving and he did not have the technique of alienation at his disposal, he failed to achieve the desired result as in his early play, *Drums in the Night*. Through this technique Brecht sought not merely to prevent undesirable empathy or emotional identification but also to make the inconspicuous-- something that one had all along taken for granted --conspicuous. He explained that a representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar. Alienation, in its widest sense, is not a matter of special techniques but a bringing to consciousness of a normal procedure of everyday life. It is another name for an effort on the part of the writer to make the spectator react intelligently and sensitively to the situation presented before him, to enable him to break the comfortable and habitual modes of thought and feeling that allow him to recognize not the whole truth of the situation but only a censured version of it.

To achieve this effect, Brecht employed a wide variety of devices in production technique, in style of acting, in the very structure and language of the play. The play presents itself as discontinuous, open-ended, internally contradictory, encouraging in the audience a “complex seeing” which is alert to several conflicting possibilities at any particular point. The stage was often very strongly illuminated in Brecht’s production of his plays so that the spectator might not feel himself linked in the darkness with those around him. The curtain masked only half the height of the stage so that the movements of actors and stage-hands could be easily seen behind it. The action was commented upon or announced by intervening or accompanying projections. Music was strictly separated from all the other elements of entertainment offered. The orchestra was installed visibly on the stage and lit up for the singing of songs whose function was to interrupt action to give the audience an opportunity to reflect on what was being shown on the stage.In fact, interrupting of action was one of the principal concerns of epic theatre. Similarly the main function of the text also was not to illustrate or advance the action but, on the contrary, to interrupt it. The interruptions were important because the job of the epic theatre was “not so much to develop actions as to represent conditions” so that “ they are not brought closer to the spectator but distanced from him.” And so, there would be no naturalist exposition on the stage. The actors could introduce themselves directly to the audience or their names could be flashed on the screen behind. The ending could also be disclosed to free the spectator’s mind from the distraction of suspense. The actors, instead of identifying with their roles, would be instructed to distance themselves from them, to make it clear that they were actors in

theatre rather than individuals in the audience as well. The artist should never act as if there were a fourth wall besides the three surrounding him. He should express his awareness of being watched. The audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place. Brecht desired such an ideal actor-spectator relationship. He wanted that the spectator would come out of an epic theatre performance feeling indignant instead of at peace with the world. The essence of the alienation effect lies in the achievement of this type of response from the spectator.

The basic function of the actors in epic theatre is to "show" the characters they are acting rather than "become"them. The Brechtian actor "quotes"his part, communicates a critical reflection on it in the act of performance. The actor is not required to merge his own identity in that of the character, but consciously perform the role as a role. In speaking his lines he does not pretend ignorance of what comes next.

The play itself, instead of creating an impression of an organic unity which carries an audience hypnotically through from beginning to end, is in the ultimate analysis, "formally uneven, interrupted, discontinuous, juxtaposing its scenes in ways which disrupt conventional expectations and forces the audience into critical speculation on the dialectical relations between the episodes. Organic unity of a spontaneous type is also disrupted by the use of different art forms: film, back projection, song, choreography which refuse to blend smoothly with one another, cutting across the action rather than neatly integrating with it. The result of these 'alienation-effects' is to 'alienate' the audience from the performance, to prevent it from emotionally identifying with the play in a way which paralyses its power of critical judgment.

The 'alienation-effect' shows up familiar experience in an unfamiliar light, forcing the audience to question attitudes and behaviour which it has taken as "natural" so far. It is the reverse of what happens in the traditional theatre which 'naturalizes' the most unfamiliar events, processing them for the audience's undisturbed consumption. Insofar as the audience is made to pass judgment on the performance and the actions it embodies, epic theatre becomes an expert collaborator in an open-ended practice, rather than the consumer of a finished object. In epic theatre, the text of the play is always provisional. Brecht is known to have re-written his plays on the basis of the audience's reactions. He even encouraged others to participate in that rewriting. The play is thus an experiment, testing its own presuppositions by feedback from the effects of performance. It is incomplete in itself, completed only in the audience's reception of it. The theatre ceases to be a breeding ground of fantasy and comes to resemble a cross between a laboratory, circus, music hall, sports arena and public discussion hall. In epic theatre, as a matter of principle, there is no such thing as a latecomer.

Ronald Gray*, in Brecht : the dramatist*, examines whether Brecht's concept of alienation derives from that of Marx or of Hegel. Brecht himself never maintained that the alienation effect he was talking about was based on the sociological concepts of alienation to be found in the writings of Hegel and Marx. Any similarity which might appear between the sociological and the Brechtian concepts is mainly superficial. Brecht has made it fully clear that the employment of alienation techniques by him is calculated to promote in his audience a greater understanding of the conditions of human existence so that it may feel provoked to fight for change. When Marx saw Man as alienated from Man and found this condition of alienation in its most acute form among the proletariat, he was using the term in an entrirely different sense. The difference between the two concepts of alienation is very clearly brought out by Frederic Ewen in *Bertolt Brecht :His Life, His Art and His Times* when he says that Brecht's theory of alienation and its practice were invented to combat traditional "alienation" in our society. Alienation effect in Brecht does not mean the condition of being estranged or alienated from human beings, but being detached and removed from that which is shop-worn, sentimental, trashy, that is, from the banal and commonplace.

Brecht wanted the degree of empathy in the spectator to be controlled to the point where his ability to observe critically is not blurred. It is not complete detachment but critical detachment that Brecht wanted of his ideal spectator. A critically detached person who has not been emotionally exhausted and who feels the right degree of indignation is the only person capable of acting decisively rather than an emotionally surcharged person

whose emotions at the end of a performance in the traditional theatre are consumed by way of catharsis and who comes out limp without any energy left to act. What was wrong with the Aristotelian theatre according to Brecht was that artistic appreciation based on empathy weakened the good instincts and strengthened the bad. It contradicted true experience and spread misconceptions. It perverted our picture of the world. There was no play and no theatrical performance which did not in some way or other affect the dispositions and conceptions of the audience. Art was never without consequenes, said Brecht.

The basic difference between the traditional Aristotelian theatre and the epic theatre of Brecht is in respect of the kind of response that is sought to be evoked from the audience because on this response depends the nature of impact the theatre is going to make on the society. The Aristotelian theatre can easily be used by the reactionary forces as a tool for furthering their own political ends. Brecht was conscious of the fact that a good deal of attention had been paid to the theatre's political influence. Therefore, realizing the threat of Fascism's grotesque emphasizing of the emotions, Brecht laid particular stress on the rational. This stress on the rational does not lead to emotionally-dry drama.

Brecht had great store of experience of the theatre from all angles. He is speaking with special authority when he says that there are many contemporary works of art where one can speak of a decline in emotional effectiveness due to their isolation from reason, or its revival thanks to a stronger rationalist message.

The emotional impact of the theatre can be understood properly only when we keep in mind the class-composition of the audience. Brecht held the view that emotions always have a definite class basis. They are in no sense universally human or timeless. To see how particular emotions are linked with particular interests is not unduly difficult. One has only to become aware of the problem and then one would easily understand how distinct interests are being served by the emotional effects of works of art. Brecht felt that emotions accompanying social progress will long survive in the human mind as emotions linked with interests, and in the case of works of art will do so more strongly than might have been expected, even though in actual life contrary interests might have gained the upper hand in the meantime. Men now dead represented the interests of classes that gave a lead to progress. Thus Brecht has put even that which is generally described as "universally human" in a historical perspective.

But it is a very different matter when Brecht finds Fascism conjuring up on the grandest scale emotions which for most of the people who succumb to them are not determined by their interests, or the interests of the progressive elements belonging to the past. It was in this particular social context that Brecht arrived at the conclusion that the theatre based on Aristotelian poetics had outgrown its utility, at least from the point of view of the forward looking working classes.

Brecht did not try to make a secret of the fact that his theatre was politically partisan theatre. When viewed from the working class point-of-view, tragedy based on the Aristotelian assumptions doesn't seem to have any contemporary relevance. Brecht's theatre is untragic theatre, his hero is untragic hero. Brecht saw the world in a process of constant change, and as changeable by man, and that too in a constructive social direction. He based himself on the rational potential of man to take part in and direct these changes. Therefore, Brecht did not want man to see the world as essentially and ultimately tragic. Tragedy based on Aristotelian assumptions saw man as caught up in an ineluctable struggle with transcendent forces. Brecht came to the conclusion that it could not adequately describe the contemporary world.

The traditional form of tragedy and its embodiment of the tragic view of life display the frustrated search for freedom in an unfree world. Since such an "unfree world" is a transitional one, tragedy too represents transitional forms and attitudes, and corresponds to the limitations of the particular period in which it is produced, or which it expresses. Conflict being the essence of life, the insights tragedy offers into the nature and heroism of man are of great and profound value.But as man becomes more and more capable of penetrating into the nature of the powers that allegedly frustrate or are destructive of him and his goals, and as he "naturalizes" the immortal gods into natural forces, and in turn learns to command and control them, tragedy as such disappears, though

tragic situations do not. In an era such as ours, when the old is battling with the new, there are bound to be disenchantments, defeats, and disasters. But even these are not ultimate, so long as human consciousness penetrates to their causes and learns from them.

Anticipating criticism that a critical attitude in the audience while watching a tragic situation was inhuman, Brecht said:

> *People cannot conceive of contradiction and detachment as being part of artistic appreciation. ... such appreciation normally includes a higher level, which appreciates critically, but the criticism here only applies to matters of technique; it is quite a different matter from being required to observe not a representation of the world but the world itself in a critical, contradictory, detached manner.*

He said that to introduce this critical attitude into art the negative element which it doubtless included must be shown from its positive side. According to him, this criticism of the world was active, practical, positive. Then he added that just as criticizing the course of a river meant improving it, correcting it, criticism of society was ultimately revolution.

Brecht's emphasis on the critical attitude was governed by his desire to maximize the social relevance of art. He wanted the whole activity of art to be purposive and in tune with the main thrust of constructive social change. He felt that once artistic activity could be freed from the shackles of false theory and conventions, it could become an effective instrument for constructive social change.

Yet, Brecht was not inflexible in his thinking on art. He subjected his views as regards reason and emotion, instruction and entertainment to adjustments and revisions as and when the need arose. He wanted to strike a balance between didacticism and entertainment. He did not consider epic theatre a complete and comprehensive technique but only one of the conceivable solutions to the problem. This shows Brecht as a thinker who was always ready to make necessary changes in his formulations if the situation warranted these changes.

Towards the end of his life Brecht seemed to be overhauling his entire theory yet again. He felt the need to do so because epic theatre had become almost a formal concept. In *The Short Organun For Theatre* published three years after Hilter's war ended, he stated that his theatre of social commitment was no less a place of entertainment. His aim was to develop a socially productive and aesthetically pleasurable social aesthetic. Brecht never allowed his theatre to degenerate into mere political propaganda: he was all the time conscious that aesthetic quality was of the utmost importance to his design.

Brecht's theory was a coherent but ever-developing, ever-growing body of thought keeping pace with the reqirements of the times and responding to the historical needs of the working classes with whose struggles he had emotionally and intellectually identified himself.

Bertolt Brecht 1898-1956

A Chronology

Brecht's life falls into three distinct phases demarcated by his forced exile from his native Germany during the Hitler years. From 1898-1933 he is in Germany; from 1933-1947 he is in exile in various parts of the world; in 1947 he returns to Europe, first to Switzerland then to Berlin.

Germany

1898 Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht born on 10 February at Augsburg where his father was an employee and later director of the Haindl paper mill.

1908 Brecht goes to Augsburg Grammar School (Realgymnasium) where he is an indifferent pupil and a rebel in his quiet way, numbering among his friends Casper Neher, later his designer. Brecht was almost expelled for taking a dismissive, anti-patriotic line when set an essay with the title "It is a sweet and honourable thing to die for one's country."

1917 Brecht enrolls as a medical student at Munich University, where he also attends Arthur Kutscher's theatre seminar. He samples the bohemian literary life of the city.

1918 Brecht is conscripted and serves as a medical orderly, though he still lives at home. He writes *Baal*, a rumbustious, even outrageous dramatic tribute to natural drives and anarchic sexuality, and does theatre reviews for the local newspaper, *Augsburger Neueste Nacbricbten*.

1919 Brecht writes *Drums in the Night*. He meets the comedian Karl Valentin, the theatre director Erich Engel, and actresses Blandine Ebinger, Carola Neher and Marianne Zoff.

1920 Brecht visits Berlin.

1921 Brecht's registration at Munich University is cancelled. An attempt to make himself known in literary circles in Berlin ends with him in hospital suffering from malnutrition. His new friendship with Arnolt Bronnen, the playwright, leads him to change the spelling of his name to Bertolt, or Bert.

1922 Brecht marries Marianne Zoff. He writes *In the Jungle of Cities.*

1923 Brecht's daughter Hanne is born. The activities of Hilter's National Socialists are hotly discussed in Brecht's Munich circle. The first productions of *In the Jungle of Cities* and *Baal* take place in Munich and Leipzing respectively.

1924 Brecht directs Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* which he and Lion Feuchtwanger had adapted. He was already using certain devices (plot summaries before scenes, white face make-up to indicate fear) to induce critical detachment in actors and audience. He finally settles in Berlin and is taken on as dramaturg (literary adviser) at Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater. The actress Helen Weigel bears him a son, Stefan.

1926 *Man Equals Man* premiered at Darmstadt and Dusseldorf. He works on a play (which he never finished) called *Joe Fleiscbbacker,* which was to deal with the Chicago Wheat Exchange, leads him to the study of Marx as the only adequate method of analyzing the workings of capitalism.

1927 Brecht divorces Marianne Zoff. He works with Erwin Piscator, the pioneer of communist political theater in Germany, on a dramatization of Hasek's novel *The Good Soldier Schweik.*

1928 *The Threepenny Opera*, music by Kurt Weill, words by Brecht (based on a translation of John Gay's Beggar's Opera by Brecht's friend and collaborator Elisabeth Hauptmann) opens at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm and becomes the hit of the season. Brecht had provocatively transferred bourgeois manners to a Soho criminal setting.

1929 Brecht marries Helene Weigel. *The Baden-Baden Cantata* is staged at the Baden-Baden Music Festival, music by Hindemith.

1930 Brecht's daughter Barbara born. His *Lebrstuck* or didactic play, *The Measures Taken,* is given its first performance in Berlin. The communist didactic plays for amateur performance were intended to clarify the ideas of the performers as much as the audience. The first performance of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny,* an opera with words by Brecht and music by Kurt Weill causes a riot as the Nazis voice their criticism at Leipzig. In his notes on the opera Brecht tabulates the differences between the traditional *dramatic* (or Aristolelian) and the new *epic* (or non-Aristolelian) theatre at which he is aiming.

1931 Brecht completes *St. Joan of the Stockyards.*

1932 Brecht's only film, *Kuble Wampe,* held up by the censor. His dramatization of Maxim Gorky's novel *The Mother* is performed by a left-wing collective in Berlin, music by Eisler. It demonstrates the development of a worker's mother towards proletarian class-consciousness. Beginning of Brecht's friendship with Margarete Steffin. Brecht studies Marxism under the dissident communist Karl Korsch.

Exile

1933 The Nazis come to power. The night after the German parliament building (the Reichstag) is burnt down, Brecht flees with his family to Prague. He moves to Vienna, then Zurich, finally settling on the island of Fyn in Denmark. His friendship with Ruth Berlaau begins.

1934 Brecht visits London. The themes of flight and exile enter his poetry.

1935 Brecht is stripped of his German citizenship. He visits Moscow and meets the Soviet dramatist Sergei Tretiakov. He attends the International Writers' Conference in Paris. He visits New York to look in on a production of *The Mother,* which does not meet with his approval.

1936 Brecht attends the International Writers' Conference in London. He writes anti-fascist poetry.

1937 Brecht attends the International Writers' Conference in Paris.

1938 Brecht finishes writing *Life of Galileo. Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* is given its first performance in Paris.

1939 Brecht moves to Stockholm with his family. He finishes writing *Mother Courage and her Children.*

1940 German forces march into Denmark. Brecht's household moves to Helsinki in Finland where his friendship with the writer Hella Wuolijoki begins.

1941 Brecht completes *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti, The Good Person of Szechwan* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui.* He writes war poetry and 'Finnish Epigrams'. Leaving Finland Brecht travels through the Soviet Union via Leningrad and Moscow (where, Margaret Steffin dies) to Vladivostock and sails to the U.S.A. He arrives in Los Angeles in July and settles with his family in Santa Monica. He makes contact with other exiles (Heinrich Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger and Fritz Lang, the film director) and with the natives (Orson Welles). **First performance of *Mother Courage and Her Children* in neutral Switzerland.**

1942 Brecht prepares his *Poems in Exile* for publication. He participates in the anti-war, anti-fascist activities of exile groups. He meets Charles Laughton.

1943 The first performances of *The Good Person of Szechwan* and of *Life of Galileo* take place in Zurich. Brecht writes *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.*

1944 Brecht becomes a member of the newly formed Council for a Democratic Germany. W.H. Auden works on an English version of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Brecht studies Arthur Waley's translations of Chinese poetry.

1945 *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* is given its first English performance in New York under the title *The Private Life of the Master Race.* Brecht and Charles Laughton complete an English version of *Life of Galileo.*

1946 The first performance of Brecht's adaptation of Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* takes place in Boston.

1947 Charles Laughton appears in the title role of *Life of Galileo* in Beverly Hills and New York. Brecht appears before the *Houses Committee on Unamerican Activities* and proves himself a master of ambiguity when cross examined about his communist sympathies.

Return

Brecht and Helene Weigel go to Zurich, leaving their son Stefan, who is an American citizen, in the U.S.A. Brecht applies for an Austrian passport. (Helene Weigel is Austrian.)He meets Max Frisch, his old friend and designer Caspar Neher, and the playwright Carl Zuckmayer.

1948 Brecht's adaptation of *Antigone* of Sophocles is performed in Chur, Switzerland and *Mr. Puntila and His Man Matti* is given its first performance in Zurich. He publishes the *Little*

Organum for the Theatre. Brecht travels to Berlin and starts rehearsals of *Mother Courage* at the Deutsches Theater in the Soviet sector of the city.

1949 *Mother Courage* opens at the Deutsches Theater with Helene Weigel in the title role. Brecht visits Zurich again before settling in Berlin. The *Berliner Ensemble,* Brecht and Helene Weigel's own state-subsidised company, is formed and opens with *Puntila.*

1951 *The Mother* is performed by the *Berliner Ensemble.* Brecht finishes the first version of his adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus.*

1953 Brecht is elected President of the German section of the PEN Club, the international writers' association. On 17 June there are strikes and demonstrations protesting about working conditions in the German Democratic Republic. Brecht writes a letter to the Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party which is released to the press in a doctored form.

1954 The Berliner Ensemble moves into its own home, the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm (where he had triumphed with *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928), and performs *The Caucasian Chalk Circle.* Brecht makes public his objections to the Paris Treaty (which incorporated the Federal Republic of Germany into Nato) and to re-armament in general. The Berliner Ensemble's productions of *Mother Courage* and Kleist's *The Broken Pitcher* are enthusiastically received as the highlights of the Paris Theatre des Nations festival. *Mother Courage* is awarded the prizes for best play and best production.

1956 Brecht is preparing the *Berliner Ensemble*, which by that time has become generally recognized as the foremost progressive theatre in Europe, for a visit to London when he dies of a heart attack on 14 August. The visit went ahead and *Mother Courage*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Trumpets and Drums* were presented at the Palace Theatre at the end of August for a short season - a landmark in Brecht's reception in the United Kingdom.

The Thirty Years War

Bertolt Brecht's play bears the sub-title "A Chronicle of the Thirty Years War." The destruction and carnage of the first world war was still relatively fresh in the people's memories but Brecht chose to set his play in the Thirty Years War. The Thirty Years War, the most destructive conflict fought on German soil until the first world war, constitutes the dark hour of German histroy. This was a conflict that lasted from 1618 to 1648, and set the country back by several centuries. Culturally, morally, and economically it represented the low-water mark of German history, a time when predatory monarchs, Catholic and Protestant, harried the land, plundered and looted it, laid it in ruins.

The war was part of the political upheaval that followed the Reformation which had divided Christian Europe into Protestant and Catholic states. In Brecht's play the Swedes stand for Protestantism (the Second Finnish Regiment being part of the Swedish Army), and the Imperial forces represent Catholicism. Brecht presents the religious conflict as a mere pretext for the war. He insists that the underlying motive of the war leaders was, and always is, profit. Through the Thirty Years War, Brecht is seeking to induce his audience to look at the present: draw lessons from the past to avoid the repetition of a catastrophic, nightmarish experience.

Genesis and Influences

The Thirty Years War produced one of the very greatest of German narrative works of all times : *Simplicissimus* by Hans Jakob Christian Grimmelshausen. This work appeared in 1669. It is the most valuable, the most vivid document of those terrible times. Through the eyes of the "vagabond" after whom the book is named, it gives us a picture of the devastations and horrors of the time, where "everything was full of war, fire, robbery, looting, raping of women and girls." "War", wrote Grimmelshausen, "makes people worse rather than better." Grimmelshausen followed this with a counterpart narrative entitled *The Arch-Cozener and Vagabond*

Courashe, which was the immediate source of Brecht's play. Brecht drew on both works for background and reflections. Grimmelshausen's books are commentaries not only upon the bestialities and cruelties committed in wars, but also upon the nature of man and his beliefs, on tolerance and bigotry, on goodness and evil. In some portions he comes close to heresy. Grimmelslausen was deeply troubled by the ways of this world, and no less by the government of it by the Supreme Ruler on High. He is filled with a truly liberal Christianity. His language, too, is of a kind that would attract Brecht: homely, earthy, vivid, simple, direct, brutal and effective in its more elevated no less than in its obscene chapters.

Grimmelshausen's Courashe is the vegabond counterpart to Simplicissimus (whom she indeed meets and unfortunately infects) - a German Moll Flanders. The illegitimate daughter of a Count, she finds her way into the wars, experiences innumerable adventures, amatory as well as picaresque, steels, cheats, fights as a soldier, whores, becomes sutler and finally turns gypsy.

It was for the atmosphere, the times, and the background that Brecht was indebted to Grimmelshausen, rather than for specific events or incidents. Brecht regarded the Thirty Years War as one of the first large scale wars waged by capitalism over Europe in the name of a war of religion. He was firmly of the view that capitalism was a system of economic exploitation which perpetrated wars. He said that war was the continuation of big business by other means. Applying his Marxist theory, Brecht stated that permanent peace on the earth would be possible only after the class-based society was abolished through a revolutionary struggle waged by the proletarian masses. Brecht could sense that the Thirty Years War was going to be repeated in an even more intensified form in the shape of the war that Hitler seemed bent on imposing upon the world. He saw the crisis of European capitalism as the root cause of the impending great war.

As a Chronicle Play

Quite like Marlowe and Shakespeare, Brecht does not mind taking liberties with the facts, events and chronology of history. After all, he is writing neither history nor a history play. His intention is to provide human truth as well as a particular view of history imaginatively. History is treated simply as a chronicle. *Mother Courage and Her Children* unrolls the chronicle of a sutler woman and her canteen wagon during the years of war 1624 to 1636. The Thirty Years War has been in progress for some time already when Anna Fierling, called Courage, makes her appearance with her three children, variously fathered : Eilif, Swiss Cheese, and the dumb Kattrin. The two sons draw the sutler wagon. In the course of the twelve scenes of the play, disparate as they are according to the "Chronicle" style, there are three connecting elements which appear throughout, from the beginning to the end : the war (chief protagonist), the wagon, and Mother Courage. Mother Courage is first of all a business woman and she lives off the war. Against this bleak, unruly background of destruction of life and property, her fortunes vary. They sag when there is promise of peace, they rise when there is war. In the course of her many vivid adventures she is joined by various characters : a prostitute, Yvette Pottier, for whom the war proves a godsend; the chaplain, and the cook of the Swedish commander.But in the end, she is left altogether alone, having lost her three children as well as her companion, the cook, whom she abandoned for Kattrin's sake. The desolation of the last scenes is symbolic of the only profiteers of war, War itself and those on top who wage it for their own interests. Symbolic of the little people who make it possible for others to wage wars, Mother Courage harnesses herself to her wagon, as depleted as the desolate landscape around her, and proceeds anew, to recoup her "fortunes".

The characters are crushed by the historical circumstances they do not undertand or fatham. Mother Courage herself is the prime example of that blindness. In such an uneven struggle the virtues people possess often prove their undoing. Thus, her son Eilif is brave : he willingly joins the army, is honoured by the Swedish commander for an unscrupulous "heroic" act of looting cattle. But when he perpetrates a similar "heroic" act in time of temporary truce or peace, he is court-martialled. Swiss Cheese, the other son, perishes because he is too honest (though not too bright). He refuses to surrender the company's strong box to the enemy, and is executed. The dumb girl Kattrin, a pathetic victim of soldiers' violence, falls a prey to her love of children. And Mother Courage herself is as much a victim of her business acumen as of her unshakeable intrepidity.

But, as in *Galileo*, this is not a play about character, but about a historic situation and its impact on human beings. Once more a historical event is being presented to illuminate the contemporary scene. The "heroism" of war is unmasked, but not through the figures of its great men. None of the commanders (with one exception) appears on the scene - neither Count Tilly, of the Catholic side, nor Gustavus of Sweden, on the Protestant side. The "heroism" of the great and small and the nature of the war are revealed to the audience by means of the little man.

The mercenary character of war is brought out in the pathetic and hopeless activity of Mother Courage. She loses Eilif to the recruiting officer while she is haggling with his companion soldier over the price of a buckle. She loses Swiss Cheese while she is haggling over the price of his release. She loses Kattrin in the end because she is off on one of her trading expeditions to the city. To save her wagon and her skin, she is forced to feign ignorance as to the identity of Swiss Cheese when he is brought dead before her.

Yet, it may seem almost paradoxical to insist that despite this background of carnage, rape, ruin, it is comic irony that dominates the play and forms something of a counterblast to the tragedy that pervades it.

Rarely has Brecht used "Verfremdung" (alienation effects) with such telling effect to make the audience see what the participants in action on the stage do not. Thus at the very outset of the play the sergeant expresses himself on the nature of war :

> *What else can you expect with peace running wild all over the place? You know what the trouble with peace is? No organization. And when do you get organization?? In a war. Peace is one big waste of equipment. Anything goes, no one gives a damn. See the way that eat? Cheese on pumper-nickel, bacon on the cheese? Disgusting! How many horses have they got in this town? How many young men? Nobody knows! They haven t bothered to count 'em! That's peaace for you! i've been in places where they haven't had a war for seventy years and you know what? The people haven't even been given names! They don't know who they are ! It takes a war to fix that. In a war, eeryone registers, everyone's name's on a list. Their shoes are stacked, their corn's in the bag, you count it all up - cattle, men, Et cetera - and you take it away ! That's the story : no organization, no war!*

This produces,an immediate shock. The audience thinks : This is true. Then they ask, but why should it be like this?

The remarks of the sergeant and the recruiting officer are followed by the appearance of Mother Courage, who sings her raucous and ironic song, adjuring (in good chorale style) all good Christians, but particularly Christian officers,to see to it that their soldiers are well-equipped with sausages and shoes, so that they may go to their "hell-pit" courageously! "Cannons on empty stomachs - why, that isn't healthy at all... so rise up, you Christians : Spring is here. The dead are at rest. Get going!".

What is good for Mother Courage is good for the army! No less ironic are the conversations of the chaplain and the cook, who have joined Mother Courage's wagon, seeking both physical and alcoholic warmth from her presence. The chaplain proclaims the continuity of wars. This one will go on forever. But really, it isn't so very bad ; there is peace even in war. One can ease oneself just as well in one as the other : one loses a leg, cries, but then hops around just as one did before ; one can take one's pleasure with a wench behind a barn and bring future generations into the world to feed other wars. So why should wars have to stop?

As a matter of fact, it is a blessing to fall in a war that is waged for religion's sake, for that's special kind of war, pleasing to the Lord. To which the cook rejoins :

> *Correct. In one sense it's a war because there's fleecing, bribing, plundering, not to mention a little raping, but it's different from all other wars because it's a war of religion. That's clear. All the same, it makes you thirsty.*

But even the chaplain has second thoughts when he looks at the disfigured Kattrin :

I reproach them with nothing. At home they never did these shameful things. The men who start the wars are responsible, they bring cut the worst in people.

Which echoes Grimmelshausen's sentiments.

It is left to Mother Courage really to expose the nature of war and heroism, though she little realizes that to make a profit from war one has, in Brecht's words, "to shear with big shears." She is in fact a "blind" realist. She sees and she does not see. She takes nothing for granted, not even the regularity of the seasons - except, unfortunately, war. Her occasional moments of lucidity are amazing.

Once and once only she gives full vent to her fury and curses out at the war. Kattrin who already as a child had been outraged by a soldier so that she has lost her powers of speech, now has come back from an errand beaten up and badly disfigured. Yet Mother Courage accepts even this calamity realistically as a blessing. It will spare her daughter further exposure to violence. But in the very next scene she says :

I will not let any of you spoil my war for me.

She is without doubt an authority on the subject of heroism. General Tilly has fallen in battle, and is being given a hero's funeral. During the course of their conversation the chaplain complements Mother Courage on her shrewd business sense. "The way you manage your business and always come through," says he, "I understand why they call you Mother Courage." She replies that poor people would be lost if they did not have courage:

The poor need courage. They're lost, that's why. That they even get up in the morning is something - in their plight. Or that they plough a field - in war time. Even their bringing children into the world shows they have courage, for they have no prospects.They have to hang each other one by one and slaughter each other in the lump, so if they want to look each other in the face once in a while, well, it takes courage. That they put up with an Emperor and a Pope, that takes an unnatural amount of courage, for they cost you your life.

Earlier she had told the commander's cook that he must be a very bad commander "because he needs *brave* soldiers. If his plan of campaign was any good, why would he need *brave* soldiers?"

But immediately after that, she is her humorous old self again, as she turns to the chaplain, " you might chop up some firewood for me". The chaplain objects : "I am a keeper of souls, not a woodcutter." And she : "But I have no soul, and I need firewood."

Thus sixteen years pass, villages and towns have been razed, the land is desolate, and Mother Courage, the cook, and Kattrin, bedraggled and beggared, are forced to ask for bread. The cook remarks : "The world is dying out." And indeed it seems so. Of what use are talent, courage, wisdom, sainthood, happiness? This is the song the cook now sings before the parsonage, as he begs for food. He urges Mother Courage to leave with him for Utrecht, where he has inherited an inn. But she must abandon Kattrin, for the inn will feed two, but not three mouths. One moment of great-heartedness lights up the dismal scene. Mother Courage refuses, and dismisses the cook. Once more she is off with her wagon, Kattrin now in harness. Soon she will lose her too. Before the city of Halle, which is being beiseged by Catholic troops, Kattrin will give way to her love of children, which will prove her undoing. In her desire to warn the besieged city of a night-time assault by the enemy, Kattrin climbs to a loft and beats the drum. She is shot down.

Ignorant of the fact that her son Eilif is dead too, and still hopeful of meeting him again, Courage sets off, now alone, harnesses herself to the wagon - a worn, old woman who has learned nothing, once more to start all over again.

If virtues are dangerous in society today, then venality may be a blessing. This is one of Brecht's favourite themes. Thus, Mother Courage reflects, as she is about to bribe the enemy to spare her son's life :

Thank God they can be bribed.

Such bitter paradoxes pervade the entire play. And they constitute its subvesive humour. They are intended to give "pleasure" to an audience, while also delivering their subtle, intellectual buffets. Brecht avoids the over-

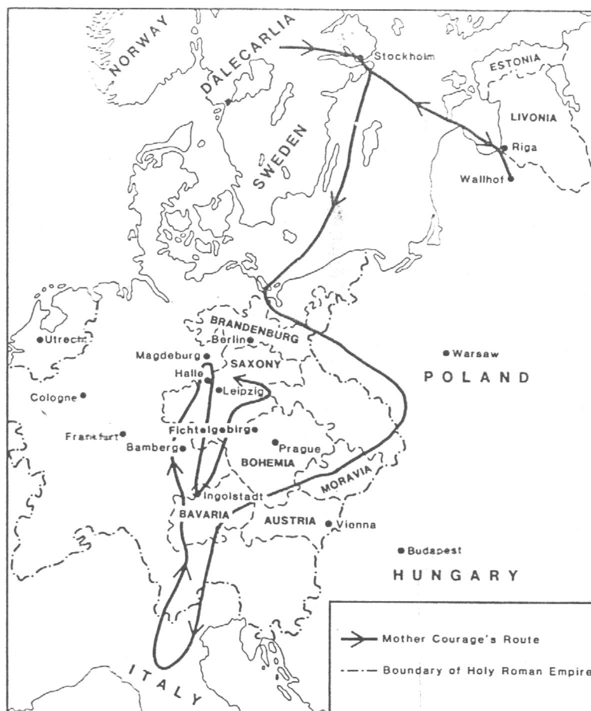
didactic element of direct address. Instruction - if one may use the term - filters in through the live dialogue. The songs, though, as always independent in character, are also directly related to the action. So Mother Courage's sales - chorale ; Eilif's song in the Swedish commander's tent - "The Woman and the Soldier" -- or the cook's "Song of the Inadequacy of Virtue" (these two Brecht repeats from earlier texts) ; or the "Song of Capitulation" sung by Courage to dissuade the emotionally over-charged young soldier from venting his justified but hopeless anger at the commander.

The dialogue and exchanges are full of gusto and verve, the language is direct, homely, and adjusted to the characters. All flows so simply but so deceptively, it is so full of meaning, that an audience can hardly be blamed for not always grasping the full sense of what is being said at the moment of its utterance. The paradox and deliberate ambiguities can only be enjoyed through repeated hearing.

Brecht was fearful of being misunderstood. *Mother Courage* was produced in Zurich in April 1941. Coming as it did at a particularly dark moment in history, it created an unforgettable impression. But to Brecht's horror, the reviews stressed an emotional impact of the play, extolling it as a " Niobe-tragedy," and spoke with warmth about the overwhelming vital force of the mother animal. Brecht altered a few brief portions of some scenes for the post-war Berlin productions, subduing some of the more debatable emotional parts, but actually altering very little of the main effect.

The Thirty Years War is one of the first gigantic wars waged by capitalism over Europe. But under and within capitalism it is extremely difficult for the individual to see that war is not necessary : for it is necessary within capitalism, namely for capitalism. This economic system is based upon a war of all against all, the great ones against the great ones, the little ones against the little ones, the great ones against the little ones. One would already have had to recognize that war and the misfortunes it brings are bad - that is, unnecessary.

Mother Courage's Journey



Europe in the 17th century. Not every scene in the play is geographically located. It opens in Dalecarlia, scene 2 is at Wallberg, scene 3 in Poland, between scenes 4 and 5 Courage traverses Poland, Moravia, Bavaria, Italy, and returns through Bavaria to Magdeburg for scene 5. Scene 6 is at Ingolstadt, scene 9 in the Fichtelgebirge and scenes 10 and 11 near Halle.

Scene by Scene Detailed Critical Summary

Scene 1

Highway outside a Town

Spring 1624. In Dalarna.

A Swedish recruiting officer and sergeant have been given the responsibility to put together four platoons for the campaign in Poland. They are discussing the diffculties in doing so. The recuiting officer complains that even if they were to overlook lack of physical fitness, there just aren't people willing to recruit/join.

The sergeant regrets the absence of discipline that creeps in in peace time. "In a war, everyone registers, everyone's name's on a list". Everything is properly organised. Once it gets moving, however, all are scared of peace because when peace comes they have to pay up. Of course until it gets going, they're just as scared of war, says the sergeant.

Just then, a canteen wagon, drawn by two young fellows, rolls on. It belongs to an old woman, Anna Fierling, commonly known as Mother Courage. She is sitting on it with her dumb daughter, Kattrin, and the two young fellows drawing it are her sons Eilif and Swiss Cheese. All three have been differently fathered, she tells the officers. She had some other live-in companions as well.

When the recruting officer calls the two young men oxen, Eilif loses his temper and would have smashed his face but is restrained by his mother. Mother Courage sees it as an opportunity of doing some business with them.

They are not interested in buying her ware though, the sergeant tells her. He wants to know why her two young and fit sons have not joined the army. Mother Courage replies that her sons are not for a soldier's life. She is prepared to fight to prevent them from trying to take Eilif from her.

The sergeant taunts that she calls herself Mother Courage and makes profit from the war but isn't prepared to make any sacrifice for the sake of the war that gives her bread. The conflict between her mother-love and her keen business acumen suggests the tragic potential of the play.

She plays the game of fortune-telling with black crosses in a clever manoeuvre to prevent her sons from being recruited, first by putting off the sergeant and then by frightening her own children. Eilif is too brave and if he doesn't use his head, he must die in the springtime of his life. Swiss Cheese is too honest and simple-minded. He'll go too if he isn't honest the whole time the way she brought him up to be. Kattrin has a good heart but she counts on her dumbness to see her through. The scene is full of dramatic irony for it is only her fears that prove to be justified.

The audience are almost allowed a preview of the tragic course of the play through Mother Courage's fears, yet ironically she fails to heed her own warnings.

Mother Courage is about to move on with her children when the recruiting officer asks the sergeant to involve her in a business transaction while he takes the opportunity to tempt Eilif with money to join the army. The Dumb Kattrin lets out harsh cries to warn Mother but she's busy striking the bargain with the sergeant. When she comes, she finds Eilif missing. The sergeant consoles her that being a soldier isn't the worse that could happen. Mother Courage has no option but to move on. Kattrin takes Eilif's place by brother Swiss Cheese's side to pull the wagon. The sergeant sings, giving her an object lesson about war:

> *When a war gives you all you earn: One day it may claim something in return.*

The echos of this are heard throughout the play.

The clever Mother Courage is outwitted by the men of war who locate her profit motive of a tradeswoman as her weak point. She is involved in haggling over the price of a belt while her brave son Eilif is snatched by the army.

Towards the beginning of this scene Mother Courage explains to the army men how she got her name. She ran madly through a bombardment " 'cause I was afraid I'd be ruined" as her fifty loaves of bread were getting mouldy. This is one of Brecht's alienation effects: whether in certain situations cowardice and courage might not be two sides of the same coin.

Although epic theatre, the first scene performs the expository function of a traditional play. We are introduced to the main persons in the play with the war providing the setting. The basic conflict of interests is highlighted and the characters of the main persons outlined. By the end of the scene, one of Mother Courage's children is already taken away by war and the action has the potential to develop into a full-blown tragedy, the only requirement of a tragedy missing here being that Mother Courage is not a typical Aristotelian tragic figure, lacking in status, being an ordinary tradeswoman.

The scene also has Mother Courage's first song as she enters introducing herself and her trade, with the war providing the background. It lays the ground theme of the play, showing the ironic interdependence of commerce and war. The nature of war is exposed in a pessimistic though prophetic manner. Mother Courage's attitude to life, as revealed through this song, is of cynical realism. She sings "with a degree of humour that admits defeat yet overcomes despair. However, she remains only half-aware of the full implications of her song. Only at the end, when she is too broken to sing herself and a variation of her song is taken up by the soldiers marching in the background, does the horror of seemingly never-ending warfare strike a note of bleak despair, reinforcing the tragic impact of the play," says Ruby Chatterji.

Scene 2

Tent of the Swedish Commander

Mother Courage is trying to sell a capon to the cook of the Swedish commander for sixty hellars which he thinks is too much for a paltry piece of poultry. She is offended that it should be so-described when a siege is on and everything is so scarce. However, she scales down the price a little bit, warning the cook at the same time that if he did not find something to eat and quick, his chief will cut his fat head off. He tries to bring her down further by taking out a piece of beef to roast but she is not taken in. She makes out that it is stale and smelling. Just then the Commander enters the tent, accompanied by a chaplain and Eilif who are his guests at dinner. The Commander is pleased with Eilif for driving away the enemy's cattle. They drink a can of red wine together. Then the Commander orders the cook to bring meat for his guests. The cook starts grumbling for there is nothing to place on the Commander's table who brings guests to boot at a time like this. But Mother Courage makes him stop talking, for she wants to listen to the conversation in the Commander's tent. She recognises that the Commander's guest is none other than her eldest son whom she has not seen for two years. She feels proud that the Commander has invited him to dinner. But she doesn't allow sentiment to get the better of her judgement in a business deal. The Commander has ordered meat for his guest but the cook hasn't any. So she immediately jacks up the price of the capon to one gilder. The cook says it's highway robbery but she knows no price is too high for the Commander's guest of honour who also happens to be her brave and clever eldest son. She says she can't wait to see his face when he sees her. She has another son who is stupid but honest and she has a daughter who doesn't talk. Mother is thankful for such small mercies.

The Commander offers another glass of wine to his guest. Eilif narrates how he found out that the peasants had hidden their oxen into a certain wood from where people from the town would pick them up. He cleverly made them lead his men whom he had made crazy for meat, to where the oxen were. However, the peasants had clubs and outnumbered his men and made a murderous attack on them. He was cornered and his good sword fell from his hand and he was asked to surrender. They would have made mincemeat of him but he foxed them by laughing and making them an offer for the oxen. They were scratching their heads at his offer when he picked up his good sword and cut them to pieces. Having finished his story, he comments : "Necessity knows no law."

The Chaplain, who has been quietly listening all this while, says that there is no such saying in the Bible. The Lord had made sure that no such necessity would arise, "When he told men to love their neighbours, their bellies were full. Nowadays things are different."

The Commander laughs and offers him more wine for his wise words. Then he turns to Eilif and says that he has the makings of a Julius Caesar. He should be presented to the King. Eilif is ambitious and says he must try to be like the King. The Commander is full of praise for a brave soldier like him.

However, Mother Courage, who has been listening in the kitchen isn't happy. She comments that he must be a very bad commander to need brave soldiers. A good commander has a good plan of campaign, and doesn't need brave soldiers. "Whenever there are great virtues, it's a sure sign something's wrong," says she, "In a good country virtues wouldn't be necessary. Everybody could be quite ordinary."

In the Commander's part of the tent, Eilif tells him that his father was a great soldier. He sings to the Commander "The Song of the Fishwife and the Soldier". Mother Courage continues the song from the kitchen, beating a pan with a spoon. The Commander doesn't appreciate this taking of liberties but Eilif has recognised the voice to be his mother's. He enters the kitchen and embraces her. She tells him that they are quite happy. She couldn't altogether keep Swiss Cheese out of trouble : he has become paymaster with the Second Regiment. She draws consolation from the fact that at least he isn't in the fighting. The Commander compliments her for being the mother of a brave son. Mother Courage give Eilif a box on the ear because he did not surrender when the four peasants tried to make mincemeat of him. The Commander and the chaplain stand laughing in the doorway.

This scene opens with Mother Courage and the Swedish Commander's cook engaged in hard bargaining over the price of a capon. Shrewd tradesperson that she is, Mother Courage exploits the wartime situation to jack up prices and make quick profits. As the two try to outwit each other, the Commander enters accompanied by the hero Eilif who deserves to be feasted for foxing the peasants and cutting them to pieces. Mother Courage does not allow her joy in discovering her own son as the Commander's honoured guest to get the better of her business sense. Rather, she exploits the situation to make a fast buck.

The Commander is all eyes and ears for Eilif but treats the Chaplain contemptuously. The pretence that it was a holy war thus stands exposed. Even the high praise being showered upon Eilif doesn't seem to be sincere. It is more a clever way of provoking him to undertake risky military adventures. But Mother Courage, although feeling proud that her son is the Commander's honoured guest, doesn't approve of him ignoring her instructions and risking his life. She gives him a box on his ear for his dare-devilry. She even makes a cynical speech running down the "great virtues". However, the question Brecht seems to be posing before the audience is : what is heroism ? Is Eilif's act of stealing cattle a heroic deed? One might well conclude that what goes on in the name of bravery during war is nothing but an attempt to legitimise and glorify thuggery.

Eilif's "Song of the Fishwife and the Soldier" leaves one with a sense of uneasiness at impending danger, although both Mother Courage and Eilif are proud of making profit from the war.

Scene 3

Three years have passed since the last scene

A camp.

Swiss Cheese has joined as regimental paymaster .

Mother Courage and Kattrin are folding up the washing drying on the cannon. At the same time Courage is bargaining with an ordnance officer over a bag of bullets as Swiss Cheese looks on. Yvette Pottier, a very good-looking young person but a whore, is sewing at a coloured hat nearby.

The officer offers a bag of bullets to Mother Courage for two gilders. He needs the money to arrange liquor for his Colonel and fellow officers who have been on a drinking spree for three days. She hesitates to accept the

offer, for if the bullets are found on her, she would be court-martialled. She also rebukes the officer for selling the bullets and using young soldiers as cannon fodder. However, it is not any concern for the soldiers that's coming in the way of her accepting the offer. She is simply trying to bring down the price. The officer convinces her that there is no risk involved. She can resell the bullets immediately to the ordnance officer of another regiment at three to four times the price he is asking her. He would have himself sold the bullets to that officer but he is his friend and he doesn't trust him. Mother Courage accepts the bag from him and tells Kattrin to pay the officer a gilder and a half. She won't listen to his protests. Kattrin drags the bag away.

Mother Courage gives Swiss Cheese his underwear. He might need it as autumn might come any time. She makes it clear to him why she has purposely said "might" and not "must" for experience has taught her that there is nothing "that *must* come, not even the seasons." But the regimental paymaster's account books must balance, says she. She reminds him that he has been made paymaster because he is honest and simple and can be trusted not to run off with the cash. She also tells him not to lose the underwear. As the ordnance officer accompanies Swiss Cheese away, she warns him not to teach her son any hanky-panky.

As the officer leaves with Swiss Cheese without even saying good bye, Yvette tells him that he could at least say good-bye.

Mother Courage tells Yvette that she doesn't like that officer. He is no sort of company for her Swiss Cheese. However, she is happy that war is making good progress. As all the different countries get involved in it, it'll be another four or five years. If she makes no mistakes, business will be good, she hopes. She advises Yvette that she shouldn't be drinking in the morning, what with her illness. Yvette vehemently denies that she's ill. Those who say so are all liars. She confesses to Mother Courage that those lies have made her desperate as everybody avoids her like a stinking fish. She throws away her hat as she explains why she drinks in the morning although she knows it is not good for her looks. She doesn't care any more how she looks as every man in the regiment knows what kind of a reputation she enjoys. "But pride isn't for the likes of us, you eat dirt or down you go", says she.

Mother Courage doesn't want her to speak of these things in front of her innocent daughter but Yvette thinks she's the one that should hear it so that she gets hardened against love. Mother Courage doesn't think anyone ever gets hardened against that.

Yvette, however, wants to unburden her heart and narrates the story of her falling in love with an army cook, a thin Dutchman, whose earlier girl called him Peter Piper "because he never took his pipe out of his mouth the whole time, it meant so little to him." Yvette warns Kattrin to beware of thin men. Then she sings The Fraternization Song. When she concludes the song, she regrets the mistake she made of running after the cook. She never found him though it's ten years now. As she goes behind the wagon, Mother Courage tells her that she has left her hat behind but she does't bother.

Mother Courage then warns Kattrin to learn a lesson from Yvette's story. Love seems heaven- born, so there's all the more reason to watch out. She should particularly beware of a soldier. She tells Kattrin she should consider herself lucky that she can't speak, for she'll never have to regret saying something she shouldn't have.

While Mother Courage is giving this sermon on love to Kattrin, the cook and the chaplain walk in. The chaplain has a message for her from Eilif. The cook has come because she has made an impression upon him.

Mother Courage says if it's money Eilif wants, she hasn't any to spare. And his brother, the regimental paymaster, is not his paymaster. Then she takes out money from her purse and gives to the chaplain for Eilif with the comment that Eilif should be ashamed, for it's a sin to speculate in mother love. The cook says Eilif will be going shortly with his regiment to his death maybe. He advises Courage to send more money for him, or she might feel sorry afterwards if he is killed in war. The chaplain thinks dying in that war of religion would be a blessing, not something to feel sorry about. The cook agrees that although on the surface it doesn't appear to be any different from other wars in that "there's fleecing, bribing, plundering, not to mention a little raping", but "it's different from all other wars because it's a war of religion."

The chaplain tells Mother Courage that the cook is bewitched of her and dreams about her. The cook says that the stories the chaplain was telling him on the way still had him blushing. Mother Courage is not surprised to hear this as he is "a man of his cloth!" Then she offers to get them both something to drink or they might start making improper advances out of sheer boredom.

Turning towards Kattrin, the chaplain asks : "And who is this captivating young person?" Mother Courage indignantly replies that she is not captivating, she's a respectable young person.

The chaplain and the cook go with Mother Courage behind the cart. They are heard talking politics. Mother Courage accuses the Poles of attacking the Swedish King when he was in the act of peacefully withdrawing and therefore their blood was on their own heads. They drink brandy. Kattrin looks after them, leaves the washing, goes to the hat left behind by Yvette, picks it up, sits down, and takes up Yvette's red boots. The cook comments that it is a war of religion. As Kattrin puts the boots on, the cook sings a verse or two of Luther's hymn. Then he begins talking of King Gustavas who first attacked Poland and then Germany. The wars cost quite a bit , so he had to levy taxes, which made bad blood, but he didn't shrink even from that. He always had God's Holy Word in his favour, "which was all to the good, because otherwise they could have said he did it for himself or for profit. That's how he kept his conscience clear. He always put conscience first."

Mother Courage doesn't like the sarcastic manner in which the cook speaks about the King. Had he been a Swede, he would have spoken differently of the "Hero King". The chaplain suggests that the cook is an ungrateful person who eats the King's bread and talks like that about him. The cook denies that he eats the King's bread. Rather, he bakes his bread. Mother Courage says earnestly that the "big chaps" wage war from fear of God but they also "want a good profit out of it" or else "the little chaps like you and me would't back 'em up." The chaplain warns him that as a Dutchman he'll do well "to see which flag is flying here before you express an opinion!" Mother Courage says they are all good Protestants for ever. The fact is that she changes sides twice as she criss-crosses Europe during the course of the war.

Kattrin has picked up Yvette's hat and is copying her sexy walk after putting it on when all of a sudden cannon and shots are heard. The ordnance officer and a soldier come running and try to push the cannon along.Mother Courage tries to get her washing off the cannon. The officer informs her that the Catholics have launched a surprise attack. The cook goes to the Commander. Before going he tells Mother Courage that he'll be back in a day or two for a short conversation. Mother Courage shouts after him that he has left his pipe behind. He asks her to keep it for him, he'll need it.

Mother Courage is unhappy at the Catholic attack at a time when she was just making money. The chaplain asks her if she has a cloak in which he could try to conceal his religion. Mother Courage brings him one against her better judgement. She notices Kattrin wearing Yvette's hat and angrily asks her to take it off immediately or the enemy would make a whore of her. Then she notices that Kattrin has Yvette's boots on too and she unsuccessfully tries to remove them.

Just then Yvette walks in She powders her face to look smart when the Catholics arrive so that she may carry on her whoring business. She finds her hat trampled upon by someone. She looks around for her red boots too but can't find them because Kattrin, who is wearing them, is hiding her feet under her skirt.

Swiss Cheese comes running with the regimental cash box. Mother Courage advises him to throw it away for his own safety but he says that he cannot betray the trust reposed in him. Mother Courage tells the chaplain to remove his pastor's coat or even the cloak would not be able to save him. She rubs ashes into Kattrin's face, saying that a little more dirt would make her unattractive and therefore safe from the enemy soldiers' eyes. "When a soldier sees a clean face there's one more whore in the world," she says. Then she asks Swisss Cheese where he had left the cash box. To her horror, he has hid it in the wagon. If it is found, they all would be hanged. Swiss Cheese offers to put it somewhere else but she stops him, it being too late. She takes down the flag from the wagon when the chaplain draws her attention to it.

Three days later, Swiss Cheese is worried that the sergeant must be thinking Swiss Cheese had made off with the cash box. The chaplain is unhappy that he has not been able to hold a service for fear of being caught. Mother Courage is not able to decide which of the two - Swiss Cheese or the chaplain - is more dangerours. She finds it hard to sleep at night because of Swiss Cheese although she has told the enemy that she is a staunch Catholic. She knows they didn't believe her but turned a blind eye as they needed a canteen around. They have been made prisoners. The chaplain talks of their defeat. She retorts that "the defeats and victories of the chaps at the top aren't always defeats and victories for the chaps at the bottom." "But," she says, "in general both defeat and victory are a costly business for us that haven't got much. The best thing according to her, "is for politics to get stuck in he mud." She notices that Swiss Cheese is not eating well. He is worried how the sergeant will pay the soldiers without him. Mother Courage feels concerned about his safety because of his sense of duty. She had brought him up to be honest because he wasn't very intelligent. Now she warns him not to go too far with his honesty. She is going with the chaplain to buy a Catholic flag and some meat. She is happy she has been allowed to stay in the business. "In business you ask what price, not what religion," she comments.

As Mother Courage disappears into the wagon, the chaplain says to Swiss Cheese that she is worried about the cash box. Upto now they've been ignored. He wonders how long such luck can last. Swiss Cheese offers to get rid of the cash box but the chaplain thinks such an attempt would be even more dangerous, for there are spies swarming literally every place. He talks of an incident where a spy with a bandage over one eye so caught him by surprise that he almost gave out his religion.

Mother Courage has stumbled upon Yvette's red boots hidden in the wagon by Kattrin and she is furious with her. Yvette disgraces herself for money, whereas Kattrin is doing it for pleasure . She tells Kattrin to save her "proud, peacock ways" for peacetime, for soldiers can't be trusted. Mother Courage would rather Kattrin remained unnoticed like a stone in Dalarna. She asks Swiss Cheese to forget about the cash box and take care of his sister. She says one of the two would be the cause of her death as she goes with the chaplain.

Swiss Cheese tells Kattrin that he is removing the cash box from the wagon so that Mother Courage has no more cause for anxiety. He says what a pleasant surprise it would be for the sergeant when he returns the cash box to him.

Kattrin goes behind the wagon to get a glass of brandy for her brother when she is confronted by an enemy sergeant and a man with a bandage over one eye. He is the spy who had so surprised the chaplain that he almost gave out his identity. Terrified, she runs away, spilling the brandy. The two men see Swiss Cheese and withdraw.

Swiss Cheese is not happy that she has spilled the brandy but he is in a hurry to get rid of the cash box that's a source of so much anxiety to his mother. Kattrin desperately tries to stop him and warn of the presence of the enemy sergeant with the spy but Swiss Cheese cannot understand what she is trying to convey through her frantic gestures. He takes the cash box out of the wagon and puts it under his coat. Kattrin tries to stop him once more but he pushes her aside and goes.

Mother Courage and the chaplain return. Kattrin rushes at her mother who has other things like putting up the Catholic flag on her mind. Then, at last, she learns from Kattrin that Swiss Cheese has gone away with the cash box and a man with one eye was after him. The chaplain says he is an informer. That means it's the end for Swiss Cheese.

The sergeant and the informer bring Swiss Cheese to the wagon where they had seen him. They allege that Mother Courage and her companion are the young man's friends. Both Swiss Cheese and Mother Courage deny that they know each other. Swiss Cheese says he had only stopped at the canteen to have his lunch. Mother Courage says she is a law-abiding citizen. The chaplain is her barman.

The sergeant asks Swiss Cheese what was the bulge in his shirt that he saw. He must have hidden it in the river. Swiss Cheese says he must have seen someone else. The sergeant says he is after the regimental cash box and he is convinced that Swiss Cheese has got it. He threatens him with death if he doesn't give them it.

Mother Courage realises that the sergeant means business and she hints to Swiss Cheese to hand over the cash box but he still insists that he doesn't have it. The sergeant violently pushes him and takes him off.

That evening,as he is rinsing glasses and polishing knives with Kattrin, the chaplain sings the ominous Song of the Hours about the death of Jesus.

Mother Courage enters in an excited state. She says it's a life and death situation for Swiss Cheese. The sergeant will still listen to them but he must not know that Swiss Cheese is her son, or she'll be accused of complicity. The sergeant would want money to spare Swiss Cheese but she wonders where money would come from. Then it occurs to her that Yvette, who has "picked up" a colonel might be able to help by buying her out of her canteen business.The chaplain asks what would then she live off.

Just then, Yvette enters with an old colonel. She embraces Mother Courage as if she is happy to see an old acquaintance and says she has heard that Mother Courage is selling off her wagon. If so, she might think about it. But Mother Courage replies that she only wants to pawn it, not sell it. And she is not in any haste. She tells Yvette that if she gives her the money she needs, she (Mother) would return it in two weeks, maybe even in one. The colonel is prepared to give money to Yvette to clinch the deal. Yvette says she would make an inventory of the things on the wagon just in case Mother Courage is not able to keep up the promise about returning the money. Mother Courage drags her by her skirt and says its Swiss Cheese's life that's at stake. She should not be wasting precious time. Yvette has arranged to meet One Eye in the bushes to settle how much money he would accept. He, of course, demands two hundred gilders. The chaplain suggests that she should try to bring him down to hundred and fifty maybe and not hand over all two hundred without any bargaining. Mother Courage asks him to shut up as it is not his money. She tells Yvette also not to haggle for it's Swiss Cheese's life at stake. Then she turns to the chaplain and explains that she is counting on that cash box to repay Yvette once Swiss Cheese is saved. She is hopeful of saving her son, for "men are bribable." Corruption is her only hope, she says. Yvette comes panting in and informs Mother Courage that they have agreed to release Swiss Cheese for two hundred gilders but the money must be paid without any delay as "these things change from one minute to the next." Swiss Cheese had confessed under torture that he had the cash box but he threw it in the river when he noticed he was being followed. When Mother Courage learns that the cash box is gone, she is in a fix as to how she will ever be able to return Yvette's money and save her wagon. Yvette asks her whether she would save the son or the wagon. Of course,son comes first but is there any harm in trying to bring down their demand to a hundred and twentyfive gilders, says Mother Courage. She also has to think of Kattrin who is twentyfive and still not married. Yvette goes to try. Mother Courage tries to console Kattrin that nothing would happen to her brother. Suddenly Kattrin runs sobbing behind the wagon. Mother Courage realies she has haggled too long. In the distance, there is a roll of drums, signalling that it's all over for Swiss Cheese. Yvette returns. She is looking pale, she rebukes Mother Courage for her greed which resulted in Swiss Cheese getting eleven bullets. She tells her that she can keep her wagon now. She has only come to warn her that they suspect the box to be hidden in the wagon. So they are going to bring his body here to see if Mother Courage and Kattrin will break down when they see him. She offers to take Kattrin away. But Mother Courage says Kattrin knows. The sergeant comes with two men carrying a stretcher. He asks Mother Courage if she can identify the body on the stretcher. She shakes her head. The sergeant then asks the two men to take the body and throw it in the carrion pit as no one here knows him. Even then, Courage and Kattrin do not betray any emotion.

To some readers the third scene emphasizes the tragic dimensions of the play. However, all action taken in totality reveals that writing a tragedy was never Brecht's intention. The ordnance officer selling and Mother Courage buying ammunition from him reveals the rampant corruption in both war and business. Then the surprise attack by the Catholics and Mother Courage's efforts to cope up with the resulting disorder reveal her resourcefulness and energy in dealing with familiar war situations. She pulls down the Protestant flag and switches over to the enemy camp without any compunction. Her unabashed explanation is that "the defeats and victories of the chaps at the top aren't always defeats and victories of the chaps of the bottom." She

identifies herself only with business interests. If it's a war of religion, what can explain the chaplain's religious turn around? The bitter truth is that these are mere made up issues to cover up one's money-making designs.

Scene 4

Outside an Officer's Tent

Mother Courage denies the scrivener's allegation that she was hiding a Protestant paymaster. She insists on lodging the complaint that the things in her wagon were all destroyed and a fine imposed on her for doing nothing wrong. If she did not complain, it would look as if she had a bad conscience.

A young soldier comes and starts hurling abuses at the captain sitting inside for depriving him of his reward and spending it on drinks for his whores. An older solider advises him to shut up or he would wind up in the stocks. The older soldier tells Mother Courage that the young soldier had saved the colonel's horse but the captain didn't let the reward reach him. Inexperienced that he is, he is unnecessarily inviting trouble by shouting about it. Mother Courage thinks it is perfectly reasonable for the young soldier to want a reward. She advises the young soldier not to shout himself hoarse. He would need the voice when the captain comes. She comments that the screamers scream only for a short while and become quiet when it is really needed. The young soldier doesn't pay her any heed and goes on shouting. Mother Courage says she understands why he is shouting. The previous year these people destroyed the crops under orders from their commander who did not expect to be around this year. Now there's famine and the soldiers are hungry and angry. She tells him that he needs to be angry for a long time but his rage is a short one. She explains that she is not saying that it is not right to ask for the money but that his anger won't last. If she thought it would, she would urge him to slice up the captain but not if he could feel his tail between his legs. The young soldier draws his sword and promises to slice up the captain when he comes. Almost immediately, the scrivener announces that the captain will be out in a minute. He commands every one to be seated and the fuming and fretting young soldier sits down as ordered. Mother Courage says : "They know us through and through". There's no revolt in sitting when ordered to do so. She suggests that if this is what it has to come to, then he better not stand up again. She tells him not to feel embarrassed in her presence because she is no better herself. People like them don't stick their necks out for it wouldn't be good business. Then she sings to him The Song of the Great Capitulation and concludes that the young soldier has a good cause but he should keep his sword drawn only if his anger is big enough. If it is short, he'd better go. The young soldier realises that he doesn't have the guts to carry out his threat that he would slice up the captain and so he quietly slinks away before the captain arrives. When the scrivener tells Mother Courage that she may file her complaint, she too decides that it's better not to do so.

This scene demonstrates how quickly the little people like the young soldier and Mother Courage capitulate to authority. Their rebellion, born of "a short anger" peters out. Mother Courage teaches the young soldier that it is in their interest to capitulate to authority and she does the same herself. Demanding and fighting for one's rights, however, is not absolutely ruled out. It would require "a long rage" , though. "A long rage" would lead to revolt and social intervention. Brecht expects the audience to understand that. The third scene had ended on a note of sympathy for Mother Courage when Swiss Cheese was shot dead by the Catholics. By applying the alienation-effect in this scene, Brecht washes out that note.

Scene - 5

Two years have passed since the last scene

The war covers wider and wider territory. Mother Courage's wagon stands in a war-ruined village. Faint military music can be heard from the distance. Kattrin and Mother Courage are serving two soldiers at a counter. One of the soldiers has a woman's fur coat about his shoulders.

Mother Courage refuses to serve them brandy if they don't have the money to pay for it. The first soldier is indignant that the Chief allowed only one hour to plunder the town, saying that he was not inhuman. The soldier, who arrived late, and thus missed the opportunity, accuses the Chief of being bought off.

The chaplain staggers in. He needs more bandages for the wounded peasants. Kattrin tries to get her mother to bring linen out but Mother Courage refuses. She has sold all bandages to the regiment and she won't tear up her officers' shirts for the poor peasants who can't pay for them. The first soldier says the peasants must pay the price for being Prostestants. The second soldier says they are Catholics, not Protestants. The first one then tries to justify the brutalities by saying that when there is bombardment going on, it is not possible to pick and choose. The chaplain needs linen to tie up a peasant's broken arm but Mother Courage does not relent. Kattrin threatens her mother with a board. The chaplain lifts her bodily off the steps of the wagon and forcibly takes shirts out and tears them in strips. Courage is left lamenting her officers' shirts. A child's cry is heard from inside a house. Kattrin runs in to save the child. Mother Courage wants someone to stop her. At the same time she is worried about her expensive linen. Kattrin brings a baby out of the ruins. Mother Courage does not want to be burdened with the child and tells Kattrin to give it to its mother immediately. She complains that she has nothing but losses from the victory. The chaplain bandages the wounded peasants with the torn shirt strips. Kattrin hums a lullaby to comfort the child. Mother Courage snatches the stolen fur coat from the soldier's shoulders when he fails to pay for the brandy.

In this scene, the background music announcing Tilly's victory at Magdebarg seems to mock the suffering of the little people. The victorious soldiers are on a looting and drinking spree. The chaplain rescues wounded people from a ruined farm house and thus salvages some of his lost dignity. But Mother Courage is not moved by the suffering of the poor peasants. She is not in the business for charity, she says. Kattrin, however, does not share her mother's approach. She risks her life to save a child from a burning house. The contrast in the responses of the mother and the daughter suggests to some readers that Mother Courage has learnt nothing from the loss of her son over whom she preferred the wagon. Rather, her personality has become all the more distorted. She has become "a hyena of the battle field".

Scene - 6

Year 1632

The inside of a canteen tent.

There is rain as drums and funeral music is heard in the distance. The fallen Commander Tilly's funeral is taking place. Mother Courage and her daughter are taking an inventory of the things on the wagon.

Courage is sorry about Tilly getting killed that way. Confused in the fog, he went forward instead of back and ran into a hail of bullets. She scolds a soldier for skipping the Commander's funeral and coming to her wagon for a drink. The scrivener blames the authorities for giving the soldiers money before the funeral. When the chaplain asks him if he was not supposed to be there, the scrivener comes out with the excuse that he did not go because it was raining. Mother Courage, while busy with her inventory, chips in that no Church bells would be rung for the poor Commander when he would be being lowered in his grave because the church towers had been shot up by his own orders. So three shots would be fired to mark the occassion.

A soldier at the counter demands one brandy. Mother Courage asks him to pay up first. She would not allow him to come inside the tent for the drink even though it is raining outside. She only allows officers inside, she tells him. Turning to the scrivener, she says that she had heard the Commander was having unrest in the Second Regiment because the soldiers hadn't been paid and he was insisting that they must fight the war of religion free of charge.

All look towards the funeral march. Mother Courage delivers a parodic funeral oration. She says she feels sorry for a commander whose grand plans for the conquest of the world might have been spoiled by "the common riffraff that only wants a jug of bear or a bit of company, not the higher things in life." Even emperors have to count on support from their soldiers and the people round about. The chaplain laughingly endorses Mother Courage upto a point but disagrees with her when she runs down the soldiers. He thinks they do what they can. They can be trusted to fight any number of years, and even two wars at a time if necessary. He

doesn't think the war is going to end just because a commander has been killed. Commanders can be had cheaply. Mother Courage cuts him short by saying that she wasn't asking him questions merely for the sake of arguments. She wanted the chaplain to advise her whether she should buy up a lot of supplies for her wagon particularly when they happened to be so cheap at this moment of comparative lull on the battlefield. However, they would be worth nothing if the war ended. The chaplain replies that there might be occasional pauses but with Emperors and Popes around, war can always "look forward to a prosperous future." The scrivener is of the view that in the long run one can't live without peace. The chaplain's answer to that is that war satisfies even the need of peace through its islands of peace. One can even be "fruitful and multiply in the thick of slaughter - behind a barn or somewhere," "... so the war has your offspring and can carry on." "War is like love, it always finds a way. Why should it end?" asks the chaplain cynically. Reassured, Mother Courage decides to buy the supplies. However, Kattrin doesn't like it and runs out. Mother Courage laughs and says that Kattrin is waiting for peace as she (Courage) had promised her she (Kattrin) will get a husband when it is peace. She brings Kattrin back, explaining to her that they'll make a little more money if the war goes on a little longer. The money will make peace all the nicer. She tells Kattrin to go with the clerk and bring some things - the dearer ones from the Golden Lion. She would be perfectly safe as most of the soldiers are at the Commander's funeral.

The chaplain is all praise for Mother Courage's business sense. He says that's how she must have got her name, that is, Courage. Her reply is that the poor can't do without courage or they would be lost. All their acts even bringing children into the world when they know they have no prospects - are acts of courage . Putting up with an Emperor and a Pope takes an unnatural amount of courage,for they cost one one's life.

Mother Courage takes out a small pipe and begins to smoke. She directs the chaplain to chop some firewood for her. He protests that he's "a pastor of souls, not a woodcutter." She replies that she doesn't have a soul, and she needs wood. The chaplain recognises the pipe she is smoking as the pipe of the cook from the Oxenstierna Regiment. He tells Mother Courage that the cook was not a trustworthy person. Courage thinks he was such a nice person. While chopping wood, the chaplain asks her to look at that pipe closely and it'll confirm what he is alleging. Mother Courage can see nothing special except that it's a used pipe. The chaplain explains that the pipe is bitten half way through which suggests that its owner is a man of great violence. The jealous chaplain runs down the cook as "a cunning Don Juan". He deals the block a tremendous blow which makes Mother Courage ask him not to bite her chopping block half way through. The chaplain's answer is that God has given him the gift of tongues, not of chopping wood. He can, with a single sermon, put such spirit into a regiment that they would care nothing of their own lives at the thought of final victory. The chaplain then makes a sort of proposal to Mother Courage. He says that under a veil of plain speech she conceals a heart. She is human, she needs warmth. Mother Courage tries to laugh it off, saying: "The best way of warming this tent is to chop plenty of firewood." But the chaplain would not let her change the subject. He wonders "if our relationship should be somewhat more firmly cemented... now the wind of war has whirled us so strangely together". She again tries to put him off, saying, "the cement's pretty firm already. I cook your meals. And you lend a hand - at chopping firewood, for instance." The chaplain, however,is earnest : "You know what I mean by a close relationship... ."Mother Courage then asks him to be sensible. She says she likes him but she has no mind to a private life. All she is interested in is "to bring me and my children through in that wagon." She is more concerned with the practical business of living. He would have nowhere to go if she was ruined.

Suddenly, Kattrin enters, breathless, with a wound across the eye and forehead, and dragging all sorts of articles. Mother Courage regrets having let her go and thus exposing her to a drunken soldier. She tries to console her that it's only a flesh wound that would heal up in a week. She bandages the wound.

Mother Courage digs Yvette's red boots out of a bag and, in a rare moment of weakness, helps Kattrin put then on.She hopes that the wound would not leave a scar although she wouldn't be bothered if it did. The soldiers don't care for girls who do not look attractive. The pretty ones are used by the soldiers till they look like a fright.

The chaplain wouldn't blame the soldiers, though. They don't do these shameful things at home, he says. It is the men who start the wars that bring out the worst in people, he alleges. The chaplain is being used here as Brecht's mouthpiece to run down the warmongers whose greed is responsible for the degradation and brutalization of the soldiers. He hopes the wound won't disfigure Kattrin. Mother Courage knows it will leave a scar but consoles herself that Kattrin needn't wait for peace now, meaning thereby that she would not be attractive enough for the soldiers. However, she (Mother Courage) still holds that war is a nice source of income.

The sound of cannon shots signals that the Commander is being lowered into his grave. The chaplain thinks it's a historic moment. However, for Mother Courage, the historic moment is when they hit her daughter on the eye. She, who's so mad about children, will never get a husband now. Even her dumbness came from the war when a soldier stuck something in her mouth when she was a little one. The war has claimed Swiss Cheese and she doesn't know where her Eilif is. For once, she curses the war openly for making the life of the underprivileged like her miserable. The wide spread destructiveness of war is closing in on Mother Courage and her children. However, it was never Brecht's intention to show that Mother Courage learnt any lesson from her experiences. It was the audience that he intended to jolt out of their complacence so that they become aware of the need to address social problems. He deliberately juxtaposed sharply contrasted attitudes towards war and peace to force the audience to do some re-thinking.

Scene - 7

A Highway

With Swiss Cheese dead and Eilif not in touch for a long time, it's Mother Courage and Kattrin assisting the chaplain in pulling the wagon. Things have gone nicely for Mother Courage who wears a necklace of silver coins. She has drawn herself out of the mood of depression she was in at the end of the last scene when she was at the receiving end. Now that the going is good, she won't let anyone spoil her war for her. Those opposed to war charge that it destroys the weak. She would like to know if peace does any better for them. She sings "war is a business proposition." Brecht deliberatey interrupts the action though this brief scene to shock the audience with Mother Courage's complete turn- about.

Scene - 8

On a summer morning inside a camp in the year 1632, Mother Courage ticks off an old woman and her son who is dragging a large bag of bedding for disturbing her at the crack of dawn. The young man explains that they have walked twenty miles during the night and have to be back the same day. Mother Courage then tells them she has no use for the bed feathers they have brought when people don't even have houses. The old woman is disappointed and tells her son to go somewhere else. The son, however, wants to sell off the feathers at whatever price or they would "sign away the roof over our heads for taxes." Just then, bells start ringing and voices are heard from the rear: "It's peace! the King of Sweden's been killed!". Mother Courage who is still inside the wagon, wants to know what are the bells for, middle of the week. The chaplain informs her that it's peace. Brecht tells us of the shock that the news gives to Mother Courage through this remarkable sentence: "Don't tell me **peace has broken out** - when I've just done and bought all these supplies!" The news has been brought by a crowd of Lutherans just arrived with wagons. When the old woman who came to sell bed feathers learns of peace, she collapses from the shock she gets from the news. Mother Courage tells Kattrin to put on her black dress so that they may go to Church to offer prayers in Swiss Cheese's memory. They owe this much duty to him.

The chaplain seeks Mother Courage's advice if he should put on his pastor's coat again. She suggests that he better confirm the news first than risk being taken for Antichrist. As for herself, she is happy about the peace even though she is ruined. She derives satisfaction from the fact that she has got at least two of her children through the war. Even as Mother Courage receives the news of peace with the hope that she would see her Eilif again, the Swedish Commander's cook, Peter Piper as we know him, comes down to the wagon from the

camp, after all these years. Mother Courage asks him where her Eilif is and the cook expresses surprise that he isn't there already for he left yesterday to be with his mother.

With the news of peace confirmed, the chaplain goes behind the wagon to put on his pastor's clothes.

A delighted Mother Courage informs Kattrin that Eilif might join them any minute, and asks her to get a glass of brandy for the cook, the bringer of the good news. When Kattrin doesn't come down, Mother Courage gets the brandy herself and tells the cook : "Peace is nothing to her,it was too long coming." They hit her over the eye, says Mother, and she (Kattrin) thinks she has been permanently disfigured and missed the marriage bus for good, she who loves children so much. Then she (Courage) tells the cook that peace has broken her neck. She is complaining of the supplies she bought on the chaplain's advice which have no buyers now. The cook admonishes Mother Courage for listening to the chaplain who is a windbag according to him. He jealously comments that he (the chaplain) appears to be the big man round there now. Mother Courage coolly replies that the chaplain has been doing the dishes for her and helping with the wagon. The cook accuses the chaplain of having a most unhealthy attitude to women. He isn't sound, he says. As for himself, he is nothing but sound. Mother Courage replies that if he thinks he is recommending himself by claiming to be sound, then he is sadly mistaken.

On being asked, the cook tells Mother Courage that the soldiers disbanded because they were not paid after the war ended. It is not very welcome news to her that he is broke. The cook declares that he would like to set himself up in some business. The chaplain comes. The cook accuses him of advising a lady to buy superfluous goods on the pretext that the war would never end. The chaplain says to Mother Courage he didn't know that she had to account to the cook for everything. Mother Courage replies that the cook is giving his personal opinion but the chaplain can't deny that his prediction about war turned out to be wrong. The chaplain reminds Courage that she is a hyena of the battlefield. The cook warns the chaplain not to insult his girl friend. The chaplain ignores him and accuses Courage of wanting war, not peace, for what she gets out of it. He reminds her of the proverb: "he who sups with the devil must use a long spoon." Mother Courage replies that there isn't much love lost between her and the war. She warns him that if he calls her a hyena, they must part company. The cook advises Mother Courage to get rid of certain goods at once before the prices sink. He urges her to get going, for there isn't any time to lose. She thinks it is sensible advice well worth taking The chaplain feels jealous and accuses her of having a soft corner for the cook. Mother Courage says she accepted the cook's advice because it was the right advice. She would have accepted it if it had come from him. The cook tells the chaplain that it doesn't behove a man of his (chaplain) profession to take him (the cook) on as a rival. But the chaplain threatens him to keep quiet or he would murder him. The cook is not intimidated. He says that the people are still prepared to go on believing and the chaplain could have got himself a parsonage if he had not degenerated into a godless tramp. The chaplain replies that since he became a tramp, he is a somewhat better man who could not preach any more.

At this point Yvette Pottier enters. She is much older, fatter, heavily powdered but dressed in black. A servant follows her. She introduces herself as Madame Colonel Starhemberg and enquires about Mother Courage. On learning that Mother Courage is inside the wagon, she calls to her that she is Yvette. Yvette recognises the cook as Peter. The chaplain asks her if she knows the cook intimately. Her reply is : "Not half." Then she turns to the cook and says, "Now I can tell you what I think of you." The chaplain is delighted that the cook would now be exposed but he asks her to do so in Mother Courage's presence. The cook does not want her to make a scene.

Mother Courage comes out and the two women embrace. Courage enquires why she is in mourning. Yvette replies that her husband, the colonel died several years ago. She asks Mother Courage if the black doesn't suit her. The chaplain wants Yvette to expose the cook now that Courage is there. Yvette says he is Peter Piper. Mother Courage is at first shocked to learn this but she is quick to get over it and laughs. Yvette says Peter is a bad lot, a person worse than whom would be difficult to find. He got so many girls in trouble. The cook tries

to convince them that it is all a thing of the past not true any more. Yvette, however, warns Mother Courage to beware of the "miserable cur", "a damnable whore hunter" and "inveterate seducer" who turned her into a whore. It was sheer luck that she chanced upon the colonel who made her life by marrying her. Mother Courage doesn't seem to be much interested in what Yvette is saying about the cook. She asks Yvette to use her contacts at army headquarters and help her get rid of her stuff before the prices fall. She instructs Kattrin to give Eilif something to drink when he comes. Then the two women leave. The cook says that after all this, he should go before Mother Courage comes back. The chaplain, for once, agrees with him. The cook tells him that peace makes him sick. "Mankind must perish by fire and sword, we're born and bred in sin!", says the cook. He advises the chaplain to leave too, there not being much future for him there either after he called her a hyena. But the chaplain is looking with surprise at Eilif who enters with his hands fettered and two soldiers accompanying him. Eilif is going to have his throat cut for doing in peace time what was considered bravery in wartime. Mother Courage has gone to market. The two soldiers have brought him to the wagon to allow him a last visit to his mother before the sentence is carried out on him for breaking in on a peasant whose wife died trying to resist. Eilif says it's no different from what he used to do earlier and was honoured for. The soldiers wont't allow him to wait till his mother returns from the market. Like Mother Courage, Eilif too, doesn't seem to have learnt any lesson although he is going to die for what he has done. When one of the soldiers says what was so brave about stealing cattle from a peasant and the cook says it was just stupid, Eilif replies if he had been stupid, he would have starved long back. The cook's comments are : "So you were bright and you paid for it." The chaplain suggests that he can at least see Kattrin for the last time but he doesn't want them to bother her. They could just give him some brandy. When the chaplain asks him what they should tell his mother, he first asks them to "tell her it was no different. Tell her it was the same." Then he changes his mind : "Oh, tell her nothing." As the soldiers take him away, the chaplain offers to come along but Eilif tells him he doesn't need a priest! The chaplain follows him, nevertheless. He advises the cook better not to tell Courage anything till he returns.

There is the thunder of cannon.

Mother Courage runs in, breathless, and breaks the news that the peace is over and the war has been on again for three days. She thanks God that she didn't get rid of her goods in a hurry when peace broke out suddenly. She asks Kattrin to pack things quickly so that they may get moving as there is shooting in the town already with the Lutherans.

She notices that something is bothering the cook and wants to know what it is. She notices that he is evading an answer and insists that he tell her. He replies that Eilif was there but he had to go away again. Courage is so excited with the prespect of making profits in the again - started war that she doesn't get the message. She expresses the hope that they'll see him on the march for this time she'll "be with our side." She asks how he looked and the cook's reply is that he looked the same. Happily she chirps :"He'll *never* change. *And the war couldn't get him, he's bright*." (Note that the cook told Eilif that he was paying for his brightness with his life.) It wrenches one's heart for its sheer irony when Mother Courage proudly asks the cook, "Did he tell you about his heroic deeds?" and the cook replies, darkly: "He's done one of them again." Then he informs her that he is going to enlist. When Courage wants to know the whereabouts of the chaplain, the cook informs her that he's gone with Eilif. She requests the cook to join Kattrin in pulling the wagon. She hopes that she might see Eilif before the day is ought. She sees no cause to complain, for it wasn't such a long peace. She doesn't know that even this brief interlude of peace in the midst of profit- yielding war has snatched from her her second son too.

Scene - 9

The great war of religion has completed sixteen years and Germany has lost half its inhabitants.

A grey morning in early winter in front of a half ruined parsonage.

Mother Courage and the cook at the wagon in shabby clothes.

The cook informs Mother Courage that he has received a letter from home saying that his mother died of cholera, leaving behind the inn to him. He offers to show her the letter although his ups and down are none of her business. She reads the letter and says she is tired of wandering, too. Business doesn't give good enough returns for a decent living. People are impoverished to the extent that there are rumours that villagers in Pomerania have been eating their younger children. Nuns have been caught committing robberies. "The world's dying out," chips in the cook. Even Mother Courage is sick and tired of the war: "Sometimes I see myself driving through hell with this wagon and selling brimstone". She wishes she could find a place where there is no shooting, "me and my children - what's left of 'em - we might rest a while." Finding her receptive the cook proposes: "We could open this inn together." In any case "with or without you, I am leaving for Utrecht. And today too." Mother Courage cannot take a decision all so suddenly. She must consult Kattrin first. As Kattrin emerges from the wagon, she takes it up with her. Mother Courage holds out hope to her that she should be able to find herself a husband there. She praises the cook for his business sense. It would ensure that they would not starve, they would have their own bed, and they would be spared this sickening life on the road. If they let slip this opportunity, they'll have to go with the Swedes. As she is thus going on, the cook asks Mother Courage for a word with her alone. Addressing her by her first name, Anna, he tells Mother Courage that if she insists on taking Kattrin along, then he'll have to withdraw the offer made to her. Kattrin is listening as he tells Courage that the inn cannot support more than two people. He suggests that she can leave Kattrin in charge of the wagon. He laughs at her hope that they might find Kattrin a husband in Utrecht. He thinks Kattrin stands no chance of finding a husband at her age and with that scar and being dumb too. Mother Courage tells him not to speak so loudly but he doesn't hesitate to state facts as they are, even if it hurts Kattrin's feelings. Besides, customers don't like having something like that always before their eyes, he adds.

Mother Courage sort of pleads with the cook that Kattrin can't be left alone with the wagon with her challenges. But the cook is not moved. He sings the Song of Solomon, Julius Caesar, and other great souls. In between he keeps on commenting: "virtues are dangerous in this world", "what good my bravery do me in all those battles?" "courage isn't the thing to fill a man's belly, try honesty",... "we're told to be unselfish and share what we have,but what if we have nothing? And those who do share it don't have an easy time either, for what's left when you've finished sharing? Unselfishness is a very rare virtue - it doesn't pay." Says the cook, "We're law -abiding folk, we keep to ourselves,don't steel, don't kill, don't burn the place down. And in this way we sink lower and lower ...". "... if we were thieves and killers, maybe we could eat our fill! For virtues bring no reward, only vices. Such is the world, need it be so?" he asks.

A voice from above tells them to come up and take some soup. But Mother Courage can't swallow it. She tells Lamb - that's the cook's name - that she is not accusing him of being unreasonable. In fact, they have always understood each other. But she just can't leave Kattrin alone with the wagon. The cook says that he is not inhuman but the small inn won't support more than two of them. He thinks Courage is being silly in refusing his offer.

Kattrin has overheard what has passed on between her mother and the cook. She makes a bundle of her things, comes out of the wagon, and symbolically lays out on a wagon wheel a skirt of her mother's and a pair of the cook's trousers side by side and easy to see. She is about to go when Mother Courage returns with a plate of soup for her. Courage sees the bundle of Kattrin's things and then the skirt and the trousers and realises that Kattrin has been overhearing them. She takes hold of Kattrin who is trying to leave. Mother Courage tells Kattrin that she did not refuse the cook's offer because she came in the way. She did it because she can't think of life without the wagon, she is so used to it. She throws down the cook's things from the wagon to convey to him when he returns that he is sacked. She declares that he is the last she'll take into *this* business. The mother and the daughter harness themselves into the wagon and leave. Shortly, the cook enters to find the wagon gone and his things lying there. Has Courage rejected the cook's offer of a home in Utrecht because of her love for and responsibility towards her dumb daughter or is it really her attachment to the wagon, as she assures Kattrin? Brecht does not answer questions, he just poses them.

Scene - 10

Mother Courage and Kattrin are pulling the wagon on the Highway as they have done during the whole of 1635 along the roads of central Germany in the wake of the ever more tattered armies.

Someone is singing inside as they come to a prosperous farm house. They stop to listen. The singer is not worried about the heavy snows and the piercing winter wind. They are cosy and warm inside their farmhouse, the voice sings. It is the "Song of Home" on the theme of comfort and security. Contrast this with the ragged condition of Mother and Kattrin who start out again after listening to the song.

Scene - 11

It is January of 1636.

Catholic troops threaten to over-run the Protestant town of Halle. Mother Courage's wagon stands near a farmhouse with a straw roof. It is night.

A lieutenant and three soldier in full armour come out of the wood. The lieutenant warns the soldiers against making any sound and instructs them to shoot down anyone who yells. They may knock as if it was a natural noise if they want a guide. After securing this permission, the soldiers knock at the farmhouse door and clap a hand over the mouth of an old peasant woman who opens the door. Two soldiers enter the house and bring out an old peasant and his son. Kattrin is also pulled out of the wagon. The peasant informs the lieutenant that the young man is his son. The son informs that the girl is the canteen woman's dumb daughter. The canteen woman herself is in the town buying up stocks as the panicky shopkeepers are selling cheap. The lieutenant warns them to keep quiet or he would get their heads smashed. He asks the young peasant to lead them to the town. The young peasant says he would rather die than help Catholics. The first soldier threatens to kill their cattle if the young man won't help them. The peasant woman starts weeping and pleads with them to spare the cattle or they would starve. The first soldier threatens to start killing with the bull. The young peasant asks his father if he should oblige them. The old man gives his permission. The first soldier comments that he knew that the threat to kill the bull would make them fall in line. The incident stresses the importance of the means of livelihood to the poor peasants. It reminds us of when Mother Courage bargained over the bribe for Swiss Cheese's life. Just as Mother Courage could not have survived without the wagon, the peasants could not have survived without their cattle. They surrender instantly. The young peasant leads them to the town. The old peasant climbs on the roof with a ladder and notices that there is more than a regiment moving in to attack the town while people are all asleep. They will be slaughtered in their beds. The peasant woman hopes that the watchman will give the warning but the old peasant thinks they must have already killed him or he would have sounded his warning horn by now. The peasants are not prepared to take any personal risks to stop the bloodshed. The peasant woman asks Kattrin to join them in praying that God might wake up the town people and save them. They pray to God to save their son-in-law and his four innocent children, the youngest of whom is not two years old yet. Brecht draws attention towards the instinct of self preservation that is so strong in common people that they would rather let their near and dear ones die than risk their own skin.However, Kattrin loves children so much that she then and there decides to take the greatest risk to save them. As they are praying Kattrin, unnoticed by them, creeps to the wagon, takes something out of it, and climbs up the ladder to the roof. It is a drum she has taken and she starts to beat it. Mother Courage had in scene 3 observed that she liked Kattrin best "when she's a stone in Dalarna, where there's nothing but stones." Well, the dumb Kattrin becomes articulate : "the stone begins to speak" through the drum. The shocked peasants ask her to stop this madness and come down quick or she'll get them in trouble. The old peasant runs to the ladder but Kattrin pulls it up on the roof. They threaten to stone her but she ignores them. The lieutenant runs back with the soldiers and the young peasant and threaten to cut them all to bits if they don't stop it at once. The peasants plead their innocence and blame the stranger girl who can't speak. The ladder has already been pulled up on the roof by Kattrin, so they can't climb and she is not cowed down by their threats. She is not persuaded even when the lieutenant offers to spare her Mother. The young peasant tells them that it is not just because of her

mother that she is beating the drum and making a warning noise. The old peasant offers to chop wood when the lieutenant asks them to make a harmless noise that would drown her drum-beating. Kattrin laughs in triumph when all their efforts to drown her drum beating fail. The peasant woman suggests that if they smash that wagon, she'll stop. She is applying her own psychology to Kattrin by suggesting the wrecking of Kattrin's only means of livelihood. It does bother Kattrin and she makes noises of distress, yet she refuses to capitulate. The young peasant now openly joins Kattrin, asking her to go on drumming as loudly as she can. The soldier knocks him down and beats him with his pike. Kattrin starts crying but goes on drumming as hard as she can. They fire at her with the musket. She is hit but gives another feeble but defiant beat or two before she slowly collapses. That is the end of the noise but Kattrin has succeeded in warning the sleeping town people who fire cannons in self-defence. The first soldier concedes that she did it.

Scene -12

It is almost morning. The troops are withdrawing.

Mother Courage sits by Kattrin's body in front of the wagon. The peasants ask her to leave as there is only one regiment to go and she would never be able to get away alone. Mother Courage is too shocked to notice them. She tries to delude herself that Kattrin has just fallen asleep. She sings a lullaby. Brecht has adapted a traditional lullaby to the situation. Courage still thinks in terms of providing her own children with the best, an echo of her aspirations for herself in the Song of the Grand Capitulation. Then she says to the peasants that they should not have told her about the children. The peasants reply that if she hadn't gone off to the town to make money, it might never have happened. They tell her to understand that her daughter will never wake up now. She must get away, for there are wolves in those parts and the bandits are worse. Courage gets up to fetch a cloth to cover up the body. The peasants tell her not to worry about all that and waste time and assure that they will give the girl a proper burial. They ask her to hurry up and find Eilif who she believes is alive. Mother Courage gives them money for Kattrin's burial expenses which they accept. They shake her hand and carry Kattrin away. The dramatic situation here is potentially full of pathos. Mother Courage is stricken with grief and unable to grasp at first that Kattrin is dead. To prevent empathising with her, Courage, in Brecht's own production of the play, was shown carefully retaining one coin as she handed over the contents of her bag to pay for the burial : business woman to the last. Brecht's plays were meant for the stage. Hence the alienation - effects were not always in the text. Towards the end of the play, the line "Got to get back into business again" was also added later to alienate our sympathies from Mother Courage. **Character of Mother Courage**

Mother Courage and Her Children was first performed in Zurich in 1941. Ever since the character of Mother Courage has been subject to conflicting interpretations.

Brecht has presented Mother Courage as a small time war profiteer. The Marxist term for people of her class is *petit bourgeoisie.* In plain English it would mean the lower middle class. The small traders and white collar workers mistakenly consider themselves a little higher on the social scale than the working class and identify with the interests of the ruling class. Mother Courage recognizes that the men at the top are in the war "for what they can get". She shares their profit-motive. However, she is not altogether ignorant that their fortunes and hers do not necessarily coincide: "The defeats and victories of the chaps at the top aren't always defeats and victories for the chaps at the bottom," she says in scene 3. Political stalemate usually offers the best trading conditions, she feels. She is a shrewd practical reader of a situation but Brecht never intended to show her as someone gifted with historical insight. Only once in the play, towards the end of scene 6, does she see the truth of her situation when she tells the chaplain who thinks that the lowering of Commander Tilly into his grave is a historical moment: "It's a historic moment to me when they hit my daughter over the eye. She's all but finished now; she'll never get a husband... . Even her dumbness comes from the war. A soldier stuck something in her mouth when she was little. I'll not see Swiss Cheese again, and where my Eilif is the Good Lord knows. Curse the war !" In Brechtian terms it is here she comes closest to realizing where her true interests lie. But it's a momentary realization. Soon, her business flourishes, she wears a necklace of silver

coins, and her first words when the next scene begins are: "I won't let you spoil my war for me." She may have forgotten the previous episode but the audience can see the despondent chaplain and the disconsolate, still - bandaged Kattrin listlessly pulling the wagon alongside her, walking reminders of what war does to people, her people. The necklace of silver coins was added in 1949 after there had been about 40 performances of the play, to show that the recently acquired affluence has bribed Mother Courage to withdraw her condemnation of the war. Through deliberately contrasted responses to the war, Brecht seeks to prevent the feeling of empathy in the audience. He equates business profits with bribery and his intention is to demonstrate more clearly than ever that Mother Courage's sense of motherhood is vitiated by her commercial instincts. Even the recruiting officer makes it out as early as scene 1 when he tells the sergeant: "Get her involved in a business transaction" and Mother Courage is tempted to come down the driving seat and round the back of her wagon with the prospect of a sale. While she is busy settling the deal, the recruiting officer takes advantage of the opportunity and manages to persuade Eilif to go with him to enlist. The sergeant draws her attention to the irony of her situation: "You want to live off war and keep you and yours out of it." How can that be? At the end Mother Courage is left alone to pull her wagon: all her children are consumed by the war. The subordination of maternal to the commercial instinct is quite explicit in this scene.

In scene 5, the chaplain has to bodily lift Courage aside to get at the officers' shirts in the wagon so that he can make bandages for the victims of the plunder by the soldiers. Here her concern that her daughter might get hurt by risking into the burning cottage is not quite matched by enough concern for the poor victims of the attack. Daughter Kattrin, on the other hand, is prepared to put her life at risk to save somebody else's baby.

Brecht never treated the text of his plays as final. He was quite willing to revise them if they did not work to his satisfaction in performance. This happened not infrequently. When the play was first staged in Zurich in April 1941, to Brecht's horror, the reviews stressed the emotional impact of the play, extolling it as a "Niobe-tragedy," and spoke with warmth about the "overwhelming vital force of the mother-animal". This took place, Brecht said, "despite the anti-fascist and pacifistic attitude of the Zurich playhouse, staffed in greater part by German émigrés." Brecht intended the spectators to be detached and critical as Courage made her last exit, but Tennessee Williams, himself a well -known playwright, felt that the final moment of the play was one of the most inspiring in all theatre because of Courage's indomitability of spirit. Tennessee Williams was not alone in this, for a substantial number among the audience were profoundly moved and their emotions were engaged. Brecht, therefore, changed a few brief portions for the postwar Berlin productions. Some of the more debatable emotional parts were subdued, but actually very little of the main effect was altered.

The positive reception to Mother Courage whom he himself saw as being misguided and refusing stubbornly to learn from experience moved Brecht to retouch her character. In the very first scene, where Mother Courage is tempted to the back of her wagon to finalise the deal with the sergeant while the recruiting officer persuades Eilif to join the army, originally Eilif had gone off with the recruiting officer while Courage was consoling the sergeant with a glass of brandy. In the fifth scene, where the Chaplain has to bodily lift her aside to get the officers' shirts for making bandages for the wounded peasants, originally Mother Courage ripped her shirts voluntarily. In the sixth scene when Commander Tilly is being lowered into his grave, Mother Courage bitterly cries that for her, the historic moment was when her daughter was disfigured by a drunken soldier. She curses war. But the very brief next scene shows Mother Courage declaring that she would not allow any one to spoil her war for her, for war feeds its people better. She is wearing a necklace of silver coins to show her new found affluence. Brecht introduced some new lines and a new song here to make her revived enthusiasm for the war look more crass. Towards the end of the play, to cool the emotional impact of the play, Mother Courage is shown as pointedly putting one coin back in her bag before handing over the rest to the peasants to give Kattrin a proper burial. Brecht wants to make the audience realize that even in this extremity, the hard-bitten business woman instincts in Mother Courage do not die. In fact, it has been a conscious attempt on Brecht's part throughout the play to show Mother Courage's depravity. All her children come to grief because of her greed for money. However, as Brecht indicated, her lowest point is reached as early as scene 4 where

she sings the Song of the Great Capitulation to dissuade a raw recruit from giving expression to protest against injustice. Brecht believed that the failure of individual protest to get grievances redressed took people's consciousness to a higher level and taught them to ultimately organize themselves into a powerful instrument of social change. Even individual action need not be futile as demonstrated by Kattrin who saves an entire village although she has to pay with her life. Hence, in diverting the young soldier from protest, Mother Courage is guilty of smothering the development of class consciousness. What can be more despicable than this when people need to be helped to the right conclusions about the required social changes?

The presentation of Mother Courage has been subjected to friendly criticism by a fellow Marxist, notable East German playwright Friedrich Wolf as well. Wolf admitted that for the spectators, the "epic" style was most consistently realized in the play with the high water mark reached in scenes which were emotionally charged like the death of the older son, Eilif, the scene between the mother and the daughter upon Kattrin's disfigurement when Courage curses the war for the only time, and the scene in which Kattrin signals the inhabitants of Halle with her drum-beat. Then he asked: "Would not Mother Courage after seeing that the war didn't pay, after having lost not only her possessions but her children too, have to become an altogether different person at the end from what she was at the beginning?" Since they were both, Wolf and Brecht, concerned with the same goal - that is, "to change people" - though from differing dramatic points of view, was it not important to show Courage changed? Would not Mother Courage have been more effective if at the end her curses against the war had shown concrete results in her behaviour and deeds? "How can our German theater show our people that which is needed? How can we activate them against another war, and away from their fatalism?" Brecht concluded the debate by replying: "This play was written in 1938, when the playwright foresaw a great war. He was not convinced that people, abstractly, learn from the misfortunes, which, in his eyes, had to befall them. Dear Friedrich Wolf, you yourself will agree that the playwright was the realist here. If, however, Mother Courage herself learns nothing further - it is my opinion that the public, viewing her, can learn something."

To sum up, the problem is not with Brecht's characterization of Mother Courage. He was quite clear in his mind as to what he was doing. But the audiences, fed on Aristotelian poetics, were not quite used to his alienation effects and saw Courage as a tragic figure. Since Brecht was quite receptive to audience response, he added more alienation effects to his characterization of Mother Courage to drive home his message. Brecht gives the audience a preview of the entire action of the play, scene by scene, the way Mother Courage is going to lose her children to the war. Brecht intended this device to prevent the building up, of empathy with Mother Courage. She comes out in the rich complexity of her character but the Brechtian brand of realistic characterization seeks to ensure that audience sympathy does not form with Courage.

The Children

EILIF would always be getting into fights if it were not for Mother Courage. He is brave - a little too brave, in fact, for his mother's liking who always tells him to use his head. If he becomes a soldier, he must bite the dust, she warns him. Still, he allows himself to be tricked by the recruiting officer into joining the army. That happens in the opening scene. When we see him next in the tent of the Swedish commander in the next scene, it is already a couple of years since then. He has made a good impression upon his commander, cutting down peasants and looting them. The commander declares his appreciation of his doings, saying he values a brave soldier like him. Mother Courage, who is in the kitchen selling poultry to the commander's cook and has overheard the commander, doesn't like what the commander says. She thinks he must be a very bad commander to need brave soldiers. "If his plan of campaign was any good, why would he need brave soldiers?" she asks. By joining Eilif in The Song of the Fishwife and the Soldier she warns him of the fate he would meet if he takes too many risks. However, Eilif is fascinated by the life of a hero. When the commander sees in him the makings of a Julius Caesar and suggests that he should be presented to the King, the over-ambitious Eilif is taken in and says that he must try to be like the King. He finally becomes a victim of his ambition and his aggression when in scene 8 he is court-martialled for doing during a short interlude of peace what he was honoured for doing when the war was waging. He has no regrets, however, for he tells the cook even as he is

being taken for cutting his throat that if he had been stupid, he would have starved long back. The message he leaves for his mother is that "it wasn't any different, tell her it was the same thing." Obviously, he has not learnt any lesson, as his mother doesn't. The virtue by which he perishes, his bravery, is a dubious quality, since it is mainly employed in harassing the civilian population.

SWISS CHEESE is a simple minded young man whom his mother has brought up to be honest and honest he must remain or he'll be a goner too. Swiss Cheese has joined the Second Regiment as paymaster, Mother Courage informs Eilif when they meet in the Swedish commander's kitchen. She hopes that his guileless honesty will stand him in good stead. The trouble is that he does not know where to draw the line. Some might say that it is his honesty that proves to be his undoing. However, rather than honesty which is his virtue, it is his stupidity which brings about his execution. He would not take the hint when Mother Courage tells the sergeant that he would give him the regimental cash box to save his life, "He's not *that* stupid." "Speak, little stupid," she urges him, "The sergeant's giving you a chance!" Still, he insists stupidly, "What if I *haven't* got it?" And off they take him, leaving Mother Courage desperately shouting that "He'd tell you! He's not that stupid!" He is even more stupid than *that.*

KATTRIN cannot speak but she can see. She is intelligent enough from the start to see the mistakes people around her make: Swiss Cheese not vigilant enough, despite the danger, to notice the man with the bandage on his eye who is a spy, Mother Courage haggling over Swiss Cheese's ransom too long, or refusing to give up the shirts in scene 5 - but on all these occasions, her dumbness prevents her from intervening coherently. Her mother has had a chequered sexual past - all her three children are differently fathered and she has had other live-in companions besides, which makes the sergeant comment ironically in scene one : "A nice family, I must say!" But she is over-protective towards Kattrin who is already twentyfive. It is a sign of sexual frustration in her when she puts on Yvette's hat and boots and imitates her sexy walk in scene 3. She is still a playful girl and the Chaplain finds her a "captivating young person." But when the Catholics make a surprise attack and the enemy soldiers are likely to be there any moment, Mother Courage's first reaction is to rub ashes into her face to hide her prettiness for "when a soldier sees a clean face, there's one more whore in the world." Mother Courage should know! In any case, as she later revealed, Kattrin became dumb when she was molested by a soldier when she was still a baby. Despite the best of intentions, the impact of this overprotection by her mother is that she is reduced by scene 7 to a cowering animal, and refuses to show herself when the cook calls her in scene 8. Kattrin's virtue is her unselfishness, and it is closely linked with her frustrated maternal instincts, which are all-embracing and naïve, whereas her mother's are perverted by a society that forces her to struggle to survive on its terms. Her love of babies is demonstrated in scene 5 when she risks her own life to save a peasant child from a burning house and in scene 11, when she learns of the threatened innocent children, she is moved to climb on the roof and drum out a warning to the sleeping town of Halle. It is not that she is just not bothered about the safety of the sole means of survival for her and her mother, and she falters and moans when the peasant tries to smash their wagon, but her response to the situation is rational and intelligent, rather than just emotional. She persists with beating the drum till they kill her. Kattrin's is the only voice consistently raised in defiance of war and war-mongering, and the fact that that "voice" is dumb provides a strongly ironic symbol.

Kattrin's martyrdom is no doubt a moment of high pathos but it demonstrates a positive alternative to Courage's strategy, namely that of individual protest. Within the framework of the play, of course, it is just an incident, not a revolutionary solution. But coming as it does towards the end of the play, it leaves a strong impression on the audience's final mood that Kattrin's consciously made supreme sacrifice has not gone waste in that she succeeds in alerting the sleeping town. The symbolic significance of the incident is not lost. Kattrin is the most perceptive character in the play. Her death and Mother Courage's refusal to be more than momentarily diverted from her business - "I must start up again in business" - must be seen as a challenge to the audience to find ways of avoiding the need for such sacrifices in the future.

The Chaplain's Role

The Thirty Years War, fought from 1618 to 1648, was projected as a war of religion. It was part of the political upheaval that followed reformation which had divided Christian Europe into Protestant and Catholic states. In the play, Swedish forces stand for Protestantism and the Imperial forces represent Catholicism. Brecht saw the religious conflict as a mere pretext for the war. He insists that the underlying motive of the war leaders was profit.

It needs to be pointed out that the immediate pretext for the war was the installation of the Protestant Elector Palatine as their King by the Protestant magnates of Bohemia and Moravia in 1618. Since Bohemia and Moravia share borders with Austria, the Catholic Ferdinand II intervened with troops and financial backing from Spain, the German Catholic states and the Papacy. The Bohemian and Moravian forces were defeated and Catholicism imposed on their land. This success encouraged the Catholic emperor to try to reduce the power of the Protestant princes in North Germany. Pressed hard, the princes, in 1629, called upon the Protestant King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, to save the cause of Protestantism.

Superficially, it would appear to make for a war of religion, but religion was really a convenient cover for the underlying profit motive of the war leaders. The shifting loyalties of the normally calm and even tempered Chaplain in the play represent the subordinate role of religion in the play. If the War was really a war of religion, the role of a man of religion like the Chaplain should have been a substantial and significant one. But since the play aimed to expose the hypocrisy and sham of a religious war, and lay bare the economic and political motives leading up to it, the Chaplain is deliberately assigned a secondary position. The Commander treats him with little respect in the second scene which has Eilif as its hero. Still, in scene 3, the Chaplain plays the official line that it's a war of faith. But the undignified treatment meted out to the formal representative of institutionalized religion sharply contradicts the claims of a war of religion . The skepticism of Courage and the cook support this impression.

Lacking the energy and vitality of Mother Courage or even the cook, the Chaplain betrays a lack of self confidence or devotion to his religious cause. His lack of consistency in his views on war seems to be under the pressure of circumstances and the absence of any firmly held conviction. Later he switches over to the Catholic camp alongwith Mother Courage. His pragmatic acceptance of the change as a means of saving his life, though, is much less comfortable than the others.

The Chaplain assures Mother Courage at some length in scene 6 that the war will survive Tilly's death so long as there are emperors, kings and popes. He is aware that the end of the war might mean ruin for Mother Courage and he thinks that an assurance regarding the continuity of war is what she would like to hear at this point of time. How can he disappoint her, she being his breadwinner at the moment. He even proposes to Courage which she brushes aside on the pretext that she has no time for personal affairs. After peace is confirmed and the cook charges him with giving bad business advice, the Chaplain suddenly changes tack. He assumes the mantle of a man of peace and turns upon Mother Courage and accuses her of living off war. He calls her "a hyena of the battlefield" and reminds her of the proverb : "he who sups with the devil must use a long spoon." His sudden conversion to the cause of peace is motivated by his resentment at being displaced by the cook in Mother Courage's favours. He blows hot and cold in the same breath. One moment he threatens the cook: "If you don't shut your trap, I'll murder you, cloth or no cloth!" but the very next, he begins to plead: "Mr. Lamb, please don't drive me out!"

As Brecht himself explained, like most of the characters in the play, the Chaplain's character is based on a contradiction. "He is part scoundrel, part superior intelligence." His dependence on Mother Courage yet reluctance to do physical labour - " I'm a pastor of souls, not a woodcutter" - is tantamount to parasitism, which Brecht attributes to the clergy in the social structure. However, the Chaplain redeems himself somewhat in scene 5 by his genuine compassion for the victims of war. He is the one who defies Mother Courage, lifts her bodily off the steps of the wagon and takes out her officers' shirts to make them into bandages to render first

aid to the wounded peasants. This aspect of his character shows the positive qualities of the clergyman, as also his common humanity as one of the oppressed himself. The change in attitude marks his growth as a human being. : he grows in social consciousness and moral integrity. As he follows Eilif out to his execution, he advises the cook to conceal the fact from Mother Courage. He seems to have found the right job both as a priest and as a fellow human being, having grown from the passive, insubstantial figure, who toed the line rather than take one of his own.

Other Supporting Characters

The cook of the Swedish Commander is haggling with Mother Courage over the price of a capon when we first come across him in scene 2. He is intelligent enough to know the distinction between 'being in siege' and 'doing the besieging'. His side is doing the besieging and he bargains from a position of strength. But Mother Courage gets the better of him when the commander orders him to bring meat for his guest, the brave Eilif, and he has none.

In the next scene, the cook comes to Mother Courage's canteen with the Chaplain who tells Courage that she has made an impression upon the cook. The Chaplain says that the cook says she has bewitched him. Mother Courage warns him to always behave himself with her even if he thinks she cannot handle him. The cook has brought the news that Eilif is going with his regiment to war - to his death maybe. He advises Courage to send more money for her son, or she might be sorry afterwards. When the Chaplain tells him that dying in that special war of religion should be taken as a blessing, for it would be pleasing unto God, the cook replies sarcastically that indeed it is a special war although it involves "fleecing, bribing, plundering, not to mention a little raping" for it is a religious war. The cook is smoking a clay pipe. He has a dig at the Chaplain when he tells Courage that even he blushed when the Chaplain was telling him his stories. He speaks ironically of the Swedish King although he is cook to the commander. Mother Courage does not like his sarcasm and tells him if he had been a Swede himself, he would have spoken differently of the Hero King. The Chaplain says that he should show more respect to the Swedish commander, for he eats his bread. The cook's reply is that he doesn't eat his bread, he only bakes it. At this moment, they receive news of a surprise attack by the Catholics and the cook rushes off in a hurry, promising Courage to be back in a day or two for a short conversation. He leaves his pipe behind, and when reminded he asks Courage to keep it for him as he would need it.

He remains off stage till scene 8 during which period Courage and the Chaplain are in the imperial camp. However, in scene 6, the Chaplain, trying to cement his place with Courage upon whose mercy he is surviving, jealously tries to supplant the cook in Mother Courage's affection when he finds her smoking his pipe.

The cook is a man of a violent temper, says the Chaplain, as the impression of his clenched teeth on the pipe's stem shows. When the cook reappears in scene 8, Yvette Pottier immediately recognizes him as Peter Piper, the man who seduced her when she was just seventeen and turned her into a whore. She charges him with being a compulsive womanizer who makes love with his pipe clenched between his teeth, it matters so little to him.

But Courage finds a kindred spirit in him. She is attracted rather than deterred by his reputation as a womanizer. They finally part ways in quite an unsentimental and pragmatic manner when he says that his inn cannot support three persons and Mother Courage will not be parted from Kattrin and her wagon. The cook emerges as a more sharply profiled suave professional and hardened campaigner who demonstrates an ironic view of life and a sarcastic turn of phrase when he debunks Gustavus Adopphus's pretext for over-running Poland.

Yvette Pottier is a very good-looking young person - two years younger than Kattrin - when she first appears in scene 2. She has a glass of brandy before her and Mother Courage advises her not to drink in the morning especially with her illness. She protests that she is not ill. She has just been maligned and every man in the regiment now avoids her. In sheer desperation she has started drinking in the morning although she knows it is bad for her looks. It gives her crow's feet. She narrates her life's story how she was seduced by an army cook of Dutch origin called Peter Piper when she was just seventeen. She made the mistake of unsuccessfully

chasing him and becoming a whore. Only later did she come to know that he had had another girl who gave him the name Peter Piper "because he never took the pipe out of his mouth the whole time, it meant so little to him." When she began her story, Mother Courage tried to stop her in front of her innocent daughter but Yvette insisted that she should hear it so that she would get hardened against love. Her life should serve as a warning of the dangers of camp life to Kattrin. But although she herself is not at all happy with it, Brecht does not indulge in any moral condemnation of the prostitute: she is just trying to make a living in her own special line of business like everybody else. Her heart is in the right place as she shows when she acts as go-between over Swiss Cheese's ransom. She remains unseen during Courage's three years with the Imperial troops. In scene 8 she reappears as the fat and prematurely aged widow of Colonel Starhemberg. That prostitution should be the only means of self advancement in the play is no fault of Yvette Pottier's - it is a trenchant criticism of the contemporary society.

Songs in the Play

Songs and music constitute an important alienating device in Brecht's plays. They give spectators a jolt to bring them out of the developing state of complacency and provoke them to think and ask questions - something that Fascism was trying ruthlessly to suppress. Songs were strictly separated from all other elements of entertainment offered. The orchestra was installed visibly on the stage and lit up for the singing of songs. The interrupting of action is one of the principal concerns of epic theatre. Music does not portray a psychological state or the subjective interpretation of a situation.

Its purpose is neither to discharge emotions nor even to illustrate the text. Music takes up a particular position; it communicates an attitude. Brecht insisted that music formed an important and independent element in the total action of his plays. It was his firm opinion that music should be kept deliberately separate, not fused with the dialogue.

Within the general framework of this concept of music in epic theatre, the songs of *Mother Courage* are an interruptive device in a dramatic action immediately preceeding or following it. The songs are independent yet central, in the structural pattern of the play. Among the several important dramatic functions that they perform are : expounding the major themes of the play, commenting upon incidents and interpreting the action. They narrate past events and anticipate future incidents. Often, they perform the role that chorus did in classical tragedy by generalizing from particular situations, the important difference being that although Brecht regards the events that the songs comment upon as tragic, he does not consider the play as such a tragedy but self-inflicted punishment. It is self-inflicted punishment because people suffer when they compromise with rather than struggle against adverse conditions.

Brecht has given almost every character in the play an individual song, stressing the key importance of music within the larger pattern. Mother Courage enters the stage singing a song. She sings intermittently - making appropriate changes to suit varying situations. The song may, therefore, be regarded as the ground theme of the play. It introduces Mother Courage and her business interests with the war situation. The unholy interdependence of commerce and war is established from the very beginning of the play. There is a strong but prophetic streak of pessimism in the comments on the nature of war. Mother Courage sings so calmly and so casually about feeding men for slaughter:

So fill the hole up in your belly
Before you fill one underground.

The trouble with her is that she herself is not fully aware of the implications of her song. At the end of the play when the death of Kattrin leaves her too shattered to sing herself and the soldiers marching in the background take up a variation of her song, the horror of seemingly never-ending warfare strikes a note of black despair but she gathers herself up again and says, " I must start up again in business." So many critics have said that the remark suggests that nothing can crush the indomitability of the spirit of the mother-animal. However, these words were a later addition by Brecht to alienate Mother Courage by hammering home the point that she

learns nothing from her war experiences and carries on mechanically. It was the audience that Brecht expected to witness the destructiveness of war and to learn that little people can never profit from a war.

In scene 2, Eilif entertains the Commander with a song his mother taught him. He accompanies 'The Song of the Fishwife and the Soldier' with a martial sword dance. Ironically, Eilif does not realize he is singing his own life story. True to his character, Mother Courage's brave son only identifies with the young soldier's aspiration for a hero's life: "It's the life of a hero for me!" As he sings the nonchalant verses, it is left to Mother Courage as the voice of wisdom to sing the last verse with the moral that the wages of bravery are death. She strikes a note of warning to her son:

But the soldier lad with his knife at his side
And his gun in his hand was swept out by the tide:
And he floats with the ice to the sea.

It is doubly ironic because she in turn lacks full comprehension of the burden of her song. The Fishwife and the Soldier of the song are Mother Courage and Eilif, and the song has a sense of tragic inevitability about it.

The Fraternization Song, sung by Yvette Pottier in scene 3, though an anti-illusionistic device, fits neatly into the action, being a summary of Yvette's life to date. It narrates the singer's unhappy experience of her youth: a typical betrayal story of young, unprotected girls in The Thirty Years War. The story of her short-lived first love and abandonment by an army cook is meant as a warning to Kattrin not to consort with the soldiery:

December came. All of the men
Filed past the trees where once we hid
Then quickly marched away and did
Not come back again.

Yvette swallowed her pride and followed the regiment, only to end up as the camp prostitute.

Fraternizing can also be a form of capitulating for the underprivileged and in a war women camp followers may sell provisions or their bodies - such is war morality. Ironically enough, Yvette, who has fraternized and hardened, is the only person to succeed in the war by attaining wealth and social status. Though she becomes morally compromised and physically bloated, Brecht does not subject her to any moral condemnation of her personal character. During the temporary peace she and Mother Courage embrace as if long-lost friends. She even finds the opportunity to settle scores with the cook and dream "of 'a better world than this." Clearly, Brecht blames the war for her dislocated life.

The longish scene 3 has another song : an adaptation of a 17th century religious poem by Christian Weise. The Song of the Hours is sung by the Chaplain who is reminded of the "Passion of Our Lord and Saviour". It might seem audacious for the Chaplain to compare Swiss Cheese with Christ but both are innocent victims of human malice in their respective evil societies. The comparison of Swiss Cheese to Jesus in anticipating his death is a powerful distancing effect that sets the audience thinking. Goodness can be seen as stupidity under such conditions. The Chaplain's song is a heartfelt comment on the plight of a contemporary "simple son of man", since even while remaining detached, we have to believe his death a real possibility. According to Ruby Chatterji, this song performs the choric function of universalizing the meaning of a particular incident.

In scene 4 comes The Song of the Great Capitulation, again sung by Mother Courage who advises the young soldier to capitulate by recounting her own past experiences. The song supplies some of the pre-history of the play, telling us that the young Courage thought that she was somebody special, destined for "Higher Things". In stanza 2 she recollects how quickly her aspirations crumbled in the face of economic necessity

.... Before that year was over
I'd learned to drink their cup of tea.
(Two children round your neck and the price of bread and what all!)

It is a fate, stanza 3 tells us, that befalls all who set out to scale the heights. The song wryly quotes folk adages

for all situations. If "where there's a will, there's a way" does not work, then "you must cut your coat according to your cloth." By the end of the song, Courage has persuaded herself as well as the soldier not to protest. This, in Brecht's own estimation, was her lowest action in the entire play. What makes it so depraved for Mother Courage to dissuade a raw recruit from protesting against injustice is its wider social implication. Brecht believed that the failure of individual protest to get grievances redressed took people's consciousness to a higher level and taught them to ultimately organize themselves into a powerful instrument of social change. Even individual action need not be futile as demonstrated by Kattrin who saved an entire village although she had to pay with her life. Hence, in diverting the young solider from protest through the Song of the Great Capitulation, Mother Courage is guilty of smothering the development of class- consciousness and there cannot be a greater act of depravity than this. When people need to be helped to the right conclusions about the required social change, Mother Courage is teaching the young soldier to submit to the necessity of circumstances and compromise with the system. The song discusses **the** central theme of the play.

The brief song that a soldier addresses to Kattrin in scene 6 accentuates the shortness of a soldier's life over which he himself has no right: he must sacrifice it to bring glory to Kaiser. The pessimistic song is an implied denunciation of war. In fact, all the songs in the play relating to war denounce war by implication.

In scene 7, at the height of her business career, in continuation of her song, Mother Courage declares:

War is a business preposition

She blithely sings praises of life on the road following the troops.

In scene 8, the fourth verse is the last of Courage's Song in which she sings of her profession and the war with any confidence, for the next scene takes the play into its bleak final phase. As early as scene I, the sergeant had warned her that it can't be that "you want to live off war and keep you and yours out of it…."

Ironically, she does not realize the true significance of her own words:

A war needs human being too.

The war is demanding her children.

The cook's Song of Solomon, Julius Caesar, and other great souls cites Solomon's wisdom, Caesar's bravery, Socrates' probity and St. Martin's Charity all as examples of the futility of virtue. It should be noted that bravery and probity have been the undoing both of Eilif - that "young Caesar" and of "honest" Swiss Cheese, and that charity will be the death of Kattrin, just as Courage's own form of wisdom will bring her no satisfaction. Brecht had earlier used this song in *The Threepenny Opera* in praise of immorality in an immoral society.

Eric Bentley is of the view that in the structure of the play, this song - he calls it The Song of the Wise and the Good - is a counterpoise to the Song of the Great Capitulation as it shows that goodness and conformism do not pay either. Though "God's Ten Commandments we have kept," Mother Courage and the cook are reduced to a state of beggary. However, the message is clear enough: virtue is never rewarded in corrupt times, so it is better not to capitulate. Since the song is sung by the cook, it serves the dramatic function of giving Mother Courage the time to think over his proposal.

The Song of the Shelter comprises the whole of the brief scene 10. As Mother Courage and Kattrin pulling the wagon come out side a prosperous farmhouse, someone inside is singing a folk song that celebrates the garden's beauty and the shelter and security that a home provides. Contrast as it does the condition of the "have-nots" mother and daughter with that of the "haves" enjoying the comfort and security of the prosperous farm house, Brecht instructed the actresses in his Model Book that they must not show any emotion here. The homeless Mother Courage and Kattrin simply stop to listen and then start out again.

In the final scene, the stunned Mother Courage tries to delude herself that her daughter is just asleep, not dead, and sings a lullaby which is an adaptation of a traditional lullaby to fit the situation. Courage still selfishly thinks in terms of providing her own children with the best while the neighbour's children remain deprived. It is not just an echo of her aspirations for herself in the Song of the Great Capitulation but also intended to alienate

Courage to counter the pathos and potential empathy in the situation.

The play concludes with the soldiers' version of Mother Courage's Song which sounds deeply pessimistic.

Who is the true Mother Courage?

A case has been made out that Kattrin, and not her mother, is the true Mother Courage in the play. It is argued that Brecht's conscious intentions notwithstanding, the title of the play carries a dual significance. Brecht's binary vision, it is claimed, encompasses two mother figures and two different types of courage. Mother Courage's behaviour suggests a self-centered and self-regarding mother-love confined to her own children as expressed even in the lullaby sung to the dead Kattrin; Kattrin's more universal mother-love embraces all children, those seen as well as those unseen, according to this line of argument. Brecht's anti-war play is thus turned into one concerning motherhood.

The problem with this kind of reading of the play is that the critic has consciously decided to distract attention from what Brecht wants to convey through his play. Brecht never tried to hide his political views and the relationship between his theory of drama and his practice. As an avowed Marxist, he was seeking to educate his audiences - not his characters - about the true character of wars, even if fought in the name of religion. If educating his characters had been his concern, he could have easily contrived to show Mother Courage a chastened and wiser person at the end. But he consciously introduced alienation effects to wipe out any such impression that might have unconsciously crept in.

Brecht has presented Mother Courage as a small time war profiteer. Mother Courage recognizes that the men at the top are in the war "for what they can get". She shares their profit-motive. However, she is not altogether ignorant that their fortunes and hers do not necessarily coincide: "The defeats and victories of the chaps at the top aren't always defeats and victories for the chaps at the bottom," she says in scene 3. Political stalemate usually offers the best trading conditions, she feels. She is a shrewd practical reader of a situation but Brecht never intended to show her as someone gifted with historical insight. Only once in the play, towards the end of scene 6, does she see the truth of her situation when she tells the chaplain who thinks that the lowering of Commander Tilly into his grave is a historical moment: "It's a historic moment to me when they hit my daughter over the eye. She's all but finished now; she'll never get a husband." She discloses to the Chaplain: "Even her dumbness comes from the war." A soldier trying to molest her stuck something in her mouth when she was a little girl.

In Brechtian terms it is here she comes closest to realizing where her true interests lie. But it's a momentary realization. Soon, her business flourishes, as is suggested by the necklace of silver coins, and her first words when the next scene begins are: "I won't let you spoil my war for me." She who ended the last scene cursing the war! She may have forgotten the previous episode but the audience can see the despondent chaplain and the disconsolate, still - bandaged Kattrin listlessly pulling the wagon alongside her, walking reminders of what war does to people, her people. The necklace of silver coins was added in 1949 after there had been about 40 performances of the play, to show that the recently acquired affluence has bribed Mother Courage to withdraw her condemnation of the war. Through deliberately contrasted responses to the war, Brecht seeks to prevent the feeling of empathy in the audience. He equates business profits with bribery and his intention is to demonstrate more clearly than ever that Mother Courage's sense of motherhood is vitiated by her commercial instincts. Even the recruiting officer makes it out as early as scene 1 when he tells the sergeant: "Get her involved in a business transaction" and Mother Courage is tempted to come down the driving seat and round the back of her wagon with the prospect of a sale. While she is busy settling the deal, the recruiting officer takes advantage of the opportunity and manages to persuade Eilif to go with him to enlist. The sergeant draws her attention to the irony of her situation: "You want to live off war and keep you and yours out of it." How can that be? At the end Mother Courage is left alone to pull her wagon: all her children are consumed by the war. The subordination of maternal to the commercial instinct is quite explicit in this scene.

In scene 5, the chaplain has to bodily lift Courage aside to get at her officers' shirts in the wagon so that he can

make bandages for the victims of the plunder by the soldiers. Here her concern that her daughter might get hurt by risking into the burning cottage is not quite matched by enough concern for the poor victims of the attack. Daughter Kattrin, on the other hand, is prepared to put her life at risk to save somebody else's baby.

When the play was first staged in Zurich in April 1941, to Brecht's horror, the reviews stressed the emotional impact of the play, extolling it as a "Niobe-tragedy," and spoke with warmth about the "overwhelming vital force of the mother-animal." Brecht intended the spectators to be detached and critical as Courage made her last exit. But a substantial number among the audience, including the well known American playwright Tennessee Williams, were profoundly moved and their emotions were engaged. Brecht, therefore, changed a few brief portions for the post-war Berlin productions to subdue the more debatable emotional parts. The positive reception to Mother Courage whom he himself saw as being misguided and refusing stubbornly to learn from experience moved Brecht to retouch her character and add a few more alienation-effects. In the very first scene, where Mother Courage is now tempted to the back of her wagon to finalise the deal with the sergeant while the recruiting officer persuades Eilif to join the army, originally Eilif had gone off with the officer while Courage was consoling the sergeant with a glass of brandy. As already pointed out, in the fifth scene, where the Chaplain now bodily lifts her aside to get the officers' shirts for making bandages for the wounded peasants, originally Mother Courage ripped the shirts voluntarily. In the sixth scene, when Commander Tilly is being lowered into his grave, Mother Courage bitterly cries that for her, the historic moment was when her daughter was disfigured by a drunken soldier. She curses war but the very next scene shows Mother Courage declaring that she would not allow any one to spoil her war for her, for war feeds its people better. Brecht introduced some new lines and a new song here besides showing her wearing necklace of silver coins to make her revived enthusiasm for the war took more crass. In scene 11 Mother Courage is shown as pointedly putting one coin back in her bag before handing over the rest to the peasants to give Kattrin a proper burial. Brecht wants to make his audience realize that even in this extremity the hard-bitten business woman instincts in Mother Courage do not die. In fact, it has been a conscious effort on Brecht's part throughout the play to show Mother Courage's depravity. Her lowest point is reached not in this scene but in scene 4 where she sings the Song of the Great Capitulation to discourage the raw recruit from giving expression to protest against injustice, for in diverting the young soldier from protest, Mother Courage is guilty of smothering the development of class consciousness. What can be more despicable than this when people need to he helped to the right conclusions about the required social changes? This is what the play is about, not two mother figures and too different types of courage as these critics would like us to believe. In fact, Mother Courage is not so-called because she is a very brave woman. There is irony in it which has surprisingly not attracted critical attention. As she herself admits to the sergeant in the opening scene;

> *They call me Mother Courage 'cause **I was afraid** I'd be ruined. So I drove through the bombardment of Riga like a mad woman, with fifty loaves of bread in my cart. They were going mouldy." That's courage for you!*

Those who have tried to make out that the play is about motherhood, are deliberately trying to deny Brecht his politics as Martin Esslin did.

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GRAHAM GREENE

The Heart of the Matter

Unit-II
The Heart of the Matter by Graham Greene

Graham Greene is a versatile modern writer. Author of twenty five novels nearly all of which have been turned into feature films he has also published as many books of other kinds-short stories, memoirs travel books, playtexts, essays & children's stories. For literary critics there has always been a problem in placing him. His work does not fit neatly into their historical & generic categories: it zig-zags across the boundaries they have marked between the 'popular' and the 'literary', between the 'modern' & the 'contemporary', between the English and the international novel. In literature, as in life, Greene has been something of a 'loner' making a path for himself in territory neglected or avoided by his peers. Greene's novels are about men in crisis, men under pressure, men on the run. Drawing on his journalistic skills, he sets them in immediately recognizable modern context. He had an uncanny instinct for visiting obscure trouble-spots around the globe which he employed as locale of his novels. For example Sierra Leone in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), Cuba in *Our Man is Havana* (1958) and Congo in *A Brunt out Case* (1961).

Greene was born on 2 October, 1904 at Berkhamsted near London. He received education first at Berkhamsted School and then at Balliol College, Oxford. He worked as sub-editor at *The Time* from 1926 to 1929. Greene was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1927 and married Vivien Dayrell Browning. Greene's first novel *The Man Within* was published in 1929. He categorized some of his works as 'Entertainments' to mark them off from his more serious fiction which he entitled 'Novels'. Some of the 'Entertainments' are – *Stamboul Train, A Gun for Sale, The Confidential Agent* and *The Ministry of* Fear. He also wrote many novels and travel books between 1930-1940. Greene served as literary editor *The Spectator* in 1940-41. Thereafter he did wartime service in Sierra Leone and travelled extensively around the world. *The Captain & the Enemy* (1988) in his last novel. Greene died in 1991.

Greene himself always kept his distance from literary politics, belonging to no group or movement, and neither seeking nor receiving the endorsement of temporarily fashionable schools of criticism. But every writer necessarily draws on literary tradition, however selectively, and Greene is no exception. In childhood and youth, his imagination was deeply affected by reading historical romances like Marjorie Bowen's *The Viper of Milan* and the adventure stories of writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Hoggard and John Buchan. Later, he came under the spell of Joseph Conrad's more profound and pessimistic tales of the outposts of the empire.

Indeed, there is one quality above all others that makes Graham Greene's fiction both unique and valuable, it is his capacity for evoking the sense of place in a way that is as vivid and immediate as a newsreel and at the same time resonant with moral and metaphysical suggestion of a haunting kind. This is what critics have called 'Geeneland'. It is essentially a feat of style, a combination of artfully selected details, striking figures of speech and subtly cadenced syntax.

The Heart of the Matter (1948) has the setting of the British colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa where Greene himself had served as an intelligence officer in the War. In this novel Greene portrays the poignant and tragic downfall of a Catholic policeman, Major Scobie, unable to decide between hurting his wife, his mistress and God. Scobie commits suicide. But Greene reminds us in one of his characteristic authorial asides, "Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation," and the ultimate fate of Scobie's soul is left open. Thus *The Heart of the Matter* is Greene's imaginative exploration of Catholic metaphysics which he initiated with *Brighton Rock* (1938), pursued with another novel *The Power of the Glory* (1940), carried

forward in *The End of the Affair* (1951) and maybe climaxed with *A Burnt-out Case* (1961). This series of novels brought Greene international recognition as a major novelist, but also encumbered him with the unwelcome label of 'Catholic novelist.' Greene preferred to describe himself as "a novelist who happened to be a Catholic" and even "Catholic agnostic." Greene made his stance clear when he quoted approvingly an epigrammatic comment of T.S. Eliot on Baudelaire – "It is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exit." Greene was specially interested in a number of French Catholic writers – Leon Bloy, Charles Peguy and Francois Mauriac, who had pursued this paradox to extreme conclusions.

So even when the Catholic in Greene seems to overpower the creative writer in him, his approach remains rather liberal, practical and humanitarian in nature. Greene looks at religion from the perspective of the seedy the corrupt and the most troubled among human beings. He probes deep into the basic function of religion vis-a-vis the individual and tries to give it a human face. Greene does not emphasis faith in God and unquestioned blind adherence to religious norms nor is questioning of the ecclesiastical code considered sinful by Greene. The disbelievers are, in fact, closer to God because they probe the very roots of faith, which shows their desire to come closer to Him.

Modern Fiction and Greene's Approach to Religion

Graham Greene and his contemporaries in British fiction like Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh and others, between the two World Wars and later, have been concerned with the gradual loss of the benevolent social values which guided society earlier. The period between the two World Wars was also a period of man's quest for some satisfactory political ideology or the other, for reorganiging society in order to face the deep economic malaise and the onrush of technology.

Greene came to the literary scene during these two eventful decades and like his contemporaries, became deeply involved with the fate of the individual, faced with the mammoth technical progress and the attendant economic unpredictability on the one hand and the rapid progress of collectivist political ideologies on the other. It was a period of total individual impotence. The citizen, even in advanced countries like England, France and the US, found himself paralysed, unable to take any initiative but to follow some leadership, even if inept. The post-War period when Greene's works drew attention, was a turbulent and chaotic one. The dilemma of belief had been replaced by the dialectics of ideological paranoia. War and the consequent tribulations filled the individual with confusion and frustration. Under these circumstances, writers like A.J.Cronin, F.L. Greene and Graham Greene tried to evolve some framework to give direction to the perplexed humanity. Greene suggested a twofold alternative-either to establish a new social structure based on collectivism or to concentrate on the individual. Some form of liberalized Christianity was the need of the hour. So Greene proceeded to construct his privately worked-out world where sin is a forced, conscious choice but the sinner is not necessarily 'a burnt-out case', outside the scope of God's mercy. It is here that Greene's brand of Catholicism plays its unique and pragmatic role.

Another important feature of Greene's art is that he presents his ideas on religious matters with a difference. Catholicism, as it appears in his novels, is not merely a public system of religious code and dogmas. Nor is it a body incorporate of faith needing exposition. It is, in fact, a privately worked out system of ideas and concepts, a source of impulses and a vast storehouse of rich symbols which is thus, in some ways, vital to him as an artist. As Greene does not draw a stern line demarcating the sinners and the saints in ossified categories, therefore, his perspective is that of a humanist. For his protagonist the religious code does not symbolize any stifling of the natural feeling and emotions. Rather, it allows for free display of man's deep-rooted internal dilemmas to which Greene lends a patient ear.

Reconciling the Humanist and the Catholic in Greene

Greene is a prolific novelist and his interests range from pure thrillers passing on to those that are deeply religious and spiritual in content to those having secular themes. His novels attempt to depict life in its panoramic variety. They are concerned with basic human situations that have perennial significance.

In his novels, Greene has largely striven to restore the religious sense and the sense of importance of the human act to the English novel. No other writer since Charles Dickens has so successfully combined immense popularity with complexity and craftsmanship. Alongwith being a representative writer of 1930s, Greene also attains the rare achievement of deftly juxtaposing the ethical values and the humanistic perspective, placing them within the contemporary scenario. For a novelist who also happens to be a Catholic, the hazard of being accused of proselytizing is ever-present. But Greene's keen sense of involvement in the cause of the seedy and the underprivileged and his staunch criticism of the monolithic and rigid religious code bufuddling the individual, marks him as an advocate of Humanism. Graham Greene was a Catholic convert, but he considered his conversion to be "an intellectual conviction and not an emotional one." However this conversion made the' theme of good and evil a recurring and predominant one within the framework of Greene's own notion of man as weak and helpless in the face of the circumstances he is placed in.

Greene may easily fall into the category of 'bad Catholic'. The more piously orthodox Catholic disclaim that their religion has anything in common with Greene's. But the fact remains that Greene grafted alien theological concepts on to the English novel without straining either the beliefs or the form. It is here that Greene's brand of Catholicism plays its unique and pragmatic role. Greene's development a novelist has provoked equally strong reactions from both his fellow-Catholics and his non-Catholic readers. It is doubtful if anyone has ever written about him without using the word "seedy". His mingled air of shabbiness and salvation is indeed unique. No other writer in the present times has articulated evil with such drive and technique. His vigorous concern with evil, despair, adultery and physical love appear rather unpalatable and distasteful to his Catholic brethren, to whom he appears to expose "all the beauty and horror of the flesh." To the non-Catholics, his exaggerated treatment of squalor and sin appear as artistically irrelevant. But critics on both sides undermine the fact that for this Catholic convert, Catholicism did not hand down some ready made solution to the problems. In order to testify his new-found faith, he had to carry to the extreme point both what he believed to be the human capacity for love, pity, fear and despair, as also God's capacity for showing mercy.

Varied themes of pursuit, betrayal, violence and suicide are explored by Greene in his novels to convey the message that violence is symbolic of the struggles going on at all the time within man's soul and the externalization of this idea shows that "today our world seems peculiarly susceptible to brutality." Greene was struck by Cardinal John Henry Newman's view of a world full of chicanery, injustice, corruption and sin where truth is crucified and virtue is defeated. What Newman observed as the Original Sin provided Greene with a basic framework of moral perception, but the treatment that Greene gives to his own world-view is contemporary. Modern-day situations are analysed by Greene but on account of his Catholic background, they acquire a metaphysical aspect. His moral vision which centres on the sinful and the depraved man also includes the idea of efficacious grace and piety which any sinner can hope for despite holding a non-conformist and ambivalent stance in life.

Greene's conversion to the powerful and prestigious Catholic church was supposed to exercise a restraining and moderating influence on his inherent ambivalence. It suggested the recovery of self through faith. Religion was called upon to do what public school discipline and psychoanalysis had failed to do in his childhood. With his background of being a lonely, bored and suicidal child, Roman Catholicism was not likely to achieve the desired results. Greene remained resolutely himself. Instead of making him tame and subdued, the conversion created a highly complex situation. It unleashed a war between experience and dogma, reality and myth, turning his rebellious and inquisitive mind even more curious than before. Indeed there were some signs of a sense of belonging and spiritual assurance bestowed upon him by his new faith, but Greene was unable to harmonize the contemporary reality with the orthodoxy of belief.

The abundance of Catholic themes and symbols permeating his novels is one of the benefits he derived from being a Catholic convert. But Greene eschews the cliches and claptraps of Catholicism and speaks from his personal experience. He subverts theology into his human world-view and seeks to explore the human predicament within the Catholic framework. This is not to suggest that Catholicism has ready-to-serve answers

to the questions posed by Greene. In the words of David Pryce-Jones, the Catholic symbols of sin and evil appeal to Greene because they evoke the real world of man. They have been super-imposed on a personal vision which existed before conversion and which Greene has described in *The Lost Childhood*. Theology for Greene has been no easy release, no diversion of earlier compassion into easily accepted doctrinal morality. As Greene mostly takes up the underdog and the weak as his protagonists, he uses Catholicism with an earthly basis, divesting sin and evil of its purely supernatural trappings. He considers sin as something natural and humane, rather than endowing it with strict eschatological codification as something deplorable and demoniac. To a convert like Greene, "the Catholic doctrine could add no more than an outward form and a suitable grammatical clothing."

There is an admixture of pointed polarity and an inevitable complementarity between Greene's Catholicism and his work. He never uses his faith either to promote individual anarchism through his rebellious and inquisitive protagonists or as an alibi for merely flouting what the scriptures ordain. Rather, his brand of Catholicism guides the depraved and oppressed man through a labyrinth of not very pleasant experiences of life towards an ideal, which is not necessarily God, to live by as in the case of Henry Scobie in the present novel. Just as Greene's conversion to Catholicism was largely a revolt against his Anglican upbringing and against a monotonus and depressing routine of childhood days, with the mechanical arrivals and departures at school, so also the emotional depravity felt by the sensitive child alongwith his awareness of a ruthless world, indifferent and callous to his sensitivities, represented by the school as a microcosm of that world, was responsible for the growth of the humanist inside him. Greene himself had been looking for something humane, flexible and compassionate.

When humanists think of freedom of inquiry and tolerance, civil liberties and the rights of man, they think of the Church as obscurantist and oppressor and of the free-thinkers as bearers of enlightenment and campaigners for emancipation. Christianity has been hostile to Humanism largely due to the belief that it undermines the basis of morals. Humanists are disposed to reverse the argument. They maintain that the Christian ethic is basically defective. It has denied man's natural, social tendencies and encouraged a self-centred preoccupation with one's own virtue and one's own salvation. Christians naturally will repudiate this view and will point to the Gospel injunctions to love one's neighbour. But if the Gospels are read as a whole and not partially, it will be clear that they attach far greater importance to loving God than to loving one's fellow men. Furthermore, they put forward as the main motive for loving and helping one's neighbour the assurance that such conduct is pleasing to God and will earn a substantial reward in the life hereafter. Strangely enough human ties are regarded not merely as less important than, but in some cases as a definite obstacle to, the attainment of a right relationship with God. This type of charity is a sort of impersonal self-denial based on duty rather than on affection. Here "posthumous self interest" is the prime concern. From the fall of Rome until the twelfth century, the church taught that human ties were an obstacle to the love of God and that one should be good to others not from spontaneous impulse but because this was what God commended and what God would reward. The last people one should do good to were the members of one's own family. In the later Middle Ages, the life of the hermit became less fashionable but there was still a strong feeling that self-maceration was one of the highest forms of virtue. By the nineteenth century the intellectual climate had been transformed by the Enlightenment and the ascetic tradition had greatly weakened. Campaign against child labour and abolition of slavery was brought about by unbelievers.

Therefore, Christianity was in principle irreconcilable with Humanism. An attempt at reconciliation was made when Rome adopted Christianity for its military and political purpose. But with the ascendance of the Church, free inquiry was suppressed and the elements of humanist tradition—political freedom and personal independence being some, were trampled. With this background analysis of Humanism versus Christianity, it would be a cumbersome effort to prove Graham Greene a Christian Humanist. A Christian Humanist may mean a Christian who gives full value to human life in this world and allows it a relative autonomy but he does so because according to his belief it is God's world and a God-given autonomy. The contrast here is with a fundamentalist

pre-occupation with salvation or with an other worldly focus of interest. For the Christian the realm of independence is a realm of obedience since he has chosen the rule of faith. For the humanist there is no such rule and he begins and ends by being human and he shares with all others the human situation.

Following the same line of argument the genre 'Catholic novel', attributed to Greene, also appears a contradictory term. The development of the novel is bound up with increasing democratization, with a degree of improvement in the education and status of women and with the whole liberal bourgeois ethos of the modern world.

George Orwell fully supports this view:

> "The atmosphere of orthodoxy is always damaging to prose; and above all it is completely ruinous to the novel, the most anarchical of all forms of literature. How many Roman Catholics have been good novelists? Even the handful one could name have been usually bad Catholics. The novel is practically a Protestant form of act, it is a product of the free mind, of the autonomous individual."

In his book *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) Ian Watt considered the novel as essentially realistic, its origins profoundly linked to the development of the modern secular world. Since the realistic novel has to be regarded as the central classic tradition of English fiction, the novelist is almost, by definition, "liberal, pluralist, foxy, his typical subject is the merely human rather than the over-arching non-human absolutes." The rise of the novel is also related to the 'declining authority of the proverbial plots of revealed religion. It is a side-product of the process by which history replaces theology as the main mode of organizing and understanding human experience. This is where the dichotomy inherent in the term 'Catholic novel' comes up with its closed world-view and narrow, religious considerations. The Catholic novel is considered to have originated in the French Catholic Revival of the late nineteenth century, which had pronounced decadent overtones and was seen to continue in the works of George Bernanos and Francois Mauriac. However, Catholicism is a rich and complex system and there are many different ways of being a Catholic. Graham Greene's fiction clearly reflects this.

The widely attested trauma of disillusionment that the post-War generation experienced was as much with religion as with patriotism and secular ideals. The deeper reflection on the traumatic shock to secular optimism and to conventional and liberal religion that the War represented made it apparent that the strong sense of the Fall and the need for salvation in orthodox Christianity may actually have something to say. An intellectual revival of orthodox Christianity was, in fact, on the way, its luminaries were Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr and Jacques Maritain. The intensifying economic and political pressures of the late twenties and the early thirties and the rise of Fascism above all, polarized political opinion among intellectuals. It also contributed to a significant minority revival of orthodox religion. More drastic solutions, than liberalism, seemed to be called for in both the theological and the political realms. As Adrian Hastings says, the thirties began to see "a breakdown of the agnostic consensus of the enlightened and ... the growing sense that a belief in supernatural religion really was an intellectual option for modern man. To be a Roman Catholic had come to mean espousing a very clearly defined set of doctrines and way of worship, centralized and self-centred, markedly set apart from contemporary English ways in some respects and powerful in its sense of certainty. This absolute doctrinal assurance appeared very attractive to many converts — Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh being among them.

Greene is among the more intellectual representatives of the Catholic church. He is an enlightened theologian, earnestly exploring the ways of adapting the tenets of the Church to modern thought and social changes. Among the multifarious ways in which this has been occurring — one is to emphasize the humane aspect of religion, to show its relevance to the concerns of man and hence to stress its uptodate nature, its role in promoting social justice and in the development of individual personality. Gradually, the church of England has been moving progressively further from Gospel Christianity to secular Humanism. The need is being voiced - for a new Humanism, which, without rejecting the supernatural, will aim at building a world where every man can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or natural forces beyond his control. Many staunch Catholics are annoyed with this new role of the church. They argue that otherworldliness is the essence of Christianity and a church that ceased to be otherworldly would cease to be Christian. Through

its failure to realise that man is a weak, social animal, Christianity has been led throughout its history to proclaim and practise a code of morality that is completely self-interested and extremely rigid. That it does so less strenuously now is due to the permeation of secular Humanism. Graham Greene stands as a tenacious and tendentious follower of this new category.

The need of Secular Humanism was all the more direly felt during the 1930s, a period which heralded intense social, political, religious and economic tumults and changes. The thirties mark a dramatic social awakening. Religion was on decline and its place had been taken by politics. There was also an acceleration of anti-humanistic trends, but a determined effort to fight them was also prevalent. Marxism came to be regarded as a healthy alternative to Fascism. Communism caught on with the younger writers as the creed of the toiling mankind. Communism appealed to those who believed in peace and social justice. It now turned the public eye to the spectre of Hitler's tyranny. The concept of evil underwent a radical change as more and more people tended to think of it in objective term. Attention was focused on evil working in and through man. The situation called for a sane, impartial and humane approach to the social and political problems facing man. There was an alignment of forces on the humanist pole. The spirit of realism led to the debunking of myths. Evil was linked with a world and it became a social syndrome. Poverty, misery, the exploitation of man by man were regarded as the breeding ground of evil. The whole system needed to be overhauled. The large scale economic reforms going on in Russia were closely watched by the outside world. Religion could not remain aloof from the forces working within the society. Attention was focused on the evils of the new society and on the ill-effects of uncontrolled capitalism. The writer's sensibility was determined by the actualities of life. G.S.Frazer feels that "the best English novels of the 1930s reflect a state of social tension." The struggle against evil, against the forces of alienation, is the hall-mark of the novels of the nineteen thirties.

Graham Greene belongs to this milieu. He shares with the writers of the thirties a passionate sense of reality. His attitude is shaped by the temper and the ethos of his age. Graham Martin in an essay called Greene "a highly topical writer" and bracketed him with Evelyn Waugh and C.P.Snow. Greene's observation focused on poverty, misery and seediness of the individual fighting against gigantic and inevitable forces of society. Greene shares many ideas with his contemporary W.H. Auden — both believed that imagination had been sacrificed to reason and both turned to a theological solution. Greene's intrinsic humanism expresses itself in his liberal opinions, his deep concern for the individual as a victim of an an-powerful world. John Atkins observes' "One attraction of the church for Greene must have been its refusal to victimize tarts. He is faithful to the Church because of its whisky priests and Scobies…." Before bracketing Greene with other Catholic writers like G.K. Chesterton, Francois Mauriac, Evelyn Waugh, George Bernanos and Hillaire Belloc his own statement about his position needs to be mentioned:

> "The membership of the Catholic church would present me with grave problems as a writer if I were not saved by my disloyalty. Loyalty confines you to accepted opinions, loyalty forbids you to comprehend sympathetically your dissident fellows but disloyalty encourages you to roam through any human mind. It gives the novelist an extra dimension of understanding."

At times he grows bitter against being branded a Catholic writer. *In Ways of Escape* (1980) he spitefully comments:

> "I was discovered to be — a detestable term! — a Catholic writer. Catholics began to treat some of my faults too kindly, as though I were a member of a clan and could not be disowned, while some non-Catholic critics seemed to consider that my faith gave me an unfair advantage in some way over my contemporaries."

To critics like George Orwell and Richard Hoggart Greene's religious view is inadequate and unconvincing. Whereas Orwell considers the "... cult of sanctified sinners ... to be frivolous", and a pointer towards "weaking of belief" in Greene. H Hoggart opines that:

> "Greene presents us with a view of the relationship between God and man in which the emphasis is almost entirely on ... one aspect of religious belief and to think it all is to have an inadequate view of religion."

Another critic, John Atkins, suggests in his book *Graham Greene* that despite the omnipresence of belief in Greene's novels, the criticism of Greene "should not degenerate in an essay on moral theology." Atkins considers Greene as a humanist among the English novelists and treats him as such. However, Greene's handling of a variety of themes — religious, secular, thriller detective, refutes this accusation. Although themes of sin and suffering are pervasive in his fiction, but he does not melodramatize them. Rather he presents sin as an inevitable consequence of corrupt actions and a vicious world. Greene relies heavily upon divine will to deliver his protagonists from their trials and travails, but he finds the operation of this divine will very irrational, even pestering at times. The question mark lurking behind his stories should not be missed.

Catholic symbols have an imaginative appeal for Greene but he has adapted only those aspects of Catholicism which correspond to his vision. He has subverted the Christian doctrine into an unconventional world-picture. For instance, the idea of Original Sin has been used by Greene to portray man as a victim of a process which is external to him, rooted either in nature, in his surroundings or in his traumatic childhood. Greene's priests are given the liberty not only to have unconventional notions verging on disbelief but also to participate in human misery and pathos through direct participation in sinful acts. Greene includes not just the saints and the sinners but a wide spectrum of humanity as his characters — revolutionaries, comedians, policeman and spies. The line demarcating the saints and the sinners often blurs and merges. Greene also does not suggest that his believers are more at peace with themselves than the non-believer. Greene also shows various shades of belief and non-belief and characters vacillate between one belief and another — Scobie is unable to decide between the love for God and the love for human beings.

Although religious disputations are liable to obscure and distort literacy issues, it is in the tensions thus set up in Greene's work that the chief interest is created. Greene's ideas may appear unacceptable and even revolting to the pious adherents of the faith, but it was Christ who declared himself more satisfied with the repentance of a sinner than with the orthodoxy of the entrenched and the devout followers. Thus Greene open ups a two-way path to salvation - one through sanctity, another through sin. It is not so much Greene's attitude to Catholicism but rather his flexible and unorthodox approach towards evil and sin and his highly imaginative and compassionate probing of the dark side of man's psyche that form the real substance of Greene's fiction.

Greene is not just a Catholic novelist indulging in ontological exercises through his stories. He is above all a humanist whose concerns are much varied and profound than of a mere theologian. He is also one of those pragmatic thinkers who has voiced the need for Christianity to mould its "modes and methods of revolution" because as it stands today, Christianity lags behind in the present day changing circumstances of a fast-growing, complex life. Greene sees the visible mundane world as an extension towards the spiritual one. Therefore, in his novels, this-worldly human actions are linked with that-worldly religious sense. Due to it his this-worldly characters are ever-conscious and apprehensive of that-worldly concerns. Hence the distinction between fiction and faith is a vague one in Greene's case. Samuel Hynes gives a right assessment:

> "For Greene, truth is religious, not always specifically Catholic, or even Christian in any exact doctrinal sense, but concerned with a vision of human life that postulates the reality of another world. One could not construct a religion out of Greene's novels, and it seems unlikely that any one would be converted by reading them, but they are nevertheless the novels of a religious man."

Greene's humanistic concerns prevent him from adopting a partisan, parochial and sectarian outlook.

Contemporary relevance of Graham Greene's humanistic religion

OR

Greene as an modern writer

Graham Greene's religious vision gives a contemporary, pragmatic and humane view of the world around. Terry Eagleton feels that Greene uses his Catholicism as a 'point of transcendence' from which his culture can be placed and criticized. It paradoxically remains at the heart of the experience of being a Catholic, to be able

to preserve a certain freedom or at least a tension with the church as an institution and an awareness of its imperfections. On the other hand the sacredness of the church is protected by emphasizing its prophetic and providential functions. Greene made a cult of what he called 'disloyality' and declared it to be essential for a Catholic writer. Throughout his career he displayed an overpowering awareness of the tension between the individual and the institutional church. His most famous 'Catholic' novels insistently raise the question of escape clauses and the fallibility of the institutional rules. Greene's privately worked out system of ideas and arguments alongwith a conglomeration of symbols help him to concretize intricate human situations.

Greene explores in his novels a world of corrosion and decay, beleaguered and besieged by evil, apparently God-forsaken but finally redeemed by God. This world, though private, is not exclusive. Its lineaments are of our world and we recognize it as an externalization of our own world. The contemporary appeal of Greene's works shows that he is not just a period-writer constrained by the concerns of his own times. His awareness is certainly more acute and more arresting than of writers like Evelyn Waugh (1903) and C.P. Snow (1905). Whereas Snow has a special interest of a contemporary, Waugh is essentially a pre-war novelist and the post-war interest in him is a kind of nostaligic reaction. Greene spans the gap between Waugh and Snow. His deeper penetration and keener observation releases him from the strictures of both 'pre-war' and 'post-war' categories. Thus Greene's art attempts to reconcile the strength of a very specialized vision with an easily accessible novel structure which aims at generalizing the vision. What Greene diagnoses is the human condition- 'Why, this hell, nor are we out of it' – this statement of the corrupt lawyer, Mr Drewitt in *Brighton Rock*, existed and still remains as an experienced social fact in the present-day world. In this way, Greene's understanding of the topical scene enabled him to connect it properly with his own themes.

Greene's disloyalty to his faith was largely responsible for bringing forth the modernist within him. Infact the concept of disloyalty was an integral component of Greene's life-long experiences, He belonged to a middle-class family having its own pretensions and fixed limits beyond which his Puritan father, Charles Greene, and strict mother, Marion Greene, would never let him go. However Graham Greene had a special interest in knowing about the distant and the unfamiliar. Besides, nothing could be outside the grist of a writer's mill. All could be used because all was about life. It was Greene's disloyality to the strict discipline of school and family which prompted him to use rogues, spies, smugglers and criminals as characters. In *Why Do I Write?* (1948) Greene has stated that as a novelist he was writing fiction, not propaganda and defended his right to be 'disloyal' to the church. He felt that as an artist, he must be allowed to write "from the point of view of the black square as well as from the white."

Uncertaintly seems to be the driving force for Greene. He is, therefore, particularly attracted to characters who inhabit a spiritual borderland and who embody some form of paradox, such as the catholic agnostics and the sinful saints. Jean Guitton finds that Greene habitually sees grace operating through sin, and the worst sins— sacrilege and suicide, function as the means to grace. Grace comes "not through the exercise of good, but through the experience of evil." This explains the special attention and consideration which Greene shows for the sinner.

Greene displays a variety of interests in his novels. The financial Depression, international capitalist monopolies, war-scare, the cold war—all this forms the multi-dimensional milieu of Greene's fiction. His characters live under an unholy amount of stress in such a world. They are prey to some weakness and are often tortured by a universe they cannot cope with. All of them are men divided against themselves, painfully aware not only of their personal failures and the ubiquitous malaise of society but also of their inner guilt and sin. Many of these characters are men on the run, pursued not only by their enemies but also by the unforeseen consequences of their choices made in their moments of crises. A Greene hero is both the betrayer and the betrayed. He faces a gamut of problems — crime and sin, guilt, flight and probable destruction. The freedom of Greene's protagonists is severely limited by their own compulsive actions and reactions and by chance encounters and happenings. But this does not mean that Greene supports determinism of some kind. However tainted and complicated the

lives of his characters may be, they are not denied the free will to lead an unconstrained and iconoclastic life-style.

The drama of good and evil in Greene's novel works itself out on the human plane through the realities of sin, suffering, death and grace. There is a pervasive sense of the implications of the doctrine of Original Sin in Greene's thought. The 'Original Sin' into which man is born creates certain theoretical problems which are different from the 'actual sin' which man perpetrates himself. But the question still has to be asked why God permits any kind of sin at all. If the recognition of sin in its various forms is indispensable, then there is a sense in which sin itself can be regarded as useful. Roger Sharrock says that through the tradition of Dostoievsky and Huysman, the paradoxes of the holy sinner influence the novelists of the French Catholic Revival — George Bernanos and Francois Mauriac.

There is therefore, perhaps, a way directly rather than by the mystery of providential grace, through sin to God. Dostoievsky in his compassion for the peasantry of his time, saw the sinful actions of many a Catholic followers, as the result of situational compulsions, but always done with pure intentions. Huysman's way 'down and out' means down into sin and out into grace. This idea also finds elaboration in Greene's novel. At the beginning of the *The Heart of the Matter* Greene uses Charles Peguy's startling assertion that :

> "The sinner is at the very heart of Christianity. No one is such an expert in Christianity as the sinner: no one, that is, except the saint."

Greene presents evil as something which limits and negates humanity and thereby has an irreducible element of mystery. Only when that mystery is recognized is there any possibility of coming to understand the underlying design of providence. For if the existence of evil has always been a stumbling block to the idea of God, it has also suggested the need for a saviour to deliver mankind.

Here, the progressive modernist view of Greene, appears to stand in opposition to the metaphysical idea of evil as something inherent with which man is born into this world. But at the same time, Greene convincingly elaborates upon the social, economic and even environmental factors responsible for sinful actions thus giving a contemporaneous look to his subject. In the case of Henry Scobie, the sultry and humid West African colony of Sierra Leone acts as a breeding, nourishing ground for evil of all sorts. The deep appeal of the seedy for Greene was due to the fact that he felt it to be closer to the beginnings of human development:

"It hasn't reached so far away as the smart, the new, the chic, the cerebral… It is only when one has appreciated such a beginning, its terrors as well as its placidity, the power as well as the placidity, the power as well as the gentleness, that the pity for what we have done with ourselves is driven more forcibly home."

It is possible that Greene's desire to go to the remote parts of Africa and Latin America and his choice of the harrowed and the depraved protagonists was an endeavour to seek out the primitive, unspoilt and unassuming aspect of human life.

Greene's faith comes handy in his exposition of the dilemma in the lives of his characters. Ford Madox Ford talks about "the queer, shifty ways of Roman Catholics" who are said to be always right when dealing with "the queer shifty thing called human nature." But Greene is not content with writing novels for the limited purpose of edification and catechization. He has a moral vision, of a much wider sense, encompassing life in all its aspects. In significant ways, his writing is a sort of social act since it corresponds to the specific conditions of our times. It reflects his knowledge of good and evil arrived at by a direct awareness of moral obligations. As a humanist Greene does not subscribe to the Catholic dogma. To him sin is identifiable with moral evil and becomes reprehensible when it is a deed done consciously in deliberate disobedience to one's conscience. Greene does not locate virtue at the center of his moral vision. On the contrary, conventional morality with its crude distinction between right and wrong, is to Greene, not a true picture of morality. His saints and damned persons betray a disconcerting resemblance, which bespeaks of his modern attitude towards religion.

Greene's basic commitment is essentially to human life as he himself admits in his report of his first journey to Africa in 1935. Greene regards this journey as pivotal as it was here that he discovered amidst some very real

terrors, a thing "I thought I had never possessed; a love of life." After an attack of malaria, he found, "I had discovered in myself, a passionate interest in living." As a creative writer he imparts to his work, what R.W.B. Lewis calls a "solid sense of this earthly life." In his novels the human world appears in all its diverse forms.

Graham Greene's modernism with its liberal and resilient approach does not serve as an alibi for the criminal and the sinner to flout rules of law and scriptures. Nor does he use his brand of Catholicism to sermonize or proselytize. He also does not arrive at some simple, deducible logic as conclusion of his novel. Contrarily, his approach is rather ambivalent. He is not a supporter of individual anarchism, depicting the individual wilfully debunking social and religious norms, and getting away with them. Greene, as a sensitive writer, living in troubled times of history (1930s), analyses the actions of his protagonists as reactions to certain internal and external factors. Scobie's tensions are further heightened in the seedy, sordid and combustible atmosphere of the West African Colony. Thus Greene's vision is not just theological and ecclesiastical but also has a broad, social and modern angle too.

Greene's modernist approach inspired him to pluck evil out of its isolation and to place it in the context of a world which had produced it. Even in his new-found faith in Catholicism, Greene feels attracted to the church because of its belief in Hell. 'It gives something hard, non-sentimental and exciting.' Therefore, although the echo of the Eternal Fall resounds in all his work, he does not overlook the other factors involved. Greene has progressively come to regard evil as a natural concomitant of the world and advocates a relentless struggle against it. His modern ideology has led him to the inevitable conclusion that sinners and criminals are not born but made by the world. A.D.Wilshere feels:

> "On the conceptual plane he (Greene) may assent to the formulae by which he interprets life, but as a writer his empiric grasp of human nature makes him revolt from the caricature of the human condition drawn for him by the theologians. As a sensitive suffering human being, he is incapable of taking the theological conclusion that an offence committed by an imperfect being inside time can be allowed to be eternally punished by a perfect being outside time. Like Scobie, he can believe in no God who was not human enough to love what he had created."

Greene's choice of locale also reflects his ingrained Humanism. Since he is concerned with the harrowed and the necessitous members of society, the hot, sweltering colony of Sierra Leone interests him as a background milieu. It is easy to talk about the luxurious and easy-going life of the self-contended, rich man, but a deep insight is required to give a correct and realistic picture of the nightmarish actualities of the life of the poor. Greene's prowess as a journalist helps him to depict an accurate and authentic picture of the background scene. But his presentation is not just a modernist, disinterested report on the matter. The humanist in him observes the milieu and its complexities with keenness and compassion.

Greene's concern for the downtrodden, ordinary man has a resemblance with Flyodor Dostoievsky's uncanny insight into the darkest nooks and crannies of man's heart and mind. This is very enlightened, modern concept. Like Greene, he has a tragic vision of life reflecting on its dark and sordid aspects, particularly with reference to the exploited peasantry of his times. Although he was declared to be "the most malignant Christian" by Turgenev, Dostoievsky expressed profound views on religion, sin and faith. His following statement reminds of Greene's ambivalent approach to his own faith:

> "You cannot imagine the terrible torment the desire to believe has caused and still causes me, for it is a desire that grows stronger in my heart the more arguments I have against it."

The idea of bargaining and striking a deal with God occurs frequently in Greene's work. It is as if he challenges God to prove His relevance in the present sordid and sorry state of affairs. This approach of Greene is most original, based on the utilitarian aspect of religion in as far as it (religion) purposefully serves human needs and ends.

Scobie is ready to lay down his life and to commit the most grievous sin of despair if that could rid his wife and mistress from the pain his life was causing them. This is a deal which he makes with God.

Another aspect which reflects Greene's interest in contemporary issues was his sympathy for the new enthusiasm in the church for social justice and his are the first British Catholic novels to pick-up on the subject of Liberation Theology — the belief that the practical search for social justice, especially in South America and the Third World, is an inherent part of the Gospel. This idea entrusts the church with more than just the spiritual, other-worldly duties, Its temporal, this-worldly responsibility of replenishing the economic and social needs of its followers is now highlighted. Greene also showed appreciation for the worker-priest movement that started in France towards the end of World War II, whereby, in an attempt to bring the church near the secularized, industrial population, certain priests went to work full-time in secular posts and shared the lives of the working people. The new church is a purified and simplified one, a church of the dispossessed. This is a church built perforce on humanitarianism, compassion and mutual forgiveness of each vice, a church whose only 'power and glory' are weakness and poverty through which God can work. This church does not strictly categorize human action as either sacred or profane but accepts human frailties in a humane spirit. To belong to this reformed church, Greene feels, is to experience a blessedness that is already a participation in the beginning of heaven on earth.

For many Catholics, Graham Greene being one of them, the new era has brought a considerable relaxation in the institutional structure of the church. Structures once seen as essential, permanent and absolute have come to be regarded as secondary. Father Austin Brierley in David Lodge's *How far can you Go?* prophesizes 'a time when the whole elaborate structure of priests and dioceses and parishes would melt away.' Edward Schillebeeckx, a mainstream Catholic theologian, says that no more than a provisional identification is possible in our time between believers and the institutional church.

Greene's observation of human nature shows his human realism. For Greene, 'human nature is not black and white, but black and grey. He believes in relativity and not absolutism of morals. Religious code has to have the elasticity to give allowance to human endeavour as also to provide succour and relief to another human being. Despite the pervasiveness of the theme of sin and suffering in his work, Greene's concern with its alleviation is equally omnipresent. He takes sides with whosoever tries to eradicate suffering from the lives of human beings. It may be the sceptical Major Scobie who readily gives up his life to save his dear ones from suffering.

Commenting upon Greene's unique quality of dealing simultaneously with the religious and the modern humanistic ideals, Mariella Garbley writes in a Christian journal:

> "Greene is especially powerful in distinguishing between the Catholic ethic, which is rooted in the idea of grace and of dependence on the sacraments, and the humanistic notions of virtue which lack spiritual dimension and supernatural orientation. When ill-handled this distinction leads to the dangerous trick of surrounding the wicked Catholic with an aura of superiority to good, unselfish unbelievers. But the clear indication of salvation as open to the sinful man who clings to his faith and at least tries to repent, leads to the portrayal of fine and moving characters such as Scobie."

The theological dimension in Green's novel is certainly his significant contribution to English fiction. Ray North says:

> "Greene has brought to the English novel a metaphysical dimension that is integrated into the themes of the books in a positive way and is not just a vague conventional background."

By incorporating the concepts of Catholic faith, Greene "has expanded the boundaries of the English novel." In Greene's case, religious faith is not a liability. Rather, his religious ideas imbued with contextual contemporary considerations help in a humane and compassionate understanding of the weak and victimized members of the society. As is typical of a humanist, Greene voices the concerns of the individual and pleads for a more equitable and humanitarian social order.

Critical Summary and Analysis of the Novel

The story of the novel *The Heart of the Matter* is complex, analytical and psychological in nature. The emphasis which was earlier on manners (Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Sense & Sensibility*) now shifts on to probing of the mind. The focus now is on the subtle nuances of human

psyche, on the predicament and dilemma which surrounds an individual living as he does in the post World Wars milieu. One such character who is caught in the web of conflicting demands and pressures is Henry Scobie, the protagonist of *The Heart of the Matter*. Scobie is a scrupulous, conscientious and dutiful police officer working as Deputy Commissioner of Police in the humid and hostile British colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa. He is a Catholic convert, married to Louise who is an ambitious and demanding wife. She is fond of poetry, parties and promotions. Unfortunately, all her ambitions are dashed to the ground when Scobie is denied promotion and she feels sulky and morose all the time. Scobie suffers from an acute sense of responsibility, concern and pity towards his wife and blames himself for her plight. To add to his woes, Scobie does not share his wife's over arching awe for the rites and rituals of the church, although he is a God-fearing man.

When Scobie is bypassed(ignored) for promotion, Louise feels very hurt and humiliated. She knows that with her fine, intellectual taste for good books, she is considered something of a snob by other Britishers. Only Wilson, the spy, shares her penchant for books, Scobie is compelled by Louise to arrange for her tour to South Africa. He tries for a loan from the bank but there is little money in his personal account and the bank denies overdraft. Now Scobie is in a very tight and precarious position, tormented by the overt and covert pestering of his wife on the one hand and tortured by his own sense of pity and hopelessness on the other. In sheer expediency, he borrows money from a corrupt Syrian trader, Yusef, who deals in all sorts of illegal trade of diamonds, narcotics etc. That Yusef should be the only confidant left in whom 'Scobie The Just' could confide, speaks volumes abut his mental and moral degradation.

In the novel, Greene has developed the character of Henry Scobie from the point when he is a serving police officer in the seedy and sordid environment of the West African Colony of Sierra Leone. The colony is inhabited by the native blacks, Syrians, Indians and the British colonizers who seem to be obliging the lesser mortals by carrying the white man's burden. They are depicted as upright, law-abidding and responsible. The climate and physical environment, however, is highly hostile, humid and hot where perspiration, inflammation and gangrene are common maladies. The flora and faurna which breed here are equally symbolic-pye-dogs, cockroaches, vultures, dumping grounds, over-flowing gutters are all essential features of 'Greeneland.' The novelist gives the reader to understand that the geographical environment of this heart-shaped colony has a close affinity with human heart where vice and corruption flourish uninhibitedly. The locale outside is the manifestation of the inner malaise which ails the hearts of the people living therein. Greene has a great sense of place and evokes the physical environment very vividly.

The seediness of the locale, to quite some extent, is blamed to be responsible for turning virtuous people into vicious ones. Wilson, the spy, Robinson, the bank manager, and even father Rank feel frustrated and garrulous due to the sultry climate. Louise too feels weepy and lonely in these humid surroundings. Scobie has witnessed human nature in its bare, rough and unpretentious form and so he hates none. He has grown indifferent and complacent. The only thing which moves him now is neither lust nor love but only pity. So overreaching is his sense of pity that he avers-"….one could feel pity even for the planets." The overwhelming sense of pity forces him to became a partner of Yusef in order to alleviate his wife's suffering with the help of borrowed money for her trip to South Africa. Scobie is all the time also conscious of a bitter, unhappy episode in his life when he lost his only child, Catherine, when he was away. Louise handled the tragedy alone and Scobie received the telegram of his daughter's death quite late. This unfortunate incident was another heavy burden on Scobie's heart who wanted, somehow, to minimize Louise's sufferings as far as he could.

Greene takes the reader through various ups and downs in the life of Henry Scobie. Another tumultuous event in his life is the arrival of an eighteen year old widow, Helen Rolt, as survivor of a torpedoed ship. Louise has left and Scobie has found peace for some time, staying alone in the company of Ali, his long-time servant. But the arrival of Helen Rolt brings back to his mind the overwhelming sense of pity which he feels for one and all.

Once again Scobie wants to arrange happiness for others. This draws him closer to Helen, the childish widow, "who comes into his life on a stretcher clutching a stamp-album." Helen is young, immature and a non-believer.

Even as their intimacy grows, she fails to understand the guilt pangs which Scobie suffers from not because of this adulterous affair alone but also because he is hurting God by his actions. Scobie visits one of the huts where Helen is putting up but he has to meet her in a clandestine manner. He is watched by Wilson, the spy, who is somewhat in love with Louise, Scobie's wife and who has also wept bitterly before Scobie once. This makes him detest Scobie as a calm and cool tormentor, and a deliberate manoeuvrer. However, Scobie is indifferent towards him.

Scobie is aware that what has drawn him closer to Helen is his incorrigible sense of responsibility but gradually there develops a feeling of comradeship between them as they are partners in this carnal sin. Helen would like him to be less inhibitive and more daring in their relationship and to visit her during broad daylight too. She feels Scobie's religious concern to be 'humbug' and "all hooey". To compound Scobie's worries, Louise decides to come back as she has got wind of the affair between her husband and the other woman. Once she is back, she declares that she would no longer pester him with undue demands. But she would like Scobie to accompany her to the Mass the Holy Communion as a Catholic ought to do. Thus she indulges in subtle torture of Scobie as she is well aware that he would never agree to go to church in his state of sin. Once this happened, Louise would get a good opportunity of holding him to task.

Once again Scobie's acute ever gnawing sense of pity gets hold of him and he decides that it would be better if he annoyed God rather than agonizing either Louise by not going to the Communion with her or Helen by abandoning her. He thinks "God can wait. How can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures?"

In the meanwhile, he has committed another act of misdemeanor. He wrote a letter to Helen convincing her of his love and loyalty towards her. He slips the letter under the door of the room occupied by Helen but the letter finds its way into the hands of Yusef who is now ready to utilise it as an instrument of blackmail. Scobie also develops a sense of insecurity and suspicion about his old and trusted servant, Ali and unwittingly connives with Yusef to get Ali murdered. So, the once exemplary and upright police officer is now a corrupt, deceiving adulterer and a sinner in the eyes of God too. Greene has used dark and negative shades to portray the protagonist, Henry Scobie. However, as the title itself suggests, this is not the real picture. The truth is not as it appears, rather, there is a different reality hidden behind the apparent. It is here that the reader gets acquainted with Greene's version of a reformed and liberalized Christianity.

Greene believes that religion is not a fetter or a chain. It is no just an agency to punish and torture man for flouting the rules ordained by the Church. Religion is not a monolithic structure which demarcates human beings as either all good or all bad. On the contrary, region is a redeeming and soothing presence, a power which is benevolent and forgiving. God himself is not the tormentor who would flourish his wand of Justice to penalize whosoever questions the tenets of the Church. The basic concern of a human being should be for the fellow human. The bond of love, piety and brotherhood is more equipped to deal with human follies rather than the straightjacket norms of the Church. Therefore, Scobie, feels Greene, is not a sinner despite having fallen from grace, being corrupted and dammed and having committed the ultimate sin of suicide. As father Rank tells Louise at the end of the novel. "As far as I know…. he really loved God." Greene always felt that such differentiation between good or bad, evil or virtue was very arbitrary and purely man-made. Man cannot understand the "appalling nature of God's mercy" nor can he himself resist the temptation of arranging happiness for others." So man, despite his puny, insignificant, erring self, remains very much Greene's focus of attention. It is rightly averred that he was a humanist to the core.

The Heart of the Matter raises a wide range of questions for the reader. It probes the nature, meaning and definition of faith in the contemporary context. It interprets the duties of Church as a social organization and not just as a doctrinaire monolithic structures. The novel unfolds a typical post-War world where man has few support systems to rely upon. Society, religion, politics— all these factors can no longer provide readymade answers or neatly packaged solutions. The complexity of life denies any simple equations. As a believer, Scobie had more doubts, suspicions and ditherings to offer instead of blind adherence. But then Greene does

not believe that asking questions or deviating from the beaten track does necessarily tantamount to being profane or evil.

Besides, who decides what is good for a fellow human being? Who is a believer and who is a non-believer? Is compassion and pity synonymatic of love and should one confuse these emotions with each other? Who is God, a tormentor, a benefactor or an indifferent observer? Then, does the society and its custodians play the role of watch dog or is society a binding, cohesive force? If we consider all these questions, then *The Heart of the Matter* no larger remains a Catholic novel. It may be termed as a novel written by an author who happened to be a Catholic. In fact, religion is just one of the prime themes with which Greene is concerned. It is not the only theme. The novel is more socio-psychological in nature.

If one analyses the title of the novel, it would again take one to the genuinely humanitarian approach which Greene has for modern man living in this strange, confounding world. A believer who questions or disagrees need not be considered as eternally damned. Only when one loves God does one feel the need of not offending or disobeying Him. A believer has to prove nothing. He has only loyalty to offer, loyality which is blind, mute but unintelligent.

Another important aspect of the novel is the racial undertones which are present. The honest and the upright are invariably the Britishers who do grow fidgety, impatient and dishonest due to the physical and social environment around. Still they are more scrupulous and diligent as compared to their other counterparts. These comprise the native Blacks, the Syrians, the Indians and so forth. Whereas the native Blacks indulge in all sorts of criminal activities- working as pimps, spying on their British masters, espionage, smuggling etc., the Syrians are corrupt manipulators. They conspire against each other and behave sycophantly with their British superiors. Both Yusef and Tallit are involved in smuggling of narcotics, diamonds and liquor. They try to frame each other and desperately try to win favours from the Britishers. In the same view, the Asians are depicted as superstitious and obsequious. Gungadin pesters his customers to let him read their palm so that he could predict their future or suggest how to improve their prospects. So the complete gamut of people is quite varied but Greene has been quite partial in depicting some characters as rather positive and others as largely negative. Thus, as a reader, one can observe that a large variety of issues interested Greene. These can be enumerated as social, religious, geographical, ethnic, personal, inter-personal, political, cultural and so on.

Graham Greene's concept of sin, salvation, redemption, damnation and the need of God's mercy:

Or

The Heart of the Matter as a religious novel.

The Heart of the Matter is invariably considered as a religious novel. The Catholic tenets are conspicuous in the background and the thriller motif is superimposed in order to make the plot contextual and contemporary. Greene deals with the malaise from which the modern society suffers. His final analysis reminds one of T.S. Eliot. Just as Eliot laments the moral barrenness and sterility of the modern world, which he calls 'the wasteland', similarly Greene ponders over the need of divine mercy to redeem man. The protagonist, Henry Scobie, is a living example of modern man trying to "arrange happiness" for others and endeavoring to please God's creatures than God Himself. In his attempt to keep everyone happy and secure, Scobie fails to keep his promises towards anyone-neither his wife, Louise, nor his mistress, Helen Rolt nor even God. He appears rudderless and lost. Greene's favourite theme of the hundted and the chased becomes very obvious. However Scobie feels that he is not the hunted himself. Rather, it is God who is being hunted by him (Scobie) due to his adulterous relationship on the one hand and then his guilt regarding going to Mass without having confessed his sins first. Scobie's overwhelming religious concern makes the theme of sin, damnation and redemption very important. Graham Greene was a Catholic convert whose conversion was not a matter of doctrine or conviction. As he himself says in his another work, *The Lawless Roads*:- "I was baptized one foggy afternoon about four o'clock. I couldn't think of any names I particularly wanted. So I kept my old name. I was alone with the fat priest, it was all very quickly and formally done…"

For someone with such an attitude towards life, religion and people, faith was not a leash to keep doubts and questions in a state of abeyance. Faith raised more questions in his mind rather than suggesting blind adherence. *The Heart of the Matter* reverberates some such sentiments of Greene. However what one should keep in mind is that Greene's interpretation of religious tenets is not purely dogmatic in nature.

Looking at things as they are. Henry Scobie, the protagonist of the novel, is a clear case for damnation and fall from grace. He is residing in a God-forsaken colony of West Africa which is extremely humid, dull and dreary. Scobie is surrounded not just by the physical dirt around him in the form of pye-dogs, vultures and cockroaches, but also people who are corrupt, manipulative and unreliable. Then, Scobie also suffers from an overwhelming sense of pity and compassion for everything and everyone around him. Swayed by the same emotion of pity, he borrows money from Yusef, a Syrian trader, to arrange a trip for his wife, Louise, who feels very lonely and dejected in that dingy and seedy colony. This lands him straight at the mercy of Yusef who is a corrupt Syrian trader and is very keen to befriend Scobie. One wrong step leads Scobie into a marsh of controversies and gradually Yusef becomes Scobie's only confidant. They arrange the murder of Scobie's time-trusted servant, Ali. Later Yusef again saves Scobie from public humiliation by taking care of the letter he had written to his mistress, Helen Rolt.

Thus on the professional front, Scobie has now joined the band of other corrupt police officers but he has been corrupted by pity and compassion. Even in personal life, his adulterous relationship makes him very uneasy. He can neither be faithful towards his wife, Louise whom he had vowed to make happy when they got married. Nor can he be always around Helen, his mistress, trying to arrange her happiness. Above all this web of troubles that he has got himself enmeshed into, there is his extreme sense of guilt towards God, whom he feels, he is constantly hurting and beguiling. So, at all levels, Scobie is a damned man.

However, Greene gives the reader a different perspective. What the novel endeavours to say is that the sinful actions of mankind are least significant and even less are they an indicator of man's lack of faith. It is the intention behind the actions which is of importance. Human beings are prone to weakness and overestimation. The desire to 'overreach' and play God is present in any mortal soul. In his own Puny way of thinking, anyone would like to "arrange happiness" for his near and dear ones rather than wait eternally for God's benevolence to take charge. Scobie also feels that he would rather annoy God than make miserable the human beings. He has created. "God can wait, human beings can't". He is one of these naïve ones who cannot leave Louise, or Helen Rolt, his mistress to wait for "the appalling" quality of God's mercy. But, despite all these apparent moral lapses Greene does not denounce Scobie as eternally damned.

It is here, in his analysis of Scobie's character, that the reader comes to understand Greene's views regarding concepts such as damnation, sin, evil etc. It is also through Greene's humanitarian approach that we can assess *The Heart of the Matter* not just as a religious work but more of a psychological study of a 20th century individual, caught in a dilemma of forces which pull him in diametrically opposite directions. Greene is of the firm belief that man is not just good or bad. He is a conglomeration of good and bad. He does not share the Puritan belief that after the Fall of Adam and Eve, there is no way human race could be redeemed and restored back to God's grace. Man has his limited comprehension and little capability. But man's capacity to love and give happiness is equally colossal. Nothing that Scobie does can be condoned either from ethical religious or legal point of view. But there is also a humanitarian angle which Greene emphasizes. In his extreme, liberal approach while viewing man's predicament, Greene emphasizes the secular and human side of Church. Religion is not a punitive measure to be adopted against and alleged defaulter who displays what the scriptures ordain. God is also not a tyrant who can only punish and penalize. Faith in God is a strength-ensuing feeling. It is having faith in some power which man considers superior to one self. Now this power is neither blind, irrational nor rigid. Instead, it is considerate, compassionate and comforting. How enormously Greene differs from the traditional belief in God is brought before the reader through the words of Father Rank, the Catholic priest of the colony, who tells Louise after Scobie's death.

> "It may seem an odd this to say- when a man's as wrong as he was but I think from what I saw of him , that he really loved God."

So we can safely conclude that although Greene deals with certain ecclesiastical issues in the novel, his larger concerns are largely human. He is truly a modern writer who has attempted to interpret religious tenets in the modern context. Just as duties of Church are changing from purely religious to largely temporal, so also our views related to religion need to be changed. Religion, no longer, is a monolithic concept which defies any humanitarian consideration. Religion should serve as a guiding, comforting force in the complex modern world where most other social values are constantly changing.

Keeping in view Greene's reformed notion of Christianity, one is convinced that the concept of sin and damnation has been treated differently by him. He neither denounces a human being for his weaknesses nor does he consider anyone infallible. He maintains a human angle in evaluating a sinner. What religion might ordain as sin could be the only possible option under given circumstances. Undoubtedly, Greene believes in the need of divine grace for man to overcome his worries and troubles. Man should not assume the role of God because he is too tiny in comparison. However, love of God is responsible for making man strive to please the creatures made by God. Due to Greene's humanitarian stance, it is difficult to call the novel just a Catholic document. Greene deals with basic human dilemmas and predicaments. So though the outer framework which Greene etches has religion lineaments but his larger concerns are humanitarian and not just religious.

Scene & Setting of the Novel

Graham Greene has commendable quality of evoking the sense of place or scene. In his novel *The Heart of the Matter*, the West African colony of Sierra Leone is evoked before the reader quite graphically with the help of images and word-pictures. Greene also worked as a journalist and War-time reporter for some time in his career. His understanding of human matters is coupled with his potential to reconstruct a place with its exact contours, shades and sounds. Nearly in all his novels, Greene skilfully concretizes and describes the sights and sounds of the milieu in which the plot of the novel unfolds itself. Brighton in *Brighton Rock*, the no-man's land in *the Power and the Glory*, the leper colony in *A Burnt-out Case* are some such examples.

In *The Heart of the Matter*, Greene evokes the picture of the West African colony with immediacy, concreteness and vividness. The dirt and filth, which is both mental and physical, is depicted by Greene in its entire detail. The damp and sultry colony breeds its ugly flora and fauna – spiders, cockroaches, dogs, vultures, mosquitoes etc. Greene portrays the seediness and ugliness of the place in its graphic detail. Scobie's suffocation – both external as well as internal has been depicted clearly by Greene. The sweat and squalor Scobie experiences transforms his benevolent, all-forgiving and saintly figure. Narrow, congested lanes, over-flowing gutters, incessant rain and decaying and swollen bodies of dead animals bring to the mind's eye some very macabre scenes.

Greene makes prolific use of certain metaphors in order to evoke the sense of place. The metaphor of map is largely used in his works as it is in the present novel. Greene describes the geographical location, climatic conditions and the sea-side of West Africa in *The Heart of the Matter*. Africa resembles the shape of human heart and therefore human nature in its raw, coarse form is present in the West African colony of Sierra Leone. Greene delineates the length and breadth of the colony with its dark narrow alleys, dirty and seedy quayside, clusters of small houses and dank, stuffy interiors. Robert Gorham Davis writes that "in Greene's novel everything is as drab and dreamy as possible." The metaphor of dingy and seamy surroundings is equally evocative. The heat and dirt of the colony creates a perfect climate for human meanness and misery.

> "In the dark narrow passage behind, in the charge room and the cells, Scobie could always detect the odour of human meanness and injustice—it was the smell of a zoo, of sawdust, excrement, ammonia and lack of liberty."

Such a God forsaken, seedy world has been righty called "Greeneland." It is a highly personalized landscape of Greene's vision of the world as a place of sin and suffering. Images of beasts, jungle and battle are pervasive in Greene's fiction. The cockroach-killing competition between Wilson and Harris is another powerful example

as also is the whimpering sound of the dying Ali when Scobie gets him murdered in connivance with Yusef. Thus Greene evokes the physical surface of the environment with concrete details. The selected detail embodies "the essential features of a location or the moral landscape within which a character moves," feels K.W. Gransden.

Greene's choice of locale for his novels is singular and unique. As a writer who travelled far and wide and assimilated his experiences in his fiction, his description of the milieu is most accurate and authentic. The physical setting within which Greene's plot unfolds casts its own spell on the protagonist. The corruption and callousness of the Syrians and the expatriate Britishers originates from the heat and humidity of the atmosphere of this West African colony.

This vivid sense of wasteland is produced by Greene's constant references to seediness and sordidness. The scenic description is the ever present image of vultures, mosquitoes and rats which gives the picture of a world abandoned by hope and by God. There are constant images of lavatories, decay and stink and thus a continual emphasis on ennui and isolation of the locale. This insistence on squalor and dirt enable Greene to bring out potently true dilemma which his characters undergo. That the seediness of place gets manifested in evil and corrupt deeds of the characters and in interpersonal relationship has been clearly depicted by Greene. However, the reader has to be mentally prepared for these seamy surroundings and their inhabitants reeling under a negative influence.

Greene's prowess of recreating a scene with a sense of urgency and immediacy goes a long way in his powerful presentation of plot and characters. The oppressive and discouraging environmental conditions of the locale inhabited by Henry Scobie, Louise, Wilson, Father Rank and others accounts for the peculiarity of their characters. The heat and dirt makes people edgy, suspicious and susceptible to wrong deeds. Greene is one of the very few modern novelists who writes about religious issues but is able to give a contemporary and contextual framework to his works. The intricate detail which he discloses helps the reader in firstly understanding and then corresponding the desired effect. Thus his potential of drawing the lineaments of Greeneland, very clearly, is specially appreciable.

Scobie's Character

In Greene's novels, compassion is as strong an emotion as hatred and helplessness. The protagonist of *The Heart of the Matter*, Henry Scobie, is the right embodiment of various compassionate qualities like pity, love, pity and honesty and at the same time exhibiting a state of helplessness and indecision. Scobie, a Deputy Commissioner of Police in the West African colony of Sierra Leone, has something of both the sinner and the saint in him. Sometimes it is impossible to tell one from the other. The ambiguity of such a character is clearly suggested in the epigraph to *The Heart of the Matter*, taken from the French writer Peguy:-

> "Le pecheur est au Coeur meme de charetiente … Nul n'est anssi competent que le pecheur en matiere de chretiente. Nul, sice n'est le saind."

The sinner is at the very heart of Christianity. Nobody is as competent as the sinner in the matter of Christianity. Nobody, if it is not the saint.

Scobie has been unsuccessful in his career, not in love with his wife, lacking money and dissatisfied with his faith. He is isolated, desperate and approaches a state of torpor which places him outside the realm of ordinary individuals and even denies him the efficacy of God's grace. Still loyal to his ideal of honesty and integrity, Scobie does not give up hope. The only thing that can bring him back momentarily to the community of men is his affair with Helen Rolt, who, having lost her husband in a shipwreck, drifted in the open sea for forty days while waiting to be saved. She is, like Scobie, a derelict and only with her can he find some kind of love. Scobie thus becomes fixed in his character. He is an efficient officer "corrupted by love and pity both, into sin and breach of duty." His fatal flaw is pity and an acute sense of responsibility. An element of pride is inseparable from Scobe's pity because of his feeling that he owes it to himself to relieve the sufferings of others.

The novel opens with Scobie having been passed over for promotion by the colonial office in London. This hurts his wife Louise who has certain social ambitious and illusions. To protect Louise in his unilateral fight against her unhappiness, Scobie sacrifices his hard won integrity. He becomes, as other men are, remoter from the love of God, and in the course, the more he conceals his actions, the more Louse loves him. He borrows money from Yusef, the unscrupulous Syrian trader, to pay for her fare to South Africa. He conceals the letter found in the Portuguese captain's bathroom during a search for smuggled diamonds, because he is overcome by pity for the man. No sooner it is done than Scobie feels that he has joined the ranks of corrupt police officers. "They had been corrupted by money and he had been corrupted by sentiment. Sentiment was the more dangerous because you couldn't name its price." The nature of Scobie's sense of pity and responsibility is defined in the scene where he stands looking at the lights of the temporary hospital in which the survivors of the shipwreck are housed. He feels the bundern of all those suffering and in doing so, he only exhibits the type of man he is.

> "It was as if he had shed one responsibility only to take on another. This was a responsibility he shared with all human beings, but there was no comfort in that, for it sometimes seemed to him that he was the only one who recognized it."

Scobie has pity to offer for everything, everywhere. Sometimes it reaches universal proportions:

> "If one knew, he wandered, the facts, would one have to feel pity even for the planets? It one reached what they called *The Heart of the Matter*?"

This prognosis provides the clue to Scobie's despair. For one who looks at things as Scobie does, the only possible attitude is that of pity, a kind of sharing of failure, which is ultimately destructive. The act of love with Helen Rolt opens a decisive phase in Scobie's life. Driven by his own loneliness, Scobie extends himself in sympathy and compassion towards her. It is a brief Indian summer of love. Scobie feels drawn to her by her loneliness and innocence. "Sadly like an evening tide he felt responsibility bearing him up the shore." Scobie knows from experience how love and passion die but pity always stays, "Nothing ever diminished pity. The conditions of life nurtured it."

After an argument with Helen, Scobie writes a letter telling her that he loves her more than himself, more than his wife, 'more than God'. As he takes the letter to Helen's lodging, he feels that he 'carried a sense of corruption' and wonders why he wrote the words 'more than God'. It is as if pity for Helen had led to his desertion of God. "The sky wept endlessly around him: he had the sense of wounds that never healed." But Helen needs him and Scobie responds to a human need of him. "God can wait, he thought, how can one love God at the expense of one of his creatures." His desperate promise the Helen, "I will always be here if you need me, as long as I'm alive," constitutes for him an oath as ineffaceable as his vow many years ago at the Ealing altar to make Louise happy. As the two vows are irreconcilable, Scobie starts feeling bewildered. He feels that all he can share with the two women is despair, and the idea of suicide as a means of securing their happiness presents itself. The unexpected return of Louise from South Africa worsens the situation. The letter which he wrote to Helen falls into Yusef's hands who blackmails him into smuggling a package of diamonds. Thus "with his eyes open, knowing the consequences, he entered the territory of lies without a passport for return."

From all this it appears that the actions taken by Scobie as means of attaining happiness for others and peace for himself are the very cause of suffering for him and for others. Scobie's career exemplifies Greene's obsession with man's sinfulness and his need for divine forgiveness. Scovie's predicament may be defined as that of a man tormented by his love of human beings. The only way out for him is to kill himself but, as a cathola, he cannot do it without wounding God. Scobie's love of God is inspired by the same pity which inspires his love of Louise and Helen. At the same time, his pity drives him to struggle with a God who does not seem to have the same compassion as he has and who would not allow him to arrange the happiness of others. There is bitterness between them and "he could speak to Him only as one speaks to an enemy."

Thus the tension in the novel arises from Scobie's endeavour to put his own compassionate self against the omnipotence which allows unreasonable anguish in human life. Scobie believes in Got and yet he can believe in 'no God who was not human enough to love what he had created.' The voice within, the voice of God, pleads with him, urging him to live, to give up either Louise or Helen and to trust them to His mercy. But Scobie is caught in the conflicting tides of love and pity and he cannot come to a decision. Therefore, he tries the only way he can to bring an end to his dilemma. He prepares methodically for the ultimate sin of despair-suicide. He studies the symptoms of Angina Pectoris and secretly collects the fatal Evipan tablets which the doctor has prescribed for the illness feigned by him. He makes false entries in his diary about symptoms so that his relatives in the family do not suspect suicide.

The conversation between Mrs. Scobie and Father Rank gives two contrasted views of Scobie's ultimate fate – one based on moral standards, determined by various rituals and the other on divine mercy. Father Rank insists on the "appalling strangeness" of the mercy of God. Louise believes that her husband is damned, but Father Rank holds out hope for Scobie.

> "For goodness sake, Mrs.Scobie, don't imagine you or I know a thing about God's mercy… The Church knows all the rules. But is doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart."

Scobie is not a character endowed with many appreciable qualities. There is a feeling that Scobie is a good man who loves too well but not too wisely. Due to the feeling of pity, he is led into the byways of evil. Even his worst sin, suicide, is the out come of his humanity and humility. Greene seems to suggest that in the modern world, happiness is a remote possibility. Scobie might appear to have failed and have been defeated in life and even death. Even the positive qualities he has are coloured with negative meanings. He is more of an anti-hero, who is defeated in everything he undertakes — relations, love, friendship and God. Pity and compassion are so excessive in his personality that they lead to his down fall. One can therefore surmise that Greene's protagonist is a good character who goes astray because he is self-assuming about alleviating the sorrows of all these people God has created. His death, though an act of humility and submission, becomes an escape route. Thus Scobie suffers largely due to pity and extreme sense of responsibility. His actions do not bespeak of heroism but of weakness and vulnerability. Pity makes an anti-hero of him.

Structure & Technique

Graham Greene's range of interests encompasses eschatological themes, chase and thriller element to sordid and seedy milieu and also in depth analysis of the psyche of the character. This large variety of subjects, on the one hand, assures him wide readership and fan following but it makes demands on his work to evoke the required atmosphere, mood and scene through proper selection of words, phrases, descriptions and analysis. That Greene has been highly successful in evoking vivid contours of 'Greeneland' is essentially a feat of style, a combination of artfully selected details and striking figures of speech. Nearly every one of his novels has been turned into a feature film largely due to his racy plots, evocative language, well-knit structure and engrossing story line.

Greene has a multidimensions concern for the individual and a panoramic vision of life which he conveys through effective technique and meaningful style. The structure combines technological theme elaborated through a variety of symbols and images and also the modern cinematic technique. The structural pattern in Greene's fiction is largely expressed through various technical devices. Use of metaphors, symbols, images and characters are the prominent areas. Greene employs the metaphors of map, dreams, diary, etc. He uses the metaphor of map quite frequently and consistently in his novels. Commenting on the geographical map of Africa, Henery Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* likens it to the shape of a human heart. Therefore, perhaps, human nature in its raw, uncertain, base form is prevalent in the British colony. Another devise used by Greene to give a structural shape to his explorations of mental dilemma of the characters is through the idea of dreams. John Atkins rightly comments, "I know of no other writer who makes so much use of dream material as Graham Greene." Dream is a measure of the complexity of character and situation, as in Henry Scobie's

dream in *The Heart of the Matter*. Nearly always, a dream is a sign of an unholy stress or unbearable boredom or sheer neurosis. One dream shows his condition very vividly in which Scobie sees himself "drifting down….an underground river…he was alone, for you couldn't count the dead body on the stretcher as a companion." Greene employs another technique to organize the structure of his plot. That is, using the medium of diary. Scobie's diary is a record of the events and episodes that lead him to commit suicide. The diary also performs the function of a confidant as Scobie is unable to discuss his dilemma with anybody, not even with the priest, since he is aware that the priest can give only some formulated solution not applicable to his case. It is in his diary that Scobie very methodically prepares the suitable background for his suicide.

Greene is preoccupied with the squalor and corruption in the world, externalized by him through symbols and images of heat, dirt and decay and use of pye-dogs, vultures and insects and such fauna of seediness. The picture thus evoked is very effective and complete in its symbolic depiction of "Greenland." The detail of physical environment suggests that the world of his novels is barren of beauty & joy. Robert Gorham Davis writes that " in Greene's novels everything is as drab & dreamy as possible." Here, in the heat & damp of the colony of Sierra Leone, moths & mosquitoes, lizards & cockroaches create a perfect climate for human meanness& misery. Scobie feels both physical & mental suffocation living in the colony.

Greene constructs a complex plot in *The Heart of the Matter* & keeps control of it by dovetailing of detail. Scobie's reactions to his previous action & their future repercussions have been described in minute detail. His psychological dalliance & introspection is one such example. Another feature of the highly visual style of Greene consists of "a series of conrete descriptive images, evoking a character or location, a kind of montage technique like that is used in the cinema, specially thriller movies. Greene evokes the physical surface of the immediate environment of Sierra Leone with concrete pictures which are selected because they embody "the essential features of a location or the moral landscape within which a character moves." Another structural feature of Greene's novel is that he skilfully combines the topical and the universal. The moral issues described in *The Heart of the Matter* are equally relevant to the present day world. The novel, therefore, does not seem like an allegory or a fable but something closer to life, hence probable and credible.

One form of artistic morality for Greene is his concern for style. He regards truth-telling as a primary duty of an artist. Accuracy of observation and writing is to him a matter of style. As a journalist Greene visited a number of regions around the world and the accuracy in his observation and reporting is largely due to his journalistic dexterity. Greene's style is sinewy and spare, producing a diversity of apt effects very economically. Keen observation, intense understanding and sensitivity to atmosphere, especially to certain seedy aspects of modern life are many of Greene's assets. The thriller element which serves as a backcloth for his novel, demands a quick-paced and taut plot whereby the 'religious' aspect does not remain mere ontological statement. The thriller element is as basic to Greene's structure as the religious theme. Therefore, Scobie feels that he is hunted and the hunter is his own conscience and God.

Apart from the afore mentioned structural devices, the use of cinematographic technique is Greene's another inimitable achievement. As a writer of thrillers like *The Man Within*, *Stamboul Train*, *It's a Battlefield* and others, Greene attempts to evolve a structure for his subject in a contemporary manner. The cinematic technique probes intimately into the complex working of the human mind and yet remains singularly detached. It combines the feature of observation and recording but permits the observed circumstances to retain their own uncluttered judgements.

The cinema has been a medium which has attracted Greene since the days when other intellectuals were too ready to dismiss it s popular and inferior art. V.S. Pritchett first recognized Greene's cinematic method as a technical innovation and predicted that Greene had initiated a movement which could "wean the English novel from its present…dullness." Greene's fascination with the cinema aroused in him extremes of emotional response and a deeply critical attitude towards films. It also involved him in the process of film making, adapting work for the screen, producing and writing scripts and working on sets. Through reviewing films he

developed an understanding of the technique of films and his action packed, fast-moving plot reflects his powers.

Greene's choice of characters reflects his interest in the lonely and the depraved. Most of his characters are victims and hunted lot whose physical pain and mental anguish is aptly delineated by Greene. Greene shows a psychological insight into the working the mind of the protagonist. In the characters Scobie, Louise, Wilson, Helen and others, Greene analyses the aberration of behaviour caused by the emotions of pity, love, possessiveness and such others. The portrayal of his character is then a delving deep into their conscious and unconscious levels of mind. Greene's characters develop through their mental turmoil recorded in the unfolding of the plots. They emerge partly by direct description and dialogue and partly through monologues with a lively credibility. Scobie and Father Rank's moral vision remains strong but Greene writes more as a realist than as a moralist. Therefore these characters speak their own words and breathe their own sighs of despair, not their author's.

However there are some loose ends in Greene's structural pattern. Some of his characters are not fully developed and he appears biased in their portrayal. In *The Heart of the Matter*, none of the native Africans is fully developed as a character, they are seen only from the point of view of the dominant, alien whites. To many of these whites, all blacks look alike and are either pimps or prostitutes. George Orwell considers this a result a Greene's 'myopic vision.' Similarly, Greene's portrayal of Scobie's dilemma in sympathetic light is like "trying to clothe theological speculation in flesh and blood which produces psychological absurdities," feels Orwell. Another lacuna is the vivid sense of wasteland produced by Greene's constant reference as to seediness and sordidness. The scenic description with the ever-present vultures, mosquitoes and rats gives the image of a world abandoned by hope and by God. Such exaggerated insistence on ennui and isolation seems very bizarre at times.

Despite these drawbacks, Greene's deft handling of technique and adept presentation of events do not let his novels stoop to the level of fables but are action-oriented thrillers having a great relevance for today's fast-moving world. By sketching significant detail Greene creates a background that looks authentic and then, by symbolic touches, draws the reader's attention to matters of special significance.

Title of the novel

The Heart of the Matter is a highly symbolic and intricate study of human heart in times of crisis. It is the story of Henry Scobie who is Deputy Commissioner of police in the West African colony of Sierra Leone and whose biggest flaw is his overwhelming sense of pity and responsibility. These qualities, in themselves, are desirable and appreciable. But they do not mix well with the theological code ordained by the Church. Scobie tries to magnify his measly self against the magnificence of God. This creates trouble for himself and for all those around him. However, Greene questions the reader whether blind adherence to religious rule is the only way to be faithful to God. He also enquires if deviation from the pre-determined theological path even for the sake of piety and companion for fellow human beings is punishable. He also questions man's naïve views about things being either good or bad and suggests those things that are good and bad. That is what "*The Heart of the Matter*" is all about. It is about human heart- the uncertainties, dilemmas and dithering which modern man has to face and also about the numerous questions which defy codified answers. That is what makes the title very evocative and pithy.

Scobie is a good man who does all the wrong deeds with right intentions. He keeps up the farce of his marriage to Louise because he cannot hurt her. He arranges for her trip abroad to make her happy and relieve some of her pain which she experiences living in Sierra Leone. For this purpose he has to indulge in business relations with Yusef who is a corrupt Syrian trader. This business deal turns into personal reciprocation of secrets and clandestine activities. Scobie overlooks the personal letter which he discovers on board the ship from the Portuguese Captain written to his daughter. Again he does a wrong deed for the sake of his incorrigible habit of compassion and pity for others. He takes upon himself the responsibility of Helen Rolt and vows to be her

benefactor and caretaker because he feels drenched in pity and responsibility for this child-widow who comes into his life on a stretcher, clutching and stamp-album to her breast.

Scobie knows that he cannot reconcile the two promises – one made to his wife, another to his mistress. Above this love the angle in which Scobie is stuck, the ever-growing guilt conscience which eats him up gradually is his greatest concern. Even when he commits suicide, it is again an act of pity towards God whom he cannot cheat and beguile any more.

The question which the title poses to the reader is whether a sinner of the magnitude of Scobie should be punished for all the humane though irreligious deeds he does. What is the definition of sin and who has laid down this definition? Does a human being become a sinner because he flouts the religious code due to human compulsion? Doesn't the sinner and the saint meet in all human beings because man, after all, is not either good or bad but good and bad? Then, another query in Scobie's mind which nags him all the while is whether he should first think about God and then about His creatures. After the Original Fall has man lost the propensity to understand "the appalling strangeness of God's mercy" and therefore he tries to play God? In this bid to ameliorate sufferings of fellow humans, are Scobie's acts of commission and omission justified? Greene further wonders if sinning, at times, is a conscious and the only choice left for a human being.

These are the questions which justify the title of the novel. They give the reader a deeper on greater insight into the novelist's mind. Greene got converted to Catholicism for no sentimental or ideological reasons. His conversion was more in the nature of an expediency than anything theological. Therefore, conversion raised more questions in his mind rather than providing ready solutions. The title of the novel elaborates upon these vary notions of Greene. He endeavours to depict the gap between what is apparent and what is submerged reality. Looking at Greene's protagonist, Henry Scobie, he has turned corrupt and manipulative police officer, an adulterer in married life and a sinner from the religious perspective. There is hardly any wrong deed and evil which he has left uncommitted both on the eyes of God and men. He is a fallen man, a degraded and damned sinner with hardly any scope for redemption. However Greene does not give up his protagonist as an eternally condemned case.

Greene, besides being a sensitive novelist, was also a compassionate human being. He advocated not the case of evil but of evil doers who entered into the dark realms of sin under duress or under compulsion. *The Heart of the Matter* is his argument before the reader to probe and reconsider as to what lies behind what appears to be. The real motive behind all misdemeanours of Scobe is compassion and pity. He is an honest officer and a reasonably caring husband when we meet him in the beginning of the novel. However circumstances, mental pressures and environment conspire to turn him into a hopeless offender in the eyes of law and also in the eyes of God. His actions are never motivated by malice. He lives for others and suffers for them. Even more, he even dies for others (God). That is what Greene would like the reader to understand that despite all his abominable deeds, Scobie remains still a human being deserving God's grace. Father Rank rightly sums up '*The Heart of the Matter*' when he tells Louise after Scobie's death:

> "For goodness' sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you or I know a thing about God's mercy."

He further adds, "I church knows all the rules. But it doesn't know what goes on in a single human heart."

Even more caustically Father Rank comments:

> "And do you think God's likely to be more bitter than a woman?"

Greene seems to convey the message that human beings are more unforgiving than God. We have forgotten the virtue of forgiveness. So mired are we in our own intrigues and counter intrigues that we overlook the need of redemption and salvation for man. It would, therefore, be very callous on the part of man just to pass strictures and denounce others for their weak moments. Human beings are vulnerable and weak however much they may try to play God.

This is what lies at '*The Heart of the Matter*.' The title is Greene's sincere appeal for compassion and consideration towards a man who errs because it is human. The title is thus appropriate and justified. It takes the reader into deeper meanings of apparently simplistic solutions.

The Heart of the Matter – a psychological novel

Graham Greene is a post-War novelist whose works trace the dilemmas and confusion of the individual placed in chaotic and hopeless situations. The age in which he wrote was an age of turmoil and trouble. Man had little support left from the system and institutions –whether political or religious. Greene tried to suggest a direction to the dismayed humanity. He gave the idea of a liberalized form of Christianity to offer succour to man. However, this alternative had its own pangs and pressures. Major Henry Scobie desires an accommodative church and an understanding God. This brings to his mind many questions. Greene tries to provide answers to these psychological questions by analyzing the working of Scobie's mind and that of others.

Major Scobie is a Deputy Commissioner of Police in the West African colony of Sierra Leone who has a host of problems in his life. These are further hightened by the squalid and humid environment of the colony. His troubled universe consists of a grumbling wife, a dead daughter, corrupt natives and equally corrupt fellow officers. He is not satisfied with his Faith and has more questions than compliance to offer to God. Despite these troubles, he is a strange amalgamation of the sinner and the saint. This makes him psychologically a very complex character. He feels overwhelming pity for everything and everyone around and also thinks that he is personally responsible for "arranging happiness" for others.

Greene puts forth the case of a man who constantly indulges in sin and in self-examination. In his introspective mood he blames himself for his wife's unhappiness. That he was not by her side when their daughter, Catherine, died adds more to his self inflicted agony. He maintains a diary and jots down all the happenings in it. This diary unfolds before the reader the working of his mind. He is a good man corrupted by pity. Due to this feeling of pity and compassion for others he borrows money from a corrupt trader, Yusef, and keeps mum when Yusef arranges the murder of his servant, Ali. He also agrees to keep concealed the letter which the captain of a ship had written to his daughter. Further in the novel he feels pity for the 17 year old war widow, Helen Rolt who comes into his life to worsen his already compounded worries. Infact his suicide too is his ultimate act of pity to relieve everyone around him of the pain he has caused to them and to God.

Scobie is thus an interesting portrayal of a man possessed. He analyzes his action and feels repentant. But his ideology does not guide him towards a positive solution. Greene presents the case of a complex character and reveals to us the working of his mind. This process is unveiled through his frequent self-examination through his interior monologues and also through his direct speech. Scobie never intends to commit adultery, thereby causing pain to his wife and sacrilege to his faith. So the sin that he commits is a result of the virtue of compassion for others. Thus two contradictory strains run in his mind. He is virtuous as well as sinner simultaneously because of his own alternative answers which he offers to the troubles of his dear ones.

The series of introspective moods in which he indulges, helps the reader to unweave his mind and thoughts. Psychologically the novel is the study of his actions and their mental repercussions. After every passing critical event and the alligned introspection, we are allowed deeper perception into the recesses of his mind. He is an example of multiple personalities, all entwined and enmeshed in each other. His role of a husband stands contradicted to his indulgence in extra-marital affair. Again, his involvement with the corrupt trader Yusef and his forced communion with God despite being in a state of sinfulness are vividly expressed. His mental turmoil renders him incapable of performing any of these roles successfully. What makes him psychologically potent is that he is sinning out of pity and he suffers in order to alleviate the sufferings of others.

The only relation which can bring him out of his self-created quagmire is his affair with Helen Rolt. But then Helen is as much a derelict as he himself and the consolation she offers proves more disastrous than helpful. Thus the multiple roles of different kinds put varied compunctions and pressures on him. Greene has endeavoured to look into the working of Scobie's mind and to explain how he tries to sustain himself under conflicting

demands. The happier he tries to make Louise and Helen, the remoter he grows from the grace of God and also from his own integrity and uprightness. Greene also brings into focus the role of various institutions such as the church, the police force, the society at large in aggravating Scobie's psychological entanglements. Greene's adept handling of Scobie's character and also Scobie's reaction to the turpitude which surrounds him, goes to show that within the broad religious framework he can still focus on the mind and thoughts of the individual as an independent unit.

Greene's interest in probing the psychology of the sinner has its genesis in his humanitarian approach. Greene was not satisfied with just deciding the fate of his protagonists by compartmentalizing them into the categories of good or bad. He wanted to delve deep into the working of mind because therein lies *The Heart of the Matter*. Making assessments on the basis of apparent actions would be naïve and immature. Therefore Greene resorted to the method of psychological analysis. However his method of psychoanalysis is different from that done by Virginia Woolf . Whereas Woolf traces the thought pattern of her protagonist and tries to establish some symmetry in the relatively chaotic raw material called life. She follows the stream of thought of a character and then tries to derive some pattern or order. Greene too makes use of reveries, monologues, reflections and diary-writing as methods to define abstract ideas. But his emphasis is more on interpreting visible, external action. Scobie does a lot of thinking and evaluation but the reader understands him more with the help of the activities he indulges in. Here, Greene comes close to the psycho analysis done by D.H. Lawrence. In his novels, Lawrence too deals with the dilemma of modern man. But he too evaluates his characters on the basis of what they do and not only on the basis of what they think. This does not mean that the characters of both these novelists think one thing and do something else. It means that their actions help their creators to draw out their clear and vivid portrait with the help of their behaviour and their interaction with the world around.

Greene has diligently studied and described Henry Scobie as a character who suffers from various complexes. At times he appears as a megalomaniac who suffers from some kind of 'narcissism.' Under its influence he magnifies his potential and tries to "arrange happiness" for others. At times Scobie looks like a father-figure who tries to bear the responsibility of not just his own dead child and living wife but also of Helen, Wilson, Ali, the whole universe and even God. At times Scobie appears to be suffering from some kind of schizophrenia under the influence of which he is helpless at one moment and self-assuming at another moment. Not only Scobie but also the mindset of other characters has been keenly traced by Greene. Louise has a typical psychology of a whining, grumbling wife who pesters her husband into a situation and then awaits to watch his fall even deeper into the self-created quagmire. She nags and coaxes Scobie to arrange for her trip abroad and in the meanwhile has a brief romantic fling with the British spy, Wilson. Her attitude and mentality is rather queer. She wants everything from Scobie but denies him even some peace of mind. After she comes back from her trip, she pursues Scobie like a hunter to trap him in a tight comer.

Greene depicts the psyche of a conformist, a staunch believer, who makes use of faith and associated rituals to nab her own husband whom she believes to be beyond God's grace. Her thoughts are calculated, concocted and callous. However much Louise pretends to be a believer, she is, infact, a shrewd manipulator who uses everything to suit her ends. Greene also probes into the thinking of the innocent non-believer, Helen Rolt. She lives life as it comes and fails to understand Scobie's deep fidelity for his faith. To her religious talk is 'all hooey'. She jeers at Scobie's guilt complex regarding God. Thus Greene does not just look at the grim and tense side of human psychology but also presents the view point of someone young and childish.

Greene's interest in human beings and their precarious existence is deep and keen. He does emphasise questions related to faith, God and theology but he is equally concerned with the individual as a unit within himself. In *The Heart of the Matter* his protagonist indulges in deep introspection and is fully conscious of the results of his actions. Greene closely follows Scobie's thought pattern and adds it up with what goes on in the mind of those around him. All his actions whether of religious or secular nature – contribute to his portrayal as a complex character. Greene is perhaps one of the only novelists who takes into account the effect of geographical and

climatic factors on the psyche of his characters. As he describes Sierra Leone as a dirty, humid and corrupt region, the thinking of the people there has also become warped and negative. It makes Scobie indifferent, Louise weepy, Wilson morose and turns many others into whining complaining conspirators.

Greene has displayed his keen sense of analysis and understanding of characters and their minds in the present novel.

Short answer type questions:-

a. Thriller element in *The Heart of the Matter*

b. Use of symbols and images in the novel

c. Cinematographic technique used by Graham Greene

d. Charactersketch of Louise

e. Charactersketch of Wilson

f. Racial bias in *The Heart of the Matter*

g. Syrian characters in the novel

h. Beginning of the novel

i. Conclusion of the novel

Thriller element in *The Heart of the Matter*

Graham Greene presents an interesting story of a corrupted police officer and a 'fallen' man in his novel. Although the religious perspective looms large on the work but the presence of chase, hunt and thriller themes is equally predominant. Greene was a versatile writer with varied interests. He knew how to garb a theological tale into a crime and suspense thriller. This way he was able to sustain the interest of a variety of readers. The thriller element runs all through the novel. It starts with Scobie's desperate attempts at arranging money for his wife's trip abroad. It deepens with his association with Yusef and the latter's dubious background. The thriller element is kept up by the efforts of Wilson who tries to find out Scobie's secrets, the small negro boys who are on the pay roll of either Yusef or Tallit or someone else and also the actions of the ruling Britishers whose uneasiness in the foreign locale makes them behave rather oddly. The plot itself in rife with thrill and suspense as it involves a love triangle related to an otherwise 'just' police officer. Then, even 'God' here has been used as a potential character whose omnipresence seems to be threatening and haunting Scobie all the while. Thus the thriller element assumes great importance in the novel.

Use of symbols and images in the novel

The Heart of the Matter is a highly evocative and suggestive novel which combines religious, social, personal, literary and so many other themes. Greene has made use o a variety of symbols and images to convey this complexity of themes. Greene is famous for his use of seedy and sordid surroundings as locale for his novels. In the present novel also the humid and hostile environment has been brilliantly drawn by him. There are abundant symbols of dirt and decay. The pye-dogs, vultures and cockroaches pervade the scene with smell of liquor, narcotics and urine all around. The native blacks and the Syrians are equally symbolic in nature. They are corrupt and manipulative schemers. Equally symbolic are the main characters themselves – Scobie symbolizing the brooding, questioning believer, Louise symbolizing the complacent conformist and Helen Rolt indicating the view of an innocent non-believer. The image of raw and rotting flesh in recurrent in the novel. Louise lying under the mosquito net has been likened to 'a joint of white meat.' Similarly, the last cry of the dying Ali has been compared to the whimpering of a trapped animal. The novel is replete with symbols and images which are negative in nature. Greene claimed that he was not pre-occupied with only the 'Catholic' angle but that his concerns were largely humanitarian in nature. With the employment of devices such as symbols and images he has been able to concretize the abstractions and uncertainties which are normally associated with purely

theological works. The literary artist in him has deftly handled the 'religious' plot by balancing it with an artistic use of symbols and images of a rich variety.

Cinematographic Technique

Graham Greene was an avid traveller and alert journalist too. His novels have greatly benefited from his sojourns to far off lands such as Haiti, Congo, Cuba, Africa, etc. Greene gives graphic description of places and presents them like a newsreel. Nearly all his novels have been made into feature films. His racy, saucy style and engrossing plots alongwith the cinematographic technique that he employs has made him a popular novelist. The present novel also makes abundant use of cinematogrphic technique. Just as in a film so also in the novel, the happenings, characters and milieu has been vivified with great clarity, precision and immediacy. Things happen one after another and the required pace is maintained. Also, the presentation of internal emotion and external locale is mutually complimentary. The dirt, squalor and corruption of the lives of the denizens of Sierra Leone is graphically brought to the reader's mind. So clear is Greene's understanding of human actions and so appropriate is his knowledge of the West African colony that he successfully evokes a powerful word-picture. Greene was much influenced by the medium of cinema and felt that it could be utilized elaborately to convey his views. By using cinematographic technique he has made possible a complete & clear evocation of the locale of Sierra Leone, the characters living a life of dissatisfaction and dejection and also expressed the story in an engrossing and involving manner.

Charactersketch of Louise

Louise is the wife of Henery Scobie. She is symbolic of many things and is quite opposed to Scobie in dealings of everyday life. Louise is ambitious, status-conscious and literary in her tastes and has conformist views about religion. She feels even more humiliated than Scobie himself after he has been passed over for promotion and she prefers to leave. She has a brief fling of affair with Wilson who finds her attractive and interesting. As far as her married life is concerned, she realizes the vacuum and sterility that has crept in between them, specially after they lost their only child long ago. On her return from her trip abroad, she pesters Scobie to accompany her to Church as she has got come hint about his extra-marital relationship. Shie would like to nail him down if he refused to accompany her for she believes that Scobie would never attend the mass in state of sin. Thus her attitude is that of a sadist though she appears to be rather meek and harmless. Louise symbolizes the attitude of a typical believer who is contended with adhering to the religious code and has only conformity and obedience to offer to God. Father Rank rebuts her argument when she discusses Scobie's suicide with him and tells her:-

> "The church knows all the rules but it does not know what goes on in a single human heart"

These lines fully charcterise Louise. She is a believer but she lacks basic human compassion. However she remains an important character.

Character sketch of Wilson

Wilson is relatively a minor character in the novel and embodies many negative aspects of the British Colonisers living in West Africa. He is on spying duty but gets emotionally involved in Scobie's personal life. Wilson is basically a weak man who cries openly before Scobie. He admits to Scobie that he loves his wife, Louise. He also displays overt admiration for Louise and shares her taste for books.

Wilson pretends to be endowed with chaste British accent but resorts to his own dialect quickly. He finds no interest in Sierra Leone. Even a visit to a brothel does not move him. He is apathetic, indifferent and very edgy. Wilson has an instinctive dislike for Scobie and watches him with suspicious eyes. He holds Scobie responsible for sending away Louise when his (Wilson's) love affair with her was about to blossom. He also keeps a shrewd eye on Scobie when he goes to meet Helen Rolt in a clandestine manner in one of the huts. Since Wilson has nothing better to do, he plays a game of cockroach-killing with Harris and thus whiles away his time. Greene has portrayed Wilson as an ambiguous character who personifies more evil than good. But then

he has also been depicted as fairly human who has no pretensions or self assured complacency as Scobie displays. Wilson is thus an interesting character.

Racial bias

Greene's novel is largely about a just and upright British police officer whose downfall is brought about not due to any vice but because of excessive goodness of disposition. Henry Scobie, like his many other English counterparts, has been portrayed in very positive lights by Greene. The Britishers are all responsible, dutiful and reasonable, carrying 'the white man's burden' in that humid and dreary colony of Sierra Leone. They are good at heart but circumstances, environment and the corrupt residents around them force them into intrigue and manipulation. On the other hand, the Asians, the native Blacks and the Syrians have been portrayed as dirty, ugly, superstitious and backward. The Asians (Gunga Din) make money by palm-gazing, the Blacks are either pimps or smugglers and the Syrians are confirmed manipulators. There is a continual series of intrigues and counter-intrigues going on between Yusef and Tallit. They are involved in narcotics, diamond smuggling, murder, ranson and everything illegal.

Thus Greene appears to be rather partial and biased in his handling of non-Britishers. Orwell calls it Greene's 'myopic vision' which made him incapable of deeper and incisive insight into characters of other races. That Scobie lives and dies a sinner has been conveniently brushed aside by condoning remarks of Father Rank at the end of the novel whereas all other local counterparts languish in Greene's criticism and censorious description. This goes to Greene's discredit as an artist.

Syrian Characters in the novel

There are two important Syrians in the novel—Yusef and Tallit. Greene portrays both of them as cunning, conspiratorial and unreliable. Yusef, however, has a friendly exterior and is very congenial towards Scobie. He wants to befriend 'Scobie the Just' and there comes a stage in the novel when Yusef is Scobie's only confidant. Yusef is involved in all sorts of illegal trade and clandestine activities which take place in Sierra Leone. He cleverly cheats Scobie in the parrot episode and sneaks away with the diamonds. Tallit is equally shrewd and mean. He is always ready to counter any move made by Yusef. Thus the Syrians are businessmen but their means are most dubious and questionable. The Syrians also indulge in murder and ransom business. They are a part of the gamut of negative racial characters portrayed by Greene. However Yusuf displays a lot of warmth and congeniality towards Scobie. He helps Scobie with money, resources and by all possible means. Yusef leads a luxurious life and extends great hospitality to Scobie too. He is a typical example of an oriental character just as Tallit, on whom Greene, as an Englishman, places little trust.

Beginning of the Novel

The beginning of *The Heart of the Matter* is very symbolic and expressive in nature. The reader is introduced to the sordid and seedy environment of Sierra Leone. The heat is oppressive and the humidity creates suffocation. Greene also introduces his protagonist, Henry Scobie, the Deputy Commissioner of Police in this British colony. His mental strain and despair are compounded by the squalor and dirt which surrounds the whole area. Scobie reflects on the bleak chances of securing a promotion. He also regrets that his failure to manoeuvre this promotion for himself would further disappoint his wife, Louise. Wilson, the other Britisher, who acts as a spy is also presented before the reader. He appears quite mean, shallow and corrupt. Thus Greene lays down the broad outline of the story and the milieu of his novel. The picture of Sierra Leone is vivid and clear in detail like a newsreel. It prepares the reader for the seediness inherent in the hearts of the denizens of that area. The sad and sombre note on which the novel begins indicates that the story would deal with a grim and tense plot which shall be gradually unfolded within the "Greenland."

Conclusion of the Novel

The ending of the novel is as symbolic as its beginning. Scobie commits suicide by feigning illness and thus incurs God's profound wrath. He has damned himself eternally and is now beyond God's grace. This is the

chief concern of his wife, Louise, who mournfully regrets his ultimate sin of committing suicide. However, Greene brings in the theological viewpoint by referring to the remarks of Father Rank. The priest tells Louise that though it would appear contradictory, still he felt that Scobie "really loved God." The statement of the priest is brought in at the end not to force the reader to transform his judgment regarding Scobie, but to present the doctrines of the church as flexible enough to accommodate the redemptive possibility given to a sinner. The novel has been developed on the idea of a series of evil actions in which Scobie partakes. He is no less corrupt and sinful than his British and Syrian counterparts. He has deceived even God by going to church in a state of sin. Still the priest absolves him of these charges. This conclusion goes out to declare that actions of humanity are but poor, insignificant things. It is the relationship between man and God that is really important. Scobie does seem to have that special relation with God and is forgiven by Him because of the "appalling nature of the mercy of God." However, the ultimate fate of his soul has been left open.

List of important essay type questions on *The Heart of the Matter*:

1. Graham Greene's concept of sin, salvation, redemption, damnation and the need of God's mercy.

   Or

   The Heart of the Matter as a religious novel.

   Or

   The Heart of the Matter as a Catholic document.

2. Greene's evocation of scene and the importance of setting in his work.

   Or

   The contours of 'Greeneland' and its special seedy appeal.

3. Scobie's tragic flaw is his acute sense of pity and responsibility- Elaborate

   Or

   Scobie's Charactersketch

   Or

   Scobie as an anti-Hero

   Or

   What do you feel is Scobie's ultimate fate?

4. Graham Greene's technical excellence as a master craftsman of cinematographic technique

   Or

   Features of Greene's style of writing

5. The title of the novel.
6. The Heart of the Matter – a psychological novel:

Bibliography of Graham Greene's Works

(A) Novels and Entertainments :

The Man Within. 1929

Stamboul Train. 1932

It's a Battlefield. 1934

England Made Me. 1935

A Gun For Sale. 1936

Brighton Rock. 1938

The Power and the Glory. 1943

The Ministry of Fear. 1943

The Hear of the Matter. 1948

The End of the Affair. 1955

The Quiet American. 1955

Our Man in Havana. 1958

A Burnt-Out Case. 1961

The Comedians. 1966

The Honorary Consul. 1973

Monsignor Quixote. 1982

The Captain and the Enemy. 1988

(B) Short Stories :

The Living Room. 1953

Twenty One Stories. 1954

(C) Plays :

The Living Room. 1953

The Potting Shed. 1958

(D) Autobiographies:

A Sort of Life. 1971

Ways of Escape. 1980

(E) Travelogues:

Journey Without Maps. 1936

The Lawless Roads. 1939

In Search of a Character : Two African Journals. 1961

(F) Miscellaneous :

Why Do I Write? 1948

The Lost Childhood. 1952

J'Accuse - The Dark Side of Nice. 1982

Getting to Know the General. 1985

Suggested Readings:

1. A.S. Collins : *Literature of the Twentieth Century.*
2. B.P. Lamba : *Graham Greene : His Mind and Art*
3. David Lodge : *The Novelist at the Crossroads.*
4. David Pryce-Jones : *Graham Greene : Writers and Critics*
5. Frederick R. Karl : *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary English Novel*
6. Graham Martin : "Novelists of the Three Decades: Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, C.P. Snow." *The Pelican Guide to*

English Literature 7: The Modern Age. Ed. Boris Ford.

7. J.P. Kulshrestha : *Graham Greene*
8. John Atkins : *Graham Greeene*
9. Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris : *The Art of Graham Greene*
10. Keshava Prasad : *Graham Greene the Novelist*
11. Marie-Beatrice Mesnet : Graham Greene and *The Heart of The Matter.*
12. Paul O'Prey : *A Reader's Guide to Graham Greene.*
13. R.W.B. Lewis : *The Picaresque Saint*
14. S.K. Sharma : *Graham Greene : The Search for Belief*
15. Valentine Cunningham : *British Writers of the Thirties*

HAROLD PINTER

The Birthday Party

Unit-III
Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party

Harold Pinter: The New Drama

Harold Pinter is a contemporary of John Osborne. The fact is important since both the playwrights are products of the post-war period in England. The other contemporary writers of Europe may have shared some of the early mid twentieth century experiences with them, but I highlight their contemporariness for the fact that both the playwrights are British: and the location of their plays mostly England. Both belonged to a generation which attempted to revolt against the establishment, refused to conform to the accepted prevalent norms, and decorum considered civilized by upholding those who were failures since the environment was unsuited to them. The similarity in the two playwrights ends here. Their reactions may have been the same but their mode of expressing them was very different indeed. Osborne's characters are angry and abusive, those of Pinter recluses, who shun fighting and recede into whatever refuge they find. Jimmy Porter and Stanley Webber are the most representative characters of the two authors' in this sense.

John Osborne is an iconoclast, who destroys but fails to construct. Harold Pinter only observes, he denounces but does not moralize. The lack of commitment on the part of Harold Pinter, to specify the meaning of his plays and to deliver an indictment makes his work very different from the other contemporary writers. He does not make a formal statement of his belief in one thing or the other, prosecution is not his job, nor is it his vocation to solve the mysteries of life, he avoids delving into the metaphysical as well as jumping into the fray.

When 'The Birthday Party,' appeared in 1958, it was met with bewilderment; the hostility in the audience as well as the critics was largely because it lacked analysis and proof. In the technological age of logic and polemics, it was treason to offer no explicable reason for whatever happens and expect the reader/ audience to be satisfied with only what is implied. Michael Scott, makes an enlightening remark on Pinter's place in the contemporary Drama in his introduction to the Macmillan case Book Studies.

"It was precisely this vagueness to which literary London in 1958 took exception." A twin phenomenon of revolt against the dramatic conventions of writers such as Noel Coward and Terence Rattingan had been accepted. John Osborne, with ' Look Back In Anger' (1956) and Samuel Beckett with ' Waiting For Godot' (Produced in London in 1955) had drawn the boundaries of the new theatre and new dramatists were expected- by the critics at least- to be followers of one of the two styles. It was clear that Pinter's work was not in the vein of Osborne. His language was far too epileptic for that school and his plots far too obscure. He seemed, comparatively closer to Beckett and Eugene Ionesco, on the surface at least, and was hurriedly adjudged the English exponent of Martin Esslin's term ' the theatre of the absurd'. The differences between Beckett and Pinter, with whom he was readily compared came to the surface, when critics made observations about their subjects, Beckett's metaphysical concerns, involved with the dilemma of man's existence had no echo in the work of Pinter. Pinter's vision centred largely on man without reference to the spiritual mode.

The second most commonly accepted comparison was with Ionesco, Michael Scott reasons this comparison out as follows: " Menace, fear, the clutter of daily living, the concentration on trivial possessions, the focus on the banality of language were elements which seemed to form a common denominator between these two dramatists."

Ionesco's glory was short-lived and the absurdist movement was at a decline. Tynan, one of the best-known critics of drama at that time described Ionesco's theatre as "a dead end Art form, an interesting experiment but a cul-de-sac" in the progress of contemporary drama. He contended that Ionesco's drama was not the main road and that though he had offered an 'escape from realism', he had ushered us into a blind alley. ' Mr. Ionesco's theatre is pungent and exciting', Kenneth Tynan said, ' but remained a diversion'.

Ionesco defended himself, and the debate between the two, which came to be known as ' the London controversy', continued for many weeks.

Pinter continued to be clubbed with Ionesco, Beckett and Janet though some critics like Ruby Kohn and Richard Schechner had expressed serious concern about linking Pinter too closely with them in the nineteen sixties itself when Pinter had not yet even established his reputation as a playwright. The strict traditions of English literary criticism had no ' term' to negotiate a perfect placement for Pinter. Much of Pinter's early criticism, is, therefore, wanting, for lack of a traditional label to denote to Pinter: his stories are told; his characters described an effort made to reach the meaning and the moral but the keynote of Pinter remains unlocked. Pinter has himself in his essays, letters and Public addresses tried to present his viewpoint about his dramatic art, which is very different way from that of Beckett or Osborne.

For an acceptable and appropriate appraisal of Pinter as a playwright it is mandatory that Pinter's own view of his work as well as that of those who have read or watched his plays be taken into account. Nothing can substantiate or affirm, the author's views more than what he himself has said about the same. In a speech that Pinter made at the National Student drama Festival in Bristol in 1962, he made some very categorical statements. It would be worthwhile to know how he addressed the issue. The following extracts from the speech should be understood in the context of the two of his plays that had been produced so far, though relevant to all his later work also, but of particular relevance to "The Care-taker" and " The Birthday Party".

" I'm not a theorist. I'm not an authoritative or reliable commentator on the dramatic scene, the social scene, any scene, I write plays when I can manage it, and that's all. ……There are at least twenty-four possible aspects of any single statement…a categorical statement; I find will never stay where it is and be finite. It will be immediately subject to modification by the other twenty- three possibilities of it. No statement that I make, therefore, should be interpreted as final and definitive." and " We will all interpret a common experience quite differently, though we prefer to subscribe to the view that there is a shared common ground…. There is a shared common ground alright, but it's more like a quicksand."

That the reality is not permanent or unequivocal does not unsettle Pinter, it is to him no worse or better for that. As the reality is ever shifting, it is difficult to have a grip over it, hence the impossibility of the final resolution. This is what Pinter has to say.

" A play is not an essay, nor should the playwright under any exhortation damage the consistency of his characters by injecting a remedy or apology for their actions into the last act, simply because we have been brought up to expect, rain or sunshine, the last act resolution. To supply an explicit moral tag to an evolving and compulsive dramatic image seems to be facile, impertinent and dishonest, where this takes place it is not theatre but a crossword puzzle. The audience the paper. The play fills in the blanks. Everyone's happy.

According to Pinter himself; therefore, we should not only not look for a moral but should not await an ending, happy or otherwise in Pinter's plays.

Pinter does not mean to 'tell' his audience anything. He just wants them to share an experience with the characters in the play. Pinter does not believe in the writer's engagement with either morals or resolutions. He is agitated by what is expected of a playwright by the playgoer.

"They want a playwright to be a prophet. There is certainly a good deal of prophecy indulged in by play-wrights these days, in their plays and out of them, warnings, sermons, admonitions, ideological exhortations, moral judgements, defined problems with built-in solutions; all can camp under the banner of prophecy. The attitude behind this sort of thing may be summed up in the phrase, " I'm telling you." The playwright instead of glibly stressing our empty preferences should hold up life as we live it. Pinter warns us of reposing our faith in writers who in the pursuit of establishing their worthiness are lost in the weight of their own words.

"What is presented, so much of the time, as a body of active and positive thought is in fact a body lost in the prism of empty definition and cliché"…

This kind of writer clearly trusts words absolutely. I have mixed feelings about words myself…such a weight of words written by me and by others, the bulk of it a stale dead terminology, ideas endlessly repeatedly and permutated become platitudinous, trite, meaningless."

About his characters that people found ambiguous, Pinter advises them to look for clues not only in the language they spoke but also in what they didn't say. It was not necessary for the characters to divulge every detail of their past or present. To Pinter much about the characters existed beyond the periphery of their mundane, biographical details.

"Language under these conditions is a highly ambiguous business. So often, below the word spoken, is the thing known and unknown. My character tell me so much and no more; with reference to their experience, their aspirations, their motives, their history. Between my lack of biographical data about them and their ambiguity…. lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration, but which is compulsory to explore…. A language, I repeat, where under what is said, another thing is being said."

The characters have according to Pinter, a momentum of their own, he would neither like to raise this, nor assign to them words which they could not speak on their own. He, as a writer would not like to impose himself on them, he would not like to impinge on their liberty, either by fixing them into calculated postures or by restricting what he calls their" elbowroom". But, Pinter does keep a strict vigil on them, lest they grow uncontrolled or anarchic. As, a writer he claims" I pay meticulous attention to the shape of things, from the shape of a sentence to the overall structure of the play". Pinter strikes a balance between listening to his characters and keeping a close watch on them where the characters are silent or in hiding. " It is in the silence; Pinter says about his characters " that they are most evident to me".

To the oft repeated that his characters fail to communicate, PInter reacts sharply. The silence of his characters has often been assailed for its evasiveness, but silence is, according to Pinter, more expressive than the words spoken.

'I think that we communicate only too well in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continued evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility".

Even when a torrent of language is being employed in a speech, it, argues Pinter, hides what is not spoken lying locked beneath it. The suggestiveness of the silence is sometimes more keenly felt than the spoken word; Pinter's precision in words to describe what words and silence mean to him is indicative of how deeply he felt the communicative ability of both.

"There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it… The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen that keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with an echo but are nearer nakedness. One way of looking at speech is to say that it is a constant stratagem to cover nakedness."

Important Events

Harold Pinter was born on 10th October 1930 at 19 Thistle ware Road in Hackney, North London. The name of his father was Jack, that of his mother Frances.

His first experience of war was, when in 1939 during the Second World War, he was evacuated to Caerhays, near Mevagissey, Cornwall.

His early days at Hackney Downs Grammar School are important for two reasons, one that he met an English teacher by the name of Joe Brearley, secondly that he played Mac Beth in an amateur school production which was reviewed in the News chronicle. This happened between the years 1944-1947, a most impressionable age for Pinter. He later joined the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in the autumn of 1948.

Two things emerge clearly from his early life, one that he was deeply interested in English as a language and drama as an art, the second that he had the power to resist. When Pinter was called up for National Service, he not only refused to enlist but also registered himself as a conscientious objector. This happened in the October of 1948. he was, consequently in 1949, not only produced before the military tribunal but also arrested and fined twice.

Subsequently he left the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and devoted himself entirely to reading and writing. His career picked up with small roles on B.B.C Radio. In 1950, Pinter not only gave his first Professional performance in " Focus on Football Pools" but also published two of his poems in the August number of "Poetry" London.

Harold Pinter was for sometime fully pre-occupied with learning the art of speech. He attended two terms at the " Central School of speech and Drama from January to July 1951.

It was at this time that Pinter got the break that he needed in his career. He was engaged by Anew McMaster to play Shakespeare and other classical drama in Ireland for six months. Pinter remained busy, at this time, acting, writing and reading, making his foothold stronger in the Literary and Dramatic world. He embarked on his first novel "Dwarf", switching dramatic companies at the same time. He changed his stage name to David Baron and married Vivien Merchant with whom he had acted in Bournemouth. This was on 14th September in 1956. From 1957, when Pinter's ' The Room' was produced at Bristol University Drama Department, there was no looking back for him. Ever since this production, Pinter has been played, not only all over Europe but in the United States and Russia also. Pinter has not only acted but also directed and produced his own as well as plays written by other's as well. Films based on his plays have been produced and he has been closely associated with production and acting on B.B.C, Radio as well as Television. Looking by it his versatility is astounding

Works by Harold Pinter

Since the entire collection of Pinter's works including his Radio, T.V and Stage Plays is available in the four Play Collections published by Faber and Faber, a list of their publications would suffice to cover his works. The only play, which is not included, is "Celebrations" of the year 2002. His poetry and prose have been included in the publications.

Celebration and The Room (London: Faber & Faber, 2000)
Collected Screenplays1 (London: Faber & Faber, 2000)
Collected Screenplays2 (London: Faber & Faber, 2001)
Collected Screenplays3 (London: Faber & Faber, 2001)
The Dwarfs (London: Faber & Faber, 1990)

Plays One: The Birthday Party, The Room, The Dumb Waiter, A slight Head Ache, The Hothouse, A Night Out, The Black And White (short story), The Examination (London: Faber & Faber, 1991)

Plays Two: The Caretaker, The Dwarfs, The Collection, The Lover, Night School, Trouble in the Works, The Black and White, Request Stop, Last To Go, Special Offer (London: Faber & Faber, 1996)

Plays Three: The Homecoming, Tea Party, The Basement, Landscape, Silence Night, That's your Trouble, That's All, Applicant, Interview, Dialogue for Three, Tea Party (short story), Old Times, No Man's Land (London: Faber & Faber, 1997)

Plays Four: Betrayal, Monologue, One For The Road, Mountain Language, Family Voices, A kind of Alaska, Victoria Station, Precisely, The New World Order, Party Time, Moonlight, Ashes to Ashes (London: Faber & Faber, 1998)

Poems and Prose, 1949-1977 (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978).

The Proust Screenplay (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978).

The Trial (London: Faber & Faber, 1993)

Various Voices: Poetry, Prose and Politics 1948-1998(London: Faber & Faber, 1998)

The Theme of Pinter's Early Plays

" The Caretaker" gave Pinter the breakthrough he needed in his career. With this play, Pinter started receiving the serious attention due to a playwright of his stature. Pinter was able to present his theme in a more discriminating manner and style. Batty finds a common theme running through all his plays. He says; " the Caretaker" was a refinement of the kinds of thematic concerns that had driven much of Pinter's writing to date. It offered a precise examination of the human impulse to dominate, to define areas of territory and the ability of an intruding figure to intercede in such things."

All Pinter's early work, his plays " The Birthday Party", "The Room" and " The Dumb Waiter", as well as his prose works, " Kullus" and "The Examination" are all different manifestations of his obsession with the violating presence and an intruding force. Significantly in all these works, space and environment are the marks of identity. " The Birthday Party" like all Pinter's early plays is hinged upon this simple premise, involving negotiations for supremacy between occupants and invaders of territory. Goldberg and McCann are intruders on Meg's and Petey's territory since they have come to deprive them of Stanley, they are, also, intruders upon Stanley, since they have come to deprive him of his refuge.

Manipulation of space and violation of territory is characteristic of the struggle between the individual and society. The formidable forces of society to aggressively gain the private territory of the individual's isolation, he is permitted neither to shun nor to renounce the society.

Reception

When ' The Birthday Party' appeared in 1958, it met almost unanimous critical hostility. The reviewers were bewildered by the play when it was first shown in London. " What all this means only Mr. Pinter knows"(Manchester Guardian Review, 29/5/1958). Most of the veteran critics including Kenneth Tynan discussed the play. Tynan described it as a clever fragment grown dropsical with symbolic content, a piece…. full of those paranoid overtures that seem inseparable from much of the avant-garde drama. This observation was made in The Observer of 5/6/1960. Writing of Pinter, two years later, Tynan, however agreed that he had failed to recognize the quality and promise of Pinter's ' The Birthday Party'.

Harold Hobson was the only one to run against the stream of adverse criticism; he recognized the dramatic force of Pinter, proclaiming, " Mr. Pinter, on the evidence of his work, possesses the most original, disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London".

Herber saw in the vagueness and unconformity of Pinter's plots, a quality which lent them a uniqueness. Pinter's success and charm lay in what people had dismissed as ambiguous. " One of the greatest merits of the play is the fact that no one can say what precisely it is about or give the address from which the intruding

Goldberg and McCann come, or say precisely why it is that Stanley is so frightened, concluding that it is exactly in the vagueness that it's spine chilling quality lies".

Support and praise came from other quarters too. Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler who have been closely associated with Pinter as directors in the production of his play remember their first reaction to Pinter." Michael Godron sent me' The Birthday Party' when it was first going to be done. I didn't know who Harold Pinter was but I liked the play immensely.

Peter Raby, traces the changes in the public's as well as the critic's response to Pinter. Starting with the response of the academia, Raby says," If Pinter was embraced warmly and relatively early by the academia, he has been treated a little more erratically by theatric critics. The Birthday Party foxed them in 1950s with the striking exception of Harold Hobson, who had the benefit of seeing 'The Room' in Bristol. The Birthday Party was a new kind of theatrical writing, posing challenges for the director, actors and the audience. Though audiences at Cambridge and Oxford, uninfluenced by any critical lead, responded positively. Over the years the reviewers response has adjusted, both to early Pinter and to Successive shifts and developments in his work.

'The Caretaker', recalls Batty received later in 1960s a much better reception. It was described as a riveting, uncompromising piece and heralded as a kind of masterpiece. He attributes the negative response earlier to The Birthday Party to the bewilderment with which it was universally greeted. The bewilderment was caused, partly, by its allegorical structure and enigmatic qualities. He records that The Birthday Party, Pinter's first significant inroad into the theatres of the London West ends, received a particular critical backing and was snubbed as a' random dottiness'.

Summary and Critical comments

Act I

The play opens in the living room of a house, in a seaside town. The room is almost bare, sporting the least pretentious of looks. The room, which we see, has a table and chairs and is connected to the kitchen. There is a hatch in the Kitchen, which is used by Meg, the lady of the house not only to pass the things on but also to carry on the conversation. Two characters are introduced in the first scene, Petey the husband and Meg the wife. It is through the hatch that she talks to Petey when he enters the room and sits on the chair to read the paper that he has brought with him. The opening conversation between Meg and Petey about cornflakes, fried bread and the news in the paper follows a line of resolute banality between two people buried in unalterable routine. Having packed their minds, lest they give trouble, they are an amicable couple. The contrast between the dreadful food they eat and the solicitude with which it is served provides a kindly sort of comedy. Meg's questions like. 'Are you back?' and 'You got your paper?' show her willingness to talk. She has seen Petey come, she has seen him reading the paper, yet she poses these questions, knowing that they are not expected to be answered; the conversation is as much a part of routine as the cornflakes and bread. Petey's replies to Meg are usually to affirm and are a 'yes'; the cornflakes is nice; outside is nice. Meg's question whether Stanley was up is also irrelevant as she knows that Petey could not have seen him, since, he had just come: Meg wants to solicit Petey's attention, she wants him to praise the breakfast she has served and does not in turn hesitate in praising him for having read some nice bits from the paper the day before.

That she is more ignorant than Petey is clear from her surprise when Petey tells her that 'it gets light later in winter'; and she simply says, oh!

Her picking up of the socks to darn them further establishes the simplicity of the household we have entered as also with the simple chores of the couple. The opening scene illustrates some of the strategies employed by Pinter to establish the atmosphere he wishes to create. John Russell Brown ascribes it's success to the use of language and silence used by Pinter.

“ The play starts with silence and the twice repeated question of Meg, who is far behind the stage is answered by Petey only in line 6”

Meg’s first three questions seem at first to repeat the same inquiry, but the slight changes of tone progressively reveal what lies hidden under the simple questions. Meg’s questions, statements and action all establish that she wishes to make Petey acknowledge her presence and his dependence.

Meg’s questions and statements reveal two things, her desire to continue the conversation and her desire for gratification. Meg’s curiosity about the name of the girl who has had a baby, her childish concern at her having a baby girl is amplified by her wishful; desire to have a little boy. Her conversation throughout helps to make her a genial comic figure. Meg and Petey have in the meantime spoken of Stanley, who it is established is somebody living with them and whom Meg is concerned about. Nigel Alexander’s observations about their domesticity are worth consideration.

“The opening sequence opens a gap between the aspirations of the characters and their behaviour that is maintained in increasingly painful fashion until the end of the play…. What it establishes is a domestic routine of almost killing boredom yet Meg’s enquiries about the cornflakes and her interest in the girl baby that the newspaper announces has been born to Lady Mary Splatt indicate great expectations that have somehow withstood the withering of age and the staling of custom. One of the reasons that she sounds like a silly old woman is that her vocabulary is still that of a bride enjoying providing breakfast for her husband and looking forward to the baby that she hopes will be a boy. Her unquenchable folly and Petey’s resigned acceptance of her good intentions have a quality of heroism, which survives even the laughter of the audience.

Petey mentions that two men had approached him on the beach, the previous night to ask whether they could be put up at their house for two days. To Meg’s question as to what he had told them, Petey’s simple answer is that he had said nothing and that they will be coming again to find out. The repetition of questions and their very short answers should be taken note of to understand how Pinter is trying to manipulate language to his purpose. Meg’s anxiety and avid desire for social approval are fully brought out in the conversation that follows:

Meg: Are they coming?

Petey: Well, they said they would

Meg: Had they heard about us, Petey?

Petey: They must have done.

Meg: Yes, they must have done. They must have heard this was a very good boarding house. It is. This house is on the list.

Whether or not, it is on the list, the desire of Meg for it to be so is manifest here. So is her fantasy of being a successful entrepreneur as a boarding house owner. It sounds all the more ironical when; we learn later that Stanley Webber is the only guest who is staying there.

‘The house is on the list’ has other connotations as well. Had the house been marked for something, nothing is, though, specified; the words ring a deep meaning later in the play.

Meg is ready to receive the visitors, she had got the room ready for the visitors” she says, which also, is unexpected since the Boarding house had never had any guests before and Meg had no inkling of them either. Her readiness for Goldberg and McCann also points to the house being destined for what comes later. Meg than says, that she was going to wake Stanley up- her words for him “ that boy” are indicative of what she feels for him. When Petey says that there was a show coming to the town, her immediate thoughts go to Stanley. Stanley could have been in it, if it was on the pier” is her reaction. Meg’s ignorance comes to light in her casual remarks in the course of her conversation, when Petey tells her that Stanley could have played no role in it, since it was a straight show where there is going to be no dancing or singing, she is completely bewildered. What kind of a show one could have without singing or dancing?

Meg had liked to hear Stanley play the Piano. Reminded of Stanley she makes up her mind to call him down. Petey's questions whether she had taken him a cup of tea and whether he had drunk it indicates that taking tea to Stanley and making him drink it, is almost a daily ritual for Meg.

Almost as common is the ritual of waking him up. The manner in which she calls him and the way she warns him are enough to establish that there is a deeper affection in Meg for Stanley than a landlady usually would have.

Petey. Did he drink it?

Meg: I made him. I stood there till he did. I am going to call him. Stan! Stanny! Stan! I'm coming up to fetch you if you don't come down! I'm coming up! I'm going to count three! One! Two! Three! I'm coming to get you.

When Meg ultimately reaches Stanley's room, she makes no allowance for any formalities. Shouts from Stanley and the wild laughter from Meg inform us that Meg would not hesitate in handling him physically. (She is panting and arranges her hair, when she gets back).

Petey is a quiet man who would not reproach his wife under any circumstances; he wishes Stanley a good morning, retaining his composure through out the conversation that follows. That Stanley is not the successful, disciplined and well-dressed run of the mill man is obvious the moment we see him. He is unshaven, in his pyjama jacket and wears glasses. It becomes increasingly difficult to judge, what Meg's feelings for Stanley are. She chides him for every small thing; he shows his impudence by answering her negatively all the time.

Meg: So he has come down at last, has he? He's come down at last for his breakfast. But he doesn't deserve any, does he Petey? Did you sleep well?

Stanley: I didn't sleep at all.

Meg: You did not sleep at all? Did you hear that Petey? Too tired to eat your breakfast, I suppose? Now you eat up those cornflakes like a good boy. Go on.

Meg admonishes him as if he were a kid, Stanley teases her as if she were a friend.

Meg: What are the cornflakes like, Stan?

Stanley: Horrible.

Meg is revolted. Petey had praised the same flakes just a while ago and even the advertisement said that they were refreshing.

When Stanley suggests that he go to the second course, Meg immediately reacts. It should be noted that when Meg disapproves of Stanley, she always refers to him in the third person, as 'he' even while she is talking to him.

The dialogue between Stanley and Meg has a very subtle humour, giving the play a quality, which grips you in spite of the fact that the situation as well as the characters are most average and unexciting.

Stanley: No breakfast. All night long I have been dreaming about this breakfast.

Meg: I thought you said you didn't sleep.

Stanley: Day dreaming. All night long.

He warns Meg that he would go down to one of those smart hotels on the front, for breakfast to which she immediately reacts by saying that he wouldn't get a better breakfast there.

Petey is non-committal in his opinion, be it food, weather or people. When Stanley asks him what was the weather like, he simply says that there was a good breeze blowing, refusing to call it either cold or warm. He speaks for Stanley when Meg refuses to give him breakfast and goes back to work, without having tea, without

a word of complaint. It is Stanley who complains about the sour milk, and blames Meg for sending Petey away without a cup of tea.

The conversation Between Stanley and Meg is good natured and warm: the retorts and accusations arte witty and are never vitriolic or ill intentioned.

The scene where Stanley and Meg are alone, unveils only a part of their relationship, much remains hidden. Nigel Alexander sums up what to him could be only explained as a mixture of natural concern and Meg's sexual consciousness of him as a man.

"What is unusual is the use of this comedy to provide information which allows an audience to predict the relationship between Meg and Stanley before he appears even on the stage. The compound of maternal sexuality in which her frustrations find expression is clearly, dangerously unstable and liable to cause an explosion. Stanley's frenzied outburst has been predicted although its form will be unexpected".

Stanley continues to slam Meg, She was a bad wife, it was disgraceful of her to give Petey sour milk and she didn't keep her place clean etc. He even taunts her about the boarding house she claims is so well known.

Stanley: Visitors! Do you know how many visitors you have had since I have been here?

Meg: How Many?

Stanley: One.

Meg: Who?

Stanley: Me! I'm your visitor.

The last sentence of the conversation spoken by Meg is important for her repetition of the house being 'on the list.' She reiterates the fact, which seems to have no meaning as such, but deeper implications can be derived from it in view of the later happenings.

Meg's attempts to draw Stanley's attention to her, to make him conscious of her as a woman are not laboured. They come naturally to her. When she objects to Stanley using the word" succulent" for the bread, she is trying at the same time to suggest her own physical properties as well as convey that she was beyond his reach. She was a married woman and Stanley had to be discreet in his use of words; yet her remark " you're 'bad' sound more amorous and suggestive.

The game of words in the lines that follow reveal closeness more clandestine than has been shown so far. Meg ruffles Stanley's hair as she passes, while Stanley throws her arm away. And yet Stanley immediately after snubbing her, Stanley utters these words, admitting his dependence on Meg. " I don't know what I'd do without you Meg. You don't deserve it though." later followed by, "Get out of it. You succulent old washing bag."

Meg: I'm not! And it isn't your place to tell me if I am!

Stanley: And it isn't your place to come into a man's bedroom and – wake him up.

The lines above suggest the manner in which, Stanley is being woken up by Meg. Meg's desire to be praised is not restricted to her housekeeping and cooking only. She would like to be wooed and pursued as a woman. She wants Stanley to tell her, more explicitly that he enjoyed his cup of tea, which she brought him in the morning, and also that she was desirable. Preferring to ignore Stanley's attempts to counter her, she proceeds to elicit a response from him. Notice the underlying meaning in the following conversation.

Meg: Stanny! Don't you like your cup of tea of the morning- the one I bring you.

(and later)

Meg:(shyly) Am I really succulent?

When Stanley says that he would rather have her than a cold in the nose, she prompts him to do that.

Meg: you're just saying that.

Stanley's growing impatience and Meg's growing sensuality culminate in the final outburst of Stanley's disgust with Meg.

After having complained of the sour milk, horrible flakes and bread that was succulent, he discards Meg's tea as horrible. It is obvious that he is finding Meg's overtures more and more tiring. He suddenly resumes the more formal role of a guest, reminding her that he was only a boarder.

Stanley:(violently) Look why don't you get this place cleared up! It's a pigsty. And another thing, what about my room? It needs sweeping. It needs papering. I need a new room.

Meg:(Sensual, stroking his arm) Oh! Stan, that's a lovely room. I've had some lovely afternoons there.

Stanley is described recoiling from her in disgust. He exits quickly but returns shortly with a cigarette. Meg, as you would have seen is untiring in her pursuit of Stanley, her behaviour bordering on erotic. Her asking for a cigarette and tickling the back of his neck leads Stanley into a growing anger. Stanley's despair at his situation is clear. The niggling between Stanley and Meg now shifts to what is helpful in the exposition of whatever we can bargain to know. That the guests whom Meg refers to have a sinister implication for Stanley becomes clear from the moment she announces the possibility of their arrival. The fact that Stanley has a fear of being found out, and hunted down is clear from his unwillingness to believe Meg. He even accuses her of " saying it on purpose" Stanley immediately becomes anxious to know, who they were, what were their names and when they had met Petey. That Stanley has an inkling of who they were is betrayed by his insistence on keeping them away from the house. His nerves have failed him completely by the time he asks" why didn't they come last night, if they were coming?" This can also be taken as a temporary relief in that they hadn't come and may not come at all.

Stanley even forgets that he had refused to drink the 'muck' that Meg had offered him. His nervous questions about the tea end with his more formal questions to Meg, whom he now addresses as Mrs Boles. Stanley is by now heading for a complete breakdown, he feels physically incapacitated and all his responses to Meg end up in grunts. He groans, his trunk falls forward and his head falls into his hands.

Meg tries to manage Stanley kindly but skilfully. She reminds him of the good Piano he used to play, urging him to play it again. She tries to humour him when he is dejected and in a forlorn mood.

Mark Batty argues that Stanley's fears are founded on some episode in his past life that holds him guilty. Whatever the past, Stanley is evasive of it. From the conversation between Meg and Stanley about his past, we learn, that he had once held a career as a pianist until an aborted concert. It is coincidental that this conversation, in which we hear of how Stanley had been ' carved up' and had refused to crawl down on his bended knees, comes so close to the revelation that two mysterious men are descending upon his safe haven?'

For the reader the fascination of the play lies in being intrigued without being fully enlightened. While Stanley seems to be intrigued by the new visitors, we are equally intrigued by what could have troubled him. It is the business of the author, to reveal as much as he likes, it is the business of the critic to clarify and enhance the subtlety of the intrigue which puzzles us.

Meg's fear of Stanley going away lies in the speeches that she makes.

Meg: But you wouldn't have to go away if you got a job, would you? You could play the piano on the pier"

Playing the piano is the reference point of his past success and failure. Stanley's references to his career as a pianist dwindle both comically and pathetically, from giving concerts through the world to giving them all over the country to once giving a concert. Dramatically what matters is not which, if any of these statements is true but that Stanley makes them in this sequence. Later Meg, further undercuts his status as a pianist when, after saying, she enjoyed watching him play the piano, she repeats his story about the concert and (comically) gets the details wrong. She will undercut that status, still further by giving him a toy drum as a birthday gift.

Stanley's reverie of his success in the past could be taken either as tragic for it is now lost, or as wishful thinking for a glory, he had never experienced. Nigel Alexander finds a logical continuity in Stanley's frenzied outburst with Meg and his relationship with his own parents,

" His own relationship with his parents has been uneasy. As he says of his 'great success'— the concert at Lower Edmonton. My father nearly came down to hear me. Well I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it, NO I lost the address that was it."

He certainly does not wish to recognize himself as the son and lover of Meg's desire. The furies, which seize him do not need localization. They have always been part of his history.

Stanley has no precise answers to, Meg's questions about his new job offers. He has no specific reply about the place and payment. "At Berlin, it is a fabulous salary and all found. Then to Constantinople, Zagreb, Vladivostok, it is world tour with flying visits to what's its name. What is the name is the question. Yes, he gave a concert, once, at Lower Edmonton. It was the night of his life, they had all turned up, it was a good concert, a successful concert and Stanley was the man of the nights with a singular touch. Stanley keeps Meg spell bound by the narration of the events. They all had Champaign that night, the whole lot of them. So far Stanley's ascension suggest a rise, moving as if towards a throne, but immediately after the coronation is the fall. Stanley talks as if he had been crowned the King of Artists and then made a target of a conspiracy. After the great splendour and adoration, which his father could not see, Stanley falters. Was it because the father did not turn up, was his father's absence of any consequence? Why did Stanley in the first place say that he had sent him a card when he had lost his address? Did he even have the address or had he lost contact with him much before the concert. These questions are never answered but the enjoyment of the play is not effected by the absence of such knowledge, it is in a way enhanced.

Stanley is now confiding in Meg. He wants to share how badly he had been treated by them. He was appointed to play in another concert, he does not now remember where it was. The space is now occupied by vagueness, nothing is concrete, nothing has a name. When he went to play, the hall was closed, the place was shuttered up. It did not even have a caretaker. They wanted to subjugate Stanley, they wanted to bring him under a yoke. He is bitter about the whole thing , he would settle his score with them if only he knew who they were. He can gather that information, he can take a tip, he tells jack, but we are not told who that Jack is.

Stanley's abrasive words to Meg, ' You're just an old piece of rock cake.' and her cracking words of fear suggest a threat. Meg's entreating words " Don't you go away, Stan. You stay here, You'll be better off. You stay with your old Meg", are words of concern as well as fear for Stanley. Stanley however, stubbornly declares that he feared neither the visitors who were supposed to arrive, nor any enemies he had made in the past.

His joke about their ' coming today', with a wheel barrow to take somebody away is weird, it diverts our attention from the men who are coming to stay, to the men who were 'looking for' somebody in particular. The suspense persists though Stanley has tried to nullify Meg's fear.

It is when Meg is preparing to leave for her shopping that Lulu comes. Lulu is a next-door neighbour and a part of the extended family of Meg and Petey. We learn that she had bought something that was kept secret. All through Mrs. Boles and Lulu's conversation, Stanley sidles to the door, trying to listen to what they say.

The conversation between Lulu and Stanley after Meg's departure is casual but not easy. Lulu's comment that the room was stuffy is answered by Stanley absurdly when he says that he had disinfected it that very morning.

Stanley continues to cheat and baffle people with small little lies. He tells Lulu that he was at the sea at half past six in the morning before his breakfast and had walked right to the headland and back is a white lie. We know that Meg had woken him in the morning much after Petey had returned. Stanley knows that Lulu does not believe him and Lulu knows that Stanley was aware of it.

Lulu's closeness with the Boles household is established in her very first appearance in the play. She tells Stanley that he needed a shave and that he needed a change. She indirectly informs us that Stanley never goes out.

"Don't you ever go out?— I mean what do you do, just sit around the house all day long— hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?

Stanley's replies are usually witty. He has a presence of mind as well as a turn of phrase. The second retort, after ' I ——in the room this very morning, I always stand on the table—when she sweeps the floor is followed by the 'where' and 'no-where game of words between him and Lulu.

After Lulu leaves, Stanley looks himself in the mirror. His action of looking at himself as well as of washing his face are proof of his being effected by what the others say of him. Though he would have us believe that he didn't care.

It is important that McCann and Goldberg arrive when Stanley is all alone at home. It is also important that he sidles behind the door and avoids them till it really becomes unavoidable. Goldberg and McCann enter through the back door. That Goldberg is the boss is established in the first instant. Goldberg caries a briefcase while McCann carries two suitcases. Stanley has by now sneaked out. Mystery and menace increase when McCann asks Goldberg if they were in the right house for he saw no number on the gate ' I wasn't looking for a number', says Goldberg, which signifies that he is looking for something else and had found it. Goldberg's command over McCann is visible in the first conversation they make. His command is a reflection of his confidence in himself, which gives him not only the ability to lead but to dominate as well. When he asks McCann to take a seat, McCann wants him to sit first.

It is obvious from Goldberg's speech that everything is being done at his behest. It is he who has brought McCann for a holiday as he puts it. He asks McCann to relax and even prescribes a method for it," The secret is breathing. Take my tip. It's a well-known fact. Breathe in, Breathe out, take a chance, let yourself go, what can you lose?

Goldberg has sensed McCann's uneasiness and is trying to restore confidence in him. Uncle Barney is Goldberg's ideal, with his impeccable dress, a good house at Basingstoke and social respectability he is, no doubt, his mentor. He remembers nostalgically his visits to the sea-side resorts, Brighton, Canvey Islands, Rottingan where his uncle took him every second Friday of the month, " He was an all round man says Goldberg, and, finding his words insufficient to describe the enormity of the man, adds, " he was a Cosmopolitan"

McCann's mind is wandering elsewhere; uncertain and nervous he asks Goldberg if they were in the right house. Goldberg again points out McCann's nervousness and accuses him of not reposing the earlier faith in Goldberg. McCann admits his nervousness but says that his faith in Goldberg has not wavered.

It should be noted that McCann calls Goldberg Nat and that he does not take offence to what Goldberg says. He is more of a listener, Goldberg more of talker. Goldberg knows McCann's worth and makes no bones about it. He tells McCann that he knew that McCann would overcome his nervousness once he starts the job and complements him for his ability to carry out the jobs very well.

Three things emerge in this scene. The first, that Goldberg had a son " who used to carry a few coppers, for a newspaper, probably, to see how the M.C.C was getting on overseas". He himself never carried any money; he only carried a good name as per the advice of his grand uncle Barney. The second thing we learn about Goldberg is that he has a position. The enormity and power of his position are evident in McCann's exclamation, " And What a position! We also learn that the relationship between McCann and Goldberg is one of trust. Gold berg has done a lot for McCann and McCann has proved his trustworthiness that has been their past, of trust and dependence. McCann's for getting things done, Goldberg's for the security he can provide in his position. Goldberg is not only a man of position but a true Christian as well this is only acknowledged by McCann. " Though conscious of his position, he prefers not to be flattered for his personal virtues, so he poses.

The doubt lurking in the mind of McCann comes to the surface once again, with his question, This job- no listen, this job, is it going to be like anything we've ever done before?

They have been carrying out their nefarious activities. They are a team set out to do a job. Goldberg's formal attitude and address in the nature of their present occupation lends to the whole business a seemingly professional profile.

Goldberg talks of their business, pointing out its similarities and differences with the previous ones. The power, which is malignant and arbitrary, is not defined in terms of being political or religious. It remains undefined till the end. That they operate in the manner of the mafia is implied by Goldberg's reference to the ' "attitude of the subject",' assignment carried out" and 'mission accomplished' point to a larger power group working to coerce people into their fold and 'no excessive aggravation to you or myself refers to the violent and physical assault they may have to resort to.

It is Goldberg who continues to speak when Meg enters His politeness and good manners at once establish that he who has been brought up in the manner of conformity to social norms. After exchanging pleasantries with Meg, Goldberg asks Meg what her husband did. The question sounds unnecessary since Goldberg has met Petey earlier and asked him about the possibility of staying in their boarding house.

The play reverts to the comic atmosphere of the beginning for a while. The punning of words gives us what may be called English comedy at its best.

Meg; Very pleased to meet you

Goldberg: We are pleased to meet you too

Meg: That's very nice

Goldberg: You are right. How often do you meet someone it's pleasure to meet?

McCann : Never

Goldberg: But today it's different. How are you keeping Mrs Boles? Goldberg continues talking to Meg, asking her questions about the guest who resided with them and Meg continues to answer him enthusiastically. Meg's naivety and lack of grooming are painfully visible in her description of the events regarding the concert where Stanley had played the piano. She not only mixes up the sequence of events but even manages a tip for Stanley at the end of his lock-up in the hall. Meg retains her ability to amuse and be pleased with herself at the same time.

It is during the conversation that Meg mentions that it was Stanley's birthday and though, he hadn't mentioned it (which makes her presume that he'd forgotten about it) . She would have liked him to play the piano on that day for that reason, she tells them.

Goldberg asks if they were celebrating Stanley's birthday and when Meg replies that they weren't, he suggests that they celebrate it. As is his custom, he immediately takes command of the situation. " They will give him a party, that ' he was glad that they came on the day of his birthday' and 'McCann is the life and soul of any party' are pointers towards the aggressive and menacing pressure of the duo. Goldberg's words, ' What do you think of that McCann? There's a gentleman who lives here. He's got a birthday today and he has forgotten all about it. So we are going to remind him, we're going to give him a party lead towards the final catastrophe.

Meg's child like enthusiasm for the party, where she will wear her party dress and which will cheer Stanley up is jeered at by the two men, who call her a 'tulip'. Stanley enters after Meg has shown them their room. Stanley is anxious about who the men were and insists on knowing their names and business. It is evident that he is disturbed on hearing Goldberg's name but does not make his feelings known. Ignorant of the cause of Stanley's anxiety, Meg tries to comfort and pacify him. She gives him the parcel and tells him to open it since it contained his birthday present. When she sees Stanley bewildered, she tells him that she had got that boy's drum for him because he didn't have a piano. The change in Stanley's attitude towards Meg can be perceived

in his submissive act of taking out the drum and the sticks. He even kisses Meg on the cheek without making fuss. He has lost the strength to retaliate. Stanley's initial bafflement and apprehension ultimately ends with the certainty of his doom It's finality is expressed by the changing rhythm of the beat, which turns, from regular to erratic and uncontrolled, becoming savage and possessed at the end. Stanley knows the tightness of the sinister grip that is approaching him.

ACT II

Act II comprises two important events, the interrogation and the birthday party.

The scene opens with McCann sitting at the table tearing a newspaper sheet into five equal strips. Stanley walks in and greets McCann. He straight away goes to the kitchen and is about to leave, after drinking water, when McCann stops him. McCann wants to know Stanley's name, which he says, is Webber. Stanley's first question, as expected is ' staying here long? Whereas McCann's first concern is to establish Stanley's identity, Stanley's is to know what their business was. McCann's way of holding Stanley back may be seen as a prelude to the laying of the siege, which will come later. McCann conveys the position in which Stanley is, by his repetition of the phrase 'laid on' meaning that Stanley is in confinement. Stanley is not allowed to move out, though no physical force is used to obstruct his way, his movement is restricted by other means. Stanley joins McCann in whistling ' the mountains of Moore' and then they resume their conversation. Stanley's feeling that he had met McCann earlier and McCann's repeated denial of it, confirms that none of them is speaking the truth. We also come to know about Stanley's past. He was born in a charming town and lived away in a quiet corner, away from the main road. It was in Maiden land, where he used to visit the Fullers tea shop for tea, and a Boots library. Stanley tells McCann that he seems to connect him with the High Street but McCann categorically denies ever having visited any of these places.

Stanley's further talk with McCann tells us two things about him. He liked solitude and that he had set up a small private business, which had made him, abandon his home and come to this place. His love for quietness comes out first in his desire to be all by himself on his birthday, " I am going out to celebrate quietly, on my own.' This is about his birthday. When he mentions his plans to return home, deliberating on the happiness of living in his own home, he compulsively recounts that he used to live very quietly. It must be understood that his staying indoors was not a new thing in his life. He did nothing at home and never stirred out. " I Played records, that's about all. Everything delivered to the door".

Stanley also refers to a small business as well as a l private income he had. But Stanley will give it up, it had compelled him to come down there and kept him there longer than he expected. There was no place like home he repeats adding that one could never get used to someone else' house.

It is Stanley who speaks most of the time. He regrets having changed his life, he talks haltingly of his past and tells McCann that his present looks were deceptive. He had those lines on his ace because he had been drinking. He continues to talk of his looks, how he looked in the past, telling McCann that though he looked very different now, he was essentially the same man.

Stanley wants to remove the doubts, from McCann's mind about him. " You wouldn't think, to look at me really—— I mean not really, that I was the bloke to — cause any trouble—would you?"

Stanley is trying to set at rest his own misgivings and anxiety by assuring McCann that he was not the bloke they should be looking for since he was not the type to create any trouble.

McCann's constant reminder to Stanley not to touch the strips of paper lends a mystery to them. McCann has been cutting the paper into equal strips not absent-mindedly but intently as if planning something numerically, leaving no room for errors.

Stanley continues his search into McCann and Goldberg's business simultaneously trying to put them on the wrong track. Why did they choose that house, 'that was not a boarding house at all' and that 'Meg was crazy, round the bend and mad', all show Stanley's utter dismay, his helplessness and failure in misguiding his hunters.

McCann's speech shows that he fully understands Stanley's mental condition, he tells him 'you are a lot depressed for your birthday', which Stanley denies immediately. Seeing that he is nervous he even asks Stanley if he would like to steady himself. Stanley's failure to control his nerves in the face of impeding danger, is now visible in his hysterical entreaties to McCann, ' There's a lot you don't know. I think someone's leading you up the garden path.'

He is nervous about what they would do. McCann's objection to Stanley's holding his arm and his action of savagely pushing Stanley away, symbolize the weaker position of Stanley, the stronger one of McCann.

Stanley's last hopes to convince McCann are quashed by Goldberg's entry. Stanley has tried to woo, convince and plead to McCann but all his endeavours have failed. He tries to explain to McCann that all those years that he lived at Basing Stoke, he never stepped outside his house. He has already told McCann that he was not the sort of man who could be involved in any unlawful activity. Stanley's tone however, betrays that there is something more to it. How does, for example, Stanley know that McCann is acting at somebody's command? Why does McCann call him Sir, and why does Stanley object to it? Stanley tries to beguile McCann and as divert his attention. Stanley resumes his commanding tone the moment he realizes that his efforts to convince McCann had failed. " Has he told you anything? Do you know what you are here for?" is followed by, ' Tell me, you needn't be afraid of me.'

Stanley tries to cajole McCann in other ways. Where did he belong, he asks, taking a clue form his name and immediately proceeds to flatter him by praising the countryside of Ireland. He had many friends there, he respected the Irish for their love of truth and sense of humour. He has already alluded in the earlier part of the conversation to the fact that McCann looked an honest man, his repetition of this now, establishes his desperate need to somehow win McCann over. He even offers to take him to a pub for a drink of 'Draught Guiness.' One must not miss his passing reference to the wonderful police-me of Ireland.

Goldberg is when he enters talking with meg and Petey about his mother. After a brief introduction with Stanley he goes back to his train of thoughts. He recalls his adolescent days, spent in a town, which had, we are told, a canal. He remembers his walks alongside the canal with a girl, a girl with a nightingale's voice and beautiful looks. The girl was pure, she was good. Goldberg makes a comparison between the young generation of those days and the young generation of the present times. Boys and girls those days were chaste whereas those of the present times took all kinds of liberties. Promiscuity was the order of the day, temperance and abstention of the days gone by. Goldberg remembers having left the girl with just a kiss on her cheek, he permitted himself no more. The girl would have no more, either, since she was pure and a Sunday School teacher, she was, too.

The kiss on the girls cheek had given Goldberg such pure joy, that he later not only tipped his hat to the toddlers, but also helped a couple of stray dogs. Compassion and love come to you naturally when you are happy and elated. Goldberg also remembers the beauty of the falling sun behind the dog stadium and compares it with the urban picture of the sun falling behind the town hall in Carrikmecross. He recalls how his mother used to call him for food, the nicest piece of gefilte fish, she wanted her ' Simey' to eat it before it got cold. McCann's pointing out that his name, he thought was Nat does not ruffle Goldberg; he brushes McCann aside by a simple explanation that his mother called him so. Petey's response, as usual is simple, we all remember our childhood, he says. Goldberg's special interest in Stanley's childhood has led to fanciful speculations Though the things mentioned are routine, hot water bottle and hot milk etc, they have been assigned deeper meaning by the critics.

Petey suddenly says that he will not be able to attend the party since it was his chess-night. Goldberg promises to save some drink for him and asks him to come back in time for the party, he asks him to beat his opponent and be done with the game.

Stanley and Goldberg are in the next scene left alone, McCann having gone to bring the bottles of drink.

Stanley is nastier to Goldberg than he was to McCann. He asks Goldberg to vacate the room since it was

already booked. Goldberg ignores him and proceeding to deliver another of his speeches, important for the symbolic meaning of the word ' birthday'. He tries to convey what birth means to him, enlarging upon its different meaning to different people. He found himself cheerful in the mornings when the birds chirped, the sun shone, the sound of the lawnmower, the church bells was welcome. The morning is for him another birth.

What Goldberg wishes to convey in his description of the men who don't get up in the morning, can be interpreted in many ways. Is he suggesting that Stanley does not want to wake up to reality, to be born or simply hinting at his own sunny view of birth against theirs, which is gloomy and morose? They complained that the mornings were not cheerful when you got up, your skin was crabby, you needed a shave, your eyes were full of muck, your nose was clogged up. Goldberg continues to describe other things, which are equally repelling. Men are at the time of the morning, like a corpse, waiting to be washed.

Is Stanley, too, a dirty corpse, waiting to be washed. Is he disparaging Stanley's unshaven, unkempt looks, hinting that he needed a over-hauling?

McCann's return with the bottles and Goldberg's undisturbed coolness, further infuriate Stanley. He tells them that the house was unlicensed for liquor and that he would not allow them to take advantage of Mr. And Mrs. Boles. He persists in his defence of himself, telling them that there was nothing for them in that house from any angle and that as for him they were just a dirty joke, they did not matter to him.

Stanley's defiance of them and his effort to gain an advantageous position are of no avail. Stanley is first politely asked to sit down, when he refuses, McCann and Goldberg become a little stern till he is finally coerced by McCann to sit. Their attitude is slowly turning more threatening, infecting the audience with Stanley's anxiety. A point of interest, in this novel method of character portrayal by PInter is the concern it can generate for the non-hero protagonist, in spite of all his failings. We neither trust, nor adore Stanley and yet hate to see him harmed. We would like to see him sail through safely.

Stanley does not lie low in front of Goldberg and McCann. He dares them when they accost him and does not hesitate to spurn Goldberg's authority when Goldberg tries to dictate terms to him. Stanley tries all methods to deflate and exasperate them. But Goldberg and McCann are made of sterner stuff, they have come to do a job and use all possible tactics, soft and harsh to subdue Stanley.

Stanley's trial starts on the most chimerical grounds. He is accused of getting on everybody's wick; he is told that he had treated the young lady Lulu like a leper. An explanation is sought for his forcing Petey to go out to play chess and for driving the old lady that is Meg, up her cork.

Absurd questions, like where had he gone yesterday and the day before? What did he wear last week? And where did he keep his suits? are meant to break his bravura and weaken his hold on himself.

The comedy slowly turns into a sort of crime thriller. Why did Stanley leave their organisation? Goldberg's mention of the old mum and a personal hurt suggest that Goldberg could have known Stanley more closely or could even be a blood relation. But Stanley's replies suggest that he hardly cared. After a silly exchange of dialogue, meant to retain the absurd nature of the play. The dialogue comprised of very short sentences is in the nature of a chase, Stanley is being hunted and the words are being thrown as darts to injure and incapacitate him.

Stanley is accused of killing his wife, then of running away from the wedding itself. The first part of the conversation looks like a hide and seek game of words:

Goldberg: Where did you come from?

Stanley: Somewhere else

Goldberg: Why did you come here?

Stanley: My feet hurt

Goldberg: Why did you stay?

Stanley: I had a headache

Gold berg: Did you take anything for it?

Stanley: Yes

Goldberg: What?

Stanley: Fruit Salts

Goldberg: Enos or Andrews?

Stanley: En-AN—–

Goldberg: Did you stir properly? Did they fuzz?

Stanley: Now-now, wait you

Goldberg: Did they fuzz? Did they fuzz or didn't they fuzz?

The entire process of interrogation closes with the verdict that Stanley had betrayed the organisation. The last question to establish that Stanley was their man is asked by Goldberg again, What could Stanley see without his glasses, and Stanley is at once caught, when his glasses are taken away by McCann.

There are other questions to evoke memories and establish the places where Stanley had links. Lyon's Corner house at Marble Arch is the p[lace where Stanley had washed the last cup on Christmas before last and that his old mom was at the sanatorium.

Why did Stanley leave the girl he was going to marry in the lurch, why did he not turn up at the Church? Gold berg and Stanley try to pin Stanley down with their words. Staley is targeted by words that have the anaesthetic deadliness of putting his will to sleep. They are meant to numb his sensory nerves, to drowse him, to deprive him of all power of resistance.

Why did Stanley change his name? And Stanley's answer is not supposed to humour them. He had changed his name because he had forgotten the other one, the reply is cheeky, his new name is Joe Soap he tells them whereupon Goldberg tells him that he stinks of sin.

The most crucial question asked is whether Stanley recognized 'the external force' qualifying the external force with ' responsible for you', 'suffering for you'. Stanley's breakdown, conscientiously worked out by Goldberg and McCann by bogging him down not only by absurd puzzling suppositions but also asking him for solutions to problems that are insolvable. The one about necessity and possibility is one such question menacing and mind- boggling, connected with it is the weird question whether number 846 was possible or necessary or both.

McCann is employed, not only to restrain and compel people to toe Goldberg's line but also to ratify Goldberg's judgement, not only to uphold his verdict but also to implement it. Goldberg's final proclamation of what he has been trying to affirm so far comes out in his words. ' Right! We are right! And you are wrong, Webber, all along the line. McCann seconds it in the fashion of a closing note, 'all along the line.'

The blame on Stanley becomes now more moral in nature; he is a mother defiler a contaminator of womankind and a lecher. He will have to pay for this. The questions that follow make Stanley more and more nervous till he becomes almost incoherent. The tirade of questions: Why don't you pay the rent? Why do you pick your nose and what's your trade? Culminate into quicker and more frenzied ones. They ask him questions about history, cricket and hearsays and end up with the proverbial enigma whether chicken came first or the egg.

Goldberg and McCann take advantage of Stanley's declining sensibility and nerves with exclamations of ' he doesn't understand! He doesn't understand! He was a traitor to the cloth (the one he uses for his pyjamas) and that he had verminated the sheet of his birth (pointing towards the sin of incest). Betrayal of the country, desertion or killing of wife, living sinfully with women are some of the charges for which Stanley should be punished. Stanley's helplessness signifies the helplessness of man, his utter loss, and dire need of support and a way out. They will stick a needle in his eye, they will sterilize him, they will annihilate him. They will make Stanley's race extinct by sterilizing him.

Stanley's sudden outburst when he kicks Goldberg in the stomach is followed by the scene, where Stanley is running with a chair on his head to protect himself with McCann chasing him. Goldberg is however cool as ever. It is only after they have been alerted by a loud drumbeat that they put their chairs down and things look normal when Meg arrives. Meg's immaturity continues to make her the butt of ridicule. She makes a fool of herself by asking McCann how she looked in her party dress. Her enthusiasm for the party also sounds disproportionate and out of place for her age. Goldberg's talk to Meg speaks of his culture; he praises her without any genuine feeling. He is equally polite to Petey and Lulu and is impolite even to Stanley only where it becomes necessary and unavoidable. Goldberg's tomfoolery in praising Meg reflects his lack of sincerity. Meg was, to begin with a tulip, now she is a gladioli. Meg's appetite for praise is amazing and Goldberg with his experience can see it at once.

Human love of play and willingness to be cheated by the self created illusions used by Goldberg to exploit Meg as well as Lulu in the party. He asks for all the lights to be switched off and McCann to light his torch for a dream like effect.

Goldberg has the power to mesmerize with his kindly words and a kindly voice that is often only a hoax. He can assure people and help them gain confidence. He persuades Meg to propose the toast and finding her shaky he asks her to say what came from her heart. He prevails upon her to express her real feelings when she looks at Stanley. Goldberg even manages the stage, before Meg begins her speech he asks McCann to shine the light not on Meg, but the birthday boy.

Meg's speech though simple in words tells us not only about her feelings for Stanley but also reveals herself as a woman. Since the speech has not been contemplated, 'the spontaneous overflow of feelings ' is not only generous but genuine as well. She talks of her long association with Stanley. Her praise of him is candid, 'he is a good boy, although sometimes he is bad'. Her love of Stanley is undivided and she knows Stanley more than anybody else in the world, though Stanley does not believe it. She declares her unconditional love for him; she could do anything for him. Meg's breaking into sobs with the emotion of having Stanley there on his birthday, show how tender her feelings for him are.

She expresses her happiness that all good people (Goldberg and McCann) were there that night, which seems ironical in the light of what happens later.

Lulu's joining the party adds exuberance and puck to it. Stanley is made to sit while Goldberg makes another speech on the value of' true feeling' in man's life. He regrets the passing away of an age when love, bonhomie and affection were expressed without shame or inhibition. He expresses his happiness at having heard Meg's toast to Stanley, which was rare in today's world for its sincerity and depth of feeling. He was glad to see love surviving, in some hidden corners and makes another speech about the things he valued in life. Goldberg believed in the quality of life not its size, says he. He believed in living life close to all the things that nature offers, enjoying the simple pleasures of man's work and labour. A good laugh, a day's fishing and a bit of gardening are some of the recreations he loved. He had even made a greenhouse with his own hands, with his own sweat and the strength of will power. Goldberg suddenly switches over to the other pleasures of life in the city. Co-incidental but deeply related to the plot of the play. Goldberg mentions the same places that Stanley had earlier mentioned to McCann. He had even asked him if he knew these places. Tea in Fullers and Boots Library are the two places that Stanley had mentioned. There mention by Goldberg raise doubts about Stanley's credentials, but things are left here, since Goldberg starts to talk of Meg's speech gain, the speech, which had touched his heart by its true sentiment.

Goldberg is overwhelmed by Meg's total devotion to Stanley and congratulates Stanley for the same. Lulu turns her attention to Goldberg, who she says, had made a wonderful speech. Meg is back to Stanley kissing and patronizing him.

While Lulu continues to compliment Goldberg on his oratory and asks him where he had learnt that art, Goldberg tells them that he had, for the first time spoken at the Ethical hall in Bayswater and the topic of his speech was ' The necessary and the possible". The reader would recollect that Goldberg has asked Stanley,

earlier during his cross-examination the same question about ‘ Necessary and Possible’.

Lulu’s paired herself with Goldberg, Goldberg has paired himself with her. Meg is seen drinking with McCann. What follows can best be described as a drunken revelry, short of an orgy by a hair’s breadth. The overtures between Meg and McCann and Lulu and Goldberg continue at the same time. Lulu sits on Goldberg’s lap after Goldberg has complimented her for being a bouncy girl. She could bounce up to the ceiling, Lulu had said, and she does bounce up to the ceiling indeed. That they are all in an inebriated state is obvious from their talk as well as the abandonment with which they behave; Lulu’s physical proximity to Goldberg is suggested by Goldberg’s remark, ‘ Mind how you go, you’re cracking a rib”. Lulu is enraptured, she reciprocates Goldberg’s compliment that there was a lot in her eyes with the same compliment. She expresses her happiness on Goldberg’s having come out of the blue and within moments of her meeting him, surrenders herself to him, reposing all her faith in him.

To Lulu’s questions whether he had a wife his answer is fabricated with the same skill as his earlier story about his mother. The version has changed slightly; instead of the canal, it is the park and the young girl he had kissed in the first episode is missing. He doesn’t forget to mention the little boys and girls also making it clear that he made no distinction between them. Though his name is Nat, his wife used to call him ‘Simey’ too. She was also particular about serving the nicest food to him and urged him to eat it before it got cold. Lulu’s question to Goldberg whether he knew her when she was a girl, also raises the question of identity crisis and conscious associations, searching for telepathy.

The loss of identity is a consequence of the loss of roots. Meg talks of her father, it is he who had given her that beautiful dress that she wore, he had also promised to take her to Ireland, but had ultimately gone by himself. Meg continues to talk of her father and Ireland, Lulu continues to give herself up to Goldberg.

The conversation between Meg and McCann now is fully turned to childhood memories. McCann had one night played with the boys, singing and dancing all night. The retreat into childhood is a refuge into the peace and comfort of the past, into the world of make belief. Half of the things, we hear, are either exaggerated or fully concocted.

Meg had a pink room, she recalls, with pink curtains and a pink carpet. She had musical boxes all over the room. Her father being a doctor, she never suffered any ailments. She had little brothers and sisters in other rooms, all different colours. Meg’s world of magic is not yet complete. She even had a nanny who sang songs to her. It is apparent that they are all sozzled by now. Meg tells McCann that he has a lovely voice, when he is asked by Goldberg to give them a love song he starts singing about the death of Paddy. Immediately reminded by Goldberg that he was supposed to give them a love song, he starts to sing what looks like a folk song about the lovers. Paddy Reilly and Bally-James- Duff. A reference is made to the Garden of Eden in the beginning of the song.

It is after the song that Lulu suddenly declares that she would like to play a game. It is by consensus that they play the Blind man’s bluff. It is decided that Meg will play ‘blind’ first of all when McCann expresses his ignorance of the game Lulu explains it to him. Goldberg is seen fondling Lulu in the course of the game and Meg touching McCann.

The next turn to be blind is that of McCann: the double game of Blind man’s bluff and love between the characters continues to be played.

McCann’s actions during Stanley’s turn to play the blind man are of importance to the progress of the play. McCann not only breaks his glasses, but also places the drum in his way. Stanley walks into the drum and stumbles over with his foot caught in it. Stanley walks towards Meg and tries to strangle her. He then tries to vitiate Lulu. The utter confusion with the lights out and McCann’s torch lost is appropriated by Stanley to settle his score with the women at least. He hates there self-indulging with men as well as with drinks. It is also an indication of Stanley’s pent up frustration about Meg’s indulgent attitude towards him.

Stanley is found bending over Lulu whom he has put on the table. When discovered in the light of the torch by McCann and Goldberg, he just giggles. As McCann and Goldberg converge upon him his giggles grow louder.

ACT III

The next morning, Petey enters, as usual, with a newspaper. Meg's question from the hatch shows that she was expecting Stanley and not Petey. On realizing that it is Petey and not Stanley, she immediately informs him that she had run out of cornflakes and had nothing else for breakfast. She pours out some tea for Petey also telling him that the two gentlemen had the last of the fry and that she was going out shopping to get him something nice. She complains of a splitting headache whereupon Petey tells her that she had slept like a log.

Meg's splitting headache and her having forgotten that the drum got broken in the party are mentioned to highlight the fact that, she was on the previous night, so sozzled that she did not notice it.

The content of Meg's speech later, which though chatty, is informative; reveals the danger to Stanley's position, though she herself does not realize the implication of what she had seen.

Meg, had in the morning, in her customary way, taken a cup of tea for Stanley but the door was opened by McCann instead of Stanley, who said that he had already made Stanley a cup of tea. She is surprised that they were up and talking for it was unusual for Stanley to be up so early. She finds it strange and the oddity of the situation makes her slightly uneasy. Did Stanley know them, may be he did, Stanley had many friends and it was therefore not surprising that he should have known Goldberg and McCann. She tries to understand the happenings of the morning when Goldberg and McCann had later come down for breakfast. Why had Stanley stayed back, she, however, satisfies herself by concluding that he must have gone back to sleep.

Meg's fears about the wheelbarrow are also laid to rest when Petey tells her that there was no wheelbarrow in the car parked outside their house and that the car belonged to Goldberg. Her fear of the wheelbarrow must be connected with Stanley teasing her earlier that a wheelbarrow was coming to take her away. Reassured, she is about to leave for shopping, when she hears the sound of a door being slammed upstairs and stops, thinking that Stanley was coming down, she immediately starts worrying about his breakfast, since she had no cornflakes left. Meg is surprised to see Goldberg. Goldberg's ironical comments bring out his opinion about Stanley's character as well as the firmness of his resolution. When Meg asks if Stanley was coming down, his reply is by implication a verdict on Stanley's fate.

Goldberg: Down? Of course he's coming down. On a lovely sunny day like this he shouldn't come down? He'll be up and about in next to no time.

Goldberg's comment that Stanley should not be down and his earlier remark that Stanley was different from him in build only, clearly show that Goldberg considered Stanley no better than himself.

Meg is charmed now by Goldberg's car. She leaves for shopping with slight uncertainty, worried about Stanley's breakfast.

Petey asks about Stanley's condition, which Goldberg does not specify as good or bad. He again makes one of his speeches about why he would not like to comment about Stanley's condition, he thought, his diagnosis shall not be authentic since he had no degrees. We learn from him that Stanley was being attended on, by Dermot, since he was suffering from a nervous breakdown.

To Petey's question as to what had caused that sudden nervous breakdown, Goldberg replies in a judicious manner, which he is adept at whereas sometimes it was slow, in other cases, the nervous breakdown came suddenly, he says. He meaningfully refers, to Stanley, as one of those people in whose case nervous breakdown was a foregone conclusion.

The happenings of the previous night have a mysterious and abstruse connotation for Petey. He found on reaching his house that all the lights were out which was strange. Stranger still was the fact that the lights come back the moment he put a shilling in the slot. Goldberg brushed aside the whole thing as simply a fuse.

Goldberg's discomfiture at Petey's having met Dermot, the previous night, is natural since he had not expected this. Petey gets growingly concerned about Stanley and says that he would have to call a doctor if Stanley did not recover by the afternoon. He is however, told by McCann that all care had been taken and that he needn't worry about Stanley.

That Stanley had been 'treated' by him, McCann reported ' till he stopped all that—— talking a while ago he was absolutely quiet now' casts a kind of morbidity in the atmosphere; things that were grotesque have now become totally gruesome.

It is also not disclosed who Dermot is, Petey has met him but no one else has, he remains a shadow of the demonic power, never discovered, never talked about.

The suitcases are ready and Goldberg is waiting for a signal from McCann. He asks him whether Stanley was ready and is told to go and see for himself. After a while McCann tells Goldberg that he had given back Stanley's glasses. Goldberg asks him whether Stanley was happy to get them back. Goldberg and McCann are able to deceive Petey, promising him that if Stanley does not recover they will take him to Monty.

Petey has not as yet fully realized their intentions. Goldberg wants him out of their way. Goldberg tells Petey that they would not be able to return for lunch and coaxes him to return to the beach.

Goldberg and McCann are left to themselves after Petey leaves. Goldberg is now in a more serious mood. That he is disturbed is visible, he not only scolds McCann for his habit of tearing the paper into strips but also for his habit of asking too many aggravating questions.

Goldberg's uneasiness, in the operation of the present 'thing', as he calls it, is confessed by him. He himself finds it unusual that he should feel 'knocked out', since it was uncommon for him to lose his composure.

Goldberg's conversation with McCann reveals them in a new light. McCann wants to know Goldberg's reality and picks on his name 'Simey', to find the truth. Goldberg warns him not to call him by that name and reacts violently to McCann's going up, Does the fact that he doesn't want any more pressure on Stanley mean that Goldberg is emotionally disturbed because he doesn't want Stanley to suffer?

His speech to McCann, is on his views on life, again and the principles he has lived by. He has, as he says, 'followed the line.' Goldberg talks of his parents time and again. Goldberg was a self made man, at school, he was top in all the subjects, he learnt everything by heart. More importantly he has kept himself fit as a fiddle. Goldberg recalls what his father told him before he died. His father, it may be noted, called him not Simey but Benny. His father taught him some precepts. 'Forgive and let live' was the first maxim. Going home to the wife the next. Goldberg's father said that he had lived his entire life in the service of others, he had asked Goldberg to do his duty and make no observations. He had also asked him to look after the lowlives. The custom of wishing 'good morning' to the neighbours is important too; the most important however, is keeping the family together. The family is the rock, the ore of one's life and should never be neglected. The dispersal of Goldberg's thoughts into the past trying to trace the lineage of his father, his father's father and finally the great-gran-granny show his loss of grip over his thoughts. Goldberg's thoughts sometimes run away with him, taking the reigns of his mind into their hands. He loses control over himself, failing to steer himself, but regains his control after a short silence. He repeats what he had said to begin his speech, that he had always been as fit as a fiddle. He expressly stresses the importance of his motto,' work hard and play hard— and respect thy father and they mother.'

Goldberg's earlier repetition of ' because I believe that the world—-', with his loosening grip over himself, records the change of his composure and mood, from 'vacant', to 'desperate', to' lost.'

The situation is ironical since Gold berg, immediately after he had declared himself fit as a fiddle, sits, breathless and asks McCann to blow into his mouth to revive him.

It is when McCann kneels down to do this and Goldberg regains himself that Lulu enters. McCann shrewdly leaves them alone saying that he will give them, just five minutes.

Goldberg and Lulu are thereafter, left alone. They accuse each other, each one saying that they had been taken in by the other.' Lulu blames him for ravishing her innocence. She discloses that he had walked into her room at night, with his briefcase, with doubtful intentions. Goldberg tells her through his remarks that she was not innocent either. Pinter's use of words for repartee are at best seen in the conversation between Goldberg and Lulu:

Goldberg: A girl like you, at your age, at your time of health, and you don't take to games?

Lulu: You're very smart

Goldberg: Anyway, who says you don't take to them

Lulu; Do you think I'm like all other girls?

Goldberg: Are all the other girls like that too?

Lulu's accusation that Goldberg had used her are immediately refuted by Goldberg by his question 'who used who?' Lulu also tells him that a boy 'Eddie' was her first love, forgetting to say that he was the last one too. Her complaint, by its content in itself becomes comic and the words used to register it are hilarious indeed.

" You quenched your ugly thirst. You taught me things a girl shouldn't know before she's been married at least three times." Goldberg's calling her Schumulu and Lullalu shows an attitude of scorn. McCann's hunt of Lulu and his reminding us of their erst-while interrogation of Stanley. McCann's affliction of Lulu, his effort to pin her down seems all the more brutal in light of the fact that McCann has been unfrocked only six months ago. The implications of his being attached to the Church are important to understand Pinter's opinion of the Church and the Clergy. His dismissal of Lulu on the grounds that her sort, spend ' too much time in bed', is a part of the morality that everybody professes but nobody follows. He justifies Goldberg's behaviour since Lulu had herself wanted it.

McCann intercepts Lulu and begins to terrorize her with a downpour of questions, which, Lulu fails to understand in the beginning but realizing what is going on, se walks out.

Stanley is now dressed in a dark well-cut suit and white collar. He is clean-shaven and holds his broken glasses in his hand. Goldberg and McCann share their satisfaction at the change they have brought about in Stanley. He looks not only much better, but is ' A New man.'

The last scene shows Stanley, completely subdued. He shows no reaction to Goldberg and McCann's 'relish' in their victory of him. Their savage tomfoolery, and celebration of Stanley's crushed spirit brings out the demonic nature of their pursuit to the full. They joy of their attack on Stanley is awfully frightening to the reader.

They tell Stanley that they were his saviours, his ailments being many, he was cockeyed, he was in a rut, he had gone from bad to worse. He looked anaemic, he looked rheumatic, he was myopic and epileptic. They had saved him from a worst fate by saving him from falling over the edge.

They had a method to recover him, a place for his convalescence and a change of climate. They would give him not only a new pair of glasses but season tickets and discount on inflammable goods. They ill in short, give him proper care and treatment. The advantages and perks they promise him are the perks generally associated with the life of a successful man. ' Club Bar' reserved table, a free pass. Care will be taken of his spiritual as well as physical health. They will provide him a skipping rope, and long walks; they will make him kneel on the kneeling days. Stanley will with all the necessities and accessories provided, be integrated in society. He will conform to the physical, socio-economical and religious pattern of society. He will be their pride.

They complete the de-orientation of Stanley by the failure of control over his body as well as his mind. This is indicated by his response to Goldberg's and McCann's last questions. Unable to speak, he only takes out incoherent sounds, he clenches and unclenches his hands till they start to tremble.

Stanley is by the end completely paralysed. He is now according to Goldberg and McCann fit to be taken away.

By the time Petey enters the house, Stanley has lost all his power of defence. He is now, for all purposes a dummy, a deaf and dumb dummy in the hands of Goldberg and McCann, who will cast him in their own mould.

Petey's protests are not heeded by them and there is a threat in Goldberg's words to Petey that if he tried to deter them he might be taken along with Stanley.

Petey does not have the strength to fight them but will not see Stanley succumb. His final words to Stanley are, " Stan, don't let them tell you what to do."

The end of the play has raised many questions and controversies. Meg does not know that Stanley had been taken away. She is not told by Petey either. Meg's joy of the last night's party sounds jarring in the all-pervading evil, which she is unconscious of.

Word Meanings and Important References

1.	Hatch	A small window like opening in the kitchen for service
2.	Darn	Mend, socks etc
3.	Succulent	Juicy, thick and fleshy
4.	Pigsty	Enclosure for pigs
5.	Carve up	Divide, crush
6.	Crawl down on bended knees	To admit defeat, to ask for forgiveness
7.	Piece of rock cake	Unmoved by anything
8.	Wheelbarrow	A single wheel cart used for carrying farm goods
9.	Bit of a washout	Pale, exhausted
10.	Reminiscent	Evocative, suggestive of the past
11.	Regular as clock work	Very regular in habits, following a routine
12.	Sidle through	Slither, slip, sneak
13.	Bright, Canway Islands, Rottingdan	Names of places in England
14.	Impeccable	Faultless, flawless
15.	Cosmopolitan	Free from National Prejudices
16.	Word of a gentleman	A respectable, honourable man's promise
17.	Copper	A metal used for currency
18.	Cool as a whistle	Imperturbable, one who doesn't get disturbed
19.	Recapitulate	Repeat, glorify, summarize
20.	Approximate	Estimate
21.	Excessive aggravation	Make worse, denoting an extreme form of offence, excessive suffering, provocation, more than one can bear.
22.	Lead up the garden path	Put on the wrong track, mislead
23.	Flabbergasted	Surprised, stunned, confounded
24.	Sunday School Teacher	Teacher teaching at Sunday school, a school for religious instruction of children of Christian families

25.	Lawnmower	Mower, cutter for grass in the lawn
26.	Isn't your cup of Tea	Doesn't suit your taste/ ability
27.	Getting on everybody's wick	Exasperating others
28.	Off her conk	Lost her balance
29.	That's black and Tan fact	Instead of black and white McCann uses the Expression to covey that there is no white in his Dictionary, there is little difference in truth and falsehood.
30.	You're a fake	Place for healing and recovery
31.	Skeddadled	Ran away
32.	Lechery leading you	Lewdness and lust leading you
33.	Contaminate	To defile or corrupt women woman kind
34.	Enough to scuttle a liner	Sink and destroy, a shop here referring to the effect of drinks
35.	Propose the toast	Drink in someone's honour
36.	Bonhomie	Easy good nature
37.	Constitutional	Walk for health
38.	Fenian Men	Irish men, also used for the Irish who rose in revolt against the English.
39.	Blind Man's Bluff	A game in which one person's eyes are tied up with a cloth.
40.	A foregone conclusion	Something which is evident before hand.
41.	Knocked out	Unconscious or exhausted
42.	Cockeyed	A squinting eye.
43.	Re-oriented	Given a new personality, changed for good
44.	Mensch	Person of integrity and humour
45.	Belle of the Ball	The most sought after and admired woman in a dance.
46.	Care-taker	One who takes care of the upkeep of lodging, school Buildings or any other institution.
47.	Tulip	A flower
48.	Erratic	Aberrant, abnormal, eccentric, inconsistent.
49.	Dismay	Disconcerts, disappoint, dispirit.
50.	Maiden-head	Virginity
51.	Thriving Community	Prosperous group of people belonging to the same caste, city, region or religion.
52.	Bracing	invigorating.

Pinter's Concerns

When The Encore Publishing Company produced the first edition of " The Birthday Party" in 1959 it advertised it as ' not only pungently funny and disquietingly macabre but rich with concern about the state of our society.

The last observation seems contrary to Pinter's own statement in the 1950s that he was not a committed writer, in the usual sense of the word, either religiously or politically.

The point that Pinter was trying to make is that he was not a didactic writer per se. His plays of 1980s and 1990s look like some active human right campaigns and his concern for the individual, paralysed by custom and society, in its dogmatic pursuit of aborting any body who preferred not to be an ally. Stanley in the Birthday Party is one such case. Pinter's earlier repudiation of his concern with social and political situation must be considered in conjunction with the fact that Pinter's plays were not dialectical and that his characters and the life they lived was more important to him than the indication of dogmas and precepts.

Pinter is neither a messenger nor a moralist. But he has his own concerns. Mark Betty sees Pinter's concerns as humanitarian concerns. Pinter is, he says, concerned with the relationship between the State and the individual and how the self-perpetuating concerns of the former often obscure and override the dignifying rights of the latter. He is interested in protesting against the hypocrisy and compliancy of those who wield power against those ill equipped to respond and is concerned dramatically to demonstrate how language is very often abused to mask political deviousness and over power and demonise the under dog. Thematically, these matters form the kernel of many of Pinter's Plays from both his early and later writings. Starting with " The Birthday Party" it is possible to trace these concerns and examine their significance in the whole of Pinter's "Oeuvre".

In " The Birthday Party", it is the unchecked authority represented in Goldberg and McCann, which represses individuality represented by Stanley. They not only sneer at him but also punish him for his independence of them, which to them, is no less sedition.

John Slokes examines Pinter's commitment in the in the light of his alertness to the times he lived in, to his relations, as a man to events of his, to the matters of class race, gender and sexuality. This John Sloes argues was achieved by Pinter not so much by overt political argument ' propaganda, as by formal innovation, by interventions and disruptions, the way in which the plays continually turn the object of social disquiet into matter of subjective concern…. The urban grid is revealed as the squared hoard of some mysterious power-playing game.'

Pinter is , in his ' Amoral Vacuum' concerned with the human condition as it is today. Whereas it is futile to look for a meaning in his plays, it is equally difficult to ignore the engaging experiences, the emotional experiences and the resulting intellectual response.

Pinter's art form does not allow for direct and overt didacticism, Pinter's plays express moments of existence, of human conduct and in that lies their strength, we take the message through he does not give one, at least explicitly.

Placing Pinter

The difficulties in placing Pinter, in any tradition, old or new arise because if we were to write a simple paragraph on the salient features of Pinter's plays, they would be such that a recognizable pattern, hitherto known to us will not be found in them, what emerges in Pinter for example in The Birthday Party by way of characterization and plot is fuzzy and vague in spite of the concrete, house, food, neighbourhood, newspaper and a job on the deck. Pinter places a group of symbolic unit in a logical expression; in this sense, he is parenthetical.

The post-war drama was highly restyled; the plays of Beckett, Harold and Brecht were stirring up debates about the function of drama in the post-war era. Mark Batty traces the different trends followed by the playwrights and tries to ascertain the position of Pinter. He says: " Pinter's earlier repudiation of any social framework to his writing ought to be considered in the context of the developments of the European stage in the middle of the century, in a time when Brecht's writings and touring were stirring up debates about the function of our post-war drama. Playwrights were increasingly expected to come down either on the side of the new dialectical, political drama that sought to dissect historical and sociological models, or on the side of the avant-garde, those who would conjure allegories of the human condition. The argument was most notably illustrated in Britain by series of open letters exchanged between the French ' absurdist' writer Eugene Ionesco and his harshest critic Kenneth Tynan in the pages of the Observer in 1958. Pinter felt comfortable in neither

camp. He could never simply be accused of having placed characters in metaphysical isolation and as Marc Silverstein points out, many of his early plays' address themselves […] to the vicissitudes of living within a specific cultural order rather than an incomprehensible universe'. Equally he was certainly not going to allow specific political interpretation to dilute and diminish the qualities of his own theatrically, which as we have seen relied upon the qualities of uncertainty and ambiguity to achieve its communication. In many ways this was not to change when he came to write his most potent protest plays in the 1980s and 1990s, and a lack of specificity in these will be seen to serve a similar purpose."

It is terms of how Pinter's plays operate rather than what they signify that the best criticism has developed. Peter Davison, John Russel Brown and Bernard Dukore, in particular, have asked how the plays work as drama. In an original approach and entertaining essay, first delivered as a lecture, Peter Davison sees a continuity in Pinter and Bekett from the English Music Hall tradition. Pinter's theatricality is based on the conventions of popular entertainment as much as Shakespeare's theatre was indebted to the popular traditions of medieval drama.

Pinter's work has been most easily understood by comic playwright and farceurs. Writers such as Noel Coward, Joe Orton and Simon Gray understood Pinter's dramatic project most immediately and instinctively. Similarly critics have tended to group Pinter with comic playwrights- witness Kenneth Tynan's famous assessment that the playwrights of his time fell into two categories: ' the hairy men- heated, embattled, socially committed playwrights, like John Osborne, John Arden, and Arnold Wesker' and 'the smooth men- cool, apolitical stylists, like Harold Pinter, the late Joe Orton, Christopher Hamptpn, Alan Ayckbourn, Simon Gray and Stoppard'.

Certainly Pinter's high-level comedic technique put him on par with the greatest comic writers. The early plays are often deliberately funny; many of the exchanges between the characters are structured with the strutting rhythm of polished comedy routines.

Petey: Didn't you take him up his cup of tea?

Meg: I always take him up his cup of tea. But that was a long time ago.

Petey: Did he drink it?

Meg: I made him I stood there till he did. I am going to call him. (she goes to the door) Stan! Stanny! (she listens) Stan! I'm coming up to fetch you! I am going to count three! One! Two! Three! I'm coming up to get you. (she exits and goes upstairs, In a moment, shouts from Stanley, wild laughter from Meg. Petey takes his plate to the hatch. Shouts. Laughter. Petey sits on the table. Silence. She returns) he's coming down. (She is panting and arranges her hair). I told him that if didn't hurry up he'd get no breakfast.

Bernard Dukore, meanwhile, in his first book on Pinter, preferred the term ' 'tragicomedy', from the tag ' comedy of menace' given by him. The search of such critical tags is fraught with danger, and Irving Wardle was soon to retract. It was too late the ' comedy of Menace' has become part of Pinter's critical heritage even though it is an aspect from which Pinter in his later plays has tried to escape, without invalidating the earlier work:

It was called " Comedy Of Menace" quite a long time ago. I never stuck categories on myself, or on any of us. But if I understand the word menace to mean as certain elements that I employed in the past in the shape of a particular play, then I don't think that it is worthy of much more exploration. After the 'Homecoming' I tried writing- odds and ends- and failed for sometime…. No I am not at all interested in ' threatening behaviour' any more, although I don't think this makes plays like 'The Homecoming' and 'The Birthday Party' invalid. But you are always stuck. You're stuck as a writer.

At least Wardle's label in relation to these early plays did credit to the comic side of the drama.

Finding an echo in Pinter of Beckett, for his portrayal of human condition and of man's failure to make sense out of an erratic world that defies prediction. Martin Esslin named him as an author of " The Theatre of the

Absurd". He placed Pinter alongside Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco, who sought' to make man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition, to shock him out of his existence that has become trite, mechanical, complacent and deprived of the dignity that comes of awareness. He viewed Pinter's characters as being: In the process of their essential adjustment to the world, at the point when they have to solve their basic problem- whether they will able to confront or shall come to terms with their dilemma

Certainly, it is the individuals' confrontation with external forces, the conditions which they attempt to resist, that governs the dramatic energies of Pinter's early plays, and it is a measure of their worth as pieces of theatre that these confrontations successfully convey both existential and implicitly political suggestion. When Irving Wardle famously applied the term ' comedy of menace' to Pinter's works, it was to denote this double-edged capacity to disturb that Pinter had crafted, through the flippant application of dark humour to situations in which characters were forced to face an implacable destiny:

Destiny handled in this way- not as an austere exercise in classicism, but as an incurable disease which one forgets about most of the time and whose lethal reminders may take the form of a joke- is an apt dramatic motif for an age of conditioned behaviour in which orthodox man is a willing collaborator in his own destruction.

While Pinter refuses to specify the reasons why his characters take the sides they do, other writers influenced by Pinter have been more than happy to fill in the gaps. Pinter's comedy of menace can be seen to have inspired a generation of black comedy written by playwrights who were willing to provide the explanations Pinter omits. Black comedy can be seen as a kind of antithesis to the comedy of menace. Menace depends on ignorance; the terror of it stems from the vagueness of threat. We don't know what is happening and why, and the lack of information leads us to fear the worst: that the threat is somehow beyond articulation- literally unspeakable. Black Comedy, on the other hand, treats serious themes comically, without the 'respect' they deserve; it says too much, it says what should not be said.

Pinter is at his comic best when he entertains through characterization and story telling. But it is not pure comedy; his comedy is linked with vulnerability, struggle and threat to his characters. What is the certainty when the foundation of man's existence is in itself suspect? It is because of the uncertainty, the vulnerability and a threat at the door in Pinter's plays, that they are not strictly comic.

Pinter's own lectures, letters, and articles throw light on what he thought of his plays and how he intended to place them. From a letter written by Harold Pinter in 1958 to Peter Wood the director of " The Birthday Party" clues to the method followed by Pinter can be found. The letter written in the earlier part of his career is particularly relevant, since what Pinter says of the evolvement of his characters and plots is uniquely his own. Pinter begins the letter with how he began to write the play.

"The first image of this play, the first thing that about a year ago was put on paper was a kitchen, Meg, Stanley, cornflakes and sour milk. There they were, they sat, they stood, they bent, they turned, they were incontrovertible, or perhaps I should say inconvertible. Not long before Goldberg and McCann turned up. They had come with a purpose, a job in hand- to take Stanley away. This they did, Meg unknowing, Peter helpless, and Stanley sucked in. Play over. That was the pure line and I couldn't get away from it. I had no idea at the time. What or why. The thing germinated and bred by itself. It proceeded according to its own logic. What did I do? I followed the indications, I kept a sharp eye on the clues I found myself dropping. The writing arranged itself with no trouble in the dramatic terms. The characters sounded in my ears- it was apparent to me what one would say and what would be the others response, at any given point. It was apparent to me what they would not, could not, ever, say, whatever one might wish. I interfered with them only on the technical level. My task was not to damage their consistency at any time- through any external notion of my own."

Pinter tries to make a point, often repeated by him in his later statements that his were not the well constructed, fore-thought plays with fore gone conclusions and destinies awarded by the author. His plays grew as the characters grew, they had their compelling basic natures and would develop and work according to their dictates. Pinter neither dictated them nor did they ever ask for dictations. Pinter: was only a sort of confidante

who knew what they were doing, and as a master weaver of stories, put them in a pattern which could spell a verbal as well as a visual message. Pinter says,

" When the thing was well cooked I began to form certain conclusions. The point is, however, that by the time the play was now its own world. It was determined by his own original engendering image. My conclusions were only useful in that they were informed by the growth of the work itself. I never held up the work in hand to another mirror- I related it to nothing outside itself. Certainly to no other work of literature or to any consideration of public approbation."

Pinter knew that the audience would be looking, at the end of the play, for the customary unravelling of the plot, the denouncement and the final outcome. Pinter's idea of drama however, does not provide such an end. Pinter believes that whatever happens on the stage will possess a potent dramatic image in itself, the very fact that people will be viewing will give an expression to the thing. Whatever is in the play will get across automatically. This is what Pinter says, " The curtain goes up and down. Something has happened. Right? Cockeyed, brutish, absurd, with no comment. Where is he comment, the slant, the explanatory note? In the play. Everything to do with the play is in the play.".

Pinter refers to the discussions, he apparently had with his Director Peter Wood. He says that it would be inappropriate to incorporate the words suggested by him in Stanley's speech as it would be " an inexcusable imposition and falsity on my part. Stanley cannot perceive his only valid justification— which is he is what he is— therefore he certainly can never be articulate about it. He knows only to attempt to justify himself by dream, by pretence and by bluff, through fright. If he had cottoned on to the fact that he need only admit to himself what he actually is and is not— than Goldberg and McCann would not have paid their visit, or if they had, the same course of events would have been by no means assured. Stanley would have been another man. The play would have been another play. A play with a 'sensitive intellectual' articulate hero in its centre, able to examine himself in any way clearly, would also have been another play. Stanley is the King of his castle and loses his kingdom because he assessed it and himself inaccurately."

Goldberg and McCann stand for the authority and evil power vested in them. Stanley for failure, failure to confront them, failure to prove himself and disprove them.

Pinter explains his portrayal of Goldberg and McCann , Stanley and Petey as well as the Boles household: " Goldberg and McCann? Dying, rotting, scabrous, the decayed spiders, the flower of our society. They know their way around. Our mentors. Our ancestry. Them. Fuck' em.—— Stanley can do nothing but make a noise . What else? What else has he discovered? He has been reduced to the fact that he is nothing but a gerk in the throat. But does this sound signify? It might very well. I think it does. He is trying to go further. He is on the edge of utterance. But it's a long, impossible edge and utterance, were he to succeed in falling into it, might very well prove to be only one cataclysmic, profound fart. Nor for instance, could Petey in his last chat with Goldberg and McCann deliver the thought for today——apart from anything else, we are not dealing with an articulate household and there is no Chorus in his play. In other words, I am afraid I do not find myself disposed to add a programme note to this piece.

Pinter does not disclaim his responsibility for his characters and his play. He wrote it, he says, with "intent maliciously, purposefully, in command of growth" Pinter was not striving for lucidity by elaboration; the play itself spoke what it had to say. The conflict between the society and the individual is amply clear too. ' We have agreed; the hierarchy, the Establishment, the arbiters, the socio-religious monsters arrive to effect alteration and censure upon a member of the club who has discarded responsibility (that word again) towards himself and others. (What is your opinion by the way, of the act of suicide?) He does posses, however, for my money, a certain fibre—he fights for his life. It doesn't last long this fight. His core being a quagmire of delusion, his mind a tenuous fusebox, he collapses under the weight of their accusation— an accusation compounded of the shitstained strictures of centuries of ' tradition'. Though non-conformist he is neither hero nor exemplar of revolt. Nothing salutary for the audience to identify itself with. And yet, at the same time, I believe that a greater degree of identification will take place than might seem likely. A great deal it seems to me, will depend

on the actor. If he copes with Stanley's loss of himself successfully I believe a certain amount of poignancy will emanate."

Pinter vouches for Stanley's behaviour as natural to himself and proclaims that though ' The Birthday Party' was a comedy it was, yet, a very serious piece of work. "As for the practical question of the end of Act Two where's the difficulty? Stanley behaves strangely. Why? Because his alteration—diminution has set in, he is rendered offcock (not off cock) , he has lost any adult comprehension and reverts to a childhood malice and mischief, as his first shelter. This is the beginning of his change, his fall. In the third Act we see the next phase. The play is a comedy because the whole state of affairs is absurd and inglorious. It is however, as you know, a very serious piece of work."

Harold Pinter emphasized the same points when he made a speech at the National Student Drama Festival in 1962, he had, he says, never started a play from any kind of abstract idea or theory. His characters, were never allegorical in the sense that he never burdened them to carry messages on morals, he did not fix them in any mould; he gave them enough freedom to grow and move as they would. Harold says that he " never envisaged my own characters as messengers of death, doom, heaven or the Milky Way or, in other words, as allegorical representations of any particular force, what ever that may mean. When a character cannot be comfortably defined or understood in terms of the familiar, the tendency is to perch him on a symbolic shelf, out of harm's way. Once there, he can be talked about but need not be lived with. In this way, it is easy to put up a pretty efficient smoke screen, on the part of the critics or the audience, against recognition, against an active and willing participation."

The theme of Protest and Subversion

Protest and subversion were by Pinter's own admission featured most commonly and significantly in his plays. Pinter had in a statement made on B.B.C in the programme "Omnibus" said that Protest and subversion had always held a significant place in his drama. He reiterated the same to Mel Gussow after two months of this programme in the year 1988.

"The Birthday Party" can be seen as a play of protest and subversion from many angles. Though at the face of it Goldberg and McCann are the subverter intruders, by implication Stanley is also one. Goldberg and McCann accuse him of depravity, violation and sabotaging the organization of which they were all members.

The protest in the play comes from Stanley, the chief character who is afflicted, oppressed and ultimately crushed by the oppressors. What these oppressors stand for is irrelevant, that is a wider issue, what we see in the play is not only an angry reaction by Stanley but also physical assault. Stanley kicks Goldberg in the stomach and exhausts his patience with his funny but evasive replies.

Batty assigns the cause of man's weak position to the uncertainty of his future and the ignorance of the external forces, social or otherwise. Though the play is critical of organizations and social structures that make virtues of submission and obedience that are seen as dehumanising forces yet it is patently not geared uniquely towards communicating such a message. Its chief theatrical device, the Machiavellian deus-ex-machina of the duo has other far-reaching, metaphoric resonance's that we also carry with us from any performance of the play. Its random intervention into the existence of Meg, Petey and Stanley might remind us of our own daily efforts to make sense of an erratic world that defies prediction. We might recognize in their panic our own endeavours to assert ourselves and secure confident identities in the face of exposing realities.

The individuals' confrontations with external forces, obliging him to accept conditions which he attempts to resist, governs the dramatic energies of Pinter's early plays, and it is a measure of their worth as pieces of theatre that these confrontations successfully convey both existential and implicitly political suggestion. When Irving Wardle famously applied the term 'comedy of menace' to Pinter's works, it was to denote this double-edged capacity to disturb that Pinter had crafted, through the flippant application of dark humour to situations in which characters were forced to face an implacable destiny.

Destiny handled in this way- not as an austere exercise in classicism, but as an incurable disease which one forgets about most of the time and whose lethal reminders may take the form of a joke- is an apt dramatic motif for an age of conditioned behaviour in which orthodox man is a willing collaborator in his own destruction.

Other writers like Michael Scott, discern in Pinter's plays, a deeper focus on the victim than the invader, though much of the time in the play " The Birthday Party" is taken up by Goldberg and McCann, filling the hours with their sinister presence and words, yet the welfare and safety of Stanley remains at the back of the reader's mind all through. The audience is silently protesting on behalf of Stanley. Michael sees the play as a study of Stanley's existence and his vulnerability.

The dislocation of the language as found in the Birthday Party complements the dislocation of the characters themselves. What is the foundation of Stanley's existence? Where within himself, within his society, his individual history can he find a defence against the attack? The specific nature of the attack does not matter. It is rather the vulnerability of the victim that is the focus.

Stanley the victim becomes the aggressor when it comes to Meg, who he is sure shall listen to him without protest. He can be openly rude with her hen agitated. Take the following as an example:

Look at her. You're just an old piece of rock cake, aren't you?) That's what you are, aren't you?

When there is no centre of stability, no foundation for one's existence, a victim can be an aggressor, an aggressor a victim, and words such as 'good' and 'evil' become meaningless These divisions don't exist in Pinter's characters: "It's rather ridiculous to try to understand people in those kinds of terms. Evil people. What the hell does that mean? Or bad people. And who are you then if you say that, and what are you?"

The moral focus is unknown. What matters are the relationships, the interaction between individuals within ' a territorial struggle'.

Francesca Coppa's essay " The Sacred joke : comedy and politics in Pinter's early Plays",deals with three major issues. Friends joke theory in context of Pinter's plays, Pinter's political concerns and audiences response. Since none of Pinter's character wholly deserves to be absolved and sympathised with. With Pinter's assiduous attempts to convey just the contrary. It is not easy to bet about the response of the audience.

The third party, the audience, is forced to take sides in the conflict between the joke teller and the victim: to laugh is to ally oneself with the aggressor, to refuse to laugh is to ally oneself with the victim. Comedy thus functions as a sort of litmus test for the audience. Will they laugh or not laugh? With whom will they side?

Francesca Coppa finds in Friends joke theory a useful key to Pinter's early plays. He quotes Christopher Innes to substantiate his point. Innes, notes that Pinter's plays are ' variations on the subject of dominance, control, exploitation, subjugation and victimisation. They are models of power structures. So, too, do tendentious jokes model power structures; so, too, jokes illustrate dominance and subjugation. Jokes, like Pinter's plays create moments of theatrical and dramatic crisis, which reveal previously invisible alliances and antagonisms.

Language, Silence and Pause

One statement in this speech should suffice to understand Pinter's use of language " A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experience, his present behaviour or his aspirations, nor give a comprehensive analysis of his motives is as legitimate and as worthy of attention as one who, can do all these things. The more acute the experience the less articulate its expression." Pinter shudders at the idea of using language that is stale and dead. He enumerates what makes a language acceptable to him, what use of words pleases him or distresses him. " I have mixed feelings about words myself. Moving among them, sorting them out, watching them appear on the page, from this I derive a considerable pleasure. But at the same time I have another strong feeling about words, which amounts to nothing les than nausea. Such a weight of words confronts us day in, day out, words spoken in a context such as this, words written by me and by others; the bulk of it a stale dead terminology, ideas endlessly repeated and permutated become platitudinous,

trite, meaningless. Given this nausea, it's very easy to be overcome by it and step back into paralysis. But if it is possible to confront this nausea, to follow it to its hilt, to move through it and out of it, then it is possible to say that something has occurred, that something has even been achieved."————

Most of the time, we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. But it's out of these attributes that a language arises. A language I repeat, where under what is said, another thing is being said.

The silence of the character sometimes conveys much more than the spoken word. It is when the characters are silent and in hiding that they are most evident to Pinter. He elaborates on this " There are two silences. One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is being employed. This speech is speaking of a language locked beneath it. That is its continual reference. The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen that keeps he other in its place. When true silence falls we are still left with echo but are nearer nakedness.

"I think that we communicate only to well, in our silence, in what is unsaid, and that what takes place is a continual evasion, desperate rearguard attempts to keep ourselves to ourselves. Communication is too alarming. To enter into someone else's life is too frightening. To disclose to others the poverty within us is too fearsome a possibility."

Language and structure- dashes and pauses

Pinter makes his comedy successfully comic and menacing at the same time with a high-level comedic technique. His use of language, structured, and cut to size for the specific effect that he wishes to create has been acknowledged even by his bitter critics: questions such as" why did the Chicken cross the road?" and " Is the number 846 possible or necessary?" cast a spell of doom on Stanley's life at the same time retaining the comic façade of the play. The unanswerable questions that Goldberg-McCann pose to the beleaguered Stanley Webber make us laugh as well as worry by their unreasonableness and the intentions of the speakers that lie behind these questions.

Pinter also uses skilfully comic devises such as repetition. Meg repeatedly uses the word 'nice' in the opening scene of 'The Birthday Party'.

'Behind Pinter's comedy one can perceive something more serious, alarming and disturbing, yet not fully exposed in the words that have been used.' to quote from Francesco Coppa. Pinter's skilful use of comedy is not incidental or merely pleasurable but rather crucial: the comedy routines in the earlier plays are maps to the themes and meanings of the plays as a whole. In an early book on George Bernard Shaw, G.K. Chesterson noted that 'amid the blinding jewellery of a million jokes one could generally ' discover the grave, solemn and sacred joke for which the play was written'. Pinter's works also tend to have identifiable 'sacred jokes', which reproduce the larger play into microcosm: Pinter uses the tendentious joke structure on the micro level as well as the macro. We may not in the final event, find the larger work funny, but that does not mean that the play is not constructed like a joke. Rather, our failure to laugh may be an indication that we, the audience, have come to the side (or have been taught to side) with the victim over the victimiser.

Like Chekov, the dominant form of communication, is made, in Pinter through the absence of direct explanation. His implicit drama depends on the subtext rather than the surface meaning of the words. The subtext in Pinter is comprised of two layers, the hidden meaning behind the words and the meaning when the words are not spoken at all. Within the subtext, Michael Scott points out, " is the strategy of pause and silence which in Pinter's plays are as important as the tense dialogue or the comic repartee or the long monologue."

Russel Brown who has made a penetrating study of the main features of Pinter's language says: The silences and pauses are considered in relation to the spoken word in a manner demanded by anyone rightly interested in the plays as primarily artefacts for performance. His interest is in the spatial and visual dimension of the play as much as in its text.

A well known characteristic of Pinter's dramatic writing, and another perpetrator of menace, is the infamous ' Pinter pause', Its most common incarnations are the simple indication pause, the more significant silence and the less obvious the three trail dots all slipped into scripts at appropriate moments. To Pinter's mind their presence is a matter of common sense and they are ' not formal conveniences or stresses but part of the body of the action'. He states that if actors play his scenes appropriately' they will find that a pause- whatever the hell it is – is inevitable'. The writer has sought to dismiss the critical emphasis that has been placed upon these distinguishing features of his drama:

"The pause is a pause because of what has just happened in the minds and guts of the characters and a silence equally means that something has happened to create the impossibility of anyone speaking for a certain amount of time- until they can recover from whatever happened before that silence."

At face value, then, these pauses, short pauses, silences and trail dots are simply codes for actors and their directors, suggested pointers to the rhythm of each scene. They add weight to the scene and their very conspicuous presence in the script acts as a form of score, providing a suggested tempo at which each scene might be played.

It would be only just to consider what Pinter himself had to say about their meaning and significance:

" I've had two full-length plays produced in London. The first ran a week and the second ran a year. Of course, there are differences between the two plays. In 'The Birthday Party' I employed a certain amount of dashes in the text, between phrases. In The Caretaker I cut down the dashes and used dots instead. So that instead of, the text would read: ' Look, dash, who, dash, I, dash, dash, dash,' the text would read: ' Look, dot, dot, dot, who, dot, dot, dot, I, dot, dot, dot, dot.' So it's possible to deduce from this that dots are more popular than dashes and that's why 'The Caretaker' had a longer run than the Birthday party. The fact that in neither case could you hear the dots and dashes in performance is besides the point. You can't fool the critics for long. They can tell a dot from a dash a mile off, even if they can hear nothing."

Pinter's blackly humorous tales are told in words of love, domesticity, coquettery, solace, threat, external danger and internal fear, but much is also disclosed by the faltering in words and failure of speech, by the emitting of sounds like the uh-gug's and caahhs. Last but not the least, the feelings are expressed and equally forcefully in dots, dashes and silence.

What words say and beyond

Pinter not only uses words meticulously and with constant awareness of the 'other language' that can be locked underneath the spoken words, he also has a great sense of timing. His writing has tension and climax, and is continually dramatic. Words run ahead or lag behind the thoughts of his characters; they surprise, digress, tantalise and occasionally, seem to clinch the dramatic conflict.

Often, in Pinter the clearest falsehoods introduce, or are accompanied by, the most potent words, words which are found to reveal several levels of meaning or suggest a large wake of association. Petey's

Yes, he's….still asleep

Let him…sleep

Say's more than that Stanley, according to him, is in bed (which was the wording offered by Meg). As Petey had watched Stanley being escorted to the waiting Black car, dressed in Black, almost blind without his spectacles and quite silent. Moreover the audience has witnessed Stanley reduced to childlike cries, and then drawing 'a long breath which shudders down his body'. Just before Petey's entry he had crouched on a chair, shuddered, relaxed, dropped his head and became still'. After his 'Birthday' Stanley has regressed as if into the womb, in a foetal position, but quiet and still as if dead. Is Stanley indeed being 'put to sleep'? Or is Petey expressing his own fearful response in trying to let the sleeping lie? After this falsehood Petey is, certainly, silent, as Stanley was and, probably, still is: is Petey 'sleeping' too, intentionally.

The most difficult to describe is Pinter's manipulation of rhythms. Speeches run in one kind of phrasing, until some sub textual pressure lengthens, shortens or quickens the utterance and so, by sound alone, betrays the change of engagement. The last episode of The Birthday Party illustrates this:

(Meg comes past the window and enters by the back door. Petey studies the front page of the paper)

Meg (coming downstage): The car's gone.

Petey : Yes.

Meg : Have they gone?

Petey : Yes.

Meg : Won't they be in for lunch?

Petey : No.

Meg : Oh, what a shame. (she put her bag on the table,) It's hot out. (She hangs her coat on a hook) What are you doing?

Petey : Reading.

Meg : Is it good?

Petey : All right.

(She sits by the table)

Meg : Where's Stan?

(pause)

is Stan down yet, Petey?

Petey : No….he's ..

Meg : Is he still in bed?

Petey : Yes, he's….still asleep.

Meg : Still? He will be late for his breakfast.

Petey : Let him ….sleep.

Society and the individual

Goldberg / McCann and Stanley Webber in 'The Birthday Party'.

Each of Harold Pinter's [first] four plays ends in the virtual annihilation of an individual. ' The Birthday Party' also ends in the virtual annihilation of Stanley when he is taken from his refuge for special treatment. The hero becomes the victim of non-descript and unexpected villains who assault him in a telling and murderous idiom. Pinter's invective against the system that he tries to personify in the characters of Goldberg and McCann remains ill-defined and vague. Pinter's assertion of humanity becomes puzzling since the institutions that have structured human morality and welfare become, the immoral agents of the destruction of the individual.

The hero victim who is targeted is not without blame either; it is equally difficult to associate him with humanity. He does succeed to win our sympathy but fails to win our approval. Let us look at Pinter's portrayal of Stanley:

" Stanley, the man in question, is an obese, shambling, unpresentable creature who has moved into a dilapidated seaside boarding house where, as the only guest, he is able to lord over his adoring landlady and gain recognition as a concert pianist of superhuman accomplishment. But even in this protected atmosphere there are menacing intrusions: He cannot banish the memory of arriving to give a recital and finding the hall locked up; there are enemies. And when the enemies arrive- in the persons of a suspiciously fluent Jew and his Irish henchman- they seem as much, furies emerging from Stanley's night thoughts as physical characters. His downfall is swift. Scrubbed, shaved, hoisted out of his shapeless trousers and stuffed into a morning suit he is led away at

the end in a catatonic trance.”

It is difficult to articulate the tragic-comedy of his characters in the existing grammar of social relations. A socially recognizable situation in the play, of Stanley’s life at the boarding house and Goldberg’s / McCann’s holiday visit is recognizable, yet not realistic. What kind of a man is Goldberg? Goldberg is definitely not Nietzschean, he is ruthless, no doubt in the exercise of his power, but not for his personal pleasure or satisfaction, he is a crusader, who has come to Stanley who had deceived the organization to which they all belonged and had deserted it by fraud.

Stanley’s situation as a guilty persecuted figure is never worked on a human level nor is that of Goldberg- McCann, they stand out in our minds as theatre figures of a familiar style. Michael Scott sees Goldberg as a typical representation of institutionalised threat to the individuals’ freedom in the name of care and social responsibility. “We recognize here, on the naturalistic level, the complacent cliché’s and rhythms of a semi-educated Jewish dealer with a flair for ‘flannelling’. (‘What can you lose?’, and the raconteur’s use of *would:* ‘on Shabbus we’d go…’) Yet it is highly patterned, and the cumulative effect of Goldberg’s speeches (and they tend to dominate the play) is to parody a type of culture-patter: the sinister complacencies of the successful Head of Family and Business. So a highly individual language is used to expose the way elements in our language compel conformity. In Act II the function of Goldberg’s speeches is quite clear: the farcical paean about the joys of boyhood(I’d tip my hat to the toddlers…’) and the fit man’s cheerful walking to sunshine (‘ all the little birds, the smell of grass, Church bells, tomato juice…’) amount to a verbal limbering up for the verbal torture of Stanley; and the birthday celebration speeches, after the inquisition inflicted on the victim, are experienced as a black ritual. But by Act III Goldberg’s patterned loquacity becomes more arbitrary. In particular Goldberg’s speeches when left alone with McCann seem to have little function apart from ‘creating a scene’ and reinforcing the cultural bankruptcy of Goldberg through making him mouth a medley of slogans. We do not respond here to the violent parody of institutionalised caring. But the detail of the mumbo-jumbo is so far fetched (farcical) that it is only — through the image of the helpless victim and his reduction to gurgling speechlessness—that we connect this ritual with any pattern of felt persecution.”

Goldberg’s seduction of Lulu by engaging her emotionally is associated with what is unmindfully permitted to a man of position in society, it also sounds ironical after Goldberg’s avowal of temperance and self-control. In the contrast between the Sunday school teacher whom he had let go ‘ just with a kiss’ and his present behaviour lies the dichotomy of his pretension and practice. Goldberg’s speech about the youth of his day with temperance as their hall-mark and the youth of today who were perverted and permissive sounds incongruous and jarring in the present system. “When I was a youngster, of a Friday, I used to go for a walk down the canal with a girl who lived down my road. A beautiful girl. What a voice that bird had! A nightingale, my word of honour. Good? Pure? She wasn’t a Sunday school teacher for nothing. Anyway, I’d leave her with a little kiss on the cheek — I never took liberties—we weren’t like the young men these days in those days. We knew the meaning of respect.” This speech he makes about his youth stands in sharp contrast to his dialogues with Meg and Lulu later on. Goldberg can be flirtatious as well as a rascal, depending on when and to whom he is speaking. “ Walk up the boulevard. Let’s have a look at you. What a carriage. What’s your opinion, McCann? Like a Countess, nothing less. Madam, now turn about and promenade to the kitchen. What deportment!”

Goldberg has a shrewd eye. He can get at the weakness of women, the moment he sets his eyes on them. He understands Meg’s love for Stanley and for simple pleasures, good clothes, a good party and a lot of adulation. Goldberg would satisfy all of them without raising in her mind a moments doubt. With Lulu it is different. He knows that Lulu, is more vulnerable than Meg, she is younger too. Moreover, Meg’s entire attention is absorbed by Stanley. Lulu is relatively more free with no encumbrances. Lulu is completely knocked down by Goldberg. “ He was a marvellous speaker,” she never knew she was going to meet him there, he had come out of the blue” Within minutes of her having met her she completely gives herself to him with complete trust. When she

meets Goldberg in the last Act, she expects him to be serious about her. She is pained by his casual behaviour and accuses Goldberg of having taken advantage of her. Goldberg's of-hand manner with Lulu, in this scene shows his capability to be relaxed in the most critical situations.

Goldberg: Who opened the briefcase, me or you? Lulu, schmulu, let bygones be bygones, do me a turn. Kiss and make up.

Lulu: I wouldn't touch you.

Goldberg: And today I am leaving.

Lulu: You are leaving?

Goldberg: Today.

Lulu: *(with growing anger*). You used me for a night. A passing fancy.

Goldberg: Who used who?

Lulu: You made use of me by cunning when my defences were down.

Goldberg: Who took them down?

Lulu: That's what you did. You quenched your ugly thirst. You taught me things girl shouldn't know before she has been married at least three times!

Goldberg: Now you are a jump ahead! What are you complaining about?

Enter McCann quickly.

Lulu: You didn't appreciate me for myself. You took all those liberties only to satisfy your appetite. Oh Nat, why did you do it?

Goldberg: You wanted me to do it, Lulula, so I did it.

Goldberg draws the blue print, commands and commissions; McCann carries it out. Perpetuators of evil, they have assigned different roles to themselves. Goldberg does not shed his civility and good manners; McCann is the one who does the dirty jobs for him. In the above scene with Lulu, it is McCann who gets her going. She is the only other person in the play, apart from Stanley who is subjected to interrogation by McCann, to keep her out of their way.

McCann: Your sort, you spend too much time in bed.

Lulu: What do you mean?

McCann: Have you got nothing to confess?

Lulu: What?

McCann (savagely): Confess!

Lulu: Confess what?

McCann: Down on your knees and confess!

Lulu: What does he mean?

Goldberg: Confess. What can you lose?

Lulu: What, to him?

Goldberg: He's only been unfrocked six months.

McCann: Kneel down woman and tell me the latest!

Lulu (retreating to the back door) I've seen everything that's happened. I know what's going on. I've got a pretty shrewd idea.

McCann (advancing): I've seen you hanging about the Rock of Cashel, profaning the soil with your goings on. Out of my sight!

Lulu: I'm going.

Goldberg is like almost all of Pinter's characters, a liar. So are McCann, Stanley and Lulu. It is difficult to count the lies they tell, they not only revert to them, they plan them for calculated ends and purposes. Stanley, McCann and Goldberg studied in the light of Guido Almansi's essay ' Pinter's Idiom of lies emerge as confirmed liars, perverted humanized animals who have no grain of truth left in them.

"But although the Pinterian hero is often as inarticulate as a pig, stumbling pathetically on every word, covering a pitifully narrow area of meaning with his utterances, blathering through his life he does not, like any honest animal seem to whine or grunt or giggle or grumble to give an outlet to his instincts, desires, passions of fears. He grunts in order to hide something else. Even when he grunts (' Oh, I see. Well, that's handy. Well, that's …. I tell you what, I might do that….just till I get myself sorted out'.), his grunt is a lie. Pinter's characters are often abject, stupid, vile, and aggressive: but they are always intelligent enough in their capacity as conscientious and persistent liars, whether lying to others or to themselves, to hide the truth if they know truth's truthful abode. They are too cunning in their cowardice to be compared to noble animals. They are perverted in their actions and speech: hence human."

In short, to subscribe to G. Almansi, You can trust his characters neither when they are talking to others nor when they are talking to themselves would not be wrong. They do behave like beasts, he says. Their language articulates the three techniques of animals: fright, flight and mimetism. Stanley uses language either to attack, or to retreat or to disguise what he is. Goldberg uses it only to attack and hide. He solemnly makes statements about the worth of respect, love for the wife and family, reverence for parents and compassion for the destitute only to hide the fact, that he didn't in reality care about human values at all. He finds Pinter's statements about the danger of communication where he had said that communication was too alarming: disclosing oneself to others or forcing them to disclose themselves fearsome. Almansi regrets Pinter's approach since it led to neglect and disuse of words that denote the better nature of man.

He rejects Pinter's language because it is based on a policy of reciprocal misunderstanding and misinformation. It spurns sincerity; honesty, linguistic generosity and openness in favour of the diabolical game of hide and seek.

It is true of the language used by all the characters in ' The Birthday Party' except Petey. Their sojourns into the past are lies, lies and only lies. Stanley's success story as a pianist, Goldberg's as an orator a beloved son and husband and Meg's pink room in her father's house have been woven on the spot. None of the characters except Petey is trustworthy.

The presence of ambiguity in the language of the characters is not because of the indeterminacy of their thoughts or intentions; it is evasive and obstructive by intention, as a weapon of attack ad exploitation. The rhythms of words are used to enhance the effect of ritual and litany. The cross-examination of Stanley Webber is held in the manner of a ritual with the speech that is completely dehumanised: resulting into an incoherence of the logic of the exercise. Matter has already been settled, the ritual serves only as a catalyst to the final catastrophe.

Poem

Harold Pinter's poem written in the style of a ballad and called "A view of the party" is a good addendum to the play. The poem was published in 1958 in " The poems and Prose of Harold Pinter (1949-1977). The poem throws light on the events of the play, helping us to appreciate it in the light of Pinter's own perception.

A View Of The Party

i

The thought that Goldberg was
A man she might have known
Never crossed Meg's words
That morning in the room.

The thought that Goldberg was
A man another knew
Never crossed her eyes
When, glad, she welcomed him.

The thought that Goldberg was
A man to dread and know
Jarred Stanley in the blood
When, still he heard his name.

While Petey knew, not then,
But later, when the light
Full upon their scene,
He looked into the room.

And by morning Petey saw
The light begin to dim
(That daylight full of sun)
Though nothing could be done

ii

Nat Goldberg who arrived
With a smile on every face,
Accompanied by McCann
Set a change upon the place.

The thought that Goldberg was
Sat in the centre of the room,
A man of weight and time,
To supervise the game.

The thought that was McCann
Walked in upon this feast,
A man of skin and bone,
With a green stain on his chest.

Allied in their theme,
They imposed upon the room
A dislocation and doom,

Though Meg saw nothing done.

The party they began,
To hail the birthday in,
Was generous and affable,
Though Stanley sat alone.

The toasts were said and sung
All spoke of other years,
Lulu, on Goldberg's breast,
Looked up into his eyes.

And Stanley- sat alone,
A man he might have known,
Triumphant on his hearth,
Which never was his own.

For Stanley had no home,
Only where Goldberg was,
And his Bloodhound McCann,
Did Stanley remember his name.

They played at Blind man's buff,
Blindfold the game was run,
McCannn tracked Stanley down,
The darkness down and gone.

Found the game lost and won,
Meg, all memory gone,
Lulu's love night spent,
Petey impotent;

A man they never knew
In the centre of the room,
And Stanley's final eyes
Broken by McCann.

The first two stanzas tell us about Meg's complete ignorance of the men who were coming to her house, it never crossed her mind that Goldberg was a man whom " another knew". The word another stands for Stanley and the thrust is upon the fact that Meg never suspected that Stanley knew Goldberg.
Stanley's fear and apprehension at the very name of Goldberg are expressed in the third stanza. Goldberg is a man to dread and his name " Jarred Stanley in the blood".
Petey's complete ignorance of who the men were and his helplessness in saving Stanley form the content of stanzas four and five. Petey had seen the lights the house plunged in darkness when he came at night, the darkness spelled the fall of Stanley to doom..
Goldberg is described as a man of weight and time, holding all the authority, it is he who supervises the game, of " the Blind man's bluff" and the more intriguing game of Stanley's hunt. It is he who" sat in the corner of the

room and set a change upon the place". McCann is mentioned only as an accomplice; a man of skin and bone who carries out the job with Goldberg.

The most significant stanza, showing Goldberg and McCann as the "external force", is the crux of the play. McCann and Goldberg as an allied power of invasion dislocate the house and set doom upon it. But Meg has so far understood nothing.

The isolation of Stanley in the party that is organized to celebrate his birthday evokes strange feelings. Stanley is isolated, the Boles home is not his home, and the home he had has associations with Goldberg and McCann. It is McCann that tracks Stanley down during the game of the Blind man's Buff.

The scene of the party, where Meg has lost all the money and Lulu has spent a love night with Goldberg ends with Stanley being taken away by Goldberg and McCann. Stanley has also been deprived of his final eyes.

The poem suggests, though obliquely, connections between Stanley and the intruders, in the past. It also spells explicitly the nature of the doom that befalls Stanley. His utter loneliness and the lack of a sense of belonging are also referred to. Pinter has cleverly been able to describe the characters, of Meg, Lulu and Petey in very short references to them. The poem, at the end instils a feeling of fear, sorrow and helplessness in the reader's mind.

Excerpts selected from critical works on Harold Pinter.

Pinter's Place in Drama

" In Sir Peter Halls, recent Clark lectures at Cambridge, on the idea of the mask, he concluded by discussing the plays of Beckett and Pinter, in a series of reference points that stretched in terms of Dramatic writing from Aeschylus to Shakespeare and Mozart. There seems to be no incongruity only continuity.

Racial Prejudices in 'The Birthday Party'

It is only in The Birthday Party, Pinter's first full-length play (1957) that elements of music-hall cross-talk begin to appear. Pinter's two comic routiner's (funny man and stooge, ring master and crony) in the shape of a stage Jew and a stage Irishman provide much of the play's hilarity. And yet it is deeply troubling play; its one- set, three act form with strong curtains, which divide the action in to before, during, and after the party of the pay's title, obscures the fact that it is an exceedingly complex piece of drama. It is " many plays to many men," as Trussler says, who chooses to see it as " oedipal tragic-farce" which is, " allegorically, a working out of revenge and an expiation of guilt, in which two exploited and spat upon races turn the tables on their persecutor" (The Plays of Harold Pinter, p.37). This leaves many questions unanswered, not the least of which is why Pinter should have made victim and victimizer so nearly identical.(Volker Strunk: Harold Pinter, Towards a Poetics of his Plays)

Intruders as projections of Stanley's mind

Perhaps a better way in the play is to suggest that its two visitors (with links to a sinister, unnamed "organization" which allows one to see it as metaphysical, criminal, political, religious or what have you) are projections of Stanley's unconscious; representatives of an externalised part of Stanley's psyche, and, simultaneously, characters in their own right, projections with a life of their own.

(Peter Raby – Introduction ' The Cambridge Companion to Harold Pinter')

Understanding Pinter

Pinter says of his characters:

"Between my lack of biographical data about them and the ambiguity about what they say there lies a territory which is not only worthy of exploration but which it is compulsory to explore. You and I, the characters which, grow on a page, most of the time we're inexpressive, giving little away, unreliable, elusive, evasive, obstructive, unwilling. But it's out of these attributes that a language arises. A language, I repeat, where, under hat is said, another, thing is being said."

Pinter's London

When Irving Wardle describes him as 'the poet of London transport, he recognised him rightly as some one on the move. But the routes are not equally available… And there are barriers to be crossed. Pinter's London is zoned and it is only permeable for those who have the right qualifications'. (Wardle, Comedy of Menace).

Sex in Pinter

The 1950's are supposedly dull period in the history of sexual mores and it is true that many of Pinter's would-be-genteel characters (Meg in The Birthday Party, for instance) have perfected a curiously respectable double-speak, which enables them to hint at sexual longings without actually having them… Sex in Pinter is invariably a double bind, a power-struggle and a mind-game in which there is no certain victor and no end in sight. (John Stokes. Pinter and the 1950's).

Pinter's new form of Theatre

I think the achievement of a Pinter production must be that the two plays meet. Because what stirs the audience is not the mask, not the control, but what is underneath it: that's what upsets them, that's what terrifies and moves them. In that sense Pinter's is a new form of theatre. It is very difficult to point to anybody else and say, ' That's the way he operates too'. Beckett of course, sometimes.
(Interview with Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler)

Pinter's Jewish ness

The extremity of family affection- the family unit being something that holds and encloses and makes everything possible, and yet also destroys everything, I don't say that is something, which is special to the Jewish race, but it's something, which they seem to have an extreme instinct for. but we all do it. Again, though, they are not ' Jewish' plays; to say that the homecoming is about a Jewish family is already wrong. It isn't. And we went out of the way to make sure that they were not 'Jewish' actors.
(Interview with Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler)

Pinter's Pessimism

But I think what is for me wonderful about Pinter is that in an unblinkingly hostile situation where everybody does go wrong in some way or the another, there are little moments of light and tenderness which are cherished. He is very pessimistic dramatist: but I don't really understand how anybody could honestly be writing in the 1960s and 1970s and be particularly sunny. People are always saying to me, ' Why don't you do happy plays, that are life-enhancing?' to which the answer is ' Well, why don't people write them?' But I find the great thing about him is that his tenderness and his compassion are not sentimental, but absolutely, unblinkingly accurate.
(Interview with Catherine Itzin and Simon Trussler)

Important Questions (Long Answers)

1. What are the difficulties of placing Pinter strictly into the realistic, naturalistic or absurdist tradition? What are the salient features of ' The Birthday Party' and to what tradition does the play conform? Discuss.
2. 'The strategy of pause and silence in Pinter's plays are as important as the tense dialogue or the comic repartee or the long monologue'. How far do you agree with this? Discuss with reference to 'The Birthday Party.'
3. " The dislocation of the language compliments the dislocation of the characters in' The Birthday Party'. Do you agree? Justify your answer with examples from the play.
4. Pinter has stated that his art is neither didactic nor political, that his plays express elements of human conduct in which lie their strengths and weaknesses. Evaluate Pinter's 'The Birthday Party' in the light of the above remark.
5. 'The Birthday Party' ends with the total annihilation of Stanley. In what way is his annihilation symbolic? Is his struggle against Goldberg and McCann an allegory of the prevalent social and political conflicts?

6. Like Osborne Pinter ‘ Looks back in Anger’, like Beckett Pinter ‘ Looks forward to nothing’. Pinter has created, however, his own distinctive and dramatic version of man versus the system. Discuss with reference to ‘ The Birthday Party.’
7. For all the realistic appearance of Pinter’s characters, it is symbolism which extends their meaning to humanity’. How far are the characters in ‘The Birthday Party’ symbolic and what forces do they represent?
8. Quietness is a key word for Pinter. His most characteristic effect is one of violence exploding with alarming unexpectedness into an equally alarming quietness. When is this change perceived in ‘The Birthday Party’? What dramatic effect is achieved by it?
9. How would you account for the hostility in the audience as well as critics towards ‘The Birthday Party’ on is first production. What were the variations which caused this reaction? Elucidate.
10. ‘ Stanley’s situation as a persecuted and guilty figure is never worked out on the human level’ How does Pinter elicit, in spite of this, a sympathetic response from the audience for Stanley? Discuss in light of Stanley’s role in the play.
11. ‘ Goldberg’s speeches in the play follow different patterns in different Acts. Their function varies according to the situation and characters they are addressed to ‘ Discuss Goldberg’s speeches in the play, in light of the above remark.
12. Meg and Lulu, the two women in the play show Pinter’s close observation of women. How far would you agree with the remark that though Pinter’s portrayal of women is very sensitive, one always feels that it’s a man looking at women, the feminine enigma remains?
13. Attempt a character sketch of Stanley, Meg, Goldberg.

Short Answer Questions

1. What are Pinter’s main concerns in the play, ‘The Birthday Party’? Does he mean to be didactic, what message, if any, is he able to put across to the reader?
2. Is virtue in women of much importance either to Pinter or his characters in the play? Discuss with reference to Meg and Lulu’s character in the play.
3. Discuss McCann as the henchman of Goldberg.
4. Discuss the device of mystification of the past and change of names in the play.
5. What is the significance of the birthday party scene in the play? Why is Petey kept away from the scene?
6. Petey is the only character in ‘The Birthday Party’ without fantasies of the past or future. Attempt an evaluation of his character in the context of his role where he neither says nor does anything.
7. Attempt a critical analysis of Meg- Stanley relationship.
8. What in the last scene of the play suggests that Goldberg and McCann have triumphed? What changes in Stanley suggest his having been converted? Attempt to share your feelings at the end of the play.
9. What role does Lulu play in ‘The Birthday Party’? What light does her character throw on Pinter’s view of women?
10. Why does Meg give a toy drum to Stanley on his birthday? What does it signify; do you find any relationship between the drum and Stanley’s past as a pianist?
11. Discuss ‘The Birthday Party’ as a ‘comedy of menace.’
12. Attempt a character sketch of Petey, Lulu.

Important Passages for Reference to Context

Act One

Meg: Stan! Stanny! Stan! I’m coming up to fetch you if you don’t come down! I’m coming up! I’m going to

count three! One! Two! Three! I'm coming to get you!

Stanley: I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot. My father nearly came down to hear me. Well, I dropped him a card anyway. But I don't think he could make it. No, I - I lost the address, that was it. Yes. Lower Edmonton. Then after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert somewhere else it was. In winter I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was closed; the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They pulled a fast one. I'd like to know who was responsible for that. All right, Jack, I can take a tip. They want me to crawl down on my bended knees. Well I can take a tip… any day of the week.

Lulu. Do you want to have a look at your face? You could do with a shave do you know that? Don't you ever go out? I mean, what do you do, just sit around the house like this all day long? Hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long? Hasn't Mrs Boles got enough to do without having you under her feet all day long?

Goldberg. When I was an apprentice yet, McCann, every second Friday of the month my Uncle Barney used to take me to the seaside, regular as clockwork. Brighton, Canvey Island, Rottingdan – Uncle Barney wasn't particular. After lunch on Shabbuss we'd go and sit in a couple of deck chairs – you know, the ones with canopies – we'd have a little paddle, we'd watch the tide coming in, going out, the sun coming down – golden days, believe me, McCann. Of course, he was an impeccable dresser. One of the old school. He had a house just outside Basingstoke at the time. Respected by the whole community. Culture? Don't talk to me about culture. He was an all-round man, what do you mean? He was a cosmopolitan.

Goldberg: Uncle Barney taught me that the word of a gentleman is enough. That's why; when I had to go away on business I never carried any money.

Goldberg: All is dependent on the attitude of our subject. At all events, McCann, I can assure you that the assignment will be carried out and the mission accomplished with no excessive aggravation to you or myself. Satisfied?

Act Two

Stanley:I used to live very quietly – played records, that's about all. Everything delivered to the door. Then I started a little private business, in a small way, and it compelled me to come down here – kept me longer that I expected. You never get used to living in someone else's house. Don't you agree? I lived so quietly. You can only appreciate what you've had when things change.

Stanley: I have changed, but I'm still the same man that I always was. I mean, you wouldn't think, to look at me, really… I mean, not really, that I was the sort of bloke to – to cause any trouble, would you? Do you know what I mean?

Stanley: I know Ireland very well. I've many friends there. I love that country and I admire and trust its people. I trust them. They respect the truth and they have a sense of humour. I think their policemen are wonderful. I've been there. I've never seen such sunsets.

Goldberg: When I was a youngster, of a Friday, I used to go for a walk down the canal with a girl who lived down the road. A beautiful girl. What a voice that bird had! A nightingale, my word of honour. Good? Pure? She wasn't a Sunday school teacher for nothing. Anyway, I'd leave her with a little kiss on the cheek – I never took liberties – we weren't like the young men these days in those days. We knew the meaning of respect. So I'd give her a peck and I'd bowl back home.

Goldberg: What a thing to celebrate – birth! Like getting up in the morning. Marvellous! Some people don't like the idea of getting up in the morning. I've heard them. Getting up in the morning, they say what is it? Your skin's crabby, you need a shave, your eyes are full of muck, your mouth is like a bog house, the palms of your hands are full of sweat, your nose is clogged up, your feet stink, what are you but a corpse waiting to be washed? Whenever, I hear that point of view I feel cheerful. Because I know what it is to wake up with the sun shining, to the sound of the lawnmower, all the little birds, the smell of the grass, church bells, tomato juice.

Goldberg: Say what you feel. What you honestly feel. It's Stanley's birthday. Your Stanley. Look at him. Look at him and it'll come.

Meg: Well – it's very, very nice to be here tonight, in my house, and I want to propose a toast to Stanley, because it's his birthday, and he's lived here for a long while now, and he's my Stanley now. And he's the only Stanley I know, and I know him better than all the world, although he doesn't think so. Well, I could cry because I'm so happy, having him here and not got away, on his birthday, and there isn't anything I wouldn't do for him, and all you good people here tonight.

Goldberg: Well, I want to say first that I've never been so touched to the heart as by the toast we've just heard. How often, in this day ands age, do you come across real, true warmth? What's happened to the love, the bonhomie, the unashamed expression of affection of the day before yesterday, that our mums taught us in the nursery?

Goldberg: I believe in a good laugh, a day's fishing, a bit of gardening. I was very proud of my old greenhouse, made out of my own spit and faith. That's the sort of man I am. Not size but quality. A little Austin, tea in Fullers, a library book from Boots, and I'm satisfied. But just now, I say just now, the lady of the house said her piece and I for one am knocked over by the sentiments she expressed.

Goldberg: We've heard a lady extend the sum total of her devotion, in all its pride, plume and peacock, to a member of her own living race. Stanley my heartfelt congratulations.

Goldberg: I'd say hullo to the little boys, the little girls – I never made distinctions – and then back I'd go, back to my bungalow with the flat roof. "Simey," my wife used to shout, "quick, before it gets cold!" And there on the table what would I see? The nicest piece of rollmop and pickled cucumber you could wish to find on a plate.

Meg: My little room was pink. I had a pink carpet and pink curtains, and I had musical boxes all over the room. And they played me to sleep. And my father was a very big doctor. That's why I never had any complaints. I was cared fro, and I had little sisters and brothers in other rooms, all different colours.

Act Three

Goldberg. Sometimes it happens gradual – day by day it grows and grows and grows… day by day. And then other times it happens all at once. Poof! Like that! The nerves break. There's no guarantee how it's going to happen, but with certain people… it's a foregone conclusion.

Goldberg: All my life! I've said the same. Play up, play up, and play the game. Honour thy father and they mother. All along the line. Follow the line, the line, McCann, and you can't go wrong. I'm self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit. I kept my eye on the ball. School? Don't talk to me about school. Top in all subjects. And for why? Because I'm telling you, I'm telling you, follow my line? Follow by mental? Learn by heart. Never write down a thing. And don't go too near the water.

Goldberg: Always bid good morning to the neighbours. Never, never forget your family, for they are the rock, the constitution and the core.

Goldberg: And that's why I've reached my position, McCann. Because I've always been as fit as a fiddle. My motto. Work hard and play hard. Not a day's illness.

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TONI MORRISON

The Bluest Eye

Unit-IV
Toni Morrison: The Bluest Eye

Introduction

Though Toni Morrison does not like to be classified, she can best be described as a 'black woman writer' – a category that she too embraces. These classifications may marginalize the potential of Morrison but for students of Morrison these are important because these tell on various aspects of Morrison's genius.

When critics call her a "poetic writer" they seem to pay tribute to the lyrical charm of her works. Some call her "D. H. Lawrence of the black psyche" for her insight into the problems that ultimately form the black experience. There are some who pay attention to her magical realism and consider it as a divide between the lyrical modernism of Zora Neale Hurston and existential naturalist experimentation of Richard Wright. Though she is a black writer there are some who would like to call her a nationalist because she is the one who "first approached question of race and imagination with urgency and rigorous open-mindedness,"(New Republic, Brian Lanker).

In fact Morrison is one of the most sophisticated novelists whose singular accomplishment (if one is only to point out one), as a writer is that she has evolved as an artist par categorization. It is for this literary representation that she won for herself 1993 Nobel Prize for literature. She was the first black to receive this honour, which is a validation of her personal achievements, the artistry of African American literature besides being the recognition of the voice of a female.

Second of four children of George and Ramah Willis Wofford Toni Morrison was born Chloe Anthony Wofford in 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, a steel town on the bank of Lake Erie, which played a significant role in sharpening the sensibility of Morrison. It was from here that she gathered the black experience, which she was to dramatize in her novels later. Here she learnt about community that is both a "support system and a hammer.' Again here she learned that neither race, class nor gender precluded opposition to inhumane conditions.

Morrison developed a strong primary identity under the care of her confident, assertive mother who in indignation had written a letter to President Roosevelt drawing his attention to the bug ridden meal being served to the welfare recipients. She owed her strength to her hardworking racist father who distrusted every white man on earth. They taught her to imbibe in her self-respect and a critical attitude to the world especially to the white standards of beauty and success. Morrison enriched herself both with the folk wisdom that her maternal grand parents imparted through their folk tales of supernatural and the dream book they used to foretell future. Morrison received formal education and was the first in the family to go to college. She did her BA from Howard University in1953 and MA from Connell University with her thesis on Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. Her teaching career had already begun at Texas Southern University when in 1957 she returned to Howard as an instructor in English. She married Harold Morrison in 1958,had two sons but divorced him in1964. In 1965 she joined as senior editor in Random House in New York. Though she had started writing at Howard, it took her a marriage, two sons, divorce, job as a editor, single parenting and writing at night to bloom fully into a class of writer that she is today. Morrison is a popular writer whom awards entailed. She won various awards and honours, the Nobel Prize being the highest. She has authored one play, 7 Novels and a book on literary criticism, which are as follows:

1. The Bluest Eye, 1969.
2. Sula, 1973 (National Book Award Nomination in 1975, Ohoana Book Award 1975)

3. Song of Solomon, 1977 (National Book Critics Circle Award in 1977, American Acad. and Inst. of Arts and Letters Award in 1977)
4. Tar Baby, 1981.
5. Beloved, 1987 (Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988, Robert F. Kennedy Book Award 1988, Melcher Award, National Book Award Nomination in 1987, National Books Critics Circle Award Nomination in 1987)
6. Jazz, 1992.
7. Paradise, 1997.
8. Playing In The Dark: Whiteness And Literary Imagination in 1992.
9. Dreaming Emmett, (Play) 1986.

The Bluest Eye (1970) is about the rape of a black girl by her father who has been emasculated by white men. It is about the dangers of moral freedom. Sula (1974) is the story of a young woman's defiance for freedom from restricting community that is both a victim and a victimizer. It is about the friendship and the slippery boundaries of good and evil. Song of Solomon (1977) is the story of feminization of a black man who comes to define freedom not disassociated with responsibilities. Tar Baby (1981) is the story of a girl who accepts her commoditification but defines freedom in terms of radical feminism and hence in masculine terms. It also questions the concept of freedom with renunciation of social responsibilities. Beloved (1987), Jazz (1992) and Paradise (1997) form the trilogy of Morrison with a stress on collectivity. Beloved is more about the slaves than about Sethe. It is about freedom and owning that freed self. Jazz capturing the post war and early migration conditions highlights the uprootedness, alienation and struggle of the black in the city through the story of a marital crisis. Paradise as a culmination of Morrison's art and vision is the story of generations and places. Characters remain insignificant in comparison to the places. This novel totally obliterates the centre so that a new world is created.

The Bluest Eye is the turbulent story of Picola. It launches a powerful attack on the relationship between western standards of female beauty and the psychological oppression of black woman besides exposing "the ugliness" of black poverty, powerlessness and loss of positive self-concept. Picola Breedlove is rejected by society, black community and her mother as ugly. Longing for love, educated under the White Look she wants to escape her ugliness by acquiring a pair of blue eyes. Stepping into womanhood she is raped by her father and beaten mercilessly by her mother. She goes to Soaphead Church, a so-called supernaturalist who deceives her into believing that she has got blue eyes. Thus Picola lapses into madness and gives birth to a stillborn child. In total isolation in which only her alter ego provides her company, while Picola longs for the bluest eye, the community purges themselves of their evil or ugliness.

Sula of Sula is the third of the man loving generation of the Peace family. It is the story of Sula's defiance of community and her friend Nel's conformity to it. Nel and Sula girls descending from two contrasting familial environments, are fast friends. They enter into womanhood and realize their sexuality in two different ways. Nel marries and mothers while Sula much disoriented by her mother's non-love for her leaves Medallion apparently to seek a self-willed life. Her return results, to the bafflement of all, in the institutionalization of her old grandmother, Eva Peace and sex with the husband of her dearest friend, Nel, which shames Jude to leave Nel and Medallion forever. While Sula takes the men of Medallion freely but only to leave them, the women learn to cherish their husband, the old and children. However, Sula's passion changes to possessiveness for Ajax making him fly leaving Sula broken and stricken with a consuming disease. When Sula is dying Nel visits her and to her surprise Sula's comment— "I know what every black woman in this country is doing… Dying just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me I'm going down one of those redwoods." –leads her to self-realization. The novel inverts the good and evil as the death of Sula, 'the evil' lets loose destruction and deaths in Medallion, which finally makes Sula the story of 'wasted beauty'.

Song of Solomon is an epic tale of Black America. It is a journey of the male protagonist down south as well as journey through the dark recesses of the past, a voyage in which fantasy and reality merge to restore the lost heritage.

The protagonist, the first male one of Morrison, is Macon Dead III who is called Milkman because his mother nursed him well past infancy. He grows into an emotional chaos while his father mercilessly drives towards money. Fueled by his father Macon III goes on a journey in a hunt for the treasure of gold that his father, and his aunt Pilate had left in a cave in Virginia. Milkman's search finally comes out to be the search for family history that his father had struggled to obscure while chasing middle class respectability. As Milkman travels through Pennsylvania and Virginia, acquiring the jagged pieces of a story he slowly assembles into a long pattern of courage and literal transcendence of tragedy. He is strengthened to face the threat to his life that rises from his own careless past to meet him at the end. The novel ends in ambivalence. The question whether Milkman dies at the hands of his hateful friend or does he survive to use his new knowledge remains unanswered.

The fourth novel Tar Baby set in a Caribbean Island is a romance of violent passions. As the story of Son and Jadine it is a battleground for race, class and culture. The novel is also her first book with white people as central actors. We are taken back to the childhood of a rich orphan who inherits a candy company, marries Margaret, the Principal Beauty of Maine, and settles down as an odd but reasonable man on an island with his two servants Sydney and Ondine. This rich man Valerian Street patronizes his servants' niece Jadine Child, a super-educated, super-beautiful young woman, a Paris model who has a love affair with an escaped criminal, a poor uneducated north Florida black who sneaks into Valerian Street's house and stays unnoticed for four days. Son's presence reveals the racism in both the whites and the black in this house. Jadine is bored and repulsed in Florida where Son takes her to live with the 'real' blacks. She returns to Paris possibly to have a rich white man's child while Son searches for her on Isle des Chevaliers.

Beloved the masterpiece of Morrison is the story of Sethe, Denver and Paul D set after the end of the Civil War during the period of Reconstruction. The central character is Sethe, a woman in her mid-thirties, who is living in an Ohio farmhouse with her daughter, Denver and her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs. This house is the haunt of a sad, malicious and angry ghost, the spirit of Sethe's Baby daughter whom she had killed when she was two to save her from slavery, frightening away the two sons of Sethe and breaking down Baby Suggs. The arrival of Paul D, one of the Sweet Home men of Sethe's past disturbs the house. Their meeting revokes their sweet, sour memories of the slave establishment from where they had ran away to experience the worst. Paul D remained chained in an underground box till torrents of rain threatened his life to fight for his survival along with other men. Sethe remembers her dehumanization at the hands of the new master of the Sweet Home, her arduous journey to meet her beloved daughter during which helped by a white girl she gave birth to Denver. While Paul D's disclosure about her husband, Halle, who had watched her being milked and had gone mad, disturbs Sethe, the disclosure about Sethe's infanticide shatters Paul D. Meanwhile, the returned dead daughter starts cowing down both of them. Sethe withdraws while Paul D leaves, taking shelter in the cellar of the church. At last Denver comes out of her haunted house to seek the community's help. The community women gather to exorcise the ghost. Paul D returns to gather the broken self of Sethe and make her realize that she is her beloved.

Jazz starts with the report of the harrowing incident of shooting down of an eighteen years old girl by her fifty year old lover and the dissection of her body with a knife by his angry wife. Joe Trace is a cosmetic salesman leading a deadened life with his wife, Violet whose obsession of her childlessness makes her sleep with dolls and speak to her parrot. He meets Dorcas and develops an affair with her. Dorcas, who had lost her parents in race riots, is brought up by her aunt Alice whose own personal experience teaches her to press upon Dorcas repression of sexuality. Dorcas a young girl bubbling with zeal to live life wants more than Joe can give her. In desperation he shoots her down while his wife tries to desecrate her body. The novel in fact is the story of Violet to know Dorcas for which she visits Alice. Her insistence to meet Alice elevates both of them psychologically to have a human understanding of the whole episode. The novel thus underlines the need of human understanding and companionship in marital relations.

Paradise the last of Morrison's novel is the story of black chauvinists who kill those women who defy the patriarchal order. In this novel Morrison creates an all black town of Haven and Ruby with ten rock families

whose men take pride in their purity of race and the strength of their ancestors to survive the white oppression. These men abstain from all those weaknesses, which are generally attributed to the black men—violence, infidelity, mobility, irresponsibility and drinking. Women are safe here, as nowhere else they could be yet these women lack wholeness and fulfilment. They are powerless to resist men's decisions and actions. A few kilometers away is situated another world—a refuge for all. It is inhabited by females and males are occasional visitors. It is a world, which acknowledges no distinction of sex, colour, class or race. Their independence seems to be a threat to patriarchy and the nine men of Ruby let out this venom on the innocent and already oppressed women. They kill them in cold blood. Thus the story of the identical twins who couldn't be separated ends in their separation as Deek exalted by love for a convent woman repents after genocide while his twin Steward remains insolvent unapologetic and patriarchal.

Morrison's novels have won wide acclaim. Her literacy honours include National Bank Critics Award, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award, Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize for her artistic delicacies. However, her success has not been without some setbacks. Beloved was turned down for National Book Award. The Bluest Eye was rejected for publication several times before it finally came into print. While most of her critics praised her for her achievements as a novelist there are a few who were most critical of her art. Sara Blackburn criticized Morrison's first novel as having been received rather uncritically, its flaws being ignored by white middle class women readers and reviewers who wanted to be more socially conscious about black women. Stanley Crouch in 'New Republic' criticized Morrison capitalizing on the desire of the white reader to consume "black women's tale of being abused by a black men' and of willingness to do almost anything to become a success." Carole Ianuone's allegation repeats the criticism of Morrison's novel as "protest pulp fiction" because of the horrific picture of slavery "to summon up the specter of white guilt." W. Lawrence Hogue's comment on the attempt of the dominant culture at "repression of non-conformist literary texts" when applied on Morrison implies that "the success of African-American text like those written by Morrison are functions of how they produce many of the dominant establishment's values".

His works have evoked substantial literary criticism most of which center around her presentation of community, failure of system, black culture feminism and her artistic potential. Critics like Barbara Christian and Susan Wills concentrate on Morrison's presentation of community's role in the achievement of wholeness of the individual. Critics like Trudier Harris, Eleanor Taylor and Sandi Russel explore Morrison's strong rootedness in black culture. Lester, Hortense, J. Spiller discuss the feminist sensibility of Morrison. Deborah McDowell, Robert Grant and Michael Awkard explore Morrison's narrative devices.

Denise Heinze in her full-length sociological study of Morrison's novels in the book entitled The Dilemma of Double Consciousness: Toni Morrison's Novels analyses the corrupting influence of racism in the life of blacks in America and the use of fantasy and supernatural by Morrison as a fictional technique to mitigate the impact of racism. Patric Bryce Bjork in her book The Novels of Toni Morrison: the Search for Self and Community takes up the theme of selfhood in Toni Morrison's novels. New Dimenstions of Spirituality is a biracial reading of Morrison's novel by a black critic Karla F.C. Holloway and a German critic Stephanie Demetrakopoulus. Holloway sees Morrison building up a universe through a synthesis of metaphors and myth making which are African archetypes. On the other hand, Stephanie's interpretation of Morrison's novels includes universal archetypes. For instance, she reads the tragedy of Philomela in the tragedy of Picola.

Irrespective of some negative criticism Morrison remains an outstanding figure not only in the African-American literature but also in the entire literary world of America. The total corpus of her literary works records her humanistic vision cutting across the boundaries of caste, class and sex.

Her novels neither destroy the double consciousness nor recommend assimilation through emulation. As a writer she demands an emotional-intellectual response to the problems of the times. She exhibits a similar response to Afro-American history and to the American mainstream. Her response is, therefore, not totalising. Her novels call the reader to feel as well as think. She perceives conflict as an essential part of life and her novels as her struggle as a writer capturing the complexities involved, make an effort not to let the conflict become a problem.

Some Major Themes in Toni Morrison

Freedom forms one of the major themes in Morrison's novels. The theme of freedom forms an inevitable part of the race relations between the black and white in almost all the black writers. Franz Fanon, Ellaine Showalter and Alice Walker have categorised literature into three groups on this basis. Fanon calls them assimilation, immersion and fighting while Ellaine Showalter terms these as imitation and internalization, protest and advocacy, and self-discovery. Alice Walker's suspension, assimilation and emergence more or less correspond to the divisions of the earlier critics. Though Morrison's writing period situates her in the last phase, her novels combine all the three notes through which Morrison presents the different meanings of the term 'freedom'. In the crisis of slavery or emancipation, freedom meant freedom from the white masters. In the crisis of Reconstruction Morrison declares: "Freeing yourself was one thing, owning that freedom was another." (BL 116) For blacks migrated to the Northern cities, freedom in its wider sense implies freedom of will. Sula's freedom is a marked contrast to Baby Sugg's freedom. Similarly to Jadine in Tar Baby freedom means freedom both from blackhood and motherhood. Sethe of Beloved, a slave mother best exemplifies the combination of these three phases/stages/modes into a single whole. Sethe's infanticide speaks of the psycho dynamics of oppression, her resistance or protest against the right of the master and her assertion to claim and own her flesh and the flesh of her flesh.

Self-help is another major theme in Morrison's novels. This theme is the underlying idea in the very first novel, The Bluest Eye that chronicles the history of black oppression. Though Morrison criticizes the prevailing system and presents its limitations, her most powerful characters are those who help themselves. Claudia, Pilate, Lone, Stamp Paid are some such characters who leave an indelible mark on the readers' mind. Her masterpiece Beloved ends on this note: you are your best. Denver stops waiting for his father and comes out of the house to help herself. Sethe learns to love herself.

Morrison's presentation of the system highlights her dissatisfaction with the institutions and life-help agencies such as education, medical services, police social security and even Church. While Dick and Jane primer in The Bluest Eye, is a sharp comment on the misorienting educational pattern for the black, the black history and typing classes in The Paradise her last novel are shown as insufficient to enable the young girls and boys to face the challenges of their times. She shows the lack of medical services for the black as suggested by the treatment of Pauline by the doctor in the hospital in The Bluest Eye, death of Ruby in Paradise and carelessness towards Eva in Sula, but she also shows many of the blacks refusing to go to a white medical man or woman to seek help because of their self-dignity. On the contrary, she also shows more and more women having a craze to be admitted to hospital. In Paradise through Lone she develops a human understanding of their desire to be away from the burden of daily routine work and to be taken care of. Though in Song of Solomon Morrison shows the black medicines/conjuring solving a sexual problem, in Paradise she shows the roots of the black woman working as a psychological tonic for Soane. Morrison shows none else coming to either Connie or Pilate for the traditional black medicines.

Nurturing is another important theme in Morrison. Though nurturing is normally accepted as the basic feminine quality, she has created some nurturing men too. In The Bluest Eye she shows the plight of children whose parents are non-nurturing. In Sula, Eva's house during her lifetime is full of nurturance. In Song of Solomon Pilate's house in spite of lack of modern gadgetry caters to everybody's tastes. In Beloved she introduces a community of men and women who nurture and heal. Here women are mothers with thick love while men like Stamp Paid nurture even small children. In Jazz women assemble at Alice's house. They eat together, laugh, talk, borrow and lend. Alice not only repairs the torn dress of Violet, but she also repairs her torn soul. It is in spite of the fact that women are shown as childless. In Paradise nurturing and healing are the dominant qualities of women both at Ruby and in the Convent. The kitchens of these women are alive with cooking. But for Morrison, nurturing alone is not sufficient. She introduces some women characters like Jadine and Billie Dallia who seek economic independence and freedom from constricting prescriptions of the black community

by seeking an independent identity. While Jadine cuts herself off from her roots and community, the last independent woman of Morrison, Billie achieves a balance by constructing an individual self without severing her relation with her community. She learns to nurture and heal both the black and white without equating her femininity with sexuality. So we see that Morrison works out the theme of individual vs. society while dealing with the theme of nurturance. Milkman's journey down south in search of treasure is his learning to relate to others and nurture, which makes his relation with Sweet really sweet.

The theme of wholeness runs throughout her novels. Her novels are readings into achieving human wholeness through self-realization. This theme is worked out in The Bluest Eye as the theme of black selfhood. In Sula, Sula's sense of wholeness is contrasted with the emotional vacuum of Nel. In Song of Solomon Morrison presents her theme of human wholeness by combining the male virtue of adventure with the feminine quality of nurturance. Sula's preference for an adventurous life to nurturance is in a marked contrast to the human wholeness that Pilate represents. Her male haircut and shoes are only physical symbols of her toughness of spirit, her physical strength and her spirit of adventure, which she combines with her abilities to cook the best-boiled egg. She nurtures Milkman emotionally as well as spiritually.

Violence is a major subject to study for Morrison. She presents violence in varied forms. Her novels, which sometimes evoke criticism because of the gruesome details of violence in them, are in fact studies into those dark recesses of human psyche, which make man inflict injuries on others. Incestuous rape in The Bluest Eye, burning of the drug-addicted son by the mother, abuse by a mother of her son and Son's killing his wife by driving the car into the bed where she sleeps with her lover in Tar Baby, murder of a young woman by her lover and dissection of her body by his wife at her funeral in Jazz and the murder of five women by nine chauvinistic black men in Paradise are disturbing incidents of violence. But Morrison's novels are aimed at understanding the socio psychological aspects of these violent behavioural patterns in order to reach a humanistic conclusion. Very important to note is the fact that she shows all human beings prone to use violence to escape frustration and displace it invariably. The worst hit by this displacement are the children. This displacement theme comes very close to the theme of the scapegoat, which is a recurrent theme in Morrison's novels. Picola and Sula are scapegoated by the community as projection of the evil to realize their goodness.

All these themes are subsumed in one dominant concern i.e. for black consciousness and experience. She writes about it because she has seen and experienced it from near her heart. The ancestral voice of the Black Americans filters through the imagination of Toni Morrison, who gives a painfully lyrical dimension to her stories. However, her humanistic vision transcends both colour and creed as her stories present the socio-psychological reality of human life under duress.

American Society and The Black Reality

Since Morrison is an African American, it is essential to understand the conditions of the black in America that shape the sensibility of a black writer and which a black writer projects in his or her novels. The value pattern on which the Frontier men and their sons based the American society includes liberty, equality, individualism and happiness. But the American society can be best described as a democratic paradox as far as the black existence is concerned. Proclaiming freedom and prosperity white American patriarch denied all access to the same to the blacks who were brought on the US soil as slaves. The white men were the masters not only of nature and themselves but also of the black, the human capital. Hence capitalism was the bases of the social economic set up of the American society. For maximizing profit white men maintained slavery in spite of their high-professed ideals. Blacks were degraded, dehumanized and discriminated against. Whites denied them their human rights and in order to maintain slavery they created myths to enslave their minds. Marriage, family, religion, leisure etc were not affordable to the black slaves.

Though after emancipation blacks were declared free, freedom brought its own miseries. With little money, land and education, the freed blacks were faced with the question of basic physical survival against hunger and oppressive laws especially in the south. That is why north appeared almost a synonym of freedom to blacks

resulting in exodus to north and emergence of ghettoes colourism, dearly cherished dream of freedom, urgency for assimilation and resistance of the white, resulted in a complex black psyche. Such was the mode of exploitation of the black spreading over generation that oppression was internalised. Longing and struggling for liberty and equality, the discriminated blacks followed the cult of upward mobility and individualism and equated happiness with white value patterns. They were made to feel that to be black meant to be inferior intellectually, socially and economically. Shelby Steale says, "to be black was to be a victim: therefore, not to be victim was not to be black."

Black American Novel and Morrison's Place in it

Though black literature came to be recognized as a genre much later, it existed as work songs, spirituals and trickster tales in the oral form .It was an effort of the enslaved blacks to preserve their humanity in the most dehumanising conditions. These also worked as a safety valve to let out the boiling anger against their white masters while the spirituals kept their hopes alive in the hopeless and helpless conditions. They helped them transcend their misery. Their work songs provided them added energy and broke the monotony of the most arduous work in the cotton fields. The most creative were the trickster tales. Through inversion and indirection the blacks wreaked their vengeance upon the whites. Above all they preserved their folk culture in spite of the design of the whites to strip them bare of it.

Unlike the oral literature that was meant only for the black ears, written literature was meant for the white .to begin with. Written black literature was aimed to be a protest in the guise of rediscovering the black experience of affliction and injustice and to justify the humanity of the blacks against the popular philosophies holding blacks as subhuman. That is why Patrick Bryce Bjork says, "Beginning with the 19th century slave narratives (1830-1861), the African American text established itself as a medium of propaganda." These were written under the guidance of some white abolitionists and sold mainly to the northern white people. Their popularity was based on the desire of such readers as demanded Cooper like material than on the abolitionist sympathies. Therefore the address of these writings remained white as they generated the values of the dominant culture.

During reconstruction period and even after emancipation African American literature reproduced the values of the dominant group creating stereotypes especially of mulatto… instead of genuine representation to the black culture as the spirituals and work songs had done. On the other hand Southern white literature created their own black stereotypes such as of mammy, the nurturing double of the pedestalled white woman. Tragic Mulatto theme assumed popularity because it fitted into the concept of the white i.e. mixing up of the race was uplifting for the black by lightening it. The literature of this period reproduced the dilemmas of the mulatto who longed and desperately struggled to be assimilated in the white race but were denied their legal status as the children of the white men and were marginalized. William Wells Brown's Clotell (1853), Frances Harper's Iola LeRoy (1892), Jean Toomer's Cane (1929 are some of the novels written in this tradition. Even the novel Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston (1937) fits in the tragic mulatto category.

Important to note is the fact that the protagonists of these novels were rarely a mulatto man; it was a dominantly a mulatto woman. Barbara Christian makes a vital point when she discusses the need of mulatto women as the protagonist to point out physical and cultural and emotion miscegenation:

"Woman in the white culture is not as powerful as man. The existence of mulatto slave man who embodies the qualities of the master is so great a threat, so dangerous an ideal even in fiction that it was seldom tried."

This was one example of racism combined with sexism. The business of the writer was to reveal what it meant to be a human without regard to either black or white America. Though to some extent he remained subsumed in western literary tradition, he tried to do away with overt propagandistic discourse. His writing served to convey the idea that change can only come from within the self and not as the result of any external political strictures. Ralph Elison too gave importance to selfhood but he also affirmed the potential of the black folklore that could provide continuity to the slave experience as well as the instruction of communal consciousness. It

could affirm both the humour as well as the horror of their living. The use of folklore in Invisible Man represents the aesthetic unity of form and content, though it could not wean itself free from accommodational tone.

Alice Walker and Toni Morrison continued with this aesthetic unity and transformed the Afro-American text into a limitless medium of discovery and affirmation. These women writers portrayed the black women, as they had never been done before. While Harper Larsen and Fauset had worked on tragic mulatto theme with heroines' loyalties divided between black & white social codes. Hurston had created more complex woman protagonists and emphasized upon community and familial concerns while reviving black folklore. Thus in her we find a shift in stress from the problems of being economically and psychologically crippled to the inherent weaknesses and strength of black people. Her works thus lay the foundation of black women's literary tradition. Alice walker and Toni Morrison fall in this tradition. They depict black women not as traditional black women, but as integral members of their community. As a woman writer, Morrison's purpose is not to replace patriarchy, but to recommend a kind of domesticity. She points out how alienation from one's self leads to distortion of reality. The untenable desire to conform to white middle class society and economic values and to internalize what it means to be beautiful, happy and worthy in white society is shown as frustrating and incapacitation. She brings into her books that poignancy of black experience, which is unique of her and which distinguishes her as a writer.

Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye has this distortion as the central point. The writer tells us of the terrible results of the estrangement from one's culture and the resulting self-hatred. Bombarded and humiliated by images of white beauty and the bourgeois ideals Morrison's characters develop self-hatred and invite ostracism until their lives cease to have any meaning beyond seeking the unattainable—to be white.

Racial Concerns of Toni Morison

Morrison is a black writer but her racial concerns are not confined to recreation of black history and black folk culture to show their strength. Though she re-externalises black history, revives black folklore and music, constructs a dominantly black world, criticizes the white system but she does all this without romanticizing or idealizing it. Her real purpose as a black writer is not to substitute one hierarchy with another in a totalising manner. She tries to see certain kind of problems among the member of the black community in a way that is not pedagogical. She studies the problems without race blinders which enables her to understand life erasing the boundaries of colour and race. She is tough with whites as well as blacks for their weaknesses but sympathises with both when they suffer.

Morrison employs many methods to balance her view of reality. She rarely uses colour or race to define or introduce her characters. This strategy is especially applied on her white characters. For example in *The Bluest Eye* though she defines the black by the colour of their skin she does not use any racial qualifiers for the two mistresses of Pauline: "She took a study job in the home of a family of slender means and nervous, pretentious ways." (94). Again she does not give the racial identity or the skin colour of the Fishers. She only says, "It was her good fortune to find a permanent job in the home of a well-to-do family…" (100). This technique is employed in the rest of the novels too. For example in Beloved Stamp Paid encounters a man while walking on the road. This man's racial identity is not disclosed but the obsequious behaviour of Stamp Paid clearly establishes the same. In her last novel the racial identity of Connie remains a riddle. The novel begins with the murder of a white woman but it is difficult to establish who of the five woman living in the convent is the white one.

Though all of Morrison's novels are the chronicles of wounded black psyche under white duress, the social history found in her novels is a history of daily inescapable assault by a world, which denies minimum dignity to the blacks. But Morrison's novels also present intra group violence going parallel with intra group violence. Her vision of violence is so penetrating that she sees both white and black as oppressors. White characters like Amy, Tarbaby, Garner couple, Bodwin sibling and Connie are a testimony to the humanistic vision of Morrison. She introduces maximum number of human white characters in her Noble winning novel Beloved that catalogues

the most heinous and the longest list of inter-group violence. She shows both the white woman as well as the black woman suffering under patriarchy.

There is a gradual development seen in the vision of Toni Morrison as a black American writer. Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* holds racism as the only and the prime reason of the psychological distortions of her black characters. But a marked change can be seen in her third novel *Song of Solomon*. Dr. Foster and Guitar represent two responses to the white world—integrationist and retaliatory. Morrison does not seem to endorse any of the two. The response of her character Pilate to white man whom she and her brother kill is the third response, which emerges in the novel as the most overwhelming: "A human life is precious… Life is Life. Precious. And the dead you kill is yours." (208). In her fourth novel Tar Baby she creates full blown white characters. Though her main stress remains on the erosion of black cultural values under the white impact, this novel presents that while white values of professionalism and education are an obstacle in the affirmation of cultural roots, she hols her black characters also responsible for that rejection. She shows how the white woman of the highest section of society remains oppressed under patriarchy.

Detailed Critical Summary

The Bluest Eye (1969) was originally written as a short story when Morrison was feeling hurt in spirit after her divorce (1964) with two toddlers to look after in a city and with no support. She wrote it to stay in a writer's group, but shaped it into a novel when she was a black editor in a predominantly white publishing house. The novel was developed to find answers to certain question. It was written as a story she wanted to read. Significantly the novel was written at the end of the decade of cultural nationalism. It makes clear the necessity to raise the slogan of 'Black is Beautiful' in opposition to the white monopoly on value. This novel portrays the devastating effects of an oppressive situation in which the oppressed collude in their own oppression by internalising the values of the dominant culture. It is thus about colonization of the human mind to decolonize it. Again the novel gives voice to the centuries old physical exploitation and rape of black women.

The novel is placed in the year 1941 at the end of the great depression when life was hard for everyone, but worse for the black people. Cultural climate in 1941 was sterile with black men being dwarfed into the still segregated US armed services and being given the most menial of duties.

The Bluest Eye as the title suggests is about the outcome of the desire of a black girl for a pair of blue eyes to be loved by her family, community and society. As inversion it is the story of an innocent adolescent girl, Picole Breedlove who unloved, uncared by her drunkard father Cholly and mother Pauline becomes a convenient victim of her community's frustration, anger, ignorance and shame. Entering into womanhood she is raped by her father, who in a confused effort to love this forsaken girl impregnates her. She gives birth to a stillborn child and desperate to escape her ugliness, falls into madness convinced that she has magically been given blue eyes.

Developing the story of Picola as the story of African-Americans search for identity and racial self-discovery in white America, Morrison begins the novel with an English primer of Dick and Jane with mother, father, Dick and Jane. In the primer Morrison weaves a black story corresponding to the Dick and Jane text with Cholly, Polly, Sammy and Picola while against the cat and the dog are set two middle class characters-Geraldine with a pet cat that she loves more than her son and Soaphead Church (Elihue Micah Whitecomb) who hates his landlady's dog. There comes a friend in the primer who will play with Jane. This friend is the central narrator Claudia who is the only one to befriend 'Ugly' 'Poor' Picola and who being the narrator of the story, in her adult effort, tries to understand the incidents of her adolescence in relation to Picola's tragedy. This effort is her search for awareness of black selfhood, a search during which Picola had got lost into misconceptions. This fiend may also be the alter ego of Picola who forsaken by everyone including Claudia, alone takes to her.

Morrison after this preface adds yet another prologue. At its onset she makes Claudia announce the close of the novel: "Picola was having her father's baby" and "there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941" and at the

end combining the two informs: "the seeds shrivelled and died; her baby too." The seed symbolize the child.

Thus after using the trope of the primer to strike the theme, Morrison uses another metaphor i.e. of marigold and this time too of great thematic significance. Marigold is most prolific flower, easier to grow, thrives in poor soil and after blooming can reseed for the coming year. But the seeds sown by Claudia and Frieda didn't sprout. It is not that only the seeds sown in the plot of black dirt by Claudia and Frieda did not sprout, none grew elsewhere too, And the reason the adult Claudia concludes was that "the earth was unyielding." So the baby of Picola died because neither the mother nor the family, community or society accepted and nourished it. Claudia in the last line says, "There is really nothing more to say- except why. But since 'why' is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how." 'Why' the society and community don't yield is too complex to answer. So Claudia narrates the story of her childhood especially in relation to Picola, the protagonist.

Picola is an eleven years old black girl of a drunkard father and a mother, who is a domestic worker. Claudia describes Picola as a child, "The black face holding, like nickels clean black eyes, flared nose, kissing thick lips, and the living, breathing silk of black skin" (148). She is introduced in the first chapter as a 'case' of a girl who had nowhere to go because her father had turned the entire family "outdoors" by burning the house. Claudia recollects her childhood memories of her mother's disgust and anger songs and chats, her humiliation at her sickness in her old, cold and green house, her own frustration at being instructed and not talked to by adults, her antagonism to Rosemary for her "white skin" and better economic status. These are combined with the sound of padding feet and the healing touch on her forehead of hands "who doesn't want me (her) to die." (14) This ultimate security is an assurance against all the discomforts and fears that Claudia as a child had experienced in her poor little house with her parents struggling to make two ends meet. Though the difference in the economic status between Claudia's family and that of Picola is only marginal i.e. of being poor and dirt poor, the sense of security of the two isn't.

Picola had not been put out but was put outdoors not by the landlord but by her own father. For this act he had joined the race of animals and "was indeed, an old dog, a snake, a ratty nigger" (18). Mother Pauline staying at her mistress, brother Sammy with another family, Picola at Claudia's house and father Cholly Breedlove in jail—the family is fragmented and in chaos as reflected in the third version of the primer in the preface.

During Picola's stay at her house Claudia knows of Picola's hunger for blue-and-white Shirley Temple Cup. Claudia hates the Shirley Temples and dismembers the blue-eyed Baby Doll in order to find out what made it beautiful and dear to one and all while it was revolting to her but Picola is crazy to look at Shirley Temple and drinks all the three quarts of milk in order to look like her but only to infuriate otherwise sympathetic Mrs. MacTeer.

In this chapter Morrison lays bare the inner state of the mind of Picola at a stage of life when she has her menarche and thus enters into womanhood. The chapter concludes with Picola realizing that she can now have a baby but doesn't know how. Picola's inquisitiveness as to "how do you get someone to love you" underlines both the budding sexuality and the condition of this child—unloved and uncared for, humiliated and marginalized for her colour of skin, features, poverty and race.

They were ugly because the atmosphere was devoid of any expression of love and care. This chapter by narrating a usual daybreak in the Breedlove's house underlines the absence of love. It tells us of how they needed and bred violence as a psychological compulsion— Cholly to let out on Pauline his frustration at having been humiliated by white men during his first sexual act and Pauline (having internalised white values displayed on the sliver screen) her frustration at the sordidness of her conditions. Both Cholly and Pauline needed each other for displacing their frustration. They didn't need reasons to fight because Cholly's drunkenness and Pauline's assumed Christian uprightness against Cholly's sinfulness was enough to ignite physical bouts before the eyes of Picola and Sammy.

Children reacted differently to these scenes of violence. Sammy let out his anger and when he felt hopeless he ran away but Picola wished either one would kill the other or she would die or just disappear. She imagined

herself dissolving but she could never get her eyes to disappear. She concluded, "As long as she looked the way she did, as long as she was ugly, she would have to stay with these people… Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike." (39).

Picola is ignored by all at home as well as at school. Teachers never glanced at her. Girls insult her when they want to insult a boy by saying that he loves Picola. Rejected Picola longs for love and therefore, for beauty. It is this hunger for beauty that makes Picola crazy of Marry Jane candies; she would devour and would become a Marry Jane.

Her lust for Marry Janes take her to the store of Mr. Yacobowski, a white man with grey head, blue eyes and an unfeeling heart for the blacks. He is introduced by Morrison to show the non recognition of the black's humanity by the white. This incident with special stress on the eyes and looks shows how under the white 'Look' and 'Gaze' the blacks felt humiliated and stripped off any slightest spec of sense of self pride. Morrison uses natural imagery to point this out. While going to the shop hopeful Picola sees dandelions and admiring their prettiness wandered why "Nobody loves the head of a dandelion." (41). But having been humiliated by the look of vacuum in the storekeeper's eye, a total absence of human recognition and distaste which she had seen "lurking in the eyes of all white people" Picola finds the 'strong' and 'many' dandelions as 'ugly' and 'weeds'.

After experiencing a slight surge of anger, shame settles down on the mind of Picola and tears come in her eyes to escape these tears she decides to "Love Marry Jane. Be Marry Jane." (43).

The only persons in the neighbourhood who don't ignore Picola are the three prostitutes—China, Poland and Miss Marie. These singing laughing whores in whores' clothing are presented as a contrast to the Breedloves. Though geographically and socially marginalized like the Breedloves they exhibit a higher consciousness placed as they are in the apartment above the Breedloves. They show no inhibitions and though isolated have formed their own community retaining the old black cultural qualities of caring and sharing. They are loving and friendly to Picola, who is otherwise ignored, rejected and humiliated by the entire community. Their 'men talks' are Picola's only source of information about loving. Picola's question, "I never seen nobody with as many boy friends as you got. Miss Marie, How come they all love you?" tells us of the rising sexuality of Picola and Marie's answer "I'm rich and good looking' (45) further strengthens Picola's desire to be beautiful. Her anxiety to know about "how do grown-ups act when they love each other?" (40) remains unattended. As for Cholly and Pauline's love making Picola only knows the agonising choking sounds of her father and the silence of her mother when in bed.

In chapter 4 the viewpoint shifts again to Claudia, who tells us about the looks of her father that are of 'hawk fighter'. This fighting spirit Claudia too inherits from him. He is their guide who, instructs them "about which door to keep closed or opened for proper distribution of heat,… discusses qualities of coal…" (52) Though Mr. MacTeer and his wife are not untouched by white values, they have instilled in their children self-value for which they fight Maureen Peal, a high yellow dream girl, rich and enchanting to the entire school and hence a source of irritation for Claudia and Frieda. Her beauty and riches also disturb them but they restore their equilibrium by finding out her flaws to snicker behind her back.

During a short period of friendship while walking back home from school some black adolescent boys corner Picola and wreak their contempt for their blackness on her. They comment on her blackness and the nakedness of her father. Picola starts crying while Frieda in the style of her father and mother intimidates the boys. Maureen buys them ice creams but the friendship soon snaps when she questions Picola about seeing a naked man. Frieda and Claudia infuriated with shame at having seeing their own father naked, enter into a quarrel with Maureen to rescue Picola. Maureen's reference to Picola's 'Old black daddy' enflames them but Maureen escapes there blows running away shouting about her cuteness and their ugliness.

This incident sets Claudia thinking over the reasons of their ugliness. But she is convinced that she is not inferior; "we felt comfortable in our skins." 62 Her and Frieda's reaction to boys as well as to Maureen is a clear indication of their fighting spirit and sense of self-respect, which Picola shows only faintly that too only in

the presence of these fighting girls.

Frieda and Claudia return home. Henry offers them money for ice cream. This part of the chapter brings out two important points—reference to the fear of Frieda and Claudia for Soaphead Church foretelling exploitation of Picola and their lessons in the Christian concept of chastity and repressed sexuality.

In chapter 5 Morrison describes the repressed sexuality of the "sugar brown Mobile girls", who sleep with their hands folded across their stomach." They don't drink, smoke or swear and call "sex nookey". Therefore, they don't have boy friend and always marry. They learn at school and college values to work to the satisfaction of their master and above all learn "how to get rid of the funkiness. The dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of wide range of human emotions." (68) This artificiality and repression of sexuality makes their married life dysfunctional sexually.

Geraldine is one such woman. Her freedom from funkiness is combined with fear of blackness and hatred for the poor black. She neatly draws a distinction between neat quiet coloured people and 'dirty and loud' niggers. She is worried about the skin colour of her son, Junior and protects it with lotions. She instils in him the assumed superiority, which wins him few friends.

Junior learns from her the intimidation of the poor black. On one idle day he tempts Picola to his house on a promise to show her some kittens. Overwhelmed with the beauty of the house Picola is lost admiring it. When junior throws the black cat right in her face hurting her, she is startled and frightened and starts crying to the sadistic pleasure of Junior. Her effort to run away is blocked by Junior. Imprisoned in the room, sobbing Picola is attracted to the blue eyes of the cat and the blackness of her fur. Junior jealous at the cats liking for Picola snatches it by its hind legs and swings it. Picola tries to prevent him but both of them fall down and the cat is dashed against the window. Just then Geraldine enters and beholds Picola with contempt and calls her 'nasty black bitch'. She is accused of killing the cat.

This chapter emphasises the division of the black community on the line of colour and class. Geraldine is introduced to point out the ruling class' aspirations of the black, their adoption and approximation of their behavioural patterns, looks, living-style and speech pattern of the ruling class and their disassociation from the black community. She underlines how urban surroundings strip them off their natural feelings. Geraldine and Junior's attitude to Picola further intensifies her humiliation and isolation. While the blue eyes in the black face of the cat further intensifies Picola's desire for blue eyes.

Chapter 6 describes Frieda's reaction to Henry's attempt to molest her. She breaks down in her anxiety at having been 'ruined'. It exhibits the impact of Christian concept of women's chastity on the psyche of the young girls and their misinformation about sexuality. Frieda tells Claudia about the rage of her father who cursed Henry, threw her tricycle at him, knocked him down and wanted to shoot him for touching his daughter. She also tells her of the helpless anger of her mother at Henry's singing of god and her friend's suggestion of taking Frieda to a doctor. The young girls think that the only way out to prevent ruin and getting fat is to drink like the prostitutes. Therefore, they search for Picola to get whiskey.

They don't find Picola at home, instead they are told by the two women that they could find her at the Fishers where Picola's mother works.

This chapter has another important incident of Picola's non-recognition and her beating at the hands of her Pauline at the Fishers. When Picola accidentally smashes a fresh-baked berry cobbler on to the kitchen floor and splatters the white child's new pink dress, Pauline knocks Picola to the floor, beats her own daughter, disowns her but she consoles the white child as if she were her own. Like Geraldine, Pauline too treats Picola as a pariah. When the white girl asks her about Picola and her friends, Pauline says, "none, baby". This incident highlights how internalisation of white values denaturalises motherhood and compels a black to lead an inauthentic life. It also shows the total absence of mother-child symbiosis in Pauline-Picola relationship.

Chapter 7 is an explanation to the isolation of Pauline. Ninenth of eleven children Pauline came from Alabama. When she was two years old a rusty nail injured her foot leaving it slightly deformed making her walk with a

limp-like flap. She suffered from total indifference at home was not given a nickname like others and told no story about funny things she did as a child etc. She held her foot responsible for this indifference and unworthiness. So she indulged in private pleasures of neatly lining up things. But her creativity lacked paints and crayons. She missed the green of Alabama when her family moved to Kentucky for better economic opportunities. Entering into teens she fancied a man, a shapeless presence that would love and touch her and her foot would straighten. She would become perfect. It was during one such daydreaming that she met Cholly. Cholly came whistling while she was leaning idly on the fence. She was pleased to hear his whistling and felt some tinkling in her foot. She turned around and held Cholly amidst the colours of sunset reminding her of all the colours of her childhood. Cholly loved Pauline and her deformity and she felt happy, secure and grateful.

Their marriage seemed to go well, but soon they migrated to Lorain. Cholly worked in mills. Pauline though satisfied with housekeeping felt uncomfortable with her loneliness, indifference of the whites and the mockery of the black women at her rural ways. This made her desire for clothes and money. "Money became the focus of their discussion her for clothes and his for drink" (94). She started working. She quarrelled with Cholly, but forsake her job for him when her white mistress awestruck at the sight of drunkard Cholly at her house wanted her to divorce him. Jobless and idle, given to romantic dreams she accepted the white concept of physical beauty from the movies. The perfection on the silver screen and the neatness and luxury of her mistress's house contrasted the conditions at home. So she went to hospital for her second delivery but felt dehumanised by the doctors and finally when the baby was born it was different from what she had thought— "smart but ugly but Lord she was ugly." (100)

Soon she assumed the responsibilities of the breadwinner and at the Fishers she enjoyed what she had wished for herself— recognition, some power, beauty and neatness and even a nickname. She developed church morality and found meaningfulness of her life only at her work while her personal life fell into chaos. She felt herself crucified even in her intimate relation to Cholly.

Chapter 8 narrates the story of Charles Breedlove alias Cholly's past. Forsaken by his father and thrown in a junk heap when four days old by his mother, he was rescued and brought up by great Aunt Jimmy in Georgia. She could not provide him the training and education that a child needs. When at school, he wanted to know about his father his aunt told him that Samson had run to Macon before he was born. Longing for an absent father, Cholly loved a man called Blue Jack as a father image. He found in him the ideal, the God but since God was white he thought Blue must be like the devil.

When aunt Jimmy died, Cholly was again abandoned but he experienced another "rebirth" in his first sexual encounter. On the day of Aunt Jimmy's funeral, Cholly ran off with Darlene to make love in the woods. This mythic scene of his initiation was undercut, however, by the intrusion of two white men who threw flashlight on the two lovers and at the gun point goaded Cholly to perform for them. And as he did, his hatred grew not for the white men but for Darlene. Unable to lash at them he hated the one who had created the situation, "the one who bore witness to his failure, his impotence, the one whom he had not been able to protect, to spare and to cover from the round moon glow of the flashlight." (119).

When Cholly thought that Darlene might be pregnant, his fear and hatred for her compelled him to repeat his father's cycle of abandonment; he ran away to Macon to look for him, but the cycle was completed when he found his father and was rejected by him. With nothing left to lose, Cholly thus became "dangerously free. Free to feel whatever he felt—fear guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. … He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites and they alone interested him" (126).

Though humiliated and scarred in a racist society and brutally rejected by her father, Cholly was able to forge ahead and follow the beat of the music he carried within. He married Pauline and was happy to satisfy her. But the move north proved fragmenting. As an adult Cholly took refuge in alcohol to sooth his rage and frustration, which was manifested also in his sadistic love making and the violence and brutality in his domestic relationship. Slowly he lapsed into a confused state.

It was one such moment of drunkardness and confusion that he committed a disgraceful act. He saw Picola washing dishes in the kitchen. He felt uncomfortable which was followed by a sense of pleasure, guilt, impotence and a desire to give happiness to Picola. His desire for Picola was intermingled with his desperate desire to rekindle his earlier happiness with Pauline. He raped his daughter because he chose to physically give of himself because it was all that he had left to give in his state of bewildered and besotted despair.

With the rape of Picola the cycle of love-hatred that Cholly had fallen (from Darlene to Pauline to Picola) seems to be completed. Some critics find Morrison's crime tempered by the author's compassions for him. Cholly's desire to love is combined with his regret that he has nothing to relieve Picola's hopelessness. Morrison captures the curious mixture of hate and tenderness that consumes Cholly. Though Morrison does have sympathy for Cholly, she does not absolve him. She does not minimize his crime. By using words like "Stunned silence", "the tightness of her vagina", the painfully "gigantic thrust", her "fingers clinching", her "shocked body" and finally her unconsciousness belie the comment of those who say that Morrison concentration on portraying the reasons of Cholly's unforgivable act make her lay little concentration on Picola's reaction. Cholly Breedlove ultimately died in the workhouse present her perspective.

Morrison presents Pauline as culpable as Cholly for Picola's suffering. Cholly's love is corrupt and tainted, but Pauline is unloving. Though she does not physically rape Picola, but she has ravaged the child's self worth and left her unprotected and vulnerable to outer forces. Picola's rape by her father and her beating by her mother strongly contrast Frieda's molestation and the reaction of her parents.

Chapter 9 completes Picola's self-alienation. In it the narrator introduces the last character of the novel Soaphead Church. Raped by her father and beaten by her mother lonely Picola longing to be loved seeks blue eyes and turns to Soaphead, a "Spiritualist and Psychic Reader" (137). Soaphead is a misanthrope and his power is fraudulent. In fact, he is incapable of any healthy love. Instead he loves worn things and girls. Such is the impact of the theories of discipline; education and good life experimented on him by his father that he equates his love making to his wife, Velma with the Holy Grail. Naturally his marriage lasted only for a few months.

Originally named Elihue Micah Whitcombs Soaphead is a West Indian of mixed blood, "wholly convinced that if black people were more like white they would be better of." Soaphead recognises the narrowness of his acculturation and unlike Pauline and Cholly, who develop destructive self-hatred, Soaphead intellectualises it. He finds comfort in an illusion in which he forms reality through language, assuming a god-like stance. His letter to god written as confession is more of a challenge to god: "I did what you didn't, couldn't and wouldn't do… I played you… I am not afraid of you…" (143).

When Picola comes to Soaphead he is quick to realize her yearning for blue eyes and promises to give her the same though "for the first time (Soaphead) honestly wish (es) he (can) work miracles" (137). He, in fact, uses her in his own schemes of hatred against God and man. He tells Picola to feed the food he gives her to his landlady's dog and if dog behaves strangely, her wish will be granted the following day. The dog does behave strangely because of the poison in the food. Thus Picola, used as a scapegoat is deceived into believing that she has blue eyes. Like Philomela, who raped and muted turned into a nightingale, Picola is seen as a bird: "she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird…" (158). She is seen as plucking "her way between the tire runs and the sunflowers, between Coke bottles and milk weed, among all the waste and beauty of the world – which is what she herself was." 159

In the final section of Summer Claudia describes how they planned to raise money for their bicycle by selling the seeds of marigold door-to-door. During their visits to these houses Claudia and Frieda overheard the story of Picola's pregnancy: "two ugly people doubling up like that to make more ugly. Be better off in the ground" (148). The sisters felt embarrassed, hurt and sorry for Picola. In their sorrow they gave up their plan for the bicycle and buried the money and sowed the seeds singing the magic words for marigolds to come up as a sign of life of Picola's baby.

The closing chapter of the novel is the end of the primer as a friend comes to play with Jane. Picola is admiring herself in the mirror. The conversation between totally forsaken Picola and her alter ego forms a duet, which

reflects Picola's total submission to illusion. She takes indifference of the people to her as their jealousy for her blue eyes. It also expresses her need for companionship, her bitterness for her mother and her inability to share her memory of the horrible moment of rape even with the person who feels for her. This conversation also reveals the nightmares that Picola has had since her first rape. Morrison gives a very subtle reference to the second rape when the alter ego gets out the information that it was when she was reading of the couch and that it was horrible too. But Picola would not talk about it because her obsession for blue eyes has turned into obsession for the bluest eye to get companionship and love. She is totally oblivious of her condition as a pariah. Adult Claudia recollecting the entire section of her childhood concludes that the community, too, must share the blame for Picola's diminishment. She has through out been made a scapegoat by a neighbourhood of people who themselves live their own unnatural life under the gaze of the dominant culture. Contrasting themselves with Picola, they embolden their own worth; deny their own incongruity and inauthenticity. Picola's madness is, therefore, not Picola's illusion. It is perpetuation of community's own illusion.

Study of Characters

Picola

The Bluest Eye is a moving examination of Picola's life—her unloving childhood, her repudiation by nearly everyone she encounters and finally the complete denigration of her self. It is a search for the culprits of scapegoating. During one of her interviews Morrison had said, "I was really writing a book I wanted to read…. I hadn't seen a book in which black girls were center stage…. And I had a major question in mind at that time, which was, how does a child learn self-loathing, for racial purposes? And what might be the consequences." Thus in *The Bluest Eye* Morrison casts a critical glance at the process and symbols of imprinting of self during childhood and at what happens to the self when that process is askew and the symbols are defective. Morrison does this through the character of Picola.

Though the novel begins with the recollections of the narrator Claudia about her childhood, it is Picola's story. The bluest eye in the title refers to her tragedy. Unloved she wishes for beauty symbolized by the blue eyes in order to be loved, but she remains unloved even when she believes she has got blue eyes. Still rejected and repudiated, therefore, she feels the need for a bluer eye and develops an understanding that she is lonely because "my eyes aren't blue enough? Because I don't have the bluest eyes?" (158).

Picola is a victim of racism that created a unique class of black as poor. Picola lives in a totally marginalized economic condition. Her father Cholly Breedlove as a rural immigrant mill worker hardly earns much and whatever he earns he drains it down in drinks. Being black, Picola represents the lowest level of social and economic hierarchy. She lives in stark poverty. Though the family of Claudia is also poor, the abandoned storefront in which the Breedloves live is worse than Claudia's "old, cold and green (house) at night a kerosene lamp lights one large room. The others are braced in darkness, peopled by roaches and mice." It is worse because situated on the outer most fringes of the town it is isolated from the entire community. Its inmates hardly mix up with other blacks .It is worse also because its atmosphere is violence ridden. They are weaklings displacing their frustration on each other.

Her character represents the damaging impact of racism on the black psyche. The racist attitude of white as ideal of beauty gave birth to another evil of colourism resulting in both interracial and intraracial prejudices. Picola is a girl born black, poor and by majority standards ugly. She is unloved, rejected and brutalized in every sphere of society—home, neighbourhood, school and playground. While the culturally blind white storekeeper would not look at her, feels disgusted having to touch her, the black people in the neighbourhood treat her us a scapegoat to cleanse their blackness on. Nobody talks to her or looks at her even at school. Teachers reject her, class fellows would not like to participate in assignment with her and black boys and lighter black girls would leave no chance to heap insults on her. She is treated as a pariah in the society. Picola, therefore, suffers from rejection, hatred and loneliness.

Being in minority in both caste and class, Picola represents the devastating results of racism on the black psyche. She represents that complex process of deculturation in which the oppressed internalises the values of the oppressor and sees oneself in their 'mirror'. Picola had been educated into acceptance of white superiority by the textbooks, billboards, magazine, movies, Shirley Temple cups, Mary Jane candies, glamours actresses and actors, society, neighbourhood, teacher, classmates and her parents.

The lesson in her black inferiority began with her mother, the first companion and educator, who saw that her daughter was ugly, and who fed her but didn't love her. Pauline who has internalised the western standards of beauty and romantic love would talk lovingly to her stillborn Picola but when she is born she has no love for her and her frustration reflects itself when she says, "Lord she was ugly" (100). By working 12 to 16 hours a day she not only ignores the needs of her child but she also beats in them a fear of sinfulness of their father and slovenliness.

As a mother Pauline is a damaging role model for Picola. As an unloving mother she fails to instil self worth and self-respect in Picola while her indifference creates in her a sense of insecurity. Above all Pauline's weaker strategy of survival of escapism through a false identity teaches Picola lessons in living through illusions and acceptance of white value of beauty as the standard. Thus the tragedy of Picola is intensified by her unloving mother. The Breedlove couple breeds not love but hatred and violence.

Picola not only has an unloving mother; she also has a dangerously free father. Cholly Breedlove, unfathered, unsocialized and castrated early in his youth by an encounter with two white men, is a social derelict. Accepting god as a white man, he decides to follow the black- the devil. Though Pauline's emotional dependence on him rescues him temporarily from inhumanity, her turning to the white gods on the silver screen soon breaks the peace in the family. Their married life becomes a darkling plane where clashes conflicts verbal and physical bouts take place before the eyes of two adolescent children. The violence and clashes between the parents worst hit the psyche of Picola. She is so frightened that she wishes either one would kill the other or she would just dissolve and disappear from the scene of violence. It is her wish for a loving world that she wishes for loving eyes.

Picola has an obsession for looks. She seeks her self-image from others. Morrison clearly shows her obsession for this search. *The Bluest Eye* portrays the tragic propensities of a situation in which black girlhood borrows identity model from the mandates of white cultural and from malevolent parental mirrors. Morrison dramatises Jacques Lacan's theory of mirror through Picola. She presents Picola spending long hours looking in the mirror and seeking her image in the eyes of the others. The eyes of everyone reflect an image i.e. a confirmation of the unapproving gaze of her mother.

It is this obsession to seek self-image in others' eyes and reflection of rejection and hatred in them that Picola is hungry for love. Accepting the white standard of beauty of blond hair, white skin and blue eyes Picola wishes only for blue eyes because she thinks the world would change if her eyes were blue. "If she looked different, beautiful, may be Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. May be they'd say, "Why, look at pretty eyed Picola. We must not do bad things in front of these pretty eyes." "So strong is her faith in the power of the blue eyes that she wishes and prays for them. Brutalised by black boys who corner her, her mother who beats her mercilessly even when injured and her father who rapes her repeatedly her faith in the power of blue eyes intensifies.

The survival strength of Picola lies in her firm belief in God, prayers and magical transformation. Its this conviction in miracle that the desire for, as in classic tale turning of an ugly duckling into a swan is born. It is this belief that leads her to the house of Soaphead Church who is known allegedly for his magical powers. This misanthrope enacts the final chapter of Picola's brutalisation when he poisons a dog to death to push Picola into the abyss of insanity by making her believe that she has got blue eyes. The tragedy of Picola is complete. The irony of her life is that if she resorts to fantasy she is considered crazy and isolated and if she tries to live, there is no place for her.

In short, in Morrison's own words *The Bluest Eye* is the story of a "little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes. It is a story to substantiate the statement of Shelby Steele, "to the black was to be victim; therefore not to be a victim was not to be black". It is the story of vicious genocidal effect of racism on the blacks especially the black woman. Picola as a child also represents the dangerous impact of a married life shredded with violence. Her madness is a telling statement about the socio-economic and political oppression of the little black girls as they get alienated from black and white American.

Pauline's Character

The Bluest Eye is about alienation and dissonance. It is about the negative results of one social construct i.e. of idealized beauty that makes some superior and others inferior. It is about the loss of self-esteem and self-identity following estrangement from rural south culture, which incapacitates a person to love, form meaningful identity and forge fulfilling interpersonal relationship. It is about how parents in their defeated life go through a process by which their self-hatred becomes scapegoating. Pauline Breedlove nee Pauline Williams is the most significant character in this novel whose life encompasses the whole of Northern community's alienation and dissonance.

Pauline born on the hills of Alabama in the South of America as the ninth of the eleven children of Adam and Fowler Williams, is a victim of a racist society. The demon of racism not only marginalized Pauline, it has also forced her to live a life of extreme poverty and deprivation. She is fifth grade drop out. Her Childhood lacks the usual playfulness. With her mother at work in a white man's house, her childhood was spent in keeping her house. After her marriage, uneducated and poor, she naturally became a domestic servant.

As a domestic worker in a white man's house, she represents that section of the unorganised wageworker that is placed at the lowest rung of society. She represents the black woman who suffered dehumanised at the hands of the white, both man and woman. The black women have been treated as the mules of the world for centuries. The doctors in the hospital also treat her as a mule: "He knowed, I reckon, that may be I weren't no horse foaling. But them others. They didn't know".

Similarly the reaction of the first white lady she worked for denies humanity to Pauline. Pauline's entreaties to this lady to give her the money she had earned fall on deaf ears. Her loss of job is typical of the fate of a black woman. She is dominated by white woman and suffers for the white woman's fears for the black man's sexuality. Pauline's desire to emulate the blond blue-eyed actresses on the silver screen and her wish to possess a house like that of the white are not only an aping of white values, but a reaction to a society which has denied her the very dignity of existence. Pauline is a manifestation of the over powering capitalistic system. Thus Pauline is a clear victim of a society in which race and class factors combine uniquely to block the path of happiness for the poor black.

Pauline is marginalized in the racist society. But she is also alienated from her community. She lacks emotional ties. It may be argued that this is the direct result of her physical and emotional displacement in migration from south to north. But Morrison makes very clear at the onset of the chapter she ascribes to Pauline that the latter's sense of estrangement is life long. As a child she never felt at home anywhere. Pauline was more or less self-absorbed since her childhood. Even in Kentucky she had few friends. In Lorain she mixes up with black women. Her house like her family is totally alienated and marginalized.

Morrison endows Pauline with the responsibility for her inability to forge integrity with her community. We don't find community women gossip with her as they do with Mrs. MacTeer. Her alienation is unlike that of the prostitutes who share their joy and sorrows with each other. Her alienation is unlike that of Geraldine, which stems from her better economic status and lighter skin. Pauline's alienation is the result of copying mechanisms of inferiority complex first by her deformed foot, and then because of her internalisation of the dangerous concepts of beauty and happiness.

Pauline's dented self-image can be traced back to her childhood. As a two-year-old child the prick of a rusty nail left her foot slightly deformed and that was enough to make the child Pauline learn to be separate and

unworthy. She associated her lack of a nickname as neglect and indifference of her parents. Her lowered self-esteem suffered the worse blow when she migrated to the milltown of Lorain where the white were hateful and black women in the neighbourhood sneered at her limp, kinky hair and her rural way of dressing and talking. Above all she found herself under the 'Gaze/look' of Jean Harlow etc. representing the white standard of beauty. When she loses her front tooth, she is forced to rank herself at the bottom of the scale she has accepted.

Pauline is seduced by the movies. Pregnant and lonely, she finds comfort in the theatre, where she is deeply influenced by "the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought"—romantic love and beauty. Pauline had a romantic imagination since her youth but in the movies, beauty becomes confused with virtue and thus she gathers self-contempt from there. Comparing the luxury on the screen with the sordidness of her house, she orchestrates a substitute life first vicariously at the theatres and then as an ideal servant at the Fishers where she finds beauty, order and praise.

Pauline's strategies for emotional and psychological survival are weak coping mechanisms of substitution, escape and compensation. As a child she compensates her low self-worth with lining up and ordering of objects. With budding sexuality she develops a romantic imagination to escape into for experiencing wholeness. With a romanticized image of herself she fancies love as "a Presence" before whose glance her foot straightened and her eyes dropped. "She had only to lay her head on his chest and he would lead her away to the sea, to the city, to the woods". Pauline is almost deceived by her idealization of Cholly and can't see that her dependence on him to fulfil her, make her perfect and whole would give her only emotional scars. Thus Pauline not only suffers from low self-esteem she also seeks fulfilment from outside.

Pauline has a fascination for colours. At Alabama, which provided her a fertile ground for the rainbow of colours, she enjoyed green the most. It stirred her creative imagination as she learned to drown her low self-esteem in her passion for order. Morrison comments that Pauline had the eye of an artist but she lacks the paints and crayons. When in Kentucky she recollected the "streak green". In her youth and freedom of imagination her spring of creativity sustained. She describes her first meeting with Cholly as an array of colours. But in Lorain she found no green to look at but that of her kitchen chairs and saw no flying bugs but the truckloads of furniture. Here colours returned to her for some time as a rainbow during her orgasm and it is this thrill that binds Pauline with her drunkard husband. But soon she found difficult in recalling them: "only thing I miss some time is that rainbow. But like I say, I don't recollect it very much any more." (104)

It is the search for these colours that she first turns to the colourful life on the silver screen and then to the 'white pillow slips', 'silvery taps', 'yellow hair', pink nightie' and 'sheets with top hems picked out with blue coneflowers' etc of the Fisher's house. And Pauline turns indifferent to the colourlessness of her house.

Pauline's married life is shredded with violence. Pauline fell in love with Cholly because he tended her deformed foot and hence made her feel whole while Cholly married her because her dependence on him restored (for some time) the self-esteem he had been deprived of by two armed white men who overseered his first sexual act. In this way we see that they needed each other to fulfil themselves. However, after their migration to the north they ventured into the experience of the industrial world. Cholly's diversion and Pauline's loneliness snapped their relationship. Cholly developed the habit of drinking down the sense of his failure in the new economic world while Pauline started living a false life by aping the white to retain her self-worth. "Money became the focus of all their discussions, hers for clothes and his for drink. Reduced to insignificance they needed each other to displace their frustration. Their married live was marked with violence—verbal as well as physical.

Pauline's indifference to her family makes her a miserable failure as a mother. In fact Morrison portrays Pauline as an example of one who struggle to be a ship but fails to be a harbour. She thinks that she is mothering by working as a servant for 12 to 16 hours a day, by beating in her children any sign of slovenliness and instilling in them a fear of the sinfulness of their father. Though Pauline communicates to the unborn child

Picola, she hardly communicates to her after her birth. She feeds her but leaves her emotionally hungry. Her behaviour teaches Picola lessons in illusions. Picola is doomed because her inability to empower her self is cemented as much by the dominant culture's value as her mother. Had Pauline resisted the onslaught on her 'self', had she retained her faith in her cultural heritage and had she taken pride in her blackness, the tragedy of Picola could have been averted. Pauline's Breedlove's love generates subterrean diabolical chaos in Picola's life by introducing her to the destructiveness of a culturally sanctioned mirror symbolized by the "eye" that is decidedly singular and the "bluest" of the world.

Thus Pauline's tragedy, her schizophrenic life is the result of the oppression of racial and capitalistic power that created the division of the privileged and the deprived. Pauline's life is the story of the wounded black psyche under white duress.

Cholly

Some say that through Cholly Breedlove Morrison has dealt with the theme of black man's conflict between owning responsibility to family and freedom to leave. He is romanticised as Morrison's first mobile man. But there are others who read in this character the tragedy of muteness and inarticulateness of black man under the white oppression. The novel is not only the story of the rape of Picola by her father, Cholly, but also a penetration into his personal history. The life of Cholly is a story of abandonment, emasculation and muteness imposed on him by racist, capitalistic and patriarchal society.

Cholly Breedlove is a forsaken man. He was literally abandoned by his father before his birth and by his mother when he was just four days old. Recovered from the junk heap where her mother left him wrapped in two blankets and one newspaper Cholly Breedlove was raised by Great Aunt Jimmy. Though she was a poor substitute of the mother, she was a great support to Cholly physically, emotionally and psychologically. When the aunt died he lost the only emotional anchor he had.

The death of Aunt Jimmy was combined with the most painful and disorienting incident of Cholly's life when he was objectified on his first sexual act by two gunned white men under the flesh light. Cholly was emasculated during this humiliating and frightening experience as the perversity of the cruel and malicious white men made him feel that the male power didn't belong to him. Unable to lash at the enemy, Cholly, for his survival in the absence of any emotional support at home, displaced his frustration on Darlene, his partner in this sexual act. This incident results in adoption of a dangerous survival strategy of misdirection of anger, hatred and frustration.

Since his childhood having heard that his mother "wasn't right in the head" Cholly had a deep longing for his father. When he was in fourth grade he had the courage to ask about his father. He looked for a father figure and found it in Blue Jack, a nice old man whose strength impressed him and Cholly decided that since god was a nice old white man Blue Jack must be the devil—strong and black. It is longing for his father that takes him to Macon when he is gripped with the fear of Darlene's pregnancy after his disillusioning sexual adventure.

Cholly had a painful childhood and the conditions of his life especially in adolescence pushed him further into the abyss of loneliness, separation, frustration and impotence. He arrived at Macon to find his father but only to be discarded. This callous abandonment was so devastating for Cholly that he regressed into an infantile rage. He soiled his pant in a final loss of control. The incident eclipsed any opportunity for emotional maturity, as he lay curled for hours in the fetal position with fists in eyes. With all protection lost Cholly lost his prelapsarian innocence and became dangerously free.

These incidents make him a sympathetic character. The rejection by his father whom he sought to seek comfort from the bruises of the visual confrontation of the white men leaves him mute. Morrison doesn't show him speaking after this incident. Having learnt to internalise his oppression Cholly learnt to get his manhood back through displacement: "These women give him back his manhood, which he takes aimlessly". Clearly he realized his manhood by conquering the body of a woman. His response is thus a reminder of the response of the black men Aunt Jimmy and his friends talked about. The only difference was that the old women received their abuses as displacement of their frustration without retaliation while Cholly's wife didn't. He needed

Pauline to "Pour out on her the sum of all his inarticulate fury and aborted desires. Hating her, he could leave himself intact."

In spite of these painful incidents Cholly is able to forge ahead. He married Pauline and is caring and compassionate to her. She needed him to make her feel complete and he by doing so could regain and retain his lost manhood. So in Kentucky, they seemed to complement each other. She had her colours and he his music. But the move north proved fragmenting to Pauline—Cholly relationship. His restored manhood as a patriarch and provider came under challenge under the white 'Look' and his economic insignificance. He sought recluse in alcohol. He started living an inauthentic life, in sadist lovemaking and violence and brutality of his married/ domestic life.

Cholly having had no role model of parenting knew not how to parent. He became a father, but didn't father his children; he had no feeling for them. Drunk and confused Cholly communicated with his wife only in violence and this violence in the total absence of parental love played havoc on the psyche of his children. Sammy reacted violently hitting him and screaming to his mother to kill him while Picola responded like a cocoon.

Only once does Cholly feel tenderness for his daughter at her helplessness, hopelessness and unhappiness. He thinks of how to make her smile to "earn him his own respect." But drunken stupor heightens the confusion of his mind where tenderness for her daughter jumbles with his passion for his youthful wife, hatred for the whites the instinct of displacing it and his own sense of impotence. In such a state of mind Cholly communicates with his daughter, as he did with Pauline—in sex and violence. He rapes Picola.

Though while narrating the physical and psychological rape of Picola Morrison penetrates into the history of her father Cholly rather sympathetically, she doesn't absolve him. His sin remains beyond acquaintance. He lands himself in the workhouse where he dies. Through Picola, Morrison talks about the rape of the black woman committed for centuries. By narrating the rape of the daughter by her father she shows how black women suffered the burden of the oppression of the black man who themselves victimized, victimize the black women.

Cholly is a victim of the economic system. His frustrations are not only that of a man beaten by a racist system but of a man beaten by an economic system. He is clearly over powered by the capitalist system that is interested in commodification. Claudia in the novel discusses the fear of extreme poverty when she discusses the condition of the outdoors. It is this outdoors that a four-year-old Cholly confronts when his mother wrapped him in a bundle and placed it on a junk heap by the railroad. From then all he encounters is deprivation of one kind or the other. The move north to overcome poverty proves futile for him. He fails to be the provider and the patriarch and lapses into an inauthentic life of drunkardness.

Cholly can also be seen as a victim of the white system of patriarchy. Pauline needs money to create her self-image according to the white 'Look' while the capitalist system sinks Cholly into a non-entity. To be a patriarch he needs money, which he can't earn because he is black and therefore, poor. Morrison shows Cholly as emasculated by the racist capitalist system as well as emasculated by Pauline. The narrator in The Bluest Eye describes the quarrel between Cholly and Pauline reversing their roles. Pauline fights like a man while Cholly fights like a coward. He is as muted by the system as is Pauline. If Cholly needs Pauline to displace his frustration and sense his manhood Pauline equally needs Cholly to displace hers and fancy the colours of her childhood. Morrison clearly writes, "And it was Pauline, or rather marrying her, that did for him what the flesh lights didn't do.... he wandered at the arrogance of the woman.

In short Charles Breedlove is a clear testimony to the complex psychological conditions generated in the blacks under white duress.

Claudia

The Bluest Eye is much more than a mere indictment of white society for its oppression of blacks or the indictment of blacks for their treatment of woman. It is about the value of self-creation, willingness to take

responsibility for one's own life. This central focus of the novel is presented in the form of the narrator of the novel, Claudia MacTeer.

Though the novel is the story about a poor black girl falling a prey to the system based on racism and sexism, it is Claudia who forms the hub. The novel begins and ends with her voice. It begins with Claudia announcing her efforts to know the reason of Picola's tragedy by trying to understand how it happened and in doing so she retrospect's and introspects. This process illuminates her and teaches her to own responsibility for Picola's tragedy as well as her own life. Her narration and rumination helps her in self-creation. "Even if it fails to grow, everyone must plan his/her own garden of Marry Gold. If someone else does, the seeds are bound to shrivel and die like Picola."

Since to Morrison novels are efforts at thinking clearly and finding answers to certain complex questions of life, Claudia carries out this exercise. Claudia's dismemberment of the white doll is the cardinal aspect of her character and it pertains to the cardinal question "what it was that all the world said (it)was lovable" and "to see what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that escaped me, but apparently only me ." The novel is an effort to know who are responsible for Picola's tragedy. That is why a critic finds in Claudia "the portrait of a black woman artist as a young girl breaking through sanctioned ignorance and arriving through internal struggle at an emergent consciousness."

Claudia is proffered as a foil to Picola. She is strong and sturdy, independent and confident Though there is only a marginal difference in the economic conditions of these families ,they are poles apart as far as the domestic atmosphere is concerned .Claudia's family has strong kinship ties. Mr.MacTeer's struggle out side the house to provide for and protect the family matches the labour of Mrs. MacTeer at home. Both of them in spite of feeling oppressed, in spite of cherishing white middle class aspirations retain black communal identity. Their anger at the world is certainly better than the feeling of shame and self-hatred that Picola and her family breed. Instead of lashing at each other for displacement of their frustration the MacTeers express their anger. True to their name they show sympathy while the Breedloved contrary to theirs breed not love but violence and self-hatred. Unlike Picola who cuddles the image of blue eyes and blond-haired girls, Claudia destroys them and the values they represent. Thus she shows a high level of consciousness and a positive self-image that her parents have instilled in her.

Through this character Morrison shows what the blacks needed most for survival. Claudia is able to survive because she has the inner strength to with stand the poverty and discrimination of a racist society. She has inherited and learnt it from her parents. Claudia is a precauious child hungry to know and experience more. She has the consciousness to understand and interpret the tragic end of Picola. Her comments clearly place the blame on society. She shows maturity of mind and her survival strategies develop according to the need. She hates white colour and loves her blackness. She says that she felt comfortable in their skin. She is unable to understand the outrageous reaction of her parents when she dismembered "a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned dole was what every girl child treasured." (20). She is violent to the girls with white skin. Though remembering this "disinterested violence" she is filled with shame she learns to change with aging knowing that, "the change was adjustment without improvement." (22). Thus she retains her self-pride and racial pride though she learns to take delight in the worldly ways. Her change is "the conversion from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred, to fraudulent love (22).

Structure

What is said is almost as important as how it is said. The 'manner' is discussed as the structure, style and narrative technique. The study of structure involves the plot or patterning of the subject matter of the novel.

Toni Morrison is a modern writer. Therefore for her events, scene and setting are important also because they perform a symbolic function of representing the inner reality of human psyche. She belongs to that class of black writers for whom structural and stylistic concerns become equally important with the thematic. So we find that symbolic and ironic structure are adopted by her as the chief poetic device of the structure.

The Bluest Eye is the first novel of Toni Morrison in which we find her feeling the urgency to dabble and experiment with the structure and narrative style in order to accentuate its thematic impact. The novel is a cerebral investigation into making of a demented personality because of the domination of Eurocentric standard of beauty. Those who lack it assume "a zero image" of themselves which according to Caroline Gerald (The Black Writer) "is a an unfulfilled, insignificant, negative sense of self." Morrison examines in this novel how a child of minority culture learns self-hatred. The child's education in deculturation and the process of making of zero images begins very early. Morrison castigates the entire educational process of a child that teaches through primers, curriculum, billboards, magazine covers, advertisements, movies, Shirley temple cups and Mary Jane candies damaging lessons in self-loathing. Such pervasive and infectious is the impact of the Eurocentric concept of beauty of blue eyes, blond hair and white skin that the blacks, in minority, unable to blue their eyes and blond their hair try to bleach both their black skin as well as their black soul in order to enter into the mainstream by adopting the white standard of morality, hygiene and happiness. Efforts to whiten themselves invariably makes them estranged from their black culture.

Morrison works out this theme through Picola, an eleven-year girl born black, and poor and by majority standards ugly. Placed in 1941, *The Bluest Eye* narrates through multiple narrative perspectives—the child Claudia, the adult Claudia, Omniscient narrator, first person narrative and stream of consciousness—conscious and unconscious acts of cruelty of community members leading to the insanity of the focal character Picola. The story entails Picola taken as an innocent and convenient victim of her community's frustration, anger, ignorance and shame. Entering womanhood she is raped by her father, gives birth to a stillborn child and then escapes her sense of ugliness in the illusion of the beauty of blue eyes.

Morrison evolves a structure that contributes to the theme. She ascribes to the prefaces symbolic meanings that help us to understand why and how the tragedy of Picola took place. The novel has two prefaces and four sections named after seasons which are divided into unnumbered chapters some of which take the heading from the last of the three versions of the primer that constitute the first preface. Morrison inverts the meanings through language play underlining the irony that forms an essential elements of the novel hence this structure becomes symbolic as well as ironic.

The novel begins with a primer repeated twice. This paragraph from a child's reader is used as an epigraph or more precisely as thematic heading. It is repeated twice, each time becoming more chaotic as punctuation, capitalization, and spacing disappear until the final version appears totally incomprehensible. These three versions, standing in contrast to each other are representative of three types of families and individuals introduced in the novel. The first standardized version stands for the ideal white families like the Fishers, who set the norm of the happy family in the society. The second version represents the families like that of Geraldine who is not the standard but look closer to it. The third chaotic version represents the Breedlove and each member of this family. Hence, this preface is used as a epigraph or more precisely as the thematic heading.

By introducing the second preface Morrison weaves a plot that is non-linear. She begins the novel with the close—Picola impregnated by her father gives birth to a dead child. In fact, the plot is devised in such a manner that Claudia while recollecting her childhood episodes tries to understand the tragedy of Picola and with this the reader is also led of towards an illumination. The readers have an insight into the why, which is Morrison's aim all along.

Morrison uses the third version of the primer in the first preface as the heading of the some of her chapter where she wants to underline the chaos. The scheme of the chapters also correspondence to the contents of the primer. The primer talks of the pretty green and white house and the house of the MacTeer in chapter I and of the Breedlove in chapter II & chapter III taking the title from the 3rd version ending half way in the word happy. (THEYAREH) tells us of the drafty damp and dark house of Claudia and the violence that pervades the house of the Breedlove that has compelled the child Sammy runaway many times and makes Picola wish for her physical disappearance.

In the Primer we have "See Jane" after 'they are happy'. Chapter 4 introduces Maureen Peal who declares to the black girl that she is cute and they are ugly and she finds the world subscribing to her conviction. The primer then introduces the cat and in chapter 5 we meet Geraldine, her son and her cat. Geraldine pinpointing the estrangement of brown girls from black culture and high lights the emotional vacuum that pervades in this so-called happy bourgeois black family. Picola comes to play with the kitten/cat is frightened by Junior and repulsed by Geraldine, but she does notice the possibility of blue eyes in the black face.

Mother in the primer is Pauline in chapter six. Though this chapter narrates molestation of a young girl by a black man, this incident is merely the background for the final incident of the beating and non-recognition of Picola by her mother at the Fishers. She would rather coo to the white child than sooth her own injured daughter. The chapter 7 deriving the title from the third version of preface narrates the estrangement of Pauline from rural south as will as black culture and her family. It ends with Pauline's words: "Only thing I miss sometimes is that rainbow. But like I say, I don't recollect it much anymore." 104.

The primer's father, big strong and smiling becomes Cholly in the story. This Chapter tells us the agonies of Cholly's life. Salvage by his grandaunt from a junk heap where his mother had abandoned him, Cholly's self image is damaged first by two leering white voyeurs during his first sexual initiation with Darlene followed by his disowning by his gambler father. The process of his isolation completes in the mill town where he substitutes Darlene with his wife, Pauline to displace his anger and frustration and drinks down his life. The chapter ends with Picola's rape by her emotionally and muddled estranged father.

Having introduced the background of Cholly, called a dog for his misdeeds by the community chapter 9 introduces us to Soaphead Church, a reader and advisor allegedly having super natural power. This man dislikes men and women and finds pleasure in abusing girls. When Picola requests him for a pair of blue eyes, he finds an opportunity to get rid of Bob, the dog of the landlady he detests. He gives food and asks Picola to feed the dog saying that if he behaves strangely, her wish for blue eyes will be granted the following way. Bob, identical to the dog in the primer dies and Picola in her urgency to escape her sense of ugliness lapses into insanity, thinking she has beautiful blue eyes.

After the dog the primer talks of friend. In chapter 10 Frieda and Claudia, the only friends of Picola learn of her pregnancy and notice the overwhelming hatred of community for the unborn child. In their innocent effort to save the child they perform the ritual of sowing of marigold seeds and chanting magic words. But in Picola there is only loneliness. She finds her friend in her alter ego who comes to play with her in chapter 11 and finally Claudia realises that Picola was a scapegoat and victim in a world eager to drive strength from her sad example.

Morrison has not only given two prefaces as props and used the third version of the primer in the first preface as headings using identical items to underline chaos through inversion, she has also divided the text of the novel into sections naming them after seasons. Morrison doesn't use the usual seasonal cycle. This has symbolic overtones. This schema is prepared by Claudia's introductory statement in the second preface in which she relates the failure of marigolds to sprout out to the death of Picola's baby.

At the centre of this nature construct are the physical and psychological events that lead to the rape of Picola. These events form the plot of the novel. The first section is entitled autumn and it comprises Picola's entry into womanhood. (Ripeness and maturity) amidst desolation (lovelessness). It is indeed the autumn season for Picola but the only abundance she has is of rejection, hatred and humiliation.

The use of names of seasons to indicate the major parts of the novel help Morrison tells her story. By beginning the novel with autumn she indicates that the world of the novel is topsy turvey. Spring usually symbolizes birth and rebirth. Autumn, on the contrary, is the time of death and decay. Summer suggests life in full bloom, ripeness for death. These seasonal divisions help the reader in understanding the fundamental decadence of life for Afro-Americans in the United States. This cycle from autumn to summer also indicates warped psyche of an adolescent African female living in a racist society. Spring season is the season of fertility but in spring

season Picola is raped by her father. Her rape in spring is preceded by a ‘false spring’ in the winter personified by Maureen Peal representing the coldness accorded to Picola. Hence Morrison uses these seasonal divisions of the novel as another prop to tell the story of the devastation of the self-image of the African-American.

Thus Morrison begins the novel with the idyllic ‘Dick and Jane’ primer setting the standard for family behaviour and beauty the image of which pervades and overwhelms all the entire American society—from school text books to print and electronic media. Morrison introduces this primer as a prefatory material:

“Morrison arranges the novel so that each of its sections provides a better gloss on key phrases from the novel’s preface, a condensed version of the Dick and Jane reader. These phrases describe the (American) cultured ideal of the healthy, supportive well-to-do family. The seven central elements of Jane’s world—house, family cat, mother, father, dog and friend—become in turn plot elements but only after they are inverted to fit the realities of Picola’s world”

Morrison doesn’t introduce the primer as prefatory material and introduce the chapter of *The Bluest Eye* that are recounted by the novel’s omniscient narrative voice. Epigraphic sections are thematically tied to the chapters, which they directly precede. For example the chapter, which introduces the Breedlove family to the reader is prefaced by the primer’s reference to Jane’s very happy family. But the family presented in this chapter is the very antithesis of the standardized, ideal (white) American family of the primer. In this way Morrison establishes an invasive relationship between the pretext (primer) and the text (the portrayal of Afro-American life). Through this she deconstructs the myth of the happy family. She exposes the sense of estrangement hidden between the lines. Portraying the family as happy she suggests the reverse. The inability of the family to respond to Jane’s call to play implies that contentment is only superficial. Beneath the healthy lies the rigidity and emotionlessness.

Thus we see that the structure of the novel is significant as it contributes to the theme of the novel. It is artfully devised by Morrison for this purpose. The structure is symbolic and ironic. The overall impact is that the structure becomes complex but its complexity matches the complexity of the issue that Morrison takes up in this novel.

Narrative Technique

Morrison says she tells stories that have not been told. *The Bluest Eye* is also an untold story. Therefore, it is a story that requires several points of view. The novel has a complex narrative pattern. Its complexity is the result of various artificial props that Morrison uses to tell the story. It is also the result of varied points of view, equivocation on the question of human motivation and intent and the absence of reliable authority and any authoritative moral judgement even while exposing the sin of innocence. This dislocation of the centre is post modernistic and Morrison combines it with the traditional black artistic technique of inversion of story telling.

Morrison begins telling her story in a speakerly style reminiscent of the black oral tradition. The first sentence, “Quiet as it’s kept, there were no marigold in the folk of 1941,” emanates from the Afro-American-community, capturing the milieu of black women conversing with one another. Thus Morrison connects with the reader. Exploiting the child speaker’s point of view and naïve but poignant logic, Morrison at once establishes a three-way collaboration between the author, speaker and the reader.

The Bluest Eye has a two-voiced narration: by Claudia and by an omniscient presence. Claudia, who narrates the first chapter in each section of the novel, relates matters about her own life and that of her family, as well as information concerning Picola about which she knows: her own dismemberment of white dolls; Mr. Henry’s fondling of her sister; Mrs. Breedlove’s abuse of her daughter in the Fisher home; and her sister’s and her own attempts to save Picola’s baby. On the other hand, the omniscient narrator, whose voice controls the chapters that Claudia does not narrate, conveys pertinent information about the histories of characters much older than Claudia, as well as information about Picola of which Claudia could not possibly be aware: Cholly’s reaction to the white hunters who discover him and Darlene in the woods; Polly’s fascination with movies; Geraldine’s attempts to suppress the funkiness of passion; Cholly’s motivation for raping his daughter; and Picola’s

schizophrenic discussion with herself.

The complexity in the narrative style of the novel stems from the problematic shifting from one to point of view to the other. The voice of the first person narrator splits into two—the child and adult. The adult Claudia as a narrator often ascribes her adult feelings and analytical ability to Claudia the child. It looks rather unconvincing the nine year old child understands the US racist and capitalistic society so well. For example when she says, "And all the time we (knew) that Maureen Peal was not the Enemy and not worthy of such intense hatred. The Thing to fear was the Thing that made her beautiful and not us." Morrison allows such shifts from the child Claudia to the adult Claudia when she wants us to have a more mature and objective view of the characters and situations. Again the major two narrative voices merge into a single voice. For example after the onset of Picola's double voicedness the distinctive narrative voices apparently merge into a single voice. Claudia's information and comprehension clearly comes from the omniscient narrator reflecting that she knows the specifics of Cholly's incestuous act and speaks of its motivation in the same terms as the omniscient narrator: "Cholly loved her. I am sure he did. He, at any rate, was the only one who loved her enough to touch her, envelop her, give something of himself to her."

In addition to it Morrison also uses stream of consciousness technique along with omniscient narration. While narrating the history of Pauline's life she gives Pauline a chance to speak for herself and in this way exposes the innermost recesses of Pauline's psyche. Thus she employs two narrative techniques within a single chapter. Like Jamesian's technique she temporarily merges the narrators point of view with that of the character but at the same time she undercuts or problematizes this point of view by presenting its alternatives. She clearly does this in the case of Pauline.

Morrison through this texts and pretexts also provides an ironic frame for the entire novels narrative. Morrison in the novel seems to manipulate the contents to suit the purpose of her narrative strategies. She presents a text and a pretext and establishes a systematic ironic relationship between the two. Though the primer with seven basic elements of Jane's world—house, family, cat, mother, father, dog and friend, Morrison sets to execute a dissection and deconstruction of the bourgeois myth of happy ideal family. Through this she exposes each individual element of the myth as not only deceptively inaccurate but also wholly inapplicable to Afro-American life. By exhibiting the negative feelings of the Afro-Americans as the direct result of their adoption of white myths Morrison breaks the spell of propaganda of the white world. Thus Morrison uses the primer consciously to trope certain contentions.

Morrison's narrative scheme is much dependent on the technique of inversion. She inverts the symbolic significances of seasons after which she names the different sections of the novel. Spring, the mythic time for birth and renewed life begins not with images of optimism and growth, but with images of agony and frustration. Even the stereotype images are inverted. For example the father figure is inverted into a rapist (Cholly) and molester (Henry) while Pauline representing the inversion of the mother figure denies her child love and care that she showers upon a white child. Cholly's rape is a culminating gesture in the novels strategy of inversion. The primer of Jane in the first preface stands in ironic contrast with the families/homes and individual elements that Morrison introduces in the novel.

Besides these two or three narrative voices embedded within the text are three levels of narrative consciousness. The first level is the personal idealized consciousness of childhood as demonstrated in Picola's yearning for blue eyes. The second represents less, naïve consciousness of the novel's central narrator, Claudia, who as an adult recalls the ambivalence of childhood images. The third version provides the social/historical consciousness of objective narrator who exposes the contrast between the real and the ideal expressing her anger at the dissolution of black lives.

The Three levels of time are another prop that Morrison in this novel uses to tell her story. The reader is introduce to a present that exists outside the novel proper, the present of Claudia as she remembers her childhood. The novel also offers a peep into the future within the novel through the second preface. Claudia

tells us about the death of the stillborn child of Picola but her madness remains a future for the reader at this stage of the novel. There is some confusion about the time in the beginning chapters of the novel. For example the reader remains confused about what time exist when Picola comes to stay with the MacTeer—wheather she stays with them after Cholly burnt their storefront house or some other house they previously lived in.

The novel has a closed form the ending is announced in the beginning. Hence the novel is not about what happens but how that 'what' happens. In the second preface Claudia tells us about Picola's tragedy and gives us the image of the earth in 1941 when there were no marigolds. This image finally establishes the ending of the novel—Picola turned insane, Cholly dead in the workhouse, Sammy left the down and Pauline skill sticking to the Fishers. *The Bluest Eye* thus gives little scope for growth and change. Claudia while introspecting finds herself responding to the reality in a different way but without improvement. It is this closed form that makes critic call *The Bluest Eye* "Toni Morrison's *The Waste Land*".

Class Consciousness

The Bluest Eye, which is Morrison's first novel, shows Morrison's perception of the white reality as completely oppressive for the helpless migrated blacks in the urban ghettoes in the middle years of the last century. The lower class of the black community grips the attention of the writer, who tries to see through their seeming pathology and criminality.

This novel presents the damaging impact of the American creed of upward mobility and middle class values on the poor blacks. Though institutional desegregation is shown as setting in, racial discrimination continues to wreck the socio-economic fabric of black life, as the society remains divided on colour and class lines. In this novel, Morrison has related colour with class. The "brown girls" are better off than the black girls and Maureen Peal with high yellow complexion is "as rich as the richest of the white girls"(BE 52). Picola is not only the ugliest but also the poorest. For poor blacks placed at the lowest rung of social ladder, there is hardly any meaningful black-white interaction. Whites are the elite; ruling class while the black world is almost the pathological community of Gunar Myrdal.

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison is based on the thesis that racism devastates the self-image of the African female in general and of the African female child in particular. It clearly exhibits that the African's self image is destroyed as a result of racism and the resultant propaganda of the ruling class of its own standards especially of beauty and happiness. Though in The Bluest Eye racism comes under major attack, Morrison streaks the entire text significantly with the impact of class factor too. Through this theme Morrison exhibit her understanding of how racism was a capitalistic set up. She portrays how the ruling class controls the major instruments of economic production and distribution and establish their cultural supremacy by promoting their image through controlling all forms of media and by analogy psychologically enslave the black into acceptance of their ugliness and hence their inferiority to ensure perpetuation of white dominance.

Though some critics like Doreatha Drummond Mbalia see an immature class analysis in The Bluest Eye, the novel has poignant suggestions as to show how economics played a significant role in the lives of the black. Claudia's statement forms the crux of this thesis.

"To be put out doors by a landlord was one thing—unfortunate, but an aspect of life over which you had no control, since you could not control your income…. Being in minority in both cast and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment…. Knowing that there was such a thing as out doors bred in us a hunger for property, for ownership." (18)

Morrison presents the class jealousy of the black clearly when she says, "Renting blacks cast furtive glances at these owned yards and porches and made firmer commitment to by themselves "some nice little old place."". (18)

The topography that Morrison creates of Lorain is linear, complementing to the hierarchy of a society divided into three major classes—the white rich and ruling, the bourgeois black and white and the poor black. Morrison

also shows how even the thin divisions in these three major categories of class play an important role in determining the mind set of the people and makes a major difference in their lives.

Though Morrison has introduced only a few white characters and that to indirectly, she makes clear suggestion to show that they form the upper most strata of society. They are the mill owners, shop owners and the employers. Thus they are the controllers of the economic life of the lower class. They live in a segregated community. Set in 1940's though Morrison incorporates an integrated school, people of different caste hardly mix up. The public park near the Lake Erie still follows the segregation rule: "Black people were not allowed in the park (84). Morrison clearly draws the class hierarchy by placing this section on a non-linear line i.e. the richest (the Fishers) in the northeast and the poorest (the Breedloves) down in the southeast.

Morrison draws the class distinctions in the mill town not only through the topography but also through the structure of the houses. The richest like the Fishers live in white brick houses. These houses are lovely, have gardens, furniture, ornaments and windows like 'shiny eye glasses…" (84). At the lower level are the "nice little old place" (18), the sturdy houses with porch and yards in which live the first white mistress of Pauline. One-step bellow in the economic hierarchy is the soft grey houses in tree-lined streets where Geraldine or Maureen Peal lives. Lower to them are the drafty houses in which live the families like that of Claudia. At the lowest rung are the abandoned storefronts—the "grey frame houses and black telephone poles around it" (30). In these houses live the most marginalized, the Breedloves and the three prostitutes.

The class distinctions are also manifested in the colour of the sky. While the houses of the poor are near the mills where the sky is grey and leaden the other end of the sky is clear: "The orange-patched sky of the steel mill section never reached this part of the town. The sky was always blue." (84) The difference in the colour of the sky clearly marks the major class distinctions between the rich and the poor.

Morrison also shows the women living in differently structured houses as complementing to the class divisions. The class struggle is clearly visible. The ladies in the decorated lovely white houses are in the image of the southern white women, silent and decorative. Their children are looked after by mammies while they remain totally oblivious of the drudgery of the household works. In the social section slightly lower to them are the women like the first mistress of Pauline who are ignored, noisy and grudging. They displace their frustration on the black women they employ. Lower in the hierarchy to them are the women like Geraldine who have broken selves but struggle hard to look poised. They fear their blackness and ape the living ways of the upper class. Placed next to their status are the leaning, tired women like Mrs. MacTeer's friends who are striving for physical as well as psychological survival in a society based on the paradigms of race, colour, class and gender.

Morrison also displays her class-consciousness by drawing class distinction on the colour line. The white living in the white houses occupy the highest position followed by white skinned black people like Maureen Peel. Morrison describes her elaborately: "She was rich, at least by our standards, as rich as the richest of the white girls, swaddled in comfort and care" (52). Next to them are the brown girls who spend most of their energy in looking like the women of the class upper to them and making their homes look like theirs. One step down is the black people like Mr. and Mrs. MacTeer while at the lowest stature are the ugly black.

Morrison takes extra care while describing the drapery and dressing up of her characters according to their class. The pink nightie of the Fishers' child stand as a marked contrast to the underwear in which sleeps the sick Claudia in the shivering winter. Similarly the white pillow slips edged with embroidery in the Fishers' house are different from the hard boiled starched white sheets in the house of the brown girls and the simple bed clothes in Claudia's house. Significantly Morrison doesn't talk of the dress or drapery in the house of the Breedloves. Morrison also makes shoes and socks the symbols of the class. Easily disintegrating shoes and brown stockings of Claudia and Frieda are certainly a class lower than the Kelley green knee socks and patent leather shoes of Maureen Peal. Picola has shoes but no socks.

Morrison presents these class divisions minutely, accurately and poignantly as she does when she describes the toilet facilities in these houses. The tone in which she describes the toilet facilities in the Breedloves' house

brings out the sordidness of their living conditions: "There were no bath facilities, only a toilet bowl, inaccessible to the eye, if not the ear." (31). Similarly the zinc bathtub in Claudia's house is much lower in class than the silvery taps in the Fishers' house.

Thus Morrison's class-consciousness is minute, keen and in-depth study of class distinctions exhibited in the structure of the houses, furnishings, dressing up, food items, habits and mannerisms. She makes no secret that while the richest look down upon the poor, the poor look up to the rich which with jealousy, awe and admiration. Significantly Morrison's presentation of class factor is a typical manifestation of the class distinctions that exist in the USA. These class distinctions are presented as generating not harmful envy but as inspiring an upward mobility in the people. However, Morrison makes no secret to show the racial feelings combined with these class distinctions. She particularly underlines the interracial class distinctions and prejudices through characters like Maureen, Geraldine and Rosemary.

Hence it is not justified to say that Morrison's class-consciousness is eclipsed under her primary concern for the racism. In fact, Morrison shows how race, colourism and class combine together to play havoc with the psyche of the poor black girls. She shows how economics/class plays a determining role in the interracial and intraracial interpersonal relationships.

Feminist Consciousness of Toni Morrison in the Bluest Eye

Black women writers who in their own struggle as women experienced the triple jeopardy best represented the rise of the voice of the black women in literature. Weaving and telling stories around and of their struggle, they brought to the front the black woman's oppression and rape by both white and black men stretching over a period of two centuries.

The novels of Toni Morrison confirm her feminist consciousness. As a black woman writer, she brings the black women out of their 'invisibility', creates a world dominated by black women, shows the women's especially black women's triple oppression, gives voice to the black women, feminizes spirituality and uses female language. Thus Morrison's novels are seen as revising history from the female perspective. Not only she studies history from the black woman's point of view, but she also presents the white woman's perspective. Her feminist consciousness enables her to see beyond the racial boundaries and develop the theme of female bonding in her novels.

Toni Morrison made her entry into the literary world with a bang. Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* tells the tragic tale of the rape of a twelve year old black girl by her racially emasculated father supporting what Barbara Omolade said, "There can be no analysis of race without an analysis of gender and there is no understanding of gender without an understanding of race." In her second novel *Sula* Sula Nel represent two different ways of structuring man-woman relationship showing different responses to gender roles and black man's mobility. She experiments with masculinising woman as Eva and Sula. In her third novel *Song of Solomon* Morrison fuses the masculine and feminine attributes in both a male (Milkman) and a female character (Pilate). Milkman is Morrison's woman-loving, humanized mobile man. In her fourth novel Tar Baby Morrison portrays a black patriarch enriched with human milk. Through Son and Jadine she explores the contours of man-woman relationship in the changing socio economic contexts and points out the dangers of a masculinized free woman.

Her trilogy—Beloved, Jazz and Paradise trace the changing man-woman relationships since slavery. She shows how even under slavery man-woman relationship though temporary were fulfilling while woman suffered sexual oppression at the hand of white men. Jazz through Joe, Violet and Dorcas shows the impact of migration on man woman relationship as repression, trivialization and erratic and inerotic expression of sex and denial of motherly instincts mar man-woman relationship. It also shows violence against black woman inflicted by both black and white men. The last novel of Toni Morrison juxtaposes a patriarchal community with a purely women's world. She shows how women in spite of being protected and provided for remain unblooming personalities, powerless to resist men's actions under patriarchy. In this novel she shows men of Ruby as

providers, protectors, nurturers and wife-loving persons co-operating with each other but as gender and racial patriarchs they oppress women who seem to threaten patriarchy. Paradise constructs a *paradise* constructed by women who open its doors for both men and women alike. Thus there is a marked development from The Bluest Eye to Paradise, which shows identification of patriarchy as a greater evil.

The Theme of the Scapegoat

Erich Newmann in 'Depth Psychology and a New Ethic' discusses scapegoating as the result of the necessity of the self and/or the community to get rid itself of the guilt feeling inherent in any individual or group due to failure to attain the acknowledged values of that group. The guilt feeling or shadow is projected, transferred to the outside world and is experienced as an outside object. Scapegoating for an Afro-American would mean self-contempt as a result of the split of self into shadow (evil as black) and unshadowed (ideal as white and American). It also means the divided self of a country which traditionally viewed Afro-Americans as the shadowed or personification of evil.

The Bluest Eye has scapegoating as its major theme. As pointed out by Chikwenye Ogunyami in "Order and Disorder in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye", "Running through the novel is the theme of the scapegoat: Geraldine's cat Bob, the dog and Picola are the scapegoats to cleanse American society through their involvement in some violent rituals." Abuses heaped on the focal character of the novel, Picola, by the white & black, men and women alike can be characterized as a ritual of purgation—purgation of the self.

The novel presents many incidents, which show how white people use the black as scapegoat. The behaviour of the white characters in the novel underline the hatred of the white for the black and the projection of their fears and complexes on to the black. The sneering white men compel Cholly to complete his sexual act at the gunpoint. Clearly they use Cholly as the scapegoat. There behaviour is so damaging for him that he is castrated for his life. Similarly the first white woman Pauline works for reacts wildly at the appearance of drunkard Cholly at her house. Her reaction is a confirmation that she subscribes to the myth of the black man as a rapist and hence an evil. The third and the most important example of the white reaction to the 'black evil' is seen in Yacobowski episode. Yacobowski is a storekeeper who sells Mary Jane candies to Picola. Morrison shows his cultural blindness in his aversion to even look at Picola. Let alone having to touch her to hold money from her hands. It is a clear manifestation that he holds Picola as an evil.

The black's indictment occurs not at the hands of the white men only. Even the black people in their race for acculturation get decultured and pile insults on other blacks to escape their blackness. Under the dominance of the white they internalise the white concept of black as evil.

Picola victimisation at the hands of a group of young boys is a clear case of scapegoating. Singing and dancing around Picola they call her "Black emo" and "ya daddy sleeps naked". The insults inflicted on Picola describe their ability to disregard their similarity to the victim and reflects their own skin colour, familial situation and depraved condition of their own lives. Morrison comments, "That they were black, or that their own father had similar relaxed habits was irrelevant. It was there *contempt for their own blackness* that gave the first insult its teeth." (55 Italics mine). Clearly by calling her black they project the shadow of their own blackness on to Picola.

Geraldine, a brown middle class woman shows alienation from her cultural centre. Her anxiety for the colour of the skin, her careful development of "thrift, patience, high morals and goodness", her effort to get rid of funkiness, her disgust for the poor blacks, her categorization of dirt black as ugly and nigger and her encounter with Picola exhibit the projection of the shadow onto the vulnerable target. Without Causasian feature of the whites she makes every effort to approximate the white in behaviour by sidestepping what Morrison calls funkiness. Clearly she has internalised the myths created by whites of blacks being dirty and inferior. Her suppression of her sexuality is her effort to falsify the myth of the lewd sexuality (hence evil) of the black woman. Her disfunctionality and unnaturalness is manifested in her meeting the sexual advances of her black husband as "unsatisfying inconvenience". For her Picola represents the repulsiveness of poverty, the vileness

of blackness and the veritable eruption of funk. When she orders Picola to get out of her house, she is, in fact, pronouncing her fears. Therefore, she projects her own shadow of blackness on Picola. Thus Morrison shows that not only blacks accepted unquestioningly the American standard of beauty, hygiene and morality but they also try to escape blackness by trying to bleach their black souls.

The black neighbourhood of Lorain in the novel is peopled by such persons who as Afro-American aspire to be 'Ideal Americans' through imitation of and approximation to whites. Since they treat their blackness as shadows, they try to reach it escape it or project it on the vulnerable. *The Bluest Eye* presents efforts of the black people to eradicate 'the black evil' as the most tragic stage of deculturation that creates Picolas. It also presents evil as failure—failure to achieve the ideal values and standards that have been set up as desirable by the dominant group i.e. the white.

Not only the community but even the parents also relate to Picola in this way with violence and misery, which the Breedloves breed destroy their daughter with. Picola's victimisation is a bold symbol of their own despair and frustration. *The Bluest Eye* demonstrates how in there defeated life parents go through a process by which their self-hatred becomes scapegoating.

Pauline is an alienated woman and her alienation during her childhood stemmed from her realization that she didn't have a nickname and had a deformed foot. But in the northern city of Loraine her alienation is the outcome of her failure to achieve the white bourgeois model and physical duty. She is frustrated when Picola was born because she was "ugly". Her sense of failure and frustration as a black is objectified as Picola and she is indifferent to her. Her disowning Picola as her daughter and claiming the floor she sweeps at the Fishers as "my floor" is her projection of evil as black and white as ideal.

Cholly's rape of Picola is the deplorable and permanently damaging instance of partial scapegoating in the novel. Like Pauline Cholly is too driven by personal demons which he attempts to purge in violence against his family. Abandoned on a garbage dump by his mother Cholly searches for his father years later but this man more interested in gambling brutally discards him. Cholly lapses into an infantile stage of helplessness and abandonment. He gets out of it with a terrible sense of freedom but his traumatic abandonment, rejection by father and emasculation by two white men during his first sexual experience haunt him. Pauline's dependence on him gives him a sense of self-esteem temporarily and he is kind, compassionate and protective, but further humiliated by his economic powerlessness in Lorain he becomes derelict. Polly comes to stand for Darlene and he "poured out on her the some of all his inarticulate fury and aborted desires". So Cholly needs Pauline to objectify his failure. His treatment of Picola may also be seen as an act of scapegoating though only partially. This scapegoating is made a complicated issue by Morrison who projects Cholly experiencing a surge of tenderness combined with self-hatred and self-contempt as a person muddled with drinking.

At the end of the novel this theme is under lined by the narrator Claudia who in her adult rumination comes to understand the tragedy of Picola as an act of scapegoating:

"All our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all our beauty, which was first and which she gave to us. All of us—all who new her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us; her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health…. We honed our ego on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength".

So we see that Picola is used as a scapegoat. This purgative abuse of Picola is reflective of the black community's guilt about its own inability to measure up to some external ideal of beauty, happiness and behaviour. This failure which generates in them self hatred and, therefore, which must be purged. She becomes the black community's shadow of evil just as black community is the white community's evil.

Morrison through this theme questions the very validity of the ideal and the concept of the evil. She emphatically presents how internalisation of external social constructs can lead to the sacrifice of the black off spring, to parental detachment from the child and to complete adoption of a false identity under the influence of white standards. In other words the novel explores the complexities of the question of black self-hood in all the subtle

complications that a society based on caste, colour, race and class creates.

Lying hidden under the theme is the theme of estrangement from cultural routs. As pointed out by Susan Willis in, "Eruption of the Funk: Historicizing Tony Morrison", "the problem at the centre of Morrison's writing is how to maintain Afro-American cultural heritage once the relationship to the black rural south has been stretched thin over distance and generation."

Morrison juxtaposes the denigration and disintegration of Picola's self with the struggle of Claudia for self-preservation and racial pride. Her sadistic dismemberment of white dolls, torture of white girls and her antipathy to Maureen are her efforts at the preservation of self-pride. The difference in the reaction of Claudia and Picola to racial discrimination is that of anger and shame and this reaction owes greatly to their familial atmosphere.

Though Mrs. MacTeer has also imbibed the white standards of beauty as reflected in her Christmas gift to Claudia and fears of the body reflected in her reaction to prostitutes, yet she has preserved the Afro-American mechanisms of self-preservation. Her songs help her to transcend her anxieties. Her loving nurturance of menstruating Picola is symptomatic of her belief in the sanctity of sex and procreation. Similarly Mr. MacTeer discusses the quality of coal with his daughters. His hawk-like countenance inspires in them a fighting spirit. On the other hand Picola has very fickle and passing sense of anger. In her 'shame' dominates and deprives her of the possibilities of a positive self-image and a spirit for self-preservation. Therefore, she falls an easy victim to the black community for their projection of shadow.

In short, *The Bluest Eye* works out the theme of black selfhood combined with the theme of the scapegoat. It is about the sacrifice of Picola. Her tragedy is not only her inability to have racial pride but also the inability of the society and the black community to achieve a positive reading of blackness.

Communities of Women

The Bluest Eye tells about the isolation and disintegration of Picola at the hands of the society, community and the family. Susan Willis has observed that the problem dealt with in Morrison's writing is the thinning cultural ties stretching over distance and generations. Her novels portray the changes that have come about in the rural black community since slavery. Communiy has been a prime concern with Morrison. It is because historically communities had been a great survival force for the black. Hence Morrison's novels are as much investigations into the individual histories as they are the studies of black communities.

Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* has introduced various communities. Being a woman writer she is concerned most about how black women form these communities, how these communities help or harm them, and how with generation and migration these communities are losing their original traditional character.

In The Bluest Eye, which is primarily the story of Picola made a pariah by community for not having physical beauty according to Eurocentric standards introduces several communities of women. There are Aunt Jimmy, Miss Alice, Mrs Grains, M'Dear and other friends of these old women who represent the older generation. There is Mrs. MacTeer her friends, Mrs. Della and her sister representing the younger generation in the urban setting. In this generation also come the three prostitutes, Poland Marie and China, who in spite of having accepted white values of beauty, morality and hygiene seem still retaining the caring and sharing values of the old rural black culture.

The great Aunt Jimmy of Cholly and her friends are a group of women representing the community of the early emancipation period. She brought up Cholly, the son of the daughter of her sister, all by herself. Morrison shows her a poor substitute of the organismic mother as reflected by her 'old wrinkled breasts sagging' and Cholly's wish "whether it would have been just as well to have died there." But Aunt Jimmy was a great physical and psychological support to Cholly since he was forsaken by his mother.

Great Aunt Jimmy had a big bunch of friends. They formed a healthy community based on caring and sharing. When she fell sick her friends poured in to "see about her. Some made camomile tea; others rubbed her with

liniment, her close friend read the Bible to her."(107) When the local natural healer suggested her to have pot liquor, they prepared pot liquor from black-eyed peas, mustards, cabbage, collards, turnips, beets, green beans and juice. This variety is a testimony to their ability to nurture and create abundance even in poverty. Their kitchens were aromatic while their lives were overworked as farm and domestic workers. They were strong physically, emotionally and spiritually: "The hands that felled trees also cut umbilical cords; the hands that wrung the chickens and butchered dogs also nudged African violets into bloom; the arms that loaded the sheaves, bales and sacks also rocked the babies to sleep." (110)

These women thus represented the human wholeness in spite of the fact that they suffered the worst oppression at the hands of the white men and women and back men: "Every body in the world was in a position to give them order. White women said, "Do this." White children said, 'Give me that." White men said, "Come here." Black men said, "Lay down." "(109) Though they were used as sex objects, they knew it and did not show any pathological symptom or psychological scars of their sexual and racial oppression. Their family life was nourished with their love and care: "When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuses from the victim." (110)

Thus these women bore the burden of the blackmen's anger and frustration with a stoic spirit and found recluse in female bonding to transcend their pain and suffering through sharing and caring.

But with the passing of time and migration these communities were weakened under the impact of white culture on the black psyche. A comprehensive networking of propaganda of white values of family, hygiene and morality started diluting the thickness of these communities. The black neighbourhood of Loraine represent this impact. The black women in this industrial town struggle to retain the old spirit of caring and sharing but the marks of oppression on their psyche are clearly visible in their thought and behavioural patterns. Mrs. MacTeer and her friend at the very onset on this novel tell us of the psychological disintegration of a good churchwoman Mrs. Della. These community women aspiring for a nuclear family on the pattern of whites are at the greatest pain over the mobility of black men. They appreciate the visit of Della's sister to see about her but it is combined with an apprehension of some ulterior motive (to grab her house). Deserted and broken Mrs. Della evokes more fear than sympathy and care of this community of women.

The black women in the neighbourhood of Loraine visit each other, share their fears and to some extent harbour sympathy for the victim, but they show clear marks of internalisation of white values. Geraldine is an appropriate example of distancing from the rural values of sharing and caring. Through her Morrison also tells us how the woman like Geraldine suffer from denaturalisation in their effort to get rid of funkiness. The possibility of fulfilling marital relationships and nurturing motherhood get sterilized.

While Mrs. Geraldine represents total isolation from the community, Mrs. MacTeer represents the ambivalence. Though she shows marks of oppression, she struggles to retain the spirit of the old rural community. As suggested by their name she has sympathy for the victims. She keeps Picola in her house when she is turned outdoor by her father. The burden of economic hardships results in irritability but she is able to transcend the same through singing. She sings blues, which are a help to her and a lesson for her daughters. Though she shows an overt acceptance of white man's standard of beauty as reflected in her Christmas gift to her daughter, she has instilled in her children self-confidence, racial pride and a fighting spirit.

Black woman of Loraine clearly exhibit a fear of the flesh. Mrs. Della's severed marital life speaks of suppression of sexuality. Mrs. Dunion apprehends 'ruin' of Frieda when she is molested by Henry. The screams of Mrs. MacTeer are also a testimony of her fear of unmarried motherhood. Pauline's reaction to her daughter's rape by the father is a reflection of her unsympathetic/cruel attitude to the victim. Though Aunt Jimmy had also beaten Cholly's mother mercilessly, it was not for carrying the child; it was for abandoning it.

In contrast to this community of women are the community of three prostitutes, Marie, Poland and China. These women clearly show the difference between inhabiting the body and inhibiting it. Though these women because of their unconventionality have been marginalized as social pariahs, Morrison places them above the

rest of the community by placing them in the upper storey. She shows their lives more fulfilling then the lives of Geraldine, Mrs. MacTeer, and Mrs. Breedlove. Though we do find in then anger and hate, they don't appear to be tired or leaning, squandered or devastated; they are self-confident, self reliant and self-employed social pariahs who have evolved a kinship and companionship in the spirit of traditional neighbourhood. They show a capacity to love, care and nurture as indicated by Miss Marie's maternal interest in otherwise totally rejected child, Picola. She uses words of endearment for her. The epithets like 'puddin'", "Honey" show more of her tenderness than her fondness for food.

The three prostitutes are middle-aged women whose authenticity stands in marked contrast to the inauthentic life of many of the community women. In the capitalist patriarchy these woman with "rain-soaked eyes" and "eyes as clean as rain" preserve not only neighbourhood structure of caring and sharing but also the family structure by releasing illicit male desire. They seek pleasure with men but are at war with them. Discovering early in life what men want from women they refuse subordination to men by rejecting domestic roles and traditional morality. By refusing to be the idealistically prostitutes in fiction these women are "whores in whores' clothing". They are different from the women of the community of Aunt Jimmy for their hatred of men. Morrison creates them as human—full of anger and hatred yet without inhibitions, providing sanctuary with their aromatic kitchen, gut level laughter and blues. Hence in the urban set up one generation ahead these women come closest to living the composite life of the older generation of women.

These women represent freedom from patriarchy. Their aesthetics and ethics are radically different from those of the dominant culture. The black middle class—centered on property and propriety. They are the only source of laughter in this otherwise dark novel. Their repartee on the use of drawers is a satire on the bourgeois decorum. Marie's laughter at once beautiful and frightening to Frieda's comment "My mama said you ruined" is a mockery of the offensive hypocrisy of respectability. This community of women is therefore, central to Morrison scheme in the novel. These women along with other women provide clear alternatives.

In this way we see that though apparently Morrison's novels are about one focal character they penetrate the essence of that character and present the conflicts that they have with their natal communities. She shows how these communities can be a survival support and a disintegrating force. She also shows how these communities undergo a change with the change of place. Through Aunt Jimmy and her friends she shows how the rural women of Georgia had taken the limits of their existence and had transformed them by recreating them in their own image and in the image of their community. Through Pauline she shows how women as individual and community grope for self worth when their look is tainted by the look of the other. In short The Bluest Eye has as the central scheme the effect of the change of place on the community particularly on women.

Man-Woman Relationship in the Bluest Eye

The issue of black man-woman relationship is paramount in Morrison's agenda as a writer. She herself stated in her interview to Robert Stepo that there is a need to see "what does she (a black woman writer) think are the crucial questions about existence, life, men-women relationship?" The choice of this relation out of all intragroup relationships is based on the belief that since it is the most intimate relationship it is the most complex one. She is interested to see the areas of conflict in man-woman relationship. The conflict in man-woman relationship owes not only to difference in perception, previous experiences and expectation levels but also due to responses. Morrison presents this conflict accentuated by the factors like capitalism, feminism and sexism.

Morrison's first novel The Bluest Eye, which is about the rape of adolescent Picola by her emasculated father, Cholly shows how the levels of internalization of white perspectives by black man and woman amount to their failure or success to form a meaningful relationship. It is a study of the complexities generated under the impact of the Look in this most complex of all human relationships.

The novel, which begins with Claudia remembering her sickness and her mother's rough as well as assuring

touch on her body, soon shifts to a woman's talk about man-woman relationship. Mrs. Macteers discusses Mrs. Della Jones with one of her friends. This episode serves as a quick insight into the black man-woman relationship. Della's madness foretells Picola's madness. Della Jones, 'a clean', "nice good church woman", (BE 15) who kept "a good house" (BE) was forsaken by her man for a 'heifer'. Shattered by the action of her husband, Mrs. Della roams around at odd hours scaring women like Mrs. Macteers' friend as a living example of a black woman's lot. It is this knowledge that women like Mrs. Macteers pass through their talks and songs to their daughters who expect to be loved by their men before they leave them. It is this fear that makes them term men like Jones' husband 'a dog' (BE 15).

A married man not performing the patriarchal role of a provider, protector and a sexual mate for his wife is 'a dog.' Cholly Breedlove is the leading male figure in the novel and is first referred to in the novel as 'the Old Dog Breedlove', (BE 17) "a snake, a ratty nigger" (BE 19) and a "criminal" (BE 119) for turning his own family outdoor. When Cholly impregnates his own daughter, he is termed as "the dirty nigger" (BE 147) by the black women of Lorain. These women, who had earlier sympathized with his family having been turned destitute, hardly sympathize with the victimized girl. The County that had helped the family earlier, the white women who arranged a temporary shelter for Picola do not come out to help the poor pregnant girl. Picola's rape by her father thus serves a dual purpose. Morrison loudly speaks of the not much spoken of the rape of a black woman/girl by a black man, but also exposes the dangers of irresponsible fatherhood, which are graver than that of an absent father.

Morrison also attacks the society that has internalized the Puritanical outlook to sex and got desensitized to the psychological needs of a sexually assaulted girl. To make the matter worse, they who seek 'good' sex through marriage stigmatize and inflict physical torture on these little girls for their sexual adventurism as well as sexual abuse leading to unmarried motherhood. Cholly's mother was beaten by a razor strap by Aunt Jimmy for abandoning the four-day-old child, forcing her to leave Cholly, motherless forever. Picola is beaten mercilessly by her mother for carrying her father's child. The child is undesired, unwanted and revolting: "Bound to be the ugliest thing walking." (BE 148)

Clearly Morrison's sympathies are with the immature innocent young mother, while she lashes at the unsympathizing community and system. Such responses of black community and society are ridiculed by Morrison in one of her interviews too in which replying to a question about dangers of baby mothers Morrison advises adults to stop being kids and understand the natural desires of human body: "Nature wants it then, when the body can handle it, not after 40, when the income can handle it."[19]

Morrison's feminism does not confine to the presentation of oppression of black women by black men, but also exposes the failures of the black women. If Morrison speaks of the emotional damage caused by black men with their irresponsible fatherhood, mobility and irresponsibility, she suggests absence of nurturance that most of the black women in her novels pass on to the next generation. If they have no control over their men, they could at least be nurturing to their children, the part of their flesh and blood.

The theme of nurturance is a recurrent and dominant theme with Morrison. In this novel she studies it as mother-child relationship. Morrison's concern for nurturing includes both physical and emotional need fulfillment. In the very beginning of the novel she makes it clear how a single touch of the mother's reassurance makes life livable for a child in spite of sickness and acute consciousness of poverty.

Pauline did not suffer from hunger in her childhood, nor did Cholly when his mother ran off. But they remained emotionally unsupported. Pauline was not nicknamed and her physical deformity was not compensated with words and touch of assurance. Cholly was fed by the Great Aunt Jimmy who made her sleep with him at times only to get warmth. The symbolic relation between the mother and the child was absent/ hampered. Morrison

introduces Junior to reinforce this idea that poverty is not the cause of lack of proper nurturance. A woman like Geraldine also fails to redress the emotional atrophy in her son though she has both time and money. Junior's loneliness turns him into a bully in the presence of those who are weaker than him. Morrison shows that these mothers are also partially irresponsible because neither do they assure their children of their love, nor they educate them to love themselves and others. For Pauline education means beating into her children a fear—"fear of being clumsy, fear of being like their father, fear of being not loved by God, fear of madness like Cholly's mother…" (BE 102)

Morrison clearly attacks the notion of a good woman who "was an active church woman, did not drink, smoke, or carouse, defended herself mightily against Cholly, rose above him everyway, and felt she was fulfilling a mother's role conscientiously when she pointed out their father's faults to keep them from having them, or pressing them when they showed any slovenliness, no matter how slight, when she worked twelve to sixteen hours a day to support them. And the world agreed with her." (BE 102)

A black woman's failure as a mother is her greatest failure for Morrison. Though Morrison understands Pauline's suffering like that of other black women under the triple jeopardy of sex, race and class, she has been presented neither as a sound ship, nor as a safe harbour. Morrison has presented Picola's madness as much a result of the failure in fatherhood as failure in motherhood. This is her gender relativism. She sympathizes with black men and women when they suffer, but is tough with them when they could have performed better.

Wendy Harding and Jacky Martin read the problematics of Cholly-Pauline relationship as owing to their choice of "more destructive courses available"[20]—emulation and escapism. They observe that Cholly finds some sense in this relationship when they are in harmony with the natural setting. Hence what changed their relationship must be something to do with the city they migrate to.

The city with its idealized fancy world and promise of better life is seen as having an atrophying impact on the black man and the woman. The early-married life of Pauline and Cholly, close to nature, was natural and fulfilling. Cholly met Pauline and was motivated by a feeling of significance he experienced then. "The neatness, the charm, the joy he awakened in her made him want to nest her. He had yet to discover what destroyed that desire." (BE 126) The physics of give and take remained balanced till they came to live in the city. The new sense of insignificance in the new socio-economic conditions in Cholly pushed him towards drinks, while Pauline was lured towards the beauties of what she saw on the silver screen. As her expectations began to soar, satisfaction started alluding. She allowed Cholly have sex with her not because of satisfaction of natural sexual instincts, but for the sense of power, beauty and rainbow she felt during the act: "Not until he has let go of all he has, and give it to me. When he does, I feel a power. I be strong, I be pretty, I be young." (BE 103) This act filled her with old colours and rainbow and she wanted to thank him. Her denaturalised sexual instincts are also suggested in the absence of initiative and total silence for and during the act, which is taken as her arrogance:

And it was Pauline, or rather marrying her, that did for him what the flash light did not do — the constantness, varietylessness, the sheer weight of sameness… The same woman …, he wondered at the arrogance of the female. (BE 126)

Pauline indulges in the act more as a spectator. Her two pages long recapitulation of it gives no detail of her performing any stimulating role for Cholly. She allows the act ignoring his expectations only for her own satisfaction of beauty, power and colours. Thus Pauline's religiosity, her vicarious satisfaction at the Fishers, her 'arrogance' and Cholly's drunkenness cause greater dysfuntionality in Pauline-Cholly relationship:

He sure ain't give me much more. But it wasn't all bad…. But it ain't like that any more. Most times he's thrashing away inside me the rest of the time, I can't even be next to his stinking drunk self. (BE 104)

Morrison shows how Church and religion fail to provide strength to black men and women. Della is a church going woman, but she is unable to derive any strength from it to survive her abandonment by her husband. Similarly, Pauline's association with Church has given her strength only to create 'fear' among her children and see herself being crucified.

Church in the novel has been presented as a disorienting force in man-woman relationship. In fact every society has some social control system to regulate sex behaviour of its members. According to the western system, religion performs a major role in it. So Church or religion, which was the traditional source of spirituality, self-sustenance, hope and self-dignity for black people, becomes a sex-repressing force. The obsession to be a 'nice woman' means repression of natural sexual instincts, which makes a woman like Geraldine sexually dysfunctional, though she has birthed a son. The conflict between Della Jones and her husband is because Della has internalized the white cultural values of religion, sex and hygiene, which are in conflict with the culture of her husband. The marriage of Geraldine and Louis continues in spite of their dysfunctional sexual life because both of them try to evade their sexuality to escape white myth of lewd sexuality of black men and women:

He must rest his weight on his elbows when they make love, ostensibly to avoid hurting her breast but actually to keep her from having to touch or feel too much of him. (BE 69)

This repression has further distorted their sexual life as the women are shown as being obsessed with their looks. Instead of participating in their sexual act, they perform the role of a spectator:

While he moves inside her, she will wonder why they didn't put the necessary but private parts of the body in some more convenient place—like the armpit, for example, or the palm of the hand. Some place one could get to easily and quickly, without undressing. She stiffs when she feels one of her paper curlers coming undone from the activity of love, imprints in her mind which one it is coming loose so she can quickly secure it once he is through… When she senses some spasm about to grip him, she will make rapid movements with her hips, press her fingernails into his back, suck in her breath, and pretend she is having an orgasm. (BE 69)

Morrison calls it "getting rid of the funkiness. The dreadful funkiness of the wide range of human emotions." (BE 68)

Morrison introduces Soaphead Church originally named Elihue Micah Whitcomb to show the effects of repression on a man in a patriarchal system. The son of a religious fanatic, Elihue was chosen by his father to "work out his theories of education, discipline and the good life." (BE 133) The outcome of this experiment on the young child was misanthropy and sexual dysfunctionality. "He did not experience sustained erections and couldn't endure the thought of somebody else's." (BE 131) His Christianity invaded his bedroom: He equated love making with "communion and the Holy Grail," (BE 134) like Pauline: "We stretches our arms outwise like Jesus on the cross." (BE 103) We remember Della Jones whose violet water made her husband run away as the Holy Grail made Soaphead's Velma leave after two months of marriage "the way people leave a hotel room." (BE 140) The comparison does not end here. Della Jones turned mad pained over her abandonment by her husband and though Soaphead survived the desertion helped by his father and books, he cried for Velma even long after. His sexual repression gets serious: "How is it I could lift my eyes from the contemplation of Yours Body and fall deeply into the contemplation of theirs?" (BE 141) Not only it makes him dysfunctional to have any heterosexual relationship, but turns him to adolescent girls to satisfy the little eruptions of his sexuality by playing with their budding breasts.

What is dangerous about this seeming non-patriarch is his assumed power of self-deception, which is more dangerous than that of a patriarch. He misuses his rationality and grants wishes to the emotionally atrophied people in the name of god. Picola is abused by her father sexually, scapegoated by black people for her

ugliness, but by selling her her dream of blue eyes, Soaphead does a greater damage to her. By granting her one illusion, he not only distorts her perception, already tainted by the white beauty standards and lovelessness, but also makes her mad for the bluest eyes pushing her deeper into the quagmire of loneliness. Picola thinks that Claudia does not play with her "Because my eyes aren't blue enough? Because I don't have the bluest eyes?"(BE 158)

'Blue eyes', therefore, not only symbolize the white standards of beauty, but also represent the expectations. 'Blue', 'blue enough' and the 'bluest' are the levels of expectations, which keep on mounting. Satisfaction of these expectations is a subjective affair. The black men and women in The Bluest Eye have been presented as usually falling a prey to the white standards of not only beauty but also of family.

Most of the blacks of Lorain choose the white standards of family—father as provider, mother as nurturer, children, a decent house to live in and sufficient money to live on. It is a dream that begins with marriage amidst the severely constrained economic conditions in a racist society. Leaving only the three prostitutes and a few bachelors like Soaphead Church, black men and women are shown as living in nuclear family system.

Though most of these families are shown as crumbling or atrophied, all are not utter failures. Howsoever limited the resources, howsoever keen the fear of hunger and rooflessness, the Macteers are shown as fulfilling the basic familial needs.

Mrs. Macteers' soliloquies, which are insulting to her daughters, Claudia and Frieda, are expressions of a lady burdened with running the house with limited financial resources and with little modern gadgetry support. Like Pauline, she is provoked into beating her daughters at the slightest sight of nastiness. But her beatings are balanced with motherly care and concern that she shows to them. Her songs balance her soliloquies and her nestling, her beating. There is hardly any sign of disharmony between the Macteers couple. Her labour at home matches his labour out door. Their daughters remember seeing their father's nakedness, which hints at the sexual life of Mrs. and Mr. Macteers. Though Morrison has given very little space to the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Macteers and whatever information comes, comes through Claudia, Morrison's masterly poetic strokes create a picture of Mr. Macteers as a responsible father who is struggling like his wife to instil self worth and self help ethic in his daughters.

"Face" writes Gloria Anzaldua," is the surface of body that is most notably inscribed."[21] The facial description of Mr. MacTeer contrasts the facial description of the Breedloves to highlight the 'ugliness that lies in the mind and gets expressed in their responses to their physical reality. Morrison rules out their poverty as the cause of this difference, because it was" traditional and stultifying, it was not unique." (BE 34)

You looked at them and wandered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. (Ibid)

This questioning spirit forms the essence of cultural relativism, which Morrison seems to recommend in this novel. Though through Macteers' family she does not reject the white nuclear family pattern and seems to be asserting her hope for a meaningful existence in spite of the class and racial oppression, Morrison shows more strength in her gender relativism. It is this strength that enables her to probe into the weakness as well as the strength of her female characters. She does not accept the failure of man-woman relationship on the surface level, assigning responsibility to irresponsible males, but also exposes the black woman's failure.

Morrison has introduced three prostitutes living in the form of sisterhood as a substitute of marriage for structuring man-woman relationship. These three women, China, Poland and Marie, seek relationship with men through sex for money. The narrator calls them whores in whores' clothing with no bitterness over the loss of innocence or inadequacies of parental love. They drink, smoke and have sex with men hating them because they think

them "inadequate and weak." (BE 41) So they feel they have a right to cheat them, but they dislike those women who deceive their husbands. They, on the other hand, respect "good Christian colored women, who tended their family, who did not drink or smoke or run around." (BE 48)

Clearly these women are not much different from other black women in their perception. But they reject the nuclear family and Church. Their non-institutionalized relation with black men shows commercialization of sex, while the institutionalized relation of 'good' women with their black men betrays denaturalization of sex. This alternative is rejection of male authority, though they are always obsessed with their appearance, hair and clothes to look beautiful to men. This mode of man-woman relationship is also shown by Morrison as non-fulfilling as symptomatically brought out in their laughter. China's laughter is spastic and Poland's is soundless. Poland, who is silent unless drunk. Only Marie's laughter is free like the flowing river. So is her expression of her old memories of her relation with men: "I was fourteen. We ran away and lived together like married for three years…. Oh, Lord. How that man loved me!" (BE 47)

The last word of her expression is a clear sign of her regret for a man who did not leave her, but was left by her for she realized she could sell sex. Her repressed/unfulfilled motherly instincts get expression when she replies to Picola's question as to if she had any children: "Yeah. Yeah. We had some" Marie *fidgeted*. She pulled a bobby pin from her hair and began to pick her teeth that meant *she didn't want to take any more*. (BE 48, Italics mine) These women are different not only in their perception of sex but also in their level of consciousness. Unlike others, they do not need a scapegoat to clean themselves on. Though they are hardly nurturing to Picola, they are the only ones who are humane to her.

Thus Morrison perceives that distortion in man-woman relationship comes as their attitude to sex and parenthood gets distorted and denaturalized. Her treatment of her characters reveals that she holds the individual equally responsible with the system for this distortion. She is concerned most, however, over the impact of this distortion on the young girls. The tragedy of Picola, therefore, seems as the failure of the white system as well as the failure of both black men and women.

In her non-fictional statements Morrison feels concerned about the child mother not because of her adolescent sexual experimentation but because of the non-support the community accords in child rearing. Morrison presentation of Picola's rape shows that she accepts it as an awful thing but her treatment of Cholly implies that she hates the sin and not the sinner. However, she does not absolve Cholly of the results of his actions. She sums up Cholly's characters in her message of the horror of the love of a morally free man: "the love of a free man is never safe."(BE 159)

Thus we see that as a study of man-woman relationship The Bluest Eye investigates into the reasons that prevent this relation ship from achieving fulfillment. The novel shows Morrison holding migration, religion and education as responsible for causing harm to this relationship. Clearly she holds the psychological enslavement of the blacks to the white values causing denaturalization of this most intimate relationship.

The Impact of the Education System on the Black

In this novel Morrison expresses her disillusionment with the system especially the education system. Education system comprises of formal education at schools and colleges, family as the first educational place and media. Families in the social economic set up of capitalism, racism and colorism struggle to follow the upward mobility value of the Americans and frustration generated by repressions, discrimination and failure is easily transferred on to the members of the family. Morrison shows the black families of Lorain following the nuclear pattern of the whites, with a difference that here the poor working women hardly have time and spirit to educate the child. The difference in the bringing up of Picola and Claudia and Frieda owes also both to the availability of parents at home. She also shows how not only the poor, but even the richer parents like Geraldine fail to

understand the emotional needs of their children and fail at their proper education.

Not only the families are shown as failing in educating the children under the impact of white system, schools and colleges, though segregated, also impart lessons in discrimination on class and colour lines. The students follow the examples of teachers who themselves indulge in discrimination:

When teachers called on her (Maureen), they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip on her in the halls, white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partners: " black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use the sink in the girl's toilet, and their eyes genuflected under sliding lids."(BE 53, brackets mine)

Not only the behavioural lessons are such, the curriculum is also catering to the white system.

They go to land-grant colleges, normal schools, and learn how to do the white man's work with refinement: home economics to prepare his food; teacher education to instruct black children in obedience; music to soothe the weary master and entertain his blunted soul....The careful development of thrift, patience, high morals and good manners. In short, how to get rid of the funkiness. The dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions. (BE 68)

The world of Media is the world of Shirley Temples, Mary Jones, Betty Garble, Hedy Lamarr, and Jean Harlow. Media especially the world of glamour has also taught them to accept the perceptions, values and standards of white culture with a feeling of self-dislike. "When they wear lipstick, they never cover the entire mouth for fear of lips to thick and they worry, worry, worry about the edges of their hair." (BE 68)

A family like that of McTears has also accepted the white standard of beauty and presents Claudia a white doll without understanding her desire:

The lowness of the stool made for my body, the security and warmth of big Mama's kitchen, the smell of the lilacs, the sound of the music, and, since it would be good to have all my senses engage, the taste of a peach, perhaps afterward. (BE 21)

This lesson in loving whiteness and disliking blackness acquires dangerous proportions when a child like Picola is born to a mother like Pauline. Pauline has been educated through media with the result that "she was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, the scale was one she absorbed in the full from the silver screen."(BE 97) Pauline, powerless to change the world starts enjoying power vicariously at her employer's house. Picola's education into self hatred and vicarious living, her experience of violence at home and her rejection make her long for blue eyes— a symbol of white beauty accepted by black adults too. She does so to be able to make herself acceptable to both the black and the white and ultimately drags herself into madness. Her emotional needs and insufficient and distorted sexual knowledge hardly make her assert herself against her father when he rapes her.

Morrison holds the education pattern and system responsible for Picola's madness, which is also clear from the fact that she gives Picola a good I.Q.. Picola's inquisitiveness to rising sexuality is appreciable. Her questions cannot be answered either by Frieda, Claudia, Maureen and even the prostitutes. Morrison's treatment of black-white relationship in the novel may show the system oppressing the black but she shows that they are human enough to create for themselves a better circumstance. She has introduced Macteers as a criticism of the defeatism that blacks in urban ghettoes usually fall in. The Macteers besides pointing out the marginal differences in class distinction serve as a comment on resourcefulness, self-dignity and assertiveness in spite of class deprivation and colour discrimination. Little acts of affection, assurance and resourcefulness, in spite of weighing consciousness of the poverty, instil a fighting spirit. Morrison's voice seems closest to that of Claudia because of the self-analytical and self-critical approach that she represents. Hence, though 'the system-blame' response dominates in the novel, Morrison seems to be demanding introspection and introduces the idea

of cultural relativism as Claudia, which serves as a silver lining in the dark cloud:

... there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. ... it was my fault. I had planted them too far down the earth. It never occurred to either of us that the earth itself might have been unyielding. (BE 9)

Sula unlike The Bluest Eye, which begins with defeatism, starts with an ironic comment on the black-white relationship as the emergence of Bottom on the hilltop. The promise of the white master to his black slave turns out to be a nigger's joke making their life a veritable struggle for survival both against Nature and the white world. The novel ends with a reversal of situation but with persisting white resistance towards integration in interpersonal relationship. As money finds way into the pockets of blacks during the war, more and more blacks move towards the valley while the whites move across the river or up the hill where still some poor black houses exist. The gap between the black and the white remains both of race and class in spite of the desegregation and coming up of more and more agencies—hospital, asylums, police—though still dominantly white.

The coldness of the white matches the aloofness of the blacks of Bottom who interact only under emergency. The non-cooperation of the black community to police and social agencies on Sula's death is marked, and is suggestive of the power that black as a group wield over the white. Through defiance they "regarded integration with precisely the same venom that white people did."(BE 113)

AFRO-AMERICAN FOLK ELEMENT IN THE BLUEST EYE

In "Eruption of the Funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison" Susan Willis says that "the problem at the centre of Morrison's writing is how to maintain an Afro-American cultural heritage once the relationship to the black rural south has been stretched thin over distance and generations." With this as the central focus, the novel The Bluest Eye can be read as the story of Afro-Americans' distance from cultural roots, with their migration from the south to the north. As such the spatial and psychological distance of these people especially the poor black like Picola from the traditional survival mechanism, which had enabled the black slaves survive the most dehumanising condition during chattel slavery, results in loss of racial pride under the impact of white standards.

The Bluest Eye focuses on the forties of the last century, a period of heavy migration of the Afro-Americans to the cities in the north. As such the story of The Bluest Eye doesn't remain only the story of the disorienting effect of inter racial and intra racial prejudices on the young girls like Picola in the mid west. It is also the story of the survival of the black folk culture Trudier Harris says that Morrison in this novel suggests that the vibrancy of the folk culture persists through the fortunes and misfortunes of the characters and it serves to enable them to connect with each other.

Lorain consists of two types of people—those who for integration into the main stream of America ape the white and internalise their values and the myths about themselves created by the whites. Soaphead Church, Geraldine, Maureen Peal, Pauline etc. are such characters who have alienated them from their cultural roots and folk habits. Morrison shows the human element saturated in them. On the other hand are the members like Mrs. MacTeer, her friends and the prostitutes who participate in the tradition that foster black survival, comforts them in times of need and endure creativity. When they feel defeated they use the folk forms that sustain generations of rural blacks.

The migration of Pauline and Cholly reminds us of the Afro-American belief of the black community during and after slavery especially of the north as a freer place and better both economically and socially. The myth of the North worked on Pauline's parents as Morrison says that near the beginning of world war 1, the Williams discovered, from returning neighbours and keen, the possibility of living better in another place… (92). For them the myth of the north is a possibility for prosperity.

The black neighbours in Lorain, Ohio, with historical black folk communities continue with the patterns of survival and use the old folk habits which are still comforting in times of loss, and point to an enduring creative tradition. For example Mrs. MacTeer has a good community network. Again Aunt Jimmy had a strong woman bonding. The care and concern shown to sick Aunt Jimmy are a testimony of the landing and borrowing, caring and sharing quality that was typical of a black rural community. The cures suggested and the food offered to Aunt Jimmy during her illness besides underlining the caring quality of a black community also brings out the belief in natural cause. M'Dear, the local natural healer reminds us of conjurer or hoodoo doctors of the historical folk communities of the blacks. This local doctor M'Dear like the traditional healer lived in a "shack near the woods". Like them though she doesn't have any physical peculiarity like a hunch or a bulging eye, her looming height of over 6 feet, her four big white notes of hair gave her appearance power and authority. Similarly Blue Jack is an active tradition bearer of various kinds of tales. His ghost stories or escape stories are told in the oral form of the Afro-American folk tradition.

The novel besides introducing characters in the line of black historical folk tradition also introduces folk speech especially drawing similes and metaphors from animal and natural world. These speech patterns establish finally a characters distance from or association with the folk culture when Mrs. MacTeer exclaims that she has, "as much business with another mouth to feed as a cat" (23), she uses the typical black metaphorical language. Similarly Miss Marie calls Picola without her socks as "As barelegged as a yard dog" (44)

Besides folk tales, folk speech and folk characters Morrison also shows her characters' belief in natural cure. In the old times since the doctors and western medicines were unavailable and expensive, black people stuck to their belief in homemade remedies and natural cures. Claudia remembers her mother giving her home remedies when she fell sick. She had wrapped her in the hot flannel that made her sweat. Holding on to the traditional belief Aunt Jimmy wears her asafetida bag around her neck while older women wrapped their heads in rags and their breasts in flannel (110).

Nick naming is an old tradition in the black community. It reflected the patterns of caring and incorporation in the black community. While describing Pauline's past Morrison specially mentions Pauline's sensitivity to having not been given a nickname, which had made her feel excluded. She felt unclaimed by her family and parents. It is again this nicknaming that is a major factor why Pauline felt attached to the Fishers in Loraine. By not giving Picola any nickname she maintains that emotional distance from her daughter that she had felt herself as a child.

Rituals also form an essential part of the black folk tradition. Rituals are beliefs long adhered to and occurrences repeated several times. The rituals performed after Aunt Jimmy's death are reminiscent of the black belief in funeral as a return of order to a community disrupted by death, providing relief to the grief for the entire community.

Music and songs had been a useful stress-coping pattern for the blacks especially during slavery. These songs (Blues) helped them transcend their brief and misery creatively. Mrs. MacTeer sings about "hard times, bad times, and somebody-done-gone-and-left-me-times" (24) and "trains and Arkansas" (78). Poland can sing "blues in (her) mealbarrel/Blues upon the self" (44). These songs suspend the muteness that the socio-economic system afflicts the life of black women in the cities. Pauline suffers from this muteness. Hence Morrison shows how his Afro-American cultural heritage was a means of sustenance and survival. Those characters who can sing has been shown as having human candour in their hearts. Though Cholly and Pauline come from the communities in which black people were tied to each other in caring and sharing ways, these dissolve once they step out of these communities. This dissolution makes the bitter realities of race colour and class as fragmenting and disintegrating.

Thus in the world of Sandi Russell, Morrison "uphold (s) Afro-American culture…. To be won with this life, to know it and embrace it and draw strength from it: that is what Toni Morrison affirms whole heartedly." For Morrison communities are important carriers of these culture; communities for her are not geographical entities. They are a feeling, have caring and sharing: "You take the village with you. There is no need for the community, if you have a sense of it inside."

Through Pauline, Cholly, Picola, Geraldine, Shophead etc. Morrison shows what can happen to a person alienated from black tradition, while through Mrs. MacTeer she shows continuation of the cultural tradition and preservation of racial pride and survival spirit.

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PHILIP LARKIN

The Poetry of Departure

Ambulance

Going Going

Show Saturday

TED HUGHES

The Jaguar
Bayonet Charge
Six Young Men
Thrushes

Unit-V
Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes

Both Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes are post-Modern (writers of a mood that succeeds High Modernist writing of the kind represented by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and James Joyce) in a sense in which W.H. Auden (1907-73) is not strictly a post-Modern writer.

People like Larkin and Hughes do not have much use for either internationalism or the mythic method. Theirs is not a Europeanized sensibility in the sense that term would apply to Eliot and Joyce. They learnt something from Imagism, Symbolism, Vorticism but the stylistic randomness and brokenness of a poem like *The Waste Land* will not do for them. They prefer tighter, more linear structures and their poems have a surfacial rationality. Auden (and from across the Atlantic Robert Lowell) affected them profoundly but they chalked out their own territory.

In the period between 1966-1985 Philip Larkin has been a major figure in English poetry despite his own attempts to underplay such eminence. He has dominated this period through style, phrasing and voice. He has made use of an elegiac tradition of Englishness. He underlines the importance of a native English tradition as opposed to modernist influence. His poetry is rational, dealing with the world of everyday reality in a pessimistic manner. There is in it, no touch of romantic excess nor is there the seeming willful obscurity of Modernism. He is a bored elegist. His best known poem 'The Whitsun Weddings' looks on England with a mixture of elegiac sleepiness and a quaint awakedness.

Ted Hughes is part of the 'New Poetry' group. This poetry, written in the shadow of nuclear weapons and Vietnam, gave voice to a sense of darkness and disintegration that characterises the post-Modern period.

Philip Larkin lived from 1922 to 1985 and Ted Hughes from 1930 to 1998. In the period they wrote their poems, T.S. Eliot's era was almost gone. W.H.Auden had come on the scene as the next major English language poet after Yeats and Eliot. In America the major talent was Robert Lowell. Auden and Lowell both affected these younger poets.

In drama and fiction, it was a period of absurdity, 'anger' and 'menace.' 'Anger' went largely with novelists like Kingsley Amis and dramatists like John Osborne. 'Menace' went with the plays of Harold Pinter. Absurdity got a powerful vehicle in plays like Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and the American writer Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

The post-Second World War mood dominated the scene. There was scepticism and there was fatigue. A kind of post-Modern sensibility was also at work, noted very perceptibly by critics like Ihab Hassan. Postmodernism as a distinct school of thought (largely originating in France) came later with the ideas of Lyotard and Baudrillard when the two talked in terms of 'incredulity towards meta-narratives' (Lyotard) and 'loss of the real' (Baudrillard). Two extremely representative works of the generation in question are Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) and Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956). Amis's novel can be seen as a catalogue of the misadventures of Jim Dixon who is a lecturer at a small university. He pulls funny faces behind the backs of those who treat him unfairly. His disastrous paper to the faculty at the end of the term is a kind of climax to all the horseplay that goes on. He drinks a lot and is bent on mocking social conventions and class limitations.

In Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* the hero is Jimmy Porter. His tirades against the complacency of the English establishment hold the play together. This is where the label 'angry young man' came from. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* was an epoch-making play. Nothing happens except words. Languages and silences rule

supreme and a lot of horseplay goes on as well. Emptiness and meaninglessness are stressed throughout. One influence on works of this kind, was the existential thought of the French thinker Jean Paul Sartre. Harold Pinter's speciality is undefined menace. His play *The Birthday Party* has a nervous lodger Stanley who is visited by 'old friends.' They turn out to be from an organisation, which they say he has betrayed. A similar menace is at work in his play *The Homecoming.* The age is marked not only by scepticism and fatigue but also by a kind of hysteria kept in check. Rhetoric is minimised, verbal violence is kept in check, but keeps surfacing. Then there is the 'Beat' generation. A great American poem that sums up the overall predicament of intellectuals is Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* which begins:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
madness, starving hysterical naked
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn
looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly
connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of
night,

There is also 'Confessional Poetry' in which one phase of Robert Lowell's poetry figures prominently. This phase is represented by *Life Studies*. A typical line from Lowell's well-known poem *Skunk Hour* is: 'I myself am hell.' Confessional poetry was written by Ted Hughes's wife *Sylvia Plath* as well.

Larkin, Hughes and Tradition

Larkin is seen as a poet of 'The Movement' and Hughes as a 'New Poetry' poet. 'The Movement' was a loose grouping of poets who made a name for themselves in the 1950s.

Robert Conquest's anthology *New Lines* (1956) included Larkin and Thom Gunn apart from Donald Davie. Hughes appeared in Alvarez's important 1962 anthology called *New Poetry.* In a sense, then, Hughes is a post-Movement poet. The poetry of the Movement was that of post-Second World War Anglo-Saxon rationalism. The Movement poets were repulsed by grand gestures and also resisted modernism.

Thomas Hardy the poet and John Betjeman were models Larkin followed while Auden remained an influence too. With the Movement primacy was given to provincialism over the Internationalism of High Modernism. English poetry scaled itself down. Larkin's provincialism was rooted in his life in Hull. His poem 'Poetry of Departures' effectively epitomises his departure from the romantic image of daring and heroism. In another sense he is a passive realist. He offers pathos as well as horror. He creates pastoral worlds but these are emptied of himself. He rejects history and he rejects self. The disparity between reality and desire is a preoccupation with him. We have no place in reality and our feelings have little meaning in it.

Larkins is a poet of isolated observation resigned to the failure of the inevitability of loneliness and death. He does, nevertheless, recognize the need for transcendence however frail its foundations may be.

Most poems of Hughes voice a poetic drama, often violent and distressing. He is possessed with the life of nature. Animals and plants are all cloaked in a kind of essentialism. D. H. Lawrence as poet and Gerald Manley Hopkins have influenced Hughes much. His poetry emphasises the pitiless and violent forces of nature. The animals of his poems pursue their lives with a single-minded strength and power. Also, what interests him about the animal world is the obviousness of the struggle for survival. The indifference of the natural world to man is stressed. In volumes like *Crow* (1970) his development has been towards self-conscious brutalism. The message of *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960) is one of impatience with human intellect and deviousness. A large part of the poetry is anti-human and it reflects the experience of human cruelty.

The main theme in Hughes's poetry is power and power thought of not morally but in a present that is violent

and self-destructive. The murderousness of nature is a theme too. Focussing on animals and nature, his poems derive their characteristic tension from the attempt to fuse into a unified response both horror and admiration.

Hughes's writing began as a reaction to 'The Movement' poetry of the 1950s. That poetry was marked by restraint, understatement and a concern with everyday reality. Hughes's poetry on the other hand, embraces the violent life of nature, particularly as exemplified by animals and birds. He extends this to include human beings who are governed by instincts and drives. He, had a mistrust of the intellect.

Recent Commonwealth Poetry as an Overall Context for the Poetry of Larkin and Hughes

In the last fifty years or so, great poetry from the non-English-speaking world has come from Pablo Neruda, (Chile), Jorges Luis Borges (Argentina), Boris Pasternak (Soviet Union), George Seferis (Greece), Eugenio Montale (Italy), Octavio Paz (Mexico), Leopold Senghor (Senegal) and quite a few others.

From within the Commonwealth, two Nobel Prize winners from poetry have been Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney. Three remarkable novelist-poets have been Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood (both Canada) and Ben Okri (Nigeria). A remarkable Australian poet is Les Murray.

In Anglo-American poetry, Larkin has been a major voice after Auden and Lowell. He is wonderful with his modulation of voice and with tonal effects. He is also wonderful with registering and cataloguing life. He's been the voice of the Post-War decline of England. His technical skill is breathtaking. And yet, there is a little something lacking at the level of the kind of public dimension that Yeats's poetry had. Larkin's conscious 'Englishness' is limiting. Also, a kind of negativity is there about a number of things. He has a fatalistic frame of mind. His attitude to work and to general social contacts is far from reassuring.

All this is compensated partly by the richness of the texture of his poems and by the almost loving care with which detail is handled. There is a celebratory aspect of his cataloguing in which a preservation-oriented impulse is also at work. This element is there in 'The Whitsun Weddings' and in 'Show Saturday.'

Larkin remains the major poetic voice in British poetry after Auden. His virtuosity alone and his honesty are sure to take care of his stature. One of his special gifts has been to enclose heartbreak in a cool, chiseled and sometimes comic style. Quite a few of his poems end with a sudden, exalted and sometimes terrifying openness.

Ted Hughes is at a slightly lower rung. There is in him a wish to be out of the human altogether. He almost finds the human condition too much to bear. He moved away from the world of the Movement. This helped him evolve on his own but his thematic range is limited. Where Larkin scores over Hughes is that he is one of those humorists who make you laugh at things not because they are funny but because laughing with them makes it easier for us to bear them. Larkin stands his ground quite well when compared to Auden but Auden's canvas was more extensive. Both Auden and Larkin are masters of the elegiac tone but in Auden, the counterbalancing element of play is greater.

Directly or indirectly, all poets of the twentieth century who came after Eliot, Yeats and Auden were affected by their work. Quite a few of these very good younger poets were less ambitious and more private. Somehow, the kind of poetry that has had the maximum appeal is one in which private and public worlds affect each other both in the process of creating and in the finished product (the words on the page.) This is where Walcott and Heaney (and Auden and Lowell) score over poets like Hughes and Plath. The public side of Heaney's concern over the violence in Northern Ireland and of Yeats's and Neruda's poetry are there for us all to see. Even a younger poet like the Nigerian Ben Okri with his *An African Elegy* fares quite well on that count.

(A) Philip Larkin: The Poems

1. ‘The Poetry of Departures’

In this poem Larkins offers a contrast between the decisive romantic gesture of impulsive ‘getting away’ with the more cautious decision to let things stay as they are. Here a different way of life is brought into discussion and is contemplated for a while before being eventually renounced as ‘artificial’ and a ‘deliberate step backwards.’

There are three verse-paragraphs of 8 lines each and then one last verse-paragraph of 5 lines. In the first verse-paragraph, someone’s chucking up everything and just clearing off is seen (in the view of quite a few) as audacious, purifying, elemental move. The man talking of the person by way of a fifth-hand epitaph is sure that his elemental move will find approval from the listener.

The second paragraph offers a list of possible reasons why such an approval is expected. We all hate ‘home’ and having to be there. The speaker says he detests his room and his specially-chosen junk. The good books and the good bed all point to a life in “in perfect order.” This, however, is said ironically.

As the speaker moves from the end of the second verse-paragraph to the start of the third he says that it leaves him stirred and flushed to have it said: ‘He walked out on the whole crowd’. He thinks that if one man did it then others can do it too (that includes himself). The sentence, which stirs him (‘He walked out on the whole crowd’), is of the same order, as sentences like: ‘Then he undid her dress’ or ‘Take that you bastard.’ Such things, says the speaker, help him stay sober and industrious. At the end of the third verse-paragraph the speaker says: ‘But I’d go today.’

At the start of the final verse-paragraph he gives details of what it would be like if he actually went but deflates the whole initiative. The different way of life which was brought into the discussion and is being contemplated is eventually renounced as ‘artificial’ and a ‘deliberate step backwards.’

2. 'Ambulances'

'Ambulances' is about death, its inevitability and its domain being everywhere. There are five verse-paragraphs of 6 lines each. The first verse-paragraph focuses on the ubiquitous (being present everywhere) quality of ambulances. All streets are visited in time. These ambulances are closed like confessionals. They thread their way through cities with loud noons. They get lots of glances but do not give back any. They are light, glossy and grey. They come to rest at any kerb.

The second verse-paragraph talks of the physical goings-on in the wake of the ambulance's arrival. A wild white face is seen momentarily on top of red stretcher blankets. Then it is seen by children scattered on steps or the road itself or by women coming from the shops past smells of different dinners.

In the third verse-paragraph, the effect it has on the women and the children is touched upon. They whisper 'poor soul' as if at their own distress. They sense the solving emptiness that lies just below the surface of all we do. For a second they get this emptiness whole. It is so permanent and blank and true. Then the fastened doors of the ambulance recede.

The fourth verse-paragraph talks about the reason for the distress felt by the onlookers. The speaker says that carried away in the deadened air may be the sudden shut of loss round something which is nearly at an end. That something (an individual) had cohering in it across the years the unique random blend of families and fashions.

In the fifth and final verse-paragraph the speaker says that the blend just referred to starts loosening. The individual concerned lies unreachable inside a room. There he is far from the exchange of love. The traffic parts (opens up) to let them pass. This brings closer what is left to come and dulls to distance all that we are.

3. 'Going, Going'

The poem is largely six line verse-paragraphs. There are nine in all with one paragraph deviating from the length. The poem is about all that is not likely to last not the least of them being 'England' or the idea of England.

In the first verse-paragraph the speaker says that the sense of there always being fields and farms beyond the town would last, at least for his lifetime. There, village louts would be still able to climb trees because all trees would not have been cut.

The second verse-paragraph leads on from the last line of the first. The speaker says he knew that there would be false alarms in newspapers about old streets and split-level shopping. Some still remain (at least so far). When with the coming up of bleak high-rise structures, the old part of town retreats, one would still be able to escape in one's car.

The third verse-paragraph attributes a certain resilience to the earth and to the sea. However much we mess it about, the earth will always respond, an example of things being tougher than we are. Similarly, the tides of the sea will remain clean beyond the initial filth we keep throwing into the sea. And yet some doubt has started creeping into the mind of the speaker.

The doubt possibly is part of aging. This comes at the start of the fourth verse-paragraph. The constant howling for 'more' is the source of doubt: More houses, more caravan sites, more parking area, more pay.

The fifth verse-paragraph takes up ways of stirring greed. More profit is sought. That gives the speaker the feeling that things would not last.

The visualising of 'England gone' comes at the start of the next verse-paragraph but already he can see countries becoming 'slums of Europe.' The crooks and tarts will have a hand in it.

Now comes the verse-paragraph, which talks of 'England gone.' By this is meant the disappearance of shadows, the meadows, the carved choirs. Books will be there. A part of it will linger in galleries but that which is most likely to remain are concrete and tyres.

In the concluding verse-paragraph he sounds a better note. All this may still not happen. But greeds (plural) and garbage are scattered all over with such a thick layer that they cannot be cleared now. One way is to invent excuses to make them all appear as needs. Yet the disappearance would happen. That is what the speaker thinks. What seems 'going, going' (including England) would then be gone.

4. 'Show Saturday'

This poem is from the collection *High Windows*. It is a longish poem on the lines of 'The Whitsun Weddings' (possibly Larkin's best-known poem.) In both poems Larkin gives ample evidence of his extraordinary recording skills. Ordinary collective institutions like 'Show Saturday' are greatly valued by Larkin despite the distance he puts between the scene and himself.

The first verse-paragraph gives the setting. It is a grey day for 'The Show' but that doesn't deter people. The narrow lanes are full of cars. There is a dog-show, there are sheep, there is a 'chain-saw competition.' 'Jumping' is also on the cards. Judges are busy. Announcements are on. A man has pound-notes around his hat. A lit-up board announces: 'There's more than just animals.' Then there are headstalls, balloon-men and a beer marquee which half hides a stopgap canvas urinal. One tent sells tweeds, another sells jackets. There are bales on which fox sit like great straw dice. Each scene is linked by spaces and each item has its own crowd, faces are incurious and there is a blankness also about the proceedings.

The next verse-paragraph focuses on wrestling. This one is a shorter verse-paragraph (half the length of the first one.) The wrestling starts late. The setting is interesting. There is first a wide ring of people, then there are cars and then trees. Then there is the pale sky. Two men hug each other, rock over the grass, stiff-legged on a two man scrum. They are dressed in acrobats-tights and in embroidered trunks. One of the two falls. They shake hands. Then another bout starts. One of the wrestlers is haired but he wins. These bouts are not so much fights as long immobile strainings. They end in imbalance. One ends up on his back, unharmed. The other stands smoothing his hair. But there are other talents.

The next verse-paragraph focuses on a long high tent with lots of wooden tables. This tent is about growing and making. Crowds shuffle past the tables. A number of items are on display. Earth itself, blanks leeks like church candles, six pads of broad beans. These are dark and shining. There are leafed cabbages. There are dairy and kitchen items. Eggs are there, four white, four brown. There are scores. A recession of skills is on view. Then there is lambing, there are sticks and there are rugs.

The next verse-paragraph starts with a reference to needlework which is on view. There are knitted caps and baskets. All are well done and worth praise. Still they are less than the honeycombs. Then the speaker shifts from this scene. We are told that outside the jumping is over. Later, there will be trick-races. Meanwhile young men thunder their competing ponies round the ring (twice.) There will also be musical stalls, sliding off and riding bareback. The ponies are being dragged to and fro from a bewildering variety of requirements. They do not mind. In the background horse-boxes start moving like shifting scenery. Each crawls towards the stock-entrance. Each tilts and sways.

In the next verse-paragraph we are told that these are bound for far-off farms. The pound-note man also goes away. The car park is less crowded. Jumps are being loaded on a truck. Everything will now go back to a private address, gates and lamps in one-street villages with high stones. These are empty at dusk. These also may go back to side roads of small towns. Front doors commemorate sports finals and allotments go right down to the rail track. The ended hush of summer had brought them to this place for Show Saturday, the annual agricultural show. Now these will be back to autumn.

These people, the next verse-paragraph tells us, will all be back to their routines. They will include men with hunters, women who bring up dogs and are defined by wool. These will also include mug-faced children swanky in a saddle and middle-aged wives. These wife glare at jellies. Husbands are on leave from the garden and are as watchful as weasels. There are also car-tuning sons with curt hair. They will also go back to their

routines. The routine would amount to their local lives with names on vans and business calendars which are hung in kitchens. They will be back to the routine of loud occasions in the Corn Exchange and market days in bars. This is the routine of most farmers.

The concluding line of the last verse-paragraph is: 'Let it always be there.' This is the England of small towns and allotments where it is forever 1947. There is an ideal of familiar Englishmen that is underlined. As winter come the dismantled show itself dies back into the area of work. The speaker wants it to stay hidden there like strength. Below sale bills and swindling let the show stay hidden for a revival later. It is something people do without noticing how time's rolling smithy-smoke shadows much greater gestures. They share something that breaks ancestrally into regenerate union every year. 'Let it always be there' is the benediction with which the poem closes.

(B) Ted Hughes

1. 'The Jaguar'

This poem is from *The Hawk in the Rain*. There are five verse-paragraphs of 4 lines each. The first two verse-paragraphs focus on the indolence and fatigue of the other zoo animals. The apes yawn. The tiger and the lion lie very still. The boa-constrictor's coil is a fossil. In most cages, there is hardly any movement. They seem empty or they stink. Parrots either shriek or strut like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut.

The remaining three verse-paragraphs focus on the jaguar who is a striking study in contrast. In the third verse-paragraph we are told that it is the jaguar's cage which best holds the zoo-visitor's attention. There the crowd stands and stares mesmerized like a child at a dream.

There they see a jaguar who is angry and who hurries through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes. He is on a short fierce fuse.

The fourth verse-paragraph tells us that these movements have no trace of boredom about them. In the rest of the verse-paragraph and the first line of the next verse-paragraph we are told that the jaguar's eyes are satisfied to be blind in fire. His ears are deaf by the bang of blood in his brain. Unseeing and unhearing the jaguar spins from the bar but a cage is as non-existent for him as is a visionary's cell to the visionary.

In the last three lines of the poem the poet focuses on the jaguar's stride and its majesty and unfettered quality. His stride is the stride of freedom. Under the long thrust of the jaguar's heel the worlds roll and as a result, the horizons come to the floor of his cage. This makes him a master in his own way.

2. 'Bayonet Charge'

This poem is also from *The Hawk in the Rain*. The first verse-paragraph has 8 lines, the second 7 and the third also has 8 lines. The instinct for survival is the core theme of the poem.

The first verse-paragraph gives the instinctive reaction of a soldier to firing from the enemy. Patriotism takes a back seat. The first instinct is to start running. It is raw fear. The khaki uniform is raw. The sweat is heavy. The soldier stumbles across a filed full of lumps of earth. Rifle fire dazzles him. The fear of a bullet hitting him hurries him forward. His own rifle is as numb as a smashed arm.

In the second verse-paragraph the soldier pauses for a while. Bewilderment results from the run for life and the patriotic awareness sweats from his chest like molten iron.

His awareness in the second verse-paragraph is that he was running like a man who has jumped in the dark all the time wondering why he was running. He listens for the reason of his still running. He also wonders whether he is a pointing second in the cold clockwork of stars and the nations. This refers to the destinies of the people and nations and the element of cold clockwork that goes into all that. As all this happens his foot hangs like statuary in mid-stride.

In the last line of the third and final verse-paragraph and the opening of the third verse-paragraph we find a yellow hare being thrown up by the shot-slashed furrows of the field. It rolls like a flame and crawls in a threshing circle. Its mouth is wide open and silent and its eyes stand out. Startled, as the soldier plunges past with his bayonet towards the green hedge, king, honour, human dignity and things of that kind drop from him like luxuries. His terror is touching dynamite and the blue crackling air produces a yellow alarm and getting out of that space is what he wants more than anything else.

3. 'Six Young Men'

The six men were friends of Ted Hughes's father, and the actual photograph had been taken just before the war.

There are five verse-paragraphs of nine lines each. The first verse-paragraph focuses on the photograph of these six young men. The clinching line is the last line of the verse-paragraph:

'Six months after this picture they were all dead.'

The photograph holds them well. They were familiar to their friends. Four decades have passed. The photograph has faded but the faces or the hands of these people have not wrinkled. Their shoes shine though the cocked hats worn by them have gone out of fashion. One of the young men is smiling intimately. One is chewing a blade of grass. One lowers his eyes and is bashful. One's cocky pride makes him look ridiculous. At the start of the second verse-paragraph we are told that all the six had trimmed themselves for a Sunday outing. The spot, says the speaker, is familiar to him. The bilberried bank, the thick tree and the black wall are still there and have not changed. Where these six are sitting one can hear the water of seven streams fall to the roarer in the bottom. A murmuring of air goes through the leafy valley. Even that is audible at that point. Their expressions are those of men listening. The valley has still not changed its sound through the faces of these six have been under the ground for forty years now.

In the third verse-paragraph the speaker describes the way these people got killed. One was shot in an attack and called for help. The second one, his best friend, went out to bring him away. He was shot too. The third one was shot along with his rifle-sights. He was warned from potting at tin cans in no-man's land. The rest were also killed. Hope was no help.

In the fourth verse-paragraph the speaker invites readers to see a man in the photograph. His locket of a smile turns overnight into the hospital for his mangled (mutilated) last agony and hours. One can see bundled in it his dead bulk and weight which was mightier-than-a-man. This photograph is the one place which keeps him alive in his Sunday best. Here itself one can see cruel war's worst thinkable flash and rending. Forty years of rotting under the earth are there but the smile is there too.

The next verse-paragraph establishes a continuity between those in the photograph and those outside it. What gets retained is also considered here. The vitality of the young men in the photograph brings the permanent reality of death to the poet's mind.

4. 'Thrushes'

The poem is from *Lupercal*. 'Thrushes' are birds who prey on insects. There is a murderousness about their task. They do it with streamlined efficiency.

The verse-paragraphs vary in length except the first two which have 8 lines each.

The focus in the first verse-paragraph is also on 'some writhing thing' (an insect) which is mentioned at the end of line 5. The purposiveness of the thrushes is terrifying. They are like coiled steel and their eyes are dark and deadly. They attack with a start, a bound and a stab. They have no procrastinations about their task and the task doesn't bore them either. Then there is a ravenous second of consuming their prey.

In the second verse-paragraph the speaker compares their mental build to Mozart's brain. It is the efficiency of the kind which strikes in too streamlined a manner for any doubt to come in its way. No obstruction can deflect such efficiency which is comparable to that of the shark's mouth which hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak on its own side and in the process eats of itself. The question posed at the start of this verse-paragraph is as to what their bullet-like and automatic purpose is a function of. Is it their single-minded looking skulls or a trained body or genius? Or is it a nestful of brats?

In the third verse-paragraph the speaker says that man is not blessed with this kind of blessedness. His heroism is on horseback. He has a desk diary or a broad desk. He carves out a tiny ivory ornament for years. His act worships itself. In the last one and a half line of the third verse-paragraph and in the fourth verse-paragraph we are told that distractions in man's case are too many and too furious. Even if he bends so much as to be bent in prayer he can never achieve singlemindedness. The furious distracting devils orgy above the space where he prays.

Philip Larkin: Brief Technique-related Notes on the 8 Poems

1. Poetry of Departures

This poem is almost dialectical in its structure. The contrast built up by the speaker is between the decisive Romantic gesture of action or movement (the kind of thing Tom Gunn talks about in his famous poem 'On the Move') And the more cautious decision to let things stay as they are. The thing to note is that the different languages in the poem – the colloquial stand and the plain language – embody the differences in life-style that the poem focuses on.

Lines like 'Take that you bastard' add to the dramatic quality of the poem and to its insight into life-styles and human relationships. The artificiality of some impulsive actions bothers the speaker and he ends the poem on a dismissive note.

2. 'Ambulances'

This poem is in 6-line verse paragraphs. Rhyming is used to give the poem phonological regularity. The first two verse paragraphs offer vivid and realistic imagery as the ambulances are shown threading their way through city-streets. 'The traffic parts let go by' is another striking image (from the last verse paragraph) about the way the ambulances move through the city. The remaining three verse paragraphs offer us the speaker's musings on this movement and what the ambulances mean to people. 'Smells of different dinners' (in the second verse paragraph) and 'loud noons of cities,' in the first verse paragraph are good examples of figurality. The structure .is tight but the tone is equanimous. Yeats's 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death' comes to mind in the matter of tone .

The imagery and the rhythm together have the effect of capturing 'the still sad music of humanity' (Wordsworth's phrase).

3. 'Going, Going'

This poem also uses a rhyme scheme for phonological regularity. The tone is partly satirical. Irony is used to good effect. The gross materialism of people, their greed and their callousness about ecology are all touched upon. As compared to 'Ambulances' the consonantal sounds are jarring in effect. Alliteration is also quite effective. ('greeds and garbage' in the last verse paragraph is a good example.

Other examples are:

'Boiling will be bricked in'

'The carved choirs'

'A cast of crooks and tarts

The language has a number of colloquialisms in it. Many of the verbs convey approval or disapproval only by being just the right ones to convey the intended emotion. At the same time, there is striking contemporaneity about language use that often achieves an ironic effect also.

4. 'Show Saturday'

The thrust of this poem is naturalistic recording. By naturalism at the simplest level is meant a kind of photographic realism with emphasis on accuracy in recording. We are flooded with detail. Here is God's plenty. In the process of cataloguing observation almost becomes epiphany. An ideal of familiar Englishness is offered.

In a sense there is more of quintessential Englishness here than in 'Whitsun Weddings.' This is almost Keatsian.

The cataloguing is like the one we find in Robert Lowell's book of sonnets called *Notebook*. In Lowell the tempo of cataloguing is a little faster because the form that contains it (the fourteen line norm) demands its being packed that way. The form here is more relaxed but about the cataloguing there is an alertness and a warmth which reinforces the longing for preservation at the end of the poem.

This poem needs to be read in conjunction with 'The Whitsun Weddings' which proceeds through its eight 10-line stanzas with none of the subdued gear-crashing of 'Church Going,' is the finest example of Larkin's temper, tone and technique. Its level descriptive sweep, its amused human observation, its intelligent sense of the inexplicable, all move with complete inevitability to the mysterious closing lines as the train with its load of newly-married couples slows as it reaches its destination.

Both 'The Whitsun Weddings' and 'Show Saturday' are remarkable examples of Larkin's assertion of Englishness. In this respect, he takes a stance against the internationalism of early twentieth century High Modernism. Sometimes, his poetry shows some traces of Eliot's *Four Quartets* in its imagery. But then, a large part of *Four Quartets* is also marked for Englishness. His is the poetry of the aftermath of Empire.

Ted Hughes: Brief Technique-related Notes on the 8 Poems

1. 'The Jaguar'

This is a poem with graphic imagery and striking figurality (similes and metaphors). The parrots shriek 'as if they were on fire.' They strut 'like cheap tarts' ('tarts' is one of the words used for a prostitute). Another striking figural expression is 'His stride is wilderness of freedom.' 'Bang or blood in the brain' is an example of alliteration. The jaguar's ferocity is actualised quite effectively and there is a tautness in the lines themselves which denotes power kept in check.

2. 'Bayonet Charge'

This poem is quite graphic. It uses a number of non-finite verbal phrases. Participial phrases are, there to capture things in motion .The soldier's movements are captured as if on a camera .

Figurality is used to good effect. A striking figural phrase is the closing line of the poem: His terror's touchy dynamite.

A kind of equivalence of this phrase with the preceding phrase is established. The preceding phrase is:

'That blue crackling air'

Alliteration is used quite effectively. Some examples are;

'cold clockwork,' 'shot-slashed'

The poem almost gives us a series of cinematic shots. The sense of menace brought about by continuous rifle-fire is built by quite well.

3. 'Six Young Men'

Here there are five 9-line verse paragraphs. The lines are more relaxed than in most of Hughes's poems. The first verse paragraph is packed with 'd' sounds. These go well with the climactic line of the verse paragraph.

'They were all dead'

The second verse paragraph uses rhyming 'know' rhymes with go, 'wall' rhymes with 'fall' and 'all'. 'Sound' rhymes with 'ground'. In the third verse paragraph rhyming is abandoned. 'All were killed' is the line that caps this verse paragraph.

Something of an elegiac tone is maintained in the fourth verse paragraph. The fifth verse paragraph continues the speaker's musings about that event in the past of which the photograph, in its own way, is a reminder.

4. 'Thrushes'

The first verse paragraph is mostly non-finite verbal constructions. The speaker tries to pack into this verse paragraph as much of information about thrushes as he can. That makes the paragraph quite intense .

The second verse paragraph gives the single-minded nature of the thrushes some thought. That musing is continued in the final verse paragraph. The context is made human this time.

The poem gives ample proof of Hughes's skill in portraying the animal world with the violence inherent in it.

Pessimism, Isolation and Alienation In Larkin's Poetry

Larkin's poetry is profoundly subversive of the institutional exhortations of church, work, family and school. The vision is unsentimental and realistic. He prefers to be in direct and ironic. He explores eternal themes of death and change. He tries to see things as honestly as possible. So there is a starkness of vision. He frequently brings in tawdry superficial aspects of modern city life.

In his best known poem 'Whitsun Weddings' he looks at couples trying to give their lives some happiness and order. But the conclusion that ultimately emerges is that happiness is something which only happens elsewhere, in the past rather than in the present, outside of our lives.

In 'Poetry of Departures' he has his own world with its detested limits but prefers it to action because that is likely to lead nowhere.

We all hate home
And having to be there
I detest my room
Its specially-chosen junk.

' 'Next Please' is another grim poem. It talks of life being a series of promises and hopes that are never fulfilled. 'Ambulances' also talks about the fact that every street is visited by disease and death. Ephemerality, temporality and nothingness dominate many of Larkin's poems. In *Going Going* what is going is England itself.

Larkin's preoccupation is with the melancholy, the misfortunate, the failing elements of life. There is, in his work, an agnostic stoicism. Through this, he confronts death, diminution and change with sardonic resignation. His humor is a black humor and can be quite unnerving at times.

Larkin's Poetic Craftsmanship

Larkin savagely and ironically portrays his compromises of life. This he does with such a mastery of the poetic line. He is also a master of indirection, irony, understatement and concision. The speaker of a Larkin poem is almost always someone standing outside the communal life of fellow human beings. There is a detachment and a separateness from his material.

It is with suppressed anger, pity,and humour that Larkin views the degraded circumstances in which people go through their lives. A distance between self and others is preserved. He values ordinary collective institutions like 'Show Saturday' but stands outside of all. He is an ironic recorder of the boring and the banal. The poems 'Dockery and Sun' and Mr. Bloomy show other aspects of his scepticism towards life.

Larkin mostly uses regular stanzas as form, artful syntax and striking diction with sometimes a colloquial touch. 'An Arundel Tomb' is a poem of exceptional technical achievement, emotional strength and verbal originality. In the poem 'The Trees' there is a combination of plenitude and transience that one finds in great poems like Keats's 'To Autumn.'

Also, Larkin is a master of naturalistic detail. 'Whitsun Weddings' and 'Show Saturday' give ample evidence of this. In 'Show Saturday' the sheer amount of detail contributes to the significance which is conferred upon the show in the closing parts of the poem. This is done in a very powerful way. There is affection for and approval of the activities described but no attempt is made to romanticize or render unfamiliar the everyday scene.

Metaphors are foregrounded by Larkin against a foreground which is predominantly metanymic. This , in turn, is foregrounded against the background of the poetic tradition which is essentially metaphoric. In the opening stanza of 'Whitsun Weddings' for example, the scenery is evoked by melancholic and synecdochic detail as are the wedding parties that the poet observes at the stations on the way to London, seeing off bridal couples to their honeymoon.

This is the usual tragic story of a Larkin poem. It would begin with a precisely observed description of a scene from life and would move to a conclusion which reflects on the significance of what has been described.

His poems are often structured to a thematic or dramatic climax which can come about through the release of an image or a change in voice from the lighthearted and the fatuous to deadly earnest. Quite a few Auden poems also work in roughly the same way but the seeming randomness is mostly greater in Auden's case.

Violence as a Theme in Ted Hughes's Poetry

Ted Hughes has a preoccupation with violence. A large part of his poetry is anti- human and it reflects his experience of human cruelty. Poems in *Crow* (1970) voice a poetic drama which is often violent and distressing. Hughes's father was a veteran of the First World War .He was one of seventeen survivors of a whole regiment which fought at Gallipoli. His father's life and losses are also part of Hughes's thematic repertoire.

Hughes's animal poems have been described as a modern bestiary. What occurs in Crow is a metaphysical, historical and individual nightmare cast in anthropological terms. Even elsewhere, 'The Hawk', 'The Thrush' and 'The Pike' are not only the physical but moral centers of their worlds.

Poems on animals in collections like *The Hawk In The Rain* and *Lupercal* evoke the wordless energies of nature – its violence, its pride and the accompanying death – in a language of harsh rhythm.

Hughes's was a poetry of man's dark side. Memories of a racial past came to be re-imagined through the freedom and violence of animals. In an early poem he talks of pike in terms of "A life subdued to its instrument." Impatience with human intellect and deviousness comes through all too often. The figure 'Crow' itself is the survivor, the black instinctive heart of the self for whom love is meaningless.

A substantial part of Hughes's poetry is anti-human. It reflects the experience of human cruelty underlying the work of contemporary East European poets like Vasko Popa (Yugoslavia) whom Hughes admired. To Popa especially he turned for 'the surrealism of the folklore'. Part of the influence comes from Dylan Thomas and Robert Lowell as well.

The creatures Hughes describes are often predators. The deaths he observes are unnervingly violent. Survival is the result (if at all) of a single mindedness is itself unnerving. The obviousness of the struggle for survival is almost always the backdrop. There is a considerable length to which Hughes sometimes seems to be going, to glorify the strength and determination of the survivor. So much so that sympathy with the plight of the defeated seems to be missing.

Hughes's abiding theme is the presence of amoral primitive forces at work beneath the surface of our predominantly urban, "civilized" culture. He has a tenacious grip over the poetry or packed, detailed, naturalistic observation. H e locates violence everywhere as a universal, natural force. He sees his age as an age of irreversible decay in the ethical-metaphysical system of Western European culture whose episteme was the Enlightenment episteme.

Hughes's Overall Poetic Style

A strong influence on Ted Hughes's work is the poetry of G.M.Hopkins. His emphatic rhythms and strongly marked stresses are very similar to Hopkins's. The same can be said of violent verbs and run-on lines. The influence of W.B.Yeats, Dylan Thomas and Robert Lowell is also there. Where Hughes is at his best, is in the powerfully concentrated and disciplined evocation of creatures in a non-human environment.

In 'The Jaguar,' the pulsating driving rhythms of the poem reinforced by heavy alliteration and assonance help register an effect of barely suppressed rage.

In 'Six Young Men' Hughes offers a vigorous mourning which is very different from Larkin's kind of elegy exemplified by the poem 'MCMXIV.' Larkin mostly stations himself, as if in a train window. Hughes's most common vantage point is the eye, (the mind's eye). Hughes's landscape is interesting. Man speaks through nature.

There is an element of hysteria about diction in Hughes's later poetry. He has a dark essentialism cloaked in which everything takes on a similar aspect including animals and plants.

Hughes uses alliteration quite often. The line: 'By the bang of blood in the brain' from 'The Jaguar' is a good example. Half rhyme and imperfect rhyme are also used to good effect.

His imagery is quite graphic and can be startling sometimes. There is a freshness and directness about it. The life of nature is an obsession with him. He sees it as a 'life subdued to its instrument'.

A Short Biographical Note

Philip Larkin was born in 1922 and brought up in Coventry. He was educated at Oxford. Beginning in 1955, he spent his working life as the librarian of Hull University Library. He was a very private, almost reclusive person and remained unmarried. He

died in 1985.

Ted Hughes

Ted Hughes was born in 1930 at Mytholmroyd in the West Riding Yorkshire. He was educated at Mexborough Grammar School and Cambridge.

At Cambridge he started with the study of English literature, but two years later switched over to archaelogy and anthropology. He and the American poetess Sylvia Plath met at Cambridge. The two got married in 1956. From 1957 to 1959 he and Plath lived in America. In 1960 the two came to England. The marriage didn't last very long. In 1963 Plath committed suicide. His second marriage was in 1970. In 1984 he became the Poet Laureate of England. He died in 1998.

A Short Bibliographical Note

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