

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH  
1914 TO THE PRESENT**

**Paper-IV**

**Section A & B**

**M.A. English (Previous)**

**Directorate of Distance Education  
Maharshi Dayanand University  
ROHTAK – 124 001**

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## Literature in English 1914 to the Present

### Paper-IV

**Max. Marks : 100**

**Time : 3 Hours**

*Note: Students will be required to attempt five questions in all. Question 1 will be compulsory. This question shall be framed to test students' comprehension of the texts prescribed for **Close Study**. There will be one question on each of the Units in all the four Sections. The students will be required to attempt four questions (in about 200 words each) one from each section.*

*The other four questions will be based on the texts for **Close Study** with internal choice i.e. one question with internal choice on each of the nine units. The students will be required to attempt **One** question from each of the **Four** Sections.*

### Section A & B

<b>Unit I</b>	<b>T.S. Eliot</b> The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, The Waste Land
<b>Unit II</b>	<b>Philip Larkin</b> The Poetry of Departure, Ambulance, Going Going, Show Saturday  <b>Ted Hughes</b> The Jaguar, Bayonet Charge, Six Young Men, Thrushes
<b>Unit III</b>	<b>D.H. Lawrence</b> Sons and Lovers
<b>Unit IV</b>	<b>Graham Greene</b> The Heart of the Matter
<b>Unit V</b>	<b>Toni Morrison</b> The Bluest Eye

**T.S. ELIOT**

**The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**

**The Waste Land**

## Unit-I

### T.S. Eliot

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#### SECTION I: CRITICISM ON ELIOT

##### 1. The Age of T.S. Eliot

The 20<sup>th</sup> century is such a complex and problematic age that it cannot be represented by a single voice or character. We can hardly call it the Age of Science, for even physics is today on the verge of metaphysics, nor will it suffice to designate it as the Age of Anxiety, for that really tells nothing. Neither it is humanistic, nor classical, nor scientific, nor romantic, nor one of the compromise. We cannot simply sum up the age by a single charming epithet, as in case with the previous eras, e.g. the Age of Chaucer, the Age of Milton, the Age of Dryden, the Age of Pope, the Age of Wordsworth, and so on and so forth. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is a peculiar mass that entraps us with tempting baits heartlessly; it is a baffling mass of currents and cross-currents. The moment we set out to discover it, it becomes a mirage. Instead of unfolding itself to us, it rather engulfs us. It seems that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has brought all the distinct threads trailing through centuries together and tied them in a knot. It would be a miracle indeed if someone were born to voice the concern of the age in all its manifestations. But the miracle has already happened in the form of T.S. Eliot !

Surrounded by a hostile world, Eliot's many-sided genius became impatient to formulate new devices of speech and rhythm in English poetry. When he began writing verses, the Georgian poetry was in progress. By and by the poets had forgotten their avowed aims and had begun doing the same as the romantic Decadents, against whom they had risen in revolt erstwhile.

To understand the greatness of T.S. Eliot, it is worthwhile to throw light on the Georgian school of poetry, since it is school against which he stood firmly and contributed something concrete to the growth of English poetry.

The Georgian school of poets published five volume of *Georgian Poetry* between 1912 and 1922 from the Poetry Bookshop of Harold Monro. In these volumes appeared the poems of R. Brooke, E. Blunden, W.H. Davies, Walter de la Mare, L.A. Bercrombie, Gordon Bottomley, John Drinkwater, J.E. Flecker, John Freeman, W.W. Gibson, Ralph Hodgson, Edward Shanks, Sir John Squire, Alfred Noyes, G.K. Chesterton, Masfield and Hilaire Belloc. These poets had their recognisable features, but they were alike in the rejection of the Decadent ideals of art and literature. They cultivated such qualities as reality, simplicity, love of natural beauty, and adherence to the main traditions of English poetry in form and technique. With the passage of time, they turned away from real life and, like the Romantics, sought shelter in "old, unhappy, far-off things" and in "battles long ago".<sup>1</sup> And hence their revolt against the decadents proved to be no more than a re-statement of 'what had already been said perfectly'. They wrote for the popular taste, and their "exoteric" poetry tended to be "flat and thin, or shallow and shadowless. .... an evasion like the phrase, 'Not at Home'."<sup>2</sup> This is the reason that led the Sitwells, Roy Campbell and others to attack their poetic practice.

T.E. Hulme (1883-1917) led the reaction against the Georgian poetry. Through his impressive lectures and five short poems, Hulme stressed that poetry should solely confine itself to the world perceived by the senses, and to the presentation of its themes in a succession of concise, clearly visualized, concrete images, accurate in detail and precise in significance. He also stressed the employment of *vers libre* with its unlimited freedom of expression and its rhythms approaching those of everyday speech. Hilda Doolittle and Ezra Pound offered their unstinted support to Hulme, and they combinedly launched an attack on the Georgian poetry and brought into being the literary movement, known as Imagism. In 1914 appeared *The Egoist* and *Des Imagistes*. The

Imagist poets went on with their job with a missionary zeal, and succeeded in producing the three collections of poems under the title *Some Imagist Poets* (1915-1917) and the final *Imagist Anthology* (1930). Although the Imagist movement grew weak by the desertion of its certain members and by the obsession of its practitioners to follow the sequence of very exact and concise images. But the movement was in full swing after the first Great War, and exerted profound influence upon Eliot and Richard Aldington. Eliot could never shake off its impact and it ensured to him the use of concrete images.

When Eliot came from the New England to Europe, the condition of English poetry was not very bright; American poetry was defunct; and French poetry began to draw inspiration from Symbolism, which influenced writers like Arthur Symonds and W.B. Yeats in its wake.

Two eminent poets of Eliot's time were Yeats and Ezra Pound. But whereas the early Yeats was devoted whole-heartedly to 'the stuff of dreams' and to the Irish questions, and Pound to his idiosyncracies about art and politics, Eliot alone showed in poetry the "complex intensities of concern about soul and body"<sup>3</sup>. In case with the first two poets, in many other respects great and powerful as they were, "the moral, religious and anthropological preoccupations"<sup>4</sup> are absent. Yeats could be a realist and an over-all metaphysical seer only towards the close of his career. Moreover, the best utterance of Yeats philosophy is *A Vision* (1925 and 1937), which is in itself an obscure work of prose, not of poetry. But Eliot's best religious and philosophical work, as far as I can think, is *Four Quartets*, a unique flower of the poet's genius: "The complete consort dancing together."<sup>5</sup> And Pound stands nowhere in the context, since his "main concern has always been art: he is, in the most serious sense of the word, an aesthete."<sup>6</sup> Despite Eliot's proclaimed gratefulness to Pound, who was his "technical adviser"<sup>7</sup> and to whom he dedicated *The Waste Land*, "the influence of Mr. Pound that can be observed from outside is secondary to Mr. Eliot's."<sup>8</sup> Thus it can be safely asserted that Eliot is the truest poet of his time, only next to none.

Being conscious of the 'failings' of the Georgians, Eliot set about to introduce "new ways of thought, new modes of approach, new patterns of expression, new rhythms and new cadences".<sup>9</sup> And Eliot succeeded wonderfully in his job as a poet for that simple reason that he had the humility to admit the great ineluctable value of tradition. That indeed is the indelible mark of true genius. The true genius does not invent or discover so much as he creates or transmutes the borrowed material. In Shakespeare's hands the material drawn from other sources 'suffered a sea-change.'

Eliot wanted to evolve and practise certain standards; he was a traditionalist through and through. He longed to imbibe in his works the best of the European tradition, of which the British was a part. "Although a poet of the English language, Eliot is, first and foremost, an European poet."<sup>10</sup> And it is this 'Europeanism, the awareness of belonging to a tradition broader than that of his language that distinguishes him from many of his English-language contemporaries. He went to Christianity to satisfy the longing for European tradition and culture, since Christianity was "the most effective measure against the corruption of totalitarianism" and could "save the modern man from being completely atomized and going adrift".<sup>11</sup>

Correlated to this traditionalism is Eliot's concept of art. His most remarkable contribution to modern literature is the 'impersonal theory of poetry' *Tradition and the Individual Talent* is a very good essay in which Eliot says that the poem and the poet are two separate things. He elucidates the matter by examining "the relation of the poem to the past" and then "the relation of the poem to its author".<sup>12</sup> He thinks that the past is never dead; it lives in the present. The poet should draw his model and ideas from the past to shape the future. He takes much from the stored wisdom of the ancients and gives comparatively less to the tradition. And in this usual barter system, he has to annihilate himself greatly, or to undergo the process of 'a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.' Personality, therefore, finds no room in his theory of poetry. In this respect he is very different from the romantic conception of art, and his declaration in 1928 that he was "classicist in literature, Anglo-Catholic in religion, royalist in politics"<sup>13</sup> is fully vindicated. Thus we see that Eliot was not only an innovator in poetry but also in criticism. His multipronged genius heralded the dawn of a new era in the field of English poetic drama too. As Eliot thought, certain emotions and feelings visit us only in

moments of inaction, the moments frequently symbolized in Eliot's work by a scene in a rose-garden or apple orchard. These can only be expressed in the language of poetry. But at the same time the contact with the ordinary, everyday world must be organically related to each other. They should look as 'integral products of an act of imagination.'

And Eliot, beyond doubt, was "an integral poet",<sup>14</sup> who had been searching for a form of poetry as well as for a form of life. He could make the search easy by means of symbols and images, which synthesised his disparate experiences, and which came up to fill in the gap created by the absence of connections and transitions. But if "he omits the grammatical signs of connection and order, he preserves the psychological or poetic signs."<sup>15</sup> Eliot's employment of 'broken images', his abrupt transitions from one thought to another, his wit-flashes, his over-implication, his allusiveness, his elliptical style that are so evident in his works are all indicative of his permanent concern to convey 'the genuine whole of tangled feelings'.

Some critics have charged Eliot of being obscure and elliptical in his poetry, particularly so in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. Though the charge may not be rejected totally, the age itself we are living in is such. Eliot did not believe in producing work haphazardly; he worked with diligence and artistry. In his reaction against the preceding poetry, he chose the way of esotericism. And in one of his memorable essays<sup>16</sup> he has tried to clarify his stand in the matter:

"We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilisation, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilisation comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."

Eliot was fully convinced of "the uselessness of wide appeal to an audience incapable of full appreciation."<sup>17</sup> He was also fully convinced of the demands of our civilisation being infinitely much more complex than in any previous era. As art is the reflection of the spirit of the age, it requires the resurrection of the lost and the development of new artistic devices. Esotericism, as opposed to exotericism of the Georgian poetry, was at once "a discipline for the easier desires of the artist and of the audience" and "a necessary result of the conditions in which the poet's sensibility had to operate."<sup>18</sup> The esoteric poet aims at "cultivating all the possibilities of words as a medium"<sup>19</sup>, and "when the speech of one sense is insufficient to convey (the) entire meaning, (using) the language of another".<sup>20</sup> Esotericism therefore, as cultivated by Eliot, was a call of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to create new devices essential to the expression of entirely new conditions.

Paul Elmer More labeled Eliot as a 'lyric prophet of chaos'. When he attributed this epithet to him, he simply meant that Eliot had dealt with 'the confusion of life' in his poetry. In 1922, a new star became lord of the ascendant. Eliot's *The Waste Land* was hailed by the literary world as a landmark in English poetry comparable to the *Lyrical Ballads*. The poem was written under the shadow of postwar horror and despair. *The Waste Land*, in method as well as in mood, is a continuation of *Gerontion*; it is in genre the same as *The Hollow Men* which is the next to follow it. This poem has surpassed even Laforgue in technique and symbolic expression. Eliot has now "developed a new technique, at once laconic, quick, and precise, for representing the transmutations of thought, the interplay of perception and reflection."<sup>21</sup>

Most of the 'modernist' trends of poetry – the new psychology, anthropology, symbolism, and metaphysics – meet in the work of T.S. Eliot and contribute most to its surprising success. The years 1919-1929 were "a confused" and "a barren decade"<sup>22</sup> but not for Eliot. The poet is loved and liked today so much due to his flourishing at a time when there was felt a vacuum in English poetry. Critics like Yvor Winters should have done well to themselves and to the literary world at large by greeting the 'ascendant' star instead of labeling him as one who 'surrenders his form to his subject', and thereby becomes chaotic. Who can say that Eliot is chaotic, simply because he 'holds a mirror to Nature' as a true social reporter and reformer? Who can deny the fact that he has done considerable service to English poetry by bringing it back to life? Perhaps Mr. Hugh Kenner has dispensed justice to him by ascribing him the quality to be "the invisible poet in an age of systematic

literary scrutiny”<sup>23</sup> Mr. William Empson is also quite judicious in his evaluation of Eliot as ‘ a very penetrating influence, perhaps not unlike an east wind’.

For good poetry Mr. Pound has laid down that it should ensure the blending of three aspects together: (1) Melopoeia, (2) Imagism, and finally (3) Lagopoeia. Some of these three is found in all good poetry, as in Eliot’s too. Such poetry “must resolve the distinctive characteristics of its own time – which are temporary – into universality.”<sup>24</sup> For Eliot, the past or tradition is the best form of universality. But this past or tradition does not imply the insular outlook of ‘Europeanism’. It transcends the limitations of space and time. Eliot is a ‘universal’ poet of the first rank. He is not ‘the great minor poet of 20<sup>th</sup> century’ as David Daiches characterised him in his Delhi Seminar address. One must bear in mind that Eliot’s universality is a progression of the concept of ‘Europeanism’ and not a retrogression. It highlights his readiness to accept ‘the best that is known and thought’ in the world. Octavio paz has expressed this idea in the following memorable manner:

“Eliot is universal in the sense in which all great poetry, from the funeral chants of the pygmies to the Hai-ku of the Japanese, is the common heritage of all men; and he is universal also because of his influence in world literature of our time, comparable to that of Klee in painting or that of Sxtravinsky in music: an influence which differs from others because it is a critical influence.”<sup>25</sup>

As a true ‘universal’ poet, Eliot included, at least, six foreign languages in *The Waste Land alone*. He would be remembered as a scholar who was sincerely devoted to the betterment of English poetry by plumbing new depths and exploring new horizons. In the words of Pinto: ‘He has given it (English Poetry) a new intellectual dignity, new forms arising out of a sincerity and a new spiritual depth. Like Dryden after the Restoration and Wordsworth at the end of the eighteenth century he has also given it a new policy’. And this is a very balanced judgement of Eliot indeed.

1. Wordsworth, ‘The Solitary Reaper’. *Fifteen poets*
2. Edith Sitwell, *Aspects of Modern Poetry*, p.73.
3. F.R. Leavis, *New Bearings In English Poetry*, P. 140
4. *Ibid.*, p.140
5. ‘Little Gidding’, *Four Quatets. Complete Poems*, p.
6. F.R. Leavis, *New Bearings In English Poetry*, p.140.
7. G.S. Fraser, *Ezra Pound*, p.1.
8. F.R. Leavis, *New Bearings In English Poetry*, p.134.
9. *The P.G.E.A. Magazine* , Allahabad University , Allahabad (1964-65),p.20.
10. Octavio Paz, ‘Inaugural Address’, *Papers and Proceedings of a Seminar* (1965), p.2
11. *Papers and Proceedings of a Seminar*, p. 97.
12. ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, *The Sacred Wood* p. 51.
13. See the Preface to *For Lancelot Andrewes*, p.7
14. K.Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T.S. Eliot* , p. 114.
15. George Williamson, *A Reader’s Guide to T.S. Eliot*, p.14.
16. ‘The Metaphysical Poets’ in *Selected Essays*, p.289.
17. D.E.S. Maxwell, *The Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, p. 15
18. *Ibid*, p. 15.
19. Edith Sitwell, *Poetry and Criticism*, p.23.
20. *Ibid*, p. 18.
21. Edmund Wilson, *Axel’s Castle*, p.92.

22. Grierson and Smith, *A Critical History Of English Poetry*, p.513.
23. See Hugh Kenner's *The Invisible Poet*: T.S. Eliot, p.ix.
24. D.E.S. Maxwell, *The poetry of T.S. Eliot*, p.13.
25. Octavio Paz, 'inaugural address', *Papers and Proceedings of a Seminar*, p.2.

## 2. T.S. Eliot's Life and Works

T.S. Eliot has become been a name of high fame in English poetry since the early twenties. He had governed the age in which he lived with an unchallengeable authority. The 20<sup>th</sup> century, as it is known to all, is quite complex and diversified in nature. It cannot be signalized by a single voice or authority. Still T.S. Eliot may be regarded as its best representative in English literature, perhaps more so than any other literary figure. Amongst the post-war poets, playwrights and critics, who have enjoyed honour and prestige, Eliot stands out as a towering personality. It is he alone who could face and relish the life of stark and harsh realities. He never liked to sit in an ivory tower by shutting his eyes to the intricate and baffling problems confronting the human race of his time. He rather came forward as one of ourselves and to presented a first –hand report on the formidable issues of the age.

As a poet, Eliot drew upon many different sources to gather his material. He was deeply influenced by certain glorious personalities of the past and of the contemporary scene. Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Ben Jonson, Arnold, etc. in general, and Donne and the Metaphysicals in particular contributed their shares in shaping Eliot's mind. Of the foreign impact upon him, mention may be made of the French Symbolists, especially Laforgue and Gautier, of the German philosophers, such as Hegel, Meinong and Bradley, and of the Indian religions and philosophies. By embracing influences so wide and diverse in nature, Eliot greatly increased his knowledge and enriched his sensibility. This also accounts for his being a universal poet. Eliot was a versatile genius, a highly talented man and an immortal soul. Eliot's universality is to be interpreted in the sense in which all great poetry, from the funeral chants of the pigmies to the Hai –ku of the Japanese, is the common heritage of all man; Eliot's appeal was not limited to the English speaking people or to the European tradition; he is rather a universal poet. And this necessarily presupposes that he is an English poet or an European poet.

In this context it is proper to say that Eliot was aware of a vastly rich tradition, which was not merely English or European, but had a wider application. He derives, for example, not only from "the best that is known and thought" in the Bible, or Christian theology, but also from Buddhism and Hinduism and many more religions. It is in this sense that Eliot's outlook is said to be catholic, not insular, not national, but international, nor peculiar to one tribe or people but to all tribes and peoples. For him creeds and castes do not matter; he is only concerned with the best. This also explains another stand taken by him, that of a classicist in literature. He held Aristotle's authority supreme, because he had a critical mind *par excellence*. Eliot is also a critic of the Aristotelian line. Correlated to this is his historic statement in 1928 that he was 'an Anglo – Catholic in religion' and 'a royalist in politics'. No doubt, Eliot's mind was wholly absorbed with Christianity, its burning problems, its reformative zeal; his poetry, tends to enact an attitude towards life, and this attitude is that of a devout Christian and spiritual fighter.

By 'royalist in politics' Eliot might have meant a conservative who does not believe in sudden and violent revolutions, like the one which the French enacted in 1789 against the monarchy. Eliot was a humanitarian beyond scruples, but it does not mean that he should be violent and aggressive to root out the stumbling blocks in the way. They are rather to be overcome with sympathy, which at once implies the sympathy of a critical mind. His manifesto of being a 'royalist' does not offer him an advantage of escape from the social and human responsibilities, which necessitates involving into action rather than fleeing into a solitary resort.

T.S. Eliot was born in 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri (U.S.A). His family was of Devonshire origin, which was traditionally interested in trade and commerce and academic studies. He was an undergraduate at Harvard during 1906 –1909. Here he came under the influence of the Symbolists and Laforgue. During 1909-10 he was

a graduate student at Harvard and completed his early poems, including *'Portrait of a Lady'* and began *'Prufrock'*. In the years 1910 and 1911 he went to France (Sorbonne in Paris) and Germany. He spent a year at Oxford reading Greek philosophy. Again he was back to Harvard University as a graduate student. It is then that he started work on the philosophy of Francis Herbert Bradley, whose *Appearance and Reality* influenced him much. During 1914–15 he resumed his study in Germany which was cut off by the First World War. He took his residence at Oxford, and worked on some short satiric poems. *'Prufrock'* was published in Chicago in June 1915. His marriage to Vivian Haigh - Wood took place in July 1915.

After a brief experience of teaching at Highgate School, Eliot entered business in 1916. He also completed his Bradley thesis in that year. Then he spent eight years as an employee of Lloyd's Bank. He took up various reviewing and editorial assignments. During 1917-20 he wrote many poems in quatrains after the French fashion. *'Gerontion'* deserves special mention in this connection. *Prufrock' and Other Observations* appeared in press in June 1917. He was an assistant editor of *The Egoist* (1917-19). He also published a collection of Poems and *The Sacred Wood* in 1920.

Eliot was the London correspondent for *The Deal* during 1921-22 and *La-Nouvelle Revue Francaise* during 1922-23. In October 1923 began his career as an editor of *'The Criterion'*. His epoch-making poem, *The Waste Land*, appeared in public in 1922. It is a much discussed poem with five movements. In it the poet has displayed the fears, doubts and distrust of the post war generation. It won for him the *Dial* award. In 1925 appeared his *Poems 1909-1925*, which included *'The Hollow Men'* written in the spirit of *The Waste land*.

During 1926-27 came out his satiric pieces *'Fragment of a Prologue'*, and *'Fragment of an Agon'*. In 1927 Eliot declared himself to be an Anglo-Catholic in religion and assumed British citizenship. *'Ariel Poems'* were published between 1927 and 1930. *'Ash Wednesday'*, the most difficult poem in six sections, appeared in 1930, before which he had written an essay on Dante (1929). The fragmentary *'Coriolan'* was out in 1931. The year 1932 saw the publication of *Selected Essays* in which were included most of the essays already published in *The Sacred Wood'* (1920). Thereafter *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism* (1933) and *After Strange Gods* (1934) were produced which contain some of the highly qualified critical opinions of the poet-critic on the theory and practice of poetry.

The year 1934 witnessed a substantial change in the attitude of the poet. He had now sided with the poetic drama, which he renovated and energized during the later years of his life. Eliot's first work in this direction was *The Rock* (1934). Since then a spate of publications flooded the dramatic field. *Murder in the Cathedral* appeared in 1935. *Poems: 1909-1935*, including *'Burnt Norton'* was produced then. *The Family Reunion* in 1939 was a stage-failure, but the dramatist remained unshaken. During the years 1940-42 appeared *'East Coker'*, *'The Dry Salvages'* and *'Little Gidding'*. These three and *'Burnt Norton'* were combined together to form *Four Quartets* (1943).

The year 1947 brought a catastrophe for Eliot: the death of his first wife after long illness. In 1948 he wrote *'Notes towards the Definition of Culture'*. By now he had been honoured by his fellow poets, writers, literary associations and clubs on so many occasions. Among the many literary honours bestowed upon him, mention may be made of: Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard (1932-33), President, Classical Association, Nobel Prize for Literature (1948), and Order of Merit (1948). At different times he had received honorary degrees from no less than twelve Universities in Europe and America.

Eliot wrote *The Cocktail Party* in 1950, *The Confidential Clerk* in 1955 and *The Elder Statesman* in 1959. After *'Four Quartets'*, poetry was almost untouched by him, though poetic element was indisputably retained in his all dramas mentioned above. Earlier in 1957, Eliot had married Valerie Fletcher, his second wife, and had published *On Poetry and Poets*. Eliot's hectic literary life came to an end on January 4, 1965, and the news of his death was received in the world with a sense of deep loss and sorrow.

Needless to say that with the passing away of T.S. Eliot an age of Masters of English literature has closed its chapter, at least for the time being. But he will ever be remembered by us; he who gave us *'Whispers of*

*Immortality*’ while alive, will return invisibly to us to console, exhort, and guide the ‘erring humanity’. He would be ever remembered as one of the illustrious sons of the Muse who have secured a permanent place on the Parnassus. He is to be remembered as one who has enriched and enhanced the scope of English poetry. “He has given it (English poetry) a new intellectual dignity, new forms arising out of a new sincerity and a new spiritual depth. Like Dryden after the Restoration and Wordsworth at the end of the eighteenth century he has also given it a new policy. More than any other poet he has saved it ‘from becoming a mere pastime of the scholarly section of the upper middle class, like Latin poetry in the days of Claudian and Ausonius.’

### 3. Themes in Eliot's Poetry

Eliot is a representative poet of the twentieth century and hence he has voiced forcefully the moral and spiritual degradation of modern man, the loss of human values, and the prevalence of chaos, confusion and tension in the human world. His poetry is an expression of the age in which he lived. It does not take a recourse to the past or the medieval age. It tries to feel the pulse of man and articulates his problems and tensions in a touching way.

A critic has rightly pointed out that Eliot’s early poetry is the poetry of suffering and tension. As we know, he began his poetic career with “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, and this poem brings to the fore the dilemma and the pangs of a middle aged man in the presence of beautiful movement. The question that haunts him incessantly is: ‘Do I dare disturb the universe?’ Similarly, the poem “Portrait of a Lady”, highlights the same kind of dilemma and sense of futility in the life a lady advancing in years: ‘I shall sit here, serving tea to friends.’ In fact, all the protagonists of Eliot - Prufrock, the lady, Gerontion, Mr. Apollinax, Tiresias, etc. – are great sufferers in the drama of life.

In his early poetry, Eliot portrays persons and scenes full of disillusionment, repulsion and horror. His awareness of ‘the universe panorama of futility and anarchy’ in the human world is quite acute and intense. The imagery of the poems prior to *The Waste Land* is modern, urban, even cosmopolitan, and invariably tends to emphasize the boredom and sterility of modern urban life. The tedium of life, even the meaninglessness of existence, may be marked in the following extract from “Rhapsody on a Windy Night”:

*So the hand of the child, automatic,  
Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was summering along the quay.*

*I could see nothing behind that child’s eye.*

Here we have a glimpse of the utter emptiness and the lack of fulfilment in the child life. A grown-up man’s or woman’s life is no better in any way. The life of the middle-aged lady is painted as follows:

*And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find expression... dance, dance  
Life a dancing bear,  
Cry life a parrot, chatter like an ape.  
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance –*

Clearly, her life is meaningless and no better than that of an animal. Prufrock is also faced with ‘the overwhelming question’ of seeking meaning in life. Gerontion, an old man, is also preoccupied with a sense of loss and nostalgia, of failure and frustration:

*Here I am, an old man in a dry month,  
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.*

The ‘sign’ of Christ given in the poem is not taken by man.

With “Gerontion” onwards, Eliot’s poems deal with the depths of human depravity. In these poems, animal images become frequent, emphasizing thereby the bestiality and depravity of man. There is Princess Volupine, whose name suggests both a devouring wolf (‘vulpene’) and a voluptuary; there is Bleistein, like some creature

from a primeval swamp; there is Sweeney, the 'Apeneck', who is 'clawing' at the pillow slip', while a cosmopolitan woman associated with him is –

*Rachel nee Rabinovitch*  
*Tears at the grapes with murderous paws.*

In "Whispers of Immortality" Grishkin is seen in a drawing soon, distilling a rank 'feline smell'.

*The Waste Land* (1922) employs the theme of 'the divitalization of human civilization' and 'the destabilization of human society'. Critics like F.R. Leavis and Paul Elmer More think that the poem begins with a description of a cruel season and a dead land, and that it ends on a chaotic note. But these critics have not been able to grasp the full implication of the Sanskrit words proper – 'Da Da Da' and 'Shantih Shantih Shantih'. The poem is highly suggestive of the loss of spirituality in the modern world; that is why London is called an 'unreal city' and the London Bridge is depicted as 'falling down'. The poem has a mythical structure. The Fisher King of the Grail legend suffers from a mysterious sickness, as a result of which the land he rules over turns into a waste land and suffers from infertility. This infertility can be healed and removed by the Deliverer. The subject matter concerns the entire humanity, though the focus is on modern London. The overall mood of the poet is one of despair not of exhilaration over the prospective dawn of a better future (as hinted at towards the close of the poem).

"The Hollow Men" continues the mood and ironic vision of *The Waste Land*. The poem is replete with sardonic tone and pessimism. The hollow men are the empty or stuffed men, with no bright hope. The poet's vision comes out vividly in the following lines:

*This is the way the world ends*  
*Not with a bang but a whimper.*

Up to "The Hollow Men" the note of suffering and pessimism is predominant, but after this poem the Christian hope returns to the poet. The Ariel Poems definitely mark the break, and the dark vision of the poet yields place to a brighter vision –

The Ariel poems consist of "Journey of the Magi", "A Song for Simeon", "Animula", and "Marina". These poems make use of the religious theme connected with the life of Christ. The magi travel a long arduous way to see the infant Christ. The narrator, who is one of the magi, is sure that he has seen the saviour. In "A Song for Simeon", Simeon also has the impression of having seen the Saviour, but he feels that he is not to be redeemed. "Animula" is somewhat somber and gloomy in outlook; it paints a process of degeneration – from innocence to irresolution and selfishness and then to death. This poem asserts that the new life after death is the gift of Christ. The poet is acutely conscious of time here. The fourth of the Ariel Poems, "Marina", is based on the reunion of Pericles with his daughter (as celebrated by Shakespeare in his famous play), and subtly shows the graceful life leading to salvation through the intervention of Christ.

Thus, we have noticed that Eliot's poetry written since 1927 breathes in a fresh air of religious certainty and spiritual discipline. The poem "Ash Wednesday" (1930) is precisely steeped in spiritual atmosphere of self-abnegation. The earlier atmosphere of chaos and confusion, doubt and distrust, has now disappeared. By this time, the poet has achieved a new religion (Anglo-Catholicism) and a new hope for the salvation of man.

*Four Quartets* (1943), which is a bunch of four poems – "Burnt Norton", "East Coker", "The Dry Salvages", and "Little Gidding" – is the acme of religious meditation and eventual salvation. The poem combines in its texture the deep reflections on time and Eternity, word and word, speech and Silence, attachment and detachment, love human and love divine etc. It achieves 'a contemplative depth' that English poetry has hardly ever witnessed.

Eliot has also written some poems on the political theme. His "Coriolan" consisting of "Triumphal March" and "Difficulties of a Statesman" is of this nature. The two fragments have surprised many of Eliot's readers, as they deviate from the mainstream of his poetry of the two fragments, the first one exalts the hero of the

triumphal march at the expense of the admiring crowds. The second one mocks at the very democratic system. Eliot had announced in 1927 that he was a royalist in politics', and hence his anti – democratic stance should be taken as deliberate and purposive.

The themes mentioned above are all related to human life. Eliot is also a poet of Nature, though his treatment of Nature is neither Wordsworthian nor Shelleyan. To him, nature is the bare phenomenon of the human world, as it was to Pope in the eighteenth century. Man is the supreme consideration in Eliot's scheme of things. Eliot describes natural beauties in relation to urban surroundings rather than to rural countryside. He is concerned with the civilized rather than with the wild aspects of natural beauties. No doubt, he is a poet of towns and cities and of crowds to be seen there. Nature is to him nothing more than a scenery, a mere phenomenon, an object for sensual and concrete imagery – an evening 'spread out against the sky' and an afternoon 'grey and smoky'. Nature is neither or spiritual, nor ethical, nor metaphysical entity. She lacks any order or plan, which she had in store for the great Hardy. Nature contains no 'healing balm' for Eliot; neither does she have a plan or design for man's development. She is no longer a shelter or solace for the afflicted mind, as he was controlled by the rational man. This idea is clearly ventilated in the following lines of "The Dry Salvages" (*four quartets*):

*I do not know much about Gods, but I think that the river  
Is a strong brown God – sullen, untamed and intractable  
Patient to some degree....  
The problem once solved, the brown God is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in the cities – ever....*

Thus, Nature is harnessed to serve the utilitarian ends of man. In fact, Eliot was so much preoccupied with the problems of life death, of man's moral and spiritual degradation, of the intersection of tirelessness with time, of God and the Universe, that he had hardly any time to get interested in natural descriptions, in some of his poems, Eliot uses the garden – scene (or, simply the garden) to symbolize the moment/place of illumination. According to a scholar, "A formal garden is an admirable symbol for man's attempt to impose a pattern on his experience and to discipline nature".<sup>1</sup> Eliot's treatment of nature is quite in keeping with his classical leanings.

#### **4. Eliot's Contribution to English Poetry**

As a poet, Eliot belongs to the Classical tradition. He has nothing to do with the Romantic excesses and 'purple patches'. A classicist remains crystal clear and controlled in his expression, and his guiding force is reason. He exalts the head over the heart, objectivity over subjectivity, reason over emotion. He owes allegiance to an external authority, like that of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Homer, Virgil, or the three great tragedians of Greek literature, whereas a Romantic listens to his own 'inner voice'. No one can make such a threadbare distinction between 'classicism' and 'Romanticism' as R.A. Scott – James has done in his brilliant book, *The Making of Literature*:

Form, outward form, is the first distinctive element in classicism, and on this beauty of outward appearance, with its attributes of symmetry, balance, order, proportion, reserve, it takes its stand. And as contrasted with this the romantic tends to emphasize the spirit which lies behind form – not the formless but the freedom which is not content with any but the freedom which is not content with any one form, but experiments, and expresses itself now in this, now in that way, as the spirit dictates. The first tends always to emphasize the "this – worldliness" of the beauty that we know; the second, its "other – worldliness".... The one seeks always a mean; the other an extremity. Repose satisfies the Classic; adventure attracts the Romantic. The one appeals to tradition; the other demands the novel. On the one side we may range the virtues and defects which go with the nations of fitness, propriety, measure, restraint, conservatism, authority, calm, experience, comeliness; on

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<sup>1</sup> See T.S. Eliot : A Study of His Writings by Several Hands, ed. B. Rajan, p.62.

the other, those which are suggested by excitement, energy, restlessness, spirituality, curiosity, troublesness, progress, liberty, experiment, provocativeness.<sup>1</sup>

This long passage has been quoted here to acquaint the readers with the salient features of 'Classicism' (the school to which Eliot belongs) as contradistinct from 'Romanticism'. And as we know, Eliot has publicly announced that he is a "classicist in literature".<sup>2</sup> So, when we come to examine Eliot's contributions to English poetry we have to keep in mind his artistic qualities as a classicist. First of all, Eliot remains a traditionalist throughout his literary career. As a creative writer, he follows the tradition of Sir Philip Sidney, Ben Jonson, John Milton, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Matthew Arnold, etc., but as a sound critic he does not spare his co-travellers for their faults. Milton, Pope and Arnold have been criticized by him for their respective weaknesses.

Eliot as a traditionalist or classicist accepts an always existing background, the function of which is to provide incidental symbolism to a poem. Pope in his *The Rape of the Lock* had designed the poem within the framework of a classical epic, using its accepted norms and symbols. It is in this acceptance that Pope is a new – classicist, and it is in the rejection of this that Shelley is not a classicist in his *Frometheus unbound Alastor* and *Mab queen*. Eliot, like Pope, accepts the value of traditional literature as his poetic world. In his monumental poem, *The Waste Land* (1922), Eliot blends European tradition with Eastern thought to provide a necessary background to the interpretation of contemporary human predicament. The basic symbolism in this poem is derived from the Grail legend, and in the last Section he employs the Journey symbol, which is well within the Christian fold.

Eliot regards 'tradition' as a substitute for the classical mythology to provide a background full of symbolism in his poetry. His sense of tradition allows due recognition of the illustrious past (which lives in the present). It intensifies the feeling of the artist, shapes the content of the poem, retains the quality of suggestiveness in it. It also "attempts to eliminate excessive blurring of the object, which tended to result from Romantic usage".<sup>3</sup> It does not require the Romantic atmosphere of mystery as found in Shelley's *Alastor*. Eliot's essays, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), is of far – reaching significance in propounding his views of 'tradition'.

In order to fully understand Eliot's concept of Classicism, we are tempted to go to the scholarly doctoral dissertation titled *T.S. Eliot: The Dialectical Structure of His Theory of Poetry* by Fei – Pai – Lee. This sound scholar summarizes Eliot's classicism under three heads: Personality, Tradition and Orthodoxy. According to him, personality though extinct in a classical work takes the shape of individuality and enlivens it in a considerable measure. This idea is made so clear by Eliot in his famous essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Tradition or the sense of history should not suppress the individual talent, but should encourage it to flourish. What Eliot wants is that personality should not be allowed to intrude too much into a work of art, and that the poet is no more than a medium of expression. He thinks that the poet must remain objective, not subjective, working as a medium rather than an experience. If he concentrates on his own personality, he will be doing the same as a Romantic does. This will inevitably shift our attention from the poetry to the poet. Eliot warns us against this kind of poetic practice. He enunciates his 'impersonal theory of poetry', which forcefully lays down that the poet and the poem are two separate things. According to him, 'the more perfect an artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; The impressions and experiences which are important for a man may find no place in his poetry, and *vice versa*. If this premise is accepted, there will be left very little of purely personal experience in a poem. As contrasted to the definition of poetry as given by Wordsworth – that 'Poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, recollected in tranquillity', etc. Eliot offers his own definition: 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.... The emotion of art is impersonal; Poetry has its life 'in the poem and not in the history of the poet'.

Evidently, Eliot is not interested in the personal history of the poet. Like W.B. Yeats, Eliot lays on the inner integrity of the personality. It is this to the work of a poet. It is due to this integrity that Eliot regards Dr. Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, and George Herbert's *The*

*Temple* as the testimony of their greatness. In Eliot's view, Shakespeare, Herbert and Herrick are 'major' poets for the same reason.

As regards Tradition (about which we have already spoken earlier), it provides room for originality (what Eliot calls 'the individual talent'). Tradition is susceptible to 'petrification' if it is static and incapable of assimilation. It is threatened with dissolution if the new developments are odd and eccentric. It admits 'experimentation' to bring to it freedom of expression. It offers us 'the historical sense' or the sense of 'the garden mean' in the past. The historical sense is an instrument for self discovery, for "it is an instrument for the discovery of the whole."<sup>4</sup>

Fei – Pai Lu thinks that orthodoxy is a part of 'the social sanction' which consist of two parts, the second being Tradition. Eliot has made this sort of bifurcation in his *After Strange Gods* (1934). Orthodoxy is contrasted to Tradition. The former is the formulated system of common beliefs, while the latter is equated with communal habits and feelings. Orthodoxy calls for 'the exercise of all our conscious intelligence', but tradition remains largely 'unconscious' and represents the blood kinship of 'the same people luring in the same place'. Eliot points out in his sociological studies *The Idea Of A Christian Society* (193) and *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) – that religion, culture and society are the main considerations of Orthodoxy.

Society is a 'spiritual community', not the congregation of crowd. Culture is 'the incarnation of religion', not 'a flurry of uncoordinated activities'. Ordered society and common culture are essential conditions for the production of classics, which, for the most part, depend upon the vitality of religion. So, church and religion in a society contribute a lot to the shaping of culture.

After the Augustans, wit had almost disappeared from the poetic world. Credit goes to Eliot to have revived it again. He blends in it the Augustan wit (such as Pope used it in his verse) with the Metaphysical wit (such as Donne and Crowley used it in their poetry). Eliot does not simply aim at evoking wit or provoking amusement in his poetry. Instead, he explores the serious through the ludicrous, or he makes use of levity to intensify the grim and the gloomy. This artistic device he has learnt from the Metaphysical poets. Shakespeare has also employed this device in his tragedies; for example, the grave – digging scene in *Hamlet* and the porter scene in *Macbeth*. Eliot uses wit for 'resolution' or 'integrity' in his poetry. Wit is useful for brevity and clarity in expression and for promoting 'ironic vision'. Wit is usually associated with irony and satire, and the Augustans have amply displayed it in their verse.

Eliot has paid utmost attention to verbal precision, which demands a conscious choice of words and phrases and a thoughtful construction of sentences. The verbal precision needs the utmost care in making use of words the placing of words flawlessly. Eliot has hinted at it in the following lines:

(Where every word is at home,  
Taking its place to support the others,  
The word neither diffident nor ostentations,  
An easy commerce of the old and the new,  
The common word exact without vulgarity,  
The formal word precise but not pedantic,  
The complete consort dancing together)  
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,  
Every poem an epitaph.

("Little Gidding," *Four Quartets*).

The poet's emphasis here is on verbal precision, which must not give the impression of stiffness or inaccuracy. Eliot's search for precision and accuracy makes room for clarity and propriety in poetry.

We have already pointed out that in Eliot's concept of poetry – which is the classical concept – the poet is a mere medium of expression. Eliot has also given his views about the role of 'emotion' and the role of 'thought' in the poetic process.

Eliot emphasises the role of emotion in poetry. But how should it be expressed? It cannot be simply transmitted from the mind of the poet to the mind of the reader. It has to turn itself into something concrete – the picture of a person, place or thing – in order to convey effectively the same emotion in the reader. And the picture of a person, place or thing into which emotion is thus bodied forth becomes its ‘objective correlative’ or ‘external equivalent’. Eliot makes use of the phrase ‘objective correlative’ in his famous essay, “Hamlet and His problems” (contained in *The Sacred Wood*, 1920). Eliot clarifies how emotion can be best expressed in poetry. He remarks: ‘The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that emotion such that even the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience are given, the emotion immediately evoked’. In Eliot’s view, Shakespeare was though a consummate artist in his plays, he failed in finding as ‘objective correlative’ to express the tortuous emotions of Hamlet. Eliot thinks that Shakespeare has superbly succeeded conveying the raging malady in Lady Macbeth’s mind by making her repeat the past actions in the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*.

Critics like Eliseo and Vincent Buckley have found fault with Eliot’s theory of ‘objective correlative’ for expressing emotion in poetry. They point out that Eliot devises the formula of ‘objective correlative’ to avoid a direct utterance of emotion, but he complicates the issue by praising Dante for his view of life and Shakespeare for his ‘emotional maturity’. These critics hold the view that it is erroneous to think that Eliot has a distrust for poetry based on emotion; for instance, Eliot holds Shakespeare superior to Ben Jonson due to the former’s ‘susceptibility to a greater range of emotion, and emotion deeper than an obscurer’.

What Eliot is concerned with is the expression of emotion in an objective way. He is opposed to the direct expression of emotion, and hence he propounds the theory of ‘objective correlative’. He is concerned with art – emotion, not with raw emotion that bursts forth spontaneously.

Eliot also gives his mind to the question of the role of ‘thought’ in poetry. The poet confronts a thought in the same way as we confront a man; he accepts or rejects it to build his artifice, to suit his poetic purpose. What comes to us is the semblance of thought, not thought at first hand, but the result of his conscious selection or rejection. According to Eliot, the poet to think is merely the poet who can express ‘the emotional equivalent of thought’. Thus, what Eliot means by thought is its ‘emotional equivalent’. Like ‘significant emotion’ serving the poetic purpose, ‘significant thought’ (or ‘art – thought’) is the objective of Eliot as a poet. If a distinction could be drawn between ‘imaginal thinking’ and ‘conceptual thinking,’ we can say that the former is the prerogative of a poet while the latter is that of a philosopher or scientist. In imaginal thinking the poet ‘nothing affirmeth, and, therefore, never lieth’. The poet articulates his ideas in a state of illumined consciousness.

Further, Eliot maintains that a synchronization of emotion and thought effects the poetic sensibility. In his well-known essay, “The Metaphysical Poets”, Eliot is seized with this matter. In this essay, he speaks of ‘the dissociation of sensibility’ as well as of ‘the unification of sensibility’. By the latter phrase Eliot means “a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling”.<sup>5</sup> When ‘the unification of sensibility’ is found, as in the poetry of Chapman and Donne, the result is good poetry. Then, thought is transformed into feeling to steal its way into the reader’s heart. It is the union of thought and feeling that constitutes poetic sensibility. But when the poet’s thought and is unable to transform itself into feeling, the result is ‘the dissociation of sensibility’ – a rupture between thought and feeling – and hence bad poetry. For good poetry, it is essential that thought must issue forth as sensation. According to Eliot, the Victorian poets Tennyson and Browning do not pass this test, as ‘they think, but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose’. The poet’s function is not to versify ideas but to convert them into sensations.

As Eliot conceives sensibility, it is the faculty that enables a poet to respond to diverse experiences in a unified manner. In its function, it is close to Coleridge’s concept of ‘Secondary Imagination’, which also gives form to the shrubby undergrowth of experiences in life. The noted critic, F.W. Bateson, subjects Eliot’s concept of sensibility to a strict scrutiny. Bateson opines that that Eliot’s concept of sensibility is a synonym for sensation, and if it is so how can it contain the element of thought? Bateson sees a paradox in Eliot’s concept of sensibility.

It would be, perhaps, in pace to draw a distinction between ‘sensibility’ and ‘imagination’. For one thing, the faculty which shapes experience is sensibility, not imagination. Eliot’s sensibility is a unifying faculty for disparate experiences. For Cloridge, imagination is a reconciling agent aiming at ‘recreation’ after dissolving, diffusing and dissipating the material at hand. Imagination does not allow a place to memory that plays a vital role in Eliot’s poetry. Eliot speaks of ‘mixing memory and desire’ in the beginning of *The Waste Land*.

Eliot’s poetic technique is consonant with the spirit of his time. Like the time itself, his technique is bare and stark, direct and unadorned. Eliot was highly impressed by the technical discoveries of John Donne. He thought that Donne’s great achievement lay in his ability to convey ‘his genuine whole of tangled feelings’. Like Donne and his school of poets, Eliot aimed at the ‘alliance of levity and seriousness.’ The use of irregular rhyme which was to Eliot’s taste, was actually inspired by Donne. Eliot largely used free verse in his practice, instead of conventional metric verse, his versification is essentially ‘a disturbance of the conventional’. His technique is, for the most part, allusive and suggestive. This sort of technique suits a poet of scholarly temperament. One can easily understand it when one keeps mind the vast number of allusions and references used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*. No fewer than 35 authors and six foreign languages have been alluded to or used by him in this difficult poem. Such a technique lends obscurity and complexity to the poem. According to Eliot, this kind of technique suits the temper of the age. In his brilliant essay on the Metaphysical poets, Eliot remarks that ‘Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity’, and he tailors his technique to catch up this ‘great variety and complexity of the modern age. The employment of apt images and suggestive symbols by Eliot in his poetry consolidates his technique to a great extent. Eliot had learnt a good deal from the French Symbolists, and shaped his symbolistic and allusive technique under their irresistible influence.

To conclude, Eliot’s contributions to English poetry are quite substantial and abiding. Among his recognisable contributions are his classical and traditional stance, his impersonal theory of poetry, his formulations of the role of emotion and thought in poetry, his concept of sensibility, his insistence on the use of correct diction and verbal precision, and his bold application of *vers libre* and allusive and symbolistic technique. For all these contributions, he will ever be remembered by lovers of English poetry.

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## SECTION II: CRITICAL NOTES ON “THE LOVE SONG”

### 1. Composition of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prurock"

This dramatic monologue was composed sometime during 1914 – 1915, that is about the year when the first World War broke out. The time of the composition is significant, for there is relevance between the theme of the poem and the general psychological and spiritual climate of Europe in those days.

The poem was submitted to Ezra Pound for his suggestion and approval in October 1914. Pound wrote to Harriet Monroe, the editor of *Poetry*, which was considered at the time to be an *avant garde* poetry magazine, publishing mainly the work of the Imagists, as follows:

‘Here is the Eliot poem. The most interesting contribution I have had from an American.

*P.S. Hope you’ll get it soon’.*

Monroe probably failed to get at the meaning of the poem, and in his typically Georgian manner suggested that the poem should be made plain and easy for the general poetry – reading audience. Pound wrote back to Monroe :

‘Your objection to the Eliot is the climax No, most emphatically I will not ask Eliot to write down to any audience whatsoever.....’

*In another letter he tried to explain to Monroe the central meaning of the poem:*

“Mr. Prufrock’ does not ‘go off at the end.’ It is a portrait of failure, or of a character which fails, and it would be false art to make it end on a note of triumph..... A portrait satire on futility can’t end by turning that quintessence of futility, Mr. P, into a reformed character breathing out fire and ozone..... I assure you it is better, ‘more unique,’ than the other poems of Eliot which I have seen. Also that he is quite intelligent (an adjective which is seldom in my mouth).....’

The poem was published eventually in *Poetry* for June, 1915, as an end – piece of the issue. It was in June 1917 that the Egoist Ltd. published this poem along with a few others in a volume entitled *Prufrock and Other Observations*.

## 2. Title of the Poem

First of all, what catches the attention is the name J. Alfred Prufrock. ‘Prufrock’ may be said to have been derived from Eliot’s unconscious memory of the name of a furniture wholesale firm in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was born and bred. But ‘J. Alfred’ is the poet’s own invention of a fatuous – sounding prefix.

Maybe, it was the pattern of sound in ‘J. Alfred Prufrock’ suggesting inanity that appealed to Eliot. The addition of ‘Love Song’ is full of implications and stirs the whole gamut of feelings associated with the theme of love – poetry since Spenser.

Thus, an irony already lurks in the title, an irony emanating from the collocation of ‘Love Song’ and ‘J. Alfred Prufrock’. This irony deepens further when we proceed to read the poem and find that the poem could be anything but a ‘Love Song’. The irony which may appear facile in the title turns into a complex one as the poem proceeds.

## 3. Sources of the Poem

The epigraph indicates Prufrock’s resemblance to Guido da Montefeltro, one of the characters in Dante’s *Inferno*. Montefeltro meets Dante and asks him about happenings in Italy, and Dante narrates all that he knows. On being asked, Montefeltro confesses his sin, of which he is ashamed, and hence he is living in hell. Like Montefeltro, Prufrock is living in a hellish world for his sins. Professor Grover Smith points out that Prufrock’s sin is his passivity.

It has been suggested that the story and character of Prufrock were derived from Henry James’s story, *Crapy Cornelia*, written in 1909. The story revolves round one middle – aged man, White Mason. He once visits a young – looking woman, Mrs. Worthington, with an intention to propose marriage. He makes several efforts to propose but each time some psychological complex hinders the words which he should have uttered. He also realises suddenly the gap between his own age and hers and deviates into meaningless conversation. It is possible, as Dr. Grover Smith suggests, that some of the descriptive details as well as its theme and narrative derive from James’s short – stories. But whatever the initial source, Eliot has transmitted the entire material into his own poem.

It is also possible that Eliot might have got the initial inspiration from one of Laforgue’s *Sunday* poems which begins:

*‘To give myself to an “I love you” ! I was all set,  
When I realised, with some regret,  
That I didn’t really have myself in hand as yet.’*

and develops the themes of indecision, hesitation, postponement, etc. The theme of inability to 'take the first step' is developed further and more elaborately in another poem, "Solo by Moonlight" by Laforgue. There is a similarity between Laforgue's "Ennui" and Prufrock's sterility of will. Certain lines in Laforgue seem to contain the original of the echoes to be found in Eliot's "Love Song". Take these lines for example :

*'Ah my sterile heart !  
I've behaved badly from the start.'*

And these:

*'And I pass by and leave them,  
And lie down facing the sky.  
The road turns.....  
No one waits for me, I'm going to no one home.  
I've only the friendship of hotel rooms.'*

Apart from these positive sources, there is one which may be called negative: Andrew Marvell. "The Love Song" has a similarity with Marvell's "Coy Mistress" in that this, too, is, according to the title, a poem about love. But it is, in reality, a total antithesis of Marvell's poem in that it is not a poem urging the beloved to vital love but one in which the lover flinches from even proposing love to his beloved.

#### 4. The Character of Prufrock

Prufrock's consciousness forms the core of the poem. His consciousness impresses us as a representative consciousness of our time. 'We suspect', as Joseph Margolis says, 'he is Everyman', and thus his malaise comes to be seen as the affliction of everyman in the contemporary society.

But for all that, Prufrock is not an abstract character: he is concretely realised, the product of a felt experience, so much so that many have been inclined to identify Prufrock with Eliot. No doubt, Prufrock is Eliot in a way, for after all he is the latter's creation after his own image. But, at the same time, it must be understood that Prufrock is a person like Pound's Mauberley. As we proceed with the poem, he gradually emerges as a distinct character in his own right revealing a multi-dimensional nature.

Prufrock is a man in his own forties, or rather dressed as a man in the forties. The lines which suggest this are:

*Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
(They all say : 'How his hair is growing thin !')  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin.....*

The growing baldness suggests the middle-age and the carefully planned dress is designed to conceal the middle-age, though, at the same time, he knows such an effort will be worthless. The parenthetical line, 'they will say.....', suggests Prufrock's fear and anxiety but Prufrock is not an hypocrite. He is not trying or posing to be young. He wishes he could behave as a young man, but he knows he cannot. He knows that it is worthless: the memory of youthful days gives him no pleasure at all. He would not be young again, for it will be the repetition of the same cheerless, routine, meaningless relationships with the women. The lines which suggest this boredom of Prufrock's experience with women are to be found in the three stanzas beginning with:

'For I have known them all already.....' It is clear that Prufrock is an extremely sensitive, rather hypersensitive person, given to reflecting, silently debating within himself implications of this or that action, this or that word. He is highly cultured and widely read in literature and fine arts, as is obvious from the mention of Michelangelo, Lazarus, Hamlet, and so on.

The melody which has afflicted him is not frustration or anger; he is rather bored with life. Hence he considers no action, not even so much as making his proposal of love, worth anything. He has had experiences of action, and they have bred only boredom. So he flinches from the occasion which will require him to act: that is to make a choice and say it to the women.

Prufrock's melody is not physical, but deeply psychological, or spiritual, like Baudelaire's and Laforgue's 'emui' characterized by total lack of will – power and sterility of emotion. Prufrock is hypersensitive both intellectually and emotionally, but the intellectual hypersensitivity has sapped all life out of emotion. Dr. Grover Smith calls him a defeated 'idealist'.

## 5. A Critical Appreciation of the Poem

“The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” is a monologue, and as such it owes a good deal to Robert Browning. It has ‘you’ and ‘I’ in the very first line. Although it is not needed to assume the presence of a second person and explicate its relationship to Prufrock in order to understand the meaning of the poem, the ‘you’ is significant in ascribing the character of a monologue to it. For one thing, the ‘you’ never speaks in the poem; it is the ‘I’ who does all the speaking from the beginning to the end. That is why the term ‘dramatic monologue’ may, strictly speaking, be inappropriate for the poem. In a dramatic monologue, the presence of the other character or characters is always felt: one character is speaking to the other, even though the latter may be silent. In this poem, Prufrock is more speaking to himself than to anyone else. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to call the poem an ‘interior’ monologue than a ‘dramatic monologue’. Prufrock's consciousness is the focal point here.

The poem consists of a number of sections put together in a manner which looks forward to *The Waste Land*. Sections are rearranged, lines put in, others taken out; and yet the poem does not suffer, for its coherence depends on consistency of feeling, not on a fixed sequence of idea or event.

The poem would appear as Eliot's first attempt to explore the nature of the spiritual state of the contemporary man. This is the germinal theme which is developed and presented in a pattern of opposites. In the words of Joseph Margolis, “And its themes, which are remarkably diverse, are offered in contrary pairs: youth and old age, work and idleness, spiritual life and death, commitment and loneliness, pride and disgust in the self, sincerity and hypocrisy, interest and boredom.” These ‘contrary pairs’ are not stated clearly; nor is one thing of a pair set in apparent conflict with the other. On the surface level, the entire poem deals with one set of themes associated with the spiritual sickness of Prufrock. Whether he flinches from asking ‘the over-whelming question’ or escapes into his own fantasy of fog or the party of his own self, he is a man who has totally lost his will to party of his own self, he is a man who has totally lost his will to action, is symbolic of his spiritual sickness. Each image, each picture – fantasy, reiterates with sharper precision, this theme of Prufrock's sterility. Eliot has not described how or why Prufrock has become spiritually sterile, though there are some hints to suggest that the root of his malaise is his being over-intellectualized and hypersensitive to things of emotional life. He is given to analyzing too deeply the pros and cons of his actions and others' reactions. Very subtly he analyses his own self.

Eliot's diagnosis of the contemporary human personality bears a slender resemblance to D.H. Lawrence's. For Lawrence too believed that the real evil of the contemporary mechanized, commercialized, society was the morbid growth of intellect which had sapped the vitality out of man–woman, and through it, man–world, relationship. And, in part, both Lawrence and Eliot up to this extent derive from Henry James's analysis of man – woman relationship as delineated in his novels.

And though the themes of Eliot's poem are not immediately related to the First World War, the outbreak of war did lend an urgency to the poem. Prufrock personified or symbolised a state of mind in which a war could break out. It is significant to note that whenever Prufrock escapes from the monotony and boredom of the human company into fantasy, his mind conjures up scenes or symbols of death or death-like situations. The evening is like a patient etherised for a serious operation struggling between life and death. The nights are restless, the

restaurants are cheap where acts of violence are common. The cat itself is associated with ferocity and destruction. Prufrock imagines himself 'sprawling on a pin' and 'wriggling on the wall'. He compares or contrasts himself to John the Baptist, Lazarus and Prince Hamlet, who were involved in violent or tragic deaths. Only in the last few lines, his fantasy brings into play the sea image which is symbolic of life, and yet the last line brings in the image of death — 'and we drown'. It is evident the Prufrock is fascinated by the idea of death, and this is because he is irretrievably bored by the contemporary life. In such a morbid spiritual state, war may even be welcome, war which brings death home.

The poem is rich in literary allusions. Michelangelo, for instance, stirs up the rich image of the mediaeval passionate love of God and man, the image of an artist who turned his sufferings into material of great art. But the women talking of him do not properly understand his value as an artist, and they are chattering about him as though he were a detective film hero. The other significant allusions in the poem are : John the Baptist, Lazarus, and Hamlet. These allusions tend to highlight certain inherent characteristics of the protagonist.

The drama of the poem is presented through soliloquy, the action being limited to the interplay of impressions, including memories, in Prufrock's mind (See Prof. Grover Smith, p. 16). A rather curious device complicates his reverie. By a distinction between 'I' and 'you', he differentiates between his thinking, sensitive character and his outward self. Prufrock is seen addressing, as if looking into a mirror, his whole public personality. His motive seems to repudiate the inert self, which can't act, and to assert his will. The ego alone 'goes' anywhere, even in fantasy, but it can't survive the disgrace of personality, and at the end of the poem it is 'we' who drown. The personal has become the general.

It is not so much the far-fetchedness of the objects of comparison but their opposition, contrariness, to one another that creates the dramatic tension and communicates the point sharply and precisely.

In fact, each image follows the same pattern. In the oft-quoted image : 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;' the first part is serious, noble and poetically grand, 'I have measured out my life,' but the other part, 'with coffee spoons' demolishes all the anticipation the first part raised. One would say, 'with coffee spoons' is Eliot's or Prufrock's way of ridiculing of the seriousness of the first part. It is again the same structure in another oft-quoted image :

*I grow old.....I grow old.....  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.*

One common function of all these images is to trivialise whatever is romantic, serious, noble, grandious and conventionally attractive. And, therefore, the images are wholly functional, because they are integrated with the nature of the themes dealt with.

Trivialisation is the general feature of all the contemporary culture, trivialisation of all values, faiths and beliefs, trivialisation of love, passion, sex, art and human relationship. Each image trivialises something considered to be grand and noble valuable.

What remain to be considered is the diction of the poem, for apart from its imagery, much of the novelty of the poem in 1915 or 1917 was seen to lie in the strange use of words and phrases. It was the language of actual everyday conversation which Eliot has used so boldly in the poem. The Georgian poets too, it is true, had tried to use the real speaking language in their poems. Important contribution in this direction were made by Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Sarseon and Wilfred Owen. But their efforts were limited to using a word here and a phrase there, while by and large the language remained conventionally poetic both in the choice of idioms and rhythm. Eliot's revolutionizing contributions lay not in using part or snatches but the whole of the contemporary idioms and speech – rhythm.

It may be noticed clearly that the language of the poem is bare of any rhetorical features and devoid of any complicated structures. The words in general are most common, though the objects juxtaposed may be far – fetched. There can hardly be more commonplace language than:

*In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.*

But the effect it exerts is stronger, deeper and at the same time more intimate than any rhetorical or conventionally poetic language is capable of. The complexity of Eliot's does not lie in the language he uses but in the complexity of his feeling the endeavors to communicate. "Prufrock" is a poem of a feeling of a mood, and all the words and phrases and images are used to create, strengthen and deepen the prevailing feeling or mood. Certain key words are repeated, certain phrases recur, so do certain images. Reception is a feature of everyday conversation, and so repetition very closely approximates the speech rhythm. Take the following lines, for example:

*And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street  
Rubbing its back upon the window panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create  
And time for all the works and days of hand.  
That lift and drop a question on your plate,  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecision's,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.*

But Eliot exploits the repetition of certain words for his own purpose; he repeats the key – words which suggest the central feeling or mood of the poem. Here 'time' is the key-word, as it is the key-word in the whole poem, and it is always the future time, and postponement of any action in the present time.

Thus, though these are repetitions and elements of verbosity in the poem, each word and each phrase has a precise function to perform. As Hugh Kenner says: 'Every phrase seems composed as though the destiny of the author's soul depended upon it. Yet it is unprofitable not to consider the phrases as arrangements of words before considering them as anything else. Like the thousand little gestures that constitute good manners, their meaning is contained in themselves alone-Eliot is the most verbal of the eminent poets: more verbal than Swinburne. If he has carried verbalism for beyond the extirpation of jarring consonants, it is because of his intimate understanding of what language can do. . . . . ' In Swinburne, language is an end in itself; in Eliot it is a means to an end. His verbalism evokes and contributes to the feeling, the mood ; it is an instrument of evocation, suggestion and implication. It is a deliberately created verbalism in which each word has significance beyond itself, and each phrase a resonance beyond itself.

Generally, metaphor and symbol replace direct statement in Eliot. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" we have what comes to be a familiar compound, observation, memory, and reflection, in which observation becomes symbol. The doctrine of the objective correlative means not only that the subjective is projected into the objective, or by means of it, but that it is expressed in other means – metaphor; objects become symbols, and personal feeling is set apart from the poet. Connection through imagery is characteristic of Eliot, who is likely to exploit a kind of imagery, not to use it at random. A particular kind of imagery becomes the expression of a particular kind of feeling, not only in the same poem but in different poems. Recurrent imagery may not only reiterate a theme, but provide a base for variations, or development; its recurrence usually is accompanied by a deeper plumbing or a richer exploration of its significance. For some of these uses witness in "The Love Song" the sea imagery, hair imagery, sartorial imagery, that of polite versus crude society, that of bare sensitivity versus the protective shell, images of relaxation or concentration of effort or will, and finally the heroic parallels which both magnify and mock the overwhelming question.

Such a method of indirection is appropriate to a character who never really faces his inner conflict or his frustrated self, and hence is capable of a direct expression of it, to say nothing of a solution. Here the most revealing lines in the poem are:

Is it perform from a dress  
That makes me so digress?

But the observation ‘downed with light brown hair’ is no digression from the arms or from Prufrock’s problem. This is why the epigraph, with its conditioned response, provides an important clue to the intention of the poem; and the title shifts its context significantly. The title suggests the question for this song of indirection, made such by repression. The mock-heroic tone is not merely in the author’s treatment or in his character’s conception of the problem, but finally even in Prufrock’s evasion of himself.

This kind of imagery is more than usually dependant upon arrangement. But the order of parts will reveal an implicit method in an Eliot poem that is essential to its meaning. There is such a method in “The Love Song”; it is begun by ‘Let us go’ and ended with and we drown’. The going is developed and dramatized even by verb tenses, the time element. The ‘drown’ submerges again what has emerged in the ‘going’ – which is never directly said – and concludes the imagery of his submerged life. To this arrangement the author helps the reader in other ways. His punctuation, for example, is functional, not conventional. Verse, too, is a kind of punctuation, as Eliot has remarked, and he comes to rely upon it more and more as a poet. In the present poem, the phrasal separation in the short lines may be studied, and the effective chimes of the mock – heroic rhyme.

All verse – even nonsense verse is not quite free – depends upon an order and organization capable of being followed and understood ; requires an implicit, if not an explicit, logic – connections which can be discovered in the terms of the poem. If the words of a poem have syntax, they make sense, have a logic. Otherwise the poet has no control over his material except that exerted by meter. Only an ordered context can control the range of meaning set off by the single word ; and relevance to this context must be the guide for any reader in determining the range of meaning or the logic involved. William Empson’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* is a misleading book in that it explores possible meanings without proper regard to their limitations by the context.

Lastly, why is the poem called a ‘Love Song’? In truth, the theme of love is so much subdued in it that it is difficult to say whether it is at all about love, and whether there is any evidence in it of the presence of Prufrock’s beloved. The phrase ‘you and I’ has been variously interpreted. Eliot himself is reported to have stated that ‘you’ is ‘some friend or companion of the male sex.’ If so, then how to justify the title of ‘Love Song’? If it is suggested that love is not the theme of the poem, then why call it ‘Love Song’? But ‘Love’ is certainly the underlying theme of it. Only if it is a fruitless, sterile yearning for love, not the vital positive passion for love. There is nothing in the poem to suggest either that relationship between ‘you and I’ is anything like Homosexual, but it can’t be ruled out as absurd in the light of Eliot’s own remarks and the suggestion of frigidity, languor, and boredom in ‘I’s’ attitude to ‘you’. And yet, the suggestion does not seem to possess an acceptable validity. Prof. George Williamson explains ‘I and you’ in psychoanalytical terms.

## 6. Annotations of the Poem

The epigraph is taken from Dante’s *Inferno*, Canto XXVII, lines 61-66. Its English rendering goes thus: “if I believed my answer might be heard by anyone who could return to the world, this flame would leap no more. But since no one ever, returned alive from these depths, as far as I know, then I answer without fear of infamy,” It emphasises the lack of communication from which Prufrock also suffers. In the *Inferno*, the flame of Guido is asked to identify himself, and he replies in the words of, the epigraph.

*You and I* — Obviously, ‘I’ suggests the speaker (in a dramatic monologue we have usually one), and ‘you’ suggests a lady, as the title indicates, but the epigraph hints at ‘a scene out of the world.

*When the evening is.....the sky* — it is evening, tea – time as we shall see later on. The line also suggests a sick world.

*Like a patient etherised.....table* — Here we have startling modern imagery. The speaker sees the evening in the aspect of etherization, and the metaphor of etherization suggests the desire for inactivity to the point of enforced release from pain, ‘etherised’ means ‘put under ether/anaesthetic.

*Let us go, through certain..... Retreats*— After we learn the time of going, we learn the way of going, ‘retreats’ means retiring corners or refuges.

*Of restless nights..... with syster-shells* — It suggests ‘a surprising way, through a cheap section of town’; ‘sawdust restaurants’ means, ‘restaurants made of fine wood fragments’, and ‘oyster’ is a kind of fish.

*Streets that follow.....overwhelming question* — The way looks as dismal as a tedious argument smacking of a treacherous purpose, and leads to an ‘over – whelming question’. In the words of George Williamson, “The streets suggest the character of the question at their end as well as the nature of the urge which takes this route’. There is an abrupt break after the mention of the question, suggesting an emotional block on the part of the speaker.

*Oh, do not ask* — The speaker refuses here to identify the ‘over – whelming question.’ Implicitly, it is his emotional urge which he conceals, and which belongs to the ‘you’.

*Let us go.....our visit* — After suppressing the real urge, the speaker diverts the attention by pointing out another object or purpose of going in, - i.e. ‘our visit’.

*In the room.....talking of Michelangel* — Where are they to pay the ‘visit’? To the room, where women come and go and gossip about Michelangelo, a man of violent personality, an artist of epic grandeur, and a typical figure of the great creative period of the Renaissance. The slumness of the town is associated with the triviality of the conversation of women.

*The yellow fog that rubs its back.....window – panes* — With this line we find more of the twilight atmosphere, - the smoke and fog settling down. Here we have the image of the fog as cat, suggesting ‘desire which end in inertia’. It the cat-image suggests sex, it also suggests the greater desire of inactivity.

*The yellow smoke.....of the evening* — The yellow smoke, like the gathering fog, stole its way from the window – panes to the corners of the room, and the evening slipped in.

*muzzle* – snout (mouth and nose) of an animal, the image being that of a cat.

*Lingered upon the pools.....in drains* — By and by, the fog or smoke expanded its reign and moved on even to the pools without water.

*Let fall upon its back.....from chimneys* — The twilight world now deepened into the dark world.

*Soot* – black powdery substance.

*Slipped by ..... and fell asleep.* — The image of the fog-cat continues. The fog or smoke, slipping by the row of houses (‘terrace’), leapt up suddenly, and seeing that it was a pleasant October night, sleepily lapped the house. The speaker or Prufrock can’t think of Nature except in terms of a cat rubbing its back and muzzle upon the window – panes, licking the dirty drain – water, allowing the chimney – soot to settle on its body, and finally falling asleep. On the one hand, Prufrock finds an escape from human company by thinking of the fog or smoke, on the other he discovers, to his discontent, that the world he wishes to escape into is the world of feline behaviors.

*And indeed there.....the window – panes*— This is the beginning of a fresh section (line 23-24). Prufrock decides to postpone taking interest in natural scenery, such as that the yellow fog or smoke.

*Window – panes* – window glasses.

*There will be time..... faces that you meet* — Here the motif of appearance and reality appears. It is clear that Prufrock prepares a mask for the world in order to lay a plot of momentous effect or to make small-talk over a tea cup. His thought now turns to the members (women) of the salon party.

*There will be time..... create* — It is now time for Prufrock to kill his natural self and create a concocted one.

*And time for all the works..... on your plate* — This is the time for toast and tea and dishes; morsels are lifted and dropped on the plate, suggesting that the party is now in full swing.

'drop a question on your plate' indicates the hesitation of Prufrock in entering into a conversation with the people in the drawing-room (for that is the scene) or even with his companion. The 'over-whelming question' of the first paragraph has returned to the speaker with a renewed tension and anxiety.

*Time for you and..... me* — Prufrock hopes to find time for the two, you and me, before the toast begins.

*And time yet for ..... Toast and tea*— Before the actual event (celebration or feast) starts, there will be time for a number of indecision's, dreams and revision of previous decisions.

*Vision* – dreams.

*Revisions* – rethinkings on previous decisions.

*In the room the women..... Michelangelo* — Inside the room women keep on talking of Michelangelo, the great sculptor.

*And indeed there will be time..... 'Do I dare?'* — The time motif returns here. Prufrock is now taken into fear of the mocking and hostile eyes of the world that will avidly note all defects and failings (lines 37-38). This section increases the tension of the speaker by raising the question of daring

*Time to turn back..... Of my hair* — Prufrock's "terrified self-consciousness" (Grover Smith, p. 18) is exposed in these lines. He is thinking of turning back from the room and going down the stair, with all his weakness of the unromantic middle-age. He is afraid of his baldness.

'*a bald spot*' – indicates the old age.

*[They will say..... thin! ]* — The thinness of hair is a sign of old age, and those present in the room will point out to each other the thinness of Prufrock's hair.

*My morning coat..... A simple pin*— Here one notices the mock-heroic touch in the speaker's 'collar mounting firmly' and the 'assertion' of his simple pin. He is also conscious of his morning coat and necktie 'rich and modest'. The suggestion here seems to be that even his dress does not allow him to introduce himself to the women in the room.

*[They will say..... Legs are thin!']* — Like his baldness the thinness of his arms and legs makes Prufrock a misfit in the company.

*Do I dare..... The universe?* — His fear has now mounted to the image of daring to 'disturb the universe.' He cannot do so.

*In a minute..... Will reverse* — The wavering nature of Prufrock is obvious here. In a minute he might make some important decisions and revised ideas which will be reversed in the next minute.

*For I have known them..... all* — In this section and in the next two (lines 49-69), Prufrock tries to explain as to why he dares not disturb the universe. In this line, he asserts that the presence of women does not at all enthrall him because he is already familiar with them.

*Have known the evenings.....afternoons* — He is quite familiar not only with the women present there but also with what they do at different periods of the day.

*I have measured out.....coffee spoons* — Prufrock is disgusted with his tired and trivial life.

*I know the voices dying..... a farther room* — He knows about the voices gradually dying out with a highly vocal music from a distant room. In other words he is within sound and 'within the range of the other senses" (George Williamson, p. 62).

*A dying fall* – a highly vocal music.

*So how should I presume?* — He has known all this without doing what he now considers ; so how should he presume to disturb the accepted order?

*And I have known the eyes.....them all* — He has already known the inimical eyes.

*The eyes that fix you.....phrases* — Now the eyes fix him, give him his place in the accepted order, with a formulated phrase.

*And when I am formulated..... On the wall* — ‘Sprawling’ and ‘wriggling’ recall the image of an insect. When Prufrock has been classified like an insect, how can he deny his classification and break with his past? These lines also recall to our minds the austerities practiced by a ‘yogin’, a hermit. It is not unlikely that the speaker, who has met failure in life, should have turned to the austere practice for his consolation. ‘Sprawling’ means ‘crawling’; ‘wriggling’ means ‘struggling’.

*Then how should I begin.....days and ways?* — The speaker can’t change his ‘days and ways’. ‘Spit out’ means ‘change,’ and ‘butt-ends’ means ‘the ends of smoked cigarettes’, here ‘targets’ and ‘objects’.

*So how should I presume* — So how can Prufrock declare his love to his beloved?

*And I have known ..... brown hair!* — Prufrock has known the arms already, the arms which are ornamented, white coloured and bare, but which are covered with light brown hair in the evening.

‘Braceleted’ means ‘ornamented’; ‘downed’ means ‘lowered’, but here ‘covered up.’

*Is it perfume.....so digress?* — He is distracted for a moment by the erotic symbol contained in ‘downed with light brown hair’ and ‘perfume from a dress’. The ‘arms’ and the ‘perfume’ together create a romantic and aromatic atmosphere.

‘Digress’ suggests ‘giving up his intention to speak out his love’.

*Arms that lie..... a shawl* — The places where the arms may be found lying.

*And should I.....begin?* — The insistent problem with the speaker is that of communication or ‘beginning’.

*Shall I say.....of windows?* — For a moment he gathers all his powers to ‘begin’. But again soon he digresses is fancying what he might say or might not say. These line emphasis the loneliness and depression of the speaker.

‘Dusk’ means ‘twilight

*I should been.....silent seas* — These lines indicate the kind of creature Prufrock should have been – ‘a pair of ragged claws’ in ‘silent seas’, not Prufrock in a drawing room.

‘A pair of ragged claws’ means ‘a kind of sea species with rough claws’; ‘Scuttling means’ ‘moving quickly’.

*And the afternoon.....beside you and me* — The scene is once more the drawing room where the afternoon, the evening, sleeps peacefully, or it pretends to sleep stretching on the floor beside the speaker and his companion.

‘Malingers’ means ‘pretends to be asleep’ (indicative of the sickening atmosphere in the room).

‘Stretched means ‘resting, spreading’.

*Should I, after tea.....to its crisis?* — Prufrock does not, after the party is over, have the strength to force or precipitate the crisis.

But though I have wept..... And here’s no great matter — Although Prufrock had been remorseful for his misdeeds, and although he has seen his bald head cut and dished, he is no prophet, as John the Baptist was, for we know that Baptist’s head was demanded by Salome because he had rejected her love.

‘Brought in upon a platter’ suggests the cutting of the speaker’s head and serving it in a dish; Prufrock is aware here of his limitations as well as certain eligibilities as a lover.

‘Prophet’ is John the Baptist. His ‘bald’ head indicates his weak, olds age.

*I have seen the moment.....flicker* — Prufrock has let his chance go, his ‘greatness’ (achievements) flicker.

*And I have seen.....I was afraid* — Timidity has suppressed his amorous self.

‘The eternal Fooman’ is ‘Death’; ‘snicker’ means ‘laugh decisively’.

*And would it have been.....after all* — Prufrock asks whether it would have been worth it to force the ‘crisis’.

*After the cups.....worth while* — He thinks that the ‘crisis’ won’t have been worth while after taking tea and jam and participating in a social gathering.

‘Marmalade’ is a kind of jam; ‘porcelain’ is crockery or china-ware.

*To have bitten off.....with a smile* — Should he have spoken of his love quickly with a smile? It would have been improper.

‘Bitten off’ means ‘introduced quickly.’

*To have squeezed.....a ball* — Prufrock is presently out of the room in the street, and is rationalizing his failure at the party. He now feels that to force the ‘crisis’ would have meant to attempt an impossible task, for it is not possible to ‘squeeze the universe into a ball.’

*To roll it.....question* — It won’t have been worthwhile for him to rush toward the ‘crisis’ (which is real love).

*To say: ‘I am Lazarus.....tell you all* — It won’t have been proper for him to say that he is Lazarus, the beggar mentioned in Luke, 16, who was raised by Christ from the world of the dead. Here Prufrock imagines himself to be the representative of the dead people.

Lazarus – *He was a beggar lying at the richman’s gate; was sent to Hell, but wanted re-life. This was granted to him by Jesus Christ.*

*If one selling a pillow.....at all.* — Prufrock is afraid the lady’s rejection of him. It is likely that the lady, keeping her head on a pillow, should have said that she did not mean love.

‘One’ implies ‘the lady of lady’; ‘settling’ means ‘keeping’.

*And would it have been.....and as much more?* — Prufrock is struck by his own inadequacy. He feels that it would have been unwise for him to force the ‘crisis’ after attending the evening party.

‘Sprinkled’ means ‘watered’; ‘skirts suggest ‘the dancing girls’.

It is impossible.....*I mean!* — He can’t express his meaning or intention.

*But as if a magic lantern..... a screen* — Though Prufrock is unable to state precisely his feelings, he can still form vague ideas or patterns about them, which are not unlike ‘a magic lantern’ throwing pictures on a screen.

‘Nerves’ indicate ‘inner feelings’; ‘patterns’ means ‘pictures’.

Would it had been..... at all— *Once again Prufrock is afraid of the unfavorable reaction of the lady.*

*No! I am not Prince Hamlet.....meant to be*— The passage beginning with this lines provides, as Joseph Margolis says, ‘the only occasion on which Prufrock has attempted to sustain an exact evaluation of his entire career, and the statement — including his denial of heroic pretensions — forms a part of a larger and most remarkable unity.’ Prufrock asserts that he is not Prince Hamlet, though indecision might suggest it. One should remember that Hamlet proposed to Ophelia, but postponed the ‘crisis.’

*As an attendant lord..... the prince* — Instead he is cautious attendant like Polonius, a courtier of King Claudius; he is the attendant who will be fit to increase the number of a procession, to begin a scene or two, and to advise the Prince.

‘Progress’ means ‘procession’.

*no doubt, an easy tool.....the Fool* — Certain characteristics of a good attendant are detailed herein, – he will be compliant, easy to handle, respectful, useful, courteous, careful, full of wise words, but a little dull, sometimes laughable, and at the others playing the role of a fool (used in the Shakespearean sense).

‘Deferential’ means ‘respectful, obedient’; ‘politic’ means ‘courteous, mannered’; ‘meticulous’ means ‘careful’, ‘full of high sentence’ means ‘full of maxims’; ‘obtuse’ means ‘dull’ morose’.

*I grow old.....trousers rolled.* - Here Prufrock assumes the role of a prudent character and indulges in self – mockery. There is a sense of weariness in the repetition ‘I grow old... I grow old...’ Though he is resigned to his sad role and unromantic character, he resolves to be a little sportive in dress (by wearing his trousers cuffed).

*Shall I part my hair behind?..... a peach?* – Having resigned to his sad role. Prufrock would raise ‘the overwhelming question’ no more. Now the problem before him whether he should try to hide his baldness, whether he should dare to eat a peach.

‘Peach’ is a kind of stone – fruit.

*I shall wear white flannel trouser.....beach.* – The rising tempo of the lines suggests Prufrock walking hastily to the sea – beach after he has put on white woolen trousers.

‘Flannel’ means ‘woolen’.

*I have heard the mermaids.....sing to me* – Prufrock is an aging man standing on the sea – beach and wistfully watching the girls, who pay no heed to him. He is sunk into a vision or dream of beauty and vitality. These girls become mermaids riding triumphantly seaward into their creative natural element and singing to each other. But the mermaids, like the lady, probably will not sing to him (as to Ulysses).

*I have seen them.....white and black* – The reference here is to the mermaids riding seaward on the waves and floating on the white foam at a time when the wind blows the water white and black.

‘White hair’ stands for ‘foam’.

*We have lingered.... and we drown* – The concluding lines (129 – 131) take us to the mermaids, reminding us of Prufrock’s original situation: he has ‘lingered’, not in the drawing room surrounded by the women talking of Michelangelo, but in the ‘chambers of the sea’ surrounded by ‘sea – girls’, who are garlanded with red and brown seaweed. But such an experience is possible only in dream: ‘...human voices wake us’. And to wake is to return to the human world of suffocation and death: ‘and we drown.’

‘Lingered’ means ‘stayed’; ‘wreathed’ means garlanded’; ‘wake’ means ‘disturb’; ‘we drown’; implies suffocation and death. The dawn of reality on Prufrock and his friends, who are lost in visions so far, disturbs them and renders them sad and frustrated.

## SECTION III: CRITICAL NOTES ON “THE WASTE LAND”

### 1. Composition of "The Waste Land"

*The Waste Land* was first published in the opening issue of the *Criterion* (October 1922) and then in the *Dial* (November 1922). Since its publication, it has taken the literary world by storm and become a classic representing the twentieth century in all its complexity and diversity. The poem is Eliot’s *magnum opus*, showing the birth of a new kind of English poetry with new patterns of speech and rhythm, with new poetic devices and technique. The composition of this great poem has a history of its own, and it is an interesting history by all means. This history is well reflected in *The Waste Land : Facsimile And Transcript Of The Original Draft* edited by Valerie Eliot (1971), in *Letters of Ezra Pound* (1950), in *An Exhibition of Manuscripts and First Editions of T.S. Eliot* (1961), and in the Quinn Collection of the New York Public Library.

The distinguished critic, Helen Gardner, has given her thought to the question of the composition of *The Waste Land*. She suggests that we should not speak of ‘the first version’ or ‘the original version’ of this poem. She

thinks that the only authentic version of *The Waste Land* is the published text. But many Eliot readers are not satisfied with this sort of suggestion.

The earliest drafts of *The Waste Land* were written as early as 1914. On 5<sup>th</sup> November, 1919, Eliot wrote to Quinn about this poem – ‘I have in mind’, and in December 1919 he informed his mother that he was to ‘write a long poem I have had on my mind for a long time’. In October 1921, Eliot’s health ran down alarmingly and he was advised complete rest for three months. He went to Margate in mid – October of the same year, and in November he joined a clinic in Lausanne for his treatment. He wrote *The Waste Land* – ‘a damn good poem of 19 pages’, according to Pound – partly at Margate and partly at Lausanne in 1921. Eliot was then recovering from a physical and psychological breakdown. At that time, Eliot was also engaged in writing the ‘London letter’ to the *Dial* (New York) which clearly vented his despair and helplessness over the threatened destruction of several churches in London which were designed by Sir Christopher Wren. His condition was no better than that of an imprisoned person who is always thinking of a way out:

... each in his prison  
 thinking of the key, each confirms a prison....  
 (*The Waste Land*, lines 413 – 414).

The allusion is to Dante’s *Inferno*, Canto XXXIII, where Ugolino is shown as confirmed to the awful tower in which he is destined to die of starvation. Modern man living in London is also leading a life of loneliness and imprisonment.

Eliot himself has acknowledged various sources contributing to the structure of *The Waste Land*. In his Notes on the poem, he specifically mentions Miss Jessie L. Weston’s book on the Grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge, 1920), and Sir James Frazer’s book, *The Golden Bough* (1922). These two books have largely inspired the composition of Eliot’s poem. Also, the works of F.H. Bradley, Joseph Conrad, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Henry James as well as the Indian Scriptures have contributed a good deal to the making of the poem.

## 2. The Theme of "The Waste Land"

The main theme of *The Waste Land* (1922) is the perversion and sterility of sexual desire in modern man which leads to loss of spirituality in the world. The theme of the poem operates on several planes of experience. As a result, different kinds of the waste land appear in it – the waste land of religion, the waste land of the spirit, and the waste land of the instinct for fertility. The poet has wonderfully given a poetic expression to ‘his feelings of futility and anarchy in the face of contemporary – civilization’. The contemporary civilization is a decayed and degenerated civilization, having lost roots in love and religion, in natural and spiritual existence. Consequently, the modern world is seen burning in the fire of sex and lust, and hence fallen on evil days. The spiritual waters which once revitalized European civilization have now dried up, and people are involved neck – deep in ‘birth, copulation and death’, particularly those living in the metropolitan city of London.

*The Waste Land* primarily deals with the theme of barrenness, which is symbolically related to the myth of the waste land. Miss Jessie Weston in her book, *From Ritual to Romance*, offers details about the quest for the Holy Grail (the cup used by Christ at the last Supper) and about the legends connected with this quest. These legends depict a region turned into a waste land by a cruel curse. Nothing can grow on this land; crops have withered; animals cannot reproduce. The land is without greenery, without water, without fertility. The land has become so because its ruler, the Fisher King, is excessively indulged in sexual exploits and has received a severe wound on his genitals. This wound has rendered him powerless to procreate. How can this curse be removed, or how can the rainlessness of the land be overcome? This can be done by a questing knight who asks the meanings of various symbols which are presented to him on his visit to a castle. In the original legend the sterility or barrenness is actually physical, but in Eliot’s poem it is basically spiritual. The poem under consideration depicts the visit of the knight to the Chapel Perilous, where the Grail is supposedly kept.

Apart from this, death is another theme of *The Waste Land*. Death is usually contrasted with life, Eliot's two favourite phrases are 'death in life' and 'life in death'. His 'Death by Water' in *The Waste Land* is an example of 'life in death', whereas most of his characters in poetry are living in a situation of 'death in life'. The degraded life of the denizens of modern metropolis (like London) is an instance of 'death in life' – the worst kind of life one can think of. As contrasted to this, 'life in death' promises a better time ahead in spiritual terms. Both kinds of life have been suggested by Eliot in *The Waste Land*. The negation of one kind of life signals the birth of another kind. Eliot is very fond of paradoxes and variations in his poetry, and this is one of his paradoxes. Another paradox to which he frequently resorts is 'the intersection of timelessness' with time (see his *Four Quartets*, 1943, for this).

Some scholars like Paul Elmer More and F.R. Leavis think that *The Waste Land* deals with 'the disillusionment of a generation' or with, 'the destabilization of an order'. Consequently, the modern man has become dejected and dispirited. Whether Eliot likes this sort of expression - that the poem is a mirror of its time – or not, the fact remains that *The Waste Land* is a vigorous and valid document of its age. This is well in tune with his statement in *The Sacred Wood* (1920) that a poet writes with an intense awareness of his whole civilization. *The Waste Land* is though claimed by Eliot to have been written to 'release his personal feelings', it is no doubt a very valuable document of its age. Paul Elmer More rightly thinks that this poem deals with 'the chaos of its time'.

Another scholar, Ian Hamilton, is of the view that *The Waste Land* effectively projects the 'superb trinity of culture, sex and religion. The culture that Eliot highlights in this poem is the European culture, and the religion that he treats of is the world religion (not mere one religion). The first three Sections of the poem stress the prevalence of sex and lust in modern human world. Is there any value of sex without love? What do you get married for if you don't want children? Eliot treats of the debasement of love – both inside and outside marriage – in a forceful manner in this poem. He dwells on the three vital aspects of human life – culture, sex and religion – in their social and spiritual contexts.

Only some important themes to be found in *The Waste Land* are discussed above. There are other related themes too in the texture of the poem, and they will be hinted at while discussing the other aspect of the poem. For example, Eliot mentions in his notes on the poem that "In the first part of part V three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book) and the present decay of eastern Europe". Thus, there are themes within themes in the poem under discussion.

### 3. The Epigraph

The Epigraph is taken from the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter and suggests the essence of the principal theme in *The Waste Land*. The *Satyricon* narrates the story of the sibyl of Cumae, the beloved of Apollo. Once the sibyl asked Apollo to grant her to live for as many years as the grains of sand in her hand. But she forgot to ask for eternal youth. Hence she became aged and shrank so small that she hung up in a bottle. When the passers –by, especially children, asked her what she wanted at that time, she could only say, 'I want to die'. Her statement shows unequivocally the predominant theme of the poem decay and destruction. D.G. Rossetti, the great Pre-Raphaelite-like poet of the mid – nineteenth century, has beautifully versified this story of the sibyl:

*I saw the sibyl at Cumae,  
(one said) with rune own eye.  
She hung in a case, and read her rune  
To all the passers – by.  
Said the boys, "what would thou, Sibyl?"  
She answered, "I would die."*

As *The Waste Land* employs the primordial imagery of death and rebirth in accordance with the Grail legend, the Sibyl belongs to the machinery of initiation in the poem. The Sibyl appears in one of the Grail romances, and links the medieval legend to the classical myth. Her misfortune as mentioned in the epigraph symbolizes

the motif of *The Waste Land*. The hint is that the feminine power which should enable the protagonist to complete his quest for initiation cannot deliver goods to the waste land. Similarly, Tiresias remains blind and impotent. The Sibyl here symbolizes 'death in life', and can be identified with Madame Sosotris of Part I.

The epigraph to the poem may be translated as follows:

*For once I saw with my own eyes  
the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in  
a glass bottle, and when the children  
said to her, 'Sibyl what do you wish?'  
she answered, 'I wish to die?'*

The only escape from 'death in life' is death proper. That alone will release the Sibyl from her suspended, even painful, life. The words in the epigraph are spoken by the drunken Trimalchio in the *Satyricon*, which is a satire written by the Roman author, Petronius Arbiter, in the first century A.D. Trimalchio is, in a drunken state, boasting to his companions and telling them stories of wonder. The story of the Sibyl is actually one such story.

#### 4. The Dedication

*The Waste Land* is dedicated to Ezra Pound, 'il miglior fabbro (i.e., 'the greater craftsman'), who edited the manuscript of the poem and 'reduced to about half its size'. As we know, both Eliot and Pound were of American origin and both had identical views about the art of poetry – that it should be meant for 'the minority audience. Hence they both made it esoteric and allusive, imagistic and concrete.

Pound (1885 - 1972) himself was a poet of stature, and it was his habit to promote other authors and poets. About Eliot he wrote thus:

*Eliot, in bank, makes \$ 500. Too tired  
To write, broke down; during convalescence  
In Switzerland, did Waste Land, a  
Masterpiece, one of the most important  
19 pages in English.*

- **D.D. Paige, ed.** *The Letters of Ezra Pound (1950), p.171.*

Of course, Pound had done a lot towards reducing the size of *The Waste Land* through his pruning and expert advice. The great service rendered by Pound, to Eliot becomes so clear when we browse through *The Waste Land: Facsimile and Transcript Of The Original Draft*, edited by Valerie Eliot after the Poet's death on January 4, 1965.

Fortunately, Pound was alive when Eliot died. Eliot was buried in East Coker, as per his wish. Pound was present at the memorial service in Westminster Abbey, and travelled a long way – from Rome to London – specifically to attend it. Pound recalled Eliot as 'the true Dantescan voice' and urged the people to 'READ HIM'.

#### 5. The Structure of the Poem

The structure of *The Waste Land* follows a circular pattern, not a linear one. The poem continually connects past and present, fertility and barrenness, life and death. The quests of various characters in this poem do not develop in linear directions; they do not arrive at a real end. The poem does not offer a hope of reaching a destination, does not promise a happy reunion. It rather articulates the failures of the protagonist's journeys.

The structure of the poem permits a new poetic technique to Eliot. This technique can accommodate a number of references and allusions in its texture. This is usually called allusive technique, which is 'at once laconic, quick, and precise, for representing the transmutations of thought' (as Edmund Wilson puts it). The technique

of allusiveness has its own merits and demerits. In his seminal essay on “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, Eliot expresses his ideas about the use of this technique. According to him, the use of allusions is one of the ways of enriching a tradition as well as of promoting the individual talent. In fact, it is very difficult to reconcile ‘tradition’ and ‘the individual talent’, but Eliot achieves this rare feat through his allusions. And his poem, *The Waste Land* is a living example of the use of his technique of allusiveness. With the help of allusions, Eliot is able to establish an association between such contrarities as past and present, sterility and fertility, death-in-life’ and ‘life-in-death’.

In his well – known essay, “The Frontiers of Criticism” (1956), Eliot clarifies that his endeavor as an artist is to ‘assemble the most desperate material to form a new whole’. His technique of allusiveness enables him to achieve this objective in a considerable way. To achieve ‘a new whole’, Eliot strives to master at least three kinds of maturity in his work – ‘maturity of mind’, ‘maturity of manners’ and ‘maturity of language; These three kinds of maturity have been his ideals in art, as he points out in his “What is a Classic?” *The Waste Land* is a powerful poem which reflects the three kinds of maturity. It aims at expressing “a wholeness of feeling, a completeness encompassing within itself the entire tradition of English culture and literature” (see Introduction to *The Waste Land*, ed. V.A. Shahana Delhi: O.U.P., 1987, P.18): Eliot’s sense of culture and literature is not limited to England alone; it rather extends to include the rich, old heritage of Greece and Rome and of the entire continent of Europe. The density of allusiveness adds the quality of suggestiveness in this poem.

In structuring *The Waste Land*, Eliot drew upon a number of past authors and contemporaries. He called ideas and methods from various literary *genres*, and from a variety of fine arts – from music, painting, the theatre, the novel, and films. But these literary devices employed by Eliot are directed towards exploring the basic theme of the poem and expressing his vision of life. Of course, Eliot’s vision remains gloomy and dismal here, though in the last Section it turns to be a bit optimistic and promising.

In *The Letters of Ezra Pound*, we come across a few letters about *The Waste Land*. From Pound Eliot seeks some suggestions, and asks him on the two points in particular:

1. Do you printing ‘Gerontion’ as a prelude in book or pamphlet form?
2. Perhaps better omit Phlebas also? And to this Pound replies thus:

I do *not* advise printing ‘Gerontion’ as preface. One don’t miss it *at all* as the thing now stands. To be more lucid still, let me say that I advise you NOT to print ‘Gerontion’ as prelude. I do advise keeping Phlebas. In fact I more’n advise, phlebas is an integral part of the poem ....

Eliot accepts Pound’s suggestion, taking him an accomplished craftsman. But Eliot does not accept the Master’s advice that the Sanskrit words proper be dropped.

Eliot’s scholarship comes out openly in his “Notes” to *The Waste Land*. The Notes clearly show that he is ‘a scholar poet’. Also why he writes these Notes, he gives the following explanation:

*Then when it come to print ‘The Waste Land’ as a little book... it was discovered that the poem was inconveniently short, so I set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter, with the result that they became the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view today.*

This pertinent statement of Eliot points out that the scholarly background to *The Waste Land* is not of great importance in understanding it. In his brilliant essays. “The Frontiers of Criticism” Eliot expresses the same idea when he remarks that he does ‘not think that most poetry... requires that sort of dissection for its enjoyment

and understanding.’ It is somewhat erroneous to approach a poem through the poet’s scholarship. Rather a reader should approach it by a consideration of the amount of transformation of the raw material at hand by his ‘poetic genius.’ The poet has to discover an ‘emotional equivalent’ to his thought for producing a gem of a poem. In its structural context, Eliot’s poem should be read in this light.

## 6. Myth in the Poem

Eliot makes use of myth in a discernible way. In this matter, he is deeply influenced by the method of James Joyce in *Ulysses* (published in 1922). Both the works appeared in the same year, and hence the question of borrowing does not arise. *Ulysses* contains parallels to Homer’s *Odyssey*. V. Larband reviewed Joyce’s *Ulysses* in the opening issue of *The Criterion* (October 1922), edited by T.S. Eliot. Reviewing *Ulysses* for *The Dial* (1923), Eliot lauded Joyce’s mythical method, thereby revealing the attractive malities of his own method in *The Waste Land*. He stressed the classical quality of Joyce’s novel. Speaking of the mythical pattern of the novel, Eliot remarked thus:

*In using the myth, in manipulating  
a continuous parallel between contemporaneity  
and antiquity Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method  
which others must pursue after him... it is  
simply a way of controlling and  
ordering, of giving a shape and a  
significance to the immense panorama  
of futility and anarchy which  
is contemporary history.*

(“*Ulysses, Order and Myth*”, *The Dial*, 1923, pp. 480-83).

Eliot also adopts the mythical method in the structuring of *The Waste Land*, but his method tends to be suggestive and selective. He makes use of the Grail legend in this poem.

The Grail legend is connected with the life – story of the Fisher king, an important ruler of the Waste Land. The grail was the disk or plate used by Christ in the Last Supper, in which the blood of the Saviour was held up on the eve of his crucifixion by one of his devotees. Subsequently, it came to be an object of devotion and dedication. But, after some time, the Grail disappeared mysteriously, and several bold knights went out in search of it. It was generally believed that the lost Grail sometimes appeared in the sky as a floating saucer of great beauty and splendour, but it could be seen only by a knight of perfect purity. Lord Tennyson dealt with this theme as the finale of his *Idylls of the King*, making Sir Galahad, the brave and pure knight of King Arthur’s Round Table, as the leader destined to succeed in his noble mission. In some other versions appearing in Germany and France subsequently, however, the protagonist is Sir Percival or Parsifal. Miss Jessie L. Weston in her book, *From Ritual to Romance*, one of the sources in the making of *The Waste Land*, has treated the legend critically and historically. She thinks that the Grail was originally connected with the fertility myth and associated with sexual symbols, but later it suffered a sea – change being associated with the founder of Christianity.

Parsifal and his fellow adventurers once arrived in a country ruled by a prince named the Fisher King. It was one of the regions where the Grail worship had been in vogue and a temple, known as the Chapel Perilous, still stood there, broken and dilapidated. At that time, the king himself had become a human wreck, maimed and impotent as a result of a sin committed by his soldiery in out raging the modesty of a group of nuns attached to the Grail temple. Because of this sin, the Fisher King had become impotent and his land barren. The king was, however, waiting with hope that one day the knight of the pure soul would visit his kingdom and the Chapel Perilous, answer questions and solve riddles prior to the ritual washing of his sinful body, which would purge it and renew its health and energy. Then, the land would also become watery and green, full of ‘soft incense’ and ‘lispig leaves’.

Eliot's poem under review is an allegorical representation of this story to modern society and religion. The modern human world is actually a waste land. We can have youth and health by journeying far, questioning our condition, and practising self – control and spirituality. Sex is certainly the source of life, and as such it was glorified and worshipped in ancient days by primitive communities. But sex is now debased in the human world and the whole universe is presently 'burning' in the 'fire' of lust. This 'fire' can be extinguished by the purification of the soul through the practice of asceticism and spiritualism. To teach this lesson, Eliot resorts to the Scriptures of India – to the *Rig Veda* and the *Upanishad*.

Thus, the use of the Grail legend in the texture of *The Waste Land* proves an effective tool to draw parallels between the ancient and modern situations. It renders the poem compact and compressed, suggestive and symbolical.

## 7. The Role of Tiresias

Tiresias is the central figure in *The Waste Land*, and it is through him that we watch all the events and situations taking place in it. What Tiresias sees from the substance of the poem. Writing about him, Eliot observes thus:

*Tiresias, although a mere spectator and  
Not indeed a 'character', is yet the  
Most important personage in the  
Poem, uniting all the rest... and the two  
Sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees...  
Is the substance of the poem.*

(“Notes” on *The Waste Land*)

Tiresias function as a unifier of all the episodes and experiences to be had in the poem. He is a representative of the entire humanity. His vision reflects the vision of the poem. He is derived from the Greek source, where he is a wise soothsayer. But in his youth he becomes blind. Why? The reasons are variously suggested – (1) that he once saw Athena taking her bath; since his mother was her friend, she did not cause her death, but blinded him and gave him the power of prophecy by way of compensation; and (2) that he one day saw snakes coupling and struck them with his stick, whereat he became a woman; later the same thing happened again and he turned into a man. He was asked by Zeus and Hera to settle a dispute as to which sex had more pleasure in love, he decided for the female. Hera got angry with him and blinded him, but Zeus compensated by granting him a long life and the power of prophecy.

Tiresias is a bi – sexual with a wide range of experience in life. This is how the poet has introduced him in the text of the poem:

*I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,  
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see  
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives  
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,  
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights  
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.  
... ..  
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)  
Stocking, slippers, camisoles, and stays.  
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs  
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest –*

(“The Fire Sermon”, *The Waste Land* lines 218 – 229)

Here Tiresias is presented as an old, blind man, having the power of 'foretelling', and also a person combining the two sexes in himself – 'Old man with wrinkled female breasts'.

As a spectator, Tiresias has watched the depressing spectacle of modern humanity which has fallen on evil days. He is at once the relic of the past and a seer of the present, at once a prophet and a detached spectator of the contemporary scene. He is a representative of the whole humanity. His camera eye is seen rolling backwards and forwards. He can move about in history and in time; he can become a modern city – man, a medieval, or an ancient Greek at will. The Waste Land in his spiritual autobiography, his search through the junkheap of modern culture for an integrating principal. His search goes on several planes: autobiography, archeology, mythology, anthropology and religion. It is often accompanied by sufferings and frustration, and yet it does not give hope of rebirth and resurrection. The Grail legend aptly suggests it through symbols.

## 8. "The Waste Land" as and International Poem

T.S. Eliot's poetry presents an interesting example of the application of international themes. *The Waste Land* (1922), his *magnum opus*, combines in its texture a number of sources ranging from the fertility rituals, the Grail legends, the Tarot pack of cards (all representing the primitive pagan ways of life), through St. Augustine and the *Bible* (both forming the Christian tradition), the Greek myth and the creation of Tiresias, the Latin writers and poets (constituting the continental Classical tradition), Buddhism and Hinduism (both championing the Indian tradition), to a host of British, French, Italian and German authors (all betokening the various nationalities of Europe). There is nothing surprising in it because one who know Eliot's background, education and wide range of reading can easily understand his sound scholarship and varying interests. When Stephen Coote in his study of *The Waste Land* calls it "a central work of modernism," he implies thereby "its desperate engagement with the [entire] modern world"<sup>1</sup> (the word 'entire' mine). It is when we consider the work in its entirety that it really becomes "a seminal par of our heritage."<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Various Sources of the Poem

Eliot discovered a fine analysis of the fertility rituals in Sir James Frazer's monumental work, *The Golden Bough* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1911 – 1919) in twelve volumes (out of which Eliot used only the two volumes *Adonis, Attis to Romance* (Cambridge, 1920) the two work which have "influenced our generation profoundly."<sup>3</sup> Sir Frazer offers vivid accounts of the fertility gods, Adonis, Attis and Osiris, chosen from the ancient culture of the Eastern Mediterranean. Of these gods, Adonis (or Tammuz) belonged to the Babylonians and the syrian; Attis originated in Phrygia and was worshipped by the Romans; and Osiris was Egyptian. The worship of these three gods being common to the sources of European culture is "essentially similar."<sup>4</sup> They were the divine yet mortal lovers of the Mother Goddess – in the shape of Ishtar, Cybele, or Isis – who personified 'the various potency of nature.' The union of the god and goddess guaranteed the fertility of the land. The death and the sexual maiming of the god followed by his consort's search for him in the underworld brought about the onset of winter and the land's infertility. With the departure of the god, the world turned into a Waste Land.

Miss Weston's book is another interesting anthropological document to which Eliot confesses his indebtedness in unequivocal terms. He observes: "Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the grail legend."<sup>5</sup> The Grail legends are based on the tales of the Knights of the Round Table (e.g., Parcifal, Gawain and Galahad). Miss Weston claims to have found 'the origins of Grail imagery in the vegetation cults analysed by Frazer.' The Waste Land of the Grail legends is mainly due to the sickness of the king for an unknown reason, reduced as it is to 'the desolation of drought and death.' The king being the Grail's guardian has to be nursed back to health. In *The Waste Land*, the Fisher King is shown maimed like a fertility god. Miss Weston relates the Tammuz – Adonic cult of Frazer to her own Grail legends, and explains that the wound suffered by Adonis was in his genitals by Dolorous Stroke, and adds that this accounts for the infertility of the land. By associations, the wound of the Fisher King was identical. The hyacinth girl is the Grail bearer in Eliot's poem; she is an embodiment of love. But the Fisher King fails with the girl in the hyacinth garden (a place of water and flowers). Madame Sosostris,

who is advanced in years and who is a ‘wise woman’, is unmistakably another Grail – bearer, she is surely “a charlatan” and “an old witchwoman.”<sup>6</sup> Another instance of the Grail – bearer is the tired typist in a luxurious boudoir whose helplessness is contained in the lines –

*What shall we do to- morrow?  
What shall we ever do?*

(11.133 – 134)

It is quite clear that the Grail legend initiates a quester – in the poem under discussion; it is Tiresias – to go on, and set the land in order by breaking the magic – spell of infertility and sterility and thereby curing the wounded king. Through a maze of symbols, this legend is primarily “primitively associated with sex.”<sup>7</sup> According to Sir Frazer, some of the primitive communities of the world used to indulge themselves in nocturnal orgies and sensuous merry – making for their welfare.

The Tarot pack of cards meant originally for divination has now degraded into fortune – telling. It consists of 78 cards out of which 56 form the Lesser Arcana (divided into four suits – Batons [Eliot’s ‘staves’], Cups, Swords and Coins) and the remaining 22 cards constitute the Greater Arcana, each depicting a symbolic figure or scene (such as the Wheel of Fortune and the Hanged Man). The cards were known in Western Europe by the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, but nothing definite can be said about their origin. Miss Weston suggests that the Tarot is “a possible repository of primeval symbols of fertility,”<sup>8</sup> and traces its elements in antique Egyptian and Chinese monuments, and opines that it might have been introduced from India by the gipsies (pp. 73 – 76). In the initiation ritual, the four Grail talismans (Cup, Lance, Sword and Dish) have the ‘sexual value’ in essential details – the first and fourth being feminine and the second and third being masculine in their symbolic connotations. They are the life – symbols by all means. In the Tarot, the drowned Phoenician Sailor and the Hanged Man symbolise respectively ‘the loveless death’ and ‘the potential healing or rebirth of Tiresias’. Madame Sosostris sees ‘the crowds of people’ turning on the Wheel of Fortune; these people signify ‘a purposeless circle.’ In his Notes on the poem, Eliot tells us that the Hanged Man has been associated with the Hanged God of Sir Frazer, which in Part V of the poem gets transformed into ‘the hooded figure.’ The Man with Three Staves, an authentic member of the Tarot pack, is arbitrarily associated with the Fisher King himself.<sup>9</sup> Taken as a whole, the Tarot cards and their reading denote the degeneration of spiritual health for man.

Fertility rituals or vegetation cults and the Grail legends and the Tarot pack of cards combinedly allude to primitive religion as represented by ancient communities of the world. In the Christian context, they are contained in the mysteries and miracles of the olden days. Another significant growth of early Christianity is St. Augustine, whose *Confessions* is “the European example of true autobiographical writing.”<sup>10</sup> Though he appears briefly at the close of Part III *The Waste Land*, he is placed significantly beside Lord Buddha as the great exponent of Western asceticism. In his Notes, Eliot inform us that “The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism ... is not an accident.”<sup>11</sup> St. Augustine fought vehemently with his own powerful sexual urge and ‘the restless sexuality of Carthage.’ He presents a graphic account of his spiritual and emotional bankruptcy – of his personal *Waste Land* – in his *Confessions* thus:

*To Carthage then I came  
Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest  
burning.*

(11. 307 – 310)

This meaningful passage highlights ‘the sordidness of urban pleasure’ in a big city, and should be read in the background of Part II (“A Game of Chess”) of the poem. It depicts sex without love, particularly within marriage, whereas Part III paints the same horror without marriage – if the former brings into sharp focus a category of women consisting of Imogen, Philomel, Bianca, and Ophelia, the latter highlights another category

of women comprising Madame Sosostris, Belladonna, Lil (the pub woman having undergone an abortion), Cleopatra and Dido. The Fisher King receives his wound as a result of the gross violation of the norms of chastity, as a result of the immoral rape. Seen against such a background, the passage beginning with 'To Carthage then I came' is highly revealing. Modern man has to throw away all 'burning in lust' and the resultant restlessness and horror if he has to come out of the prevailing state of infertility and sterility around him. This is certainly the path of Negation, as opposed to the path of Affirmation, and this path of Negation has been best shown by Lord Buddha, the great Indian ascetic, who abjured his wife and son and grad palace for the sake of real enlightenment. The title of Part III is directly based on "The Fire Sermon" delivered by the Buddha at Sarnath (Varanasi) to his first five disciples immediately after his enlightenment. In his Notes, Eliot tells us that the Fire Sermon "corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount."<sup>12</sup> In that historical Sermon the Buddha has shown that the entire world is 'on fire', which has got to be extinguished for the redemption of mankind. So important is the Fire Sermon that a noted critic like William Empson is prompted to remark that it "leaves Christianity far behind"<sup>13</sup> in its insistence on spirituality and asceticism. Here at least is a possibility for the modern man to emerge out of his Waste Land. The well – known critic, E.L. Mayo, is of the opinion that the passage 'To Carthage then I came' remarkably fuses into one the three religious traditions – the Christian, the Hebrew and the Buddhist.<sup>14</sup>

*The Bible* has been occasionally by Eliot. The Jews' destiny of waiting for a Redeemer (in the Old Testament) resembles the destiny of human beings as described in *The Waste Land*. In line 20 of this poem, the vision of Ezekiel ('the son of man') is alluded to - the vision of the coming of the Messiah and the return of the Jews to the Promised Land – and in line 23 the cricket and in line 353 the cicada are borrowed from the vision of cataclysm in the Ecclesiastes. If the Old Testament presents a world without a Redeemer, the New Testament is its fulfilment. Christ is the risen God who triumphs over man's sin and wins forgiveness for him. In lines 322 – 326 of *The Waste Land*, the scenes in Christ's life just before the crucifixion, and in lines 359 – 365 the scenes of His life after the resurrection are beautifully recalled. The opening paragraph of "What the Thunder Said" has distinct analogies with the incidents in arrival of soldiers and the imprisonment before the trial. In his Notes, Eliot informs us that the first section of Part V employs three themes – "the journey to Emmaus, the approach to Chapel Perilous... and the present decay of eastern Europe."<sup>15</sup> Eliot purposely compares the risen Christ to Sir James Frazer's Hanged God. But the world of the Waste Land is so much decayed and degraded that it cannot recognise the resurrected Christ or 'the hooded figure.'

Besides a fair use of *The Bible*, the Hindu scriptures have also been drawn upon in a bid to make the poem truly representative of the entire humanity. Eliot has used them in *The Waste Land*, *Four Quartets*, and the shorter piece "To the Indians Who Died in Africa." The hoary wisdom of ancient India is contained in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Miss Weston traces the symbolism of the Grail legend to the *Rig Veda* (see p. 25 of her book for this). There are two self-evident references to the Hindu scriptures in *The Waste Land*, the first being 'Da Da Da' and the second being 'Shantih shantih shantih.' The first one is derived from the cryptic teachings of Prajapati to his disciples – gods, men and demons – as found in the *Brihad aranyaka Upanishad* (5.1-3). The father –preceptor enjoins upon them the necessity of practising the three laudable virtues of Love, Sympathy and Control (i.e., 'Datta,' 'Dayadhvam' and 'Damyata') by modern man for his deliverance from his self-created prison. The second one, as the poet puts it, is "a formal ending to an Upanishad,"<sup>16</sup> which is also echoed *verbatim* by the noted critic, Elizabeth Drew.<sup>17</sup> It is derived from the *Yajur Veda* (36.17) as well as from the *Upanishads* (which invariably end it). The triple 'shantih' actually reflects a peaceful state of mind attained after a complete resolution of all disturbances, anxieties and doubts.<sup>18</sup> Very adroitly the poet has given a clear-cut clue to modern man to turn away from the selfish, worldly pursuits to the moral, spiritual quests to cure his otherwise incurable malady.

Tiresias, an omnipresent, mythic figure, is unmistakably Greek in origin, precisely to be found first in the Oedipus plays. His omnipresence in the poem creates a structural coherence and a psychological insight into the prevailing unhealthy conditions in the world. In his Notes, Eliot offers a detailed commentary on Tiresias in

the following manner:

*Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two Sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the Substances of the poem.*<sup>19</sup>

From this commentary it is obvious that Tiresias is a blind old man combining both the sexes in himself – in other words, the entire humanity – and that his observations constitute the central core of the poem. His position is that of a silent spectator, not that of a redeemer or an active participant in the enactment of the tense drama of *The Waste Land*. Both Sophocles and Seneca opened their Oedipus plays when the plague was at its height on Thebes after Oedipus had unwittingly killed his father and married his mother Jocasta. The incestuous relationship with his mother caused the blight of the land, and the horrible plague descended on Thebes. In these plays, the blind prophet Tiresias could reveal the truth to Oedipus and thereby hasten his tragedy. “The Fire Sermon” contains three clear references to Tiresias : in the first, he is

*Blind, throbbing between two lives,  
Old man with wrinkled female breasts...*

In the second, he speaks of himself as an ‘old man with wrinkled dug’s’ (line 228), and in the third he presents himself thus –

*And I Tiresias have foresuffered all  
Enacted on this same divan or bed;  
I who have sat by Thebes below the wall  
And walked among the lowest of the dead.*

(11.243-246)

The Latin poet Ovid (who is referred to in line 99 of the poem) describes vividly about the transformation of Tiresias into a woman for seven years and then again into a man as a result of his striking of the two intertwining huge serpents in the depths of the green wood, and about his condemnation to ‘eternal blindness’ by angry Juno, for he had given his verdict in favour of Jupiter over a delicate issue – that ‘women get far more pleasure out of love than men do.’

No doubt, the most dominant classical personages to have influenced Eliot’s *The Waste Land* have been Sophocles, Seneca and Ovid, but some Latin works also contribute their shares to the making of the poem. These works are: the *Satyricon* of Petronius, the anonymous *Pervigilium Veneris*, the *Aeneid* of Virgil, the poets of *The Greek Anthology*.<sup>20</sup> Petronius clearly suggested the epigraph of the poem to Eliot wherein the Sybil of Cumae expresses her desire to die – ‘I want to die.’ The *Pervigilium Veneris* (meaning literally ‘the Vigil of Venus’) provides Eliot with one fragment for the close of *The Waste Land* – ‘Quanno fiam uti chelidon’ (meaning ‘When shall I be as the swallow’), - expressing a certain longing for singing in full freedom. The references to Virgil in “A Game of Chess” is very brief, and it focuses our attention on the panelled ceiling of the boudoir which is actually derived from the first book of the *Aeneid*. *The Greek Anthology* consisting of over four thousand epigrams on a variety of subjects is drawn upon in the Phlebas episode.

Amongst the various authors alluded to by Eliot in this poem, mention may be made of German poet Richard Wagner (whose *Tristan and Isolde* is the human world’s marvellous expression of romantic love, including torrential passion, sexuality and death, and who is alluded to in lines 31-34 and line 42 of *The Waste Land*), the French poet Baudelaire (who is referred to in lines 60 – ‘Unreal City’ – and 76 where Eliot is mainly concerned

with a powerful evocation of the picture of the gloomy modern city, the image of London as a contemporary Waste Land), the Italian poet Dante (who supplied Eliot with suitable incidents to ‘measure the moral bankruptcy of his times,’ as in lines 63-64 and in lines 411-412 –both from *Inferno*, Books III & IV, which describes the horrors, lamentations and tortures to the guilty like Count Ugolino), and in line 293 (which refers to the unhappily married La Pia) and in line 427 (which alludes to Arnaut Daniel slipping back into the cleansing fire – taken from *Purgatorio*, Books V and XXVI respectively), and noted German writer Herman Hess (whose *Blick ins Chaos*, i.e., ‘In sight of Chaos’ is alluded to in lines 366-376, pointing out the utter exhaustion of traditional Europe), and a host of British authors like William Shakespeare (whose plays *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest* have been specifically referred to in Eliot’s Notes), John Milton (whose *Paradise Lost* is mentioned in line 98), Webster (II.118 and 407), Middleton (I.138), Spenser (Prothalamion is alluded to in line 176), Marvell (whose *To His Coy Mistress* is mentioned in line 196), Goldsmith (whose *The Vicar of Wakefield* is drawn upon in line 253), Kyd (whose *The Spanish Tragedy* is touched upon towards the close of the poem), and a number of other minor sources.

## II. Titles of the Five Parts

The title of part I of *The Waste Land* is “The Burial of the Dead,” and is derived from the majestic Anglican service for the burial of the dead. The theme of resurrection finds its counterpoint here in the rhythmic annual return of the Spring, which proves to be the cruellest month with ‘dull roots,’ and memory and desire blend an old man’s insert longing and lost fulfilment.<sup>20</sup> The speaker Tiresias is content to let himself covered up with winter ‘in forgetful snow.’ Blind and spiritually embittered, he wrestles with buried emotions which have been unexpectedly revived. The opening paragraph is actually a pointer to both joy and agony in human life.

The title of Part II is borrowed from the Jacobean dramatist Middleton’s play, *Women, Beware Women* (Act II, Scene 2). It recalls the scene of seduction of Bianca by the Duke, while her mother-in-law’s attention is diverted by a game of chess. Bianca is another Philomel in her woeful fate. Eliot also reinforces his theme by resorting immediately to a reference to *The Tempest*, wherein also a game of chess takes place between Ferdinand and Miranda (Act V, Scene I, lines 172-175), but which in contrast betokens amity and love. The overall subject of this Part is sex without love, particularly within marriage, which reduces it to a mere physical subjugation and bondage.

Part III also enacts the drama of sex without love, but this time outside marriage. Its title is taken from Lord Buddha’s “Fire Sermon.” First delivered at *Sarnath, Varanasi*, to his five disciples, the emphasis of which is ‘burning of the entire world’ in the fire of lust and passion. A similar voice was also raised by St. Augustine together herein, especially at the close. The wind that blows in the ‘Unreal City’ is quite unwholesome and unhygienic.

Part IV is very small and fragmentary; it symbolises failure in love and ascendancy of lust. It paints the picture of Phlebas the Phoenician. It is translated from one of Eliot’s earlier experiments in French, and underlines ‘the brevity of sensual life,’ according to Bullough. It suggests that man should give up ‘the traffic in worldly things and the lusts of the flesh’ in order to secure the love of God and humanity.

Part V has its title from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (5.1-3), which throws light on the teachings of Prajapati to his disciple-sons – men, demons and gods – to practise the triple virtues of Love, Sympathy and Control in the interest of all. In the first section of this Part, at least three themes are employed – the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous, and the present decay of eastern Europe. The poem ends on a note of ‘peace’ (‘shantih’); at least it throws up the possibility of man’s redemption by following the virtuous path.

## III. The Subject and the Style

The subject-matter of *The Waste Land* is simply religious and spiritual: precisely speaking, it is the growth of the loss of religious feeling in man. This theme is set within the framework of primitive ritualistic sex. According

to V.de S. Pinto, “*The Waste Land* is an essay in creating a poem on a grand scale out of vision of a devitalized world that has denied or ignored the spiritual life. He had already treated this theme on a small scale in *Gerontion*... The central conception of *The Waste Land* is sexual impotence used as a symbol for the spiritual malady of the modern world.”<sup>21</sup>

The main theme and sub-themes of this poem are cast in the form of a series of scenes which are rather like film-shots fading and dissolving into each other, and are seen from the viewpoint of an impersonal observer, Tiresias (the protagonist of the poem), who is identified with the impotent Fisher King. The two cardinal motives in the poem are: Memory and Desire. The noted scholar, Anthony Thwaite, has rightly remarked that “*The Waste Land* is ... not a mere reflection of hopelessness but a panoramic view of spiritual exhaustion comparable in desolation to the ‘terrible’ sonnets of Hopkins. The soul is scoured, and waits in emptiness for its revival.”<sup>22</sup>

I.A. Richards takes this poem as ‘a music of ideas,’ while Grover Smith regards it as “the possible release” from “the quandary of intractable flesh contending with reluctant spirit.”<sup>23</sup> The style of the poem is a typical compression of clearly visualised, often metaphysical, images, a vocabulary essentially modern, and a subtly suggestive use of the rhythms of ordinary speech. It tends to be highly allusive and over-burdened with literary and mythical references. Eliot evidently does not pay due regard to syntax and punctuation. Yet his skill in conveying a metrical sense is unquestionable, as observed by Helen Gardner – “*The Waste Land* (1922) represents the culmination of this period of metrical virtuosity. Its basic measure is the heroic lines, which it handles in almost every possible way.”<sup>24</sup> As the first section of this essay will indicate clearly, Eliot is quite derivative here in his technique and full of difficult scholarship. His notes given at the close of the poem will also confirm this view.

#### IV. Eliot's International

We have already thrown light on Eliot’s varied sources and vast scope in *The Waste Land*. He has culled his material from all possible sources, and this makes him truly ‘international’ and ‘universal.’ It may be pointed out here that Eliot’s ‘internationalism’ or ‘universalism’ does not get in the way of his American ‘individualism’ or his Catholic ‘Europeanism.’ It rather transcends the narrow limitations of caste, creed and clime, rendering his work readily acceptable to all mankind. *The Waste Land* is verily a poem of this kind, and it displays the poet’s, as well as the reader’s, readiness to accept ‘the best that is known and thought in the world.’ O. Paz comes very close to admitting this fact when he remarks that –

*Eliot is universal in the sense in which all great poetry from the funeral chants of the pygmies to the Hai-ku of the Japanese, is the common heritage of all men; and he is universal also because of his influence in world literature of our time, comparable to that of Klee in painting or that of Stravinsky in music: an influence which differs from others because it is a critical influence.*<sup>25</sup>

*The Waste Land* definitely adds laurels to the creative cap of Eliot and helps build for him an internationally acceptable stature. It is this that M.C. Bradbrook suggests when she states that the poem is “certainly Eliot’s most influential poem,” and that “The generations which grew up in the later nineteen-twenties took it to themselves and absorbed it so that it became part of their habit of mind.”<sup>26</sup>

#### V. Conclusion

Eliot was an American by birth and breeding, a British by acquired citizenship and anglo-catholicism, a European by culture and tradition, and an ‘internationalist’ by taste and outlook upon life. His liberal education and broadbased training enabled him to adopt a cosmopolitan outlook upon life and letters. He never hesitated to

take the services of any land or people in meeting his poetic purpose and furthering his literary designs. It is when *The Waste Land* is seen in this perspective that it becomes truly 'international' in its scope and structure, adding an extra punch to the reader's sensibility by enabling him to have a clear "vision of a devitalized world"<sup>27</sup> around him.

### Notes and References

1. Stephen Coote, "Afterword," *The Waste Land* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England : Penguin Books, 1985), p. 141.
2. *Idem.*
3. T.S. Eliot, "Notes on *The Waste Land*," *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (London; Faber & Faber, 1972), p. 44.
4. Coote, *op. Cit.*, p. 95.
5. See Eliot's Notes, p. 44.
6. Grover Smith, T.S. Eliot's poetry and Plays, 9<sup>th</sup> Impr. (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 76.
7. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Waste Land* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p.90.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
9. See Eliot's Notes, p. 45.
10. Coote, *op. Cit.*, p. 127.
11. See Eliot's Notes, p. 49.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 48
13. "William Empson and the Fire Sermon," *Essays in Criticism*, VI, No. 4 (Oct. 1956), 481.
14. E.L. Mayo, "The Influence of Ancient-Hindu Thought on Walt Whitman and T.S. Eliot," *The Aryan Path*, XIX (Jan-Dec. 1958), 174.
15. See Eliot's Notes, p. 49.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
17. Elizabeth Drew, T.S. Eliot: *The Design of His Poetry* (New York : Charles Scibner's Sons, 1949), p. 116.
18. For details, please look up my book, *T.S. Eliot's Major Poems: An Indian Interpretation* (Salzburg, Austria: University of Salzburg, 1982), pp. 53-56.
19. See Eliot's Notes, p. 46-47.
20. Coote, *op. Cit.*, p. 129.
21. See Pinto's Book, *Crisis in English Poetry: 1880-1940*, p. 170.
22. See Thwaite's book, *Contemporary English Poetry*, p. 60.
23. G. Smith, *op. Cit.*, p. 129.
24. Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot.*, p. 19.
25. O. Paz, "Inaugural Address," *T.S. Eliot: Papers and Proceedings of a Seminar* (Mumbai: Manaktalas, 1965), p. 2.
26. M.C. Bradbrook, *T.S. Eliot*, a British Council Pamphlet (London : Longmans, Green & Co. 1955), p. 19.
27. Pinto, *op. Cit.*, 170.

## 9. "The Waste Land": A Critical Study

*The Waste Land* appeared in 1922. It was the first attempt of the poet to create a major poem with a philosophical message the poem provides a good illustration of the use of 'objective correlatives' and the great economy of

words which such use can bring about. It is almost an epic in less than five hundred lines. 'It is an epic on man and on human civilization, not any particular civilization. But on the sum total of human achievements since the dawn of history to the modern times'<sup>1</sup>. According to Matthlessen, the poem expresses "the agony of a society without belief."<sup>2</sup>

Grover Smith sees *The Waste Land* as a consummation of 'Memory and Desire'. Leavis hails the work as one "that compelled recognition for the achievement". Of course, with the appearance of this poem in five Sections, the world began to realize Eliot's greatness as a modern poet. "In 1922 a new star became lord of the ascendant. Mr. Eliot's *Waste Land* was hailed by the rising generation as a landmark in English poetry comparable to the *Lyrical Ballads*."<sup>3</sup>

The title of the poem comes from Miss J.L. Weston's book. *From Ritual to Romance*, which has an anthropological theme: the Waste Land in that work has a significance in terms of Fertility Ritual. The question is – what is the significance of the modern Waste Land? The answer may be found in "the rich disorganisation of the poem."<sup>4</sup> Leavis remarks that "the seeming disjointedness" of the poem is closely connected with the erudition so puzzling to the reader and with "the wealth of literary borrowings and allusions." The characteristics noted here reflect "the present state of civilization." As a result, traditions and cultures have mingled, and the historical imagination makes the past contemporary; no one tradition can digest so great a variety of materials. This naturally leads to a break-down of forms and the irrevocable loss of that sense of absoluteness which seems necessary to a robust culture.

Nobody would deny the fact that the poem is a difficult and complex one in content and technique; its details are inextricably woven together. The poem, as such, passes the comprehension of the common reader. It hints can be picked up, but they can't be easily explained. "It is no use approaching Eliot in a state of wise passiveness. You have to use your wits."<sup>5</sup> It is partly so because it was written under the stimulus of Ezra Pound, whose ruthless abridgments sealed the shape of the poem. Pound was helpful to Eliot in more than one way.

In *The Waste Land* we have, in addition to the 'ritualistic figures,' 'legendary myths', complex structure based on analogy and anomaly, the abrupt progression through five Movements or Sections – (1) "The Burial of the Dead", (2) "The Game of Chess", (3) "The Fire Sermon", (4) "Death by Water", and (5) "What the Thunder Said". Throughout the poem appears the figure of Tiresias, representing entire humanity; it is his presence that gives unity to the work. The real unity of the work as the historian Albert has noted, lies in its "emotional atmosphere"<sup>6</sup>

One of the things that makes *The Waste Land* really difficult is the use of symbols by T.S. Eliot. The poem is built round the symbols of drought and flood, representing death and birth. This is a recurrent thought in the poem. Other symbols used in it are hardly capable of precise explanation. Mark what Bullough has to say in this respect in *The Trend of Modern Poetry*. 'Mr. Eliot uses symbols drawn from kindred myths and religion'. And F.O. Matthlessen says, "The drama of *The Waste Land* is built upon the contrast of repeated and varying symbols of drought and rain; much of its unified effect depends upon the frequent return of the Unreal City, with its 'trams and dusty trees', its murky streets 'under the brown fog of a winter noon', its dull canal made suddenly horrible by the slimy belly of a rat."<sup>7</sup>

Another much-complained thing contributing to the complexity of the poem is its remote references and recondite allusions. The opening epigraph of the sibyl legend, the *Tristan and Isolde* verses, Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (line 76), the *Aenled* remembrance (line 92), Ovid's 'Metomorphoses' and Philomela (line 99), Verlaine's *Parsifal* (I. 202), the Grail legends, the Vegetation myth, the Chapel Perilous in Part V, seen against the background of "the hyacinth garden" in Part I, the mystical teachings of the Indian sages and of the *Upanishads* are some of the references out of the reach of common reader. The poem is reminiscent of the Elizabethan and Metaphysical extravagances and conceits. In evoking the images Eliot seems to echo Baudelaire, and in adopting a symbolic device in poetry he is close to the French Symbolists. The echoes of Dante, St. Augustine, Lord Buddha, Miss J.L. Weston are heard throughout the poem. Yet George Morris has suggested another

figure who left deep mark on Eliot's *The Waste Land*; it is Countess Marie Larisch, who wrote "My Past". Morris says, "T.S. Eliot was certainly one who read it, and before he wrote *The Waste Land*,"<sup>8</sup> He traces this fact on the philological basis.

The best way to begin reading the poem is to regard it as a phantasmagoria of futility a series of trains of thought in the mind of a social observer. Eliot has introduced such an observer in the person of Tiresias, the seer, who having been both man and woman represents the characteristics of all mankind.

Section I, called *The Burial of the Dead* to emphasise the inevitable dissolution which must precede new life, begins with a lament over the loss of fertility in what should be Spring-season, and illustrates this by means of typical chatter of cosmopolitan idlers, passing thence to symbols of our barrenness. The decay of love in the modern world is then suggested by a quotation from Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (romantic idolatory), with which is compared an instance of amorous sentimentality. That secret wisdom, too, has fallen on evil days is shown by the introduction of the Tarot pack of cards, used formerly for divination, now for fortune-telling. He ends with a vision of London as an unreal city in a nightmare of memories –

*That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?  
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?*

The connection with the fertility cult is thus stressed here.

In Section II, called *A Game of Chess* to recall the dramatic irony of Middleton's Bianca and the fatal power of woman, the poet depicts two types of modern woman in contrasted literary styles. After a picture of a luxurious boudoir which rivals Keats's he gives the petulant conversation of its tenant, and her eternal question–

*What shall we do to- morrow?  
What shall we ever do?*

The man replies –

*The hot water at ten.  
And if it rains, a closed car at four.  
And we shall play a game of chess,  
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door*

Then the scene changes to a pub at closing time, and the garrulous mean talk of another woman follows.

In Section III, the tone of disgust deepens. It is called *The Fire Sermon* to suggest to the initiated the sermon of Lord Buddha, in which he spoke of mankind as burning in the flames of lust, hatred and infatuation. Here we are shown the sordidness of urban pleasures. Just as the poet introduced into the boudoir scene touches of Cleopatra and Dido, so now he recalls the river of Spenser's *Prothalamion*, and with equally devastating irony goes on to parody Goldsmith's *When Lovely Woman*, in order to contrast the cynicism of the modern girl with the 18<sup>th</sup> century sentimental ideal. So also is used Wagner's *Rheingold* melodies, and a picture of Queen Elizabeth flirting with Leicester in her barge, to emphasise the permanence of human sensuality and the degradation to which it has now fallen. With agony of soul the allusions are made to the repentance of St. Augustine and to the teachings of the Buddha :-

*O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest  
burning.*

In the short fourth Section, called *Death by Water*; the picture of Phlebas the Phoenician is painted. This section is translated from one of Eliot's earlier experiments in French. It emphasises 'the brevity of sensual life' (Bullough). It suggests that man should give up 'the traffic in worldly things and the lusts of the flesh,' which separate him from love of God and humanity at large.

In Section V, called *What The Thunder Said*, several themes are recapitulated to assert the sterility of our life. The picture of a dreary desert is first painted. In this desert we suffer illusions; where two walk, there goes a shadowy third. There are murmurs and lamentations. When the seer reaches the a Chapel Perilous it seems empty; but as the doubting begins (betraying Christ), the cock crows twice. Thus God gives a sign, by thunder bringing rain. And the message of the thunder is delivered: *Datta, Dayadhvan, Damyata* (i.e., self-surrender, sympathy, self-control). These three ideals are the way to Salvation.

The poet then speaks of setting his own house in order, though the London Bridge is falling down. He must pass through the fire of purification, as Dante has shown us. He is obsessed by images of desolation, and a shower of literary allusions shows him slipping into frenzy. But like the charm of healing rain he repeats the message of the thunder and ends with the Sanskrit blessing : Shantih shantih shantih (“The peace which passeth understanding”).

We have so far given an interpretation of *The Waste Land*. Now we shall consider its theme. The subject is really simple and religious one – The growth and loss of religious feeling in man. The theme is set within the structure of primitive ritualistic sex. Pinto has observed about its theme and conception in the following manner : “All Eliot’s poetry converges on *The Waste Land* (1922)... *The Waste Land* is an essay in creating a poem on a grand scale out of vision of a devitalized world that has denied or ignored the spiritual life. He had already treated this theme on a small scale in *Gerontion*...The central conception of *The Waste Land* is sexual impotence used as a symbol for the spiritual malady of the modern world”.<sup>9</sup>

The themes of this symphonic poem are a series of scenes rather like film-shots fading and dissolving into each other, seen from the view-point of an impersonal observer, the protagonist of the poem, who is identified with the impotent Fisher King and also with Tiresias, the blind prophet of Greek legend. Two main motives in the poem are: Memory and Desire. One should rightly favour the judgement of Thwaite: “*The Waste Land* is thus not a mere reflection of hopelessness but a panoramic view of spiritual exhaustion, comparable in desolation to the ‘terrible’ sonnets of Hopkins. The soul is scoured, and waits in emptiness for its revival”.<sup>10</sup>

Almost all critics have given their unfeigned admiration to this epoch-making poem. To examine a few of them and heir utterances on *The Waste Land*, Miss M.C. Bradbrook emphasises the note of modernity in it which has been responsible to draw the younger generations to it. She says, “If it is not his greatest poem, *The Waste Land* is certainly Eliot’s most influential poem. The generations which grew up in the later nineteen-twenties took it to themselves, absorbed it so that it became part of their habit of mind.”<sup>11</sup> Leavis takes it as a representative poem of the age it was written in, and praises it for its “psycho-analysis”.<sup>12</sup> He does not subscribe to the view that “the poem lacks organization and unity.”<sup>13</sup> Matthiessen commends its dramatic intensity “in the externallized structure of parallel myths”.<sup>14</sup> This was achieved through the use of ‘objective correlative’. R.A. Scott-James thinks that in *The Waste Land* Eliot’s “imagination takes a higher flight”.<sup>15</sup> I.A.Richards takes it as ‘a music of ideas’. D.E.S. Maxwell first notes its derivative nature and then praises its valuable execution: “The initial impulse comes from Baudelaire; its application is Eliot’s alone”.<sup>16</sup> Grover Smith sees in it “the possible release” from “the quandary of intractable flesh containing with reluctant spirit”.<sup>17</sup>

The style of *The Waste Land* is a typical compression of clearly visualized, often metaphysical, imagery, a vocabulary essentially modern, and a subtly suggestive use of the rhythms of ordinary speech. It is highly allusive and over-burdened with literary and mythical references. As a modern poet, Eliot does not pay due regard to syntax and punctuation. Yet his skill in conveying a metrical sense is unquestionable, as has been noted by Miss Helen Gardner: “*The Waste Land* (1922) represents the culmination of this period of metrical virtuosity. Its basic measure is the heroic lines, which it handles in almost every possible way.”<sup>18</sup> We can definitely say that *The Waste Land* is Eliot’s *magnum opus*.

## References

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3. Grierson & Smith, *A Critical History Of English Poetry* p. 511.
4. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*, p. 90.
5. M.C. Bradbrook *The British Council Pamphlet*, p. 12.
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7. *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot*, p. 136.
8. See “Marie, Marie, Hold on Tight”, *T.S. Eliot*, ed. H. Kenner, p. 86.
9. See his *Crisis in English Poetry* (1880-1940), p. 170.
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12. *New Bearings in English Poetry*, p. 95.
13. *Ibid*, p. 103.
14. *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot*. P. 59.
15. *Fifty Years of English Literature*, p. 156.
16. *The Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, p. 60.
17. *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*, p.99.
18. H. Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, p.19.

### **10. Indian Thought in “The Waste Land”**

T.S. Eliot was a profound scholar of Sanskrit. He was well read in Indian philosophy and scriptures. Though he borrowed and derived his material from the Pagan and Christian sources, the influence of the *Rig Veda*, the *Upanishads* and Buddhism is quite explicit in *The Waste Land*. He was so lured by Buddhism that of the time of writing this poem, he seriously considered becoming a Buddhist, and he entitled the third Section of the poem as *The Fire Sermon* after *The Fire Sermon* of Lord Buddha.

Going through Eliot’s poetry, one may mark his irresistible attraction for the wisdom of ancient India, It is said of him that ‘but for Indian thought and sensibility he would have written altogether different kind of poetry’. In his poetry references exist to show that he had acquired knowledge of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Patanjali’s *Yoga-Sutras*, and Buddhistic lore and literature. For one thing, what is Upanishadic may also be Vedic for the simple reason that the *Upanishads* form the closing part of the Veda: for instance, the use of ‘Shantih Shantih Shantih’. *The Waste Land* is both Vedic in origin and Upanishadic in content. In the same poem, Eliot has drawn upon the *Brihadaranyake Upanishad* (5.1) in the threefold message of the Thunder – “Da Da Da”. These three words stand for *Datta*, *Dayadhvam*, *Damyata*, meaning ‘Given, sympathise, Control’ respectively. The message is symbolic in the context. It sums up the cryptic mode of Prajapati’s teaching to the three kinds of his disciples: gods, men and demons. When these disciples approach the father-preceptor, after the completion of their formal education, to ask him what virtues they should cultivate to lead a meaningful life, he utters the same word *Da* for three times, with a different meaning each time. For the gods, it means *Damyata* (Control yourself); for the men, it connotes *Datta* (Give in); and for the demons, it signifies *Dayadhvam* (Be compassionate). The clear-out-hint of Eliot in using this highly symbolical event from the *Upanishad* is at the prevailing sterility in the Waste Land, which can hardly be turned into an oasis unless the virtues exhorted by Prajapati are earnestly practised by mankind. The use of the *Upanishad* at a proper moment confirms Eliot’s digestion of the Hindu Scriptures. It shows that Eliot wanted the poetic fragments of the Hindu Scriptures incorporated in *The Waste Land* to be read and understood in a way alien to Western habit of thought. Hence the repetition of the actual Upanishadic words at the end of the poem. Conrad Aiken has brilliantly put it: ‘Why, again, ‘Datta,’ ‘Dayadhvam’, ‘Damyata’ or ‘Shantih’? Do they not say a good deal

less for us than ‘Give: sympathise: control’ or ‘Peace’? Of course; but Eliot replies that he wants them not merely to mean those particular things, but also to mean them in a particular way that is, to be remembered in connection with a Upanishad.’

### **Buddhism**

*What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday,  
and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: our  
life is the creation of our mind.  
If a man speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering  
follows him as the wheel of the cart follows the beast that  
draws the cart.*

– *Dhammpada (trans. Juan Mascaro)*

Eliot took the title of one of the Buddha’s sermons for the title of the third Section of *The Waste Land*. At the close of this he fuses its subject-matter with reminiscences of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, and comments: ‘The collection of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident.’ We should therefore try to trace the importance of *The Fire Sermon* in the Buddhist teaching.

At the heart of Buddhism lies enlightenment of the Buddha himself. Born a prince and sheltered from knowledge of the world’s ills, the inevitable contact with age, illness and death roused in him an irresistible desire to find the causes of the suffering and their solution. To this end, he gave up the life of his palace and for six years meditated on the problem of pain, imposing on himself the greatest physical austerity. Despite such discipline he found no answer. Eventually, at the age of thirty-five, he seated himself under a tree in the lotus position of meditation and vowed not to rise until he had achieved enlightenment. After a night of profound spiritual experience, he rose the next day as the all-Enlightened One.

Suffering and freedom from suffering lie at the heart of the Buddhist vision, and the cause of suffering is selfish desire. Each person sees himself as separate, unique, individual, and this self is the centre of his interest. How he wishes to exploit it may vary. A man may long to do good works or he may be consumed with lust. Either path is his ‘Karma’, the destiny that he has created for himself by the things he has yearned to do: ‘What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday.’ Desiring to act on the world weaves man into a net of cause and effect, and this binds him tight.

Man is caught on the wheel, the endless revolution of cause and effect, because he believes in the power of his separate, illusory self which wants now this, now that, now another thing. But this lower self is an illusion precisely because it is changed by its various wants. It is never the same but is in a constant state of flux. Such flux is suffering:

Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, association with the unpleasing is suffering, separation from the pleasing is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering.

The way beyond suffering is to realize that the self to which we are so attached has no fixed reality. Man must get beyond the circumstances that cause desire: ‘Our mind should stand aloof from circumstances, and on no account should we allow them to influence the function of our minds’. We must go beyond *Karma* and free ourselves from the Wheel of Life by right action and thought – what is known in Buddhism as the Nobles Eightfold Path and so enter *nirvana*, that state described as coming to pass when, after ‘the destruction of all that is individual in us, we enter into communion with the whole universe and become an integral part of the great purpose.’

Such freedom from desire – particularly sterile sexual desire – is one clear way out of *The Waste Land*. However, just as in his use of Dante Eliot could refer only to the world of the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, so with Buddhism it is not the final beatific end that is glimpsed in *The Waste Land*; rather, it is the analysis of worldly

suffering provided by religious experience. This is particularly clear in Eliot's citing of *The Fire Sermon*. This was actually preached to a group of Indian fire-worshippers whose beliefs formed its imagery. In the Sermon, Buddha describes how burning desire binds men to the world and to illusion and suffering. Freedom from these is the goal of the wise man:

All things are on fire: the eye is on fire, forms are on fire, eye-consciousness is on fire: the impressions received by the eye are on fire, and whatever sensation originates in the impressions received by the eye is likewise on fire. And with what are these things on fire? With the fires of lust, anger and illusion, with these they are on fire, and so were the other senses, and so was the mind. Wherefore the wise man conceives disgust for the things for the senses he removes from his heart the cause of suffering

In *The Waste Land*, the Narrator still feels consumed with desire, and in this he is at one with St. Augustine wrecked by the lust of Carthage. The two – Lord Buddha and St. Augustine – make a 'collocation' here because their experience of lust and desire is similar. So, too, was their belief that the solution to the problem was ascetic and spiritual.

### The Rig Veda

*The Waste Land* opens with a description of Nature in April. The word 'nature' takes a different meaning if we relate to the primitive Aryan cult of nature, and the seasons have a different meaning if we try to imagine what they meant for the singers of the *Rig Veda*. More than a disguise of Eliot's convictions as a Christian, the allusions to Indian rituals are the whole foundation of the poem.' These rituals have never been completely lost: they still exist in various isolated manifestations of folk-lore, they have been observed, and transmitted by the Templars and the Knight of the Grail; they were preserved by the early Grail legends, then they were forbidden by the Church, and they make a last literary appearance with Tennyson, Wagner, E.A. Robinson and Matthew Arnold. The disappearance of these rituals in Western Europe coincides with a weakening of religious belief and with the corresponding meaninglessness of our life. *The Waste Land* of our epoch is a dry land, that is a land deprived of its connections with the help from supernatural forces and fertilizing deities.

In order to understand why water occupies such an important place in *The Waste Land*, it is necessary to remember *the meaning of water* for the Indian populations where the 'nature cult' and 'vegetation ceremonies' took place: 'We must first note that a very considerable number of the Rig-Veda hymns depend for their initial inspiration on the actual bodily need and requirements of a mainly agricultural population, i.e. of a people that depend upon the fruits of the earth for their subsistence, and to whom the regular and ordered sequence of the processes of Nature was a vital necessity.' (*From Ritual to Romance*) This passage throws an intense light on the opening lines of *The Waste Land*.

In the third Section of the poem, Eliot wants to show that passion and lust are inherent elements in human nature and they are the sources of suffering. Eliot finds the 'objective correlative' for this theme in the *Fire Sermon* preached by Lord Buddha to the assembled priests. The Section closes with the words of the Buddha and St. Augustine about the 'burning' of the human world in 'the fire of lust'.

In the fourth Section, "Death by Water", Eliot derives much from the Indian philosophy. When he writes:

*A current under sea  
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell  
He passed the stages of his age and youth  
Entering the whirlpool.*

It seems that Eliot was acquainted with a basic conception in Indian Philosophy – that the sense-ridden soul is tied to the cycle of birth and re-birth through endless ages till it is disciplined and enlightened by subduing the strong pull of the senses which pave the way for its final release.

The allusion to water in “Death by Water” takes us to the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. What ‘death by water’ meant for the early Indian is well-explained by Miss Weston. ‘Tradition relates that the seven great rivers of India had been imprisoned by the evil giant, Vitra, or Ahi, who Indra slew, thereby releasing the streams from their captivity.’ The *Rig Veda* hymns abound in references to this feat...

‘Indra has filled the rivers, he has inundated the dry  
land.’  
‘Indra has released the imprisoned waters to flow upon  
the earth.’

## The Upanishads

In the whole of the world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life – it will be the solace of my death.

- Schopenhauer

Near the end of *The Waste Land*, after the disappointment of the empty Grail chapel, the Narrator sees a flash of lightning and feels the promise of rain. We return to the vegetation cults, the rites that secured the fertility of the land, but we also move forward to the Hindu teachings of the *Upanishads*.

At the core of these Sanskrit gospels (which date from about 600 B.C.) is the idea that the goal of man’s religious quest lies in identifying his self, or *atman*, with *Brahman*, the supreme source of all things. It is a mystical union in which the ego frees itself and the soul is at one with the great cosmic force who fashioned the world out of his self-delighting creativity. The core of the individual is now joined to the essence of the universe. It is a state of heightened sense of being, consciousness and delight.

In *The Waste Land* Eliot draws upon the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. It has a parable that tells how when the gods, men and the devils had finished their student days with Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, they asked him for some final words of wisdom. To each he uttered the syllable ‘Da’. The gods understood this to have been ‘Damayata’. Meaning ‘to be subdued’ or ‘self-controlled.’ Men thought, he said ‘*Datta*’ which is the Sanskrit for ‘give’; while the evil spirits thought they heard him say ‘*Dayadhvam*’ or ‘be merciful.’

The presentation here of the Lord of Creation as a god calls for some explanation. After all, the passages from the *Upanishads* make it clear that he is a force rather than an incarnate deity. In fact, Hinduism recognizes the supreme difficulty of visualizing a purely spiritual godhead and so allows incarnation in many forms as an aid to worship. In this particular case, the incarnation of the source of life as Indra, a deity who could take on an endless variety of forms at will, is important since he is the god who, with his thunderbolt in his right hand, is the dispenser of thunder and lightning. Indra is the god of rain and fertility who is constantly at war with drought.

It is this figure who thus brings to a head the vegetation gods who have their roles in the earlier sections of the poem. Indra, the God of Thunder, suggests the promise of a Waste Land redeemed through rain. But he is more than this. He comes in the lightning, and lightning is an Indian symbol of enlightenment. The enlightenment that he brings is the moral teaching of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*:

The divine voice of thunder repeats the same Da Da Da, that is, be subdued, Give, Be merciful. Therefore let that triad be taught: Subduing, Giving, Mercy.

Here are the Hindu principles of ‘right action’, whose practice has little to do with the intellect and nothing to do with selfish desire. They are a form of moral teaching that also happen to be associated with fertility. They do not in themselves bring rain, but in Eliot’s interpretation. They are close to some of the Narrator’s most spiritual experiences (11.395-422), which are in turn connected with the possibility of a Waste Land redeemed. It is partly for this reason that Eliot can end his poem with the three repeated Sanskrit words that close an *Upanishad* and mean in a western, Christianized translation: ‘The Peace which passeth all understanding’.

## 11. Annotations of the Poem

### The Epigraph

In Greek mythology Sibyls were women possessing great prophetic powers. The Sibyl at Cumae was the most famous of them. The Sibyl Cumae was the most famous of them. At her request Apollo granted her immortality, but in her excitement she forgot to ask for perpetual youth. Consequently she became aged and infirm, and though she held grains in her hand as a count of her years her powers of prophecy declined.

For once I saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae near Naples hanging in a cage, and when the children said to her, 'Sibyl, what do you wish?' she answered, 'I wish to die'.

These words are uttered by the drunken Trimalchio in the *Satyricon*, a satire composed by the Roman satirist Petronius Arbiter in the first century <sup>AD</sup>.

The Sibyl at Cumae is said to have guided Aeneas through Hades and this journey is described by Virgil in his Aeneid. However, the Satyricon or Virgilian prophetic woman seems to 'have degenerated into Madame Sosostris' in *The Waste Land*.

**Ezra Pound** (1885-1972): Well-known American poet and critic whose Cantos earned him an important place in the modernist movement in American and European poetry. Eliot dedicated *The Waste Land* to Pound as a token of his gratitude

**il miglior fabbro**: Meaning 'the better craftsman'. These words, in Italian, are used by Dante (*Purgatorio* <sup>xxvi</sup>, 117) as a tribute by Guinicelli to Arnaut Daniel, the twelfth-century Provençal poet and artist.

### 1. The Burial of the Dead

**The burial of the dead**: 'The Order for the Burial of the Dead' is the complete title of the burial service in the Church of England, as derived from *The Book of Common Prayer*. In a related context the burial of the dead is also intended to convey the burial of the fertility gods as explained by Jessie Weston and James Frazer. These myths are related to vegetation cults and harvest festivals, and the cycle of fertility and decay, spring and winter, in nature. In Egypt the cycles of fertility and decay were personified as gods, such as Osiris, who were buried or drowned in the sea and reclaimed in the spring.

**Line 1, April...month**: April, the harbinger of Spring, is also connected with the great event of Christ's resurrection, Easter. In the fertility rituals also, April is connected with the new harvest, and the strength and potency of the Fisher King, which give fertility to his lands. However, Eliot calls it 'cruellest' because resurrection and new harvests are looked upon with fear in the valueless waste land. The idea has already occurred to him in 'Gerontion' ('depraved May', line 21).

**Line 2, Lilacs out of the dead land**: Lilac flowers are symbols of spring, renewal in nature, and fertility Eliot reverses the implication of this allusion.

**Lines 6-7, feeding/A little life with dried tubers**: Eliot alludes to James Thomson (1832-82), 'To Our Ladies of Death': cf. 'Our Mother feedeth thus our little life,/ That we in turn may feed her with our death'.

**Line 8, Starnbergersee**: The name of a lake resort near Munich in West Germany. It is also known for King Ludwig's Castle, Schloss Berg. It was in this lake that Ludwig tried in vain to escape and was drowned, Eliot visited the place in 1911.

**Line 10, Hofgarten**: A public park in Munich: 'Royal Garden'.

**Line 12, Bingar... echt deutch**: 'I am not Russian at all. I come from Lithuania; I am pure, real German'.

**Lines 15-16, Marie, Marie, hold on tight**: An incident derived from *My Past* (1913), the autobiography of Marie Larisch, a countess and relation of King Ludwig. Eliot had met her and talked about the sledding which is referred to in the poem. Marie was interested in fortune-telling through cards and was assassinated on the banks of Lake Lemman.

**Line 20, Son of Man:** cf. Ezekiel 2:1. ‘And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will, speak unto thee’. Eliot himself refers to ‘The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel’ (Old Testament) in his notes.

**Lines 22, A heap of broken images:** cf. Ezekiel 6:6: ‘And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, “In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished” (Old Testament).

**Line 23, the cricket no relief:** cf. Ecclesiastes 12:5. Eliot refers to this passage: ‘Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets’.

**Line 26, (Come in under the Shadow of this red rock):** These lines seem very similar to the opening of one of Eliot’s early poems, ‘The Death of Saint Narcissus’ (written about 1912):

**Line 30, I will...handful of dust:** This significant phrase is found in John Donne’s *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624), in Meditation <sub>IV</sub>: ‘What’s become of man’s great extent and proportion, when himself shrinks himself, and consumes himself to a handful of dust. . . . The allusion is also Biblical: cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7: ‘Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was’.

**Lines 31-4, Frisch...weilest du?:** Eliot himself has referred to *Tristan and Isolde*, <sub>I</sub>, verses 5-8. The reference is to Richard Wagner’s opera *Tristan and Isolde* in which a young man sings of his absent sweet-heart: ‘The wind blows fresh to the homeland. My Irish girl, where are you lingering?’

**Line 35, hyacinths:** A flower presented as a symbol of resurrection. Hyacinthus was the name of a pre-Hellenic god. He was killed in an accident, and, in Greek myth, a flower grew out of his blood.

**Lines 37-41, Yet when... silence:** An experience of love which is partly mystical. The tragic passion of Tristan and Isolde, and the potion they drink, binds them together eternally. ‘Silence in the heart of light’ is an image derived from Dante’s *Paradiso*.

**Line 42, Oed’... Meer:** Another reference to the Wagnerian opera, *Tristan and Isolde*, <sub>III</sub>, 24. Tristan is about to die and is waiting for his beloved, Isolde, but a shepherd, appointed to watch for her sail, can only report that there is no sign of her ship: ‘Desolate and empty is the sea’.

**Line 43, Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyante:** There appears a fake fortune-teller in Aldous Huxley’s novel *Chrome Yellow* (1921) in chapter <sub>XXXVII</sub>, whose name is Madame Sosotris. Eliot had read this novel before writing *The Waste Land* (1922), but the borrowing is quite unconscious. Originally, it was an Egyptian name: Sesotris, the sorceress of Echatana.

**Line 44, Had a bad cold:** Eliot’s mode of creating bathos and an unexpected ironic touch.

**Lines 46-56, With a wicked pack of cards:** Eliot said he was ‘not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards’ and that he made use of it to ‘suit my own convenience’. The four suits of the Tarot pack (described by Jessie Weston) are the cup, lance, sword and dish – the life symbols found in the Grail legends. Originally the Tarot pack of 78 cards was used by Egyptian priests to read the future or to foretell the rise and fall of the Nile waters. This ancient art has here been vulgarized by fortunetellers such as Madame Sosotris.

**Line 47, Phoenician Sailor:** He is kind of fertility god whose image was committed to the sea and later reclaimed. He is also shown as Phlebas in section <sub>IV</sub> of *The Waste Land*.

**Line 48 (Those are pearls that were his eyes Look!):** This is a quotation from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1610), part of Ariel’s song in which he tells Prince Ferdinand about the supposed drowning of his father Alonso, the king of Naples:

*Full fathom five thy father lies;  
Of his bones are coral made;  
Those are pearls that were his eyes:  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.*

(*I.ii. 396-401*)

**Line 49, Belladonna:** In Italian this means ‘beautiful lady’, is also the name of one of the three ‘Fates’ in classical mythology.

**Line 49, Lady of the Rocks:** Eliot had in mind a passage from Walter Pater’s *The Renaissance* (1873) where Pater (1839-94) discusses Mona Lisa, La Gioconda, a picture painted by Leonardo da Vinci. The picture shows a woman with a haunting smile.

**Line 51, man with three staves:** He is identified with the mythical Fisher King. Here he is only a figure on the Tarot pack of cards.

**Line 51, Wheel:** The wheel of Fortune which rotates and shows the ups and downs of life.

**Line 52, one-eyed merchant:** He is described as ‘one-eyed’ (Jack) because only one eye is visible on the Tarot card picture. He is linked with the Smyrna merchant, Mr Eugenides. It is believed that these merchants carried on foreign trade and also communicated the mysteries to fertility cults of their fellow men in Syria and other places in the Middle East.

**Line 55, The Hanged Man:** Figure with a T-shaped Cross on the Tarot pack, a man hanging. Eliot obviously associates him with James Frazer’s Hanged God, the divine idol sacrificed for restoring fertility to the land.

**Line 55, Fear death by water:** A timely warning which reverberates in many places, particularly in section IV.

**Line 60, Unreal city:** In this allusion Eliot refers to the poem by Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) entitled ‘Les Septs Vieillards’ (The Seven Old Men). The ‘unreal city’ of Baudelaire (Paris) seems to merge with the other ‘unreal’ cities, such as Eliot’s London or Dante’s city in the Inferno.

**Lines 62-3, so many,... so many:** cf. Dante, *Inferno*, III, 55-7:

*It never would have entered in my head  
There were so many men whom death had slain.*

(*trans. Dorothy Sayers*)

Dante spoke these words to Virgil as he observed the ‘damned’ in hell perpetually moving towards a constantly shifting ideal.

**Line 64, Sighs... exhaled:** cf. Dante, *Inferno*, IV, 25-7:

*We heard no loud complaint, no crying there,  
No sound of grief except the sound of sighing  
Quivering for ever through the eternal air.*

(*trans. Dorothy Sayers*)

Dante describes the state of the virtuous pagans in Limbo, excluded from the bliss of God’s presence.

**Line 66, King William Street:** A street in London where Eliot walked daily to reach his office.

**Line 67, Saint Mary Woolnoth:** A famous Anglican Church with beautiful interior decorations designed by Sir Christopher Wren. It was proposed to be demolished, but a report recommended its preservation.

**Line 69, Stetson:** A reference to Ezra Pound who was nicknamed ‘Buffalo Bill’. Pound was known for his very impressive stetson hat.

**Line 70, Mylae:** The Battle of Mylae (260<sub>BC</sub>) was part of the Punic wars fought between the Romans and the Carthaginians.

**Line 71, 'That...garden:** This refers to ancient fertility rites in which the images of gods were buried in the fields or thrown into the sea.

**Line 74:** Eliot refers to the dirge in John Webster's play, *The White Devil*. This is sung by Cornelia as a lament for her son, Marcello (Act V, Sc. iv).

**Line 76, 'You... frere!':** Eliot alludes to Charles Baudelaire's book of poems *Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). The last line in the poem 'Au Lecteur' (To the Reader) is translated thus: 'O Hypocrite reader, my fellow-man, my brother!' This is the prefatory poem in Baudelaire's volume.

## II. A Game of Chess

**A Game of Chess:** The title is taken from the play *A Game Of Chess* (1624) by Thomas Middleton (1570-1627), a satire on an uneasy marriage forced by political necessity. In another play of Middleton, *Women Beware Women* (1621), is shown an actual game of chess played by Livia. She is the Duke's accomplice and plays with the mother. Meanwhile the Duke is seducing Bianca, which is another kind of game. The woman at the dressing table is reminiscent of *Belinda in Pope's The Rape of the Lock* (1714).

**Line 77, The Chair...throne:** This is based on Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The queen is travelling in a decorated barge on the river Cydnus in Asia Minor.

**Line 80, Cupidon:** The golden image of Cupid, the god of love.

**Line 82, candelabra:** A large, branched candlestick.

**Line 87, synthetic perfumes:** Artificial perfumes made out of chemicals. This is in tune with the artificiality of the lady's way of life.

**Line 88, unguent:** Oily.

**Line 92, laquearia:** A panelled ceiling. Eliot refers to Virgil's description of the banquet given by Dido, Queen of Carthage, in honour of her lover, Aeneas, who finally deserted her.

**Line 93, coffered:** Adorned with sunken, low panels.

**Line 98, sylvan scene:** Eliot has referred to the description in Milton's *Paradise Lost* of Satan's response to his first sight of the Garden of Eden:

**Line 99:** Eliot has referred to Ovid's (43<sub>BC-AD</sub> 18) *Metamorphoses* (vi) and his version of the myth of Philomela. Philomela was raped by King Tereus of Thrace. She was the sister of Procne, wife of Tereus. The king cut out Philomela's tongue to prevent her from speaking about the outrage. Philomela depicted her misfortune on a piece of tapestry and sent it to her sister. In revenge the sister slaughtered Itys (the child of Tereus by Procne) and fed him to Tereus (the eating of human flesh becomes the symbol of Communion). The crisis grew to a pitch and the king then tried to kill both Procne and Philomela into a nightingale, Procne into a swallow and King Tereus into a hoopoe.

**Line 103, Jug Jug:** This was a conventional way of representing a bird song in Elizabethan poetry. Crudely, the term was also used as a suggestion for sexual intercourse, even as a joke. The tragic myth of Philomela is thus vulgarized.

**Lines 111-23:** This scene resembles the one described by D.H. Lawrence in 'The Fox' (published in *The Dial*, 1921).

**Line 115, rat's alley:** A meaningful image of spiritual darkness and modern man's sense of loss.

**Line 118:** The reference is to *The Devil's Law Case*, III.ii.162 by John Webster and to the surgeon's comments in it.

**Line 125, 'Those...his eyes':** Ariel's song in *The Tempest*.

**Line 128, The ‘Shakespeherian Rag’:** A very popular jazz song in the years of the First World War (1914-18). It was an American ‘hit’ of 1912. It was partly an adaptation of Kenneth Ball’s song, ‘O you Beautiful doll’:

*That Shakespeherian rag  
Most intelligent, very elegant*

The ‘OOOO’ and the extra syllable catch the syncopated rhythm of ragtime music.

**Line 137:** Eliot refers to the game of chess in Middleton’s *Women Beware Women* II. ii. While Livia plays chess, Bianca is being seduced.

**Line 139, demobbed:** Discharged from the army; a slang expression, an abbreviation for ‘demobilized’.

**Line 114, HURRY...TIME:** The call of the bartender notifying the customers of closing time in a pub. The bartender’s call is perhaps an echo from Shakespeare’s ‘knock’.

**Lines 142-70:** This episode seems to have been based on a real experience as described to the Eliots by their house-maid, Ellen Kellond.

**Line 166, gammon:** Ham or bacon.

**Line 171, Ta ta:** (Slang) good-bye.

**Line 172:** These are the last words of the mad Ophelia as she leaves the royal room. She imagines she has been deserted by Hamlet and sings a song of St Valentine’s Day (*Hamlet*, IV.v.72). More importantly, Ophelia meets her death by water.

### III. The Fire Sermon

**The Fire Sermon:** The subtitle is based on Lord Buddha’s great sermon to his disciples against the fires of anger, lust and malice, the temptations that consume men. It also evokes the sentiments of St. Augustine about unholy passions as well as the injunctions of St Paul against unholy alliances.

**Line 173, The river’s ...broken:** An image of the shelter provided by leafy branches of trees over-hanging the river.

**Lines 175-9:** Eliot cites the source in the refrain of the nuptial song in *Prothalamion* by Edmund Spenser (1552-99). Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset, daughters of the Earl of Worcester, were being married (1596) and the nuptial song was composed for that event. The Elizabethan nymphs of pastoral grandeur are gone; so are the modern nymphs – the call girls of London.

**Line 182:** The lamentation and sorrow of the Israelites recalling their exile in Babylon, when they remembered Zion. The local Swiss name for Lake Geneva in Switzerland is Lake Lemman. By a curious coincidence, parts of *The Waste Land* were composed near Lake Lemman in Lausanne. The common noun ‘leman’ is also associated with a mistress, hence ‘the waters of Lemman’ are linked with the fires of lust.

**Line 185, But at my...I hear:** cf. An ironic contrast to the lines of Andrew Marvell in his poem, ‘To His Coy Mistress’:

*But at my back I always hear  
Time’s winged chariot hurrying near*

The lover urges his beloved to forsake coyness since time is fleeing. The reference to Marvell occurs again.

**Line 189:** cf. The Fisher King of mythology. To fish is to seek eternity and salvation.

**Lines 191-2:** Eliot refers to *The Tempest* I.ii and to the passage where Ferdinand is made to think of his father:

**Line 196:** Another ironic reference to Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress*.

**Lines 197-8:** Eliot cites John Day (1574-1640), *The Parliament of Bees*, quoting:

*When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear,  
A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring  
Actaeon to Diana in the spring,  
When all shall see her naked skin...*

According to Greek legends the huntsman Actaeon shocked Diana (goddess of chastity) who was bathing with her nymphs. As a punishment she turned him into a stag and he was hunted to death.

**Line 198, Sweeney:** In Eliot's poetry he is the sensual sex-hungry man who occurs in three poems: 'Sweeney Erect', 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' and 'Sweeney Agonistes'.

**Lines 199-201:** Eliot writes that these lines are derived from a ballad which was popular among troops in the First World War. The soldiers sang it as they invaded Gallipoli in 1915, and a reporter from Sydney, Australia, described that scene.

**Line 202:** 'And O those children's voices singing in the dome': In these words (translated) Verlaine is alluding to Wagner's *Parsifal*. Eliot says the source, the final line to the sonnet 'Parsifal' composed by Paul Verlaine (1844-96), describes how the questing knight – Parsifal – resists the seductive charms of Kundry. His feet are washed to the accompaniment of children's choir music. In the Grail Legend the food washing precedes the restoration of the wounded Antortas (the Fisher King) by Parzival, and then the curse on the waste land is lifted.

**Line 205, So rudely forc'd:** A phrase derived from 'A Game of Chess'.

**Line 206, Tereu:** Tereu is the Latin vocative form of Tereus, the king, who raped Philomela.

**Line 209, Smyrna:** Modern Izmir in the western part of Turkey, a great centre of trade.

**Lines 209-14:** The events described in these lines actually happened. A man from Smyrna invited Eliot, and he had currants in his pocket. The implication of homosexuality, however, is imaginary.

**Line 211, C.i.f.:** 'Cost, insurance and freight'. Valerie Eliot has corrected Eliot's original note: see *The Waste Land Facsimile*, p. 147.

**Line 211, documents at sight:** The bill of lading was to be given to the buyer upon payment of 'draft at sight'.

**Line 212, demotic:** Vulgar, abominable.

**Line 213, Cannon Street Hotel:** A hotel close to Cannon Street station in London.

**Line 214, Metropole:** A fashionable luxury hotel in Brighton, a seaside resort on the south coast, sixty miles from London. The proposals made by Eugenides to the protagonist for a 'week-end at Brighton' has homosexual implications.

**Lines 215-23:** These lines recreate the evening scene at the opening to the *Purgatorio*, viii.

**Line 218, Tiresias:** Eliot notes that Tiresias is 'the most important personage' in the poem and that 'the two sexes met in him'. He also quotes the relevant passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which narrates the story of Tiresias's change of sex. Tiresias came across two snakes copulating in a forest. He hit them with his staff and, in consequence, was changed into a woman. Eight years later he repeated the blow in a similar situation and regained his masculinity. Later a dispute arose between Jove and Juno on the issue of whether in love the woman derives the greater pleasure than the man; Juno argued that the reverse was the truth. Tiresias sided with Jove and therefore Juno blinded him. To compensate for this Jove gave him the gift of prophecy and long life. Tiresias forgot to ask for the gift of youth.

**Line 219, old man...breasts:** A repetition of the phrases used by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*.

**Line 221:** Eliot mentions Fragment 149 written by the seventh-century Greek poetess Sappho, which is a prayer to the Evening Star. 'Evening Star, that brings back all that the sinking Dawn has sent far and wide, you

bring back the sheep, the goat, and the child back to the mother.’ But the connection with ‘Requiem’ by Robert Louis Stevenson is more immediate:

*Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill.*

**Line 227, Camisole:** Under-bodice.

**Line 227, stays:** Corsets.

**Line 231, the young man carbuncular:** Pimpled. An echo, in Eliot’s mind, of ‘that old man eloquent’ in Milton’s sonnet ‘To the Lady Margaret Lay’. Carbuncles are associated with lechery.

**Line 234, Bradford millionaire:** Bradford is a great centre of wool manufacture in Yorkshire and an abode of many millionaires in that trade. Rapid fortunes were made here during the First World War.

**Lines 245-6 who...wall:** This refers to Homer’s account of Tiresias, who sat in the market place at Thebes and prophesied. Later he did the same in Hades where Ulysses consulted him.

**Line 253:** Eliot notes the source, Olivia’s song in Oliver Goldsmith (1730-74), *The Vicar of Wakefield*. She returns to the scene of her seduction by Squire Thornhill.

**Line 257:** cf. *The Tempest*, I.ii.389, Ferdinand’s words recalling the music and responding to Ariel’s song. He expresses his grief over his father’s supposed death.

**Line 258, Strand:** A famous street in London, leading eastward.

**Line 258, Queen Victoria Street:** A busy street close to the Thames.

**Line 260, Lower Thames Street:** Near the Thames at London Bridge. Eliot worked in this area in Lloyds Bank.

**Line 263, fisherman:** These are not fisherman, but workers at the nearby Billingsgate fish market.

**Line 264, Magnus Martyr:** The beautiful church designed by Sir Christopher Wren, built in Lower Thames Street.

**Line 265, Inexplicable...gold:** Eliot says ‘the interior of St Magnus Martyr is one of the finest among Wren’s interiors’. In these lines Eliot suggests a world of true values which is now lost.

**Line 266:** The song of the three Thames daughters starts at this point. From line 292 to 306 they sing in turn. See *Gotterdammerung*, III.i. The Rhine daughters and their song are the theme of Richard Wagner’s lengthy opera, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. The Rhine daughters express their sorrow over the loss of the magic hoard of gold of the Nibelungs, which they had guarded. The loss of the gold is symbolic of the loss of the beauty and charm of the Rhine. Eliot has tried to pattern these lines on Wagner’s rhymes.

**Line 272, spar:** Strout pole supporting the mast.

**Line 275, Greenwich reach:** The south bank of the river Thames of Greenwich, downstream from the centre of the city.

**Line 276, Isle of Dogs:** The river bank opposite Greenwich.

**Lines 277-8:** The lament of the Rhine maidens over the loss of gold. The refrain is from Wagner’s opera.

**Line 279:** Eliot refers to J.A. Froude’s *History of England*, vii, 349, and quotes the letter of de Quadra to Philip of Spain.

The river cited is the Thames; Elizabeth entertained Leicester (Lord Robert Dudley) at Greenwich House near Greenwich reach.

**Lines 280-5:** These lines represent Enobarbus’s description of Cleopatra (see note to line 77).

**Line 281, stern:** Hind part of the ship.

**Line 293:** Eliot in his Notes draws attention to Dante's *Purgatory*, v: 133; the sorrow of La Pia who was murdered by her husband. 'Remember me, who am La Pia; Siena made me, Maremma unmade me'.

**Line 293, Highbury:** A residential suburb in the northern part of London.

**Line 293, Richmond and Kew:** Two riverside districts on the Thames. Kew is well known for its botanical gardens.

**Line 296, Margate:** Part of the East End of London. Eliot used this underground station for this daily travel to Lloyds bank.

**Line 300, Margate Sands:** A seaside resort in Kent on the Thames Estuary. Eliot began composing *The Waste Land* here in 1921 while he was recovering from an illness.

**Line 307:** Eliot traces the source to *The Confessions* of St. Augustine. 'To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears'. St Augustine writes about the sensual temptations of his youth in Carthage.

**Line 308:** This is taken from the Buddha's 'Fire Sermon', where he says everything in the world is on fire:

**Line 309:** Eliot in his Notes refers to his source, the *Confessions* of St. Augustine: 'I entangle my steps with these outward beauties, but thou pluckest me out O lord, thou pluckest me out'.

#### IV. Death by Water

**Death by Water:** A reference to the practice at Alexandria (narrated by Jessie Weston) of throwing into the sea an effigy of a pagan fertility god such as Adonis as a symbol of the death of nature's power. The head was carried to Byblos. It was later retrieved and worshipped as a symbol of the resurrected god. The Christian sacrament of baptism could also be cited as another significant tradition in this context.

**Line 312:** 'Dans le Restaurant' in turn may have been suggested to Eliot by a passage in the *Life and Death of Jason* (1867) by William Morris (1834-96). In Book IV the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts speaks of a Phoenician sailor as a victim of the sea. Eliot was familiar with this.

**Lines 315-16:** Image of 'sea-change' is derived from Ariel's song in *The Tempest*.

**Line 319:** This is an reference to all mankind. The Bible distinguishes between the faithful, the Jews, and those who reject God.

**Line 320, wheel:** The wheel of fortune as engraved on the Tarot pack of cards, which is turned by a figure holding a sword and a crown. Perhaps the mysterious nature of man's fate is suggested in this picture.

#### V. What the Thunder Said

Eliot says the source of this subtitle is the Indian legend of the Thunder derived from the sacred book, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* V.i(see note to line 400).

Eliot also says that in the first part (lines 322-94) three themes are explored. First, the story told in the Bible (Luke xxiv: 13-31) of the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus (a village near Jerusalem) on the day of Christ's resurrection. Eliot's second theme is the final stage of the Grail Quest and the journey to Chapel Perilous of the Knight. This theme is interwoven with the theme of the Emmaus journey. Eliot's third themes is modern – the decay of eastern Europe in the twentieth century.

**Lines 322-8:** These lines evoke the course of great events from the betrayal and arrest of Jesus Christ, the agony and prayer in the garden of Gethsemane to the moment of crucifixion. Also, they are indirectly evocative of the death of the Fisher King.

**Line 323, silence in the gardens:** Gethsemane, the scene of Christ's final moments before the arrest (see Matthew 26:36) and Golgotha, the hill of Christ's crucifixion.

**Line 324, agony...places:** cf. Matthew 21:38: Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death...'

**Line 326:** Christ was taken to the palace of the High Priest where he was publicly interrogated before being taken to Pilate, the Roman governor, in the Hall of Judgement. See Mark 15:13-14: 'And they cried out again, crucify him. . . And they cried out the more exceedingly, crucify him!'

**Lines 326-8, reverberation...dead:** At the death of Christ the whole earth shook. See Matthew 27:51: 'the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. . .'

**Lines 331-59:** Eliot thought very highly of these twenty-nine lines and wrote about them to Ford Madox Ford in a letter (*See The Waste Land Facsimile*, p.129).

**Line 339, carious:** Decayed.

**Line 346, If...rock:** This is shown as two lines, but the line numbering in the text shows it as one line.

**Line 353, cicada:** An insect with a shrill sound.

**Line 356:** Eliot notes that the water-dripping song of the hermit-thrush is quite well known.

**Lines 360-6:** The vision of the risen Christ is revealed to his disciples on the road to Emmaus:

Eliot has also cited the event of the Antarctic expedition. He was moved by this account (in *South*, 1919) by Sir Ernest Shackleton. The tired Antarctic explorers were haunted by the delusion that there was one more person with them who could not be counted, and this makes the Biblical parallel very interesting.

**Lines 366-76:** This is a nightmarish picture of the decay of eastern Europe brought home to Eliot by a reading of *Blick ins Chaos* (1920), written by Hermann Hesse (1872-1962). Eliot quotes a passage which refers to the Russian Revolution and other upheavals in Europe:

There is a close connection between this decay of eastern Europe and the destruction of the Roman empire by barbarian hordes (see St. Augustine in *City of God*).

**Line 377:** The hair is a symbol of fertility as well as an object of sacrifice to the fertility gods.

**Lines 379-84:** This nightmarish portrayal of macabre images is perhaps influenced by the paintings of the Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516) Medieval versions of the Grail Legend portray the horrors of the entry into Chapel Perilous which were intended to test the Knight's nerves, and these nightmarish visions, including bats with baby faces, were encountered by him. Bosch's paintings of Hell also influenced Eliot in portraying this scene.

**Line 391-2:** An echo, perhaps, of Peter denying the Lord three times and then the cock crowing, as Christ had anticipated. There are two traditions of the crowing cock. The first tradition shows Peter denying acquaintance with Christ and then breaking down in tears at his own cowardice. Here it is seen as part of a ritual preceding the death of Christ and mankind's salvation. The second tradition shows the cock as the trumpet of the morn and is associated with ghosts (*Hamlet*, I.i.).

**Line 395, Ganga:** The original sacred Sanskrit word for the Ganges.

**Lines 396-420:** These important lines project the message of the Thunder.

**Line 397, Himavant:** The original Sanskrit name for high mountains in the Himalayan ranges.

**Line 400, DA:** This is the voice of the Thunder. The parable embodying the divine message of thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, V.i.

Eliot alludes to a very significant episode in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* which describes how gods, men and demons approached Prajapati, their father-preceptor, for instruction and message after completing their formal education.

**Line 401, Datta:** Give.

**Lines 403-4:** In *The Waste Land* the act of giving has been generated into immoral acts such as sexual surrender.

**Line 407:** cf. *The White Devil*, V.vi, by Webster. Eliot refers to Flamineo's speech warning against the frailty and inconstancy of women:

*they'll re-marry  
Ere the worm pierce your winding –sheet, ere the  
Spider  
Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs.*

**Line 411, Dayadhvam:** Sympathize.

**Line 411, I have ...key:** Eliot cites Dante, *Inferno*, xxxiii: 46, quoting the words of Ugolino della Gheradesca, the thirteenth-century Italian nobleman as he recalls his imprisonment in a tower. He, his two sons, and two grandsons were starved to death in that tower.

**Line 416, broken Coriolanus:** The hero of Shakespeare's play, *Coriolanus*. He was broken because pride and selfishness brought about his death. He scorned the hostile Roman mob, but was broken by his own pride.

**Line 418 Damyata:** Control.

**Lines 418-22:** The young Eliot was a keen yachtsman.

**Lines 423-4:** cf. *From Ritual to Romance*. Eliot cites the story of the Fisher King described by Jessie Weston.

**Line 425:** Prophet Isaiah's words to King Hezekiah, a sick person whose Kingdom was ruined by the Assyrian conquest.

**Line 426, London...down:** This is the refrain in a well-known English nursery rhyme.

**Line 427:** Eliot cites the source as Dante, *Purgatorio*, xxvi: 145-8.

**Line 428:** This is a quotation from an anonymous Latin poem, *Pervigilium Veneris* (The Vigil of Venus). The poet's lament is that his song is unheard and he awaits the coming of spring to give it voice, like the swallow. Eliot, in his Notes, also cites the story of 'Philomela and Procne'.

**Line 429:** This line is quoted from a sonnet 'El Desdichado' (The Disinherited) by Gerard de Nerval (1808-55), a French poet. The poet calls himself a disinherited prince, stressing the lost tradition of troubadour poets. A Tarot card showing a tower strick by lightning symbolizes the lost tradition.

**Line 430, These fragments...ruins:** This is also a reference to the broken kingdom of the Fisher King.

**Line 431:** Eliot cites the source in *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd (1557-95). The play's alternative title is *Hieronimo is mad againe*. Hieronimo is driven mad due to the murder of his son. He is asked to write a court entertainment and replies, 'Why then Ile fit you!', ironically suggesting that he would give them (the murderers) their due. He arranges that his son's murderers themselves are killed in his play, which is composed of poetic fragments in several languages.

**Line 433, Shantih:** Eliot says the Sanskrit word signifies 'the peace which passeth understanding' and is a meaningful repetition of the well known formal ending of the great *Upanishads*.

## SECTION IV: MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

### 1. Possible Short Answer Questions

*(Answer to be in 200 words each)*

- 1 Attempt a short note on the composition of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".
2. Throw light on the appropriateness of the title of this poem.
3. What are the sources of this poem?
4. Comment on the line 'Like a patient etherised upon a table' in the poem.

- 5 Critically examine the following lines:

*In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.*

6. Critically analyse the following:

*I have measured out my life...coffee spoons.*

7. Explicate the following:

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.*

8. Explain the following lines:

*I grow old...I grow old...  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.*

9. Point out the contributions of Ezra Pound to the shaping of *The Waste Land*

10. Is it correct to state that *The Waste Land* lacks a formal structure? Furnish details.

11. Do you consider the poem to be dramatic in quality? Give reasons in support of your answer.

12. Examine the mythical method used by Eliot in this poem.

13. How does Eliot treat of earthly love in this poem? Illustrate your answer.

14. What do you consider to be the main theme of the poem? Give details.

15. Do you agree with the view that *The Waste Land* ends on 'a note of chaos' as it began? Give a reasoned answer.

16. Consider *The Waste Land* as a religious poem.

17. What is the message of this poem?

18. Evaluate *The Waste Land* as a symbolist poem.

19. Comment on the following:

*April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.*

20. Critically analyse the following lines:

*Unreal city,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.*

21. Explicate the following:

*The 'change of Philomel, by the barbarous King  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues.*

22. Tell briefly, how does Tiresias represent 'the entire humanity'?

23. Explain the following:

*When lovely woman stoops to folly and  
Paces about her room again, alone,*

*She smooths her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts a record on the gramophone.*

24. Comment on the following:

*To Carthage then I came  
Burning burning burning burning  
O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
O Lord Thou pluckest  
Burning.*

25. Explicate the following:

*Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves  
Waited for rain, while the black clouds  
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.*

26. Attempt a brief note on the source of “The Fire Sermon”.

27. Which is the source of “What the Thunder Said”? Does Eliot follow that source *Verbatim* or not? Give full information about it.

28. Comment briefly on the last two lines (432-433) of *The Waste Land*.

## 2. List of Possible Long Questions

1. Discuss Eliot’s contributions to the development of English poetry.
2. What are the main themes of Eliot’s poetry and how does he deal with them? Give details.
3. Critically examine Eliot’s impersonal theory of poetry.
4. Write a detailed note on the use of imagery in “The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”
5. Give a pen-portrait of J. Alfred Prufrock.
6. Assess “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” as a modern poem.
7. Discuss *The Waste Land* as a poem dealing with “the chaos of life” or “the disorganization of life” (F.R. Leavis).
8. Throw light on the title and structure of *The Waste Land*.
9. Comment on the poetic technique (“the technique of allusiveness”) used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*.
10. Examine *The Waste Land* as a poem embodying “the release of personal feelings” (Eliot).
11. What are the various sources of this poem?
12. Discuss *The Waste Land* as an international poem.
13. Comment on the role of Tiresias in this poem
14. Critically analyse *The Waste Land* as a mythical poem.
15. Consider the relevance or otherwise of the use of the Hindu Philosophy (or, the Sanskrit words proper) in *The Waste Land*.
16. I.A. Richards consider *The Waste Land* as “a music of ideas”. Comment on the statement.
17. Bring out the story of the Fisher King and the appropriateness of its application in this poem.

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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-II

### Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes

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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.

Larkin 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), Jorge 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'

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In this poem Larkin 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'

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'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'

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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'

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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'

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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'

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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 field 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'

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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'

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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

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### 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. Ephemeral, 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 metonymic. 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. He 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 archaeology 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

Larkin's main works of poetry are:

*The North Ship* (1945)

*The Less Deceived* (1955)

*Whitsun Weddings* (1964)

*High Windows* (1974)

*Collected Poems* (1988)

Hughes's main works of poetry are:

*The Hawk In The Rain* (1957)

*Lupercal* (1960)

*The Earth-Owl and Other Moon-People* (1963)

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**D.H. LAWRENCE**

**Sons and Lovers**

## Unit-III

### D.H. Lawrence: Sons and Lovers

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#### Biographical Sketch (1885-1930)

David Herbert Lawrence was the son of an illiterate coal miner, John Arthur Lawrence and a genteel schoolteacher, Lydia Beardsall, in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. Lawrence, the fourth child of his mismatched parents was especially close to his mother. From early years he was plagued with tuberculosis which growing acute in his forties eventually killed him. He began work with clerical jobs and in 1908 he qualified as a teacher from Nottingham University College. After four years of teaching he eloped with Frieda to Italy and were later married in 1914. Later, after the First World War, he traveled all over the world including Australia, Mexico, New Mexico and Europe. He found immense comfort and harmony in the plains and mountains and offered a refuge from the decadence of life that was taking place in Europe. His health steadily worsened and he died in 1930.

#### The Age

It is impossible for any writer to remain untouched by the social, political, intellectual and cultural environment of his age. Every writer depicts the characteristics of his age as he generally transcribes life. In order to understand well the writings of an author, knowledge of the times in which he lived is indispensable. Hence, we shall analyze the social and the literary background that influenced the works of D.H. Lawrence

According to William J. Long: "The long and progressive reign of Queen Victoria came to a climax in the Diamond Jubilee Year (1897), a time of peace and plenty when British Empire seemed to be at the summit of its power and security". However, the two important factors that influence the social life and literary sphere at this period of time were imperialism that led to the two world wars and the wave of social unrest as a result of decline in religious faith and social or moral values. War happened to be the main motive force for social and cultural changes in this period, the moral order began to decay rapidly and a sense of alienation prevailed among the general public.

The situation is very aptly described by Lawrence: "It was in 1915 the old world ended. In the winter of 1915-16 the spirit of the Old London collapsed; the city, in some way, perished, perished from being the heart of the world, and became a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors. The integrity of London collapsed and the genuine debasement began, the unspeakable baseness of the press and the public voice, the reign of that bloated ignominy, "John Bull" ... The well-bred, really cultured classes were on the whole passive resisters. They shirked their duty. It is the business of people who really knew better to fight tooth and nail to keep up a standard, to hold control of authority."

The rapid growth of industrialization in England in the Victorian age marked the shift of England to an industrial country from an agricultural country thus, forwarding a rapid change in the social life of the people. By the end of the nineteenth century there was a total change towards urbanization with a breakdown of the agricultural way of life. The simultaneous coming up of industrialization and urbanization brought with it many problems. The industrial towns grew haphazardly and congestedly, these congested places often lacked the basic amenities of lives reducing the living standards of people to almost inhuman condition. There was a marked rise in vice and crime and a gradual decline in the standards of spiritual and ethical values.

There arose a mad race for acquisition of wealth and this became the ultimate aim of a gentleman's life. All human relationships came to be regarded in terms of money. The evil effects of industrialization are remarkably

reflected in the works of the 20<sup>th</sup> century novelists like Ruskin and Carlyle severely condemned the commercialization of this age. Certain spiritual values seemed to be vanishing with gradual decline of the rural way of life and urban societies led to the establishment of material values in life. The new age, however was not without its possible aspects, like there came into being a welfare state—the state was now responsible for education, health and well being of the individual. However, writers continued to think of the agricultural life as the ideal form of life and nostalgically referred to it in their works.

As a result of all these changes, there started a period of uncertainty and moral perplexity. The blind faith in social belief and tradition was given up with rational and scientific questioning. However, the Victorian writer in spite of this questioning was never critical of the very fundamentals of the social and moral order. For example Dickens, though a critical writer criticizes only a few basic evils inherent in their social system. On the other hand he has an acceptance of their way of life and takes pride in it. The beginning of the twentieth century introduces to us writers like Shaw, Wells and Glasworthy who were highly critical of the existing social, economic and moral system.

The different critical attitude of the writers, which tend to be contradictory, has led to confusion on the part of the common man. R.A. Scott-James writes: “the twentieth century has, for its characteristic, to put everything in every sphere of life, to the question, and secondly, in the light of this reception, to reform, to reconstruct, to accept the new and attempt to mould it by conscious, purposeful effort.” With the spirit of interrogation came the questioning of the male authority and assertion of the liberation of women. With the end of the war came complete decline in the supremacy of the male authority. People instead of submissively following their leaders became suspicious of manifestations. Their subordinates and juniors, who now did not hesitate to revolt against them, no longer accepted the incompetence of those in authority.

Among other changes, the most important change was the enhancement of the position of women. Women were no longer confined to the four walls of the house but had a significant role to play in the family and the society. The movement of women’s liberation got a strong impetus with the spread of education and a tendency towards democratization. There was now a general allowance and encouragement for the women to go in for higher education and their right to vote was vehemently advocated. The tenets of Christianity were no longer accepted unquestioningly. Contemporary religious scholars and philosophers like Max Muller shattered the concept of the supremacy of Christianity. The theory of evolution of Charles Darwin threatened the very basis of the Christian faith. Hence, the complacency of the Victorians was shed off and there was a gradual loss of faith in God and religion.

With weakening of religious faith under the influence of science and rationalism, public issues could no longer be moulded with religious controversies. There arose a keen interest in the study of nature of man in philosophy and metaphysics. The assessment of human behaviour was greatly revolutionized with the psychological theories propounded by Freud followed by Jung and Bergson. Freud declared man to be a biological phenomenon, a creature of instincts and impulses. Freud laid emphasis on the powers of the unconscious to affect the conduct of man. Now more emphasis began to be assigned to the study of the unconscious. The normal were also recognized to be neurotic and abnormal to a certain extent. It was established by Freud and his followers that neurosis and other signs of abnormality are a result of repressed sex instincts. His theory of Oedipus complex was strongly propounded and thoroughly exploited by the twentieth century writers (like D.H. Lawrence). It became established that man’s intellectual communications are actually the rationalizations of his emotional needs. Emphasis began to be placed on feeling and intuition rather than intellect, which had all through been regarded as a means of true and real understanding.

The psychological theories of Freud and his followers were not only confined to the literary field, but imparted a considerable influence on the private and family relationships. The theory of Oedipus complex led to the interpretation of various relationships in its terms. It was now believed that mothers could naturally be jealous of their daughters or daughters-in-law. Sons were supposed to have greater attachment for their mothers

rather than their fathers. The daughters were bound to be more attached to their fathers. All such relationships were pervaded with sexual undertones. For instance, T.S. Eliot interpreted *Hamlet* in terms of Oedipus complex. All abnormal human conduct occurs from repressed sex instincts. It was believed that the behaviour of a man was a direct outcome of his early development as a child. The old authoritarian pattern of family relationships broke up.

The questioning of authority and with dismantling of traditional patterns of human relationships, there was an environment of tensions and frustrations. The age became pervaded with the temper of anti-heroism. Various factors including unemployment and economic depression added to the hardship of life. The sense of security unlike the Victorian age was lost because of the shaking foundation of the social and political order and beside the forces of labour legislation, democratization and dissemination of scientific ideas added to the deteriorating situation. The evolution of strong durable convictions that form the basis of emotional stability was not allowed because of the rapid scientific advancement. Man lost faith in God and became rootless and this rootlessness brought its own problems and frustrations and thus, it led to severe anxiety which became the most important characteristic of this age.

In the literary sphere there was a rapid decline in the literature that was produced because of the commercialization of the printing press. The cheap literature catered to the needs of the general public and they were abundant in vulgarity and brutality. The themes of popular literature were no longer touching upon human relationships but had taken over to violence, crime and mediocre love stories. One could say that this age was noticeably an age of popularization and commercialization. Even the serious literature, in order to survive, had to adapt itself to this new world that lacked ethical values and principles. Psychological theories of Freud and other made symbolism quite significant in presenting the literary work and also the stream of consciousness evolved as a very considerable literary technique. "In a world of increasing socialization, standardization and uniformity, the aim was to stress uniqueness, the purely personal, in experience, in one of the mechanical rationality, to assert other modes through which human beings can express themselves, to see life as a series of emotional intensities involving a logic different from that of the rational world and capturable only in dissociated images of stream of consciousness musings." In addition, realism became major part of literature instead of an inclination towards pastoralism and romanticism. Usually avoided facts about life now found place in the modern literature, for instance, war slums and camps, prostitution and other realities were incorporated along with heavy dose of cynicism and satire. Along with traditional forms of literature—novel, drama and poetry—a great amount of literary criticism was produced during this age. The works of art were interpreted through sciences like psychology, anthropology, semantics, linguistics, etc. Many schools of criticism, (for example The New Critics, The Marxist, The Moralists, The Psychological school, The Impressionists, The Formalists, Archetypal Criticism, The Historical Criticism), contributed to this field,

### **Fiction of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The foremost feature of modern writing, perhaps, could be that things not very often begin when and where they are expected or supposed to begin. Indeed the very concepts of beginning and ending become debatable, as Lawrence writes: "In the beginning—there never was any beginning". In fact, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* actually ends in a peculiar manner—the opening sentence being the completion of the final one, the final sentence hence once again turning the reader back to the beginning of the work.

**Rise of the Novel:** there has perhaps never been so radical a change in any branch of literature, as that which came over the English Novel in the first half of this century. Not only has it mirrored the change in the external world, like every art medium, but it has also developed internally. The English Novel right from its beginning, has been monopoly of the English Bourgeoisie, and so dealt mainly with the social and economic culture of the age. The traditional novelists took their stable society for granted. They never questioned its beliefs or values, and tread their characters in relation to the society. What is more important is the fact of that these novelists were assured that their readers shared all their views, shared the basic assumption of the sanctity of social

institutions, family, church etc, and necessity to conform to the rules of such institution. This opinion and approach to novel writing reached its peak in Victorian England.

Yet towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, disillusion with bourgeois complacency and commercialism crept in, and this was a major external force in the rise of what we call 'the modern' novel. Ironically enough, it began with the Victorians themselves. George Eliot and Emily Bronte questioned the basic of an individual's links and society. Tennyson began to doubt the linear progress of his and his contemporaries' works. This generated interest in discovering new themes and new ways of expressing them and gradually the break with the past was achieved. Of course, there was now startling jump from one type of novel to the other. The subject matter became increasingly critical of Victorian materialism, sex was no longer a taboo, but still the tradition was not completely done away with. One cannot deny the presence of Victorian elements in the early works of all the major modern writers. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is in main-stream of typical Victorian fiction, despite his candid views on sexuality. This is particularly true of Forster and Huxley, who, one feels have never managed to make a complete break with traditional novelists. Affinities in both technique and theme have been studied between Lawrence and Hardy, Conrad and Dickens, Woolf and Sterne. Yet all these novelists—Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Conrad and Joyce—were steadily making trime and paving the way for the modern novel.

At the same time, the hold of society over the individual was loosening. Man was emerging as an individual in his own right and not merely a member of society. Church, family and schools (all institutions) were no longer the prime concern of the individuals. The writers of this period could no longer take it for granted that their impression held good for others, For society, which formed the basis of beliefs shared by the reader and writer, was no longer the major motivating force. It is this breakdown of what David Daiches calls a 'public sense of significance' (the shared belief of the writer and reader of what is significant in human experience), that forced sensitive artists to discover new ways of expressing new themes and feelings.

This breakdown was the result not only of social and economic cause as the Industrial Revolution, but also related to remarkable discovery made in psychology and other areas. One such discovery was Henry Bergson's concept of *Law duree*. Bergson asserts that clock time is artificial, and that 'mental' time is the only natural time. Time, he said, is a continuous, heterogeneous flow, which cannot be characterized by separate moments. According to this theory then a novel of linear progress, which moved from situation to situation in a fixed chronological statement, was not a 'real' rendering of human experience. Therefore, a new kind of narrative developed to capture the reality, the essence of human experience—since it emphasized fluctuating time, which constantly moved backward and forward. In such a narrative structure there is no tension between the past, the present and the future, because a character can proceed from one to another as often as he wants to. One of the first novelists to use this technique was Marcel Proust. His work influenced every major twentieth century English novelist as is evident from such works as, *Nostramo*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Ulysses*, *a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and more.

Together with this new concept of time was the changing concept of human consciousness influenced by the work of Freud and other psychologists. The fact emphasized in this concept was the "multiplicity of consciousness". That is to say, an individual's consciousness is the sum total of all that he has ever experienced and his cultural affinities with the members of his race. So, actually the past does not exist separately. What we term the 'past' exist along with the present determining every response of ours. So a novelist who seeks to project the total view of his characters, has to effectively communicate the simultaneity of the characters' different levels of consciousness. Since the traditional novelist had not been faced with such a problem, the modern novelist had to evolve an appropriate technique. This resulted in the stream of consciousness technique.

These then are the three major forces that resulted in the growth of the modern novel. They also influenced the major theme of the modern literature—the theme of an "individual's loneliness". Since all beliefs in religion, family and other institutions were completely shattered; the modern writer was a completely isolated

figure. No longer could he depend on the stability of the conventions, he had to forge completely new relationships based on a different set of values. Since most modern novelists have undergone this experience personally, it forms the keynote of their major works. Thus, we have Lawrence and Joyce re-living their own experiences through the characters of their novels. In their works and in those of other major novelists, “loneliness is seen as the necessary condition of man” (David Daiches). Yet their main preoccupation is not this isolation, but to find a way through which harmony can be achieved. A way through which a modern man cut adrift, can achieve satisfying relationships.

Each novelist views this problem in his own way, for instance, Lawrence believed that the solution lay in love which recognized the mystical core of otherness in the beloved. Therefore, we see towards the end of the century, the concept of what was significant in human experience changed under the influence of psychology and related fields of knowledge. No longer was a man’s exterior personality or his behaviour in society considered important. Stress was now laid on his internal make up; the working of his mind, his responses to a world that was essentially hostile and his search for an identity in this world. The modern novel is the result of the novelists’ effects to deal with such problems, to define them and suggest a possible solution.

### **Techniques used in the modern novel**

As it has already been discussed the modern novel emerged in altogether a different kind of environment with diverse changes in its themes and techniques, there by defining the very concept of the novel.

**Stream of Consciousness:** it a psychological term that refers to a literary technique in the twentieth century and gained immense popularity within the genre of the modern novel. Leon Edel writes that “between 1913 and 1915 was born the modern psychological novel—what we have come to call in English letters the stream of consciousness novel”. Robert Humphrey defines stream of consciousness fiction as the type, “in which the basic emphasis is placed on the exploration of the free speech levels of consciousness for the purpose, primarily of revealing the “psychic being of characters”. The use of this technique is coincidental with the turning inward process of the English novel; it is a technique to document authentically the mental process or to capture “the atmosphere of the mind”. Many writers find this technique highly realistic and facilitating greater truthfulness in the presentation of the character. It is important to note that stream of consciousness is not the same as the “point of view”. The latter aims at analyzing the character from various perspectives or angles. Neither can stream of consciousness technique be equated with impressionism because the object under consideration is static. The origin of the term lies with the psychologist, William James, who believed that an individual’s consciousness is continuous but constantly changing: “Consciousness does not appear to itself chopped up bits. Such words as ‘chain’ and ‘train’ do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing that is pointed; rather it flows. A river or a stream is metaphor by which it is most naturally described. On talking about it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought or consciousness, or subjective life.” In other words, one understands from the above explanation that the consciousness of a person is always in a flux and the task of the novelist is to arrest this flux.

There are certain techniques used in the presentation of stream of consciousness:

**Interior monologue:** Robert Humphrey defines this technique as “the method used in fiction for representing the psychic content and processes of character, partly or entirely just as these processes exist at various levels of the conscious control before they are formulated for deliberate speech”. This is not the same as dramatic monologue, for the latter is the verbalized form of the contents of consciousness. In the direct interior monologue technique, the consciousness of the character is rendered with minimum interference from the author. There are no guidelines or authorial comment, and the actual lecture, the very essence of the character’s consciousness is reported. This is done by the character himself. The classic example is the last forty five pages of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*—the detailed wanderings of the consciousness of Molly Bloom. In these pages the author disappears entirely. The monologue is in the first person and keeps no rule of grammar. The incoherence is emphasized by a total lack of punctuation and the indistinct limitations of time and space. Nor is the monologue

directed to either the reader or any character. Leopold Bloom, the only other character in the scene is asleep. What we have here is a perfect example of the direct monologue technique, represented by the un-inhabited flow of Molly's consciousness. Joyce has gone a step further, by using a variation of this direct interior monologue technique, in trying to depict dream consciousness in *Finnegans Wake*.

Where as direct monologue, the author rarely intrudes, in '**indirect interior monologue**', the continuous presence of the author is implied. So instead of the narration proceeding in the person indirect monologue, the second or third person is used. This naturally lends more coherence and unity to the subject matter. For, while the consciousness of the character is rendered directly, the author is always at hand to guide the reader through it. All the same that basic quality of interior monologue-the direct presentation of a character's consciousness is retained. Virginia Woolf's novels are based mainly on this technique, particularly, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. Edward Dujardin was however the first novelist to use this technique of interior monologue in his novel *Les Lauriers Sont Coupes* (1881).

There are certain techniques (uniquely twentieth century) used by nearly all stream of consciousness writers, which Humphrey terms '**cinematic devices**'. As the very name implies these are borrowed from the cinema. One of these devices is the **time and space montage**. Montage, as Humphrey explains is essentially a technique to show different views of a single subject. This forms an important aspect of stream of consciousness fiction, for in depicting the consciousness of a character, the novelist has to break all barriers of time and space. This technique works in two ways. One is that in which the character remains fixed in space and his consciousness moves freely intermingling the past, present and future. This has been freely used by Virginia Woolf and there are many instances of it in *To the Lighthouse*.

The second method of montage is that in which the time element is fixed and the spatial element changes. This is known as space montage. For example of this in literature, the famous "'Wandering Rocks"' episode in *Ulysses*. This technique is also known as 'multiple-view, for at a given time, the consciousness of several characters can be described-their individual responses to the same stimulus'

### **Aspects that Characterize the Modern Experimental Novel**

**Purpose of the Novel:** Before twentieth century the novelists were primarily concerned with the creation of memorable characters. The experimental novel asks instead "What is the experience of living?" The focus, unlike the previous writers, was not so much on the social and economic pressures that dictate the occurrences of one's life. In fact, the emphasis is laid on the critical reappraisal. For instance, Henry James intentionally made the characters of his novel financially self-sufficient so that the economic demands do not become an over riding factor in the novel. The novel, therefore, no longer remains as a mere source of entertainment and pastime.

**Withering away of the external plot:** the readers of 20<sup>th</sup> century novel would usually complain that not much happened in the novels. The novelists in this age were more concerned about the inner life of the characters rather than highlighting the outside or the external events of one's life. The conflict therefore, moved to the warring elements within the character. As M.H. Abrams writes: "Since 1920s, a number of writers of prose fiction and drama have deliberately designed their works to frustrate the expectations that the reader or auditor has formed by habituation to traditional plots."

**Absence of the Hero:** the experimental novel has discarded the concept of heroism and the reader would seldom find a truly likable character. In the earlier novels the hero and the villain were obvious but now the no character is all good or all bad rather they have shades of grey.

**Complexity:** Seeking to portray not so much what people do or say as what they actually are, the experimental novelist finds none of the old ethical simplicity but discovers a vast and chaotic world within even the outwardly mundane character. Change and alteration produce within a personality a ceaseless fluidity that destroys the old rigidity of character and reveals disturbing contradictions and complexities.

**Irrationality:** Increasingly, the experimental novel in exploring the inner life, has found that man does not act from reason, as earlier novels assumed, but rather is motivated by deep unconscious sources of primordial origin.

Modern novelists can be divided into those who continue within a broad tradition of realism and those who experiment far more with the form of the novel. Writers like John Glasworthy, Arnold Bennett, Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, Doris Lessing, Earnest Hemingway are essentially realists. They are less intrusive than 19<sup>th</sup> century realists, presenting a credible picture in which we are not particularly aware of the narrator's presence. They deal with social, personal and ethical problems and offer us an entertaining, but at the same time, an instructive look at how people cope with life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The outstanding novelist within the tradition is D.H. Lawrence whose novels conform to the usual model of presenting characters at odds with the society, but Lawrence goes much further than the other writers in a romantic quest for an alternative way of life. Lawrence's writing is committed to exploring fresh areas of experience, and writes in an emotional style that suits his subject matter, never forgetting that his characters are bound by demands of ordinary existence. The most striking feature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century novel is the extraordinary degree of formal experiment and innovation. This begins with the works of Joseph Conrad and Henry James. The reasons for such testing and originality were the disappearance of shared values and beliefs. A new awareness of individual psychology came into existence. It was realized that each individual has a unique perception of the world and life, thus calling for more emphasis on the mind of the individual.

### **Important writers of this age**

**Thomas Hardy:** He was not only the last of the great Victorians but also the forerunner of the modern novel. Hardy's writings show human beings facing up to the assaults of a destructive power. He accepted the theory of evolution and as a result had little hope left for individuals. He was always trying to depict human condition in general rather than narrating a story of a particular individual's life. Through his serious fiction Hardy presented his view of life that was quite different from his contemporaries like Tennyson and Browning. He is very often called a pessimist as is at the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: "happiness was but the occasional episode in the general drama of pain".

Hardy's preoccupation with his "philosophy of life is seen in the way in which he pierces into his novels to point an accusing finger at destiny or to take the side of his protagonists, and in the very often use of coincidence of accidents which he looks for to his case. Too often his plots center upon a sequence of accidents which have the most grim consequences, and, therefore, while he rarely fails to inspire in his readers his own deep pity for the sufferings of his characters, he frequently fails to attain the highest tragic levels. Allied with this use of coincidence are a fondness for the fantastic or unusual and a weakness for the melodramatic. Yet he handles striking situations with great firmness of touch and a telling realism, and all his best novels contain individual scenes, which are unforgettable.

The characters of his novels are mostly ordinary men and women not forming a part of the higher strata of the society. The individuality of some is sacrificed to Hardy's view of life' but while he is, by more modern standards, not really deep in his psychological analysis, characters like Jude and Sue, Tess, Henchard, and Eustacia Vye show considerable intricacy of interpretation. Such figures as Gabriel Oak (*Far from the Madding Crowd*) and Diggory Venn (*The Return of the Native*) are finely realized, country types blending with the countryside to which they belong, while the minor rustics, who are briefly sketched but readily visualized, are a frequent source of pithy humour, and act as a chorus commenting on the actions of the chief protagonists.

Hardy's boyhood was spent mainly in the country, and he had an acute and sensitive observation of natural phenomena: "Without overwhelming you with his intimate knowledge of natural phenomena, he can make you feel, by his delicate and multifold allusiveness, the significance of country's life". As a unifying influence in his novels, the Wessex scene, which he immortalized, is second only to his philosophy. But nature provides more than just a background and many times it takes the role of a protagonist in the story, an unfeeling impersonal

force exerting its influence upon the life of the characters. Interestingly, his understanding and perception of nature gives the reader inkling into his view about men and women.

**Henry James:** Born in New York, Henry James was educated in America and Europe. He became a prolific writer with novels, short stories, travel sketches, literary criticism, autobiography and was also a friend of the New England group of writers—among them were James Russell Lowell, H.W. Longfellow and William Dean Howells. A study of James is important for the analysis of the modern novel for the reason that he was the first to view it as an artistic form. To him novel was primarily an art form to be judged solely by artistic canons, concerned, not with moral purpose, but with the objective and impartial presentation of the reality of life. In this picture there is no place for the extravagance of romance or the distortions of sentimentality. He was not much concerned with the external or with detailed and elaborate study of the subtlest shades of human reactions to the situations which he conceived. Moreover, his work shows the steady evolution of technique to replace the outworn convention. He saw unlimited possibilities of artistic achievement for the novelist: “the advantage, the luxury as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant—no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes.”

The key to James’s choice of subject is to be found in his own life. An American fascinated by the charm of an older civilization, he finds a great many of his themes in the impact of one type of society upon the product of another, in the study of the processes of adjustment and their effect upon the development of an individual character. An intellectual and a member of an intellectual family, James through out his novels portrays life of the people such as himself. He is concerned with the man as a social being, not with the deeper relations of man with his God. There is not much of elemental passion in his novels because the chosen field is a sophisticated, intellectual society, except in so far as they are shown under the influence of mind. Identifying the good with the beautiful, he regards taste, artistic sensibility, and individual integrity as the prime virtues. On the other hand he sees ugliness and meanness of spirit as the great evils. James is often concerned in the development of a character as apart of the social group. He is absolutely not interested in the poor or in the unintelligent. His characters and figures are usually sensitive, refined, sophisticated, controlling impulse by reason, and endowed with faculty for acute self-analysis. They are capable of viewing their own motives and reactions with a remarkable detachment and an equal degree of subtlety.

**Joseph Conrad:** He was a sailor and an adventurer and his works reflect this character of the author. He presents situations that cannot be really explained through the conventional and accepted notions: “the world of significance that he creates is far removed from the Victorian worlds of public significance and this is what makes him the first important modern novelist in English”. His method of writing a novel is best found in his preface to *The Nigger of Narcissus*—“My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is before all, to make you see”. The characters of Conrad’s novels did not convey just a single point of view but a variety of them. His technique of writing novels involved shifts of time as well as double narrator scheme. His novel *Heart of Darkness* is an excellent example of this.

### Lawrence’s Fiction

Lawrence’s theory of novel takes, unswervingly, from his notion of man and his relationship to the universe. Lawrence ardently believed that man was not an isolated being rather he was well integrated within the cosmos. “There is in his novels a furious struggle between those who live, or more appropriately, seek to live in their soul and those who translate a mental concept of life into the process of living. The novel for him seeks to establish the perennial, man-universe relationship. This essential quality is, as Lawrence calls it, the fourth dimension, like a myth the Lawrentian type of novel present these truths about the man-universe relationship that are above the limiting boundaries of time and circumstance. The human plane of the novel thus is a paradigm of the mythical plane because the interaction of character and action repeats the mythical aspect of experience. The mythopoetic vision express itself in a rhythmical movement of the prose”.

It will be useful to learn what a great literary figure like T.S. Eliot has to say about Lawrence: “he was an impatient and impulsive man (or so I imagine him to have been; for, like the author of this book I never knew him). He was a man of fitful and profound insights, rather than of ratiocinative powers; and therefore he was an impatient man; he expressed some of the insights in the form least likely to make them acceptable to most of his contemporaries, and sometimes in a form which almost willfully encouraged misunderstanding... wrong he often was (I think) from ignorance, prejudice, or, drawing the wrong conclusion in his conscious mind from the insights which came to him from below consciousness: it will take time to dissociate the superficial error from the fundamental truth. To me, also, he seems often to write badly; but to be writer who had to write often badly in order to write sometimes well.”

Lawrence did not believe in following the conventions of his time and his work is thus regarded as a revolt against the values and ideals of the nineteenth century. “Lawrence, in that ultimate spark of spontaneity, the essential untouchable naivety at the centre of all true human beings, rejects both the false ‘individuality’ of the liberal tradition and the increasing socialization of his times. His triumph was to see them as joint manifestations of the same basic outlook, involving the evaluation of the ego or spurious self the conscious entity with which every individual is saddled’—the conceptualizing self, not the unified sensibility. In essence too this was his case against the positive assault. In reaction against the abstraction of the intellect, the failure of reason to capture adequately the sheer flux and flow of experience, there has been a counter assertion of the need to convey emotional immediacy, a grasping after the moment, a subjective insistence on the force of inner feeling.”

During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), England was going through a difficult phase. As a result of industrialization, life had become very mechanical and the vibrancy and vivacity had given way to artificiality and uniformity. Moreover, the society was compartmentalized into classes and these class barriers curtailed the growth of relationships between people. Above all, the state religion, Christianity, was turning cold with its restraints and prohibitions. Individuals were feeling suffocated as simple passions were repressed and the natural course of things were always interfered and arbitrated. Lawrence was in opposition to all these things and tried to rebel against the standards dictated by the social authorities, especially those dealing with personal lives of individuals. As a result, we find Lawrence’s inclination towards the psyche of a person, which has control over the behaviour and to some extent on the character of an individual. But Lawrence did not concern himself with the regular feelings and commotions experienced by an individual; rather his aim was to open the doors to the restricted areas of the human psyche and sexual experience was one of those areas that were forbidden from being openly discussed.

An essential feature of his fiction is that the central character is always proceeding from a partial or mechanical existence into organic wholeness. Lawrence used the novel as a carrier of his own interpretation of life, very much concerned with the basic problems of human existence and relationships among human beings. Therefore, the relationship between man and woman and their sexual conflict became a major part of his study. Lawrence had once declared: “I can write what I feel strongly about; and, that at present, is the relation between men and women. After all, it is the problem of today. The establishment of new relations, or the adjustment of the old ones, between men and women...”. For Lawrence complete happiness in life is not possible unless sexual harmony is attained. Modernity for Lawrence meant free and frank treatment of sex and his attitude towards life was deeply rooted in sexual mysticism. It is not just a physical process meant for only pleasure or reproduction but is capable of much more as a critic has commented: “To him [Lawrence]...sexual experience was a door to new realms of consciousness, and initiation into divine mysteries, the mysteries of the other world that is close behind us.” He tried to highlight the contrast between the modern mechanized world and the natural living.

He was quite inclined towards the study of the development of one’s individuality but this study was not based merely on the intellectual abilities of an individual but also on the impulses and senses that play a significant role in shaping the personality of a person. Apparently, Lawrence’s themes are concerned about the passions and instincts of the heart rather than the working of the mind. As F.R. Leavis puts it: “Life is fulfilled in the

individual or nowhere; but without a true marital relation, which is creative in more than the sense of producing children, there can be no fulfillment; that is the burden of Lawrence's art". He allotted a superior position to the impulses and believed that intellect is responsible for annihilation of life's excitement and destroys the liveliness. In his own words: "Life and action take rise actually at the great centres of dynamic consciousness". He fully agreed with modern psychologists who argued that there are layers of consciousness—the conscious, the subconscious and the unconscious—and Lawrence felt that if one lapses back into the unconscious self "only then will you act straight from the dark sources of life, outwards, which is creative life".

Lawrence ardently believed in the presence of "dark mystery" of life and he saw all living forms instilled with it. Lawrence was, in fact, of the opinion that the "dark mystery" could not be known through intellect. Moreover, natural and untamed ideas are cannot be accessible through intellect but may be known through the instincts and intuitions. He had once written to Katherine Mansfield: "We must grow from our deepest underground roots, out of the unconscious, not from the conscious concepts which we falsely call ourselves". For reasons like this Lawrence and his writings have often been criticized and condemned for being immoral and obscene by many but on the other hand F. R. Leavis defend him against such charges and E.M. Forster regards him as "the greatest imaginative novelist of our generation".

From a literary point of view also Lawrence can be looked upon as a radical in the sense that he did not constrict his writing to the pre-laid rules or models. He questioned the traditional methods of novel writing: "he felt that the novel could become more personal and less objective if he saw the possibility that language could describe in detail the personal experiences of emotion and passion as it were from the inside". Lawrence was to a great extent influenced by Thomas Hardy. Hardy's novels are usually set against natural background which play an important role in the development of action instead of being just a background for the story. In case of Lawrence also the imagery is significant to bring out the essence of the scene and enhance the emotions and sentiments of the characters. For Lawrence a novel was a religious art in which he could speak of and to the whole man.

An autobiographical note runs through most of Lawrence's novel. As Middleton Murry believes: "Lawrence was a tortured soul for full forty-five years of his life, and his writings are an expression of his inner suffering, frustration and emotional complexes. They are all in the nature of personal revelations, some more, some less, but the autobiographical note runs through them all"; another commentator feels that "the most striking feature of Lawrence's characters is the resemblance they bear to their creator". Lawrence's writings seem quite impulsive and natural and he reader feels that the writings are the result of author's inner compulsion coming out with all the force.

Lawrence with his protests against "idealization" and his assertion of the poetry of "the immediate present" which has "no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished" questions, thus: "The ideal—what is the ideal? A figment. An abstraction... It is a figment of before and after. It is a crystallized aspiration, or a crystallized remembrance: crystallized, set, finished. It is a thing set apart, in the great storehouse of eternity, the storehouse of finished things." (Preface to Poems)

The reason for all the misery and turmoil, for Lawrence, was the fact that human beings were becoming more and more dependent on reason rather than their impulses and emotions. The so-called modern age was emphasizing on the intellectualization of life and discarding the spontaneous and instinctive response to life. Lawrence had written to his friend Ernest Collings: "My own religion is the belief in blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But whatever blood feels and says is always true. The intellect is only bit and bridle. What do I care about knowledge? All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, on moral or what not." Also, with industrialization, there was an overwhelming change in the attitude of people. The society had shifted to a materialistic approach towards life and detachment from emotional sentiments resulted in killing of natural instincts.

Lawrence's philosophy can be defined in the following words: "throughout his career he had been anti-materialistic, since materialism for him blunts sensibility, he is for shearing away the relics of dead faiths, of philosophies that

clog the free play of the impulses and he rejects Christianity and Platonism with equal scorn". One way of seeking escape from this materialism was living among nature and thus he traveled to places like Italy, Australia and Mexico. Lawrence was filled with horror at the growing materialism and selfishness, the increasing ugliness, sordidness and meanness, consequent upon the rapid industrialization of the country. Lawrence is nostalgic for the bright sensory life that town civilization is steadily destroying and like a neo-romantic craves for contact with the earth.

David Daiches, commenting on Lawrence's philosophy of life, feels: "he soon came to feel the deadness of modern industrial civilization with the mechanizing of personality, the corruption of the will, and the dominance of sterile intellect over the authentic inward passions of men, which he saw as the inevitable accompaniment of modern life. But he has no patience with political or social panaceas. Sometimes he talked as a wild anarchist asserting that everything must be pulled down or blown up so that a new start might be made. But the vision conveyed by his characteristic novels is not political in any way, even in a destructive anarchist way. He is concerned always with human relationships, with the relation of the self to other selves, with the possibilities of fulfillment of personality, and with exposing all the dead formulas—about romantic love, about friendship, about marriage, about the good life which can cause so much deadness of frustration or distortion in the life of the individual. There is nearly always a strong autobiographical element in his novels; he never attempts, as Joyce does (and Joyce uses autobiography too, but in a wholly different way), to construct a self-contained world outside himself and his readers with its own structure and its own *livableness*. He projects his novels from the very centre of his own passionate experience so that they act out, sometimes tentatively, sometimes fiercely, sometimes desperately, his own deepest insights and forms of awareness, and the lyric and the dramatic modes interpenetrate each other." On the other hand Aldous Huxley sums up his philosophy in the following words: "Lawrence could never forget, as most of us almost continuously forget the dark presence of the "otherness" that lies beyond the boundaries of man's conscious mind. This special sensibility was accompanied by a prodigious power of rendering the immediately experienced others in terms of literary art".

### Principal Works

**Novels:** The White Peacock (1911), The Trespasser (1912), Sons and Lovers (1913), The Rainbow (1915), Women in Love (1920), The Lost Girl (1920), Aaron's Rod (1922) Kangaroo (1923), The Boy in the Bush (1924), The Plumed Serpent (1926), Lady Chatterley's Lover (1928), The Virgin and The Gypsy (1930).

**Poems:** Love Poems and Others (1913), Amores (1916), Look! We Have Come Through (1917), New Poems (1918), Bay (1919), Tortoises (1921), Birds, Beasts and Flowers (1923), Pansies (1929), Nettles (1930), Last Poems (1932), Fire and Other Poems (1940).

**Short Stories:** The Prussian Officer and Other Stories (1914), England, My England (1922), The Ladybird (1923), St. Mawr, together with the Princess (1925), The Woman Who Rode Away (1928), Love Among the Haystacks (1930), The Lovely Lady and Other Stories (1933), A Modern Lover (1934).

**Essays:** Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious (1921), Fantasia of the Unconscious (1922), Studies in Classic American Literature (1923), Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine (1925), Phoenix (1936).

**Plays:** The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd (1914), Touch and Go (1920), David (1926), A Collier's Friday Night (1934).

**Travel Sketches:** Twilight in Italy (1916), Sea and Sardinia (1921), Mornings in Mexico (1927), Eiruscan places (1932).

### Bildungsroman

"Bildung" is a German word that means "formation" or "shaping" and "Roman" in German language means a "novel". Thus, Bildungsroman is a novel that describes the youthful development of the protagonist who normally attempts to integrate his/her experience by the end of the novel. It is a novel which tends to draw more directly and heavily on the writer's memory of his/her own life than do most other forms of fiction. With

this goes the tendency for the author and narrator to identify more closely with the protagonist of the novel than is usually the case. Such a genre has both the feeling of authenticity associated with an autobiographical work and the integrity and detachment of the fictional writer. Within the tradition of “Bildungsroman” there is the further genre of “Künstlerroman”. In German Künstler means an “artist”. Therefore, “Künstlerroman” is a novel that shows the development of an artist. Paul’s description of the kind of painting he aspires to directs the reader to the kind of writing Lawrence is attempting to write. Paul claims to be painting not “the stiffness of the shape” but “the shimmeriness” which is “the real living” and “which is inside really”. For Lawrence the self is:

a thing of kisses and strife  
 a lit-up shaft of rain  
 a calling column of blood  
 a rose tree bronzed with thorns  
 a mixture of yea and nay  
 a rainbow of love and hate  
 a wind that blows back and forth  
 a creature of beautiful peace, like a river  
 and a creature of conflict, like a cataract.”  
 (Death is not Evil, Evil is Mechanical)

### Summary

The novel opens with the description of mines and related activities. The cottages of the miners formed the village of Bestwood. The industrialization had just begun with coal and iron fields at Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire being discovered. Within the new set-up there are two residential units—the Squares and the Bottoms. Initially Mrs. Morel was not interested to move into the Bottoms, but when she got an end house with an extra strip of garden, she moved in. Mrs. Gertrude Morel had a refined taste and an intellectual background. She is a mother of two children—William and Annie—and is expecting her third baby. A wife of a miner, she is now disappointed and dejected with her life. She had met her husband at a Christmas party and taken to like him for the mere reason that she found him different from others. It was not very long before love and affection begins to diminish from their conjugal relationship. Frequent quarrels and clashes disrupt the peace of the family life. Two unhappy episodes accelerate the widening of the gap between husband and wife. The first is the clipping of William’s hair by Morel and then one night Morel comes home drunk and a very violent quarrel ensues. Thus, the antagonism between the two opposites—husband and wife—goes on increasing. As the sons grow, first William and then Paul, they replace the husband in Mrs. Morel’s life. She continues to have arguments with her husband, some of which have painful results: on separate occasions, she is locked out of the house and hit in the head with a drawer. Estranged from her husband, Mrs. Morel takes comfort in her children, especially her sons.

Paul, the third child and the second son, is born and Mrs. Morel’s affections begin to transfer from the eldest son to Paul and a special bond seems to develop between Paul and his mother. Meanwhile Morel falls ill which brings which results in some peaceful period in the house and makes Mrs. Morel a little tolerant towards her husband. Another baby, named Arthur is born as a result of this cordial period. However, as the children grow old, Morel is reduced to a non-entity in the house and with time feels alienated. The children grow up hating their father and Paul goes to the extent of praying for his father’s death. William moves to London and Paul becomes the centre of his mother’s love and attention.

Mrs. Morel, over the years, gets very possessive about her sons. She cannot tolerate any other woman in their lives. The sons also, on the other hand, feel uncomfortable in making new relations especially with girls and are

not able to come to terms with their growing sexual instincts. William, however, manages to free himself from this mother-son bond when he is engaged to Lily. He brings her home on Christmas to introduce her to his family. On another visit, without Lily, he seems completely worn out and sad. He even harps about the theme of death and wonders if Lily would ever visit his grave. Unfortunately, on returning back to London, William falls seriously ill and never recovers. The family is completely shattered with William's death and then Paul also falls ill but to Mrs. Morel's consolation, gets better. After William's death and Paul's recovery from serious illness, Mrs. Morel's "life now rooted itself in Paul". From that point on, Paul becomes the focus of her life, and the two seem to live for each other.

With the arrival of Miriam the novel enters into new complexities. Paul falls in love with Miriam Leivers, who lives on a farm not too far from the Morel family. They carry on a very intimate, but purely platonic, relationship for many years. The suppression or denial of physical pleasure results in tension and conflict, not only between the couple but also inside them individually. Also, Paul is unable to free himself from the strong mother-pull. And the mother never leaves an opportunity to convey her dislike for Miriam and her disapproval of any kind of relationship that Paul might be thinking of developing with Miriam. The burning of bread incident reveals a couple of facts. First, Paul feels passionately for Miriam and is aware that Miriam has similar feelings for him, yet their love cannot culminate. Something is always holding them back.

Mrs. Morel is very annoyed over the burnt bread and blames Miriam for it and is angry with Paul for neglecting her. Paul consoles and reassures his mother about his devotion for her. Furthermore, he asserts that he did not really love Miriam and that nothing can distract his attention from his mother and his home. Mrs. Morel, in return, "kissed him a long fervent kiss". Finally, Paul is sure that he feels very strongly for his mother and thus, decides to break off with Miriam. They come to the conclusion that perhaps they did not love each other enough to get married. However, within himself Paul was going through feeling of turmoil and utter confusion. He still had mixed feelings for Miriam that were very difficult to resolve.

Paul meets Clara Dawes, a suffragette who is separated from her husband, through Miriam. Paul is straight away attracted towards Clara and wants to get closer to her. Meanwhile, Annie is married to Leonard and Arthur returns from army. With Annie gone and Arthur being no better than an outside visitor, it is Paul who is left to be the only companion to Mrs. Morel. However, Paul cannot get rid of the restlessness and the dilemma. On one hand he wants to go back to Miriam while on the other he is drawn strongly towards Clara.

As a painter Paul managed to receive some acclamation and Mrs. Morel is very pleased with her son's success. Paul begins to socialize and meet new people but is never at peace with himself. He, once, goes to Clara's place and comes to know about her poor condition. He manages to get a job for her at Jordan's but Clara is not welcomed by some of the old employees. The girls at the work place celebrate Paul's birthday but do not involve Clara in the celebrations. Later, when the secret is disclosed, Clara makes up by sending a volume of verse to Paul. As he becomes closer with Clara and they begin to discuss their relationships. When Paul complains about Miriam's attitude towards him, Clara does not hesitate to declare that Miriam had always desired him and not any kind of union of soul. She tells him that he should consider consummating their love and he returns to Miriam to see how she feels. Paul and Miriam sleep together and are briefly happy, but shortly afterward Paul decides that he does not want to marry Miriam, and so he breaks off with her. She still feels that his soul belongs to her, and, in part agrees reluctantly. Even physical consummation is not able to bring the long desired fulfillment. He realizes that he loves his mother most, however.

After breaking off his relationship with Miriam, Paul begins to spend more time with Clara and they begin an extremely passionate affair. Their relationship seems to be free from any sense of guilt or mental reservation; rather there is a sense of freedom and a feeling of delight. However, in spite of the intensity in their relationship, there is something missing. Clara painfully realized it: "together they had received the baptism of life, each through the other; but now their missions were separate. Where he wanted to go she could not come with him. They would have to part sooner or later". Clara seems to prefer Baxter to Paul and does not want to divorce her husband and so Paul and Clara can never be married. Paul's mother falls ill and he devotes much of his

time to caring for her. Paul could not bear to see her mother in so much pain and suffering more and more each day.

At last, Paul decided with his sister Annie to give an over dose of morphine to Mrs. Morel and release her from the pangs and miseries of life. When she finally dies, he is broken-hearted and feels lonely. He senses a kind of vacuum in his life after the support system, his mother, is no more. Everything around him seems to have lost its meaning, it seemed different and unreal, and he moved around aimlessly. Nature also did not have a soothing effect on his mind. He felt a little comfortable only in the darkness of night. One evening he unexpectedly meets Miriam and spends some time with her. He does not react to the news of Miriam's employment, which irritates her a little. Miriam is shocked to find Paul wasting his life. She is so overwhelmed with love and sympathy that she plainly proposes marriage. She felt that only by becoming his wife could she do something to help him. She confesses that she is always thinking about Paul. On this Paul replies, "I know you do. But – you love me so much, you want to put me in your pocket. And I should die there smothered". Miriam falls back with utter pain and frustration. This was the end of their relationship. Miriam was ready to sacrifice herself for their relationship but Paul was not ready for this.

While going back to town, Paul takes note of the country beyond the town and the dark night enveloping the surroundings. He thinks about his mother and feels her presence in his soul. It was time for him to make the choice between darkness and light and finally "turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence... He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly".

### **Aims and Structure (Sons and Lovers)**

Henry James, writing of Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, said:

"It is simpler and more complete than his other novels; it achieves more perfectly what it attempts, and it has about it that charm, very hard to express, which we find in artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark—as sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme."

The same can be commented in case of Lawrence as well. His first two novels, *The Trespasser* (1912) and *The White Peacock* (1911) are quite assuring but slight. Lawrence himself in a letter refers to them disapprovingly as "a florid prose poem [and] a decorated idyll". The opulence and embellishment is replaced in *Sons and Lovers* by "a flexible and economical style, and the implied triviality gives rise to a subject of compelling interest and importance. The openness of the writer makes it easier for the reader to distinguish and counter "the stimulating tenseness that comes from Lawrence's obvious feeling of excitement and self-discovery of the progress from boyhood to manhood". Lawrence, unmistakably, is intensely involved in the situation he is dealing with; the exhilaration conveyed by the novel is that which accompanies the recollection in later years of the significant and formative era of one's life.

*Sons and Lovers* can be viewed as an endeavour to "reconstruct the stages of a movement into understanding and maturity that was still close enough to Lawrence to be remembered passionately, but distant enough to be recorded with objectivity". Lawrence chooses to explore and survey very natural experiences in one's period of life. Topics deal with growth, love in various forms, ever changing ideals resulting in conflicts within the personality, coming out of the secured cocoon of family into the outside world, being aware of one's sexuality and so on and so forth. However, it cannot be denied that the complexity of these experiences is dealt with an approach that is direct but does not, by any chance, over simplifies things. There is a well-defined story that is told in more or less a chronological progression. It is interesting to note that the events and activities are very common but at the same time they are not essentially universal. However the feelings and thoughts that are the result of such experiences can be comprehended even if they have not been experienced in particular by all. Lawrence is only narrating the events and leaving it for the story to speak for itself. Analyses of feeling

and motive rise naturally from recorded events that are presented fairly and squarely for the reader to contemplate and assess for himself/herself.

The characters of *Sons and Lovers* are real people with personal characteristics and are directly related to observable realities of everyday life. They are not abstractions designed to illustrate a theme, or embody an ideal, or enunciate a theory. The novel seems to give an impression that Lawrence has observed humanity as it is and not as it ought to be or as he would like it to be. These accurately observed people are placed in a world that is equally firmly based on a meticulous and often loving perception of the social customs, the habits and the day to day economic realities of the working class, given with such an eye for detail serves to reveal a wealth of unconscious assumptions and beliefs. In fact, if the novel had nothing else to offer, it would still be invaluable to the social historian as an authentic picture of working class life at the beginning of this century. "All this is done in a style that is generally simple, direct and precise, refreshingly free from the over-insistent rhythms of the later work and from words intended to carry a special meaning and portentous significance."

It would be a grave error on the part of the reader to interpret Lawrence's intentions as an attempt towards creation of characters that are either highly likable or highly detestable. Rather his intention is to create "recognizable human beings". It is very important to perceive the characters not as individuals within themselves but in relation to one another. It would appear that the comment made by Mrs. Moore in E.M. Forster's *Passage to India* that "though people are important, the relations between them are not" would not get the approval of Lawrence who believed that the importance of various events is based on the "developing patterns of intertwined lives". This is all the more emphasized in his novels, *The Rainbow* and *Women In Love* where the relations play a very significant role. At the same time, considering the construction of Morel in the first chapter of *Sons and Lovers*, one would realize the paradoxical nature of Lawrence's stance.

However, the focus of Lawrence's writing has predominantly been on the ways in which individuals counter and act in response to one another. In fact, much of his best work is found when he is describing emotions, impulses, reactions and responses or even physical sensations in all their complexities that arise as a result of interaction or mere contact with people. "It is not only that he traces the obvious effects and consequences of such meetings of personalities, showing how a new awareness of life, a new period of growth may follow from a chance meeting or how a life may be made painful by the consequences of a powerful but short lived emotion. This he certainly does, but this is the commonplace activity of any novelist interested at all in the interactions of human beings, the usual subject matter of the majority of novels. This is as it were a part of the iceberg that shows above the water, impressive in itself, but a very small part of the whole; it is the most obvious manifestation of an interest and a process that are much more subtle and penetrate much more deeply into the source of human individuality and behaviour.

Lawrence's great strength, the power that distinguishes him from any other novelist, lies in his capacity to perceive and convey the essential consciousness of each other that exists between two people or a group of people. This consciousness is not always at the level of intellectual awareness and recognition; he is dealing with the stage of awareness that comes before verbal formulation is possible, before it is possible to say to oneself 'That person is here, I am aware of him, he disturbs me', or a stage further, 'I dislike that person' or 'That person is attractive'. Lawrence is more concerned with the instinctive movements of sympathy or revulsion that make ultimately make possible such statements, and particularly those occasions on which sympathy and revulsion are simultaneous and co-existent—as witness the relationship between Paul and Miriam. Such feelings or instincts are the basis not only of attitudes that in a more advanced stage of their development can be recognized as love or hatred or indifference, that can be expressed in words, rationalized and put into neat categories, but of all human awareness of other human beings, and consequently of all human endings of old relationships. This simple scheme is perfectly adequate; the subtleties of *Sons and Lovers* are not in sophisticated organization or a concern with art for art's sake. The unity of the novel is organic in that it records developing lives and people in contact with each other moving from a beginning to the end."

Both thematically and structurally Mrs. Morel is the nucleus of the narrative. This reason for this is very clearly explained by the analysis of *Sons and Lovers*, which Lawrence made in a letter to Edward Garnett, dated November 14, 1912:

A woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class and has no satisfaction in her own life. She has had a passion for her husband, so the children are born of passions, and have heaps of vitality. But as her sons grow, she selects them as lovers—first the eldest, then the second. The sons are urged into life by their reciprocal love of their mother—urged on and on. But when they come to manhood, they can't love because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them... As soon as the young men come into contact with women there is a split. William gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him because he doesn't know where he is. The next son gets a woman who fights for his soul—fights his mother. The son loves the mother—all the sons hate and are jealous of their father. The battle goes on between the mother and the girl with the son as object. The mother gradually proves the stronger, because of the tie of blood. The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's possession and, like his elder brother, go for passion. He gets passion. Then the split begins to tell again. But, most unconsciously, the mother realizes what the matter is and begins to die. The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked of everything, with a drift towards death.

It is a great tragedy and I tell you that I have written a great book. It's the tragedy of—thousands of young men in England..."

The statement shows the emphasis that Lawrence lays on Mrs. Morel. Apparently, the mother is the "strongest motive force" in the novel, and the other characters are viewed in relation to her. This is made clear from by a very simple fact about the structure of the novel. She and only she is involved in all the relationships dealt with: she is the factor common to all of them.

The novel deals, first of all, with the coming together of Mrs. Morel and her husband. The period of passion and happiness is so brief and is so rapidly replaced by strife and bitterness that the readers tend to overlook the fact that this is the first love affair of the novel, that it is the study of reverse side of love. The state of affairs between the Morels is the basis on which other relationships rest; it dictates their course, and developments that follow are the inevitable consequence of Mrs. Morel's deprivation, disappointment and frustration. Then follows what is best described by the title heading of the third chapter: "The Casting Off of Morel and Taking on of William". "The title assumes the central importance for Mrs. Morel; she removes her attention from her husband and transfers it to her son; she is the agent, the one who acts, and the others are to a certain extent her satellites, important mainly as they relate to her." The love relationship between Mrs. Morel and William does not leave much of an impact on the reader for various reasons and the removal of William to London being one of them. Nevertheless, the theme of maternal possessiveness is reiterated in the next section of the novel. In the relationship with William a concurrent theme, that of mother's hostility towards her son's lover, emerges.

With the death of William, the novel pierces through more intricate and complex sequences. Initially there is a sort of "tranquil mutual love between Mrs. Morel and Paul. This section provides a stirring account of the independence of "an isolated mother and a son who by temperament and circumstances cannot bring himself to play a full part in the outside life of his contemporaries". However this seemingly blissful state of affairs do not last for a very long time, for as Paul grows up he "enters into a strange and ambiguous relationship with Miriam".

The intricacies are further generated with the arrival of Miriam and a period of struggle begins. This is the beginning of a relationship that is not initiated by Mrs. Morel and where the hold and the influence of the mother is threatened. Interestingly, the structure of the novel seems to follow the pattern of life itself: "the son grows up and begins first to seek and then assert emotional independence; the mother resents, and struggle ensues." This struggle is tripartite—there is interlocking tension between Mrs. Morel and Paul, Mrs. Morel and Miriam and between Miriam and Paul. The reader realizes that each character is engaged in more than

one but connected struggle and also, Mrs. Morel is not only concerned with Paul and Miriam as individuals but also as a couple. "It is in the description and the working out of these battles of will and personality that we see Lawrence at his sensitive and intelligent best, as we shall see, at times his grasp weakens, but on the whole the complexities are handled with an assured certainty that keeps all the various developments in continuous play."

This section of the novel can be regarded as the most imperative part not in with regard to the development of the novel but also vital for formulating an impression on the readers. At the same time one cannot come to conclusions as this is only a part of the novel and one of the component of the entire pattern. Thus, to have a balanced view it will not be correct to concentrate any more on this section than is required or asked for. The process of Paul's growth continues with the coming of Clara. It is important to note that Mrs. Morel does not feel all that threatened by Paul's relationship with Clara as she does in case of Miriam. Probably, she thinks that Paul is only physically flirting with Clara that will not last for a very long time and also Clara on the other hand does not seem to be trying to possess Paul. Thus, Mrs. Morel is not afraid of losing Paul. The relationship between Paul and Miriam falls off and due to Mrs. Morel's illness Paul returns back to his mother. This can also be seen as a victory for Mrs. Morel as the son comes back to her. However, the novel ends with Paul "agonizingly free of all entanglements, entering on his own life for the first time alone"

The novel thus deals with; "The relationships themselves, their effect on the participants, the depiction of victories and defeats incidental to the process of growing up, the emergence of a mature man through passion and anguish". But these premises or themes cannot be viewed in isolation. Whether it is analysis of relationships or the description of setting, all are significant in providing a meaning to and understanding of the novel. The picturesque backdrop, including the home, the mine and the village or as small unit as a pub, contributes to the drama of life and has an essential and decisive role in the shaping of the characters and their individual personalities.

On the structure of *Sons and Lovers*, Seymour Betsky writes: " *Sons and Lovers* moves along a structural pattern determined by the nature of its human relationships. A Wave-rhythm distinguishes, in beat and counterbeat the major involvements of the characters: those of Walter and Gertrude Morel, Paul and his mother, Paul and Miriam, and Paul and Clara. In each of these relationships, separate episodes focus—in dramatically enacted dialogue, description, and action—aspects of each character-inter-connection. Each event is a successive wave and, the movement of the relationship is the full tide which is its consummation. After that consummation there are wave like returns to the achieved tension in that relationship, but now each wave shows a diminishing strength and intensity.

The reader of *Sons and Lovers* soon comes to anticipate the rhythmic returns and finds himself attuned to the Lawrence mode. He doesn't ask for the conventional climactic development." Also, comments from Dorothy Van Ghent on the structure of the novel would be helpful in its understanding: "...it is clear that the book is organized not merely on a chronological plan showing the habits and vicissitudes of a Nottinghamshire miner's family, that it has a structure rigorously controlled by an idea: an idea of an organic disturbance in the relationships of men and women—a disturbance of sexual polarities that is first seen in the disaffection of mother and father, then in the mother's attempt to substitute her sons for her husband, finally in the sons' unsuccessful struggle to establish natural manhood.

Lawrence's development of the idea has certain major implications: it implies that his characters have transgressed against the natural life-directed condition of the human animal against the elementary biological rhythm he shares with the rest of biological nature; and it implies that his offence against life has been brought about failure to respect the complete and terminal individuality of persons by a twisted desire to 'possess' other persons as the mother tries to possess her husband, then her sons, and as Miriam tries to 'possess' Paul. Lawrence saw this offence as a disease of modern life in all its manifestations, from sexual relationships to those broad social and political relationships that have changed people from individuals to anonymous economic properties or to military units or to ideological autonomies."

## Autobiographical Elements in the Novel

“Lawrence was always an autobiographical writer, and aspects of his personality, his beliefs and his experience in life appear in most of his novels, often more directly and with less modification than is common in imaginative fiction.” Graham Hough, in *The Dark Sun*, says: “*Sons and Lovers* is a catharsis achieved by re-living an actual experience—re-living it over and over again”. There can be no doubts that the novel is not only a record of Lawrence’s early life but it is also believed that the writing of that record was exceedingly important to Lawrence as an individual and thus makes the novel much more than just another accomplishment in his literary career.

*Sons and Lovers* is set in close replica of Lawrence’s native village of Eastwood. The minutely described Bestwood can be seen as the realistic presentation of the place where the author has been brought up. The member’s of the Morel family and the situation that exists in the family is also mirrors Lawrence’s own life at home. Lawrence’s parents never enjoyed a very happy married life and its strains had an adverse effect on his own development. Quite similar to his mother, Lydia Lawrence, Gertrude in the novel is attracted towards Mr. Morel (Arthur Lawrence in case of Lawrence’s mother) initially but the charm began to dwindle away very soon. Moreover, in case of both the woman, Lawrence’s mother and his novel’s Mrs. Morel, dissatisfaction from marriage resulted in transference of affection from husband to sons.

Lawrence born on September 11, 1885 in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, began his education in 1891 from Board School to Nottingham High School and finally teacher’s training at Nottingham University College. Paul of the novel bears a close resemblance with Lawrence. The author, just like the character that he creates, was a weak and sickly boy. Both were affected by the disharmony in the relationship of their parents and as a result became quite introvert and depressed souls. In 1901 began his friendship with Jesse Chambers, which bears the origin of the “Mirriam” of *Sons and Lovers*. It is believed that the parts of the novel related to Paul-Miriam love affair were written and revised under the direction of Jessie Chambers. Lawrence had a love relationship with Jessie but their affair failed to reach a satisfactory point of culmination, just like that of Paul and Miriam. Regarding the character of Clara, critics feel that it does not have its origin in any single but more than one women from Lawrence’s personal life.

It is believed that Lawrence himself was a victim of Oedipus complex as his mother Lydia had a very strong hold him and in return Lawrence had an extraordinarily close relationship, more like that of a lover, with his mother. Lawrence himself confessed to Jessie Chambers: “I’ve loved her like a lover that’s why I could never love you”. Similarly, in *Sons and Lovers*, Mrs. Morel happens to be the central force in Paul’s life. Paul cannot break free from his mother in order to establish some sort of normal relationship with any other woman in his life.

## Class Consciousness

The issues of class-consciousness seem to be reflected to quite an extent in the *Sons and Lovers*. Lawrence appears to be offering a foretaste of the social structure prevailing during the early twentieth century in Britain. It has been noted that as the Victorian era came to an end the mothers, especially those belonging to the working class, aspired for higher standards of living and aimed towards higher achievements, both culturally and socially. Also, it was found to be a common practice among mothers to hold their sons close to themselves and inculcate the same notions, values and aspirations. “The expectations of mothers in Lawrence’s days were tempered with a sense of realism, but secretly harbored a desire for he success and happiness of all their offspring. But men were trapped in late Victorian society, frequently by their mothers who unwittingly failed to let go, sometimes by societal constraints and, in spite of educational reform, were constantly struggling to improve their lot, yet generally failed to do so.”

In context of this background Paul, as many critics agree, is restrained by his mother’s prevailing dominance but her influence seems to be ambivalent to an extent. On one hand she wants her son to rise in life and at the

same time does not allow him to be completely on his own. Along with a yearning for economic progress she does not completely disapprove of his desire to pursue a simple living by staying local. Thus, it is important to note that “this ambivalence, mirrored in other relationships throughout the novel, seems to pervade Lawrencean thinking and, defined in terms of social stratification, sets up a predominant dialectic throughout the work, leading to a combination of aspiration, passion, constraint and self-destruction. This progression is almost roller coaster like, as the protagonist hurtles toward a destiny the reader begins to glimpse, but is unable to stop. The inevitability of Paul’s dialectic make-up almost seems to flow naturally into the novel, because the attentive reader readily perceives the introspective musings and the idle speculations which typify Paul’s thinking.”

The emotional impulses that characterize Paul’s personality also have some basis in social aspirations as his life’s adolescence was dominated by an authoritative father and an ambitious mother. The dialectical aspect of Paul’s character “toward growth, yet destruction, and toward eroticism, yet nihilism, cross the barrier from the purely psychological to the socio-economic as the novel unfolds”. During the early nineteenth century England there was a wave of Marxism and egalitarian theories had begun to attract the minds of many people. Lawrence is not trying to endorse the Marxist values through the novel but is trying to reflect the ideological dilemma that the people faced during that period. Lawrence does not cling to pure Marxist philosophy as he does allot the superior position to Paul whereby he is able to make employment available for lower-class people as well. Lawrence seems to be suggesting some sort of hopefulness and at the same time questioning the system of distribution of money in the society. The novel thus deals with issues of class structure, the way class restrictions are imposed and confronted and how they influence the psyche of the individuals.

### Setting

The Countryside and Nature: “Lawrence was very much a village boy although his village was industrial rather than agricultural and throughout his life he kept the intense awareness of natural objects that was fostered in his childhood by the woods and fields that came within a stone’s throw of the house in Eastwood where he was born. His background and the background of *Sons and Lovers* must not be imagined in terms of the vast built up areas of the Northern industrial conurbations; in his childhood and youth, the period of the novel, town and country jostled each other shoulder to shoulder. As Lawrence writes in the very first chapter of the novel: “From Nuttall, high up on the sandstone among the woods, the railway ran, past the ruined priory of the Carthusians and past Robin Hood’s Well, down to Spinney Park then on to Minton, a large mine among corn-fields; from Minton across the farm-lands of the valleyside to Bunker’s Hill, branching off there, and running north to Beggarlee and Selby, that looks over at Crich and the hills of Derbyshire; six mines like black studs on the countryside, linked by a loop of fine chain, the railway.” (Chapter 1)

The countryside is virtually acts as a contrast to the darkness of the burrows of the coalmines that lie underneath. The account of this in the novel is almost secondary and it is not referred to openly and directly, but the reader is all the time reminded of the proximity of and to the world of nature. The people are not entirely detached or removed away from the natural order, rather there is always, although not very explicit, bond with nature. They are living a synthetic life within a mechanized system and there seems to be a repudiation of nature altogether, but there is some kind of closeness with nature that is shared by all.

Thus it is very natural for certain important scenes of the novel to take place in natural surroundings, for instance it can be country walks or farms. Lawrence, in fact, makes use of such junctures to “convey moments of revelation in his characters”. Lawrence had the ability to emphasize the emotional turmoil through the associated background. Nature would help to provide the character with an insight into his/her own thoughts. Mrs. Morel is often comforted by some undefined energy that the nature possess: “She went into the front garden, feeling too heavy to take herself out, yet unable to stay indoors. The heat suffocated her. And looking ahead the prospect of her life made her feel as if she were buried alive. The front garden was a small square with a privet hedge. There she stood trying to soothe herself with the scent of flowers and the fading beautiful evening” (Chapter 1).

Another of Lawrence's description in Chapter 2 needs attention: "The sun was going down. Every open evening, the hills of Derbyshire were blazed over with red sunset. Mrs. Morel watched the sun sink from the glistening sky, leaving a soft flower-blue overhead... The mountain-ash berries across the field stood fierily out from the dark leaves, for a moment. A few shocks of corn in a corner of the fallow stood up as if alive; she imagined them bowing, perhaps her son would be a Joseph... With Mrs. Morel it was one of those still moments when the small frets vanish, and the beauty of things stands out, and she had the peace and strength to see herself." Not only do these passages demonstrate the observant eye of an artist like Lawrence that captures the minute details of the surroundings but it also shows how the backdrop is so skillfully used to convey the emotions and mood of the character, Mrs. Morel in this particular case.

It has been very truly commented about Lawrence's writing that "it is purely functional writing and its function is within the novel". Perhaps, Lawrence is so well informed about and cherishes a special kind of intimacy with nature that he instinctively uses natural objects to describe human emotions. In the novel he particularly uses flowers and plants to bring to light complex characters like that of Miriam: "The cheeks of the flowers were greenish with cold. But still some had burst, and their gold ruffled and glowed. Miriam went on her knees before one cluster, took a wild-looking daffodil between her hands, turned up its face of gold to her, and bowed down, caressing it with her mouth and cheeks and brow" (Chapter 9). A better understanding of Miriam's personality and temperament can be attained through this visualized action rather than a formal analysis.

The use of flora and plant life, through out the novel, is suggestive of the power of life. Lawrence has taken them as metaphors of vivacity and spontaneity, images of life itself. Thus, when the naturalness around is compared to the relationship between Paul and Miriam, the sterility of this human liaison is highlighted although it has been equally a part of nature. Moreover, Miriam's attitude to the flowers, one of strong, worshipful adoration, mirrors her feelings towards Paul, too idealistic and over-spiritualized.

These observations establish the fact that Lawrence uses the natural surroundings and the countryside in two different ways: "first to particularize the special circumstances of Bestwood and secondly, as a source of imagery and near symbolism that can best convey extremely delicate and intangible emotions and attitudes."

**The Village and Mine:** Lawrence does not provide any formal description of the village and it is left to the reader to grasp the physical properties and appearances and so forth from the many comments that are made in the course of the novel. Just as the existence of a village does not stand outside the lives of its inhabitants, the reader also comes to take it for granted. The focus of the author is not on the external presence of the village as we see in the case of nature. Rather, Lawrence perceives village as a community. "Strangely enough the countryside is most important in defining the village. The constant reminders of the near presence of the countryside gradually give the impression of Bestwood as an island, to some extent cut off, and most certainly self-contained. This creation of a sense of unity in isolation is factual reporting; even today, despite the ubiquity of the motor-car, mining villages tend to be exclusive communities whose members, friends and enemies alike, belong to one another; the village is an extension of the family."

The fine description of this cluster of village people makes the reader acknowledge not only his social accuracy but also sense that he intends to make the community something more than merely a background for his narrative. It becomes significant in the placing of his characters. Morel fits into it while Mrs. Morel does not. Morel belongs to the place as is depicted by scenes at work or pub, going on jaunts with his friends and sharing their habits and so on. He seems to blend naturally and quite easily with his surroundings, whereas Mrs. Morel never feels at home. She is we are told, "not anxious to move into the Bottoms; even when she does get there, she is set apart: "Having an end house, she enjoyed a kind of aristocracy among the other women of the "between" houses" (chapter 1). Mrs. Morel's superiority and her awareness of it is best shown in a trivial incident. Mrs. Morel is "having a word" with her neighbour; a short conversation follows about Hose, the agent who collects the stockings that that the housewives have seamed at home. Hose arrives: "Hose was

coming along, ringing his bell. Women were waiting at the yard-ends with their seamed stockings hanging over their arms. The man, a common fellow made jokes with them, tried to swindle them, and bullied them. Mrs. Morel went up her yard disdainfully” (chapter 2). Two functions are being carried out here simultaneously: First, the reader is acquainted with one of the many facets of community life and secondly, the reader is informed about Mrs. Morel’s attitude towards this life, which is undoubtedly that of superiority.

Lawrence is more concerned and curious about human life and experience rather than being interested in physical appearance of the surroundings. This is to be seen in Lawrence’s handling of the pub that happens to be an important place in the life of the Morels. The building and its rooms or even the furniture is barely touched upon, but its importance to the men and especially to Morel, is presented in a couple of scenes. The first is when early in the novel he comes in after ‘waiting’ all day at the ‘Moon and the Stars’, and described his day, mainly the conversation centred on a coconut (chapter 1): “This is very far removed from stage dialect; Lawrence with his accurate ear for language and his close acquaintance with the common tongue of north Nottinghamshire, captures the rhythm and cadence of uneducated and lively speech, achieving an authenticity that takes us into the heart of working class talk and thought”. Another incident demonstrates the social function of the pub in the community, and quite precisely reveals Morel. The incident takes place after a quarrel between him and Mrs. Morel when he has thrown a table drawer at her and is resentful and feels guilty. More than words could ever describe the character of Morel; his action speaks all about his personality. Lawrence’s writing is commendable for such dramatic economy of high order.

Numerous incidents in the novel—the chapel, shopping, market, etc.—firmly base the actions and activities of the characters in actuality with immense authenticity and from these substantial insights of daily life, not very obvious facts about the economic life of the working class begin to surface. “Through out the first half of the novel there is a constant awareness of money, and there is a deeply sympathetic depiction of the unremitting pressure of near poverty, and of the planning and small economies made necessary by a small and uncertain income.” Lawrence seems to be very ardently engaged in the depiction of the feelings and thoughts and apprehensions of a working class man. The result is quite realistic because Lawrence is writing, based on his instincts and experience, from inside. The details are meticulous: “If he earned forty shilling to pay his debts” (chapter 1). These figures remind the readers that Morels could have been comfortably placed; coal getters were among the aristocracy of labour; we discover from Robert Tressell’s *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*, for example, that at this time skilled painters and decorators were earning barely a pound a week. Mrs. Morel, thus, has a genuine and real grievance against her husband apart from emotional aversion. From another perspective, the reader is made to sympathize with the poor housewife’s condition.

Economics bring together two of the predominant issues in this precisely recorded background: the mine and the home. The mine dictates the village life as it happens to be the economic basis for the existence of the village people. Moreover, its physical presence is persistently felt: the winding gear at the pit-head, the lives of miners walking to and from work, the whistle, the trucks, the mine offices, though not described ostentatiously but very convincingly show the influence of mine on the lives of the characters. Morel’s tales about mine episodes adds a lot of veracity to the idea of mine being central to the village life. In addition to this, mine has its place in the home as well: Morel getting his ‘snap’ ready, laying out his singlet, having his back scrubbed, drying himself and changing his clothes in front of the fire. Incidents, though trivial, enable the reader to peep into the daily life of the Morels and realize the extent to which mine infiltrates into the domestic life.

There can be no doubts about the fact that mine is central to the life of the family in general but it is only Morel who actually goes down the mine. There is a large and significant part of his life that is inaccessible to his family. While he is relaxing with his mates or is at the pub, he is very distant and secluded from his family. He withdraws into a world of his own which although “shapes their lives but is impenetrable to them, and which they cannot, even if they wanted to, share”. The novel does not emphasize on this feature of “separateness” but it is very much there. For Morel the idea of home and family is not the same as for Mrs. Morel, and they seem to have different perceptions of life itself. For Mrs. Morel mine is only a means to an end; she is rather

astonished to know that Morel is a miner: “ ‘And you are a miner?’ she exclaimed in surprise. ‘Yes. I went down when I was ten.’ She looked at him in wondering dismay.”(Chapter 1) But for Morel, mine is much more than just a source of food and shelter for the family. One may regard this as a cause of alienation of Morel from the family or as a factor that emphasizes this alienation. With time mine begins to lose its importance for the family but remains centre of Morel’s life. The sons look elsewhere for their livelihood, William to London, Paul to Nottingham, Arthur to the army and Annie gets married. As Paul starts earning, Mrs. Morel is no longer solely dependent on Mr. Morel’s income and thus the mine becomes less important. As is mine important and part of Morel, the work that Paul takes up to earn his living is not essentially a part of Paul or his life.

**The Home and the Home Life:** The mine and community are very important in the development of the novel. And, to quite an extent, they also seem to have influenced the home life of the characters. There are two main aspects to these: the physical actuality of the house and the normal daily domestic economy on one hand, and on the other the kind of life that is led there. The relationship between Morel and his wife are largely expressed in terms of their home life, the way in which they live and get on together, and it is impossible to talk of the home without talking of the relationship.

“There is a vivid description of the appearance of the Morel’s home, impressionistic rather than photographic; it is not until fairly late in the novel that we are given anything like a literal description of the interior, and even here the effect sought is one of coziness rather than detailed description.” Home and domesticity had always been very important for Lawrence and therefore happens to be noticeably present in the novel. For Paul also, a home with its comforts and simplicity is vital for existence. Even amidst strife and during difficult times home with its homeliness has a very calming effect for Paul. It offers not only comfort but becomes a refuge and a kind of safe haven for Paul. There is a desperate need for this security that the home provides and thus no longer remains merely as a vignette of domestic life.

The home is not only seen in still pictures as a stagnant object or is never referred to as a mere building/house but always as a place of activity. The things are going on and happening in this place and it is not deprived of life. There are descriptions of the daily routine of domestic life with such revealing detail that authenticity is assured. There is a kind of genuineness and realism about the account of the household affairs that are carried out by the characters. Paul blanching almonds, Mrs. Morel ironing, Paul baking bread, and letting it burn in his preoccupation with Miriam, all these show a home as a place where things happen; they give the impression not of a dead setting but a living environment; they are completely accurate in tone and convincingly strike the note of a real home.

The home is of course the scene of special occasions of various kinds. The description of Christmas preparations before William’s first return home brings to mind Dickens’s skilled art of portraiture. Imbedded with comic element, Lawrence uses his observation powers are able to show very accurately the working class manners and other social traits through the scene. Later, the preparations for the reception of William’s coffin are described with equal rightness and solemnity. There are still many more scenes that bring out different shades of life lived in a house by a working class family ranging from tense and tortured moments to some happy and cheerful flashes: “These doings and occasions, happy and sad alike, are the stuff of domestic life, and Lawrence carefully shows the ordinariness in the life of Morels; this is no demonic family set apart from the general run of humanity by monstrous and gigantic passions; the Morels home is no Wuthering Heights; but the ordinariness is valuable in stressing those elements in the life of the family that differentiate it from others and make it distinctive.”

Another important thing to note is that it is only at home that Morel is shown drunk. In other words, the novelist wants to show how his drunkenness affects the domestic and the family life while at the pub Morel is shown very briefly. It can be said that Morel’s drunkenness is of two types. On one hand it is used to construct scenes of violence and anger between Morel and his wife, thereby highlighting the existing tension and strife between the couple. On the other hand, it shows the feelings that arise as a consequence. It gives rise to a

sense of uncertainty and a feeling of wretchedness. At the same time there is a constant fear about the future of the children and the adverse affect it has on them and, furthermore, it brings an extended misery for everyone in the family. Thus, the home is more than just a background for Lawrence's narrative. It, in fact, plays an important role in bringing out the suppressed feelings and impulses in the family members.

Gradually, Mrs. Morel's love and adoration for her husband depreciates with each quarrel and every outburst. The clashes of personalities resulting in quarrels are depicted with lot of dramatic vim and vigor. "Lawrence perfectly catches the vocabulary and rhythms of embittered speech designed solely to hurt; they are powerful presentations of viciousness, of blind unthinking antagonism; the reader is made to realize that they are the eruptions of passions that for most of time lie dormant and repressed, only to break out on provocation with destruction and irresistible violence." The initial quarrels have only Morel and his wife as participants. In the first chapter of the novel we find the couple shouting at one another

### Symbolism:

There is an extensive use of symbols in the novel but it, in no way, hampers the development of the plot or the flow of action. The symbols are so well knitted that it is difficult to regard them as something outside the structure. With regard to symbolism Jung remarks: "A symbol is alive in so far as it is pregnant with meaning..." and that symbol "is the expression of a thing not to be characterized in any other better way". According to M.H. Abrams "The modern period, in the decades after world war I, was a notable era of symbolism in literature. Many of the major writers of the period exploit symbols which are in part drawn from religious and esoteric traditions and in part from their own invention. Some of the works of the age are symbolist in their settings, their agents, and their actions, as well as in the objects they refer to."

One of the major symbols in the novel is that of flowers. Mrs. Morel seems to have a special relationship with them. They are not only offered to her by her son, Paul, but also have a very soothing and calming effect. Apart from the usual symbolism of innocence, beauty and freshness they also show the varying attitudes of three individuals—Paul, Miriam and Clara—in the scene when the three are walking in the open field. While Paul seems to have a very spontaneous respond toward them, Miriam seems to drive life out of them though she picks them quite lovingly and on the other hand Clara does not pick them at all. Then there is the swing at Willey Farm is symbolic of the ambivalence that Paul experiences with regard to his feelings for Miriam. Just as the swing moves to and fro, Paul is all the time oscillating between the feelings of love to that of hate. It also symbolizes the transitory nature of the two extreme feelings. Moreover, the dilemma within Paul is highlighted. When Miriam is not able to achieve the same height as Paul does on the swing, it shows the incompatibility between them.

**The Concept of Oedipus Complex:** Freud's theory of the Oedipal Complex takes its name from the title character of Sophocles' *Oedipus*. In this legendary Greek drama, Oedipus comes to kill his father and marry his mother. The Oedipus/Electra complex is the foundation for many of Freud's theories. He argued that every child was faced with the task of mastering the id's urges for the incestual relations of the Oedipal Complex, and that a failure to master the tendencies resulted in a basis for neurosis.

In a letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud explains how he developed the concept of the Oedipus complex: "Being entirely honest with oneself is a good exercise. Only one idea of general value has occurred to me. I have found love of the mother and jealousy of the father in my own case too, and now believe it to be general phenomena of early childhood, even if it does not always occur so early as in children who have been made hysterics... If that is the case, the gripping power of Oedipus Rex in spite of all the rational objections to the inexorable fate that the story presupposes, becomes intelligible and, one can understand why later fate dramas were such failures. Our feeling rise against any arbitrary individual fate... but the Greek myth seizes on a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he has felt traces of it in himself. Every member of the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy, and this dream fulfillment played out in reality causes everyone to recoil in horror, with the full measure of repression which separates his fantasy from his parent state."

As explained by Arthur Asa Berger: For Freud, the Oedipus complex is the central or nuclear core of neurosis, and how we resolve our Oedipus complexes effect the way we develop and whether we are relatively normal or become neurotic. And, as we have seen, it affects the way our children develop also.

Freud argued that the Oedipus complex is found in everyone because it is natural and not environmental. There is a divergence of opinion among anthropologists as to whether this is correct, but there is evidence that seems to suggest it is and that the Oedipus complex is found everywhere. (there is also an inverse or negative Oedipus complex, which involves fantasies of incest with the parent of the same sex and murderous wishes towards the parent of the opposite sex.)

The Oedipus complex is normally resolved or mastered; in little boys. This is done through the agency of castration anxiety (the fear that the father will castrate the boy) and in little girls through penis envy (the fantasy girls have that they have lost their penises). Castration, anxiety, so the theory goes, leads boys to identify with their fathers' masculinity and to renounce their love for their mothers. This masculinity is then channeled into love outside of the confines of the family and toward other women. Penis envy leads girls to reidentify with their mothers and turn to males (other than their fathers) to obtain babies, and, indirectly, their lost 'penises'.

The female equivalent of Oedipus complex is often called the Electra complex, after the myth of Electra, daughter of Agamemnon. Electra induced her brother Orestes to kill their mother and her new husband, in retribution for their having killed Agamemnon. Electra refused to marry and brooded over the death of her father

Many are of the opinion that Oedipus complex is at the heart of all literature: "for a literary work to have a strong, or, even more, a lasting appeal, its plot must arouse and gratify some important aspect of the unconscious oedipal wishes of the members of its audience". Furthermore it is suggested that Oedipus complex is "the cornerstone of all culture as we know it". In other words "it informs our expressive works, both tragic and comic. It helps us work through out the unconscious problems and conflicts, both as individuals and as collectivities; as such, it plays a much more profound role in our lives than we may possibly imagine".

Not only Lawrence but also the age itself was swayed by the theories of Freud and Oedipus complex was a major one. However, it cannot be assumed that this theory determined the composition of *Sons and Lovers*. If one believes that Lawrence was trying to present his personal experiences in the novel then it can be concluded that he was a victim of this complex. His mother, Lydia, had a great influence and a strong on him and he had once confessed to Jessie Chambers, the girl he loved: "I loved my mother-like a lover and that is why I could never love you". Graham Hough (*The Dark Sun: A Study of D.H. Lawrence*) asserts the psychological importance of *Sons and Lovers* and claims it to be 'the first Freudian novel in English'. The Freudianism is not only explored through the life of the main character in the novel but it also hints at the "Oedipus imbroglio" of the author. Harold Massingham wrote in a review published in the *Daily Chronicle*: "We suspect that Paul is a projection of the writer's own personality".

**Characters and Relationships:** In this chapter we shall be considering the various relationships and interrelationships that make up the main part of SL. It will not be often necessary to give character sketches because Lawrence does not work that way, and it will not be possible to deal with situations in as neat and orderly fashion as the sub heading might rather deceptively indicate. For example it is obviously impossible to talk of Mr. And Mrs. Morel without talking of their children; it is even more impossible to talk about Miriam and Paul without talking about Mrs. Morel. But the sub – headings will at least serve to indicate the main lines of emphasis.

**MOREL AND MRS. MOREL:** When the reader is first introduced to Mrs. Morel, she has been married for eight years; she is seen immediately as housewife and mother. In the scene at the wakes, there is the first slight statement of the Principle theme of the novel, the attachment between the mother and the sons. Williams, a child of about seven years old, has won two eggcups from a stall. He is pleased with them, and shows them

to his mother. ‘ She knew he wanted them for her. ‘ Lawrence goes on to describe briefly the little boy’s pride in his mother, and in his possessiveness of her: He would not leave her. All the time he stuck close to her, bustling with a small boy’s pride of her. (chapter1). The note that resounds through the novel is here struck gently and unobtrusively. When the children have gone to bed, Mrs. Morel, alone, reflects on her life: Mrs. Morel was alone, but she was used to it. Her son and her little girl slept up stairs; so, it seemed, her home was there behind her, fixed and stable. But she felt wretched with the coming child. The world seemed a dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her—at least until William grew up. But for herself, nothing but this dreary endurance—till the children grew up. And the children! She could not afford to have this third. She did not want it. The father was serving beer in a public house, swilling himself drunk. She despised him, and was tied to him. This coming child was too much for her. If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness. She went into the front garden, feeling too heavy to take herself out, yet unable to stay indoors. The heat suffocated her. And looking ahead, the prospect of her life made her feel as if she were buried alive” (Chapter1).

Thus we are introduced to the central figure of the Morel, a woman depressed and tired, no longer loving her husband, and sustained only by her children. Then follows a retrospective account of her early life, and what emerges from it is her superiority, both personal, and, by decent at least, social: ‘She came of good old burger family.’ A measure of ‘forgiveness’ is indicated, too, though of Nottingham stock, she had spent her childhood and youth in the south, and had been educated there. Lawrence establishes from the beginning those qualities of temperament and make it unlikely that, she being as she is, her marriage can be a success with the sort of man she married; this is hinted at by the mention of the young man whom she had known at Sheerness and (She still had the Bible that John Field had given her) who we gather would have been suitable.

Mr. Morel who attracted her into marriage is introduced in the course of this reminiscence; and throughout the emphasis is on his simple abundant vitality. A list of the words and phrases used to describe him is revealing: well set up, erect and very smart, vigorous, ruddy, red mist mouth, rich ringing laugh, color and animation, ready, pleasant, non – intellectual, warm, natural, joyous, exaltation, glamour, the flower of his body, the dusky golden softness of this man’s sensuous flame of life. These all occur in the course of a page and a half and speak for themselves; (Chapter1 pg 10) they show us the spontaneous, instinctive and simple sensuous man who appeals to his antithesis: “She was a Puritan, like her father, high-minded and stern” (Chapter1 pg11). This fundamental sensuous attractiveness is a real and in some ways lasting influence on the relationship between them. It is left for Paul to comment on it late in the novel: Yes; but my mother got real joy and satisfaction ... lasts three months (chapter12).

Though Paul’s subsequent attempts to define this kind of passion are not realize what is meant; there must be an experience of passion and fulfillment which however brief it may have been, can illuminate a whole life, a moment or period of complete and spontaneous union that can never be forgotten, where existence serves as a bond between those who shared it even when the passion itself is long dead. And this experience Morel and Mrs. Morel had; brief through the statement of their short married happiness, it is enough. It should be set against the innumerable statement of Mrs. Morel’s contempt for her husband, the vivid description of the hatred between them, and the reiterated theme of Mrs. Morel’s economic dependence on the Morel ‘ for the children’s sake.’ The economic reason and the passionate reason can assimilate, just as a sense of union can co – exist with, just as a sense of union can co – exist with hatred and contempt. Lawrence, dealing with the emotions, is aware of their complexity, and refuses to simplify into terms of black and white, right and wrong, happy and miserable; antitheses can co – exist.

When we first see the Morel, however, the period of disillusionment had lasted years, and a fifth of the novel is largely given to tracing the last stages of spiritual intimacy between them. We are shown the various crucial moments; Mrs. Morel’s discovery of her husband’s deceitfulness about money is the first; the second and crucial one is the cutting of the year old Williams’s hair – an event trivial enough, one which is earlier and lesser novels could have been an excuse for vintage domestic sentimentality; here it here it becomes really important:

“But she knew and Morel knew, that that act had caused something momentous to take place in her soul. She remembered the scene all her life, as one in which she had suffered the most intensely. This act of masculine clumsiness was the spear through the side of her love for Morel” (Chapter1). This is worthy of close attention, and the details must be noted carefully. The reference in the metaphor is of course to the crucifixion. Mrs. Morel’s love for her husband is the implied Christ of the image; but Christ’s side was pierced only after his death.

The cutting of William’s hair is the act that proves the death of that first love; after this – that is, for practically the whole novel – Mrs. Morel has ceased to love her husband vitally: “Before, while she had striven against him bitterly, she had fretted after him, as if he had gone astray from her. Now she ceased to fret for his love: he was and outsider to her. This made life much more bearable” (Chapter1). But Mrs. Morel cannot lapse in to the easy going indifference that could have made their lives so much more tolerable, and which would have been so welcome to Morel: “Nevertheless, she still continued to strive with him. She still had her high moral sense inherited from generations of Puritans. It was now a religious instinct, and she was almost a fanatic with him, because she loved him, or had loved him. If he sinned, she tortured him. If he drank, and lied, was often a poltroon, sometimes a knave, she wielded the lash unmercifully” (Chapter1).

At this stage, it is Possible to feel some sympathy for Morel, and it is even possible that Lawrence feels some. But, basically his approval and sympathy lie with Mrs. Morel, His mother – figure; she is an expression of his even Puritanism. In the scenes that follow the casting off of Morel, there is very little sympathy, and Morel is presented, reasonably enough, in a bad light, since his actions are disgusting. Besides being an account of the transference of Mrs. Morel’s love from her husband to her son, the first quarter of the novel is also an account of the degeneration of Morel, and of Mrs. Morel’s bitter triumph in the middle of misery. “The pity was, that she was too much his opposite. She could not be content with the little he might be; she would have him the much that he ought to be. So, in seeking to make him nobler than he could be she destroyed him. She injured and hurt and scared herself, but she lost none of her worth. She also had the children” (Chapter1).

In this objective summary of the situation, the responsibility for Morel’s decline is ascribed unequivocally to Mrs. Morel, even though the provocation comes from Morel. But in the presentation of Morel’s process of degeneration, Lawrence seems to be intellectually aware of the pathos of his gradually diminishing vitality, but does not seem to be moved by it: he is much more moved to indignation and sympathy by the misery it causes to Mrs. Morel (who he has said is responsible) and her children. This withdrawal of comparison is particularly interesting when we consider the sympathy by which he treats Paul’s struggle to resist being eaten up by his mother, and when we consider Lawrence’s own bitterly expressed resentment of possessive love as it appears in Birkin’s attitude in *Women In Love*. Morel loses most, but quite simply Lawrence does not seem to care; Morel only matters to Lawrence in so far as he affects Mrs. Morel and the children. However this does not prevent Lawrence from recording the process accurately and sensitively. There is a direct statement; after the incident in which Morel locks his wife out of doors, Lawrence comments: “After such a scene as the last, Walter Morel was for some days abashed and ashamed, but he soon regained his old bullying indifference. Yet there was a slight shrinking, a diminishing in his assurance. Physically even, he shrank, and his fine full presence waned. He never grew in the least stout, so that, as he sank from his erect, assertive bearing, his physique seemed to contract along with his pride and moral strength” (Chapter2).

He is seen as increasingly empty, and increasingly futile in action; there is a shaming anticlimax of his blustering departure from the house with his little blue bundle and his ignominious return the same evening, on which there is this comment: As Mrs. Morel saw him slink... because she had loved him (chapter2). It is shortly after this that her love for him finally dies. In his illness ‘she never quite wanted him to die... wanted him for herself’ (chapter3) but the the birth of Paul asserts itself and brings about the final change and Mrs. Morel realizes the direction in which her feelings are set: Now with the birth ...she scarcely desired him (chapter3). And with this with enunciation comes on measure of indifference; Morel has last to heart her; from this time on her concern is with the children, and Morel’s behaviour is only important to her if it affects the children. The effect

on Morel's inner life is disastrous, even though, after his return to strength he goes on very much as before, working, drinking and bullying his family. But, as far as his personal life is concerned, he is a beaten man: His life was casting him off...to their children (chapter3).

He has ceased to be of any account in the life of his family, and when this is remembered, his violence inside the home, and his search elsewhere for comfort and consultation can be seen as empty gestures of assertiveness, attempts to impose his presence on these withdrawn people of his flesh as a reality. These pathetic attempts make his children hate him, as they fear him and are made uncomfortable by him; in this section of the novel we see him and his relationship with his wife through the children's eyes, not through Mrs. Morel's – he is no longer important to her: Paul hated his father so...and nasty temper (chapter4).

This is a figure very far removed from the young man of super abundant life and charm and vitality that we saw at the beginning of the novel, and at least part of the change is done to a change in Lawrence's attitude: his sympathy for Morel diminishes as the novel progresses, until here we have something that is very near caricature. Lawrence's involvement of Paul's feeling is clearly shown in the use of the word 'soiled' of Morel's patches of grey – it is an emotional weighting. Lawrence at this stage does not seem to see anything pathetic in this situation, indeed, Morel is stated to be where and what he is by an act of his own will, as a consequence of his own choice: He was an outsider. He had denied the god in him (chapter4). There is no recognition of the fact that it takes two to make an incompatibility, no sense of regret at the prevention and near extinction of a personality. Lawrence is too deeply committed to the mother and children. This is one of the occasions when we are most acutely aware of Lawrence's personal employment with the characters of the novel, when we remember that Walter Morel is Lawrence's vision of his father, and Paul his vision of himself. Dramatically, this bias has its compensations: it certainly gives urgency and intense feeling to the scenes in which Morel is behaving intolerably, but its presence must be acknowledged if we are to see the novel clearly.

By the time William is entering early manhood, and Paul is a boy, the relationship between Morel and his wife has reached its final static stage. Mrs. Morel is by now largely indifferent to her husband; he became less and less important in the home and more ineffectual, lapsing in to mare "an ugly irritant". Not only in Mrs. Morel's life but also in the novel he is replaced by his sons, and in the second half of the novel he seldom makes an appearance of any importance.

It has been dealt at some length with this relationship partly because it is only easy to take it for granted, and partly because of his dual complexity; first the complexity of the relationship itself, the study of incompatible people moving from passion through hatred to indifference; and secondly, the complexity of Lawrence's attitude towards Morel; he starts off with some measure of sympathy for him, and some objective realization of the intractability of Mrs. Morel; these disappear as the story moves into the more conscious period of Paul's childhood; that is, as it turns to the part that Lawrence himself can more vividly remember experiencing. It well illustrates the very special place of this novel in Lawrence's work and life: it is at once of personal record and an objective work of art.

**MRS. MOREL AND HER SONS:** Mr. Morel is discarded off as a dominant factor fairly early in the novel, and Mrs. Morel "turns for love and life" to her children. The first relationship with William is not as powerful as it could probably have been or as Lawrence might have wanted it to be. It is the coming of Paul that is responsible for the impetuous end of her love for her husband; it is Paul who is symbolically baptized with her blood. William is to be seen as a temporary substitution. Mrs. Morel turns to him first because he is older; he is nearer to a manhood; she saw him as a man, young full of vigour, making the world glow again for her" (chapter 3). In him she sees the chance of fulfilling all those aspirations—social, intellectual, and emotional—that her marriage with Morel had crushed. William, unlike his father is clever, ambitious, and intelligent and he has the intellectual qualities of his mother: he can enter the outside world from which she has been excluded by her unsuitable marriage. He begins to move in social circles nearer to those of his mother's youth.

As he enters this world inaccessible to his parents there is inevitably tension between him and his mother on one side and his father on the other. In a scene such as has been enacted in countless working class homes, Morel voices the resentment and antagonism that exist alongside his pride in his son. In an argument about William's choice of a job, Morel suggests the pit, but Mrs. Morel is strictly against it and says that it is not good enough for him. More important is the first development of tension between Mrs. Morel and William. His modest social climbing takes them to dances, of which the puritan of Mrs. Morel disapproves, and brings him into contact with girls, of whom she disapproves even more strongly. Lawrence very effectively catches Mrs. Morel's forbidding antagonism and these girls' painful embarrassment. The incident is trivial, as are the affairs; but it shows Mrs. Morel's protective possessiveness, and the direction in which Williams' downfall is to lie; he has a predilection for, in Lawrence's word, "fribbles" – pretty, feckless, shallow girls. His departure to London is mingled pain and pleasure to Mr. Morel's; "she loved him so much! - ... as well out of her heart" (chapter 3). She not only misses him but worries for him as well, fears that his susceptibility will lead him to make a choice, as in the event it does. His removal to London accelerates a process that had already begun: Mrs. Morel had already begun to turn to Paul for comfort. When William was kept more from whom by his work in Nottingham, and this moment is intensified; but at this stage we are told "William occupied her chiefly... not so passionate as with her eldest" (chapter 4).

However, William's first visit home on Christmas brings the family together and a. and to reanimate it for the time being: "Home was home, and they loved it with a passion of love, whatever the suffering had been" (chapter 4) and we are told again that Mrs. Morel still "loved him passionately" but this is the last time that such a feeling is conveyed for William. On his next Christmas visit Williams 'arrived with a lady, but no presents', The mother, in spite of her reservations and dislike, is kind and hospitable towards the girl, who is hopelessly feather-headed, but Williams is quite unsettled and insecure. When he brings the girl home again, he is all the more disturbed and unhappy. He is shown as feeling himself committed to the girl, yet not loving her, capable even of detesting her, and despising her. There is one sentence that perhaps reveals the true reason: "Lily could understand nothing... he hate his betrothed (chapter 6). Lily, in fact, is not his mother and the intimacy that is between him and his mother is not to be found with her and he hates her for it. He is at first attracted to her by her prettiness, her gaiety, and what he sees as her lively social life, but these prove insufficient: what ever gives, it is not in the pattern that has been established by his mother as the one necessary for his personality. He has chosen lightly and wrongly, on an ultimate basis of appetite, and cannot escape and the situation is draining him of life. Mrs. Morel is sensible and kind, but seeing him heading for a marriage of incompatibles, and seeing him suffering she suffers too "her heart was heavy as it had never been... it was her hope that was struck (chapter 6). She sees her son destroying himself and part of her self in her hopes of him: he, in whom she had hoped to live and to achieve by deputy what she had never had in person, is moving towards a union as certain of failure as her own turned out to be. His depth, in tolerably painful as it is to her, is only as it was a realization of her fears.

Shortly after William's death the final stage of Mrs. Morel's final shift of her central love to Paul takes place. Mrs. Morel, since the funeral, has withdrawn from life and begins to lose the will to live. But Paul falls ill: his mother lies in bed with him. He wakes, feeling him that he is dying: "I s'll die mother! He cried... oh my son, my son" (chapter 6). The mother's words are those, which she uttered repeatedly at Williams' funeral; now she applies to her living son; she comes back in to the world of life, and at last Paul has completely taken of his brother who had already taken the father's place in the mother's heart. The relationship between Paul and his mother runs through the whole novel; it has various stages and various degrees of intensity and stress; all other relationships are brought in to contact with it. Not only is it most exhaustively treated and the most feeling rendered of the relationships, but it is also the central expression of the theme of sons and lovers; every thing is ultimately referred to it.

The study of William and his mother is presented to a large extent in terms of direct statement – the reader is told that GM loved her elder son; the study of Mrs. Morel and Paul is presented dramatically and on a large

scale. From the very beginning we are shown the development the love and its manifestations, and are also shown the circumstances outside it that contribute in making it all the more strong. Its fluctuations are noted and demonstrated; it is always seen as a living thing, kept constant by the fixity of Mrs. Morel's emotional dedication to it, and wavering only because of the inevitable changes caused by Paul's growing up, and the consequent diffusion of his interest and affections. The course that it takes is one from the unquestioning intimacy of his boy hood and early adolescence through the period of trouble and problems that is caused by Miriam to the realization by Paul of his mother's central and dominant position in his life, ending only with her death.

It is very obvious that Lawrence is more concerned with the relationship rather than the individual is clear picture of Gertrude Morel here, a firm inflexible little woman, suffering and embittered, but indomitable and determined to achieve a personal life of fulfilled emotion; we see her as a woman passionately determined not to be beaten down by life. But Paul as an individual seldom emerges with any definite clarity. We are told from time to time what he looks like (chapter 5). He was not a very good debater and the reader is told about his interests – his painting, his intellectual questioning, and his life at work. Yet, comparatively slight as the formal description is of him and his personality is, we became acutely and intimately aware of him. This comes about by reason of the very subtle way in which Lawrence takes us inside Paul; we are made to share his receptiveness; we feel the impact of events and people as they come into his consciousness. And Paul is most usually seen in a state of response to the personalities and doings of others, of his mother, of Miriam, of Clara, of Banter Dawes.

In a sense it is true to say that Paul is a hero of the novel, in that it is mainly to him that things happen, and we experience them with him. This is not to say that we are invited to identify naively with him, as we are invited to identify with James Bond; Lawrence in giving Paul's experiences, generally has given us enough to see the whole picture, and this evaluates and places Paul's reactions, thereby qualifying ours. A good example of this is to be seen in Lawrence's treatment of Paul's intense experiences of passion; everything is centred on Paul's awareness of it; it is described subjectively, not objectively; but we are also made aware of the other person's reactions; we know more than Paul, though at the time we can see through his eyes. In these cases Lawrence achieves a singular fusion of author, character and reader. This, of course, has its dangers; sometimes we feel that we are being forced to endorse the judgment, which we cannot accept, but this is rare.

Although Paul is so much at the centre, and so much the register of other people and events, and though we are shown so much of his mind, he is not presented as a thoroughgoing introspective; this is precisely because he is concerned so much more with other people and his reactions to them than he is with the details of his personality. Paul, in fact—and this is one of the great strengths of the novel—is for most of time in state of ignorance and bewilderment about himself; in capturing this confusion, Lawrence has captured the very essence of adolescence and early manhood. He seldom tries to explain the inexplicable; after all, it can be argued that the novelist's talk is to present the problems, not to give the answers. So Paul emerges as a sensitive and intelligent boy and young man, immensely responsive to the world and people round him, confused and uncertain, often unhappy, but determined like his mother to live, though, unlike her, he does not consciously expect happiness.

It will be useful to look in some detail at the way in which the relationship between these two is presented. Descriptions of affectionate companionships begin very early in the novel; there is the trip to Nottingham to get him his job; the mother's uninhibited eagerness and the boy's embarrassment at it are delightfully caught, and the simple completeness of their happiness is summed up: "He had spent a perfect afternoon... and tired (chapter 5)

Also, the description of their first visit to the Leiver's farm shows well Lawrence's technique of presenting the incident in simple, straightforward prose, and then clinching the meaning with an unobtrusive statement: Here is a bit of new mown hay... she was perfectly happy" (chapter 6). It is worthy to note that Lawrence here, in a situation of great emotional delicacy, manages to avoid any suggestion of the sentimentality it would be so

easy to fall into, the occasion has been put before the reader with too much authority, and the comment is too austere in expression to allow any falsity of feeling to creep in.

These occasions show the activity of the relationship at its most free and happy, the spontaneous expressions of the intense fundamental love that is dealt within the period of the strife and unhappiness that follows the idyllic untroubled phase. They are reinforced by occasions of even more explicit significance; the following passage is one of the few occasions on which Lawrence actually states the importance of this quiet communion to both mother and son. "He was studying for his painting...they almost ignored" (chapter7).

The first sign of a flaming of this happy companionship comes only three pages later, when Paul is late home after spending an evening with Miriam. We are first told directly of the mother's uneasiness. "Always when he went with Miriam...he could not understand" (chp7 pg185)—a statement whose accuracy as a fact of domestic life will no doubt strike many readers but the real force of the incident lies to a much greater intent in the splendid reporting of Mrs. Morel's conversation with Paul. Her antipathy for Miriam, her unwillingness and lack of enthusiasm to admit the reality of Paul's growing up, the antagonism between mother and son, are dramatically before the reader—the more direct comment that has gone before is amply documented and justified. Mrs. Morel's conscious reason for her anxiety has been stated. She could feel Paul being drawn away—she said to herself (chapter7) but the simpler and deeper possessiveness, something not entirely dissimilar from what she fears in Miriam, comes out in the action put before the reader. Equally clearly emerges the fact that this strife is not likely to destroy the love between mother and son at the end of the incident. "Then he went slowly to bed...she was hurt" (chapter7). There are further incidents of a similar kind one, that takes place during the holidays at Marblethorpe, is important because it shows Miriam so plainly as an intruder into the happy intimacy between mother and son. Again, he is rather late; again, there is acid exchange between them. "And she took no further notice of him...she put the blame on Miriam" (chapter7).

Besides showing Gertrude's antagonism to Miriam, it gains force when one remembers the close intimacy shown in the passages quoted earlier. When Paul was at home working at his painting; the intrusion and the resultant discord are shown. It will be noticed that there is no question of right or wrong in this matter; Lawrence merely states the facts as they are and though, as the incidents multiply, we can see that his sympathies are pretty clearly with the mother, yet at this stage of the novel there is no undue writing; the pitifulness of Miriam's character is honestly realized.

Matters reach a crisis when Paul returns from taking Miriam to her home after having burnt the bread; it is this incident that shows the subject of the next chapter—The Defeat Of Miriam—to be inevitable. In the course of a bitter agreement Paul stressed the community of ideas and interests that he shares with Miriam and cannot share with his mother. Mrs. Morel resents his saying so, just as she resents the truth of the statement and Paul blundered into a further stupid truthfulness: "You'r old mother, and we are young...wrong thing" (chapter8). His mother is deeply hurt, and Paul is shocked into realization. Then follows the most revealing passage: "he had taken off his collar...without knowing he gently stroked her face" (chapter8). This is in many ways a fundamental passage. Technically, it shows Lawrence's mastery of the impassioned scene of strong and complex emotions: the mother's desperate fear of losing her son, her sense of a frustrated life, the intensity of her love, the son's misery and his equally strong love for his mother, the complete absorption in feeling and emotion are all conveyed with a straightforward directness that commands assents.

But besides this, it establishes two vitally important elements in the theme of the novel; we see now that Mrs. Morel realizes a similar intensity of possessive emotion in Miriam: she realizes that she and Miriam are fighting for the same thing, the possession of Paul's soul; and it establishes her rare supremacy in Paul; when he is put under pressure, his choice, he realizes, is already made; he must return to his mother. All this is expressed quite deliberately in terms of erotic love (his mouth was on her throat", "long fervent kiss") and Gertrude's explicitly says: "I have never had a husband—not really". This stresses the intensity of the link between mother and son, and shows its completeness; it has within itself a capacity for passion that is generally associated with the

relationship between man and wife, or lovers. Indeed, significance of title, *Sons and Lovers* becomes obvious; there is a way in which the sons are seen as lovers. Though so much of this is expressed in terms of the senses. The total effect is not one of sensuality; the senses and the language of the senses, are used to express a much more complex spiritual position. The completeness of mutual passion between mother and son explains why Mrs. Morel must oppose Miriam, who is seeking the same thing; why she is different to Clara, from whom Paul's soul is safe; why Paul can never love another woman completely while his mother lives—he is too far committed already. Here, as at all key points of the novel, Lawrence's dramatic power and economy are obvious; there is nothing superfluous and nothing wanting, and a vital development has taken place. Paul's complex emotions and his ultimate submission to his mother are summed up at the end of the chapter: "he pressed his face into his pillow in a fury of misery... It was the bitter piece of resignation" (chapter 8).

Gertrude Morel's triumph is about an ordinary possessiveness, though that is there. It is recognition of a fundamental mutual need. This central fact of Paul's essential commitment to his mother is established surprisingly early: the above scene takes place exactly half way through the novel. For the rest of the novel both the relationships between Paul and his mother and the relationship between Miriam and Clara must be seen with this acceptance in mind. Of course, the study of the relationship between Paul and his mother does not end here; there is much to come that makes them increasingly solid figures; but the crisis has been passed, and the main course of Paul is already set.

The rest of the relationship between Paul and his mother is concerned first with Mrs. Morel's concern for his son in his love affairs and then with his concern for her in her illness. Although now "he had come back to his mother" (chp9 pg 253) and although Mrs. Morel can say with security "in him was established her life now" (chapter 9). There are other demands made on him, first by Miriam, then by Clara. These continue to upset Mrs. Morel and make her suffer, not because she is uncertain of her son's love, but because she is afraid for him. Paul is shown at this stage as in a "state of restless fretting". Unable to break finally with Miriam, and unconsciousness of the strong pull of Clara; her mother in anguish sees this state as dangerous to him: "Mrs. Morel felt as if... which is a form of slow suicide" (chapter 10).

**Paul, Miriam and Clara:** "The relationship between Paul and Miriam is in many ways the most difficult in the novel, partly because of the psychological and emotional complexities in it, and partly because of Lawrence's varying and subtle attitude. With the other relationship he seems to have a clear pattern in mind from the beginning, so that in spite of the changes and developments, the dominant point of view remains basically the same. But in this case Lawrence's sympathy and emphasis fluctuates, moving between Paul, Miriam and Mrs. Morel in such a way as to leave a measure of uncertainty. This effect is artistically valuable; it expresses the confusion of Paul, and the confusion of Lawrence himself, and adds a great deal to the authenticity and immediacy of the account; it is to some extent a reliving of a difficult part of his past by Lawrence, and comes over directly to the reader. By a purist, it might be seen as a weakness in the art of the novel, but most certainly it strengthens the dramatic impact and furthers the humanity."

From the very beginning of the relationship, before Mrs. Morel's hostility is aroused, and before Paul is deeply involved, it is clear that there are going to be difficulties. Many of these lie in the personality and temperament of Miriam herself. When she is first introduced, when she is 'about fourteen' Lawrence is concerned to establish her coyness; her brothers call her 'mardy-kid' and her feeding of the hen states without undue emphasis characteristics which persist through the novel. She finally forces herself to offer grain in her hand to the hen: "At last Miriam let herself... rather pathetic" (chapter 6). Fear, pain and grief are to form a large part of Miriam's association with Paul, and, as is foreshadowed here, so much of it comes from her own over-refined sensibilities, her readiness to be hurt. Her timorousness, it is later suggested in a vivid incident, is closely linked with her inability to submit herself to the moment and take a risk. Paul has been swinging: "He was swinging through the air, every bit of him swinging, like a bird that swoops for joy of movement". Miriam reluctantly takes her place on the awing: "She felt the accuracy with which he caught her... hot wave of fear" (chapter 7). When she is left to herself, she sways gently, safely, 'scarcely moving'. It is not merely fear: "She

could never lose herself, so, nor could her brothers". Swinging is symbolic of the capacity for instinctive living: Paul can give himself up to the moment, spontaneously; Miriam, though she recognizes this power in Paul, and warms to it, cannot naturally act in the same way. The difference of temperament is fundamental, and much of the difficulty of the relationship is caused by this deep dissimilarity.

This is brought out in the overture to the relationship; when it properly gets underway, in the chapter *Lad-And-Girl-Love*, other characteristics are emphasized. We are told of her romantic nature, her mysticism, of her treasuring religion inside her', of her passion for learning, and of her piqued idealization of Paul, who 'scarcely observed her'. It is relevant to her latter attitude that after Paul's illness (she is now 16) she rejoices in his weakness—"then she would be stronger than he. Then she could love him" (chapter7). In her way she wants to be dominant; it is not Mrs. Morel's way, but there are points of contact. And yet with the desire for dominance goes a shrinking hesitancy, and what Lawrence describes as 'proud humility'; she at once retires, and wishes to assert mastery.

Very early in the course of their acquaintance, characteristic that is to be most important in their life together is introduced. Paul has already noticed the very in which Mrs. Leivers 'exalted every thing to the plane of religious trust; "Miriam resembles her mother in this, many of her early meeting with Paul are concerned with establishing this quality of intensity. Paul starts to teach algebra. He is not a good teacher: He was quick and hasty...he questioned her more, then got not...afraid, apologetic, ashamed. (chapter7).

Irritation with Miriam is an important ingredient in Paul's attitude towards her, irritation that hurts her and makes her cringe. In her earnestness, she makes the learning of algebra more important than it is, and brings to it a disproportionate emotional intensity. Learning is desperately important to Miriam, and she approaches it with a kind of religious fervour, as she approaches everything, yet her fervour, instead of giving her confines and certainty makes her hesitant, unsure and anguished. She makes complex what with happier dispositions is simple, and imposes her complexity on Paul: "Because of the intensity...went with Edgar (chapter7). It is plain that such a relationship can seldom be easy and untroubled; Miriam's very nature demands too much.

Miriam's intensity rises to its peak in her attitude before flowers. Lawrence splendidly suggests the repressed passion behind her spirituality, which is indeed a sublimation of passion. She takes Paul to look at wild rose bush: "they were going to have a communion together—something...holy (chp7 pg 183-184). They stand before the bush which is made to seem a living power—"Point after point the steady roses shone...in their souls". They are united in their response to it, but Paul cannot go the whole way with her; Paul looked into Miriam's eyes...he turned aside as if pained" (chapter7). One need not feel gross and insensitive if one recognizes the fact that, to say the least, such intensity is difficult to with it; it makes easy spontaneity difficult and hazardous, and Lawrence clearly shows the demand it makes on Paul's sensibility. Miriam translates everything into terms of the spiritual, and Paul feels himself, half-reluctantly, half-willingly drawn into it. Significantly, it is just after this incident that Gertrude Morel says of Miriam, she is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left, and though we see Mrs. Morel's possessiveness we must admit there is a considerable justification for her feeling and Miriam's own possessiveness is clearly stated: "he had not seem to belong...would she feel alive again' (chapter7).

By this time, the bond between them is love, love, however, that they will not acknowledge: "He thought himself too same for such sentimentality and she thought herself too lofty." Besides that, there is the important factor of Miriam's attitude towards sexuality. It would be wrong to call her prudish, and certainly we see her capacity for passion, but the passion is etherealized. Miriam is inhibited by her spiritual delicacy: 'but, perhaps because of the continual business of birth...it could never be mentioned that the mare was in the foal" (chapter7). And Miriam, in her bewildered purity, at first prays: "O Lord, let me not love Paul Morel. Keep me from loving him, if I might not to love him" (chapyer7). Inevitably, Paul feels the pull of sensuality, and in dealing with these early stirrings, Lawrence shows his deepest understanding of adolescence. When Paul and Miriam stand among the sand hills gazing at an enormous yellow moon, Paul is tormented: "she was slightly afraid...but

somehow she ignored them” (chapter7). The situation is created and then explicitly commented on, the state described as complex, but the analysis is perfectly clear: “he did not know himself what was the matter... he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it” (chapter7). Miriam’s attitude is not a simple one; it is clear that she is not merely chaste because to be chaste is the right and the moral thing. In her own way, she is intensely aware of him physically: “she loved him absorbedly... she never realized the male he was” (chapter8). The growing tension between them is admirably and surprisingly briefly stated; a few incidents are enough to establish it completely. It is made unmistakably obvious that all the inhibitions are not on Miriam’s side; and that as complex as she is, he is even more so. She is not merely passive: “she seem to want him, and he resisted ... she wanted to draw all of him into her” (chapter8). And immediately afterwards Paul says: “if only you could want me... then its my fault”, he said (chapter8). These passages demonstrate the lovers’ difficulty splendidly: attraction and something near to revolution, desire and inhibition, love and hatred, the sensual and the spiritual, are all confirmed and struggling together; neither of the lovers knows what is the matter. And for Paul there is the added complications of his mother all the time: ‘And why did he hate Miriam, and feel so cruel towards her, at the thought of his mother? ... easily hated her” (chapter8).

This happens just before the scene quoted and commented as above, in which Paul realize primary love for his mother; the one that follows after the realization, and illustrates the increasing bitterness and anger. In a crucial scene in the chapter, “Defeat of Miriam”, all the incompatibilities flare out, and the situation is made as clear as it can ever be. All Paul’s irritation, all his thwarted passion are expressed in savage resentments: “why must you always be fondling things,” he said irritably ... jolted off these sayings like sparks from electricity (chapter9). It should not need Lawrence’s comment to make us realize that this is not an entirely just view of Miriam; it is partial one, seen in anger and frustration, and a hidden consciousness of failure on his part in Paul. Shortly afterwards, he first suggests that they should “breakoff”: “I can only give friendship... let us have done” (chapter9)

Here, Paul recognizes his own share in failure of the relationship, and here I will reiterate what I suggested before. Though Paul is partly Lawrence, and though we see largely through Paul’s eyes, we also see Paul; he cannot understand himself and his situation, but we can; we are shown enough of the situation as a whole to enable us to make our own judgement. Indeed, at this moment in the novel, it is not measure of Lawrence’s involvement with Paul that is remarkable, but it is the coexistence of involvement with fine crucial detachment, it is undoubtedly a rare achievement.

Paul moves from this to his firmest statement of his own incapacity to love. Miriam has said that she cannot understand his attitude towards he: “I know,” he cried, ‘you never will! You will never believe that I can’t- can’t physically, anymore than I can fly up like a skylark-, “what?” she murmured. Now she dreaded. “Love you” (chapter9). Miriam will not believe it: she knew he loved her and both now and later. Miriam continues to love and to hope. This is the moment she recognizes fully that besides fighting Paul, she is fighting his mother: “What have they been saying at home? ... she knew it was” (chapter9).

Immediately afterwards we are shown, he had come back to his mother. Stated badly like that it sounds as if Lawrence were working mechanically to a rigid formula, but the development is by no means coldly schematic. The richness and authority of creation of Paul’s relationship with his mother, display of the difference in his feelings and attitudes when he is with his mother from these with Miriam, the subtlety of the interplay of the two contending pulls on Paul, make this an organic development: it grows naturally out of a complex of feelings, situations and personalities.

Though Paul has gone back to his mother, the struggle in Paul and between his mother and Miriam are not over; rather, even though the ultimate decision has been taken, they are intensified. Miriam goes on fighting for Paul’s love, and Paul, who is shown to have a real need for Miriam’s companionship, unsatisfactory though, it is drift back to her. He can neither take her nor leave her alone. He still needs her. “She alone helped him towards realization... could not do without her” (chapter9). She is necessary to his intellectual life and to his

growing up, but the sexual barrier remains, now acutely self-conscious. When he comes to the verse...scotch in his running with her (chapter9). It is at this time of frustration that Clara really enters Paul's life, and the situation is complicated further. When he meets her at the farm, she is described in terms of the physical and sensuous: Clara sat in a cool parlour reading...muslin at the top her hand" (chapter9).

Since we largely see Clara through Paul's eyes, we are made amply aware of her sexual appeal to him; and because we also see her partly through Lawrence's eyes, we are aware that she is drawn to him. They have points in common. In the scene in which Paul and Clara compete in jumping over a haycock. We are made aware that Clara has same gift of surrendering herself to sensation and the moment that Paul showed in the much earlier scene of the swing; both have the same capacity for instinctive living, however it may have been repressed and thwarted by circumstances. Here, as he breaks again with Miriam and the novel comes to the end of the first phase of Paul's love-affair (chapter9). It is marked by an intensification of his sexuality: The sex-instinct that Miriam had refined...concentration in the breast (chapter9). It is not simply a turning from one woman to another; both are in his consciousness: "Sooner or later he would have to ask...he allowed her right" (chapter9).

His intimacy with Clara grows gradually; for a time he sees little of Miriam, and more and more of Clara. When she comes to Jordan's at his invitation, they are thrown even more together, and Lawrence traces very delicately the growing involvement; he shows their physical awareness of each other and the defensive sexual hostility that accompanies such awareness. The situation is not realized as intimately, as much from inside as the relationship with Miriam; it does seem more to be there in order to confirm preconceived thesis, but it is amply adequate for its purpose; Clara's little attractiveness is enough conveyed for us to accept it as a fact. Again, Paul does not realize the true state of his feelings towards Clara. At the time when the nature of Clara's appeal to Paul is clear to Gertrude Morel and to the reader, 'Paul can still feel: but she was a married woman...it was only a friendship between man and woman" (chapter10). At this point, Lawrence makes one of his clearest definitions of Paul's state: "Sex had become so complicated...yet he did not positively desire her" (chapter10).

Because Paul, preoccupied with sex as he is, has not yet completely focused his desires on a particular woman, it is possible for him to return to Miriam, in spite of the attraction to Clara. Clara has in a way herself encouraged him; she has told him that "Miriam does not want any of your soul communion. That's your own imagination. She wants you"(chapter10). He goes back this time with fully aroused passions, and still finds himself inhibited from any direct approach to Miriam by the 'eternal maidenhood' about her. Paul's return to Miriam causes bitter suffering to his mother. She has not been in the centre of the picture for some time as Paul is absorbed by interests other than her so is the reader but now she comes back. In a passage whose significance is often missed, because the main stress for the time being lies on Paul, we are told of her grief and her feeling of defeat. "She sees Paul as losing warmth and joy in the course of his struggle with Miriam: she realizes he is determined to go to her. Now, for the first time, she cannot fight back. Mrs. Morel was tired...she was in the way" (chapter11). The decision now lies with Paul; his mother no longer has will or power to act.

Paul makes an effort to break the barrier of physical reticence between him and Miriam; he tries to bring sexuality to life between them, so that their union, so close in many ways, can be complete. But Miriam cannot respond; to do so would be alien to her, a violation of her own special integrity. Her timorousness, her inability to yield herself spontaneously to sensation, feeling and passion, come more painfully than ever between them: "He courted her now like a lover... deliberate reflective creature" (chapter11).

They do however achieve physical consummation, but it remains merely physical, it doesn't bring about the union that both Paul and Miriam desire. It has seemed to Paul that only Miriam's physical withdrawal stood between them; he finds that possessing her body makes no essential difference: "They lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice...But he wanted somehow to cry" (chapter11). They have a week of passionate lovemaking

and the situation is made quite clear. When Paul takes Miriam physically, he had to do so selfishly—he had always almost willfully, to put her out of count; when they are spiritually together, Paul's desire has to be laid aside. The spiritual and the physical sides of their love never fuse together; for Miriam the physical act of love is a voluntary sacrifice of herself. Between them, the physical union gives nothing more than itself; for Miriam it is not even a gratification.

Both feel a sense of failure. Paul realizes that the act he had set so much store on as a means of achieving fulfillment and unity is paradoxically the means of driving them apart: "Gradually, he ceased to ask her to have him...it would never be a success between them" (chapter 11). This is really the end for them. Paul has had Miriam's body, but he has not had her; her spiritual virginity, that has proved to be the barrier, remains. But Miriam is not wholly to blame. In their last meeting as lovers, Miriam, in a scene of great pain and bitterness, says: "It has always been you fighting me off...always the same" (chapter 11).

Paul, in despair, feels that their whole relationship has been a sham; Miriam is 'full of bitterness' and for those who believe that Lawrence wholly and blindly committed to Paul, it is useful to look at Miriam's angry assessment of "his littleness, his meanness, and his folly" we, the readers, knew better than either of them that the relationship was more than a sham, that there is more to PAUL than bitterness, meanness and folly. Their situation is a sad one; but we can see that it is inevitable. They are not 'star-crowd. Lovers; they are crossed by their characters, temperaments' and circumstances.

They go their separate ways, Miriam in patient hope (she remained alone with herself, waiting of Paul's return), Paul to seek fulfillment in Clara. The treatment of the relationship between Paul and Clara is different in tone from that of Paul and Miriam. It is not so minutely seen from the inside, and, vivid as it is, and perfectly adequate to fulfill Lawrence's intentions, it is not so intensely felt; it is reported, and convincingly reported, rather than experienced. The relationship is in itself simpler, and I do not propose to deal with it in such close detail.

It is for Paul, something in the way of an exercise or experiment in passion. This is not to say that Paul's feeling is cold-blooded lust a simple search for gratification, but the reader certainly gets the impression that there is an element of will in it. Paul is deliberately searching for the fulfillment in passion that failed to find with Miriam. That is in love with Clara is made clear enough; Paul's impatience through the long Sunday as he waits for Monday when he will see her again is well done; Clara's physical vitality is thoroughly realized; and we feel Paul's acute awareness of it.

They achieve a simple happiness together at first; both are uninhibited with each other; both are willing to surrender to the moment; both have a capacity for happiness. Ultimately, Paul finds his fulfillment: But then Clara was not there for him, only a woman, warm, something he loved and almost worshiped, there is the dark...the wheel of stars (chapter 13). Their passion is seen to be instinctive and living and natural—it is included in the natural order of the world, the grass, the peewit, the stars. It is a revelation to them, a profound experience: They could let themselves be carried by life (chapter 13). Although, they could see this, Clara is not satisfied: something great was there...but she could not keep the moment (chapter 13). She feels that she has not fully got Paul, that there is some part of him withheld. Not deliberately, but, unattainable because of his very nature. Just as Miriam could not naturally give herself physically, Paul cannot (naturally) give himself spiritually. But their passion and their desire for each other continue, and very soon, Clara recognizes the true state of affairs: She knew she never fully had him...realize what it was" (chapter 3). She feels surer of her estranged husband than she does of Paul. Paul and she have benefited each other, she feels; a necessary function has been performed: Together they had received the baptism of life...but now their missions were separate (chapter 13). She realizes that they will part, and realizes too that they both want a permanent relationship; she knows that they cannot give that to each other.

As time goes on, even the passion begins to fail, and they begin to move from the realm of love to these of lust: Their loving grew more mechanical...some feeling of satisfaction (chapter 13). At this stage, it brings to a head

all Paul's inner dissatisfaction with himself and his life. He becomes inaccessible to Clara and even to his mother. He is in this precarious state when he hears of his mother's tumor, and the process of dissolution is accelerated. It is virtually the end of his relationship with Clara; he still sees her and she can give him some relief from his anguish, but there is no vital link between them, and return to Banter Dawes as it were serves formally to mark the end of the relationship. The relationship has given Paul something; he has come near his fulfillment in passion; but he cannot give himself, and it has ended as the relationship with Miriam did, in failure. And clearly this time, the deficiency is with Paul.

**THE LAST PHASE:** Many of the important revelations of the relationship of Paul and Clara were made in the course of analysis, often by Clara; now, the novel turns reverts to the more dramatic techniques of the earlier section, the characters are shown in action. Mrs. Morel comes back with Paul into the focus of attention; her illness and suffering are splendidly realized, and again we must admire Lawrence's creative tact in his avoidance of sentimentality and any kind of over-statement; the reality of intolerable suffering is expressed by the heroic stoicism of Mrs. Morel: Her mouth gradually shut hard in a line...tearing from her.

The narrative from the first statement of Mrs. Morel's illness to her death is very compelling. The death itself is vividly realized but it is particularly important because of the immense irony that it exemplifies. We have by now realized for once and all that Paul's life is centred on his mother; yet he hastens her death; in love for her, he gives her an overdose of morphine; he is an agent in killing what he loved most. Paul at his mother's death is very near his own: "His mother had really supported his life...faced the world together". But in spite of what Lawrence said in his letter to Edward Garnett, Paul is not defeated completely: "He did not want to die...he would go on alone" He carries on mechanically and lifelessly, in anguish and puzzlement, but still he carries on; his mother's endurance lives in him. Clara finally goes back to her husband and Paul is alone: 'Always alone, his soul oscillated, first on the side of death then on the side of life, doggedly". When Miriam appears again he offers to marry her but she realizes that, as always he is unable to offer his fuller self. Miriam achieves heroic dignity in her final acceptance of defeat: "she was not to have him, ...self-sacrifice". The path of the whole relationship is summed up and concentrated in this refusal; each desperately wants the other to act, to give; they need each other; but neither can act or give wholly. Nothing in the novel more clearly shows the inevitability of their failure to come together: "He felt, in leaving her... by denying his own."

### **Critical Comments on D.H. Lawrence**

Virginia Woolf: "His [Lawrence] reputation, which was that of a prophet, the exponent of some mystical theory of sex, the devotee of cryptic terms, the inventor of new terminology which made free use of such words as solar plexus and the like, was not attractive; to follow submissively in his tracks seemed an unthinkable aberration; and as chance would have it, the few pieces of his writing that issued from behind this dark cloud of reputation seemed unable to rouse any sharp curiosity or to dispel the lurid phantom...One of the curious qualities of *Sons and Lovers* is that one feels an unrest, a little quiver and shimmer in his page, as if it were composed of separate gleaming objects, by no means content to stand still and be looked at. There is a scene of course; a character; yes, and people related to each other by a net of sensations; but these are not there—as in Proust—for themselves...The world of *Sons and Lovers* is perpetually in process of cohesion and dissolution. The magnet that tries to draw together the different particles of which the beautiful and vigorous world of Nottingham is made is the incandescent body, this beauty glowing in the flesh, this intense and burning light. Hence whatever we are shown seems to have a moment of its own. Nothing rests secure to be looked at. All is being sucked away by some dissatisfaction, some superior beauty, or desire, or possibility. The book therefore excites, irritates, moves, changes, seems full of stir and unrest and desire for something withheld, like the body of the hero. The whole world—it is a proof of the writer's remarkable strength—is broken and tossed by the magnet of the young man who cannot bring the separate parts into a unity which will satisfy him."

An anonymous critic writes in *The Bookman*, August 1913: "...The book has naturally a place in a list which includes such authors as John Galsworthy, Cunninghame Graham and Charles Doughty, to name only three of

the many who have enriched the literature of today with work which is, in some sense, esoteric. . . It has nothing of urbanity and no trace of the humorous and faintly contemptuous patronage which is common—and probably rather difficult to avoid—in novels dealing with a particular piece of country and class of people. Its descriptions and interpretations are convincing as experience is convincing; Mr. Lawrence is on his own ground and presents it with an assured intimacy of knowledge that never fails or blurs. . . it is a novel of outstanding quality, singular in many respects and in none more so than in the author's constancy to his artistic purpose, which never suffers him to see his people in a dramatic or spectacular light or on a level higher or lower than his own. The fact that they exist suffices him without calling them names, whether good or bad, his business is to show them, dispassionately and accurately. He writes with a nervous pliancy which is a joy to read."

### **Questions for better understanding of the novel**

1. Show with reference to *Sons and Lovers* that Lawrence sees human relationships essentially in terms of conflict.
2. Does the value of *Sons and Lovers* depend wholly or mainly on the validity of the Oedipus complex? Is it possible to make a case for the novel even on the assumption that the theory is false?
3. The clash of his parents in him gets reflected in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Examine the novel from this perspective.
4. How far would it be appropriate to dub the novel 'a success for making the psychological selves of the characters but an outgrowth of their sociological selves'?
5. Has *Sons and Lovers* any real unity as a novel, or is it at least two separate novels co-existing uneasily in a single book? Give reasons in support of your answers.
6. Is Mrs. Morel the most important woman to Paul throughout the novel, or are there moments at which his relationships with Miriam or Clara take precedence? If so, what is the significance of these moments? Why does he always come back to his mother in the end?
7. What goes wrong between Paul and Miriam? Is it just that she cannot compete with his love for his mother, or is there some other problem?

**GRAHAM GREENE**  
**The Heart of the Matter**

## Unit-IV

### The Heart of the Matter by Graham Greene

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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 in Havana* (1958) and Congo in *A Burnt 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 'Greenland'. 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 emphasize 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 reorganizing 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. Along with 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 befuddling 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 as 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 clichés 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 demonic. 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 monotonous and depressing routine of childhood days, with the mechanical arrivals and departures at school, so also the emotional depravity felt by the sensitive child along with 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 up-to-date 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 literary 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 opens up 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 'disloyalty' 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 along with 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 nostalgic 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. In fact 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 disloyalty 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."

Uncertainty 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 Guittou 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 Dostoevsky 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. Dostoevsky 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. Wilshire 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-contented, 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 Dostoevsky’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, Dostoevsky 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 about 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-abiding 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 fauna which breed here are equally symbolic-pye-dogs, cockroaches, vultures, dumping grounds, over-flowing gutters are all essential features of 'Greenland.' 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 become 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 not 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, religion 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 damned 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 synonymic 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 longer 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, loyalty 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 hunted 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 thing 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 noman’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 rightly 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 Greenland, 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 saint.”

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 Scobie’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 ambitions 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 Louise 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 burden 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 wondered, 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 to Helen, "I will always be here if you need me, as long as I'm alive," constitutes for him an oath as inefaceable 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. Scobie'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 catholic, 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 God 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 it 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 'Greenland' 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 multidimensional 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, Henry 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 device 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 concrete 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 its 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 or 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 Scobie 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 heightened 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 corner.

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, in fact, 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 is 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 of 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 is 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 along with the cinematographic technique that he employs has made him a popular novelist. The present novel also makes abundant use of cinematographic 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 Henry 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 some hint about his extra-marital relationship. She 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 contented 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 characterise 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, ransom 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 Greene*
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*

**TONI MORRISON**  
**The Bluest Eye**

## Unit-5

# Toni Morrison: The Bluest Eye

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### 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 in 1953 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 in 1964. 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 cowering 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 Book 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 Januone'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 Dimensions of Spirituality* is a biracial reading of Morrison's novel by a black critic Karla F.C. Holloway and a German critic Stephanie Demetrakopoulos. 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 Dally 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 ghettos 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Ellison 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 holds 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, Pecola 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 Pecola 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 Pecola 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’ Pecola and who being the narrator of the story, in her adult effort, tries to understand the incidents of her adolescence in relation to Pecola's tragedy. This effort is her search for awareness of black selfhood, a search during which Pecola had got lost into misconceptions. This friend may also be the alter ego of Pecola 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: “Pecola 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. Nineth 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 compassion 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 as 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, glammers 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. It is 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 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 life 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 subterranean 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 refuge 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 well 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. Salvaged 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 tell 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 introduced 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—whether 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 ghettos 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 Gunnar 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 Peel 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 Peel. 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 and 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 patriarchy 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 purification—purification 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. Their 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 Caucasian 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 dysfunctionality 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 roots. 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. Community 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 reclusiveness 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 than the lives of Geraldine, Mrs. MacTeer, and Mrs. Breedlove. Though we do find in them 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 women 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's 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 Stepto 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. Macteurs 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. Macteurs' friend as a living example of a black woman's lot. It is this knowledge that women like Mrs. Macteurs 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."<sup>19</sup>

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"<sup>20</sup>—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 dysfunctionality 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 stiffens 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.”<sup>21</sup> 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 *fidged*. 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 relationship 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 Mactears as a criticism of the defeatism that blacks in urban ghettos usually fall in. The Mactears 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 lending 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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**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**  
**1914 TO THE PRESENT**

**Paper-IV**  
**Section C & D**

**M.A. English (Previous)**

**Directorate of Distance Education**  
**Maharshi Dayanand University**  
**ROHTAK – 124 001**

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M.A. (Previous)  
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH 1914 TO THE PRESENT

**PAPER-IV****Max. Marks : 100****Time : 3 Hours**

*Note: Students will be required to attempt five questions in all. Question 1 will be compulsory. This question shall be framed to test students' comprehension of the texts prescribed for **Close Study**. There will be one question on each of the Units in all the four Sections. The students will be required to attempt four questions (in about 200 words each) one from each section.*

*The other four questions will be based on the texts for **Close Study** with internal choice i.e. one question with internal choice on each of the four units. The students will be required to attempt **One** question from each of the **Four** unit.*

**Section C**

**Unit 6 JOHN OSBORNE**  
Look Back in Anger

**Unit 7 HAROLD PINTER**  
The Birthday Party

**Section D**

**Unit 8 ARTHUR MILLER**  
Price

**Unit 9 BRECHT**  
Mother Courage

**JOHN OSBORNE**  
**Look Back in Anger**

## Unit-6

### John Osborne: Look Back in Anger

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#### John Osborne: His Life and Times

Osborne's autobiography titled 'A Better Class of Person: An Autobiography: 1929 – 1956', provides a valid record of Osborne's childhood and youth. John Osborne was born on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1929 of parents of very different backgrounds. Nellie Beatrice Grove, Osborne's mother was from a working class family, the daughter of Adelina Rowena Grove whom Osborne describes with a sense of regard, which he admittedly had for the Proletarian. Almost every working day of her life, she has got up at five o'clock to go out to work, to walk down what has almost seemed to me to be the most hideous and coldest streets in London. Osborne's approbation and idolisation of the woman who has the inborn dignity comes out in his words "She'd put her head down, hold on to her hat and push. And she did so with grit". His maternal grandfather, William Crawford Grove, was smart in more than one way he had, always, other women in his life which was not a secret from Mrs. Grove.

On the paternal side Osborne's grandmother was snobbish and unpleasant, she ill-treated her husband as well as her son. Old Osborne is described by John as "a shambling shy figure who said little" and was "ill-treated contemptuously as a servant". She is compared to the Redferns by Osborne in that her behaviour and words were always utterly studied, she lacked naturalness and spontaneity to such an extent that young John never for once heard his grandma raise her voice. Adept at concealing her emotions, she could ill-treat people without betraying the least bit of anger or disgust.

The two older women, in 'Look back in Anger' are born out of Osborne's own experience. Alison's mother Mrs. Redfern is a copy of his paternal grandmother. His friend Hugh's mother of his maternal grandmother. Osborne lived for sometime, when his parents were not living together at Fulham Palace Road quite near the Groves home. That his childhood was not a happy one is established by his memories of his having blooming fainting fits when his parents came to live together in 1936. Osborne's father was contemptuous of many things including the clergy, and John was to inherit this contempt for the church from him.

John's memories of both the families were one of unpleasant quarrels, which, he recounts with a tinge of remorse in his autobiography. The Osbornes moved house from Stoneleigh to Ewell bypass in 1938. John was at this time nine, he joined the Ewell's Boys school where unlike the other boys, he made few friends and remained rather lonesome. He had only one friend, Micky Wall, the boy who read a lot and with whom he formed the Viper Gang Club. His greatest love at the time was cinema, which was to him, his church and academy.

John Osborne fell in love with Joan Buffen, three years his senior (she was twelve, he only nine) who tried to draw his attention to sex. John was treated affectionately by both Joan as well as her mother: the affair came to an end abruptly when she was sent to the boarding school.

Two things seem to have afflicted Osborne the most in his childhood. He suffered, for years, as he himself records the humiliation of being a fairly regular bed-wetter. The other, one, of a deeper consequence was the death of his father. John experienced the death of his father, who, they were told had only six weeks to live. More than his death, it was the callous attitude of "Black Look" John's unpleasant and irritable mother that saddened and angered him. Even the senior Mrs. Osborne never mourned her son's death. The humiliation and anger at the apathy, he saw were to leave a scar on Osborne's mind for life.

John flung himself with girls, his love for Isabell Seller who was ten years older to him was the innocent love of an adolescent who wanted to escape a mother he hated. Later in St. Michael's Boarding school, he fell in love with Jenny, the niece of the Principal. The letters that Jenny wrote, unfortunately fell in the hands of Eric her uncle, the Principal and the affair came to an end. John's term, at the boarding school, ended equally abruptly, when unexpectedly, slapped by Eric, John retaliated by slapping him and was expelled.

John had a short stint with journalism. Working for 'Gas World' and 'The Miller'. He had, at this time another of his affairs. A woman of great physical attraction, she had no brains to match it. John Osborne's interest in her was limited to the erotic, he knew that he would not like to marry her. Finally, he succeeded in breaking the affair by drifting into the world of theatre. He first acted in 'No Room at the Inn', a music hall drama and worked as an Assistant Stage Manager.

He wrote a play on the persuasion of Stella Linden, his mistress for sometime who was married to Patrick Desmond. The play was first named 'Resting Deep' which was later changed to the 'Devil Inside Him.' He also had a brief and inconsequential affair with Sheila, a juvenile actress. He took on small jobs in Restaurants till his second assignment as an Assistant Stage Manager at the Theatre Royal. His first play was produced here in 1950. From this year onwards, Osborne started his career as a playwright, writing some plays in the beginning in collaboration, later all of them on his own. His output is varied, apart from his well known plays he wrote adaptations of earlier literary work and plays for T.V.

John Osborne was a growing boy during the second World war. The era of Imperialism seemed to be closing during the period after war. During this period the process of dismantling started with the Labour government coming to power in 1945 and when the Conservative government came to power in 1951, the process continued unabated. On the international level, the western nuclear monopoly was challenged by the Soviet Union. They had manufactured the atomic and the hydrogen bomb triggering the arms race. With the destructive power of these scientific innovations the fear of annihilation at the slightest provocation raised doubts and fears in the hearts of mankind. CND, the campaign for nuclear disarmament was the new slogan of the people who wanted the human race and nations to survive. There was, understandably resentment against the Church of England when it extended support to the nuclear programme. The resentment mounted into antagonism and there was considerable withdrawal of faith in the Bishops.

Another change was in the industrial side. After the recovery of industry in the post war era, people migrated in response to job positions and though it led to better prospects of income, people who had migrated felt cut off from their moorings. The work they under-took to do on the machines was also so repetitive that their work-life became stereotyped. Automation in industry crept into human life rendering them unable to live with individual passion and pride.

Osborne responded sensitively to the Major issues of this period. Though other writers of this period had also reacted sharply to some of the issues, Osborne's reaction was much more aggressive. Jimmy Porter's tirades against the conservative party, his inactivity against the Bishops for supporting the nuclear programme are all an expression of the author's own impatience with these establishments. Jimmy Porter and the other characters in his plays only expressed the anger and dismay of their author, none of them offers a practical solution, since their creator offered none. Osborne just raise the issues which demanded people's attention, he wanted the people to feel, the way his protagonists did about the prevailing situation, he did not expect them either to know or offer any solutions.

With a more socialistic pattern emerging in society, with the class distinctions becoming less distinct, with the economic security offered by the governments in the shape of housing, unemployment and old-age pensions, the old and the young felt more relaxed. They became complacent with no social or political injustice to fight against. Even the taboos related to sex became less rigid, the middle-class morality and Victorian prudery was replaced by more freedom in the behaviour amongst opposite sexes. The charm of struggle, chivalry, romance in love was becoming a thing of the past, disillusionment was bound to follow.

## Lineage and place in Modern Drama

John Osborne did not find any dramatist in the contemporary drama who could be his model. English drama had become during Osborne's earlier phase hermetically sealed. The drama of T.S. Eliot and Fry were too far removed from reality those of Coward and Rattigan, through commercially successful lacked in the spirit that could inspire. The theatre of the Absurd, the most popular on the French stage had not taken root in Britain. Becket had himself translated the play from French into English and it was being talked of like the verse plays of T.S. Eliot, 'Murder in the Cathedral', 'The Cocktail Party' and 'The Confidential Clerk' etc and Fry's 'A Phoenix Too Frequent' and the Lady's Not For Burning', 'Venus Observed' and 'The Dark Is Light Enough'. The only prose dramatist of significance, in England, at that time was John Whiting, but John Osborne looked up to earlier writers in England for inspiration.

Amongst the foreign writers who influenced him, Ibsen stands in the forefront. Ibsen dealt with the social problems of the day, presenting the every day life with a verisimilitude: his plays come close to reality in characterization, themes and the stage setting. Osborne was to adapt, 'Hedda Gabler' of Ibsen's plays later when he was working on scripts for T.V. and film productions. The violence and death that recurs in Ibsen's plays, the suicides in the 'Wild Duck', 'Rosmer Sholm' and 'Hedda Gabler'; the deaths in 'Little Eyolt' and 'The Master Builder' reverberate in the violence and deaths of Osborne's plays.

If Osborne is closer to Ibsen in creating sensational ends, he is closer to Chekov in his characterization. Unable to communicate fully with one another, they feel isolated. His plays like Osborne's long monologues and even while talking to each other his characters are always at cross purposes. They are, like Jimmy, drifters who have lost their moorings.

Chekov does allude to death and violence in some of his plays, 'The Sea Gull' includes a suicide and like 'The Three Sisters' death in duel, but these take place off-stage and the ending of 'The Cherry Orchard' is quiet. Mostly his characters only sit, talk, eat and drink evoking a certain mood in the audience.

Another playwright who comes to mind while reading Osborne is August Strindberg. He set a precedent by portraying brutal pictures of the man-woman relationship in plays like 'The Father', 'Miss Julie' and 'The Bond'. The man-woman and class conflict of 'Miss Julie' was to occupy Osborne in 'Look back in Anger', with Jimmy, Alison and Helena replacing Jean, the valet, Miss Julie and the working maid in the house.

George Bernard Shaw was too optimistic with the substance of life held firmly in his hand to be confirmed with the Nihilism so visible in Osborne. Some of Shaw's plays do present a grim picture of England as well as decry its values and systems but Shaw never completely renounces hope and none of his protagonists is ever a drifter.

It is only the 'Heart-break House' of Shaw, which comes nearest to Osborne's perception of the futility of human relations and social customs.

Oscar Wilde was another writer whose novel 'The Dorian Gray' Osborne dramatized. In Oscar Wilde, Osborne found a playwright who, in his well-made plays, looked at man-woman relationships, erotic attachments and social conventions from a satiric perspective, turning the prevalent norms upside down and suggesting a diametrically opposite sense of values. Osborne refers to Helena as Lady Bracknell of Wilde though it would have been more appropriate to compare her with the still more repulsive and dominating Mrs. Redfern.

Osborne himself admitted his debt to D.H. Lawrence in his colliery plays like 'The Widening of Mrs. Holroyd', 'A Colliers Friday Night', 'The Daughter in Law' and other prose-plays where he recreated the atmosphere of the world of he knew through the dialogue of the mining district and a general evocation of working class life. He had in his plays recorded the mental tensions arising out of the differences in the class backgrounds. Osborne was to later deal with the same kind of marital tensions arising out of the inability to adjust. The tough, coarse but vigorous working class man was portrayed by both Lawrence and Osborne married to the sensitive, snobbish upper class girl— ill-matched and angry for the class distinctions.

Jean Anouilh was another acknowledged model. Osborne's similarity with Anouilh lies in creating strong central characters who defiantly challenge the existing institutions of power and control. Antigone and Joan are given long, powerful speeches like Jimmy and Archie to make their views known. They, at the same time, defy the opinions of the other characters and the society at large.

Osborne, was influenced by another playwright, Tennessee Williams. Tennessee Williams, like Osborne chose for his characters, social outcasts, who find the crass society they live in intolerable and refuse to conform to its values. They also, like Jimmy and company, play roles and identify with names in literature in order to escape from or cope with the problems that confront them. Williams' realism is however, notably different from the usual sense in which it is used. He calls his theatre The 'Plastic Theatre' since reality is not literally copied but moulded, transformed for presentation on the stage.

In some other plays, like Van Moody's, 'The Great Divide', the woman, like Alison, in 'Look Back in Anger' comes back to her man affirming her new loyalty across the divide of class.

It should be noted, that many playwrights had prefigured in their plays elements of 'Look Back in Anger': an alienated rebellious character who defies the World, surrounded by certain character types; intense marital tensions and a central love triangle; class conflict, vitriolic satire on social, political and religious institutions; the structure of the well-made play; rhetorical speeches and role – playing and the creation of atmosphere through speech variations, set and music, but without the frame-work of realism.

Osborne had, in the area of drama, many kindred spirits who if not his mentors, were men Osborne could identify with. In spite of similarities John Osborne stands on his own ground as a dramatist.

## **John Osborne Works**

### **The Devil inside Him (1950)**

The Devil inside him, Osborne's first play was written in collaboration with Mrs. Stella Linden. It is the melodramatic story of a Welsh youth who is considered to be a sex-maniac by his relatives because he writes poetry. A visiting medical student to the village where he lives recognized the talent of the youth, though he has so far only been taken for an idiot. The tragedy of his killing a girl who tries to misappropriate him by passing him off as the father of her child is melodramatic in nature.

### **Personal Enemy (1955)**

Written again in collaboration, this time with Anthony Creighton, his theatrical partner. The story of a soldier who refuses to be repatriated from Captivity in Korea, the play suffered on account of the large-scale deletions demanded by the Lord Chamberlain, a stand of homosexuality in the play was also ordered to be deleted.

### **Look Back in Anger (1956)**

John Osborne started working on 'Look Back in Anger' on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1955 and finished of on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. Osborne was just twenty-six and the play that was to make him world-famous had been completed within a month. The play was sent, quite simply by Osborne to the recently established English stage company, a group with the mission of introducing new theatrical writing. Though the reviews were of mixed nature, Osborne was recognized as the 'Juvenile prodigy', who had brought new drama on the stage in the sweep.

### **The Entertainer (1957)**

The Entertainer is the story of a Archie Rice Music Hall performer who improvises his artistic integrity by bringing nude-woman on the stage in a vain bid boost his business. A photograph of his father Billy, who was an authentic artist remind Archie of his fall from the standards set in The Edwardian period. Nostalgia for this period is evident in the play. His personal life also suffers, tired of his aged wife Phoebe, he becomes a

philanderer who seduces every other woman. The decline of the Music Hall becomes in a larger sense symbolic of the declining fortunes of the British Empire. A note of protest against the policies of the government is registered by Jean, Archie's daughter from his first wife. Her one half-brother in action and the other, Frank is sent to jail for his conscientious spirit and faith objections are raised against the British invasion of the Suez Canal. The play was presented in the framework of fantasy music-hall numbers, letting it away from realism. Archie Rice's journal emotional failure signifies the loss of nerve and purpose on a wider plane. The play closes with Archie being forced to leave for Canada by old A Billy's brother who pays off his loans. Old Billy dies. A highlight of the first production was Sir Lawrence Olivier playing the lead role.

### **Epitaph for George Dillon (1957 – in collaboration with Anthony Creighton)**

The play focuses on, the life of an artist, who compromises with his art and in the process loses his integrity. George Dillon starts living with the Elliots and gets involved with their frivolous daughter Josie. George is treated variously by the different characters. Mrs. Elliot welcomes him to the house. Her husband opposes his stay and Ruth the divorced sister-in-law puts George in position by telling him that he is a failure. But George continues to stay in the house impregnating Josie. There is also in the play, a purely, commercial producer. Barney Evans who fires George to cut-off the high-know staff and replace it with a list of dirty stuff to make the play commercially viable. Barney Evans', character, it seems was drawn in contempt of Patrick Desmond, Stella Linden's husband, who was associated with Osborne in the beginning of his career. It is, a sort of caricature of the commercial producers in England who are savagely satirized by Osborne. George's play becomes a big commercial success, but only inspires him to talk of his own epitaph.

### **The World of Paul Slickey (1959)**

The world of Paul Slickey, an ambitious musical, with all the ware of songs, dances and musical pieces was a failure Jack Oakham, alias Paul Slickey, a journalist has been asked to investigate the affairs of Mort Lake Hall, who happens to be his father-in-law. The whole family, including Paul, himself is promiscuous; besides being greedy, hypocritical and unfeeling. Paul Slickey has an affair not only with his secretary Jo, but also Deirdre, his sister-in-law. Osborne attacked through his character, not only the aristocracy, the Clergy and the British Empire but also exposed journalism. The play was innovative in its use of stage devices with the newspaper office evoked as a huge cloth representing a sheet of newsprint and a chorus punctuating and qualifying the action on the stage

### **A subject of scandal and concern (1960)**

The play is based on an incident that happened in 1842. George Holyoake, was tried for blasphemy of atheism. The police, the jury and the judge, Erskine are shown to be incredibly unfair to him, and sentence him to six months imprisonment. The play ends tragically with the news of the death of George's former Comrade South Well and the death of his daughter. Though, there were no more trials in England of this nature after George Holyoake, a narrator steps onto the stage and announces that he is to defend some one charged with a similar crime, suggesting that persecution of this nature is still prevalent.

### **Luther (1961)**

Luther is an adaptation of a sort. Osborne, dramatized the career of Martin Luther on the basis of Erik .H. Erikson's sketch of him in his 'psychobiography'. 'Young man Luther'. Luther's inadequate faith in his earthly father, Hans Luther lends to his less faith in God. He rebels against he Divine father as well as the concept of the Holy Father, the Pope. The psychosexual predicament of Luther forms the core of the play is presented impressively combining the impressionistic as well as epic devices. The agony and suffering of Luther is presented visually by the round cone of light and the torso of a naked man hanging across a knife. A knight formally announces the time and place of every scene creating a sense of distance, which lends to an objective viewing of the play rather becoming a part of it. The person of Luther is psychology

determined and the peculiarities of the treatment of Luther disallow any moral judgement on him as a public figure.

### **Under Plain Cover (1962)**

The techniques used in this play are also not-realistic like his earlier play. The play repeats the theme : it parodies the world of journalists the protagonists Tim and Jenny live their life playing different roles each time they encounter a new person. Their life is however shattered when they come to know that they are brother and sister. Jenny breaks away from Tim to marry a post office clerk but returns soon after Tim. They come together but live secluded from each other. New devices are used. A reporter in the play talks directly to the audience, and cinematic techniques help the fading away of characters and quick change of scenes.

### **The Blood of the Bambergs**

This is a companion play : drawing into the area of attack not only the journalists but also the Royalty. The assault is on the royal wedding of Princess Margaret to a photographer, it showed how, when on the day of the Royal wedding Prince Wilhelm dies in an accident, he is replaced by a double, Alan Russel, a photographer from Australia to marry Princess Melanie. There is direct address to the audience, this time by Wimple, who functions as a kind of narrator.

### **Inadmissible Evidence (1964)**

Inadmissible Evidence, as the title suggests is an attack on the judicial system. The play is about the efficacy of the judicial system, its methods of questioning and, trial. The main character Bill Martland who passes through anxiety and a sense of guilt in his dream trial cannot shake off the impression it has cast even after the dream is over.

The play records not only the professional life of Bill but also his personal relationship with women; he makes overtures not only to his mistress and wife but also to his clients and his employees. Bill suffers a kind of disorientation in spite of the affirmation of love from his mistress Liz and writes a five-page long monologue to his only daughter revealing his disintegrated state of mind and failure to communicate with people.

### **A Patriot for Me (1965)**

The play covered a significant phase of history in its dramatization of the military career of Alfred Redi. Enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army. Alfred Redi was blackmailed by the Russian intelligence for his homosexuality. The play records a series of Redi's sexual encounters, first with woman and then with young men. Spectacle is provided by the big names like Archduke Ferdinand and countess Dalyanoff, who is shown to be involved with Redi. The grandeur of some scenes stands in contrast to the scenes of complete darkness. The tragic end of Redi and the final Victory of Oplensky who continues his espionage activities leaves the reader in a very peculiar state of mind.

### **Time Present (1968)**

Pamela, The female protagonists of the play has striking similarities with Jimmy Porter of 'Look Back in Anger'. Her bitterness after the demise of her father and her sardonic invective against the politicians, woman writers, homosexuals reminds the reader of Jimmy's Virulence. An actress by profession, she dominates all the characters in the play, her mother Edith, her stepsister Pauline and her ex-lover, Edward.

### **The Hotel in Amsterdam (1968)**

The play is set in a suite in a large first class hotel in Amsterdam. Three English couples are spending a weekend here. They occupy themselves most of the times talking about their mother or mothers-in-law and discuss topics like homosexuality, Airlines, Pills and marriages. Some flutter is created by confessions of love between the character who come later, but the climax of the ply with the death of K.L. K.L, a film personality is shown to be some what mysterious in his life as well as death, in his unexpected suicide. The play has an air

of emptiness which adds to the suffocation of stillness and lack of action.

### **West of Suez (1971)**

Wyatt Gilman, a writer is on a holiday with his four daughters to a sub-tropical ex-colonial island. They are accompanied by three men, husbands of two daughters and the lover of the third. During the excursion, they are interviewed by a local newspaper reporter Mrs. James. They also meet a popular writer named Lamb, the conversation with these two brings out the emptiness of their lives. Wyatt's recollections of the Colonial Past suggest a feeling of nostalgia about the Imperial glory of England's past. The play becomes sensational after the arrival of Jed who warns them of their impending death. His presumption comes true when several armed islanders come and shoot Wyatt.

### **A sense of Detachment (1972)**

This play, most reflex in one sense is also in another sense more group oriented. Posing questions about the artistic and dramatic illusions, which the author had experienced it, has direct references to Osborne's autobiography. The audience become participants in the drama by virtue of the direct address to them and also by the invitation by The Box Man they receive to join in the songs or interrupt if there is a genuine need for it. Stills from political, social and military life are shown in the background. There are references to the contemporary playwrights like Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker and Samuel Beckett to name a few. The autobiographical references include the death of his father because of T.B. and his sexual life with Stella Linden.

### **Watch it Come Down (Published 1975)**

Marital discord and the resultant violent fights is the theme of 'Watch It Come Down'. Ben, the renowned people director and his wife Sally, fight their sordid battles in the presence of their guests. Glen the young artist doomed to die, his devotee Jo and Raymond a homosexual, all witness their ugly scene.

Ben is shown to be lustful, he desires Shirley as well as Jo. The play ends on a violent note with the death of the Couple's dog, and their physical skirmishes. Ben is shot dead by The Yobbos, and Jo commits suicide after Glen's death. The play has been compared to G.B. Shaw's 'Heart-break House' for its violence and promiscuous lovemaking.

### **The End of Me Old Cigar (1975)**

Lady Regina Frimley an arch-feminist lays a trap for the dignitaries whom she has invited to her country-house. She has fixed women for them for the night and would have them expose while they are making love to them. It is discovered however that one of the couples, Leonard Grim Thorpe and Isobel really fall in love. Lady Regina's plans are also foiled since, her lover betrays her for promised life of luxury in Spain.

T.V. Plays & Adaptations:

The Right Prospectus (1970)

Very Like a Whale (Published 1971)

Jill & Jack (Published in 1975)

You're not Watching me Mummy (1978)

Try a Little Tenderness (1978)

These plays repeat some of Osborne's typical characters and themes. The characters are aliens, actors, artists, discordant couples, the theme that of maladjustment, compromise with one's integrity in art and family discord.

### **Adaptations**

A Bond Honoured (1966) a reworking of Lope de Vega's La Fianza Satisfecha – The play is a class, apart for its physical violence. Whereas Leonido rapes his sister before her wedding, in the original, in Osborne's

adaptation he rapes his mother too. Sadist to the utmost degree, he takes out his father's eyes and tortures everyone.

### **Hedda Gabler (1972)**

Osborne, except for a few changes in names and places stuck to the original by Henrik Ibsen. Osborne was able to retain the verisimilitude of Ibsen.

### **The Picture Of Dorian Gray**

Osborne is like Oscar Wilde, adept at the art of portraying intense characters and sensitively portraying their agonies and conflicts. Osborne reduced the number of characters and condensed the story to suit his medium of drama.

### **Place calling itself Rome**

Adaptation of Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus', Tom James by Firdling Osborne adapted the novel for the screen.

## **Osborne's Introduction (collected plays Vol. I. Faber & Faber)**

### **Reception as a playwright – 'Look Back in Anger'**

With a writer like Osborne, who has little pretention about either his intellect or intentions, it is comparatively safer to take him for his face value for an authentic answer to some of the major questions about his life and work.

This is how Osborne recounts the first production of 'Look Back in Anger':

May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1956, is one of the few dates usually quoted in accounts of modern theatrical history, and generally regarded as the commencement for good or ill, of a tangible change in the climate and direction of The English Theatre. It was the first, performance of 'Look Back in Anger' at the Royal Court Theatre, an occasion I partially remember, but certainly with more a accuracy than 'those who subsequently claimed to have been present and, if they are to be believed, would have filled the theatre several times over.'

Osborne refutes the claim of the literary historians contradicting the attendance at the first performance as well as the impact that the play had. He says, 'The compilers of these histories have deduced all sorts of theatres about the consequences of that sparsely attended first night and its social, political and then revolutionary implications.'

Osborne finds the appraisal of the play speculative and disordered and the motives of Osborne fanciful inventions of the critic and the general reader. He regrets that "all this has served to draw attention to the piece as an historical phenomenon, while the play itself is passed over under the weight of perpetuated misinterpretation."

The most offending question to an author according to Osborne is one of his motive in creating a piece of work. Exasperated by the question, "Why did you written Look Back in Anger", Osborne says 'that writing comes to a writer as naturally as breathing, laughing or falling in love, without any explainable reason, without any motive.'

The main ingredients of the play, which have contributed to its survival, are vitality and honesty, says Osborne. Unlike, some writers who in order to seek intellectual respect and approbation 'flatter, indulge and offer false and easy comfort'; Osborne claims, 'to write in a language in which it is possible only to tell the truth.'

Osborne discusses the use of language in drama at length. In Literature, he observes, drama has been, unfortunately considered as a supernumerary branch and the most successful playwrights assigned a place below that of the poets and novelists. Even in drama, which has sometimes been very successful, the language is according to Osborne far from living and true. Speaking of Somerset Maugham's plays, which he knew closely since he had acted in a few of these, he says: Somerset Maugham, on the other hand, appeared to have the trick of it and entertained middle-class audience for a quarter of a century. As a young actor I did a lot of

Maugham — and one of the things I discovered was that they were extremely difficult to learn — Maugham’s language was dead, elusively inert, wobbly like some synthetic rubber substance — you could approximate with little difference in meaning or nuance.’

The nuances of language are important to Osborne and the notations are meant to be meticulously followed. They are constructed for reasons : even ‘ands’ and ‘buts’ contributing to the syntax and truth, to convey the full meaning. A play is according to Osborne, an intricate mechanism, and the whole mesh of its engineering logic can be shattered by a misplaced word or emphasis.

Osborne is sore about the mistake of the critics who claim that the language of ‘Look Back in Anger’ was naturalistic. It negates the two basic properties of a play that according to Osborne lend credibility to it. “The Pursuit of vibrant language and patent honesty” are the hall-mark of drama were denied to him by attacking the epithet of naturalistic to his language. The naturalistic language, is according to him inadequate. The language of ‘everyday life’ is almost incommunicable for the very good reason that it is restricted, inarticulate, dull and boring, and never more so than today when verbal fluency is regarded as suspect if not downright ‘elitist’.

The other point that people have missed, to the dismay of Osborne is that ‘Look Back in Anger’ is a comedy. He recollects the objections of the directors, George Devine and Tony Richardson at the public dress rehearsal of the play on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1956, when some audience, mostly young, laughed where expected. The following nights, there were fewer laughs, which was more re-assuring to the directors, more discomfiting to the author. Vehemently stressing that play is a comedy Osborne makes his point. A performance of ‘Look Back’ without persistent laughter is like an opera without arias. Indeed, Jimmy Porters in an accurately named ‘tirades’ should be approached as ‘arias’ and require the most adroit handling, delicacy of delivery, invention and timing.’

Osborne, in this introduction, written after thirty years of the play’s first performance admits that some of the misunderstandings about the play have been cleared over the years. His impression that the play was a monologue by Jimmy, ‘a vacuum’, as the other characters in the play hardly had the substance either to support or contradict him. Alison’s obdurate withdrawal had also been misjudged.” This part of the introduction, where he discusses the nature of the play and the characters therein will be taken up later while dealing with the issues, where it is relevant.

It would suffice, here to say, that the one thing Osborne resented the most was that the theatre-managers as well as directors “followed in their productions the playgoer’s directions instead of the play-wrights, he resented, as a matter of fact the constraints which involved conciliating the audience by confirming their prejudices and not mocking their expectations.

‘Look Back in Anger’, Osborne declares, is a much misunderstood play because the time it came up was not yet ripe for it. ‘In my profession’ says he, “the surest road to penury is to be ahead of your time’.

John Osborne narrates the particulars of the how the play was received by the viewers, readers and the critics on the publication and presentation of the play. In the Introduction to the first volume of his collected plays, by Faber & Faber. This is what he has to say.

“In spite of the attention to the play at the time, amounting to something like crazed tumult, it did not transfer to the West End. The misgivings and private distaste of the presiding managements were unpersuaded. Timidity prevailed over agonized avarice. The one producer prepared to compromise his reputation insisted that all references to bears and squirrels be excised. This, I was told, embarrassed the customers; it made them squirm. Even the play’s most quoted supporter, Kenneth Tynan, had described them as ‘painful whimsy’. A few years on, whole pages of respectable national news papers would be devoted to ‘Valentine’s Day’ messages from ‘Snuggly Bouffel Bears’ to ‘Squiggly Whiffly Squirrels’, far more nauseous than my own prescient invention.”

This is what Osborne recalls of the difficulties that arose when the play was first brought public in 1956. Since he wrote the introduction to this collection after more than three decades had passed between its first reception,

he had much to say: the play's durability is now unquestioned; its popularity, and success unchallenged. He is no longer interested in refuting his critics.

He says: Some where in the world the play is performed every night. People are bemused, dismayed or, I hope, exhilarated by it and driven to laughter. There have been homosexual and black versions. The lesbian angel must surely be to come. Misogyny is attached to it for ever and the American – Freudian view of Jimmy and Cliff as lovers is still irresistible to academics and feminists alike. It is an old war-horse that has paid my rent for a lifetime and seems able to bear the burden of whatever caparism is placed upon its laden back.

The responses to the play, it seems were dictated by the dons of literature. People are guided in art and literature by the rules set for them by who, they consider have superior talent, intellect or scholarship. Bewildered by novelty stage they fail to comprehend their responses in absence of a standard gauge. Osborne read the same bewilderment in the First Night audience. "The First Night audience, if they were conscious, seemed transfixed by a tone of voice that was quite alien to them. They were ill at ease; they had no rules of conduct as to respond".

Mention must be made of the incident Osborne relates about the first-night production of his play 'The World of Paul Slickey'. He became, he says, "the only living playwright to have been pursued down the London Streets by an angry mob – Anyone reading the play now may well wonder what the fuss was all about. I can only refer them to my own account of the strange events and climate of the time, which led up to bizarre, rowdy and ugly event."

The incident, at once evokes the memory of the playboy riots after J.M. Synge's, 'The Playboy of the Western World' was played in Dublin more than half a century before 'Look Back in Anger'. The tone of the two writers is equally stubborn in their refutation of the public as well as critics.

Osborne was in spite of slight discomfort which the audience felt in the unexpected turn from the usual and expected, hailed as a sensational discovery. Gareth Lloyd Evans records in the Chief Chronicle of the fifties and sixties, John Russell Taylor was empyrean in his enthusiasm – for him Osborne "Started everything off". Only slightly less ecstatic is his view that the play was the first "type-image of The new-drama" (Modern British Dramatists 'Twentieth Century view – New Perspectives edited by John Russel Brown. Prentice Hall inc. 1984.

## **Summary and Critical Appreciation**

### **Act I**

The action of the play takes place in a one room flat in a large mid-land town. It is a fairly large attic room on the top of a large Victorian house. The room serves as the living room, bedroom and kitchen, household chores like ironing are done in the same room.

The room is occupied by Jimmy Porter, his wife Alison and a friend Cliff Lewis. They are all in the same age-group say about twenty-five. That they are not affluent is apparent from the ordinariness of the room, the furniture is simple and old, there are only three dining chairs instead of a set of four or six and the chairs are shabby.

It is springtime, the play opens on a Sunday in April, the time is early evening.

Jimmy and Cliff are buried in a heap of newspapers and weeklies, both of them are intently absorbed in them. Alison is busy ironing the clothes. An ironing board is in front of her a pile of clothes beside her. It is chilly. There is an atmosphere of stillness in the room, which is full of smoke.

It should be noted that Jimmy starts the very first dialogue in the play on a note of discontent. He creates fuss about the quality of book reviews and blames himself for wasting his Sundays on them. He comments on the quality of the book reviews, half of them are in French; more over much of what has been written is a repetition of what had been said earlier about a totally different novel. To his question whether Cliff feels ignorant after

reading them and receiving a positive 'no' as reply, he asks Alison, the same question. She does not pay much attention to Jimmy's question evading him by saying that she had not read the paper so far. Jimmy's sarcastic remarks about Cliff and Alison set the tone of the play. Jimmy is throughout disparaging, Cliff amiable and reconciliatory, Alison preferring to ignore and avoid argument.

Jimmy complains that Alison starts to sleep when he is talking. Cliff suggests that Jimmy not disturb Alison since she cannot think when he is talking, Jimmy replies that Alison hasn't had a thought in her head for years. Jimmy's question, 'does the white women's burden make it impossible to think?' is a dig at the British women at large and at Alison in particular.

The manner of speech and the behaviour of Jimmy and Cliff suggest their lower-class upbringing. There is sincerity and fondness in their attitude. Cliff does not mind Jimmy's calling him ignorant, a peasant, uneducated and a Welsh ruffian. Jimmy similarly does not mind being called the big horrible man. The familiarity with which they treat each other establishes Jimmy's affection and trust in Cliff, a very rare feeling from Jimmy. Though critical of Cliff he does not tear him to pieces the way he does Alison and many others including Alison's family.

Cliff's remarks about Jimmy are also more cutting than caustic and spoken in a light vein. He calls Jimmy a pig. He says to him 'you're like a sexual maniac—only with you it's food that you lust for. When Jimmy replies 'yes, yes, yes, I like to eat, I'd like to live to eat, his immediate response is most natural, 'Don't see any use in your eating at all. You never get any fatter.' Jimmy's reply is, 'people like me don't get fat—we just burn everything up'.

Jimmy continues to rail, he denounces the posh papers, the Bishop of Branley and the younger generation of girls all in one stroke. The girl who wants to know if her boyfriend will lose all respect for her if she gives him what he asks for is disgusting, she is to him a stupid bitch. Against the clergy, he has more than one grievance, the first that they are supporting the Christian world in the manufacture of the H- Bomb, the second against their hypocrisy. The Bishop wants to clarify his position in regard to the rich and the poor. He denies that he makes any distinction in classes and blames working classes for persistently and wickedly fostering this idea.

That neither Cliff nor Alison give much attention to these vitriolic speeches by Jimmy is obvious from their reaction. Cliff remains mostly unmoved by Jimmy's most scathing remarks, his only concern is to make Alison get the least effected. His gestures of friendliness show not only his fondness for Alison but also his anxiety to put a sort of safety valve on her growing impatience. Jimmy finds Cliff's acts of caressing sickening. He finds love sickening paradoxically he finds the lack of it devastating.

He wants Cliff and Alison to share in his utter frustration in things he declaims as debunk. He refers to the news about a lady having been badly wounded during a mass meeting of a certain American evangelist at Earl's Court. People's confession of love in theory is marked sharply against their practice of indifference and apathy. The example of the woman who went to the mass to declare herself for love and broke four ribs and got kicked in the head, is cited by Jimmy in order to get support for discrediting the Church where in their enthusiasm for the 'onward Christian soldier march, they became oblivious of the woman who kept yelling her head in agony.

Jimmy also suggests that probably all the stuff about the Bishop of Brombey, has been written by Alison's father under the assumed name of the Bishop. Cliff urges Alison not to take any notice of what Jimmy had said because Jimmy was deliberately trying to be offensive. Jimmy's aim is to evoke some response from his wife and Cliff, but they both remain indifferent, with the result that Jimmy gets frustrated. Ironically he says that there must be something wrong with him. His failure to elicit a response from both of them deepens his sense of isolation.

Jimmy's first piece of rhetoric comes soon afterwards. He finds the dull routine of Sundays so monotonous, the same papers, the same cups of tea, the same ironing of clothes. He gets impatient not only with his boredom but also the complacency with which Cliff and Alison accept it. He is impatient with the people around, he avoids going to the pictures on Sunday night fearing that his enjoyment will be ruined by the yobs in the front

row.

He wants Cliff and Alison to share his concern for what is happening around in the world or at least about what is happening in England. Hi misses in them his own ardor and avidity. He bursts into a tirade against lethargy of mind and lack of enthusiasm. None of the two have read Priestley's piece in the weekly that he gets. He resents their indifference, their dubious sloth. Nobody except him seems to be bothered.

It must be particularly noted that Jimmy feels as muffled under the weight of their passivity as they do under the weight of his supercilious and overbearing vigour. They are imperturbable, he susceptible to the slightest provocation.

He longs to feel really alive. He even suggests that they play a little game to revive the life force in them. He exclaims in utter helplessness the loss of feeling really alive and looks to Cliff and Alison for help. 'Let's pretend we are human— oh brother, its such a long time since I was with anyone who get enthusiastic about anything.'

Cliff now asks Jimmy what Mr. Priestley has said in the paper Jimmy, who is always looking for an excuse to target Alison's family immediately compares him to Alison's father. Priestley, like Colonel Redfern always keeps looking back to the Edwardian times the glory is lost but the Colonel persists to live in it. Please mark the use of the word 'comfortable' to describe Colonel's attitude.

The scene reveals another side of Jimmy. He is humane and tender when it comes to the people he loves. He notices the condition of Cliff's new trousers and snubs him for ruining the pair of new trousers he had spent so much money on. His question to Cliff, 'What do you think you are going to do when I'm not around to look after you?' is almost patronizing.

Cliff does not need any reassurance about Jimmy's feelings for him and turns to Alison who is emotionally a part of the trio.

Cliff's distaste for the smell of the pipe that Jimmy is going to smoke and Jimmy's denial of a cigarette to him evoke a mood of easy understanding rather than disapproval. Jimmy is only concerned about the ulcers Cliff is suffering from. He wishes to be treated with concern; he wishes to treat people the same way. His self-pity makes him a bore "I am sick of doing things for people and all for what?"

His personal grouse takes a much larger dimension. Again, suddenly and uncalled for, Jimmy thinks of listening to a musical programme by Vaughan Williams which Jimmy welcomes since it is truly English unlike the English cooking, which somebody said came from Paris, their politics from Moscow. They copied their morals from the Port-land, it was said. Jimmy does not forget to attack Cliff and Alison, forgetting the name of the person who said it, he taunts them by saying that there was no point asking them as they would have no clue to things like these. A long speech on the shrinking of the empire after the British departure from India show's Jimmy's regret at the glory that is now lost. The old Edwardian brigade of whom Colonel Redfern was a part is justified in missing the high summer, crisp linen, volumes of verse etc in India. The picture is glorious and tempting. What with the home made cakes and croquet, bright ideas and bright uniforms, an idyllic picture of life lived grandly, romantically. Jimmy understands that a part of the story was phony, yet the picture is so tempting that he who had never been a part of it becomes a compulsive mourner for the passing away of it.

He finds the American age 'pretty dreary', as he calls it and his fear is that the children in England will be Americans soon. The glorious past of imperial Britain is regretfully compared with the Americanized Britain of future times.

Jimmy talks incessantly. A compulsive talker, his thoughts run from one topic to another without a second's break. Feeling let down by Cliff's disinterest in his last 'thought', as Jimmy calls it, he kicks Cliff and asks him to make some tea for him.

His thoughts now wonder to Webster, a friend of Alison, who though he does not like Jimmy, is more acceptable to him. Webster has the 'bite, the edge, the drive' and gives to Jimmy what the others fails to give.

Alison makes a reference to Madeline, who she reminds Jimmy had the bite and the drive. When Cliff asks who Madeline was, Alison says with a kind of mockery that Madeline has been talked of so many times that Cliff should have remembered who she was. Cliff remarks that there were quite a few. Alison also asks Jimmy again, ironically whether he had an affair with her when he was thirteen or fourteen. Jimmy unabashedly says that he was eighteen and that Madeline was ten years older to him. Alison does not forget to add that Madeline was his mistress and that according to Jimmy he owed almost everything to her. Cliff calls him Marchbanks, reference to the names in literature as well as authors are scattered all over the play. Here, Cliff compares Jimmy with Marchbanks the young poet of Shaw's 'Candila' who is in love with her. Candila is married and older to Marchbanks.

Jimmy goes back to look for the time of the concert, he had been wanting to hear on the radio. Cliff's distaste for the kind of work they are doing particularly the sweet stall is obvious. Jimmy talks of the routine of going to the factory for the fresh stock and setting up the stall in the morning.

To the reader it should be obvious that Alison is not as unaffected and non-participating as the critics would have us believe. Though not as excited and exuberant as Jimmy, her words are measured, suggestive and meaningful.

Jimmy continues to talk of the sweet stall waiting for the concert, which is to start in five minutes time. Cliff rouses himself from lethargy to make some tea. But Alison has not forgotten Madeline, she resumes the topic inciting Jimmy to go on with Madeline's staggering curiosity about things and people. He reverts to the reverie of the time spent with Madeline. Every small thing became an adventure with her. Even sitting on the top of a bus with her was like 'sitting out with Ulysses'. Osborne, here uses Ulysses as a metaphor. Madeline was like Ulysses, the Greek hero of Homer's classic adventurous, living life to the full.

Cliff's absent-minded remarks stand in sharp contrast to the willful disinterest of Alison. They also provide relief from the tedium of Jimmy's talk. Cliff rebuffs Jimmy, comforts Alison and goes back to himself, only partially conscious of what Jimmy is talking about. Jimmy compares Webster to Emily Bronte, the well-known English novelist and teases Alison that it was surprising that she could get along with a man like Webster, who was worth something, suggesting that she was not worth much. Webster's merit and value lay in his guts and his sensibility, a rare combination.

Alison's appeal to Jimmy to give a break suggests that his persistent assiduous chatter is wearisome to her. Her earnestness and quickness do not suggest the submissiveness generally associated with her, her attitude is one of simple exasperation.

Jimmy's continued assault on Alison is irritating to the reader. He tries to provoke her and having failed exclaims that, she would not be provoked even if he dropped dead. But why does he want to provoke her. What reaction does he expect from her? He does not himself seem to know.

Jimmy now, diverts his attack to Alison's family. They were militant, arrogant and full of malice. Her brother Nigel was straight backed, chinless wonder from Sandhurst. Jimmy continues to rail at them, coining phrases and making the most odious comparisons. Jimmy calls Nigel a commonplace object from outer space. His acrimonious attack becomes almost cankerous towards the end. His rancour and resentment against the entire privileged class becomes evident in the passage. 'Nigel is sure to make it to the cabinet one day. The politicians have been plundering and looting everybody for generations'. That Nigel was difficult to define since he was so vague and that there was a very thin line between being vague and being invisible, that the invisible politicians are of no use even to their supporters. 'Nigel is most vague in his knowledge of life and human beings and deserves to be awarded some kind of decoration for it'. Jimmy's subtlety and felicity with words, which he uses with such negative force, is amazing. He says, Nigel is vague about everything his motives and ideas are vague, he is immune to the notion of right and wrong and not even the greatest injustice will move him, nothing will strike or pierce his conscience.

Jimmy continues to bombard the Englishman, who is too stupid and satisfied to think of change. During his long

speeches, Jimmy moves up and down lending rhythm to his speech and movement. He is angry at everything. He is angry with the socially upper class, he is angry with politicians, he is angry with the Englishman and he is angry at the system of education. The very fact that Nigel had received an education which had made him unfit for thought will help him secure a position better than anyone else.

Osborne describes Jimmy as a man who is not only angry but also bent upon drawing blood. Seeing that Alison is determined to maintain her brazen calm, he composes himself and carrying on his blabber unabated he hammers Alison and her family. Talking of Alison in the third person and ironically alluding to her parents as Mummy and daddy. 'Their manners are royal but they are under the skin as schemy as would not hesitate biting you under the groin the moment you turn your face.' For Alison and Nigel, Jimmy uses words like sycophantic, flattering parasites, phlegmatic, which stands for sluggish and pusillanimous which means lacking in firmness of mind.

Cliff has by now completely lost his cheerfulness and looks troubled. He asks Jimmy to turn the radio on since it is already the time for the concert.

Jimmy continues his non-sensical talk about pusillanimous, saying that Alison typifies the qualities of the word. He goes into one of his far-fetched comparisons again. The word pusillanimous, he says, sounds like a Roman word and pictures Alison going to watch games in Rome along with her husband Sextus. The nuisance caused by Jimmy becomes unbearable for Alison as well as Cliff.

Jimmy continues the simile of the games, with himself playing Sextus and Alison Pusillanimous. He transgresses into the world of Hollywood. If a film were to be made on him, the beefcake Christians would take off with his wife in the stereophonic sound before the picture is over. In one stroke he demolishes the Christians, the British actors and the Roman Empire. Sextus is unimpressive, the British actor suitable only to play unimpressive role like that, the Christians making away with pusillanimous and Pusey herself willing to go for an easier, brighter and more promising future. He calls Alison Pusey and suggests that both of them go into the Arena and feed themselves to the lions.

It is for the first time in the play that Alison feels the loss of her nerves and exclaims that unless Jimmy stopped she'll go out of her mind.

Jimmy remains unruffled. In his hunt for Alison he takes out the dictionary and reads out, emphasizing each word, the meaning of pusillanimous. As if not satisfied with this he refers to the origin of the word. A Latin word, he says, 'Pusillus' means 'very little', 'animus' mind. He again points at Alison calling her lady Pusillanimous, watching and waiting for her to break down. It seems as if Jimmy would succeed but Alison retains her composure.

Jimmy gives himself a short break to listen to the concert and the conversation between Cliff and Alison serves as a pleasant interlude. Cliff's trousers have been ironed, he wears them and Alison and he smoke cigarettes.

Jimmy's fuss about the noise Cliff is making by turning the pages of the newspaper and his reminder that he has spent his nine pence on it restores the atmosphere in which the play had started.

Jimmy's objection to Alison's ironing the clothes and his subsequently switching off the radio shows, as Alison rightly says, his childishness.

Jimmy does not like to be patronized, he hates sensitivity, he hates sentimentality. He hates indifference he hates attention. The speech that follows shows Jimmy's hidden hatred for women. Apart from Madeline and his friend's mother, of whom we shall learn later, he hates to live with them. Jimmy sounds like a misogynist, he finds women clumsy in their movements and wonders what would happen if the world had more women surgeons. He finds Alison clumsy the way she jumps on the bed, the way she draws the curtains back, even her dressing up when she for example is applying her make up or doing her hair. There are two simile's comparing a woman to the old Arab and another one comparing her to a surgeon operating on a patient. Jimmy's picture of a woman surgeon operating on a patient with his guts taken out and put back in the body just

like a puff in a powder-box suggest mockery and impatience of the woman's ways. Jimmy recounts one of his past experience to prove his point. He had a flat once, he says, just beneath the one occupied by two girls, the girls movements and actions were a kind of assault on his sensibilities. Even a simple visit to the lavatory sounded like a medieval siege. Jimmy suffers not only from class hatred and opposite sex hatred but also bears against them a strong ill will. He does not spare the use of, he himself admits, the most ingenious obscenities for the bastard girls as he calls them. The marriage is for him, in itself agonizing to the man. The two girls, he imagines, must be married by then, driving their husbands out of their minds. The slamming of doors, the stamping of high heels and banging of irons and saucepans add to the assault on the sensibilities of man.

Jimmy wants the world to tune itself to his fancies and whims. He had earlier expressed his unhappiness at the clouds appearing on the sky, now it is the ringing of the Church bells that disturbs him. He rushing to the window and asking for the bells to stop suggests the frenzy that is taking hold of him. His denial of everything leads to paroxysm of despair and disgruntlement.

Alison stops him from shouting but recovers herself in a moment. Jimmy's attitude towards Mrs. Drudery, who is mentioned by Alison for the first time is the same as for everybody else. She is their landlady, a robber according to Jimmy. She is a Church-goer too, which is not a recommendation as far as Jimmy is concerned.

Cliff's understanding of Alison and Jimmy is most near perfect. He closes the window and acts as if they are on the dance floor. Their jokes are lightly vulgar, Cliff asks him if he comes there, (imagining that they are at the dance floor) to which Jimmy naughtily replies, only in the mating season'. His warning that all Cliff's teeth will come out if he does not stop his tomfoolery is also in lighter vein.

There is a light irony in the question whether the bosoms will be in or out this year, it is a passing remark on the changing fashions of the times.

Jimmy's and Cliff's fights and physical assaults throw light on their relationship, which is one of deep affection and understanding. The tussle between Jimmy and Cliff is an everyday affair says Alison, it is distasteful to her, disgusting and vulgar may be, but she uses restraint describing the place as a zoo. Jimmy and Cliff after grappling with each other fall on the ground, bringing down the ironing board with them. Alison burns her arm with the hot iron. Alison, who has been controlling herself so far, can constraint herself no longer. Both the men apologize to her but she is difficult to appease. She asks both of them to get out. It is Jimmy only, however, who leaves and Cliff remains to tend her.

The relationship between Cliff and Alison is tender and effortless. That they have a deeper understanding between them than Jimmy and Alison enjoy becomes clear from the uncertainty of Jimmy after Alison is hurt. It is Cliff who nods, asking Jimmy to go. Cliff brings the soap and assures Alison that he will wash it gently without giving her pain.

Alison is on the breaking point, her gestures when Cliff goes to get the soap show her failing spirit. She can fight no longer, she seems to be telling herself. The front that she has been putting up ultimately seems to be collapsing. Feeling utterly defeated she tells Cliff, 'I don't feel very brave—I don't think I can take much more—I think I feel rather sick'.

The scene where Cliff and Alison are left alone is important to understand the feelings of both Cliff and Alison, towards each other and for Jimmy.

Cliff, a sensitive man lives on the assumption that he is a coarse and ordinary man, he would have others believe it too. His concern for Alison and Jimmy, his effort at disregarding Jimmy's behaviour and trying to bring things back to normal show a man whose emotions and suffering are much deeper than they seem to be. He embarks on the reason for his staying with Jimmy and Alison, 'one gets fond of people', he says, 'which unfortunately makes one dependent on them'. Alison is too tired of hearing about love. Her speech suggests two things, one, that both Jimmy and Alison have lost the spontaneity and verve of youth and two that they

have lost the naturalness so essential to sustain a relationship. Even an apology, a consolation, a word of love are difficult, nothing comes on impulse.

Cliff's sadness of the relationship between Jimmy and Alison is also expressed by him, his doubt as to how long he will be able to bear the recurring ugly scenes between the two confirms his feeling of uneasiness in living with them. What renders him helpless is his love for Jimmy and Alison.

Alison discloses to Cliff that she is pregnant. She expresses her own unhappiness about it. She does not want a child in their present condition and is also apprehensive about Jimmy's reaction. It is clear that they do not want a child, since they succeeded in avoiding it for three years after their marriage, says Alison.

Cliff asks her whether the pregnancy is in an advanced stage, she says, she guesses so. It is suggested that Alison would have got it aborted if it were possible but will have to bear it now.

Alison's fear of how Jimmy would react to the news make her cautious of her moves. He is suspicious of Alison's designs on him, he is vulnerable to the smallest thing that means commitment. One can perceive in Jimmy a kind of revulsion for confirmation and continuity. Stagnation to him means binding by laws that don't come to you naturally—feelings of compassion, ecstasy of music, good art, even physical energy are the things worth the salt. Their sexual life seems also inhibited by the fact that after making love with Alison, Jimmy feels hoaxed, cheated as if Alison was trying to ensnare him, kill him, make him her slave, her prey.

Jimmy's vary of a morality that lays restrictions on natural love, love on impulse. Alison tells Cliff that Jimmy and she never slept together before getting married. It was simply because they did not have much opportunity. Later when Jimmy realized that she was a virgin he taunted her. Jimmy's morality instead of being conventional is evolutionary in an idiosyncratic way. He felt, having been defiled, by an untouched woman. The compulsion with which he is out to bulldoze everything that comes from the upper classes, authority, morality, politics, Church, even marriage is indicative of the grievances and hatred he has against them, in his heart.

Cliff tells Alison that both he and Jimmy have common views about so many things since they both come from the working classes. Jimmy's hatred for the posh is evident from the fact that he hates some of his relatives who are better off. He likes Cliff and gets along with him because he's common.

Cliff and Alison have no guilt about their affection. They have therefore, no shame of it. Even after Jimmy enters the room, Cliff and Alison continue to have their arms around one another. Cliff has already asked her to disclose her pregnancy to Jimmy, assuring her that all will be well.

Jimmy is some-where unsure of himself. When Cliff says, that Alison is beautiful, he says that Cliff seems to think so. He also asks whether Cliff feels that Alison was more suited to him. Alison answers Cliff's remark that he was not her type, in very meaningful words, 'I'm not sure what my type is'.

Jimmy's aversion for excessive physical fondling and sexuality is brought out in his words, 'they look pretty silly slobbering over each other: their freedom with each other would be enough to scandalize Alison's parents. Every time Jimmy creates a scene, he tries to normalize things, to restore and reestablish himself.

Jimmy comments on Cliff becoming shorter and smaller everyday and calls him a mouse. Cliff readily welcomes this. Cliff dance happily like a mouse around the table. The old friendly atmosphere of their world is reestablished; Jimmy is the horrible 'old bear', Cliff the mouse, dancing the Mourris dance. Jimmy and Cliff resume their tomfoolery, Alison her affectionate way. Cliff is sent to get some cigarettes since Alison has run out of them and Jimmy and Alison are left together standing close to each other. We see a glimpse of Jimmy's other self, the loving Jimmy, which gives the reader a respite from the ongoing madness. He apologizes to Alison and breaks into a speech, which brings out his feelings for Alison, much deeper than one has perceived so far. He would not have her busy herself with the drab routine of ironing clothes and other household chores.

Jimmy is lonely and furious. He hates staleness and yet he fears losing people he is used to. 'The trouble is', he says, 'you get used to people'. 'Even the trivialities of people, you get used to, become indispensable to you'. He now wants to make love to Alison but will have to wait, since Cliff will come back any time. He wants to

know what Alison has been wanting to tell him but Alison is unable to do so. He talks of his school friends, recalling their names and mentions Hugh's mother, who to him, is special. She is let Jimmy buy her sweet stall and pay in his own time. She had as a matter of fact bought the shop for them only. It hurts Jimmy that Alison maintains her distance with Hugh's mom in spite of the old woman's fondness for her.

Alison feels alarmed at Jimmy's sudden change of mood. After his avowal of watching and wanting her every moment, his reversal to Hugh, Hugh's mother and Madeline is foreboding. Jimmy senses the growing anxiety of her mind and re-assures her by calling her a grey-eyed squirrel. He continues to call her by endearing names like, 'hoarding nut munching squirrel', she responds by calling him a 'jolly', 'super and marvelous bear'. The bestial sensuality has replaced the intellectual and emotional rancour.

Alison takes no time to get into the animal exhilaration of love. She starts jumping and taking out sounds like a squirrel. It is in this happy mood that Alison wants to tell Jimmy what she had been intending to say. But as in a drama, the dramatic turns must be contrived so as to keep the audience's interest intact. Cliff suddenly appears saying that he had not been able to go for the cigarettes at all. He was all this while with Mrs. Drudery, who hadn't gone to the Church. He tells Alison that there is a phone call for her and the news of Alison's pregnancy is postponed for another time. Jimmy is upset to hear the name of the caller since Helena Charles, a friend of Alison is his enemy, he says. He fears that Helena Charles' visit will disturb the atmosphere of the house further.

After Alison leaves to hear the phone call he falls into another unpleasant speech. He had had enough of women and sensual pleasure. He then goes on to speak of Andre Gide and then of Webster, adding that if a revolution ever comes, he would be the first to be shot with all the poor old liberals.

He alludes to the fact that Webster does not like him and sarcastically comments that Webster is not an exception since nobody seems to like him. Webster keeps thrusting his strawberry mark as if he was the only one with it. Jimmy has his own strawberry mark, he says, only it different from Webster's. The leftists would mistake Jimmy for a liberal if ever the revolution came and he would be killed along with the other liberals.

While talking he opens Alison's bags and sees her mothers letters in it. He resents the fact that his name is never mentioned in the letters. Jimmy admits that he has become mean but explains that that was the only way of knowing Alison's secrets. Cliff objects to his opening of Alison's bag. Jimmy replies unabashedly that to know whether or not Alison is betraying him, he not only opens her bag but also then searches the drawers, the bookcase, the trunks and what have you.

He takes out a letter from the bag, a letter from Alison's mother wherein he has not been mentioned at all. He bitterly says that his name is never mentioned in their letters by either Alison's mother or her because it is a 'dirty word' to both of them.

The return to the rancorous mood is complete. Helena is coming to stay but Alison would arrange for her the spare room that is vacant with Mrs. Drudery.

Jimmy's phrases like he will kick her in the face and that Helena should bring armour as she would need one, reveal the extreme hatred he has for her.

The last part of Act 1 is important in that it is here that we see Jimmy not only as a man who resents the treatment meted out to him, but as a man who has no control over his nerves. He tells Alison that she is living in a dream world and that she needs a tragedy of a great magnitude to happen to her to shake her out of her sleep. A tragedy like she having a child and then losing it, the tragedy will bring some expression on her expressionless face.

He describes how passionately Alison can make love and says that at such times, he is devoured by her as if he were a rabbit. The most offensive of Jimmy's speeches this establishes him as not only an 'angry man', an epithet usually used for him, but as a maniac, a sadist, whose perversity in inflicting pain becomes sacrilegious.

**ACT II Scene (1)**

The same room. Two weeks have passed since Helena arrived and she has already made herself at home. We see Helena for the first time though we had heard of her in Act 1. It is a hot evening and Alison and Helena are preparing the evening meal. Helena is almost the same age as Alison, carefully and expensively dressed. She has a personality, which draws attention and commands respect. She is seen helping Alison prepare the salad. Both the women are busy talking side by side.

Alison asks whether Helena has been able to adjust to which Helena replies that she feels comfortable working and reminds Alison that it is she who had done most of the cooking the previous week. She says that the only problem is fetching water from the bathroom on the lower floor since she is not used to a thing like that.

The fact that the system is rather primitive is agreed upon by the two. The conversation between Alison and Helena is of a casual manner. Alison tells Helena that Cliff manages most of his own jobs and even helps Alison with her household chores. Helena says that she has already knocked at Cliffs' door to call him for the meal. Jimmy is heard playing loudly at his trumpet, which as usual is upsetting Alison.

This scene brings out the relationship between Helena and Alison, the scene is also important to hear from Alison what her feelings about Cliff, Jimmy and her marriage are.

The sound of Jimmy's trumpet is disturbing to both the women. Alison says that one of these days, Mrs. Drury, the landlady is going to ask them to vacate because of this noise. She imagines the irritation it must be causing to the people and fears that they will soon start banging at their door, asking them to stop this menace.

Helena starts to analyse Jimmy's behaviour. Her first question, as expected, is whether Jimmy drank, to which Alison replies that he was not an addict if that is what Helena meant. Helena observes that 'Jimmy's hatred could be seen in his very eyes and that the magnitude of his hatred was bewildering and horrifying. He hated all, but Helena in particular', she says. It must be noted that Helena finds his anger horrifying but at the same time 'oddly exciting'. She had never seen 'such hatred in some one's eyes before' is what she tells Alison.

Alison offers, what to her seems to be the most apparent reason for Jimmy's frustration, the sweet stall that he runs. Jimmy had, while he was still a student, his own jazz band. Jimmy would, she says, like to start another jazz band and give up the sweet stall altogether.

Helena finds the relationship between Cliff and Alison slightly suspect; their behaviour is what would seem strange to most people. It does not confirm to the accepted standards. It is not normal and Helena seeks clarification from Alison about it.

Alison asks whether it is the hugging and embracing which she finds strange. Helena feels that there is something strange about them and has noticed Cliff restraining himself in her presence. To Helena's question whether it is something beyond affection, Alison replies that it is not a consuming passion, it is like the comfort that you get in a warm bed which is so relaxing and satisfying that you don't look for anything more exciting.

Jimmy's comfort and lack of anxiety about this relationship is difficult for Helena to understand. Alison tries to explain Jimmy's attitude towards their relationship as a part of his larger psyche. For Jimmy it is a question of allegiances, loyalty and devotion. Jimmy expects Alison to fully share not only his present and future but his past as well. Jimmy expects Alison not only to share his present but also to share the memories of his past, to then cherish the relationships he cherished. He is unhappy if Alison does not share his love and admiration of people. He expects Alison to identify herself with his suffering of the past, of his father's death and even share the memories of the women he loved in his early years.

Helena fails to comprehend the meaning and justification of what Jimmy demands of Alison. Alison has herself not been able to figure it out completely. Alison has failed to feel about things the way Jimmy does.

Cliff seems to have come by chance as a stroke of luck in their life. He is kind and lovable and Alison is genuinely fond of him, she says. He is so very unlike Hugh, a former friend of Jimmy in whose house they lived for some time after their marriage.

Jimmy had no money at that time, he had recently left the university and had no place to go. Alison also mentions that Jimmy went to a University, which was most ordinary, it looked most unimposing with an ordinary campus and rooms with white tiles. Everything that Alison describes proves that Jimmy came from a poor background, so did his friends. Hugh Tanner lived with his mother in a warehouse in Poplar and that is where Alison found herself on her wedding night. Alison's loss of hope and a sense of frustration are evident from her narration of those days. Hugh and Alison had taken a dislike for each other on the first sight. Jimmy wanted Alison to have a most wonderful relationship with his friends. Alison's discomfort with the class of people she had come to live with comes out in words like 'three of us tried to get tight in some cheap port they'd brought in'. There is even a kind of remorse in her at having burnt her boats and having being cut off from the people she'd always known, her family and her friends. Alison felt trapped unable to return to her parents whom she had bitterly opposed. She had nowhere to go. Her brother, Nigel was busy for the coming elections since he was contesting for membership to the Parliament, he didn't have time to think of anyone at that time. Though, if approached he would surely have been kind to her, she never went to him.

There are things in the play, which don't seem too plausible. Alison did not inform her brother of the trouble she was in, she did not go to Helena since she was away on tour for a play, look less than probable reasons for either Helena or Nigel not having been approached.

Alison describes the days at Poplar as a nightmare. She recalls that those days were full of horror, Jimmy and Hugh were so ruthless: Hugh subtly insulting and sarcastic, Jimmy steadily depressed; they were a savage team. She was made to feel stupid, she was snobbish and squeamish, she was told. She felt as if she had been dropped in a jungle. Hugh's character can be guessed from what Alison says of him, 'he takes the first prize for ruthlessness- from all corners. They both seemed to regard Alison as a hostage from those sections of the society they had declared war on. They were together frightening to Alison; they started another campaign to avenge themselves on Alison's family. . They would invite themselves to Alison's family, friends, the people her parents knew and their relatives. They went everywhere uninvited to the Arksdens, to the Tarnatts, for cocktails, parties and entertainment. Living in Poplars, SW, SW 3 and other posh localities were for them the enemy territory. Jimmy and Hugh felt happy at plundering them of their drinks, food and cigars. The people they visited did not disallow them, they were in the first place too decent for it, and secondly afraid they would hurt Alison if they objected.

Hugh was the worst of the two. He even black mailed a friend of Redfern's by giving him the story that they were being turned out of the flat they were occupying for non-payment of rent. They were such men that people would have given anything to get rid of them.

Alison had no money to sustain them since her mother had got all the shares transferred in her name before Alison got married. For want of money and for revenge, the guerrilla-warfare, which Jimmy and Hugh had waged against Alison's class, continued unabated.

Helena is surprised that Alison had not tried to put a stop to it, neither opposed them nor voiced her anger. As a matter of fact, she asks, why did Alison marry Jimmy in the first place? Alison has no precise reason for it. She describes the circumstances in which she met Jimmy. Her parents, she says, had come back from India. Col. Redfern had become uncertain and irritable; Mrs. Redfern had little understanding to confide in. Alison was only twenty-one. She met Jimmy at a party. He was the odd man out, with a bicycle, looking different from all the others in the party. He had oil all over his dinner jacket. He looked a creature from a different world; the men looked at him with distrust, the women with contempt. Alison's narration of the past in this scene is the vantage point from which Alison's feelings and attitude towards Jimmy can be studied fully. Alison continues to describe how she was charmed by Jimmy It was a lovely day and Jimmy had been in the sun. What

attracted Alison towards Jimmy was the fire in him. Everything about him seemed to burn his face; the edges of his hair glistened and seemed to spring from his head, and his eyes were so blue and full of the sun. He looked so young and frail in spite of the tired line of his mouth.

Alison knew her limitations but she had no choice. She was in love and whether he was in love or not he was determined to marry Alison simply because her people were outraged at Alison's choice. Jimmy wanted to prove his victory in the teeth of opposition.

Everything seemed so romantic to Alison, Jimmy was to her like a chivalrous knight rescuing the damsel in distress. Alison continues to recount incidents that occurred in the past. Nigel's meetings were sometimes disturbed by Hugh and his companions. Alison then describes the circumstances under which Hugh left England. Hugh had been writing a novel. He suddenly made up his mind to go and try some other country. England was no longer a place to stay, he said. Alison's reference to China or some other God-forsaken place suggests her hidden contempt for these countries of the East, which she considered 'God-forsaken'. Hugh felt that the conditions in England had been rendered hopeless by people like Alison's family. He sarcastically called Alison's family, 'Dame Alison's mole'. Jimmy disapproved of Hugh's idea of leaving his country as well as leaving his mother alone. Jimmy considered it shirking from responsibility. The friends fought bitterly over the issue till ultimately Hugh left. Alison's remarks like 'I almost wished they'd both go and leave me behind', are enough to indicate the extent of her frustration.

Alison continues to narrate the past to Helena. Alison and Jimmy came to their present flat after Hugh left. Hugh's mother seemed to be blaming Alison for Hugh's departure. Alison tells Helena that she has nothing against Mrs. Hugh. She is a kind lady, sweet and ignorant to Alison, adorable to Jimmy. Jimmy's admiration for Hugh's mother is partly because she has always been poor. Poverty to Jimmy is something, which deserves attention and admiration. Poverty to him it seems is a quality, a virtue, not a state.

Helena advises Alison to make up her mind finally about Jimmy. She says she that since she is pregnant she has to worry not only about her life but about the life of her future child.

Alison again makes remarks, which show how closed, uncommunicative and stifling her relationship with Jimmy has become. 'I'm so tired. I dread him coming into the room'. The pity is that she loves Jimmy in spite of everything and has never wanted any other man in her life. Alison tells Helena and assures her that the child she is carrying is Jimmy's only. Helena says that things should be set in order. Either Jimmy should learn to take responsibility or Alison should quit, what to Helena is a 'madhouse', a menagerie, a wild place inhabited by animals like Jimmy.

Alison now shows Helena a bear and a squirrel, the bear, she says, is Jimmy, the squirrel she and then they both play a game, 'bears and squirrels, squirrels and bears'.

Helena looks bewildered and remarks that Jimmy may be mad for doing such things. Alison tells her, how after Hugh's departure, Jimmy and Alison had resorted to this game. Bitterly lonely and having little rapport, they retreated into the animal world; they played like animals with one another, made love like animals: 'they became furry creatures with little brains'. This was something that gave them a short lease of life, she recoils from the thought of living like mere animals but adds that bereft of that animal spirit, they have nothing to live on. Helena again urges Alison to make up her mind as if she lived with Jimmy, she would go mad.

The conversation between Alison and Helena is interrupted by the entrance of Cliff. In his usual light mood, he asks Helena if the tea is ready. He calls out to Jimmy asking him to stop his bloody noise. Cliff asks Helena and Alison if they were going to the pictures, he is surprised to hear that they were going to the church instead. To Helena's question whether he would like to accompany them, he replies, that he would like to read the papers since he had not been able to do so in the morning.

Jimmy's remarks about the newspapers and his love for music expose his hatred for Alison and Helena. Jimmy lets out his hatred, by his insolent and brutal attack on the two women, he spares Cliff, ensuring at the same time that Cliff remained his ally, not theirs. Jimmy makes uncalled for remarks to instigate Helena and Alison,

'Cliff likes music, all right, only the women don't and those who don't like jazz, have no feeling for music or people', he concludes. Helena snubs him calling his remark rubbish.

With no controversial topic to pick on, Jimmy again reverts to the lack of care in handling newspapers in the house. His focus now shifts to Cliff. He comments on the lack of intellect and curiosity in him, denounces him as 'Welsh trash' and asks him 'what are you?' 'what are you?', here does not signify doubt in Jimmy's mind about Cliff's worth, it is simply his way of dealing with him. If Cliff is nothing than he should be the Prime Minister, Jimmy's target shifts; it is not Cliff but the Prime Minister he seems to denounce now.

Jimmy's tirade against Alison and her class continue while they are having their meal. They, the people where Alison belongs are all very spiritual, so refined in taste that they discuss matters of sex as if it were the 'Art of Fugue'. Picking up and keeping the continuity of the argument in musical tones, he passes adverse comments like the following on Alison without any provocation. 'She is sweet and sticky outside while messy and disgusting if you see deeper.

Cliff is like Alison, Jimmy says, he is always keen to please and to appease. Jimmy warns him that he will end up being like Alison and others of her class, black-hearted, evil minded and vicious if he continued to live like them. Alison does not react even once against the mad ravings of Jimmy, she seems to have insulated herself against them.

Jimmy says that he had composed a new song. Talking to the ladies by turn he asks Helena if she would help him give a religious angle to the song since that is bound to make the song more popular. Jimmy recites the lyric, which deals with booze and whoring. Sick of sex and being constricted by women, he would prefer booze, which is at least pure, celibate.

Jimmy repeats his weariness with sex, revealing in him a kind of revulsion for the physical. Jimmy is tiresome in his repetition but he must make his point. After sex, it is religion that becomes his target. For his denunciation of religion he chooses Helena as his special listener. He tells her that the other poem he had written has the religious strain of Dante and Eliot; the religious element, he adds sarcastically should particularly appeal to Helena.

The title of the poem is the Cess Pool and Jimmy is the stone trapped in the pool of filthy water. Cliff's derogatory remarks about Jimmy bear no ill will against him, nor do Jimmy's remarks bear any malice for Cliff.

Helena asks Jimmy why he tries to be so unpleasant, to which Jimmy replies that he is happy to incite Helena, to instigate her into entering into an argument. Helena's remark that Jimmy is very offensive makes him still happier and he roars with laughter at having won the battle.

Jimmy's curiosity about where Alison was going with Helena, betrays his sense of insecurity. Though domineering in his treatment of others, the fear that his authority would be challenged is always lurking in his mind.

He tries to instil a fear in Helena as he had done earlier in the case of Alison. The pride, which he tries to flaunt, and the arrogance that he displays is only skin-deep. He is desperate to know where Alison is going with Helena. He tries to hide his fear of Helena usurping his authority over Alison by calling Helena's company an affliction. It is Helena, more of a match to Jimmy who makes a confident reply, telling him that they were going to the Church. Jimmy is for once beaten at his own game.

He accuses Helena of trying to win Alison over and accuses Alison of being so feeble. He reverts to the old story of what all he had endured to marry Alison. Alison's outburst that yes Jimmy had rescued her from the clutches of her family shows her contempt for Jimmy's claim. To her taunt that he was like a knight who had carried her off on his white charger, he replies in a voice that is calculated and calm. He lends to the entire episode a touch of parody, a mock-heroic by describing her mother as the off white charger, their house as a castle and her family's war against Jimmy as a holy crusade. Mummy, Jimmy says bitterly was prepared to use any weapon to shield her daughter, she could resort to cheating, bullying, lying and blackmailing.

Jimmy makes another odious comparison between Alison's mother and a female rhinoceros in labour. Alison's mother would be so dreadful and disgusting to the male rhinoceros that they would pledge themselves to celibacy.

In Jimmy's long speech, Alison's mother is the object of hatred and attack. Alison's mother, he says, looked over fed and flabby on the outside, inside she was all armour plated, ever ready to strike. She was rough as a night in a Bombay brothel and tough as a paired animal's arse. His hatred amounts to the wish that he kill her, annihilate her. He sits on the cistern saying that Alison's mother may be hiding in it and listening to them and beats it with bango drums.

Jimmy's hatred for Alison's mother is a reaction to her contempt for him. She hated his long hair, she considered him a ruffian, she found him unfit for her daughter and would do anything to save her from him. She would not mind resorting to any measure, intrigue, even conspiracy to ruin Jimmy's reputation, puncture his guts and get him going. She wanted to ruin Jimmy's reputation so that discredited and despoiled he would flee the field, leaving Alison free.

Cliff is throughout trying to control Jimmy good-humouredly. Jimmy continues to pour profanation not only on Alison's family but against Helena as well. Helena is the sin-jobbler who would take Alison to the Church to supplicate herself to worship and to pray for forgiveness. Helena tries to stop Jimmy but he continues in an even more menacing tone. Alison's mother was a bitch and should be dead. He challenges Alison to rise in her mothers' defence. Cliff, alarmed by Jimmy's tone and apprehending the worst, tries to stop him but is savagely pushed back. Jimmy continues to spit venom against Mrs. Redfern. After she is dead, the worms who eat her body will suffer from stomach ache. Her body is so poisonous that even the worms will need laxatives to cure themselves of the mal-nutrition. 'From purgatives to purgatory', the phrase used by Osborne is effective for its alliteration as well as its meaning. From cleansing of the body to the cleansing of the soul is purgatory.

He incites Alison to react but Alison, to his dismay, will not. He insults her, he mocks her by statements at once witty and surprising by their paradox. She would, he says, react if someone insulted him, by springing into one of the moods of lethargy and saying nothing. To Jimmy, Alison can rise to an occasion by merely not rising to it. She can neither be lifted nor pushed down from her level. It is her static position that exasperates him. She remains unruffled even by the most deadly provocation.

Helena is the only one who does not withhold her contempt and loathing for Jimmy, but Jimmy goes on undeterred. He shall he says, write a book one-day. The book that he will write with his blood will be all 'fire and blood'. His book will have no thoughts of comfort and tranquility; he shall not go picking daffodils with Annie Wordsworth. He will write about the flames a mile high, the most unwordsworthian of all poems.

Helena tries to be reason out with Jimmy, for a change. It is Alison who remarks that she better not take Jimmy's suffering away from him, he'd be lost without it. The remark is very meaningful since Jimmy according to her is sustaining himself only on his bitterness against the world, he thrives on the grievances he nurtures in his heart, his anger and hatred are his blood, he breathes them, he feeds on them, he lives on them.

Jimmy is for a moment surprised by this subtle attack by Alison but decides to continue his war. Jimmy feels more and more threatened by Helena's presence and asks her why she had not left even a week after her play was over. He accuses her of hatching a plot against him, to which Helena smartly replies that there was enough of villainy already (meaning in him) for them to think of furthering it by conspiracy. He then asks Alison why she is letting herself be influenced by Helena. Alison shows her displeasure for being questioned for everything small but Jimmy does not give up.

Jimmy says, and this speech is mostly for Alison's consumption, that they had in the past never gone to Church. The last time they had gone to a Church was when they got married. He remembers his marriage with a kind of scorn, scorn for the lust of marriage, which involves physical abandonment and indulgence. Jimmy and Alison had decided for a wedding in the Church, since the Registrar was a close friend of Col Redfern. They wanted to keep it a secret for fear of Alison's parents. When Jimmy and Alison went to the Church, they found

to their surprise that Alison's parents were already there. Jimmy's words like 'execution' and 'lusting for marriage' again reveal his disgust for the carnal, his anguish at having surrendered to the lust of the body, continuing his metaphor of the female rhino he describes how Alison's mother sat in the Church. Alison's father was upright and unafraid; he was still living in the hey-days of British glory, imagining himself still in India. Jimmy recalls that there were only four of them in the Church, he, Alison and her parents.

Jimmy continues to incite Helena. He calls her a cow, a sacred cow, a saint in Dior's clothing, alluding to what she was and what she would have people to believe.

Cliff reprimands Jimmy for going too far but Helena pays no heed. Jimmy accuses Cliff of going over to Helena's side, the side of Christianity, to the Church, which are as commercial in their dealings as any other business house: they promise you reward in heaven for your good deeds on earth, penalty for the sins you have committed. They are the share brokers who make promises of gain in heaven for your investments in spiritual matters here on earth.

Jimmy continues to impugn the Church for merchandising and trafficking in souls. He says, the Directors of religion with their new skills in management always ensure that the dividends are good; they also have the knack of approaching the right people, those who are vulnerable and can easily be taken in. The method adopted by these religious propagandists is simple, go back to the old times, paradoxically their only way to progress is by a return to the past. They romanticize their spirits, they close themselves in the small hermitage of their hearts and become oblivious to the problems around them. Helena is such a person. Like many others, the only place where she can see light, is the Dark Ages. She is ecstatic in her solitude, confessing and absolving herself of all guilt privately. She is not interested in what is being explored and created, she likes to cut herself off from the modern conveniences that man has discovered and invented. She does not like to meddle with the problems that the world faces either.

Helena maintains her calm throughout the speech. She puts Jimmy in place by saying that had he been within her reach she would have slapped him. When Jimmy moves towards her, she repeats that if gets any closer she will slap him. Jimmy retorts by saying that he can slap Helena back without a moment's thought. He had neither the public school education nor the scruples of a gentleman to stop him, he would not hesitate striking her and lay her down.

Helena's simple reply that she does not fancy any such notions about Jimmy since she knows his class as well as his manners, serves to rebuff as well as insult him.

Jimmy explains that he does not wish to be threatened by any women, for he would not take from her without giving back to her. Retaliation will come naturally to him but he prefers to avoid violence, since he hates it.

Jimmy asks Helena again whether she had ever watched anybody die. He recounts the death of his own father who came back from the war in Spain and died after suffering for a year. His reference to the God-fearing men who had rendered him unfit to live for long is a painful reflection on the violence and pain inflicted by man on man on the pretext of patriotism and principles. Jimmy was at that time only ten years old and his father's suffering and alienation bereaved him. Jimmy's mother hardly cared for him, she saw him as a man who allied himself with the wrong side. She was all for minorities provided they were a smart and fashionable minority. The family did not fail in its duty by way of money or provision but the care that one longs for was missing. Only Jimmy cared, the others it seemed, waited for him to die. The father did not want to create any vulgar fuss but he shared with Jimmy, things, which he could hardly understand, at that age. The sad outpourings of his father's heart made Jimmy sad and brought tears to his eyes. Jimmy recalled the bitterness and despair of the dying man and his sweet sickly smell.

Jimmy knew what it was to be angry and helpless at the age of ten, he had become a veteran in suffering. Whereas Helena was still a virgin as far as death and suffering were concerned, she had experienced neither.

Jimmy's speech does not leave much impression on Helena whose immediate remark that it was time they went, is very matter of fact in tone.

Jimmy cannot bear to be defeated at anyone's hands. Losing his bravado in the face of defeat at Helena hands, he appeals to Alison to save him. His words to Alison that it does not matter to her what people do to him again reveal the weaker side of Jimmy's personality. He would expect Alison to stand by him, to refute and fight Helena for the sake of his prestige. He abuses Alison for letting Helena do this to him.

Alison is not moved by either Jimmy's appeal or anger. She changes into a new dress and is ready to go. However, she is so upset that she feels giddy and leans against a wall for support. All she wants is a little peace, she says. But Jimmy's complaints are perpetual refusing to offer even a minute of respite to Alison. He complains that people do not understand him, they either pity him or denounce him, his grudge is that Alison's treatment of him is the most painful, to him she is indifferent to his suffering. When his heart is full or he is sick with rage, she simply keeps herself clear of him, unconcerned and undisturbed she even goes off to sleep.

Jimmy's self-searching speech makes him slightly pitiable indeed. Who is to blame, who is mean and stupid, who is the tyrant, he or Alison, he asks himself. He resorts to self-pity to relieve himself of the utter rage and desolation that have overtaken him. Alison's rejection of him in the act of wearing her shoes and going to the Church signify to Jimmy a loss of power, the loss of his power as a man. He compares himself in the futility of his words to a hysterical girl.

His helplessness at Alison's treatment of him infuriates him even further. He now falls to the level of cursing Alison. He wishes that Alison may one day suffer and that he may be able to gloat in her suffering. He would, then stand in her tears and rejoice in them, dance in them, splash in them. Defeated and beaten Jimmy feels out bargained by Alison and Helena. He wants Alison to suffer, fall and be subdued, that is what can satisfy him, he wants nothing more.

It is in this mood that Jimmy goes to hear the phone call for him. Helena's hatred for Jimmy comes out in her words, 'I want to claw his hair out by the roots' etc. She is more concerned about Alison's pregnancy and the child and blames Jimmy for upsetting Alison in her present state.

Cliff's long speech, the first out of the two or three that he has in the entire play, makes us familiar with the situation between Jimmy and Alison from his point of view. He calls their house a battlefield, a narrow strip of plain hell and tells Helena that he has played a role in keeping Jimmy and Alison together. Alison and Jimmy would have broken of long back but for Cliff, who has served, he says, as a no man's land between the two. He makes a statement of his love for both Jimmy and Alison, about the atmosphere in the house, he says, brawling and excitement are a part of life and he doesn't mind being in the thick of it. Cliff adds sadly that he pities himself and others in the house for the situation they are in. Helena discloses that she has sent a telegram to Alison's father to come and take her home. Alison's simple yes to Helena's disclosure that she had sent a telegram and that Alison should go back to her parents shows that she has no power to resist or oppose anyone, she agrees to go with her father without even asking one question to Helena. She does not even mind Helena having called her father without consulting her. Jimmy comes back after taking the phone call. It was from a hospital, where Hugh's mother had been admitted after a stroke. She was dying he says. By the manner of his speech, it is obvious that he expects Alison to go with him. He falls into one of his sentimental speeches reminiscing their days with the Tanner's.

Mrs. Hugh had seen Alison's photograph after their marriage. She was charmed by Alison's beauty. Jimmy remembers the genuineness with which she had exclaimed, 'Alison was pure gold, she was priceless.' Jimmy again expresses his sense of loneliness while asking Alison if she could come with him and looks baffled when she walks away. In utter disbelief he picks up the bear and throws it down stage. The groaning and rattling of the bear are symbolic of Jimmy's own feelings at that time.

## ACT II (Scene II)

Scene 2 is important for two reasons. The first that we meet Colonel Redfern, who arrives in response to Helena's telegram and second because Alison walks out on Jimmy. Unexpectedly Helena stays back.

The Colonel is described as a large handsome man, his basic goodness is proved by the fact that he is sad for Alison, disturbed by the turn of events rather than being happy as his wife would be, perhaps in case she were present.

In the course of his conversation with Alison the Colonel says that he has failed to understand the situation, he says that Jim speaks a language different from any one of them. Alison tells him that Jimmy was away to meet Mrs. Tanner the mother of Hugh Tanner, a friend of Jimmy. She had suddenly taken ill and Jimmy had left for London immediately. Since the Colonel has only a vague idea about Hugh and his mother, Alison tells him that she was the same person who had helped Jimmy set up the sweet stall. To her father's question whether she was in any way like her son, Alison says that she was nothing like her son. The question is indicative of the impression that the Redferns had of Hugh, it also confirms that Hugh was obnoxious to their family. Alison describes Hugh's mother as very ordinary. She was a charwoman who had married an actor. She had worked hard throughout her life to support her husband and son. Her ordinariness was what Jimmy admired, since ordinariness to him was the tag of the working class.

She tells her father that Cliff is managing the stall in Jimmy's absence. The Colonel expresses surprise at the fact that an educated man like Jimmy who was clever in his own way has found nothing better to do.

It is also disclosed during the conversation that Alison had not shared with her parents the conditions in which she had been living.

She tells her father that Jimmy thought that it was a great treason on the part of Alison to be writing to her parents. The question of what she wrote was of no consequence, when to Jimmy corresponding with them was betrayal in itself.

Colonel Redfern admits that they were to some extent responsible for igniting the fire of revenge and hatred in Jimmy's heart. He remembers with regret how hostile Alison's mother had become towards Jimmy. He hadn't been able to stop it but the inquiries about Jimmy, the detectives they had hired, the accusations, the insults they had hurled at Jimmy were horrifying. He re-affirms his disapproval of Jimmy as a match for Alison but the way things were handled was undignified.

Colonel Redfern's views which strike Jimmy as more balanced than most other characters in the play are revealed in his speech was honest in his dealings per se, Alison's mother was justified in her anxiety to protect her daughter. But the method adopted was undesirable. Redfern blames Alison and himself for letting the situation take an ugly turn. They never put their foot down, never fought them back refusing to disturb their position which was by comparison more comfortable. They, Alison and her father were alike in the sense that they avoided anything that disturbed their peace and were in that sense responsible for what happened. He then suggests that Alison should not have written letters to them when she knew that it infuriated Jimmy and hurt his sense of pride. Both the father and daughter find the situation awkward, Alison continues to tell Colonel Redfern what Jimmy said about Mrs. Redfern. She reproduces the very words used by Jimmy without reservation. She says that Jimmy's feelings about Colonel Redfern are not so hard. He just talks of him more humorously, portraying him as a 'plant left over from the Edwardian wilderness', that can't understand why the sun isn't shining anymore. The phrase suggests the ludicrousness and absurdity of the man, but not the hatred, which every word that Jimmy says about Alison's mother, conveys.

To her father's desperate question as to why did she have to meet Jimmy at all, she appeals that the question was meaningless as she had paid for it by suffering for four years. She is scared of any argument and logic since nothing can reverse what has already happened. Alison renders different reasons for Jimmy's determination to marry Alison. It may have been revenge, revenge with the class he hated. The reader would remember that Alison had in the earlier scene said the same thing to Helena. Jimmy and his friends felt that

Alison was the hostage they had taken to settle their score with her class. Alison feels that Jimmy takes himself to be P. B. Shelley, the poet and wonders why Alison is not Mary, the woman Shelley loved and why was Colonel Redfern not the villain Godwin. Jimmy weighs himself as well as others in his own scale, he measures himself to be a genius for love and friendship, the others lacking in both. Jimmy has his own set of values and would not accommodate any other idea. She calls Jimmy, 'a spiritual barbarian, meaning, the man who has his own scruples and conscience but guards them unscrupulously, without any restraint or without any civilized code of conduct. He throws the challenge at Alison's face, challenging the righteousness of her class. Her situation is so complex that it is difficult to understand it.

Colonel Redfern acknowledges Jimmy's mastery over words and turn of phrase. He tells Alison that she had learnt a good deal from Jimmy whether she realized it or not. The Colonel is unable to understand the mind of the younger people. He says that he always believed that people marry because they are in love but love seems, no longer to be a sufficiently a valid reason for people to marry. He does not understand what a man woman relationship has to do with challenges and revenge. The Colonel wonders why his own daughter of all the people should have got trapped in a marriage where revenge and anger had taken the place of love, when she herself had admitted that not all marriages even of the younger generation were as hard as hers.

Colonel's long speech explains why he feels like an 'old plant left over from the Edwardian Wilderness'. He says that Jimmy is justified in calling him that. The Colonel's reminiscences of his days in India, when the sun was shining on the British Empire are full of nostalgia. He recollects the long years he spent in India from 1914 to 1947. He as the Commander-in-chief of a Maharaja in India had enjoyed a position and prestige, which was difficult to forget. He remembers the long cool evenings in the hills, all purple and golden, the faith of the British people in their Empirical power was so strong that they never thought that it could come to an end. When he had to leave India in 1947 he knew that all was over for them. When the train left the dirty and suffocating station, he knew that the end of a golden period in his own life not only but also the Golden era of the British Empire had come to an end.

He had loved his life in India, which now seems like a dream that had ended. The Colonel had lost the world that he loved and the England he came back to was a disappointment too. The England of 1914 when he had left for India was hardly recognizable. The country had totally changed. He felt sorry but tried to live in the England of the past.

Alison tells her father that it is difficult to comprehend and define the situation; it was strange that the Colonel thought that things had changed so drastically whereas Jimmy is sad that nothing had changed or was changing.

Alison has by this time packed her things, she picks up the bear and is about to put it in the suitcase when she suddenly decides to leave it behind. Alison lingers for a moment, trying to make up her mind. Suddenly she leans against her father and begins to weep softly. The Colonel asks Alison to give a second thought to her decision of leaving Jimmy and going back to her family.

Just at this point, Helena enters the room, she asks Alison if she needed any help and whether she had packed everything. Alison replies that she had managed to pack most of the things but if anything was left behind, Cliff could send it later. Her remark that Cliff should have returned by now shows that she is unconsciously waiting for him. It is after the Colonel is ready to take the suitcases down to the car that Helena tells him that she would not be leaving with them. This comes as a surprise to Alison, it also comes as a surprise to the reader. The reason that she gives about her appointment for a role is not entirely convincing. Helena's staying back in Alison's house after she has left, with a man whom she abhors, is difficult to understand.

Cliff who has by now come back also finds Helena's staying back aberrant, unaccountable. He is polite and gentle to the Colonel as the Colonel is to both him and Helena. The Colonel bids them good-bye and asks Alison not to delay the departure since her mother would worry if they don't reach in time.

Helena taking the responsibility about telling Jimmy that Alison has left also shows her presumptuousness, she seems to believe that she has the right to decide things for others as also act on their behalf. It is with amazing ease that she takes over the household chores of Alison.

Cliff wants Alison to consider her decision again. He also feels that it would be more fitting if Alison told Jimmy before her leaving. When Alison hands over her letter to him he simply says that it was a conventional way of doing things to which Alison replies that she was a conventional girl. Alison's concern for Jimmy and her confidence in Cliff come out in her words, 'Look after him'.

Cliff feels that Helena is responsible for the break between Alison and Jimmy. He doesn't like Helena staying back and refuses the cup of tea she offers to make for him. His irritation with Helena is an indication of his doubt about her honesty. When Helena tries to cajole him into talking about Jimmy's involvement with his old woman friends, his replies are rude. When Helena asks him if there were any chances of Jimmy going back to Madeline, he loses his cool and says that it was not probable since Madeline was old enough to be Jimmy's mother. Cliff's exasperation is visible in his reply 'why the hell should I know'. We see Cliff unhappy and angry for the first time in the play. But Helena's excessive firmness verging on stubbornness is unwelcome to Cliff, even the reader feels disturbed by her obstinacy and stubbornness.

Cliff is ready to leave the room, he finds not only Helena's company unsavoury but also the task of giving Alison's letter to Jimmy painful. His exit, leaving the letter with Helena shows that he has doubts about Helena's honesty. He would not like to see Jimmy hurt. His sorrow about the situation is so deep that his attempts to hide it in humour fail miserably. He tells Helena that he would like to have a good meal and few drinks before witnessing Jimmy suffer. His words, 'he's all yours', reveal how deeply he felt for both Jimmy and Alison, Cliff can already see that Helena is going to take Alison's place. Cliff's hatred of Helena comes out in words, which sound vulgar when spoken by Cliff. He wishes that Jimmy should ram the letter up her nostrils.

Jimmy walks into the room to find Helena sitting on the bed, with her head back on the pillow, holding the toy bear. She looks at him. Jimmy is almost giddy with anger and has to steady himself on the chair. He has just seen Colonel Redfern drive away with his daughter. 'The old bastard nearly ran me down in his car,' says Jimmy. Unable to fully grasp the situation he wonders why Cliff had avoided him in the street, he had pretended as if he had not seen him. Jimmy's disbelief on reading Alison's letter shows how he had disregarded even to himself any doubts about her. He had believed foolishly that Alison could never desert him. Her words that she always would have a deep love for him further infuriate him. Alison's words of love and concern don't ring true to him, he expected her to express her true feelings of hatred for him and curse him rather than cover her hatred by the humbug of civilized words. He finds the whole thing phoney and disgusting, then realizing that he has been letting himself over to Helena, he checks himself. He asks Helena to clear out from there. But Helena knows how to handle Jimmy, she knows where and when to strike. She immediately tells Jimmy that Alison was pregnant and asks him cunningly if that meant anything to him.

Jimmy is surprised, but he holds his ground for the next round with her. He assures her that the news had not filled him with remorse as she had expected. He says that he didn't care if Alison was going to have a baby, he didn't care even if the child had two heads. He then starts telling about the death of Hugh's mother, in the vein very similar to the one he had used to describe his father's death. He accuses Alison of being callous and unfeeling towards Mrs. Tanner. Alison was like the people of her class indifferent to the suffering of the people who were ordinary and poor. To her class they were insignificant.

Jimmy asks Helena to leave since her performance was over. He calls her 'evil-minded little virgin'. The scene closes with Helena slapping Jimmy and kissing him passionately and drawing him beside her.

### **Act III**

Several months have passed since Alison left. The scene takes place in the same room on a Sunday evening. Helena is seen ironing the clothes on the ironing board; Jimmy and Cliff are busy reading the papers. The furniture is the same. Jimmy and Cliff are stretched in their respective armchairs; only Alison's things have been replaced by Helena's on the dressing table. Jimmy hasn't changed he is still smoking the pipe which he was smoking in the first scene, he is reading the papers and commenting on the content and categories of the

newspapers, the dirty ones and the posh ones. Cliff tells him that his pipe stinks, but Jimmy continues to smoke saying that Cliff himself stank. Jimmy then asks Helena whether the pipe bothered her, she replies that it didn't and adds instead that she liked it.

Jimmy then makes some critical remarks about the news of the grotesque and evil practices going on in the midlands. As Cliff has not read this, Jimmy tells him that some people there have been indulging in midnight invocations of the Coptic Goddess of fertility. A debutante during an evil orgy in the Market Harborough killed a cock and drank it's blood. The revelry of the devotees was maddening. Jimmy says, ironically that the people in poultry business must be doing roaring business since the demand for cocks would have risen suddenly. He then goes on to say that perhaps their landlady, Mrs. Drudery also performed the same ritual on Sunday evenings and may be doing the same at that moment. He turns his attention to Helena every time he talks of something. He asks her if she had ever been a part of such a ritual. Helena laughs at the question and jokingly remarks that she had not tried it, at least lately. Jimmy suggests that things involving blood are suited to Helena's and that such an exercise would at least keep her busy. He says that it takes different kind of people to make this world. He suddenly shifts the topic; he says that somebody has been sticking pins into his wax image meaning that somebody has been busy stabbing away at it. He immediately concludes that it can be no one else but Alison's mother who must be getting wax from Harrods every week to wound his image. Jimmy is suggesting that Alison's mother would find Jimmy's sacrifice the most befitting.

( 1. Coptic refers to Egyptian Christians)

Helena says that he could also make a sacrifice to which Jimmy replies that the first sacrifice they make could be of Cliff. They could roast him over the gas stove but so much of gas would be consumed to roast Cliff that they wouldn't have money to pay for it. He says that such an occupation will keep them busy on those autumn evenings. He ridicules the people who feel that they are making a sacrifice when they give up something, their career, sex or belief. In reality they befool themselves as well as others because they only renounce and give up what they didn't care for in the first place. Such people should be pitied instead of being admired.

Jimmy keeps talking for the sake of doing so. Jimmy blabbers most of the time to give vent to his pent up feelings. He again turns to Cliff and says that Cliff is the most suited for a sacrificial offering. He, however, modifies his statement by saying that Cliff's blood will not make as good a sacrifice as Helena's since his blood was common whereas hers was pale Cambridge blue. He compares Cliff's blood to the red-dye consisting of dried bodies of the female cochineal insects. He continues to impugn on the posh newspapers and the articles they publish. Cliff says that they being men should not sacrifice to the Coptic Goddess since they didn't want to be blessed with fertility. He addresses Helena and tells her that there was an article in the paper on artificial insemination. The article criticizing artificial insemination had been written by a lady and would be of more interest to Helena since it was she who could use it.

Jimmy ridicules the journalists and the contributors to the papers for the weird topics they write about. One of the topics discussed in a long correspondence was whether Milton wore braces or not. Most of the papers were full of news about murders, rapes or riots, since these sensational news made the papers popular. Jimmy wants to know who got shot down that week. Cliff referring to another correspondence going on in another paper, says that that particular correspondence was now closed because a fellow of a Church called ' All Souls' had died because the Athenaem was destroyed in fire.

Jimmy makes fun of the academicians who flourish and gain by coming out with the most absurd things. Lately an American professor had come out with the theory that Shakespeare had changed his sex while he was writing 'The Tempest'. He was obliged, consequently to go back to Stratford since none of his actors took him seriously after that. The professor, the paper said, was coming to England to substantiate what he had said. It

further said that Shakespeare, later married a Warwickshire farmer but only after he had three children from him. Jimmy's opinion of the Professor needs no further elaboration.

Helena laughs and says that she was beginning to understand Jimmy. She tells Cliff that earlier she was never sure as to when Jimmy was serious and when he was not. Cliff says that Jimmy himself was half the times not sure.

Jimmy then asks what they were going to do that evening, there was a no concert worth listening to. He asks Helena if she was going to the Church, the question surprises her as she was never expecting it. She says that she did not intend going to the Church unless he wanted to go.

Jimmy remarks that he had observed a growing shine in her eyes, which was satanic and evil. He then asks Helena if she had the guilt of living in sin with him. Jimmy says that he was only curious about her feelings and that he did not intend to make fun of her. Helena herself does not like to believe that Jimmy was trying to ridicule her. Helena is shaken by the coolness in Jimmy's eyes; his remark has upset her a bit. The normalcy in Jimmy's tone, immediately restores her confidence.

Jimmy asks her if she had met the parson, a friend of Mrs. Drudery the previous day. Helena replies in the affirmative in an uneasy tone. Jimmy tells her that she need not be defensive. Jimmy realizes that Helena is hesitating since she knew of Jimmy's dislike for the Church and the clergy. He says that there was no harm in calling the parson to tea in their house. He asks Helena if it would be worth his while to try building up his moral and spiritual strength. He makes an analogy between building up of spiritual strength and physical muscle. He was earlier a liberal skinny weakling, he was afraid of seeing naked truth about himself, but the anomaly was that the abstinence from conventional religion had made him so strong that people now envy him for the strength he has acquired.

Jimmy has by denouncing all accepted norms and conventions given himself a facelift which beats the uplift of a starlet hollow, he claims.

Helena and Cliff tell Jimmy to give them respite from his talk about religion and politics. Cliff tells him to change his record, since it was becoming too much for them.

Jimmy then says that he has thought of a title for his new song. The title is 'My mothers' in the mad-house - that's why I am in love with you'. The lyrics of the song that he has written are catchy, he suggests that they work the lyric into an act.

Helena agrees and Jimmy suggests minor changes in the names of the characters they could give themselves new names instead of Jock and Day. There is a sort of play within a play, with Jimmy taking the lead.

Cliff falls in with the familiar line, he utters three words Mirth, Mellerdy (Malady) and Madness, the core of what they are enacting, the primal elements of man's mind and heart, the sources of his joys, sorrows and madness. Both the lovers are not only guilty but they are insane as well.

The lines seem to touch the cords of Jimmy's heart, he stands up and rattles off the next lines in an almost unintelligible speed. Jimmy here tries to entertain in the style of a traditional fool, the quiz master of the game. 'Ladies and Gentlemen', he says, as if addressing the audience in a theatre, as he was coming to the theatre, a man walked up to him on the stage door and asked him whether he had seen nobody. He was answered that he hadn't seen nobody and that he didn't want to waste his time in further conversation. Jimmy recites the title of a poem, which runs like this, She said, and she could be any woman for Jimmy, that she was called Little Giddling but she was in reality more like a sharp knife, capable of cutting, of castrating. Jimmy's remarks an ironical comment on the nature of women, innocent to look at, killers at heart.

The other man is still looking around for nobody, he is desperately looking for nobody since he has a case to deliver to him and repeatedly asks Jimmy if he had by any chance seen nobody. The actor, played by Jimmy is irritated at being interrupted in entertaining the ladies and the gentlemen present.

Cliff plays the stranger who is looking for nobody, Jimmy the entertainer. The tomfoolery continues for some time till Helena joins as nobody and mocks at the play.

Helena says that Jimmy's play stinks but her attitude of ridicule is only a sham. The play ends with Helena saying that she was nobody and Jimmy telling her that since the case was for nobody she shall take it. He hurls a cushion at her as if it were the case being talked of. The cushion hits the ironing board.

The two men enact another comic act. The song that Jimmy and Cliff sing is about a young man who wants to marry a girl with blue blood in her veins. She is better than him but he shall persist and marry her, he shall approach the sweet hearts father since her mother had already turned him down.

The lover says that he is waiting for a more favourable time to marry her; he will then build a little home for the two of them.

The middle-class may spurn the lower classes but the people with real blue blood still care.

The angels above know that your love is true, they shall therefore bless you,

Their little household will be quiet and happy, they will send their children to public school

The song encourages the lover not to be afraid because his sweet heart was better than him. He should not fear making love and sleeping with her.

The song over, Jimmy and Cliff resume their normal tone. Jimmy has had enough of the gag and wants Cliff to make some tea. They kick and chide each other, again more out of familiarity than contempt. Cliff manages to push Jimmy down, kneels on him and pretends that he is going to read the paper in that pose.

The childish game between the friends continues till Jimmy succeeds in taking the better of Cliff.

The important thing to be noted is that there is continuity of life in the house. Cliff and Jimmy continue to have the same relationship as they did in the beginning of the play, their games and amusement are the same, the absence of Alison has not affected them, their mutual trust and affection is intact. Helena has taken Alison's place. She is now going to wash Cliff's shirt as Alison had, in the first Act ironed his trousers. But one can perceive the difference. In the short time that Helena is away washing Cliff's shirt, Jimmy asks him if he is fond of Helena. Cliff says that it is not the same as with Alison, to which Jimmy replies that one woman is never the same as the other. Since, however, relationships are not permanent it is better not to give much thought to these things. The thoughts that hurt you must be avoided. Cliff's hurt is as deep as Jimmy's, he for the first time lets out his feelings. He tells Jimmy that he won't like to stay in that house much longer. Cliff also says that he would like to try his hand at something else and quit the tea stall, he reasons it out saying he felt that looking after the two of them is quite a job for Helena. Jimmy's casual attitude and his assumed indifference to Cliff is skin deep. He doesn't take Cliff seriously at the face of it betting him that he will not be able to last even five minutes without him. He needed Jimmy even to understand the score. He tells Cliff that Helena would find a suitable girl for him, one of her friends with lots of money and no brains. Cliff has an inherent modesty and a natural amiability, which has insulated him against any sense of hurt and false pride. His replies to Jimmy's questions about his plans of marriage and occupation reveal an imperturbable calmness; Cliff refuses to be instigated as well as to instigate Jimmy, calls Cliff 'scruffy little beast' who would end up as clean as a pin after he marries a rich girl from Pinner or Guildford. Jimmy's feelings for Cliff are clear-cut. He, for the first time expresses the value Cliff's friendship has for him. Cliff has been to him, a generous and loyal friend and yet he is prepared for the coming separation. Jimmy deplores the frailty of human nature, the fact that man hopes to get things which he knows are impossible to get. He now is hoping to get from Helena what he knows; she is incapable of giving to him. He knows the futility of his search for the relationship he is looking for. He feels sorry to say goodbye to Cliff as this would be another of the painful partings he has had.

Jimmy deliberates on the man woman relationship that is so mysterious and strange to him. He knows that Cliff is worth half a dozen Helena's and yet there is something strange that impels him to be drawn and destroyed by women. The men have no good causes left to die for. All good causes came to an end in the thirties and

forties when Jimmy and his friends were just kids. There is no scope for a dedicated life, no chance of death for a noble cause, there is nothing left for men but to be bled by women.

The era when man's life and even death had a purpose is over. People are now likely to die in the devastation of war, a death that is as inglorious and accidental as dying under the wheels of a bus. Jimmy says that men are now bleeding for women, even the appeal for the donation of blood by the post office is merely an appeal on behalf of all the women of the world for the blood of men; nothing less than that would satisfy them. Jimmy's words sum up the absurdity and purposelessness of the 'Brave new nothing- very- much- thank you present times with the yesterdays world of a grand design and purpose lay bare the cause of his frustration.

Helena has in the meantime washed Cliff's shirt, and is back with it. Cliff's words of thanks, 'that's decent of you', throw light on the difference between Cliff's feelings for Alison and Helena. With Alison it was genuine emotion, with Helena a courteous decency. Cliff goes to dry his shirt and Jimmy asks him in the same tone to make him a cup of tea; he announces they shall go for a drink. He looks at Helena and asks her to make herself a bit glamorous, he feels depressed to see her busy at the ironing table all the time. He would like her to have a little pucker and not wear a dull and dead look. He flirts with her, he says that he wants that her heart should flutter every time she sees him. Helena says that her heart does stir whenever she sees Jimmy.

Jimmy tells Helena that Cliff will be leaving them, he is told by Helena that Cliff had already told her about his decision the previous night. Jimmy complains that he is always the last to get information. Helena is unhappy over Cliff's decision to leave and so is Jimmy. Jimmy again expresses his feelings for Cliff, he is a man, says Jimmy who can be forgiven his untidiness and sentimentality simply for one of the rarest things he possesses, he has a big heart. He knows not only how to take but also how to hand over, to give.

Jimmy appreciates not only Cliff but also Helena. Talking of her he says that he admires Helena for almost the same reason. She could step forward and give without expecting the other person to make the first move. She had no inhibitions in love, from the first day itself it was Helena who had put out her hand first. She had not expected anything in return of her love. She was a formidable enemy when it came to fighting but that is what made her a worthy opponent.

Jimmy appreciates Helena's spontaneity in love; she had no hesitation in caressing and fondling him. Jimmy then analyses what love means to Helena. To her, love means giving comfort to the general, in this case Jimmy who is tired, hungry and dry after a campaign. Jimmy and Helena share a feeling of tenderness, Jimmy kisses her fingers and she fully reciprocates by pressing his hand against her.

Jimmy is grateful to Helena for having taken the initiative to express her love for him and to seek his in turn. He entreats her to ensure that nothing goes wrong between them. They will make a good pair, a good double of T. S. Eliot and Pam. If Helena helps him, he says, he will start afresh and build a new life, close the tea stall and go somewhere. Helena shares his promise of a new future for both of them, where they will love each other tenderly, he will love her so passionately that she will forget everything else in the world.

Helena and Jimmy are now ready to leave. Helena wants to change from Jimmy's old shirt to go out. Jimmy moves towards the door to call Cliff. But before Jimmy reaches the door, Alison enters. She is wearing a raincoat, her hair is untidy and she is looking ill. Jimmy is stunned to see her. He regains his composure after a minute and walks out of the room. He refuses to greet Alison as his wife and asks Helen to attend to her.

The meeting between Alison and Helena in the last scene of the play is not noisy or obtrusive, as would normally be expected. Nothing much happens in the scene, though the return of Alison is very significant for its dramatic effect. Helena is seen pouring out a cup of tea, while Alison sits on the armchair. The sound of Jimmy playing on the trumpet in Cliff's room can be heard. Alison tries to revive her memories of her life in that room. She picks up a little pile of ash from the floor and drops it in the ashtray.

Alison asks Helena if Jimmy still smokes the pipe. She tells Helena that though she hated the smell of it initially, she had later on got quite used to it. She narrates an incident to tell Helena that she has become so habitual of the smell that she had almost started liking it. Only the previous week, she says, he had gone to the pictures, an

old man was smoking a pipe a few rows away, she got so drawn by the smell of the pipe that she went and sat beside him.

Alison apologizes to Helena for coming there so abruptly. Helena asks why she should feel guilty about coming there. Helena is polite throughout and asks Alison if she was better. Alison recounts how she had fought the urge to come back to that house many times. She narrates how on that day itself when she had bought a ticket from St. Pancras, she doubted whether she would really board it. It was all like a riddle, was the place she was returning to hers by any claim, she felt that she was intruding. Everything seemed to have receded into oblivion. She seemed to be unsure if there was ever a house like this one where she had lived. But now that she was there, she tells Helena everything had become suddenly real. Absent-mindedly Alison foot plays with the newspapers on the floor. She recollects how in the months that she was away, the picture of the days spent in that place flashed on her mind. There was no sequence in her thoughts and memories, just solitary pictures suspended in isolation.

Alison tells Helena that a sense of timing was one of the things she had learnt from Jimmy, this refers to her returning at precisely the moment when Jimmy and Helena had committed themselves to each other. When Helena wants to tell Alison what she had learnt from Jimmy, Alison says that she realizes the blunder she had made in returning. Alison's remark that all of them must be wishing that she was a thousand miles away shows that she is aware of the fact that Jimmy and Helena have grown very close.

The conversation between Alison and Helena is a dialogue on the institution of marriage. Helena holds the view that Alison's place in the house was the rightful one and that she had usurped her place. But Alison has stopped believing in the divine rights of marriage, there were no prescribed rules about relationships; it was only a matter of consent she believes now. When the divine rights of the Kings could be substituted by Constitutional Monarchy, where was the surprise if the pattern of marriages also changed?

Alison assures Helena that she had not come to disturb Jimmy and her. She had no intention of blackmailing them. She was herself at a loss as to why she had come there, it could be just hysteria, impulse, madness or the macabre curiosity to see Jimmy and Helena living together. She was sure of one thing in any case; she did not wish to make a breach between Jimmy and Helena. Helena has full faith in what Alison is saying, but her distrust of herself makes her feel guilty. Helena feels all the more outraged at what she has done because Alison does not reproach or blame her.

Alison tells Helena that she need not feel that she had cheated on her for Jimmy. Helena is surprised at Alison's new outlook on the modalities of life. She recognizes Jimmy speaking through Alison. Helena is shocked that Alison does not expect any confirmation to any values by either her or Jimmy. She blames herself for living in sin with Jimmy and says that though she had flouted the rules she believed in, she had never for once doubted their validity.

Alison's reference to Helena's letters to her about Jimmy tell us that Alison was posted with whatever was happening from time to time between Jimmy and Helena.

Helena had professed her love for Jimmy in these letters; she had also condemned him whole-heartedly. Alison finds it difficult to understand Helena's stance, Helena herself finds it difficult to explain it. Alison tries to explain Jimmy's position, he was born out of times, she says. Jimmy finds the mundane everyday life of his times too ordinary, with no purpose, nothing to dedicate yourself to, nothing to live for and nothing worthwhile to die for, life is too unexciting and ordinary. Jimmy still lives in the times of the French revolution, when people fought and rebelled for a cause, he should have belonged to those times. In the present times Jimmy has no direction with no motive of any significance, Jimmy would live an insignificant life. Alison says that Jimmy was an eminent Victorian and slightly comic as all Victorians were. Helena then declares her intention of leaving Jimmy. The moment Alison returned Helena realized that she had made a grievous mistake, she says. Helena had never believed in the principles that Jimmy believed in and would never be able to believe in them. Jimmy and Helena were diametrically opposite in their views, Jimmy's amorality was not compatible with Helena's

strong views on right and wrong. Helena says that she does not feel that she needs to apologize for her opinions and convictions, which are quite modern and not outdated, as Jimmy would call them. She says that even making love to Jimmy and sleeping with him can never bridge the gap between them. Helena tells Alison that she is convinced that what she had done was wrong.

Alison tries to dissuade Helena from leaving, since then Jimmy would be left alone. Helena however, takes a firm stand and even advises Alison not to make the blunder of coming back.

The scene not only throws light on the difference in Helena's and Alison's character but also proves Alison's strong feeling for Jimmy. Helena has no fear of Jimmy being lonely; she feels that soon after both the women walk out, he will find somebody else. He may even hold a court in the fashion of the Renaissance papers in that room. It was all over between Jimmy and herself asserts Helena and tells Alison that though it was strictly her business, she would be a fool if she came back to Jimmy. A change had come about in Helena's feelings by the way Alison looked, tired, hurt and ill. The suffering and loss of Alison's child was, according to Helena, a punishment, a divine judgement on them.

Alison does not seem to agree with Helena's view. She simply feels that it was something that had happened and it must be taken as such. No body can be blamed for it, nor can it be attributed to any judgement. In this sense it must be noted that Alison's views are closer to those of Jimmy than Helena's.

Alison tries to explain the logic of it but Helena feels that there can no logic in your sense of right and wrong. Alison, once again tells Helena not to leave Jimmy, since he needed her but adds that none of them were suited to Jimmy anyway.

While the two women are talking Jimmy continues to blow his trumpet, its volume growing louder and louder. Helena gets impatient of the sound and asks Jimmy to stop it. The rest of the scene with Jimmy's attempts to spurn Alison, looking for dark plots in whatever the two women do, helps the characters move towards the denouncement in the play. Helena decides to tell Jimmy about her decision. Jimmy has noticed Alison's condition which he describes as ghastly, in the meantime when Helena tries to describe her condition to him, his impassioned tone in 'I can see what's happened to her', reveals Jimmy's deeper feelings for Alison. He is somewhere still concerned about her.

Jimmy being averse to any sentimental talk, dismisses his concern for Alison as simply an aversion for pain and suffering in general. The loss of the child was one of the many he had suffered in his life. It was in the case of Alison, a big loss and the first one she had suffered.

Jimmy hates sentiment and sympathy more so because of the reserved solemnity that they are usually accorded. He asks Helena why was Alison there and what made her look so serious. Alison tries to say something but is choked with emotion. Helena checks Jimmy from swaying into one of his moods. She tells him that Alison had nothing to do with her decision to leave. Helena re-affirms her faith in the concept of right and wrong. She proclaims that one can never be happy if what one was doing hurt someone else. She tells Jimmy that things between them would never have worked out, she had however loved Jimmy and would never be able to love the way she loved him.

Helena takes command of her emotion and is ready to pack. She tells Alison, that the arrangement for her stay for the night could be made in a hotel.

Jimmy's long speech addressed to Helena is about love One needs guts and defiance, the freedom of mind and soul to be in love. People who are scared of suffering and defying the norms of society and religion are incapable of loving. Religion and the sense of right and wrong incapacitate human beings from loving without fear, without inhibitions. He hands over Helen's things to her with the final words, 'If one wants to live, one has to live as a human being, if one wishes to be a Saint, one has to reject life, renounce life. You cannot be human and saintly at the same time'.

Jimmy is shaken and avoids looking at Alison. He is disturbed by the Church bells ringing in the distance. The call of religion is to him the call for the denial of the natural life.

Jimmy's outburst about what Alison had done is to give vent to the hurt feelings he has been nursing in his heart. He rambles into a long speech, reviving each and every hurt that Alison had inflicted upon him. She had not even cared to send flowers to Mrs. Tanner's funeral. In doing so she had denied flowers not to the dead lady but to Jimmy himself, since he cared for her. He continues to deplore the fact that there was no justice in the world, since wrong people went hungry, wrong people died and wrong people were loved.

Jimmy's final speech, gains in strength by virtue of being tragic without being vindictive. Was he wrong to believe that there is a burning virility of mind, a potent force of spirit, could find a spirit akin to itself in an ever loving energy- looking ever for more and more. The strongest men in the world are lonely like the old bear following his own breath in the dark forest. The ordinary ones walk in herds, the stronger ones alone, the weaker ones have many allies, the strong ones no one to understand, no one to match. The strong are the ones who are utterly lonely. Jimmy tells Alison what he had marked in Alison, which demarcated her from others. On the first night that he saw her, he observed in her a wonderful relaxation of spirit. Jimmy mistook this relaxation for a balance of spirit, struck after much struggle and fight, later on, however, he discovered that Alison had no real strength. She had never seen struggle in her life, she had never fought, she had never opposed. He may be a lost cause, says Jimmy, but if Alison really loved him, it shouldn't have mattered. He reminds Alison that her desertion of him meant that she never loved him truly.

Alison's affirmation of faith in a life of futility and corruption rather than attitude of passivity and neutrality is at once, her avowal of comradeship with Jimmy and her emergence as an individual rather than a dummy of her class.

It is the loss of the child, which has taught her how helpless one could be. She had lost the child she felt was hers; it was so safe and secure in her body. All she wanted after the loss of the child was to die. She wanted Jimmy to see her, in such an abject condition, so stupid, so helpless. This is what Jimmy had always wanted, he wanted to see her defeated. He wanted to splash in her tears, to revel in her suffering. All that had come about, Jimmy could see that Alison had suffered, though he had, himself, lost his child in the process. Alison tells Jimmy that he should be happy since she was now in utter sorrow, groveling in the mud. Alison's emotions are fully worked up; unable to hold herself she falls at his feet. For a moment, Jimmy stands rigid, then he bends and takes her trembling body into his embrace. He tells her that he cannot bear to see her in that condition. He then reminds her of the bears and squirrels game that they used to play. He says that they will continue to live like a bear and a squirrel, eating honey and nuts. Lying in the sun they will sing songs about trees lying in the sun. Alison will keep her eyes on his fur and keep his claws clean since he was a careless sort of a bear. He would see that his squirrel keeps her tail bushy and shining forever. They shall be careful of the steel traps lying about everywhere to catch the timid, little animals. He calls Alison rather mad and slightly satanic but a beautiful squirrel, warning her of the traps thrown in for people like her. Alison reciprocates affectionately calling him 'Poor Pears'. The bears- the men, are like squirrels- the women very, very poor creatures indeed.

### **John Osborne-as an Innovator**

John Osborne was hailed as an innovator in drama in the mid twentieth century. His protagonist, Jimmy Porter was regarded as the first non-hero, his language considered revolutionary.

In the heat of enthusiasm for the angry man who was not a hero and his use of language, which was far from the language conventionally used in drama, Osborne was credited with more innovation than he deserved or even himself claimed. Gareth Lloyd Evans elaborates on this in his essay on John Osborne and naturalism. He says, that to regard Osborne as the first to bring this concept on stage would be to belie the truth. There were people who had presented the non-hero protagonist before Osborne. Stanley Kowalski, was by the time 'Look back in Anger' was written was well known and had spawned, in films, a number of progeny of his own type. Evans contends that Osborne's scything newness, which seemed to his admirers a break-away from the well made play is also in reality not so. The author also contends the opinion held by many that Jimmy represented a post-war generation. Many of Jimmy's generation would not recognize them in him and that Jimmy is only a

mouthpiece for one man's disillusionment with the society he lived in. Jimmy's anger, petulance, dissatisfaction, infirmity of purpose, railing and complaining is more an expression of his own frustration than that of the younger generation of that period as a whole. Even the label of raw naturalism is to the critic a bit exaggerated. Osborne's language might have seemed permissive by contemporary standards but it was far from being either raw or natural.

Evans quotes Osborne, who, himself delivered the greatest blow to these claims. Osborne described the play as formal and old fashioned which Evans elaborates. Evans says, 'A summary examination of the play reveals some interesting facts. It is a Three-Acter, it has a thoroughly conventional set; that is in the old fashioned sense, a box set, the play has a very precise conventional pattern- statement, development, crisis and resolution- in dramatic and theatrical terms, even if thematically it is opaque and lacks direction, no special effects are required, the situation is naturalistic in that it could well be equated with real life events. Indeed, a cursory examination alone amply confirms that Osborne's view of his play is indeed forthright'.

What Evans misses out is that the last part of his statement where he says that the play is opaque and that it lacks direction negotiates a novelty in approach, Osborne is taking us to an experience that is unfamiliar, introducing us to characters who are not only complex in the typical humours they personify but in the inconsistency of their professed beliefs and behaviour. A conventional pattern is not enough to designate the play as conventional. Apart from Jimmy, the other characters are also, all through, in a dilemma. Jimmy's is constantly wavering between agnosticism and belief; he faces helplessness in his attachments and attractions, the purposelessness of life and the wantonness of death and suffering. These are the maladies of the modern times. The consciousness of the malady by the one who suffers from it is even more modern.

### **Nature of Language in 'Look Back in Anger'**

Two claims have been made for 'Look Back in Anger', one that it is vehement in its approach and second that the language of the play is markedly distinct from the language of drama written before it. The first and most striking feature of the pattern of language which he observes while reading the play is the rhythm that is set up between monologue and dialogue. The dialogues seem sparse and thin comparison to the long monologues.

The characters speak in a fashion that can be called neutral. Little can be made out of their lass or character from the dialogues. Except for a few words from Cliff, like 'girlie' and 'not arf', there is no individualization in the dialogue. The words in 'Look back in Anger' just pass information; they do not help us identify the characters. The conversation between Helena and Alison or the dialogue between Alison and her father reveals rather a lack of dimension than a measure of their scope. The dialogue between Redfern and Helena is an instance.

Colonel: 'Well I'd better put this in the car then. We may as well get along. Your mother will be worried, I know. I promised her I'd ring her when I get here. She's not very well'.

Helena: "I hope my telegram didn't upset her too much. Perhaps I shouldn't have. —"

Colonel: 'Not at all. We are very, very grateful that you did. It was very kind of you indeed——'

The use of everyday speech, by way of words fails to lend authenticity to Osborne's characters. The truth of character created by Shakespeare or Shaw is missing in Osborne. Whatever pleasure we get from Jimmy's speeches is not because of the character they reveal but his oratory and the use of rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, metaphor, literary illusions and blatant abuse.

The language of the other characters in the play apart from Jimmy, is lacking in personality. Even in the case of Cliff and Alison, who share a feeling of affection and trust, the words spoken to each other only express a sense of sympathy and understanding but do not help to throw light on either Cliff or Alison as a person.

Evans further says, 'the dialogue as such, which, of course, involves Jimmy too, is on the whole a neutral speech. Little attempt is made by Osborne to characterize thorough it, or to indicate class or accent— there is no identification, no individualization in this dialogue.'

He cites the example of the following speech of Alison, which, he says, is not much different from Jimmy's self-indulgent speeches. 'I am wrong, I was wrong! I don't want to be neutral; I don't want to be a Saint. I want to be a lost cause; I want to be corrupt and futile'.

The language in the play fails to fulfil the very first requirement of dramatic language—the embodiment of individual character.

Evans discusses the language of Jimmy, which, to him is nearer the naturalistic, in the sense that it has a degree of truth. Jimmy's speech, is however, not naturalistic in the sense of the language of the other contemporary dramatists like Edward Bond. He does not speak of the lowest common speech.

He is eloquent. It is not so much raw as vehement in a very lucid way. It is the language of the University graduate. He has delved deeply in the arts, it is a language that he has acquired by a self-willed awareness. A conceit born out of Jimmy's consciousness of his intelligence is evident in his words. Jimmy's is the language of a youth determined to chalk up a victory in the intellectual stakes, convinced of his role as a rebel, determined to put things right. Jimmy's naturalism is special in the sense that it is elitist as compared to the language of the drama of the 1970s.

Jimmy uses speech for most part of the play, to pour out his invective, his invective, which is so wide-ranging that nothing escapes it. Exaggeration, hyperbole, is used by Jimmy to show his anger towards most of what he targets. Jimmy's constant use of hyperbole makes his the most vehement of all the speeches in the play, highlighting the element of exaggeration in his character. Jimmy, exaggerates through repetition and his speeches tend to be rhetorical in the vein of a public speech rather than spontaneity of a personal grief or emotion. Consider the following speech for example:

"Reason and progress, the old firm, is selling out! Everyone gets out while the going is good. Those forgotten shares you had in the old traditions, the old beliefs are going up- going up. A lack of spontaneity lends Jimmy's speeches a colour of eloquence sans depth. Jimmy's outbursts lack consistency of logic, though it can often suddenly eliminate an idea or a feeling or an intuition. "If you have no world of your own, it's rather pleasant to regret the passing of someone else's. I must be getting sentimental. But I must say it's pretty dreary living in the American age- unless you are American of course."

Jimmy loves to parody; writers, drama, newspapers, pamphlets, and journalists all fall into the ambit of his attack. The parody is sometimes more conscious and deliberate. Jimmy's attempt to be witty is mostly successful, he being intrinsically an exhibitionist, prefers to be loud to then being quiet. His metaphorical use of his wax image is a proof of Jimmy's ability to make the most far-fetched comparisons, profitably to use.

'All I know is that somebody's been sticking pins into my wax image for years (suddenly) of course Alison's mother? Every friday the wax arrives from Harrods, and all the through the weekend she is stabbing away at it with a hatpin! Ruined her bridge game, I dare say.'

Jimmy does abate into a more commonplace language at times. It is then, that a kind of youthful pathos can be glimpsed behind the cataract of his words:

"The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There is no warm pack, no herd to comfort him. The voice that cries out doesn't have to be a weaklings, does it?"

The use of the simile, the comparison of the loneliness of Jimmy with the old bear does bring out how lonesome and isolated Jimmy is. Jimmy's speeches are innately melodramatic. They are meant to appeal to the emotions. G. L. Evans considers the use of language at length, Jimmy's emotions, sentimentality as it proceeds and emerges from the language he uses. Sentimentality, says Evans, emerges less as an inevitable facet of the character than as a function of language. Rhetoric is often the mother of sentimental expression, with its recourse to repetition, its self regarding rhythms, its tendency to seem impersonal while pushing unerringly towards the emotionally subjective.

The entire impact of Jimmy's personality lies in his waywardness and versatility of his capability to talk himself into one posture or another. It is the sentimentality of the language, which sometimes proceeds to turn from the object of Jimmy's speech to himself.

The sum total of Jimmy Porter is the language he uses, the language in a way becomes, the protagonist, it is the words that hold are attention and it is the words we behold for comprehension.

Alison makes use of the language, as a tool, not merely of expression, but to hold attention once or twice, like in her speech "I want to be a lost cause". Helena and Cliff use language unconsciously, deriving not much from it not dominating by there use of it. Colonel Redfern, though not rhetorical by any standard, is eloquent in his speech of the now lost long summers of India. Though not much of a talker, he is not inarticulate; he is able to express himself fully as a left over plant from the Edwardian period. He is also able to convey fully, his regret at the way Jimmy had been treated by his wife. More restrained by nature and training, he establishes himself favourably by his dignity of manner and speech.

### **Imagery and Symbolism in the Play**

Jimmy and Alison are happy when they are playing Bear and Squirrel. They impersonate them when they are in love; the loves turns into hostility when they resume their human form, with individual minds and thoughts. Alison tells Helena the game Jimmy and she played, describing it with a childish love for rhythm, 'Bears and Squirrels, Squirrels and Bears. In the beginning, when they were left to each other after Hugh's departure, the game was a symbol of their uncomplicated affection for each other. They lived in their world of make believe as two dumb furry creatures. They were then, all love and no brains. Becoming human is painful but to reclaim the animalism, the sensuality of that time difficult too. The poor little creatures are now dead, as humans Jimmy and Alison cannot live the life of abandonment, the cosy life they had led in the zoo. It should be noted that though Helena finds their game quite mad, to Alison it is absolutely natural and agreeable. The animal symbol works in two ways. It offers a refuge from the married couples daily life, secondly it provides the only way for them to communicate, love between Jimmy and Alison is based only on physical attraction which functions below the level of rational thought.

The bear is the symbol of masculine power and virility. After, Alison's departure, when Helena is opening the drawers in the chest, she picks up the toy bear and sits on the bed, looking at it. She lays her head back on the pillow, still holding the bear. Jimmy himself throws the bear down showing what to him seems a fall from grace after Alison has walked out on him.

The reappearance of the animal symbols and the resumption of the game of bear and squirrel with all the vows of love, promises happier times for Jimmy and Alison. The apprehension that the game that had failed them earlier, may fail them gain lingers in our minds.

Another recurring image, though no symbolic in the strict sense is that of the newspapers. Jimmy and Cliff are shown reading the papers in the opening scenes of all the Acts and all Jimmy's discussions on politics and religion start from these. It brings the outside world into the small world of Jimmy, Alison and Cliff more than that it, like an invader upsets the familial setting of their home.

The images in the play, mainly verbal are sometimes pleasant and romantic, at other times disgusting. Colonel Redfern's description of Edwardian England evokes a pleasant image of the 'brief little world' that he nostalgically speaks of. Alison's image of 'I'm in fire and I'm burning' describes her anguish metaphorically. Some of the images, however, are employed only to shock or disgust, the image of 'a mass of India rubber and wrinkles' used for a newborn baby is an example.

The only image of an animal, who is human in his solitude and grandeur unlike the timid little animals referred to in the play, is that of the old bear following his own breath in the forest.

The bear and the squirrel were images of animal sensuality; the lonely bear one of dignified solitude who has no pack since he has no equal.

### **Jimmy Porter: An Appraisal**

Jimmy Porter has been seen by many as a self-portrait of Osborne. A substantial body of critical appraisal of Jimmy is based on the critics. Subscribing to the view that Jimmy shares not only his anger with his creator, but they have many more things in common. Not only is the episode of Jimmy's fathers' death almost autobiographical but the class, economically and otherwise which they belonged to is almost the same. Gareth Llyod Evans' statement that Jimmy is the mouthpiece of one man's disillusion about the society he lived in can be further qualified by saying that this man is not Jimmy but Osborne himself.

Osborne's impatience with the contemporary British society and Empire, his denunciation of the Church, of the upper and middle classes are at once discernible in Jimmy's character. Jimmy embodies Osborne's derision of the Conservative Government, the Royalty. Jimmy hates the stiff upper lip of the privileged classes in England; he sees them as a personification of apathy and detachment.

Jimmy's contempt of the British is explained by what he calls their lack of enthusiasm. He mourns the loss of vitality, vigour and the will to fight in the generation of the day. He attributes this not only to a degeneracy of character but also to the times, which have nothing to offer to infuse enthusiasm. 'Nobody thinks, Nobody cares'. No beliefs, no convictions and no enthusiasm", laments Jimmy. He attributes it to the fact that there are no brave causes left to fight for.

Though a spokesman of Osborne's views, his emotion and empathy, Jimmy is a much more complex character. To base him only on a comparison with his creator would be limiting the scope of his character and the study. Jimmy Porter's character has a huge sentimental element. This sentimentality, should however, not be confused with the characteristics it is generally associated with. Jimmy is a romantic; his sentimentality segregates and isolates him from people. Though Jimmy talks sentimentally about his father's death and angry about his treatment by the Redfern's, it is difficult to relate fully his resentment to his experiences. We can only conclude from his long speeches and rhetoric that it is not so much his prejudice against any principle or people that urges him to make these long vitriolic attacks, it is the indulgence of listening to himself. Gareth Llyod Evans finds a sure proof of Jimmy's love of indulging himself in self-pity: 'There is no surer evidence of this than in the famous speech about his dying father, hailed by many as an example of an underlying sensitivity and vulnerability in the angry, deprived, perturbed spirit of Jimmy Porter. In truth, what is remarkable about the speech is not any revelation of the deeper soul of Porter, but the utter shallowness of his responses. The language as it grows more rhetorical, 'turns in the sentimentality and as this proceeds, the object of the speech turns away from the dying father to Jimmy himself. He has talked himself into being victim. His father was the stalking-horse for Jimmy's self-indulgent eloquence'.

The childhood experience, says Jimmy has hardened him, embittered him towards the world, resulting in mistrust and a feeling of hatred. According to Mary McCarthy, Jimmy's profoundest, quickest, most natural instinct is mistrust.

In classical Freudian terms, Jimmy can be seen as a paranoid personality, suffering from the fear of losing his dear ones. He makes a property of the people he loves, he cherishes them as invaluable possessions, he feeds his sense of tragedy on his separations from them. People as well as fate play his adversaries, the entire world is against him, horrifying Cliff, Hugh and his mother, everyone is included in his list of persecutors, even Alison is not spared.

The inferiority complex from which Jimmy suffer, is, according to one school of thought proved by constant attention-seeking. Jimmy waivers between moods of cruelty and kindness, which is attributed to schizophrenia in his personality.

Jimmy is insecure. M.D Faber relates his insecurity to neurosis. According to him Jimmy has problem the origin of which lies in the stresses of the 'oral stage'. The characters suffering from the 'oral stage' are prone to passivity, fear of retaliation and a sense of alienation; these tendencies in turn can lead to sadism. In the case of Jimmy persistent fear of being abandoned, of being separated from the mother surrogate is evident from the

many references he makes to his separations in the past and his fear of the ones that may come in the future. The distinctive features that mark him out as a psychoneurotic prevent him from emerging as hero, he remains the protagonist but fails to emerge as a man to be remembered.

Jimmy's suffering entails by its violent outburst a suffering of others. He is clearly a sadist and a masochist. His brutal behaviour towards Alison indicates that he enjoys all the pain that he inflicts on her. He abuses and rails at her brother, her parents and friends and mounts his attack more and more forcefully on seeing her unarmed. He looks for the strongest words of disapprobation for Alison and her people. He calls her Pusillanimous and describes its meaning from the dictionary word by word to make his attack more vehement. Bamber Gascoigne's view that the real reason for Jimmy's cruelty to his wife is the excess of energy, which he cannot use in the Sweet-stall. This may explain his atrocious behaviour, as being the outcome of his pent up animal energy, but not the joy he derives from hurting Alison. Nor does it account for the way he bullies Cliff and does not miss any chance at physically hitting him. His pleasure in giving pain is obvious. Instances like, when he twists Cliff's ears and he cries in pain, Jimmy only grins back at him.

Jimmy's defence of suffering as an essential part of the process of personal involvement lead him to his glorification of himself as well as condemnation of those who had not suffered. He asks Helena if she had ever seen someone die. He also wishes that Alison should suffer by losing a child to become a better human being. Jimmy lives happily with Helena but misses no opportunity to wound her either. Jimmy's misogyny as well as his sado-masochism are evident in his behaviour towards all the three characters, he lives with. Jimmy's cries of social justice and psuedo-philosophical dogmas are only the expression of his desperation for recognition. That Osborne is insufficiently critical of the flaws in Jimmy's character is confirmed by John Mander, who aptly remarks, ' Jimmy is a phony: but we are left with the impression that his creator cannot admit the fact.'

### **The Feminist Viewpoint**

#### ***Alison and Helena***

It is possible to see all the characters in the play as the sites where the vexed realities of class and gender play themselves out.

There are two women characters in the play. Both belong to the same class and both love Jimmy. They both accept their positions. Helena's assertion differentiates her from Alison very marginally, willingly, even happily. Alison and Helena are shown busy with household chores, ironing the clothes on the ironing table and wearing Jimmy's old shirts.

Both of them hate Jimmy's way of talking, his pipe and his trumpet and yet both of them get accustomed to these. Their complaints of Jimmy are rendered null and void by their tone of him. It is Helena who manipulates to stay back when Alison is leaving and it Alison again who comes back without being approached by Jimmy, even once.

Alison has a long list of grievances against Jimmy which she share with Helena but is absolutely quiet when Jimmy is present. Helena's defiance also slowly gives way to a kind of servility.

The women who are discussed in the play are either Jimmy's favourites or the ones he hates. Mrs. Redfern apart, he hates his landlady, he hated the girls who lived in the same house as he at one time, he hates all the women for their noise and lack of poise in movements.

Jimmy adores the women who are poor and helpless. Two women fall in this category. His own grandmother and Hugh's mother. Both had worked to support their families, both were ordinary to look at. Jimmy's love for the under-dog surfaces even in his relationship with women.

## **Glossary**

*Naturalism*: Historians and critics of drama have held divergent views on the interpretation of the term 'Naturalism in Theatre'. The term was first used for the French Literature, which stemmed from the writings

of Zola and his followers. Though an extension of realism in literature, naturalism differs from it in deliberate emphasis on the ugly, the shabby, the vicious. The author offers no moral or ethical judgement; the stance is amoral and no judgements are passed on characters who are invariably seen as biographically and socially determined.

*The Well-made Play* : The term is applied to a neatly constructed play with all the conventional requirements of plot and structure

*Dramatic Personae*: The characters in a play

*Hyperbole*: Is a figure of speech that means using exaggeration for emphasis. It is used, usually, to convey a sense of emotional disturbance, in exaggerated praise or invective, to give vent to one's feelings of love or hatred.

*Parody*: A burlesque imitation of a literary or musical work or style. Ludicrous in nature, it is used to mock at a person in high position or a reputed work of art/ literature. The person who parodies refutes their claim to fame and recognition.

*Imagery*: A figure of speech forming mental images, imaginative description of a picture or pictures, images in general or collectively.

*Symbolism*: To represent by symbols, use of symbols in literature and art.

*Contemporary*: OF the same time or period. Used for writers etc..

*Ambiguity*: when views are not clearly defined. Having a dubious meaning.

*Bildungaroman* : A piece of literature that educates. It is educative in the sense that while tracing the protagonist's growth to maturity, it educates the reader through the development of his character.

*Subjectivity*: Belonging to the inner self, having an individual perspective of things by looking at them not objectively and rationally but relating them to personal experience and vision.

*Misogyny*: Dislike or hatred for women

*Articulation*: Ability to express one's self in words

*Evangelist*: Person who preaches the gospel that is the life and message of Jesus Christ.

*Colloquial*: Every day informal speech

Vanderville: Form of light variety entertainment with skits, songs and dances

*Masochism*: Abnormal pleasure obtained from pain or suffering inflicted by a member of the opposite sex.

## Questions

1. The other characters in 'Look Back in Anger' are not more than stage furniture with the result that the content of the play is reduced to Jimmy's views. Do you agree?
2. Does the author deliberately keep our attention focused on Jimmy? If so, what are his intentions in doing so? Substantiate your answer with examples from the text.
3. The conflict between Jimmy and Alison is a part of the larger class-war. Jimmy's vitriolic attack on Alison and her family is part of his frustration at being on the lower side of the dividing line. Do you agree?
4. Class and gender are two grounds for conflict and strife in 'Look Back in Anger'. Both of them, the class-war as well as the battle of sexes are conflated in the play. Discuss in view of the marriage between Jimmy and Alison.
5. Discuss how the romantic and modernist concepts of the delineation of character are combined in the portrayal of Jimmy's character. Do you sympathize and identify yourself with him?

6. As an 'Angry Young Man', Jimmy is not only the protagonist, but also a delegate of the younger generation? How far do you think, does Jimmy represent the men of his age in those times?
7. The action is reduced to a minimal in 'Look Back in Anger'. The only action is the interaction between the characters, Discuss.
8. The re-appearance of the animal symbols may appear to give the play a conventional, sentimental happy ending but that is only a contrivance that offers no real solution. Do you agree? Do you believe that Jimmy and Alison will have a happier life in future?
9. Do you agree with Dyson's observation that Jimmy's trumpet can mock the universe but not sound a call to battle? Discuss in view of Osborne's own statement about Jimmy where he says, "To be as vehement as he is, is be almost non-committal."
10. Attempt appraisal of the relationship between Jimmy and Alison? Would you describe it as a love-hate relationship?

### Short Questions

1. Jimmy's invective in 'Look Back in Anger' is meant to convey the mood of his generation. Does it perform this function effectively?
2. Pretence in Play- acting in 'Look Back in Anger' comes out in its rhetoric and imagery of animals. What is the role-playing in the lines of the characters in the play?
3. What do you understand by the term hyperbole? How is it used and what purpose does it serve in 'Look back in Anger'?
4. What issues in 'Look Back in Anger' can be highlighted from the feminist perspective? What impression do you form of the situation of women in England at that time form the play?
5. Locate Osborne's' main concerns in the play.
6. Briefly discuss how Helena engineers the departure of Alison. Is she justified in this as well as in leaving Jimmy at the end of the play?
7. What does the term morality mean in the context of the play? What is Jimmy's morality and how does it differ from that of others whom he denounces?
8. Do the social and economic realities of Britain find expression in the play? How do the characters react to them?
9. Cliff stands in sharp contrast to Jimmy. What is the bond between the two friends, which lasts longer than Jimmy's love for the two women discussed?
10. Helena's character and role is the least convincing of all in the play. Do you agree?

### Important Passages for Reference to Context

#### Act One

JIMMY: Well, she can talk, can't she? You can talk, can't you? You can express an opinion. Or does the White Woman's Burden make it impossible to think?

JIMMY: Oh heavens, how I long for a little ordinary human enthusiasm. Just enthusiasm - that's all. I want to hear a warm, thrilling voice cry out Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I'm alive! I've an idea. Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings, and that we're actually alive. Just for a while. What do you say? Let's pretend we are human. Oh, brother, it's such a long time since I was with anyone who got enthusiastic about anything.

JIMMY: The old Edwardian brigade do make their brief little world look pretty tempting. All homemade cakes and croquet, bright ideas, bright uniform. Always the same picture: high summer, the long days in the sun, slim volumes of verse, crisp linen, the smell of starch. What a romantic picture. Phoney too, of course.

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

JIMMY: The Platitude from Outer Space - that's brother Nigel. He'll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake. But somewhere at the back of that mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations.

JIMMY: And nothing is more vague about Nigel than his knowledge. His knowledge of life and ordinary human beings is so hazy, he really deserves some sort of decoration for it - a medal inscribed 'For Vaguery in the Field'. But it wouldn't do for him to be troubled by any stabs of conscience, however vague.

JIMMY: All this time, I have been married to this woman, this monument to non-attachment, and suddenly I discover that there is actually a word that sums her up. Not just an adjective in the English language to describe her with - it's her name! Pusillanimous! It sounds like some fleshy Roman matron, doesn't it?

JIMMY: Have you ever noticed how noisy women are? Have you? The way they kick the floor about, simply walking over it? Or have you watched them sitting at their dressing tables, dropping their weapons and banging down their bits of boxes and brushes and lipsticks? I've watched her doing it night after night. When you see a woman in front of her bedroom mirror, you realize what a refined sort of butcher she is. Did you ever see some dirty old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb fat and gristle? Well, she's just like that. Thank God they don't have many women surgeons! Those primitive hands would have your guts out in no time.

ALISON: I keep looking back, as far as I remember, and I can't think what it was to feel young, really young. Jimmy said the same thing to me the other day. I pretended not to be listening - because I knew that would hurt him, I suppose. And - of course - he got savaged, like tonight. But I knew just what he meant. I suppose it would have been so easy to say 'Yes, darling, I know just what you mean. I know what you're feeling.' It's those easy things that seem to be so impossible with us.

ALISON: Tonight it might be all right - we'd make love. But later, we'd both lie awake, watching for the light to come through that little window, and dreading it. In the morning, he'd feel hoaxed, as if I was trying to kill him in the worst way of all.

ALISON: And, afterwards, he actually taunted me with my virginity. He was quite angry about it, as if I had deceived him in some strange way. He seemed to think an untouched woman would defile him.

JIMMY: There's hardly a moment when I'm not - watching and wanting you. I've got to hit out somehow. Nearly four years of being in the same room with you, night and day, and I still can't stop my sweat breaking out when I see you doing - something as ordinary as leaning over an ironing board.

JIMMY: I've got my own strawberry mark - only it's in a different place. No, as far as the Michelangelo Brigade's concerned, I must be a sort of right - wing deviationist. If the Revolution ever comes, I'll be the first to be put up against the wall, with all the other poor old liberals.

JIMMY: Oh, my dear wife, you've got so much to learn. I only hope you learn it one day. If only something - something would happen to you, and wake you out of your beauty sleep! If you could have a child, and it would die. Let it grow, let a recognizable human face emerge from that little mass of indiarubber and wrinkles.

She just devours me whole every time, as if I were some over-large rabbit. That's me. That bulge around her navel - if you're wondering what it is - it's me. Me, buried alive down there, and going mad, smothered in that peaceful looking coil.

## Act Two

HELENA: It's almost as if he wanted to kill someone with it. And me in particular. I've never seen such hatred in someone's eyes before. It's slightly horrifying. Horrifying and oddly exciting.

ALISON: It isn't easy to explain. It's what he would call a question of allegiances, and he expects you to be pretty literal about them. Not only about himself and all the things he believes in, his present and his future, but his past as well. All the people he admires and loves, and has loved.

ALISON: Those next few months at the flat in Poplar were a nightmare. I suppose I must be soft and squeamish, and snobbish, but I felt as though I'd been dropped in a jungle. I couldn't believe that two people, two educated people could be so savage, and so – so uncompromising. Together, they were frightening. They both came to regard me as a sort of hostage from those sections of society they had declared war on.

ALISON: Hugh fairly revelled in the role of the barbarian invader. Sometimes I thought he might even dress the part – you know, furs, spiked helmet, sword. He even got a fiver out of old Man Wain once. Blackmail, of course.

ALISON: Everything about him seemed to burn, his face, the edges of his hair glistened and seemed to spring of his head, and his eyes were so blue and full of the sun. He looked so young and frail, in spite of the tired line of his mouth. I knew I was taking on more than I was ever likely to be capable of bearing, but there never seemed to be any choice.

ALISON: She's been poor almost all her life, and she's frankly ignorant. I'm quite aware how snobbish that sounds, but it happens to be the truth.

ALISON: It was the only way of escaping from everything – a sort of unholy priest-hole of being animals to one another. We could become little furry creatures with little brains.

Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other. Playful, careless creatures in their own cozy zoo for two. A silly symphony for people who couldn't bear the pain of being human beings any longer. And now, even they are dead, poor little silly animals. They were all love, and no brains.

ALISON: Oh yes, we all know what you did for me! You rescued me from the wicked clutches of my family, and all my friends! I'd still be rotting away at home, if you hadn't ridden up on your charger, and carried me off!

JIMMY: The funny thing is, you know, I really did have to ride up on a white charger – off white, really. Mummy locked her up in their eight-bedroomed castle, didn't she? There is no limit to what the middle-aged mummy will do in the holy crusade against ruffians like me.

She wouldn't hesitate to cheat, lie, bully and blackmail. Threatened with me, a young man without money, background or even looks, she'd bellow like a rhinoceros in labour – enough to make every male rhino for miles turn white, and pledge himself to celibacy.

JIMMY: My God, those worms will need a good dose of salts the day they get through her! Oh what a bellyache you've got coming to you, my little wormy ones! Alison's mother is on the way! She will pass away, my friends, leaving a trail of worms gasping for laxatives behind her – from purgatives to purgatory.

JIMMY: One day, when I'm no longer spending my days running a sweet-stall, I may write a book about us all. It's all here. Written in flames a mile high. And it won't be recollected in tranquility either, picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth. It'll be recollected in fire, and blood. My blood.

JIMMY: Progress, the old firm, is selling out! Everyone get out while the going's good. Those forgotten shares you had in the old traditions, the old beliefs are going up – up and up and up.

She's moved long ago into a lovely cottage of the soul, cut right off from the ugly problems of the twentieth

century altogether. She prefers to be cut off from all the conveniences we've fought to get for centuries. She'd rather go down to the ecstatic little shed at the bottom of the garden to relieve her sense of guilt. Our Helena is full of ecstatic wind – aren't you?

JIMMY: At the end of twelve month, I was a veteran. All that that feverish failure of a man had to listen to him was a small, frightened boy, I spent hour upon hour in that tiny bedroom. He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one, lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry – angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. I knew more about – love...betrayal...and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life.

JIMMY: But that girl there can twist your arm off with her silence. I've sat in this chair in the dark for hours. And, although she knows I'm feeling as I feel now, she's turned over, and gone to sleep.

I want to stand up in your tears, and splash about in them, and sing. I want to be there when you grovel. I want to be there, I want to watch it, I want the front seat.

CLIFF: I've been a – a no man's land between them. Sometimes, it's been still and peaceful, no incidents, and we've all been reasonably happy. But most of the time, it's simply a very narrow strip of plain hell. But where I come from, we're used to brawling and excitement. Perhaps I even enjoy in the thick of it. I love these two people very much. And I pity all of us.

JIMMY: She looked at it, and the tears just welled up in her eyes, and she said: "But she's so beautiful!" She kept repeating it is if she couldn't believe it. Sounds a bit simple and sentimental when you repeat it. But it was pure gold and the way she said it.

## Scene Two

COLONEL: I don't know. We were all to blame, in our different ways. No doubt Jimmy acted in good faith. He's honest enough, whatever else he may be. And your mother – in her heavy-handed way, as you put it – acted in good faith as well. Perhaps you and I were the ones most to blame.

ALISON: 'Poor old Daddy – just one of those sturdy old plants left over from the Edwardian Wilderness that can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more.'

COLONEL: I always believed that people married each other because they were in love. That always seemed a good enough reason to me. But apparently, that's too simple for young people nowadays. They have to talk about challengers and revenge. I just can't believe that love between men and women is really like that.

COLONEL: Those long, cool evenings up in the hills, everything purple and golden. Your mother and I were so happy then. It seemed as though we had everything we could ever want. I think the last day the sun shone was when the dirty little train steamed out of that crowded, suffocating Indian station, and the battalion band playing for all it was worth. I knew in my heart it was all over then. Everything.

HELENA: You're his friend, aren't you? Anyway. He's not what you'd call reticent about himself, is he? I've never seen so many souls stripped to the waist since I've been here.

JIMMY: Alison'. Oh, how could she be so bloody wet! Deep loving need! That makes me puke! She couldn't say 'You rotten bastard! I hate your guts, I'm clearing out, and I hope you rot!' No, she has to make a polite, emotional mess out of it!

## Act Three

JIMMY: After all, it wouldn't do if we was all alike, would it? It'd be a funny world if we was all the same, that's what I always say! All I know is that somebody's been sticking pins into *my* wax image for years. Of course: Alison's mother! Every Friday, the wax arrives from Harrod's and all through the weekend, she's stabbing away at it with a hatpin! Ruined her bridge game, I dare say.

JIMMY: Do you feel sin crawling out of your ears, like stored up wax or something? Are you wondering whether I'm joking or not? Perhaps I ought to wear a red nose and funny hat. I'm just curious, that's all.

JIMMY: I was a liberal skinny weakling. I too was afraid to strip down to my soul, but now everyone looks at my superb physique in envy. I can perform any kind of press there is without betraying the least sign of passion or kindness.

JIMMY: No, of course it's not the same, you idiot! It never is! Today's meal is always different from yesterday's and the last woman isn't the same as the one before. If you can't accept that, you're going to be pretty unhappy, my boy.

JIMMY: Why, why, why, why do we let these women bleed us to death? Have you ever had a letter, and on it is franked 'Pleased Give Your Blood Generously? Well, the Postmaster-General does that, on behalf of all the women of the world. I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer.

JIMMY: Right from that first night, you have always put out your hand to me first. As if you expected nothing, or worse than nothing, and didn't care. You made a good enemy, didn't you? What they call a worthy opponent. But then, when people put down their weapons, it doesn't mean they've necessarily stopped fighting.

JIMMY: Perhaps it means something to lie with your victorious general in your arms. Especially, when he's heartily sick of the whole campaign, tired out, hungry and dry.

JIMMY: We'll get pleasantly, joyfully tiddly, we'll gaze at each other tenderly and lecherously in 'The Builder's Arms', and then we'll come back here, and I'll make such love to you, you'll not care about anything else at all.

## Scene Two

ALISON: Because it was unfair and cruel of me to come back, I'm afraid a sense of timing is one of the things I seem to have learnt from Jimmy. But it's something that can be in very bad taste. I felt like a criminal. I told myself I'd turn round at the other end, and come straight back. I couldn't even believe that this place existed any more. But once I got here, there was nothing I could do. I had to convince myself that everything I remembered about this place had really happened to me once.

ALISON: I regret it, and I detest myself for doing it. But I did not come here in order to gain anything. Whatever it was – hysteria or just macabre curiosity, I'd certainly no intention of making any kind of breach between you and Jimmy.

HELENA: When I saw you standing there tonight, I knew that it was all utterly wrong. That I didn't believe in any of this, and not jimmy or anyone could make me believe otherwise. How could I have ever thought I could get away with it! He wants one world and I want another, and lying in that bed won't ever change it!

HELENA: When you came in at that door, ill and tired and hurt, it was all over for me. You see – I didn't know about the baby. It was such a shock. It's like a judgement on us.

JIMMY: It's no good trying to fool yourself about love. You can't fall into it like a soft job, without dirtying up your hands. It takes muscle and guts. And if you can't bear the thought of messing up your nice, clean soul, you'd better give up on the whole idea of life, and become a saint.

JIMMY: The injustice of it is almost perfect! The wrong people going hungry, the wrong people being loved, the wrong people dying!

The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest. Like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There's no warm pack, no herd to comfort him. Do you remember that first night I saw you at that grisly party? You didn't really notice me, but I was watching you all the evening. You seemed to have a wonderful relaxation of spirit. I knew that was what I wanted. You've got to be really brawny to have that kind of strength – the strength to relax.

ALISON; It doesn't matter! I was wrong, I was wrong! I don't want to be neutral, I don't want to be a saint. I want to be a lost cause. I want to be corrupt and futile. I'm in the fire, and I'm burning, and all I want is to die! It's cost him his child, and any others I might have had! But what does it matter – this is what he wanted from me! Don't you see! I'm in the mud at last! I'm groveling! I'm crawling!

JIMMY: We'll be together in our bear's cave, and our squirrel's drey, and we'll live on honey, and nuts – lots and lots of nuts. And we'll sing songs about ourselves – about warm trees and snug caves, and lying in the sun. And you'll keep those big eyes on my fur, and help me keep my claws in order, because I'm a bit of a sippy, scruffy sort of a bear. And I'll see that you keep that sleek, bushy tail glistening as it should, because you're a very beautiful squirrel, but you're none too bright either, so we've got to be careful. There are cruel steel traps lying about everywhere, just waiting for rather mad, slightly satanic, and very timid little animal. Right?

## Notes

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1. *Midland.*: the central part of England.
2. *attic*: a room at the top of a house directly under the roof.
3. *landing*: the level part of a staircase between flights of steps.
4. *skylight*: a window in a roof or ceiling.
5. *tweed*: woollen cloth with a rough surface.
6. *flannels*: trousers made of loosely woven woollen cloth or similar material.
7. *disconcerting*: surprising and upsetting.
8. *freebooting*: random and almost uncontrolled.
9. *importunate*: annoyingly persistent.
10. *blistering*: fiery, strong enough to disturb.
11. *loudmouth*: one who boasts in an unpleasant manner.
12. *vehement*: very assertive, passionate.
13. *To be as vehement as he is* : The author implies that a person who always talks aggressively may not be committed to any idea or viewpoint.
14. *exact it*: obtain it by pressure.
15. *counterpoint* : total contrast.
16. *polyphony*: uneasy combination of different elements. The term is used in music to describe a composition combining a variety of sounds, apparently not in harmony.
17. *She is turned in a different key.* : Alison is very different from Jimmy and Cliff, suffering from ‘well-bred malaise’, i.e. the sickness or weakness resulting from being well brought-up. She cannot cope with Jimmy’s aggressive behaviour. Her personality is in contrast to the ‘robust orchestration’, that is, harmonious vitality of the other two.
18. *grubby*: somewhat unclean.
19. *equivocation*: avoiding frank and honest statements or behaviour.
20. *not arf*: not really or not at all, suggesting contempt.
21. *While Woman’s Burden* : This is an ironic variation of White Man’s Burden which means, in the history of Colonialism, the responsibility to ruling the colonised. Jimmy is angry because Alison, like so many of her class, seems uninterested in serious ideas.
22. *Old Porter talks* : Jimmy complains that people don’t take an interest in his talk but respond even to a yawn by Alison! He implies that it is so because she belongs to a higher class than he does.
23. *Welsh Ruffian*: a violent, brutal person from Wales, which is on the mid-west coast of England.
24. *You’ll end up in the “News of the World, .. boyo, .....* : There will be some scandal about you and it will be reported in the kind of newspaper that gives prominence to scandals.
25. *boyo*: affectionately critical term for boy.
26. *bound over*: colloquial for imprisoned.

27. *Builder's Arm.* : name of a pub, a place where alcoholic drinks are served.
28. *black-outs* : a condition in which a person appears to lose consciousness.
29. *guzzled*: swallowed food or drink greedily.
30. *Girl here wants to know...* : reference to a letter in a Personal Advice Column of a newspaper, asking for an expert opinion on a sexual situation.
31. *Bishop of Bromley* : a church correspondent in the newspaper. Bromley is a Greater London diocese.
32. *dullin* : slang for darling.
33. *nom de plume*: pen name.
34. *evangelist*: a person who preaches Christianity, especially at large public meetings.
35. *Earl's Court*: a district of S.W. London
36. *yobs*: rough, dirty, bad-mannered persons.
37. *Hallelujah*: song of praise to God; used ironically here.
38. *Edwardian twilight*: end of King Edward VII's reign (1901-1911); a period characterised by complacency of the socially privileged.
39. *disenfranchised wilderness*: a place in which one is deprived of the right to vote; metaphorically, without any influence. one whose voice is no longer heard.
40. *slinks the place out*: fills the place with a dirty smell.
41. *ulcers*: sores that do not heal easily, on the skin or inside the body.
42. *Vaughan Williams*: (1872-1958) eminent British composer.
43. *Port Said*: a port and fuelling station at the Mediterranean end of Egypt. An implication of sleaziness.
44. *The old Edwardian brigade. . . pretty tempting*: The conservative upper class made their former narrow environment seem attractive.
45. *croquet*: a game in which wooden balls are driven by long-handled wooden hammers through a series of hoops fixed in the ground. The game was once popular among the English upper classes.
46. *phoney*: not genuine, false, full of pretence.
47. *he's got bite, edge, drive*: he is capable of thinking sharply and effectively; has the determination to get things done.
48. *Proper little Marchbanks*: the comparison is with a character in Shaw's play *Candida* who fell in love with a woman (Candida) much older than himself.
49. *naive nosiness*. - childlike curiosity.
50. *Ulysses*: the hero in the Greek epic *The Odyssey* attributed to Homer. An ironic reference to a long epic journey.
51. *A sort of female Emily Bronte*': the *author of Wuthering Heights*, a novel of tempestuous passion, written under a male pseudonym. 'A female Emily Bronte' is an ironic tautology.
52. *there's a shower for you*: Jimmy considers Alison's friends 'wet', that is uninteresting, dull.
53. *That blooming droning*: that damned noise (the concert on the radio).
54. *sadist*: one who gets pleasure in being cruel to others.
55. *Sandhurst*: The popular name for the Royal Military Academy (1802) of Great Britain. formerly at Sandhurst. Berkshire. but since 1947 at Camberley, Surrey.

56. *Well-bred commonplaces* : polite and superficially cultured but rather ordinary statements.
57. *bowler hat* : a type of hard, round felt hat.
58. *The Platitude: from Outer Space*: a platitude is a statement of something ‘obvious and trivial, said many times before but made as if it were new and important. The reference to outer space suggests a thin, insubstantial creature, hardly real.
59. *he’ll make it*: he will be a success.
60. *shakily triumphant*: successful without confidence.
61. *draw blood somehow*: succeed in creating the effect he has in mind, which is to shock and upset.
62. *Marquess of Queensberry*: the Marquess of Queensberry (1844-1900) established the code of rules governing modern boxing. The implication here is that despite the civilised outward manner the individual will observe no rules of civilised conduct.
63. *sycophantic*: flattering behaviour with the intention of gaining some advantage for oneself.
64. *phlegmatic*: not easily moved or excited.
65. *pusillanimous*: cowardly, weak, incapable of action.
66. *the Games*: public entertainments organised by the Ancient Romans.
67. *beefcake Christians*: muscular Christians, i.e., solid. Fundamental, unwavering Christians.
68. *stereophonic*: of recorded Or broadcast sound giving the effect of coming from different directions.
69. *feed ourselves to a couple of lions* : referring to the Ancient Roman pastime of feeding the Early Christians to lions in their amphitheatres.
70. *The iron mingles with the music*: the electricity on which the irons interferes with the music from the radio.
71. *patronise*: a way of behaving towards another which is kind and friendly but indicates that one is superior.
72. *grimacing*: twisting the face.
73. *ingenious*: inventive.
74. *Miss Drury*: the landlady.
75. *takes in*: convinces, though not honestly.
76. *swinging on those bloody bells*: being emotionally aroused; enjoying something.
77. *Do you come here often?*: Cliff pretends comically that Jimmy is a single woman at a public dance.
78. *Only in the mating season*: Jimmy replies ironically as if he is a single woman, though such a woman wouldn’t confess she is in search of a husband.
79. *Do you think bosoms will be in or out, this year?*: Will it be in or out of fashion for women to reveal or to conceal their bosoms? Alternatively, whether the size of bosoms will determine the male response to women.
80. *Your teeth will be out....*: Stop harassing me with your questions or I’ll break your teeth.
81. *getting close to breaking point....*: about to collapse or to become violent under pressure.
82. *infallible* : incapable of making a mistake, always right.
83. *vulnerable* : in this context, easily hurt, sensitive.
84. *trying to kill him in the worst way of all*: making him accept their relationship because of the pregnancy; making him conform to the expectations of society; destroying his real personality and convictions.
85. *loose*: freewheeling, morally unscrupulous, promiscuous.

86. *common*: low, vulgar.
87. *Puritan* : one who is excessively strict, precise in religion or morals.
88. *slobbering* : literally, to let saliva dribble from the mouth; metaphorically, to seem overflowing with sentiment.
89. *randy* : full of uncontrollable sexual desire.
90. *mourris dance*: Cliff distorts the word Morris, which is the name of a dance that originated in Medieval times and now is performed at festivals, to *mourris* so as to suggest mouse - a Morris dance done by a mouse, so to speak, as he explains later.
91. *whimsy*: odd or fanciful.
92. *halfwit*: half-mad.
93. *half a crown*: a coin worth 2s 6d before the UK went metric; hence a coin of low value.
94. *That's my boy*: That's the kind of person I like.
95. *a lot of old-stock*: The conventional way of his parents and ancestors asserting itself in Jimmy which, he adds immediately, "Nobody wants".
96. *I know what I want now*: i.e. sex.
97. *You'll have to wait till the proper time*: i.e. at night, when we go to bed.
98. *There's no such thing*: There is no fixed time for sex.
99. *mimes*: using movement to perform the functions of speech.
100. *"expense of spirit" lark*: Quoted from a sonnet by Shakespeare  
- 'The expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
Is lust in action.'  
Jimmy calls it a lark, i.e., a piece of fun or mischief.
101. *a scoutmaster*: one who is likely to be conventionally' moral and to preach morals.
102. *Gide*: Andre Gide (1860-1951), French author, who wrote frankly about his homosexuality.
103. *Greek Chorus; boys*: they are believed to have been homosexual.
104. *he's like a man with a strawberry mark*- He's like a man with a strawberry-coloured birthmark of discolouration on the face; who is self-conscious about it.
105. *Michelangelo Brigade*: men who are alike the Renaissance artists who were supposed to be homosexuals.
106. *right-wing deviatianist*: a conservative who disagrees with the conservative establishment.
107. *the Revolution* : a sexual revolution in which opponents of homosexuality win be shot.
108. *predatory*: living by attacking and feeding on others.
109. *Hippodrome*: name of a theatre.
110. *digs*: (colloquial) inexpensive accommodation.
111. *She just devours me whole every time*: Every time we have sex she seems to eat me up, i.e. reduces me to something impersonal. She does not change as a result of the experience. She returns to her conventional way of thinking, feeling and behaviour.
112. *tripes*: parts of the stomach of a cow or sheep, used as food; the reference here is to Alison's intestines, which Jimmy describes as "distended, overfed".
113. *slip*: a kind of undergarment.
114. *intermittent*: stopping for a while and starting again.

115. *matriarchal*: like a mother who dominates a family.
116. *rabble-rousing instincts*: urge to use words and phrases which will excite listeners.
117. *catcalls*: shrill whistles indicating disagreement or disapproval.
118. *salad colander*: a bowl with small holes in it for draining water from salad, vegetables, etc.
119. inhibiting: repressive, causing inability to relax and to express one's feelings in an open and natural way.
120. *allegiances* : loyalties, Jimmy is loyal to Cliff and will not be suspicious of his relationship with Alison.
121. *literal*: following the exact meaning with no exaggeration and nothing added by the imagination.
122. *fluke*: something that happens by chance.
123. "comes down" : a phrase denoting that a student has left a university; used only in relation to students of the best English Universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.
124. *red brick*: universities founded in England from the late nineteenth century onwards and so without a long tradition or learning and cultural values. The term comes from the building material or the time.
125. *white tile* : not even as good as the red-brick universities; virtually without intellectual standards.
126. *warehouse* : a building in which goods are stored.
127. *tight* : slightly drunk.
128. *port* : a kind of strong, dark-red, sweet wine.
129. *burnt my boats* : destroyed any means of retreating.
130. *brawling* : quarrelling.
131. *squeamish* : easily shocked.
132. *snobbish*: inclined to admire people of high rank or social class and to look down upon those of a lower class.
133. *hostage* : a person who is held prisoner as a guarantee that certain demands, conditions of any agreement etc. are carried out.
134. *W. I. S. W. I. etc.* : Postal codes for some of the more affluent London districts.
135. *gate crash* : go to a party, meeting etc., without being invited or without paying.
136. *the silver* : anything made of or looking like silver, specially knives, forks, spoons, etc.
137. *guerrilla warfare* : wars conducted by small groups, generally outside the regular army, who make sudden attacks on the enemy.
138. *that did it* : I made my final decision to marry Jimny because the family objected to it so strongly. (If it had left me alone, I might have changed my mind!)
139. 'the *knight in shining armour* : the fighter for a cause, with high ideals.
140. *cronies* : friends, close companions.
141. *Dame Alison's Mob*: a sarcastic reference to Alison's high society upbringing contrasting with her working-class marriage.
142. *The New Millennium* : a millennium is a period of thousand years. The reference here is to a New Age or Utopia likely to last for a long time.
143. *menagerie* : a place with a collection of wild animals.
144. *fey* : with homosexual tendencies.
145. *boyo* : affectionate substitute for the word boy.
146. *blinkin* : slang term for damned.

147. *washes over you* : has no effect on you.
148. *trash* : something worthless.
149. *Blimey* : a vulgar interjection of surprise or contempt.
150. *fugue* : a piece of music in which a tune is repeated by different parts of an orchestra or by voices.
151. *spinster* : an unmarried woman, specially one who is past the usual age for marrying.
152. *You know your trouble. son? Too anxious to please* : Jimmy is imitating Cliff's father giving advice to his son.
153. *meringues* : very sweet cakes made of sugar and egg-white.
154. *tom-toms* : small drums.
155. *top of the bill* : above all.
156. *religious angle* : some religious ideas, words and phrases.
157. *a big hit* : a great success.
158. *necking* : kissing and embracing.
159. *pecking* : a quick kiss.
160. *blues* : low spirits, depression.
161. *booze* : liquor.
162. *hetero* : heterosexual.
163. *metero* : the word metro, which means underground railway in London, is extended to rhyme with hetero.
164. *perpetual* : constant.
165. *whoring* : going after prostitutes.
166. *python coil* : deadly embrace.
167. *celibate* : doing without sex.
168. *theology* : study of or system of religion.
169. *slosh of* : tone and influence of.
170. *the theology of Dante with a good slosh of Eliot*: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), the great Italian renaissance author of *The Divine Comedy*. and T.S. Eliot (1886-1965), the distinguished twentieth century Anglo-American poet; both representatives of high culture; thus models for emulation.
171. *Cess Pool* : for collecting waste or sewage.
172. *rise to the bait* : like a fish (be tempted to criticise him, which is what he wants).
173. *Lady Bracknell...* : a large and formidable prospective mother-in-law in Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Ernest* who interviews her son-in-law to be over tea and cucumber sandwiches.
174. *charger* : a war horse.
175. *off white* : a colour near white.
176. *crusade* : a continued effort to help a good cause, derived from the military expeditions of Christians to win back the Holy Land from the Turks.
177. *chivalry* : kindness towards women, a higher standard of politeness towards them than towards men, derived from the medieval knightly social code.
178. *guzzler* : one who swallows food or drink greedily.
179. *He clutches wildly* : he tries desperately to think of something.

180. *matelot's arm* : French for a sailor's arm.
181. *cistern* : a tank for storing water.
182. *get me into the News of the World* : find a scandal about me which can be reported in the newspaper of that name, which focuses heavily on scandals.
183. *tricked out* : pretentiously equipped.
184. *caparisoned* : colourfully dressed in some old historical style.
185. *mare* : a female horse; a reference to a Nursery Rhyme "The Old Grey Mare, she ain't what she used to be".
186. *brawl* : to quarrel noisily.
187. *genuflecting* : bowing in an exaggerated way, showing excessive respect for someone's opinions and wishes.
188. *sin jobber* : one who helps another with various kinds of jobs for payment, in this case to the extent of committing sins.
189. *he brakes for a fresh spurt later* : he pauses before bursting out again.
190. *He's saving his strength for the knock-out* : He controls himself so that he will be able to hit hard to the point of defeating his opponent in argument.
191. *those worms will need.....* : even the worms in Alison's body will not get the salt they need to survive, because she has no salt in her (metaphorically, i.e. nothing strong).
192. *declamatory* : oratorical, as in a speech intended to sound dramatic, forceful.
193. *purgatory* : a place or state after death in which a soul is purified before it goes to heaven; any state of suffering or unpleasantness.
194. *She hasn't broken* : Alison is not wholly upset by Jimmy's remarks about her and her mother; her endurance has not collapsed.
195. *on the end of his line* : metaphorically, his fishing-line or rope at the end of which is the bait.
196. *Written in flames a mile high*: remembrances which are extraordinarily fiery.
197. *Recollected in tranquility*: Wordsworth's definition of how poetry is written.
198. *picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth*: Recent research indicates that Wordsworth's sister Dorothy made entries in her diary about their walks together in the Lake District, which inspired Wordsworth's poem "The Daffodils".
199. *expediency*: a practical necessity but not down with belief or conviction.
200. *the local registrar*: registrar of marriages (i.e. outside the church).
201. *spill the beans* : to tell what is expected to be secret.
202. *like a shot*: immediately.
203. *vicar*: priest.
204. *my best man* : a friend of the bridegroom who accompanies him to the church altar for the wedding services.
205. *to watch the execution carried out*: Jimmy maliciously describes the wedding as an execution.
206. *buzzed* : dizzy, exhausted, irritated.
207. *pew*: a seat or bench in a church.
208. *vestry* : a room in or near a church used by the clergy as a dressing room and for small meetings.

209. *He can smell blood again*: one more opportunity to be provocative.
210. *Saint in Dior's clothing*: Christian Dior, one of the popular fashion designers of our time. A saint would not wear fashionable clothes and would arouse suspicion if he or she did so.
211. *Sacred cow*: a person, idea or institution considered beyond criticism, derived from the Hindu veneration of the cow.
212. *dry up*: stop talking.
213. *pay off*: make it worthwhile.
214. *the Economics of the Supernatural*: a way of thinking about the world in which everything is explained in terms of the supernatural.
215. *apocalyptic*: relating to the end of the world.
216. *share pushers*: share sellers or promoters who hide the weaknesses of their case.
217. *a transfer of power*: from the system of ideas under the category of Reason and Progress to "The old traditions, the old beliefs" in the Supernatural.
218. *There's going to be a change over*: Jimmy describes (ironically) a possible change in the spiritual and religious ethos in terms of shares and dividends. etc.
219. *The Big crash*: The collapse of the beliefs considered modern (Reason and Progress. etc) The term is usually applied to the stock exchange, the prices of shares, the rates of interest, and so on.
220. *gilt-edged*: absolutely reliable.
221. *capital gain*: a term in economics which means an increase in the main sum of money and not only in the rate of interest.
222. *The Dark Ages*: the period (5th - 8th centuries) of European history for a bad or chaotic period, here ironically.
223. *ecstatic*: intensely joyful.
224. *wind*: air of gas in the stomach.
225. *smouldering*: burning slowly.
226. *public school*: A British boarding-school, in this context, established as rule a long time ago and noted for its intellectual standards, devotion to traditional morals, manners, etc.
227. *scruples*: a feeling to hesitation or doubt about doing something because one thinks or knows that it might be wrong, or unkind to do it.
228. *cash in on*: take advantage of.
229. *just plain Irish*: the Irish are said to be more outspoken than the English.
230. *a pretty bad case of virginity*: metaphorically, a case of ignorance, lack of experience, etc.
231. *the war in Spain*: the Spanish Civil War (1936-39)
232. *a veteran*: one who is old and experienced (Jimmy uses the word ironically).
233. *bravado*: a show of daring but not real bravery.
234. *Judas*: Judas Iscariot. one of the 12 Apostles, who is said to have betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.
235. *phlegm*: thick, slimy liquid brought up from the throat by coughing.
236. *He's drawn blood at last*: he has been successful in his attempt to provoke.
237. *twist your arm off*: do something very cruel.
238. *hysterical*: uncontrolled in speech and behaviour, often without adequate reasons.

239. *grovel* : to make oneself excessively humble because one wants something.
240. *I want the front seat*: I want to have a clear view of it.
241. *see your face rubbed in the mud*: see you humiliated.
242. *raving* : talking and behaving as if made.
243. *got a kick out of*: a pleasant thrill.
244. *hardly audible*: not clearly heard.
245. *speaks a different language*: has a different attitude, view-point, way of behaving.
246. *charwoman*: a woman employed in house-cleaning.
247. *heavy-handed*: clumsy, not very intelligent.
248. *take after me*: resemble me.
249. *sit on the fence*: avoid taking sides.
250. *trails off*: concludes rather weakly.
251. *blow-out*: a feast.
252. *Edwardian* : of or in relation to the reign of king Edward VII (1909-1911).
253. *sturdy old plants...sun isn't shining any more*: a survivor of the cosy reactionary background of the Edwardian era who can't understand why the former age of cosy comfort for the socially privileged has vanished.
254. *quite a turn of phrase*: a special way of using language which brings it alive, makes it more effective.
255. *the famous American question-you know the sixty-four dollar one*: a question that can't be answered at all or is very difficult to answer.
256. *uncomprehendingly*: without understanding.
257. *another Shelley...Shelley had a romantic marriage with Mary, daughter of the philosopher William Godwin, who did not approve of it.*
258. *barbarian*: rough, wild or uncultured person.
259. *throws down the gauntlet at me*: challenges me.
260. *mystified*: puzzled, confused.
261. *why the sun isn't shining any more*: why life is not enjoyable.
262. *the Blimps*: people who resemble Colonel Blimp, a die-hard reactionary named after a cartoon character representing a pompous, obese old man.
263. *the stall*: the sweet-stall, which Cliff and Jimmy manage jointly to earn a living.
264. *cock-eyed*: in the state of confusion.
265. *nut-house*: mad-house.
266. *reticent*: reserved, withdrawn.
267. *souls stripped to the waist*: half-naked souls, persons who reveal what they think and feel without any respect for social conventions.
268. *tart*: a prostitute or a Woman who behaves like one.
269. *old mother Drury*: a mocking reference to the elderly landlady Mrs. Drury.
270. *rams*: pushes it hard.
271. *snorts*: forces air noisily through the nostrils.

272. *bloody wet*: disgustingly insensitive.
273. *puke*: vomit.
274. *soggy*: wet and soft.
275. *sordid*: dirty, unpleasant .
276. *aria*: a song for one voice in an opera. Jimmy means that he is not going to make a fuss, not dramatise...
277. *the dirty ones...the posh ones*: the poor and the rich.
278. *wet round the mouth*: cowardly in speech.
279. *grotesque* : very odd, almost ugly.
280. *the old place* : the Midlands,, familiar place.
281. *invocations*: appeals, to summon a spirit into the mind.
282. *the Coptic Goddess of fertility*: the Goddess of a primitive culture, supposed to be responsible for the conception and birth of children.
283. *depraved*: evil, corrupt.
284. *rather us*: somewhat like us.
285. *snarling*: becoming confused.
286. *debutante*: a girl making her first formal appearance at a gathering in upper-class society.
287. *orgy*: a wild party or celebration.
288. *cockerel*: a young cock.
289. *Fortnums*: a well-known department store in London.
290. *a roaring line*: successful sales.
291. *a stint*: a short appearance.
292. *Y.W.*:YWCA Young Women's Christian Association.
293. *a workout*: some practice.
294. *dabbled in* : attempted in an experimental sort of way.
295. *Your cup of tea*: the kind of thing you would enjoy.
296. *accent*: a special way of pronouncing words in a particular area or way of life.
297. *Sticking pins into my wax image*: reference to the superstition that if you stick pins in a wax image of someone, he or she will experience bad luck, suffer financially or in health.
298. *Harrods*: a famous department store in London, with many branches.
299. *Kidding*: deceiving.
300. *brooding*: thinking anxiously or with great seriousness.
301. *excursion*: a trip, an outing (used metaphorically to describe Jimmy's long speech about why people make sacrifices).
302. *Dry up*: Stop talking.
303. *cochineal*: a scarlet dye used in colouring food.
304. *a long letter....*: in the newspaper Jimmy has been reading.
305. *artificial insemination*: making a woman pregnant by non-natural means.
306. *whether Milton wore braces or not*: a sarcastic reference to the english preoccupation with literary correspondence in the major newspapers, largely concerned with inconsequential, or downright farcical matters.

307. *who gets shot down*: whose argument is destroyed by a counter-argument.
308. *A Fellow of All Souls*: a Fellow is a distinguished instructor in a college; All souls is in Oxford.
309. *bitten the dust*: been humiliated in argument.
310. *the Athenaeum* : probably a reference to a London club founder in 1824 for men of distinction in literature, art and learning.
311. *acquiring yourself a curiosity*: learning to be curious in matters of knowledge.
312. *Yale*: an eminent and well-known American university.
313. *When Shakespeare was writing the Tempest he changed his sex*: referring sarcastically to the far-fetched and sensational research thesis of American literary scholars.
314. *second best bed*: other than the one shared with one's marital partner.
315. *Old W.S. ended up .. three children by him*: a continuation of the whimsy mentioned above. Actually, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, and had three children. He left Anne his second-best bed in his will.
316. *quizzically*: as if asking a question.
317. *mark it down*: consider it.
318. *satanic glint*: a devilish gleam or sparkle.
319. *living in sin*: a sexual relationship without being married.
320. *Reverend*: a Christian priest.
321. *Parson*: a Christian priest in charge of a parish (organised neighbourhood).
322. *Spiritual beefcake*: moral and spiritual ideas which are not reliable or convincing but have a good "taste".
323. *moral weight-lifting*: exercises with moral ideas which have been traditionally accepted.
324. *a liberal skinny weakling*: one who believes in democracy, tolerance, progress, reason and so on, but without much conviction.
325. *physique*: the structure of the body, here intended to mean the structure of the soul.
326. *any kind of press*: perform any action.
327. *uplift*: a high moral and spiritual condition.
328. *tumbling over*: discussing.
329. *change the record*: don't repeat yourself.
330. *pipe down*: stop talking or talk less.
331. *catchy*: attractive, likely to be popular.
332. *scrub*: cancel, drop.
333. *Jock and Day*: the names of the two main characters in the musical Jimmy is composing.
334. *"And jocund day..."* a quotation from Wordsworth.
335. *that peculiar man's plays... have finished with him*: the thorough literary analysis of Jimmy Porter's plays by academic intellectuals.
336. *snappy*: smart, short and crisp.
337. *T.S. Eliot and Pam*: T.S. Eliot, the distinguished modern Anglo-American intellectual and poet, and Pam Ayres, the pop poet. An incongruous pair.
338. *falling in* : accepting and co-operating with.

339. *mellerdy*: melody, deliberately mispronounced for the sake of making it sound funny.
340. *rattles his lines off*: sings them very fast; unintelligible: not clear.
341. *a little Gidding*: ironic reference to one of T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets entitled "little Gidding" which is the name of an English village.
342. *gelding iron*: instrument used for gelding, i.e. castrating animals.
343. *perlease*: please, deliberately mispronounced for comic effect.
344. *stinks*: is worthless.
345. *a Flanagan and Allen*: a pair of music-hall comedians.
346. *Roedean*: a distinguished English public school for girls.
347. *ménage*: household.
348. *marge*: short form of margarine, a butter-like substance made mainly from vegetable fats.
349. *true blue*: who has real merit.
350. *gag*: joke
351. *wrench my guts*: sprain my ribs.
352. *oaf*: fool.
353. *Marlon Brando*: a Hollywood actor admired for his tough, manly appearance and style.
354. *to explain the score to you*: help you to assess the situation.
355. *scruffy*: dirty and untidy.
356. *Pinner or Guildford*: small English towns, known for their conventional morals and manners.
357. *gobbles you up*: swallows you, i.e. makes you resemble her in respectability.
358. *make out*: make a career.
359. *bleed us to death*: destroy our individuality.
360. *franked*: marked with a rubber-stamp.
361. *the big bang*: the atomic explosion.
362. *the old-fashioned, grand design*: the traditional social and moral ideal.
363. *Brave New*: reference to Aldous Huxley's novel (*Brave New World*) about an ideal society.
364. *butchered*: slaughtered, killed.
365. *glammed up*: dressed up glamorously.
366. *hit the town*: go into town to have an entertaining time.
367. *shroud over Mummy*: a cloth over the photograph of Alison's mother.
368. *Union Jack*: the British National flag.
369. *sloppy* : untidy.
370. *how to take it*: how to endure or accept harsh things said or done to him.
371. *how to hand it out*: how to hit back, in words and action.
372. *a good double*: a good pair.
373. *tiddly*; mildly drunk.
374. *lecherously*: with strong sexual desire.

375. *"The Builder's Arms"*: name of pub.
376. *St. Pancras*: one of the three major railway terminuses in London.
377. *charade*: a piece of ridiculous pretence which is so obvious that it does not deceive anyone.
378. *Suspended and rather remote*: not involved in whatever happens, with a sense of its unreality.
379. *don't bring out the book of rules*: don't refer to conventional notions of right and wrong.
380. *strong-arm stuff*: in this case, trying to assert your rights in a marriage.
381. *blackmailer*: one who seeks money or a favour by threatening to reveal something the victim wishes to keep secret.
382. *macabre*: horrible.
383. *breach*: gap, disturbance, conflict.
384. *He was born out of his time*: he is completely out of tune with the present age, belong to a different historic period.
385. *never amount to anything*: he will never be a success in any way.
386. *An Eminent Victorian*: the reference is to a famous book of biographical essays by Lytton Strachey entitled *Eminent Victorians*. Alison is obviously very confused about Jimmy who has nothing of the Victorian in him; no faith in reason, Progress, a society with high moral standards, etc.
387. *get away with it*: succeed in reconciling Jimmy's way of life and ideas with mine.
388. *hold court*: assemble people and pass judgement on those he dislikes as if they are "the accused" in a law case.
389. *like one of the Renaissance popes*: in Helena's statement they represent the all powerful. There is irony in Jimmy, with his anti-religion slant, being compared to the popes.
390. *a kind of cross between*: an odd combination of.
391. *courtesan*: a prostitute.
392. *henchwoman*: a faithful supporter or follower who will engage in dishonest practices: a principal attendant.
393. *Cleopatra*: Cleopatra VII (9-30 BC), queen of Egypt, mistress of Julius Caesar and later Mark Antony, representing a powerful, attractive, dominating personality.
394. *Boswell*: James Boswell (1740-95) biographer of Dr. Johnson; a respectful, admiring person devoted to another's life and work.
395. *wrenching*: pulling with a violent movement.
396. *Jimmy (off)*: his voice is heard but the audience can't see him.
397. *dark plots*: plans for doing something evil.
398. *draw a diagram*: explain the simple and obvious.
399. *They all want to escape*.. This is one of Jimmy's central convictions. That one must face life's sufferings and cope with them.
400. *hot-house feeling* : artificial feelings, not genuine, apparently strong but not really sincere.
401. *like of soft job*: a situation in which there are no serious problems.
402. *muscle and guts*: strength of mind and courage.
403. *the injustice*....the wrong people dying. Life is full of underserved suffering.
404. *as powerful as itself*: equal vitality in people, relationships, work experience, etc.
405. *The heaviest...the loneliest*: an independent mind is alone, since few mind are genuinely independent.

406. *warm pack, herd...*: company.
407. *The voice that cries out...*: that expresses its sufferings.
408. *grisly*: horrible, unpleasant.
409. *brawny*: muscular as applied metaphorically to the mind.
410. *sweat your guts out*: work hard, think intensely till you arrive at your basic convictions.
411. *a hair out of place, or....*: you've never been really disturbed in your mind.
412. *I may be a lost cause*: isolated, unsuccessful, with ideas shared by very few people, etc.
413. *I don't want to be a saint...*: Alison asserts Jimmy's values.
414. *splash about in*: experience all the time, remain familiar with, not avoid for the sake of mental comfort and security.
415. *this is what he wanted from me!*: he wanted me to know suffering as it really is.
416. *I'm groveling*: begging for something with excessive humility, respect and fear.
417. *bear's cave and ...*: Jimmy sees himself as a bear living happily with Alison as squirrel, each acknowledging the nature of the other.
418. *drey*: a squirrel's nest.
419. *snug*: warm and comfortable.
420. *soppy*: foolishly sentimental.
421. *Scruffy*: dirty and untidy.
422. *none too bright*: not very intelligent.
423. *satanic*: evil.
424. *Poor squirrels!... Poor bears!* Jimmy and Alison, each recognises and feels a kind of a affectionate pity about the essential nature of the other.

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**HAROLD PINTER**  
**The Birthday Party**

## Unit-7

### Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party

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#### 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 Rattigan 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 are 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 carries 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. Goldberg 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. Its 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 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's 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 face 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 impending 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 from 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 Guinness.' 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 girl's 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 Carrigmecross. 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

Goldberg: 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 place 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? Goldberg and Stanley try to pin Stanley down with their words. Stanley 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-incident 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 believe. 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-grand-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 Goldberg, 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. Their 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

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|-----|-----------------------------|--|
| 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 convey 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 Beckett 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 be 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 involvement 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 the 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 possess, 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 less 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 permuted 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 the 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 devices 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. Chesterton 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, coquetry, 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 subtextual 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 unthinkingly 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 moment’s 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 and 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 bluff,  
Blindfold the game was run,  
McCann 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 from 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 play'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 its 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 than 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 and 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 for, 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 thy 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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# **ARTHUR MILLER**

## **Price**

## Unit-8

### Arthur Miller

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#### CHRONOLOGY

- 1915 : Arthur Asher Miller born on 17 October in New York City to Isidore and Augusta Miller. Second of three children.
- 1929: Father's clothing business declines because of the Depression, forcing the family to move to Brooklyn.
- 1933 : Miller graduates from high school, but is rejected from Cornell University and University of Michigan. Works at a variety of jobs and writes his first short story "In Memoriam" depicting an aging salesman. Reapplies to University of Michigan and is granted a conditional acceptance after writing to Dean that he is now "a much more serious fellow."
- 1934 : Studies journalism at University of Michigan where he becomes night editor of *Michigan Daily*. Studies playwriting under Professor Kenneth T. Rowe.
- 1936 : First play, *No Villain*, is produced and wins University of Michigan's Avery Hopwood Award.
- 1937: Receives second Avery Hopwood Award for *Honors at Dawn*, but the play is never produced. Receives the Theatre Guild's Bureau of New Plays Award for *They Too Arise* (revision of *No Villain*).
- 1938: Comes in second for Avery Hopwood Award for *The Great Disobedience*, which is produced at University of Michigan, Graduates and moves to New York.
- 1939: Completes another revision of *They Too Arise* (now entitled *The Grass Still Grows*), Writes scripts for Federal Theatre Project until it is closed by Congress. He then writes radio plays for CBS and NBC.
- 1940 : Completes *The Golden Years*. Marries Mary Grace Slattery. They will have two children, Jane (1944) and Robert (1947).
- 1941 : Completes two radio plays, *The Pussycat and the Expert Plumber Who Was a Man* and *William Ireland's Confession*. Also works at various odd jobs.
- 1942 : Completes radio play, *The Four Freedoms*.
- 1943 : Completes *The Half-Bridge*.
- 1944 : Tours army camps gathering material for screenplay, *The Story of G.I. Joe*, and book, *Situation Normal*. First Broadway production, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, closes after four performances, but wins Theatre Guild National Award and is published in *Cross Section: A Collection of New American Writing*.
- 1945 : Publishes first novel, *Focus*, on anti-semitism. Completes radio play, *Grandpa and the Statue*, and a one-act play, *That They May Win*. Attacks Ezra Pound for his pro-Fascist activities.
- 1947 : *All My Sons* opens on Broadway and wins New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Auctions off manuscript on behalf of Progressive Citizens of America. Becomes involved in variety of anti-Fascist and pro-Communist activities.
- 1949 : *Death of a Salesman* (originally entitled *The Inside of His Head*) opens in New York with Lee J. Cobb in the title role. Jo Mielziner designs the innovative set. Wins the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Miller publishes the first of his many theatrical and political essays.

- 1950: Adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* opens; but closes after thirty-six performances.
- 1953: *The Crucible* opens in New York to mixed reviews that differ on play's relevance to McCarthyism. Play wins Antoinette Perry and Donaldson Awards.
- 1954: Denied passport by State Department to attend opening of *The Crucible* in Brussels because of his alleged support of the Communist movement. Miller supporters claim this move is a retaliation for the parallels between McCarthy era tactics and the Salem witch trials evident in *The Crucible*.
- 1955: Contracts to write a film script for New York City Youth Board, but is dropped from film after a condemnation of his leftist activities appears in a New York City newspaper. *A Memory of Two Mondays* and the one-act version of *A View from the Bridge* produced as double-bill in New York.
- 1956: Two-act version of *A View from the Bridge* opens in London. Testifies before the House Un-American Activities Committee and refuses to name names of others attending meetings organized by Communist sympathizers. Divorces Mary Slattery and marries Marilyn Monroe.
- 1957: Indicted on charges of contempt of Congress for refusing to name suspected Communists. Publishes *Collected Plays*.
- 1958: US Court of Appeals reverses contempt of Congress conviction. Filming begins of Miller's *The Misfits*, starring Marilyn Monroe.
- 1959: Awarded Gold Medal for Drama by National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- 1961: *The Misfits* released. Divorces Marilyn Monroe. Opera versions of *A View from the Bridge* and *The Crucible* produced.
- 1962: Marries Ingeborg Morath, an Austrian-born photographer. Daughter, Rebecca (1963).
- 1964: *After the Fall* and *Incident at Vichy* open in New York.
- 1965: Elected president of PEN (Poets, Essayists and Novelists), an international literary association.
- 1967: Publishes *I Don't Need You Any More*, a collection of short stories.
- 1968: *The Price* opens on Broadway. Serves as a delegate to the Democratic Party National Convention.
- 1969: Publishes *In Russia* (travel journal) with photographs by his wife, Ingeborg Morath. Films *The Reason Why*, an anti-war allegory. Refuses to be published in Greece to show his opposition to the government's oppression of writers.
- 1970: Two one-act plays, *Fame* and *The Reason Why*, performed at New York's New Theatre Workshop. The Soviet Union, in response to *In Russia*, bans all of Miller's works.
- 1971: *The Portable Arthur Miller* published. *The Price* and *Memory of Two Mondays* appear on television. Helps win release of Brazilian director/playwright Augusto Boal.
- 1972: *The Creation of the World and Other Business* produced in New York, but closes after twenty performances. Protests oppression of artists worldwide - very active politically through the 1970s. Permission granted for all-black production of *Death of a Salesman* in Baltimore. Revival of *The Crucible* in New York.
- 1973: Revival of *Death of a Salesman* in Philadelphia - first time the play is performed within one hundred miles of Broadway since 1949.
- 1974: *Up from Paradise* (musical version of *The Creation of the World and Other Business*) produced in Ann Arbor, Michigan. *After the Fall* appears on television.

- 1975 : Revival of *Death of a Salesman* in New York at Circle in the Square.
- 1977 : *The Archbishop's Ceiling* has limited run in Washington Dc. Publishes *In the Country* (travel journal) with photographs by Inge borg Morath.
- 1978 : Visits China. *The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller* published. *Fame* appears on television. Protests the arrests of dissidents in Soviet Union.
- 1979 : Publishes *Chinese Encounters* (travel journal) with photographs by Inge borg Morath.
- 1980 : *The American Clock* opens in New York. In spite of its success in South Carolina, the play closes in New York after a few performances. *Playing for Time*, adaptation of Fania Fenelon's book, appears on television.
- 1981 : Arthur Miller's *Collected Plays, vol. II* is published.
- 1982 : Two one-act plays, *Some Kind of Love Story* and *Elegy for a Lady*, open in New Haven.
- 1983 : Directs *Death of a Salesman* in Beijing with Chinese cast. Revival of *A View from the Bridge* in New York. Revision and revival of *Up from Paradise* in New York.
- 1984 : Publishes *Salesman* in Beijing with photographs by Inge borg Morath. *Death of a Salesman* is revived on Broadway with Dustin Hoffman in lead role. Involved in dispute with the Wooster Group over their unauthorized use of scenes from *The Crucible* for their production of LSD.
- 1985 : Revival of *The Price* opens successfully on Broadway. Hoffman version of *Death of a Salesman* produced on television. *Playing for Time* produced in Washington Dc.
- 1986 : *The American Clock* and *The Archbishop's Ceiling* produced in London. Revival of *The Crucible* in New York and Washington Dc.
- 1987 : *Timebends: A Life* (Miller's autobiography) published. *Danger: Memory!* (two one-act plays, *Can't Remember Anything* and *Clara*) produced in New York. *All My Sons* appears on television.
- 1989 : Revival of *The Crucible* in New Haven. Opening of Arthur Miller Centre, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.
- 1990 : Revival of *The Crucible* in New York and London. Screenplay for motion picture *Everybody wins*.
- 1991 : *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* opens in London.
- 1992 : *Homely Girl, A Life* published.
- 1993 : *The Last Yankee* opens in New York. Continuing a lifelong commitment to the freedom of writers, Miller contributes to volume on censorship entitled *Censored Books: Critical View points*.
- 1994 : *Broken Glass* opens in New York and London.
- 1995 : *Plain Girl* published in England. Eightieth birthday marked by Gala Performance at the Royal National Theatre in London and Gala Dinner at the Arthur Miller Centre.
- 1996 : Film version of *The Crucible* released.

## LIFE AND CAREER

"The plays are my autobiography. I can't write plays that don't sum up where I am. I am in all of them. I don't know how else to go about writing". (Miller in an interview to BBC recorded in 1995 to mark his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday).

Arthur Miller is undoubtedly one of the three greatest American playwrights of the 20th century – the other two being Eugene O' Neill and Tennessee Williams. Miller's plays though dealing with American issues, appeal to audiences from Brazil to Russia and Iceland to China. In China, **Death of a Salesman** has enjoyed immense popularity though China till recently was a communist state. In India, Miller's plays, specially *All My Sons* and **Death of a Salesman**, have been translated into many languages and staged in many parts of the country.

### Birth and Childhood

Miller was born in 1915 in a then fashionable part of Harlem, New York in a middle-class Jewish family. He was one of the three children, the others being an elder brother Kermit and a younger sister, Joan. His father, almost illiterate, was a successful manufacturer of ladies coats. His mother on the other hand, was an avid reader and taught public school. She was intensely devoted to her children and had high ambitions for them.

### School

The Millers observed Jewish customs and holidays and provided their family with a sound moral and religious background. Miller attended a public school in Harlem but much to the disappointment of his mother, he was an undistinguished student. However, he was a competent athlete and a rather good football player.

### Moving from New York to Brooklyn

In 1929, when Miller was fourteen years old, The Great Stock Market Crash occurred, creating havoc in America. This was a traumatic experience for the young Miller who wrote about the effects of the Depression in a number of plays, specially **Death of a Salesman**. His father's business, like that of thousands of others, suffered and the family consequently moved to Brooklyn. Although the Millers were now living in middle-class poor surroundings, the place was rather rural with great elm trees and flat grasslands.

Miller's neighbourhood was just a few blocks long and essentially Jewish. Socializing between neighbours was limited but everyone knew his neighbour. "I don't recall any time when the cops had to be called," Miller wrote years later. "Everyone was so well and thoroughly known that the frown of his neighbour was enough law to keep things in line". (Arthur Miller, 'A Boy Grew in Brooklyn, **Holiday** (March 1995), p 119.

For the young Miller the school days passed pleasantly and leisurely. At James Madison High School he neglected his studies and devoted his time and energy to football and athletics. His only responsibility during these days was the job he held with the local bakery, delivering bread and rolls each morning before school. The job not only required strict punctuality but also the utmost care in delivering the right bag to the proper house.

### High School

He progressed from James Madison to Abraham Lincoln High School, football being his main interest. So carefree was his life that years later he recalled, "I can fairly say we were none of us encumbered by any thing resembling a thought". Indeed, Miller's only encumbrance was a knee injury he sustained in one of the games which would later on exempt him from military duty.

The young Miller became aware of the economic chaos caused by the Great Depression of the 30s. He saw millions of Americans suddenly become penniless and unemployed. Some committed suicide while others took whatever jobs came their way. The domestic situation became increasingly painful. His father's garment factory which employed about a thousand workers suddenly lost business. His maternal grandfather, his savings depleted by the depression, started living with his daughter. Indeed, the crash left such a profound impression on him that it became a recurrent theme in many of his plays.

In 1932, Miller graduated from high school and applied to Cornell University and the University of Michigan. But he was rejected by both and began looking for a job.

## Early jobs

He went to work in his father's garment factory but soon found the job distasteful what with the atmosphere claustrophobic, the workers loud, vulgar and aggressive. In the next few months he held a number of jobs from truck driver to an announcer at a local radio station. Finally, he became a shipping clerk at an automobile parts warehouse in New York where he worked for more than a year for fifteen dollars a week.

He applied again to the University of Michigan and to his surprise and joy was accepted on the condition that he achieve good grades at the end of the first semester.

In the warehouse he learned about hollowness and despair and hope and fulfillment. The experience would always be with him. He drew upon this experience when he came to write his autobiographical play, **A Memory of Two Mondays**.

## University

The University of Michigan with its sprawling green campus and radical atmosphere was a paradise compared to the warehouse where Miller worked for about two years. He "fell in love with the place" and he "resolved to make good". He did though with much difficulty and hardship. He had never been a distinguished student and a two-year absence from studies hardly helped. By dint of hard work and application he achieved proper grades.

With each passing day, Miller grew more and more fond of Michigan. Its main difference from the depressing and hopeless world he had been exposed to in Brooklyn and New York was its vivacity. The atmosphere of the University was one of hope and fulfillment rather than of despair and despondency. The campus was full of speeches, meetings, leaflets and issues. Informal courses in politics were available to anyone who was receptive. His fellow students were as exciting to Miller as the causes they supported and attacked. In sharp contrast to his previous dull and drab social life his classmates came from different backgrounds. They were sons of bankers, advocates, doctors, engineers, and even unemployed recipients of dole; they came from all parts of America. Interacting with them was part of Miller's education at the University of Michigan. No wonder he loved every minute of it.

Since Miller's parents were in no position to bear the cost of his education, to support himself he washed dishes in the cafeteria to pay for his meals, and earned a modest salary as editor of the **Michigan Daily**. He also did some other odd jobs to maintain himself.

Though he began a journalism major, he soon moved to the English department, which provided him an incentive for creative writing. He attended Professor Kenneth Rowe's Course on play writing who impressed Miller with his learning and ability as also his dedication and interest in his students.

"He may never have created a playwright, no teacher, ever did", Miller observed later on, "but he surely read what we wrote with the urgency of one who actually had the power to produce the play".

While Miller's interest in play writing was encouraged by Prof. Rowe, it was reinforced by an alumnus of the University, Avery Hapwood. The latter left a considerable legacy out of which the University founded an annual award for creative writing. Miller submitted the play **Honors at Dawn** in 1936 for this competition. He was surprised and elated when it was announced that he was the winner of the prize which was worth two hundred and fifty dollars! Suddenly he had achieved recognition, money, and most importantly, the realization that play writing as a vocation was open to him. His hopes were further encouraged the following year when a second Avery Hopwood prize of \$250 was awarded to him for his play, **No Villain**.

Both **Honors at Dawn** and **No Villain** remain unpublished and unproduced. Their essential merit today lies not in their intrinsic merit but in the themes, characters and situations they foreshadow in Miller's later and more mature work.

**Honors at Dawn** is about a young man named Max Zabriskie who unwittingly and reluctantly supports and participates in a strike at his factory. He is fired for his role in the strike, although he is hardly aware of the cause for which his fellow workers have been fighting. With hardly any hope of getting a job, under the influence of his

elder brother he goes to college. Max initially regards the University as a citadel of learning and idealism. But his optimism is soon shattered and he becomes disillusioned. He finds corruption all-pervasive in many walks of university life and is shocked to learn that his brother is in the pay of the administration to spy upon young radicals. Shocked by his brother's betrayal and disgusted with college life, he returns to the factory, but this time with a new sense of commitment and a full understanding of the cause for which he and his co-workers are fighting. The play ends with Max taking a bad beating but, realizing that he has finally gained at a new "dawn" the honors of individual integrity and social responsibility that he had vainly sought at the University.

**Honors at Dawn** is melodramatic, didactic and naive. It is clearly influenced by the protest literature of the Depression era. Yet, for us the worth of the play lies in that it has themes, Miller would develop in greater depth and intensity in later work.

Set against a negative image of university life, the conflict between the Zabriskie brothers is a precursor of sibling rivalry that characterizes Miller's later plays. Equally significant is the conflict between the individual and his society. These themes would recur later in **All My Sons**, **Death of a Salesman** and **The Price**.

Like many later heroes, Max is a confused man who is out of touch with reality. Also, his self-awareness begins with the revelation that his brother is bribed by the University. This device takes the form of a pair of spectacles in the novel, **Focus**, a letter in **All My Sons**, an accusation of witchcraft in **The Crucible** and a mistaken identity in **Incident at Vichy**.

It cannot be claimed that the early Miller of this play had fully worked the thematic considerations and dramatic structure of the later and more mature plays. But at the same time it cannot be denied that **Honors at Dawn** contributed, in however small a way, to the profound growth and development of Miller's dramatic art.

**They Too Arise** is an enlarged and revised version of Miller's second Avery Hopwood Award winning play, **No Villain**. It continues the pattern established in **Honors at Dawn** of linking familial conflicts with societal problems that affect the family.

The play opens in the drawing room of Abe Simon's home in a New York City suburb in the 1930s. The Simon family comprises Abe, a manufacturer of women's coats (like Miller's father), his son Ben, who works with him, his wife Esther, and his young daughter Maxine. Although it is late, the family is waiting for the arrival of the younger son, Arnie, who is studying at the University of Michigan.

The tensions in the family are obvious. Although there is a strike in the factory the Simons are far from united. Esther, who is alienated from her husband and son, remonstrating with Ben for not marrying the daughter of a wealthy businessman and faulting Abe for being ineffective. Estranged from his wife he becomes indifferent to her and spends most of his time in the shop and showers great affection on his daughter. Caught in the conflict between his parents and frustrated with his job, Ben becomes increasingly bitter and unhappy. His bitterness surfaces when his eighty year old maternal grandfather comes to stay with them. His arrival intensifies the conflict between Abe and Esther. Though she and her sister have been taking care of their old father by turns, Abe resents the burden thrust upon him by his prosperous sister-in-law.

The only pleasant topic of discussion is Arnie and even he becomes the cause of conflict when Ben questions the wisdom of his father to offer him (Arnie) a share in the shop because his younger brother has always disliked the work. Moreover, he has become a radical in the college and might support the workers in their ongoing strike.

At this point Arnie enters and is warmly welcomed by all. He is overwhelmed by his family's affection and the atmosphere is relaxed for the time being. This is where the first act closes.

The second act opens in Abe's factory. In spite of Ben's objections, Arnie, who does not understand the issue involved in the strike, agrees to help his father. Soon after, Arnie is bashed up when he unwittingly crosses a picket line. He criticizes his father for keeping him in the dark and supports the workers facing financial disaster. Abe pleads with Ben to agree to marry the girl of a wealthy businessman that may save the family. Much against his wishes but for the sake of the family, Ben accepts the marriage proposal.

In the concluding scene of this act, which takes place in the Simon home, Arnie is trying to persuade his father to accept the workers' demand and asks Ben to break off his engagement. Ben, however, with his feet firmly planted on earth, asks his brother to abandon his noble ideals and rescue their father from financial ruin.

As the two brothers are quarrelling, Esther cries that her father is having a heart attack.

As the third act opens, Abe is besieged by creditors and in despair realizes that his business is finished.

The last scene is in the Simon home. The death of Esther's father brings her and Abe together. After experiencing defeat and death they discover their love for each other and the family decides to come to terms with life and its realities. Ben calls off his marriage and decides to strike on his own in the world. Arnie warmly and proudly welcomes his brother's act. As the two brothers prepare to go to bed, Abe says softly to Esther; "We gotta learn how to laugh again, we gotta learn how to laugh". The play ends with these words.

**They Too Arise** is undoubtedly didactic and melodramatic and has many other dramatic weaknesses. But like **Honors at Dawn** it deals with characters and situations which Miller was to develop in the later plays. The characters form the center of a family which will develop in depth and complexity in Miller's later work.

Abe Simon with his selfless desire to sacrifice himself for his sons, is an early portrait of Joe Keller and Will Loman, to give only two examples.

"We're finished Through", he exclaims, "But Ben, some day I want you should – I wanna, see you on top. You can do it Ben, without me".

Abe's anguished cry will be echoed by Patterson Beeves in **The Man Who Had All The**, Luck; it will figure in Joe Keller's painful justification of his deeds in **All My Sons**; it will form the core of Willy, Loman's extravagant dreams for Biff and Happy; and it will reverberate again in **After the fall** in the Fathers impotent rage at the discovery of his ruin.

If Abe embodies many characteristics of father figures Esther is similar to many mothers in later plays. She, a dutiful and protective wife, is not unlike Kate Keller and Linda Loman. They all provide their sons with the best possible homes.

Arnie and Ben provide a pattern of two contrasting brothers that is repeated in many later plays. Though temporarily blinded by their father's, formula for success they, or at least one of them, gains self-knowledge and realize the hollowness of their fathers dream.

So, **Honors at Dawn** and **They Too Arise** are significant not so much in their intrinsic merit as in prefiguring the characters and situations that Miller was to develop in later drama .

Miller graduated from the University of Michigan in 1938. He was armed with B.A degree, two playwriting awards, a fiancée, Mary Slattery and a lot of high hopes. The Michigan years proved to be fruitful and crucial; he learned a lot about the world and himself.

He later commented about this period, "I felt I had accomplished something there. I knew at least how much I did not know ... It had been a small world, gentler, than the real one, but tough enough."

After his marriage he turned to radio writing while his wife did secretarial work. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he wrote scripts for radio and worked on ships in the Navy Yard. But he despised radio as it placed too many restrictions on him. He had to deal with the censors, meet the deadlines and cram each story into a half-hour limit. However, he continued to write radio scripts for it gave him some economic stability.

Miller wrote a vast number of radio plays. While some celebrate the integrity and potential of the common man, others, are openly and unabashedly patriotic.

His radio scripts are noteworthy for what they reveal of his thematic considerations and dramatic technique. The plays reveal a number of non realistic experiments. Fanciful and fantastic situations, the use if a narrator, rapid and plastic shifts of scene, and the collapse of chronological time – all these elements which are perfected in **Death of a Salesman**, **A Memory of Two Mondays**, **A view from the Bridge**, and **After The Fall**- are

even employed boldly and interestingly in his radio plays. Of them all perhaps, the most interesting is the fanciful '**The Pussy Cat and the Expert Plumber who was a Man**'. It is a delightful comedy about a talking cat called Tom who blackmails some politicians into contesting for governorship before he is exposed by a bold and honest plumber.

Although Miller was a successful scriptwriter for radio, he was dissatisfied. His first love was play writing, the radio plays were no more than potboilers.

His first major play after he gave up radio was the **Man Who Had All The Luck**. The play had its premiere in 1944 and Miller hoped the play's title would apply to the author as well. But it closed after only four performances. For him success was still a couple of years away.

The protagonist of **The Man Who Had All the Luck** is a young man who works as a motor mechanic in a small town. Though happy with his job, he is unhappy in his personal life. He cannot marry his sweetheart, Hester because her father is opposed to the marriage. The rest of the play dramatises David's rise to fame and fortune through luck and chance. As David is contemplating giving up Hester, he learns of the death of her father in an accident. Now, they are free to marry. But at this point a rich farmer brings an expensive car for repairs with the offer that if he can fix it the owner will extend his patronage to him. At this moment a stranger appears, informs him of his plans to open a garage. Though a potential rival he becomes friendly with David and offers to help him with the car. Exhausted, David falls asleep and Eberson fixes the car. The next day David earns the benefits promised by Dibble, the owner of the car.

The second act opens three years later. David is now a rich and famous man. While he is marching to fame and fortune he is dogged by the fear that good fortune will not last forever. To test his luck he invests in a number of ventures all of which turn out to be successful. At the end of the play, David's lot is better than ever and it is wholly gratuitous.

The play suffers from many inherent defects, the chief being that many critical situations and the incidents depend on coincidence and chance. Miller's main problem is to persuade the reader or spectator to believe these strange happenings. That Miller himself was dissatisfied with the play is obvious from the fact that he did not include it in his **Collected Plays**.

Miller's old football injury kept him out of the Second World War. So it was with great readiness that he accepted an offer by a film producer to collect material for a film about the war. He threw himself heart and soul into the project. He spent a couple of months visiting recruitment centers, training schools. When after he turned in his reports his interest in the war continued. He had become so involved in the project that he shaped his material into a book with the title **Situation Normal**. It is a book of first-rate reportage and personal impressions that was published in 1944. The central point of the book is Miller's interview of a soldier called Watson. For him Watson was to some extent the victim of a society that taught him no sense if commitment to anything beyond self and family. His story looks forward to the main themes of **All My Sons**. In **Situation Normal** Miller did not explore in depth the implications of the conflict between self-interest and commitment to society that he probed twenty years later in *After the Fall*, **Incident at Vichy** and **The Price**.

While doing various odd jobs in the 30s Miller encountered anti-Semitism. Though there is no direct influence of this on Miller's novel **Focus** the book is imbued with anti-Semitism. To start with **Focus** was conceived to be a play but gradually Miller realized that the material could best be dealt with in the form of a novel. It tells the story of Lawrence Newman, a New York executive who becomes, more and more disoriented as the action progresses. The novel, which is about anti-Semitism in America, proved remarkably successful. Nevertheless, he returned to the theatre with **All My Sons**, a play written during the war but produced in 1947. It was an immediate and phenomenal success.

## ALL MY SONS

The idea of the play was provided by an actual incident. During a casual talk a relative told the Millers about a family in their neighbourhood that had been ruined because the daughter had reported to the authorities that her

father had supplied defective spares to the Army during the war. The girl's story had a profound effect on him. He describes the impact in the following words in his introduction to the Collected Plays:

*I knew my informant's neighborhood. I knew its middle-class ordinariness, And I knew how rarely the great issues penetrate such environments. But the fact that a girl had not only wanted to, but had actually moved against an erring father transformed into fact.....what in my previous play [**The Man who had All the luck**] I had only begun to hint at had no awareness of the slightest connection between the two plays. All I knew was that somehow a hard thing had entered into me, a crux toward which it seemed possible to move in strong and straight lines. Something was crystal clear to me for the first time since I had begun to write plays, and it was the crisis of the second act, the revelation of full loathsomeness of an antisocial action".*

Miller transforms the daughter into a son and plans the climactic confrontation between him and his father in the second act. Also, he was determined to write a well-made play like Ibsen whose influence on him is direct and pervasive. Like most of Ibsen's dramas Miller's new play is meticulously structured and carefully plotted. The guilty past of Joe Keller is revealed through revelatory dialogue as in Ibsen's **Ghosts**. In the Norwegian's work a close relationship is established between past actions and present consequences and so it is in **All My Sons**. Another similarity between Ibsen and Miller is in dealing with the theme of sins of the fathers being visited on their children, a theme which is at the core of his new play. He fully understood Ibsen's attitude to life. He explains in the introduction to the collected plays:

*"His [Ibsen's] intention [was] .....to assert nothing he had not proved, and to cling always to the marvelous spectacle of life forcing one event out of the jaws of the preceding one and to reveal its elemental consistencies with surprise. In other words, contrast his realism not with the lyrical, which I prize, but with sentimentality, which is always a leak in the dramatic dike. He sought to make a play as weighty and living a fact as the discovery of the steam engine or algebra. This can be scoffed away only at a price, and the price is living drama."*

In the words of Nelson "The thematic image of **All My Sons** is a circle within a circle, the inner depicting the family unit, and the outer representing society, and the movement of the drama is concentric, with the two circles revolving in parallel orbits until they ultimately coalesce."

**All My Sons** tells the story of Joe Keller, the owner of a small factory who allows defective aeroplane parts to be supplied to the Air Force during the war. His hopes of not being caught are dashed when twenty one pilots die in accidents caused by the faulty planes. When it is found that the accident occurred because of his cracked cylinder heads, he passes the blame to his partner who is imprisoned. In this way he escapes responsibility and **when the war is over he is merrily running his factory**.

When his son Chris returns from the Army, ignorant of his father's guilt, he joins the family business. Soon he becomes engaged to Ann Dee Ver, the daughter of Joe's ex-partner who is in jail and the fiance of Chris's brother Larry, who was killed in the war. But Mrs. Keller is opposed to their marriage because she refuses to believe that Larry is really dead and is convinced that he will soon return. Another obstacle to the marriage is her imprisoned father.

The central action of the first half of the play consists of the attempts of Chris and Ann to overcome the difficulties in their path. They overcome Mrs. Keller's objection and even succeed in persuading Ann's brother George that his father was solely responsible in shipping defectives spares. All seems to be well for the time being. But tension mounts as it is revealed that Joe was equally guilty. Now the dramatic interest shifts from other characters to Chris and Joe, the guilty father and the prosecuting son. The confrontation between these two now becomes the central action of the play.

With mounting intensity the play focuses on the two, Joe desperately trying to defend his actions and Chris not forgiving him to all. Despite all his attempts the son fails to make his father realize the enormity of his deeds.

Then Ann discloses that she received a letter from Larry in which he revealed his intention of committing suicide as an atonement for his father's crime. Now Joe realizes his responsibility and it dawns upon him that the pilots who died were 'my sons'. At the end of the play he seeks expiation in death.

The first act of the play is a vivid example of Miller's ability to treat his theme in a particular context. Through casual and informal conversation and leisurely pace and accumulation of detail he draws the portrait of a small mid-Western town. After this the portrait of Joe Keller, a pleasant and affable man is convincingly drawn. He is not ruthless, heartless businessman but a devoted family man and a nice neighbour. It is his single-minded devotion for and commitment to his family, which is his tragic flaw and that brings about his ruin. He is narrow-minded. He is so preoccupied with providing for his family that he neglects his responsibility to the society. He believes that the deaths of thirty one men was a 'mistake' rather than a crime. He has no hesitation in advising Ann to ask her father when he is released to return to the factory. He is not a cold-blooded murderer but a loyal husband, a loving father and a nice neighbour.

In the main confrontations with Chris, Joe explains everything he believes in and stands for. At the end of the second act when he is forced to admit his guilt he pleads with his son to understand his reasons:

*What could I do! I am in business, a man is in business; a hundred and twenty cracked, you are out of business; you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business, you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good, they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell is to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away? I never thought they'd install them.....Chris, I did it for you. I'm sixty one years old, when would I have another chance to make something for you? Sixty-one years old you Don't get another chance do ya?*

*Joe Keller believes there is nothing, dishonest in being loyal to one's Family. His second appeal to his son Goes a little beyond the worth of the Individual effort and sanctity of family Life but is shall defined by them. You want me to go to jail', he asks His son. 'If you want me to go, say so.' What's matter, why can't you tell me ..... I'll tell you why you can't say it. Because You know I don't belong there.....Who worked for nothing in that war? When they work for nothing, I'll work for nothing. Did they ship a gun or a truck out a Detroit before they got there price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; War and peace, it's nickels and dimes, What's clean? Half the goddam country Is gatta go if I go! That's why, you cant tell me.*

Joe's problem is not that he is unable to differentiate between right and wrong but his own concept of morality in which loyalty to family is more important than responsibility to society. He is both a sinner and one sinned against. His society has encouraged him to subscribe to false values. In this sense society is partly responsible for his actions. Because of his intense and selfish loyalty to his family he has committed a crime against society. So, Miller dramatizes a conflict not so much between good and evil as between family and society.

Chris is pitted against his father. He is an idealist who refuses to accept his father's justification of his actions. He tells Ann what the war has meant to him.

*"They were not just men," he says, referring to his fellow soldiers. One time it'd been raining several days and this kid came to me, and gave me his last pair of dry socks. Put them in my pocket. That's only a small thing....but... that the kind of guys ! had. They did not die; they killed themselves for each other.....And got an idea....watching them go Down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me to one new thing was made. A kind of responsibility. Man for man....to know that, to bring that on earth again like same kind of monument and everyone would feel it standing there, behind him, and it would make a difference to him and then I came home and it was incredible!..... there was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind of a bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt.... ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all. It Seemed to make suckers out of lot of guys to his father's plea that he acted in his interests, Chris retorts: For me! Where do you live,*

*where have you come from? For me ! – I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business? Is that as far as your mind Can see the business? What is that, the world the business? What the hell do you mean you did it for me? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world? (collected plays : pp 115-116)*

In reply to his mother's question as to what more they can be Chris answers :

*'you can be better; he exclaims. Once and for all you can know There's universe of people outside and your'e responsible to it And unless you know that you threw away your son because that's why he died.'* (bid, pp.126-127)

Finally, Chris brings his father to a genuine understanding of the meaning of his crime and so at the end of the play he commits suicide.

It is noteworthy that Miller is an economical play wright. The secondary characters are all significant. There is no character, no dialogue which does not advance the action, reveal character, or is irrelevant to the theme. Neighbours like Lydia and Frank Lubey represent those who during the war stayed at home and led ordinary lives. They provide a contrast to Joe, Chris, Larry, and Ann. Perhaps the most fully realized minor character is Dr. Jim Bayliss, who is a next door neighbour. Chris, as his friend, has encouraged him to specialize and do research rather than general practice. But under the influence of his wife he abandons research and becomes a general physician.

Miller's dialogue is highly artistic. A striking feature of the dialogue is the frequency of questions and their effectiveness. The questions reveal the dilemma of a naturally garrulous man like Joe who finds it impossible to communicate with other. "What do I do? Tell me, talk to me, what do I do?" Joe asks Kate in the final scene when Chris returns after an angry outburst. Joe enquires : "Exactly, What's the matter? What's the matter? You got too much money? Is that what bothers you? Questions like these abound in the play.

To emphasize the contrast between the comfortable life of the Kellers and the gravity of the revelation that cost twenty-one lives, Miller sets the small talk of every day suburban life against the condition of Chris' men lost in the battle. The family conversation deals with such mundane objects as meat, champagne, clothes, car etc. The imagery of the play, derived from nature, also employs contrast. Kate's faith in astrology contrasts with Jim's reference to 'the star of one's honesty'. The apple tree, symbolic of Larry, has been blown down the night before by a storm , which symbolises the violent action about to erupt.

In act two as Joe's guilty secret is revealed, each line of dialogue between father and son gathers intensity until it explodes in Chris's outburst. The short lines strike like rapier thrusts:

*Chris : Dad....Dad you killed twenty one men!*

*Keller : What killed?*

*Chris : You killed them, you murdered them ?*

*Keller : .....How could I kill anybody!*

*Chris : Then explain it to me. What did you do? Explain it to me or I'll tear you to pieces!*

In contrast to this sharp exchange are the longer speeches. Two prominent examples are Joe's defense and Chris's accusation; their style and content differentiate each speaker. The stage directions emphasize the contrast: "Their movements are the those of subtle pursuit and escape. Keller keeps a step out of Chris's range as he talks." Joe's speech is characterized by repetitions , the rhythm reflecting his thought processes, as if he is wondering what to say next" : I'm in business, a man is in business."

The act ends with Chris's speech which is the most significant in the play. It begins with eight questions, the rising crescendo in each like a hammer below: 'Don't you have country? Don't you live in the world?

When **All My Sons** had its premiere on Broadway in 1947, two years after the war, it was enthusiastically received by critics and audiences. Louis Kronberger wrote in his review, "**All My Sons** slashes at all the

defective parts of our social morality : but most of all it slashed at the unsocial nature of family loyalties, of protecting or aggrandizing the tribe at the expense of society at large. He called Miller as easily first among our new generation of play wrights.” Brooks Atkinson in the New York times of 30 January 1947 praised Miller’s ‘many-sided. Genius : ‘Writing pithy yet unself conscious dialogue, he has created his characters vividly, plucking them out of the run of American society, but presenting them as individuals with hearts and minds of their own ..... He drives the play along by natural crescendo to a startling and terrifying climax .’

Some critics emphasized the topicality of the play, regarding it an expose of war profiteering.” But this aspect of the play should not blind us to the fact that Miller is dramatizing a universal and not a local situation.

## DEATH OF A SALESMAN

When **Death of a Salesman** premiered at Broadway in 1949, two years after the success of **All My Sons**, it had a powerful impact on audiences. Men and women wept openly; during the interval spectators asked in wonder how Miller knew their stories. And this experience was repeated again and again all over the country, indeed all over the world. "They were weeping", Miller said in an interview on the Canadian Broadcasting Company network in 1979, "because the central matrix of the play is... what most people are up against in their lives..... They were seeing themselves, not because Willy is a salesman, but the situation in which he stood and to which he was reacting, and which was reacting against him, was probably the central situation of contemporary civilisation. It is that we are struggling with forces that are far greater than we can handle, with no equipment to make anything mean anything."

**Death of a Salesman** tells the story of a man's life in its final painful days. The protagonist is Willy Loman, a travelling salesman who lives in Brooklyn and covers the New England territory by car. Sixty years old, he is physically and mentally tired and can't meet the rigorous demands of his job any longer. His exhaustion is apparent in the opening with Willy, with back bent and shoulders drooping, carrying two heavy suitcases containing his merchandise. Despite the support and love of his wife, Lynda, he knows his life has been a failure. This awareness has driven him to attempt suicide several times. His depression is further enhanced by the inability of his two sons to achieve success in life. Happy is anything but happy; he is a shallow and vain braggart who is stuck in an inferior position in a department store and Biff, from whom Willy had great hopes, has turned out to be a petty thief and a vagabond. It is Biff's return home after a long absence that sets the play in motion.

Through a series of elaborate flashbacks, occurring in Willy's mind the reasons of his family's tragedy are gradually revealed. He has instilled false values into his sons. He has told them that the key to success is an attractive personality, smartness, a ready smile, an interesting joke and a fine appearance. He has neglected to impress upon them the value of honesty and hard work. In this respect he is the architect of their ruin.

Acting upon his father's advice, Happy becomes a frustrated, good-for-nothing fellow while Biff leads a desultory aimless life. When Biff was in school he caught his father in an adulterous affair in a Boston hotel. This traumatic experience led him to understand that his father was a hypocrite and a liar.

With his sons now home after a long absence, Willy makes one last desperate attempt to achieve happiness. Both he and Biff visit prospective and current employers. Instead of getting a desk job and a promotion, Willy is fired by the son of the founder of his company for his old age and growing incompetence. And Biff wastes a whole day waiting to see the man he has hoped to sell a promotion scheme. In anger and frustration, he steals a gold fountain pen as he is leaving the office.

Biff finally realizes that his father has brought him up on false and exaggerated dreams rather than solid virtues. In the play's central scene he tries to share his knowledge with his father but he spares him further agony and instead breaks down weeping on Willy's shoulders. Overwhelmed by his son's love for him, Willy decides to sacrifice his life for him. He drives into the night to kill himself and so provide Biff with twenty thousand dollars of insurance money. Willy's suicide may be regarded as both an atonement for past sins and an affirmation of his love for his family, especially Biff.

The drama ends with a requiem around Willy's grave. In contrast to the hundreds he dreamed would flock to his funeral only his immediate family, his friend Charley, and Charley's son, Bernard, are present. In brief eulogies each person tries to assess Willy's life and death.

**Death of a Salesman** has many things in common with **All My Sons**. Both plays depict the conflict between the family and society. However, in **Death of a Salesman** the action resolves more around the family; man's social responsibility is there but it plays a less vital role than the father's conflict with his sons. In both plays father's authority is challenged by their sons. Both fathers have loyal, devoted and supportive wives. Both are haunted by a guilty past which casts a shadow on their present lives. In the case of Joe Keller the guilt of

supplying defective aircraft parts gnaws at his conscience; Willy Loman realizes that his adulterous affair with the woman in the Boston hotel has destroyed Biff's life.

However, despite its similarities with **All My Sons**, **Death of a Salesman** is structurally different from the earlier play. The structure is a blend of realism and expressionism. Although steeped in realism, the play goes much beyond it because it portrays the processes of a disoriented mind. So, the form of **Death of a Salesman** is perfectly suited to the protagonist's nervous breakdown. One important feature of this structure is the breakdown of chronological time to connect the past with the chaotic present. This is not a simple flashback technique but rather a complex juxtaposition or intermingling of past and present, illusion and reality.

The form is necessary to the theme and characterization of the play in at least two respects. First, it shows Willy's painful search for elements in the past which have brought about his ruin. He recalls characters and incidents which, he thinks, have led to his fall. The second significant result of the play's structure is that by linking Willy's final days with the past that has shaped them, it gives his life and death a dramatic cohesiveness. In other words, Willy's suicide is vividly linked to past events which have led to it. The flashbacks are not scattered through the play at random. Miller selects and arranges them in a definite pattern that gives depth and meaning to the hero's life and reveals his character.

Basically, the flashbacks fall into two categories. One group consists of events involving Willy and his brother, Ben. Willy is presented as the respectful and supplicating child seeking guidance and assurance from Ben who is an epitome of success for him. In the second group of flashbacks Willy is giving rather than seeking guidance to his sons, especially Biff, how to achieve success. Both sets of flashbacks culminate in the one depicting his infidelity, a symbol of his ultimate failure.

Willy's life is full of errors of judgment, moral lapses and false hopes but perhaps his greatest mistake has been living with the wrong dream. He articulates this dream in the advice he gives to his sons in the first flashback when he compares them to Bernard.

*"Bernard is not well liked?" Willy asks rhetorically. 'He's liked,' Biff replies agreeing with his father, 'but he's not well liked.'*

*'That's just what I mean,' Willy exclaims.*

*"Bernard can get the best marks in school, y'understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. 'Willy Loman is here!' That's all they have to know, and I go right through," (Miller, 'Death of a Salesman,' Collected plays, p. 146)*

This is the success formula to which Willy has dedicated his life and those of his sons. Here he's the root of his tragedy.

Lynda is a key figure in the tragedy. She is the greatest supporter of her husband. When Biff says Willy has no character toward the end of the first act, she replies angrily.

*"I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's human being and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person." (p. 162).*

But for all her love and devotion to her husband, she is a woman of limited understanding. She says in the requiem:

*"I can't understand it, at this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist."*

Charley replies, "No man only needs a little salary'. When this is lost on her he makes a moving defense of Willy's life."

*"Nobody dare blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is, no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding on a simile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back – that's an earthquake ..... Nobody dare blame this man. A salesman is got to dream boy. It comes with the territory. A few lines after these lines Biff replies with what is the essential theme of the play, 'Charley, the man didn't know who he was.' Biff's self-realization is expressed in those words", I know who I am .....*"

At the heart of all Miller criticism is the major question which is asked again and again. Does Miller write tragedy? When the play was attacked as a tragedy he wrote a defense in **New York Times** soon after the opening of the play in an essay called "Tragedy and the Common Man". The main points have to do with the terms originated in Aristotle's **Poetics**: the exalted subject, the tragic flaw, action, pity and fear, the catharsis (or purging) of these emotions.

According to Miller in the essay, "the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were." He could have added the obvious that in the long history of mankind from slavery to democracy the common man had acquired an importance never known before. Miller further points out:

"I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing – his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Meeia to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his rightful position in his society. "

"Tragedy, then," says Miller, "is the consequence of man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly."

How does Willy Loman qualify as a tragic hero? First of all, as Miller has pointed out elsewhere, Willy must be responsible for his actions; he must be aware of and understand the issues involved. The passive protagonist could never become more than a pathetic figure, arousing pity and not terror – Willy must act out of his convictions and beliefs. What then does Willy believe; upon what will he stake his life? Willy has devoted his entire life to starting small and ending big. And he pursues it to the end.

He recommends it to his sons, Biff and Happy. Even after more than thirty years of service with his company, he is taken off salary and put on straight commission like a beginner, he sticks to his dream. When Happy announces an outlandish scheme to sell sports goods, Willy responds enthusiastically: "You guys together could absolutely lick the civilized world." Even in his advice to Biff on what to say to Bill Oliver, the prospective employer, we can detect the old formula: "It is not what you say, it's how you say it because personality always wins the day."

This, then, is the essence of Willy Loman's dream, this is the way to achieve success in life. The tragic condition, according to Miller, will be met when Willy sacrifices his life in the pursuit of his dream. "It is the tragedy of a man," Miller continues to explain, "Who did believe that he alone was not meeting the qualifications laid down for mankind by those clean-shaven frontiers men who inhabit the peaks of broadcasting and advertising offices."

**Death of a Salesman** had 742 performances on Broadway and won the Drama Critics and the Pulitzer prizes. Despite this, however, the play was attacked by some critics. Eric Bentley criticised it on the following grounds:

The tragedy destroys the social drama; the social drama keeps the "tragedy" from having a genuinely tragic stature. By the last remark I mean that the theme of this social drama, as of most others, is **the little man as victim**. The theme arouses pity but no terror. Man is here too little and too passive to play the tragic hero.

More important even than this, the tragedy and the social drama actually conflict. The tragic catharsis reconciles us to, or persuades us to disregard, precisely those material conditions which the social drama, calls our attention to ..... Or is Mr. Miller a "tragic" artist who without knowing it has been confused by Marxism? (Theatre Arts, Nov. 1949, p. 13)

Miller rebutted this criticism in his celebrated essay, "Tragedy and the Common Man", that appeared in **The New York Times** soon after Bentley's savage attack. Miller defends Willy as a tragic figure who far from being a "Victim", is an active agent and whose fate arouses both pity and fear.

Exactly the opposite argument was advanced by Elenor Clark in **Partisan Review**;

It is, of course, the capitalist system that has done Willy in; the scene in which he is brutally fired after some forty years with the firm comes straight from the party-line literature of the thirties and the idea emerges lucidly enough through all the confused motivations of the play that it is our particular form of money economy that has bred the absurdly false ideals of both father and sons. . . . . Immediately after every crack the playwright withdraws behind an air of pseudo-universality and hurries to present some cruelty or misfortune either to Willy's own weakness, as when he refuses his friend's offer of a job after he has been fired, or gratuitously from some other source, as in the quite unbelievable scene of the two sons walking out on their father in the restaurant.

The whole play, according to Clark, is characterized by an intellectual muddle and a lack of candor that regardless of Mr. Miller's conscious intent are the main earmark of contemporary fellow-traveling. . . . .

On the other hand, critics who praised the play because they regarded Miller as a Marxist were not wholly satisfied with it. They find the presence of Willy's capitalistic friend Charley in the Requiem irksome. Nor do they like Miller's tacit approval of Bernard's success in the capitalist system.

But **Death of a Salesman** is neither a leftist attack on American capitalism nor an approval of this system. Miller has rightly stated that his play in particular and art in general, cannot be simply equated with political theories:

"I do not believe that any work of art can help but be diminished by its adherence at any cost to a political program, including its author's and not for any other reason than that there no political program – any more than there is a theory of tragedy – which can encompass the complexities of real life. Doubtless an author's politics must be one element and even an important one, in the germination of his art, but if it is art he has created it must by definition bend itself to his observation rather than to it is opinions or even his hopes. If I have shown a preference for plays which seek causation not only in psychology but in society, I may also believe in the autonomy of art, and I believe this because my experience with **All My Sons** and **Death of a Salesman** forces the belief on me." (Miller, 'Introduction, Collected Plays, p. 36)

## AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Soon after the last performance of **Death of a Salesman**, another play by Miller, **An Enemy of the People** opened on Broadway. This is an adaptation of the play by his mentor and master, Henrik Ibsen. This is Miller's only attempt, at adapting another man's work. Though his purpose was to show the relevance of Ibsen today, the play was far from successful and folded after only thirty – six performances.

**An Enemy of the People** describes the trials and tribulations of one Dr. Thomas Stockmann, a physician who has helped to develop the mineral baths that may become a tourist attraction. When the project is completed, he is rewarded with a lucrative position as the inspector of the baths. Soon, the doctor discovers that the baths are contaminated with typhoid germs. So, he proposes to publicize his findings and have the baths demolished and rebuilt. Happy that he has discovered the germs in time he is confident that his community will hail him as a hero. Several important political leaders support Dr. Stockmann. But there is one important politician, his brother, the mayor, who opposes him. He argues that the repairs will require a considerable amount of money and labour. He suggests an alternative plan – the baths be kept in operation while repairs are undertaken slowly and secretly. The good doctor tries to convince his brother that if the baths are not closed typhoid epidemic may break out. But the mayor is guided by financial considerations. The doctor takes his case to the entire village which supports the mayor rather than him. Not merely that. He is branded a traitor, an enemy of the people. As the play ends the doctor refuses to be cowed down and vows to continue his battle for truth and honesty.

## THE CRUCIBLE

Miller has stated that the inspiration for his plays has been “What was in the air.” In the early 1950s it was the hearings of the powerful House Un-American Activities Committee, presided over by the redoubtable senator McCarthy, which declared that the American Communist Party posed a threat to the nation. Party members, sympathizers, “fellow travelers, indeed any one suspected” to be a friend of Russia, could be summoned by the committee. They were grilled and asked to reveal the names of friends and associates who were Communists, Marxists or even socialists. McCarthyism became a menace in democratic America. Miller was struck by the similarities between the committee hearings and the witch trials of seventeenth century Salem, Massachusetts.

In **The Crucible** John Proctor is an ordinary man who achieves extraordinary moral victory when he is tested in the crucible of the 1692 Salem witch trials. In his struggle against the mass hysteria of his community and their unjust and authoritarian court, he loses his life but preserves his “name”, his integrity.

**The Crucible** premiered in 1953, ran for about 200 performances and won both the Antoinette Perry and Donaldson awards as the most distinguished American Drama of the Year. It had a successful off-Broadway production five years later. Moreover, in the 50s and 60s it had three London productions, including one by Lawrence Olivier for the National Theatre, which Miller regarded as the best staging of the play till then.

**The Crucible** describes the disintegration of a society under the influence of mass hysteria. Beginning slowly and then gaining momentum, it dramatizes the storm that breaks over Salem. When the play opens, a group of adolescent girls are discovered by the local minister, Reverend Parris, indulging themselves stealthily in the forest under the guidance of a superstitious Barbados servant, Tituba. To escape punishment some of them including Parris’ daughter Bety and niece Abigail Williams fall into ‘mysterious’ trances. Two of their neighbours, the farmer John Proctor and the respected matron Rebecca Nurse look upon the girls’ activities with compassion and understanding. Soon, however, a dread spreads in the town and the girls are suspected to indulge in witchcraft.

When Tituba is threatened with hanging for indulging in strange forest rituals, she confesses to demonism. Abigail, who had earlier told Proctor privately that the whole thing was a prank, now says she practiced witchcrafts, and as she discloses the names of other culprits mass hysteria spreads like wild fire in the town. It is quickly spread by many citizens, partly out of superstition, partly out of their guilts, suppressed desires and frustrations.

Ann Putnam, whose daughter is one of the victims and whose other eight children died in their infancy, is convinced that witchcraft is responsible for her misfortunes as is evident in her outburst to Rebecca Nurse:

“You think it God’s work you should never lose a child, or grandchild either, and I bury all but one. There are wheels within wheels in the village, and fires within fires.”

Her husband, Thomas is equally convinced of the existence of demonism in Salem but his reasons are more mercenary and selfish than his wife’s. He brands his enemies as witches because he wants to avenge the legal reverses over his land and property.

On the other hand, the Reverend John Hale of Beverly, who has been invited by the community as an authority on witchcraft, regards it as a challenge to his profession and authority.

So, superstition, malice, self-interest are so rampant that they smother to the few voices of reason that want to be heard.

To escape the madness, John Proctor returns to his farm and family. But when he comes to know that Rebecca Nurse and other friends have been accused of being witches and are being persecuted, he goes back to Salem to rescue them. He is shocked to learn that Abigail Williams who had worked for the Proctors and had a brief affair with him, has accused his wife Elizabeth of witchcraft. As she is arrested Proctor realizes that the vortex has engulfed him.

The trial takes place in the third act of **The Crucible**. The panel of Judges is presided over by Deputy Governor Danforth, who agrees to hear the evidence of Proctor’s current servant Mary Warren. She, however, falters in

her testimony and in desperation Proctor confesses that he committed adultery with Abigail and that is why she has implicated his wife. Elizabeth is summoned by the tribunal to verify his story. She, however, tells a lie to protect his good name. Hale believes Proctor's charge but the Deputy Governor and the presiding officer Danforth remains unconvinced.

Just as Hale proceeds to condemn Abigail, she indulges in hysterics as do the other girls. The action moves to a crescendo when she charges Proctor with witchcraft. Sickened by the proceedings, Proctor denounces the tribunal.

"You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore," he shouts at Danforth force and quits the court.

The final act belongs to Proctor: It is the day if his scheduled execution His Wife's life has been temporarily spared because she is pregnant but Rebecca Nurse has been sentenced to die along with him.

"There are orphans wandering from house to house," Hale reminds Danforth. "Abandoned Cattle bellow on the high-roads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlots cry will end his life."

But Danforth refuses to put off the executions. He agrees to intervene on Proctor's behalf only if he confesses his collusion with demons. Finally, he surrenders and signs a confession, but when Danforth tells him that it must better shown to all the inhabitants of Salem to (Proctor) tears it to pieces. The realization dawns on him that it is better to die than betray those who have died before him and are dying everyday.

**The Crucible** contains a gallery of sharply drawn characters who are skillfully woven in to woof and warp of the play. The play has a large cast with more than twenty speaking parts but Miller handles them with skill and care and his minor characters are sharply etched and made memorable. Three of them – Reverend Parris, Abigail Williams, and Giles Corey are particularly vital to the theme and development of play. Each is a gem of in depth character study.

The Reverend Parris is a key figure in the mass hysteria he helps to let loose. He is a vivid personification of the surrender of conscience for self-survival. He is more petty and mean than evil. Abigail Williams also is an embodiment of spite and hatred. She is highly frustrated after Proctor has ended their affair. Giles the irascible old man, is one of the most mysterious characters in the play. His death as a martyr precedes that of Proctor and strongly influences his final decision. Facing death by stoning, Corey refuses to confess that he is a witch.

Though the characters are based on actual persons, they are Miller's own creations. So it is with dialogue which is his own invention, though it is modeled on the spoken language of the real persons. It is bare yet eloquent in its simple images and rhythms; it carries a flavour of seventeenth century Salem, but it is not a realistic reproduction, but Miller's own version. He states that as he sat in Salem's courthouse, "reading the town records of 1692, which were of ten spelled phonetically . . . . [by] the court clerks or the ministers who kept the record as the trials proceeded, he then, "after a few hours of mouthing the words . . . . . felt a bit encouraged that I might be able to handle it, and in more time I came to love its feel, like hard burnished wood. Without planning to, I even elaborated a few of the grammatical forms myself." (Introduction, The Collected Plays)

One striking feature of the speech patterns is the use of the double negative. Rebecca Nurse declares: "I am innocent and clear . . . . . I never afflicted no child . . . . ., I am as clear [innocent] as the child unborn." Miller also changes verbs and tenses to conform to those of the period. Abye threatens a reckoning that "will shudder you". Sometimes verbs are transformed to adjectives. Says Mary Warren, "My insides are all shuddery."

Miller uses archaic diction sparingly, to create an atmosphere of the past, by choosing simple, everyday words such as **yea** and **nay** and **goodly**. Women are addressed as "Goody" instead of Mrs. In the above cited quotation Rebecca uses **clear** to mean **innocent**.

A characteristic of the imagery of the play is nature images relating to winter, to suggest the harshness of New England life. In contrast to these images are those of heat and fire, for the main metaphor is that of the crucible in which fire melts and purifies. Frequently used is the fire of Hell. John's passion for Abigail is described in

terms of the “heat” of animals. In the forest scene Abby uses the image of fire as both purification and passion. In the opening scene Ann, points out that there are “fires within fires” in Salem. As fire and crucible are central metaphors, the three main characters – John, Hale and Elizabeth are tested by enduring the fire of suffering which burns away their defects and makes them nobler or purer persons.

Imagery suggesting good and evil use light and dark and their association with black and white, Abigail complains that Elizabeth is “blackening” her name in the village. Lucifer’s book is “black”. Danforth tells John in act 4 that his “soul alone is the issue here, Mister, and you will prove its whiteness. . . . .” Abigail in the forest scene vows to “scrub the world clean” for the love of God and to make John “such a wife when the world is white again”. Deriving images from household work is appropriate, for she has been a servant since childhood. One of the most vivid images, based on the simple, everyday act of weaving, appears in John’s final speech, “I do think I see some spread of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it from such dugs.”

Red colour symbolizes murder and passion. In the last act when Danforth asks Hale why he has returned, he replies, “There is blood on my head! Can you not see the blood on my head!” Abigail, asked by Parris if her name is “entirely white” in the town, replies, “There is no blush about my name.” Speaking of the soil, Proctor tells Elizabeth in act 2, “It’s warm as blood beneath the Clods.”

The modulations, rhythms, and even the diction of the Bible characterize Hale’s speeches, especially in the final act. As he and Danforth try to convince John to save his life by admitting collusion with the devil he tells him in poetic language, “I came into the village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up.”

Danforth’s imagery is clear, sharp and precise; in act 3 he describes the age in these poetic words, “This is a sharp time, now, a precise time – we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God’s grace, the shining sun is up, and them that, fear not light will surely praise it”. He is hardly aware of the irony of his view, for soon the night and darkness of the trials will follow. He tells Proctor, “we burn a hot fire; it melts down all concealment,” Ironically the concealment of the accusers goes undetected, even when Proctor tries to expose them.

Is **The Crucible** a successful analogy for the McCarthyism that prevailed in America in the early 50s? Miller’s comment was, “McCarthyism may have been the historical occasion of the play, not its theme”. Had it been a one-to-one analogy between the Salem trials and the hearings of the House un-American Activities Committee, the play would be a political document and not a highly artistic play.

By 1956, Miller was a famous playwright, well-known for his crusading zeal and his fearless defence of freedom of speech. When he applied for routine renewal of his passport, the House un-American Activities Committee summoned Miller to a hearing. He refused to disclose the names of other communists and fellow travelers. He told them, “I want you to understand that I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party. I am trying and I will protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him. . . . I take the responsibility for everything I have ever done, but I cannot take responsibility for another human being.” He was held guilty of contempt, fined and given a thirty-day suspended jail term. He appealed against the verdict and won his case. Miller’s stand before the committee is not unlike that of John Proctor in **The Crucible**.

When Miller was briefly in Hollywood in 1950 he had met Marilyn Mouroe, and the two had fallen in love. They were married in 1956 after his divorce from his first wife. He writes about her with love and compassion in his autobiography, **Time bends**, relating the joys and sorrows of their marriage. During that time he wrote no plays, but, instead, devoted three years to a writing a movie script for her, **The Misfits**, based on his short story of the same name. By the time the film was released in 1961 they had been divorced.

## A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

About two and a half years after **The Crucible**, two new plays, **A Memory of Two Mondays** and **A view from the Bridge** opened as a double bill on Broadway. But both plays were disappointing.

The story of a **A View from the Bridge** was told to Miller by a friend who worked among longshoremen in Brooklyn. Miller originally conceived the play in one act in the classical style: “a hard, telegraphic, unadorned drama” that moved to its catastrophe in a “clear, clean line”. Somewhat like the heroes of Greek tragedy, the protagonist Carbone is seized by a powerful passion which leads to a fatal decision. He betrays the social code by which he lives and for which he lays down his life to regain his good “name.” Lawyer Alfieri like the chorus in Greek tragedy, introduces, participates in and comments on the action. As Miller observes, “It must be suspenseful because one knew too well how it would come out, so that the basic feeling would be the desire to stop this man and tell him what he was really doing to his life.”

For the London premiere the play was expanded into two acts. It is the revised version that is discussed here.

The story describes Eddie Carbone, an Italian American longshoreman living in Brooklyn with his wife Beatrice and his niece Catherine. He has brought up the girl from childhood and now that she is a grown up girl he does not want to part with her. Torn between an overt paternal protectiveness and sexual passion, Eddie threatens to destroy Catherine, Beatrice and two other individuals who have come to live with them.

Marco and Rodolpho, two illegal immigrants, are given refuge by Eddie. Catherine and Rodolpho fall in love and Eddie forcibly tries to destroy their relationship. But when he fails to separate them and they came closer, he reports against Rodolpho and Marco to the immigration authorities. For this he is denounced by Marco and the neighbours. Condemned by one and all, he challenges Marco to a combat. In the resultant fight he is killed by Marco and thus the play ends.

As already pointed out, the story was initially dramatized in a single act. “This version was in one act” he wrote in the introduction to his **Collected Plays** “because it has seemed to me that the essentials of the dilemma were all that was required, for I wished it to be kept distant from the emphatic flood which a realistic portrayal of the same and characters might unloose.” (p.50)

In the introduction to the original version of the play, Miller elaborated further:

“I saw the characters purely in terms of action. . . . they are a kind of people who, when inactive, have no new significant definition as people. The form of the play, finally, had a special attraction for me because once the decision was made to tell it without an excess line, the play took a harder, more objective shape. In effect, the form announces in the first moments of the play that only that will be told which is cogent, and that this story is the only part of Eddie Carbone’s life worth our notice and therefore no effort will be made to draw in elements of his life that are beneath these, the most tense and meaningful of his hours.” (Miller, “On Social Plays, **A view from the Bridge**, p. 18)

The intention was good but the result was unsatisfactory. So, Miller expanded and revised the London version into two acts. When the neighbourhood was represented by twenty actors instead of four (as in the Broadway version), the larger group, like a Greek Chorus, enhanced the audience’s understanding of the protagonist. As Miller says, “the mind of Eddie Carbone is not comprehensible apart from its relation to his neighbourhood, his fellow workers, his social situation. His self-esteem depends upon their estimate of him, and his value is created largely by his fidelity to the code of his culture.” In the revised version, “once Eddie had been placed squarely in the social context, among his people, myth like feeling of the story emerged of itself, and he could be made more human and less a figure, a force,” observes Miller.

The chorus-like character of lawyer Alfieri opens and closes the play. In the two-act version he speaks prose rather than verse, though it is poetic prose. As the play opens, Alfieri strikes the note of inevitability : Every few years there is still a case, and as the parties tell me what the trouble is, the flat air in my office suddenly washes in with the green scent of the sea, the dust in this air is blown away and the thought comes that in some Caesar’s year. . . . another lawyer, quite differently dressed, heard the same complaint and sat there as powerless as I, and watched it run its bloody course. . . . This one’s name was Eddie Carbone.”

In enlarging the play, Miller developed the character of Eddie's wife, Bea, so that she becomes a sympathetic, wronged woman. If Alfieri is the spokesman of society and human nature, she is the voice of individual neighbours. Miller also expands the role of Catherine. If she is passive in the original version, she is now active tasting love for the first time. When Eddie learns that she is going to work, he finds fault with the neighbourhood and the company. "Near the Navy Yard plenty can happen. . . . And a plumbin's company! That's one step over the water front. They're practically longshoremen." He has no answer when Bea asks him, "You gonna keep her in the house all her life?"

Catherine and Bea are enthusiastic about the brothers whom they have given shelter but Eddie is suspicious. And when Rodolpho becomes the center of attention and sings a song Eddie asks him to be quiet or else he might be picked up. When he finds that his niece is attracted to Rodolpho, Eddie questions his manhood and tells Bea that he is "like a weird" and a chorus girl. He also tells Alfieri that "guy ain't right." Eddie's sexual obsession with Catherine increases as the affair between Catherine and Rodolpho advances. In the second scene of act one Bea asks Eddie, "When am I gonna be a wife again?"

In the revised version, the characters of both women are developed. Beatrice warns her niece, "I told you fifty times already, you can't act the way you act. You still walk around in front of him in your slip." She cautions her that she is now a grown woman. "You're a woman, that's all, and you got nice body, and now the time came when you said good-bye. All right." Alfieri warns Eddie and is as blunt as he can be, "we all love somebody, the wife, the kids – every man's got somebody that he loves, heh? But sometimes. . . . there's too much," he says, "too much love for the daughter, there is too much love for the niece."

When Alfieri tells him, "let her go," Eddie's reply shows that his love for her is sexual, "I take the blankets off my bed for him, and he takes and puts his dirty hands on her like a goddam thief!" Alfieri replies, "She wants to get married, Eddie. She can't marry you, can she." Angry and desperate Eddie replies "I don't know what the hell you're talking about."

Act one ends on a note of high drama – Eddie's oral threats turn physical and he becomes violent. As Catherine says she must dance with Rodolpho, Eddie starts insulting and humiliating, even casting doubts on his manhood. He challenges the brothers to a boxing match.

The next scene witnesses even more high drama. When Catherine is alone in the house with Rodolpho, she asks him whether they could live in Italy after marriage: "I am afraid of Eddie here." Catherine is a changed young woman in the revised version. In the original version she is a passive creature, a mute witness to the quarrels between Eddie and Bea. In the enlarged version, however, she is an active and sympathetic person. Rodolpho encourages Catherine to leave Eddie and takes her to the bedroom.

As they come out, Eddie enters, drunk. He orders Rodolpho to leave the house; Catherine says she will leave too. Eddie tells her not to. "He reaches out suddenly, draws her to him, and as she strives to free herself he kisses her on the mouth." A fight ensues between Eddie and Rodolpho.

Eddie's kissing Catherine confirms his incestuous passion for his niece. If this is shocking, what is even more shocking is Eddie's kissing Rodolpho. This has led some critics like Nelson to consider that there is a "possibility" of "latent homosexuality" in Eddie. But this seems to be unconvincing in the face of his sexual obsession with his niece, so much so that for this he betrays his community and destroys his good name. Alfieri tells him to let her go. However, as Eddie leaves, Alfieri suspects that in the attempt to destroy Rodolpho, he (Eddie) will destroy even himself.

Alfieri expresses the fears and suspicions of the audience about the catastrophe that is to follow. Eddie reports against Rodolpho and Marco to immigration authorities. "The betrayal achieves its true proportions as it flies in the face of the mores administered by Eddie's conscience – which is also the neighbours," observes Miller in the

**Introduction** to the Collected Plays.

Eddie like Oedipus is expelled from the community for an abhorrent act. He also somewhat resembles John Proctor who in order to preserve his name sacrifices his life. To the neighbours, Eddie tries to defend his act as

one wronged by strangers whom he had given shelter: “to come out of the water and grab a girl for a passport. . . . Wipin’ the neighbourhood with my name like a dirty rag! I want my name, Marco.” Saying this he attacks Marco and a fight ensues. Eddie dies in the arms of Beatrice. Alfieri comes forward and utters the last words:

Most of the time now we settle for half and I like it better. But the truth is holy, and even as I know how wrong he was, and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something pure calls to me from his memory – not purely good, but himself purely, for he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than all my sensible clients. And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be! And so mourn him – I admit it – with a certain. . . . . alarm.

**A view from the Bridge** is a tragedy of the common man, as defined by Miller, in which the hero, regardless of his rank, is forced to “evaluate himself justly.” Eddie, like Willy Loman, is unwilling “to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status.” Miller continues further that “the commonest of men may take on. . . . [tragic] status to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest, the battle to secure his rightful place in his world.” His fate evokes fear in the audience, “fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world.”

As Miller joints out in his introduction to the two-act version, the expansion enabled him to include “the viewpoint of Eddie’s wife, and her dilemma in relation to him.” Making Beatrice active rather than passive lends depth and intensity to her portrait as well as that of her husband. But despite her being an assertive and strong character, she is unable to prevent the tragedy.

As in his previous plays, Miller creates dialogue that is both realistic and poetic. Unlike **The Crucible**, in which he invented almost a new language for his seventeenth century characters, here, his people, except for Alfieri, are uneducated longshoremen and their families. To express their feelings, Miller gives them speech that is bare, enthusiastic and rhythmic. He employs active verbs and simple adjectives with little imagery except for ordinary and everyday allusions. Descriptions are vivid and direct, as in Beatrice’s account early in the play, of a teenaged informer: he had five brothers and the old father. And they grabbed him in the kitchen and pulled him down the stairs – three flights his head was bouncin’ like a coconut.”

Omissions, double negatives and other ungrammatical devices make the language realistic but also humorous. When Catherine in act one announces a job offer, Eddie is at first hostile, then reluctantly’ agrees and offers advice:

*Eddie : I only ask you one thing – don’t trust nobody. You got a good aunt but she’s got too big a heart, you learned bad from her. Believe me:*

*Beatrice : Be the way you are, Katie, don’t listen to him.*

*Eddie : [to Beatrice – strangely and quickly resentful]*

*You lived in a house all your life, what you know about it? You never worked in your life;”*

While the speech of the longshoremen and their families sounds realistic and contemporary, Alfieri’s poetic words evoke the past with musical and alliterative proper names, “some Caesar’s year, in Calbaria perhaps or on the cliff at Syracuse.” The Brooklyn Bridge is symbolic as a link between modern Brooklyn and traditional Sicily – a bridge between the past and the present. The “view” of the title suggests an objective distancing between the action and view of it by Alfieri and the audience.

When the one-act play was staged on Broadway, the reviews were disappointing. Miller himself was dissatisfied with it: “If **A View from the Bridge** more than thirty years later has a vigorous life on stages all over the world, it is no thanks to the original production, which made it appear at best an academic and irrelevant story of revenge,” says Miller “What I had written was something different, something plain and elementary and frightening in its inexorability. . . . . the play on the stage had no tang: it lacked the indefinable webbing of human involvement that can magically unify many otherwise dimly ordinary separate parts.” (Time bends, p. 354-55)

However, two years later the British premiere of the enlarged and revised play was a great success.

## A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS

Arthur Miller had firsthand experience of the Depression: “through no fault or effort of mine it was the ground upon which I learned to stand.” He started writing plays during the Great Depression. Although today the period is regarded with some romanticism, it was actually a frustrating time; everyone was suffering because there was no money.

Miller describes this play as “pathetic comedy: a boy works among people for a couple of years shares their troubles, their victories, their hopes, and when it is time for him to be on his way he expects some memorable moment, some sign from them that he has been among them, that he has touched them and been touched by them. In the sea of routine that swells around them they barely note his departure.” It was written, he says in the introduction to the **Collected Plays**, “in part out of desire to relive a sort of reality where necessity was open and bare; I hoped to define for myself the value of hope, why it must arise, as well as the heroism of those who know, at least, how to endure its absence. Nothing in this book was written with greater love, and for myself I love nothing printed here better than this play.”

It is not difficult to understand why this is Miller’s favourite play. It contains memories of several years when he worked as a store keeper in an auto parts warehouse. In his introduction to the TV version he noted that the dusty warehouse, cold in winter and hot in summer may seem awful to viewers today, but it was “a haven in the thirties. It was a place to go; at least you had a job — this was a great thing — that’s what remained with me — that I was so lucky.”

Miller observes that the warehouse setting, although “dirty and unmanageably chaotic,” is also, “a ‘little world, a home to which unbelievably perhaps, these people like to come every Monday morning, despite what they say.” The Two Mondays of the title are a Monday morning in summer when Young Bert is just beginning his job as a warehouse store boy, and a winter Monday morning when Bert is about to leave for college, having saved some money from his weekly salary. The people of the warehouse, as seen through Bert’s eyes, are portrayed vividly and come to life. The mood is nostalgic, even sad at times, like Gus’s describing his years at the warehouse in terms of old cars.

The play tells a simple story. Bert mixes with his fellow workers, and at the end he leaves for college while they remain. The entire action takes place in the warehouse with “factory-type windows which reach from floor to ceiling and are encrusted with the hard dirt of years”.

The main characters are three middle-aged men: Raymond who has become manager by dint of hard work; Larry, who is still a clerk after long years of service; and Tom, the accountant who is almost sacked for drunkenness when the play opens but who has given up liquor at the end. The boss Mr. Eagle also belongs to the same age group. The two older characters are Gus, who is in his sixties and his friend Jim who is in his seventies. The principal younger men are Bert, who is eighteen (Miller’s age in 1933 when he worked in the warehouse) and Kenneth, a young Irish immigrant who sings and recites poetry. There are two women, Agnes the telephone operator, in her 40s and Patricia, in her 20s.

Of all the workers the most interesting and memorable is Gus. Blunt and out spoken he wears a hat in the office. He and Jim are pals and spend week ends eating and drinking heavily. Gus’s wife, Lilly, is invariably ill. He, like Agnes, protects the drunken Tom and threatens to quit if Tom is fired. At the end of the first Monday his wife, Lilly, dies, alone and neglected while he was drinking and carousing with friends. By the second Monday he is a reformed character; he has never recovered from the death of his wife.

When Gus receives her insurance money he goes on a pleasure trip with Girm; on the second Monday they report for work drunk. He is not afraid of Mr. Eagle who will arrive soon. In a nostalgic tribute to the years gone by, Gus sums up, in a catalogue of cars now extinct, his twenty two years at the warehouse.

He and Jim leave the warehouse even though it is only nine-thirty in the morning. On Bert’s last day, at lunch

time, Girm informs that, on one last binge Gus has died.

The other workers, however, do not play with their lives and are more careful. They need their jobs. Larry has a phenomenal memory and knows where every auto part is kept in the multi story building.

He is the father of triplets and though denied a promotion buys a new car because he thinks it is beautiful. Because of the car, Patricia, the office beauty, is attracted to him. But by the second Monday he is forced to sell the car and loses Patricia too.

Within an hour and a half Miller succeeds in making the audience and readers take interest in the characters, each of whom is an individual with his own idiosyncrasies. Kenneth, who has just arrived from Ireland and is young like Bert is, perhaps, the most pathetic of them all. He is constantly singing and reciting poetry. When Bert asks him how he learned it he replies, "why, in Ireland, Bert, there's all kinds of useless occupations in Ireland." Some of his dialogue, like Bert's, is in free verse, but even his prose speeches are poetic. "It's the poetry hour, Gus," he declares." This is the hour all men rise to thank God for the blues of the sky, the roundness of the ever lasting globe, and the cheerful cleanliness of the subway system...."

While others suffer from lassitude, Kenneth is full of drive and energy. He washes, with Bert's help, the windows reaching from floor to ceiling. But by the second Monday, in winter, Kenneth is disenchanted with life and seeks solace in drink. As Bert is about to leave for college, he advises Kenneth to regain his optimism and vibrancy To this Kenneth replies:

*How's a man to live,  
Freezing all day in this palace of dust  
And night comes with one window and a bed  
And the streets full of strangers  
And not one of them's read a look through.  
Or seen a poem from beginning to end  
Or knows a song worth singing.  
Oh, this is an ice-cold city, Mother,  
And Ruosevelt's not making it warmer, somehow.*

Throughout the play Kenneth, sings the Irish ballad "The Minstrel Boy", symbolic of both myself and Bert. Though like the minstrel boy, Kenneth has hope and joy at first, he loses these by the second Monday. He thinks of joining the civil service but as he tells Bert he is going to be at the warehouse for good.

The ending is pathetic. When Bert departs his companions hardly take notice. On the other hand, Bert thinks he will always remember them. He at least is going to college, but the others are, "caught by necessity and by their lives."

Both humor and pathos are there in this "pathetic comedy." Miller asserts time and again that during the Depressive people did not lose their optimism; they could laugh and enjoy as well as bemoan the hard times. The physical humors in the play derives naturally from the situations. Gus is so much larger than life that everything he does is exaggerated. Even though he cynically disapproves of the hopes of his coworkers, he is amiable and good-natured. The reactions of the workers are both humorous and typical when the washed windows reveal a next-door brothel.

As an escape from the drudgery of the warehouse, drinking is common to almost all the workers—Gus and Jim, Tom and Kenneth. Sooner or later, they all became drunkards.

## AFTER THE FALL

Miller had been absent from Broadway for about nine years. So, the public was excited when **After The Fall** premiered in 1964. However, the play was greeted with rage rather than critical evaluation. Robert Brustein commented: "Mr. Miller is dancing a spiritual striptease . . . . He has created a shameless piece of tabloid gossip, an act of exhibitionism which makes us all voyeurs." While some critics saw only "the most nakedly autobiographical drama put on public view," Miller protested that the "man up there isn't me . . . a play wright doesn't put himself on the stage, he only dramatizes certain forces within himself." The philosophical and artistic merit of the play went unnoticed, while reviewers concentrated upon the marriage of the hero, Quentin, to a popular sex goddess, Maggie. It was tempting not to notice the resemblance to Miller's marriage to the film star Marilyn Monroe, followed by divorce and her suicide by an overdose of sleeping pills.

Miller describes the play as a trial by a man's "own conscience, his own values, his own deeds." Apparently, Quentin is a lawyer.

As both prosecutor and defense attorney, he selects and considers evidence from the past before he can take a decision about the future. Miller's technique, as in **Death of a Salesman** is expressionists; incidents follow one another not in chronological order but, instead by association, one thought leading to another. "The action takes place in the mind, thought and memory of Quentin. He seeks self-knowledge with the help of Holga, whom he is going to marry. In his search he will encounter and overcome temptations that are sexual (Elsie), moral (deserting his friend Lou), and material (saving his job at Lou's expense). As Quentin is intellectually honest, he will recognize betrayals, those he commits and those committed against him by his family and friend Mickey. He will see that in the real world, after the Fall, evil cannot be faced by denial or guilt, but by assuming responsibility.

The action is like a stream of consciousness in Quentin's mind, making free associations between characters, incidents and fleeting images. The one realistic piece of setting which dominates the stage is the tower of a German Concentration Camp. As Quentin remembers people and incidents, they will be picked out by light or disappear into darkness. As in the mind, all the characters are present in the background, from which they emerge when necessary.

As the play opens Quentin, who is in his forties, separates from the others, comes to the front of the stage, and addresses an unseen listener. The listener has been differently interpreted as a psychiatrist, priest, judge, God, or the audience itself. Or he may be Quentin himself on the verge of his quest for knowledge. During the action Quentin may speak directly to the listener or participate in the action or comment on it. Making him a lawyer imposes a certain order on his account. He says, "I looked at life like a case at law."

Quentin evaluates his two previous marriages. Was he responsible for their failure? He must review these as he is about enter a third marriage with Holga, an Austrian woman who survived World War II. Has he the right, he asks the listener, to marry her? He feels guilty for failing his first wife, Louise and his second, Maggie. He also feels remorse when friend Lou's suicide saves him from defending him (Lou) before the House Un-American Activities Committee, a defense that might have cost him his job. Quentin's personal and professional conflicts reflect the larger problem that he probes and tries to resolve—the existence of evil (symbolized by the concentration camp tower) and the denial of personal responsibility.

Quentin's two marriages as he examines them, to Louise mainly in the first act and to Maggie in the second, reveal that he has searched in vain for a connection within those sacred unions, marriage and friendship. "It's like some unseen web of connection between people is simply not there," he reflects. "And I always relied on it, somehow; I never quite believed that people could be so easily disposed of." When he is informed that the head of his firm is asking him not to defend his friend Lou, he feels relieved.

Although Quentin has not had an extramarital affair, he has been tempted to do so, which Louise regards as betrayal, causing him to feel guilty. The first act ends with their divorce as inevitable.

Like other characters, Louise is presented through his eyes. She is portrayed as cold and selfish. They may have

been love when they were married; what he now recalls is a loveless marriage with mutual suspicion, betrayal and guilt. The characters of Felice, a dancer, and Elsie, Lou's wife, appear and disappear. Felice, whose divorce case Quentin has argued successfully, worships him. Felice is associated in his thoughts with Quentin's mother who also admired him. Unlike Maggie and Felice who are sympathetically drawn, Elsie is a seductress. She appears naked and inviting before Quentin (an invitation which he declines), betraying her husband Lou, his friend and client. Appearing again and again throughout the play is Holga, an Austrian whom Quentin met in Germany. She is a symbol rather than a fully developed character like Maggie or Louise. Holga carries the burden of the theme in as much as she has attained the self-knowledge Quentin seeks. "Holga teaches him the necessary lesson that guilt, loss, and betrayal are not punishments to be avoided but inevitable signs of the human condition."

The Maggie episodes develop emotionally rather than chronologically. They provide a contrast to the philosophical import of the play. Though she resembles Marilyn Monroe to some extent and may have been modeled on her, she is a convincing character in her own right. The Maggie episode is an integral part of the play reinforcing its theme in terms of human relationships and commitment. Many years later Miller would write in his autobiography the agonizing story of his marriage to Marilyn Monroe. In an article in *Life* magazine shortly after the opening of the play, however, Miller would like us to take a broader view of the play: "The character of Maggie . . . is not in fact Marilyn Monroe. Maggie is a character in a play about the human animal's unwillingness or inability to discover in himself the seeds of his own destruction . . . She most perfectly exemplifies the self-destructiveness which finally comes when one views oneself as pure victim. And she . . . exemplifies this view because she comes close to being a pure victim — of parents, of a Puritanical sexual code and of her exploitation as an entertainer".

Maggie is afraid of and haunted by her mother, who, like Monroe's was promiscuous. Quentin's own mother appears early in the play in an incident of betrayal. In **Timebends** Miller also associates Monroe with his mother.

Maggie assures Quentin, "I . . . don't really sleep around with everybody. I was with a lot of men but I never got anything for it. It was like charity, see? My analyst said. I gave to those in need." After their marriage Maggie's jealousy, vulgar language and extravagance embitter their relationship. In their last scene together she even tries to make him take the bottle of sleeping pills, so that she can snatch it from him thus making him responsible for her death.

She swallows lot of pills; he holds her wrist and reaches for her throat. Just at that moment his mother appears. Quentin informs the listener that though Maggie survives this time she commits suicide a few moments later.

The play ends as Quentin, approaching the tower, realizes, "who can be innocent again in this mountain of skulls? I tell you what I know! My brothers died here. . . . But my brothers built this place. . . . And what's the cure? . . . No, not love; I loved them all, I And gave them willing to failure and to death that I might live. . . ." Holga appears, with her greeting, the word that opens and closes the play. "Hello!" Quentin cries, "That woman hopes," and realizes that "she hopes, because she knows."

Miller describes his style in **After The Fall** as "impressionistic." "I was trying to create a total by throwing many small pieces at the spectator." The play is poetic both in structure and in its language. Quentin's final realization is expressed in, perhaps, Miller's most poetic prose. It is unparalleled in his plays for its rhythm, imagery, simplicity and perfect harmony of theme and style :

Is the knowing all? To know, and even happily, That we meet unblessed; not in some Garden of wax fruit and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but after, after the fall, after many, many deaths. Is the knowing all? And the wish to kill is never killed, but with some gift of courage one may look into its face when it appears, and with a stroke of love — to an idiot in the house — forgive it again and again . . . forever?"

## INCIDENT AT VICHY

The main idea of **Incident at Vichy** according to Miller, continues the theme of **After The Fall** – “that when we live in a time of great murders, we are inhabiting a world of murder for which we share the guilt. . . . We have an investment in evils that we manage to escape, that sometimes these evils that we oppose are done in our interest. . . . By virtue of these circumstances, a man is faced with his own complicity with what he despises.”

A psychoanalyst who had hidden in Vichy, France during the second world war before the Nazis occupied the country told Miller a story on which the plot is based: “a Jewish analyst picked up with false papers and saved by a man he had never seen before. This unknown man, a gentile had substituted himself in a line of suspects waiting to have their papers and penises inspected in a hunt for Jews posing as Frenchman.” “What **Incident at Vichy** reiterates is our proclivity to evade troublesome facts so that confrontation with evil and hence our responsibility for it are avoided.”

The plot unfolds in a straightforward and linear manner. In Vichy in the waiting room of a place of detention in 1942 ten men seated in a row await interrogation by the authorities. The incharge is a Nazi major, the other officers are French. The suspects are called one by one into an inner room, where the police captain is in charge, assisted by two detectives and a professor of social anthropology. Some of the suspects will be released and leave, while others will be killed. The hopes and fears of the detainees are revealed and dramatic tension mounts as each is summoned. The occupation, looks, behaviour, attitude of each of the suspects differentiates him from others and engages the sympathy as well as suspense of the reader and the spectator.

Though the men are anxious and frightened, they try to delude themselves into believing that the questioning is only routine and as long as their papers are in order they will be discharged. A waiter among them even tells them that the Nazi major, a client at his restaurant is not a really bad chap. The audience learns that the men one being taken off the streets. There is a rumour that only Jews are being picked up. **Bayard**, a railway employee informs that a train has just arrived from **Toulouse** from which cries were heard; that the engineer is Polish suggests **Auschwitz**. **Moncean**, a complacent actor, claims that even at **Auchwitz** Jews have nothing to fear. “The important thing,” he says, “is not to look like a victim. Or even to feel like one,” for “they do have a sense for victims.” **Leduc**, the psychiatrist comments, “that is true; we must not play the part they have written for us.”

When **Merchand**, a businessman, is interrogated and released with a pass, others are hopeful. Then the waiter’s boss, who brings in coffee for the authorities, whispers to his employee that people are being burned up in furnaces. **Monceau** does not believe this and calls it fantastic nonsense.

**Von Berg**, a prince, has been arrested by mistake, may be because of foreign accent. When **Bayard** declares that the future belongs to the working class **Von Berg** asserts that most of the Nazis are ordinary working class people. When **Leduc** notices that there is only one guard at the door, he suggest that they overpower him and escape. But no one accepts his suggestion. **Lebeau** reveals that he and his parents could have emigrated to America before the German occupation but his mother would not leave. A gypsy evokes different responses, including the same prejudices as held against the Jews. **Bayard** thinks that the gypsy has been detained because he belongs to an inferior race; others suspect that the pot the gypsy carries is stolen one. Among the detainees are an old; bearded Jew and a fifteen year old boy. The boy’s story is poignant. He had gone out of his house to pawn his mother’s ring to buy food for his famished family.

Aristocrat **Von Berg** and psychiatrist **Leduc**, the last two of the detainees encapsulate the theme of the play. **Von Berg** says: “I would like to be able to part with your friendship. Is that possible?” **Leduc** replies that he is not angry with him: “I am only angry that I should have been born before the day when man has accepted his own nature; that he is not reasonable, that he is full of murder, that his ideas are only the little tax he pays for the right to hate and kill with a clear conscience:” When he says that gentiles have a dislike for the Jews **Von Berg** denies that this is true of him. **Leduc** replies:

*Until you know it is true of you,*

*You will destroy whatever truth can come out of this atrocity. Part of knowing who we are is knowing we are not someone else. And Jew is only the name we give to that stranger, that agony we cannot feel, that death we look at like a cold abstraction. Each man has his Jew; it is the other. And the Jews have their Jews. And now, now above all, you must see that you have yours – the man whose death leaves you relieved that you are not him, despite your decency. And that is why there is nothing and will be nothing – until you face your own complicity with this....your own humanity:"*

Von Berg again denies involvement in this evil, for he even tried to commit suicide when the Nazis murdered his Jewish musicians. Leduc informs him that Von Berg's favorite cousin is Nazi who persecuted Jewish doctors. Von Berg cries, "What can ever save us?" Just as he utters this the door opens and he is called to the interrogation room.

He comes out after a short while. With a pass. He forces it with the wedding ring, into Leduc's hand: "Take it! Go!" Leduc, however, is embarrassed and tells him, "wasn't asking you to do this! You don't owe me this." Von Berg insists, "Go!" As the guard appears, Leduc hands him the pass and leaves. The professor is the next suspect. On seeing Von Berg he shouts and sirens sound; the Major rushes in and confronts Von Berg. The two stand there staring at each other with fire and fury. Four new prisoners are brought in to sit on the bench, as the play ends.

The reviews were by and large favourable; some however charged the characters with being symbols rather than real and lifelike. Some critics defended the play against the charge pointing out that Leduc, Von Berg and the Major grow and develop as the action advances. Both Leduc and Von Berg through argument and discussion learn and change previously held opinions.

The Major is one of the earliest sympathetic portraits of a Nazi by an American writer. Injured in battle, he has been assigned against his wishes to be in charge of the interrogation. He tells Leduc, "I would only like to say that. . . . this is all as inconceivable to me as it is to you." Leduc replies: "I would believe it if you shot yourself. And better yet, if you took a few of them with you." But the Major explains that they would all be replaced: "There are no persons any more."

Cultured, educated, soft-spoken, Von Berg does not know much about the havoc caused by the war. A patron of music and fine arts he lives in the cocoon of his luxurious villa and it is only when the Nazis kill his musicians that he realizes the reality of war. And he tells Leduc: "When I told the story to many of my friends there was hardly any reaction. That was almost Worse." Von Berg learns more than any other character. Leduc's realization does not come as surprise for his previous arguments prepare us for this. But Von Berg by surrendering his pass and perhaps his life shows that it is not enough to accept guilt, one must also assume responsibility.

Leduc's speeches emphasize the theme. Miller has the unique gift to dramatize ideas. From the beginning Leduc is the most rational, as he questions the arrest. It is he who urges the others to join him in subduing the single guard. All others interpret the situation personally; only Leduc sees the universal. Leduc's final speeches persuade Von Berg to act and enrich the intellectual and emotional content of the play.

Tension and suspense build up as each suspect is called into the inner room where his fate will be decided. The inner room symbolizes the uncertain future or death.

Though the play is set in World War II, it has remained relevant since its premiere in 1964. "The occasion of the play is the occupation of France, but it is about today," says Miller. "It concerns the question of insight – of seeing in oneself the capacity for collaboration with the evil one condemns. It's a question that exists for all of us."

## THE PRICE

**The Price** deals with the issues of free will and responsibility that were themes of **After the Fall** and **Incident at Vichy**. Some critics think Miller was writing an apolitical play in the midst of political turmoil. But Miller saw the issues of illusion and denial in **The Price** in the context of the sixties. For him the 60s were a time when Americans were looking outside themselves for salvation; both the play and life were telling him that we were doomed to perpetuate our illusions because truth was too harsh to face. Though Miller claims that his play reflects the mood of the 60s, illusion, reality and betrayal have been his themes throughout his career.

The Depression has cast its shadow over many of Miller's plays: **The Man Who Had All the Luck**, **Death of a Salesman**, **After the Fall** and **The American Clock**. **The Price** is no exception. Indeed, though it was produced in 1968, he had known the story since the 30s but as he said, "I can't imagine writing a play just to tell a story. My effort is to find the chain of moral being moving in a hidden way. If I can't sense that I don't know where to go". It took him about thirty years to find it. He tried it in the 50s, jotting ideas for the play in a notebook, but it wasn't until the late 60s that he noticed a shift in cultural values which reminded him of the 30s. In the midst of the idealism of the anti-Vietnam war protests and the black awakening he saw "the seeds of a coming disillusionment and recognized an indifference for personal morality". To his mind the 20s were characterized by the assumption that society was immune to moral standards. As the 60s were coming to a close he felt the same mood and, therefore, the same urgent need to come to terms with fundamental issues. As he explained, "the whole question arose as to whether any kind of life was possible that wasn't completely narcissistic, whether there was any truth in any emotion that wasn't totally cynical".

The conflict between father and sons is a recurrent theme in Miller. It is the central issue in **All My Sons** and **Death of a Salesman**. It is present in **The Price** too with this difference that here it is seen from the view point of the sons. Although he is dead, Father Franz has decided the characters and destinies of his sons, Walter and Victor. In a room cluttered with the old furniture of their youth the brothers meet, or rather confront each other, after sixteen years of separation, marked by estrangement and hostility. They re-examine old values and learn that a price must be paid in the present for choices made in the past. As they defend their actions and accuse each other of selfishness and betrayal, the unlikely mediator is an eighty-nine year-old second hand dealer appropriately named Solomon. A surrogate father, he symbolically sits in the paternal chair, commenting, sympathizing, reprimanding and advising as the brothers squabble.

The plot is deceptively simple. As the house of his dead parents is about to be torn down, cop Victor meets Solomon to negotiate a price for the furniture. Victor has left a message at the office of his brother, a successful surgeon, to come to the site and approve of the price. In their two-hour confrontation each brother reexamines old family crises, blames the other and defends himself. They recognize, if not fully accept, responsibility for past actions and present situations. Although the dialogue is realistic and the time of the action is actual, Miller's symbolism, his portraits of the contrasting brothers in a common family situation, and his creation of the wise though comic Solomon make the play universal in its appeal.

That Miller regards the conflict between the two brothers as archetypal can be seen in his choice of Cain and Abel as antagonists in his next play, *The Creation of the World and other Business* (1972). Victor's and Walter's initial disagreement is upon an acceptable price for the second hand items, but deeper hostility gradually comes to the surface as they discuss the past of which the furniture is a symbol. Victor, the idealistic younger brother sacrificed his college education and career to support his father, ruined by the failure of his prosperous business during the 1929 crash. To support his father, Victor chose a policeman's job and now, nearing the age of fifty, is debating whether to take early retirement.

Act one is Victor's just as act two is Walter's. In the former, before Walter arrives, there is tension but also affection between Victor and his wife, Esther. She believes that he has suffered because he sacrificed his career to enable his brother to go to medical school and become wealthy and famous. She is convinced that the money from the sale of the furniture should go to her husband and so she is there to see that he gets the right

price: "he can never keep our minds on money! We worry about it, we talk about it, but we can't seem to want it. It do but you don't. I really do, Vic, want it! Vic? I want money!" Her wish is understandable, for all their life they have lived modestly on his meager salary. To her the money to be paid for the furniture could be utilized for all the minor comforts they could not afford. In act two when Walter offers Victor a handsome amount (if the furniture becomes a tax deductible donation), Esther is emphatic that Victor be rewarded materially for his earlier sacrifices. Embarrassed to be seen in public with him in uniform, she goes to the cleaners to collect his civilian jacket.

When he is alone with Solomon he recalls his frustrations in life: making decisions without being aware of their consequences, like dropping out of school to support his father; "we always agreed, we stay out of the rat race and live our own life. That was important. But you shovel the crap out the window, it comes back under the door - it all ends up she wants, she wants. And I can't really blame her - there is just no respect for anything but money. At the very end of the first act, just as Victor has accepted the price and is receiving Solomon's money Walter appears. He is also unhappy. Though successful in his profession he is very frustrated in his personal life. He rarely meets the children of his broken marriage and has had a nervous breakdown. He also feels guilty for deserting his father to pursue his career. Now in his mid fifties, he will try to defend his actions and argue that Victor should have thought of his career; their supposedly penniless father had saved thousands of dollars.

In the verbal warfare between the brothers, in act two Victor presents himself as the loyal son and Walter as a selfish one. The latter, however, regards him as an idealistic fool and himself a realist: "There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement . . . And you proceeded to wipe out what you saw".

In his Author's Production Note at the end of the published text, Miller warns the actors of Victor and Walter to maintain "a fine balance of sympathy". Walter, notes Miller, "attempting to put into action What he has learned about himself", and the actor "must not regard his attempts to win back Victor's friendship as mere manipulation." Miller explains the theme of the play. "As the world now operates, the qualities of both brothers are necessary to it, surely their respective psychologies and moral values conflict at the heart of the social dilemma". He says, "the production must therefore withhold judgement in favor of presenting, both men in all their humanity and from their own viewpoints. Actually, each has merely proved to the other what the other has known but dared not face. At the end, demanding of one another what was forfeited to time, each is left touching the structure of his life".

Miller's insistence that the production be fair and balanced in creating sympathy for both brothers did not find favour with critics who cater to the taste of the audiences. He explained in an NBC TV interview in 1968 that in *The Price*: I have done something which is probably intolerable. I've suspended judgement. I've simply shown you what happens when you take these two courses and the price you pay for being responsible, and hopefully, it would agitate people to think about this". In his plays, the author noted, "you are pretty well cued in to what's happening from moment to moment and ultimately you arrive at a paradox which, because I think I don't let you off the hook, is quite intolerable. You want me to tell you".

The paradox in *The Price* comes in the second act. The audience is prepared to see Walter through Victor's eyes until Walter gives a different interpretation of past events. As Gerald Weales has pointed out, *The Price* is an extremely talky play, with a curious blend of psycho analysis and Ibsenite revelation. The revelation in act 2 creates dramatic conflict and reveals more fully the characters of the brothers. A common Miller theme illusion vs reality emerges as they re-evaluate their past and the motives for their choices.

The setting provides visible proof of the family's affluence. Expensive, heavy, solid furniture is piled up in the attic, the favourite place of Victor and his father. Living on "garbage", throw-away food from restaurants, the elder Franz sat all the time in the overstuffed arm-chair (at center age now occupied by Solomon), listening to the radio and looked after by Victor.

Victor recalls that when he asked Walter for a loan for college fees, the latter replied, "Ask Dad for money". When Victor does so, the father merely laughs. At this Victor walks to a park. In an emotional speech he reveals why he could not desert his father, blamed by his mother and abandoned by Walter.

*The grass was covered with men. Like a battlefield: a big open-air flophouse. And not bums – some of them still had shined shoes and good hats, busted businessmen, lawyers, skilled mechanics. Which I'd seen a hundred times. But suddenly – you know? – I saw it there was no mercy. Any where ... One day you're the head of the house, at the head of the table, and suddenly you're shit overnight. And I tried to figure out that laugh How could he be holding out on me when he loved me?"*

*(The Price, Penguin, p 88)*

Walter, however, quickly dispels Victor's illusion that they were brought up to believe in each other; that only he could save their father: "Were we really brought up to believe in one another?" He asks. "We were brought up to succeed, weren't we? Why else would he respect me so and not you?" He reminds Victor of their father's laugh when he (Victor) asked him for money. "What you saw behind the library was not that there was no mercy in the world, kid. It's that there was no love in this house. There was no loyalty. There was nothing here but a straight financial arrangement, that's what was unbearable" (p. 89)

Point, counterpoint, argument and counter argument as in courtroom drama – this is what sustains the dramatic conflict. As soon as one brother presents his defense it is demolished by the other. And this see-saw battle continues till the end. Each case must be presented with equal weight and force. Miller was anxious that the audience should not pass judgement on Victor or Walter. The play, Miller said, was finally about love. The brothers love each other and want to come together, but can't.

Walter's belief that they "were brought up to succeed", would explain his motivation to leave the father, attend medical college and become an eminent surgeon. But it also reveals why the crash crushed their father and why Victor chose a safe job. After the elder Franz's success ended in failure, Walter was motivated even more strongly to succeed. In the "Production Note" Miller says, "from entrance to exit, Walter is trying to put into action what he has learned about himself" . . .

Walter tries to explain to Victor and Esther how he has changed since he left home; "The time comes when you realize that you have not merely been specializing in something – something has been specializing in you; . . . And the whole thing comes down to fear, he tells them, "the slow, daily fear you call ambition and cautiousness, and piling up the money". But when he began taking risks, he says, "suddenly I saw something else. And it was terror. When Victor asks "Terror of what?" Walter responds, "Of it ever happening to me . . . as it happened to him. Overnight, for no reason, to find yourself degraded and thrown down". He asks "You know what I am talking about, don't you? Isn't that why you turned your' back on it all?" Victor replies, "Partly Not altogether, though".

There is more to come. Walter wants that Victor should accept at least some responsibility for his sacrifice and not place all the blame on him for deserting their father and not sending him (Victor) for college. Walter discloses that he telephoned their father to offer to pay the tuition (a message never delivered), insisting that his brother should not join the police and waste his talent. The father's reply was, "Victor wants to help me. I can't stop him".

Walter's last disclosure is even more painful to Victor. When Victor was supporting him, their father had about four thousand dollars. He had asked Walter to invest it fearing that some day Victor would desert him. Victor argues that he had no choice but to remain. Pointing to the harp Walter tells him; "Even then it was worth a couple of hundred, may be more! Your degree was right there. There is no doubt that Walter does feel some responsibility for his brother's lost opportunities, for he offers him a job in his hospital. Victor's reaction is an angry one: "Why do you have to offer me anything?" "There's a price people have to pay. I've paid it, it's all gone. I haven't get it any more. Just like you paid, didn't you? You've got no wife, you have lost your family, you are rattling around all over the place?"

After they have re-evaluated their past, denied personal responsibility and defended their earlier choices, there is a faint hope that the brothers might at last sink their differences. But as Miller remarks, "they think they have achieved the indifference to the betrayals of the past that maturity confers. But it all comes back; the old angry

symbols evoke the old emotions of injustice, and they part unreconciled. Neither can accept that the world needs both of them – dutiful man of order and the ambitious selfish creator who invents new cures” (Miller, *Timebends*, 542).

Although for three decades he tried to prevent the kind of disaster his father suffered, Walter has learned a painful truth: “I only got out alive when I saw that there was no catastrophe, there never had been.” He thinks if Victor could recognize his past self-delusion, they will resolve their differences;

*We invent ourselves, Vic, to wipe out what we know. You invent a life of sacrifice, a life of duty; but what never existed here cannot be upheld. You were not upholding something, you were denying what you knew they [their parents] were. And denying yourself. And that’s all that is standing between us now – an illusion, Vic. That I kicked then in the face and you must uphold them against me. But only saw then what you see now – there was nothing here to betray. I am not your enemy. It is all an illusion and if we could walk through it, we could meet. (P. 90).*

But not only can they not meet, their accusations gather momentum. Victor tries to force Walter to confess to some responsibility to thwart his career.

*Victor: you came for the old hand shake didn’t you! The Okay! ... And you end up with the respect, the career, the money and best of all, the thing that nobody else can tell you so you can believe it that you’re one hell of a guy and never harmed anybody in your life! Well you won’t get it, not till I get mine! Walter : and you? You never had any hatred for me to destroy me with this saintly self-sacrifice , this mockery of sacrifice? (p. 92).*

*Shouting, “you will never again make me ashamed! And throwing their mother’s gown at Victor, Walter leaves. His angry outburst alarms Victor. But Solomon advises him: “Let him go... What can you do?” Acting like his father in whose chair he is sitting, Solomon offers him sane advice.*

Miller describes Solomon “a phenomenon”. An Old Testament figure he is an original, wise and ancient. He is Miller’s equivalent of the Elizabethan wise fool, in the same class as Feste (*Twelfth Night*) and the fool in **King Lear**. With a Russian Yiddish accent, Solomon personifies the theme of the play: on the realistic level he examines, evaluates, and offers a price for the actual furniture; in a symbolic parallel Victor and Walter reexamine the past which the furniture evokes and then realize the price each has paid for his choice. Victor cannot trust Walter because of his behaviour in the past; when Victor says it’s good furniture, Salomon remarks, “I was also very good; now I am not so good. Time, you know, is a terrible thing”. With comments applied to the furniture but true of the brothers’ relationship, Solomon reminds him that values change with the times. “People don’t live like this any more. This stuff is from another world. So I am trying to give you a modern viewpoint”. The view point each brother has of the other is not up-to-date, it belongs to the past.

The very solidity of the furniture valued in the past, is out of fashion today, says Solomon: “the average he’ll take one look it will make him very nervous... because he knows its never gonna break”. He bangs on the library table to drive home his point. “A man sits down to such a table, he knows not only he’s married, he’s got to stay married – there is no more possibilities”.

Eighty-nine year old, Solomon is reluctant to buy such a large quantity of furniture which may require more years to sell than are left to him. He came in the hope of getting some nice prices. To sell all the furniture “could take a year, a year and a half. For me that’s a big bet”. He is not a shirker; “The trouble is I love to work”.

While delaying his offer he is carefully examining the furniture, expert that he is. He is eating to keep up his energy. He eats a hard-boiled egg and a chocolate bar, describes incidents from his long life. He philosophizes, from drawing upon his vast experience. He pretends to leave at one point when Victor loses his temper, “No, I don’t need it” and telling him, “And don’t forget it – I never gave you a price”.

At last as Victor is about to ask him to go, Solomon decides, “I’m going to buy it! I mean I’ll ... I’ll have to live that’s all, I’ll make up my mind! I’ll buy it. As he hops from piece to piece, taking notes and making estimates, mementos of the affluent past appear: a robe, a top hat, evening gowns. And from all this he could go so broke, asks Salomon. “And he couldn’t make a come back?” Well, some men don’t bounce, you know, is replies Victor.

With his zeal for life, Solomon is the opposite of the elder Franz, who after the crash lost the will to live. "Listen, I can tell you bounces. I was busted 1932; then 1923 they also knocked me out; the panic of 1904, 1898... but to lay down like that." Like the furniture Solomon was strong is his youth, As an acrobat, he was the one at the bottom", in a vaudeville act *The Five Solomon's*, "may be fifty theatres". He left Russia at the age of twenty-four: "I was a horse them days... nothing ever stopped me. Only life.."

While the depression, their parents deaths and their estrangement have cast a shadow over the lives of Victor and Walter, Solomon's nostalgic memories of his daughter are a reminder that domestic tragedy is not uncommon. Time and again, he refers to his daughter. First he compares Victor to her: "you are worse than my daughter! Nothing in the world you believe nothing you respect – how can you live? Near the end of act one he confides that his daughter, who "had, a lovely face, large eyes, has been appearing to him every night, "I lay down, to go sleep, so she sits there. And you can't help it, you ask yourself – what happened? May be I could have said something to her... May be I did say something... it's all..."

While the brothers live in a make believe world of illusions... Victor that he sacrificed his career for his selfish brother, Walter that he chose self preservation and his brother self deception – Solomon is a realist. He knows that time is a terrible thing" that change is inevitable. He knows like a wise man that adversity must be faced and misfortune accepted. Near the end of the play he alludes to his daughter for a third time. "Every night I lay down to sleep, she's sitting there, I see her clear like I see you. But if it was a miracle and she came to life, what would I say to her?" Although he respects Walter, Solomon does not hesitate offering him advice saying that the tax deduction may be disallowed, and defending Victor when he accepts a price rejected by Esther and Walter.

In the quarrel between the brothers in act two, Esther plays an active role. It is because of her that the play remains a drama and does not degenerate into a debate... Though she and Victor disagree, there is understanding and love between them, in contrast to Walter and his ex-wife. Knowing her husband, she rightly suspects that Victor will, rather than negotiate, accept a price that is too low. Now that their son is in college she is tired of leading a frugal life and believes that they deserve all the money; she is angry when Victor wants to share it with Walter, and feels relieved when the latter offers all of it to his brother. Their reactions are different when Walter discloses to them their father easily could have supported himself as well as paid for Victor's tuition. Victor remarks, "The man was a beaten dog ... How do you demand his last buck - ? But Esther reacts angrily, "It was all an act. Beaten dog! He was a calculating liar. And in your heart you knew it! No wonder it all seemed like a dream to me – it was; a god damned nightmare".

Esther has another vital role in the play; it is she who reveals, for Victor is too proud to admit it, the hardships of their married life: "We lived like mice" their furniture was "Worn and shabby and tasteless. And I have good taste". She sums up their life, "It's that everything was always temporary with us. It's like we were never anything, we were always about-to-be".

She does not want to lose the opportunity to gain some money (Walter's office of tax-deduction saving). She loses her temper and gives Victor an ultimatum.

*"You can't go on blaming everything on him or the system or God knows what else! You're free and you can't make a move, Victor, and that's what's driving me crazy... You take this money! On I am washed up".*  
*Walter's reentry saves Victor from replying.*

At the end it is Esther who narrates the sad story of her married life. "I was nineteen years old when I first walked up those stairs – is that's believable. And he had a brother who was the cleverest, most wonderful young doctor ... in the world. As he'd be soon. Somehow, some way ... and a rather sweet, in offensive gentleman, always waiting for the news to come on.. And next week, men we never saw or heard of will come and smash it all apart and take it all away. So many times I thought – the one thing he wanted most was to talk to his brother, and that if they could – But he's come and he's gone. And I still feel it – isn't that terrible? It always seems to me that one little step more and some crazy kind of forgiveness will come and lift up everyone. (P. 93).

Brought closer by the confrontation, Esther and Victor go off to see a movie. She does not insist on his changing into his civilian clothes, says good bye to Solomon, and "walks out with her life". Victor puts on his policemen's

jacket and tells Solmon he will return for masks and a couple of other items. While Walter has flung at him the dress representing their mother, Victor has accepted their past family life.

**The Price** begins and ends, with laughter. Perhaps, it is appropriate “Though scarcely a comedy, it is a play in which humour has a vital role” points out Bigsly. That it is so is to a great extent because of Gregory Solomon. It is doubtful whether Miller could have created such a figure earlier in his works until *After the Fall* in 1964. It took long for Miller to assimilate the meaning both of genocide and survival. “Now the guilt of the survivor, gives way to the celebration of the survivor”, Solomon is the result, a man who at the very end of his life can now believe in possibility again.

There is, however, another kind of laughter in the play that is not generated by Solomon or inspired by an old record. This too comes from the past. It is the laughter which haunts Victor’s memory, the laughter with which his father had greeted his request to finance his college education. This laughter is crude and self mocking. That in the end it is wiped out by the present laughter shows that Miller is offering a certain grace. The present may be price we pay for the past but it is not perhaps without its redemption.

In discussing the language of his plays, Miller notes, “my own tendency has been to shift styles according to the nature of my subject”. In **The Price** the speech of Esther, Victor and Walter is simple, sharp and precise; it is realistic though a little heightened. The language Miller invents for Solomon, however, is distinctively his own and like that of no other character in his work. Its basic feature is its Russian – Yiddish idiom. His dialogue is in turn humorous, aphoristic and ironic. If even style is the man, it is true of him. His accent and his age differentiate him from the brothers.

His wise and witty remarks are made memorable by their idiomatic expression, which is achieved by the use unorthodox syntax and strange metaphors. Verb tenses are ungrammatical: “I never dealt with a police man”. The order of adjectives and adverbs is reversed; metaphors are exotic: “Anything Spanish Jacobean you’ll sell quicker a case of tuberculosis”. Aphorisms are expressed in a unique fashion: “In a day they didn’t build Rome”. It is characteristic of Miller's art that every element of the play has its purpose: structure, language, and symbolism reveal character and theme. He is master of economy; not a word is wasted. As Gerald Weales has noted “talk is both tool and subject”. In the first act suspense is created by the extraordinary sight as the curtain rises: lots of furniture piled high. Interest is aroused by the situation – waiting for the offer of a price, by the disagreement between Esther and Victor and by the arrival of Walter which shatters hopes of a bargain.

The conflict between Walter and Victor gathers momentum as act two proceeds. It begins with Walter’s rejection of the price offered; Esther supports Walter, Victor resents her implication that he is incompetent. When Walter suggests tax deduction, Victor suspects his motives. Now each successive speech reveals more and more of the past and upsets present assumptions. Finally, Miller avoids a happy ending, the brothers are unable to resolve their differences.

The deceptively simple realistic dialogues and action, crafted by Miller left some critics dissatisfied when the play premiered in 1968. However, the symbolic furniture piled high in the attic and a larger than life character like Solomon make the play more than realistic. Another complaint about the play was that action is static, nothing is changed during the action. This is far from true. In Solomon’s words, “what changed, of course, was the viewpoint . . . as the audience was drawn first to one character, then to the other; the result was one of the rarest of dramatic (or human) experiences, understanding, sympathy, with all”.

Verbal metaphors advance the action and reveal characters. It was Victor’s walk to the park which led to his decision to become a cop walking the beat to support his father. Looking back at this life he says, “all I can see is a long, brainless walk in the street”. His decision caused destitution that is captured in such images as: they ate garbage and lived “like mice”, burying away our existence, down the sewer”. Many images are based on the household. Advising Victor to take a decision on retirement Esther says, “It is like pushing against a door for twenty five years and suddenly it opens . . . and we stand there”. Victor reacts angrily to Walter’s offer of an administrative job. You can’t walk in with one splash and wash out twenty eight years”.

Often both past and present have a dreamlike quality Solomon tells Victor: “I pushed, I pulled, I struggled in six different countries . . . It’s tell you it’s dream, it is a dream. Esther describes the strangeness of Victor’s wearing his first uniform as “a masquerade; years later he is “walking around like a zombie ever since the retirement came up. Walter regards over assessing the furniture, for a tax credit as a “dream world”. To Esther the misery of their destitute married life is both dream and nightmare: She comments: “I knew it was all unreal. I knew it and I let it go by. Will, I can’t any more.

Both brothers emphasize that one has to pay the price for past actions which is the theme of the play. Walter describes his profession as a “strange business, with too much to learn and far too little time to learn it. And there is a price you have to pay for that. . . there’s simply no time for people” When Victor is offered a job at the hospital he suspects a payoff because he is unqualified. "There is a price people pay. I have paid it". What the play suggests is that there is no outsider who can lay down moral values. Each man must set his own price on his action and then learn to accept his evaluation.

The furniture and other items symbolize the past and the brothers' clothes the present. In the beginning of the first act Esther does not want to be seen with Victor in his uniform (why must every body know your salary). At the same time the uniform also symbolizes law and order; a person wearing it might well sacrifice his life for another, as Victor has done. Walter's camel hair coat and confidence imply success. Victor recalls to Solomon, “the few times he’d come around, the expression on the old man’s face – you’d think God walked in. The respect, you know, what I mean? The respect!” Solomon agrees, well sure, he had the power. The prosperity of their boyhood is suggested by the father’s tap hat and their mother’s evening gowns.

While the arm chair in the center of the stage (in which Solomon seats himself) symbolizes the father, who was confined it after his fall, the harp represents the mother. Walter offers it to Victor who declines – “nobody plays”. Victor was his mother’s favourite, as Walter points out with some envy: He tells Esther that his mother adored him. Both acts end with Solomon counting out the money, the price paid for the furniture, into Victor's hand, symbolizing that the present pays a price for the past.

After purchasing the furniture, Solomon is left alone on the stage. He goes over to the phonograph and plays a record, the same one heard at the beginning before any dialogue was spoken. As Victor joined in the laughter earlier, so Solomon does now, as the curtain falls slowly.

Writing about **The Price**, Miller says, “In the miltancy of the sixties... I saw the seeds of coming new disillusionment. Once again we were looking almost completely outside ourselves for salvation from ourselves the play and life seemed to be telling me that we were doomed to perpetuate own illusions because truth was too costly to face. At the end of the play Gregory Solomon finds an old laughing record and, listening to it, starts laughing uncontrollably, nostalgically, brutally, having come closest to acceptance rather than denial of the deforming betrayals of time”. (Timebends, p. 542).

### **Some Topics for Discussion**

Before discussing any topic the student must form his own opinion based on a close reading of the play. The edition recommended is: Arthur Miller: **The Price** (Penguin Plays).

1. Discuss the conflict between father and sons and Victor and Walter.
2. Comments on the role of Gregory Solomon in **The Price**.
3. What is the role of Esther in the play?
4. Discuss the use of symbolism in the play
5. In **The Price** “The past presses on the present and the present reinvents the past”. Elaborate.
6. Bring out the contrast between Victor and Walter.
7. Discuss the significance of the title.
8. “Though scarcely a comedy, it is a play in which humour has a vital role”. Discuss.

## MILLER'S 1970s PLAYS

The decade of the 1970s was a period of turmoil and turbulence. The American invasion of Cambodia leading to the bloody protests of Kent State University, the withdrawal from Vietnam after many years of protests at home, South Vietnam's collapse, Watergate and the resignation of a president under threat of impeachment all shook the very foundations of American democracy.

Miller wrote three plays in the seventies that dwelt upon cultural differences. **The Creation of the World and Other Business** and **The American Clock** offer reflections on the issues of the 70s. *The Archbishop's Ceiling*. (Written in 1977 but revised in 1984) deals with a world that has lost moral values. Two plays present an ideal and the other puts the ideal into confrontation with the real.

In **The Creation of the World and Other Business** Miller has produced his own interpretation of Genesis. It has been variously called religious parody and a comic reworking of creation. The play includes the creation of Eve, the Fall, and the Cain and Abel story, hardly suitable for the comic treatment Miller gives it. The source of humour is various anachronistic insertions, including comments by characters which sound more like 70s conversations in New York than momentous dialogues in the Garden of Eden.

In this play Miller attempted to demythologize and localize biblical events. Miller tried in it what Shaw had done in *Caesar and Cleopatra* and **Saint Joan**. Miller has made mythic figures real and life like "In the words of C.W.E Bigsby the play "is a consciously naive attempt to trace human imperfection to its source by unwinding the process of history and myth. On the surface, the play seems out of place in the Miller canon, but as he himself observed," there are reverberations of all my plays in this one. It's ray, but with an underlying earnestness."

The play is remarkable for Miller's reinterpretation of God and Lucifer, who represent forces of good and evil. The play opens with a confession by God. Miller's God is a learning God and the universe an evolving one.

Lucifer's apparent selfishness is an evil not easily identifiable as such. Far from a disaster, he sees the Fall as opportunity to join forces with God. Miller's genesis is related to the problems of contemporary world in which it appears we have chosen Lucifer over God. The play may or not be seen as an apology for Judeo-Christianity, but it is a dramatization of moral issues. It offers a new cosmology for a world in need of fundamental reevaluation, a world in which mankind in general and the individual in particular assume responsibility for their actions and for their world.

Miller idealized his conceptions in *The Creation of the world, but in The Archbishop's Ceiling* these idealizations are put to hand test. The latter play is set in the capital city of an Eastern Bloc country (Miller identifies it as Czechoslovakia). Adrian, an American novelist, makes a surprise visit to his literary friends in that city, a visit that is his poorly disguised attempt to gather material for a novel he is writing, to capture the difficulties of living under a totalitarian regime.

Adrian meets his old friend Maya, a poet who has given up poetry and joined the state-run radio. Her former lover is Marcus, a former dissident who has become an unofficial host for foreign literary visitors. Sigmund is another dissident who attacks the regime though others think it is more lenient than the old one. This group of four, plus a Danish whom Marcus picks up, meet in Marcus's government – allocated apartment, the former residence of the country's archbishop. It is a large, dilapidated, formerly luxurious set of rooms. The ceiling of the living room oppressively dominates the action. In this ceiling it is presumed there is concealed microphone allowing the state to overhear all. Miller's use of the microphone is ingenious, employed in the play at various levels. At one level, the microphone represents the violation of privacy by the totalitarian regime. At the symbolic level it represents the invasion of Lucifer into God's former house. Seen in this light, the play could seem little more than a simple allegorical tale of good subdued by evil.

Miller, however, goes beyond this superficial level by having the microphone work upon its victims at a subtle psychological level. It discourages genuine human communication. Because everyone in the room assumes that the state is overhearing what they say, they never fully reveal themselves. At another level the microphone

stands for the omnipresent ear of God which was embedded in the original ceiling decorations. That has now been replaced by the multiple ears of Lucifer, represented by the totalitarian state.

It is obvious why the play finds its setting in an East European country. But as Miller notes, we must remember that in the 70s when the play was written the “White House was bugged, businesses were bugging competitors to defeat their strategies and Watergate and the publication of Pentagon Papers ... demonstrated that the Soviets had little to teach American presidents about domestic espionage”. While Miller points out the political significance, he adds that eventually “the real issue changes from a political one to the question of what effect this surveillance was having on the minds of people who had to live under such ceilings, on whichever side of the cold war they happened to be”.

Miller returns to the American scene with **The American Clock**. The play is set in the 1920s and 1930s. The play initially depicts a rich and comfortable country. That world is shattered by the Great Depression. Yet people seem content to wait for a return to prosperity. What is required is something or some one to return America to the old prosperity. Ironically it is World War II. Which brings the country out of the Depression.

In his autobiography, **Time bends** Miller states about **The Ceiling and the Clock**:

“Both were hard-minded attempts to grasp what I felt life in the seventies had all but lost – a unified concept of human beings, the intimate psychological side joined with the social-political. To put it another way, I wanted to set us in our history by revealing a line to measure from. In *Clock* it was the objective facts of social collapse, in *Archbishop*, bedrock circumstances of real liberty.” (p. 587)

## MILLER IN 1980s

During the 1980s Miller wrote four plays: **Some Kind of Love Story**, **Elegy For a Lady**, **I Can't Remember Anything** and **Clara**. The plays are dramatic, with sharp dialogue and varied styles.

Miller's themes in these plays are: grief, old age, memory, betrayal and disappointment in relationships that are friendly, sexual, political and familial. The duration of the action varies from twenty minutes to two hours. Miller has remarked that his subject determines his style, which he may change from play to play "in order to find speech that springs naturally out of the characters and their backgrounds." *Elegy* is dream like, *Love Story* is a detective story and **Can't Remember** is realistic. In mid eighties when Miller reached seventy, he write his autobiography *Time bends*. The four new plays produced in the 80s cover the emotions from comedy to tragedy.

In 1982 *Love Story* and *Elegy* were presented in New Haven, Connecticut, directed by Miller. In an "Author's Note" Miller declares that "in different ways both works are passionate voyages through the masks of illusion to an ultimate reality." The reality in *Love Story*, says Miller, is "Social reality and the corruption of justice." As the only witness to a murder for which an innocent man has been imprisoned. Angela, a call girl, holds the key to its solution. Being "delusionary", she both "conceals and unveils" the facts in order to hold the attention of private detective O'Toole, her ex-lover.

In her last interview with Tim, Angela assumes three of her multiple personalities: the tough but frightened call-girl, an eight year old girl and a cultured lady. O'Toole suspects her fears are imaginary, including her claim that cops in a "Cruiser" are parked just outside the door. During the meeting Angela discloses that she has known intimately three of the main figures in the case: the chief of detectives, murdered drug dealer who supplied him and the prosecutor, who at the trial obtained a verdict of guilty for an innocent spectator. In these associations Angela has seen police corruption, during peddling, and miscarriage of justice. Miller describes her as both "dedicated to clearing an innocent man and possibly implicated in his having been condemned. She is part where and part challenge to his [O'Toole's] moral commitment to justice, and of course the reviver of his moribund sexuality." When O'Toole threatens to abandon the case, she reminds him", I am the only one alive who knows. There are names that' knock your head off." She tantalizes him with the thought that "the whole criminal justice system could be picked up by the tail like a dead rat."

In both this play and **Elegy for a Lady**, observes Miller, "the objective world grows deem and distant as reality seems to consist wholly or partly of what the characters need require it to be, leaving them with anguish of having to make decisions that they know are based on illusion and the power of desire." (*Time bends*, p. 590)

**Elegy for a Lady** deals with grief and love and old age, and about despair and hope. Its funeral tone echoes the music Miller describes at the opening: "a fine, distant fragility, a simple theme, repeated – like unresolved grief." The two characters are nameless; they are called Man and Proprietress. '**Elegy**', Miller says, "is an attempt to write a play with multiple points of view – one for each of the characters, plus a third, that of the play... like the neutrality of experience itself." The setting is dreamlike: a boutique without walls, its displays "suspended in space."

A well dressed old man enters the boutique, asking the proprietress, "Can you help me?" He is looking for a gift for his dying lover. As he selects and rejects various items, the story of his love unfolds. While he is describing the relationship from his point of view, he notices that the proprietress is the same age as his lover. The man realizes that it was their "uncommitment" that makes it difficult for him to choose a gift.

From the beginning the proprietress seems to speak on behalf of the man's lover. She insists that the illness may not be as serious as he thinks, that there are cures. She tries to comfort him with the thought that the lover may be terrified of an operation. Miller points out that "at moments the proprietress seems actually to be the dying lover herself. A play of shadows under the tree of death."

The Proprietress suggests to the man another facet of the affair. They never spoke, he says, "of negative things." "You met only for pleasure, she says. "Yes," the man replies, "But it was also that we both knew there was no where it could go. Not at my age. So things tend to float pretty much on the surface".

Her comments lead to his recognition that “if she makes it . . . it would not be good for us – to have shared such agony. It won’t cure age. Embracing him the proprietress says, “She wants to make it stay exactly as it is. . . . for ever.” He decides upon a gift – an antique watch. The lover may or may not live. What has died, and what the man is lamenting is the affair.

**I Can’t Remember Anything** and **Clara** were first staged in 1987. Miller observes that he became “more and more deeply absorbed by a kind of imploding of time – moments when a buried layer of experience suddenly surges upward to become the new surface of one’s attention and flashes news from below.” (**Time bends**, 590)

The play gives a gently humorous account with somber overtones, of an evening meal by two elderly friends, a man and a woman in the man’s small country house.

Leo, an armchair Marxist and Leonara, a wealthy widow, discuss death in a matter-of-fact manner. She eats with Leo everyday and drives her car dangerously. Because she believes that “this country is being ruined by greed, mendacity, and narrow-minded ignorance,” she prefers to ignore present events and evades responsibility by saying she cannot remember anything.

She departs, as he cautions her to drive carefully and observes, “We could have a lot more interesting conversations if you’d stop saying you can’t remember anything.” “Or if you could occasionally learn to accept bad news?” she retorts. He reminds her to phone when she gets home, and the play ends with her call.

**Clara** is the more complex of the two plays, a character study of a conscience – stricken Albert Kroll. The reviews were disappointing. One reviewer complained that “Miller is continually presenting shadowy events that haven’t quite happened within imagery that makes no sense” Miller replied that the critics failed to understand the main character or even the story.

The story is presented clearly and economically; as the action unfolds, facets of Kroll’s character are revealed, and an incident buried in the past creates dramatic interest and resolution at the end. In a blood spattered room in a New York apartment, Kroll discovers the body of his murdered daughter; he is lying on the floor in a state of shock as Detective Lieutenant Fine enters.

The action, with flashbacks, consists of Fine’s dialogue with Kroll to discover the name of the murderer believed to be a Hispanic man released from jail term served for killing a girl-friend. Clara, who was engaged in the work of rehabilitation of former prisoners was having an affair with him, Fine interrogates Kroll to know the man’s name, but he can’t remember. Kroll feels guilty for instilling in Clara the idealism that made her vulnerable.

To show the way a buried memory comes back, Miller employs flash bulbs of the police photographers to denote flashes from Kroll’s memories of Clara, some of them enacted. As she talks with her father on a visit with her lover, Kroll tries to express his disapproval, but Clara defends the murder as “rage” and an “illusion”. After the incident, Kroll admits to Fine, “I guess I am a little ashamed of one thing. I didn’t tell Clara how strongly I felt about this man.”

By the end of Kroll’s odyssey through memory he recognizes truths he earlier denied, and he regains his lost idealism. Ironically, it is not the grilling of Fine but, rather, the playing of an old record of Kroll singing which enables him to recall the name of the suspect, but, more important, his old faith in people.

Music and memory enable Kroll to gain recognition and acceptance. As Miller observes, “Must he disown it [his earlier ideal], suffer guilt and remorse for having missed his child? Or, despite everything, confirm the validity of the ideal and his former trust in mankind, in effect keeping faith with the best in himself. . . . The play ends on his affirmation; in her catastrophe he has rediscovered himself” (**Time bends**, p. 591).

Both these plays describe the pain of recollection, whether in unpleasant relationship of two aged individuals who were once young and glamorous or in an experience such as Kroll’s, of going to World War II with hope and faith only to lose them later in life.

The publication of **Time bends**, Miller's autobiography in 1987 brought a number of rave reviews. Liz Smith's judgement was that "Miller lifts autobiographical writing to the level of genius" (Daily News), Jay Parini expressed this belief that "Time bends may be among the great books of our day" (USA Today), Roger Shattuck characterized the book as "a work of genuine literary craftsmanship and social exploration" (New York Times Book Review), and Peter Ackroyd declared, "This is autobiography as art" (The Times London).

## MILLER IN THE NINETIES

In 1990 Miller was seventy-five years old. He might have been forgiven if he had chosen to retire. Ibsen wrote his last play when he was seventy one while Beckett produced little after he was sixty. Miller's public career had already lasted forty-six years, longer than those of Chekhov, Strindberg, Brecht, O'Neill, or Williams. Surprisingly, the 90s proved his most prolific period since the 60s. During this decade he wrote three new plays, a film script for **The Crucible** and a novella published as **Homely Girl**, in America and **Plain Girl**, in England. He continued to take interest in politics, writing articles for The New York Times, supporting oppressed and imprisoned writers and traveling widely. In other words, he was as active as ever in theatrical, political and social life.

His new play **The Ride Down Mount Morgan** opened in 1991 in London. As Miller points out in **Staging Note**, "The play veers from the farcical to the tragic....." The farcical aspect of the play is its plot: a man married to two women in different cities is able to deceive them for the ten years until a car accident in Mount Morgan lands him in the hospital. Both wives arrive at his bedside to confront him and each other. Although his behaviour shocks the two women, he maintains to the end that he has done nothing wrong. When someone asked Miller what the play was about, he replied that, "it's in direct succession with the rest of my work. It's basically about the problem of sincerity: if you convince yourself you're sincere, you can do anything."

Lyman Felt is a man of the 1980s. A rich insurance executive in his late fifties he enjoys all the luxuries of life, but he is unhappy with his wife. On a visit to his firm's upstate office he meets the dynamic young Leah, and they become lovers. When she becomes pregnant, he marries her, telling her that he has divorced Theo. Lyman's assertion that he is beyond the law may sound familiar to those who recall the political and economic scandals of the 80s. **The Ride** says, Miller is "a completely political play." Lyman, he observes, "is the apotheosis of the individualist who has arrived at a point where the rest of the world has faded into significance. This type of character, he continues, isn't new. "It's just that Ronald Regan gave it imprimatur of society."

After attaining love, money and fame, Lyman becomes aggressive and charming . At the same time he is lonely and frightened of death. His dead father appears from time to time trailing a long black shroud, a symbol of death. In the final scene, in the presence of Theo, Leah and Bessie the shade of the father successfully covers Lyman with the shroud. The play closes with Lyman's wonder and envy at the comradeship of the little group on the ice.

## THE LAST YANKEE

**The Last Yankee** opened simultaneously in New York and London in 1993. Leroy is “the last Yankee”, for he adheres to the founding fathers' beliefs in independence, tolerance and diligence. Miller in the play returns to the theme of **Death of a Salesman**, the destruction of the individual and the family by false values of society. The play was hailed as a “miniature masterpiece” of ninety minutes' duration. It portrays four characters whose words and gestures are significant. The story is simple. Two husbands, one in his 40s and the other in his 60s, meet in a mental hospital and discuss their wives, who are suffering from depression. In the second scene the wives reminisce about their past lives and contrast them with the present ones. The husbands enter, and the four interact. While the older ones are still squabbling, the younger couple come to an understanding and leave for home. So life like and realistic are Miller's characters and so deep his sympathy for them that the audience is left hopeful and overjoyed.

**Yankee** symbolizes the old ideals new lost in the conflicts of modern life. It also has another significance in the small town where Leroy and his wife Patricia grew up, he a descendant of Alexander Hamilton and she as the daughter, of immigrants, Yankee was the immigrants' pejorative term for Americans.

A prosperous businessman, Frick judges people by their appearance, occupation and contacts. The American dream has worked for him, unlike Willy Loman. However, despite the material success he has achieved, his wife is unhappy and their marriage disintegrates. The couple are clear-eyed about their chances of success, but they are willing to try. Miller provides no easy answers, but the fact that the couple kiss suggests that they are hopeful..

**The Last Yankee** was praised in both England and America. Richard Corliss wrote in Time magazine, “In the wonderful character of Patricia Hamilton, we hear a troubled soul having a chat with herself. . . . She seeks a release from the ghosts of her golden youth. But wry or wistful, she speaks with the reckless lucidity of someone liberated from drugs and intoxicated by the impending peril of real life.” (Time, 8 February, 1993, 72)

John Peter, in England's Sunday Times of 31 January 1993, observed, “No other American play wright has written with such power and unrighteous, un-censorious understanding about marriage under stress: the need for independence and reassurance, domination and comfort; the hopeless, helpless, battered affection people can feel for someone close but unreachable; the need to speak and the fear of being either heard or unheard.” The “half-optimistic ending”, notes Peter, rings both touching and true: it has been bought at a price. There is no rosy sunrise here, no glib, perky rebirth, only a sense of survival fleshed but by dogged hope and the burdensome, unbreakable bond called love.”

## BROKEN GLASS

In 1994 **Broken Glass** opened in both New York and London and was widely acclaimed. While it ran for only two months on Broadway, it ran for a much longer period in London. Before the performance in his “Platform Lecture” Miller was applauded for a long time by a housefull crowd.

“This is a story I have known and thought about for fifty years,” stated Miller. In the 30s he had known a woman who had lost the power to walk for inexplicable reasons. “I thought about it a lot, and years and years later realized that it was a hysterical paralysis. . . . . One day I saw the image of that woman sitting there unable to move, and nobody knowing why and it seemed on exact image for the paralysis we all showed them in the face of Hitler. . . . . But I haven’t written it before because it always seemed to be part of the past. Until two years ago, when ethnic cleansing came into the news, and suddenly it became part of the present.”

The play is set in Brooklyn in 1938, but the title refers to the night of broken glass, when the Nazis in Berlin broke the windows of Jewish shops and synagogues. “I’ve probably been influenced in selecting the theme by the recrudescence of anti-Semitism in this world which is something that I wouldn’t have believed.” Miller told an interviewer. “It always comes as a surprise, whenever it happens. It’s well, that’s over with; its not going to happen anymore and suddenly there it is again.” Sylvia Gellburg, Jewish housewife in Brooklyn, is obsessed with the newspaper stories of atrocities on Jews, and when she suddenly loses the power of her legs, no physical cause can be found. Her husband, Phillip, consults a doctor who solves the mystery of her hysterical paralysis and who helps her to change.

Sylvia in way is a continuation of Karen in **Yankee**. Both women have domineering husbands; their own needs are repressed. Only when their repression takes an extreme form does anyone pay attention to them. Karen becomes so depressed that she has to be confined to an institution; Sylvia loses the use of her legs and is confined to a wheel chair. Both confinements are symbolic of a repressed married life.

Despite their serious illness, both women grow and change though Karen does so only temporarily. Sylvia’s change is the central point of **Broken Glass**. The play is so complex in the manner in which it combines the political and the personal and so full of compassion in the understanding of Sylvia and her husband – that audiences are deeply moved.

Philip Gelburg is a very complex character. He is a self-hating Jew who sometimes sounds anti-Semitic. He is proud that his name is Gelburg. He is not popular among his neighbours who regard him as disagreeable and cantankerous. At the same time, says Miller, the audience is “supposed to really feel for him,” because “he’s trying to be invulnerable.”

By discovering the causes of his behaviour, Miller creates sympathy and understanding for him. His impotence, he tells Sylvia in scene 8, was a result of what he believed was her rejection of when he refused to allow her to return to work.” Miller describes the play as “a tragedy.” The tragedy is the waste of a life, that of middle-aged Sylvia.

In scene II Sylvia brilliantly analyses the causes of her disintegration after marriage, how her potential was destroyed by a domineering husband.

Philip’s realization is less dramatic but more hurtful. Like Willy Loman, he is a victim of the American dream.

Symbolism is pervasive in **Broken Glass** Sylvia’s paralysis is a metaphor for the inability of the outside world to act in 1938 when the Nazi persecution of Jews was gathering momentum. Images of birth and death, babies and funerals, symbolize Sylvia’s rebirth and the death of her marriage.

In 2003 at the ripe old age, of 88 Miller is undoubtedly one of America’s three greatest playwrights, along with Engene O’Neill and Tennessee Williams.

## ART AND DRAMATIC THEORY

Arthur Miller's articles, essays, speeches and introductions provide a rich source for his theory and practice of drama. From the fifty-two-page introduction to his **Collected Plays**, which appeared in 1957, to the 1993 essay "About Theatre Language," Miller's theatre essays are considered major contributions to modern dramatic theory. Miller discusses not only the aesthetics of his plays but also their genesis and the artistic, commercial, political and social climates of the times.

Miller admits his debt to Ibsen in **All My Sons**. He admires Ibsen's "ability to forge a play upon a factual bedrock. A situation in his plays is never stated but revealed in terms of hard actions, irrevocable deeds; and sentiment is never confused with the action it conceals." Miller also appreciates Ibsen's solution to the "biggest single dramatic problem, namely, how to dramatize what has gone before," to achieve "a viable unveiling of the contrast between past and present, and an awareness of the process by which the present has become what it is. . . . . What is precious in the Ibsen method is its insistence upon vivid causation." Miller's observations on Ibsen are equally applicable to himself.

Miller also states that "for younger writers such as myself, [Clifford] Odets for a couple of years was the trail blazer. . . . . he has dared to invent an often wildly stylized stage speech. . . . . It was as though Odets were trying to turn dialogue into jazz. . . . . It was an invented diction of a kind never heard before on stage – or off." Miller remarks that Odets's dialogue was not realistic but poetic. Likewise, although Miller's dialogue is realistic it is carefully created to suit his character. It would be more correct to characterize his speech as "poetic realism:" "Attention must be paid," "he's liked, but he's – well liked."

### Death of a Salesman

"My own tendency," writes Miller, "has been to shift styles according to the nature of my subject. . . . . In order to find speech that springs naturally out of the characters and their backgrounds rather than imposing a general style." He explains that the New Englanders in **Yankee** do not speak like working men and women in **A Memory** or Eddie Carbone and his fellows in **A View**. For **The Crucible** he crafted a language that begins with the idiom of the verbatim court records of the period and proceeded to take on flavour and a poetry of its own which is bare, strong, and earthy, like the people who speak it.

Miller's drama is a drama of ideas. He says, "Idea is very important to me as a dramatist", pointing out that playwrights need not invent new or original ideas, but rather "they have enunciated not yet popular ideas which are already in the air, for which there has already been a preparation. . . . Which is to say that once an idea is "in the air" it is no longer an idea but a feeling, a sensation an emotion, and with these the drama can deal". Miller may draw his theme from ideas in the air, but his plots often are suggested by actual events he hears about. Images drawn from life, sometimes his own, may suggest a play: **Broken Glass** based on the picture of a woman he knew in the 30s who for no known reason lost the power of her legs, **Death of a Salesman**, he says began as a series of images: the little frame house, now deserted Miller admits that his plays contain autobiographical elements: his friend Sidney who became a cop suggested Victor in **The Price**; Cousin Abby, Happy in **Death of a Salesman**; his own mother, who like Sylvia in **Broken Glass**, felt she wasted her life when she married. His illiterate father, says Miller, was a testing ground for the plots of his plays: "He'd ask what I was writing, and I would tell him the story. I could see in his eyes whether it was going to hit home. I can't remember a time when he was wrong. . . . . He wanted to be astonished and when he was – Boy, the power that came out of him."

Though some of his characters may be based on his own life and experience, Miller insists that they are dramatic beings, created for the stage and existing in their life there. Sometimes readers and audiences ignored this as in the case of **After the Fall**. Maggie was equated with Marilyn Monroe and Quentin with Miller. Sometimes, however, spectators or readers recognize themselves or their parents or friends in the plays, Willy Loman is the best example, but Linda Loman, Joe Keller, John Proctor, Eddie Carbone, and Sylvia Gellberg fall in the same category.

Miller's plays attempt neither "escape from process and determinism" nor "inverted romanticism" but instead seek a new balance that "embraces both determinism and the paradox of will." "If there is one unseen goal toward which his plays strive, he says, "it is that very discovery and its proof – that we are made and yet are more than what made us."

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**BERTOLT BRECHT**  
**Mother Courage**

## Unit-9

### Bertolt Brecht 1898-1956

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#### 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 Augsburg 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 Volkswille* 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 between the dramatic Aristotelian theatre and epic theatre in a list which is reproduced here:

<b>DRAMATIC THEATRE</b>	<b>EPIC THEATRE</b>
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 experience	forces him to take decisions 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 growth	each scene for itself 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 distinguish 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 evolving 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 ideology 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 precisely that attitude towards art which Brecht has attacked in his theory : an uncritical emotional attitude 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 career. 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 censored 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 required 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-trying' 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 society/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 acceptance 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 activated. He was opposed to empathy because it is uncritical emotional identification. He wanted his audience to 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 up to 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 psychological 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 opposition 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 censored 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 entirely 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 consequences, 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 Organon For Theatre* published three years after Hitler'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 requirements 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 Nachrichten*.
- 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 Hitler'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 Leipzig 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 Fleischbaker*, 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 *Lebrstück* 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, *Kuhle 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 Tretyakov. 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 history. 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. Grimmelshausen 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 vagabond 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, steals, 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 Katrin. 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 Katrin'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 understand or fathom. 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 Katrin, 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 Katrin 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 peace 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 Katrin :

*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. Katrin 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 Katrin, 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 Katrin, 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, Katrin now in harness. Soon she will lose her too. Before the city of Halle, which is being besieged by Catholic troops, Katrin 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, Katrin 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 subversive humour. They are intended to give "pleasure" to an audience, while also delivering their subtle, intellectual buffets. Brecht avoids the over-

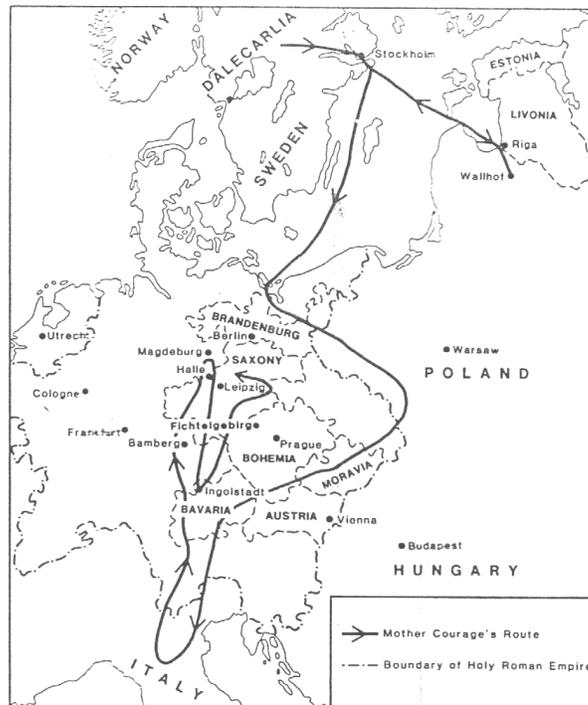
didactic element of direct address. Instruction - if one may use the term - filters in through the live dialogue. The songs, though, as always independent in character, are also directly related to the action. So Mother Courage's sales - chorale ; Eilif's song in the Swedish commander's tent - "The Woman 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 difficulties in doing so. The recruiting 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 recruiting 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 Katrin 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 Katrin to pay the officer a guilder and a half. She won't listen to his protests. Katrin 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 Katrin to beware of thin men. Then she sings The Fraternalization 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 Katrin 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 Katrin 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 Katrin, 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 Swiss 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 dangerous. 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 the 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 guilders. 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 guilders 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 guilders, 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 realises 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 soldier 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. Katrin 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. Katrin 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 Protestants. 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. Katrin 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. Katrin runs in to save the child. Mother Courage wants someone to stop her. At the same time she is worried about her expensive linen. Katrin brings a baby out of the ruins. Mother Courage does not want to be burdened with the child and tells Katrin 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. Katrin 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 Magdeburg 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. Katrin, 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 occasion.

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 beer 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 up to 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, Katrin doesn't like it and runs out. Mother Courage laughs and says that Katrin is waiting for peace as she (Courage) had promised her she (Katrin) will get a husband when it is peace. She brings Katrin 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 Katrin 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, Katrin 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 Katrin put them 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 Katrin. Mother Courage knows it will leave a scar but consoles herself that Katrin 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 complacency 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 Katrin 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 deliberately 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 Katrin 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 Katrin 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 Katrin 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 (Katrin) 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 Katrin 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 won’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 Katrin 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 Katrin 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 prospect 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 Katrin in pulling the wagon. She hopes that she might see Eilif before the day is out. 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 steal, 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 soldiers 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. Katrin 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 Katrin by suggesting the wrecking of Katrin's only means of livelihood. It does bother Katrin and she makes noises of distress, yet she refuses to capitulate. The young peasant now openly joins Katrin, asking her to go on drumming as loudly as she can. The soldier knocks him down and beats him with his pike. Katrin 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 Katrin 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 Katrin'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 Katrin 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 Katrin's burial expenses which they accept. They shake her hand and carry Katrin away. The dramatic situation here is potentially full of pathos. Mother Courage is stricken with grief and unable to grasp at first that Katrin 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 Katrin 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 Katrin, 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 Katrin 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 Katrin 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 Katrin's disfigurement when Courage curses the war for the only time, and the scene in which Katrin 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 Katrin 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, Katrin 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. Katrin’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. Katrin’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.

Katrin’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 Katrin’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. Katrin 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 along with 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 “fleeing, 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 Katrin 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 Katrin - 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 Katrin. 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 preceding 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 Katrin 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 Katrin 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 soldier 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 proposition*

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 Katrin, 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 Katrin; Katrin'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 Katrin 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 be 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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