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STUDY MATERIALS

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PAPER VI

BRITISH LITERATURE SURVEY

(FROM 1940 TO THE PRESENT)

POETRY

1. DYLAN THOMAS

INTRODUCTION

Born on 24th October 1914 in Swansea, Wales, his father D.J. Thomas was teacher of the local Grammar School. Dylan studied here and left school in 1931. Swansea fascinated him greatly in his boyhood. He has recorded the thrills of his boyhood in his semi-autographical short stories, Portrait of the Artist as a young Dog and in his broadcast talks Quite Early One Morning. After leaving school he worked for a year as a reporter on a Swansea newspaper. Then he went to London, where he did minor jobs for newspapers such as writing reviews for thrillers. He tried to get enlisted in the armed forces during the Second World War but was rejected as medically unfit. Then he became script writer and announcer in the B.B.C. He earned great reputation as a marvellous reciter of poetry on the radio or on gramophone records. But in private life he was earning the displeasure of his friends by drinking too much. In 1937 he married Caitlin Macnamara and moved to live in Laugharne. He toured America three times and delighted huge audiences with his third tour. His published works include 18 Poems (1934) Twenty-five Poems (1936) and Collected Poems (1952) besides his short stories and broadcast talks mentioned earlier.

THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS - A BIRD'S EYE-VIEW:

Dylan Thomas was perhaps the most powerful among the post 1940 poets of English. He turned away from the political and social preoccupations of the Poetry of the 1930's represented by W.H. Auden and others. He led the surrealist poets of the 1940s. Edith Sitwell, George Barker and David Gascoyne were prominent in this group. Surrealist poetry has been described as a perpetual flow of irrational thoughts in the form of surrealism but is restrained in his choice of images. He has explained the process in a letter to Henry Treece he says he allows an image to be made emotionally in him and then brings to bear upon it his intellectual and critical faculties. Then he lets it - the firm image - breed another and that in turn breeds another and so on; all the images come into conflict, of course within his imposed formal limits; which clearly indicates that

an element of conscious restraint was there. It was no anarchic disorganisation, the controlling hands of the poet's genius is present. Surrealism was a reaction from the over - Intellectuality of the previous era.

Another movement in which Dylan participated was the neo-romanticism of the 1940s which laid greater emphasis on emotion and imagination than on the intellect. Still another movement which took shape in the late forties was the New apocalyptic Movement. These poets denounced the over - intellectuality and the social interest of the poetry of the 1930s. They aimed at making poetry broad, deep and limitless as life itself. This movement can be described as a continuation of the surrealist movement. But Dylan is said to have disowned it as a literary school, though some people say that it was he who fathered the movement.

E.L. Black (Nine Modern poets) says that Dylan's poetry can be divided into three classes: first those that are almost surrealist second, a few poems that are straightforward and third, those that present nostalgic memories of childhood. The range of subjects explored by Dylan was limited. Chief among them were sex death and religion, the major influences on Dylan Thomas were Hopkins and Freud and in his later poetry the Bible's influence also is clearly visible.

An interesting aspect of Dylan Thomas's poetry is what is known as synaesthesia - presenting as sense image in terms of another sensation; e.g. sight in terms of sound, sound in terms of touch or smell etc. This is a direct outcome of his unified sensibility, which in turn can be attributed to his unified view of reality as something transcending name and form and pervading everything. He is said to have been obsessed with the thought of death. But it should be realised that it is not a flinching from death as something terrible. On the other hand he equates death with birth; one thing dies when another is born. The birth does not take place after the death; the two things are coeval, simultaneous. It is not a linear string of events but everything happening together. This is not a linear string of events but everything happening together. This reminds us of Eliot's words 'The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew are of equal duration (Little Gidding, section 5) meaning they happen at the

same time. This world view also brings him near to the Heraclitean flux, the pantheism of Wordsworth and Shelley and the Indian doctrine of Advaita - a nameless, formless entity manifesting itself in manifold forms and names. But to many English critics this is unpleasant and they insist that he should make his religious commitments clear. (For a fuller treatment of this see J. Hillis Miller - Poets of Reality p.p 190-216) He explored the depths of the unconscious mind for images; he explored the nature of reality and found its oneness; he explored the nature of reality and found its oneness; he explored Time and found its creator and destroyer and he explored the possibilities of language to communicate what he has apprehended. This preoccupation with the possibilities of language is inevitable when what is apprehended is subtle and tenuous. We see the same predicament in Eliot's four Quartets (in all the four poems)

Very briefly stated, the following are the characteristic qualities of his poetry

1. A true Celt, he was deeply passionate.
2. Verbal excitement of his early poetry - the magic of words.
3. Wild new romanticism challenging the cerebral orderliness of the times.
4. Breathless and daring imagery (skulls, maggots, wombs, ghosts, things, etc)
5. Mingling of biblical and Freudian imagery
6. Mingling of the elemental world of nature in the raw with the feverish internal world of human desires, secrets, longings and regrets.
7. Compound adjectives (sea - sucked man - melted tide-tongued, man - iron etc)
8. Great liberation of verbal imagery; over excited imagery
9. But the poems are constructed with enormous care. The images are carefully related to each other and to the unfolding meaning.
10. Clearly conceived themes - relation between man and nature, problem of identity in view of the perpetual changes brought about by time; relation of the living to the dead and of both to seasonal changes in nature; unity of all life and of

life and death as a continual process.

11. Ritual and sacramental element.

A REFUSAL TO MOURN

This is a poem about a child killed in an air raid during the Second World War. The Poet refuses to mourn the death of the child till darkness, chaos, is come again. He will not mourn till he also is covered up in the darkness of chaos along with the child. In other words he will not mourn. It is not something to be mourned. She has attained eternal life, become one with eternity. That is not a matter to be mourned but to be rejoiced.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Look at the long first sentence (143 lines) which ends in the world death. lines 1-3: 'mankind making', 'bird beast and flower fathering' two compound adjectives as in Hopkins. Both the Adjectives qualify darkness (1-3), darkness which makes mankind and fathers bird, beast and flower. All religions refer to a primal darkness out of which all this manifested universe sprang. In Indian thought also this darkness is described as the mother of everything (Aadi mahaa tamas), all humbling: all of us are made humble in this darkness. We are equal and helpless before death the leveller.

7-13: At this death the poet's body will decompose and will be turned into water and corn in the flux existence. This is a holy process. He must return, every one must return, in the end to the seed and water out of which he came. The child has returned to that state before him.

Zion: Kingdom of heaven is one of the meanings of this word. The other meanings (Jerusalem, Jewish theology, the Christian church etc.) are irrelevant in the context. Synagogue is an assembly of worshipers or place of worship. Both the words are evocative of the eternal life. (See Shelley's Adonais Stanza 9: Peace, peace! he is not dead, he death not sleep / He hath awakened from the dream of life.)

12. Sack cloth: Wearing sack cloth and scattering ashes over one's head and body was practice among the Hebrews as a sign of sorrow and lamentation. The poet sees no justifica-

tion for such mourning over the majesty of the child's being called to eternal life.

15. grave truth: obviously there is a pun on the word. It is the grave where the dead are buried and grave is also an adjective meaning serious. I shall not murder mankind by lamenting her death, which is a grave truth (that she is called to the bosom of eternal life)

16. stations of the breath: sages of life (perhaps on the analogy of stations of the cross the successive incidents in Christ's passion)

17. the first dead: Men and woman dead long go.

18. long friends : grains of London's earth are friends of the dead of long standing.

24. After the first death there is no other: Some critics say that the meaning of his line is vague. Some say that Thomas should be unambiguous if what he wants to say is important and that he should make it clear whether he accepts or rejects the Christian doctrine of Resurrection. But all this seems to be irrelevant in the light of Thomas's view of life as a unified whole. In the world that he understands (that is our world) nothing remains itself for long. Forms are continually changing into other forms. In this world of perpetual flux nothing can long remain itself. It dies once and ceases to be itself. There is no second death. Please see Donne's sonnet death, be not proud which ends with the words And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die' (When I die) No critic has insisted that Donne should make his commitment clear.

PHILIP LARKIN

INTRODUCTION

Philip Larkin was born in 1922 in Coventry (a city famous for its automobile industry) in Warwickshire. He was educated at the local King Henry VIII school and St. John's college Oxford, from where he graduated in 1943. Kingsley Aims and Larkin were close friends at college and this friendship continued in later life. A collection of his poems entitled *The North Ship*, mostly love lyrics, was published in 1945 the poems show a marked influence of W.B Yeats. Then he came under the spell of Hardy, whose influence continued through. He became a librarian. Both Larkin and Amis shared great interest in jazz music and Larkin contributed feature articles on jazz music for the *Daily Telegraph* of London, the *Northship* (1945), *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) were his poetic works. A few poems were included in Robert Conquest's anthology *The New Lines* (1956). He also wrote two Novels *Jill* (1948) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947). He was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry and the Arts Council Triennial Award for Poetry in 1956 and he had brief spell as visiting Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford.

1. "THE MOVEMENT" POETS

Some young poets of England set out to write poetry deliberately different from Auden and others. They found some of the opinions of T.S. Eliot the Critic useful. But Eliot the poet was certainly not to their taste. They regarded intelligibility as the cardinal virtue of poetry. They initiated a new trend called the "Movement" which was a reaction from the poetry of the previous era, especially of Dylan Thomas, an article in *The Spectator* in 1954 announced this new trend. Robert Conquest himself a young poet at the time, published an anthology of poems entitled *New Lines* in 1956. This reinforced the new trend and gave consistence and unity to The Movement. Conquest presented nine poets in this anthology including Philip Larkin, Thom Gunn and Elizabeth Jennings. Six of them were university lecturers, two were librarians and one a civil servant. They were determined not to ignore technical excellence in order to explore the unconscious mind. Conquest maintained

that poetry is written by and for the whole man, Intellect, emotions, senses and all. They said they stood firmly rooted in their times. To be of one's own times is not an important virtue, but it is a necessary. The most important arts point that distinguished the new poetry from that of the previous decades was that it was free from both mystical and logical compulsions. They insisted on a rational structure and comprehensible language. Larkin was the most successful as a poet among the nine. Kingsley Amis and John Wain were successful as novelists. Larkin died in 1985.

LARKINS POETRY

Clarity, intelligibility, is the most important characteristic of Larkin's poetry that captures our attention. A firm structure present in his poems shows his craftsmanship. Portrayal or realistic details of the life around him is another feature. Barbara Everett (Philip Larkin - The Man and his Works. Dale Salwak, -Ch.II) says that Larkin's work brought poetry back to ordinary people (P132) E.L. Black (Nine Modern Poets) describes him as anti heroic. He did not distort syntax as Eliot did and did not try to convert us to his cause as Auden did; nor did he dredge up the debris of images from his subconscious mind as Dylan Thomas did says Black, but goes on to say that to put it in such negative terms is unfair to Larkin because there is nothing negative or inhibited about his poetry. He takes up a variety of topics ignored by the Auden group, but which are really important for us. His language is memorable and lucid and at the same time natural and forceful. His comments on life and people are sympathetic and stimulating, which makes his poetry enlightening and moving. David Lodge (Philip Larkin's etc. ed Dale Salwak Ch. 12) Points out that many of Larkin's poems have no metaphors but when he does use them they are foregrounded against a predominantly metonymic background which is in turn foregrounded against the background of the (metaphoric) poetic tradition. Lodge also refers to the ordinariness of the poetic persona as typical of Larkin. Death is a non verbal reality (It is not an experience in life) but it is in dealing with death that Larkin achieves the feat of expressing in words what is beyond words. He does ignore such formal features as metre, rhyme etc..

WHITSUN WEDDING

SUMMARY

The poem begins with a glimpse of Hull as the train leaves the city and proceeds south ward to London. A series of realistic views are caught by the traveller (Let us take it that it is the poet who speak in the poem). It is a warm Saturday afternoon. At first the speaker doesn't notice what is happening. He is reading and he thinks that it is the porters who make the noise in the stations where the train stops. Then he notices that the noise is made by the people who are seeing off the newly wedded couples on their honeymoon trip. We are given realistic descriptions of the parties - the father, mothers, uncles the girls throwing confetti and so on. More scenes on the way. The observant bachelor poet reflects on the significance of this hour in the lives of these newly married couples, which they are too preoccupied to do. This hour changes their lives. The poem, on the face of it, is only a simple realistic description of train journey. But it has been observed that the implications are profound. There is nothing more full of potential than a marriage. After a birth one's marriage is the most important event in One's life. One is changed for ever for better or for worse. But they don't think about it at the moment; the poet does.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Whitsun: the seventh Sunday after Easter, fifty second day from Good Friday. This is the time of weddings. (The word Whit sun is derived from Whit Sunday meaning White Sunday. The new converts wore white cloths on that day.)

LINES

1. That Whitsun: That whitsun season
2. One- twenty: 1.20 p.m. See the matter - of - factness of one - twenty and three - quarters empty train.
5. It is fairly hot being in the month of May. Spring is almost over. It is near Summer.
8. Blinding windscreens: the wind screens of cars drawn up at the level crossings. The sunlight flashed back from the windscreens blinding us.

Smelt the fish-dock: the train is nearing a fish-dock, which is

not seen but one can feel the proximity through the bad smell.

10. Hull is separated from Lincolnshire by the river Humber.

Water : water of the river Humber

14. a slow and stopping curve : the slow and curving motion of the train that stops at many places (It is not an express train)

15. Note the ugliness cast on the face of nature by industrialisation: Canals with floating of industrial froth.'

16. Hothouse: heated building, usually glass, for growing delicate plants.

18. reek : bad smell. buttoned carriage - cloth: the cloth covering the cushions of the carriage; the smell coming from the cushions.

19. Nondescript : shapeless.

20. Acres of dismantled cars : typical of industrialised English countryside.

25. whoops and skirls: shouts and shrieks

26. larking : playing (colloquial)

28. pomaded : (hair on which is) applied pomade or vaseline.

29. Parodies of fashion: laughable imitation of fashion (not fashion itself, which too is not likely to appeal to the serious, intellectual, mind of the poet). heels : high heeled shoes?

33. It : the event (ofl. 31)

37. seamy : probably seamed (marked with lines)

38. smut : dirty language

40. different colours of the dresses of the girls.

42. bunting - dressed : covered with bunting or decorations
coach party annexes : in restaurants where such wedding parties (coming in coaches) are served.

Wedding.....end : the wedding season.

47. Confetti : bits of coloured paper thrown on the bride and bridegroom. Along with the last confetti, when the train is about to start they give (throw) their last advice to the couple also.

53. happy funeral : (possibly) the end of virginity is like a funeral and the beginning of a union implies happiness - this is the secret shared by women. Note the oxymoron.

55. Religious wounding : consummation of the union is, in metaphorical terms, a wounding; therefore religious wounding.

65. Odeon : cinema house. Cooling tower of an industry

66. someone running....bow! : a running cricketeer seen from the train.

71. there we were aimed : our aim was to reach London.

73. Pullmans : sleeping coaches.

74. This frail travelling coincidence: That these wedding parties happened to travel together was a coincidence. That the poet travelled with them is also a coincidence.

74/77. What this moment held for the future for them stood ready. What the moment holds is the potential, the possibility of change either for good or for bad. This is the most significant part of the poem. A railway journey with a lot of factual details won't make poetry. The significant reflection of these lines make the whole poem meaningful. (See also Textual and Critical below)

78. tightened brakes: The train is coming to a stop. They have arrived at their destination - London

79. a sense of falling : falling of rain, a shower of arrows sent out of sight coming down as rain..Rain is a symbol of fertility.

2. CHURCH GOING

SUMMARY

The title contains ambiguity. It is about going to church and it is also about the church as an institution going out of our lives. The poet feels shy on entering the church and make sure there is nothing going on inside before he enters. Then he goes on to describe the inside of the building. Hatless, he takes off cycle-clips in awkward reverence. He mounts the lectern (desk) and reads a few verses and pronounces the words 'here endeth' in imitation of the priest. We must realise that the speaker is an agnostic. He goes back to the door, signs the visitor's register, donates an Irish sixpence and reflects that the place is not worth stopping for. (The Irish sixpence has no value in England).

Yet he did stop (he muses). He does so, often and always wonders what to look for as now. He also wonders what will happen to churches when people stop going there. A few cathedrals might be preserved as show - piece. Some of the items there like

the pyx, parchment, plate etc. might be kept in locked cases and the rest of the church might be let out rent free to rain and sheep. Shall we avoid the churches as unlucky places? Or else it may happen that dubious women may come to the church in the dark and make their children touch a particular stone in ignorant superstition. Or else they might pick simple electuaries (medical herbs) for the cure of cancer. Or it may be they come on specified nights to see a ghost. Some kind of power will continue to attract people to the churches. But ultimately superstition and belief also will vanish.

He continues musing. What will remain then? Only weedy pavement and the over growth of brambles. The shape of the church will become less recognizable. Its purpose will become more obscure. The poet wonders who the last person will be to visit this place. Probable an architect who comes to know what rood-lofts (choir gallery) were once upon a time. It may be a ruin-bibber (one who studies ruins. bib=drink) or a Christmas addict. Or also is it likely to be one like himself, bores and uniformed, yet one who values the place because it commemorates so much of the past. People have been baptised, married and buried here. The church was once associated with birth, marriage and death-the most important things in person's life.

The poet admits he has no idea what this mossy building is worth. But he stands there in silence. It is a serious house on serious earth. In its air all our compulsions meet, are recognised and described as destinies. That much can never become absolute; someone will for ever be gravitating to this place with an inner hunger to be more serious. There will be someone who realises that this is a place in which to grow wise, with so many dead people lying around.

SALIENT FEATURES OF LARKIN'S POETRY.

1. The movement. Larkin most notable.
2. Anti-romantic anti-heroic
3. Larkin differs from Eliot, Auden, Dylan Thomas
4. Intelligibility - the watch of 'The Movement'
5. Wrote for the common man.
6. Concerned with England of the times

7. Near Total absence of metaphors. (See general estimate below)
8. Nihilist. Total rejection of religion and current beliefs.

PHILIP LARKIN AS POET - A GENERAL ESTIMATE

The distinctive contribution of the 1950's to English poetry is known as 'The Movement' an intellectual reaction against the neo-romantics of the 1940's. Its initiation was announced in an article in The Spectator in October 1954 and followed up by the publication of an anthology by Robert Conquest. The anthology was entitled New Lines and contained poems by a group of nine young poets including Conquest himself. Elizabeth Jennings, Thom Gunn and Larkin were among the nine and Larkin became the most notable among them as a poet. They did not distort syntax as Eliot did, did not seek to impose their political or religious views on us as Auden did, did not dredge up the debris of images from their subconscious as Dylan Thomas did. Intelligibility by and for the whole man, intellect, emotions, sense, all.

E.L. Black describes Philip Larkin as anti romantic and anti-heroic. That is to say, he was realistic. In I remember, I remember Larkin is not sentimental or nostalgic as Thomas Hood in his poem Past and Present beginning with these words 'I remember, I remember. Another aspect of Larkin's poetry is that he wrote poetry to the common man. Barbara Everett points this out and reminds us that those who read poetry are not common men. The Movement poets stood foursquare in their own country and in their own time. Conquest has declared. 'To be of one's own time is not as important a virtue, but it is a necessary one. 'Larkin celebrates' a real and commonplace England.' David Lodge points out that Larkin's poems have no metaphors. When rarely one appears it is foregrounded against the metonymic background so that the metaphor gains in power. Calvyn Bedient describes Larkin as a Nihilist but unlike other Nihilists of his time. To these people life has nothing to offer. This is largely the effect of the traumatic experience of the Second World War. Finding poetry and humour even in sterility he makes it bearable; he shows that it can be borne with grace and gentleness. Larkin himself has said that his primary commitment was to ex-

pression itself. In this respect he is not notable for his respect for formal perfection. He does not discard metre rhyme etc.

A major influence on Larkin was Hardy. His first volume poems has a marked Yeatsian influence but soon he gave up Yeats as a model. But it should be remembered that he did not cling to English poetic tradition but used it for his own ends.

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 Calvin Bedient : Eight Contemporary Poets.

TED HUGHES

Ted Hughes was born at Mitholkmroyd, a little town in Yorkshire, England in 1930. After Mexborough Grammar School he went to Pembroke College Cambridge. After leaving college he tried several jobs such as gardener, night-watchman, teacher etc. In 1956 he married Sylvia Plath the poetess and left for America in 1957. Ted taught creative writing at the University of Massachusetts and Sylvia Plath took up teaching at Smith College. Ted's first book of poems The Hawk in the Rain was published in 1957 and it was made a poetry Book Society choice. It was well received by the critics. He returned to England in 1959 and stayed in London for sometime. Other collection of poems followed : Lupercal in 1960, Wodwo in 1967 and Crow in 1970, Sylvia committed suicide in 1963.

His poem February tells of a man obsessed by a photograph of the hairless feet of the last wolf killed in England. This man is obsessed by images and vision of wolves and he goes on making wolf-makes. Lupercal is the festival of the Roman wolf-god. According to Legends it was a she - wolf who suckled Remus and Romulous the founders of the city of Rome. Ted Hughes is the man who makes world-masks. He writes poems about wolves and other animals to bring back the vanished power and vitality to the world of mern. The characteristic feature of Ted Hughes poetry are:

1. The pervasive animal imagery - single animal or bird, centre of each poem.
2. The violence represented by these birds and beasts.
3. Ted Hughes is concerned with recreating and participating in the experience no in reflecting on it. Poetry need not always evaluate experience. It can extend awareness.
4. Major theme-power
5. Influences: Blake, Yeats, D.H. Lawrence. John Crowe Ransom etc.
6. Way of reconciling human vision and non-human cosmos
 The animal images are metaphors for this own nature. They are bulletins from within.
7. The animal images are metaphors for his own nature. They are bulletins from within.

8. Gulf between man and animal- the animal in us.
9. Nihilism. Ted's own views about religion.

For an elaboration of these points see the general estimate at the end of this unit and refer to the books mentioned in the bibliography.

PIKE

SUBSTANCE

The pike is a fierce fresh water fish, a Killer. The poet describes the pike and its savagery in vivid, forceful language.

Here is a pike, three inches long. It is pike in every part; from snout to tail (as Shakespeares King Lear every inch a King). It is striped yellow and gold. It is a killer even from its days in the egg from its birth. It dances on the surface with a malevolent grin, or moves stunned by its own grandeur over the green bed of the pond; a silhouetter of sub-marine delicacy and horror. 'It lies watching upwards or remains hung in an amber cavern of weeds on the floor of the pond. The Jaws with hood-like clamps and fangs are deadly. It is as though it was meant to enable its jaws to do their work. The poet goes on to give two examples to prove this. They kept three pikes in glass aquarium. One was three inches long, another four inches and the third four and a half inches. Suddenly there were only two and finally only one. There were two pikes in their pond, six pounds each, over two feet long. One swallowed the other. Even as it was half swallowed, its eyes stared with the same iron like cruelty. The poet says he is afraid to try to fish in the pond after nightfall. His hair stands frozen with fright on his head.

TED HUGHES AND HIS POETRY - A GENERAL ESTIMATE:

What strikes anyone reading Ted Hughes' poetry is the animal imagery - horses, cats, hawk, bull mouse otter, thrushes, bull-frog, pike (all from the titles in Luperca!) No poet had observed animals more accurately, never taking his eyes from the object, capturing every characteristic up to the limits of language. So vivid is his rendering, so startling and true his insights, that the way one looks at hawk, thrush or a pike (or in later poems, a jaguar, a sky-

lark or a swarm of gnats) is permanently altered. But the description generates metaphors, and the metaphors relate the creature to all other creatures and to human experiences and concepts (Keith sagar in Three contemporary Poets :Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes and R.S. Thomas. Ed. by A.E.Dyson - Case book series p.131)

Closely allied to the animal imagery is the element of violence associated with most of these animals, that hawk, the jaguar, the pike etc. His Nature is Nazi, not Wordsworthian says M.L.Rosenthal (case book cited above p 126) Most critics have noticed this aspect of Ted Hughes poetry. The poets own reaction to this is pertinent. Ted Hughes refers to the violence in the T.V shows and the 'Pulp fiction' of the times and points out that if we are to answer an examination question 'who are the poet of violence?' We will have to begin with Homer and we will find ourselves pointing to Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides Dante, Shakespeare, Balake etc. He asks the question 'What is violence and when is it great poetry?' The critic cannot distinguish between fear for his own mental security and the actions of the Universe redressing a disturbed balance.....because poetry is nothing, if not that, the record of just how the forces on the Universe try to redress some balance disturbed by human error' (case book:p 110) The man who makes the wolf - masks (mentioned earlier in this lesson) is Ted Hughes with the masks of the many animals, Jaguar, Pike, hawk etc. trying to redress the balance of the cosmos upset by human error.

This brings us to the theme in the poems of Hughes. The theme is neither animals, nor violence, but power, The major theme in the poems is power, and power thought of not morally, or in time, but absolutely in a present which is often violent and self-destructive, but isolated from motive or consequence, and so unmodified by the irony which time confers. For Ted Hughes violence and power go together : his own gods are makers of the tiger, not the lamb' (A.E.Dyson:Case book: p 116) In some of his poems , Dyson points out the poet seems wholly identified with some moment of power and violence as in 'Hawk Roosting'. In some others he realises the moment fully nut stands apart, a human and time-bound intelligence outside the experience, aware of the unbridgeable gulf between symbol and fact, eternity and time. In the latter kind such as ' The Hawk in the Rain, the violence is balanced by awareness of time.

Poetry need not always evaluate experience. Sometimes its main function is to extend awareness, creating new areas which the reader can assimilate into his own total morality later'.

Hughes seems to be looking for a way of reconciling man with nature or the non-human cosmos. So he identifies these energies and describes them in human terms as well as Nature's terms. The dichotomy between these two angles provide the tension of some of his best poems. Another way of looking at the animal imagery is to see them as metaphors of his own nature, that is to say human nature. The poems give us insights into the battle ground within. The gulf between man and animals is also the gulf between civilized man and the animal in him. This animal, we should realize, is part of his authentic self.

This brings us face to face with the question of Hughes' nihilism. Both Larkin and Hughes have been described as nihilists in the sense that they reject religion and accepted conventions. Ted's own words in those connections are interesting. 'Any form of violence - any form of vehement activity - invokes the bigger energy, the elemental power circuit of the universe. Once the contact has been made - it becomes difficult to control. Something from beyond ordinary human activity enters. When the wise men know how to create rituals and dogma, the energy can be contained. But the old rituals and dogmas have lost credit and new ones have not taken their place. So the effect of the distributed energy is destructive. In the old world God and divine power were invoked.....In the present world we dare not invoke them - we wouldn't know how to use them or stop them destroying us' (Hughes to Ekbert Faa in an interview. Cited in the latter's book *Ted Hughes: The uncommunicated Universe*)

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1. THOM GUNN

INTRODUCTION

Thomson William Gunn was born in 1929 Gravesend, Kent. His father was a Fleet street journalist. Thom was educated at University college school London and Trinity College, Cambridge. He left England and went to the United States of America, where he worked as a teacher of English at the University of California at Berkeley. Thereafter he moved to San Francisco and took up freelancing writing. He was one of the poets of 'The Movement' presented by Robert Conquest in the 1950s in 'New Lines' (see introduction to Philip Larkin) but soon he cut a path for himself and mostly chooses existential themes for his poems. His poems were published under the following titles: *Fighting Terms* (1954), *The Sense of Movement* (1957), *My sad Captains* (1961), *Positives* (1966), *Touch* (1967), and *Jack Strew's Castle* (1976)

A major influence on Thom Gunn is Jean Paul Sartre and his existentialism. Your Winters, William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore are acknowledged by him as having an influence on him. The motor cycle gangs of the 1950s in the USA appealed to Thom's imagination as symbolic or his own existential revolt against the human condition.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THOM GUNN'S POETRY.

1. Existential themes
2. Metaphysical quality - intellectual
3. Irrational element
4. Intuitive. Unified, experience and art, philosophy and image are unified in his poetry.
5. Vivid tensions
6. Intense joy (in friendship, in sex, everything) in balance with great longing for withdrawal of self
7. Irony seasoned with compassion.
8. Astringent observation
9. Sheer delight in diversity, colour, sensation, life itself.
10. His own voice in spite of the varied influences.

11. A certain rare moral fineness concealed in a moral hedonism.

12. Fear of life and death are near allies - this is a constant idea in Gunn.

13. Nothing before birth, nothing after death life vibrant between

14. Syllabic metre (also see general Estimate of Thom Gunn at the end of this unit)

ON THE MOVE

SUBSTANCE

The theme of the poem is Sartre's existential humanism. The existentialists see neither value nor meaning in life and they revolt against it. This poem is a beautiful poetical expression of this philosophic idea of the rejection of life. Without poem will not yield its meaning. It appeared as the first poem in Gunn's collection *The Sense of Movement* (1957)

The epigraph *Man your gotta Go* expresses the quintessential message of the poem: 'Keep moving! Fare forward' (away from this life)

The first stanza describes the birds in the bushes. The blue jay scuffling in the bushes following some hidden purpose, the gust of birds spurring across the field, the wheeling swallows seeking their instinct or their poise, all of them move; they don't stand still. Even these birds have a baffled sense.

The second stanza introduced the motor cycle gangs. 'The humbulging into thunderous noise' is described, also their dusty dress. The noise is described, also their dusty dress. The noise almost holds a meaning for them, (in Communication theory noise is not the same thing as sound. It means indifference with the transmission of a message. We say don't make any noise'. Noise interferes with the communication of meaning. But the noise that the boys make have a meaning for them. Noise communicates meaning -- a contradiction)

The third stanza tells us that they have no precise destination. But they are moving away from a known and futile existence. Their direction is where the (motor cycle) tyres take them. The will

is very powerful. 'Much that is natural' must yield to the will. With the power of will man can make not only the motor cycle but also his own soul. (Sartre says that man can create himself i.e. he can create his soul by arbitrary but important choices. When he makes these choices he cannot fore see their consequences. He cannot govern the consequences of his actions. Nevertheless his actions begat these consequences) therefore he can dare to exercise his will to shape the future through his choices (from the taken routes - 1.24.)

In the fourth stanza the poet realizes that this is a partial solution (to the existential predicament). The individual is not necessarily at odds with this world. He is not a helpless being in an alien world (as existentialism makes out). This is because he is only half animal. Animals act on instinct. Man has will. 'One wakes afloat on movement that divides and breaks. 'By means of his will he can move from one place to another from one state to another. One can join the Movement' (This may be political or even poetical as *The movement* in English poetry of the 1950s). One can move away from a valueless world by making the important choices. Both the hurler and the hurled, both he and the frustrating, valueless world around him move away from this world, somewhere out of it all. Value is imposed by choice (see notes). So one may be moving towards value.

In the final stanza the motor cyclists vanish. They are the self defined (men who manufacture their souls); they rush past seated a stride their created will. The towns they travel through are not really towns inhabited by men and birds, (the birds remind us of the first stanza and the physical world.) This is a country of the mind. Their movement is an intellectual one, not physical (see notes). 'Birds and saints complete their purposes', i.e. men in this physical world will reach some goal or other sooner or later. But these riders are symbolic of the incessant quest. Which will take us away from the frustration and futility of the world. At best they will reach no absolute goal of perfection. At worst they are at least in motion, which takes one nearer the goal than one will be if one keeps still. It is the quest that matters not the goal which might never be reached. Be on the move! Fare forward! Man, you gotta Go, - This is the

final message of the poem.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The epigraph 'Man You gotta Go' expresses the quintessence of the poem. It is the conversation exclamation of the motor - cycle boys of America. It means 'man, you have got to go; you have got to move on somewhere you cannot rest.'

LINES

1. blue joy: a parrot - like bird
scuffling : struggling ; fighting
2. Some hidden purpose; even at the beginning of the poem the idea of a purpose or aim is suggested. It is hidden unknown to the birds, the motor cyclists and the poet himself.
gust of birds : rushing of birds like a rush of wind
3. spurt: rush forth
5. poise : balance
7. baffled sense is suggestive of vague idea behind the urge to move.

The second stanza introduces the motor - cyclist gangs of America of the 1950s

10/11. their hum blges: their humming noise grows louder, they come nearer.

The distance throws them forth: They are thrown forward from a distance

12. held by calf and thigh : They make the noise of the motor cycles themselves louder by some manipulation with their legs (calf and thighs)

13. In goggles.....each of them wears a pair of goggles. They all look alike, they have no individuality; in this they are impersonal.

14. trophied with dust: trophies are usually some memorials that one brings from the battle field or from hunting expeditions. The trophies of these boys are the dust gathered on their jackets by their violent rush.

13-15. The goggles, the dusty jackets etc. give them an appearance of impersonality - they all look alike. But they are really robust. Their robustness is strapped (covered) in doubt; they hide it (robustness) in these external appearance of impersonality.

16. Meaning and noise are opposites; noise is what interfere with communication of meaning. These youngsters almost find meaning in their noise. They have a vague idea that the very noise they make, their movement away from this meaningless, valueless world, holds within it a meaning; That the movement is meaningful was suggested in the last two lines of the stanza (baffled sense; approximate words') in line 16 it is made just a little clearer.

The third stanza takes us further it introduces the idea of a goal towards which they move.

17-18 the destination (conclusion of journey) is vague. 'It has no shape yet' The starting point is known (from known whereabouts')

19. They are directed by their tyres. They go wherever their tyres (their motor cycles) take them. In other words they have no exact destination. (more like a man flying from something that he dreads than one who sought the thing he loved". Wordsworth. But to Wordsworth it was just a simile to show the aimlessness. To the motor cycle boys it is a flight from something that they really dread)

20. The flight of birds is something in nature.

21. The birds are scared by the noise of the boys. The motor cycle is made by the will. It scares the birds of nature. Nature must yield to will. The human will can overcome the futility and frustration of life (nature)

21. both the motor cycle and the soul are made by men by their will. Sartre says that man creates himself (his soul) by making arbitrary but important choice. When we choose a course of action we cannot know its consequences beforehand. But the consequences will follow. So they, men, can use these choices (which they imperfectly control) to dare a future, a destination, a state of meaningful existence. The movement is symbolic of such choices.

25. After all, this aimless rushing forward is not meaningless. It holds, within it at least a partial solution (to the existential predicament)

26. One is not necessarily discord on earth: The existential idea is that the individual human beings born into an alien universe. Through this line Thom Gunn suggests that the alienation of man is not insoluble. It can be solved if only we have will (mentioned in the previous stanza).

27-29 man is not eternally damned. Man is only half animal. One is not governed by instinct; one has will, with to shape the future ("dare a future from the taken routes"- 1.24) One can move consciously though movement might divide and break.

1. 28-29 One wakes afloat on movement. One is wakeful or conscious in movement. In other one can wakefully or consciously move forward.

30 valueless world: This present human existence which has either value nor meaning. Value is not something that is there to be discovered by us but something that we create by our choice. A pencil has no value unless we chose to write it or we are compelled to use it. We can create a value by making choices, by moving away from this valueless world, "by joining the movement".

31. Such a choice will carry both the hurler and the hurled one forward (both the one who joins the movement and the valueless world itself can be changed by our choices, our joining the movement) Here lies the partial solution of 1.25 By the right choices we can transform the life of frustration and futility into one of value and meaning.

32. always toward, toward ; any movement is always toward something. It implies a destination though we do not know it. Any movement therefore that takes us from here will ultimately lead us to the destination.

33. A minute...go : These boys come and go. They belong to time (a minute holds them). They are an instance from actual life. But the poet is concerned with the universal, not the particular, with the ideal, not the actual. Therefore in his hands they become poetic symbols that hold a universal meaning for all time (not a minute)

34. The self- defined : They have defined their position, their attitude; they have made the choice.

Astride : sitting on. The created will: The motor cycle that carry them away from the present are symbolic of the will they created, the will they have exercised in making their choice.

35. The towns that they travel through are home for neither bird nor holiness: It is not the world of actuality; It is a country of the mind as in Yeats's Sailing to Byzantium. The world of poetic imagination the poet sees them as a world out of time. These towns are

not the towns we see in the maps.

37. Birds and men arrive at the end of their quests some time or other. These boys and their machines will never complete their journey. They are the symbols of the eternal movement.

38-40. To keep moving and not keeping still is the that we can do. At best we reach somewhere, perhaps we may not reach an absolute finality where we can rest. All that we can hope to do is to be nearer that goal and that is possible only by moving on.

The last two lines contain the message of the poem. In one respect this poem has affinity with Tennyson's Ulysses for whom "all experience is an arch where thro' gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades for ever and for ever when I move", with Yeats' Sailing to Byzantium and the ancient Indian Upanishads containing the exhortation "Charaivethi Charaivethi" (Keep on moving).

2. IN SANTA MARIA DEL POPOLO

SUBSTANCE:

Thom Gunn had visited Italy when he was young. This poem recalls his visit to a church while he was in Rome. The church is named Santa Maria del popolo (church of Saint Mary of the people). Gunn saw a painting there "The conversion of St. Paul" by Michaelangelo. The picture shows Paul lying on the ground. His earlier name was Saul and he was a persecutor of the Christians. As he journeyed he came to Damascus, where a bright light from heaven struck him down. As he fell down he heard a voice telling him "Sual, Sual why do you persecuter me ?" His vision of God was stunning and it left him blind. But Ananias cured him of his blindness.

The painting shows the sudden conversion of Saul. The poet waits for the sunlight to fall on this particular painting. The shadow in the painting brims with a real shadow, that drowns all the shapes in the picture. Only the horse's haunch and some of its limbs are seen. But evening comes and the slanting sunshine falls on the picture. Beneath the horse and an indifferent groom Saul lies sprawling. His face is hidden. The clever artist has limited the picture to a wide gesture of the fallen Saul's lifted arms. This is before Anaias comforts and converts him. The artist has cleverly left it out. It is the

symbolic gesture of Saul's isolation that is stressed. Gunn remembers that Michaelangelo had painted characters from low life, prostitutes, cardsharpers etc. He, the painter was strangled for money by such a character. (It has been pointed out that he was not really murdered).

The poet turns to the interior of the church where people are at prayer, mostly old women. They are too weary to take any interest in the painted gesture of Saul.

The poet seems to convey the idea that even St. Paul is unable to communicate with the Christian worshippers, his followers. What is shown in the picture is his wide gesture of isolation. It is nothingness that even these great men embrace. This is usual existentialist theme.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

LINES

2. Oblique : slanting in the afternoon.
4. Caravaggio: Michaelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio was his full name.
7. Haunch : the hind part of the horse
8. We doubt what the theme of the picture is because only the horse's hunch is seen clearly.
10. him: Saul
12. Saul becoming Paul : the sudden Conversion of Saul into Paul.
14. cacophony : confusion (usually of sound but here the poet uses it to describe visual forms).
15. You Wily painter. The poet is addressing him in lines 13-16
17. Ananias : A Christian of Damascus directed by God to touch Saul and cure his blindness.
20. Candour : frankness
22. young whore: Mary Magdalen, a painting by Caravaggio.
- 22-23 reference to another painting by the same artist. The Cardsharpers. Both paintings are in the Doria Gallery of Rome now.

A GENERAL ESTIMATE

THOM GUNN

It has been remarked that Thom Gunn has been an intellectual poet bearer to the metaphysicals than even Eliot, almost equal to Donne (especially in Fighting Terms). More important than this is another aspect of his poetic personality, his intuitiveness. This gives him unified sensibility, which fuses experience and art. His philosophy is obviously existentialism. Many of his poems deal with existential themes. A.E. Dyson remarks that even this, is a servant, an accessory - philosophy fused with image. The world in which he lives - the parts of it that we see through his poems involves tensions. For example there is tension between intense joy of life and the existential longing for the withdrawal of self. He finds joy friendship, in sex, in loud boisterous men etc. Another facet of this tension is the one between irony on the one hand and compassion on the other.

Another quality worth noting is his astringent observation, which lends him delight in diversity, colour and sensuousness, in short, delight in life itself. This joy goes against the general tone and temper of the times which is one of despair. In his particular aspect R.S. Thomas and Ted Hughes are one with Thom Gunn. The Metaphysicals, Hardy Yeats, Auden, The Beat Poets of America, all have an influence on Thom Gunn. His voice in the poems is his own authentic voice. He is eager for life, observant, loving, amused by human folly and subtle. These show that there is a moralist in him. But he is without malice or cant.

There is no place for God in his world. He sees nothing before birth and after death but there is life vibrant between these. The circumstance surrounding life is Nothingness. Life is like a lamp; it burns. You blow it off and there and end. Referring to his poem. A waking Dream in which Gunn sees very vividly Tony White a friend who died in an accident and communicates that vision to us A.E. Dyson remarks that "there is a moral fineness concealed in Gunn's amoral hedonism". This consists an instinct of life and love balanced against fear of death. Fear of death and fear life are constant companions this is a recurring theme in Gunn.

We have to see the poems in the light of the above remarks.

In Santa Maria Del Popolo Gunn sees only the wide gestures of isolation on the part of Saul. It is nothingness that even these saintly people embrace. This is his usual existential theme. In the poem "On the move" the obvious theme is the existential withdrawal. But there is a positive force, a vibrant dynamism in the movement of motor cycle boys which cannot be equated with withdrawal. But there is a positive force, a vibrant dynamism in the movement of motor cycle boys which cannot be equated with withdrawal with negation. It is an affirmation, a will to dare a future to create a future by moving away from this existence of futility. Here certainly it is not a vision of Nothingness surrounding life, but something which they are moving.

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CHARLES TOMLINSONS

Born at Stoke - - on Trent in 1927. educated at the local school and at Cambridge. Then he took to teaching and is now reader in English at the University of Bristol. He is a graphic artist and poet. There are similarities between his paintings and his poems. His poems were published under the following titles.

The Necklace, Seeing is Believing, a Peopled Landscape. American Scenes. The Way of a World, Written on Water. The Way in.

The Way of world is the best collection Swimming Chenango Lake is the opening piece in The Way of a World and it is considered to be his best poem.

Acute observation of nature is one of his traits. He is fastidious in his concern for details. Visual details predominate. This is a Wordsworthian transcendental concern. Nor is there Keats' sensuousness. He is unlike Ted Hughes in so far as he does not personalise nature. He was careful about technical effect and rhythmic nuances. A certain elemental force is noticeable in his work.

SWIMMING CHENANGO LAKE (SUBSTANCE)

Chenango Lake is in New York State, USA. Chenango is a name derived from the Red Indians who lived there long ago. Winter will come soon and the water will freeze into ice preventing swimming. It is autumn now and the water is hesitant. There is a wealth of ways; he can swim wherever he please. But though the water is calm there is a kind of stir. Leaves have fallen before he (the Swimmer) has jumped in and made ripples causing widening circles. This is a kind of geometry in the water. The pattern of the plentiful clouds is reflected in the water below. To balance the circles made by the leaves there are these floating images of clouds. The pattern is of angles and elongation. Every tree appears as a cypress tree in the water. Every bush is reflected as a shaft of fire. It is really a geometry, a pattern, not a fantasia of distorting forms. It is really a geometry, a pattern, not a fantasia of distorting forms. It is constant, hard - grained (grain) in texture. The eye has seen enough. It has to be recalled. In other words he has stop observing the details of the visual forms on the water and start swimming. In swimming he cuts (scissors) the water in to two as he moves forward. The coldness of the water holds him tight and he yields to the grip. For to swim means to have control over the water's meaning, to be in its embrace and to be able to move. He is free momentarily and in space, his element, next he is taking a place (a where) in water. This position is again given up willingly at each stroke. The water torn by him closes behind him and heals itself (It is as if he has cut the water and the wound heals itself as soon he has rushed forward). The image of the water shadows him like a large wing. He is alone, solitary, unnamed by this baptism. He loses his identity in the immersion in water and also naming the child. Here this baptism unnames him in the sense that the experience effaces his ego. This leads him to think of the name Chenango which continues. This world had a meaning in a lost language. The swimmer begins to construe the language of the lake's water (speech of densities etc. Being human he faces it and being human he draws back from the cold. The mercilessness of the water shows a kind of mercy in sustaining him. The sun is about to set and a wind is shattering the forms and images in the water, the flowing rock (obsid-

ian) and the moving ripples.

GEOFFREY HILL

INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Hill (born 1932) was born in Bromsgrove Wocrester, in 1932, and attended Bromsgrove grammar school in 1950. He went to kebla college, Oxford to read English. At Oxford he was a contemporary of Adrian Mitchell. "The elder states man of literary protest". He began teaching at Leeds university where he has remained combining full time academic work with an attempt to maintain his poetic vocation.

In 1952, When he was twenty, the Fantasy press issued a pamphlet containing five of his early poems. Hill has published, at discrete intervals only four books. For the Unfallen (1959). King Log (1968) Mercian Hymns (1971) and Tenebral (1978). Some where is such a Kingdom (1975) collects his whole out put from 1952 on wards. His version of Ibsens Brand was presented at the National Theatre in 1978. His reputation as a poet has grown slowly but steadily, but now he is the reputation as a poet has grown slowly but steadily, but now he is generally recognized as the outstanding poet of his generation. He is the recipient of several awards: some among them are Gregory Award 1972. He now lives in Leeds, Yorkshire. His debt to the poets of the first and Second world wars is evident. Keith Douglas and Issac Rosenberg in particular Influenced Hills Writing. Judging from the fantasy press pamphlet from the outset, Poets who "knew the clear/ fullness of vision" - Dunbar, smart Blake and Chancer other than the two already mentioned. And the example of the metaphysical was never faraway.

OVID IN THE THIRD REICH

MEANINGS AND EXPLANATIONS;

Ovid: (Publius Ovidius Naso) (43 B.C.-A.D.18) The Roman Poet was banished from Rome by Augustus in 8 A.D. to Tomi near the mouths of the Danube for reasons connected with his "ars amatoria" and some scandal affecting the imperial family and there

he died eventually His "Tristia" and "Epistulae ex ponto" contain a pathetic account of his sufferings in exile. His masterpiece is Metamorphoses. He wrote in elegiacs, and was the favourite Latin poet of the Middle Ages.

Third Reich: The word "Reich" is usually used with reference to Germany in the sense of realm, nation or empire. The first Reich refers to the Holy Roman Empire until dissolution in 1806. The Second Reich refers to the German empire during 1871 -1919, up to the end of the first world war. The Third Reich refers to Germany during the Nazi regime (1933-45) under the powerful, cruel dictator Hitler. The third reich is associated with concentration camps gas chambers, torture cells, mass exile refugee bulks and all sorts of the worst unimaginable evils.

The Latin epigraph (Amores III xiv) in Christopher Marlowe's translation, reads she hath not trod away that both deny it, such as confess have lost their good names by it.

I: As in many of Hill's poems 'the impersonal "I" conveys experience and not an obstructive self.

Line 1: The speaker in the poem can be any citizen in a totalitarian state of the present century, an unknown citizen, peace loving and non interfering in official matters, but one who is often victimised by the state. He is interested in his work and loves his family.

God is distant difficult; That god as a "pure force" not malignant but neutrally present is a prevalent theme of Hill's early poems. Even divine intercession seems to afford little relief in confronting the problems of tyranny, torture and violent death.

Things happen : The pace of life is so quick and uncertain that they just seem to happen without the common man's comprehension

Troughs: long open box for animals to feed or drink from, troughs of the sea refer to long hollows between waves.

Ancient troughs of blood " reference to bloodshed and killing in the past under regimes compare "I have waded far through the oceans of blood" ("Macbeth"). The imagery of callous killing and bloody wars rendering the lives of ordinary unknown citizens hollow (as the troughs, and meaningless is conveyed.

Things happen....troughs of blood: Violence and bloodshed have always been a part of human activities from the First Reich to the Third Reich. There is a contraction of the time sense here. The memories of ancient violence merge so naturally with the modern acts of violence actually perpetrated that they seem to be juxtaposed.

Line 4: a professed innocence of evils is an inadequate defence against the terrible facts about us. Innocence has always been considered a divine quality worthy of being cultivated. See no evil hear no evil, speak no evil'. But such a stand is only appreciated but it is also considered unsafe dangerous in the modern context.

LINE 5:

look down despise, consider oneself superior to; show false contempt for.

Demand : the demand of condemned souls in hell; a word associated with 'death' very common in Hill's poetry'

sphere : region, place, (hell)

harmonize : blend, live in accord

love - chair : love song

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

The poem Ovid in the Third Reich is a highly allusive and symbolic poem. The Latin poet was exiled in the First Reich. The poem presents the same Ovid in the Third Reich, that is Germany during the Nazi regime (1933-45) under the powerful cruel dictator Hitler. Ovid has recounted his trials and tribulations in exile in his works. *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex ponto*. But the poet suggests that they are nothing compared to the sufferings of a modern exile or refugee or victim of the Third Reich which is associated with concentration camps gas chambers, torture cells and all sorts of the worst unimaginable evils.

The plight of such a victim is presented in the poem. The speaker begins by saying that he loves his work and his children. He is an ordinary person, a non-entry, totally indifferent, even pathetic to the affairs of the state-machinery or the developments taking place around him. He remarks that god is distant, difficult. Like Issac Rosenberg with whom he bears thematic affinities, Hill too rejects benevolent God. There is an analogy between Rosenberg's

early idea of god and Hill's - seen as a pure force not malignant but neutrally present. The speaker does not find any solace in god's who seems to be beyond his reach or understanding.

The speaker is not able to comprehend the real significance of all that is happening around him. He observes that things happen too near the ancient troughs of blood. Violence and bloodshed have always been a part of human activities right from the First Reich to the Third Reich. There is contraction of the time sense here. The memories of ancient violence merge acts of wickedness actually perpetrated that they appear to be juxtaposed. The perpetual existence of power struggle and cruelty gives time a continuity.

The poet realizes sardonically that "Innocence is no earthly weapon in other words, professed innocence of evil is an inadequate defence against the terrible facts around us. Innocence has always been considered a divine quality worthy of being cultivated "See no evil, hear no evil speak no evil". But such a stand is not only appreciated but is also considered unsafe and dangerous in the modern context.

His bitter experience as a victim of the tyranny and atrocities of the modern totalitarian state has taught the poet one thing and that is not to look down so much upon the demand. They in their sphere harmonize strangely with the divine loves, while he celebrates the love choir in his. There is a veiled insinuation that existence in the Third Reich is so torturesome and hellish that it is no better than eternal damnation perhaps even worse.

The epigraph preceding the eight line poem in Christopher Marlowe's translation reads;

"She halt not trod awry that doth deny it,

Such as confess have lost their good names by it."

It ironically sums up the trend of morality in modern times. One may resort to hypocrisy, fraudulent practice and other foul things in order to amass wealth and obtain power. But it is very necessary that all these must be convened up, lest one should lose one's reputation.

The poem Ovid in the Third Reich is the first one in Hill's collection *King Long* whose principle theme is power-in various guises

- and the individual's relationship to it. "A political concern which mates recent atrocities with the outrages of more remote history is one of Hill's great strengths as a poet", remarks George Macbeth, and this poem amply bears out that truth. Violence, and brutal punishment remain as damaging and acceptable in the 1940's as they were in the ancient times. Perhaps they have become worse. The poem alludes to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the consequent suffering with the authority of something remembered rather than something imagined. Hill's remarkable sense. The theme suggests contemporary analogies without forfeiting its historical particularity "What makes the experience resonant is that it is unfinished" (Michael Schmidt)

The "I" in the poem does not refer to any specific person including the poet. It represents merely a voice of any person who has had the experience recounted in the poem, and is not therefore an obtrusive "self". Death-related words like "blood", "weapon", "demand" etc. abound in Hill's poem including the present piece. The poem is written in just eight lines made up of two quatrains. The rhymes are not perfect to the ear or the eye. They are imperfect. The lines rhyme alternatively a b a b c d c d (God - blood; happen- weapon down divine; and sphere choir) the "d" and "n" sounds recur. "The ancient troughs of blood" is a powerful imagery. The poet has employed harsh irony in metaphorising innocence as an earthly weapon. The development of the thought is logical. The first quatrain presents the speaker's predicament; the second his attitude formed as a result of his experiences. Altogether "Ovid in the Third - Reich" is a powerful though short poem.

GEOFFREY HILL'S POETRY - A GENERAL ESTIMATE

Of the many good poets in his generation (Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes, Peter Porter, for example) Geoffrey Hill had been one of the slowest to achieve wide recognition and there is still a sense in which he is very much a poet's poet. The high seriousness of his output is unquestionable but it can seem unapproachably difficult at first glance. *Merlin* is relatively easy to grasp if the historical allusions are known. So too *Ovid in the Third Reich* which has a logical coherence among all its eight lines. But the fifteen sequences of three quatrains each which make up his lyrical composition. The *Pentecost Castle* is a rather obscure or tough poem since amorous and

religious images and themes are abruptly juxtaposed. Repeated reading and pondering are required before the poem begins to make sense, perhaps the combination of precision and energy in his diction is what will most immediately excite and attract the reader. Hill can seem as remote, though in his own way almost as grand as the young Milton. His work repays a slow study.

Like Ted Hughes, Hill is concerned with power, but he explores it through history and not through myth. Throughout *King Log*, the principal theme is power in various guises - and the individual's relationships to it. Many of his poems explore social and natural tyranny. In *Mercian Hymns*, the poet approached the subject from another angle from the point of view of the empowered. "King Log" begins with "Ovid in the Third Reich" expresses a desire to be left untouched by the terrible happenings around him. Thus Hill explores power from the perspective of the powerful - the empowered - and the powerless - the victim power need to be only political: there is also the power of love as implied by the *Pentecost* sequence.

The language of many of Hill's poems is literally spat out. The tough phrases carry the weight of literary usage and yet are crude and new. The lines are effectively bitter off at the rhymes and yet the breaks are unexpected miming pain struggle or disgust. "The twisting paradoxical progression of thought are symptomatic of a struggle that surrounds him". (Garth Clucas). Hill is careful in his use of consonants. One sometimes feels that the vowels are not as well-chosen. The paradoxes in the poems and the brilliant combinations of opposite (as in the *Pentecost* castle for example) are characteristically dealt. He writes about the "proud citadel of meekness" splendidly shining darkness" and so on.

An awareness of history and mythology is indispensable for thorough comprehension of Hill's poems, he ventures to specific moments in history to give meaning to his diverse perceptions of life and suffering or at least to employ them as a context in which they can be analysed. The poems *Merlin* and *Ovid in the Third Reich* recount names and incidents from ancient legend and history with the authority of something remembered rather than something imagined, revealing Hill's sharp historical senses. Their themes suggest contemporary analogies without forfeiting its historical peculiarity.

What makes the experience resonant is that it is unfinished. What is unfinished or flawed is for Hill haunting and generative. He does not go in quest of what was. Martyr's truncated lives are therefore of meaning is their incompleteness, such a paradoxical view of life is prevalent in much of Hill's poetry.

In Michel Schimdt's opinion, it would be wrong to speak of Hill Poems - even those credited to specific speakers - as dramatic monologues. They are soliloquies rather than expository set speeches ruminations from within an experience, not about experience. The speakers do not set out to evoke themselves. The impersonal "I" conveying experience and not an obstusive "self" is characteristic of Hill's poetry. Merlin, Ovid in the third Reich and the Pentecost castle are all illustration. Again it is wrong to consider Hill a baroque poet in his approach to subject matter, in other words one who uses a highly grotesque or ornated approach. The baroque element is in the language where each word demands attention and relates to its neighbours. On several different planes Hill's poem's are almost inexhaustibly generous in their meanings. For the same reason, they are often tough and obscure.

The principal flaw in all his poems is Hill's willingness to place too much trust in gritty, immediately effective words, they tend at times to neutralize each other. The tone too can become Monotonous, as though the poet feels the poem can exist at only on pitch and use one register of language with effect's as though certain experiences, ideas emotions, have no place and the scope of the poetry is limited. These limitations and restriction are an aspect of his integrity. However, "One feels that he is deleneating the areas in which his poetry will exist. But that the beset poetry from within those frontiers has yet to come, and will come only when he takes his territory for granted" (Michael schmidt)

There is little doubt that Hill has profited indirectly through the modernist writers-from Henri Bengson's ideas about time which Sartre summarised in these terms. On going into the past an event does not cease to be; it merely ceases to act and remains "in its place" at its date for eternity, in this way being has been restored to the past.... and the past is continually organised with the present. All the three prescribed poems illustrate the interpenations of the past and the present and the presentness of all times. Such an

approach serves to universalize themes and issues.

The formal versatility of Hill's work is extraordinary. As in the work of Ted Hughes, one finds that the common element in all the poems is their tone. Darkness, gloom, blood and death are seldom absent from the work, this insistent, Some what narrow however some critics complain about the deliberate (some others say over deliberate) nature of his writing, especially in the long - lined poems, "the veritable cramming of every rift with ore". Their opinion is that Hill's poetry thus becomes stifled in a kind of absolute verbal control. But there are other critics and readers who find this verbal control, which at times is capable of amazing lightness as well as serious deliberation a rare virtue in modern poetry. Like R.S.Thomas, Geoffrey Hill also has not received due recognition, it may because his poems are too grand and obscure. Too Miltonic or Brownian to become immediately popular, we may hope that in the years to come, Hill may win the laurels he deserves as an outstanding poet of our time.

MODEL ANNOTATION

Things Happen

Too near the ancient trough of blood
Innocence is no earthly weapon

Geoffrey Hill is one of the outstanding poets of our time and his writings are highly allusive obscure and difficult to grasp. One of his very allusive and symbolic poems "Ovid in the Third Reich" subtly presents the plight and mental trauma of a victim like Ovid the eruct in the Third Reich, that is Germany during the Nazi Regime (1933-45). The speaker a non - entity totally indifferent or even apathetic to the affairs of the rigid state machinery makes this remark.

The speaker notices that things happen too near and too quickly that he cannot comprehend their real sense he further realizes in such a predicament, a professed innocence of evil is an inadequate defence against the terrible facts around us.

There is a contraction of the time sense here. The memories of ancient violence merge so naturally and spontaneously with the modern acts of wickedness actually preponderated that they appear to be juxtaposed. The perpetual existence of power struggle and cruelty give time a continuity.

SEAMUS HEANEY

INTRODUCTION

Irish poet and essayist Seamus Heaney won the 1995 Nobel Literature prize "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth". He was born into a peasant family of eight children in Country Londonderry, Northern Ireland on April 13, 1939. He was educated at St. Columb's Colleges and Queen's University, Belfast, after his schooling at Anahorish school. He took a BA (Hons) in English in 1961. As Michael Schmidt observes: "Born on the land the eldest of eight children trained academically and became a lecturer". He married Marie Devlin in 1965 and the Heaneys have two sons.

Besides his teaching Heaney did regular radio work and composed poems. As his poetry began to attract attention a succession of academic posts beckoned him, he taught at various American universities, between 1989 and 1994 he was both the professor of poetry at Oxford and the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard. He soon became the leading poet of his province. His first book of poems *Death of a naturalist* published in 1966 brought him wide recognition. Later collections include *Door into the Dark* (1969) *Wintering Out* (1972) *North* (1975) and *Field work* (1979). The particularity of his early poems is that they describe his own rural background infused with the rhythm and rhymes of the songs and chants of childhood. Once he had exhausted the early vein Heaney began to explore his Ireland through emblems of its past and with travel, he gained a clearer perspective on the situation and on his place within it. The example of Patrick Kavanagh was important to him when he began. So too was that of R.S. Thomas. He learned much from his near contemporaries.

Winner of several prestigious literary awards the Eric Gregory prize, The Geoffrey Faber award, the Somerset Maugham prize, Irish Academy of Letters Award, E.M. Foster Award to mention just a few Heaney has never forsaken his humility. Temperamentally shy, he was highly distrustful of publicity.

Heaney, the third Irishman to take the world's most prestigious literary award - the Nobel prize - after W.B. Yeats won it in 1923 and Samuel Beckett in 1969, left Northern Ireland in 1972 and

has lived in Dublin for twenty years.

I FUNERAL RITES

MEANINGS AND EXPLANATIONS

Shouldered: made (one's) way through a crowd by pushing with the shoulder, took on the shoulders a great burden or responsibilities.

Manhood : maturity

laid out : arranged, designed and displayed

tainted : decayed or made infected, poverty, ignorance and lack of antiseptics made the rooms stink because of the decaying corpses.

glistening : shining (because of tears)

dough : mixture of flour, water etc. in a paste (for making cake bread etc.)

dough - white : soft, flabby and pale.

shackled : chained

rosary beads : a string of beads for keeping count of prayers

hands / shackled rosary beads "the string of rosary beads on the hand of the corpses of mourners appears as shackles of chains to the boys' imagination, implying grief allowed little freedom for prayers.

Puffed knuckles : blown out or swollen bones at finger joints, suggesting the person was applying himself earnestly to a piece of work.

unwrinkled : stretched, exerted.

dulse : coarse, edible red seaweed.

dulse - brown : reddish brown, suggestive of blood and death

shroud : cloth or sheet to be wrapped round a corpse.

quilted : having soft material between layers of cloth.

cribs : usually a child's bed with enclosed sides. (here) the confined space within the coffin.

courteously : showing due respect

flames hovering : flames swaying

Women hovering : women waiting about, remain at or near.

gleaming : shining

scapstone : a massive variety of talc with a soapy or greasy

feel, used for hearths, washtubs etc.

soapstone marks : marks made of soapstone.

masks : suggest hiding one's true emotions and putting on a show of sorrow courteously as in the fourth stanza.

igloo : dome shaped winter hut made of blocks of hard used by the Eskimos. (here) suggests the coldness and hardness of death.

igloo brows : cold, hard foreheads of the dead which appear as dome shaped igloos to the poet's imagination.

suffice : be content with

sunk : driven in

glacier : mass of ice formed by snow falling and accumulating on mountains moving very slowly along a valley.

Black glacier/of each funeral : a picturesque description of the slow procession of mourners in traditional Christian, funeral, all in black, Glacier like igloo brings out the hardness and coldness of death: while the snail pace at which the funeral procession is moving is suggested by the slow moving of the glacier.

Neighbourly murder. Note the subtle punning of "neighbourly" as it qualifies "murder". The expression could mean murder of neighbour" murder in the neighbourhood or "murder by a neighbour" implying treachery or extremist killing.

pine for : yearn or long for

ceremony : religious services etc. special acts or rites etc, on an occasion such as a funeral, wedding and so on.

customary : according to custom, habit or tradition

customary rhythms : regular succession or recurrence of customary or traditional acts (here) associated with a funeral.

Temperate : moderate, avoiding extremes.

Cortege : train of attendants or a long procession of mourners as for instance at the funeral of a king or president.

winding past : going not in a straight path blinded home : home where the windows are covered with black curtains a sign of mourning.

I would : I wish or desire

restore : bring back

Boyne : A river in the republic of Ireland rising in the bog of Allen near Carbury in county Wick and eventually flowing into the

Irish sea. It figures largely in Irish history. The battle of the Boyne was fought in July 1690 between the force of King William III and the former King James on the banks of this river. That battle is celebrated in northern Ireland by Organemen (members of a secret protestant society formed in the north of Ireland in 1795) as a victory for the protestant cause on July 12. Note how a single word evokes so many associations.

chambers : burial chambers or vault.

sepulchre : tomb, especially one cut out in rock or built of stone

purring cars : cars whose engines make a low, continuous vibrating sound - expressing pleasure.

nose into line : go forward carefully one behind the other.

tunes : sounds harmoniously.

muffled drumming : the sound of the drumming made dull by wrapping it up in cloth etc.

somnolent : sleep walking

somnolent Women : perhaps mentally disturbed sleep walking women thus reduced by extremist's killing of their beloved ones.

mounds" (here) burial mounds or mounds of earth over a grave.

boulevard : wide city street often with trees on each side.

Gap of the North : the destination of the funeral procession.

megalithic : made of large stones. Especially one used as a monument (as in very early times)

Stone : resumes the connection with megalithic

strange and carting fiords : Afoord or fiord is a long narrow arm of the sea between high cliffs the places are Strangeford and Caligford.

strang fiord : strangeford is an inlet of the Irish Sea in county Down, North Ireland. It afforded sheltered entry to North East Ireland from early times (its name is Norse) and there settlement around its shores).

Carling fiord : Carlingford is a market town, resort and port in Ireland it is alleged to be the place where St. Patrick landed in 432 AD.

Cud : food which oxen cows etc, bring from the first stomach

and chew again

cud of memory : reflection or pondering over past memories.

allayed : made less. (pain, fear, doubt etc)

arbitration : settlement of a dispute by the decision of a person or persons chosen and accepted as judges or umpires.

feud : bitter quarrel between two persons, families or groups, over a long period of time.

placated : pacified or appeased, made calm

those under the hill : the buried ones

disposed dead and got rid of : places (the dead) in suitable position (as in a coffin) a beautiful pun.

Gunner (or Gunther) Burgundian king (died 437 AD who was the hero of many medieval legends. He is mentioned in the 12th century German epic Nibelungenleid. He and his followers were slain upon his sister's orders while visiting the court of her second husband.

though dead by violence : reference to Gunnar's death upon, his sister's orders.

unavenged : not revenged for.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

"Funeral Rites" which is included in the collection *North* (1975) is regarded by many as Seamus Heaney's most mature poetic composition. The poem, is written in three sections. The first section relations. The poet, remembers how in the past he had made his way through the crowd assembled in the house of a dead relation. Shuddering "a kind of manhood", stepping into lift the coffins of dead relations. They had been laid out in tainted or infected rooms. Poverty, ignorance and lack of antiseptics made the rooms stink because of the decaying corpses.

The boy's imagination recaptures a picturesque description of the corpses. Their eyelids were glistening probably due to tears. Their soft and flabby pale hands were shackles in rosary beads. Their puffed knuckles had unwrinkled, the nails were darkened and the writes obediently sloped. The boy knelt courteously "admiring" the whole thing including the reddish brown shroud. And the quilted satin cribs. The wax melted down and veined the candles whose flames swayed. Women hovered around, behind the boy and al-

ways the coffin lid with its nail heads dressed with little gleaming crosses stood in a corner. The mourners who had come to pay their last homages to the dear departed are described as "dear soapstone masks". Implying that many of them put on a show of grief rather. Courteously "as in the fourth stanza they had to be content with "kissing their igloo brows. Before the coffin was placed and the nails were driven in. The section ends with the poet remarking that "the black glacier of each funeral. Pushed away. It is a picturesque description of the slow procession of mourners in a traditional Christian funeral all in black. Glacier like igloo brings out the hardness and coldness of death, while the snail pace of which the funeral procession is moving is suggested by the slow moving of the glacier.

The second section is a subtle delicately satirical meditation on the extremist killings in a modern totalitarian revolutionary or violent political set up. It opens effectively with the poet remarking that as news comes in of "each neighbourly murder", we pine for ceremony and customary rhythms! There is subtle punning of "neighbourly" as it qualifies "murder" it could mean murder of a neighbour or murder in the neighbourhood or murder by a neighbour, implying treachery or violent killing. Gone are the days of a ceremonious funeral with all its traditional rites: Religious service, solemn procession of mourners meandering or winding past homes where the windows are covered with black curtains as a sign of mourning and also as a mark of due respect to the dear departed.

The poet expresses an ardent desire to restore the burial chambers or vaults on the banks of River Boyne in Ireland and prepare a sepulchre or stone tomb under the cupmarked stones. Boyne which figures largely in Irish history evokes memories of the struggle and victory of the Protestants in North Ireland over the mother country England. He then describes the modern scene. Family cars one after another move into line, their engines making a pleasurable sound! The whole of ten thousand engines. A third is a subtle suggestion that a funeral is an occasion for pomp and celebration for all more concerned. The outward show is a cover up for the callousness and lack of feeling on the part of the mourners. "Some nambulant women" probably mentally distributed sleep - walking

women thus reduces by extremists willing of their beloved ones, are left behind to move through emptied kitchen, imagining our slow triumph towards the burial mounds. Quite as a snake in its grassy beoulevard or city avenues, the splendid funeral procession drag's its tail out of the Grasp of the north as its head already enters the megalithic doorway. Perhaps of a big graveyard.

The final action of the poem contain a vision of the dead disposed like the Viking chieftain Gunnar in his tomb. The poet says that when they have put the stone back in its mouth we shall drive north again past strange ford and Carlingord, full of Irish associations. The cud of memory is allayed for once. Arbitration or settlement of the prolonged dispute are placated or pacified, and we imagine that those buried under the hill are disposed like the Viking or Burgondian king Gunnar who lay beautiful inside his burial mound though dead by violence and unavenged people said that he was chatting verses about honor and that four heights burned in corners of the chamber which opened then as he turned with a joyful face to look at the moon. Thus the poem ends abruptly and dramatically with the allusion to Gunnar and his followers being killed treacherously upon his sister's orders.

Funeral Rites is a remarkable poem for several reasons. The-matically it is very mature. Realistic and relevant. George Macbeth remarks : "we move from a child hood recall of" dead relation to a mediation on the extremist killings and finally to a vision of the dead "disposed" like the Viking chieftain Gunner in his tomb." The conventional funeral rites are described with meticulous care and picturesque in the first section comprising eight stanzas. The mourners with this soapstone marks as also the poet attend them courteously. Admiring it all! The poet had indeed succeeded in giving a realistic picture of conventional funerals in a community. Which people attend as a duty.

The extremist killings and the subsequent funeral is mentioned in the second section made up of seven stanzas they are totally lacking in all traditional rites. Instead there is much pomp and show. Full honour in accordance with the importance of the post held by the dead man while alive. This section brings to our minds the numerous funeral of statesman and leaders of state shot dead by as-

sassins (identified or otherwise) of revolutionaries who are killed as martyrs for a noble cause. In all such cases the funeral is less religious and more show. The more cars, the greater noises (of purring engines) The bigger number of dignitaries attending the funeral, the greater the structure of the dead man and his importance. Heaney is subtly but vehemently criticizing this mockery of a funeral, where people who count use such death to parade their self importance and prosperity build monuments make meaningless speeches and so on.

The third and final section is the briefest made up of five stanzas only. Driving back from the grand funeral mentioned in the previous section, the poet enters a mood of reflection. His mind thinks of all such people lying under the burial mounds killed by enemies or extremists without having a chance to avenge their violent deaths. This contemplative mood enables him to conjure up a vision of the Viking king Gunnar in his beautiful tomb. He even visualizes the serene, poetic scene just before he was treacherously killed. Thus Heaney shoes how funeral rites vary from age to age according to change in political set up, social customs etc. but death remains the same naked reality.

George Macbeth is all praise for the technical excellence of the poem "One of the finest poems from North, in the four, square, slow paced stanza Heaney has made his own - thus he describes Funeral Rites. Its shift between two - and three - stress line effectively avoids that perpetual danger of Irish poetry the oblique echoing of Yeats. On this theme, namely the deaths or disposal of men for political reasons, that avoidance is a triumph.

The synthesis of past present is enriching. It helps to universalize the phenomenon of death. It becomes piteous and noble in a way that goes beyond explicit commentary. The imagery employed in the poem is striking. The dough white hands shackled in rosary beads. The soapstone masks kissing their igloo brows. The black glacier of each funeral are all brilliant examples. And there is an urbane and generous balance in the placing of words like "courteously" and in the subtle punning of "neighbourly" as it qualifies murder. To quote George Macbeth once again. "Amongst Ulster poets, perhaps only Louis Macneice if he had lived, could have

achieved the technical precision and historical perspective of a poem like Funeral Rites it creates a new kind of political poem for our time".

II A CONSTABLE CALLS

MEANINGS AND EXPLANATIONS

His : the constable's

bicycle : "Even the innocent bicycle takes weapon of war. As the poem proceeds.

Rubber cowl : long loose gown made of rubber or similar water proof material (as worn by policemen) with a hood that can be pulled over the heads, a covering.

Mudguard : a guard (curved cover) so placed as to protect riders or passengers from mud thrown by the wheel of a bicycle, automobile or the like.

Skirting : Passing along the edge of

Spud : A potato, a spadelike instrument especially one with a narrow blade as for digging up roots. Heaney takes the imagery from the countryside to create the right atmosphere.

Gleaming : shining

cocked back : raised backwards

pedal treads : grooved part of a tyre or pedal which touches the ground.

boot of the law : ironic reference to the constable, a frightening symbol in a rigid political set up.

bevel : the slant or slope of a line or surface when not at right angles with another.

tillage : The art or practice of tilling the land

tillage returns : income from cultivation (of crops)

roods : units of land measure

perches : measure of length especially for land.

Arithmetic and fear : A very telling phrase which brings out the atmosphere of terror in an ordinary peasants's house measures and returns by a B-special.

Holster : Leather case for a pistol or revolver.

Braid : Number of strands (of silk, linen etc.) woven together

cord : twisted strands thicker than string thinner than rope.

Imangolds : a kind of root crop

turnips : a root (vegetable)

black hole : a small prison cell

barracks : building for lodging soldiers.

baton : policeman's short stick uses as a weapon

doomsday book : Ironical reference to the heavy ledger carried by the constable.

Domesday : Dooms day

Domesday book : record of a survey of the land of England made by order of William the conqueror about 1086 giving ownership extent, value etc. of the properties. Also Domesday Book.

bicycle ticked : like a bomb!

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

A constable calls is one of Seamus Heaney's most directly political and committed poems. Though the reminiscences of a seemingly insignificance, innocuous experience, the poet creates an atmosphere of terror and night marish horror. A constable calls on or visits the poet's father. The whole encounter is seen through the boy's eyes. The policeman's bicycle stood at the window - sill. The rubber cowl of a mud splashier skirted the front mudguard. Its fact black handle grips were, hot due to sunlight, the spud or front curved part of the dynamo was shining and cocked back. At last the constable. Go down relieving the pedal treads of "the boot of the law".

The policeman's cap was upside down on the floor next to his chair. The line of its pressure on his head ran like a level in his slightly sweating hair. He had unstrapped the heavy ledger and go down to business. The poet's father was giving him accounts of tillage returns or income from crops "in acres, roods, and perches", Heaney sums up the atmosphere as "Arithmetic and fear" Even though merely ordinary figures were being given. There was a heavy sense of fear and uneasiness in the peasant's house caused by the constable's presence. The boy kept staring at the polished holster with its buttoned flap, the braid core looped into the revolver butt. The stark fear in the small boy's mind on seeing a man of the law, in uniform is picturesquely brought out.

The constable further enquired about any other root crops like mangolds, marrow stems and so on. The boy's father answered in the negative. The constable persisted in his questioning by wanting to know whether there was not a line of turnips where the seed ran out in the potato field, and so on.

The boy assured small quilts and sat imaging. "The black hole in the barracks" that is a small prison cell. The expression black hole brings to mind the notaries "Black Hole of Calcutta" that is a small prison cell in Fort William Calcutta in which in 1756. Indians are said to have imprisoned 146 Europeans, only 23 of whom were alive the following morning. At last, the constable stood up. Shifted the baton case further round on his belt. Closed the doomsday book which was as terrifying as Doomsday, fitted his cap back with two hands and looked at the boy as he said good-bye. A shadow bobbed in the windows. The constable was snapping the carrier spring over the ledger. His boot pushed off and the bicycle ticked away.

Seemingly A Constable Calls is a simple descriptive poem of policeman's visit to the poet's father's house. The bicycle with its various parts like rubber cowl, mudguard, dynamo, his cap, his baton, revolver - nothing escapes the keenly observant eyes of the boy. But the description is coloured by an eerie atmosphere, suggesting fear, anxiety, uncertainty. As George Macbeth points out: "The authority of childhood experience rams home a sense of what pre-1969 Ulster must have been like for the minority." Ulster refers to Northern Ireland and a part of the Republic of Ireland. During the Irish rising, the Irish minority did have a tough time with the mother country Britain which is predominantly protestant.

"Heaney manages to recall and present his father's interviews with the B special policeman with an eye for savage detail". (George Macbeth). When the constable gets down from the cycle, the boy observes that the pedal treads hang relieved of the boot of the law. Another suggestive sinister expression is "arithmetic and fear". The doomsday spell the poet's father's Doomsday. The boy is led to imagine the black hole in the barracks with its terrible historical associations. And as a final stroke, the boy says that the bicycle ticked. Even the innocent bicycle thus takes on the oppressive tension of a weapon of war. By the end of the poem it ticks like a bomb, so usual in Modern age of "bomb culture".

The constable is no longer regarded as the law abiding citizens friend, because in the present political set up he is a mere, but useful and callous tool in the hands of politicians and heads of state. The atrocities of policemen right from Hitler's secret police the Gestapos to their latest counterparts all over the world are too obvious and appalling. In such a situation, the police man becomes a symbol of cruelty, terror and torture. To quote George Macbeth once more. "English readers might reflect on. How easily one about the 1940's in Nazi occupied Vichy France, or the Channel Island. The face of suppression remains the same".

III. THE TOLLUND MAN

MEANINGS AND EXPLANATIONS

Aarhus : seaport in Denmark in East Jutland. One of the oldest cities in Denmark it has gothic cathedral and a university there is an art gallery and a prehistoric museum there.

Peat : Plant material partly decomposed by the action of water, used as a fuel.

Pods of his eye - lids : The eyelids are metaphorically spoken of as pods (pressed vessels of various plants like Peas, beans, etc.

gruel : liquid food of oatmeal, rice etc, boiled in milk or water

Winter seeds : some cereals that grow in winter

caked : formed into a thick, hard, undigested mass.

cap : suggests cunning, secret, on the sly of disposing of the man.

girdle : cord or belt fastened around the waist to keep clothes in position, something that encircles like girdle. Suggestive of captivity.

torc : torque twisting force, collar or necklace typically or twisted metal worn in ancient times.

tightened her torc : suggests that the man was hanged

fen : area of marshy land

trove : hidden under the earth and of unknown ownership

turf : soil surface with grassroots growing in it. The plural form "turves" refer to pieces of peat in Ireland.

turfcutter : those who dig, cut the turf

honey comb : wax structure of six sided cells made by bees for honey and eggs.

honey combed workings : the turfcutters dig the peat so as to give it the look of a honey comb, filled with holes and tunnels a very felicitous imagery.

Stained face : ironic, because the face of the corpse is skeletal now.

reposes : lies in peace, the head of the corpse is displayed in a museum in Aarhus.

II

Blasphemy : utter irreligious words, especially - against God.

Consecrate : make sacred or holy

cauldron : large deep open pot in which things are boiled

cauldron bog : the bog is an area of soft, wet, spongy ground of chiefly decayed or decaying vegetable matter. It is metaphorically described as a big boiling pot. An effective homely metaphor.

germinate : sprout, sign of life

Scattered : dispersed of troops etc. lying in wait to make a surprise attack. suggest that the man was hunted down treacherously before he was hanged.

Flesh labours : Heaney's sympathy for the numerous workman who were killed and buried in the bog.

Stockinged : wearing stockings

Tel - tale : making known a secret giving away (something one wishes to hide).

flecking : marking with flecks or small spots or patches.

Sleepers : (i) those who sleep (lie in death)

(ii) heavy beam of wood or similarly shaped piece of other material, on a railway track. etc. supporting the rails.

trailed : pulled along, scattered.

the lines : railway lines or tacks

III

sad freedom : a packed expression conveying all the sorrows, trials, tribulation and torture one has to undergo in order to get freedom.

tumbrill : or tumbrel, a cart especially the kind that carried

prisoners to the guillotine, during the French Revolution, the word conveys several such sinister associations of police torture, captivity and extremist killing.

TOLLUND. GRABAUULLA, NEBELGARD

These are Heaney's symbols for ancient victimisation. They represent all those who were killed in the past as part of rituals sacrifices and soon. By relating modern, man who is often killing, to these symbols, Heaney brings out the continuity in baseless human cruelty.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

The Tollund Man refers to an almost perfectly preserved Iron age Corpse discovered in a Danish peat - bog in 1950. He had been hanged. The head is displayed in a pre-historic museum in Aarhus, a seaport city in Denmark. Seamus Heaney begins the poem by remarking that some day he will go to Aarhus to see the tollund Man's peat brown head, the mild pods of his eye lids and his pointed skin cap, In the flat country nearby where they dug out his corpse, scientist could analyse his last meal which was "caked in his stomach". It consisted of gruel of winter seeds. The description evokes disgust and subtly suggests that the man was hanged even before his last meal could be properly digested.

The Corpse was naked except for the cap, the hangman's noose and girdle. In other words, everything personal and essential about the man had perished. There is irony in the metallic girdle and noose remaining, as though they are callous remnants of the iron age. The poet is deeply moved and says he will stand a long time. Watching the "Bridegroom to the goddess: of the earth. There is a clear allusion to the human sacrifices and ritualistic, savage killings prevalent in that ancient period, as an act of appeasing the elements of nature, the goddess of the Earth and so on. The poet continues: the goddess tightened her torc or twisted metal (again suggestive of the Iron Age) on the Tollund Man and opened her fen, as though welcoming him. There is tremendous callousness and ruthlessness in the description that follows: the dark juices of the fen worked him to a saint's kept body! The bog has a tendency to suck in anything and everything that falls into it and the organic

matter gets decomposed in course of time. Here the poet suggests ironically that the goddess of the earth has preserved the skeletal remains of the man like an anointed saint. The body has been hidden in the trove of the turfcutter's or the peatbogs in Ireland for centuries. The turfcutters dig the bog so as to give it the appearance of a honey comb filled with holes and tunnels. In one such digging, they must have hit upon the Tollund Man's corpse. So, now his stained face reposes at Aarhus.

The second section begins on a melancholy, contemplative note. The poet says he could risk blasphemy and holy ground and pray to Him (the Tollund Man or God) to make the scattered ambushed flesh of labourers and the stockinged corpses laid out in the farmyards germinates. In other words, he wishes he could bring them all back to life, to be able to live, achieve and fulfil their desires. The tell-tale skin and teeth flecking the sleepers of four young brothers, trailed for miles along the rails. Heaney expresses his heart felt sympathy for the numerous workmen who were killed and buried in the bog. There is a subtle hint that many of these dead one were hunted down treacherously before they were killed. There is punning on the word sleepers; it could mean those who sleep and also railway sleepers or heavy beams of wood on the railway track supporting the rails. Probably the poet is thinking of some persecuted young persons forced to end their lives on the railway lines. The imagery is grotesque but very realistic.

The mood darkness as we move on to the third stanza. The poet says that something of his sad freedom as he rode the tumbril should come to him driving, saying the names Tollund, Grabaulle, Nebelgard etc. watching the pointing hands of country people; not knowing their language out there in Jutland. He in the old man-killing parishes, he will feel lost unhappy, and yet at home much meaning is packed into this short and final section. The expression "sad freedom" conveys all the sorrows trails, tribulations and torture one has to undergo in order to get freedom. The tumbril is a cart especially the kind that carried prisoners to the guillotine during the French Revolution. Take together these words and phrases bring to a sensitive and extremist killing. The Tollund Man, Grabaulle and Nebelgard are not Irish but their anguish is not dissimilar from

that of the moderns. The "tongue", of pain and torture is universal. The expression "old man-killing parishes" suggests the numerous killings in the name of religion fundamentalism and rituals' which has ever gone on in the history of mankind. The poem ends on a note of depression and in his own country, the poet feels unhappy for his heart goes out to the numerous persons lying buried under the peat bog.

The Tollund Man is a highly symbolic poem. The peat bog is the controlling metaphor in this as in many of Heaney's beat poems. The dark centres of the past, of the unknown, of the self of the mysterious region from which poems emerge found an eloquent metaphor in the peat bogs of Ireland which preserve objects from the past and sometimes yield them up. These bogs have these peculiar power to preserve whatever falls into them. They are full of relics of Ireland's past including those who have been murdered or have otherwise met violent end. P.R. King observes that "This natural phenomenon links the landscape with the people and with the rural past of Heaney's own family who like many rural families, cut peat, for themselves and to make a living.

Heaney's discovery of P.V. Glob's *The Bog People* confirmed his faith in this metaphor and extended his understanding of the violence in Northern Ireland by showing that in the early Iron Age, there had been similar blood lettings. The book enriched his imaginative response to the metaphor of the bog in its moving accounts together with its pictures of the tollund man, 'The Grauballe Man' and others, and how ritual sacrifices to the goddess of the earth led, through time and through the preserving and transmuting properties of the bog to those resurrected objects of beauty. Thus observes Maurice Harman. In this manner, the bog becomes a symbol of continuity.

Of this bog image, Heaney has written: "So I began to get an idea of the bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in it and to it". It is impossible to describe the sharp physical sense of the bogs and their buried "treasure" except by quotation. The bodies of the Tollund Man, the Grauballe Man and numerous others killed by violence who yet remains, preserve permanently in the horrible callous atti-

tudes to death are perfect images for Ireland's troubles, past and present, and for the persistence of the violent past in the present.

Heaney's isolation - his sense of being outside and yet connected still to Ireland's troubles (victim and yet also related to the perpetrators of the violence) is seen in this poem and in the whole volume ("North") as a necessary stand for the artist. The poet merely says:

Out there in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy feel at home.

He feels deeply with a keen sensibility for all those who are buried in the peat bog just as he feels for the young girl who was hanged as adultress who too was one of the bodies discovered in the bogs (Refer Heaney's "Punishment")

Explaining the poet's stand, P.R. King writes : "The poet's imagination (his - mummer's power to enter into the lives of many) takes him through his family past to the dark peat core of Ireland where he experiences life as both invader and invaded, revenger and victim. It prevents his from taking sides....even though he suffers the derision of those who condemn him for not making a plainer political response. The artist's role. Heaney insists, is to stand on all sides and to accept the mire and complexities of the blood of a whole people. Thus exploring the implications of the resemblances and associations between modern man and Tollund Man, Heaney writes with confidence and nonchalance, making bold imaginative leaps across the landscape of Northern Europe and backward through the literary, linguistic and geological periods.

HEANEY'S POETRY - A GENERAL ESTIMATE

Seamus Heaney began publishing his first poems in the early 1960s, and is the oldest of a group of poets who have produced consistently interesting and valuable poems over the past. The rural landscape of the poet's childhood forms the background to many of his poems and is frequently the central subject of the best ones. The activities of farm life, its crafts and skill, and its relationship which often reminds us that until recently Ireland has been the only country in northern Europe to retain something approaching a genu-

inely peasant culture the traditions and rituals of that culture, together with the spirit of Ireland's rural history, emerge in many of his poems. *The Tollund Man* and *A Constable Calls* are good examples.

Heaney has proved to be popular with the poetry-reading public, often having an immediate appeal because of his accurate descriptive powers and the clarity of his figurative language. The descriptions of a traditional funeral in *Funeral Rites*, and the policeman's visit in *A Constable Calls* bear testimony to the poet's keen observation of very common place matters. He moulds phrases that are both precise and warmly evocative. Thomas C. Forster observes that "the strength of the poet's lies in his ability to integrate packed literary language with looser forms of speech", His imagery is radical, in the true, etymological sense of that word. His recurring metaphor for the act of writing poetry is digging, into the past into the literal Irish bogs where old friends and enemies lie buried and preserved. Potatoes, seeds roots, bogs, peat etc. are repeatedly employed words with symbolic undertones. Such symbolic overtones enrich many of his direct and intimate pieces.

From his first published volume *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) Heaney has produced intense, lyrical words that seem suspended between contradictions-life and death, joy and griefs, memory and loss. Such sensation were his birthright. All his poems with their scenes and people reek of Ireland. The response to their rural background subsequently involved the auditory imagination. A.C. Ward observes. "His verse concentrated on the legendary past and the recent history of rural communities in Northern Ireland and captured the feeling of the marvellous aspects of agricultural life as well as its ordinary routine". In the accents of the area, in its place names and historical antecedents, he could hear the divisions in his own experience, between the Irish heritage and the English heritage which he had acquired through education and reading. To quote the poet himself. "I suppose the matter of Ireland, and the masculine strain is drawn from the involvement with the English language. I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading."

Many of Heaney's poems are vitiated by a kind of primitive trust in the force of onomatopoeia to bring over and experience or an image is sound. In Michael Schmitz's view, a partial reading of

Hopkins must have contributed to the unsubtlety and to the labouredness of some of those early poems. Much of the art that Heaney has learned since comes from his reading of American and other contemporary poets. There is, too, a greater subtlety of organisation in the later poems. Subtlety is not of itself a virtue, but neither is primitive plainness unless the poem is merely a simple evocation. Even in his earliest poems, Heaney was in pursuit of something more than mere evocation, and yet he had no other language but that rudimentary one. What is so impressive in his development is the assurance with which he had moved beyond the limited range of his early work.

Yet the early work is crucial to the whole vision. His own career-breaking with his age old rural roots, to become academically trained and take up a teaching profession-mirrors one of his social themes: the loss of "the old traditional community which I knew as a child". Initially such a loss produces nostalgia and is therefore negative. Nostalgic elements and a sense of lost traditions is traceable even in *Funeral Rites* for instance. Gradually the poetry from book to book gains in technical assurance as also in thematic ambition. A.C. Ward notes that "In so far as Ulster had a special poetic voice during the period of prolonged violence and that voice told of universal and not only political truths, Heaney was considered to be its most accomplished and moving spokesman".

His long, archaeological perspective (as for instance in *The Tollund man* and *Funeral Rites*) had drawn some criticism over the years from Catholic partisans on the struggle over Northern Ireland who felt that Heaney was insufficiently engaged in the tumultuous here and now. Shiv.K. Kumar notes that unlike W.B. Yeats and James Joyce who sometimes lent their imagination to the political problems of the day, Heaney had kept himself from the hurly burly of contemporary politics. Only recently, did he make a mild statement about the unceasing turmoil in his country.... "the fact that there has been unwillingness on both sides to speak out...." However his mature poems do reveal that he is affected by the escalating violence and extremist, killings in his country and elsewhere.

Nature figures predominantly in Heaney's poems but he cannot be called Nature poet like Wordsworth or any of the Romantic

poets. His use of nature is more symbolic and suggestive than being plainly descriptive. Michael Schamidts says that "There is a strong element of celebration in Heaney's work as well even if at times it is simply the celebration we associate with clear evocation." In identifying the historical nature of recurring ills, he provides a valuable civic verse.

The source of many of his best poems (including *A Constable Calls* and *Funeral Rites*) is a memory of childhood experiences which he then renders accurately and almost physically in a direct language that shuns obscurity of expression. P.R. King vehemently states that this may be a virtue often underestimated among literary academics and reviewers, but which nevertheless gives Heaney's work a powerful precision and lucidity. Heaney is not primarily a poet of ideas; he is more a poet of vivid sensations and recall.

Heaney's later poems particularly the ones included in *North* are significant since they concentrate on the wider, public inheritance of the country's history. It is felt by Heaney to be an inheritance that is deep and sometimes violent certainly in poems written after 1970 there is an increasing recognition of the political troubles of Northern Ireland as for instance in *A Constable Calls*, which George Macbeth describes as "One of the most directly political and committed of Heaney's poems". What makes *North* important is that as in parts of the previous ones here Heaney relates past and present, his personal past and the country's history, in order to get beneath the dangerously oversimplified political perspectives of Ireland and its people. *Funeral Rites* is an excellent example for this. Though his commitment to a continuity of past and present (as in *The Tollund man*) explored in the language of people and place, Heaney begins to discover and identify for himself that acknowledges his own part in a strife-torn land but which does not take the easy way of identifying himself with that side of history to which his birth should align him. His stand leaves him to which his birth should align him. His stand leaves him to appear as either enemy or deserter. P.R. King explains: It is an easy stand but he draws his courage from the fact that ultimately it is the only stance that can include the whole of Ireland-the only possibility for resolution.

Through some of his later poems, Heaney expresses his be-

ing forced as an artist away from his community and yet, because the roots of his art lie in the life of that community and its traditions he believes he must continue a search for some way to remain fiercely independent so that he can play the true servant to his community as the magus (or wiseman) who can create the community's dream and make "dark tracks" between its members and the deep springs of their lives.

Seamus Heaney is unique in various aspects. He has always remained deeply committed to his love of nature, distancing himself from the razzle-dazzle of the cities-London, Paris or New York. "What matters to the poet is the integrity, his own inner truth, his courage to take life as it comes along. And if a perennial sense of wonder is the stuff poets are made of, then Heaney is indeed a poet par excellence." (Shiv.K.Kumar) So he revels in his own world on nature. What delights Heaney's readers is the authenticity of his observations, his subtle manipulation of detail, and the music of his words.

Paul Gray observes that "The intensity of Heaney's poetry stems largely from a Roman Catholic temperament that has been baffled by doubt." "My language and my sensibility are yearning to admit a kind of religious or transcendent dimension" he once told an interviewer." "But then there's the reality there's no heaven, no afterlife of the sort we were promised and no personal God." Even though we may not agree with such ideas, we cannot deny the power of the words he has found to bridge the disjunctions of his life and faith. Heaney's works are a projection of highly sensitive impressionable personality. In his case therefore, as in the case of Dante or Milton, the creator cannot be divorced from his creations. He lives as he writes, sings as he soars, synthesising meaning and sound, thought and image, vehicle and tenor And believes "The end of art is peace."

MODEL ANNOTATION

and the black glacier,
of each funeral
pushed away.

Irish poet and essayist Seamus Heaney won the 1995 Nobel Literature prize "for works of lyrical beauty and ethical depth" Many

of his poems contain echoes of a remembered childhood. One such poem is Funeral Rites which is included in the collection "North" (1995) regarded by many as Heaney's most mature poetic composition. The poem is written in three sections.

The first section presents a childhood recall of dead relations "the poet's vivid imagination recaptures a picturesque description of the coffins, the corpses, and the mourners, the mourners' had to pay their last homages quite courteously, being content with kissing their igloo brows" before the coffin lid was placed in position and the nails went driven in. Then in the given lines, the poet says that the black glacier of each procession pushed away: thus the section ends.

The given lines contain a very picturesque description of the slow procession of mourners in a Christian funeral all in black. "Glacier like" "igloo" brings out the hardness and coldness of death; while the snail pace at which the funereal procession is moving of the glacier.

R.S. THOMAS (BORN 1913)

INTRODUCTION:

R.S. THOMAS (Ronald Stuart Thomas) was born in Cardiff in Wales in 1913, a year before his namesake Dylan Thomas. He was reared and educated in Holyhead, Anglessy. In the mid thirties he studied Classics at the University College of Nort Walls, Bangor where he read Classics and took his degree in 1935. He then went for theological studies to St. Michael's college, Liandaff and was ordained priest in 1937. After a few years as curate, he became Vicar of Manafon in Merionethshire early in the Second World War. He has lived his life as a clergyman, often in the remote country parishes whose landscape and people he has celebrated in his poems. His parishioners are principally hill farmers, Welsh speaking and non conformist in attitude.

Harry Blamiers observes that a priest-poet like Hopkins personally zealous to win souls for the Christian faith, R.S. Thomas looked at "man and nature in the light of eternity". The young priest had studied the nature literary language, namely Welsh, when an adult, as a first necessary step towards fulfilling his cure of souls, and at the same time he seems to have been attracted towards the rapidly developing Welsh nationalist movement. His parishes in the rural parts of Wales, his relationship with his parishioners, and the effect supplied him with much of his poetic materials.

R.S. Thomas is the greatest living Welsh poet writing in English and an outstanding religious poet of the century. During his poetic career spanning a period of more than four decades, he has published about twenty volumes of poems, a few selections had a number of uncollected poems and prose pieces. The book which earned him wide popularity was Song at the year's Turning (1955) which included poems from two earlier collections. The Stones of the Field (1946) and An Acre of Land (1952) a dramatic poem entitled 'The Minister' composed for radio broadcast (1953) and some additional Work. This major collection was followed by Poetry for supper (1958) Tares (1964) and The Bread of Truth (1963) with Pieta (1966) Thomas began to change his ground, His style, tone and perspective underwent a readjustment and continued in Not

that he Brought Flowers (1968) HM (1972) Laboratories of the Spirit (1975) and Frequencies (1978) His Selected Poems 1946-1968 appeared in 1973. Another volume entitled R.S. Thomas Later poems 1972-1982 published to mark the poet's seventieth birthday (in 1983) consists of a comprehensive selection written since his select Poems together with forty three new poems, which will reinforce his growing reputation as a major poet of our time.

R.S. Thomas is thus a prolific writer, a poet of international repute and his poems have been translated into other languages including French and Japanese. He has received the Heinemann Award of the Royal Society of Literature, the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry and three of the Literature Awards of the Welsh Arts Council. He has written and lectured extensively on the hill country of Wales the Welsh political and social situation, the natural world, the nature of ultimate reality, the process of poetic composition, the language of poetry and the perennial themes like the conflict between man and the machine, time and eternity, reason and emotion and vision and reality. Just as Thomas Hardy is the spokesman of the Wessex rustics, R.S. Thomas is the voice of the Welsh farmers. Both are regional writers. Like Geogfrey Hill, Thomas too deserves to be acknowledged for his contributions to English poetry, he has also helped us to understand the Welsh farmers thoroughly.

I LAGO PRYTHERCH

MEANING AND EXPLANATIONS

Lago Prytherch: In R.S. Thomas's mythology, Lago Prytherch is almost a generic name for the Welsh peasant enduring the harshness and loneliness of the hill farm, thereby letting himself be blind to the things of the mind and the spirit.

Soliloquies: speaking one's thoughts aloud, disregarding or oblivious to any hearers present. In drama (Eg. Shakespearean drama) a soliloquy is a speech in which a character thinks aloud" revealing his innermost feelings, motives etc., without addressing a listeners.

crouched: lowered the body with the limbs together, bent low.

Surgery: operation on the body of the earth like ploughing,

digging etc, with the blade in line 3.

November rays of the sun's: Note the transferred epithet. "Rays ought to go with "suns" it has been transferred for the sake of effect.

graceless: without grace; without a sense of what is right and proper.

bareness: emptiness

draught: current of air in a room, or any enclosed place.

Draught of nature sweeping the skull; The harsh, bleak landscape and climate which affect lago's mind and heart create "thought's bareness" in line 12

Marring: spoiling, disturbing

gaunt: old and weak

marring.....question: The crouched or bent body of gaunt lago resembles an oversized question mark on the square fields, thereby disturbing their from design.

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

In this letter to Raymond Garlic written in March 1969, R.S. Thomas said: "As you will see from the poem" And Prytherch, then was he a real man? - I have never been quite sure about his existence-he's certainly dead now. The first poem I wrote about visiting a 1,000 feet up farm in Manafor where I saw a labourer docking swedes in the cold, grey air of a November afternoon, I came later to refer to this particular farmer armed jestingly as lago Prytherch."

Lago Prytherch is the subject of about eighteen poems by Thomas. He seems to be a composite figure who stands for the endurance and simplicity of the ordinary farm labourer in hard land, "observes George Mac Beth. He makes his first appearance in "A Peasant" as "as ordinary man of the bald Welsh hill." The poem entitled "Lago Prytherch" brings out the poet's enigmatic attitude to the peasant.

The poet begins the poem by imploring to lago Prytherch to forgive his naming him. The farmer is so far in his small fields, away from the world's gaze, sharpening his blade 'on a cold's edge' that no one will tell how the poet made fun of him. The isolation and the alienation of the Welsh peasant and the hilly terrain are suggested. Likewise Lago will never know how the poet pitied his long solilo-

quies, bent low, ploughing digging and performing similar "surgery" on the earth most patiently on a cold and foggy afternoon in the month of November.

The poet goes on to say that people's "graceless accusation" was that he made fun of Lago. Watching the peasant at work, he feels sorry that he took Prytherch's "rags for theme" and exposed his "thoughts bareness". In other words, he feels sad that he had made fun of his shabby appearance. He now realizes that science and art the mind's furniture have no opportunity to instal themselves because the rough, cold bitter wind sweeps everything away from the brain. The poet's feelings for the farmer are a mingled lot. His true feelings are beyond the scope of words. Is it mocking compassion? It is neither exclusively. It is a complex response as mysterious and enigmatic as the physical appearance of the gaunt lago who resembled an oversized question mark. The bent body of the former looking like an interrogative sign triggers off a volley of questions in the poet's mind. He admits that his poems were composed "in the long shadow/ falling coldly across the page."

The theme of the poem is the speaker's attitude to lago. George Macbeth observes "Thomas seems to be fighting a running battle with a number of feelings about this man. These include irritation, compassion, admiration and, as here feelings too complex to be resolved in to any one emotion. "It is a sort of love-hate relationship. The two poems "A Peasant" and Lago Prytherch" throw a flood of light on the central poetic concern of Thomas, namely growth into a knowledge of the real and the illusory in oneself and others from an enforced intimacy like that of locked wrestlers, with what at first seems intolerably alien. While liking at the dark figure, the poet probably wonder who really is the nature man, Prytherch or himself the literate, intellectual, sophisticated man of the world. These are the questions symbolised by the Welsh farmer as he stands in the shape of a question mark in the middle of the square field.

Realization dawns on the poet about the hollowness or "bareness" of his self-assumed superiority complex, flooding, him with sympathy, compassion and true love. When the poet- priest actually deals with his rustic parishioners, his response vacillates from annoyance at their unthinking stolidity and passivity to a grudging

admiration for their simple elemental lives, Michael Schmiat observes that Lago Prytherch is an omnipresent character in Thomas's landscape. When Thomas writes: "There is something frightening in the vacancy of his mind, "We understand the poet's attraction: there is something equally frightening in the visionary fullness of his own mind, drawn to its struggled opposite, His disgust, contempt and shock at the smell of the peasant are only the response of 'the refined. 'But affected, sense confronting "stak naturainess." The poet attempts to write, "The terrible poetry of this kind" In this sense, Lago Prytherch becomes the image of the process of poetic creation in Thomas.

The last two lines of the poem "My poems were made in its long shadow Falling coldly across the page" explain the inseparable bond between Thomas's poetic creation and the Welsh Farmer. His explanation in his essay Words and the poet are illuminative in this regard: "In my contact with others or out in the world of nature. I see something, begin to turn it over in my mind and decide that it has poetic possibilities." Poetry thus begins when the poet seizes a passing man and plants itself within him like a seed: Such a world for Thomas is the bald Welsh hills. Against the background of the rugged hill country are depicted realistic scenes of the hard working peasants scratching a pitiful livelihood from bare and inhospitable soil. The farmer's sweating body and dirty old clothes which seem disgusting and revolting to the urban sophisticated form the poet's "theme." Another point emphasized by the poet is the Welsh farmer's "thoughts bareness" or the frightening vacancy of his mind. But his attitude which is initially critical and contemptuous changes into one of sympathetic understanding and compassion when he realizes that the peasant is as natural and untainted as the soil on which he fights his rough battle for survival: It is the harsh land and the rough unfriendly weather that has turned him into an imbecile. With such reflections and experiences the poet's blank pages are filled; poetry is born. Thus "Lago Prytherch" and the related poems are Thomas's attempts to unravel the quintessence of characters such as Lago (C.T. Thomas).

The poem also acknowledges the failure of language to communicate true feelings. The curious mixture of emotions roused in the poet's mind by the dark (literally and figuratively crouched) gaunt

figure of Prytherch is more to be inferred than expressed. In the opinion of Belinda Humphery, Prytherch the hill farmer is Thomas's meditative emblem Humphery, prytherch the hill farmer is Thomas's meditative emblem of all his confrontations of life and its meanings. Colin Meir thinks that Patrick Kavanagh's peasant figure Maguire impressed the poet and that Lago Prytherch is its direct outcome.

The poem contains some fine images. In the first stanza the farm labourer is described as a surgeon, sharpening his blade to perform patient surgery under the dim November rays of the sun's lamp. The transfer epithet (November rays) enriches this description. George Macbeth calls this image a complimentary one. The second stanza contains another fine word picture. The Welsh farmer's mind is likened to an empty unfurnished chamber sans (without) the mind's furniture namely "science and art". The physical appearance of the gaunt, bent Prytherch resembles an oversized question mark, his dark figure marring the simple geometry of the square fields. Thomas's images as well as his verse emanate from his experience and imagination. Indeed his ambivalent attitude to Lago is picturesquely conveyed through a plethora (big mass) of images.

Lago Prytherch becomes the medium through which the poet interprets the world. He assumes great importance in the poet's mind. According to H.J. Savill, "Lago's repeated appearance would also suggest that he had acted as a control, a sounding board for the poet's personal sense of conflict between the old world and the new." Some feel Prytherch is a personification of 'Wales and its problems: others regard him as a poetic symbol. Savill however thinks that the poet was trying to solve the problems of communication by the adoption of a 'persona'. The peasant appears to be more real than reality and the poet seems severely concerned with the terrible "vacancy" of his mind. Another critic R.G. Thomas perceives in the plight of Lago Prytherch, the plight of the decaying, depopulated countryside. He says: "In some subtle way Lago has become part of the poet's mind, an alter ego". In the final analysis, in spite of the stolidity of his mind, the ineptitude (weakness, dullness) of his thoughts and his stinking rags, Lago is valued for his capacity to endure. Lago Prytherch "is indeed a grim but obscurely moving and

profound multi-layered poem.

II SOIL

MEANINGS AND EXPLANATIONS

hedge: row bushes, shrubs or tall plants etc. usually cut level at the top forming a boundary for a field, garden etc.,

tall hedges: figuratively, a restriction or barrier

A field with tall hedges: defines the limited, enclosed area with which Welsh farmers lives and works.

declining westward: setting, gradually losing strength, vitality etc.

mangolds: mangel-wurzel or mangold wurzel a variety of beat which is cultivated as a cattle food.

swedes: a variety of turnips. The swedes or mangolds have their green tops sliced off with a knife: the roots may then be clamped for winter food, and the tops fed to cattle.

plying : working with an instrument like knife.

plying.....cold blade: The farm worker is probably using a knife with a curved blade for cutting the mangolds and swedes.

This is his world: the Welsh farmer's world is his field with tall hedges.

the hedge defines/the minds, limits: the peasant like a frog in the well. Just as the hedge encloses his tract of land, likewise it stunts his mental growth.

only the sky/is boundless: note the glaring contrast between the limitless sky and the limited soil.

he never looks up: confirming the image of the frog in well.

the soil is all: the recurring or central ideal of the poem.

the knife errs: cuts and the peasant bleeds.

the blood.....it came: an apt reminder of the Biblical quotation: "As dust thou art/To dust thou returnest"

CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE POEM

Like the Lago Prytherch poems. "Soil" too is taken from R.S. Thoma's collection "Song At the year's Turning (originally from The Stones of The Field)' It relates the same theme with certain ramifications: The Welsh farmer scratching a pitiful livelihood from the drugging soil which renders him a limited being, a veritable (true

frog in the well. His field is enclosed by tall hedges. A young moon in the branches and a lone star declining westward set the background against which he works slowly. He is "topping" root-crops like mangolds and swedes probably for his cattle. He uses a knife with a curved blade for slicing off the green tops. The roots may then be clamped for winter feed and the tops fed to cattle. Thus he plies mechanically.

Thomas observed rather ironically:

"This is his world, the hedge defines

The minds limits."

Just as the hedge encloses his tract of mind, it likewise stunts his mental growth. The Welsh farmer's "thoughts bareness" or the frightening vacancy of his mind are brought out here. As a glaring contrast to his enclosed mind is the boundless sky. The farmer never looks up, thus confirming the imagery of his being a typical frog in the well, a totally ignorant entity unaffected by external knowledge or events. His gaze is fixed upon the dark soil which is everything to him. He keeps on working on it mechanically and continually. The knife errs, cuts him and he bleeds. His blood returns to the soil as though bringing, out the truth of the Biblical saying.

As dust thou art

To dust thou returnest.

The part of Wales that Thomas writes about is the hilly district of Montgomeryshire, a romantic stretch of land divided here and there by small river valleys. The grey stone buildings with their guardian pines, set against the bare hillside, would make one look for some highly imaginative, poetically inclined hill farmers dwelling there. But those dilapidated buildings are uninhabited. In spite of the several ruined homesteads, there are a few small farms and crofts whose occupants manage to win some kind of living from the grudging soil. It is about such people that Thomas writes in this poem. He believes that they are the true Welsh people. His feelings towards them are a curious blend of repulsion and admiration, love and hate, and contempt and sympathetic understanding.

In 'Soil' the Welsh farmer is portrayed as a colossal ignoramus, a literal frog in the well. The poet uses several images and expressions to convey this idea. The tall hedges of his small fields define his mind's limits: they restrict the horizon of his thought. Liv-

ing and working on his field, he hardly ever looks up to perceive the unlimited firmament of freedom and knowledge and light; he hardly cares for such things, he does not seem to miss them probably because he is not aware that such things exist. He lives on the soil, on it provides wrought (produced) with tremendous labour. Every drop of his blood finally returns to the same soil, for he hardly ventures beyond the tall hedges.

The figure of the farmer plying mechanically and tirelessly on the harsh, inhospitable soil haunts the poet's memory so much that he writes about him in poem after time. The Welsh farmer in the poem is none other than the protagonist in "A Peasant" or Lago Prytherch poems. Living in contact with the dark soil he leads a more brutalised but less enlightened life. He reminds us of Wordsworth's leech gatherer but is devoid of the latter's nobility, dignity. The Leechgatherer with his bent body can certainly be regarded as forerunner of the "gaunt question" in the square field "playing mechanically his cold blade" never looking up. Both Words' and Thomas's peasants and labourers endure in hard circumstances with hardly a word of complaint (P.G. Warrior)

The poem "Soil" should be read along with "Lago Prytherch". A peasant and the several poems on the Welsh farmer written by Thomas, since each poem interprets the other. They are all to be regarded as a number of poems about the same person against the same background. They form a well knit sequence.

R.S. THOMAS' POETRY-AN OVERALL ESTIMATE

R.S. Thomas is an outstanding poet of our time for several reasons. His poetry is extremely sincere, exquisitely simple and extraordinarily direct. He writes with great precision and clarity, poems that are simple at the same time profoundly moving. "R.S. Thomas is not at all literary." John Betjeman wrote. Thomas takes his forms for granted, worries little about poetic theory. He is not an experimentalist in form nor does he belong to or believe in any poetic school or movement. The verse emanates from his varied personal experiences as a priest among the Welshmen for decades, his poetry can rightly be described as a "spontaneous overflow" of profound, deeply disturbing feelings, sounds, symbols and images. Most of his poems are terse and compact, mostly lyrics.

Thomas's subjects ate the bleakness of man and nature in the society and landscape of Wales as exemplified by the 'Lago Prytherch' Poems. There is no banner waving, there are no concessions in sentimentality or to any inherited altitudes in his presentation of the Welsh peasant. Among the human studies in which the harshly repellent aspects of daily toil and stench, dirt and death are faced, the recurring poems about the Welsh hill farmer reveal an appreciation of a prototype of human endurance. His preoccupation with the dual power of nature to brutalise and to heal is rooted in his awareness of the openness of human nature to the bestial and the spiritual.

Glyn Jones observes that R.S. Thomas is much nearer a tradition in Wales which sees the poet as community in which he lives; in fact some of his themes have much in common with those of certain modern Welsh language poets. Patriots like Saunders Lewis and Waldo Williams: like the Welsh writers, he sees with bitterness, sometimes perhaps with despair, the rural decay, the cultural erosion and the depopulation which afflict the Welsh countryside. "His attitude towards his parishioners had been steadily unromantic but also ambivalent and increasingly tolerant. To quote Glyn Jones, "the parish of R.S. Thomas' care is the Wales of the small farms, and his achievement has been to give his themes and his characters, limited and remote, by his passionate concern, universal significance."

In his later poems, the themes become more serious. "the machine becomes a pervasive threat; the Welsh landscape is replaced at times by an almost allegorical landscape where Thomas's portentous vision of the future is briefly enacted, or which God looks over and ruminates on, in the first person. The relation between man and God, the real meaning of God consciousness, the obstacle posed by mechanisation and modernism in man's spiritual quest and like them are treated in his later poems."

R.S. Thomas employs a very direct intelligible, lucid style to convey his ideas and present his themes. He loathes (dislikes) every kind of affectation, artificiality and dishonesty. Absolute futility is the hall mark of his writing. If in each of his collections, there are dozens of limp poetical phrases. It is because he has not questioned his language, he has questioned his experience and adapted a conven-

tional diction. He is not given to loading his verse with difficult idioms and phrases. Or to subject it to material innovation and structural embellishments. He is a stolid doggedly clear writer, who like Robert Frost (who seems to have influenced him in this matter) is committed to traditional presentation of his themes without the least tinge of sentimentality. The element of linguistic ornamentation or employing words for word's sake is conspicuous by its absence in Thomas's poetry. A great quality of his writings is passionate naturalness. His words are crystal clear like broad daylight. There are no obscure allusions in his style as in the case of Geoffrey Hill or Seamus Heaney. Hence his lines run, rather gallop smoothly.

Thomas's simple direct style stems from the fact that he is predominantly a poet of feeling rather than thought. Thematically speaking, most of his poems are invariably variations or ramifications of a major theme like the hill farmer, god or mechanisation; but his poems present a variety of emotions like repulsion, disgust, indignation, irritation awe, sympathy, love, compassion, aesthetic admiration piety and so. The striking fact is that he uses more or less the same style to convey these myriad emotions.

Another quality of Thomas's poetry is its conversational intimacy. Whether speaking directly as himself, or speaking through a *persona* as in the "Lago Prytherch" poems, he gives the readers the impression that in a finite moment of infinite significance, they are listening to a person, who knows them intimately. For instance, the lines from "Lago Prytherch" > "Made addressed to Prytherch, involves the reader on account of their quiet, informal, conversational tone. This sense of intimacy which allows the reader to share the thoughts and feelings of the poet, is created by an extremely skilful use of 'pause' and 'run on' lines. Thomas often places a colloquial statement at the end or the beginning of some verse so that a line of ordinary speech is invested with exceptional meaning.

Thomas's poetry abounds in sense and sound devices. Alliteration and onomatopoeia abound in his poems. "Draught of nature sweeping the skull" (Lago Prytherch) Declining westward set the scene" ("soil") are examples of alliteration of the 's' sound "Emerging" in *Frequencies* contain two examples of internal rhymes: from morphemes and phonemes: that conceal god and reveal him to us A great fascination for rhyme is found in his earlier poems.

There are end line rhymes, besides internal rhymes and occasionally delayed rhymes in his poetry.

Thomas does not adhere to strict stanzaic forms or metre, However his favourite rhythm is a heavy four-stressed line which owes something to the beat of traditional Welsh poetry. George Macbeth observes that "The stress accent writing of Rs. Thomas however, gives a much more perceptible 'beat' than the work of any of his contemporaries or immediate predecessors' His later poems and paragraphs of free verse is An example is "Emerging", a poem taken from "Laboratories of the Spirit", Capital letters at the beginning of each line have been dropped and one can hardly find any stanzaic pattern in such poems. Of Thomas's poetic style Calvin Bedient has made the following observation "Roughly but not the delicate water surface tension of phase than on the metrical foot, rhymeless infrequently end-stopped and usually in lines of fewer than eight syllables, Thomas's poetry is like a briskly descending brook. Everything about it is bent to a single aim, namely the wift happy arrival at mainstream realization."

Repetition is another conspicuous feature of Thomas's poetry. He repeats words, phrases and even long sentences sometimes with variation. "How I made fun of you", "Made fun of you?" "Fun?" appear in "Lago Prytherch". On reading his poetry, one is struck by his apt choice of words and felicitous phrasing; particularly the adjective. To Thomas adjectives are not only the criterion of a poet but also much more subtly revelatory. "Long soliloquies", 'patient surgery' graceless accusation" true feelings "gaunt question (Lago Prthyerch)" tall city" snake haunted garden (Emerging) some fine examples which illustrate that Thomas's adjectives are spontaneous, striking, profound and thought-provoking.

The real merit of Thomas's poetic art lies in, the skill and inventiveness with which he creates metaphors. Seldom does a poet employ this figure of speech as often and as effectively as Thomas. His metaphors which have their origin in nature, religion and science help him to give concrete shape and pattern to his abstract ideas. "Science and art the mind's furniture" (Lago prytherch) "laboratory of the spirit (Emerging) are examples. Besides he also employs similes, transferred epithet and other figures which help to enrich his style.

Thomas is a master of symbolic vision. "Lago Prytherch" is a symbolic character who represents the average Welshman with all his stolidity, ineptitude and endurance. A very powerful symbol in his poetry is the question mark made by the crouched, gaunt figure of this solitary farmer at his plough. Many of his poems were created in the long shadow of this dark figure, "Falling coldly across the page". Like wise Thomas's later poetry is highly symbolic where he tries to communicate his knowledge of the unknowable reality through the language of metaphor and symbols. There is a rich tapestry of images in his poetry; they are impressive and impressionistic, varied and sublime" (P.G. Warrier)

The didactic quality of Thomas's poems is as powerful and outstanding as their aesthetic value. Every poem has some message to convey. The moralistic or propagandist intentions manifest in almost all the poems dealing with the Wales and the lives of the hill men: Besides he is endowed with an immense descriptive power and a rare gift of narration. His descriptions are not tainted or burdened with allusions and obscure parallels; but they are natural, with or without comments or reflections according to the requirement. For instance his poem "Soil" affords a fine illustration of his picturesque depiction of man and scene.

George Macbeth notes that Thomas's poetry seems at first sight a grim and forbidding body of work to approach. His tone of voice is almost invariably severe, his rhythm slow and heavy and his subject matter invariably Man scratching a pitiful livelihood from a bare and inhospitable land". Thomas's poetry is narrow in range but it seems sure to last for its depth and its honesty".

Commenting on the poet's work. Michael Schmidt makes these remarks. "The development of Thomas's work towards a greater thematic inclusiveness his changing relation to place, the evolution of his social and spiritual perceptions, and his language reveal clearly the growth of an imagination described by John Betjman as 'not at all literary'-an imagination pursuing what it perceives as 'truth' whatever the consequences for 'beauty'. Thomas's experimentation is never merely play. It is always an earnest engagement with experience and with language".

Casting about for comparisons critics have compared R.S. Thomas to Crabbe for the way he comes to grips with the harsh

realities of rural life-the dirt, the cruelty the near bestiality; to Edward Thomas for his "slow meditative manner" and his disciplined verbal sparseness. All agree that he has nothing in common with his counterpart in name and fame. Dylan Thomas. Yet perhaps comparison might also be made with George Herbert. The two careers of hidden devotion to human ministry with the marriage of literary to personal discipline seem to match across the centuries.

Though he may resemble other poets in one respect or the other, R.S. Thomas nevertheless has carved a permanent place for himself in modern poetry. He is indeed a major poet of the century, yet like Geoffrey Hill, he too has not received due recognition. P.G. Warrier thinks this could be because he never tires to follow the current trend or fashion in poetry. But pursues his own manner of utterance. His distinctive voice had succeeded in producing a reverberating echo in the hearts of his admiring listeners and is sure to gather a still wider and larger audience in the years to come.

MODEL ANNOTATIONS

1. I passed and saw you

Labouring there, your dark figure

Marring the simple geometry

of the square fields with its gaunt question

A major poet of our age with a distinctive voice R.S. Thomas is priest-poet G.M. Hopkins and worked for decades as clergyman in the remote Welsh country parishes whose rugged landscape and stolid hill farmer he has celebrated in his poems, the early ones in particular. His poem entitled. "Lago Prytherch" describes one such typical Welsh peasant bringing out the poet's enigmatic attitude to him.

Seeing the crouched figure of Lago in the distant fields working on the grudging soil with immense patience, the poet addresses him and apologises for having taken his rags for theme and having made fun of him (in many of his poems). He confesses that no words can describe his true feelings for the peasant. Then in the given lines, he goes on to say that as he passed and saw him labouring there, his dark crouched gaunt (weak) figure resembled an oversized question mark marring or spoiling the simple geometry or regularity of the square fields.

In R.S. Thomas's mythology, Lago Pryterch is almost a generic name for the Welsh peasant enduring the harshness and loneliness of the hill farmer, thereby letting himself be blinded to the things of the spirit. The question mark made by the stooping figure of the solitary farmer is a powerful symbol in his poetry; many of his poems were created in the long shadow of this dark figure, "falling coldly across the page".

2. This is his would, the hedge defines'

The mind's limits, only the sky'

is boundless, and he never looks up

A major poet of our age with a distinctive voice; R.S. Thomas is a priest-poet like G.M. Hopkins, and worked for decades as a clergyman in the remote Welsh country parishes whose rugged landscape and stolid hill farmer he has celebrated in several poems of his collection "Song At the years" Turning" Etc., In one such poem entitled "Soil" the poet present the peasant scratching a pitiful livelihood from the grudging soil.

The labourer is working in his small field enclosed by tall hedges he is 'topping' rootcrops like swedes and mangolds probably for cattle. Watching him playing mechanically with his cold blade, the poet says in the given lines that the field with its grudging soil is the Welsh farmer's world; the tall hedges mark the boundary of his fields; they define the limits of his mind. Contrary to his limited enclosed existence, the sky is limitless and the farmer never looks up.

In these lines the Welsh farmer is portrayed as a colossal ignoramus, a literal frog in the well. The tall hedges are symbolic; they restrict the horizon of his thought. Living and working on his soil, he hardly looks up to perceive the unlimited firmament of freedom and knowledge and light; he does not seem to miss them, probably because he is not aware that such things exist.

TOPICS FOR STUDY

1. Critical appreciation of individual poems.
2. The poetic art of each poet.
3. Allusiveness and obscurity in Geoffrey Hill's poetry with special reference to the prescribed poems.
4. Use and significance of imagery in Geoffrey Hill's "The

Pentecost Castle"

5. The elements of contrast in Seamus Heaney's poems (prescribed ones)

6. The Welsh farmer as portrayed by R.S. Thomas with special reference to the prescribed poems.

7. R.S. Thomas's approach to God (based on) the prescribed poems.

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4. Fifty Modern British Poets	(ed) Michael Schmidt
5. Eleven British Poets	(ed) Michael Schmidt.
6. Four Modern English Poets	K. Balakrishnan
7. R.S. Thomas: A study in the Development of his poetic Vision	Paravathy P.G. Warriar.
8. Twentieth Century poetry	G. Martin and P. Furbank
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DRAMA

WAITING FOR GODOT

SAMUEL BARCLAY BECKETT

Samuel Beckett, the Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1969, was born at Foxrock, near Dublin in an Anglo-Irish, well-to-do Protestant, middle-class family on Friday, the thirteenth of April on Good Friday 1906. He was the second son of William Frank Beckett, a quantity surveyor, and Mary, nee Roe. He spend his kindergarten

days at Miss Ida Elsher's Academy at Dublin. Later he had his public school education at Portora Royal School (where Oscar Wilde had his education) He was a brilliant student excelling both in academic activities and sports and games.

After his school education he joined Trinity College, Dublin in 1923 first as-pensioner and then as foundation scholar. In 1927 he passed his B.A. examinations and was ranked first in the First Class in Modern Literature (French and Italian) for which he won a large gold medal and the moderatorship prize. While at the university he actively participated in the Golf Club, the Cricket Club and the Modern Language Society and played brilliant chess. In the summer of 1926 he had his first contact with France when he went on a bicycle tour of the Chateaux of the Loire.

After graduation, in 1928, he spent two terms as a teacher at Campbell college, Belfast. The same year he went as exchange lecturer at Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Jean-Paul Sartre was there at the time. He met and befriended James Joyce there.

Beckett's involvement with James Joyce in Paris was of crucial importance and influence. In 1929 he edited some essays by several very close friends admirers and disciples of Joyce, who were enthusiastic about Joyce's forthcoming "Einnegan's Wake"- Work in Progress-which was published only in 1939.

In the summer of 1930 his first publication - the poem, Whoroscope, on Descartes- was issued by Nancy Cunard's HOURS PRESS in Paris. The poem has won \$10/-prize.

In 1930 Beckett was back in Dublin, this time as assistant lecturer in French at Trinity College, Dublin. He took his M.A. degree in 1931. He resigned his lectureship after four terms. Beckett was temperamentally unfit to hold down a teaching job and had to undergo psychoanalytical treatment in London for a grave neurotic condition with severe and debilitating physical symptoms.

In February, 1931 Beckett's first play- parody of "Corneille's LeKid"- written in collaboration with fellow French lecturer at Trinity College was performed.

In 1931 his first, and also his last, major work in literary criticism "Proust" was published by Chatto and Windus.

His association with Joyce and his critical study of Proust were a turning point in his literary activities. The associative abundance

of their worlds helped Beckett in division a recipe the literary economy an economy of substance which strips his imaginative world of the personal and civilizational accoutrements of life except in so far as they selectively impinge upon his characters as algebraic symbols of abstract space, function or possession. The association also explains his obsession with the antithesis between the inner world and the outer world. You may recall Proust's involuntary memory leading to mental alienation.

Years of wanderings in London, France and Germany between 1932 and 1936 culminated in his decision to make Paris his home. In 1937 he settled in Paris.

In 1934 Beckett's first prose Fiction- a collection of short stories titled 'More Procks than Kicks'- was published by Chatto and Windus.

In 1935-36 his first collection of verse-Echo Bones and other Precipitates-was published in Paris.

In 1937 Beckett lost his father. He was left with a small annuity which was his only source of income and his only support till his success in the theatre in 1950s.

In 1938 his first novel "Murphy" was published by Routledge. Irish Murdoch, the novelist, an undergraduate at that time at Oxford, was profoundly influenced by the novel.

The Second World War broke out. Beckett joined the Resistance Group and was very active. In 1942 when his Resistance Group was betrayed to the Gestapo, he narrowly escaped with his future wife, with just minutes to spare, and reached the unoccupied Southern Zone. He became an agricultural labourer in the village Rousillon in the Vaucluse near Avignon and eked out a living which was literally hand to mouth. This is referred to in "Waiting for Godot" as: But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called... (he snaps his fingers)....can't think of the name of the man at place called....(Page 62: Waiting for Godot:Faber: Paperback:1972) He spent three years there in the farm. He suffered a serious nervous breakdown. Worse, he lacked access to medical/psychiatric treatment. Then he embarked on his novel "Watt" writing which he found relief: he was committing his confusion to paper. It was his last strictly English novel.

The wartime services of Beckett were recognized and he was

awarded the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille de la Resistance.

In 1945 after the War Beckett returned to Ireland to see his family. In order to get back to Paris he accepted a post as interpreter and storekeeper at the Irish Red Cross hospital in Saint-L.O. Normandy.

In 1946 he returned to Paris. Between 1946 and 1950 there was burst of creative work. He wrote in French the trilogy of novels Molly. Malone Dies and The Unnameable - and then 'Waiting for Godot', preceded by 'Eleutheria' which was neither published in French.

In 1950 Beckett lost his mother. The following year 'Molly' and Malone Dies' were published in Paris. In 1952 Waiting for Godot' was published in Paris.

On 5 January, 1953 the world premiere of En Attendant Godot, (the original French version 'Waiting for Godot') was given at the Theatre of Babylone (Now extinct) Boulevard Raspail, Paris directed by Ronger Blin. The same year saw the publishing of "Watt" and The Unnameable'.

In 1954 Beckett's own translation of En Attendant Godot' was published in New York. On 3 August, 1955 waiting for Godot, was premiered at the Arts Theatre, London directed by Peter Hall, On 3 January, 1956 the premiere of Waiting for Godot was given at the Miami Playhouse in America.

On 13 January, 1957 Alt That Fall was first broadcast by the BBC, and it was directed Donald McWinnie. On 3 April, 1957 the first performance of Endgame (in French with 'Act Without Words1') was given, directed by Roger Blin at the Royal Court Theatre, London.

On 28 October, 1958 'Krapp's Last Tape' directed by Donald McWinnie was premiered at the Royal court Theatre London. 'Endgame' in English joined the 'Tape'.

In 1959 The University of Dubin honoured Beckett with a D.Litte, BBC broadcast 'Embers' On JUNE, 1959. 'Embers' won the "Italia" prize.

The world premiere 'Happy Days' was on 17 september, 1961 at Cherry Lane Theatre, New and it was directed Alan Schneider. Beckett shared the International Publishers' Prize with Borges.

On 13 November, 1962 'Words and Music was first broadcast

by the BBC. On 14 Nune. 1993, 'Play' was first performed in German at Ulm directed by Derek Mandel; on 13 October, 1963 the first broadcast of 'Cascando' by RTF, Paris, directed by Roger Blin was done.

In 1964 untitled 'Film' was produced in New York under the direction of Alan Snieder. In Septmber , 1965 Derek Mendel Directed 'Come and Go' in German in Berlin. On 4 July, 1966 BBC televised 'Eh Joe' produced by Mechael Bakewell.

In 1969 the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Beckett. In October the same year the first independent production of Breath' directed by Geoffrey Giham in Glasgow took place (which was originally incorporated by Kenneth Tynan as the opening sketch in 'Oh! Calcutta)

On 22 November 1972 the world premiere of Not 1 Was given at the Licoin Center (Vivan Beaumont Theater Building) New York directed by Alan Snieder with the famous Jessica Tandy and Henderson Forsythe as the actors.

In 1976 in celebration of Samuel Beckett's 70th birthday the first broadcast of Rough 'for Radio' was given by BBC, besides the world premiere of That Time and Foot falls at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Beckett himself directed 'Foot falls' On 17 April 1977 the BBC televised 'Ghost Trio' andBut the Clouds....' and they were directed by Donald McWinnie.

Beckett continued to write and produce short experimental plays and to bewilder audiences worldwide as the plays challenged every aspect of conventional theatre by registering human mystification and incapacity before the pathos of existence and the ineffectiveness of human endeavour to connect and comprehend the divergent threads of existence.

Beckett may be said to have won general recognition as a playwright through his play 'Waiting for Godot' However, his main claim to distinction lies in his novels which we have listed above. Since 1950 he has remained in the fore front of literature as one of the most influential and original appealing and dominating figures, mesmerizing, above all, a generation of people that shuns facile solutions to fundamental problems and questions relating to human existence and to the relation between the 'Finite' man, and the

'infinite' space and time, in a world wherefore the traditional, time-honoured God has disappeared, In this he has been guided by Dante and Proust as well as quite a few other metaphysicians.

Beckett's complex, abstract and quasi mathematical speculations are encoded in a series of clear, yet at times nauseating images and symbols. His vision of man disintegrating beneath the overbearing and crushing threat of merciless. Times and Space leads us to a picture of the world / universe which is arid and comfortless and yet compelling.

The above calendar of events is complete as information regarding the latest position is not available. Beckett died at few months ago. In his death the world English literature lost one of the most original writers of this century.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SAMUEL BECKETT

Audiences, whatever their nationalities be, are part of people and share the outlook of their time and place - which means that they tend to be myopic, biased, suffering from thoughts and feelings bounded unconsciously by their environment, likes and dislikes, traditions, conventions, customs, religions and the like. They almost always arrive at the theatre with strong, preconceived notions about 'life' and secretly but strongly entertain notions about how life is to lived. It is their kind of life and the way that it is to be lived that they expect from the play, coming alive before them on the stage through action and dialogue. We must always remember that a play constantly interacts with the audience and so the audience is both participant in and arbiters of the form and content of the dialogue, the dialogue being the carrier of meaning / sense / substance or whatever we call it. Almost always, therefore, playwrights gave their audience what they wanted or rather expected (until playwrights like Ionesco, Beckett, Adamov, Tardieu etc / arrived on the scene). Audiences wanted what we call now a Well MADE PLAY. So, perhaps, the best way of beginning a study of 'Waiting for Godot' will be by stating that 'Waiting for Godot' is what a well made play is Not. It is everything in drama except being a well made one. This observation calls for an explanation - am elaboration of what until now has been considered a well made play.

We are not aware of any laws governing plays and the theatre, Yet we do expect a few things from plays, from the theatre (here I am using the word 'theatre' as a hyponym). Theratrical activity has a long tradition, going back to 1500 B.C. in Egypt. Our expectations, as a rule, have been generally satisfactorily fulfilled. Any standard book on plays / theatre will give us the information about what a well made play is. Nevertheless, we shall list the features usually associated with them as follows:

(1) A well made play always has a beginning, a middle and an end.

(2) A well made play is said to have witty, sensible, logically acceptable and coherent dialogue in a language which can be heard and understood by the audiences.

(3) A well made play normally has at least two and almost always more than two (in fact, quite a few) characters, real or imaginary, born out of the close observation of the playwrights of the people around them. Such characters are recognizably human and their actions are justifiably (in a logically valid sense) motivated. In theatre parlance we may say that their actions bear the stamp of credibility and verisimilitude. The characters may be one hundred percent fictitious, still they may be "probable" and /or "possible".

(4) A well made play must have the following three 'key' features all time - honoured ones.

(a) the crisis (b) the hero (c) the three unities (b) and (c) are self-explanatory; (a) calls for an explanation. The crisis in a play may be defined as that moment in the play when all the relevant information about the main story (plot/theme) has been gathered in and the audience can more or less correctly predict what the outcome is going to be. It is not the denouement which literally means the untying of the knot. Denouement stands for the unravelling of a plot or story. The crisis, we may, therefore, say, is the moment just before the denouement when the audience realize for the first time when the unravelling will start and what the outcome will be. The hero (the protagonist) and the three unities of time, place and action are too familiar to us to demand any explanation.

If we look at 'Waiting for Godot' from the standpoint of a well

made play, we find that it has no beginning, no middle or no end, as nothing happens in the play for it to have them. There is very little action in the theatrical sense of the term. The play originally written in French as *EN ATTENDANT GODOT* in 1948 and translated into English by Beckett himself has its dialogue in excellent modern English as far as individual utterances are concerned, but we fail to 'understand' a large part of it, as it is not sensible, not logically connected and not acceptable as discourse since the utterances at time are fragmented, seem to be at cross purposes and fail to convey anything meaningful. In other words, each of the principle characters talks, almost always, at different waverings with very little of what I might call **COMMON DENOMINATORIAL IDEATION**, one talks about one thing in half formed sentences the listener about another things as if he has not heard the speaker and so on with the result that, as we expect, there is practically little communication between them. The show puzzles us as it is unusual. To put the whole thing in a nutshell, each human being is an island unto himself - which is a strange kind of mental alienation. I shall try to explain such a 'character' using the following example.

Imagine a pendulum. Its property is to swing from one end to the other. Say, from A to B. It swings constantly A to B without any break or cessation at any point. The constant to and fro movements may be equated with the interaction between the two characters involved in the dialogue i.e. communication. The pendulum is the dialogue between A and B. Now suppose the pendulum swings to end A and stops there for a while before swinging back to B; similarly it stops for a while at end B before swinging back to A. So long as the pendulum is arrested at A; there is no communication; The pendulum is very much there i.e. the talk continues but communication breaks down. It is virtually A talking to himself and B talking to himself, though as the normal swing is resumed communicative interaction comes back. 'Normal' is a tricky word, though. As we know that the pendulum behaves against all normal traits, against all norms of human society. They talk, but they do not at all communicate. Is it not similar to the mythical Tower of Babel, but with a difference, where all talk in different language with no communication, while in our case it is the same language with no com-

munication? Well, the net result is the same.

The situation is highly suggestive and symbolic. It indicates an absence of purpose or direction in the case of those involved, as also an automatic / mechanical existence and action inappropriate to the occasion. The talkers are inert and will-less; confused and disoriented; suspicious and fidgeting. It suggests impoverishment of linguistic and philosophical values, the general acceptance of / about language and what lies behind it, manifest in the 'fossilized debris of language', as Martin Esslin calls it, in the form of slogans, clichés, repetitions etc. Leading to ritualization etc. Strung together in nonsense patterns. The language is full of trite and irrelevant remarks and sometimes it parodies the language of science and philosophy. Language which is the meaning transmitting medium amongst humans is rendered vacuous and consequent by absurd.

Even such characters are small in number. Action is minimal, as thin and transparent as a spider web. The communication gaps are to be filled in by the audience through active participation and involvement in the thin action. Here again a good deal will be purely hypothetical and irrational with slim chances of confirmation. However, the audience has to lock forms with what little goes on the stage to extract something - a phenomenally small something - out of it which turns and never ending. That, by the way, is the success of the play.

The characters in 'Waiting for Godot' and similar plays are, to say the least, very unusual ones. They are not introverts; they are not insane; they are not retarded; they are a sort of disorganized about themselves. In case we subject ourselves to an unbiased and honest investigation, we will be surprised, nay, confounded, to find that 'almost' always we resemble them. Perhaps it is our 'moods'; in their case it is their 'character'. When such characters as we find in 'Waiting for Godot' talk, will be full of sound, and at times fury too, a kind of phatic communion, signifying not, of course, nothing, but their peculiar island-like mental make-up. They do not seem to "Live" rather, they "Exist".

The characters in our play have no identifiable, recognizable features like surname, nationality, age, special clothes, marital status, passport, driving license, identity card and such paraphernalia.

The result is that we do not know what to make of them. Their action, what little there is, is not convincingly motivated. Even if we stretch our willing suspension of disbelief to its elastic extremity, we are unable to consider them as similar to us. We can hardly look upon them as humans like us, who, we guess are 'normal', normality being a strange scale of measure and varying from person to person. These characters shatter all our conventional ideas of normalcy, credibility and humanity; they are not aliens, though. The best we can say about them is 'they do not belong' and 'they are different'.

As we come to the end of the play we begin to feel and think that we have been cheated. At the end, as the curtain falls, there is the near unanimous value judgment that the play right has taken us for a ride. In perfectly justifiable disappointment, outrage, annoyance and disgust we pronounce the judgement: The play is Absurd. Nevertheless, we are profoundly disturbed. Moved? Well, I don't know. Perhaps. Disturbed? Yes. Very much.

In the foregoing account I have been using words like absurd, absurdity, nonsense etc. almost synonymously. The following account tries to explain what I mean by absurdity, using a few examples and situations. Once we know what is meant by absurdity, we will be comfortable with plays, like 'Waiting for Godot; which belong to the genre called Absurd Plays. We will be tempted to conclude that there is nothing absurd about the so called absurd plays. On the contrary, they are great plays.

IMAGINE:

(I) (A). I have to go to a distant place by train. I stand in the long queue for a long time to get my ticket. The train, in the meanwhile, arrives and stands on the platform. It may leave any moment now. I feel restless, helpless. At last I reach the booking counter, collect my ticket and rush to the platform. The train has already started to move. I run all the way to the train elbowing the milling crowd on the platform, run along with the train to keep pace with it and at last am about to get into a compartment when the train clears the platform leaving me behind panting for breath with the ticket in my hand. I have a terribly painful feeling of being cheated. My frustration is boundless. I did everything within my

power and reached. After all the law-abiding waiting in the queue, labour, expenses, anxiety and physical exertion, I got nothing in return. I have been left where I was earlier. Now an uncontrollable series of thought passes through my mind: The train is full : there are thousands of passengers inside. Why I was left behind is beyond my comprehension. What haven't I done? Everything that as expected from me was done sincerely and honestly. I try to rationalize the result. I reach nowhere. If only the train had given me just two more seconds, I would have been inside; I would have reached my destination as planned. But here I am, stranded, helpless and bewildered, for no fault of mine as far as I could fathom. It is something like a punishment to me. Do I deserve it? It is totally unwarranted, senseless. IT IS ABSURD!!! I don't understand!!! I fell like a fish out of water.

(II) (A) I have worked hard for my final examinations. I am thoroughly satisfied with my performance. It has been outstanding. I expect a high first class even a distinction. The results are announced. Then, to my disappointment I do not find my number anywhere. I have not passed the exams even in the third class. This cannot be! In mounting panic I look again. I find no number of mine. Terrified, I conduct an enquiry. I learn that as per the registers I have not appeared for the exams. So how can I find my number? I then prove that I did write the exams. The records at the exam centre indicate my presence. The university authorities state that even though the records show that I have written the exams, my papers are not with them, they are missing in spite of their best efforts to trace them. This kind of things does not happen. Mine is the only and isolated case in the long history of the university. I felt miserable, virtually mad. The incident defies all understanding, all rationalization. I felt cheated, absolutely helpless. Why me??? The question torments me. IT IS ABSURD!!

Let us just go back to (I) (A). If I had succeeded in getting into the moving train, everything would have been all right, everything would have fallen into a neat or predictable pattern. Nothing has gone wrong. I would have been perfectly happy and contented. Let us refer to this as (I) (B).

Similarly let us go to back to (II) (A). If I had found my num-

ber in the first class or distinction division, as was expected, my calculations would have been proved correct, my expectations would have been fulfilled. I would have been happy. Let us call it (II) (B).

Now, imagine that I am writing two short plays - one based (I) (A) and the other based on (II) (A). I have two options before me : I can end (I) (A) in two ways, as given above. That is, (I) as given in (I) (A) and (2) (I) (B) and in the second example (I) as is given in (II) (A) and (2) (II) (B).

If I have decided to close my plays as (I) (A) and (II) (A), they will be absurd plays; if I have decided to end them as (I) (B) and (II), they will be well made plays.

The absurd plays result because no amount of philosophical, sentimental, moralistic or religious rationalization can explain satisfactorily. How the things happened to me as they did. If I was a believer in Fate and / or Fatalism, I can satisfy myself by resigning myself to Fate. However hard I try, the experiences mystify me; in fact, they are mind - boggling.

These are crude and prosaic examples which try to show what absurd plays are like and about. The theatre of the absurd has a system of philosophy which we do not find in the above illustrations. We ask questions like 'why me?'. If everyone asks this kind of questions, then the experience is universalized. That is the heart of the matter.

Usually we calm ourselves by assertion 'The past is dead, the future is yet to come, what matters is the present'. But living is, and always will be, a concatenation of the past, the present and the future. Only animals live at the present, for the present. We have a better word to refer to this kind of living: EXISTENCE. Animals exist; humans live. We can do nothing at all to alter the past; only animals exist at the present and for the present; we can do nothing at all about the future either, as we do not know what lies ahead of us. We do not know what the purpose of our existence is. We are born into this (hostile) world without having been informed of the purpose, if there be any, of our arrival. Being human, we expect that it will be revealed to us later today, tomorrow, the day after, next week or next month or perhaps sometime next year. We are all waiting for this revelation, for something to happen to us so that

the mystery is removed. We have no control over this removal or mystery and subsequent revelation of the purpose of our existence, but we can wait which is very much the only domain of our activity. WE CAN WAIT AND WE DO WAIT AND WE CANNOT BUT WAIT. Suppose nothing happens in spite of our continued waiting is prolonged and tends to be endless. Meanwhile, what do we do with time? To kill time we do certain things - which in the philosophical frame amounts to insignificance, mere trivialities. If this is all about life, why try to rationalize it? Well, we need not. Life is beyond definition and rationalization.

I shall now try to explain the concept of waiting, using commonplace illustrations, I buy a lottery ticket and then wait for the day the results are announced. I write exams and wait for the results. I wait for a job. I wait for my marriage. I wait for the birth of Children...I at long last wait for death. Life is endless waiting (with death as destination and as the cessation of the waiting process).

The kind of waiting referred to above is too mundane. The waiting that is mentioned in Beckett is 'spiritualized', 'rarefied' and 'highly hypersemanticized'. We can easily conceptualize the meaning to 'waiting'; if we imagine a prisoner who has been sentenced to death on a particular day he is LOOKING FORWARD TO IT (Note the irony). We must admit that the only thing the prisoner is capable of is to wait and it is this waiting that makes up his living. For him living is waiting. We may further aggregate this. Imagine that there has been a miscarriage of justice: the prisoner is fact innocent; circumstantial evidence against him is so strong that the prosecution could easily establish that he is guilty and the defence could do absolutely nothing at all to save him. Can we never understand what the prisoner would feel under the circumstances? How is this waiting tied to time? Waiting is possible through time only and time ticks away-over which we have no control. The agony is ineffable.

The works of Beckett reflect some of the basic tenets of modern philosophy - the most conspicuous being Sartre's Existentialism. This is not to say that he borrowed everything from Sartre (recall that they were coevals).

Existentialist philosophers like Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Sartre

etc. and writers like Kafka, Camus and others look upon man as an island, as an alienated being cast into an unfamiliar, mostly hostile universe which does not possess any inherent truth, value or sense (i.e. meaning). The represent human existence on earth as a journey from nothingness to nothingness That is, existence is absurd, anguished and meaningless. In his remarkable and influential book 'The Myth of Sisyphus' Camus observes:

In a universe suddenly deprived of illusions and of light man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile.... This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting truly constitutes the feeling of absurdity.....

Eugene Ionesco has something to say in his essay of Kafka about this:

Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd and useless.

Thus existential philosophy starts from the rejection of validity and reality of (general) concepts. We know that in idealistic philosophy common concepts like beauty, goodness etc. are considered 'real'. A beautiful thing includes an element of beauty; a good thing includes an element of goodness. In other words, it is the essence, beauty, that makes a thing beautiful. It is the essence, goodness, that makes a thing good. Therefore, ESSENCE COMES BEFORE EXISTENCE. Well, existential philosophy says just the reverse. It is out of the beautiful thing that beauty, the essence, is abstracted; it is out of the good thing that goodness, the essence, is abstracted. That is to say, EXISTENCE COMES BEFORE ESSENCE. So general truths, ethical / moral systems and the like are pure illusion. Here by 'general' we mean 'common to one and all'. Therefore, as general truths etc. are illusions, there can be nothing in this world common to all people, to every individual in this world. That is to say, each one has to find out one's own salvation all by oneself, because of the absence of generally, encapsulated in one's own identity one is all alone; one has to discover for oneself everything that applies to one that is also to say, we cannot find two persons alike in this world. Each has to have his own sense of being the question is what is being? Philosophers have, time and again,

asked this question. Beckett explores this in his cannon and leaves it unanswered for the readers and spectators to form their own confusions. The search continues for man's identity. Even if it appear despairing and nihilistic, the quest is laudable because if we get what we are searching for, we understand life and existence and the meaning of life and existence.

It tradition literature through millennia experience both at a and imaginary, (or is it imaginative?) has formed the framework skeleton for padding and embellishment. Absurd writing of both subjective and objective visions and experiences.

When the plays of Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, Arthur Admove, Harold Pinter etc. are presented on stage these days, critics and audiences do not leave the houses puzzled, outraged, feeling cheated or cursing, as they did when they were premiered. To day their plays are crowd pullers, box office successes, fascinating, stimulating, disturbing and above all, strangely satisfying. The theatre of the Absurd marks the birth of a new and different convention of drama. Let us recall the words of Kenneth Tyrn after he saw the premiere of 'Waiting for Godot'

It forced me to reexamine the rules which have hitherto government drama; and having done so to pronounce them not elastic enough.

The label *THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD* given to these plays by Martin Esslin, Head of the Radio Drama department BBC London and an authority on drama must be "understood as a kind of intellectual shorthand for a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method and convention, of shard philosophical and artistic premises, whether conscious or unconscious, and of influences from a common store of tradition".

The birth of the theatre of the absurd may be traced to several causes like the conflict between science and religion consequent upon Darwin's findings resulting in the disappearance of god (or the death of god), the World Wars and the inevitable breakdown of the so-called liberal faith, the birth and spread of the communist / fascist nazideologies, the interbellum and post bellum disillusionment, the barbarism of Hitler which manifested in concentration camps, mass murder and genocide, the spiritual vacuity of the era,

the total inability of rich, mechanical and material world to satisfy the spiritual needs of man, the astonishing poverty of huge chunks of humanity and their animal like existence and so on.

When we referred to existential philosophers and writers, we mentioned a senseless (meaningless) universe, senseless actions, senseless utterances etc. Sense is carried from one individual to another in a close - knit community through the language of the community. And so, no wonder that the theatre of the absurd is seriously concerned with criticism of language which has been deprived of its logical semantic component. Language has become empty (perhaps, 'empty' is too strong a word and so we can use 'inadequate' in the place). When such an inadequate language becomes the medium of expression of say, philosophy, politics, economics and the like the latter suffer from imperfect expression. Recent books bear testimony to this observation. We do seem to understand much of what is being said in such books, not because our grasping is deficient, but because the authors use a language which is becoming increasingly inadequate. Similarly, most of our day-to-day communication is senseless, PHATIC and absurd. The language of the absurd plays on many occasions ceases to carry meaning because only through such a language an absurd existence be represented realistically. Here language uses mostly active vocabulary but in spite of that, signification remains opaque, hardshelled. When our conceptualization of the universe which takes a verbal shape runs contrary to what is real (which again has verbal shape), we suspect the latter and stupidly holds onto our fond vision. In other words the two pictures clash in order to desperately cling to the accepted notions and values, we are prepared even to change the premise. For instance, suppose we say to an ill-informed person that the earth is round, he may raise his eyebrows and ask; 'You mean flat' There is an incessant clash between illusion and reality in this world which is put to artistic and creative use by writers.

The Theatre of the Absurd is not the only avant - grade one. We have the theatre of cruelty, of fact, of protest, of anger, of ritual the comedy of menace the poor theatre and scores of other kind. Almost every modern dramatist is the father of a new kind of the-

atre. There is a good deal of experimentation going on in the field.

Now let us see what we have in 'Waiting for Godot'. The play was translated into many languages, performed in many countries and was the most important influential play of its generation. It has no plot. It is static. NOTHING HAPPENS, NOBODY COMES, NOBODY GOES, IT'S AWFUL Let us see what the play consist in:

By a tree on a country road, two old tramps are waiting for Godot. They encounter Pozzo and Lucky, master and slave. After more waiting, a boy tells them Godot will surely come tomorrow. The above happens in the first act.

In the second act the same things happen (except that Pozza has become blind and Lucky dumb). At the end they receive the same message.

Valdimir : Well, shall we go?

Estragon : Yes, let's go (they do not move).

The two tramps under a tree on the bare stage are derived from the cross talk comedians of the music halls and films, Chaplin and Keaton of the silent films (movies) and Laurel and Hardy of the talkies. The dialogue is repetitive patter.

What do we make of this play?

It is an existential play wherein the two tramps like ourselves suffer constant pratfalls, ponder the meaning of life, contemplate suicide and wait. Vladimir and Estragon are complementary personalities like Pozzo and Lucky. (It is said the Pozzo stands for the body, the material and Lucky the mind, the spiritual). The tramps constantly wait for something, just like us. The act of waiting is essential to the human condition.

Beckett did not examine the illogicality of dreams, with the surrealists, the nature of allegory with Ionesco, non-sense for its own sake with the dada-ists, or even insist that the world is absurd / He has a particular voice: he considers the human condition at its most basic level. He does this by examining the dramatic forms of expression and extending them to their limits, there by purifying dramatic language and simplifying forms of technique. His influence has been phenomenal. You will find this when you do the play in detail.

Beckett did not interpret the search for the self (identify) as

meaning simply the attempt to define one's character. Individual characteristics (Personal moralities among them) were of less importance than the basic human awareness of living, the sense growing or dwindling away, waiting for something to happen, the cycles of friendship or alienation. With single-minded devotion and dedication he strove to develop a dramatic means through which these inner rhythms could be captured. As he desired total objectivity, he chose to write in French, English having too many personal associations, (recall the associative abundance of the Joycean and Proustian stream of consciousness and read 'Modern Fiction' by Woolf) and then translated his works into English for British audiences.

Whenever we talk about life, soul, mind and such things, religion is close behind. But Beckett did not betray too many signs of religious beliefs. The play has quite a few references to Christianity, but any traces of religious belief are promptly contradicted by expressions of doubt and disbelief. Christianity is used within the play as just one of those habits of fear or hope keeps a person going through the endless process of waiting. Many critics tried to associate Godot, the mysterious being for whom the two tramps are without reason waiting, with God. Godot never appears. In a rare moment Beckett stated that Godot was not God.

If Godot is not God, then what (many asked, many are asking and many will continue to ask) does the play mean? The play infuriated many critics including lover Brown who said that he could "find no satisfaction in the meanings of the mentally deficient". Bercht saw the play as a justification of social inaction and also hated it.

Our answer to the question 'what does the play mean?' is another question on 'Is it imperative that everything should mean something?' Existence will be unbearable if everything that we do and say is meaningful. Too much of meaning leads to what we call ANGST in the German language.

Beckett wished to present an inner flow of consciousness but instead of choosing 'a language dense with private association, he evolved a primary language which would convey the flow directly', instead of through the mist of confused memories.

"Waiting for Godot" is basically about waiting for something to

happen. Nothing happens, of course, for simple reason that if it did, the play would no longer be about waiting, but about something happening, Beckett's problems was how to translate the waiting feeling into dramatic terms. He did so by carefully balancing one type of expectation against another which on a literary level resulted in an almost hypnotic antiphonal prose - poetry, one short phrase counter pointed by another, and on a social level captured a mood of irresolute, sceptical uncertainty which was perhaps the familiar feeling of the 1950s when the earlier optimistic ideologies were proving false. The play is not pessimistic; it is even nihilistic. Waiting is not Pessimistic. We Believe in Waiting. Beckett balanced out pessimism and optimism, death and birth, leaves falling and growing.

One of the paradoxes about the play was that it was regarded by many as theatrically intractable and extremely obscure. Yet it became a popular success. The tramps set up a fashion of their own in Great Britain, influenced Harold Pinter and T.V. comedy programmes. Martin Esslin points out that the play was a great success before prison audiences who knew nothing about the literature but everything about waiting.

It is said that Jarry's "Ubu Ro" first seen in Paris as far back as 1896 was the first absurd play. It was based on the assumption that human life and endeavour are so essentially illogical, and language so inadequate that man's only refuge is in laughter. But when and if many has lost his innate capacity to Laugh, either at his own self or at life in general, then what? Let us not even think about the answer. It is too frightening, nightmarish!!!

THE PLAY: WAITING FOR GODOT

JUST THE SYNOPSIS

THE TEXT USED HERE IS THE PAPERBACK EDITION OF FABER AND FABER (1956) REPRINTED IN 1972.

THIS IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE PLAY PROPER READ THE TEXT AS MANY TIMES AS YOU CAN.

'Waiting for Godot, to use the author's own words, is a tragic-comedy in two facts. First written in French in 1948 as 'En Attendant Godot' and then translated into English by Beckett himself, the

play has been causing violent debates and controversies, ever since its premieres in USA, UK1 and France forty year ago, on what drama is and what the problems relating to drama are. Recall Kenneth Tynan has stated.

One evening on a lonely road near a leafless tree two figures, elderly, half tramp-half clown, dressed in the vestiges of respectability and equipped with cliché-thinking and verbal self-importance, are waiting for somebody of the name Godot. They seem to have no family, no profession (occupation), no home to go to Godot has given them to understand, they seem to believe that their patience will be rewarded. But it is soon apparent that they are Estragon and Vladimir. They are not sure what shape the offer of help of Godot will take. They are not sure that they are at the right place either, they are not sure whether it is the day fixed for the rendezvous. As they do not know what they should keep themselves busy with during the waiting, they do this and that to while away their time. They seem to belong to category of people well-known in Paris as CLOCHARDS, persons who have known better days, who have been educated, civilized and cultured. Physically they appear to be comparatively unscathed: One takes off his boots the other talks of the Gospels. They eat a carrot. They have little to say to each other which means something They call each other by Two diminutive - and Didi, the former being short for Estragon and the latter for Vladimir.

They first look to the left, then to the right. They talk about going, pretend that they are in fact going, leaving each other though after few moments of separation, they get back to each other. Well, they cannot go away, as they are waiting for Godot, about whom the audience knows nothing except that he will not come. At last that much at least is clear to everybody.

Nothing is mentioned about their antecedents: no initials, no surname, no age, no occupation no family, no society, property, no nationality, in short, nothing at all. They seem to have no future plans at all except meeting with Godot.

Soon they have visitors two errie passers - by who serve as a diversion distraction, who come from nowhere who are going nowhere and who leave no trace at all. One of the two is Pozzo who

seems to be a local landowner. He says he is on his way to the local fair to sell his slave, Lucky (the second person), who is walking ahead of him at the far end of a long rope which Pozzo holds in his hands, Lucky is decrepit, emaciated, anaemic and stiff. The rope is round his neck. Pozzo and Lucky contrast with each other, yet they have one thinking in common: they are both driven by a desperate attempt to evade panic which could grip them if they happened to lose their belief in what Pozzo stands for. Pozzo halts a while with the two tramps, sits down on a camp stool, eats his lunch consisting of leg of cold chicken in front of them, grants them the bones when Lucky spurms them smokes a pipe and then in gratitude for their company makes Lucky execute a few shambles by way of 'dance' and then thinks aloud for them. He delivers a highly picturesque description of the twilight. Lucky, besides his dance, gabbles an incomprehensible speech-his intellectual performance consisting of stammering and stutterings and strange disconnected sentences. All of them set upon him to silence him. Pozzo lives by orders hurled at Lucky in the form of mono syllables, never looking at him or even in his matters. He seems to proclaim to the wide world that he is all in all, the whole world revolves round him and he has the final say in all matters. He destroys whatever might be growing in time, by not listening. He ignores urgency by fidgeting with his pipe or spraying the interior of his mouth with mouthsprary. He relishes an impressive show of pessimism.

Soon Pozzo takes leave of them with his slave ahead of him at the other end of the rope with its noose round his neck. The two tramps have not been alone for long when a boy appears before them bringing the news that Godot "won't come this evening, but surely tomorrow". The boy goes away; darkness envelopes the place almost at once when the two tramps contemplate suicide by hanging themselves from the tree. Then they decide to call it a day and to go. But they do not go. The curtain comes down. So much for the first act.

The second act. The same place is revealed as the curtain goes up (in fact we presume that is the following day). The decor, at any rate is the same but for just one detail; the tree has sprouted a few leaves four or five. Didi is joined on the stage by Gogo: Didi

sings a song about a dog coming into the kitchen, stealing a crust of bread, getting killed and buried on whose tomb is written etc. etc. Gogo puts on his boots, eats a radish. He does not recall that he was there before.

Pozzo and Lucky return from the side they made their exit from the first act. They have changed: Pozzo is blind, Lucky is dumb. Pozzo does not remember anything. They fall in a heap together and get up painfully. Pozzo is exasperated at Didi's questions on time. He bellows that life itself is only a brief instant. (Recall, "out, out, brief candle). Pozzo leaves driving Lucky before him. A little later the boy comes and delivers the same message as before: Mr. Godot won't come this evening, but he 'll come tomorrow. The boy does not seem to know or remember the two tramps: he has never seen them before.

The sun sets; the moon rises; the two tramps contemplate suicide, but without much determination - well, the branches of the tree ought to be quite strong for that. They decide to go away, but do not stir as the curtain comes down.

The play takes roughly three hours for performance. The audience sit mesmerized throughout. The endless waiting produces an effect of searing pathos, if it were not for the fact that Beckett turns the tramps into clowns, who mess about with their hats, boots etc. and tumble in horseplay. The anguish of human restlessness and the meaninglessness of human existence on this planet consort with crude pantomime. There is not anchor or dignity. Beckett denies satisfaction to the audience and they leave the playhouse profoundly disturbed.

WARNING

No synopsis, no matter how well written it might be, can ever act as a substitute for the original full - length version. So the above synopsis is more like an apology and indiscretion than anything else.

It is absolutely essential that we read the play repeatedly dozens of times and 'try to visualize the performance along with the readings. This guarantees to us ever increasing satisfaction.

The power of the play lies in its dialogue. We have hardly used any part of the dialogue in our synopsis. So the synopsis is

just the carcass; the soul is nowhere in it.

SEEK IT IN THE PLAY

In the next few pages we are attempting a critical evaluation of 'Waiting for Godot'. This evaluation will amount to something only if the text is thoroughly familiar to each of the reader. Therefore access to the text is presumed to be available to all.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF "WAITING FOR GODOT"

As the curtain goes up, we discover a country road A leafless tree stands on one side. The time is evening.

Estragon is sitting on a low mound and trying to take off his boots. This is how the play begins. The locale is unidentifiable, so also the character who is totally absorbed in his task. It could be any place. As we watch Estragon trying hard in vain to take off his boots, we begin to suspect that the boots have become part of his body (just as in the case of Molly where his bicycle has become a mechanical extension of man's physical inefficiencies).

Vladimir appears. We hear Estragon speak the first word as: Nothing to be done.

It this is true, we have to presume that for the rest of his life the boots will remain as part of his anatomy. Which, to say the least, is frightening.

See how Beckett describes Vladimir approaching.:

Vladimir (advancing with short stiff strides, legs wide, apart). His words are, however, a morale-booster.

I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I 've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle.....

The resumption of the struggle is reminiscent of King Bruce of Scotland who was inspired by a spider to resume his fight and who won the battle after seven defeats. It is quite a positive outlook. Note how all on a sudden humour springs:

Vladimir (.....Turning to Estragon): So there you are again. This is more like phatic communion the normal communication. But Estragon takes it to mean literally and to refer to the locale:

Estragon : Am I? (Am I here again?)

Now let us look at what Vladimir says:

I'm glad to see you back, I thought you were gone for ever. The words suggest that the going and the returning are a regular feature.

Estragon is glad, too, obviously to see Vladimir. He says : Me too. So, togetherness is welcome and eagerly looked forward to. This is reinforced by the words of Vladimir:

Together again at last! We 'll have to celebrate this. But how?....

On being denied an embrace, Vladimir sarcastically asks:

May one enquire where His Highness spent the night?

Estragon : In a ditch.

Vladimir: (admiring) A ditch! where?

Estragon : (without gesture) Over there

We cannot explain why Vladimir admires Estragon for having slept in a ditch. The absence of gesture appropriate to the response conveys no meaning. Vladimir is not wiser as result of the answer.

Vladimir : And they didn't beat you?

Estragon : Beat me? Certainly they bet me.

Normally, after 'Beat me? We expect ' Certainly they did not'. Here we have just the contrary.

By now you must have become familiar with the linguistics of Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*.

Let us take a review of what we have seen so far:

The first sentences spoken by Estragon and Vladimir (Nothing to be done and I'm beginning to come round to that) strongly indicates that what lies in front of them is nothingness. i.e. vacuity. It is doubtless a terrible feeling. However, total apathy and insensitivity have not possessed them. The humour, the sarcasm, the feeling of togetherness and the resultant relief are all indicative of something positive. Mutual dependence and fellow - feeling are desirable. In fact they sustain them.

Even though they are unhappy now, they have happy memories: Vladimir : Hand in Hand from the top of Eiffel Tower, among the first. We were presentable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up.

Passage of time has harmed them. They had know better days

had social recognition and acceptance, a status to boast of. At present they are tramps. I have already mentioned that such persons are called "clochards". Besides they have their private ailments: Estragon's boots refuse to come off; Vladimir complains of something.

'I' like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have. We have already noticed how Vladimir walks. Now we hear his complaint. He does not name his illness. Therefore, we may guess that something is wrong between his legs. This support from the following:

Estragon : (pointing) you might button it all the same.

(Obviously it is the fly of his trousers).

Vladimir : (Stooping) True. (He buttons his fly). Never neglect the little things of life.

We can not but notice the pure humour hidden in the words whereas Estragon is obsessed with his boots, Vladimir is obsessed with his hat. Both, with their antics, remind us of clowns. They seem too busy themselves with trivial things. They have to kill time. They have nothing to do. Their clownish actions continue. In the course of his clownish actions Estragon; with supreme effort succeeds in pulling of his boot. He looks inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down shake it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing feels inside again, staring sightlessly before him.

Estragon : Nothing

Estragon : There's nothing to show

'Nothing' is word that is used numerous times in the play. 'Staring sightlessly' suggests that they look but do not see, as perhaps, their minds wander and they are not able to concentrate on anything at all.

A close stylistic analysis may tell us that on many occasions even when they are talking to each other in apparent earnestness no communication in the strict sense of the term takes place between them. They talk at cross purposes, suggestive of their wandering minds as well as their inability to concentrate, to think coherently, or to understand the other's point of view. if at all there is one. Their (comic) antics, virtual pantomime as a matter of fact tell us of vacant minds and also that they have all the time in the world and

do not know what to do with it. This agony.

Estragon rejects Vladimir's request / suggestion/ demand that the former put on his boot again. This occasions the learned comment from Vladimir.

There's man all over you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet.

The metaphor informs us that we charge the world with all kinds of imperfections when in reality the faults are ours.

All on a sudden, their talk switches to religious matters:

Vladimir : Go go

Estragon : What?

Vladimir : Suppose we repented?

Estragon : Repented what?

Vladimir : Oh.....(he reflects) We wouldn't have to go into the details.

Let us look at the above dialogue. Even Vladimir suggests that they repent, he has not cogitated on repenting. It is Estragon's pursing of the matter that prompts Vladimir to reflect. Even then he is not quite clear about what to repent. By now it is quite clear to us that their utterances are just sounds stripped of their natural meaning. See it is Estragon who fills in the gap in the thinking of Vladimir.

Estragon : On being born?

"Vladimir breaks into a hearty laugh which the immediately stifles his hand pressed to his pubis, his face controlled. " I have already mentioned that something is wrong between his legs. Now we can be more explicit: he has some venereal disease. It is taboo to name it or discuss it in public.

Vladimir : One daren't even laugh any more.

Estragon : Dreadful privation.

When I was referring to Jarry's 'Ubu Roi' (1986), the first absurd play, I happened to mention that 'human life' endeavour are so essentially illogical, and language as inadequate that man's only refuge is in laughter. Vladimir suffers unbearable pain when he tries to laugh. Coupled with this inability to laugh is dreadful privation. We can only imagine the horrifying situation where we dare not laugh and where we are destitute.

Vladimir can't laugh. But he finds that a laugh cannot be re-

placed by a smile. The latter is not fulfilling. Its not the same thing. Nothing to be done. This time it is Vladimir who says 'Nothing to be done'.

Now their talk is on religion. They discuss the Bible, the Gospels, the Dead Sea, Crucifixion, the Saviour, the two thieves, salvation, damnation and so on. He talks about how only one of the Gospels mentions about one of the thieves being saved - which is a probing theological question. This discussion of metaphysics shows that they are 'educated' in such matters, despite their present deprivation.

Estragon, who is poetic (Earlier there is a mention of this fact - his rags bear testimony to having been a poet) remarks that the spot is charming. He suggests that they go. It is now that for the first time we hear Godot being mentioned.

Estragon : Let's go

Vladimir : We can't

Estragon : (Despairingly) Ah! (Pause) You're sure it was here?

Vladimir : what?

Estragon : That we were to wait

Vladimir : He said by the tree. (They look at the tree) Do you see any others?

Estragon : I don't know. A willow

Consider the last enquiry and the answer. First we have a question, then an answer, then the cancellation of what the answer says. This type of cancellation and qualification in language is typical of Beckett. The remaining part of the dialogue is trivialities. But in their midst is hidden some vital information which has correct bearing on the action of the plays.

Vladimir What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place?

Estragon: He should be here.

Vladimir : He didn't say for sure he'd come.

Estragon : And if he doesn't come?

Vladimir : Well come back tomorrow

Estragon : Possibly

Vladimir : And so on.

Estragon : The point is....

Vladimir : Until he comes.

The above lines succinctly present the heart of the play i.e.

Waiting

However, they are not sure of anything at all. They are not sure whether they were there the previous day, whether they could recognize the place, whether it was the day Godot was to come, etc., etc., Lingering doubts, hazy recollections, nebulous certainties - all these torment the two tramps. Sense of loneliness, dreams and nightmares scare them.

Estragon desires to try out parting, There are time when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.

After bandying words with with each other, they come round to

'What do we do now?'

A dozen or so of lines now take up hanging-where to hang from who to hang first etc., Soon we come to a major point of the play:

'Well ? What do we do?'

Don't let's do anything, its safer.

This justifies all their inertia, inaction and, perhaps, fear. There follows a stitchmythic dialogue from which we get some information on Godot, their relation to Godot and the like. Theirs was a kind of prayer' a vague supplication to which his reply was that he would see, that he couldn't promise anything, that he would have to think it over in the quiet of his home, that he had to consult his family, his friends his agents, his correspondents, his books, his bank accounts' etc.! before taking a decision.

They eat a carrot and carry on their empty talk. And once again, suddenly, Estragon remarks:

Nothing to be done

So far we have been watching the two tramps and their doing nothing. Is it because they cannot do anything that they are not doing anything? Or, is it impossible for them to follow up their words with the corresponding action as they cannot logically connect through translation from statement to action? Worse still, don't they know that normally statements should be followed by action? For instance, if I say I'm going. I must follow it up with actual going-

which does not happen in their case. So we are at a loss to understand what is going on. We can resolve the puzzle, though. Perhaps, it is because they cannot will that they do not do (let us recall the inaction of Prince Hamlet and the explanation give by Dr. Jones when he says something like. It is not that Hamlet cannot it is not that he will not, it is that he cannot will) I have no intention of opinionating you. We do not have to explain each and everything in a work of art.

Quite frequently they lapse into all kinds of arguments. Then as regularly as they argue they reconcile. This love hate relationship is quite important in understanding the play, about the play.

Sometimes the arguments use the language of children when the situation and the characters become absurdly comic, ludicrous and at the same time actually pathetic.

"Nothing to be done". The finality of the statement is staggering its impact is further strengthened by a terrible cry, close at hand, Estragon drops the carrot. They remain motionless... 'They are scared to death, as if they are being hunted down.' Then enter Pozzo and Lucky. See how Beckett describes their arrival:

Pozzo drives Lucky my means of a rope passed round his neck, So that Lucky is the first to appear. Followed by the rope which is long enough to allow him to reach the middle of the stage before Pozzo appears. Lucky carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a great coat, Pozzo a whip.

Perhaps, here Beckett was reminded of Tamburlaine, the Great, the play by Marlowe where the defeated kings were harnessed, bitted, reined and whipped. Obviously, the scene suggests that Pozzo is master and Lucky his slave.

At this point we may notice one thing about their names. The names Vladimir and Estragon are both trisyllabic, consisting of eight letter while being represented graphemically: similarly, Pozzo and Lucky are disyllabic, and consist of five letters when represented in writing. Perhaps, I am sure, Beckett is trying to balance and even out the characters as pairs. Estragon is one of emotions: Vladimir is one of intellect. Pozzo is master and all-powerful; lucky is weak and slave.

Two sides of a coin? Perhaps.

A shout 'On' is heard, followed by the crack of whip. But Pozzo stops suddenly on sighting Estragon and Vladimir. He jerks the rope violently back; Lucky falls in a heap with everything he carries. Vladimir's fellow feeling surfaces when he steps to pick Lucky up but Estragon pulls him back. Pozzo warns:

Be careful! He's wicked.....With strangers.

Estragon. (Undertone) Is the that him?

Vldimir: Who?

Estragon: (trying to remember the name) Er.....

Vladimir : Godot?

Estragon : Yes.

Our question at this juncture is: How can one afford to forget the name of the one who's one last hope?

Pozzo's self-introduction comes to save Vladimir.

Pozzo: I present my self: Pozzo

Only then Vladimir replies to Estragon's query. (To Estragon) Not at all.

Nevertheless, Estragon is unconvinced.

Estragon: He said Godot

Vladimir: Not at all

Estragon: (timidly to Pozzo) You're not Mr. Godot, sir?

The situation reveals to us the mental make-up of Estragon. Then follows a discourse on the name 'Pozzo': we hear variations like Bozzo and Gozzo. Pozzo's bearing scares both and the tramps at once become conciliating, apologetic.

Pozzo's words are worth quoting in full.

You are human beings nonetheless. (He puts on his glasses) As far as one can see. (He takes off his glasses) Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!

Pozzo is inquisitive; he wants to know who Godot is; the discussion gets longer and longer: Soon we begin to have doubts.

If one is made in God's image, can one be human? Our idea of humanity has to change if we have to accommodate the tramps as human in each and every sense of the term. Appearances can be quite deceptive.

Lucky has a human shape; he even speaks a human language But is he as human as we are? Is Pozzo as much a human

being as we are? Are not Estragon and Vladimir lacking in something essentially human? Perhaps the best we can say now is: THEY ARE ALL DIFFERENT FROM ONE ANOTHER. And the difference is quite significant.

The words and actions of Pozzo and Lucky persuade us to look at them in a new light. Estragon and Vladimir examine Lucky when he sags as if he were a caged animal. They come out with a profile of Lucky too, which tells us a lot about him.

We get a chance to watch the antics of Pozzo , too as also the dance of Lucky, a little later.

The treatment that is meted out of Lucky by Pozzo is unimaginably cruel. To what extent a human being can be thorough low is illustrated by Pozzo. The text of the play gives a lot of information on this. However Life of Lucky is organized by Pozzo. Degradation and deprivations are writ large on Lucky's face, his clothes and also his blah-blah. Is it a commentary on exploitation of a man by man it is difficult to say. Lucky is worse, far worse, than a bonded slave.

The status of Estragon is comparable to that of Lucky in a different way. See how Beckett describes Estragon's conduct when he see and watches Pozzo devouring his chicken.

(They turn towards Pozzo, who, having finished eating, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand).....(Estragon sees the chicken bones on the ground and stares at them greedily.....)

Estragon.....(timidly) Please sir.....

Pozzo: What is it, my good man?

Estrgon: Er...Yo've finished with the.....er....you don't need theer....bones, sir?

Vladimir: (scandalized) You couldn't have waited?

It is the 'dreadful deprivation' that prompts Estragon to beg for the left over bones. Hunger can not be restrained. Self respect bends knees before hunger and thirst. Vladimir is scandalized because Estragon shamelessly displays his deprivation: he is not a verse to eating the bones. Note how beautifully Beckett suggests this:

Vladimir: You couldn't have waited.

They could have had the bones after Pozzo and Lucky leave

them alone. Then they could have the wrap of self respect about them in fact. When Pozzo says that the bones belong to Lucky, Estragon asks Lucky:

Estragon: Excuse me, Mister, the bones, you won't be wanting the bones.

Pozzo follows it up with his own question and when Lucky refuses to answer he says to Estragon: They're yours.

(Estragon makes a dart at the bones, picks them up and begins to gnaw at them)

There is a feeble attempt on Vladimir's part to object to Pozzo's ill-treatment of Lucky (remember Vladimir is an 'intellectual')

Vladimir : (sluttering resolute) to treat a man.....(gesture towards Lucky).....like that.....I thinkI think that....noa human beingnoit's a scandal.

Estragon resumes his gnawing.

Pozzo does almost all the talking when the four of them are together on the stage. But this talk is just bombast, full of arrogance. He is all ears when Vladimir says; let's go. Vladimir says "Let's go" a second time when Pozzo talks sense:

I hope I'm not driving you way, wait a little longer, you will never regret it.

Vladimir changes his suggestion into I'm going Pozzo continues:

.....Think twice before you do anything rash, suppose you go now, while it is still day, for there is no denying it is still day...What happens in that case...to your appointment with this...Godet...godot...Godin...anyhow you see how mean, who has your future in his hands. (pause)at least your immediate future.

A couple of lines later we find Pozzo delivering the axiomatic but plentitudinous observation:

I too would be happy to meet him (godot) The more people I meet the happier I become. From the meanest creature one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one blessing, Even joy(he looks at them contentedly in turn to make it clear they are both meant).....even you who knows, will have added to my store.

Is the underlined sentence a compliment? Is it a dig at them? Their talk continues. In the middle Estragon says. I'm going. No-

body seems to have heard him, though.

Pozzo talks about getting rid of Lucky and how the latter tries to mollify his master so that he will be retained. Vladimir repeats.

You want to get rid of him? FIVE times and once a variant as you've had enough of him?

THIS KIND OF REPETITION IS ONE OF THE IN-TRADE OF BECKETT, PINTER ETC.

We see a good deal more of the antics of Lucky, the display of Pozzo and the agitations of Vladimir and Estragon.

Now it is Vladimir who says: Let's go. But they do not stir.

Pozzo: (.....to Estragon) What is your names?

Estragon : Adam.

Is it a blantant lie? Is Estragon duping Pozzo? Or, has he forgotten his name?

A few lines later, after Pozzo's blah-blah, we hear.

Estragon : So long as one knows.

Vladimir : One can bide one's time

Estragon : One knows what to expect

Vladimir : No further need to worry.

Estragon : Simply wait.

Vladimir : We're used to it

The underlined sentences highlight the theme of the play.

Pozzo demands of Vladimir and Estragon to appraise him:

Pozzo : How did you find me?...God? Fair?Midding? Poor?

Positively bad?

The bloated ego of Pozzo is evident in these words. And Vladimir is quite game to answer.

Oh very good, very very good.

And we hear some nonsense from Estragon:

Oh tray bong, tray try tray bond.

But soon he gets a chance to say:

In the meantime nothing happens:

The sense of self respect comes to the fore in the case of Vladimir when Pozzo offers some favours to them and when Estragon asks for ten francs:

Pozzo:.....So that I ask myself is there anything I can do in my turn for these honest fellows who are having such a dull, dull time.

Estragon: Even ten francs would be welcome.

Vladimir : WE ARE NOT BEGGARS!

Pozzo....

Vladimir: Even five

Vladimir : (to estragon, indignantly) That's enough!

Estragon : I couldn't accept less.

Pozzo wants to entertain them for which he will make Lucky dance and think. Lucky used to dance the farandole, the fling, the braw! the jig, the fandango, and even the horripipe. He capered. For joy. But now Lucky dances as if he is wearing stilts. More of meaningless stichomythic dialogue follows and we hear the apparently endless thinking aloud of Lucky. Pozzo cries 'His hat' and Vladimir snatches it. Silence of Lucky. He falls. BECKETT IS PROBABLY MAKING FUN OF THE IDIOM: TALK THROUGH ONE'S HAT, This Suggests that it is the hat that enables Lucky to think and talk. Hatless, Lucky is deprived of both these faculties.

IS IT NOT A DIG AT US TOO? WHEN WE ARE NOT WEARING OUR HATS, WE ARE ABLE TO TALK AND THINK. TO THINK AND TALK.

Lucky who has fallen in a heap is helped to stand up with all his equipment, He is quite unsteady on his legs. Pozzo refers to the stink of Estragon and Vladimir: the former has stinking feet, the latter stinking breath.

There is protracted, farcical leave taking with quite a few adieus empty 'yeses' and 'thank yous'

Pozzo drives Lucky before him as they entered the stage some time ago and leaves the stage. Once again we have the two tramps alone on the stage.

We find them repeating what they have been talking earlier.

Estragon : Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

Not the brilliance of Beckett's style -the astonishing economy of words:

Vladimir : That passed the time

Estragon : It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir : Yes, but not so rapidly

This is a commonplace idea, but Beckett's handling of it places

it in sharp focus and we look at it with renewed interest.

The talk between the two tramps continues when we hear:

Boy: (off) Mister!

Estragon halts. Both look towards the voice.

Vladimir : Approach, my child.

(NOTE THE MOCK HEROIC, MOCK RELIGIOUS, MOCK REGAL STYLE: IT IS PURE HUMOUR)

Enter Boy, timidly. He halts.

Boy : Mr. Albert....?

Vladimir : Yes

How can we account for the yes' of Vladimir?

Estragon : What do you want?

Vladimir : Approach

The boy does not move.

Estragon: (Forcibly) Approach when you're told, can't you?

The bluster of Estragon has temporarily unnerved the boy. He advances timidly, halts.

Vladimir : What is it?

Boy: Mr. Godot.

The mounting anxiety and tension are brilliantly suggested by the display of impatience by Estragon which is counterbalanced by the apparent calm and cool of Vladimir.

Estragon: (violently) Will you approach! (The boy advances timidly) What kept you so late?

Vladi, Mr. You have a message from Mr. Godot?

Boy: yes, sir

Vladimir : Well, what is it?

But Estragon's impatience never permits the boy to deliver it and so the suspense mounts.

Small talk continues. But something important comes up in the middle.

Boy : Mr. Godot...

Vladimir: I've seen you before, haven't I?

Boy : I don't know, sir,

Vladimir : You don't know me?

Boy: No, sir

Vladimir: It wasn't you came yesterday?

Boy: No, sir

Well, Now it is Vladimir who does not permit the boy to deliver the message. We also learn that the previous day they were there and a boy approached them with a similar message.

IS IT THE FEAR IN THEIR SUBCONSCIOUS THAT MAKES THEM PREVENT THE

boy from delivering the message? However, it has to be delivered and the reality faced. How long can one postpone its happening?

Vladimir: Words, words, (Pause) Speak

Boy: (In a rush) Mr Godot told to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow.

SILENCE

Then follows a series of questions with which Vladimir probes the Boy-his relation with Godot, how Godot treats him, whether he beats him, whether he gets enough to eat, whether the Boy is unhappy etc. etc., The Boy prepares to go away, as Vladimir permits him to go.

Boy: What am I to say to Godot, Sir?

Vladimir: Tell him....tell him you saw us. (Pause) You did see us, didn't you?

Boy: Yes, sir

Note the doubts and uncertainty of Vladimir.

Once again the two are left alone to talk to each other. Estragon is leaving the boots behind, he is not going to wear them. Vladimir says: But you can't go barefoot!

Estragon: But Christ did!

Vladimir: Christ! What's Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!

Estragon: All my life I've compared myself to him.

Try to recall what I mentioned earlier. Beckett uses this kind of a balancing technique quite often. Faith and doubt are matched, so that we do not emerge any wiser about Beckett's religion, or attitude to religion.

Almost at once reality dawns on them:

Vladimir: We've nothing more to do here.

Estragon: Nor anywhere else.

This terrible pessimism at once balanced by Vladimir's strong optimism.

Vladimir: Ah Go go, don't go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better.

Estragon: How do you make that out?

Vladimir: Did you not hear what the child said?

Estragon: No

Vladimir: He said that Godot was sure to come tomorrow (pause). What do you say to that?

Estragon: Then all we have to do is to wait on here.

The 'ON' after wait suggests ominous continuance of the process of waiting.

Estragon would like to bring a length of rope the following day probably to consider again death by hanging.

They reminisce. Estragon would like them to go separate ways. Though Vladimir is not for it. 'Nothing is certain in this world. However, Vladimir says: we can still part, if you think it would be better. But thinking is not Estragon's forte.'

We are now coming to the end of the first act of the play as follows:

Estragon: It's not worth while now

Silence

We can almost reach out and touch and feel the silence.

Estragon: Well shall we go?

Vladimir: Yes, lets go

They do not move.

I have already mentioned about the severance between words and acts. It appears that just their lips move, their hearts and minds are far, far away.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

Next day, Same time same Place

The identical repetitive unchanging pattern suggests stagnation. It is events which cause chances and it is changes that cause events. We find neither of them here, except for a minor thing: the

tree has four or five leaves. If it is truly NEXT DAY, it is too soon for the tree to have developed these leaves, We will have to exercise our willing suspension of disbelief to its extreme. But then in an absurd play any thing is possible.

The stage is bare but for the boots of Estragon and the hat of Vladimir.

Vladimir appears. His antics are seen. His song is heard.

Estragon enters. There is the frantic reunion. Estragon seems to have taken a beating and to be scared.

Estragon: Don't touch me! Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!

Vladimir: Did I ever leave you?

Estragon: You let me go.

Almost at once they fall into each other's arms and embrace. End of embrace. Estragon, no longer supported, almost falls. There is moving pathos in these actions. We begin to believe that they cannot exist apart from each other. A post mortem takes place over the events of the previous night.

Vladimir reminds Estragon: Wait for Godot (Estragon groans. Silence) Things have changed since yesterday.

Estragon does not seem to remember much of what had happened the previous day. He is furious. When Vladimir asks him whether he remembers the place, he explodes:

Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk about scenery! (Looking widely about him) Look at this much-heap! I've never stirred from it!

Estragon gives vent to his frustration in no mincing terms. But Vladimir romanticises his bygone days:

But we were together! Could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called...can't think of the name of the man, at a place called...can't think of the name of the place. Do you not remember?

But this romantic notion is not shared by Estragon

Vladimir : You are a hard man to get on with, Go go

Estragon: it'd be better if we parted.

This is a game frequently played between the two-going their ways and always coming back to each other.

Stichmythic dialogue continues and once again

Vladimir: (in anguish) Say anything at all!

Estragon: What do we do now?

Vladimir: What for Godot.

Much of what follows over the next few pages is nonsense. Vladimir is trying to help Estragon remember what transpired there the previous day. It is no good: memory fails to serve him. The talk hinges on Estragon's boots. Then all too suddenly.

Estragon: I'm tired, Let's go

Vladimir: We can't

Estragon: Why not?

Vladi : We're waiting for Godot.

Estragon: Ah! (Pause Despairing) What if we do! What'll we do!

Vladimir: There is nothing we can do

We are reminded of the nothing passage from Eliot's The Waste Land'. Estragon grows sleepy. Vladimir sings something like a lullaby, covers his friends body with his coat. The loving kindness is soul stirring. After all, they are not fully dehumanized automations!! There is still some humanity left in them.

We hear again the same refrain:

Estragon: We can't

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot

Estragon talks about leaving, but he does not leave.

Then follow their antics with the hat, frantic movements about the stage, hiding behind the tree, scanning the horizon and so on which are all apparently disconnected actions.

It is followed by a wordy duel, a rapid fire dialogue and quickly. They make up. They play about.

(Enter Pozzo and Lucky. Pozzo is blind, Lucky burdened a before Rope as before, but much shorter, so that Pozzo may follow more easily. Lucky wearing a different hat. At the sight of Estragon and Vladimir he stops short. Pozzo, continuing on his way, bumps into him)

Estragon does not recognize Pozzo and Lucky, despite his meeting with them the previous evening Pozzo's blindness is not explained.

Estragon's twice repeated Is it Godot? is not answered by Vladimir. Vladimir, however is immensely relieved that they have company.

"We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for...waiting, All evening we have struggled, unassisted. Now over, it's already tomorrow.

When Estragon is informed that the person is not Godot, he is chagrined. And we have the refrain:"

Estragon: Let's go

Vladimir: We can't

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.

In the case of Pozzo the bluster has given place to abject helplessness. He repeatedly cries for help. "Pozzo writhes, groans, beats the ground with his fists."

Vladimir's suggestion to capitalize on Pozzo's helplessness is worth looking into

Vladimir: No, the best would be to take advantage of Pozzo's calling for help.

Pozzo: Help!.....

Vladimir: In anticipation of some tangible return

Estragon: And suppose he

Vladimir: Let us not waste our time in idle discourse. For the first time in the play we find Vladimir waxing eloquent. And the passage deserve quoting in full.

Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not everyday we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally, well if not better. To all mankind they were addressed those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not, Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul breed to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? (Estragon says nothing) It is true that when with folded arms we wright the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners without the least reflection, or else he slinks away into the depts of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are

we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear, We are waiting for, Godot to come

Estragon: Ah!

Pozzo: Help!

Vladimir: Or the night to fall. (Pause) We have kept our appointment, and that's an end to that, We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

This is crucially important as it asserts that they have kept their side of the bargain. However, this is beautifully cancelled by what Estragon says: Billions. I have already mentioned how Beckett uses statements and counterstatements used one after another to even out the fact so that Beckett is always seen sitting on the fence.

What follows next is profoundly disturbing and pathetic:

Vladimir: All I know is that hours are long, under these conditions, and contain us to beguile them with proceedings which how shall I say-which may at first seem reasonable, until they become a habit. You may say it is to prevent our reason from floundering. No doubt.

Waiting has become a habit and it helps.

Estragon has a rare aphorism to his credit:

Estragon: we all are born mad. Some remain so.

This smacks of Francis Bacon and Rousseau. Only a person who is sane accepts the fact that he is going mad. We begin to look at Estragon with a new interest. When Pozzo offers to pay for help. Estragon at once asks: How much ?

Let us see how it develops:

Pozzo: Help! I'll pay you!

Estragon: How much?

Pozzo: One hundred francs!

Estragon: It's not enough

Vladimir is too modest, too reasonable and too kind

Vladimir: I wouldn't go so far as that.

We get response from Estragon which is just the opposite of what we normally expect.

Estragon: You think it's enough?

(We expect You think it's too much)

Vladimir: We wait. We are bored. No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do?

We let it go waste. Come let's get to work! (He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride) In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness.

Both the tramps are totally alienated, surrounded by nothingness, Vladimir attempts to pull Pozzo to his feet, but fails; the efforts continue, but to no avail, he seeks Estragon's help, when Estragon says: I'm going. Vladimir begs him not to. Then

Vladimir: Help me first. Then we'll go together

Estragon: You promise?

Vladimir: I swear it!

Estragon: And We'll never come back?

Vladimir: Never!

But we can safely guess that it will never happen; it will remain a mere pipe dream.

Vladimir is not able to get up in spite of the extended hand of Estragon. Pozzo continues to cry for help. Vladimir kicks. Pozzo who cries and crawls away and falls again. The tramps continue their arguments Estragon calls Pozzo Abel, Cain etc., a few line later we find Estragon and Vladimir at their old game.

Estragon: Let's go

Vladimir: We can't

Estragon: Why not?

Vladimir: We are waiting for Godot

WE HAVE HEARD THIS DIALOGUE REPEATED AT REGULAR INTERVALS. WELL, ANYTHING REPEATED ON A REGULAR BASIS BECOMES RITUALISTIC. SO IT WILL NOT BE INCORRECT IF WE SAY THAT IT IS ALMOST A RITUAL FOR VLADIMIR AND ESTRAGON TO WAIT AND ALSO TO INDULGE IN THIS KIND OF A GAME, OF TALK. AS TIME PASSES, A RITUAL DEGENERATES INTO NOTHING BETTER THAN A HABITUAL ACTION.

VLADIMIR HAS ALREADY REFERRED TO THIS IN HIS LONG SPEECH

At long last between them Estragon and Vladimir carry Pozzo who cannot stand erect. There is good deal of empty words be-

tween them. Estragon betrays his knowledge of classical mythology. Pozzo chews the cud of memory, happy memories. Pozzo asks after his menial (Lucky) Pozzo wants one of them to go find Lucky and to check whether he is hurt. Estragon does not move when Pozzo asks why he is not going and the answer is: I'am waiting for Godot.

Let us look at the above carefully. Lucky is quite nearby. It will take hardly a minute or so to go find if he is hurt, However, Estragon does not stir, because waiting for Godot has got ingrained in his consciousness, waiting for Godot has become an obsession, waiting for Godot has become a habit. AND ONE TAKES ONE'S HABIT TO ONE'S GRAVE.

However, Estragon is persuaded and assured that Lucky will not harm him, Estragon goes to the inert Lucky, kicks him, hurls abuses at him when Lucky stirs, In the process of kicking Estragon has hurt his foot. He moves away, limping, gaining: sitting on the mound, he seems to fall asleep.

Pozzo does not seem to remember that they met the previous day:

Pozzo: I do not remember having met any one yesterday. But tomorrow I won't remember having met anyone today....

Desertion of memory leaves a man in the state of animals. Loss of memory leaves a man a vegetating substance.

As pozzo prepares to leave them, Vladimir asks him to instruct, Lucky to sing:

Vladimir: Before you go tell him to sing.

Pozzo: Who?

Vladimir: Lucky

Pozzo: to sing?

Vladimir: Yes, Or to think, Or to recite

Pozzo: But he's dumb

Vladimir: Dumb.

Lucky can't even groan! One whose eloquence had to be forcibly terminated just a few hours ago is now dumb!!!

The question 'When?' irritates Pozzo and he explodes into words:

Pozzo: (suddenly furious) Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is

that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb. One day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.

We notice that it is when they are furious, that they deviate into sense and WHAT SENSE!!!

Pozzo and Lucky leave the stage once again leaving the tramps alone.

Vladimir: I felt lonely

Estragon: I was dreaming I was Happy (Happiness is possible only in dreams)

Vladimir: That passed time

Estragon: I was dreaming that....

Vladimir: (vehemently) Don't tell me!

So, the rather meaningless talk continues, either the same way or in a little changed style.

Estragon: Let's go. We can't

This time Estragon seems to recollect that they cannot go as they are waiting for Godot.

Vladimir thinks aloud: there is profound wisdom in his words.

Vladimir: Was I sleeping while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do what I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably But in all that what truth there be? (Estragon, having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again, Vladimir stares at him) He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. (Pause) Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave digger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (He listens) But habit is a great deadner. (He looks again at Estragon) At me too someone is looking, me too someone is saying, he is sleeping he knows nothing, let him sleep on (Pause) I can't go on! (Pause) What have I said?

Enter Boy right. Once more we hear a dialogue exactly similar to the one we had at the end of the first act.

Boy: Mister.....Mr.Albert.....

Vladimir: Off we go again (Pause) Do you not recognize me?

Boy: No, sir,

Vladimir: It wasn't you came yesterday.

If it is a different boy how come that Vladimir asks these questions? He should be able to recognize them as two different boys.

Note the change in the dialogue even though the content is exactly identical.

Vladimir: You have a message from Mr.Godot.

Boy: Yes, sir

Vladimir: he won't come this evening

Boy: No, Sir

Vladimir: But he'll come tomorrow

Boy : Yes , sir

Vladimir: Without fail.

This time Vladimir anticipates the words of the BOY. It is as if their roles are reversed.

Vladimir: What does he do, Mr.Godot?.....

.....

Boy: He does nothing, sir.

WELL IF GODOT IS A PERSON AND HE DOES NOTHING, (ABSOLUTELY) NOTHING (AT ALL) HIS CASE IS WORSE THAN THAT OF THE TRAMPS, BECAUSE THE TRAMPS AT LEAST DO THEIR WAITING DO WE NOTICE A SHIFT FROM NIHILISM TO POSITIVISM IN BECKETT?

Vladimir enquires: How is your brother?

Boy: He's sick, sir

.....

Vladimir (softy) has he beard. Mr.Godot?

Boy: Yes, sir

Vladimir: Fair or...(he hesitates).....or black?

Boy: I think it's white, sir

SILENCE

Vladimir: Christ have mercy on us!

What has this prayer got to do with the white beard of Mr. Godot? We haven't the faintest idea, Perhaps Vladimir has none either, It is almost an involuntary cry, a reflex action, of Vladimir, But

the next few words convey a volume of meaning. Vladimir: Tell him.....(he hesitate) tell him you saw me and that.....(he hesitates).....that you saw me. (pause) Vladimir advances, the Boy recoils, Vladimir halts, the Boy halts, With sudden violence) You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me!

Silence, Vladimir makes a sudden spring forward. The Boy avoids him and exit running. Silence. The sun sets, the moon rises.

Estragon: What's wrong with you?

Vladimir : Nothing

Estragon : I am going

Vladimir : So am I

A couple of lines later

Estragon : Where shall we go?

Vladimir: Not far

He cannot name their destination because they have none: they have no place to go to.

Estragon: Oh yes, let's go far away from here.

Vladimir : We have to come back tomorrow

Estragon : What for?

Vladimir : To wait for Godot.

Thus waiting for Godot has become a ritual and is fast becoming a habit, the great deadener. The two tramps have been perhaps desensitized, Which accounts for their mechanized movements. They have become mere atonements, puppets, wound and realized to execute standardized movements. This explains to a large extent Estragon's obsession with his boots and Vladimir's with his hat.

It is also apparent that they cannot escape from the waiting
Note:

Estragon: an if we dropped him? (pause) If we dropped him?

Vladimir : He'd punish us

The fear of Godot chains them to the place. That is to say, everything depends upon Godot's Arrival. Godot does not, nothing will happen. It is endless waiting which is horrible prospects for the tramps. In their subconscious, perhaps, the idea has germinated which is suggested by their contemplating the tree.

Vladimir: Everything is dead but the tree
(This Everything includes them too doesn't it? Does it imply that they are clinically alive, but mentally and spirituality dead")

Let us follow the dialogue:

Estragon: (looking at tree) What is it?

Vladimir: it's the tree

Estragon: Yes, but what kind?

Vladimir: I don't know, A willow

(I have already dwelt upon the peculiarity of such statements)

Estragon draws Vladimir towards the tree.. They stand motionless before it. Silence.

Estragon: Why don't we hang ourselves?

Could it be the subconscious urge to put and end to this kind of waiting that prompts Estragon to contemplate suicide? On second thoughts, we agree: It is perhaps so.

But they have no rope. They have Estragon's bugle. The belt turns out to be a cord and breaks when they test it strength

They agree to bring a good bit of rope the following day.

Anyway the hanging is postponed

Vladimir: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow (pause) unless Godot comes.

Estragon: and if he comes?

Vladimir: We'll be saved

It is quite a bit if , though

A few lines later, the familiar refrain:

Vladimir: well? Shall we go?

Estragon: Yes, Let's go

THEY DO NOT MOVE

CURTAIN

Now, what happened on the stage in the course of the two acts of the play deserves a closer, deeper examination. The two tramps are awaiting for someone called Godot. As the curtain goes up this is what we find.

As the curtain falls at the end of the second, act, we find them still waiting. In between they have done nothing, absolutely nothing.

ing. Expect waiting which does not call for or require any exertion. Although they have done nothing except waiting, something does happen

TIME HAS PASSED

Twenty four hours have passed between the rise and the fall of the curtain. Perhaps nobody noticed that, What do we make out of this? Only time can tell whether Godot will come or not, And here the two tramps have to wait out time. Man. Slave to time tide to time and the finite being is crushed by time, the infinite. Man waiting out his time (his life) during which nothing meaningful happens to him this seems to be the general drift of the play. It is events that mark the passage of time. If nothing happens, time cease to be relevant to man. Time stands still so does man.

And so does life. When nothing changes.. Life cannot be lived, as change constitutes life.

Waiting for things to happen when nothing seems to happen is absurd. But does man have a choice? The tide of time carries man, not man the tide of time. Only time can make things happen and it is happenings that constitute time. In this vicious circle where is the place of man? Hence to search for a place in this scheme of things is absurd.

But time the tyrant is not invincible. Man has weapon to fight against his tyranny. That is suicide. This could be the reason why Vladimir and Estragon talk about suicide. To wield it, must have stupendous, extra ordinary courage. It is this courage that is lacking in the tramps. And hope makes them weak. Hence their misery; hence their endless waiting.

At the same time, is into waiting also hoping? Hoping is positive! Hence all is not lost. Suppose Godot does come tomorrow then ? Waiting bears fruit: hope is rewarded.

Let us wait and hope. Let us hope and wait.

WARNING

THE NOTES GIVEN ABOVE ARE NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR THE ORIGINAL TEXT. THE PLAY SHOULD PREFERABLY BE SEEN IN ACTUAL PERFORMANCE IN ITS ABSENCE, THE TEXT SHOULD BE READ CAREFULLY SEVERAL TIMES ATTEMPTS

SHOULD BE MADE TO TIE UP THE LOOSE ENDS

EXERCISES IN COMPOSITION

After reading the text several times elaborate upon the following points, Some of them have been touched upon in the notes in a casual way. These exercises would go a long way in helping you familiarize yourself with the play. I have elaborated the last point. Which is also the most difficult, in order to help you with a model.

(1) The two tramps are just what they appear to be nothing more, nothing less, Are they "round" ? Do they have any complexes, neuroses or flaws? How do they mingle with the backdrop? Is there anything common between the tramps and the bare country road?

(2) Vladimir is perhaps more aggressive than Estragon. In what other ways are they different from each other? In what ways are they similar to each other?

(3) Pozzo and Lucky act as a foil to Vladimir and Estragon How?

(4) Repetitions, either identical or with minor variations, are used through out the play in the form of movements, words, ideas etc. Examine how they contrast with each other where variations are found and how they reinforce and emphasize each other where they are identical.

(5) It is not obligatory for plays to have a meaning or a message. Our play bears testimony to this observation. Perhaps the very absence of meaning may be the "meaning " of the play. Critically examine the play and defend this statement.

(6) Dozens of interpretations are possible for the play. However none of them is going to be definitive. Attempt a few interpretations.

(7) Becket does not reveal the identity of Godot. Who could he be?

(8) The dialogue in the play is stoichiometric in many places Identify the various characteristics of the dialogue with special references stichomutia.

(9) The stylized movements and gestures of the four (main) characters remind us of those of Chaplin and Keaton of the movie times and Laurel and Hardy of the talkies. Make a list of such gestures and movements.

(10) Opposing elements like laughter and pathos, disgust and fascination, wonder and bewilderment are beautifully balanced in the play to create a taut structure and a fast pace. Identify such opposition.

(11) If Vladimir and Estragon are elderly people. If they are our coevals, we may safely presume that they lived through all the major events of the present century, like the two World Wars. The Bolshevik Revolution. The interpellating depression and the sue Crisis. Could these events have any impact on them?

(12) Can we extract any philosophy from the play? If the answer is yes, what is it? if the answer is no explain why it does not have any.

(13) Opposites like sanity-insanity, truth-falsehood, allegiance-desertion are balanced in the play. Identify the area where this is done.

(14) Numerous references are made to the Holy Bible in the play identify such references and explain them.

I shall attempt to answer this one (14)

What Beckett says about Mr. Godot in various places in *Waiting for Godot* strongly reminds us of the Bible. God... Estragon and Vladimir, the two attempts, are waiting for him on the country road beside the dead tree in the vanishing twilight with a not infrequent fleeting vision of a rescuer cum provider cum saviour who may keep up his appointment with them and afterwards take them to a place where they can be warm and dry and comfortable and can sleep, with a full stomach, on straw. Reference is made to tending sheep. And also goats. The tramps will supplicate and go to him on their hands and knees. He will be angry if they do not wait for him. He would punish them. He is reported to have a flowing white beard. He does nothing (for a living) Abel and Cain are mentioned; in the former is God's beloved the latter is fugitive from a God and gets punished. On more than one occasion Christ's crucifixion is discussed. The four Gospels give different versions of the scene of the Crucifixion which becomes a moot theological problem. Vladimir and Estragon remember about the vine yards where they were together a decade ago plucking grapes (doesn't it remind us of the Lost paradise?) All these and many more indirect reference and

echoes smack of Christianity.

But Beckett does not commit himself to the religion (Christianity) Belief and disbelief, faith and doubt are placed side by side and they cancel each other.

Today it is commonplace that God of the Holy Bible has disappeared and people are waiting for his reappearance. (We have here an interesting archetype-the search for the holy Grail by the knights of King Arthur's Round Table but reversed i.e. God is expected to go to the questers who are waiting, who are obviously immobile. Paralysed, scared to go to him. If this is not true. How can we explain their deciding to go but being unable to move?)

Once this is properly understood, the play comes alive with explosive force and blinding revelation. The guarantee of the reappearance of plenty and prosperity and the restoration of potency to the wounded fisherman (who, in the context of the play, is Estragon/Vladimir) Remember both have some physical handicap (i.e. literally wounded) Estragon's swollen foot and Vladimir's suggested venereal disease. Once they were the custodians of the Grail symbol, then they lost it. Now probably it is going to be resorted to them. When they will return to the world of "Normalcy" The questions they ask each other and themselves suggest the questions the gesture was supposed to ask when the Grail symbol is displayed before him in the Grail Castle)

The tree may be the symbol of the Cross(.....the dead tree gives no shelter.....) and the idea of hanging then of crucifixion.

See what Beckett has to say

Vladimir: We'll hang ourselves tomorrow (Pause) unless Godot comes.

Estragon: And if he comes?

Vladimir: We'll be saved (my capitals)

If Godot comes he being the saviour, they will be saved. Either way it is saving.

Let us now look at another piece of dialogue where the tree is mentioned.

Estragon: That we were to wait.

Vladimir: He said by the tree (They look at the tree) Do you see any others?

Estrogen: What is it?

Vladimir: I don't know A Willow

Estrogen:: Where are the leaves?

Vladimir: It must be dead

The dead tree sorouts "four of five lives" on just about twenty four hours which is a miracle.

It could be the strong faith the tramps have in Godot (that he would come and save them) that is behind the symbolism the dead tree (God and Faith are dead) coming back alive (the disappeared God and the vanished Faith are reborn)

This idea gets reinforced by the following quotation.

Estrogen: What about hanging ourselves?

Vladimir: Hmm. It'd give us an erection

Estragen: He is like a dead tree which cannot have any foliage. So hanging (Symbolic of Crucifixion) confers on them potency. Beckett minces no words when he mentions where it falls mandrakes grow.

The following quotation gives the last word on this aspect of the play.

Vladimir: But you can't go barefoot!

Estragen: Christ did

Vladimir: Christ ! What's Christ got to do with it. You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!

Estragen: All my life I've compared myself to him

THE FORE GOING ACCOUNT IS BY NO MEANS A DEFINITIVE EVALUATION OF EITHER SAMUEL BECKETT OR WAITING FOR GODOT. THE PLAY HAS SEVERAL LEVELS AND LAYERS OF MEANING IF WE INSIST ON MEANING. MY HUMBLE REQUEST IS LET US NOT LOOK FOR ANY SUCH SPECIFIC MEANING.

FOR FURTHER READING

1. Beckett- a study of his plays: Fetcher & Spurring
2. Samuel Beckett: Macmillan Modern Dramatists: C.R.Lyons
3. Samuel Beckett: Twentieth Century views Ed.by martin Esslin
4. Modern British Dramatists: a collection of Critical essayed by John Ressel brown

5. Absurd drama : Ed by Martin Esslin

6. The Theatre of the Absurd: Martin Esslin

7. The Myth of sysiphus: Albert Camus

8. Tynan on Theatre: Kenneth Tynan

9. Post war British Theatre John Elsom

10. The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama: Keir Elam

The definitive biography of Samuel Beckett is said to be by Derider Beir the writer of these notes has not been able to have access to his biography

BY

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LEAR

EDWARD BOND

INTRODUCTION

I am sure you will agree with me if I say that today we live in an age obsessed with power-politics. Corruption and violence. We see so much violence and Callousness that many of us are even losing our basic instinct to react. And that is a dangerous predicament for unless humanity reacts in this hellish state of affairs it will never act in a way as to set thing any person. Any literature or artistic creation etc. Which can give us a jolt from dazed state of sung complacency is the need of the hour.

EDWARD BOND: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Edward Bond was born of working class parents in North London on 18 JULY. 1934 and educated there. He was sent to various schools in 1946 he was classified as non academic unsuitable for a grimed school education. In 1949 he left school and began a series of short-term jobs in factories and offices. In 1953 he was called up for national Service and sent to Austria as a clerk in the Allied Army of Occupation.

Two factors or events exerted a profound influence in Bond's later career as a very powerful playwright and spokesman of our times (i) in 1948 Bond was highly impressed by Shakespeare's Macbeth presented at the Bedford Theatre in London. He remarked "For the very first time in my life I met somebody who was actually talking about my problems, about the life I'd been living the political society around me" He later explained that this was because Shakespeare stated the problems in such a way that they had to be considered politically. And secondly (ii) While serving in the Army in 1953 his political awareness was sharpened. He said "You find in the army that the class structures are not glossed over. There was brazen brutality".

Remember these two influence are particularly evident in the play Lear which you are about to study.

The most important writer to emerge during the 1960s Bond

has a number of powerful plays to his credit. They include The Popes's Wedding (1962) Saved (1965) Early Morning (1968) Lear (1971) Bingo (1973) and so on.

Let us now proceed to study the play LEAR prescribed for non detailed study.

LEAR

Dramatics personae

Main characters

Lear: An autocratic despot bent on building the wall which teaches him a better lesson and leads to his ultimate downfall and death.

Bodice, Fontanelle: Lear's daughters, symbols of violence and cruelty

Duke of North: Husband of Bodice

Duke of Corn Wall: Husband of Fontanelle

Warrington: Lear's advisor who is publicly tortured and mutilated by the two daughters thereby adding to the horrifying aspect of the play.

The Grave digger's boy: Perhaps the only source of solace to Lear when deserted and humiliated. His Ghost continues that role after he is killed.

The grave digger's boy's wife: Whose name later on is revealed as Cordellia, and who is raped by the soldiers at the end of Act I only to undergo metamorphoses as a revolutionary leader of the peasants towards the end of the play.

Carpenter: Who loves Cordelia stands by her and later becomes commander of her peasant army.

Thomas and Susan: A couple with whom Lear stays in Act III who are left to build a better world from their understanding of Lear's new philosophy.

John: who loves Susan and offers to marry her. But Susan will not leave Thomas to go with John.

Apart from the above ten or so main characters of the play there are about seventy other speaking parts. Bond says In a sense they are on role showing the characters of a society.

Now that you have been introduced to the main characters.

Let us study the plot of the play first. We shall take up characterization in detail later on.

The play is made up of 3 Acts. Comprising 18 Scenes in all (7+7+4)

ACT I

Act I consist of seven scenes. The play Begin with Lear's visit to the huge defensive WALL which he is having built in order to safeguard, he claims the peace and security of his people against his enemies, namely the Dukes of North and Corn wall. He is accompanied by his two daughters Bodice and Fontanelle. His Adviser Warrington and an old council. In spite of the loud protests of his daughters he executed a man for causing the death of another worker on the wall.

This is too much for the two young ladies. They grasp the opportunity to announce their intention to marry the very same enemy dukes and with their help to demolish the wall. This in fun is too much for Lear who raves and curses his daughters Civil War Follows Warrington is reputed by the sisters. Each one has already tried and failed to suborn him into betraying Lear about assassinating the dukes and newly widowed princesses. In revengeful fury the sisters have him tortured mutilated and then released. All this is in full view of the audience and reeks in horror. Warrington is now deaf and dumb but not blind.

Soon Lear becomes a fugitive and is given shelter out of pity by a grave digger's Boy despite the anxiety of his young pregnant wife. Warrington comes at night and tries to kill Lear but merely wounds him before running away.

Presently soldiers from the two sisters come there, shoot the gravedigger's son and rape his wife. Lear is taken captive. A carpenter from a nearby village in love with the Boy's wife (who it is then revealed is called Cordelia) kills the soldiers as a nemesis for their atrocious acts. Thus Act I ends on a high key note of explicit violence.

ACT II

This act also consists of seven scenes, all quite short. The dukes hope to save Lear's life. But they do nothing to prevent him

from being brought for trial before a judge who has been ordered by Bodice to aggravate matters and then condemning Lear. The old man does not recognize his daughters. He is appalled by his own mirror reflection which appears to him to be the image of a caged beast for which he feels intense pity.

Fontanelle is increasingly distracted from politics by her several lovers. While Bodice, the more cunning of the two, conspire's to take over supreme command and eliminate her sister. The dukes flee from their treacherous wives but they are recaptured.

The plot assumes a Supernatural dimension when Lear is visited in Prison by the Ghost of the grave digger's Boy. Remember he was killed by the soldiers at the end of the previous act. Lear also sees the ghosts of his two daughters as young girls.

A rebel Army led by Cordelia and the Carpenter overthrows the two sisters regime. Bodice and Fontanelle are captured. Fontanele is shot and her body is dissected, while Lear watches on, fascinated by the neatness and beauty of the anatomy and he is baffled or shocked to learn that it is the body of his own daughter whom he had come to regard as monster. Bodice Struggles for life but she is killed painfully.

The carpenter views Lear as a potential treat, but Cordelia will not permit his execution, Instead she mates him a worse, more inhuman Punishment, Lear's eyes are ruthlessly but expertly plucked and he is set free to wander with the boy's ghost.

As a next step, Cordelia gives orders for resuming the work on Lear's wall. The implication or rather effect is that the land and livelihood of the peasants are snatched from them. Moreover they are compelled to labour on the wall in precarious unhealthy conditions. Lear who has become enlightened as a result of all his experience precipitated by his own folly and arrogance, was Ciordelia on the dangers of such a harsh policy. At the end of Act II, Lear has become acutely sensitive to the intense suffering around him.

ACT III

The final act has only four scenes. By now seven months have elapsed and Lear has more or less come to terms with his physical blindness. He now lives at the Boy's house with Thomas

and Susan a young couple. Susan is pregnant, she is a loved by John a man from the village but refuses to leave. Thomas for him. (note how there is some similarity between this scene and the one in Act I where Lear comes for shelter to the Gravedigger's Boy his pregnant wife Cordelia and her lover the Carpenter)

Lear has become a target for opposition to Cordelia's regime. People flock to listen to his stimulating political parables. Two deserters from the wall arrive. One is a petty criminal who used to trade illegally in tobacco and other goods, the other is Ben, a young orderly who had brought food to Lear in prison. Cordelia's Soldiers come in search of the two men but leave without discovering them. They also warn Lear that hence forth he will be under surveillance.

The old councillor who has successfully switched allegiance with every shift of power informs Lear that he is now under house arrest. Ben and the other deserters are arrested. Ben is glad to return to the wall to organize opposition there to Cordelia's government. The other deserter is to be hanged.

Lear is indignant and pained at the inhuman cruelty and moral hypocrisy of the new regime and despairs of his ability to alter the current political set-up. The boy's ghost which has become steadily pale and emaciated tries to persuade Lear to give up the struggle and lead a life of quiet seclusion.

Cordelia appears along with the carpenter and tries to convince Lear, that he must stop opposing her. Lear, on the other hand declares that he cannot be silent and tries to make her realize the need for petty and compassion, but she argues that hardness is required in order to make a leader strong enough to build a better world. She also warns Lear that he will be tried and sentenced to death. The Boy's ghost hovers around feeling distressed that she does not recognize him, her former husband.

After Cordelia has gone, Lear informs Thomas and Susan that he must make a journey with Susan's Help. The Boy's ghost stumbles in bleeding. For he has been attacked by pigs and must die a second time. He thus leaves Lear free to go the wall and show in action what he has learnt from the mistakes he had committed as a king.

Taking spade Lear climbs the wall and begin to shovel the

earth down from the top. Continuing to work even when challenged by an officer in Cordelia's army, Lear is shot. The officer hustles the few bystanders away so that only the Wall and Lear's body remain.

The play begins and ends with Lear's wall.

Let us sum up the main points of the plot.

ACT I

The autocratic Lear is bent on building the defensive wall. His daughters Bodice and Fontanelle turn against him and announce their decisions to marry the enemy dukes of North and Cornwall respectively. In the civil war that follows the daughters capture the king's adviser Warrington and have him mutilated. Lear who has become a fugitive is given shelter by a Gravedigger's Boy. Soon Soldiers from the two sisters shoot him and rape his young pregnant wife Cordelia. Lear is taken captive. A carpenter who loves Cordelia kills the soldiers.

ACT II

Lear is brought for trial before a judge. He is put in prison. The Gravedigger's Boy's Ghost visits him. A rebel army led by Cordelia and the carpenter overthrows the sisters regime. Both Bodice and Fontanelle are killed. Lear's eyes are plucked out. Cordelia gives orders for resuming work on Lear's wall. Lear tries to warn her against such a policy. He has become acutely sensitive to the intense suffering around him.

ACT III

Seven months have elapsed. Lear now lives in the Boy's house with Thomas and Susan a young couple. He has become a target for opposition to Cordelia's regime. People flock to listen to his stimulating political parables. Two deserters from the wall arrive but soon they are arrested. Lear is pained at the distress caused by Cordelia's regime. Cordelia appears with the Carpenter and warns Lear not to oppose her. The ghost dies a second death. Accompanied by Susan Lear goes to the wall. As he starts shovelling the earth down

from the top, he is shot by an officer in Cordelia's army.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Read the original play a number of times and with the help of the above outline, try to understand its plot carefully.

We shall now proceed to study various aspects of the play.

STRUCTURAL DESIGN OF THE PLAY

Edward Bond had a clear idea of the structural format of the play *Lear* well before he started composing it, to quote his own words:-

"I know exactly what I'm going to say. I know exactly the order of the scenes and what's going to happen in them and what character has to be there at what point. The difficulty is to get them there there's the painful thing (Drama and the Dialectics of Violence' Interview, Theatre quarterly, 1972):

The author's own account of his approach to the organization of action and relationship in the play throws on the deft and pains taking management or scattered material required by an Epic subject. The structural design of *Lear* has affinities both with the sequences of plays written by a classical Greek dramatist such as Aeschylus and with Shakespeare's historical epics. It is the Pattern of dialectic or logical argumentation. Progressing from the theses (dominant idea) through the antithesis (an alternative or conflicting idea) to synthesis (or the final idea) which concludes the plot. The pattern is indicated by Bond in his Preface to the play:-

"Act One shows a world dominated by myth. Act two shows the clash between myth and reality, between superstitious men and the autonomous world. Act Three shows a resolution of this, in this world to prove real by dying in it. Clearly, this emphasizes the thematic importance of 3-act structure which lends coherence and compactness to the 18 short scenes constituting the play.

If we analyze the structural format we can see that each act moves from a point or phase of conflict to some kind of resolution:

Act I portrays *Lear* at a moment of real crisis: The autocrat challenged and about to be deposed. Then the wheel of fortune turns with his fall and capture raising his two daughters to the top, but simultaneously elevating a new Nemesis in the forms of Cordelia

and the Carpenter to pursue the prosecutors of the old king.'

Act II Depicts Bodice and Fontanelle at the pinnacle (height) of power and ruthless cruelty. Bodice is all the more striking, caught up in the conflict between her self image and the political reality in the form of Cordelia's revolutionaries. The killing of the two sisters establishes the power of the new Nemesis. This is followed by the building of *Lear* like another Greek tragic hero Oedipus for being the product of an irrational system of privilege. A myth of kingship. This action completes the clash between myth and reality. Physical blindness offers *Lear* a new freedom to discover the truth about his responsibilities towards his subjects, in other words to become morally aware. The journey towards reality begins before the close of Act II.

Act III begins with *Lear*'s enjoying sort of serenity and status as a leader of the people talking to them in parables. But the conflict between *Lear*'s personal prestige and well being on the one hand and an insistent need for some positive political action on the other hand is still present. The resolution to this conflict comes soon after his final confrontation with Cordelia; he decides to demolish the defensive wall which he and after him Cordelia has used to imprison the people. The action leads to his martyrdom. But all is not lost. Thomas and Susan are left to build a better world based on their understanding of the rationale behind *Lear*'s assault of the wall.

Thus we see that each of the three acts is self-contained, that is, it contains the information needed to explain its situation and their significance, and to make the events appear to be coherent, each act builds to a recognizable climax, while at the same time the three acts are properly inter-related. Moreover the thematic clarity of the 3-act structure is not diluted by the series of 18 short scenes. On the contrary it is this loose episodic structure that links *Lear* to the Shakespearean epics, each episode dramatizing one significant moment in the shifting balance of political power which makes up a nation's evolution.

It is commonly agreed that the work of Edward Bond has in some degree been influenced by the Epic Theatre of Bertolt Brecht. Let us now try to analyse *Lear* as a product of Epic theatre. But

before, that I would advise you to look up "Epic Theatre" in some standard Glossary of Literary Terms" (sav by M.H. Abrams) and become familiar with its salient features.

LEAR'S - PRODUCT OF EPIC THEATRE

In the 1920s, the German playwright Bertolt Brecht identified his plays as epic theatre. By this term, Brecht signifies primarily his attempt to emulate, on the stage the objectivity of epic narrative, his aim was to prevent the spectators. Emotional involvement with the characters and their actions and so to encourage them to criticize, rather than passively play represents. Brecht used what he called Estrangement effects (sometimes translated as alienation effects) for this purpose.

Try to apply these principles to the play Lear

Bond statement that an epic play tells a story and why it happened brings out the predominance of action over character, even while he is concerned to present his selected individuals vividly and with conviction. In all the 18 scenes, he presents only whatever is immediately and obviously relevant to the political situation being described. (Refer to the plot outline given in 14 and you will realize how the play is a narrative of single episodes which follow one another coherently without unnecessary details or digressions).

Take for instance the case of Cordelia. Bond concentrates on what happened to her which ultimately transforms her from the Gravedigger's Boy's anxious, pregnant wife to a revolutionary leader. The audience pool at her briefly in a staccato (detached) sequence of significant moments, it is not invited to share her experience, but to recognize it, moment by moment as the product of changing historical and political realities. The point about historical forces; we are made to see, is that they affect people and so they do remain merely abstractions. All these principles hold good in the case of Lear's transformation.

Another aspect of the epic theatre as seen in Lear is that there is no deep introspective contemplation of character as in the cases of Shakespeare or Ibsen or any writer in Dramatic theatre, particularly soul stirring tragedies. But he is concerned to represent his characters individual experiences dramatically, to imply an emo-

tional life and a consistent inner logic through response to the changing conditions of their world. Their actions, the features of the epic story must spring convincingly out of these implied feeling. It is the sense of a character's continuing inner life that enables the audience to understand the connections between episodic events without at the same time getting emotionally entangled. To cite Cordelia's case again.. The theatrical silence that separated the rapped Cordelia standing helplessly beside her husband's body at the end of Act I from the incisively ruthless guerilla leader on the battle field in the final act is filled with such incidents and events which help the audience to understand (through inference of course) Cordelia's potential for suffering indignation and calculated retaliation.

Listen to what Bond himself says in this matter :- "I regard subjective experience as very important but often I have to create that subjective - presence on stage very swiftly and without demonstration the process of inner - invention "Bond's epic theatre therefore is much more than a political manifesto, he is not only concerned about dramatising the emotions and motivations of his characters but is also emphatic about the importance of that one significant moment in the shifting balance of political power which makes up a nation's evolutions. Thus in Lear, we watch two or three lines of political activity switching quickly from one to another and thereby gain a god's eye view of the historical processes that have shaped society.

As a next step, we could indulge a little in comparative study. Surely you are familiar with Shakespeare's tragedy King Lear. Bond's "Lear" is often described as a critique or review of Shakespeare's "King Lear" Before we attempt such a question. I suggest you go through King Lear and note down points of similarity and difference between the two plays.

PLOT OF KING LEAR IN A NUTSHELL

King Lear, a powerful monarch in declining years, hands over his kingdom to his two daughters Goneril and Regan cutting off through a petty grievance, his youngest daughters Cordelia who loved him dearly, without a share and deciding to live alternately with the other two.

Soon these two elder daughters use their authority to turn their father out and then conspire for supreme power, the one against the other. Another complication is that they are both enamoured by the same man Edmund, the illegitimate son of the Duke of Gloucester, and Goneril is prepared to have her husband (The Duke of Cornwall) murdered so that she may marry him.

In the end Cordelia, now queen of France brings an army to fight for her father against his oppressors. It is defeated, but the figure heads of the victorious army meet death in their hour of victory. For Goneril poisons Regan and then commits suicide. Those remaining resolve that right shall be done but not before Cordelia is hanged in prison and Lear dies over her dead body.

FROM KING LEAR TO LEAR

Bond observes that "the social moral of Shakespeare's Lear is this endure till in time the world will be made right. That's a dangerous moral for us. We have less time than Shakespeare". This and several other statements Bond has made suggest why he felt particularly challenged by the earlier play and what his recreation of that story was intended to achieve. Instead of following King Lear's progress towards Self - Knowledge, reconciliations and acceptance Bond's play can be seen as tracing historical in an epic way.

For Bond the abdication of Political responsibility which King Lear's action denotes, is unacceptable, unreasonable, a sign of moral collapse rather than return to sanity. His Lear is offered just such a retreat from political activity by the Gravedigger's Boy's Ghost in Act III, scene ii who suggested that people should learn to bear their own suffering and that Lear should live in quite seclusion. Lear does succumb briefly but soon realize that it is such selfish quietness that must be renounced, not active involvement in the world. He has the moral courage to declare.

"I made all the mistake in the world and I play for each of them" (Act II Sc iii)

Bond argues that by a theatrically effective Sleight of hand in King Lear, Shakespeare has transmuted the political problem into a personal conflict, as though implying that in spite of every thing, the system itself survives. Such a return to the bad old ways is not

acceptable to Bond. His work is bleak in many respects but he explains that is essential to its political effectiveness that the play offers a way out of the society dominated by fear and violence. (We shall say more about violence and its presentation on the stage in a later section).

The death of Bond's Lear looks backwards to the mistakes he must expiate but also forwards to the possibility of a more rational society that may be shaped by succeeding generations understanding of the event. To quote Bond himself.

"My Lear makes a gesture in which he accepts responsibility for his life and commits himself to action..... My Lear's gesture mustn't be seen as final... He makes his gesture only to those who are learning how to live.

The audience who comes to watch Lear does so with a certain amount of previously gained knowledge. They already presume that the story must be about the surrender of power to daughters who prove ungrateful and unscrupulous but who are ultimately punished for their inhumanity. Refer to the two plots and you can see several parallels. There are similarities between Regan and Bodice; and between Goneril and Fontanelle quite apart from the rhythmic echoes within the pairs of names. (We shall take up their characters for a more detailed study later on). Instead of the third daughter, Bond chooses to place his Cordelia outside the royal family and makes her rise to prominence as a revolutionary leader. While the king and his two daughters die in both play in Bond's play the Gravedigger's Boy fulfils the role of being Lear's solace in desolation which is shared by the Fool and Edgar in the earlier. But unlike them, the Boy does not survive.

It is no single individual who shoulders the burden of responsible government reassuringly just before the final curtain - Bond leaves Cordelia desperately trying to impose her idea of law and order on a battles carried nation, while the future, in the shape of young people like Thomas and Susan, gathers strength and political awareness. Clearly Bond's objective is to "provide a meaning to the strong" which will make Shakespeares play seem relevant and truthful to the twentieth century audience.

Lear presents a more realistic picture of autocracy and tyr-

anny than King Lear. For instance in the older play. The oppressive cruelty of Cornwall is highlighted by the sudden gesture or protest from his servant at the building of Gloucester. Bond dismissed this servant's violent protest as part of "A feudal myth" evidence of Shakespeare's political naivety and romanticism. In his opinion it was Shakespeare's hopeful assertion that the excesses of authoritarian reign would always be tempered and checked by the stalwart decency of the common people.

Bond goes much further and gives us a more truthful and realistic interaction between the governors and the governed in Lear, Act I, scene, iv, when a soldier is ordered by Lear's daughters to mutilate the captured Warrington. Note two things here (i) The soldiers is not individualised by name but merely labelled with a letter, obviously signifying his anonymous status in a typical totalitarian set - up.

(ii) He does as he is trained and paid to do without any melodramatic display of emotion shrugging off moral responsibility of his part in the atrocity. Bond there by headlights the callous, moral apathy of our times, a dangerous syndrome indeed!

Bond wants his story to seem more rational and thought provoking than Shakespeare's story which seems to have a fairytale quality about it. May be it was this fanciful element which captures his fancy and challenged him to attempt a more radical version. The political aspect also appealed to him. He adapted the 16th Century play to suit his needs. We have seen the way in which the two Lear's differ in their basic approach to the problem.

Let us also consider the matter in the case of the two Cordelia. As I have already pointed out, Bond's Cordelia is not the youngest and prettiest of the three princesses, rather he emphasizes and significantly, explains the difference between her and the other two by placing her within a different social, economic and political context. In each case, the Cordelia's decision to take up arms against the two corrupt sisters results in her own downfall. While Shakespeare's heroine is defeated and hanged in her prison - cell. Bond's revolutionary leader becomes hardened and harsh through the exercise of power goading others particularly Lear to oppose her autocratic ways. In each case. The impression left in the

spectator's mind is that Cordelia's fate may appear to be unacceptably cruel, undeserved. When we consider the characters enduring desire to do good to do what seems right and just to fight against tyranny and violence. Indeed both are sinned against much more than sinning.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

Read the two plays side by side a few times and sharpen the impressions of parallel and contrast left by them in the matters of plot Character and dialogue.

By now you must have formed your own picture of the major character of Bond's play with juxtaposed. (Placed side by side) pictures of their counterparts from Shakespeare's play. Let us dwell a little more on characterization in Lear.

CHARACTERIZATION IN LEAR

We have already noted the predominance of action over character in Bond's Lear. Refer 1.6. However the characters in Lear are not mere puppets or spokesmen of certain ideas alone. On the other hand, they are quite individualised and become etched in our minds. To appreciate them fully we must instantly compare and contrast them with their counterparts in Shakespeare's play. You will recollect that some observations have already been made in 1.8.

LEAR

Bond's Lear is not the same as his Predecessor. In Shakespeare's play. Lear is pictured as a powerful monarch who chooses to abdicate, to disown Corelia, to dictate his terms of retirement and so on. Later on he shows no interest in resisting his capture by Edmund as he is wholly absorbed in his relationship with Cordelia. He plays no part in his own release. Nor is he able to prevent his daughter's death. Finally and most importantly, his own death has no significance for him beyond the termination of his existence on earth. He neither seeks it actively nor shows any understanding of its political impact.

Let us place Bond's Lear along side. His Lear does not choose to surrender power and status; in fact they are snatched from him. His apparent insanity into a nightmarish world of tortured images is

a phase through which he reaches a more rational understanding of his situation and can act morally, that is in Bond's terminology, in a politically responsible way. He then chooses to defy Cordelia, to leave his asylum with Thomas and Susan to set right (or at least make an attempt) all the foolish acts of injustice and cruelty he had done, and thus become a new messiah or saviour of the people by saving them from the clutches of Cordelia. To quote Bond.

"Lear discovers something in himself, out of this comes his ability to act. He understands" At last and has the "arrogance of truth and simplicity."

The most significant gesture about Bond's Lear is that he makes a solitary assault on the Wall (which has become a symbol for the kind of implacable paternalism practised by him and Cordelia later). The action is important because it demonstrates a way out of the present predicament what the playwright refers to in the play's preface as "a method of change" rather than a plan of the future". Thus Bond's Lear impresses us as a more realistic, practical, flexible autocrat, endowed with the rare gift to learn from his mistakes and actually make amends accepting the obligations and responsibilities incumbent upon him as the saviour of his people.

BODICE AND FONTANELLE

Shakespeare presents Regan and Goneril as two ugly sisters in a fairy tale infected with motiveless malignity. He indicates at the outset itself that their declaration of filial love and duty are spurious. They shift from public declaration and finally to the military and political opposition which destroys them all. But the play does not offer satisfactory explanation as to why they are so wilful, selfish and inhuman where as their youngest sister is totally different from them. Beyond Cordelia's reference to her own growing up, there is little dramatic life given to the idea of Lear as a father to very young daughters.

Bodice and Fontanelle are the modern counterparts of Regan and Goneril. Observe their names. Look up their meanings in a dictionary see the way Bond has delineated them. Like the elder daughters of King Lear. They too are shown moving from decorous involvement in the performance of their father's public duties to the

explicit opposition to Lear which leads to their own ruin. Bond depicts their revolt as a consequence of their upbringing - they have grown to fear not to love their overbearing father, and they have been reared in a system of privilege and an atmosphere of violence which in turn has taught them to act with brutal selfishness.

It is worth while to go! Through Author's Preface to Lear, for among other things, Bond dwells at length about children becoming aggressive and violent if brought up in an atmosphere of emotional neglect, lack of assurance, care and love. I shall quote a few sentences at random since they throw light on Bond's treatment of the two sisters.

"Our society has the structure of a pyramid of aggression and as the child is the weakest member it is at bottom... Almost all organizations dealing with children are obsessed with discipline..... We build homes without proper places for them (Children).... Every child is born with certain biological expectations..... That its unpreparedness will be cared for, that it will be given not only food but emotional reassurance. That it will be born into a world waiting to receive it,.... But the weight of aggression in our society is so heavy that the unthinkable happens. We batter it..... So the small infinitely vulnerable child panics - as any animal must. It does not get the reassurances it needs in its fear it identifies with the people who have power over it.

Bear the above points in mind when you analyse the characters of the two sisters. Fontanelle greets the moment of open conflict with relief exclaiming "I was always terrified of him" Like wise Bond's Lear like his older model tries to dissociate himself from his daughters and curses them when they oppose him. Yet he remembers their childhood with nostalgia creating a picture of them as vulnerable and affectionate, needing his care and attention and love" The two girls appear to us as eager. Even anxious to please their father who is a remote figure often away from his family in hot pursuit of power and political security and whose appearance are rare occasions.

Thus Bond implies how the present ruthlessness and callousness of the two sisters have their roots in an unsettled, fear - ridden, emotionally suppressed childhood.

Even as a child, Bodice is preoccupied with images of power and megalomania, the power - politics that spell final doom for all. The family of father and daughters sans mother has always been walled in by the realities of politics. They have had only an illusion of freedom. But Bodice's capacity to realize the havoc that power is creating to her perhaps makes her a more sympathetic and vulnerable figure in spite of the atrocities she has been responsible for..... The trainees of power link her with Cordelia, while Bodice is born to "greatness", Cordelia has it thrust violently upon her. But predictably, the result is much the same. Compared to Bodice, Fontanelle is slightly less in everything: not as shrewd and calculating more crude and childish with an unnatural urge for cruelty. But for that matter, both daughters are sadists: the torture and mutilation of Warrington bear ample testimony to this fact.

THE GRAVEDIGGER'S BOY

You must be familiar with the Fool in King Lear. One of his roles in the play is to comfort the old king when he feels insulted and deserted by his daughters. Further the fool tries to make Lear understand the nature and extent of his folly, not maliciously but because he really cares for the old, helpless man. However Lear fails to perceive the relevance of the Fool's observations to his own situation. Thus the two characters are presented by Shakespeare as in alliance against the daughters' selfishness and callousness which the audience already knows to be despicable.

In Bond's Lear, the Gravedigger's Boy at first performs a slimier function. Another words, he appears when Lear is displaced and threatened and he shows a pity to the old man, as though offering an alternative to the father child bond which has proved so damaging and demoralizing to both Lear and his daughters. In this situation he does not view Lear as powerful king of figure who stands for an unworkable political system and wields power irresponsibly.

Another role performed by the Boy is that like Shakespeare's fool, he offers a critical picture of Lear's arrogance, blindness and folly as king. He openly criticizes the "Wall death" caused by Lear. His words are full of irony when he tells Lear that he would go back

and dig a grave for him (Act i Science iv) Bond's Lear like his predecessor or does resist the plain truth being thrown on his face, but thanks to the Boy and others, he is pushed towards a realization of his actual plight.

Besides that of the fool, the Boy's role also contains elements of Edgar in King Lear, Shakespeare's Lear is moved to pity at the spectacle of Edgar in the guise of a poor mad Tom, a ragged social outcast, it is a definite step on the old man's journey towards some kind of rehabilitation- it begins to cut through his stubborn egotism.

Like wise the Gravedigger's Boy not only shows pity himself to the old king but perhaps more valuable, he teaches Lear to feel pity and compassion-not a generalized and largely rhetorical pity for the suffering multitudes, generally speaking, but pity directed towards specific pain, a response to another's immediate need. In prison, the emaciated and disoriented ghost of the Boy clings to Lear. He makes the old king realize his personal responsibility for the suffering of others and his need to try to make amends.

Note that the intense pathos of the relationship between Lear and the ghost help to humanize Bond's political epic; to add an important dimension to the "meaning" that the character of Lear is to communicate to the audience. Bond further implies that a life of political retreat, withdrawal from social responsibilities and choosing a selfishly sentimental pastoral idyll all which the Boy's Ghost suggests to Lear, are not desirable or acceptable.

Thus the Boy and his Ghost play an instrumental role: that is they are an essential part of Lear's journey from political and moral blindness towards awareness and action. And like Shakespeare's Fool, they fade out once their task has been completed.

CORDELIA

Much has already been mentioned about Cordelia's character in the earlier sections. We shall close up this section with a few more observations about her. Like Lear, Cordelia is a round character, to use E.M. Forster's terminology. That is to say, they undergo change and what we see of them in the first act. While Lear changes in a positive manner, visibly evolving into a much better more compassionate, more concerned and responsible human being.

ing, the process is reversed in the case of Cordelia.

Unlike King Lear's daughters, Bond's Cordelia lives as a rural peasant, not at court, better, educated than her husband the Gravedigger's Boy but still tied to the land by the routine of subsistence farming. The Soldier's violation of her to act politically. Such a decision inevitable change the course of their life and her character too. She is transformed into a hardcore revolutionary and powerful ruthless leader reminding us of Lear at the beginning of the play.

Cordelia's character has a touch of universality about it. Think of the various films about terrorists and Mafia-gangsters, and revolutionaries you have watched. Don't you find that in most cases it is callousness and partitive and that too undeserved. Which often provokes well-meaning sensitive individuals to turn cruel and wield power irresponsibly? Does such a change appear to you as Natural and Realistic?

Now that we have studied the "Plot" and character aspects of the play let us spend some time on the third ingredient of Drama namely Dialogue.

USE OF DIALOGUE IN 'LEAR'

Dialogue is perhaps the most interesting part of play often more than action too, since it is through the utterance, that various character reveal themselves to us.

Since it a political epic. The dialogue in Lear is generally effective terse and rhetorical (in the manner of a speech) According to Bond, Rhetoric is one of Lear's Three Great Crimes, In the early scenes of the play, the rhetoric is used to defend what Bond describes as a myth which asserts that Might is Right and that Law and Order legitimate weapons in the hands of strong governments.

Lear, Cordelia, Bodice, Warrington etc. all use or abuse language in order to defend the indefensible, Let us take a few example

(1) At the beginning of the play Lear declares: My wall will make you free Does it? You will remember how all the problems revolves around the Wall. The revolt of his daughters, the imprisonment of Lear killing of the Boy. Rape of Cordelia Lear's enlightenment, Cordelia's assumption that the wall must be built implying

that history repeats itself and the wall continues to stand as a symbol of fear, terrorism, violence and other attendant evils of totalitarianism.

(ii) Regarding the trial of old Lear, Bodice remarks. "This is a political trial" Politics is the higher form of justice" Can anything be further from the truth?

Similarly Lear is blinded callously in a "refined inhuman" way in order to make him "politically ineffective" indeed suffering meted out in the name of politics knows no bounds and it is all couched nicely in language. The neo-wise Lear's comment is quite relevant. "You commit crimes and call them law". The great enemy of clear language is in sincerity "Abuse of language is linked with abuse of power, as the above bits of dialogue prove.

The rhetorical style has a justifiable role in Bond's play Shakespeare's Lear also begins with a rhetorical defence of an action which events prove to have been indefensible Regan and Goneril use rhetoric to gain power and partition of the kingdom, whereas Cordelia's inadequacy to wield rhetoric fetches her cruel punishment and unrest abandonment. Bond has not only adapted the epic structure and scope of Shakespeare's theatre for his own purposes. He has also exploited the possibilities inherent in the epic style with its freedom from naturalism, making way for vivid imagery, oratory, parables and overtly theatrical statements and gestures.

Secondly, the political rhetoric of the various characters in Bond's play, we must remember, is in its turn, only one element of the rhetoric of the plays as whole, it is a political epic. a propaganda play. And Bond himself writes. "A propaganda play must be able to tell its message to an uninformed or resisting audience" Thus his use of language in the play is both dramatic and poetic, Significantly he gives nearly turned phrases to characters whose hypocrisy and abuse of authority he intends to expose and condemn. Bond is certainly not naive stylistically as some critics think on the other hand, the width and intensity of his reading is well reflected in the range and sophistication of the language of Lear.

No political play or novel can eschew (Avoid) violence for it involves power-clashes. Should violence be enacted on the stage

or should it be reported? This has been the major point of dispute among different schools of Dramatic Theory. Find out what the classic and Romantic schools felt on this issue. We shall turn to this aspect in the case of Lear.

VIOLENCE IN 'LEAR'

Bond's preface to the play *Lear* begins like this:

"I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about violence. Violence shapes and obsesses our society and if we do not stop being violent we have no future. People who do not want writers to write about violence want to stop them writing about us and our time. It would be immoral not to write about violence."

The above passage clearly states Bond's obsession with the theme of violence and his moral insistence upon presenting it in his plays. Above all he is preoccupied with political violence, the outrages of those in power against the poor and the helpless—whether peasants, women, children or victims of whatever kind.

The play *Lear* is indeed a farrago (mixture) of sensational scenes of violence and cruelty. Take the torture of Warrington by the two sisters in Act I scene iv. It takes place in full view of the spectators. Please read this scene: only then you can experience the nightmarish horror of the whole thing. Bodice knits while that soldier, "A" kicks at Warrington! He and Fontanelle jump on the victim's hands! The devilish woman screams, "Jump on his head....kill him inside....I want to sit on his lungs!" and so on. As a climax to the mutilation process - for Bodice has already Warrington's tongue cut off—she pokes her knitting needles into Warrington's ears! Enough is enough, one might say.

The shock such a scene provokes is that of the powerlessness of morality when confronted by the banality of evil. What horrifies us is the interior space of terror as a form of destructive play without limit. Nothing seems to be bound terror except the boredom or exhaustion of its preparator.

To cite another instance, equally powerful in its effect is the removing of Lear's eyes by another political prisoner with a device "perfected on dogs for removing human eyes" In Act III Scene ii. The event is calculatedly shocking first Lear is coaxed into a strait

jacket and then a contraption (device) is lowered over his head. The formality and the deliberation of the actions heighten the horror, since they afford time for the audience to understand the real significance, and hideous reality behind the 4th prisoner's comment to the carpenter. "Then he could be made politically ineffective" (Same scene) there is time also to anticipate and imagine the refinements of pain to be inflicted on Lear and to cringe at Lear's terror. Please note that Bond does not allow any softening of the event. Lear screams in excruciating agony (deep pain) while the 4th prisoner proudly describes the details of the procedure.

In his treatment of violence, Bond also engages the spur of revenge. The savage murder of the Gravedigger's Boy and the rape of Cordelia, -her identity dramatically withheld until after violation - generates a counted violence that is organized but without pity. The Carpenter who avenges the Boy and Cordelia by murdering the soldiers who have attacked them later becomes a commander in Cordelia's peasant army which unleashes (releases) more violence. The cycle of violence is respective, but revolutionary too. It is not merely the disposing of two prodigal daughters as in Shakespeare's tragedy. But the class vengeance of a peasant woman killing both sisters. Rendering politically ineffective and then at last killing their wronged father also as members of the same political order.

That the presentation of such violent scenes on the stage can be theatrically powerful is evident from the response of critics to each production of the play. For instance, the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Lear* in 1982 met with critical respect for Bond's ambitious choice of subject etc. but there was also fascinated an unease about the enacted violence.

What do you feel about enacting so much violence on the stage? why?

We may have difference of opinion on this matter but the point we have to understand here is that if the horror were somehow diluted rendered aesthetically decorous, the purposes of meaning of Bond's epic story would become blurred. The nightmarish events in the play are involved in his thesis that men are not necessarily or innately violent. But are driven to react violently when they feel trapped within an irrational and inhuman political system and so

on. The author insists in his preface that even such a play as *Lear* which depicts the darkest side of man's experience, is not fully desperate. Bond exclaimed the intention of the play's final image. *Lear's* assault on the Wall is a positive action not a gesture of despair. Thus by enacting stark violence on the stage. Bond aims at teaching truths, exposing naked reality to the people, facts which he feels cannot be taught through the traditional institutes of state, school and church, since these are cripples and corrupted by capitalism.

Christopher inner remind us that Bond sees his audience. as composed of "spiritually dead people" and he thinks it is necessary to disturb them "emotionally" in order to achieve his purpose he reached to certain dramatic devices. For instance recall the Warrington torture scene in *Lear* (we have referred to it many times in the earlier sections). The incongruity of juxtaposing heartless force and human suffering is explicitly intended be highly disturbing. As Bond has said, the effect of such an inappropriate tone is very cruel. Indeed Bond's use of farcial comedy has to be viewed as an extension of his naked image of violence.

Compare the above scene with the baby-killing scene in Bonds 'SAVED' (1965) in which some young layabouts (loafers) amuse them selves by rubbing a baby's face in its own excrement, throwing lighted matched into its prim and then stoning it to death ! Height of sadistic violence and most inhuman cruelty we would exclaim. Now in such scene. Bond's social indignation is evident. He has a sense of humour but his shock tactics screams at the gods.

In terms of dramatic function, the value of such enactment of violence primarily that they provoke extreme, reactions in the audience. As Bond commented: Every body's reaction is different.....they must ask themselves, not ask me what I think about it"

In fact the change from graphic realism is saved to the grand fantasy of *Lear* is only a response to the public's capacity for accommodating themselves to violence.. As Bond openly admits> "I had to find effective...."This is what he has labelled Aggro-Effect in deliberate distinction from the Brechtian alienation effect."

Thus we see that Bond perceives outraging the audience emotionally as a sort of shock therapy designed to galvanize their consciences into life and provokes them into viewing society "ob-

jectively" and "rationally" that is to say from his perspective. For him the degree of violence is nothing more than a measure of urgency, and he denies any "desire to shock". Regarding the use of "Aggro effects" in his play Bond says.

"And so it's only because I feel it is important to involve people in the realities of life that I sometimes use these effects,."

Now that we have said quite a lot about violence in *Lear*, let us briefly turn to his Preface to the play.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Like Bernard Shaw, Bond has prefixed a Preface to his play *Lear* as well as several other plays. Such a preface is of great relevance to the proper understanding of the play Its theme or themes, the controlling ideas, the wants to enact and so on. Now, I would advise you to read the Author's Preface carefully and note down the important ideas. They will help you to understand and appreciate the play better. I shall however give below a few points contained in the Preface, which you should specially note:

MAIN POINTS IN AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO 'LEAR'

(i) We are not basically violent, but respond aggressively when constantly deprived or threatened.

(ii) Aggression has become moralized and morality has become a form of violence.

(ii) Children, like adults, evolve into violent being when they are battered by the weight of aggression everywhere in society.

(v) Social morality is a form of suicide

(vi) Spending lives doing things for which we are not biologically designed results in making us more and more tense, nervous and aggressive.

(vii) Our sort of society is dangerously aggressive being basically unjust and making people lead unnatural lives.

(viii) The only way out for such a society full of injustice is that must be violent.

(ix) The solution for the injustice and violence in our sort of society is to LIVE JUSTLY: allowing people to live in the way for which they are evolved.

We have covered in the above sections some of the basic

and important aspects of the play. We are now in a position to give an overall estimate of the author and his work.

BOND AND 'LEAR': AN OVERALL ESTIMATE

The most important writer to emerge during the 1960s was Edward Bond whose concerns prophetically foreshadowed those of the coming decades. In a relatively brief dramatic career consisting of a little over half a dozen full length plays, Bond has emerged as a distinctive yet wholly representative voice in the British theatre-representative not of a school of dramatists, but of that growing concern for ecological values which became widespread in the early 1970's and of which Bond emerged as an early prophet. Not that he engages in the immediacies of life "in a sense far wider than would have been understood by dramatists a generation earlier.

Bond's plays from the close social realism of *Saved* to the eloquent myth-making of *Lear* managed to blend a high seriousness of purpose with extreme precision of theatrical execution and a gift for independent verbal and physical imagery unequalled since Brecht (Simon Trussler)

As James Holloway points out, Bond is a significant figure not only because of the intrinsic interest of his deeply felt and humane work but because of embodies as perhaps no other writer of the sixties and seventies, some of the distinctly insular traits of the writing of the time along with qualities that represents the growing strength of Continental influences and traditions as they begin to return to the literary scene Britain in the later years of the post war period (John Holloway)

Like Osborne, Edward Bond achieved immediate prominence through the controversy surrounding his first play *Saved* (produced in 1965) But unlike Osborne, Bond did not become quickly accepted. Initially he was subjected to perhaps the most violent storm of protest and denigration (defamation) aimed at any modern dramatist since Ibsen. His plays were described by pressure groups among the general public as sadistic, filthy "unfunny and obscene" Gradually a counter reaction set in leading theatre people and critics like Oliver, Tynan, Martine Esslin and others were quick to perceive the strikingly original and profoundly moral quality of his work "And with

his truly impressive output of ten full length plays, four adaptations, an opera and various short piece in the last fifteen years, Bond is now widely accepted as the single most important contemporary British dramatist, (Christopher Innes)"

All Bond's qualities as an effective playwright can be perceived in his play *Lear*. The play was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre in September 1971. Taking as its starting point the story of an autocratic monarch deposed by his two power-hungry daughters, the play presents an extravagantly horrific parable of the corruption of power and the ruthless cruelty imposed on us by the assumption of modern society.

Simon Trussler observes that *Lear* must stand as Bond's highest artistic achievement, The play had its beginnings in Bond's dissatisfaction with various elements in Shakespeare's version; nevertheless it stands entirely in its own right in its vision of the once authoritarian, dispossessed *Lear* travelling a lonely road of self discovery as his daughters do battle for his kingdom. The revolutionary leader Cordelia perpetuates *Lear*'s mistakes Thus *Lear*, his daughters and the conquerors too, have all suffered and are depicted as suffering hideously caught in the trap. *Lear* dies in a futile attempt to dismantle the wall into whose "defensive" construction he had diverted the energies of his kingdom. However the best thing he achieves before his death is that he perceives and gives voice to the urgent need both for an awareness of man's trapped state and for pity as a corrective.

"*Lear*" is a very personal achievement yet persuades us of its dramatic rightness. And implies us with its moral force. The Ghost who has to die a second time is a recurrent figure in Bond's plays: nevertheless in this play it is no idiosyncratic ingredient but an entirely appropriate embodiment of an insidiously attractive way of living in which *Lear* once found refuge, but which finally like the ghost must be allowed to die.

Bond's vividly theatrical vision and his ability to weave, disparate threads in to a unified work of dramatic art are evident in the play *Lear*. His use of "aggro effects" to shock the audience at the outrages of society is admirable, in the blending of satisfaction with an artistic experience and dissatisfaction with the society. Bond

comes closer to Brecht than any other writer in the modern British theatre.

We have come to the end of the Unit on Edward Bond's play *Lear*. Hope you have understood the basic features of the play. Read the original text a number of times with the help of this study material and master each aspect. The more through you are with the play the more easy it will be for you to write your examination and face the viva voce. Let us wind up the study part of the unit with brief summing up of the important aspects of the play.

LET US SUM UP

- (i) The play *Lear* (1971) is a powerful play by the English playwright of the post-war period Edward Bond (born 1934)
- (ii) It is an extravagantly horrific parable on the corruption of power and of the ruthless cruelty imposed by the assumption of modern society.
- (iii) it is a product of the Epic theatre associated with Bertolt Brecht.
- (iv) It is a critique or rehandling of Shakespeare's *King Lear*
- (v) The play is noted for its powerful character-delineation and effective dialogue.
- (vi) The obsessive theme of the play is VIOLENCE or aggressive nature of man deprived and forced to lead an unnatural life.
- (vii) The play has an effective Author's preface which contains many weighty themes and ideas we come across in *Lear* as well as in his other plays.
- (ix) Finally it is a thought-provoking play which forces us to realize through our own reaction to the play, the urgent need to set things right in an unjust, violent society LIVING JUSTLY allowing people to live in the way for which they are evolved.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Now that you have understood Edward Bond's Play *Lear* well, read the study material along with it and prepare your own essay in about 450 words on the following:

- (i) Edward Bond's *Lear* as product of the Epic Theatre.
- (ii) Discuss Bonds *Lear* as a critique of *King Lear* (March 1995)
- (ii) How does Bond's *Lear* enact the theme of violence? What

are the devices used?

(iv) "Although tragic scale is unimaginable except in the theatre, Bond's *Lear* is not primarily a play for "theatre goers", but it is meant for any one concerned with our apparently hell-bent course towards self-destruction- Do you agree?

(v) Characterization in Bond's *Lear*

(vi) The author's message in *Lear* and his means of conveying it

(vii) the significance of the wall in Bond's *Lear*

(b) Prepare some Quiz type questions for the written exam and the viva voce. For this, read extra, books on Edward Bond and have a general idea about the Playwright and his works. See 1.17 for specimen questions.

(c) Discuss with your friends the underlying themes and message of the play. Compare the play with the political developments, terrorism, outrages etc. happening all around us and verify whether Bond is depicting a universal Phenomenon.

I shall list below a few useful books for your extra reading

Suggestions for further reading

1. 20th century Drama edited by James Vinson
2. A Guide to 20th Century Literature ed by Harry Blamirrs.
3. Longman's Companion to 20th century literature by A.C. ward
4. A New Pelican's Gude to English Literature Vol. VIII
5. Tragic Drama and Modern Society by John Orr.
6. Modern British Dramatist, New Perspectives. ed John Russel Brown

(Read Introduction pp 1-12 and Ch.ix. "The political spectrum of Edward Bond" by Christopher Innes.

7. A Glossary of literary Terms by M.H. Abrams:

SAMPLE "OBJECTIVE TYPE QUESTIONS.

These are a regular feature of the written examination. A few sample are given below:-

1. Bond's *Lear* is a reworking of a play by(Shakespeare)
2. What is the theatre of Edward Bond called? (The Rational theatre/ Epic Theatre)

3. The character who pokes the needle into Warrington's ears (Bodice)

4. Who removes Lear's eyes?

5. The obsessive theme of Bond's Lear (violence)

Make more questions in this pattern, they will help you in your viva voce too.

FICTION LORD OF THE FILES

WILLIAM GOLDING

INTRODUCTION

William Golding was born in Cornwall in 19 September 1911 into a world of sanity and logic and fascination. "My life is passe in condition of ravished astonishment!, The exclamation he gives to the experimental scientist in his play. The brass Butterfly, might have been, and perhaps was spoken by his father, Alec Golding, But the first memory which he has given us of his childhood, in the autobiographical fragment, the Ladder and the tree, is of terror and darkness! Darkness and indescribable terror made objective in the Flint -walled cellars of their fourteenth century house in Marlborough, and in the graveyard by which it stood.

He offers a social cause for this contact with darkness. "Had my mother perhaps feared this shadowy house and its graveyard neighbour when she went there with me as a baby? She was cornfish and the Cornish do not live next to a graveyard from choice. But we had very little choice. My father was master at the local grammar school, so that we were all the poorer for our respectability. But clearly this matter of class is not cause but only part of the conditions for a personal plight. By the time Golding was seven he had begun to connect the darkness, though not the storm, with the ancient Egyptian, From the learnt, or on them he projected mastery and symbolism, a

habit of mingling life and death and an attitude of mind sceptical of the scientific method that descends from the Greeks.

Variously hailed as a fabulist, "Marginal" Anti-realize, Philosophical novelist, and anthropologist of the imagination, William Golding, who moved into the hallowed precincts of fiction relatively late in life, has come to occupy a unique defying classification and categorization. A section of the critics tend to over emphasize some of Golding's limitations which could in fact be seen as the self - imposed limits within which he chooses to operate. However no one can deny the originality, vitality and seriousness of his work. He may not be prolific or versatile but he displays a rare technical virtuosity and remarkable imaginative power.

Golding draws upon the rich literary tradition only to assert his untitled artistic identity. It is rightly said that "his originality in prose is much like that of Eliot's in verse. Tradition.....Leaves its mark on his work, but his work leaves its individual mark, and sometimes excruciatingly on tradition" Golding would use the original texts only to violate them. And whether its is de-romanticizing Ballintyne, inverting Wells, subverting Dante, or "Deconstruction" Coleridge, Golding's work presents the subject in a startlingly new light, giving it yet another dimension. Invariably in this process he raises disturbing questions relating to the human predicament.

Golding's novels move at the level of phenomena of things happening in the physical or the spiritual worlds, and develop their own forms for experience. Golding's work is not just a powerful refutation of the naive optimism of Wells or shallow progressivism of Ballantyne. He would rather question a whole tradition embodying man's simplistic and optimistic formulations about himself. His work mainly based on his own painful observation of the cult of the irrational and on his own war - time experience, seems a counter blast to the eighteenth century biologists like James G Frazer and Edward B. Taylor, and such liberal thinkers in modern times as H.G. Wells and Sir Julian Huxely, Actively opposed as he is to the behaviourist assumption that human ills are related to the environment, Golding puts

the locus of all evil in the "will" of man., his work domesticates the limitations of order envisaged by the rational consciousness of man.

Man's dream of a rational, well structured universe and the poignant awareness of the threats to the dream are well expressed by Golding, even in his early literary efforts, Golding visualizes the Universe as "Cosmic Chaos". He is stated to have observed in the course of an interview with Owen Webster that the basic problem of modern man is "learning to live fearlessly with the natural chaos of existence. Without forcing artificial pattern on it". But then order or pattern is very much a human need. It is sought in our individual lives. Social intercourse, scientific and philosophic investigation, and literally and artistic endeavour.

Golding's fiction focuses on this significant aspect of man quest for order on various levels and encountering in the process chaos within and without. In Golding's world chaos manifests itself in various forms. On the social level it is seen in the form of violence resulting from the clash between different types of order (Lord of the flies). It is also experienced in the form of moral evil and seen as resulting from not only over assertion of the ego, (Pincher Martin) but irrational faith (The Spire). There is the natural chaos of existences. The pattern lessons of life pointed out by Talbot and realized by Sammy Mountjoy at the end of his agonizing quest for a pattern. Again it is, in the Nietzschean terminology, the Dionysian impulse as opposed to the Apollonian motive.

Golding's novels at the Level of phenomena, of things happening in the physical or the spiritual worlds and develop their own forms for experience. One consequence of this is that. Perhaps more than with any other, novelists, the process of reading a Golding novel is overwhelmingly important. He visualizes a state in which man lived in perfect harmony with the Universe (The Inheritors). Man was a perfect microcosm of the macrocosm. Being unself-conscious he was never aware of nature as other, and was absolutely free of the tension between order and chaos. Golding also depicts man's loss of the sense

of unity with the universe with the fragmentation of his undifferentiated consciousness. Man's rise to consciousness is seen by Golding as a fall. Man is destined to endure the trails of self ranging from an adolescent's awareness of the ignominy of growing up through the expective and self deceptive subterfuge of a noble aspiration to the seriocomic rites of passage, to an adult sense of sin and self-hood, disgrace and defilement, and ignominy and guilt. In Golding's universe the descent of man is enacted not in the Darwinian sense. But literally and in the theological sense of the fall. While the doctrinal fall forms the skeletal background. Golding depicts the Fall not only as occurring in the history of the human species (The Inheritors) but as a destined event in the Blakean sense, in the life of a social class (Lord of the flies) or in that of every individual as he moves from innocence to Experience (Free Fall and the Pyramid).

Golding says that he would rather trace his literary lineage to the great Greek writers, Euripides, and Aeschylus are the obvious influences. While on the one hand, he is akin to the great Greek tragedians in his preoccupation with the human tragedy he resembles on the other, such masters of fiction as Melville and Conrad in his emphasis on the natural chaos of existence. In his thematic preoccupations - man's alienation, free will, guilt, primacy, and universality of evil - Golding comes close to writers like Melville, Conrad and Graham Greene.

Like Melville and Conrad, Golding presents his themes through myth and fable, symbol and metaphor. While John Peter's evaluation of Lord of the flies, the Inheritors and Pincher Martin as fables has been generally accepted and has, in fact, set the trend for the analysis of Golding's forms and themes, Golding himself said that he would prefer the description myths of total explanation of his work, Golding seeks to transcend the limitations inherent in fabulation by giving it a mythic dimension as well as by expressing his meaning through symbol and metaphor. He may not have outlived his narrative strategy as Henry James for instance, did through his prefaces and notebooks. Golding's novels are symbolist in their settings and ac-

tions so that reading Golding becomes an act of journeying by symbolic sea, or exploring the, "Cathedral of the mind" or the rock of the "ravenous ego"

LORD OF THE FLIES: THE FRAME WORK AND THE STORY

At the beginning of *Lord of the Flies* (1954) the reader has two forms of reality offered him, one in the text, the other in the title, the text begins with a well known sort of story: boys making their own lives on an island, apart from adults. The immediate model is made clear enough: Ballantyne's "The coral Island" (1858), in which three adolescents, Ralph, Jack and Peterkin create a happy simple life on a pacific island. But one can feel many others of the genre hovering about the story, notably Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*, and even more his *Secret Water* in which a naval officer's Children play at explores in the marshy islands behind Walton - on - the Waze in Essex until confronted by local children whose game is to be savage tribe with corroborate, ritual dance and mock human sacrifice. But the children are all very nice and responsible children, and everything remain at the level of game.

Ballantyne's names, Ralph and Jack are those of the two principle characters in Golding's book. And the first chapter differs from Ballantyne's and Ransome's shape for the world only in Golding's peculiar, detailed almost halucinatory awareness of physical reality.

The title *Lord of the Flies* can perhaps be traced to the Jewish hierarchy of demons where there is reference of Beelzebub who is known as the Lord of the Flies. The chief representative of the false gods. The title therefore, is appropriate to a novel which like a fable conveys a moral that the world is not the reasonable place we are led to believe and that "all power corrupts" and that one has to live with the darkness of man's heart, It is the author's philosophy to restore principle in an unprincipled world. Restore belief to a world of disbelieves.

The novel opens in a terrifying atmosphere, nuclear war has broken out in Europe and a school from the English Home counties has been evacuated by an aeroplane to an unknown

destination. The plane has touched down at Gibraltar and Addis Ababa, then still flying south east wards. It has been attacked, its crew killed, but its passenger tube released so that it can crash land on the jungle below. At the moment of impact, a fierce storm is raging and only a few boys - Ralph, Jack, Roger, Simon, Piggy amongst them manage to scramble out of the tube before the wind sweeps it out to sea. They arrive on an unnamed island. It is full of coral reef, beaches and fruit trees that bear all the year round. In the Edenic island there is plenty of food fruit and fresh water. Hence forward, the novelist concerns himself with the adaptation of the boys to their new tropical background. They have their assembly, they pursue their own pleasure all within law and rule. The boys behaviour on the island has been variously as they evolve their own goods, totems and taboos when they are deprived to parental authority. Some see it as a parable of man stripped of sanctions of customs and civilization, others as attract about the differences between democracy and civilization, others as a tract about the difference between democracy and anarchy and others relate it to the story of the Fall of Man and the Garden of Eden. The beautiful conch Ralph and Piggy discover brings all the boys together and soon becomes the acknowledged symbol of harmony and order. It is the possession of the conch that more than anything else qualifies Ralph to be the chief. There are no elders to boss around. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages.....' says red-haired, tall, thin, quick to anger, proud and aggressive Jack Meridian. He has all the qualities of a twentieth century dictator who in league with Lord of the Flies has thirst for power. He is their choir leader wears a golden badge on his cap. They are like boys of any cathedral school - highly organized, civilized and disciplined. The tragedy is sharp as they fall from that civilized height. They turn into savages - naked, painted, gorging, on pig-flesh, and whoops of aah-ah and "ooh-ooh" are heard, they all participate in exploring the meaning and consequence of the creation of evil.

Ralph and Jack are antagonistic to each other, leadership is there upon Ralph. He is not intellectual and logical as

piggy. He would never be a good chess player. He is not so intuitively right as Simon and aggressive as Jack. He is straw boy of democracy, tossed about by forces he cannot cope with, he is courageous intelligent but finally despairs of democracy which manic only "Talk, Talk, Talk", apologizes to piggy and faces his guilt of Simon's death is characterized most effectively and poignantly. He is a stunning, vivid little boy aged 9 or 10. It is he who discovers that the Beast reportedly send is not more than a dead airman whose parachuted - strings have tangled in the rocks and scrub. Thus when a wind blows and the strings tauten, the helmeted figure rises and seems to peer across the mountain. Then, as soon as the wind drops, the face falls forward upon its knees. Simon is full of vision and forethought and tries to explain this and the fact that the Beast whom they all fear is not real and it really lies within themselves, the others will not listen and club him to death. He suffers from epilepsy as some great man of the past, the Lord of the Flies visits him in a key scene when the fit is about to take him. He has the touch of the mystic and his is the voice of warning. He becomes the central figure of the Lord of the Flies Scene. Very powerful and poetic, and he also a human or a pig's head off stick. But this does not mean that Simon stands for wisdom and Jack for evil. The situation shows that the human nature has very qualities make him a sinister foil and contrast to Simon. Piggy has a name that has irony in it and he possesses good and bad attributes of a weaker sort of intellectual. He rationalizes Simon's death just before his own. Ralph acts as a conscience for him. The Ralphs of this world do not see that the logic of Piggy's mind will not cope with the situation.

Ralph dimly realizes that the world is not ready for its saints, or Simons nor even piggies or Ralphs. However, the latter do try to stop relapsing into barbarism. The world of the boys in the island domesticates that good and bad can exist side by side in the darkness of man's heart. Not only is the conch shattered in the process but the island itself is set on fire. The fire however attracts a passenger cruiser to the island and thus, by the irony of circumstance. The boys are "rescued" for the

time being from a total collapse. It is a novel that reveals Golding's philosophy that the world should restore principles in an unprincipled world, restore belief to a world of disbelievers. This is the hidden appeal and message.

A CRITICAL FOCUS ON THE NOVEL

One might as well ask with Ralph: "...what's wrong?... What makes things break up like they do?" (P. 154) that is what the novel is about the failure to establish order. An answer is to be found. On the surface level of action in the intellectual complications of the three main characters, in their motives and deeds, and on deeper level, in the constitutions of man's psyche, in "mankind's essential illness" (p.47)

Ralph and Jack are vitally different in their natures, upbringing and attitudes".....Two continents of experience and feeling, unable to communicate" (p.60) Their two worlds are essentially incompatible....." The brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration skill...(and) the world of longing and baffled commonsense" (p.77) As such they are always at cross - purposes. The first note of antagonism is struck on the question of properties. While Ralph says, "The best thing we can do is to get ourselves rescued" (p.58), Jack replies, Rescue? yes of course. All the same. I'd like to catch a pig first" (p.58). Later in the scene of final confrontation between the two groups. Piggy tries in vain to make Jack and his savages see reason. In other words, the question before them is which is more fundamental a communal effort at being rescued or an assertion and imposition of the will over the community? It is a clash of will the rational will aiming at decent. Democratic leadership based on reason, and irrational will seeking to establish an authoritarian regime.

Jack and his cohorts are introduced in a way which is ominous in its import. They appear to Ralph from the distance as a dark creature wending its way to the platform from where he has blown the conch. "Within the diamond haze of the beach some dark was fumbling along.....The creature was a party of boys..... Their bodies....Were hidden by black cloaks.....The boy who controlled them, was dressed in the same way" (p20-21).

The words suggest that level exists as a potentiality in Jack. The "opaque mad look" (p.58) slamming his knife into a tree trunk and looking round challengingly, the offhand authority in his voice, and such other intimating gestures all these things are pointers to his ungovernable energy and perpetual restlessness. The infernal incantation kill the pig. Cut her throat! Bah her in (p.82). but a disguise, like the paint on his face, for his emotional self-indulgence. His desire for malignant power sets no store by the conch which stands for order and harmony. When he finally breaks away from Ralph and becomes the chief of his tribe, he shows himself susceptible to the totalitarian temptation and empowers himself with titanic evil. "Power lay in the brown swell of his forearms; authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape" (p.165). The transformation of the chapter chorister into a savage tribal chief is thus complete.

The confrontation between the representatives of order and the forces of chaos takes place when Ralph, accompanied by Piggy and twins, Samneric, visits the castle Rock. The stronghold of Jack. In the violent clash that follows, Samneric are captured and forced to turn savage. It is as though civilization had been forced into subjugation by brute force. Piggy holds up the conch and appeals for order. But the fragile shell is nothing before the fierce anarchic tendencies of Jack and his men. Once in full flow, they brook no opposition and react with all violence and force. Roger, Jack's, Hench, lets fall a huge rock which strikes Piggy hard and drives him to his violent death, with the talisman in his hand expounding into pieces. Now Jack and his men turn their attention to Ralph who runs away and conceals himself in the forest. The pig-hunt degenerates man-hunt. The savages with their paint, spears, and ululation spread terror. The whole forest is seen "Shuddering with flame" (p.222) The fire that is meant for rescue all but destroys Ralph and the island when a naval officer who has just arrived intervenes.

Ralph horrified at his own plight with Piggy and his conch, all order and sense are lost. He finds himself an outcast. In trying to come to terms with the outworld, he discovers the horrible inner self of man. As the metamorphosis of the choris-

ter and his Choir boys into savages is complete, Ralph weeps "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart....." (p.223). The moment of his anguish and terror is also the moment of self knowledge.

If such a traumatic experience was necessary for Ralph to realize the power of darkness, Simon has an intuitive grasp of it. Jack and his followers, like the newmen in the inheritors and the boys in the Coral island, externalize the Beast and placate it by animal sacrifices. But Simon knows that it is inside man. The introspective Simon's communion with the Lord of the Flies, which may be called the key episode of the book, is but a communication with, and a recognition of the powers of darkness within himself and within everybody. The Lord of the Flies tells Simon, "you knew, didn't you? I'm part of You? Close, close, I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" (p.158) The devil says they are going to have fun on the island and threatens Simon with bitter consequences if he interferes. And it does carry out its threat as Simon, A little later tries to save the boys from the fear for the "Beast". After the communion with the Lord of the Flies. Simon comes across the "beast" "a himped thing" (p. 161)

Golding refers to Simon as a "Christ-figure" Indeed Simon reminds one of Christ and other martyrs, who initially are not understood by their fellowmen and meet with the inevitable tragic end. It is not without significance that Simon is represented as being subject to epileptic fits as the prophets were. More often than not, the quest for truth involves as confrontations with untruth and results in the seeker's violent end. The tragedy of Simon may well be regarded as yet another triumph of evil forces and setback to man's quest for truth beauty and goodness.

If Simon is a Christ figure, Piggy is "the Socrates of the story". Piggy too like Simon, can be credited with an adult understanding of life. He thinks purpose fully like adults and displays practical sense. Good intention and democratic instinct. Practical interests engage his attention all the time. He scorns the "senseless ebullience of the children" (p.42) and his passionate willingness to carry the conch against all odds" (p.190)

show that order and discipline are the supreme values for him.

Viewed in anthropological terms of the fall, *Lord of the Flies* is a sequel to the *Inheritors*. In the *Inheritors* Golding shows that the fragmentations of man's consciousness constitutes the fall. WH Auden, in one of his poems, states how the fall has fragmented man's consciousness into four faculties - intuition, feeling sensation, and thought: Simon, Ralph, Jack and Piggy may be said to represent the four faculties respectively. The clash among them is in its essence symbolic of the various pulls and pressures man experiences on the existential level as a result of his fragmented-consciousness.

Lord of the Flies depicts a clash, on the societal level, between law makers and law-breakers, between the champions of order and the forces of anarchy while the fire around which the boys gather is a signal of human sociability, the pig-hunt is expressive of man's blood lust. On the political level. It represents the conflict between what might be called the utilitarian democracy and authoritarianism. Where as Ralph with his slogan of signal fire and shelter may be taken as representing the "enlightened self-interest of Hobbes, Bentham and Mill, Jack's doctrine of pig-hunt is an expression of his lust for power.

In his book on violence and destructiveness Erich Fromm speaks of rational and irrational will. He means the energetic effort to reach a rationally desirable aim. It requires, according to his realism, discipline, patience and the overcoming of self indulgence. The irrational will is powerful, but man is not the master of this will; he is driven by it. Fromm observes that Hitler's will was indeed strong. If we understand it as irrational will. But his rational will was weak Ralph may be said to represent rational will, and Jack irrational will. Jack is so much obsessed with pig-hunt that it almost consumes his spirit and energies. He confesses to a feeling of "being consumed by his spirit and energies. He confesses to a feeling of "being hunted; as if something behind you all the time in the jungle". (p.57) Ralph is affirmative and sanguine, Jack is sadistic and destructive.

The problem of man's struggle with the "beast" may be studied in terms of the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy drama-

tized by Euripides and propounded by Nietzsche in his *The Birth of Tragedy* out of the spirit of Music where he invokes the Dionysian powers. According to Nietzsche, the Apollonian and Dionysian elements are the two aspects of consciousness and the subjective tragedy is an integration of these two elements. The clash between Ralph and Jack is symbolic of the clash within man, between the rational and irrational. This is dramatized, though suggestively in the theatre of Ralph's consciousness itself. His instance on making fire and building shelters is an Apollonian urge to preserve the ego in the face of the Dionysian frenzy within as well as without.

The dead airman may be regarded as the evaluative image in the novel. Apart from the fact that the boys incarnate the beast in the form of the dead parachutist. The implicit statement seems to be the beast in man himself, the adult, and the adolescents betray the fact that the beast is within them as well, for they shows themselves to be no better than the adults. The dead airman is as much a beast as its victim and presents "the picture of a human at once heroic and sick" (p.113)

Golding said that he would like to have his novels characterized as myths rather than fables. Market Kinkadee and Jan Gregor observe that the essence of literary myth is reversal and discovery. They point out that *Oedipus Rex* (cited by Aristotle as the perfect tragic mythos) "opens with the assertion of stable world... but it dissolves in the acid of a different truth". The boys in *Lord of the Flies* begin on a note of harmony in paradisaic surroundings, but their harmonious existence quickly degenerates into anarchy. The lesson brought in the wake of anarchy forms a most poignant discovery of the book. The various episodes on the island are the rites de passages for Ralph, producing in him "a convulsion of the Mind" (p.84) and initiating him into an awareness of the heart of darkness.

"Myth" it has been rightly said ".... is not a distinct fictional mode or form. Myth is simply an imaginative tendency or mode of perception to which all are subject". And in *Lord of the Flies*, as in Golding's other novels, we see the workings of the myth - imagination as it seeks to transcend the limitations inherent in

fabulation and invests the book with greater depth, significance and scope.

Having taken part in world war II, Golding realized how rational intelligence and material progress made man more corrupt, violent and destructive. Golding said, "World War II was a turning point for me. I began to see what people were capable of doing" It destroyed his youthful illusions comparable to the optimistic picture conjured up in fancy, by which now thought he should deromanticize. While the coral island is a paean of civilization, *Lord of the Flies* is about what might be called "The nemesis of civilization". It points out how civilization, besides being ineffective as restraint on man's inner depravity, arms it with greater powers of destruction, and annihilates mankind that has created it. We should remember that the boy's situation on the island is the result of the civilized nations going to war. The initial disaster the boys experienced had been wrought by the civilized adults.

Golding commenting on the ending of the story says, "The officer. Having interrupted a man-hunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cruiser which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser? It is better to leave the question unanswered. The Novel is hence marked with rich allegoric dimension and interpretative possibility.

Though pessimistic apparently *Lord of the Flies* is far from being a depressing novel. On the other hand, It is a work affording great delight to its readers. It is as delightful as Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* and it does retain in the opening chapters the "Coral island" glamour. On the surface level of action, it is exciting and suspenseful and its narrative momentum, meeting James prescription of "Continues relevance" take the reader along to the inevitable catastrophe in the boy's society. Each episode - the sounding of the shell. Making the fire on the mountain, pig hunt, the search for the beast setting up arrival camp contributes to the whole bringing to light "mankind's essential illness" (p.47) The first confrontation between Rajph and Jack soon after a ship passes the island while the fire is

out, is well dramatized. Again, the Lord of the Flies Scene occupies a key place in strategy of the novel. The episode effectively reinforces the novel's theses. It forms the most significant focus deepening and enriching our understanding of the novel's major concern, namely the primacy of evil.

MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Consider "*Lord of the Flies*" as an allegory.
 2. "*Lord of the Flies*" is about what might be called "the nemesis of civilization". - examine? Novels by William Golding
 - Lord of the Flies* London : Faber & Faber 1954
 - The Inheritors* London: Faber & Faber 1995
 - Pincher Martin* London: Faber & Faber a 1956
 - The Brass Butterfly* London: Faber & Faber 1958
 - Free Fall* London: Faber & Faber 1959
 - The Spire* London: Faber & Faber 1964
 - The Hote Gates* London: Faber and Faber 1965
 - The Pyramid* London: Faber & Faber 1967
 - The Scorpion God* London: Faber & Faber 1971
 - Darkness Visible* London: Faber & Faber 1979
 - Rites of Passage* London: Faber & Faber 1980
 - A Moving Target* London: Faber & Faber 1982
 - The Paper Men* London: Faber & Faber 1984
 - An Egyptian Journal* London: Faber & Faber 1985
- Selected Bibliography
- Babb Howard S. *The Novels of William Golding*, Columbia, The Ohio State University Press 1970
 - Baker James R. *William Golding: A Critical Study*, Newyork St. Martine's Press 1955
 - James Gindin "Gimmick and Metaphor in the Novels of William Golding" *Modern Fiction studies* VI (Summer, 1960)
 - Mark Kinkead - *wreakers* and Jan Gregor
 - William Golding - *A critical study* (London: Faber and Faber 1967)
 - Virginia Tiger - *William Golding: The Dark Fields of Discovery* (London: Calder&Boyars, 1974)
 - V.V. Subbarao *William Golding: A study* Sterling publishers Pvt.Ltd 1987)

THE GOLDEN NOTE BOOK

DORIS LESSING

AUTHOR AND HER WORKS

Doris Lessing was born in Persia, of British parents, But her father migrated to Rhodesia and settled down as a farmer. She became a leading European novelist, writing about her African experience. She married twice and divorced. All her novels are related to her own life. Her maiden novel "The grass is Singing" was an instant success. In her literary career of 40 years, she was considered to be a Marxist Terrorist and mystic, though she serves all these labels. She has not expounded any specific ideology, but touched upon variety of ideas and forms. She has produced her novels as series, For example children of Violence series consists of five highly, autobiographical novels with Martha quest as the central figure. The space fiction series are known with the over all title of Campus id Argus "Archives" And they are five in number. Lessing's short stories are generally "rehearsals or exercises for her novels".

Lessing's own sense of displacement leads her to concentrate in her novels on the theme of search for identity, the roles of women in relation to men and to each other etc. Rubenstein is right in saying that "the common denomination in Lessing's fictional world is the mind. The discovering, interpreting, and ultimately shipping its own reality"

SUMMARY

The Golden Note Book: "Narrates the story of two women friends living in London. It records the emotional problem experienced by these two lonely free woman. Anna is divorced and has a daughter called Janet. Molly is also divorced and lives with her twenty year old son. Tommy. Molly's former husband is trying to divorce his second wife, Marian who has three kids by him. Yet is still concerned about Tommy. Anna records her experiences in different colour note books. Tommy reads them and tries to commit suicide. He doesn't die, but blinds himself. Janet goes to the board-

ing school. Left alone, Anna is on the verge of going mad. She meets an American in a Similar condition. Has in affair with him and recovers from the break-down. She begins some welfare work and marriage guidance. Molly also remarries.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

The Golden Note Book is an experimental novel, written parodying the conventional realist novel. The strength and innovation of the novel is that it confirms the realist strong and the examination of realism. The form of the novel is rather complicated. It consist of a realist novel entitled free women, Anna and Molly. Free women is narrated in the third person inobjective tone. In between each part of three women, the novel has extracts from four different coloured with Anna Woolf, the writer. Here Anna presents The material she used to write her best selling novel "Frontiers of war, gradually Anna experience the writer's block and loses her ability to write. The black note book reduces to cutting files about violence in Africa. Here she discusses the problem of apartheid. The red note book deals with Anna's experiences with the British communist party and states how she resigns from it. This is again full of newspaper cuttings. Yellow note book deals with Anna's novel "The Shadow of the Third" which is a fictionalized version of her own life. It tells the story of Ella. Writing a novel about suicide and her relationship with Paul. The blue not book in actually Anna's diary where she records her writer's book her sessions with psychotherapist, it gives all factual account of her break-down, her relationship with Soul Green, Molly and Janet.

Thus the four note books symbolize the chaos and disintegration in Anna's personality. With her rejuvenating experience with Saul Green, Anna recovers, gets out of the writer's block as they give each other the first sentences of their novels. The sentence Saul Green suggests for Anna, happens to be the opening sentence of free women. Thus the different strands of the novel invite at a point., giving the novel a cycle pattern. The final golden note-book symbolizes Anna's psychic integration and the other four note books symbolize her feeling of disunity.

The different notebooks through the different perspectives they represent about a single event, show the reader the many way the

source material can be represented. Lessing's note books help her a great deal to convey layers of consciousness of her characters and their madness and nervous breakdown.

The different note books, which contain different versions of her novels, juxtaposed with free women, in fact explains to the readers the mechanics of fiction writing. The reader can deduct the process of selection, omission and shaping in the art of novel writing.

The fragment form of the novel in fact echoes the content.

FEMINISM

The Golden Note book is considered to be a key text of feminist movements in the mid 1960s. But Lessing in her preface denies this categorization. Yet the fact remains that in her novel Lessing touches upon the desires and frustrations of woman. Women's search for identity happens to be a major theme in this novel. In "Golden note Book" the female protagonist Anna Wolf is shown to disintegrate, reintegrate and evolve as a new personality.

The novel does not advocate liberation from marriage, but thinks of means to enhance the quality of marriage. Characters like Richard or Michael have only a minor role to play. through the emotional conflicts of Anna and Molly. Lessing presents the damaging effect of the rejection by men and the women passively accepting it. Yet at the overall view, the female need for the opposite sex is stressed. We find women like Anna, Molly and Marion support and protect each other against the pain caused by men like Richard. There is a critical presentation of the relationship between men and women. The novel also abounds in free open discussion of female sexuality.

Books for Further Reading

Loran sage, Doris lessing

Ruth Whiltacker, Doris Lessing

Anita Myles, Doris Lessing

THE LONELINESS OF THE LONG - DISTANCE RUNNER

ALAN SILLITOE

A INTRODUCTION

The Loneliness of the long distance Runner was published in 1957 in a collection of short stories to which it gave its name. It could be reckoned as a "novella". Alan Sillitoe the son of a poor labourer in a bicycle factory at Nottingham, after leaving school at fourteen he too worked in a bicycle factory. Later on he was carried up in the FAF and while on service in Malaya contracted tuberculosis. Sillitoe began to write during the year he spent in hospital and has made writing his career. His first full-length novel. Saturday Night and Sunday Morning published in 1958 caused a remarkable impact because of its grimly realistic portrayal of working-class life of course from a particular angle. Subsequently he published "key to the Door" The General and a volume of poetry. The rats and other poems.

Sillitoe belongs to a group of writers -- Jon Brain, John Wagne, Keith Water house, Stam Barstow and the like -- who tried to take an anti-establishment, outlaw stand especially to highlight the flight of the working class. The works of these writers were turned to successful films too. The same concern for the working class was gaining ground in the theatre too. Harold Pinter, Arnold Wesker and Shelagh Delancy belong to this category.

The labour Government which had come to power in 1945 tried to remove the remaining class barriers. Post - 1940 British Novelists and dramatists were concerned with these social changes. But at best only a back drop. These writers were more interested in depicting the impact of these changes on the people. The generation gap too becomes an absorbing theme. The constant conflict between the in law blocks and out law blocks grips the attention of these post 1940 "angry young men protest writers". Sillitoe's hero (almost unnamed). But of

course named once or twice as Smith, as a victim of this on going struggle (His) hero, however was born to delinquency. We know nothing of how his family has been reduced to such uncompromising hostility to society, but we are left with the impression that he had no alternative, but to be one of the Out-law blocks, like me and 'us' inevitably opposed to the in law blocks like you and them? He presents in an extreme, form that opposition between them and us that professor Hoggart sees as a major factor in the ordinary person's attitude to society. The world of them is the largely impersonal world of the "Authorities and the Bosses",. In sharp contrast to the intimate and human world of one's own family and neighbourhood.

Often the world of government and administration is not comprehended by the masses and any sort of its intervention in private life resented by them. The authorities any ment it by a sort of mystery willingly imposed on it. "In the Loneliness of the Long-distance runner they speak impersonally in the Plural: They always say "WE" "WE" never "I" "I" as if they feel braver and righter knowing there's a lot of them against only one" (David Elloway. "Introduction" 1959, 203) "Organization", "Community" etc. are impersonal abstract terms inspiring the individual in no way.

The "Welfare state" ideals did not yield the intended results. Family ties weekend. Better social security measures enables adolescent and girls to mature equalize. The relative economic stability offered by the "Welfare state" also contributed to the independence of adolescent. "But if post-war prosperity has loosened the bonds that tied the teenager to his local community, it has left him with the sense of belonging to no community at all. Although he enjoys economic security he lacks the security of feeling himself a part of an organized society/ and it is those who feel insecure and in significance who find it necessary compensate for this by aggressive self-assertion. The condition of our commercialized society make it increasingly difficulty for the individual to feel that he has a significant part to play in it. He will probably have a dull routine job on an assembly line, in an office or behind a shop counter.....Boredom

is probably as important as in security in causing delinquency. Together they breed that barren cynicism that finds expression in pointless rebellion (206)

Sillitoe addresses to some of these problems in a forceful but poetic way in "The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner" He makes use of his childhood and adolescent experience to tell the tale of an adolescent delinquent, Smith. His criticism of the society and establishment is well based on the unpackable experience of the depraved working class.

ESSAY

1. Consider "The Loneliness of the Lond-distance Runner" as protest Novel

or

Comment on the metaphor of running in the "Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner?"

Or

Alan Sillitoe is a powerful spokesman of the working class" as seen in "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner" Discuss

Or

Give four impressions of the post 1940 English society based on the "Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner"

Ans. Alan Sillitoe's "Loneliness of the Lond-distance Runner is a moving account of the social malaise. The delinquent Smith is a typical instance of the "angry young man" generation. He could not comply with the outmoded authorian ways of the impersonal "we" -- the establishments and community.

The tale of woe and anger begins with the present. Smith is now in Borstal to get himself redeemed for the sake of the "We" he has been running virtually through out his life. In a way his Borstal term is also a sort or runner. In a cryptic, way his feeling is put down", I did'nt mind it much to tell you the truth because running had always been made much of in our family, especially running along from the police" (157)

The society its establishments and the victims (us) are equally cunning, They are cunning and I'm cunning. If only them and us had the same idea we'd get on like house on fire, but

they don't see eye to eye with us and we don't see eye to eye with them, so that's how it stands and how it will always stand" (157)

They are always supervisors, "German generals from the tops of tanks" (158) They want others (us) to will laurels for them. The governor of the Borstal school reckons Smith as a race horse. Smith's anger is writ large in his words, "They're training me up fine for the big sports day when all the pit-faced snooty-nosed dukes and ladies -- who can't add two and two together and would miss themselves like honeys if they didn't have slaves to back-and-all and make speeches to us about sports being just the things to get us *bading* an honest life and keep our itching finger. off them shop locks and safe handles and hair grips to open gas meters. They give us a bit of blue ribbon and a cup for a prize after we have shagged ourselves out running or jumping, like race horses, only we don't get so well looked after as race horses, that is "the only thing" (158)

Smith does not entertain any fellow feeling too, He feels the other 300 odd Borstals are sleeping deal. He alone is running. Running for life. Thinking for himself. Running away from death. The establishments wants every one of us to be good in its terms. He does not mince his words. In-law blocks like me and us and waiting to phone for the coppers (police) as soon as we make a false move" (157), He scans his mind, He finds things clearly, To be honest in his own way he has to break the so called laws. He thinks (in a literal figurative way). "It's a treat being a long distance runner, out in the world by yourself with not a soul to make you bad-tempered or tell you what to street.....Everything dead, but good, because it's dead before coming alive, not dead after being alive (160). What is in short for him if he wins the race and completes the term in Borstal in a successful way? Army. What is the difference between Borstal & the army? Nothing, both are equally "Progressive and modern places" (161). He must win the Borstal Blue Ribbon Prize cup For Long Distance Cross Country Running (All England). For What? To, embellish the establishment. No, no, no, that is what Smith feels, He is determined to lose the race, though he

is easily the best, just to be honest to himself, "I'd rather be like I am (163) "I am honest.....I'll always be honest.....But it's true because I know what honest means according to me and he only knows what it means according to him" (163)

Borstal didn't hurt him or help him in any way. Establishment can not do much for the working class. He thinks Non it (Borstal) doesn't get my back up, because its always been up, right from when I was born. What it does do is to show me what they've been trying to brighten me with" (164) In a way he has been (the working class in general) carrying on an unarmed combat. I know who why enemies are and what war is...I'm in a different sort of war, that they think is child's play" (165). People like us are engaged in a constant war, Smith thinks rightly. "I know every minute of my life that a big boot is always likely to smash for myself" (166). While raciung does the shop like a petroductyl he feels empty. As empty as he was before he was born. He asserts, (E) very run like this is life -- a little life, I know-but a life as full of misery and happiness and things happening as you can ever get really around yourself -- (167). Cahpter 1, thus puts, the whole "War" in the right perspective.

The author merges running with thinking. Chapter 2 tells you how and why delinquents like Smith multiply and increase, Big families. Smith has five brothers & sisters, an ailing father, caught with in escapable career (not in heaven or hell), a frolicking wife cuddling herself with fancy lovers upon the bed both by the deals given to her by the munificent bicycle factory management as a reward for the "timely" demise of her husband. A realistic and biting satiric picture of the post - 1940 social set-up is given in this chapter. Tallies (Television sets) tell you of the things you have to buy. The world or riches * treasures are thrown open to you. Smiths get on the more prompted by this Smith and his pal, (Mike, in this story there are many more in the world) break gilltes, leap walls, take away baker's cash houses stores the points notes in drum pipes. This is not just an act of law breaking. Ironically it is an inescapable leap for life. In that race they are caughty rather trapped by intelligent coppers. The end product in Smith's Comfortable life in Borstal,

for redemption, resurgence, Society makes theories. Society makes law breakers. The very same establishment generates delinquents. Borstals "reform" them coppers subsist on this governors triumph on it. Sillitoe freely mixes stark realist with sardonic humour and cutting social rules mounting ambition, loose morals, rebellious tendering etc. Make the state of post 1940 English society an alarmingly in chote one. Sillitoe tenders cinematic graphic shots rolling in poetry, with commendable case and skills.

Chapter 3 puts the war that is going on between the impersonal establishments and the deprived and depraved angry youngmen of the working class in the right perspective. No love or understanding is best between these warring groups. The Governor, Roach, the sports master, the well flashed and flushed ladies (ever anxious of the victory of Smiths) array on one side. The irony is the other of the Borstal too fail totally to grasp in meaning of the losing of the race by Smith. Smith has a philosophy of his own., 'Because, you see I never race at all: I just run and somehow I know that if I forget I'm racing and only joy-trot alone until I don't know I', running I always win the race (186). But paradoxically while I'm running I always win the race" (186). But, paradoxically while running he thinks for himself in a bold and original way. He arrows and I've been able to do this because I've been thinking; and I wonder if I'm running because I'm too busy thinking" (1986-87). While running steeped in loneliness he feels the only honesty and realness there was in the world" (199). He knew that he has run the race and win it on his own terms to register his protest and also to prove his very existence. The motion of honesty differs widely between We and us. He also fully realized the dire consequences of acting against the wishes of "we" Still he preferred life to death And so I will hit him where it hurts a lot, and he'll do all he can to get his own back tit for tat. Though I'll enjoy it most because I'm hitting first. And because I planned it longer (190). At this juncture he is reminded of his father's long suffering due to cancer, the inevitable and death, almost around in blood, still his honesty to be himself rejecting totally the medical also (arms) of the tentacle like establishment, singularly

devoid of conscience one way of being true to his father is being true to himself, by hammering out a different ken of honesty, incomprehensible to we. The usual pattern is Borstals, regiments desertion and then jails. That is the date of many of Smith's cousins. It is a reflection of the post - 1940 society torn by diverse problems and possibilities. Smith's anger, any wish & protest take concrete, shape as a firm a vowel. By God I'll stick this out like my dad stuck out his pain and kicked them doctors down the stairs: if he had guts for that term I've got guts for this and here I stay waiting for Gunthorpe or Alesham to bash that turf and go right slap-up against that bit clothesline stretched across the winning post" (194).

Smith deliberately "lost the race. His own "pals" (inmates of Borstal) hated him. The governor & company were in ire Smith was, ironically enough, at peace with him for he carried out his plan of protest in the most honest manners possible. His release from the Borstal after six more months of rigorous life didn't bring about much change in his life.

Alan Sillitoe makes no secret of his anger depression and protest. Smith is only his mouth piece, a true representative of the unlucky working class. Superficial, Half-hearted esteems cannot cure deep rooted maladies. In a way all working class people are long distance runners at bets in league with "loneliness" and a hardwon honesty of their own.

2. Comment on the style and narrative strategy of Alan Sillitoe in *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*

And: In the loneliness of the long Distance Runner, Sillitoe tells the story entirely from the point of view of Smith, the delinquent ill-fared representative of the working class. The first person mode of narration banking resourcefully on the past and present builds a solid blank for future rumination. The vocabulary is crude and blinded still Sillitoe raises to poetic heights occasionally. The narrative gives the impression of being the disordered thoughts of an uneducated mind, although in fact these thoughts are assembled skilfully to give a picture of his past and present life and are gathered together into a unified climax. They are given direction by the running.

They plod on to the accompaniment of the trot-trot, slap-slap-slap-slap, over the stream into the wood, through to the crunch slap end" The style is as hard, spare and wiry as the runners mussels and as uncompromisingly blunt as the survey heat of the Borstal boy. It has the continuous monotony of a long distance run (David Ellovar, introduction) The Lonelines of the Long-distance Runner, 1951:214) and facts spring in his mind just as in one who is engaged in physical activity. Running, thinking and narrative merge in this work. (use relevant portions from the earlier essay)

Just as in real life some ideas which one wants to keep away lay hold on him when one keeps jogging or running. The death of Smith's father gets this trick in Smith. It is a revelation. It is a booster for him to be honest in the hard way. That teaches him to be uncompromisingly honest even in his mode of narration.

Running and the narrative are inseparable, for running provides Smith with the opportunity to think. It makes him 'think so good'. 'I get to thinking, and that is what I like'. For Smith running is thinking.

I feel that up till then I haven't been running and that I've used up no energy at all. And I've been able to do this because I've been thinking, and I wonder if I'm the only one in the running business with this system of forgetting that time because I'm too busy thinking.

Earlier he had no chance to think

I've had no time and peace in all my bandit life....To give it a rest by slap dashing down through the brambles of the sunken lane.

Even the identity of Smith is dependant on running. His mind is his alarming runner-brain. For him running is life. The novelist gives it more credence by linking it with his protagonist's sense of freedom and life. At no point it is idealized. Everything described in simple primitive terms.

Chewing wood and dust and may be maggots or trot this lovely pattern 194.

The intensity in the narrative depends on the position of

parallel thought streams of the Governor and his people (we) and Smith and his pals (us). It is like playing ball playing ball with us and we'll play ball with you. The Governor deems the runners as a race horse ment for winning races only. Smith's vision of life is structured on some totally different ideas. The rebellions mood and thoughts (certainly words too) do not alone Smith to win the race to please the authority Smith doesn't approve of a dead society. he yearns to live. And the only way to be so is to be a non-conformist. Smith's narrative is constructed in such a way as to facilitate almost a continues blow of anger, remonstrance and anguish.

The race track is used as a stereo typed symbol of regulated clear life (Elaborate) Smith's attitude is very different. I knew what the loneliness of the long distance runner running across country felt like, realizing that as far as I was unscented this feeling was the only honesty and realness there was in the world (187-88)

With trusted integrity he sacrifices the prospect of comfort and success for a principle. He is honest, as he continually asserts honesty to the personal identity he has discovered in his running (Elloway, 222)

(Elaborate this point by taking relevant comments and passages from the text/previous essay)

Hard running that too running on purpose to lose the race makes Smith (the author) to think deeper and deeper on the irreconcilably at work in the society. (of this father's suffering & death. His mother's fancy love affairs. Off the tangent assassins from the factory & Insurance. His own family's early state of object poverty. The present transient state of relative luxury, his persistent inclination to there and role -- all become the stable of his thoughts and spokes of his narrative) amplify

See the importance that the novelist gives to the final run of Smith. It is a run for life. In fact it becomes the very life of the working class. The very existences of that class is dependent on their capacity to action their own. Just as the final running gains greater momentum and meaning in that way the narrative too gains were and vitality in the last cap because of

this.

Smith while running with an unflinching determination to lose realizes his own nature. Even he suspects the act of thinking now. He is not pretty sure about the stance of the Borstal authorities vis-à-vis his own. The Robuert self-sufficiency of the bright beginning has been humanized until at the end he is blabbing like a baby. Still the dominant emotion is that of defiance just as the defiant rhythm of his running. The final running coincides with the tragic like this in the runner's stride can I keep on like myself and beat them back see the me loved wisdom even within the rebel, Smith through a suffle narrative nuance he rings in the birth.

What a life for all of us, well, I'm not grumbling, because if I did I might just as well win this blending race, the novelist asserts, to grumble is not in keeping with the Out-law bloke" He has to strike against the in-law blokes surrounded at the winning just to cheer the cup winning, obedient ;long distance runner. The narrative strategy is to make it known through Smith himself that being along-distance runner of his type in no longer a treat..... Out in the world by yourself with not a soul to make you bad tempered/

The gap between appearance and reality is well brought out. The sad realization of smith points to this. He avows. It was hard to under stand and all I knew was that you had to run, run, without knowing why you were running....And the winning post was not end to it....(188). Still he is determined to fight on till his very end. Until then I am a long distance runner. Crossing country all on my own no matter how hard it feels, (195)

The long distance Runner continuous to cross country all on his own, trust he now understands what this involve. He understands, too, the real rather of his "honesty" that the has discovered in running. It is not merely an honest expression of his own feeling. When he has connected from himself, as will as from the "in-laws" but an honest recognition of the real nature of those feelings, by means of a protective mask of cynicism. he now knows that it is not only cunning "What counts in this life" (Elloway 226)

The Loneliness of the Long-distance Runner begins with

self-assertion, but ends with a certain amount of self knowledge. The narrative strategy, the metaphor of running, crude and blunter vocabulary, mild humour, poetic flourishes, free mighting of past & present, the confessional first person strain all make the loneliness of the long-distance, runner meaningful and worth probing deeper to get a better awareness of the plight of the working class in a fast changing society.

Lesson prepared by
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DYLAN THOMAS

Dylan Thomas was born in 1914 in Swansea, Wales where his father taught English at the Grammar School. His prose works show us how fascinating a place Swansea was to him as a boy. It still contains, within its municipal boundaries, some of the ugliest and some of the loveliest parts of the British Isles, and when Thomas was young this contrast was even greater. Close to the oldest parts of the town, later to be destroyed by German bombers, was Swansea's pleasant beach, which within walking distance for an active boy were the unspoilt beauties of the Gower Peninsula. Thomas recounts the thrills of his boyhood in his semi-autobiographical short stories, "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog", and in his broadcast talks published under the title of "Quite Early One Morning."

When Thomas left school he worked for a year as a reporter on a Swansea newspaper and then risked his chances in London, where he made a precarious living by doing odd jobs for newspapers such as reviewing thrillers. During the Second World War Thomas, who was rejected from the army as medically unfit, won a deserved reputation as a script-writer and broadcaster for the B.B.C. He exerted a magnetic influence on all who listened to his reading of poetry on the radio or on gramophone records. His warm, powerful voice and his essential sincerity made many poems either written by himself or by a wide variety of other poets - sound greater than they had ever seemed before. He was also becoming notorious as a bohemian personality who drank too much, was an irresponsible spendthrift, and either amused or shocked his listeners with outrageous witticisms. Thomas offered poetry readers what they wanted in the 1940's. His poetry did not argue about politics, instead it was lyrical in a challenging manner about sex, religion and death. For ten years or more he was the model whom the young poets copied.

In 1937 he married Caitlin Macnamara, a niece of Augustus John the painter, and they went to live in Laugharne. It is a picturesque little seaside town near the farm where he stayed as a boy with his aunt Laugharne's ruined castle, covered with ivy, looks down on a Lilliputian harbour and a wide, shallow estuary. At low tide the drying sands stretch for miles, but at high tide the dazzle of the sea

comes right into the town.

Thomas' death in the U.S.A. in 1953 was hastened and dramatized by his three tours of America, during which he delighted huge public audiences with his inspired readings of poetry but shocked many people who met him in private by his reckless drinking and conversation.

He arrived in America for the last time in October 1953. He looked very ill indeed, but he was able to see the first performance of "Under Milk Wood", in which the inhabitants of thinly disguised Laugharne reveal their emotions and daydreams in poetic prose. A few days later he died in hospital of 'direct alcoholic toxicity in brain tissue and brain cells.' Immediately, journalists who had never read a word of his poetry joined with those poets who had read every word of it in raising melodramatic cries of exaggerated grief and adulation. In America admirers collected the money to fly his body back to Laugharne, while in Britain they made assertions as hysterical as George Barker's claim that the death of Thomas represented 'the undisguised intervention of the powers of darkness in our affairs.'

The best we can say for Thomas as a man is that he was always honest sincere, that he was rude only to those people whose interest in poetry seemed to him to be mere pretence, and that he was driven to drink by the fear that he had outlived his inspiration. He had written very little in the last seven years of his life.

THE POEMS OF DYLAN THOMAS

Dylan Thomas believed that "a poem on a page is only half a poem", but that "reading one's own poems aloud is letting the cat out of the bag". Each poem is a performance being both a realization and a criticism of the text. Thomas, who had an extraordinary voice, often eloquent and moving, at times engagingly melodramatic, died in New York city on November 9, 1953, while on a reading tour of the United States.

In a characteristic vein, Thomas enters directly into processes as momentous as birth and death. Poetry itself is a renaissance, a "movement from an overclothed blindness to a naked vision that depends in its intensity on the strength of the labour put in to the creation of the poetry", so that his own poems become the record

of an "individual struggle from darkness towards some measure of light." It is as though the spirit were heaving through encrustations, like a Lazarus unwinding from the piled earth and almost shaking it off. Yet there is occasional disagreement as to whether he sees with visionary freshness, or through his proliferate style. Using every means conceivable from unorthodox punctuation and words heady with connotation, through periphrases, to disassembled or mixed metaphors. Thomas attempts to freight his language with a maximum of meaning. Until the subject seems to be neither birth nor death nor even "meaning" but the infinite variety of the English language.

A poem by Thomas is a "watertight compartment", an elaborate yet strict formality, that contains a sequence of creations, recreations, distractions and contradictions. At the centre of each poem seethes a host of images. Out of such a conflict of images Thomas tried to make in his own words, "that momentary peace which is a poem."

His poems can be divided into three categories. Firstly those that are almost surrealist, secondly those few that are straight-forward, and thirdly those that present nostalgic memories of his childhood or regret the deaths of people close to him.

The first category includes most of his poems, especially those that would be classed by his most fervent admirers as representing the true authentic Dylan. Just as Freud believed that if a psychiatrist's patient could be helped to reveal the memories buried in his subconscious, he would be on his way to recover peace of mind, so the Surrealists believed that if the poet dredged up miscellany of images from his subconscious, he would produce a work of art that would have a therapeutic effect on himself and his readers. David Gascoyne, therefore described surrealist poetry as a 'perfect flow of irrational thought in the form of images.' Much of Dylan Thomas's poetry is similar to this, but it stops short of the surrealist extreme. He made a more deliberate choice of images and looked consciously for images that were either connected or else contradictory. He explained this process in a much quoted letter to Henry Treece, an English poet who wrote a stimulating book about Dylan Thomas:

A poem by myself needs a host of images, because its centre is a host of images. I make one image - though 'make' is not the word; let, perhaps, an image be 'made' emotionally in me and then apply to it what intellectual and critical forces I possess - let it breed another, let that image contradict the first, make (of the third image bred out of the other two together) a fourth contradictory image, and let them all, within my imposed formal limits, conflict.

Since the process that Thomas describes includes some selection of the images suggested by the subconscious, which are not equally suitable for poetry, he is here insisting that he is a more deliberate craftsman than Gascoyne and other Surrealists. But he gave a more Freudian defence of his art on another occasion when he was asked to write an answer to an enquiry from Geoffrey Grigson. He said that his poetry attempted "the stripping of the individual darkness, which must, inevitably, cast light upon what has been hidden for too long, and by so doing, make clean the naked exposure; my poetry, is the record of my individual struggle from darkness towards some measure of light" and he hoped that it would restore his reader's peace of mind by letting them see more clearly their subconscious impulses.

The range of subjects that he could explore in this way was limited. Many of his images have a sexual significance. Consequently, sex and death two of his favourite topics, become inextricably mixed. His third principal topic is religion, and here he appeals strongly to those who wish to believe in a vaguely beneficent power that controls the universe. Others object that if what Thomas has to say is important, it should be unambiguous. They insist that when he concludes a poem, he should make it more clear whether he is accepting or denying the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection. Often he is so intoxicated by the sound of his lines that the meaning becomes blurred and important.

Besides Thomas's use of vivid, often clashing images, and his obsession with a few favourite themes, his rhetorical poems have other distinctive features. He copied the use of compound words from G.M. Hopkins, he also copied the use of balanced allit-

eration, of brilliant play on words, of unusual adjectives that are sometimes puzzling and sometimes thrilling, and of sprung rhythm. This means that the number of accented syllables in a line is fixed, but the number of unaccented syllables varies with the effect that the poet wishes to achieve. In each foot of sprung rhythm there is only one stressed syllable, which must be the first syllable, and may be the only one.

The second small group of Thomas's poem are successful in a straightforward way untypical of him. In these he gives a short objective description - usually of a person - develops his thought clearly, and avoids any conflict of images.

His third group of poems can be seen from the publication of "Deaths and Entrances" (1946) and even later, where he shows that in poetry as well as prose his genius was for contemplating childhood from a distance of time, or where he regrets the actual or imminent death of relatives or neighbours. In those poems his images remain striking without becoming obscure. In "Poem in October" he looks at Laugharne through a sunshine shower, and the present mingles in his memory with mornings long ago. Dylan Thomas recreates for us the innocence and happiness of his childhood holidays. In describing such exhilarating experiences as those in his poems, and in improvising a new style to suit them, Thomas showed real poetic genius.

POEM IN OCTOBER

It was my thirtieth year to heaven
 Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
 And the mussel pooled and the heron
 Priested shore
 The morning beckon
 With water praying and call of seagull and rook
 And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
 Myself to set foot
 That second
 In the still sleeping town and set forth. 10
 My birthday began with the water-
 Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
 Above the farms and the white horses

And I rose
 In rainy autumn
 And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.
 High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
 Over the border
 And the gates
 Of the town closed as the town awoke. 20

A springful of larks in a rolling
 Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
 Blackbirds and the sun of October
 Summery
 On the hill's shoulder,
 Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly
 Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
 To the rain wringing
 Wind blow cold
 In the wood faraway under me. 30

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
 And over the sea wet church the size of a snail
 With its horns through mist and the castle
 Brown as owls
 But all the gardens
 Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales
 Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.
 There could I marvel
 My birthday
 Away but the weather turned around. 40

It turned away front he blithe country
 And down the other air and the blue altered sky
 Streamed again a wonder of summer
 With apples
 Pears and red currants
 And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
 Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother

Through the parables

Of sunlight

And the legends of the green chapels

50

And the twice told fields of infancy

That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart moved in mine.

These were the woods the river and sea

Where a boy

In the listening

Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his joy

To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.

And the mystery

Sang alive

Still in the water and singingbirds.

50

And there could I marvel my birthday

Away but the weather turned around. And the true

Joy of the long dead child sang burning

In the sun.

It was my thirtieth

Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon

Though the town below lay leaved with October blood.

O may my heart's truth

Still be sung

On this high hill in a year's turning.

70

POEM IN OCTOBER

Stanza. I

October

Dylan Thomas was born on 27 October, 1914.

Line 1

thirtieth year : The poem celebrates his thirtieth birthday-

to heaven: towards heaven or offered to heaven.

Line 2.

harbour : Laugharne is a fishing village on the

Taf estuary on the Welsh coast.

Line 3-4

heron...shore: The atmosphere is so holy that the herons look like priests of nature. Herons are symbols of holiness in -Thomas's poetry.

Line 1-10

The poet describes how he leaves Laugharne. It is early morning. The scene is so holy that the water seems to be praying and the herons seem to be priests for they stand on the shore, surrounded by kitti-wakes and oyster-catchers and adopt attitudes like that of a priest blessing his parishioners. In such a small country town near the sea rooks and seagulls will be flying together.

Line 12

birds of the winged trees: a transferred epithet, the wings of the birds being transferred to the trees. The trees seem to be alive with birds and they seem to participate in the celebration of his birthday. flying my name: waving flags welcoming him. Line 17

high tide: The sea could have been at high tide at that time. But more importantly, the poet's emotional life was in high tide.

Line 18

Over .border: Both physically and metaphorically he has crossed the border. Physically he has left the town behind and psychologically he has left the present actuality behind to enter the realm of phantasy.

Line 1.1-20

The poet walks through a scene that is a beautiful confusion of actuality and memory, of country and sea, of the sun and rain of a sunshine shower.

Line 21

springful of larks: Echoes the line 'as many larks as you would find in a whole spring' (Olson)

Line 24

Summery: An unusual coinage. The poet experiences summer weather in autumn.

- Line 25 the hill: Sir John's hill. 'In Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, where Thomas lived, Sir John's hill overlooks the estuary at a point to the east where the river Towy enters it. The whole area is a haunt of water-birds and birds of prey'. Cf. 'Over Sir John's Hill'.
Line 21-30 While the poet wonders and listens to the autumn rain, suddenly it seems to him that he hears the larks sing as though it were spring and the October sun shines as though it were summer; whereas up till now he had 'wandered and listened to the rain'.
- Line 35-36 But all...., blooming: To his mind's eye, all the seasons seem to have converged.
- Line 36 tall tales: his poems.
- Line 38-40 There could....Away: As he looks down on the harbour and town, he feels at harmony with life.
- Line 40 the weather turned around: Suddenly he remembers the childhood summers.
- Line 31-40 Just as his eyes sees sunshine and rain at once, so his mind's eye see past and present scenes at once. The seasons are all intermingled and past and present scenes merge down the other...sky: he recreates the innocent and splendid days of childhood.
- Line 42-43
- Line 48 parables: the sunlight taught him about God's goodness just as parables do.
- Line 50 legends: saints lives.
green chapels: woods. The woods are as edifying as reading the lives of saints.
- Line 41-50 Thomas turns away from looking at Laugharne in the October sun to think of wonderful summer mornings when he was a child at Swansea or Fern Hill.
- Line 51 twice told: first by the child and then by the

- poet in adult life.
- Line 52 his: the child's. The past and present coalesce as the tears of his childhood burn his adult cheeks.
- Line 56 Summertime of the dead T h o m a s thinks of his past as a child, the summers when his aunt (Aunt Jones) and others who were then dear to him were still living.
- Line 51-60 He apprehends nature with the innocence and purity of childhood.
- Line 62 the weather turned round: his thoughts return to the actual present.
- Line 70 this high hill: Sir John's hill
- Line 61-70 He contemplates, in retrospect, his childhood joys, he hopes the next birthday will find him equally blessed with poetic articulation. May he write equally well on his hill above Laugharne in a year's time.

POEM IN OCTOBER

Dylan Thomas is a pure poet in the sense that his poetry is written not to preach any moral lesson or to convey any message, or to analyse the social and political issues around him. It has no social or moral purpose to serve. It is poetry which is an end in itself and is remarkable for its artistic merit and aesthetic value. His concern with the artistic and technical side of his poetry, and his indifference to various 'ideas or ideologies, also shows him to be a pure poet. His great care in the use of language, words and images, and his habit of cultivating and refining are the qualities of a pure poet for whom the beauty and perfection of his craft is more important than the expression of thought or the message or meaning.

A poet does not live in a vacuum, he is influenced by what happens to him and to others, by contemporary thought, contemporary art, the changing of the seasons, and the environment in which he lives. These influences emerge clearly from a chronologi-

cal presentation of his work. To give one example only, the later poems of Dylan Thomas are full of references to, or imagery derived from, the water birds and the birds of prey he saw in such numbers from the window of the hut where he worked, overlooking the Laugharne estuary.

Some of his poems, like 'Poem in October', are specimens of evocative art which presents a contrast to the dryness characterising so much of the poetry of his time. He is a poet of feeling, not of intellect, of sensibility, and not ideas, and his claim to be a pure poet lies in the fact that he concentrates on the cultivation of his craft rather than on the treatment of social or political issues.

'Poem in October' was written in August, 1944 and sent to Vernon Watkins on 30th August. It was first published in "Horizon" in February 1945. It has been a favourite with the poet and has remained one of his most popular pieces. It celebrates Thomas's thirtieth birthday. The poet imagines that it is the month of October, for Thomas was born on 27th October 1914. As he leaves the fishing village of Laugharne in the morning for a walk in the autumn drizzle. As he thinks of his birthday, he is overcome by sentiments of the holiness of nature. Though the season is autumn he is suddenly caught by a confusion in the seasons and he fancies that it is summer and that he is back in his childhood watching the world with a child's vision of natural beauty. As Elder Olson says, the poem is 'luminous with all the weathers of childhood'.

Metrically the poem is extremely interesting in that it is one of the earliest poems in English to be written in, syllabic metre, a feature which has been copied by Thom Gunn and others. It consists of seven ten-line stanzas. Unlike accented verse, each line has a given number of syllables, while the number of feet or stresses is variable. Each stanza has the following number of syllables per line: 9,1,2,9,3,5,12,12,5,3,9. Throughout the poem the same syllabic pattern is repeated. Other metrical devices used are alliteration e.g. heaven/hearing; assonantal rhyme beckon/second and full rhyme apples/chapels; burning/turning.

"Poem in October" is Dylan Thomas's retrospection on his thirtieth birthday and his imaginative childhood flashback. It was his thirtieth birthday and he believes he is on his onward journey heaven being his ultimate destination. As he woke that morning, he

is reminded of his native fishing village, Laugharne. The scene is so holy that the water seems to be praying while the herons are transformed into priests. The morning calls him and he is attracted to the call of the water birds, namely the seagull and the rook. The sailing boats are a welcoming sight to the poet inviting him to set sail even before the town is awake.

In the second stanza the poet passes through an interesting confusion of both actuality and memory. It is as though the wings of the birds are being transferred to the trees. Likewise the trees are active with its birds and they seem to participate, in Thomas's birthday celebration. Cheering him by waving flags. The poet refers to the high tide as being the literal high tide at that time. It could also refer to the high tide of his emotional life. He is slowly entering his dream world, he has crossed the border. Physically he has left the town behind and psychologically he has left the present actuality behind to step in to the realm of phantasy. At this point he feels that the gates of the town have closed on him and the town awoke to the morning.

This stanza deals with the confusion of seasons. The poet wonders and listens to the autumn rain. It seems to him that he hears the larks sing as though it were spring while the summer sun is shining on the scene. The word 'summery' is Thomas's coinage, for he experiences summer weather in autumn. The birds still sing in the morning while it is raining and cold winds blow in the woods. The poet is reminded of Sir John's hill in Laugharne. The hill overlooks the estuary at a point where the river Towy enters it. The whole scene is a haunt of water birds and birds of prey.

The past and present scenes merge in the fourth stanza, the seasons are all intermingled. The poet speaks of the rain over the harbour, the sea, the church, and of spring and summer in his poem. He is happy and content but then he remembers his childhood summers and of course his birthday.

The scene shifts from Laugharne in October to the wonderful summer mornings in Swansea and Fern Hill. The weather turns away from the country, to the opposite side and the changed blue sky. He speaks of summer associated with its fruits, apples, pears and currants. In it he saw clearly a child's fond forgotten mornings, when he walked possessively with his mother. Dylan Thomas uses 'sac-

ramental images' intended to give a sacramental meaning to the statement. It is a kind of imagery of which Thomas is very fond of, for example the phrase "the parables of sunlight". This idea is to shock the reader into attention to the sacramental meaning. Just as parables teach, sunlight taught him about God's goodness and the lives of saints.

Thomas apprehends nature with the innocence and purity of childhood. The past and present mingle when he speaks of the twice told field. First by the child and then by the poet. As 'his' tears burned 'my' cheeks, the 'man' of thirty and the 'boy' he remembers become one.

Here Swansea and Laugharne are united, The poet thinks of his past summers, as a boy, when his aunt Jones and others who were then dear to him were still living. All his joy he passed on to Nature, the trees, the stones, the fish, the tide, the water and to the singing birds around him.

In the process of his retrospection, he contemplates, his childhood joys, he hopes the next birthday will find him equally blessed with poetic articulation. In this last stanza, phrases of the first, fourth and sixth stanza's are repeated. The poet's thoughts are reverted to the actual present, from the child that he once was to his thirteenth birthday and thirteenth year towards his journey to heaven. He is aware simultaneously of the summernoon of his childhood and of the ripe red leaves of October present in the town below. May he write equally well on his Sir John's Hill above Laugharne in the years time. The poet prays for his poetic art to survive the coming years.

In his late poems such as "Poem in October", Thomas, achieved a new lucidity and serenity, and many readers have felt that in the 1940s he began to solve his technical problems. In the early poems Thomas discovered a form which communicated fully the strain under which he lived, but in his later poems he withdrew from such problems into nostalgia. Dylan Thomas uses pattern and metaphor in a complex craftsmanship in order to create a ritual of celebration. He sees life as a continuous process, sees the working of biology as a magical transformation producing unity out of identity, identity out of unity, the generations linked with one another and man linked with nature.

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DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

DYLAN THOMAS

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle in to that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

STANZA 1

Line 1 good night: An epitome of the poem's paradox: night, symbolic of death, is used with several shades of meaning in this phrase. Good night is farewell suggestive of death. It equally implies that death is good and final.

- Line 2 burn and rave; The same paradox is, reiterated.
 Line 3 Rage: It is an echo of several of Yeats's poems about old age.

STANZA II

- Line 4 wise men: philosophers.
 dark is right : the inevitability of death.
 Line 5 their words had forked no lightning Is a reference to the composing of poetry.
 Line 4-6 Philosophers accept death as a natural inevitable end.

STANZA III

- Line 7 Good men: Puritans.
 Line 8 frail deeds : insignificant deeds contrasted.
 Line 9 Rage, rage....the light: This line is repeated as in the third line of the first stanza.
 line 7-9 Puritans are not ready for death, because they at last realise they have missed opportunities to lead a full life.

STANZA IV

- Line 10 Wild men: Hedonists.
 Line 11 they grieved : They felt sorry.
 Line 12 Do not.....good night: This line is repeated as in the last line of the second stanza.

STANZA V

- Line 13 Grave men: An obvious pun. Grave men are those who are conscious of the fact of death. The term also means 'serious minded people'.
 blinding sight : divine illumination or poetic illumination.
 Line 14 gay : a deliberate echo of Yeats's "Lapis Lazuli".

STANZA VI

- Line 16-19 This final stanza is a prayer for the father's benediction and malediction. It is natural for a father to bless his son. It is equally natural that the father should curse the son who is to take his place.

DO NOT GENTLE INTO**THAT GOOD NIGHT**

The poem was enclosed in a letter to Princess Caetani on May 1951. The letter had a postscript : 'The only person I can't

show the little enclosed poem to is, of course, my father, who doesn't know he's dying'. D.J Thomas, Dylan Thomas' father lingered for more than a year after this, and died on 15th December 1952. The poem was first published in *Botteghe Oscure*, VIII, Nov. 1951. It is significant that for this subject and for this occasion, Thomas deliberately chose to discipline himself by the use of a strict form the villanelle.

A villanelle is a poem normally in five tercets and a quatrain. It uses only two rhymes, which form a strict sequence, and the first and third lines are repeated in an elaborate pattern. It is paradoxical that Thomas should choose so formal and artificial a structure, usually associated with light verse and Austin, Dobson, for this very personal poem on his father's illness in old age.

The central rhyming words, 'light' and 'night' juxtapose life and death. Dylan Thomas exhorts his father not to give in but to struggle against the onslaught of death and dissolution, but at the same time he admits the, inevitability of death. Thomas greatly respected his father for his strength of character and independence of judgement, qualities which had been tamed by the latter's illness. The imagery of light and darkness assumes a peculiar poignancy when we remember that the father was facing the double darkness of blindness and death. In the central part of the poem the attitudes of different kinds of men are presented. This poem which is in praise of life and an acceptance of death ends on an ironical note when Thomas requests his father both to bless and curse him.

Metrically, the poem is of considerable interest. Consisting of five tercets and a quatrain, all using only two rhymes, it is a villanelle, a rather formal metrical scheme. The first, sixth and twelfth lines are the same, and so are the third, ninth and fifteenth. These two repeated lines appear again in the conclusion. Originally a French form used predominantly for the treatment of pastoral themes (from French 'villa' -farm or country house), the successful use of this metre by Auden and Empson may have influenced Thomas.

The poet begins the poem by saying that one should, both fight against and welcome death. 'Good night' combines the idea of saying farewell; of God be with you, and of death as a natural end

to life. The two rhyming words 'night' and 'light' stand for death and life. Thomas urges his father not to accept death tamely.

In the second stanza, the poet presents his observations of the various reactions to death by the different kinds of men. Here it is the reaction of wise men. Wise men are the philosophers, though wise men are helpless at the inevitability of death.

The third stanza deals with the response of good men, The good men are the Puritans. They feel frustrated, having avoided the pleasure of life in their life time and finally having no consideration in death:

The next group of men are said to be the wild men. This stanza describes the men of action - that life disappears before their actions are completed. These hedonists just cannot accept death stoically.

Grave men, is a pun, obviously pointing at the serious minded people who are wise in a serious manner. Grave men are those who are conscious of the fact of death. They see clearly how much old men might have achieved.

Dylan Thomas concludes his poem with an ardent request to his father, both to bless and curse him simultaneously. Thus the final stanza turns to be a prayer for both, his father's benediction and malediction.

Of all the younger poets of the nineteen thirties Dylan Thomas had the most brilliant lyrical gift. This young Welshman used language with an originality and a daring felicity that had hardly been paralleled since Hopkins. His poetry, like that of Barker and Gascoyne, is full of violent images of death and love. Though his poetry is confused and obscure at times, it is poetry of great strength and deep humanity.

DYLAN THOMAS'S POETIC TECHNIQUE

Dylan Thomas was seriously dedicated to his poetic craft, and wrote poems with meticulous care. He tried to refine and polish his technique so as to present his poetic vision effectively, and also to make his poetry pleasing and enjoyable, because he believed that "All that matters about poetry' is the enjoyment of it, however tragic it may be" and also thought that it is because of the craftsmanship that a poem is able to move the reader.

Keenly interested in words and their shapes and sounds, Thomas was very careful in the use of language. His languages highly individual and symbolic "and so rich and strange that, however unintelligible, it had an almost hypnotic power which was enhanced by the poet's command over sound and rhythm" (A.S Collins). Thomas coins words like Hopkins and uses them to convey complex meanings. Sometimes he employs a shocking language involving the use of words and images related to the baser functions of the human body, such as sweating etc.

Much of Dylan Thomas' poetry is marked by obscurity and incoherence. This is because of the occasional obscurity of both the subject matter and style. Often his style resembles that of the metaphysical poets, and tends to be obscure like it. Especially, his early poems clearly obscure of the compressed and condensed manner of his writing. It seems that, as Laurence Durrell points out, "He is attempting a compression even greater than that of Hopkins, squeezing up his material and his rhythm until his poems resemble mere ideograms of thought or emotions". Because of his obscurity, his poetry requires like Eliot's or Hart Crane's, some effort to understand its meaning by grappling with his symbols and metaphors that may obstruct it to some extent.

Dylan Thomas's style in his later poetry is clear and more capable of conveying his earlier poetry, as Moody and Lovett observe, "meaning was in danger of being drowned out by the clamour of importunate figures, in which the most extravagantly exuberant metaphors fused or lashed". The use of vague symbols and images also added to the obscurity of Thomas's early poetry. But "in the latest poetry Thomas has written, he has modified his technique to allow it to carry simpler meanings more clearly.....His ability to raise symbols to a higher power by the ambiguity of their position in a line of poetry is a gift which no one else today shares". (Laurence Durrell)

An abundant use of images forms a dominant trait of Dylan Thomas's style. According to Grierson and Smith, "he thinks in images", and appeals to imagination. He intermingles Biblical and sexual imagery with imagery drawn from Nature. Often he has used surrealist images. The use of images lend beauty and force to

Thomas's style., and tends to help him make his meaning clear. Though in some cases it makes it obscure too. According to Douglas Bush, "Thomas's preoccupation with birth and rebirth admits or demands a wealth of images from nature, and his strange naked intensity of vision carries a strange expressiveness, local if not total, of phrase and rhythm".

Dylan Thomas was, as he himself told, "a painstaking, conscientious, involved and devious craftsman in words", who evolved a diction and style of his own. Though writing in the English language, he made use of his native Welsh to enrich his linguistic and verbal resources. He borrowed from the bardic tradition of Wales the manner of using sound and rhythm, internal repetition and parallel constructions. His vocabulary is limited, and he makes use of the same words repeatedly. Coinages, compound words, repetition of words and using them as different parts of speech and exploiting the musical quality of words, these are some of the characteristics of his diction.

Thomas's poetry is remarkable for its vital energy, verbal gifts and musical quality. Nor less remarkable are his metrical experiments, beauty of imagery, mastery of language and lyrical, felicity.

DYLAN THOMAS AND VARIOUS POETIC

MOVEMENTS OF HIS TIME

DYLAN THOMAS AND SURREALISM

Like other new Romantic poets, Dylan Thomas was also influenced by surrealism, though after the fading away of the Surrealist movement he began exploring other fields. With the breaking up of the Auden group, around 1939, there was the end of the poetry of social and political concern, and of the 'voyage without' which was characterised by the treatment of the external world. A group of younger poets including George Barker, David Gascoyne and Dylan Thomas came into prominence in the early 1940's, who turned away from the treatment of the world without to an exploration of the world within, and showed little interest in what went around them.

They wrote pure poetry, instead of social or political poetry which marked a return to the ideals of poetic integrity and artistic individualism; a setting out again in the direction of pure poetry. These poets constituted a school called "Surrealism". They were poets of the image rather than statement. They were influenced by the French Surrealist movement of the 1920's. As V.S. Pinto points out, "The Surrealists declared themselves to the dialectical materialists and enemies of the Capitalist State, but they were entirely opposed to social realism, the official doctrine of art in the U.S.S.R., and the Communists did not welcome them as allies".

The Surrealist poetry was private poetry, and not social and tended, therefore, to be difficult. The poetry of Dame Edith Sitwell is characterised by a surrealist manner. Her influence may be traced in the poetry of younger surrealist poets like Dylan Thomas, George Barker and David Gascoyne. Dylan Thomas was the greatest poet of this school, and has a great mastery of technique, language and imagery. His "Eighteen Poems" published in 1934 provides an illustration of the surrealist usage. The obscurity in his expression was counterbalanced by his abundant poetic vigour and force and his sensitiveness to the charms of Nature; as revealed in his volume "Collected Poems".

Like Barker and Gascoyne, Dylan Thomas was a poet who "made the nearest approach to Surrealism, which, if practised ideally, meant the release by the poet of whatever welled up from within him without any control or selection". (A.S. Collins)

DYLAN THOMAS AND NEW ROMANTICISM.

Dylan Thomas belongs to the new romantic school of poets who were more interested in depicting their own individual emotional development than in dealing with the external world, like the poets of the Auden group. "New Romanticism" was a movement in modern English poetry, which was a contemporary of, and originated from, the Surrealist movement. The Surrealist poets, Dylan Thomas and George Barker, were the chief neo-romantic poets too. These poets were more concerned with the exploration of self than with the treatment of the external world of physical reality, and concentrated on their own private world and vision rather than on the

social world around them. The unromantic movement "accepted the idea that the poet should use images that arose spontaneously in his mind, without trying to 'understand' them, and should let one image suggest another image without trying to work out the pattern of a poem logically; on the other hand, he should be, as the surrealist were not, selective, he should reject images that seemed trivial or jarring, accepting only those which seemed to have a certain massiveness and emotional coherence with the other images in the poem: and this above all was the great contrast with the French Surrealists. He should shape his poem as a work of art, with a regard for rhyme and metre, and the amenities of diction, and in fact for the traditional formal demands made on the English poet. Even if the material of the poem all came straight from the subconscious mind, at the aesthetic or formal level, there must be consciousness control". (G.S Fraser)

The neo-romantics laid greater emphasis on the romantic elements of emotion and imagination than on the neo - classical ones of Reason and intellect favoured by poets included in Geoffrey Grigson's anthology, "New verse". Dylan Thomas's later poetry reveals his responsiveness to natural beauty and his use of images drawn from Nature, as we find in the romantic poets of the early 19th century. George Barker's poetry abounds in Keatsian sensuousness and lushness of imagery. Dylan Thomas may be regarded as the father of the neo - romantic poetry of the 1940s. The lack of social concern and the treatment of the private world instead of social or external reality made these neo-romantic poets akin to the decadent of the 1890s. But Dylan Thomas is not utterly devoid of an interest in the world around him. However, the lyric quality and subjective nature of his poetry adds to his stature as a romantic., and so does his interest in Man. His experiments with language and words, and his freedom in matters of style and manner are some of the romantic trait:- too that are found in his poetry.

DYLAN THOMAS AND THE (NEW) APOCALYPTIC MOVEMENT:

In the later part of the fourth decade of this century, a new movement arose in modern English poetry. Which was known as the "Apocalyptic 'movement, This movement was initiated with the publication of the anthology *The White Horseman*' (1941) edited

by J.F.Hendry and Henry Treece: It was preceded by the manifesto 'The New Apocalypse' (1939), and followed by the publication of more anthologies. In 1946, Henry Treece stated the nature and aims of the Apocalyptic movement in his book "How I See Apocalypse", The reaction against the poetry of the Auden group, started earlier by the Surrealists, was carried on by the poets of the New Apocalypse, Henry Treece, J.F Hendry, Nicholai Moore, Vernon Watkins, Tom Scott, Norman Mac Caig and G.S.Fraser. These poets denounced the over intellectuality and social interest of the poetry of the 1930s, and sought to present individual vision and private perspectives of the world. As against the left-wing ideology of the Auden group, they adopted an anarchic position in the political field.

The Apocalypse poets aimed at making poetry broad, deep and limitless like real life. The aim of these poets was to free the individual from all sorts of mechanization. They attached more importance to feeling and imagination than intellect, to the individual than society and to myth than facts. The value they set on the individual and or imagination and personal religion, encourages the hope that here perhaps is the first flush of the dawn of a new Romantic Revival'. Concentrating on individual vision and myths, the New Apocalypse poets remained indifferent to the world events especially the second World War. Their poetry, like that of the Surrealists, went out of vogue after a short period of existence and popularity.

Dylan Thomas is said to have 'fathered' the 'Apocalypse' movement and with it a lot of bad thinking and bad writing (Kenneth Allott). His indifference to contemporary world of external reality, his absorption in and treatment of dream material and inner experiences, his quality of myth-making, and the individual nature of his thought and expression seemed to be typical traits of Apocalypticism. However, he soon severed all relationship with this movement, and turned in other directions. This shift in his position was largely responsible for the disintegration of the Apocalypse movement. As Raymond Las Vergnas remarks, "The Apocalyptic were not destined to last as an organic body for more than a few years, possibly because Dylan Thomas, one of those whom they most often preferred and for whom they professed unqualified admiration, refused

to become absorbed by the movement and indeed disowned it as a literary school. Thus Dylan Thomas's association with and allegiance to various schools and movements in modern English poetry kept fluctuating.

VERSE - PATTERNS IN THE POEMS OF

DYLAN THOMAS

Dylan Thomas never entirely abandoned the orthodox metrical form of English verse, based on the position of stressed and unstressed syllables, he gradually used it less often in his later work, except in satire and occasional poems. A system based on syllabic count without regular stress pattern eventually took its place in his most serious poetry. He also experimented for a time with free verse, that is, verse liberated from pattern, or at least from a set pattern.

Each of these three types of verse-pattern predominates at different times. The periods overlap, and characteristics of one period persist and recur, but in spite of this, chronological division gives a clear picture, if not a perfectly accurate one.

The earliest poems, that is, the poems of Thomas's boyhood are, not unexpectedly, essays in traditional patterns of metre and stanza-structure. The Swinburnian or Meredithian line, with its big feet tripping over one another, occurs often, but Thomas, like others, found it difficult to handle and unrewarding in its effect, and soon came to prefer a more natural verse - beat, with weak stresses limited usually to one only in every foot. The anapaests recur later as a set pattern in only one poem, "The Sun Burns the Morning". During this period of apprenticeship, Thomas tried his hand at many strict forms of verse-structure, for example, the triolet. Writing about his dying father in what was to be almost his last poem, Thomas significantly chose once more to submit to the discipline of a strict form, the villanelle in his poem 'Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night'.

Influenced by several contemporary or near- contemporary poets, and affected by prevailing fashion, Thomas soon turned from conventional verse- patterns to so-called 'free verse'.

The only possible definition of 'free verse' seems to be the negative one: verse without a set of pattern. If a set pattern is al-

lowed to intrude casually, that is, without some deliberate purpose, the medium is, as it were, violated. This happens, for example, when a weak -strong beat is maintained in several successive lines. To avoid this impression of uniformity, poets practising free verse made considerable use of logaoedic and speech rhythms, and when they were successful, the result can neither be mistaken for regular metrical verse nor be regarded as metrical anarchy. Free verse, indeed, is not only difficult; it is far from free. Perhaps the expression 'free verse' should be reserved for the failures; 'cadenced Verse' is more appropriate to the successes.

These comments are necessary in order to explain the dissatisfaction with 'free verse' which Thomas soon felt, in common with many of his contemporaries. Free verse offered no help to a poet, with every line, every word, his was the full responsibility for turning it into 'cadenced verse'. The weak-strong beat, perhaps natural to the language, or perhaps instilled by reading of the literature, asserted itself unavoidably in long passages.

The most favoured substitute was equivalence (Coleridge) or sprung rhythm (Hopkins), a regular pattern imposed on the strong stresses, while the weak stresses (Coleridge) or the weaker stresses (Hopkins) are regarded as free. In spite of the influence of Hopkins on Thomas in other ways, this was not the system which Thomas chose to replace 'free verse'. Surprisingly, perhaps he returned to traditional metre, but with a much greater skill and freedom than before. Crossrhythms were overlaid upon the basic pattern to produce an effect of verse-counterpoint. Rhymes returned but they were now in the form of half rhymes. This was the only fashionable device Thomas retained and he found good use for it in much of his remaining work. Thomas eventually worked out a very complex technique of combining full rhymes, half -rhymes, assonances and alliteration. A suggestion of this will be found in his early poems.

With the growth of his individuality in style and imagery, however, Thomas felt more and more strongly that conventional metre, even when treated contrapuntally, was inadequate for his needs. Those needs seemed contradictory: perfect flexibility, controlled by rigid discipline. The solution was provided by the system based on syllabic count, without regular stress pattern. This system, regularly adopted in the literatures of many foreign languages that have

weak stresses has appeared only occasionally in English literature, with its strong stresses. There are suggestions of syllabic count in "The Litanie" and some other poems of Donne, and it emerges clearly as a system in the prophetic books of Blake, for example in "The Book of Thel", with its irregular stress -patterns within an almost regular syllabic count of fourteen. In the present century many poets have sought and found individual solutions for the verse-pattern problem. Some have found the-solution in equivalence or sprung rhythm, some in reservation to a modified conventional structure, and others — a small minority, in the 'syllabic count'.

The first instance of Thomas's use of syllabic count system is apparently, 'I dreamed my genesis' written in Dec. 1934. The count of 12, 7, 10 and 8 syllables is sustained, with only two irregular lines out of twenty eight. This technique gave Thomas the flexibility and the discipline he needed, and it became predominant in his most serious and mature work.

Donne, perhaps, was Thomas's guide in the use of verse - patterns. Similarly, Donne and the "metaphysical" poets influenced him in the structure of stanzas. The geometrical shapes of poems like "Now, Say nay" and "Vision and Prayer" make these poems too obvious as examples. The structure is reminiscent of the "metaphysical" poets: the size of the stanza, its elaborate pattern, the combination of lines differing greatly in length, the inclusion of lines unusually long (fifteen syllables) and unusually short (one syllable), and the relation of lines of contrasting length of one another by rhyme or similar means. The lines are of the following syllabic length: 5.6 14(13), 14(15), .5(4,6), 1, 13(14,15), .5(4,6), 14 (13), and 13(14). The figures in brackets are variants. The patterns of the endings may be represented by the letters a a b c c b x d a d x x. The letters a, b, c, d are full rhymes of half - rhymes. The two - syllable endings indicated by x are more subtly related. They alliterate, and at the same time are connected by assonance in the first syllable only: hedges, heron, headstone; paddles, passage; prancing; dilly, dingle, distant; whistles, windows, whispering; scaly, shaken, sailing. There are also connections between words by alliteration or assonance within the line too complex to analyse.

It could be argued that some of the verse - patterns of Thomas, while accompanying certain perceptible impressions, produce

no impressions that can be directly ' ascribed to the patterns alone, and that from this standpoint they are artificial devices and abstract conceptions. What human ear, it might be asked, could detect that the ending of the third line of "prologue" rhymes with another ending sixty eight lines later? The syllabic - count system might be criticized on the grounds that, even if it is perceptible as a numerical pattern, it is easily overcome by the natural patterns of the English language, based upon combinations of weak and strong stresses.

The criticism of the syllabic - count system depends upon individual reading and perception. It may be true for some readers, but it is: certainly not true for all. There is also an answer to the general accusation of "artificiality". The artist, when faced with an infinite number of possibilities, is quite powerless. For example, the painter requires a framework, the composer a tone - row or some other convention, and the poet a planned structure. Within his self-imposed discipline, the artist can begin work. The Greek poet Kazantzakis (in Kimon Friar's translation) says: "A verse is not a garment with which one dresses one's emotion in order to create song; both verse and emotion are created in a memory flash, inseparably, just as a man himself is created, body and soul, as one being".

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PHILIP LARKIN AND THE MOVEMENT POETRY

The New Line poets were Philip Larkin, Robert Conquest, Elizabeth Jennings, Donald Davie, Kingsley Amis, D.J. Enright, John Holloway, John Wain and Thom Gunn. The New Lines poets were also known as the Movement, a name given to them, two years earlier by Anthony Hartley in an unsigned leading article in the *Spectator*. They also came to be known as the University wits or the New Academics because they were mainly of Oxford and Cambridge and doing academic jobs; or Neo - Augustans on account of the neatness and elegance of their verse. According to Jan Hamilton, the Movement was little more than a publicity stunt. Any how it did not last long nor did it create any great impact. In fact Charles Tomlinson has condemned it as the "Middlebrow Must" But it helped to redress the balance after the excesses of the earlier generations from 1910 to 1950. They were hostile to the neo - romanticism of Dylan Thomas and the New Apocalypse; they revolted against the political commitment of Auden and his generation. They were anti-heroic in their attitude; they preferred a neutral tone because they believed that nobody wanted any more poems on "the grandeur themes" for some years. They reacted against absurdity and the chaos in the use of structure and metre, faults which they attributed to Pound and Eliot. "I have no belief in "tradition" or a ..common myth - kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets"; observed Larkin, and Donald Davie found it objectionable to 'write in metres which I cannot scan". These poetic spokesmen of the generation of The Angry Young Men stand for sanity, sobriety and discipline. They adhered to the subdued, unsentimental, tone and to traditional forms.

Philip Larkin is the most talented of the New Lines or Movement poets and is generally regarded as the most outstanding poet of the fifties. The first full length study of his work - Philip Larkin (1973) by David Timms throws light on all aspects of his achievement. Anti-heroic and unsentimental in his attitude, Larkin deals mainly with "the faceless urban civilisation and a faceless middle class world. His tone is cool, detached and unemphatic and he employs irony and understatement in a subtle manner; but beneath it all there is suppressed feeling and even deep compassion. His

verse is clear, elegant, and highly polished, it is characterised by formal perfection in the traditional manner.

PHILIP LARKIN

Philip Larkin was born on 9 August 1922 in Coventry, Warwickshire. He was educated at King Henry VIII School, Coventry, and St. John's College, Oxford, from, where he graduated in 1943. At Oxford he and Kingsley Amis become close friends. Both shared an enthusiasm for traditional Jazz. Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) was dedicated to Larkin. After listening to a talk at the English Club at Oxford by Vernon Watkins, Larkin came under the spell of Yeats's poetry. The *Northship* (1945), his first collection of poems, mostly of love lyrics, bears significant traces of Yeatsian influence. He soon shifted his allegiance to Thomas Hardy, who remains the greatest single source of inspiration in his work. The *Less Deceived* (1955), is an important collection of poems. His poems also appeared in *New Lines* (1956), Robert Conquest's anthology of significant new verse of the fifties. His next volume of verse, *The Whitsun Weddings* appeared in 1964. *High Windows* (1974) in his latest book of poems. Besides verse, Larkin wrote two significant and sensitive novels, *Jill* (1946) which was dedicated to Amis, and *A Girl in Winter* (1947) By profession a librarian, since 1955 Larkin has been librarian of the Brynmor Jones Library of the University, of Hull. He contributes feature articles on Jazz music for the *London Daily Telegraph*. In 1965 he was awarded the Queen's Gold Medal for poetry and the Arts Council Triennial Award for poetry. During 1970 - 71 he was a Visiting Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He died on 2 December 1985.

Larkin is the most significant poet to emerge in the nineteen fifties. His writing is a repudiation of the obscure and cerebral verse of Eliot, Pound and Auden.

The most important of the "Movement" poets who sought to resuscitate in English poetry the virtues of intelligence and intelligibility, in his poems Larkin presents himself in the role of a sceptical, astringent observer of contemporary life. His verse is noteworthy for its virtues of lyrical conciseness, its sensibility its honesty its clarity and its bold imagery.

AMBULANCES

Closed like confessionals, they thread
Lound noons of cities, giving back
None of the glances they absorb
Light glossy grey, arms on a plaque
They come to rest at any kerb:
All streets in time are visited.

Then children strewn on steps or road
Or women coming from the shops,
Past smells of different dinners, see
A wild white face that over tops
Red stretcher - blankets momentarily
As it is carried in and stowed.

And sense the solving emptiness
That lies just under all we do,
And for a second get it whole,
So permanent and blank and true.
The fastened doors recede. Poor son.
They whisper at their own distress:

For borne away in deadened air
May go the sudden shut of loss
Round something nearly at an end,
And what cohered in it across
The years the unique random blend
Of families and fashions, there

At last begin to loosen. Far
From the exchange of love to lie
Unreachable inside a room
The traffic parts to let go by
Brings closer what is left to come
And dulls to distance all we are.

Lines 1. confessional : a small wooden cubicle in a church where
a priest sits to hear confessions.

4. arms on plaque : Court of arms on a metal plate
5. kerb: Pavement
6. A characteristic understatement pointing to the ubiquitousness of mortality.
- 13-14. Life with all its trivial concerns is seen for what it is while being confronted with the fact of death.
15. The sight of the Ambulance restores to us a true scale of values. For a second we perceive life whole.
- 17-18. In the death of others we find intimations of our own death.
21. Something nearly at an end: a strikingly novel euphemism for death:
- 25-30. When a sick man is removed to hospital in an ambulance, life seems to be rather a shadowy experience and the reality of death quite close.

CRITICAL COMMENTARY:

Under the conditions of modern urban life with its security and impersonality, we tend to forget the fact of death. The sight of an ambulance restores to us the true perspective of things and a shocked perception of our own mortality.

"Ambulances" may be sometimes regarded as Larkin's most entirely successful poem. The poem allusively fuses Various themes in a subtle manner. The poem is also noted for Larkin's poetic manifestation of the absurd in him. The agonising reality and of the inevitability of the mortal destiny causes this sense of absurd in Larkin. Death is an inevitability that may appear sooner or later before cur door - step and through the presence of an Ambulance Larkin is forcefully communicating the dominating and imposing vigour of death over the transitoriness of the mortal existence.

The very opening line of the poem. "closed like confessionals" is an image which sets going a thread of religious suggestions, implying absolution. Later in the poem, the line "All streets in time are visited - implying visitation and redemption~ from life, as much as the congenial arrival of a friend. The criss - cross movement of the ambulance make everybody to confine upon the final reduction of the statement that "the solving emptiness /That lies just under all we do"

"Whatever its degree of formality, the peculiarity of Larkin's

style is an eloquent taciturnity : it betrays a reluctance to use words at all. If as "Ambulances" says, a "solving emptiness.... lies just under all we do", then Larkins' words, as if preparing to be swallowed up, will make themselves as lean as they can — nothingness, they assert, will not fatten on them. Indeed, they seem to have soaked a long age in a vinegar that dissolves illusions". (Calvin Bedient : M "Eight Contemporary Poets") What Bedient does here is the very opposite of what he means in that Larkin uses words sparingly. At the same time, he loses nothing by way of poetic art.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does Larkin communicate the notion of the all pervasiveness of death?
2. What is our immediate response to the sight of an ambulance?
3. Explain : " for a second get it whole"
4. Explain : " Poor soul," / They whisper' at their own distress.

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THOM GUNN

Thomson William Gunn was born in 1929 in Gravesend, Kent, the son of a journalist and was educated at University College School in London and Trinity College, Cambridge. He is now settled in the United States of America. He was on the English faculty at the University of California at Berkeley before moving to San Francisco where he now lives as a free lance writer. His first book of poems *Fighting Terms* (1954), published when he was only twenty five, established him as one of the significant young poets of the time. His verse is stylistically akin to that of William Empson, but he often deals with violent, contemporary subject matter. The special quality of his poetry emerges from the tension generated between the limpidity of his style and the ferocity of his subject-matter. He generally chooses existential themes concerning will and action. The most persistent element in Gunn's poetry is existential. According to Sartre, existence precedes essence. That is to say, man is free to choose his role and reject the norms of society. Man is his own freedom. Among collections of his verse are *The sense of Movement* (1957), *My Sad Captains* (1961), *Positives* (1966), and *Touch* (1967). His latest book of poems is *Jack Straw's Castle* (1976).

GUNN ON HIMSELF AND POETRY

...obsession is another name for passion, perhaps. But you do have to be obsessed about something to write well about it.. I'm often asked about the genesis of poems, and my answer is that I might begin just with an idea, really rather a general one - it might even be a concept, but you don't just sit down and write about a concept unless you're in the eighteenth century. The thing you want to write about - whether a specific scene, incident or idea gestates and the process of writing becomes an exploration. You discover things about yourself and about your insight into your subject matter that you often didn't guess at. The surprises that occur on the way are often the most exciting things about writing. Sometimes when a poem is going flat I realise it's because the poem has become an exposition of my original idea and no more. It is the

discoveries that make the poem. I agree to that extent with writers like Robert Duncan who believe so much in the improvisation of the moment. But my point is that the subject of a poem can only gestate if you are obsessed by it in the first place.... ,

..... Moly (1971) is my favourite book by myself, partly because it's the neglected child. I also think that there I extended my range a great deal and I am not sure I've got very far beyond it yet. It's a phase of my writing that I am probably still in..... The theme of the book as a whole, if you like to speak in those terms, is of metamorphosis, as in the second poem, where the man is actually being turned into a pig.

A COURIER AFTER IDENTITY.

Thom Gunn's first book of poems, *Fighting Terms*, was published in 1954. In those early days he was seen by many to be a poet with similar ambition to the Movement Poets. In fact he was a contributor to the *New Lines* anthology which presented these poets to the public. This identification was made on the strength, particularly, of his attitude to form in poetry. He shared the belief of the Movement poets that poetry should be well made and craftsman like, utilizing traditional rhythms and rhyme schemes. Many of his early poems expressed fairly complex ideas within intricately extended metaphors, a style which helped earn him the label of "a modern metaphysical poet," especially as these poems were often concerned with matters of love and passion, one of the traditional themes of the seventeenth century metaphysical poets.

Many of his poems, particularly his best ones, are linked closely to his life and experiences and especially to his exploration of his sense of himself and the possible attitudes and commitments he might embrace. There is a sense in which his poetry might be seen as a continuously developing attempt to understand the intellectual's condition in modern life and to explore the divisions, conflicts, tensions and problems that he faces. His poems explore aspects of the rift between thinking man and Acting man, between body and mind, self and others, self and the natural world.

MOLY (POEM)

Nightmare of beasthood, snorting, how to wake
I woke. What beasthood skin she made me take?
Leathery toad that ruts for days on end,
Or cringing dribbling dog, man's servile friend,
Or cat that prettily pounces on its meat,
Tortures its hours then does not care to eat
Parrot, moth, shark, wolf, crocodile, ass, flea
What germs, what jostling mobs there were in me.
These seem like bristles and the hide is tough.
No claw or web here: each foot ends in hoof.
Into what bulk has method disappeared?
Like ham streaked. I am gross - gray, gross, flap - eared
The pale - lashed eyes my only human feature.
My teeth tear, tear. I am the snouted creature.
'That bites through anything; root, wire or can
It I was not afraid, I'd eat a man.
Oh a man's flash already is in mine.
Hand and foot poised for risk. Buried in swine
I rood and riot, you think that it is greed
It is but I seek out a plant I need.
Direct me, gods, whose changes are all holy,
To where it fickleness deep in grass, flap moly;
Cool flesh of magic in each leaf and shoot,
From Milky flower to the black forked root.
From this fat dungeon I could rise to slain
And human title, putting pig within.
I push my big gray wet snout through the green.
Dreaming the flower. I have never seen.

Moly (1971) is the collection in which Gunn wrote of his experiences with the drug LSD. Moly is the ancient name for a hallucinogenic drug, referred to in the *Odyssey* where it is given to Ulysses as the antidote to restore his sailors to human shape after Circe had transformed them into pigs. This legend is recalled in the preface. In an interview Gunn remarked that his poems are explorations of meaning for him and that anything important in his life will eventually find its way into a poem. This is true of his first "acid

trips" taken at the age of thirty five and of which he has said, "LSD shakes complacencies, it opens doors on other worlds. I learnt about my own nature that I had concealed from myself.

In their form these poems return to carefully developed structures and frequently employ traditional metre and rhyme schemes. This reflects Gunn's feeling that careful ordering is necessary to balance the content. "A trip is a loose structured experience and this is a way, perhaps of filtering it through the finite and of keeping control over the material., Clearly the book suggests that a new freedom - even revelation - has been obtained through the drug, but it is not advocating its wholesale use. LSD/Moly signifies the need for an openness to experience and the need to articulate a new vision.

The nature of this vision can begin to be seen when we realize that many of the poems are concerned with transformation (Many poems in Gunn's book describe changes in a person) Some of the central poems are to do with half - men half - beast creatures (Moly and "Tom-Dobbin") and others concern the transformation of vision ('The Colour - Machine', "three")

In the title poem "Moly" we find a poetic counterpart to the prefaces quotation from the Odyssey. It describes the sailors changed into swine. "a nightmare of beasthood", and it is seen through the eyes of a single character who is one of the sailor animals. He wakes from the drugged sleep under the spell of Circe to find himself an animal, although at first he cannot tell of what kind. From his skin, his tough hide, his hoofed feet and his great, grey ears, he realizes he has been turned into a pig. The only remaining connection with his human personality and appearance is his long eye - lashes.

I am the snouted creature

That bites through anything, root wire or can.

If I was not afraid I'd eat a man.

But a man's flesh is in him and the mingling of the two is clearly stated. The reader is surprised by the following couplet which shows man - swine greedy to search out the root of the plant that brings changes that "are all holy". The acceptance of man's swinishness and animatedly is what makes possible that search,

and the ending implies that the beast in man needs the drug to hold him within (not to overcome it but to give man's animals self its right place):

I push my big grey wet snout through the green Dreaming the flower I have never seen.

There is an abmiguity here which suggests either that the magic root has yet to be discovered and therefore that which is a vision has yet to become a reality, or that the drug is required to produce that vision. The light, brisk couplet suggests a lucidity that is not so easily discovered in the meaning.

Michael Schmidt, in summing up Gunn's progress says: "He knows where he has been and if - for a time - he wanders in to the woods, he has the resources to change course, to come, out again, not retreating, by a different path". In the "Moly" Collections of poems, he is in the world of myths mainly. In "Moly" the poet wakes up into experiences of different forms-toad, dog, cat, parrot, moth, shark, wolf, Crocodile, ass, and flea - "what jostling mobs there were in me". All are abhording : "Leathery toad that ruts for days on end": Cringing dribbling dog, man's servile friend; the cat that "tortures it hours, then does not cure to it" its meat. "I am gray gross, flap eared, " the poet laments and says that

It I was not afraid, I'd eat a man.

The poet yearns for another metamorphosis:

"I seek out a plant I need : the moly"

'Cool flesh of magic in each leaf and shoot

From milky flower to the lack forked root,

From this fast dungeon I could rise to skin

And human title, putting pig Within.

I push my big grey wet snout through the green

Dreaming the flower, I have never seen.

The theme may strike as different; but the poetic technique is that of the familiar rhyming lines.

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TED HUGHES

Ted Hughes (Edward James) (1930-) was born in Mytholmroyd in Yorkshire. His father, William Hughes, was a carpenter who fought in the First World War (he was one of only seventeen survivors of an entire regiment which perished at Gallipoli). The family moved to Mexborough, a coal-mining town in South Yorkshire, when Hughes was seven and his parents took a newsagent's and tobacconist's shop. In 1948 he won an Open Exhibition to Pembroke College, Cambridge. Before attending university he did two years National Service in the RAF. After leaving Cambridge, he worked as a rose-gardener, nightwatchman, and a script reader for Rank at Pinewood, before becoming a teacher. He married the American poet Sylvia Plath in 1956 and the marriage survived until her death in 1963. There is much evidence of mutual influence in their work:

Hughes first collection of poems, *The Hawk in the Rain*, was published in 1957, and its vigorous vernacular won immediate claim. Its terse celebration of raw natural energies contrasted with the rational ironies of Movement verse and since the late 1950s Hughes has been viewed as a nature poet. His appointment as Poet Laureate in 1984 sealed his essentially shaman-like conception of his poetic mission and enabled him to speak out on environmental issues while celebrating royal weddings and babies. Ted Hughes is generally regarded, with Philip Larkin as one of the two most important English poets to appear since the war. His energy and rough-hewn style have fathered a host of imitators. If Larkin is the voice of the 1950s Hughes is unmistakably the voice of the 1960s and the 1970s. The great American poet Robert Lowell has said that Ted Hughes' animal poems are 'like a thunderbolt' and indeed many of them seem to spring from the page with the energy of a force of nature. One of the liveliest poets writing in Britain since 1945, Hughes' works include: *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957); *Lupercal* (1960); two volumes of verse for children, *Meet My Folks* (1961) and *Earth Owl and Other Moon People* (1963); *Wodwo* (1967); *Crow* (1970); *Poems* (1971); *Eat Crow* (1971); *Prometheus on His Crag* (1973); *Spring Summer Autumn Winter* (1974); *Moortown* (1979); *River* (1983); *Season Songs* (1985); *Flowers and Insects* (1986). His rather violent poetry appeared when English verse was

dominated by the poets of the Movement; these were restrained, disillusioned, ironic and often urban in the setting of their poems. Hughes is remarkable for his evocation of natural life, in particular of animals presented as alien and opposed to the civilized human consciousness and for that reason, as in the poetry and prose of D.H. Lawrence, peculiarly close to the subrational instinct in the self. The future development of Hughes' Poetry is hard to predict. Nobody now writing in English seems to have more latent power. Hughes is already a major poet and his career is still rich in promise. Already with elements of *Crow* and with his translation of Seneca's *Oedipus*, he has made approaches to a synthesis of poetry and drama and this is an ongoing preoccupation in his work.

CRITICAL BACKGROUND:

Ted Hughes has been accepted as a classic of our time. Many of his best poems have a significant amount of shock and violence attached to them. His infatuation for the dark side of life can be traced back to his life in the West Yorkshire Pennines where everything is slightly unpleasant and the valley always dark. Ted Hughes is best known for his poems about animals. It is not because he portrays the beasts and insects in a sympathetic way, but because he presents the animals with all their forecious nature, violence and surplus energy. Hughes is one among the long line of writers who has acknowledged the instinctual powers and energies of the animal world.

His poems reveal that Hughes is deeply committed to a vision of our troubled relationship with nature. He brings out the relationship mostly in terms of animal imagery and symbols drawn out from the vast storehouse of mythology and folklore. Hughes is rather, 'preoccupied' with the problems of man's relationship the elements of the non-human cosmos. In most of his works Hughes seems to move towards the very root and sources of myths and legends in the depths of the human psyche, what Carl Jung called the "collective unconscious." The main aspect that attracted the attention of Hughes was the religion of Shamanism which has certain affinities with the non-human world. Most of the critics including Keith Sagar, Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts have spoken about the connection between Hughes' poems and Shamanism. Hughes considered po-

etry as a means of finding a way into the locked up life. He is disillusioned with what he sees in the civilized world. Man has totally lost touch with the inner locked up spirit, and he does not even realize that it is absent.

In literature, many prominent writers have created myths of their own which has acted as a unifying force among their works of art. Some writers adapt older mythologies to convey their own interpretation of truth. Some others use myths religiously to explore the meaning of human life, yet others psychologically to explore the quality of experience in a character. As a result of the rise of science, the dispassionate eyes of objectivism have destroyed the last myth that helped relate man to his inner and outer world- the myth, of Christianity. The cause of modern man's feeling of alienation is the destruction of a humanizing language.

Animal anatomy, mother nature, the question and answer method are different techniques used by Hughes. What these techniques have in common is that, they grant total license to the poet's free-wheeling inventiveness. In many poems are seen a vernacular robustness making use of colloquialism and slang. In spite of a strong contemporary idiomatic usage there are also echoes of ancient and traditional forms of discourse such as the Old Testament, Milton and Marvell. The poetry is strong, packed and purposeful. Notwithstanding the air of rapid improvisation they are stunningly effective. Music and poetry of the kind we are familiar with in English poetry is absent. Usages of repetitions, refrains, parallelisms, incantations and invocations are to be seen in these poems. There are also variations of approach like metaphysical probing, cartoon techniques and startling and violent verbs. The use of myth gives a unifying force to Hughes' poems. It manifests the ideas he had already presented in poems like Hawk Roosting and Jaguar - the replacement of one idea of God with a much larger one. In the later poems it attains structural breadth and flexibility. The creative myths in Hughes' poems are always trying to explore what actually exists and what the real conditions are in its widest metaphysical aspect. Some of the poetry explores the creative myth directly. But the different levels together try not to evade the uncertainties in history. Instead they try to approach history from a different internal point of

view.

The question is not how far the ideas of Hughes may be true but, rather what kind of artistic success the poet, achieves in following his task. The immensity of the task and the belief in the artist as a guardian of essential truths can lead to a poetry with aim that may sometimes elude its grasp. Hughes himself has spoken of writing from "three separate characteristic states of mind which are fairly different." The voice of nihilism in many of the "Crow" poems the voice of confused search in Wodwo and the voice of divided man in Guadete are only some of the voices of the poet who expresses the modern sense in varied and contradictory ways.

Ted Hughes obviously has some affinities with D.H. Lawrence. The poem's about animals show the sort of sympathy that D.H. Lawrence shows in his poems like "Bat and Snake". It is more important that they share Lawrence's admiration of the essential sanity and goodness of our instinctive impulse. In Lawrence's fiction can be seen as the tragic conflict between the virtues of the mother and the very different virtues of the father. Hughes admired similar positive qualities in the animals he describes. As the eminent critic A. Alvarez puts it: "Ted Hughes having been born in the same sort of semi-industrialized area as Lawrence has a Lawrencian sympathy for the unsophisticated, uncouth, basic human impulses". Hughes writes so often about animals and birds because he finds in them the unsophisticated vitality which the urban man is in danger of losing. The hawk or the otter trying to survive the murderous attack of man symbolizes the attempt of beauty, passion and natural vital instincts to survive, in an artificial society. Poems in "The Hawk in the Rain" and Luperca are certainly poems about animals and nature. Hughes' creation of hawks, jaguars, pikes and thrushes are vibrantly energetic in taking the reader to the very feelings and actions of the animals and these poems must rank as the best of their kind. But Hughes' total output encompasses far more subjects than animals. It is true that the dominating interest that his poems yield to a reader is a sense of the vigour and frequently violent energies of both the non-human world and inner world of man's own emotions. Poetry is nothing if not that record of just how forces of nature try to redress some balance upset by human error, says

Hughes. In animals he sees the most clear manifestations of a life that has source of power which is distinctly non-human or rather non-rational.

Hughes observes in modern man the reluctance to acknowledge the deepest, instinctual, sources of energy in his own Being, an energy that is related with the elemental power circuit of the Universe. Hughes, concern therefore has always been wider than the simple labelling of him as "animal poet." The latter implies that his animal poems are not mere descriptions of creatures, but are intended as comments on certain aspects of human life, particularly man's relationship with Nature.

Ted Hughes' works give the impression of being congenitally indifferent to humanism; a mind on the outskirts of civilisation, "like a boy who skips the school and spends the day, even the night in the woods. In the beginning it was Love - a boy's eager love, compounded of curiosity, possessiveness and adventure - "My interest in animals began when I began", Hughes writes in Poetry. In the Poetry the animals re-emerged not as playthings, but as Lords of Death and life. In memory and imagination they were Gods or Demons. In discovering his own death Hughes concluded that the one thing that matters was Life and animals' organs represent purely, "the will to live in particular circumstances; as Schopenhauer puts it "they are quick eyes". Hughes is primarily a poet of the will to live at phenomenal levels of the leaping blood.

For Hughes the more terrible the beast, the more admirable. The stabbing thrush, the devouring wolf, the meat-eating dragonfly, the hawk whose manners are "tearing off heads" are the heroes of his "world;" his fierce effort against nothingness. The poems that present these animals and birds are among his very best because they concentrate on a single animal or bird and a single theme. The imagery is not only forceful and striking it is also intellectually disciplined of drive home a limited number of relevant ideas. Hughes' poetry has the youthful vigour that we associate with Marlowe, and the love of verbal acrobatics, such as using nouns as verbs that we associate with G.M.Hopkins or Dylan Thomas. Hughes is so fond of animals that he has learnt from Donne and Eliot how to describe them in a witty, sophisticated way. He holds attention through his,

unusual similes, such as when he describes "black back gall bent like an iron bar". With a kind of metaphysical wit he describes the tiger and lion in the zoo as "fatigued with indolence." Consequently he shares R.S. Thomas' ability to write about the country and country- Life as though he had never read any nineteenth century poetry about it. His style is as modern as his ideas about animals are realistic and unsentimental. Hughes' great success is in communicating to his readers, his admiration of the animals' energetic Life Force. 'As A.E. Dyson wrote "the major theme in the poem is Power." This power is "thought of not morally, or in time, but absolutely in a present which is often violent and self-destructive, but isolated from motive or consequence, and so much unmodified by the irony which time confers." For Hughes power and violence go together. His own dark gods are makers of the Tiger and not the Lamb. He is fascinated by violence of all kinds, in love and in hatred, in the jungle and in the arena, in battle, murder and sudden death.

Ted Hughes has certainly entered the poetry reading consciousness and his matter and manners have been widely imitated or even parodied- which is a clear indication that a major poet has arrived.

"VIEW OF A PIG".

A sort of funeral speech over the body of a dead pig. Hughes is trying to be extremely accurate about his feelings as he sees the pig's body. The object of the poem is to drain death of all its nobility and false trappings. Even the brief spurt of praise for the pig's energy in its lifetime in the second last stanza is abruptly stamped out at the end of the poem. The pig has become just a stone to be treated like an inanimate object. Ultimately what comes through is a muted unglamorized pathos.

Rooted like D.H. Lawrence in a dissenting culture, Hughes follows Lawrence both as a literary model and a writer who attempts to abolish society by locating the self-justifying act of individual witness in a primordial wilderness. Hughes' primitivism in poems such as these embodies this wounded search for an original wholeness. In his verse Hughes has constructed a myth in which the Germanic/puritan/masculine is eternally at war with the Celtic/catholic/feminine. The driven, gruelling texture of this poem is intensely puritan

- written to the moment in a type of absolute present tense. The moral weight of Hughes' work is great: his concern with violence, power and survival has a relevance with which few critics have come to terms- except the terms of ideological dismissal. Hughes is not the simple and elemental poet he is so frequently presented as being. His creaturely world is personalized; and yet his very personal nightmare world is generalized. Aggression and survival in the natural world and in the historical, social world have many aspects, and Hughes' poetry illuminates a range of them while at the same time testifying to the rich specificity of the given world. "

SECOND GLANCE AT A JAGUAR:

In Hughes' first poem on the jaguar, he joins the crowd of curious onlookers who rush quickly past the cages that contain apes, parrots, and even tiger, lion, and boa-constrictor to stare "mesmerized,/As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged/ Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes/On a short fierce fuse." Jaguars are seen less often than are tigers or lions and they are harder to track and catch. Hughes focusses on the jaguar's rage as an abiding condition, in contrast to the boredom emanating from the caged tiger and lion who are "fatigued with indolence" and "lie still as the sun". Even after he's been captured, the jaguar, suggests Hughes, seems oblivious to the fact of his having been caged. The jaguar's rage protects, him, engulfs him and provides the real environment within which he moves, , His rage not only makes him oblivious, but it frees him from the necessity of coming to terms with his caged environment, He carries the wilderness with him.

When we come to Hughes' "Second (Glance at a Jaguar" we are immediately struck by the obvious increase in power and complexity and a significantly altered viewpoint. Hughes dispenses with the theatrical framework of someone strolling down a line of cages, mentally distinguishing the jaguar from the other animal. In this poem, the jaguar is not merely an emissary from a primeval world, he is a world in himself. The verse pattern conveys the gait of the jaguar through the sliding motion of run-on lines with a restless movement that pivots, turns and mimics the jaguar's distinctive motion. Hughes evokes perfectly the low-slung body, the sense of odd misalignment produced by the too high ball joints of the hips

and shoulders, the impossible yet liquid movement:

Skinfull of bowls, he bowls them,

The hip going in and out of joint, dropping the spine

With the urgency of his hurry

Like a cat going under thrown stones, under cover,

Glancing sideways, running

Under his spine.

The way it flings its head forward and the roundness of its head and joints suggests an English bowler which modulates into a picture of the jaguar being just a large cat pelted by stones. The odd carriage of the head, the pale yellow surface covered by black spots, becomes in turn the focus of the metaphor "carrying his head like a brazier of spilling embers." Each aspect comes to life of turn: the fiery rage in the eyes, the spotted coat, the open mouth filled with sharp devouring teeth: As the jaguar turns back on itself, coming to each corner, the beautiful pattern of spots reminds Hughes of a "butterfly." Thus far, the reader will note that the poem is but an extension of the earlier treatment, even taking Hughes' greater skill and subtlety in description into account. But beginning with the line "at every stride he has to turn a corner/In himself and correct it" we become, aware that Hughes has , significantly altered the poem's view point added a previously missing dimension to his portrayal. "The Jaguar" displayed the animal quite literally housed within his rage and presented his stride as a "wilderness of freedom." But in the "Second Glance at a jaguar" the Jaguar's fate of outer imprisonment is nothing compared to his predicament of trying to purge himself from within, to burn through the constraints of his own nature. Hughes' emphasis on aspects of the jaguar- its ability to kill, its fastidious low-slung movement, its odd disjointed powerful body and its too thick tail and too solid legs-are part of an invocation to bring the jaguar into focus. His reference to an "Aztec disemboweller" evokes the jaguar's method of killing its prey by disembowelling it with a flip of its powerful paws and relates it with the bloody sacrificial rites in Mexico, Central and. South America. Not only is the jaguar theme particularly pronounced in Olmec Mexican Art, in the. context, of ritual sacrifice by disembowelling, but even today, there is a were-jaguar concept among North and South American Indian

tribes Among these tribes, "it is thought that a shaman can turn into a jaguar, at will and that he can use the form of this animal as a disguise under which he can act as helper, a protector, or an aggressor". Professor Peter Furst of the University of California has put the case succinctly, "Shamans and jaguars are not merely equivalent but each is at the same time the other". It is commonly believed that both Shamans and jaguars are believed to have "supernatural powers" and among these tribes there is a fundamental belief in the "spiritual bond and identity between the shaman, and the jaguar. Thus Hughes not only widens the poem's field of vision by drawing on the tradition of jaguar worship among Central and South American Indians, but is consciously exercising a shamanic technique of identifying himself with an animal that is charged with the whole mythology of the species. The power of the earlier poem is still evident, but is being used for an altogether different purpose. The jaguar's rage is no longer directed outward but against itself. For this reason Hughes swings the poem away from Aztec tradition and into the context provided by another pre-eminently shamanic work, The Tibetan Book of the Dead. Taking his cue from the jaguar's ceaselessly repetitive pacing motion "swivelling the ball of his heel on the polished spot" and the unusual sub-vocal coughing grunting sound of the jaguar's voice, "muttering some mantrah", Hughes shifts the poem into a different but related context. In The Tibetan Book of the Dead, a mantrah, explains W.Y Evans-Wentz, is a sequence of syllables or a word of power which has its own "vibratory rate". Yet power, once evoked, can destroy as well as save, Hughes draws on this ancient concept and suggests that the jaguar calls up his rage to war himself out from within to annihilate and free himself from his condition of enslavement - not to the bars but to his condition of "jaguariness" which imprisons him.

The most visible marks on the jaguar flanks are what Hughes calls the "Cain-brands." Cain of course, is the first murderer, the first to be overpowered by the rage to kill. What the jaguar wished to wear out by turning his rage against himself is the mark of Cain that he is "spurred" by literally branded into his coat significantly according to Indian tradition certain mantrahs that are chanted over and over again are intended to release the personality from control

by irrational terror, from a bestial perspective and from the whole delusionary rage of existence itself.

After reading Hughes' "Jaguar" poems and being reminded by Keith Sagar that Hughes "changed from English to Archaeology" in his third year at Cambridge, one can agree with this critic that Hughes' "grounding in these disciplines has proved of immense and growing value in his creative work." Combined with an imagination embedded in myth and folklore is the enormously intuitive, sensuous and direct grasp of the way in which the animals he writes about actually appear, communicated in a manner that seems inefably 'right'

Selected Bibliography:

Glifford, T. and N.Roberts : Ted Hughes: A Critical Study
Keith : The Art of Ted Hughes.

FOR DISCUSSION / WRITING:

1. Comment on the ambiguity on the part of the poet towards his subject in 'View of a Pig'.
2. What is the nature of the experience in the poem "View of a Pig"?
3. Do you think "View of a Pig" is a poem of mere evocation.?
4. "He's wearing himself to ovals.....keeping up/ The hind legs lagging". Elucidate and comment on this metaphor.
5. What is the poet's response to his subject in "Second Glance at a Jaguar:"
6. Comment on Hughes' use of mythology in "Second Glance at a Jaguar:"

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R.S. THOMAS DEATH OF A PEASANT

Ronald Stuart Thomas was born in 1913 in Cardiff, South Glamorgan, Wales. After his school education he studied at the University College of North Wales, Bangor where he read Classics and graduated in 1935. Afterwards he went for theological training to St. Michael's College, Llandaff. Subsequently, in 1937, he was ordained priest. After holding curacies at Chirk and at Hanmer he became in 1942 Rector of Manafon, a remote and not particularly attractive village in Montgomeryshire about sixteen kilometers away from and southwest of Welshpool. He spent twelve years there. In 1954 he was appointed vicar of St. Michael's Eglwysfach, a hill village in Cardiganshire on the road between Machynlleth and Aberystwyth. In 1967 he moved into Cardiganshire to the tip of the Llyn Peninsula to be Vicar of St. Hywyn Aberdaron with St. Mary, Bodfern. In 1973 he became Vicar of St. Aelrhwi, Rhiw with Llenfaerlrhys.

Thomas's earliest publications were brought out from small Welsh printing and publishing houses.

1. The Stones of the Field (1946) Druid Press, Carmarthen
2. An Acre of Land (1952) The Montgomeryshire Printing Company, Newtown
3. The Minster (1953)

A commendation on the B.N.C. Critics' programme in 1952 by Alan Pryce resulted in these editions to be sold out. This encouraged Thomas. In 1955 he gathered together what he thought to be his best poems, added a few later poems and published the collection as "Song at the Year's Turning". The book contained an introduction by John Betjeman, the poet of the Edwardian Backwaters and English Countryside and of nostalgia, who was very generous in paying his rich 'tribute to the new-emerging poet-priest. As Thomas was a retiring and reserved personality and did not like much fanfare and publicity, the publisher's wanted a 'name' to make the book sell. Betjeman wrote: The name which has the honour to introduce this fine poet to a wide public will be forgotten long before that of R.S. Thomas. Betjeman was able to recognize that R.S. Thomas, the priest-poet (like G.M. Hopkins), was zealous to

win souls for the Christian Faith, looking at man and Nature in the light of eternity. Looking for comparisons, critics have compared Thomas to Crabbe for his unique way of coming to grips with the harsh realities of rural life- the dirty, the cruel and the nearbestial unyielding nature- and to Edward Thomas for his slow, meditative manner' and his 'disciplined verbal sparseness'. There is unanimous agreement amongst all students of literature when they say that he has nothing in common with the other major Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas (In fact, they occupy the two poles) There is something common between George Herbert and R.S. Thomas, even though, temperamentally, they are different. R.S. Thomas has nothing of Herbert's sunniness; Thomas rarely tastes the calm of tensions resolved and Thomas is much less direct and explicit than George. Herbert in reference to duties as a priest. Yet, the two careers of hidden devotion to human ministry with the marriage of literary to personal discipline seem to match across the centuries. .

The other volumes of poems by R.S. Thomas are Poetry for Super (1958) Tares (1961) The Bread of Truth (1963) Pieta. (1966) Not that He Brought Flowers (1968) H'm (1972) Laboratories of the Spirit (1975) Frequencies (1978) and Between Here and Now (1982)

All his dominant interests recur in them with no slackening of perception or craftsmanship. The last-mentioned includes a very distinctive group of poems on Impressionist paintings in the Louvre

R.S. THOMAS, THE POET:

Thomas had English as his mother tongue. He taught himself Welsh. The Wales he represents is a countryside decaying inwardly by the invasion of a threatening Elsan Culture (Elsan= a type of portable lavatory in which chemicals are used to kill bacteria and destroy the smell: the word is a portmanteau one. E.L. Jackson, the inventor/manufacturer and sanitation) and the 'thousands of rouths.... emptying their waste speech about us' Looking at Sheep. The Bread of Truth). At fifty he was still trying to 'deceive himself' that his country 'was still Wales'; but the land has 'no more right to its name than a corpse'. It lies like a bone thrown aside and of no use (A Country: The Bread of Truth). Thomas is too big a man and a poet to see the local dilemma in isolation. There is no banner-waving and there are no concessions to sentimentality or to any

inherited attitudes in his presentation of the Welsh peasant whose prototype is IAGO PRYTHERCH. Among the human studies in which the harshly repellent aspects of daily toil and stench, dirt and death are faced are the recurring poems about Iago Prytherch, the hill-farmer revealing an appreciation of a prototypical symbol of human endurance quietly repairing the rents of history and in 'Servant' (Pieta) he is imagined in terms that give him his own cultural status and identity. The poet turns from his own questionings and doubts

To where you read in the slow book Of the farm, turning the field's pages So patiently, never tired

Of the land's story; not just believing, But proving in your bone and your blood Its accuracy.

Thomas's concern with the dual power of Nature to brutalize and to heal is rooted in his Christian sense of paradox and his awareness of the openness of human nature to the bestial and the spiritual. If the men of the moors have not yet 'shaken the moss' from the savage skulls or 'prayed the peat, from their eyes' (A Priest to his People), nevertheless, in 'Valediction' (You Failed me, Farmer) the farmer is rebuked for lacking the grace and beauty that belong to his background.

Your uncouthness has

No kinship with the earth, where all is forgiven.

All is requited in the seasonal round

Of sun and rain, healing the year's scars.

Alan Brownjohn, a modern poet and member of The Group, has pinpointed the corresponding stylistic paradox of Thomas's 'harshly refined' manner and his 'piercing plainness' of statement.

The poems in which Thomas speaks more revealingly of his calling and the personal tensions the priestly life imposes on him are shorn of posture, and pretence, and reflect ruthless self-exposure in varying moods of bewilderment, of spiritual testing and of hope glimpsed (Who?, In Church, and The Belfry respectively.) The terse, spare, yet unsparing precision and economy of the man is essentially and inextricably both a literary and spiritual fact. Its unique impact understandably provokes comments such as that of Kingsley Amis, a Movement poet and novelist: His example reduces

most modern verse to footling whimsy (i.e. trifling and affected, delicate freaks). For the tensions and ambivalences inherent in the cultured and compassionate priest's encounter with what attracts and what disgusts in those he would serve are explored with force and penetration that universalize the parochial.

Having been born in Wales and having been vicar of a country parish there, living, working and writing in the hill country of the North of Wales, the countryside and the national consciousness have strongly stained his poetry and his experience of faith. It is a bleak, spare country the bones showing through

That bare hill with the man ploughing

Corrugating that brown roof Under a hard sky.

Sometimes he hated its earthiness and the narrowness of spirit it begets. It seems sometimes ghost country washed up by the past, a dying race and culture, a dying language.

There is no present in Wales And no future;

There is only the past, Brittle with relics

Wind-bitten towers and castles With sham ghosts.

The English go over the border and stop their cars by the roadside to inspect these strange foreigners. Thomas feels like the curator of a gigantic national museum as they come

Scavenging among the remains

Of our culture...

Elbowing our language.

Into the grave we have dug for-it.

and stare at the people inhabiting this landscape, growing out of it, out of its earth, its soil. The soil is all. The Welsh peasant mechanically docks swedes:

the knife errs

Burying itself in the shocked flesh

Then out of the wound; the blood seeps home

To the warm soil from which it came.

In this life understanding, refinement etc. flicker only feebly. It is a life whose true realities are the resistant soil, the weather, the elemental rhythms from birth to dying. It leaves little room for the expansion of the spirit in the narrow confines of the land and its society. See what Thomas says of them as the hill people go at

X'mas to

... the bread's ...

'Purer snow fumble it in their huge

Hands; put their lips to it

Like beasts.

They return without much illumination to comprehensible realities.

There horizon contracted

To the one small stone-riddled field.

Occasionally, 'narrow-but-saved', more often stunted, sometimes to imbecility, these peasants are certainly not witnesses of a liberal, enlightened Christianity, or even humanity. Nevertheless, about them is an enduring toughness, a permanence, an atavistic courage in the face of seasons and circumstances. This is where we have to study closely the peasant, Iago Prytherch (an imaginary Welsh hill farmer created by R.S. Thomas) and appearing in quite a few of his poems.

His (Iago's) clothes sour with years of sweat

And animal contact, shock the refined

But affected sense with their stark naturalness.

Yet this is the Welsh prototype farmer who season by season, Against siege of rain and the wind's attrition

Preserves his stock... stars.

He endures and lasts with a kind of inarticulate existential courage:

His (Iago's) hands are broken

But not his spirit. He is like the bark. ~Weathering on the tree of his kind.

Yet we might say this primitive permanence, the solidity of ancient granite cannot comfort a priest. His task is to blow up some flame of the spirit from those unpromising embers. Is it an altogether hopeless task, words falling on deaf ears, head battered against a stone wall? But there is no pretension at all:

I am Pretherch, forgive me, I don't know What you are talking about; Your thoughts flow Too quickly for me: i cannot dawdle

Along their banks.

It is in the haunting figure of Pretherch that Thomas displays

his inordinate love for the Welsh country and those who live there. 'Iago Pretherch, forgive my naming you', says Thomas. Because he chose the Welsh farmer as the fit subject for poetry ('I took/your rags for them'), he counters the world's graceless accusation:

Fun? Pity? No word can describe

My true feelings. I passed and saw

you Labouring there, your dark figure

Marring the simple geometry

Of the square fields with its gaunt shadow

Falling coldly across the page.

The farmer has no time for science or for art, the furniture of the mind. He spends a lifetime toiling in the soil. In one poem Thomas asks Iago's forgiveness:

Prytherch, man can you forgive.

Prytherch is a symbol of permanence in the midst of 'the world's roads: he serves as a foil for the poet who, seeking meaning else where, finds it too close for the mind's lenses to see. Ultimately, it is Prytherch what lends the poet a little point, by giving back to life its own value:

It was you who were right the whole time; Right in this that the day's end

Finds you still in the same field

In which you started, your soul made strong

By the earth's incense, the wind's song

Through the image of Prytherch, however, emerges Thomas's own examen. He acknowledges his debt: You served me well, Prytherch. The Welsh farmer served to pose questions and doubts though he did not give the 'whole answer'. His voice was limited:

Is truth so bare

So dark, so dumb, as on your hearth

And in your company I found it?

Perhaps the best remark on the farmer is:

He was in the field when I set out.

He was in the field when I came back

Needless to say, these lines indicate the (success and) failure of R.S. Thomas as a priest and as the spiritual mentor of the Welsh farming community.

R.S. Thomas tells us that when he took up his living in Manafon he "was brought up hard against this community (Montgomeryshire) and I really began to learn what human nature, rural human nature, was like. And I must say that I found nothing that I'd been told in theological college was of any help at all in these circumstances." It could be added that much of the religious apologetic found in contemporary philosophy would be equally useless. Thomas's bewilderment in being confronted by the peasant is quite obvious:

Who can tell his years, for the winds have stretched
 So tight the skin on the bare racks of bone
 That his face is smooth, inscrutable as stone ?
 And when he wades in the brown bilge of earth
 Hour by hour, or stoops to pull
 The reluctant swedes, who can read the look
 In the colourless eye, as his back comes straight
 Like an old tree lightened of the show's weight ?
 Is there love there, or hope, or any thought
 For the frail form broken beneath his tread,
 And the sweet pregnancy that yields his bread ?
 (A. Labourer)

In spite of this Thomas asserts: The earth is patient; he is not lost. The above lines tell us succinctly about the prototypical Welsh farmer and the harshness of his life.

The description continues (of the farmer) in "Affinity":

Consider this man in the field beneath,
 Gatered with mud, lost in his own breath,
 Without joy, without sorrow,
 Without children, without wife,
 Stumbling insensitively from furrow to furrow
 A vague somnambulist; but hold your tears,
 For his name also is written in the Book of Life.

In the poem titled 'The Hill Farmer Speaks' R.S. Thomas makes him say:

I am the farmer stripped of love
 And thought and grace by the land's hardness; But what I am
 saying over the field's
 Desolate acres, rough with dew,

Is, Listen listen, I am a man like you.

Now keeping the above details in mind we can venture into the world of the poem "Death of a Peasant".

From the foregoing account of the Welsh hill country farmer we learn that he is a misfit in the modern world set up. The Welsh countryside is as old as the hills and has remained unchanging in the face of technological advances (Cynddylan (an imaginary farmer in the poem titled 'Cynddylan on a Tractor') is a funny character on his tractor, almost a caricature of a farmer there. From "Soil" we learn about the peasant:

A field with tall heges and a young
 Moon in the branches and one star
 Declining westward set the scene
 Where he works slowly astride the rows
 Of red mangolds and green swedes
 Plying mechanically his cold blade.
 This is his world, the hedge defines
 The mind's limits; only the sky
 Is boundless, and he never looks up;
 His gaze is deep in the dark soil,
 As are his feet, and his bones

Are formed out of it with the swedes And if sometimes the
 knife errs, Burying itself in his shocked flesh,

Then out of the wound the blood seeps home To the warm
 soil from which it came.

It is this sort of a peasant who dies and whose death forms the theme of our poem- and dramatic monologue. Here the despair of Davies is clearly brought out in the second and third lines:

With his face to the wall, as the manner is
 Of the poor peasant in his croft On the Welsh hills.

Neither the neighbours nor the poet has any words of comfort for the lonely farmer:

Of the wide bed in which he lay.
 Lonely as an ewe that is sick to lamb...

The image of the trapped wind is strongly reminiscent of the farmer trapped in his stone croft in the hard weather of mid-March and tied to his unyielding and unproductive land. The inability of

the neighbours to show any grief and their gruff words point an accusing finger at the heartless, apathetic nature of the Welsh who are no longer tender and humane. They have been roughed up by their environment. Their destiny is no different from that of Davies and the priest can do nothing about it: The priest cannot help them at all. He can only 'recall' and 'remember' how lonely farmers die with their faces to the wall in their primitive stone huts with slate roofs.

The farmer has a human form and figure all right; but he is hardly 'human'. He is more like a humanized automaton doing chores with metronomic regularity (given in the companion poems, not brought out here). Fate has been cruel to him and others, like him. Their spiritual mentor, the priest-poet, R.S.Thomas, is helpless to give them any comfort since the farmer is too stupid and their life and work are totally devoid of any transcendental implications. 'See what lingo is given to say:

I am Prytherch. Forgive me. I don't know

What you are talking about; your thoughts flow

Too swiftly for me.

Davies and lingo represent the Welsh hill country farmer. One question looms large before us: Do they know what they are deprived of? This poem is to be studied along with a large number of other poems of the same kind to have a balanced view of the early poetry of R.S.Thomas.

Caution: The above study material is no substitute for the poetry of R.S.Thomas. As his poems are readily available, an intense and in-depth study is recommended to have the correct profile of the poet. Bibliography:

Poetry of the Hidden God: Phillips D.Z.

Casebook: Gunn, Hughes and Thomas

Modern Poetry: Anthony Thwaite

Eight Contemporary Poets: Calvin Bedient

A Reader's Guide to Fifty Modern British poets: Michael Schmidt.

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ARNOLD WESKER

LIFE AND WORKS OF WESKER

Arnold Wesker was born in Seprey in the East End of London in 1932. His parents were of Jewish stock, his father a Russian tailor and his mother a Hungarian who worked in kitchens to support the family. He went to the Upton High School at Hackney in 1943 where he was trained in book-keeping, typing and shorthand in addition to the normal curriculum in High schools. In 1948 he left school and became an apprentice to a furniture maker, who could not afford to keep him for long because he was facing stiff competition. Wesker left him and became a carpenter's mate in a building firm. After about a year he left that job and worked in a bookshop, Simmonds, in Fleet Street. Here he remained for about eighteen months and left that and worked for Robert Copping in his basement bookshop. Shortly afterwards he went into the Royal Airforce where he was from 1950-52. In 1951 he wrote a novel *The Reed that Bent*.

From 1952-58 we see Wesker in another series of jobs; assistant in another bookshop, a plumber's mate, a seed sorter, a farm labourer, a builder's labourer, a kitchen porter, a pastry cook. In the last job in Paris he was able to save up some money, with which he took a course at the London School of Film Technique. In 1956 Wesker started writing a play *And After Today*, parts of which were later incorporated into *Chicken Soup with Baerly*. In 1955 he wrote short story *Pools* and in 1956 he wrote *The Kitchen*. When he wrote *The Kitchen* he was serving sweets in the Hungaria Restaurant. He says that when the urge to write is there you can find the time for it. "I virtually wrote *The Kitchen* in between serving sweets in the Hungaria Restaurant. I thought about it at least and made notes." He started writing another play, *Chicken Soup and Barley* in 1957.

In 1958 Wesker received the Arts Council award of 300. He wrote the play *Roots* in the same year and married Doreen Cecile Bicker. He won the Evening Standard award as "the most promising dramatist of the year" in 1959. He wrote *Chips with Everything* and released the film version of *The Kitchen* in the United States in

1960. In the same year he was in prison for one month for his agitation in protest against nuclear weapons and then he was appointed director of Centre 42.

A word about this centre. Wesker was a committed socialist and once he gave a lecture at the Student Drama Festival at Oxford, sponsored by the Sunday Times. He was invited to speak on 'the contemporary, playwright.' He did so and attacked the Labour movement for neglecting the role of art and the artist on society. He put the contents of his speech into a pamphlet and sent copies of it to several Labour party and trade union leaders, following it up with another pamphlet containing suggestions. One of the suggestions was that the T.U.C (Trade Union Congress) should hold an inquiry into the state of the arts. They took up the suggestions and moved a resolution at that year's T.U.C congress. This resolution was item no. 42 on the agenda. This led to the formation of Centre 42 with Wesker as its artistic director. The other members on the board gradually left it; it seemed too ambitious for them. Wesker comments: "I saw Centre 42 not only as an attempt to create something that would reach wider audience but as a project that would consolidate and give a continuing outlet to that whole band of new writers and directors and actors, who I instinctively felt, would be dismissed in a very short time because of the fashion - conscious rhythms of the cultural world."

Wesker continued writing plays and novels. He was offered the C.B.E but he refused to accept the title. In 1970 he persuaded the council of Centre 42 to dissolve itself. But he continued writing plays, film and television scripts and so on. Sometimes he directed these plays also. He has become famous and his plays have been produced in England as well as in the United States; Sweden, Germany etc.

Though Wesker was a Jew by birth, he was not seriously affected by the anti-Jewish feelings in England or abroad. When he was about fourteen he had joined a Jewish youth group, when his Jewish consciousness sharpened for a time but then it disappeared entirely. At its sharpest it only made him aware of having inherited a shared consciousness of the community's suffering. "I didn't experience much anti-semitism as a child. What I did discover I took

fairly flippantly. I mean I had socialist answers for why it existed. And we were a long way from what happened in Europe to the other Jews. But there does remain an inherited sense of history of persecution. And it is that which I think gives one a sense of identity' Wesker came from the East End of London but it didn't worry him that his people were poor. He enjoyed the street life with the other poor boys. As a boy he used to play truant and was often the leader of gangs. On the whole Wesker has been acclaimed as one of the major English dramatists of the second half of the twentieth century. The following are Wesker's dramatic works,

The Kitchen, Chicken Soup with Barley Roots, I'm Talking about Jerusalem, Chips with Everything, Their Very Own and Golden City, The Four Seasons, The Friends, The Old Ones, The Journalists, Love Letters on Blue Paper, The Merchant, The Wedding Feast, In addition to the above he has also some works of fiction to his credit. Among his non-fiction works *Fears of Fragmentation* (1970) and *Words as Definitions of Experience* contain significant insights into creative writing.

WESKER AS A DRAMATIST

Ronalds Hayman in his book *Arnold Wesker* (Contemporary Playwrights Series) observes. "He has taken risks which others would have thought foolhardy, but he has succeeded in bringing a kind of life to the English stage that was never there before. There had been plenty of working class characters in plays written before *Look Back in Anger* (1956) but no one had ever cut such large slices of the working life of the working classes and bundled them so unceremoniously on to a stage, saying, in effect, 'see how little I have to transcribe in order to give you drama' In 1955 no one would have thought it possible to make a large - scale success out of a one-act play with twenty-nine characters and with the whole action set in a kitchen. No one would have thought that a trilogy of plays about Jewish communists and Norfolk farm labourers would stand the remotest chance of being produced. And no one could have guessed that the West End would welcome an all - male play about National Service which grows into a swinging attack on our whole social system and ends with the National Anthem played to a seated audience." But this was what happened. Wesker made an impressive

entrance and gained the approval and acclaim of critics as a major dramatist of the times,

Let us turn now to Wesker's own words about his art. In an interview with Ronald Hayman, Wesker has observed: "In thinking about the structure of my work I have come to consider a possible theory about the composition of any work of art. On the assumption that all art is the recreation of experience whether imaginative or actual, then the recreative act happens under two headings. Both of which are valid. One heading could be called the organization of experience and the other the transformation of experience - transformation, that is, into poetry" He goes on to say that from such a theory we can analyse a work of art to discover how much of it is organizing and how much is transforming. The more moments of transformation we find the greater the work of art. But we should not undervalue the importance of the organizing work: How much of each play of Wesker is organization and how much it is transformation is for us to decide; it would be an interesting pursuit. Wesker says seventy five percent of *Roots* is organization and pays a tribute to Chekhov whose work is seventy five percent transformation. One thing is certain. The work in *A Kitchen in a large restaurant* is quite unpromising material for dramatic treatment but Wesker had succeeded in transforming it into a stage play.

The presence of a didactic element is obvious in Wesker's plays. He has a message; the plays are not mere entertainments. Broadly, speaking, thematically, the plays are studies in the potential for change and the failure to achieve it. More specifically Wesker's major concern seems to be the social pressures arising from the hectically busy life in the crowded cities. But it has to be noted that Wesker does not use the drama for propagandist purposes.

This brings us to Wesker's attitude to life as revealed through his approach to and his treatment of the problems of modern social life. To consider Wesker merely as a committed socialist would be too simplistic. The events in the plays do not lead us to the usual socialist answers to the problems. Wesker seems to steer clear of such answers in his open endings. No alternative is suggested or even hinted at. There is no revolution but only revolt. The end of

The Kitchen resembles the end of an existentialist novel as of. Kafka or Camus - a symbolic killing to register the individual's protest against the alien universe into which he is born, with this difference: Peter doesn't kill anyone but only destroys the gas connection and breaks a pile of plates, bringing the activities of the restaurant to a temporary halt. He also cuts his own arm. The expressionistic, the existentialist and the socialist elements and the open ending, all these together indicate a frank, detached, open-minded approach characteristic of British liberalism and of a scientific, philosophic temper.

The plot line is not important. In many famous plays and novels plot is seldom of serious concern. Especially in the case of *The Kitchen* the work and the workers form the staple, not the background. Moreover the treatment is discursive and episodic. Characterization is much more important. Here too Wesker has dared to tread difficult ground,

There are twenty-nine characters in *The Kitchen* and only two in another play. But considering all aspects of the question, we can say that Wesker's characters are sufficiently individual and credible to remain in our memory as men and women of real life. Such are Peter, Paul, Dimitri, Kevin and even the chef and the proprietor. The dialogues similarly are suited to the characters and setting. The setting and the view of life have already been touched upon.

An interesting point about Wesker as a dramatist is the autobiographical element in these plays, not that his personality intrudes into the action, but that he has gone through similar situations in his own life. Wesker had worked in kitchens and restaurants, he had heartbreaking moments in his childhood when his parents quarrelled with each other - (but he adored them both) and so on. Such things from his memory often recur in the course of the action of the plays,

Wesker's workmanship deserves special mention. He wrote and rewrote, his plays. *The Merchant* has as many as six drafts and *The Old Ones* five. This is mentioned to show that Wesker was a careful artist though sometimes, as in *The Kitchen*, he writes on impulse. A gradual development in Wesker's dramatic art has been noticed and commended upon by critics. This development is many

sided and wide - ranging. It is seen in closer attention to craftsmanship, in the management of exposition, the flexibility of the speech patterns and such things as the evocation of mood. Varied rhetorical weight etc. .

The most pervasive and unifying concern that runs through all Wesker's plays is "the search for systematic sense in life, for an interpretation that is at least workably inclusive yet also life-affirming" (Glenda Leeming and Simon Trussler in *The Plays of Arnold Wesker*)

To conclude, Wesker has made significant contributions to the English dramatic tradition and earned a place for himself in English literature.

THE KITCHEN

A SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

A neatly unfolding plot - line with a beginning, middle and end as demanded by Aristotle in the fourth century B.C or as diagrammatically triangulated by Freytag in this century with an initial incident, a complication, a crisis, a resolution and a catastrophe, eludes us in this play as well as in some other plays of Wesker. To write down the story in outline is almost impossible as there is no story in the conventional sense. The scene is a kitchen of a busy restaurant in London serving about two thousand customers a day. The duration is less than twelve hours. The stage direction tells us that it is 7a.m. when the play begins. There is no curtain at the beginning of the play or at its end.

The whole-play is divided in to two acts and an interlude in between. The first act shows the forenoon hours in the kitchen and the second act the busy hectic, evening session. The exact time at the end of the play is not given. The interlude is an interval when there is no service.

The night porter wakes up, looks at his watch - it is seven in the morning - and he switches on a light which barely shows the kitchen. The he lights up the oven, which soon emits a steady hum. This is a noise that continues throughout. As all the ovens are lighted the hum grows into a loud, ferocious roar. There is a constant battle between this noise and the dialogue. At times the noise falls or rises

in unison with the tempo of the din and bustle of the kitchen.

Wesker himself has declared in "the introduction and notes for the producer" at the beginning of the text as follows: "This is a play about a large kitchen in a restaurant called Tivoli. All kitchens, especially during service, go insane. There is the rush, there are petty quarrels, grumbles, false prides, and snobbery. Kitchen staff instinctively hate dining room staff, and all of them hate the customer. He is the personal enemy, The world might have been a stage for Shakespeare but to me it is a kitchen where people come and go and cannot stay long enough to understand each other, and friendships, loves, and enmities are forgotten as quickly as they are made..... The quality of the food here is not so important as the speed with which it is served".

There is very little dramatic incident. There is only routine work in the restaurant kitchen and the casual conversation among the workers.

ACT ONE

The night porter wakes up switches a light on and lights up the ovens. The cooks, the porters, and the waitresses come in gradually. They greet one another. Anne asks Raymond what happened to Peter the previous day. We gather from their conversation that Peter was involved in a fight with Gaston over some trifle. Nobody seems to know the details. We also understand that Peter is a German and that he has always been quarrelling with someone or other. He has been in this restaurant for three years. Max comments "he is a bloody German fool". Anne, remarks that the boy is in love. Raymond says he watches Monique the waitress through the mirror. He is watchful to see if she is flirting with anyone. He is jealous. Paul adds that they quarrel in front of everyone. Sometimes she doesn't even look at him but waits for her orders with her back turned towards him. Anne expresses her sympathy with Peter: "Poor boy. He's no parents".

To Raymond's question Magi answers that they nearly killed him the night before. He was in a fighting mood. She was not there. Even Paul who was there says that they suddenly started shouting at each other - Peter and Gaston. The latter raised a knife and Peter knocked it out of his-hand, lifted up Gaston and almost sat him

on the stove. Then the chef came and separated them. No one knows what it was all about. When Magi came in at nine last night, Gaston said that Peter called him a lousy Cypriot. All the boys crowded round him, they wanted to hit him and he was scared white. Max provides the information that it was about a ladle. Anne asks, "You wouldn't think this place will become a madhouse in two hours would you?" Her remark is significant. It proves to be quite true as we are going to see.

They disperse but the service has not yet become busy. Dimitri, a Cypriot kitchen porter comes with a portable record player that he himself has made. It looks somewhat crude but it works. Raymond is surprised at the boys talents and asks him why he does not get a job in a factory instead of washing dishes here. Dimitri's reply is a profound comment on modern technology. "All day I would screw in knobs. I tell you, in a factory a man makes a little piece till he becomes a little piece". Another comment of Dimitri is equally significant. He says it was not all Peter's fault. They all wanted to fight, "You put a man in the plate room all day, he's got dishes to make clean and stinking bins to take away and floors to sweep, what else there is for him to do - he wants to fight. He got to show he is a man someway. So - blame him!" They play a record on Dimitri's instrument and some of them try to dance to the pop music. A waitress rushes on and warns them of the approach of Marango, the proprietor of the restaurant. The scene becomes quiet.

Afredo comes in, followed by Gaston and then Michael. Hans escorts Kevin, the new cook. We get an idea of the place and the nature of the work going on there, the men and women of different nationalities, races and religions from their attempts at introducing Kevin the new cook to his work. (his is a clever technique on the part of the dramatist to introduce expository material) Soon the tempo of the work hots up gradually. Frayed tempers begin to show and then quieten down. There is an exchange of hot words between Nick and Bertha over a tray of sliced potatoes. Nick says he had prepared it for himself. Bertha asks him to get his salad from the veg. room. When he exclaims "bloody hell" she asks him to "bloody hell" in his own country. "This is my country" says Nicholas and Bertha reports: "The lavatory is your country" and then calls

him a lousy little foreigner. Then the quarrel dies down.

As Kevin is introduced to the work, Peter enters with his characteristic laugh "hya hya hya..." From the conversation that follows we understand that Peter and Hans are Germans (they speak a few German sentences) and that Kevin is Irish. Peter expresses his regret and says, "sorry" to Gaston, who seems to be in no mood to forgive Peter for the black eye he got from him. Peter offers himself to be treated similarly and asks Gaston to give him a black eye in return. Again he comments that they are all lunatics. A quarrel starts and it goes on for months. When one apologizes the other doesn't know how to accept it. Max shouts to Hans and Raymond to speak English when they are in England. Peter asks him what is wrong with him and if he is frightened of something. Max replies bluntly that he is not frightened of Peter and asks him to keep quiet. He goes on to point out what is wrong with Max. He has been working in the same place for twenty-one years; he needs a change. He suggests that he go and work in Germany for a season. There's calm again. Mr. Marango the proprietor enters. Kevin remarks that he never sweated such as now since his honeymoon. He asks if it is like this everyday and Peter advises him to wait till they start serving. This is only the beginning. Marango asks Kevin if he is the new cook and seeing him sweat, comments. "Never mind, I pay you well. Just work, that's all, just work well." To Kevin the old man appears to be kind and it is Peter again who makes one more chorus-like comment. He tells Kevin that Marango speaks kindly because it is summer and he is short of staff. In winter you can see his real nature, finding fault with everything. "He is not a man, he is a restaurant". Life in a kitchen is no life.

Now we get a glimpse of Monique, and Peter proudly points her out to Kevin as his future wife. We also get a glimpse of the chef's character. He is indifferent and knowing nothing except when something goes wrong. Monique scolds Peter for fighting with Gaston. They have their petty quarrel for a moment. It is comparatively calm while the kitchen and dining room staff have their meal. Hans come screaming and covering his face with his hands. A pot of hot water fell on his face and has scalded him. Frank the second chef says it is mad to take responsibility. The chef answers that he

has taken it for the money. He has to keep up his standard of living. Kevin is sick of the job already. Peter has been at it for three years. Hans wants to go to America. He has been there twice. As they go on eating and talking, Peter places a glass of water in the cup of Frank's cap and laughs at his. There is a brief conversation between Peter and Monique. He wants her to inform her husband that she is leaving him to become Peter's wife. She refuses to do it.

The tempo quickens. Waitresses come and go giving orders to the cooks and taking the plates to the dining room. There is a great deal of shouting and movement. The place looks like a madhouse. Kevin asks just that "Jesus, is this a bloody madhouse or something? You all gone mad?" The lights fade.

INTERLUDE

This represents the interval between the morning and the evening services. The lights fade and there is the sound of a guitar. The roar of the ovens is reduced to a half of what it was earlier: Kevin is dead tired and he talks to himself aloud telling him to quit the place. This is no place for a human being. Dimitri points out to him that it is no better anywhere else. "This stinking kitchen is like the world....It is too fast to know what happens. People come and go, big excitement, big noise" We do not even make lasting friendships. We forget each other soon. Peter comments that this madhouse will always be here. We all go but this kitchen will remain. It means nothing to you and you mean nothing to the kitchen "The world is filled with kitchens - only some they call offices and some they call factories." Kevin asks whether they want to find it gone. Hans remarks in German that Peter is dreaming. Then Peter asks everyone present how they would dream. To Dimitri it is impossible to dream with iron around him and dustbins and black walls. Dimitri would dream of a little shed where he would make tools and instruments. Kevin dreams of sleep, Hans dreams of money and Raymond of women, Paul dreams of a friend. He thinks that Peter is a pig but since he gives him rest and silence and takes away this mad kitchen he would consider him a friend. But for the mad kitchen, all the people he thought were pigs are not so much pigs. He goes on to give an instance. He had a friend next door, a bus driver. Though he helped him in all ways the fellow wanted to drop a bomb on a

procession of peace marchers (of which Paul was a member) because they held up traffic. The millions of people like this driver are pigs. There is a wall between them and Paul. All this mad scramble should go. But how do you and I live? He wants an answer and he asks what is Peter's own dream. Peter goes away with Monique without saying anything about his own dream. The lights fade and the interlude is over.

ACT TWO

All the workers have had their meal. The evening service begins. Alfredo points out to Peter that he is not ill, he has all his teeth, he has good lodgings and that he eats enough. So then what is he unhappy for? Peter replies that Alfredo is a good cook and works harder than others and never grumbles. He asks him if this is a good house. "It depends; it's not bad for Marango, this is Alfredo's answer. Good and bad, he implies, is a matter of one's standpoint. He has worked in places unlike this where he could do good cooking. It doesn't matter now. He works only for the money. Michael says he loves the sound of the ovens and Peter calls him an idiot. The casual conversation continues among the various groups. It is mostly about the place and the near madhouse like condition. Kevin wishes to leave the place, the high pressure and the bad cooking. He never cooked so bad since when he was in the army. Hans tells him that Marango will try to make him stay. We also gather that Paul is a Jew and Hans a German, suffering together.

A tramp comes in who says he was crippled in the war and that he has lost his pension book. He begs for food. The chef orders Max to give him some soup. Peter goes and looks in the tin, takes it from the tramp and throws it in to the dustbin asking Max to drink it. He brings two meat cutlets and gives them to the beggar. There are heated exchanges between him and the chef. Mr. Marango comes in and the chef explains that Peter gave the fellow a cutlet from his own supper, but Marango exclaims it is sabotage. It is his fortune that they are throwing away. When he has moved into the dining room, Peter exclaims "A bastard man. A bastard house" They ask him for his dream and Peter replies that he can't dream in a kitchen. As he says this the work in the Kitchen is heard extra loud. (an expressionistic device; the roar of the ovens is another). Monique

enters. Soon she embraces Peter and nips his buttocks. A passing waitress takes Monique's hand from Peter's buttocks and places it on his shoulders warning her to be careful. While the two continue to talk affectionately a cry is heard from the back of the kitchen. The same waitress has fallen down in pain and become unconscious. A crowd gathers. Monique tells Peter that her husband Monty has promised that they will have a house of their own and implies that she won't give him up. From the conversation of the others we understand that the waitress who fell down has taken pills for abortion. A waitress says there are four other girls here who have taken the same pills. She indicates that one of the four is Monique. A waitress takes a plate of fish without asking Peter. He snatches it from her hand and smashes it on the floor. He insists that it is his right to serve the orders. The waitresses cannot take away anything without his permission. She can do what she likes in the dining room. The argument between them becomes heated and the waitress calls him "Bosch" and "a bloody German bastard" He is aroused. He screams at her "Say it again" and smashes the gas pipe with a chopper. Running into the dining room he throws down a pile of crockery on to the floor and rips his own hands. Frank, Alfred and Hanss bring Peter back and ties his hands Monique, weeping, goes to fetch first aid. The chef is impatient but he is gently moved away by Alfredo. Kevin remarks "I knew something like this' would happen, now I just knew it. When you take away a man's' dignity he is fighting mad. Can you see that now?" Marango comes in exclaiming that he, Peter, has stopped his whole world. Frank tells that "the boy is going", he is very ill. He asks Marango to calm down but he goes on repeating that he pays well, they eat what they want. What more do they want? "What is there more? tell me." The act ends with a stage direction saying ["We have seen there must be something more and so the lights must slowly fade"] Then the curtain falls.

EXPLANATORY NOTES ~

P 20 escallop (e) : slice of boneless meat esp. of veal.

Veal : calf's flesh.

pastry : baked flour paste

religieuse: possibly a day of religious observance when Jews

should not handle certain kinds of food.

21 .chef: head cook

22. Pools : football pools; people enter bets, as in horse races, about the winning teams in a series of football matches; correct predictions win prizes.

Norwich and Leyton : Two football teams.

He speaks with an accent: he speaks English unlike a native speaker, somewhat with a foreign accent.

saute: (food) fried lightly and quickly.

30. hostess: Women employed to welcome customers

35. Swipe : Steal

41. madhouse : lunatic asylum; hospital for madmen. also (fig.) confused uproar.

52. You are a Jew - I am a German: In Hitler's Germany the Jews were denounced and persecuted, here they two suffer together. Note the irony of the situation.

Rommel : German General who overran the best part of Africa in the Second World War. Note: begging is prohibited in Britain and therefore there is no open begging.

53. sabotage : deliberate destruction of property such as factory equipment by dissatisfied workmen.

fortune : wealth.

55. passed out: become unconscious

56. row: quarrel .

57. citroen ; Volkswagen; Jaguar: different makes of fine motor

pills : pills for bringing off an abortion.

bosche : (also boche) a French term of abuse for a German.

TEXTUAL AND CRITICAL ESSAYS

1. *Wesker as a dramatist: a general estimate*

After innumerable little jobs ranging from pastry cook to member of the Royal Air Force Wesker discovered his vocation in writing, especially writing of plays. Daring to tread risky ground and turning to dramatic form usually intractable and therefore unlikely material such as the maddening routine work in a crowded kitchen of a large restaurant, and proceeding steadily to improve his art, he

soon came to be recognized as a major dramatist of the times who has made a substantial contribution to the growth of the English Drama.

Some critics have patronisingly described Wesker as a simple dramatist who writes simple plays, in the sense that his plays are easy to understand whose meaning is obvious. But discerning critics have pointed out that this estimate itself is too simplistic. A closer examination will reveal that this impression is superficial. But Wesker himself has mentioned more than once the complexity of choices and delicate adjustments that all his thinking characters have to make.

In spite of the open ending in *The Kitchen* and other plays a didactic strain marks all the plays of Wesker. He has a message to convey through his plays. The significance of the plays consists in these messages, not in the handling of plot and character. This takes us to his themes. He is generally concerned with the social pressures that the individual has to face in modern life. The plays are studies in the potential for change and failure to achieve it. The dramatic conflicts resolve themselves into the clash 'between man; the individual human being and the dehumanising society in which he has to exist. The predicament faced by the human being is thus at once existentialist and socialist. But Wesker doesn't bring in his socialist answers for this problem as he has stated in connection with semitism. He puts by those answers and therefore the open ending of the plays. He does not turn these problems to account for propagandist purposes. In this he is more of a liberal than of a socialist. This leads us to his integral approach.'

The broadly liberal outlook which Wesker has developed seems to have influenced his writings in many ways. He has admitted that he had inherited a shared consciousness of the Jewish community's suffering. But he does not allow any rancour to come out in his writings. He is a committed socialist and the response is present in the way in which the characters react to the heartless cruelty and apathy of the modern capitalist industrial society. But he does not present socialist solutions like the creation of a classless society through war, nor does he even imply such a solution. He has a streak of existentialist thought, which comes out in *The*

Kitchen as a final gesture of revolt against the dehumanising atmosphere as in the symbolic killing in the novels of Kafka. But in Wesker's case the gesture consists in destruction of property, not in killing anyone. He presents the racial, national and social animosities as divisive forces, the implication being that disintegration is harmful to the individual and to society, Integration is the obvious answer. He seems to have integrated his semitism, socialism and existentialism into his response to life and its problems His sympathy for all the characters point out his humanist temperament. The integral trait is seen in his readiness to accept everything good. Such is his use of the expressionist technique, for example the hum of the ovens in *The Kitchen* which rise and fall in unison with the rise and fall of the tension, The work in the kitchen is heard extra loud when Peter exclaims that he can't dream in kitchen. (see next essay)

Let's take a glimpse into the usual ingredients of a drama. The plot or story was not taken very seriously even by great dramatists like Shakespeare and great novelists like Dickens and Thackeray. With such unconventional material as Wesker's in *The Kitchen* a clean plot -line is beside the point. In plot management Wesker's mode is discursive and episodic: Characterization is quite satisfactory within the limits imposed by the incidents. Where there are only a few characters Wesker is quite successful. Even in *The Kitchen* with twenty-nine characters Wesker has succeeded in creating credible and individual characters who are true to life. The dialogue reflects the working class idiom, which has become acceptable on the stage for some time past. Wesker has also managed the dramatic unities of time and place quite successfully and the unity of action as far as it is possible within the limits of the "action" chosen. The organization of material and its transformation into an artistically satisfying drama - this is the work of a dramatist according to Wesker. He has succeeded in this basic task also. Wesker has remarked once that in *The Kitchen* he had little to do by way of organizing the material. The contusion, the slanging matches, the sick hurry, the madhouse like condition, that was what he was dramatizing and he had only to reproduce the scene in a large kitchen in a busy restaurant without any effort at organizing

the incidents.

The drama, says Hamlet, holds the mirror upto life, so does all literature; it reflects life. The woes, the miseries, the problems of life change from time to time yielding place to new ones. Here are vital problems of our times craving attention, of the artist, and Wesker coming from the slums of the East End of London, has given expression to the vital problems of modern life and compelled the conventional West End circles to accept him as a major dramatist. This is not mere chance but the result of hard work. An all round development in dramatic craftsmanship has been noticed in Wesker by the critics, in plot management, characterization, creation of atmosphere etc. He wrote and rewrote the plays several times, and he has come to stay.

2. THE KITCHEN: A CRITICAL ESTIMATE

A veritable madhouse - a large Kitchen in a large restaurant in the busy city of London, twenty-nine characters including cooks, porters, waitresses, a chef and second chef, the proprietor and the constant roar of the ovens - this is the physical setting of the play. Many of the men and women are English, some Germans, some Cypriots and some Irish. Some are Jews. "You are a Jew" says Hans Paul and me - I am German; we suffer together" The, lavatory is your country " Says Bertha to Nick who returns the compliments to her. Peter calls Gaston "a lousy Cyprio". Hans and Raymond speak to each other in German and Max reacts violently: "You are in England now, speak bloody English. Everybody speaking a different language, French, Italian German". And the last provocation to Peter from the waitress, "You Bosch you. You bloody German bastard!" This last brings about the catastrophic ending. The national, social, religious animosities, the rush, the confusion, the maddening roar of the shouting almost submerged in the fierce roar of the ovens - this is the setting of the action. Truly this is the very action that is sought to be dramatized in the play. The pandemonium of noise, the maddening speed of work, the frayed tempers, the dehumanizing atmosphere, this is the staple of the play.

Out of this confusion and disorder Wesker has turned out a stage play, which soon captured the attention and acceptance even of conservative critics and theatres in the West End of London. The

oppressive atmosphere provokes opposition from almost everyone. There are one or two like Alfredo, who works only for the money and Michael, who says he loves the sound of the ovens. All the others revolt against the whole state of affairs, the system. Kevin on his very first day of work exclaims that he never sweated so much since his honeymoon days and that' he never cooked such bad food since he was in the army. For him this is a madhouse, "this is no place for a human being". Peter who suggested that they dream during the lull exclaims, when pressed to say what he would dream about, "I can't dream in a kitchen". Asked about his dream Dimitri answers "In this place? With iron around me? And dustbins? And black walls?"

How does this madhouse get its significance? Dimitri tells Kevin the new cook "This stinking Kitchen is like the world; the excitement, the noise, the people coming and going and you forgetting them soon" Peter comments, "this madhouse, it's always here:..... it will go on when we die.....The world is filled with kitchens- only some they call offices and some they call factories". Wesker himself declared in his "introduction and notes for the producer". "The world might have been; a stage for Shakespeare, but to me it is a kitchen, where people come and go and cannot stay long enough to understand each other, and friendships, loves and enmities are forgotten as quickly as they are made. The quality of the food here is not so important as the speed with which it is served." The Kitchen is the microcosm of the world which is the macrocosm. The last sentence of the quotation just given indicates that it is specially the modern world, the modern industrialized capitalist society that is symbolized by the Kitchen. Dimitrios the Kitchen porter has technical talents and has assembled a record player. When he is asked why he doesn't seek a job in a factory he replies". All day I would screw in knobs. I tell you, in a factory a man makes a little piece till he becomes a little piece". This is a comment on the modern industrial system with its mass production and assembly line. Instead of becoming a cog in a wheel in a factory he has become a cog in another wheel cleaning dishes and removing stinking bins all the day and every day.

The message of the play is clear. It is a vivid and telling com-

ment on the modern capitalist, industrial society with its craze for unlimited growth, speed and over-centralization. In the midst of this gigantic growth in size and speed there are the inevitable elements of animosities, racial, social, national and religious and the fraying of tempers leading to tension and disequilibrium. This is the socio economic or socialist response to the madhouse of modern society. All of us are workers in offices and factories and we are called upon to cater to the needs of other people like us, the consumers. They themselves are working in offices and factories catering to our needs; we are all working in Kitchens where the quality of the food does not matter, it is the speed that matters. Thus the whole world is a Kitchen.

In Wesker's hands the social conflicts and the dehumanizing atmosphere receive something more than a socialist response. The individual revolting against the alien environment that stifles his ego is the characteristic existentialist response that we see in the novels of Kafka and others ending in a symbolic killing. The symbolic gesture of revolt in *The Kitchen* consists in the destruction of some property and no killing. Peter's violence is inflicted on himself; he wounds his own arm.

If there are the predisposing influences on Peter the precipitating influence is that Monique has told him that she is not going to leave her husband. Peter loves her and is proud of her and she returns the love. So he has been hoping to have her as his wife. They had planned to do so; it is obvious from their conversation. Now his hope is shattered and he is like a volcano. When the waitress calls him "You Bosch, you German bastard" the Volcano explodes into violence. This is the psychological portrayal of character, which is managed effectively by Wesker. Characterization on the whole in the play is quite satisfactory considering the number involved. Half a dozen of them capture our attention and remain in our memory as individual and credible characters. Such are Peter, Paul, Kevin, and Dimitri.

Another interesting aspect of Wesker's art is the expressionistic touch adopted by him. Expressionism at first introduced by Strindberg the Swedish dramatist, is a radical revolt against realism. Instead of representing the world as it objectively is, the inner

experience is expressed by representing the world as it appears to the mind. Often the work implies that this mental condition is representative of the troubled world and the anxiety ridden man in it. Of the various techniques used for this are special effects in lighting and sound. In *The Kitchen* the humming of the ovens throughout the action rising on occasion to a ferocious roar and subsiding, sometimes to half of its intensity helps in creating the special effect. When Peter exclaims "A dream! I can't dream in a Kitchen", the noise in the Kitchen is heard extra loud. This kind of effect other than what is derived from the mere text of the play is usual expressionistic device: Wesker uses it to telling effect in the play.

Another point worth noting is the observance of the unities of time and place. The location is a Kitchen throughout and the time of action is less than a day. The action is episodic and discursive and we don't look for the unity of action. The very confusion and disorganisation is the staple of the action. A plot line in such a context is beside the point.

An artistically satisfying play made up from the most unpromising material - this is how we can sum up the play.

Other suggested topics

1. Attempt a character sketch of Peter.
2. Comment on Wesker's skill in portraying character.
3. Comment on the open ending of the play.
4. Recreation of experience, imaginative or actual involves two things according to Wesker - organization and transformation. Examine this diction in relation to *The Kitchen*.

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HAROLD PINTER THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

INTRODUCTION

LIFE AND WORKS

Pinter was born of Jewish parents at Hackney, a borough in London on 10th October 1930. His father was a tailor and he had a house of his own. They were not well off; the father had to work for twelve hours a day. The father's business eventually failed and he had to work for wages. The beauty and ugliness of the place and the economic insecurity of his boyhood seem to have influenced his writing throughout. The brooding sense of danger underneath the apparent calm on the surface, the sense of unreal gentility, the mingling of ordinary English with cockney, all these are the heritage of his boyhood at Hackney.

The Jewish population of North London was about 40,000 when Pinter was born. Hitler's concerted anti-Jewish propaganda had its reverberations in the East End of London leading to violence and retribution in the late 1930's. This was followed by the Second World War and the series of air raids on London. Everyone of that generation in England was in the grip of fear and uncertainty. But the Jews were the worst affected. They were the butt of Nazi fury and their fear and anxiety of a possible Nazi dominated post-war world were almost palpable. Einstein, a German Jew by birth, left Europe and settled down at Princeton U.S.A for good. This was the background against which Pinter grew up.

When the war broke out many people were evacuated from London. Pinter was taken to a castle in Cornwall along with some other boys. The separation from the parents and the domestic insecurity and familiar surroundings accentuated the anxiety and fear of the boy. It must have engendered the sense of alienation which we find in the existentialist strain in Pinter's writings. After a while Pinter's mother took him back and lived with him at a place near London.

At school Pinter was fairly bright and active. He played cricket and football, ran races, acted and wrote verses. He contributed ar-

ticles to his school magazine and took part in debates. Leaving school in 1947, Pinter joined the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art with a government grant but played truant. At the age of eighteen he was called up for compulsory national service. But he declared himself a conscientious objector to war; had to face trial twice and was fined. Two poems by Pinter were published in the magazine Poetry, London in 1950. After one or two roles in radio features he became a professional actor for the B.B.C. In 1951 he toured Ireland as an actor in Anew McMaster's touring theatrical company. He married Vivian Merchant, a fellow actress when they were both in the repertory company at the Palace Court Theatre in 1956. During this period-about 1954 to 1957 Pinter worked in many repertory companies and adopted the stage name of David Barron. When out of work he had to take a variety of jobs such as waiter, dishwasher, salesman etc.

Pinter's first play *The Room* was written and produced by the Drama Department of Bristol University in 1957. After seeing it produced Pinter went on to write *The Dumb Waiter*, another one act play and *The Birthday Party*, a full length play in three acts. *The Birthday Party* was first performed at Cambridge and then in London (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith) in May 1958. Most of the reviewers reacted unfavourably. But Harold Hobson, the drama critic of the *Sunday Times* wrote very favourably about the play. He said it was a first rate play and that its author possessed "the most original, disturbing and arresting talent in theatrical London." He went on to say:

"The influence of unfavourable notices on the box office is enormous; in lasting effect it is nothing. *Look Back in Anger* and the work of Beckett both received poor notices the morning after production. But that has not prevented those writers, Mr. Beckett and Mr. Osborne, from being regarded throughout the world as the most important dramatists who now use the English tongue. The early Shaw got bad notices; Ibsen got scandalous notices. Mr. Pinter is not only in good company, he is in the very best company..... Mr. Pinter and *The Birthday Party*, despite their experience last week, will be heard of again."

After reading these comments of Hobson, Michael Codron

bought an option on the *Birthday Party* for fifty pounds. A son, Daniel was' born to Pinter in this year. Pinter went on to write radio plays and some full - length plays also (see below) and played in television productions. He was awarded the G.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 1966. In 1973 Pinter was appointed Associate Director of the National Theatre. Vivien sued for a divorce and left Pinter in 1980. Later that year he got married to Lady Antonia Fraser, the former wife of Hugh Fraser, M.P. He has also written screen plays based on various novels. The following are Pinter's works,

FULL-LENGTH PLAYS

1. The Birthday Party (1958)
2. The Caretaker (1960)
3. The Home Coming (1965)
4. Old Times (1971)
5. No Man's Land (1975) 6. Betrayal (1978)

In addition to the above he has written several one-act plays and radio and television plays such as *The Dumb Waiter*, *A Slight Ache*, *A Night Out*, *Tea Party* etc. Film versions of his own stage plays and novels of others, besides a few poems, have come from Pinter's pen.

PINTER'S PLAYS — SALIENT FEATURES

The *Birthday Party* has been described as a 'Comedy of Menace'. There are elements of comedy - we are kept amused - and at the same time there is a vague sense of fear, of something lurking behind the scene. Pinter seems to convey to us a sense that peace is illusive, that it might be shattered by the appearance of an intruder- a neighbour, a stranger or one from the past. Pinter himself once said that "menace and fear do not come from extraordinary sinister people but from you and me, it is all a matter of circumstance". This brooding sense of fear-is not confined to *The Birthday Party*. It is pervasive in most of Pinter's plays.

This is the outcome of Pinter's boyhood influences especially his life at Hackney in the years before the Second World War and the frightful experiences of the war itself. The persecution of the Jews in Germany and its repercussions in England, particularly the Jewish quarters of London, where the Jews were isolated by

the fascist elements, seem to have left their stamp in the boy's mind. England, the most powerful country in the world was being defeated on all fronts. Their retreat from Dunkirk leaving the whole of Europe in Hitler's hands sent a sense of anxiety and terror into the minds of all peace-loving people of England. The future was bleak for them. A world dominated by Nazi Germany was a nightmare that disturbed everyone. But the Jews of London must have felt it most. The menace that lurked round the corner was not fantasy but an almost palpable reality to the Jews. The evacuation of the boys from London and their sense of insecurity and alienation must have deepened this fear. Pinter's early plays reflect this sense of menace. These works may yield symbolic meanings that may be universally applicable. But much of his writings have specific origins traceable to his early life at Hackney.

Violence actual or potential is one such theme; another is the fear, the menace mentioned earlier. Still another theme of Pinter's plays is appearance and illusion. Pinter has declared "there are no hard distinctions between what is true and what is false, it can be both true and false. The assumption that to verify what has happened and what is happening presents no problems, I take to be inaccurate. Another theme is tranquillity and chaos. The urge to probe oneself and arrive at a self-definition and the relationship of the individual to the group - these are some other recurring themes in Pinter's plays.

The plot and the characters usually have a very important place in the evaluation of play. The only thing worth nothing in Pinter's characterization is a certain difference in emphasis from the conventional method of piling significant details about the appearances, the actions and utterances and motivation. The conventional method take the past histories of the men and women as solid ground to build on. Pinter is concerned with only what is said and done on the stage. We know Stanley's past (in *The Birthday Party*) from this own description of it. We know that he has falsified it but we don't go beyond the falsification. What matters is that he is falsifying it but this does not mean that they are vague. They do create very definite impressions. However it is true that we don't

get any idea of their physical appearance. Here are Pinter's own words about characters: "A character on the stage who can present no convincing argument or information as to his past experiences, 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, alarmingly, can do all these things. The more acute the experience the less, articulate the expressions. The story line of Pinter is usually subject to the same indefiniteness as his characters. Hobson's review in the *Sunday Times* contains the following statement "Theatrically speaking, *The Birthday Party* is absorbing. It is witty. Its characters are fascinating. The plot...is first rate. The whole play has the same atmosphere of delicious, impalpable and hair-raising terror which makes the *Turn of the Screw* one of the best stories in the world". It has been said that *The Birthday Party* is a complete play but someone has left out the beginning and end. So long as the dramatic aim is achieved i.e. communicating the sense of "menace" this is not a serious weakness. Bernard Shaw had to face the same charge of incompleteness of plot.

The dialogues and the style of Pinter's plays have attracted considerable attention. Ordinary people engaged in conversation do not follow grammar or logic. Only a tiny minority of people speak rationally and logically in ordinary conversation. Even they do not keep up the systematic, rational mode through out. But in literature the decorum of rationality is kept up. In dramatic dialogue the men and women listen to each other and answer each other intelligently. Pinter has taken his dialogues nearer to real life conversation. He has caught the repetitions, inconsequential, illogical ungrammatical mode of common conversation in his dialogues. Ronald Haymon comments: "This is writing which succeeds by breaking all the rules of writing. It is good because it is so realistically full of bad syntax, tautologies, Pleonasm, repetitions non-squatters and self-contradictions. The characters are not only uninterested in listening, they are hardly interested in what they are saying themselves", (Harold Pinter. Heinemann, London). Sometimes Pinter exploits the very weakness to depict character. Language becomes a function of character just as character is a function of the theme. But the so called "Pinteresque" style does not stand still. Pinter uses such things

a little more subtly as he progresses. Yet another feature of Pinter's dialogues is that he specializes in one-sided dialogue, one person speaking and the other listening. Osborne also does it but Pinter is more detached and is interested equally in the speaker and the listener. He doesn't identify himself with the speaker. "His focus is always on the unbalance."

Another aspect of Pinter's plays is a certain element of mystery. The motivations are not even hinted at. This is also pervasive in Pinter's plays. According to him we can't get at motives and motives often do not matter. Sometimes the characters themselves and sometimes the spectators are left mystified. Some critics say Pinter is deliberately withholding information from his audience just to tease them. Once Pinter received a letter from a lady as follows:

"Dear Sir,

I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your play "The Birthday Party". These are the points which I do not understand.

1) Who are the two men?

2) Where did Stanley come from?

3) Were they all supposed to be normal?

You will appreciate that without the answers to my questions I cannot fully understand your play".

Pinter replied: Dear Madam,

I would be obliged if you would kindly explain to me the meaning of your letter. These are the points which I do not understand.

1) Who are you?

2) Where did you come from?

3) Are you supposed to be normal?

You will appreciate that without the answers to these questions I cannot fully understand your letter."

The problems of identity, motivation and of verification are genuine problems to Pinter, who believes that these are beyond human knowledge in our present state of knowledge. We do not know what motivates our own kith and kin. How then can a dramatist be expected to know everything about his characters? The best that he can do is to communicate his own sense of mystery and wonder to the audience.

There is an existentialist streak in Pinter. He has acknowledged the influence of Beckett and Kafka among others such as Hemingway, James Joyce and Dostoevsky. He believes that the mode of a man's being determines his thinking. Therefore, in order to get at the root of his attitude the dramatist must approach a character at the most decisive point in his life when he is confronted with the crisis of adjustment with himself. This existential adjustment determines one's attitude to men and matters, to life itself. Man's existential fear as an everyday occurrence permeates Pinter's works. But unlike Kafka and Beckett who move in a world of fantasy and dream, Pinter stands firm on the ground of everyday reality.

One other matter that deserves notice especially with reference to *The Birthday Party* is how various critics have interpreted the play in various ways. One interpretation is that the play is about man's fear of being driven out from his safe earth. Another view is that it is about growing up and the expulsion from the world of childhood. According to another view Stanley is the artist who is claimed back from his bohemian existence and compelled by society to conform to its own standards of behaviour. Yet another view is that Goldberg and McCam represent Stanley's own unconscious urges.

A BRIEF SUMMARY AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY

ACT One

Meg, a woman in her sixties, is running a boarding house in a town near the sea. Her husband Petey is about the same age. He is working as a deck-chair attendant on the beach. Stanley Webber, a man in his thirties is their boarder. The play opens with the old couple in casual conversation. Meg behaves as a mother to Stanley but she is a sort of mother-mistress. She asks Petey if Stanley has come down for breakfast. She recalls those days when Stanley used to play the Piano on the pier to the sea bathers. Stanley then was a member of a concert party. But now he is unemployed and doesn't go out. Petey tells Meg that two men are seeking accommodation in the boarding house for two days. Meg assures him that there is a room ready for them.

Meg goes upstairs to bring Stanley down for breakfast. She wakes him up with a great deal of shouting and comes down with hair dishevelled. Perhaps there was an amorous struggle between the two. She tells Petey that she had threatened Stanley with no breakfast if he didn't come down immediately. Breakfast is brought. Conversation ensues. Petey is reading the paper. Stanley says he did not get any sleep at night. He asks Petey how the weather is outside. He is told there is a breeze blowing but it is not very cold. The cornflakes are no good because the milk has turned sour. Stanley wants something else for the second course. Petey intercedes on Stanley's behalf but Meg is firm. Stanley says he will go to a hotel on the beach. Meg brings a plate of friend bread.

Petey leaves for work without taking tea. Stanley chastises Meg for not giving Petey his cup of tea and for giving him sour milk. Meg claims that Petey considers her a good wife and also that she maintains a very nice house and that she keeps it clean. Stanley refuses the claim pointing out that he had never seen any visitor there. The casual conversation continues. A Pot of tea is brought for Stanley but it is cold and dirty. The house is a pig sty, he remarks. There is some flirting between the two. Stanley goes out and returns after a while. She mentions the expected visitors, two of them who are going to stay there for two night. Meg does not know their names, nor does she know who they are. Stanley asserts that they won't come. Some one was trying to tease her with this false message. Stanley is evidently perturbed by the information, we don't know why. He tells Meg that some people will be coming to the place in a van. They will have a wheel barrow with them, in which they will take away a dead body from the house. This frightens Meg. She thinks it will be her dead body that will be carried away.

Lulu, a young girl living nearby comes in with parcel. Meg goes out for a bit of shopping. Lulu likes to go out with Stanley but he is not interested in her. She goes away. The visitors arrive and Stanley slips out through the back door. The two men come in and sit down. They are Goldberg, a Jew in his fifties and McCann an Irishman of about thirty. From their conversation we gather that they are on some mission and they are working for some organization.

McCann is somewhat nervous about the job and his companion tries to comfort him that it won't harm them in anyway. Meg returns and the visitors ask her several questions about her lodger Stanley. She happens to say that it is his birthday and Goldberg suggests that they give a birthday party to Stanley. Meg is delighted and says that she will be in her best dress. They also agree to invite the girl next door, Lulu. The two men are taken to their room upstairs. Stanley comes back and asks Meg about them; she knows nothing about them. She then tells him about his birthday party and a present that she has bought for him. Lulu's parcel contains a toy drum; it is Meg's present to Stanley. But he denies it is his birthday. He begins to play on the drum, first gently but then violently, loudly and without rhythm.

ACT TWO

The same scene - the living room. McCann tells Stanley of his birthday party. He speaks to him in a friendly manner but Stanley is apprehensive. He denies that it is his birthday and proposes to go out. But then McCann begins to whistle an Irish tune and Stanley joins in. He remarks that he has met McCann somewhere before. He continues that he has lived all his life in his hometown, Maidenhead. He was quite happy there and proposed to go back there. To this question McCann replies that he and his friend are on a brief holiday. Stanley tells him that they have chosen the wrong house, it was not a boarding house and that the lady is not in her right mind. He asks whether McCann's companion has told him about the real purpose of their visit to the house. Then he goes on to say that he has lived all his life at Basingstoke. Guessing that McCann was Irish he goes on to praise Ireland.

Goldberg and Petey come in and the former talks to Stanley in an engaging manner. Petey leaves to play chess with his companions at his club. Stanley pretends to be the manager of the house and tells them that there is no room available for them. Meg has made a mistake. The room given to them was actually reserved for another. They should leave and look for accommodation elsewhere. They cannot drink there as the place has no licence to serve drinks.

or permit drinking. He asks them again to leave the place and to take away their liquor bottles. But they are in no mood to leave. Their behaviour becomes menacing and the argument becomes heated.

The two men begin cross-examining Stanley. It is a strange piece of conversation with insensible questions, mostly unconnected with each other and Stanley either not answering or giving irrelevant answers. They snatch away Stanley's glasses. They ask him why he left the organisation, Why he killed his wife, why he never got married, whether the number 846 is possible or necessary, why the chicken crossed the road, whether the chicken came first or the egg etc.... Growing desperate Stanley kicks Goldberg in the stomach. McCann is about to hit Stanley with a chair but is calmed by Goldberg.

Meg appears and the two men pretend as if nothing had happened. Goldberg compliments Meg's pretty dress and the bottles are opened. Meg is asked to propose a toast to Stanley. She makes a brief speech expressing her affection. Lulu enters; she is late for the party. Goldberg makes a speech. Each one wishes Stanley a happy birthday. Meg gives him a kiss also. Lulu sits on Goldberg's lap at his request and he goes on talking in a reminiscent mood. They are all drunk and everyone is infected by the mood. At Meg's suggestion they play the game of blind man's buff. Stanley when he is blindfolded tries to strangle Meg. The othermen push him away. The lights go out in the confusion that follows Stanley appears to have tried to rape Lulu. Goldberg and McCann pounce upon him and the act ends.

Act Three

Next morning what they did to Stanley is not presented on the stage. But it appears they have been cruel to him. Petey guesses that they have been torturing Stanley. Meg has nothing to make breakfast with. She goes out to buy something while Petey is at his newspaper. A big black car is parked outside. To her question Petey replies that it belongs to Goldberg; and she asks if there is a wheelbarrow in it. There's no reason why there should be such a thing in the car, says Petey and Meg is much relieved. Goldberg comes

down the stairs and asks for a cup of tea. To her question the replies that Stanley is coming down and that he will be going out; the weather is very good. To Meg's question whether Stanley will be going out in the car Goldberg says nothing except that it is a very good car which has never let him down.

Meg goes out and Petey asks Goldberg how Stanley feels and the latter replies that only a qualified doctor can tell. Petey says his condition last night was pitiable and is told that it was a case of nervous breakdown owing to the night's revelry. Most probably he has already recovered. Petey says he will go and get a doctor if Stanley does not recover by lunchtime. Goldberg assures him that everything has been taken care of and asks him not to bother about a doctor. McCann comes down. He is very nervous and declares he will not go to Stanley's room, but adds that he is quite now and not talking. Stanley's broken specs have been returned to him. Goldberg had better go and see for himself whether Stanley is ready to leave. Petey goes out into the garden. Goldberg also is nervous about something which he says, is unusual. Obviously he is shaken.

Lulu comes in and complains that Goldberg seduced her last night. Both the men ridicule her and she goes away. Stanley comes down. He is completely changed in appearance, well-dressed and cleanshaven. He has his broken glasses in his hands. But the appearance is deceptive. His mind seems to have suffered great damage. The two men once again overwhelm him with all kinds of statements and assurances of a golden future for him. Stanley is indifferent and shows no reaction. His mind seems to be paralysed. Petey comes back from the garden and sees the two men trying to take Stanley away with them. They say he is being taken to Monty for special treatment. Petey offers to go out and bring a doctor but Goldberg insists that Monty is the best person to treat him. Then they take him away and Petey looks on helplessly. Meg comes in and is told that the men won't come back for lunch. He tells her that Stanley is still asleep and adds "Let him sleep"

All the dramatic pre-occupations of Pinter are present in the play. The menace, the violence actual and potential, appearance and illusion, tranquillity and chaos, the inability to communicate,

the repetitious, inconsequential dialogue, the uncertainly and vagueness of events and persons. The element of mystery (who the two men are, the organization behind them, why and where they are taking Stanley away, who Monty is etc. etc.), the problems of motivation and identity all these elements are characteristic features of Pinter's plays and they are present in *The Birthday Party*. The indefiniteness and vagueness of characters and events do not reduce but only heightens the dramatic interest. The play does certainly deviate from conventional dramatic practice but more and more serious critics have given their approval and recognition to Pinter. Also other dramatists have tried to follow his footsteps especially in capturing the inconsequential speech in ordinary conversation and incorporating it into dramatic dialogue. As Harold Hobson of *The Sunday Times* prophesied Pinter has come to stay.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Act 1

The page numbers given on the left hand side refer to those of the Methuen student edition of *The Birthday party*

P.9 Kitchen hatch: an opening in the wall of the kitchen through which food can be passed to the dining room.

12, boarding house: a place where customers are given lodging as well as food at rates cheaper than in hotels.

12. on the list: approved by the local body for the use of tourists.

13. the Palace: typical name for a theatre.

13 the pier: boarded walks supported on iron girders above the sea level sometimes large enough to hold a theatre for variety shows, musical concerts etc.

15. the milk's off: the milk is spoiled ; it has turned sour.

17. succulent: juicy; delicious. The word has no sexual associations but Meg doesn't know the meaning of the word.

18. strap : belt or leather strap used for beating children in English schools.

19. papering : needs new wallpaper.

21. taking the Michael: a phrase for teasing.

21 who do you think you are talking to: talk to me respectfully

22. all found : boarding and lodging provided free in addition to the salary.

23. the lot : all of us; everyone

23. they carved me up: they ruined me.

23. they pulled a fast one: they deceived me

23. all right, Jack, I can take a tip : I can take a hint; I can understand what you mean. I don't mind, "all right Jack" is a phrase expressing defiance.

23. did you pay a visit: did you go to the lavatory?

25. Lulu: a pet name or a nick name suggesting sexiness.

25. under her feet: getting in her way ; being a hindrance for her.

26. You're bit of a washout : you are a failure; a useless person

26. goldberg is a typically Jewish name and McCann is a typically Irish name.

27. shabbus : the Jewish Sabath.

28. Culture? Don't talk.....: the words mean that his culture is perfect; it cannot be questioned.

28. coppers : coins of very low value such as pennies

28. M.C.C. Marylebone Cricket club; the headquarters of English cricket. The reference is to the English cricket team.

28. My name was good: Goldberg's very name was good guarantee for credit. It was sufficient to obtain credit without any other security.

28. do a job : "job" suggests an act of crime.

28. you're all over the place : you are very nervous or excited.

28. cool as a whistle : quite calm.

32. give him a tip : obviously Meg has misunderstood Stanley's earlier remark " I can take a tip" (hint). She takes it to mean that they offered to give him a small gift of money.

33. down in the dumps: depressed.

Act II

37. Many happy returns of the day: conventional birthday greetings.

38. everything is laid on: everything is prepared.
 38. "The Mountains of Morne" : a popular Irish song.
 38. booze-up : drinking party.
 39. Maidenhead: an English town on the river Thames. But the word means virginity or maidenhood and can have sexual overtones.
 39. Fuller's teashop: one of a chain of respectable teashops-not existing now.
 41. round the bend : crazy; mad.
 41. leading you up the garden path: deceiving you deliberately,
 42. what you are at.: what you mean.
 42. they respect the truth: the Englishmen generally consider the Irish to be imaginative rather than truthful. Stanley is trying to please McCann.
 42. They have a sense of humour: This too is ironic. The English view is just opposite
 42. Guinness : Strong drink
 42. haven't had the pleasure: haven't had the pleasure of meeting you.
 43. bird: (slang for) girl.
 43. give her a peck.: give her a little, casual kiss.
 43. dog stadium: arena for dog races,
 43. Carikmacross: town in Ireland.
 43. gefilte fish: popular Jewish food.
 44. don't mess me about: don't interfere with me.
 44. We're booked out: all accommodations has been booked for other people; there is no room available for you.
 44. boghouse: lavatory
 45. unlicensed premises: In England a licence is necessary for serving drinks in public places such as restaurants, boarding houses etc. but not in private house.
 45. this house isn't your cup of tea: this place is not suitable for you,
 46. get on my breasts: get on my nerves; irritate me.
 46. kick the shite out of him: injure him (shite= shit, excrement)

47. getting on everybody's wick: Irritating every one
 47. off her conk: off her sense; mad.
 48. the organization: though it is not explicitly mentioned, the word implies a mafia, a criminal, network.
 48. That's a black and Tan fact: That is a notorious fact. "Balck and Tan" was the nickname of an irregular police force sent to repress the Irish revolutionaries.
 48. You're on the wrong horse: you are mistaken.
 48. Enos. Andrews: trade names of famous fruitsalts.
 49. Lyons Corner house: one of a chain of respected restaurants in London (at the time) (these details can be ignored. The whole exercise is outside the domain of reason)
 53. Enough to scuttle a liner: enough liquid to sink ship.
 56. Gone with the wind: famous American novel - the film version was very famous
 56. Austin : a small car, very common at the time
 56. on our tod: alone (slang)
 56. kip: sleep (slang)
 56. Mazoltov: congratulations; conventional Jewish greeting
 56. Simchaps; a Jewish holiday
 57. Well over the fast; a Jewish form of salutation.
 59. Carikmacross is in Ireland. King's cross is in London.
 59. out of the blue: quite unexpectedly
 59. Gesundheit : a walk taken as exercise
 60. piggyback: giving a ride on one's back to a child.
 60. pop goes the weasel : a line from a nursery rime.
 61. hide and seek; a children's game
 61. Bind man's buff: a children's game in which one who is blindfolded has to touch one of the participants, who in turn is blindfolded next and so on.
 65. spread-eagled : flat out with arms and legs outstretched,
Act III
 67. slept like a log : slept soudnly.
 70. next to no time : at once.
 71. a few letters after his name: letters indicating one's qualifications like M.A. M.B.B.S.etc

72. Abdullah; a brand of Egyptian cigarettes,
72. shilling in the slot: there was a system in London in which the electric supply was controlled by a coin-operated metre. After using up a shilling's worth of electricity you had to insert another shilling coin
74. sellotape: adhesive tape
75. My life: an exclamation meaning "certainly"
76. get it over : finish it quickly
76. knocked out : exhausted
77. fit as a fiddle: quite healthy
77. Honour.....mother: the fifth of the Ten commandments in the Old Testament.
77. All along the line ; always
77. kept my eye on the ball: was very careful
77. follow my mental?: do you follow my meaning, the trend of my thought.
77. don't go too near the water; be cautious, avoid danger.
78. schnorrers; beggars (colloquial)
79. You go the needle to : do you feel hostile to
79. pontoon; a card game played for money.
80. do me a turn: do me a favour. Please understand me
80. a jump ahead : superior to me.
81. Rock of caskel: a rocky hill with beautiful natural scenery around and several ruined buildings on it, in Tipperary, Ireland.
81. unforked: a cristian priest is deprived of his status before he is punished for misbehaviour. Goldberg says that McCann was once a priest and therefore entitled to hear confessions.
82. cockeyed: squint-eyed and unable to see clearly; confused.
82. somewhere over the rainbow: somewhere in the sky ; some where in an unattainable place.
82. where angels fear to tread; fro the proverb "fools rush where angels fear to tread" popularised by Alexander Pope's couplet.
82. you're in a rut: you have got into a fixed routine.
82. you're on the verge: you are very near something dangerous (madness; death etc)

82. you're dead duck; you fate us sealed.
- 82/83. [notice the two men trying to tempt Stanley with the advantages that society offers to the individual if he conforms.]
83. hot tips : pieces of valuable information.
83. on the house: provided free of cost
83. mensch : a real man
85. Monte: perhaps the name of a man of a man or of a place - deliberately ambiguous.
86. don't let them tell you what to do ; don't allow them to dominate you.
87. belle of the ball: the most beautiful girl of the ball (dance or party)

TEXTUAL AND CRITICAL ESSAYS

1. Harold Pinter as a dramatist- a general estimate

Pinter made his appearance in the world of dramatic literature at about the same time as John Osborne and has been even termed as one of the "Angry Young Men". There is nothing to bear out this classification except that he goes against the tastes and modes of conventional; drama. If he revolts against society, it is not as one who is not accepted by the establishment but far more subtly as an individual against society itself, as an individual concerned with his own identity and the threat posed to it by society. Pinter is not angry ; he is sufficiently distanced from his characters. He is the dramatist, the artist who is confident of his role, his modes and techniques, his use of language, his dramatic aims etc. We can therefore rule out the idea of including him in the group known as "Angry young Men". He is a class by himself.

His output is small; his full-length plays constitute his solid achievement. His first full-length play *The Birthday Party* met with severely adverse criticism. Most critic described the play as obscure, mad delirious, incoherent. One critic, Harold Hobson of the *Sunday Times*, however, praised him and predicted an enduring place for Pinter in dramatic literature. He pointed out that the plays of Osborne and Beckett, and even those of Shaw and Ibsen received adverse reviews at first. "Pinter and *The Birthday Party* will be heard of again make a note of their names'

Almost the most important characteristic of Pinter's plays is the use of the common people. He has captured the very language of men in real life, with its repetitions, its inconsequential and inane qualities. No one speaks logical, rational and grammatical sentences in a systematic way. Such modes of conversation can be found only in conventional dramatic dialogue. Here is one, who liberally as it were, holds the mirror up to life. The idiom is not selective but the natural spontaneous, uninhibited working class speech. This does not mean that the language is careless. It is far from it. There is very careful, deliberate planning behind such use of language. Sometimes Pinter uses pauses to great advantage, what is left out being far more significant than what is said. Sometimes "language becomes a function of character as character itself is a function of theme" says Ronald Hayman, who also points out another typical feature of Pinter's dialogues-sometimes it is one-sided, one person speaking and the others on the stage merely listening. Pinter is detached enough from the characters to capitalize on this also.

Characterization is all important in the dramatic art and it receives due attention in the hands of Pinter. As with almost everything else in his plays here he differs from the conventional dramatists. They give us moderate amount of their past histories, on which the plot is based. But Pinter is not concerned with the past but only with the immediate present, with what is done and said on the stage. For example we know nothing about Stanley's past in *The Birthday Party* except what he says about it. He says once that he has lived almost all his life at Maidenhead and then he says later he has lived all his life at Basingstoke. There is no interest in getting at the truth. As Pinter has explained we know very little about the past of people and about the veracity of their statements. What matters is that Stanley is falsifying; the focus is on the here and the now. This is an example of how dialogue becomes a function of character. We must realize that this dialogue revealing character is nothing new. It is as old as the drama itself. "None of Pinter's characters are defined by their past history (which they are liable to distort), their attitudes (which are inconsistent) or by their physical appearance (which is seldom described). Generally we know nothing about them except what we see and hear for ourselves, and

their statements are often self-contradictory and their actions inconsistent"

Pinter's plots (story element) are subject to the same indefiniteness as his characters. Though there is no certainty whether the incidents mentioned by the men and women in their lives have really taken place and often his mode takes us nearer the theatre of the absurd, there are moderately managed series of incidents that make up the semblance of plot structure. There is a fairly good plot in *The Birthday Party* though someone has remarked that it looks like a good plot from which the beginning and ending have been removed. But a well-made plot by itself is no guarantee to the soundness of the play.

All this is of little consequence in dealing with a playwright who deviates from convention all round.

The atmosphere of fear, of menace lurking round the corner, this is the central element giving significance to the play. Everything else, plot, character, dialogue, style, are but accessories to this. This is related to the existentialist strain in Pinter. He is concerned with the problem of the existentialist strain in Pinter. He is concerned with the problem of the individual's and the artist's identity and the menace faced by it from society that force itself on his seclusion. His recurring themes are fear and menace, violence actual or potential, appearance and illusion, tranquillity and chaos, the inability to communicate, the urge for probing the self.

An element of mystery is all pervasive in Pinter's Plays. Some critics have maintained that Pinter is often trying to mystify his audience by withholding information. He is thus teasing them. Pinter has denied this. We do not know the motivations in the present state of our knowledge. How then can the dramatist pretend to know everything and try to explain everything to his audience? All that he can do is to communicate his sense of mystery in this world of unpredictable impulses and actions.

Yet another feature of Pinter's plays is the influence of his native place Hackney. But it is not prominent as such in *The Birthday Party*. It does come in as the fear, as the menace that waits round the corner, as the violence real or possible. Its merely local character is removed and it is universalized as a vague, but at the

very same time, real menace. The play has therefore been rightly described as a "comedy of menace"

In spite of the small output Pinter has made his solid contribution to English drama. His depth of insight and his commitment to his art and its requirement have made him a major dramatist of the time and perhaps of the times to come.

2. *The Birthday Party - a critical analysis*

This is the first major play with which Pinter captured the attention of the playgoers. The first presentation at "the lyric" theatre at Hammersmith received adverse reactions from the critics. But Harold Hobson, the drama critic of the *Sunday Times* wrote a glowing review predicting a lasting place for Pinter. This was in May 1958, It was revived in May 1959 by Tavistock Repertory company at the Tower Theatre. The magazine *Encore* helped in attracting the attention of the public to its performance and many people witnessed it. This was a much better production than the earlier one and later one by Pinter himself for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1954. Between them Harold Hobson's review and the 1959 production of the play established Pinter's reputation as a dramatist. Ronald Hayman in his book on Pinter comments that this play has more substance than Pinter's other full length plays. The impact is enormous, the terror and violence are well-contrived and the structure the most impressive that Pinter has achieved. The parts contribute to the whole. The mystery and the sense of menace are built up with masterly craftsmanship.

The play has been described as a "comedy of menace." Stanley is scared when he is told of the visitors expected by Meg. Then follows a little piece of dialogue (which is given as a sample, students need not quote such things)

Stanley: They're coming today

Meg: Who?

Stanley: They are coming in a van

Meg: Who?

Stanley: And do you know what they've got in that van?

Meg: What?

Stanley: They've got a wheelbarrow in that van

Meg: They haven't

Stanley: Oh yes they have Meg: You're a liar.

Stanley: A big wheelbarrow. And when the van stops they wheel it out and they wheel it up the garden path, and then they knock at the front door.

Meg: They don't

Stanley: They're looking for someone Meg: They're not.

Stanley: they're looking for someone. A certain person.

Meg: No, they're not!

Stanley: Shall I tell you who they're looking for?

Meg: No.

The dialogue builds up the expectation that something terrible is going to happen. Things that are not at all sinister in themselves somehow are made to build up the tension. This is characteristic of Pinter's technique-building up of a powerful impression out of inconsequential events and dialogues. This sense, this impression of fear and violence is the substance of the play. The plot, the characters, the dialogue, everything is accessory to this total impression.

The play works within specific limits the unities of time, place and action. In Pinter's earlier play - *The Room*-the scene of action is a single room; in *The Birthday Party* it is Meg's boarding house and almost everything happens in one room. The action takes place within a day, The events have a single strand. All the three unities are thus seen to be kept. But it differs from conventional drama in many ways. We know nothing about the characters. What we know of Stanley is from his own words, which we need not believe because he contradicts himself. They are left vague though they are differentiated from one another. Pinter's defence in this respect is that most of the people whom we come across in life are not fully known to us or understood by us. Their motivation and their identity are not fully realised even by themselves. How then you expect the dramatist to be know-all, asks Pinter. The story line - what happened before the opening and the end of the play - is equally left vague. This is also true to life according to the author.

The dialogue is equally true to life. Most people deviate from

grammar, logic and even commonsense in their casual conversations. The repetition, the inconsequentialities, the irrationalities of the common people in common conversation are produced in Pinter's dialogues. At first this antagonized the critics but the practice has been followed by other dramatists and has come to be accepted by the critics too to an extent. A word about the style while on the subject of dialogue. The language of the lower middle class is characteristic of Pinter's plays.

The personality or identity of an individual is actually very fragile. Each one presents to the world and to himself an image of himself. Much of life is a search for personality and a sense of individual identity. The personality that Stanley takes as his own is threatened from outside. It is this very threat very menace, that is dramatised by Pinter in *The Birthday Party* and in his other play except *No Man's Land*, a "social" or "psychological" comedy. Even the other characters in other play are subject to this threat of "deflation" (Weakening and disintegration of the individual ego)

Another theme in the play is the role and fate of the artist in society. The man with creative talent refuses to accept the values and the ways of society and poses a threat to it. If people follow him and refuse to conform, society itself will crumble and be destroyed. Therefore the establishment seeks to draw him into its mainstream and make him conform. The artist's individuality suffers in the process and he loses his creativity- he becomes almost dumb, unable to communicate. This last point, the inability to communicate is another thematic concern of Pinter in this play. When Stanley comes downstairs at the end of the play and even earlier when the outsiders bombard him with questions seeking to brainwash him, he is not able to articulate his thoughts. He makes only incoherent sounds. They offer him the comforts of society and the individual ultimately succumbs to the temptation.

The fear of death is another theme. Though it is articulated through Meg, Stanley too is in its grip. All the others are really subject to it but Pinter doesn't make it apparent. This is only the converse of the fear of birth; it is only a matter of the standpoint from which one looks at it. The individual finds himself born into an alien society and he rebels against it. This in short is the existential pre-

dicament. Man is born into society and this birth itself is unpleasant. From this angle "birth" is forced on him. It is not his choice. Thus it is Stanley's birthday and he refuses to admit it. Fear of death and fear of birth are two facts of the same event.

Thus Pinter has little to do with "the angry young men" who are angry because they are not accepted by the establishment. His leanings are towards Beckett and Kafka. But unlike Beckett whose characters inhabit a stark, unspecific world, Pinter places his figures in recognisable surroundings. In Kafka's novel *The Trial* two strangers make their way into the bedroom of K, who is not able to make a retreat. They accuse him of various unspecified offences and K protests his innocence. The scene is very much like Stanley's final submission. K also accepts his fate.

The Methuen editor of the *The Birthday Party* points out that the play is a social allegory. The plot, the dialogue, the characters, the thematic concerns such as menace, the individual's or artist's role in society, the existential predicament, all these aspects of the play makes it the most representative and most successful of Pinter's plays.

OTHER SUGGESTED TOPICS

1. "A comedy of menace"- show how this is an appropriate label for *The Birthday Party*.
2. Pinter's plays work quite as much on what they do not say as on what they do - discuss with reference to *The Birthday Party*.
3. "The Birthday party is a complete play, except that someone has left out the beginning and the end" discuss. Or The structure of the play.
4. Does Pinter try to mystify us wilfully?
5. The plight of the artist in modern society -this is the theme of *The Birthday party*: discuss.
6. The various themes in the play.

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GRAHAM GREENE

Graham Greene was born in 1904 and educated at Berkhamsted School where his father was the headmaster. On coming down from Ballial college, Oxford, where he published a book of verse, he worked for three years as a sub - editor on The Times. He established his reputation with his fourth novel. The Stamboul Train. In 1935 he made a journey across Liberia, described in Journey Without Maps, and on his return was appointed .film critic of the Spectator. In 1926 he had been received into the Roman Catholic Church and was commissioned to visit Mexico in 1938 and report on the religious persecution there. As a result he wrote The Lawless Roads and, later, The Power and the Glory. Brighton Rock was published in 1938 and in 1940 he became literary editor of the Spectator. The next year he undertook work for the Foreign office and was sent out to Sierra Leone in 1941-43. One of his major post war novels The Heart of the Matter, is set in West Africa and is considered by many to be his finest book. This was followed by The End of the Affair, The Quiet American, a story set in Vietnam, Our man in Havana and A Burnt Out Case. The Comedians and twelve other novels have been filmed plus two of his short stories, and The Third Man was first written as a film treatment. In 1969 he published Travels With My Aunt and in 1971 his autobiography. A Sort of Life. In all, Graham Greene has written some thirty novels, "entertainment", plays, children's books, travel books and collections of essays and short stories. He was made a Companion of Honour in 1966.

THE NOVELS OF GRAHAM GREENE

Graham Greene's novels are an exploration of experience through character in action. He is concerned with the human condition and he reacts to it. Greene is a tough - minded writer who is greatly impressed by the power of accident and misinterpretation. He happens to attribute most of his principles and prejudices to his Catholic faith. Greene has often written about Catholics and he has made Catholic belief the arbiter of much of his works. He sees and feels his characters in relation to his own intensely felt reactions.

His characters may be used as sign - posts to his extraordinary and obsessed sensibility. In Green's case there is his primary obsession with evil, the "dark" side of human nature and life, produced by his acute sensitivity to his varied experiences in childhood. This obsession accounts for a number of recurrent themes and motifs which form a matrix of impulses and circumstances for Greene's characters. Isolation and failure, guilt and betrayal squalor and corruption, crime and violence, sin and suffering, tragic love and fatality. Childhood traumas and adult perversions, excesses of pity and innocence - all these symbolize or dramatize the evil which permeates Greene's world. People whose lives are riddled with evil are imaginatively significant to Greene. They embody what he feels about life. They nourish what Greene has called "the manic - depressive" side of his talent.

Greene's preoccupation with evil is inextricably linked with his religious consciousness, his obsessive awareness of God and his Mercy. Therefore many of his characters, in spite of their experience of evil cannot altogether stifle their longing for God or for a lost peace or ideal. They are pulled in opposite directions as Greene was in his early years. Greene exhibits with equal force the "demonic" element in man as well as the "angelic" principle which makes man turn to God. The self is the product of inborn tendencies, assimilated childhood influences and the discoveries made about both the outer and the inner worlds during one's progress towards adulthood. Undoubtedly Greene's personal taste for the pessimistic side of experience comes from these influences and tendencies. He portrays life and people with a personal slant that helps to stimulate the reader. This may be the reason why he has been charged with converting his "personal Anxiety" or "private nightmares into the temperaments and dilemmas of his "dramatis personae". A sensitive boy, Greene felt very cramped in his Anglican middle - class environment and was thrown upon the resources of his own imagination to fight the ennui and despair which beset his life. His unhappy childhood has had a seminal influence on all his fiction. He speaks of his childhood in the personal postscript to his book of essays.

I was seventeen and terribly bored and in love with my

sister's governess - one of those miserable, hopeless, romantic loves of adolescence that set in many minds, the idea that love and despair are inextricable and that successful love hardly deserves the name.

And he goes on to say:

I think the boredom was far deeper than the love. It had always been a feature of childhood: It would set in on the second day of the school holidays:

Greene's state of mind was also akin to the "wan and heartless mood" which Coleridge describes in "Dejection: an Ode". Boredom or despair was one of the strong emotions which lie behind Greene's way of seeing the world and the nature of man.

From school he moved on to Oxford and after Oxford he showed a desire to go east: He took a job with a tobacco company because it offered the prospect of three years in China, but it never came to anything. At Oxford he met Vivien Dayrell - Browning, an attractive Roman Catholic and proposed to her. Some time after he became friendly with a Catholic priest, and after three months of discussion he was received into the Catholic Church. He was married to Vivien in October 1927 and later a son and daughter were born to them. In 1925 he produced his first book Babbling April. This volume of poems, produced when the author was twenty - one was dedicated to his father and mother.

Greene says that in a Christian land we have grown so accustomed to the idea of a spiritual war, of God and Satan, that this supernatural world, which is neither good nor evil but simply power is almost beyond sympathetic comprehension. The Eden of childhood is invaded by the adult world. Evil creeps into his later dreams and these dream images of ugliness and brutality continue to dominate Greene's imagination. Evil one might say, is for Greene one of the eternal varieties of his lost childhood: In Journey Without Maps he found a dead dog at the bottom of his pram. Another fact he remembers was a man who rushed out of a cottage with a knife in his hand to kill himself. At the age of fourteen, like a revelation, Greene realised "the pleasure of cruelty". He wanted to do things to a girl who lived closeby.

I didn't do anything about it, I wasn't old enough, but I

was happy I could think about pain as something desirable and not as something dreaded. If it was as if I had discovered that the way to enjoy life was to appreciate pain.

To these childhood perceptions we may relate Greene's obsession with the sordid and violent aspects of life with which the majority of his works have made us so familiar. Greene sees squalor and violence as the essence of the human condition and from time to time he has sought them in the primitive sources of man's existences. He sees man as suspended between two worlds - heaven and hell - both claiming his allegiance. The ideas of Heaven and hell were unalterably fixed in the boy's mind. They have coloured the deepest levels of Greene's personality and fiction. Laurence Lerner remarks: "He depicts the world as Hell, since that is the first argument to faith: if there is Hell, must there not be Heaven?" Like their creator the first thing that the characters in Greene's fiction come to know intimately is the Hell of Pain, solitude and squalor. This knowledge becomes the basis of belief, a sort of intuition of heaven. And so Greene's fiction is built on the juxtaposition of despair and belief, evil and faith. The existence of the one, in fact implies the existence of the other. In the prologue to the Lawless Roads, he tells us that he escaped from his school for a few hours at night.

It was an hour of release - and also an hour of prayer. One became aware of God with an intensity.....one began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell.

In Greene's life "the primary symbols were altered later and he was gradually led to his conversion to Roman Catholicism.

The Man Within published in 1929 is a historical novel set in the eighteenth century Sussex of smugglers and excisemen. Against this background with its incidental glimpses of rural and country town life, we follow the adventures of the hero, Francis Andrews, the son of a blackguardly smuggler, who is forced into the wild business of smuggling. Francis Andrews is the prototype of Greene's heroes or anti-heroes. He does not conform to the concept of a hero with an integrated triumph in life. He is in the tradition, which

reacted against the romantic hero as a paradigm of psychic harmony and social identity. This tradition created a hero who is excluded from the accepted social relationships. Bewildered and blundering, he tries desperately to achieve a sense of identity in a confused world. In the thirties there is a change of direction from romance to realism in Greene's works. In it's a Battlefield and England Made Me, he creates a world that is recognisably modern. In these two novels, Greene recaptures the tension and bitterness, irrational hopes and fears, exploitation and violence of a real world in which he and his readers lived.

Brighton Rock marks the climax of Greene's obsession with evil. In his earlier novels pursuit, betrayal, murder, violence and corruption cruelty and injustice gave an effective and recognisable dimension to the evil which confounds man. This novel deals overtly with the question of sin, domination and salvation. Brighton Rock and the "religious" novels which follow have a spiritual intensity, a depth of meaning which sets them apart from Greene's secular novels. This novel was followed by an entertainment, The Confidential Agent and a travel book The Lawless Roads. The latter raised the curtain on one of the Greene's finest novels The Power and the Glory. The Lawless Roads is a plea for faith, Catholicism. Its protagonists' intent is undisguised. The power and the glory is built on the equation of the human and the nonhuman. The setting and the protagonist are inseparable. In a state where the church and the priest have been outlawed by a revolutionary government, flees the last remaining priest while all other priests have either run away or capitulated to the state. The theme of pursuit clearly indicated in the epigraph, helps to unify the episodic pattern of the novel and gives it a picaresque character. This novel exemplifies once again Greene's obsessional interest in the operation of evil in man's life. Greene's religious impulse in this novel does not denigrate or undermine the human values. This may be the reason why Brighton Rock, The Power and the Glory and The Heart of the Matter are sometimes treated as a trilogy.

Greene's novel The End of the Affair marks the high point of his concern with the redemption through love and suffering. The novel is set in war-time London. The eschatological and the

matic elements in Green's work are brought together in the theme of *The End of the Affair*. In this novel miracles play an important part because the mode of progression is from nature to, super nature, from errors to agape. John, Atkins justifies the use of miracles on the ground that Greene believes in them as a Catholic. His belief in the presence of God in the real and the living world permeates the action of *The End of the Affair* as well as that of the preceding novels. *A Burnt out Case* deals with the complex and tortured journey undertaken by a character but the end of the journey is left unclear. Here the hero rejects belief though ultimately his lack of belief is made out to be a sign of faith. This novel exemplifies Greene's obsessive unease with the boredom, vulgarity and seediness of the civilisation in which the springs of life dry up. Greene's protest against the anomalies of human life is not a new element in Greene's fiction. In fact we find an urgency in the way Greene suggests divine responsibility for the loss of innocence and happiness. Greene is well aware of the unpredictability of divine intervention which thwarts man's instincts and aspirations, causing and agonising tension in his life.

Like so many of Greene's novels. *The Quiet American* was inspired by his personal experience of a particular part of the world. He has translated into novel his experience as the Indo - China correspondent of *Life* and the *London Sunday Times* in the fifties. War - ravaged Indo - China provides like Brighton, Mexico and West Africa, a landscape and a situation in which individuals and their values confront each other. *The Comedians* re-examines the ideas of commitment and non - commitment in another contemporary political situation. The horror of existence unredeemed by any faith forces men and women into role - playing for their very survival. *The Honorary Consul* Published in 1973 is set in the seventies; the immediate past. It is based on the notion that in a world dominated by political 'isms' and institutions and devoid of faith, some sort of belief or commitment is called for and cannot be evaded.

Graham Greene classifies some of his novels as entertainments which are easily unidentifiable by the stress on outward action, a comparative lack of development in the characters and a marked use of melodramatic devices: The denomination "entertain-

ment" does suggest a relaxation of serious purpose. Most of Greene's entertainments are thrillers with all the paraphernalia of crime and intrigue, espionage and secret documents; pursuit and escape, murder and suicide. Greene's thrillers have an edge over other specimen of the genre in as much as they have intellectual glamour, psychological interest and the air of social and moral questioning. In his novels and entertainments Greene explores a private world of corrosion and decay, invested with evil apparently god forsaken, but finally redeemed by god. His novels dramatise the loneliness and moral failure of his character which are symptomatic of the presence of evil in their lives. They, are driven to prolonged misery and death in a stifling atmosphere of distinctiveness. One of Greene's deepest intuitions is of the predicament which enforces upon man the necessity of some conclusive action. Such a predicament in the life of a Greene hero arises partly from the collective forces of "society and partly from his own moral constitution. It is the "Personal Morality" of Greene as an individual which directs his creative energy. His sensibility that of a Christian humanist remains unchanged. His novels extend and clarify our understanding of the world of his imagination. Moreover they furnish a coherent view of human nature in all its paradoxes' and contradictions.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

The membership of the "fallen" world in Greene's novels made vividly seedy and corrupt entails tensions and longings which can only cease with the end of time. This view of life informs the careers of the central characters in Greene's religious novel. The happiness and salvation of these characters are obstructed by the malevolence of a temporal order which provides occasions for further entangling and complicating the life of a person driven by an obsession. Scobie in *The Heart of the Matter* has something of both Pinkie and the whisky - priest in his character. He is like Pinkie involved in crime and he has; like the whisky. priest, a plodding desire to do good and an innate love of god. According to R.W.B. Lewis, Pinkie, the whisky priest and Scobie represent the murderer, the priest and the policeman the dramatis personae of Greene's recurring drama and of his troubled universe. Scobie moves on a

religious plane and has the air of a man possessed. Such a man is capable of good as well as of Evil: The sinner, and the saint meet in him and sometimes it is impossible to tell one from the other. The ambiguity of such a character is clearly suggested by the epigraph to The Heart of the Matter and may serve for the other religious novels of Graham Greene as well.

THE MORAL CLIMATE OF THE NOVEL

The World of The Heart of the Matter - a British colony in West Africa - is as squalid as Mexico and Brighton. Greene's realistic picture of the West Africa colony is undoubtedly based on the details of the physical and moral climate which he must have observed during his stay in Sierral Leone when the war was in full swing. The town where Scobie lives is an ugly place where for a few minutes the laterate roads turn a delicate flower like pink and create an illusion of beauty. The heat is oppressive. The slightest contact between two bodies starts sweat. One has to keep a blotting paper under the wrist to catch the sweat when writing in the hot moist air, the smallest scratch turns gangrenous if neglected for an hour. Tropical diseases like malaria and backwater fever abound. The climate of the land breeds its ugly fauna, rats cockroaches flies, mosquitoes and pye-dogs. It is however the vultures, the scavengers of a rotting and decaying region, that symbolise the corruption which has overtaken the land and will soon overtake Scobie. Greene's imagery as in Brighton Rock and The Power and the Glory formulates the atmosphere of the novel. Once again there are the sights and smells of a world that is evil. The "rusty handcuffs". The "broken rosary". The "atabrine yellow face" a "joint under meatcover". The "ugly flapping birds, the "swollen, pye-dogs," the "zoo smell" in the corridors the "stench of dog's pizzle", all coalesce into an overwhelming picture of ugliness and decay:

The moral climate of this place is of undisguised corruption. The natives, Syrians and Europeans are all corrupt and unreliable. The schoolboys lead a sailor "triumphantly" towards the brothel. The natives resort to lies, evasion and bribery in order to out manoeuvre the rules and regulations which is Scobie's duty to enforce. In dealing with them; he discovers that guilt and innocence

are as relative as wealth. The Syrians who run all the stores in the country, are diamond smugglers, out of favour with the government: Yusef, with his unabashed villainy, his crooked arguments and his genuine need for love and respect: is a typical inhabitant of this world. The English the colour are afflicted with a physical and moral debility. The Secretariat reminds Scobie of a hospital. Greene sets down graphically the inbred patterns of an isolated community, the snobbery and boredom, meanness and malice which are vented in intrigue, rumours and scandals. In the climate of West Africa even the intonations undergo a change; they become "high pitched and insincere" or "flat and unguarded". Typical of these exiles are Wilson, the MIS agent who spies on Scobie. Wilson, brash, award, ready to adapt himself to the way of the world like Harris in England Made Me, are the two old Downhimians who harassed by climatic discomforts, quarrel, hunt cockroaches and read their school magazine. In them, Greene reduces human nature to a level where nothing dignified can ever come of it."

Symbolic of the nature and surroundings of the inhabitants of the colony is the great stone building of the law courts and police station. Scobie has no illusion about this world and its inhabitants: His thoughts about this infernal world might be those of his creator, Graham Greene. Thus West Africa is yet another picture of Hell. Here one finds it so easy to believe in sin and corruption. While inspecting the quayside, Scobie finds a bottle of native medicine opens it and realises his mistake.

He should have left the bottle where it stood, it had been placed there for one purpose, directed at one person, but now that its contents had been released, it was as if the evil thoughts were left to wander blindly through the air, to settle may be on the innocent.

The Heart of the Matter is pre-eminently the story of corruption settling on one man - Henry Scobie, the Deputy Commissioner of Police. Once again the setting and character define each other and combine to suggest a fundamental truth about human life, the inductable reality of evil. Scobie feels bound to his mean and sordid world; he seems to get some satisfaction out of it. There is something wrong with Scobie. In him we have a man, no worse than

most and better than many, who is betrayed by his natural inclinations in a world of evil. It is moral superiority to his environment that cause ironically enough his downfall.

CHARACTER OF SCOBIE

Scobie is intended by Greene to be a tragic hero, though not one of the classical proportions. A police officer, he is rather undistinguished in appearance, hard-working and conscientious. The commissioner calls him "Scobie the just" Scobie's fatal flaw is pity which causes wrong appraisals and bungling of situations in life. An element of pride is inseparable from Scobie's pity because of his feeling that he owes it to himself to relieve the suffering of others. When the novel begins we learn that Scobie has been passed over for promotion. He betrays a sense of guilt and failure in his relationship with his wife because of his inability to love her and to make her happy. The fact that Louise is no longer young or beautiful only intensifies his sense of guilt and he feels bound to her by the patterns of her unattractiveness. He can keep up the pretence of love because he knows that in human relations kindness and lies are worth a thousand truths. There is a good deal of contempt mixed in Scobie's pity for his wife. Louise longs to escape from the society which she finds unbearable and Scobie unable to withstand her importunity, promises to find money for her passage to South Africa. This triggers off the chain of event which carries Scobie relentlessly to his doom. So overpowering is the sense of pity in Scobie that he would have made the promise even if he had,

foreseen the terrible consequences. Scobie realises that his peculiar sense of responsibility, the desire to carry the burden of other's suffering involves despair. It is as though he had a presentiment of his own fate.

Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is one is told, the unforgivable sin; but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for dominations.

This is the heart of the matter so far as the unhappy life and death of Major Henry Scobie are concerned. He is a good man betrayed into evil by an obsession "the horrible and horrifying emotion of pity", which imposes contradictory obligations on him and brings him to an impasse.

Under the stress of circumstances, Scobie forgets what his experience has taught him, "that no human being can really understand another and no one can arrange another's happiness." He also knows that it is absurd to expect happiness in a world so full of misery. At the same time he is concerned with happiness. As his depression thickens, he comes to the conclusion that only three kinds of people can possibly know happiness: the egoist the evil or the absolutely ignorant. This clear-sightedness does not relieve him of the haunting sense of responsibility to promote the happiness of others. The nature of Scobie's responsibility is declined in the scene where he stands looking at the lights of the temporary hospital in which the survivors of a ship wreck are housed. He feels the burden of all suffering".

It was as if he had shed one responsibility only to take on another.....

Scobie has to offer pity for everything everywhere. At times it reaches universal proportions.

If one knew, he wondered, the facts would one have to feel pity even for planets. If one reached what they called the heart of the matter.

This application provides the clue to Scobie's despair. For anyone 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. This ambiguous emotion becomes the controlling factor in Scobie's life, inducing a moral weakness in his nature. He seems incapable of facing the truth directly. It is significant that he dreams of peace by day and night. The dream in which he finds perfect happiness is one in which he loses the sense of human responsibility in the midst of nature, with Ali, his servant as a silent companion. There is one moment where Scobie feels that he has come to "the ultimate border of happiness". Louise has gone away to South Africa. He is alone in darkness with the rain falling, with

out love or pity. "But such moments are fleeting and rare in a life made restless by 'the terrible impotent feeling of responsibility and pity'". Towards the end of the novel Louise says "Oh why, did he have to make such a mess of things" There is no doubt that Scobie makes a mess of his life. Just before he committed suicide he found himself loving Louise again but only because his heightened perceptions saw beyond here complacent delight in the forthcoming social triumph and knew that she too was a failure. He slid into a desire to protect her. He slid back into pity. And pity is a retreat from love, not a part of love. The absolute imperative of pity brings about absolute corruption. Though an upright officer, he has only to deviate from his standard of conduct to be caught in a train of events leading to the corruption of his private and public life. The threat which his pity possess to his professional integrity is seen when he destroys the letter concealed in the captain's cabin on a Portuguese ship. No sooner is it done (out of pity for the captain) than he feels he has joined the ranks of corrupt police officers.

They had been corrupted by money and he had been corrupted by sentiment.

Sentiment involves him further in professional indiscretion when he borrows money from Yusef, the unscrupulous Syrian merchant in order to fulfill his promise to send Louise to South Africa. One thing leads to another and Scobie gets embroiled with a truly Mephistophelian character. It was a compact of guilt which bound him forever to Yusef.

Scobie's excessive sense of responsibility creates a situation of extreme anguish in his private life. His conscience which is troubled by his failure to keep his vow to Louise is now troubled still further by a pledge which involves him disastrously not only with other human beings but also with God. The arrival of a party of survivors from a vessel torpedoed by a German submarine upsets the peaceful daily routine of life in the colony. This episode marks the end of a period of relative freedom and the beginning of a period of tragic anxiety leading to death in Scobie's life. He witnesses, the death of a little girl who reminds him of his own dead child. He had been away when his child died and he had always thanked God for sparing him the agony of that moment. But now he realises that to be human is "to drink the cup". Unable to bear the suffering

for the dying child, he strikes a bargain with God. "Take away my peace forever but give her peace". God does precisely this. The child dies and Scobie's troubles begin almost immediately. Scobie meets Helen Rolt, a nineteen year old widow, who unwittingly provokes a crisis in his relations both with his wife and his church. Greene's obsession with evil can be recognised in the malevolence which pervades Scobie's life, thwarting his operations and endeavours. The screw turns again and again and Scobie appears at odds with his destiny. The conjunction of love and pity in human relationship is often found in Greene's novels. Particularly so in The Heart of the Matter. Scobie is tormented by his love of God because he cannot reconcile it with his love of human beings. His love of God is inspired by the same pity which inspires his love of Louise or Helen. The tension in the novel arises from Scobie's endeavour to pity his own compassionate self against the omnipotence which allows unreasonable anguish in human life.

RELIGIOUS MOTIVATION IN THE NOVEL

Religious motivation grows stronger in the book when Scobie is faced with the problem of religious observance. Louise who has heard about Scobie's affair with Helen asks him to accompany her to Mass. He is cornered by his wife's insistence. If he refuses he will give himself away and let Louise know the worst. At the same time he can't hurt Helen. He knows that going to communion without prior repentance means domination. So the right answer to the problem is to confess, repent and to avoid Helen - but that means to abandon her "to Bagster and despair". But Scobie's feeling of pity, his sense of allegiance to any victim makes one answer as unacceptable as the other. As he cannot peruse himself to put his own soul first and as he cannot leave those for whose happiness he has made himself responsible to the mercy of God, he is unable to promise in the confessional not to see Helen again. Father Rank refuses absolution. His spiritual condition is symbolised by the dream in which he discovers a smell of decay in his own living body. Caught between belief and pity, Scobie has given up his future. The believers in Greene's novels suffer acutely from their fear of damnation. Scobie regards sin as an outrage perpetrated against God. The

fundamental terror of life is brought home to Scobie, through sin.

Now that Scobie feels he is of "the devil's party" success comes to him : he is to succeed the police commissioner at last. It seems to him a cruel joke of destiny. Isolated and suffering, Scobie is overtaken by weariness of spirit. He has betrayed Louise, his government and his God and it seems to him "one of the qualities of deceit that you lost the sense of trust. Feeling that Ali, his faithful servant has been spying on him and could ruin him as well as Louise and Helen, Scobie confides in Yusef. That Yusef should be the only man to whom 'he can turn is an indication of Scobie's moral decline. He realises that it is his sense of guilt that makes Ali's death so important to him. Greene, perhaps intends the episode to be taken as the inevitable consequence of Scobie's sin. Again Scobie is going to die for love which has brought him into a state of mortal sin. The unbearable conflict between his love for Louise and Helen and his love for God whom he cannot go on desecrating is revealed in an inner dialogue between him and God. Scobie reasons that by killing himself he will stop inflicting pain on those he loves: Caught in the conflicting tides of love he cannot but go down. He cannot transfer to God his burden of responsibility and he cannot make either Louise or Helen suffer as to save himself. He therefore tries the only way he can to see it through. He prepares methodically for the ultimate sin of despair - suicide. He is going to commit the worst crime a Catholic can commit. His fatal sense of responsibility stays with him. God is his victimiser as well as his last victim. He says aloud: "Dear God, I love....." and falls dead. Scobie's last words put the final seal of ambiguity on his character and life.

The novel ends with a conversation between Mrs. Scobie and Father Rank. Two contrasted views or judgement of Scobie's ultimate destiny are presented : One based on the moral - legalism of "religious" human standards and the other on divine mercy. Through Father Rank, Greene insists once again upon the "appalling strangeness" of the mercy of God.

For goodness sake, Mrs. Scobie, don't imagine you - or 'I know anything about God's mercy.....

Father Rank's observation recall Scobie's own assertion of

God's mercy earlier in the novel in answer to Father Clay's pious ejaculations" on Pemberton's suicide and also what he said to Helen on one occasion.

And then against all the teaching of the church; one has the conviction that love - any kind of love - does deserve a bit of mercy.

The priest is brought in at the end not to force our suspended judgement into "positiveness and definiteness" but to present the doctrines of the church as flexible enough to accommodate the redemptive power of a sinner's love and sacrifice

The Heart of Matter is one of the most controversial of Greene's novels. While it is true that the relation between man and God is one of Greene's major preoccupations, it is not difficult to see that in his novels a sinner's conduct or action is important in determining his fate. In Scobie's case, considering his sins, as soon as one is ready to give him up as lost, one is forced to take into account his virtues which are more important than his' sins. He is a good Christian in spirit though he violates the rules of the church. Notwithstanding the uncertainty about Scobie's fate and the ambiguity caused by the ending of the novel, the implications of the entire action and particularly of Scobie's last incomplete phrase persuade the readers into believing that by a miracle of divine mercy his mortal sin may be transformed by the love which prompted it.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR READING

1. John Atkins : Graham Greene
2. Francis Wyndham : Graham Greene
3. J.P Kulshrestha : Graham Greene : The Novelist

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