स्वाध्याय स्वमन्थन स्वावलम्बन

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MAEN-05
AMERICAN LITERATURE

SIXTH BLOCK : American Poetry

SEVENTH BLOCK : American Short Story

EIGHTH BLOCK : American Drama

NINTH BLOCK : The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

Shantipuram (Sector-F), Phaphamau, Allahabad - 211013

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MAEN-05
AMERICAN LITERATURE

Block

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American Poetry

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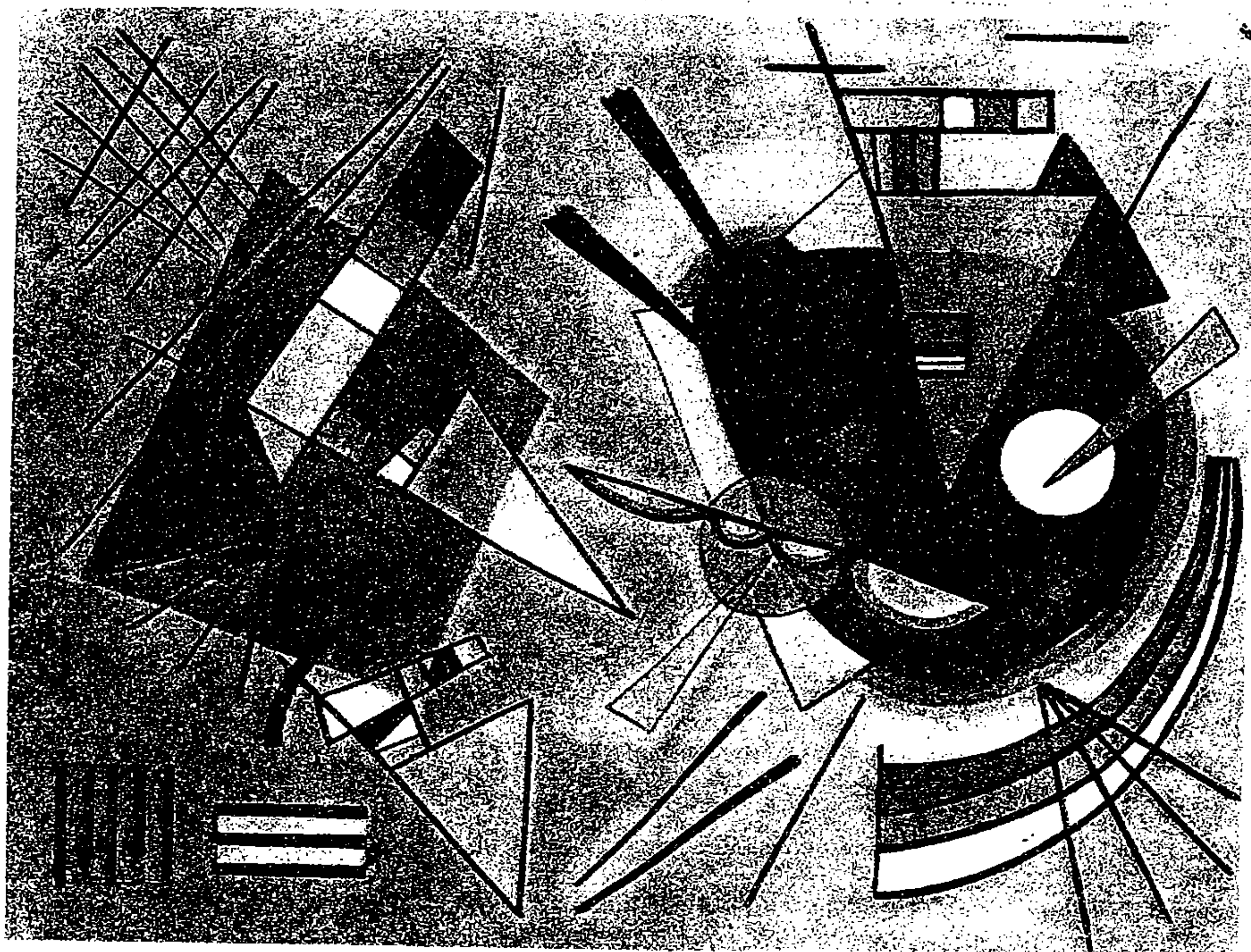

Wassily Kandinsky, Black and Violet, 1923

defined Surrealism (he had borrowed the term from the French poem Apollinaire) as "Pure Psychic Automatism by which it is intended to express verbally, in writing or in any other way the true process of thought. It is the dictation of thought, free from the exercise of reason, and every aesthetic or moral preoccupation." Dali, Magritte and Picasso's works from the late 1920s may be called Surrealist.
In music too there was a breaking rather a wrenching away from tradition. Expressionism in music consisted of a hyper expressive harmonic language linked to huge leaps in the melody and to the use of instruments in their extreme registers. Symmetrical structure was abandoned in rhythm, melody and harmony. Expressionist composers like Arnold Schoenberg deliberately distorted the normal accentuation of words in order to secure a heightening of tension, an effect of a reality transcending the real. The vocal line is "curious" as one critic puts it of Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire, the tonal bearings are unrecognisable, the sonorities are stretched almost to the point of breaking, and the atmosphere created by the music is a neurotic one.

Then slowly there was a transition to the next age of the postmodern. The postmodern shares with the modern the sense of discontinuity, of challenging accepted tradition, of widespread innovation. Colonialism comes to an end in the post modern age and the intellectuals of the once colonised countries like India, South Africa, Nigeria, speak out against the oppression of Europe and against political malpractice and injustice in the new decolonised governments. The post modern age, because of the widespread reach of the media and the omnipresence of the computer, is a truly global age.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION
FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM

Do you know what is common between Matisse, Picasso, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, James, Conrad, Proust, Gide, Kafka, Faulkner, Mallarme, Valery, Eliot, Pound, Rilke and Stevens? The answer at first sight would seem to be nothing. But they are all artists of what is called the modern age. How does one define this age? Can one define it at all? Let us make an attempt to do so.

The dates of the modern period may roughly be put as 1880 to 1950 with the peak being in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Virginia Woolf writes, "On or about December 1910 human nature changed..... All human relations shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature." This change was modernism.

Modernism attempts to break with existing tradition. The word modernism is difficult to define. It is an age in which previous certainities were challenged in the field of art, of religion, of social structures of human nature. It is an age which breaks away from tradition. Disruption and rupture from the existing tradition is what the artists stress.

Modern art – and by art I mean literature, painting, sculpture, music obviously designed for a highly – educated audience. In many ways this art is bleak, dark, alienated disintegrated and has, as Frank Kermode puts it, the tendency to bring us closer to chaos. While the creative impulse was seen as something magical it also had the downside of being nightmarish, dangerous, a voyage into the unknown.

The accepted structures of myth and history are seen to collapse or rather to be unable to withstand the pressure of civilization that seems on the verge of crumbling, thanks to a devastating world war (with another to follow) and discoveries in Science (Darwin) and Psychology (Freud) and Political Science (Marx) that threatened organised religion and threatened the notion of the sane human mind and the "goodness" of the capitalist ethos. The confidence, even the smugness of the Victorian age is gone. Because of rapid modernisation, industrial development, urbanisation and growth in technology one is unable to hold on to any belief as absolutely true; it continually changes shape and form. All around is the powerful sense of a culture in crisis. "Things falls apart;" wrote Yeats, one of the foremost modern poets, in his poem "The Second Coming", "the centre cannot hold."

Modernism was an age of fragmentation, an age of discontinuity. Cubism, Expressionism and Surrealism as forms of painting came into vogue in order to reflect this sense of disruption and discontinuity. Cubism is the parent of all abstract forms. It grew out of the efforts of Picasso and Braque to replace the purely visual effects of the nineteenth century art movement, Impressionism. The Impressionist artist had an obsession with light and the surface view of objects with a more intellectual conception of form and colour. However, Cubism really began with the innovations of the last of the impressionists, Paul Cezanne. Another contemporary art movement was expressionism. Artists like Toulouse – Lautrec and Munch tried to be expressive by exaggerating and distorting line and colour. They deliberately abandoned the naturalism implicit in impressionism in favour of a more simplified style which they thought could carry far greater emotional impact. The artist Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee revelled in distorted images which they sprang from their unconscious – hallucinatory visions that defied conventional notions of beauty in order to achieve the most powerful effect of the artist's inner self. Andre Breton

UNIT 26 ROBERT FROST (1874-1963)

Structure

26.0 Objectives
26.1 Life and Works of Robert Frost
26.2 "Mending Wall"
- 26.2.1 "Mending Wall" Text of Poem
- 26.2.2 "Mending Wall" Critical Appreciation
- 26.2.3 "Mending Wall" Notes

26.3 "Birches"
- 26.3.1 "Birches" Text of Poem
- 26.3.2 "Birches" Critical Appreciation
- 26.3.3 "Birches" Notes

26.4 Let Us Sum Up
26.5 Questions
26.6 Further Reading

26.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we study the life and works of Robert Frost. We also look in detail at two of his poems, "Mending Wall" and "Birches" and see how Frost developed his own unique, spare and clean style in which there was a close link with nature and where ordinary natural objects often suggest something far greater.

26.1 LIFE AND WORKS OF ROBERT FROST

Robert Frost was born in California where his father, a journalist with political aspirations and a dissatisfied northeasterner, had moved. He was an occasionally violent man and developed in Frost a lifelong wariness towards destructive impulses. His mother was Scottish and wrote poetry. Through her Frost became acquainted with the Romantic poets as well as New England poets like Emerson. She also introduced him to organised Christian religion.

Frost's father died in 1885, the family returned to New England, and Frost finished high school from Lawrence, Massachusetts, (studying classics) as the class valedictorian. Three years later he married his classmate and fellow valedictorian, Eleanor White. Frost studied for a short time at Dartmouth College, taught in schools, and then enrolled as a special student at Harvard (1897-1899) where he was influenced by William James and George Santayana. He took courses in English, philosophy and the classics. From Harvard he entered a completely different world. His grandfather had left him a farm in New Hampshire and Frost, his wife and his four children endured years of hardship there. While he was struggling with depression and thoughts of suicide Frost was also composing poetry and establishing a close link with nature. In the years 1906-7 he wrote many of the poems that would later appear in North of Boston and Mountain Interval (1916). In 1909 Frost left the farm to teach in New Hampshire. From there he sold his farm and moved to England in 1912 because he was unable to find publishers for his work in the land of his birth. Within a month of his arrival in England he was able to publish his poems and North of Boston won praise from Ezra Pound. Within two years his volumes had appeared in America and he won a number of honours, including election to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Frost returned to New England in 1915 and started teaching in Amherst College two years later. He was obviously making a commitment to a tradition and a particular location. Kipling had already pointed out that Frost's language sounded strange to English readers; Frost regarded this as an advantage--he felt his language had the "freshness of a stranger," and that strangeness, be it in language or metaphor. is intrinsic to poetry. Critics suggest that Frost's poetry sounds unfamiliar even to those Americans outside new England and of course we in India would feel no differently.

There were a number of sources from which Frost inherited the technique of using the ordinary to suggest something other than itself: the Bible, the classics, the poetry of Wordsworth, and New England writers such as Thoreau or Emerson. He admired Emerson's use of simplicity to suggest profound meanings. The classical pastoral tradition and the Romantic tradition of poetry about nature were in his hands refashioned by the use of New England vocabulary and turns of phrase. Rather than the fine arts or music that influenced a poet like Wallace Stevens Frost was more drawn to science and philosophy. He was not as radical an experimenter as Ezra Pound. He felt poets ought to develop links between sound and sense and emotion. Metre was important too, but its rigidity should be qualified by the rhythms of actual speech. (He was a master in the use of a number of verse forms, however, rhymed couplets, the sonnet, blank verse and rhyming quatrains.) Drama, also, was vital for it made writing "unboring," but poetry should contain no excesses--the effect should be a carefully controlled one. He called the poem in its beauty and its slow, dignified exploration of reality, "a momentary stay against confusion" (Selected Prose 36, Norton 1102). A poem is an affirmative entity for it springs from belief, be it belief in God, in the poet's own self, in art or in the nation.

His important poems were all written before 1930. While his first priority was always poetry he also made time to teach and to read his poems in public. He was associated the longest with Amherst (1917-20, 1923-38, 1949) but he also spent time at Michigan and Dartmouth and Harvard. He helped to establish the famous Bread Loaf School of English in Middlebury College, Vermont. He was a very popular teacher. He won four Pulitzer prizes before the publication of two ambitious philosophical poems, The Masque of Reason (1945) and The Masque of Mercy (1947). In the Clearing (1962) was his last work. He won many honours, including honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge universities in 1957, and last but not least the invitation to read a poem at President John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961 where he recited "The Gift Outright" from memory.

26.2 "MENDING WALL" TEXT OF POEM

26.2.1 Text of Poem I

Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing: 5
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made, 10
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go 15
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We war our fingers rough with handling them. 20
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across 25
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "good fences make good neighbors.
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it 30
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall, 35
That wants it down. I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an old stone savage armed. 40
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.' 45

26.2.2 "Mending Wall" Critical Appreciation

In this poem Frost takes a very ordinary incident, building or repairing a wall between his neighbour's garden and his, and turns it into a meditation on the divisions between human beings. While his neighbour believes that "Good fences make good neighbours," Frost questions this point-of-view. According to him land should be shared with trust and a mutual understanding. Walls give him a sense of being "walled in" or "walled out" that is 'cut off from his immediate environment' and he does not enjoy this. There are no cows to stray from his garden info his neighbour's--why then, the wall, the fence?

From this ordinary incident Frost wants to suggest deeper meanings about the way human beings intrinsically distrust each other even when there is no reason to do so and how these suspicions should be replaced by trust and mutual good will. While his neighbour believes "Good fences make good neighbours," Frost keeps thinking, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." When one notes the year, 1914, in which this poem is composed one cannot help relate it to the outbreak of the First World War. It is the same sensibility of building walls and fences, of protecting one's property, of suspecting one's neighbours, that can take place even on a global basis and lead to wars. Trust and fellow feeling can go a long way in avoiding this sort of a situation.

Note the masterly way in which Frost uses the rhythms of the speaking voice and his understated style. His poetry helped evolve a new voice for modern poetry so that poetry sounded effortless, shorn of any deliberate poetic ornamentation, was meditative. In his hands poetry took on some of the qualities of prose.

26.2.3 "Mending Wall" Notes

"Mending Wall" 1914

L1-4 Here Frost is showing how nature dislikes the concept of walls or barriers and tries to break through walls and make gaps that at least two people can pass through. There is something unnatural about walls.

L10"No one...made" Here Frost suggests the mysteriousness of these gaps in the wall--they were not made by hunters. Nature itself seems to be making them in protest against its laws of freedom and sharing and property common to all which human beings do not follow.

L24 "He is all pine..orchard" Frost means that his neighbour has mainly pine trees on his land while Frost has apple trees. Perhaps he also means to suggest that his neighbour does not believe in growing trees which give fruit, and thus food and pleasure. Also, pines are rather prickly--rather like Frost's neighbour who insists on everything being just so and on every gap in the wall being mended.

L36 "elves" Elves are tiny supernatural creatures drawn from folklore and myth. By this word Frost wants to suggest to his neighbour that some non-human agency is protesting about the existence of this wall and wants it to be broken down. But rather than suggesting it to his neighbour Frost wishes his neighbour had enough imagination to think of it himself--"I'd rather/ He said it for himself" (L37-38).

26.3 "BIRCHES"

26.3.1 Text of poem II

Birches

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning 5
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells 10
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust-
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed 15
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun. 20
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows-
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball, 25
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them, 30
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so no carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise 35
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground. 40
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs 45
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away form earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me 50
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away

Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bar no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

55

26.3.2 "Birches" Critical Appreciation

The first part of this poem (L1-41) consists of a fairly straightforward nature description. Frost speaks of the many different appearances of birches in summer and in wintry weather. Frost imagines a rural boy climbing the birch tree, a boy who lives too far from town to enjoy baseball, and whose only entertainment is nature (Frost draws on his own childhood memories as a "swinger of birches" here). He says he longs for the return of those innocent pursuits.

In the next part of the poem (L43ff) Frost compares life's difficulties and hardships to the difficulties of walking through a "pathless wood" and says that he longs to get away from the pressures of life, not in the sense of dying, but in the sense of climbing a birch tree, tipping its branches towards heaven, and then returning to earth. By this metaphor Frost wants to suggest he wants to be able to return to the innocence and beauty of nature, to let nature refresh him, and then to return to the everyday grind of life on earth. He does not dislike earth--"Earth's the right place for love"--but a refreshing dose of birch-climbing would be a welcome respite.

The influence of the English Romantic poet Wordsworth, who composed The Prelude, on this poem is marked--we have the same fond recollection of a childhood closeness to nature, the same sense of oppression of an adult life spent apart from nature and the same sense of nature's rejuvenating energy.

Note the effectiveness with which Frost captures the rhythms and the locutions of the speaking voice with the use of the first person singular and conversational phrases like "Often you must have seen them" (L5) or "You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen" (L13) or "But I was going to say when Truth broke in/With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm/ I should prefer to have some boy bend them" (L21-23) or "I don't know where it's likely to go better" (L53) or the last line "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches" (L59). One gets a strong sense of the speaker and with the repetition of the word "you," the reader is also invited into the world of the poem and made to feel comfortable there. The atmosphere of the poem becomes confidential and intimate.

26.3.3 "Birches" Notes

"Birches" (1916)

Title: Birches are smooth-barked, slender-branched northern forest trees

L9 "enamel" Frost uses a metaphor here. He compares the shiny birch bark to enamel which is a glass-like coating of metallic surfaces for the purpose of ornament or for preservation. By this metaphor he expresses the shiny beauty of the birch bark.

L12 "broken glass" Another metaphor. The snow crystals are compared to bits of broken glass because of their transparency and their sharpness.

L14 "bracken" Fern abundant on heaths

L19-20 "Like girls...sun" This is a simile which compares the arched trunks of the birches trailing their leaves on the ground to girls who throw their wet hair over their faces in order to dry it. This simile brings out the delicacy and the vulnerability of the birches.

L44 "life is too much...wood" A simile which compares life, with its enigmas and its hardships to a forest in which there is no clearly-marked path. One may easily lose one's direction.

L45-47 "Where your face...open" Frost adds a metaphor to the simile and compares the physical hardships of trekking through a pathless forest to the rigours, physical and emotional, of life. The word "weeping" suggests that the tears do not come simply as a result of a cut or bruise but because of some inner sorrow.

26.4 LET US SUM UP

Robert Frost is the quintessential New England poet. His poems are spare. He has a close affinity with nature and his poems are meditative--qualities he shares with the Romantic poet Wordsworth. Often, ordinary natural objects suggest something greater in his poems. He plays around with metre in order to capture the easy rhythms of the speaking voice. His poems flow very smoothly, like a good conversation.

26.5 QUESTIONS

Q.1 How would you characterise Robert Frost's poetry? Answer with close reference to "Mending Wall" and "Birches."

Q.2 What does the wall represent to Frost in "Mending Wall"?

Q.3 What does swinging on birches teach the poet about life?

Q.4 Analyse any three metaphors or similes in "Birches."

26.6 FURTHER READING

Brower, Reuben. The Poetry of Robert Frost: Constellations of Intention. 1963.

Ellmann, Richard and Robert O'Clair, eds. The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry. New York: Norton, 1973.

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UNIT 27 WALLACE STEVENS 1879-1955

Structure

27.0 Objectives
27.1 Life and Works
27.2 "Sunday Morning"
  27.2.1 Text
  27.2.2 Background
  27.2.3 Critical Appreciation
  27.2.4 Notes
27.3 "The Emperor of Ice Cream"
  27.3.1 Text
  27.3.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
  27.3.3 Notes
27.4 "The Idea of order at Key West"
  27.4.1 Text
  27.4.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
  27.4.3 Notes
27.5 Let Us Sum Up
27.6 Glossary
27.7 Questions
27.8 Further Reading

27.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we study the life and works of Wallace Stevens and three of his poems, "Sunday Morning," "The Emperor of Ice Cream" and "The Idea of Order at Key West," in detail. Stevens' closeness to painting, the way in which his beliefs in art (poetry, painting, sculpture, music) as a new religion, a kind of replacement for the loss of faith in institutionalised religion, is analysed. The role of the poet and the role of the poet's imagination is also one of Stevens' pet concerns.

27.1 LIFE AND WORKS

On October 2, 1879, the man who was to become one of the six or seven foremost poets writing in the English language was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. He was descended of stubborn and taciturn farmer stock. His father was a schoolteacher and an attorney. In 1897 Wallace enrolled at Harvard as an undergraduate special student. There he was an occasional poet and short story writer, his pieces, the poetry marking the influence of Keats and Tennyson, appearing in the Harvard Monthly and the Harvard Advocate. At Harvard he came to know the poet-philosopher George Santayana and his works made him believe that poetry has a quasi-religious function in an age of scepticism and disbelief. Perhaps because his father had told him to put "work and study" above his "dreams," in 1900-1901 Wallace became, not a writer starving in a garret, but a well-paid reporter, for the New York Herald Tribune. He did not consider himself a success as a journalist and so, taking his father's advice, he enrolled in the New York Law School in 1901 and was admitted to the New York State bar in 1904. He was, however, not a success as a lawyer either so in 1908 he joined the New York office of a bonding company and married Elsie V. Moll the following year. In 1911 Stevens' father died and, in the following year, his mother. In September 1914, in The Trend, and in November 1914 in Harriet Monroe's Poetry: A Magazine of Verse came the first publication of Stevens' mature work. In 1916

Stevens joined the legal staff of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, an insurance company he would work for the rest of his life, and made Hartford, Connecticut, his lifelong home. In 1915-17, he wrote three experimental one-act plays. His first volume of poems, Harmonium, appeared in 1923. Earlier his poems had appeared only in little magazines like Harriet Monroe's Poetry and Alfred Kreymborg's Others. These poems were the result of the double life Stevens led, a lawyer working for an insurance company by day, a poet by night, on weekends, and during the summers while his wife, of delicate health, vacationed in the country. He was a peripheral figure in the literary scene, a close professional friend, but only that, of poets William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore. He wrote and received letters but his reticence and his business kept him away from the centre of literary activity. In 1924 his daughter, Holly, was born and for the next six years Stevens wrote almost nothing. In the mid-thirties, he became economically secure. In 1934 he became the vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, and four important collections of his verse appeared in quick succession: Ideas of Order in 1935, Owl's Clover in 1936, The Man With the Blue Guitar in 1937, and Parts of a World in 1942. In 1946, he became a member of the National institute of Arts and Letters. Transport to Summer appeared in 1947. In the '40s he gave occasional readings and delivered lectures at Ivy League institutions like Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. The Auroras of Autumn appeared in 1950. In the same year, he was awarded the Bollingen Prize for poetry. In the following year, his acclaimed book of essays, The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination,

appeared and, in 1954, his Collected Poems. The following year he was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize for poetry and the National Book Award. In August 2 of the same year he died. Two years later appeared his Opus Posthumous.

Stevens' poetry dealt with the problem of the role of the imagination in relation to reality. The poet's role is to speak to the elite but also to help people "live their lives." How so? Because the poet "gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive it." It creates "a world of poetry indistinguishable from the world in which we live, or, I ought to say, no doubt from the world in which we shall come to live" (The Necessary Angel).

27.2 "SUNDAY MORNING"

27.2.1 Text of the Poem III

Sunday Morning

I

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice. 5
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As a clam darkens among water-lights.
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings
Seem things in some procession of the dead, 10
Winding across wide water, without sound.
The day is like wide water, without sound,
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre. 15

II

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
What is divinity if it can come
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else 20
In any balm or beauty of the earth,
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?
Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued 25
Emotions when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;
All pleasures and all pains, remembering
The bough of summer and the winter branch.
These are the measures destined for her soul. 30

III

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.
No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave
Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind
He moved among us, as a muttering king,

Magnificent, would move among his hinds, 35
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,
With heaven, brought such requital to desire
The very hinds discerned it, in a star.
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth 40
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?
The sky will be much friendlier then than now,
A part of labor and a part of pain,
And next in glory in enduring love,
Not this dividing and indifferent blue. 45

IV

She says, " I am content when wakened [illegible]ds,
Before they fly, test the reality
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields
Return no more, where, then, is paradise?" 50
There is not any haunt of prophecy,
Nor any old chimera of the grave,
Neither the golden underground, nor isle
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm 55
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
As April's green endures; or will endure
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,
Or her desire for June an evening, tipped
By the consummation of the swallow's wings. 60

V

She says, "But in contentment I still feel
The need of some imperishable bliss."
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,
Alone, shall come fulfilment to our dreams
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves 65
Of sure obliteration on our paths,
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
Whispered a little out of tenderness,
She makes the willow shiver in the sun 70
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves. 75

VI

Is there no change of death in paradise?
Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,
Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,
With rivers like our own that seek for seas 80
They never find, the same receding shores
That never touch with inarticulate pang?
Why set the pear upon those river-banks
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?

Alas, that they should wear our colors there, 85
The silken weavings of our afternoons,
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,
Within whose burning bosom we devise
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly. 90

VII

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,
Not as a god, but as a god might be,
Naked among them, like a savage source. 95
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills, 100
That choir among themselves long afterward.
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
Of men that perish and of summer morn.
And whence they came and whither they shall go
The dew upon their feet shall manifest. 105

VIII

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."
We live in an old chaos of the sun, 110
Or old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries; 115
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings. 120

27.2.2 Background of Poem

This is a long, complex poem which appeared first in Harriet Monroe's Poetry in 1915, but that was only stanzas I, VIII, IV, V and VII, printed in the order mentioned, scrambled by Stevens himself. In 1923, the poem was reprinted, but this time in its entirety and with the stanzas in the original order in which Stevens composed them. The poem is a slow meditation on death and on the conflicting claims of Christianity and paganism and their varied interpretations on the possibility of a life after death.

In the Title: "Sunday Morning" There is a pun on Sunday, the day of the week which perhaps got its name from the natural sun, and on "son," implying Christ, the Son of God. Stevens in his Letters (250) said that the poem was an unconscious "expression of paganism" and that it is not just a woman's but any person's "meditation on religion and the meaning of life" (Norton 1151). The poem was inspired, however, by his mother's death in 1912. His mother believed in Christianity while Stevens did not. He remembered in his journal how his mother would drink fruit juice and assert her

belief in immortality in her last days. Stevens also wrote to his wife that he thought that the grief of his mother's death could be "dissipated" (he uses the same word in this poem, L4) by pleasurable things. He urged his wife to indulge in "sweet breaths, sweet fruits, sweet everything" (Norton 1151). The poem may even be read in the form of a dialogue between a believer and a non-believer who alternately take turns to express their point-of-view rather than as a single meditation within a single mind.

27.2.3 Critical Appreciation

In the first stanza Stevens imagines a woman sitting in her dressing gown, in her study and thinking about her approaching death or perhaps even death in general. However, these brooding thoughts are "dissipate(d)" (L4) or lessened by the pungent oranges, the sunny chair and the wonderfully free, green wings of the cockatoo embroidered upon a rug. All these colourful markers of life surround the woman as she meditates on death. Note also the combination of the Christian, in the reference to Palestine, and the pagan, in the phrase "ancient sacrifice" (L5) and in the subtle reference to the "procession of the dead" (L10). The pagan references are reminiscent of the scene Keats describes in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," a sacrifice that belongs to a pagan civilisation:

> "Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
> To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
> Leadest thou that heifer lowing at the skies..."

The second stanza may either be the woman herself playing devil's advocate and asserting an opposing point of view or it could be another persona expressing something that is closer to the poet's own point-of-view. This stanza describes all the various things, objects in life that are to be "cherished" as much as "the thought of heaven" (L22): the sun, fruit, green wings, rain, snow, forest blooms and autumn nights. Note that the objects described combine effects of gladness and of grief--"All pleasures and all pains" (L28). "Divinity" must be sought within the human being rather than outside-- i.e., in the hope of God or Jesus or a life in heaven.

In the 3rd stanza the poet juxtaposes the pagan concept of divinity, Jove, who had no human mother and no homeland, whose thoughts were vast and who moved among humans "as a muttering king," with the Christian concept of divinity. Jesus was born of woman (the Virgin Mary) and born in a particular location (Bethlehem). The poet wants to suggest that the change from the pagan to the Christian concept of divinity, came about through human desire, and that desire, that very human blood, cannot fail us now. If we can only accept the earth as "all of paradise that we shall know" (L41) then the sky, (meaning nature and the world of nature,) will seem "much friendlier" (L 42). There will be no division between human toil and human sorrow and the world of nature. After all, nature too moves through various seasons, as Stevens has reminded us in the previous stanza. Of course, Stevens is much more tentative (note the three questions, L39-41) than I make him out to be in this paraphrase.

In the first two lines of this lovely stanza that follows the woman says she still feels the need, in the midst of earth's pleasures, of "some imperishable bliss" (some endless joy). In the remaining thirteen lines of this stanza, the poet's other persona explains how beauty can only come from transience: "Death is the mother of beauty" (L63). In other words, it is not the imperishable things that are joyous, but the perishable ones. We find things in life beautiful because they pass away so soon. And then the poet's other persona describes the many scenes of life through which death reminds us that she is the mother of beauty, scenes of earthly "sorrow," (L67) of earthly "triumph" (L68) and of earthly "tenderness" (L69). The last five lines of the stanza this persona elaborates on a pastoral scene in which boys pile the "*disregarded* plate" with ripe "*new* plums and pears" (emphasis added) in order to woo the "maidens." Images of love and death beautifully coexist--the "disregarded plate" (L74) has been handed down by long-dead ancestors. They are piled with fresh fruit symbolising

life. The maidens are young, and yet they "stray impassioned" (L75) (passionately move so as to lose their way) in the "littering" autumn leaves, representing decay and the passage of time.

What gives this verse its resonance are the rich echoes from earlier poets like Andrew Marvell ("To His Coy Mistress," "The Garden" "The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers," Keats' ("Ode on Melancholy" "Ode to a Nightingale") and Gerard Manley Hopkins ("Spring and Fall"). All these poets manage to combine the secular, pre-Chrisitan elements of pastoral with the darker Christian hints of the Garden of Eden and the fall. According to Christianity, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden because they disobeyed God and from then on human beings, who had till then been immortal, became mortal and the eternal spring of the Garden of Eden changed into the cycle of seasons. Decay and death entered human life. Stevens follows in the footsteps of the poets mentioned and still gives his poem an unmistakably modern ring by juxtaposing words like "boy" and "plate" with older words like "maidens".

The next stanza tries to imagine what paradise would be like, where everything would be so perfect, nothing would decay, and yet there would be no satisfaction because time and change would not exist--the ripe fruit would never fall, the boughs would always hang heavy, the sky would be like the sky we know only unchanging. Paradise thus becomes a less satisfying copy of the earth because there is no change. Usually, it is common to argue the reverse, but again Stevens follows Keats' precedent in the "Ode on a Grecian Urn." The scene of the lovers depicted on the urn is beautiful, the youths remain forever young, yet they are cold, frozen in an attitude of never-consummated desire:
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

In stanza 7 Stevens pictures a pagan celebration of life and nature as a sort of unorganised religion. What the men are celebrating is really their own energy. They also know that this earth and their "fellowship" (friendship) are all the heaven that they need. The sun, the wind, the trees--these are all the gods they need. They have no need of an"imperishable bliss." (L62) that the woman had longed for in Stanza 5. What is "fugitive," short lived, about life is what appeals to them.

In the last stanza Stevens describes the woman as hearing a soundless voice telling her that Jesus was just a human being, not a god. Palestine marks his grave; it is not the location of some mystical experience. We have not being created by God but have sprung from chaos, and this is where our complete freedom lies. The last seven lines of the stanza give a marvellous description of the wonderful variety of the birds, the trees, the fruits and the waters that surround us. No doubt Stevens was drawing inspiration from the grand New England scenery surrounding him. The last three lines are once again reminiscent of Keats, this time his "Ode to Autumn:"

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Keats is describing the "mellow fruitfulness" of autumn but the ode ends with a hint of winter in the air. The swallows are about to leave England for warmer countries.

The last line in this poem, "Downward to darkness on extended wings" provides a model or a pattern for the woman whose death is approaching. She should face the darkness, meaning death, squarely, unaffra[illegible]-her wings, signifying hope and [illegible]dness, sh[illegible] be aloft.

27.2.4 Notes

L1 "peignoir" dressing gown

L7 "old catastrophe" this could refer to death in general, the woman's particular (approaching) death, to the crucifixion of Christ or even to the Christian doctrine of the Fall.

L14-5 "silent Palestine,/ Dominion of the blood and sepulchre" Palestine was the place where Jesus was sacrificed and the location of many other bloody deaths in the name of religion.

L31 "Jove" This is the Roman name for the Greek god Zeus, the supreme deity in both Greek and Roman myth.

L37 "requital" repayment, reward

L38 "hinds...star" Farm labourers. This could be a reference to the shepherds who saw the star of Bethlehem that signalled the birth of Jesus.

L52 "chimera" a mythical, hybrid creature with a lion's head, a goat's body and a serpent's tail. Here it represents difficult-to-prove beliefs in other worlds.

L53 "golden underground...isle/ Melodious" Perhaps referring to pre-Christian Greek or Roman visualisations of life after death in the isles of the blessed.

In this stanza Stevens imagines the woman as saying that she is content with life while it lasts, but what about when it ends? Shouldn't one have some hope to sustain one in that case? Birds and misty fields are all very well, but what about when the birds fly away and their "warm fields" do not return? To which question the poet seems to reply that no concept of the life hereafter can "endure" (last) or satisfy as do earthly pleasures, the simple pleasures of April green, the warmth of June, and swallow's wings.

L74 "disregarded plate" Stevens himself explained that this referred to the silver-plated dinner service that was handed down from generation to generation in a family. "'Disregarded' refers to the disuse into which things fall that have been possessed for a long time. I mean, therefore, that death releases and renews. What the old have come to disregard, the young inherit and make use of" (Letters 183, Norton 1153).

There are a number of personifications in this verse--death is personified as the mother of beauty (L63), sorrow is described as "sick" (L67), triumph is personified as a sort of army general or even the conductor of a band, ringing "his brassy phrase." (L68) and love is personifed as a person tenderly whispering to his/her beloved (L68-69). These personifications help bring abstract concepts alive in the reader's mind.

L82 "inarticulate pang" a sorrow that cannot be expressed
L86 "silken" silky
L87 "pick the strings of our insipid lutes" play our stringed musical instruments, lutes, which are ordinary, humdrum

L88-90 "Death is the mother....sleeplessly" Two very difficult lines which probably mean that we create an image of Death, (an abstraction which we can never completely understand until we experience it, and then it's too late) in the image of our earthly, mortal mothers, waiting sleeplessly for their children to come home.

L91 "Supple and turbulent" easily bent (referring to the bodies of the men) and riotous

L92 "chant in orgy" sing wildly together in a secret rite in celebration of a particular god. This word is usually used with reference to Bacchus, the Greek god of wine. Celebrations in his honour were marked by drinking, singing and wild dancing.

L94-5 "Not as a god...savage source" The sun is being worshipped by these men not as a god but as a primitive source of energy not very different from themselves.

L100 "serafin" seraphim (Hebrew) are high ranking angels or heavenly creatures, gifted with love and associated with light and purity. The modern word "seraph" is derived from this.

L103 "fellowship" fellow feeling or friendship

L105 "The dew upon...manifest" Stevens in a letter explained this line thus: "Life is as fugitive as dew upon the feet of men dancing in the dew" (Selected Letters 250, Norton 1154).

L105 "manifest" show

L110 "chaos" matter without form. The Greek writer Hesiod in his Theogony (c 8th century BC) writes that chaos was the source of creation. This of course runs counter to the biblical belief that God created everything including Adam, the first man, in seven days (Genesis).

L119 "ambiguous undulations" the movement of the pigeons' wings does not have a fixed meaning. It may be interpreted in a variety of ways.

27.3 "THE EMPEROR OF ICE CREAM"

27.3.1 Text of the Poem IV

The Emperor of Ice-Cream

Call the roller of big cigars,
The muscular one, and bid him whip
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress
As they are used to wear, and let the boys 5
Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.
Let be be finale of seem.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,
Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet 10
On which she embroidered fantails once
And spread it so as to cover her face.
If her horny feet protrude, they come
To show how cold she is, and dumb.
Let the lamp affix its beam. 15
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream

27.3.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

This short poem appeared in 1923. In 1933 Stevens said that this was his favourite poem because of its combination of a "deliberately commonplace costume" with "the essential gaudiness of poetry" (Norton 1155). In 1945, Stevens remarked on the

'singularity" of this poem. Any poem, he explained, "must have a peculiarity, as if it was the momentarily complete idiom of that which prompts it, even if what prompts it is the vaguest emotion" (Norton 1155).

The poem's setting is a funeral, an occasion which brings about one of Stevens' favourite juxtapositions--that between life and death.

In his Letters (341) Stevens writes that the poem "is obviously not about icecream, (sic) but about being as distinguished from seeming to be." "...icecream is an absolute good." Ice cream has the connotations of coldness and pleasure, a combination that sets the tone for this poem about the way life and death, pleasure and pain coexist in being. The image of ice-cream symbolizes grotesque death and the wake which are parts of life. Ice-cream is at once cold, agreeable, ordinary and gesture and hence a symbol of life and death. Ice-cream in this poem also symbolizes change and flux which are both essential parts of life. It symbolizes change and flux because it melts quickly. At the same time it also symbolizes firmness and stability in its frozen state. The idea conveyed by this poem is that though reality is a fixed appearance it is sure to change "The Emporer of Ice-cream" uses change and flux as its central idea.

27.3.3 Notes

The title suggests, perhaps, in the combination of "emperor," a word denoting power and rule, with the word "ice cream," a sense of comic lightness. We should not take either death or life too seriously is what the poet seems to be telling us in his title.

Stanza 1

L3 "concupiscent curds" The word "concupiscent" means intense sexual desire. In 1945 Stevens wrote that this phrase has "no genealogy." They merely "express the concupiscence of life, but, by contrast with the things in relation to them in the poem, they express or accentuate life's destitution, and it is this that gives them something more than a cheap lustre" (Letters 500, quoted in Norton 1155). What is contrasted to the "curds" is the dead body of the woman described in the second stanza. There is also a sexual image in the reference to cigars, a phallic image. Sex (i.e., a life-generating energy) and death go on simultaneously in this poem.

L4 "Let the wenches dawdle..." The wenches (young girls) and "boys" of the following line both represent youth--something the dead woman has left far behind her.

L6 "flowers in last month's newspapers" Note again the juxtaposition of the past, something that is dead and gone, old news in the phrase "last month's newspapers" with something fresh and growing and living: "flowers."

L7 "Let be be finale of seem" A very complex line. "Finale" could refer to a) the striking flourishes that mark the end of a musical composition b) the final end or catastrophe. This line is something of a paradox. If one takes meaning a) the line could mean let being be celebrated in a display of "gaudy" (a favourite word of Stevens' and usually used to describe the effect of art or poetry) illusions (as in art or poetry). If one follows meaning b) the line could mean let being put an end to all illusions ("seem").

Stanza 2

L9 "dresser of deal" this means a chest of drawers made of plain, unpolished wood.

L10 "lacking the three glass knobs" three is a very important number for Christians because it represents the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The fact that the

dresser lacks three knobs could be taken to mean that Christianity can no longer play a major role in modern western lives.

L11 "embroidered fantails" fantails refers to fantail pigeons. What is significant is that a sheet embroidered by the dead woman is now used as her shroud. The woman is dead, but her art, the embroidered sheet, lives on.

L13 "horny feet protrude" "Horny" means hard as horn, calloused. The coldness and deadness of the woman and the attendant ugliness ("horny") of death is not something we are allowed to forget. But at the same time, the beautiful sheet she embroidered is also visible. There is a balance between the forces of death (the woman's dead body) and the forces of relative permanence (the embroidered sheet).

L15 "lamp affix its beam" "Lamp" could mean both a) the light by the corpse and b) the light of the poet's imagination. The poet's imagination transforms the sad spectacle of the dead woman into something beautiful, permanent and comforting, without denying the finality of her death. He does this by a series of juxtapositions in which he compares life and death, old age ("horny feet") and youth ("wenches" and "boys"), the past ("last month's newspapers") and the present, and death (the dead woman) and art (the embroidered sheet).

27.4 "THE IDEA OF ORDER AT KEY WEST"

27.4.1 Text of the Poem V

The Idea of Order at Key West

She sang beyond the genius of the sea.
The water never formed to mind or voice,
Like a body wholly body, fluttering
Its empty sleeves; and yet its mimic motion
Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry, 5
That was not ours although we understood,
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.

The sea was not a mask. No more was she.
The song and water were not medleyed sound
Even if what she sang was what she heard, 10
Since what she sang was uttered word by word.
It may be that in all her phrases stirred
The grinding water and the gasping wind;
But it was she and not the sea we heard.

For she was the maker of the song she sang. 15
The ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea
Was merely a place by which she walked to sing.
Whose spirit is this? we said, because we knew
It was the spirit that we sought and knew
That we should ask this often as she sang. 20

If it was only the dark voice of the sea
That rose, or even colored by many waves;
If it was only the outer voice of sky
And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled,
However clear, it would have been deep air, 25
The heaving speech of air, a summer sound
Repeated in a summer without end

And sound alone. But it was more than that,
More even than her voice, and ours, among
The meaningless plungings of water and the wind, 30
Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped
On high horizons, mountainous atmospheres
Of sky and sea.
It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing.
She measured to the hour its solitude. 35
She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,
As we beheld her striding there alone, 40
Knew that there never was a world for her
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.

Ramon Fernandez, tell me, if you know,
Why, when the singing ended and we turned
Toward the town, tell why the glassy lights, 45
The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there,
As the night descended, tilting in the air,
Mastered the night and portioned out the sea,
Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles,
Arranging, deepening, enchanting night. 50

Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,
The maker's rage to order words of the sea,
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,
And of ourselves and of our origins,
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds. 55

27.4.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

This poem appeared in 1935 and is one of the best known of Stevens' poems. The first stanza is complex stanza. Here Stevens is describing a woman singing by the sea shore in Key West and the effect her song has on the listeners. Although the woman is not singing about the sea, the sea seems to find expression in her song and the song elicits a response in the minds of the listeners. Stevens is obviously referring the mimesis theory of art and what relation art has to life. This was a debate that was first opened by Plato, a circa fourth century B.C. Greek philosopher. According to him art was a reflection of a reflection and had no relation to truth. Aristotle, in his Poetics (c330BC) claimed that art should be judged on its own merits and not on whether it was a true reflection of life. Romantic poets like Wordsworth argued that the poet's imagination transformed nature and added a certain radiance that was not intrinsically present in nature. Stevens, as a modernist, here is trying to unravel the effect nature, as exemplified by the ocean, has on the artist, exemplified by the woman singing a song, and the effect art has on its audience. This gradually unravels in the course of the poem.

In the second stanza, the poet is trying to decipher the exact relation between the song and the sea. Is the sea merely a location for the woman's song? Is the sea her inspiration? Even if she sings what she hears, she transforms it because the sea cannot use words and she can. Was it the spirit of the sea finding expression in her song or was it her imagination at work? These and many other questions are aroused in the minds of the audience. Again, Stevens is probing the problem of the interaction between nature and art and the role played by both nature (here the sea) and by the artist's imagination. Nature is transformed by the artist's imagination and

finds intelligible voice through it. The listeners feel they understand the "tragic" nature of the sea because of the woman's song.

In the third stanza the poet is saying that if the woman's song were merely a replica of the voice of the sea then it would have no words, it would sound only like air. It would be sound alone. But it is something more than that. It is something more even than her voice, or the voice of her listeners, or the voice of the twilight landscape of the sea that surrounds them.

In the second part of the stanza, which begins from line 34 "It was her voice..." the poet explains that the woman's voice made the sea and the sky and everything else that surrounded them find a voice. The woman's voice gave the power of speech to the sea, the sky and the "bronze shadows" of twilight. The woman creates a world through her song. This too relates to what Elizabethan poet-critics like Philip Sidney say about the relation between the poet's imagination and nature. Sidney in An Apology for Poetry writes,

> "Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection [to nature], lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, forms such as never were in nature...;so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done, neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet smelling flowers....Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden." (14-15) "Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature, but rather give right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature, which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of as divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her [nature's] doings...." (17) In other words, the artist becomes a sort of surrogate god or creator--note Stevens too uses the words "artificer" (L37) and "maker" (L40).

In the next stanza, the poet asks an imaginary friend, Ramon Fernandez, who had apparently been listening to the song along with him, why everything around looked different when the song ended. The lights of the fishing boats seemed to divide the night into perfectly ordered zones of radiance. They seemed to intensify the effect of the night. Why was this so?

In the final stanza, the poet himself suggests an answer to the question posed in the earlier stanza. He says the effect on the landscape came about through the artist's "rage for order" which is a "blessed one"--the artist's power of creation is a great gift. It is through this gift that the artist makes nature and our origins clearer to us. But at the same time, the artist's creation leaves us room for flexibility in interpretation--the "demarcations" are "ghostlier" less real than nature itself, more ambiguous too and yet the sounds are "keener"--that is, art gives us a heightened awareness of nature and of life.

27.4.3 Notes

Title: Order is a very important concept for Stevens, particularly in the sense of the order imposed by the artist's imagination on the chaos of nature. Key West is a place in Florida. Stevens used to vacation in Florida quite regularly and some critics see the pungent tropical fruits, birds and colours in his poems to stem from his experiences in Florida.

Stanza 1

L1 "genius" this could mean a) tutelary or guardian spirit or b) inspiration

L3-4 "Like a body...sleeves" This is a simile in which Stevens says that the sea does not become a body through the singer's song, a body clothed in a shirt whose sleeves are empty, but that the spirit of the sea is reflected in the singer's song. Spirit rather than body is what finds expression.

L4-5 "mimic motion...constant cry...caused constantly a cry" note how the alliteration of "m" and "c" reflects the sense of the lines--the song and the sea are mimicking (imitating) each other. Similarly, the "m" and "c" sounds are repeated in order to reflect in sound the sense of mimicry.

Stanza 2

L8 "mask" I think by this word Stevens means to suggest Greek drama with its use of masks and by implication Aristotle's theory of catharsis. Aristotle argued that art made pleasurable and instructive what was often horrifying in real life. For example, the story of Oedipus killing his father and marrying his mother would have merely shocked us if we had read about it in the newspapers. But Sophocles in his great tragedy, Oedipus Rex, makes it a grand and moving tale. The word "tragic" used later in line 16 also suggests that Stevens was thinking along these lines.

L9 "medleyed sound" mixed sound

L13 "grinding water...gasping wind" note the alliteration of "g" and "w" to suggest the sound of the water and the wind and the effect of the wind on the water.

L15 "maker" this is a loaded word because it means not just composer. It refers back to the word the Greeks used for poets and thus situates this poem in the whole art-life debate. The woman and her song represent the artist and his/her artistic creation.

L16 "ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea" the sea is personified as a person whose head is covered and whose hand movements are sorrowful. This means that it is difficult to interpret the sea. A hood covers the face and the hands move sadly, but there are only movements, no sounds or words to express what the sea is feeling.

Stanza 3

L21 "dark" means not just colour but inscrutability. The sea's voice is difficult to understand.

L24 "sunken coral water-walled" coral is a hard substance, red, pink, orange or white in colour which is secreted by some types of marine polyps for support. This is a lovely phrase, which captures, through sound and alliteration of "w," the sense of the coral deep beneath the sea, surrounded by water.

Stanza 4

L43 "Ramon Fernandez" Stevens points out in his letters that this name was not meant to refer to any particular person, particularly not to the critic of that name, but that he had just strung two common Spanish names together.

Stanza 5

L55 "demarcations" marks of a boundary

27.5 LET US SUM UP

Stevens is a poet who is deeply concerned about the world of poetry and the world of the imagination. He enters into the age-old debate about the relative merits of life and art, does one feed on the other, does one supersede the other? He seems to

suggest in "The Idea of Order at Key West" that art adds something to life that is not just a mimicking or mirror or copy or mimesis of it. The art produced by the artist lives on even after the artist dies in "The Emperor of Ice Cream." Art to Stevens seems to take the place of religion in a world where institutionalised religions like Christianity have fewer and fewer believers. In "Sunday Morning" he tries to convince one such timorous believer that life in its very fleetingness has a more powerful allure than the impossible-to-confirm promise of an everlasting Christian paradise.

27.6 GLOSSARY

Pagan: Pre-Christian

Mimesis: The Greek word for imitation. Entered the realm of aesthetics when Aristotle used it in his Poetics (c330B.C.), one of the earliest works of literary criticism.

27.7 QUESTIONS

Q.1. What does "Sunday Morning" say about the conflicting claims of Christianity and paganism?

Q.2. Analyse the significance of the lines, "And, in the isolation of the sky,/ At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make/Ambiguous undulations as they sink,/Downward to darkness, on extended wings."

Q.3. Analyse all the ways in which life and death are juxtaposed in "The Emperor of Ice Cream." What is the significance of this juxtaposition?

Q.4. What does "The idea of Order at Key West" contribute to the art versus life debate which thinkers and poets like Plato, Aristotle, Sidney and Wordsworth have spoken about?

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UNIT 28 WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883-1963)

Structure

28.0 Objectives
28.1 Life and Works
28.2 "The Red Wheelbarrow"
    28.2.1 Text of the Poem VI
    28.2.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
28.3 Let Us Sum Up
28.4 Glossary
28.5 Questions
28.6 Further Reading

28.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we study the life and works of the poet William Carlos Williams and his poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" in detail. Williams was an oppositional voice in modern poetry--he agreed with many of the modern poets' endeavours (such as imagism) but was also fiercely critical of the expatriate poets. He was interested in developing a truly robust American voice and idiom in modern poetry. He was a strong influence on the movement called objectivism. He did a great deal to support new talent in American poetry in his lifetime.

28.1 LIFE AND WORKS

This poet did the most to support new talent in American poetry after World War II. He wrote for over sixty years and was both poet and doctor (pediatrics was his specialisation).. Along with poetry he also wrote plays, essays and fiction and was, along with Hart Crane, one of the leading inheritors of Whitman's mantle in American poetry.

Williams was born in 1883 near Paterson, New Jersey and he lived there all his life. His father was an English immigrant and his mother a Puerto Rican who had studied painting in Paris. He was thus exposed to European culture but at the same time had a strong sense of America being his only home. He went to local schools as well as to schools in Switzerland and Paris. After graduating from the Horace Mann High School, he studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. There he became friends with the poets Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle (H.D.). He graduated in 1906, and after working in New York City and Germany he returned to New Jersey, married Florence Herman, and began practising as a pediatrician. He continued seeing patients till a number of strokes in the mid '50s forced him to turn his practice over to one of his sons. Like Wallace Stevens, Williams pursued his career as a poet at night and in between seeing patients. He was determined to be a writer but equally determined not to let go of a doctor's livelihood. His practice and his community social projects brought him into contact with a wide variety of people and probably led to the energy and physicality of much of his poetry.

His first book, Poems was published privately in 1909. The second volume, Tempers, published in 1913 with the help of Ezra Pound, revealed Williams' interaction with the modern mode in poetry and his attempt to create his own voice.

In the intellectual circles of New York he came to know Wallace Stevens, the poet Marianne Moore, and painters like Picabia and Duchamp. Although he disagreed with Pound on matters like the revival of old verse forms, he agreed with him about his principle of "imagism." He was also attracted to Whitman's celebration of the merely physical and his strong recommendation for a poetry of feeling and of the poet's role as an upholder of liberty and equality. His essays in the magazine Contact which he edited between 1920 to 1923 with Robert McAlmon, his prose and poetry in Spring and All (1923) and his essays in the volume In the American Grain (1925) saw him moving away from expatriates like Pound and establishing his own, individual, even somewhat eccentric American tradition. Poetry, Williams argued, should be impelled by the same energies that bring about a revolution. It should run against the establishment. At the same time it should be grounded in reality--something he felt expatriate poets like T. S. Eliot were running away from. Symbolism should not be used to distance the reader of poetry from reality. Meanings should be found in actual things, actual objects and not vague abstractions. "The Red Wheelbarrow" is an excellent example of Williams' concerns about poetry in this sense. He was for reestablishing the cadences, the rhythms of American diction in poetry--this, he felt, would make poetry more down-to-earth. He also thought the very lack of stability of the American language would make it particularly open to innovation and fruitful change. Williams effectively uses fragmentation in syntax to draw attention to the particular and different ordering that the poet's imagination gives to the world of objects in order to turn it into poetry.

Poetry is not just imitation but "mutation." The influence of painting can be seen in his volume Sour Grapes (1921) as well as the earlier Spring and All. This is something else he has in common with Pound and Stevens. Dadaists, Expressionists, Cubists, Precisionists--Williams was exposed to all of these modern schools of European painting through art shows in New York City. He borrowed from the Cubists their fragmentation of objects; from the Precisionists their combination of geometry and objective realism.

In the 1930s, Williams' poems became one of the models for the "Objectivism" movement. His Collected Poems 1921-1931 was published by the Objectivist Press in 1934. At this time Williams was also writing a lot of fiction. The Great American Novel appeared in 1923, A Voyage to Pagany in 1928 and two collections of short stories, The Edge of the Knife and Life Along the Passaic River appeared in 1932 and 1938 respectively. The first two novels are mostly autobiographical and deal with the life of an artist; the short stories talk about the bleak, comic and heroic lives of American immigrants. Later novels like White Mule (1937) and its sequel In the Money (1940) talk of an immigrant's move from rags to riches in an America dominated by business.

Despite a series of heart attacks which began in 1948 and which made writing increasingly difficult for him, Williams completed his epic Paterson, the first book of which appeared in 1946 and subsequent books in 1948, 1949, 1951 and 1958. The epic is an answer to the Greeks and Romans and an epic about a modern metropolis. Book IV concludes with the hero's return to New Jersey, much like Odysseus' return to Ithaca in Homer's Odyssey.

Williams' honesty, his innovation and the directness and clarity of his style influenced later poets like Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, and Robert Creeley. He received a number of awards like the Dial Award (1926), the National Book Award (1950), the Bollingen Award (1953) and the Pulitzer Prize (1962). As can be seen from these dates, recognition came later rather than earlier in his career.

28.2 "THE RED WHEELBARROW"

28.2.1 Text of the Poem VI

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain 5
water

beside the white
chickens.

28.2.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

The Red Wheelbarrow (1923)

This is a poem in the style of the Japanese haiku, where a single image is elaborated on and the significance of that image is left entirely up to the reader's imagination. It is objectivist, rooted in reality and uses no metaphors or symbols to escape from hard.

even mundane reality. The fragmentation of the syntax gives proof of Williams' effort to capture the new, intrinsic, particularly *American* cadences in his poetry. Here the object of Williams' attention is a red wheelbarrow, a humble country implement used for carrying straw or manure or animal food around a farm, "glazed" or made shiny by the rain, set up against some white chickens. The image becomes pungent because of the contrast between the red of the wheelbarrow and the white of the chickens. What is also unusual is that Williams can write a poem on such an ordinary farm object--poetry can indeed be composed about anything at all. The phrase "So much depends..." probably refers to the task the poet sets himself--can he indeed compose a poem about a wheelbarrow and some chickens, a poem that people will not laugh at, a poem worth the name? The fact that this poem continues to be anthologised 70-odd years after it was composed answers all those questions in the affirmative.

28.3 LET US SUM UP

While William Carlos Williams believed in the other modern poets' credos like Pound's imagism, he had problems with what he called the expatriate poets' flight from reality through symbolism. He wanted poems to be sensed as real objects, not to blind the reader to reality. He influenced the objectivist movement. He was also a strong influence in the creation of a robust American tradition in poetry, even though some may have seen his efforts in this direction as somewhat quixotic. In this endeavour he saw Walt Whitman as a powerful influence. "The Red Wheelbarrow" is a characteristically Williams poem--it elevates a humble object, sees it for what it is, does not obfuscate it into a symbol, and writes about it in a plain style that is nevertheless very graphic.

28.4 GLOSSARY

Imagism: A literary movement launched in the early twentieth century in revolt against romanticism. It promoted free verse and precise imagery.

Symbolism: A movement in France in the late nineteenth century that later spread to England and America wherein artists expressed ideas and emotions indirectly through symbols.

Mutation: The act or process of being altered or changed.

Dadaism: A western European artistic and literary movement (1916-23) that sought discovery of authentic reality through the abolition of traditional cultural and aesthetic forms by a technique of comic derision in which irrationality, chance and intuition were the guiding principles.

Precisionism: A modern school of European painting combining geometry and objective realism.

Objectivism: A mode of writing verse that recognises the poem, apart from its meaning, to be an object to be dealt with as such. It pays particular attention to the structure of the poem and its construction.

28.5 QUESTIONS

Q.1. What is objectivism? Analyse "The Red Wheelbarrow" and say whether or not you think it is an objectivist poem.

Q.2. In what ways did William Carlos Williams agree as a poet with his contemporaries like Pound and Eliot and in what ways did he differ?

28.6 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 29 EZRA POUND (1885-1972)

Structure

29.0 Objectives
29.1 Life and Works
29.2 "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"
29.2.1 Text
29.2.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
29.2.3 Form and Metre
29.2.4 Notes
29.3 The Cantos
29.3.1 Canto I: Text
29.3.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
29.3.3 Canto I: Notes
29.3.4 Canto XVII: Text
29.3.5 Canto XVII: Critical Appreciation
29.3.6 Notes
29.4 Let Us Sum Up
29.5 Glossary
29.6 Questions
29.7 Further Reading

29.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we study the life and works of Ezra Pound and look in detail at his long poem, "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" as well as two parts of his magnum opus, "The Cantos"--Canto I and Canto XVII. This unit contains detailed, line-by-line annotations because the poems of Pound are crammed with allusions to classical mythology, to Renaissance history and to European geography among other things, so the reader must be a little patient. Pound was one of the most innovative poets of his time, both in terms of matter and form, and very supportive of new talent. His "Cantos" with their disjunctive form are an important precursor of the postmodern.

29.1 LIFE AND WORKS

Ezra Pound was born in Hailey, Idaho, to parents who had ancestors in the American North-East and in the American West. They moved to Philadelphia when Pound was a few years old and his father worked in the Mint. Pound studied in the University of Pennsylvania--English literature, American history and the Greek and Roman classics--before moving to Hamilton College, where he took up Old English and Romance literatures. He graduated from Hamilton in 1905, returned to Pennsylvania for an M.A. the next year, and entered academics. He was dismissed from his first position (at Wabash College, Indiana) for sheltering an unemployed burlesque queen. This dismissal made him leave his native America for Venice and London but did not make him abandon his academic career. He taught medieval and Renaissance literature at the London Regent Street polytechnic between 1908-9 while trying to make his mark as a poet. His translations and scholarly works appeared in The Spirit of Romance (1910). His first verse collection was A Lume Spento (1908), published in Venice. Two others, A Quinzane for This Yule (1908) and Personae (1909) appeared in London. In 1914 he married Dorothy Shakespeare, who was to be the mother of his only son. Hand in hand with these publications went teaching and the writing of influential critical essays.

Although he spent much of his life outside America he was very conscious of his identity as an American within Europe. In his memoir Indiscretions (1923) he made clear his links both to the lumberman grandfather in the West and to the well-known upper New York family of his mother--two very disparate sections of society, one economically underprivileged, the other affluent. He insisted on using slang in his criticism and his poetry, along with colloquialisms in the latter in order to present an American identity, but as some critics have pointed out, there is also much of the cosmopolitan in Pound. He insists on writers adhering to standards of taste that are independent of national boundaries, is scathing when they do not, and is determined to formulate those standards in an effort to rebuild what we would now call the canon. Of course, Pound was far more radical than his contemporaries, the Georgian poets, who were merely calling for a literary revolt against Victorianism. At times in his strenuous efforts he appeared to want to become what a critic has called "the literary dictator of London" (Norman, Ezra Pound 273). Towards the end of his career he did occasionally sound a little too prone to the dramatisation of the loneliness of his endeavour, but the ambitiousness of his programme to redefine and rebuild the Anglo-American tradition, cannot be denied.

In essays like "Rensaissance" Pound wrote about the steps that ought to be taken in order to carry out his programme: models from earlier ages should not be plagiarized but transformed and surpassed. Poets should "go against the grain of contemporary taste." History and culture should be ransacked in order to disclose lost traditions, as Pound thought he had done by discovering what he called a "new Greece" in Chinese

art and literature. Trusts and endowments should save the artist from the need to cater to the inferior tastes of the "ignorant" public and leave him/her free to pursue radical visions.

A few instances will prove Pound's indefatigable efforts to promote new talent. He was the first important reviewer of importance to praise what he called Robert Frost's "VURRY Amur'k'n" gift (Letters 114, Norton 1027); he promoted the music of the American composer George Antheil; he it was that was responsible for having Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man serialised in the journal The Egoist. Of course, his crucial editing changes in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land are now a part of literary history.

Along with Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle and others, Pound helped formulate the theory behind Imagism, and provided the title "Imagiste" for the group. The three main principles of this movement were: 1) the "direct treatment" of poetic subjects 2) economy of language by a radical condensing by the elimination of any unnecessary or merely ornamental words 3) an inorganic selection of rhythmical patterns--rhythmical composition was preferred in the sequence of the more flexible "musical phrase" rather than in "the sequence of a metronome" (Norton 1027). This group, which Pound left by the time he had published Des Imagistes: An Anthology (1914) and which was later led by Amy Powell, believed in the short poem, usually dominated by a single image or metaphor and structured around it, a rhythm of cadences, describing to the reader an object or scene from the material world and refusing to diffuse the poem's effect by relating it to an extended abstract meaning. This movement was a reaction to the flabbiness and abstraction of much of nineteenth century poetry. Some critics see a similarity in this poetic revolution and the one that came about as a result of the publication of the Lyrical Ballads in particularly in both Romantics' and Imagists' concentration on the object and the bias in favour of realism that accompanies this. In its concern with technique and in its restriction of meaning the movement also has something in common with more contemporary movements which attempt to reaffirm the values of poetry against the pressures of science. With formalism imagism shares an attention to the craft of writing. It focusses on a moment of discovery or awareness in which a single sharp metaphor or image crystallises the intuitive insight of the poet, the insight which he/she approximates with the essence of life. In its concern with surfaces, light and colour, the movement also has links with impressionism. Pound's haiku, "In a Station of the Metro:" "The apparition of these faces in the crowd;/ Petals on a wet, black bough" is a famous example of an imagist poem.

Later Pound moved away from Imagism to Vorticism, along with the sculptor Jacob Epstein and the painter Wyndham Lewis. While imagism he now thought was too visual and static, Vorticism enabled forms that were sculptural and associated with energy and movement. Pound thought of the vortex as a form prior to any of the specific forms in art, a kind of ur-form. In cultural history a vortex is a time of revolution, innovation and ferment among all the arts. In poetry, an image is a vortex, "a radiant node or cluster...from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing" (Pound Gaudier-Brzeska 92, Norton 1028).

During this time Pound was also interested in his explorations of oriental culture. His volumes Cathay (1915) and Lustra (1916) contained translations from the Chinese. He studied Ernest Fellonosa's manuscript, The Chinese Written Character as a Medium of poetry and inferred that condensed Chinese ideograms had almost the effect of a film in their combination of events and actions, their words full of energy and their graphics. His interest in Confucian ethics can be felt in the Cantos and in his free translations of certain songs in The Classic Anthology Defined by Confucius (1954). Studying Confucius convinced Pound that the poet's mission was to remake language and also the individual and society. Pound was drawn to the Confucian social model of the lord and his dependent community. His scholarship and his interest in the orient were not gratuitous and had to serve the larger purpose of his.

propaganda in poetry and poetics--what he thought appropriate and what he strove to make authoritative in modern poetry.

In 1920 Pound left London for France and Italy--at this point he thought London as backward in the literary sphere as he had earlier thought New York. His farewell to London formed the basis of his early masterpiece "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (1920). By 1925 he was settled in Rapallo, Italy and well into composing the Cantos. At this time he relied mainly on the enormity of his correspondence to achieve his literary ends. Two volumes of his essays, Make It New (1934) and Literary Essays (1954), mostly contained essays written before 1920 while two other volumes, The ABC of Reading (1934) and Polite Essays (1937), contained his ceaseless appraisals of modern writing.

Along with assessments of the present went Pound's research into the past. In his study of the Middle Ages he came across the word forma which he felt expressed the process of creation which artists try to capture in their finished works of art. In his study of the Renaissance he was struck by similarities between 16th century statesmen and art patrons like Sigismondo Malatesta and Americans like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, and more surprisingly, the Italian fascist dictator Mussolini. His Guide to Kulchur (1938), though containing many perceptive observations on history and culture, is now increasingly attacked for its anti-Semitism. Pound was increasingly emphatic in his denunciation of the Jews and his criticism of America under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He supported fascism saying it was preferable to "usury." According to Pound, usury was the enemy of social good and cultural order.

As expected, Pound's outspoken political views landed him in trouble. The talks that he delivered to the American troops on the invitation of the Italian government had the American government try him for treason in 1943. Literary circles in America also denounced him and he was edited out of an anthology. Not a bit deterred, Pound continued to recite his Cantos over the air, abuse President Roosevelt and the Jews, and mock American motives for taking part in World War II. After the fall of Italy Pound was imprisoned for months in an open-air cage--this physically and emotionally debilitating experience he hints at with anguish in the Pisan Cantos. In 1945 he was returned to the United States for trial, but his case was suspended because psychiatrists declared him mentally unfit. From 1946 to 1958 he was a patient in St. Elizabeth's hospital in Washington D.C., visited by his wife and admirers, and working on the Cantos. As a result of the efforts of influential friends like Archibald MacLeish, who harness the energies of lawyers and congressmen as well as literary figures, Pound's charge of treason was dropped in 1958 and he was free to return to Italy. Pound spent the rest of his life in Europe, mainly Italy, cared for by his faithful wife, the concert violinist Olga Rudge, and their daughter Mary, the Countess de Rachewiltz. Occasionally Pound visited London and in 1969 he even went to the United States to receive an honorary degree from Hamilton College and visit friends. He continued to publish the Cantos and to see friends, although towards the end of his life he was increasingly prone to long periods of silence.

Pound was awarded the Bollingen Prize for poetry in 1948 for the Pisan Cantos, but this prize stirred up quite a bit of controversy because of Pound's political views and the charge of treason. Even though his influence on the poets of the '60s and '70s was immense, his reputation could never free itself from charges of anti-Semitism. In 1962 he received the Harriet Monroe Award for poetry and the following year a prize from the Academy of American Poets. However, when in 1972, just before his death, a committee of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences nominated pound for its Emerson-Thoreau Award, the governing board of the Academy overruled the committee and did not give Pound the prize. In Pound's life radical courage and innovation on the one hand and controversy on the other were perpetual bedfellows.

29.2 "HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY"

29.2.1 Text of the Poem VII

Hugh Selwyn Mauberley
(Life and Contacts)

"Vocat aestus in umbram"
-NEMESIANUS, Ec. IV

E.P. Ode pour L'Election de Son Sépulchre

For three years, out of key with his time,
He strove to resuscitate the dead art
Of poetry; to maintain "the sublime"
In the old sense. Wrong from the start-

No, hardly, but seeing he had been born 5
In a half savage country, out of date;
Bent resolutely on wringing lilies from the acorn;
Capaneus; trout for factitious bait;

Caught in the unstopped ear;
Giving the rocks small lee-way 10
The chopped seas held him, therefore, that year.

His true Penelope was Flaubert,
He fished by obstinate isles;
Observed the elegance of Circe's hair
Rather than the mottoes on sun-dials. 15

Unaffected by "the march of events,"
He passed from men's memory in *l'an trentiesme*
De son eage, the case presents
No adjunct to the Muses' diadem.

II

The age demanded an image 20
Of its accelerated grimace,
Something for the modern stage,
Not, at any rate, an Attic grace;

Not, not certainly, the obscure reveries
Of the inward gaze; 25
Better mendacities
Than the classics in paraphrase!

The "age demanded" chiefly a mould in plaster,
Made with no loss of time,
A prose kinema, not, not assuredly, alabaster 30
Or the "sculpture" of rhyme.

III

The tea-rose tea-gown, etc.
Supplants the mousseline of Cos,
The pianola "replaces"
Sappho's barbitos. 35

Christ follows Dionysus,
Phallic and ambrosial
Made way for macerations;
Caliban casts out Ariel.

All things are a flowing, 40
Sage Heracleitus says;
But a tawdry cheapness
Shall outlast our days.

Even the Christian beauty
Defects--after Samothrace; 45
We see
Decreed in the market place.

Faun's flesh is not to us,
Nor the saint's vision.
We have the press for wafer; 50
Franchise for circumcision.

All men, in law, are equals.
Fee of Pisistratus,
We choose a knave or an eunuch
To rule over us. 55

O bright Apollo,

What god, man, or hero
Shall I place a tin wreath upon!

IV

These fought in any case,
and some believing, 60
pro domo, in any case...

Some quick to arm,
Some for adventure,
Some from fear of weakness,
Some from fear of censure, 65
Some for love of slaughter, in imagination,
learning later ...
some in fear, learning love of slaughter;

Died some, pro patria,
non "dulce" non "et décor"... 70
walked eye-deep in hell
believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving
came home, home to a lie,
home to many deceits,
home to old lies and new infamy; 75
usury age-old and age-thick
and liars in public places.

Daring as never before, wastage as never before.
Young blood and high blood,
fair cheeks, and fine bodies; 80

fortitude as never before

frankness as never before,
disillusions as never told in the old days,
hysterias, trench confessions,
laughter out of dead bellies. 85

V

There died a myriad,
And of the best, among them,
For an old bitch gone in the teeth,
For a botched civilization,

Charm, smiling at the good mouth, 90
Quick eyes gone under earth's lid,

For two gross of broken statues,
For a few thousand battered books.

Yeux Glauques

Gladstone was still respected,
When John Ruskin produced 95
"King's Treasuries"; Swinburne
And Rossetti still abused.

Fetid Buchanan lifted up his voice
When that faun's head of hers
Became a pastime for 100
Painters and adulterers.

The Burne-Jones cartons
Have preserved her eyes;
Still, at the Tate, they teach
Cophetua to rhapsodize; 105

Thin like brook-water,
With a vacant gaze.
The English Rubaiyat was still-born
In those days.

The thin, clear gaze, the same 110
Stiull darts out faun-like from the half-ruin'd face,
Questing and passive...
"Ah, poor Jenny's case"...

Bewildered that a world
Shows no surprise 115
At her last maquero's
Adulteries.

"Siena mi fe'; Disfecemi Maremma"
Among the pickled fetuses and bottled bones,
Engaged in perfecting the catalogue, 120
I found the last scion of the
Senatorial families of Strasbourg, Monsieur Verog.

For two hours he talked of Gallifet;
Of Dowson; of the Rhymers' Club;
Told me how Johnson (Lionel) died 125
By falling from a high stool in a pub...

But showed no trace of alcohol
At the autopsy, privately performed—
Tissue preserved—the pure mind
Arose toward Newman as the whiskey warmed. 130

Dowson found harlots cheaper than hotels;
Headlam for uplift; Image impartially imbued
With raptures for Bacchus, Terpsichore and the Church.
So spoke the author of "The Dorian Mood,"

M. Verog, out of step with the decade, 135
Detached from his contemporaries,
Neglected by the young,
Because of these reveries.

Brennbaum

The sky-like limpid eyes,
The circular infant's face, 140
The stiffness from spats to collar
Never relaxing into grace;

The heavy memories of Horeb, Sinai and the forty years,
Showed only when the daylight fell
Level across the face 145
Of Brennbaum "The Impeccable."

Mr. Nixon

In the cream gilded cabin of his steam yacht
Mr. Nixon advised me kindly, to advance with fewer
Dangers of delay. "Consider
Carefully the reviewer. 150

"I was as poor as you are;
"When I began I got, of course,
"Advance on royalties, fifty at first," said Mr. Nixon,
"Follow me, and take a column,
"Even if you have to work free. 155

"Butter reviewers. From fifty to three hundred
"I rose in eighteen months;
"The hardest nut I had to crack
"Was Dr. Dundas.

"I never mentioned a man but with the view 160
"Of selling my own works.
"The tip's a good one, as for literature
"It gives no man a sinecure.

"And no one knows, at sight, a masterpiece.
"And give up verse, my boy, 165
"There's nothing in it."

Likewise a friend of Bloughram's once advised me:
Don't kick against the pricks,
Accept opinion. The "Nineties" tried your game
And died, there's nothing in it. 170

X

Beneath the sagging roof
The stylist has taken shelter,
Unpaid, uncelebrated,
At last from the world's welter

Nature receives him; 175
With a placid and uneducated mistress
He exercises his talents
And the soil meets his distress.

The haven from sophistications and contentions
Leaks through its thatch; 180
He offers succulent cooking;
The door has a creaking latch.

IX

"Conservatrix of Milesien"
Habits of mind and feeling,
Possibly. But in Ealing 185
With the most bank-clerky of Englishmen?

No, "Milesian" is an exaggeration.
No instinct has survived in her
Older than those her grandmother
Told her would fit her station. 190

XII

"Daphne with her thighs in bark
Stretches toward me her leafy hands,"
Subjectively. In the stuffed-satin drawing-room
I await The Lady Valentine's commands,

Knowing my coat has never been 195
Of precisely the fashion
To stimulate, in her,
A durable passion;

Doubtful, somewhat, of the value
Of well-gowned approbation 200
Of literary effort,
But never of The Lady Valentine's vocation:

Poetry, her border of ideas,
The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending
With other strata 205
Where the lower and higher have ending;

A hook to catch the Lady Jane's attention,
A modulation toward the theatre,
Also, in the case of revolution,
A possible friend and comforter. 210

Conduct, on the other hand, the soul
"Which the highest cultures have nourished"
To Fleet St. where
Dr. Johnson flourished;

Beside this thoroughfare 215
The sale of half-hose has
Long since superseded the cultivation
Of Pierian roses.

Envoi (1919)

Go, dumb-born book,
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes: 220
Hadst thou but song
As thou hast subjects known.
Then were there cause in thee that should condone
Even my faults that heavy upon me lie,
And build her glories their longevity. 225

Tell her that sheds
Such treasure in the air,
Recking naught else but that her graces give
Life to the moment,
I would bid them live 230
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time.

Tell her that goes 235
With song upon her lips
But sings not out the song, nor knows
The maker of it, some other mouth,
May be as fair as hers,
Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers, 240
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
Sifting on siftings in oblivion,
Till change hath broken down
All things save Beauty alone.

Mauberley
1920
"Vacuos exercet aera morsus."

Turned from the 'eau-forte 245
par Jaquemart"
To the strait head
Of Messalina:

"His true Penelope
Was Flaubert," 250
And his tool
The engraver's.

Firmness,
Not the full smile,
His art, but an art 255
In profile;

Colourless
Pier Francesca,
Pisanello lacking the skill
To forge Achaia. 260

II

"Qu'est ce qu'ils savent de l'amour, et qu'est ce qu'ils peuvent en comprendre?

S'ils ne comprennent pas la poesie, s'ils ne sentent pas la musique, qu'st ce qu'ils peuvent comprendre de cette passion en comparison avec laquelle la rose est grossiere et le parfum des violettes un tonnere?"
- *Caid Ali*

For three years, diabolus in the scale,
He drank ambrosia,
All passes, ANANGKE prevails,
Came end, at last, to that Arcadia.

He had moved amid her phantasmagoria, 265
Amid her, galaxies
NUKTIS AGALMA

Drifted... drifted precipitate,
Asking time to be rid of...
Of his bewilderment; to designate 270
His new found orchid...

To be certain... certain...
(Amid aerial flowers).. time for arrangements—
Drifted on
To the final estrangement; 275

Unable in the supervening blankness
To sift TO AGATHON from the chaff
Until he found his sieve...
Ultimately, his seismograph:

—Given that is his "fundamental passion," 280
This urge to convey the relation
Of eye-lid and cheek-bone
By verbal manifestations;

To present the series
Of curious heads in medallion— 285

He had passed, inconscient, full gaze,
The wide-banded irides
And botticellian sprays implied
In their diastasis;

Which anaethesis, noted a year late, 290
And weighed, revealed his great affect,
(Orchid), mandate
Of Eros, a retrospect.

Mouths biting empty air,
The still stone dogs, 295

Caught in metamorphosis, were
Left him as epilogues.

"The Age Demanded"

VIDE POEM, II

For this agility chance found
Him of all men, unfit
As the red-beaked steeds of 300
The Cytherean for a chain bit.

The glow of porcelain
Brought no reforming sense
To his perception
Of the social inconsequence. 305

Thus, if her colour
Came against his gaze,
Tempered as if
It were through a perfect glaze

He made no immediate application 310
Of this to relation of the state
To the individual, the month was more temperate
Because this beauty had been.

The coral isle, the lion-coloured sand
Burst in upon the porcelain revery: 315
Impetuous troubling
Of his imagery.

Mildness, amid the neo-Nietzschean clatter,
His sense of graduations,
Quite out of placc amid 320
Resistance to current exacerbations,

Invitation, mere invitation to perceptivity
Gradually led him to the isolation
Which these presents place
Under a more tolerant, perhaps, examination. 325

By constant elimination
The manifest universe
Yielded an armour
Against utter consternation,

A Minoan undulation, 330
Seen, we admit, amid ambrosial circumstances
Strengthened him against
The discouraging doctrine of chances,

And his desire for survival,
Faint in the most strenuous moods, 335
Became an Olympian *apathein*
In the presence of selected perceptions.

A pale gold, in the aforesaid pattern,
The uncxpected palms

Destroying, certainly, the artist's urge, 340
Left him delighted with the imaginary
Audition of the phantasmal sea-surge,

Incapable of the least utterance or composition,
Emendation, conservation of the "better tradition,"
Refinement of medium, elimination of superfluities, 345
August attraction or concentration.

Nothing, in brief, but maudlin confession,
Irresponse to human aggression,
Amid the precipitation, down-float
Of insubstantial manna, 350
Lifting the faint susurrus
Of his subjective hosannah.

Ultimate affronts to
Human redundancies;

Non-esteem of self-styled "his betters" 355
Leading, as he well knew,
To his final
Exclusion from the world of letters.

IV

Scattered Moluccas
Not Knowing, day to day, 360
The first day's end, in the next noon;
The placid water
Unbroken by the Simoon;

Thick foliage
Placid beneath warm suns, 365
Tawn fore-shores
Washed in the cobalt of oblivions;

Or through dawn-mist
The grey and rose
Of the juridical 370
Flamingoes;

A consciousness disjunct,
Being but this overblotted
Series
Of intermittences; 375

Coracle of Pacific voyages,
The unforecasted beach;
Then on an oar
Read this:

"I was 380
And I no more exist;
Here drifted
An hedonist."

Medallion

Luini in porcelain!
The grand piano 385

Utters a profane
Protest with her clear soprano.

The sleek head emerges
From the gold-yellow frock
As Anadyomene in the opening 390
Pages of Reinach.

Honey-red, closing the face-oval,
A basket-work of braids which seem as if they were
Spun in King Minos hall
From metal, or intractable amber; 395

The face-oval beneath the glaze,
Bright in its suave bounding-line, as,
Beneath half-watt rays
The eyes turn topaz

29.2.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

This poem was published in 1920 when Pound was just about to leave London and was already at work on his ambitious Cantos. This poem too is quite ambitious. It seeks to measure the variety of social, economic and cultural ills in England that threaten poetic talent and force poets to become frivolous or escapist. The poem also questions the whole metier of being a poet and is quite clear-eyed about the limited efficacy of this vocation. F.R. Leavis has emphasised Pound's Wit, especially in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley". He finds the verse is extraordinarily subtle, says that "critical activity accompanies feeling," and finds the poem "serious and light at the same time, Sardonic and poignant, flippant and intense"; "Mauberley," he concludes is a "great poem." (Seven Modern American Poets, Unger.pg 130)

Pound said that the poem was modelled on the technique used by Henry James in his fiction: it presents its subject through the medium of a character's mind or voice, a "centre of consciousness" which assesses the subject in question. In this poem the first thirteen lyrics are presented through "E.P.," a persona with whom Pound has much in common (besides the initials) by way of artistic tastes and ambitions but who should not be simplistically equated with the poet. The London cultural scene is surveyed through the eyes of "E.P." The tone verges on futility until the section entitled "Envoi," where the voice sounds more passionate.

In the next section entitled "Mauberley" "E.P." is absorbed into the persona of the fictitious poet Mauberley. Pound's attitude is slightly mocking here, but his attempt to infuse poetry with new life continues unabated. Pound attempts to rid his poetry of its tendency towards nostalgia and isolation and his belief in the perfect form. All these he feels threatened to turn his poetry to an aesthete's "overblotted/ Series/ Of intermittences." By admitting these limitations Pound manages partially to overcome them in the highly-charged last section, "Medallion."

There are a number of things to keep in mind while reading this early masterpiece by Pound. The poem is in the form of a dramatic monologue, a form which Pound borrowed from Robert Browning and then later adapted. In Browning the monologue is used as if the speaker and not the poet is speaking, but speaking in such a way that we see him or her in an objective light. Thus, in "The Last Duchess," we cannot but be horrified at the speaker's cold-hearted murder of his wife because she smiled too much. However, the speaker himself remains imperturbable. In Pound's hands the form becomes more personal. The figure from the past and the poet himself become so entwined that the figure ends up being a persona or a mask for the poet. Browning's dramatic monologue becomes in Pound's hands and in his own words a "dramatic lyric." He defines this as "the poetic part of a drama the rest of which (to

me the prose part) is left to the reader's imagination or implied or set in a short note" (Letters 3-4). It also becomes a tour de force reworking of history. The person chosen is usually a poet and in the patchwork reconstruction of his life appear snatches of his poetry, his journal entries, and fragments of the documents in which the speaker's life is recorded. The persona thus became for Pound an important means of communicating in a plurality of voices and of exploring the western tradition and incorporating necessary parts of it to fabricate a voice suitable for modern poetry.

His admirable control over colloquial speech and his mastery over the "sculpture" of rhyme are evident in lines like those describing the affluent Mr. Nixon "In the cream gilded cabin of his steam yacht," advising the poet to "Butter reviewers. From fifty to three hundred/ I rose in eighteen months" (L148ff). The mix of the scholarly and the colloquial is also arresting: we glide from the oh-so contemporary Mr. Nixon to the Greek Aphrodite and Homer's Penelope and back again. At times, of course, Pound's relentless and intentionally teasing erudition--he believes in tossing out jigsaw fragments of the Greek epics, Ovid, Florentine art--can become tiresome.

29.2.3 Form and Metre

What Pound later called his attempt "To break the pentametre" (Canto 81) or the traditional five-foot line of English and American poetry, is evident in the way he avoids writing lines of the same length, breaks lines with an unexpected caesura, and avoids the monotonous regularity of "hefty swats on alternate syllables" (as typified by the iambic pentametre) by variations in cadence, tone and rhyme. It is this discipline in his craft that avoids the sharp contrasts of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" from becoming melodramatic. The tone of subtle irony is maintained throughout. Pound's innovations greatly influenced later modern poets and disciples such as T.S. Eliot.

29.2.4 Notes

Title: The name of the poet that Pound uses is entirely fictitious.

"Life and Contacts": This is an ironic transformation of the usual sub-title of literary biographies,"Life and Letters." In the American edition of 1926 Pound said that the poem was "distinctly a farewell to London" (Norton 1056.)

"*Vocat...umbram*": "The heat calls us into the shade." This line is from the Eclogue IV of the third century Carthaginian poet Nemesianus (Norton 1056).

"Ode...Sepulchre": This is an adaptation of the title of an ode by the French poet Pierre de Ronsard (1524-85), "On the selection of his tomb" (Norton 1056).

L8 "Capaneus": One of the seven against Thebes whom Zeus struck down by lightning for his rebellion (Norton 1056).

L12 "Penelope": Penelope was the wife of Odysseus who remained faithful to him during his long absence from Ithaca. She fended off suitors by saying she would only marry once her tapestry was complete; every night she took care to undo all that she had woven during the day!

L12 "Flaubert": Gustave Flaubert (1821-80) French novelist and author of the celebrated Madame Bovary. He was a stickler for form and stylistic precision.

L14 "Circe": The enchantress with whom Odysseus spent a year before returning to Ithaca (Odyssey 10). She helped him successfully to complete his journey to the underworld.

L17-8 "*l'an...eage*": The French line translates, "The thirtieth year of his age." Adapted from The Testament by the 15th century French poet and robber Francois Villon. Pound later changed this to "trentunieme" or thirty-first, since he was referring to the turning point in his life which happened in 1916: the publication of Lustra (Norton 1056).

Stanza 2

L20 "Demanded": This word expresses how difficult it is for the modern poet to fulfill his public role when the public is so insistent about what it wants.

L30 "kinema": The Greek word for "movement" from which we derive the modern cinema.

L33 "Cos":=Gauzelike fabric for which the Aegean island of Cos was famous (Norton 1057).

L35 "Sappho's barbitos": Sappho was the renowned lesbian poet of c600B.C. who lived on Lesbos. A barbitos is a kind of lyre.

L36 "Dionysus": The Greek god of fertility, wine and poetic inspiration. His worshippers indulged in wild orgies and ecstasies. His festivals included indulgence in wine, sex and theatre.

L38 "macerations": Wasting away by fasting. Pound contrasts the Dionysian indulgence to the body's needs with the Christian ascetic tradition of denying the body.

L39 "Caliban...Ariel": Two characters in Shakespeare's play The Tempest. While Caliban disobeys Prospero (he wants to make love to Miranda, Prospero's daughter) Ariel, a spirit with magical powers, follows his orders, albeit grudgingly, hoping to gain his freedom thereby. Pound seems to associate Caliban with the Dionysian and Ariel with the Christian.

L41 "Heracleitus": A Greek philosopher of c 500 B.C. who said that all reality is flux, mutable, ever-changing.

L45 "Samothrace": North Aegean island which was the centre of mystery cults and the location of the famous statue, "Winged Victory" (norton 1057).

L53 "Pisistratus": Athenian tyrant and, surprisingly, art patron of sixth century B.C. (Norton 1058).

L57: This is Pound's version of Pindar's "What god, what hero, what man shall we loudly praise" ("Olympian Odes", II.2) (Norton 1058).

L61 "pro domo": For the home, adapted from Cicero's *De Domo Sua* (Norton 1058).

L69-70 "pro...décor' ": Adapted from Horace's famous lines, *"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori"* (Odes III. ii. 13) meaning it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. Pound says the deaths are neither sweet nor fitting. His lines are similar to those of the English war poet, Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), who has a poem entitled "*Dulce et Decorm Est,*" published posthumously in 1920, the same year as "Hugh

Selwyn Mauberley." In that poem Owen calls Horace's lines "the old Lie": a lie for which thousands of young men, including Owen himself, gave their lives in the First World War. As Pound himself says in section V of this poem, "There died a myriad,/ And of the best, among them,/For an old bitch gone in the teeth,/ For a botched civilisation." The biting alliteration of the "b" sound underlines his fury. The "old bitch" is Europe.

"*Yeux Glauques*": This refers to the yellow-green eyes of Elizabeth Siddall, the seamstress-turned-model of the pre-Raphaelite painters, who was later to become the wife of the poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) (Norton 1059).

L94 "Gladstone": William E. Gladstone (1809-98) was a politician and three times Prime Minister of England (Norton 1059).

L95 "John Ruskin": The critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) whose book <u>Sesame and Lillies</u> contains a chapter entitled "King's Treasuries" called for an improvement in English tastes in art (Norton 1059).

L96 "Swinburne": The poet Algernon Swinburne (1837-1909) was part of the pre-Raphaelites. These poets were attacked as the "fleshly school of poetry" by Robert W. Buchanan (1841-1901) and defended by John Ruskin (Norton 1059). Pre-Raphaelite art too tended to be overripe.

L102 "cartons": drawings

L108 "The English Rubaiyat": Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83) translated <u>The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam</u> in 1859 but it was not read until discovered later by the Pre-Raphaelites. That is why Pound calls it "still-born" (Norton 1059).

L113 "poor Jenny": The prostitute heroine of a poem by Rossetti (Norton 1059).

L116 "maquero": Or *magnereau*, meaning sexual exploiter or pimp (Norton 1059).

L118 "*Siena...Maremma*": Some of the most moving lines in Dante's <u>Purgatory</u> V.134 which translate as "Siena made me, Maremma unmade me." They are spoken by a woman born in the beautiful town of Sienna who is condemned to die in the Maremma marshes for her adultery.

L122 "Verog": Victor Plarr (1863-1929) the French poet and story teller from Strasbourg who was later the librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons and a member of the Rhymer's Club.

L123 "Gallifet": Marquis de Gallifet (1830-1909) French General of the Battle of Sedan, which the French lost, in the Franco-Prussian war (Norton 1060).

L124-5 "Dowson...Johnson": These were two heavy drinkers and poets at the Rhymer's Club (Norton 1059).

L130 "Newman": John Henry Newman (1801-90) editor and Roman Catholic convert and intellectual. He was later a Cardinal (Norton 1059).

L132 "Headlam...Image": The Rev. Stewart D. Headlam (1847-1924) was forced to resign his curacy for lecturing on the dance to working men's clubs. Selwyn Image (1849-1930) was the co-founder, with Headlam, of the Church and Stage Guild (Norton 1060).

L133 "Terpsichore": The Greek muse of the dance.

Brennbaum: in german means burnt tree which also suggests 'burning bush'

Bernini, Apollo and Daphne, c1620

L143 "Horeb, Sinai": The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Moses saw the burning bush at Horeb and received the ten commandments at Sinai (Exodus3.2 and 19.20) (Norton 1059).

L167 "Bloughram": In Robert Browning's dramatic monologue, "Bishop Bloughram's Apology," the Bishop rationalised his laxness in matters of religious doctrine (Norton 1061).

L168 "Don't...pricks": This is an ironic echo of Christ's statement to Saul· "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9.5) (Norton 1061).

L183 "Consevatrix...Milesien": Conservator of the erotic indulgence for which the Ionian city of Miletus and Aristides's Milesian Tales were known (Norton 1062).

L185 "Ealing": A London suburb.

L191 "Daphne" This is a reference to the moving tale of Apollo and Daphne in Ovid's Metamorphoses I. Apollo was in love with the nymph Daphne and kept pursuing her against her will. One day as he touched her she prayed to her father Peneus for help and was changed into the laurel tree. Ever since, the laurel has been associated with Apollo.

Mary M. Innes' translation reads:

'O father,' she cried, 'Help me! If you rivers really have divine powers, work some transformation, and destroy this beauty which makes me please all too well!' Her prayer was scarcely ended when a deep languor took hold on her limbs, her soft breasts were enclosed in thin bark, her hair grew into leaves, her arms into branches, and her feet that were lately so swift were held fast by sluggish roots... (43)

This myth has also been immortalised in marble by the Baroque sculptor Bernini. Pound's lines are a translation of the French poet Theophile Gautier's Le Chateau de Souvenir.

L212 "'Which...nourished'": A translation of two lines from the French poet Jules Laforgue's (1860-87) Complainte de Pianos (Norton 1062).

L213 "Fleet Street": The newspaper district of London.

L214 "Dr. Johnson": Samuel Johnson (1709-84), poet, novelist, essayist, biographer and and critic. One of the most respected and influential people in the world of English 18th century letters.

L218 "Pierian roses": Pieria is a place near Mount Olympus where the Muses were worshipped (Norton 1063).

Notes (ENVOI)

Envoi: "This poem is modelled on the rhetoric and cadences of "Goe, Lovely Rose" by Edmund Waller (1606-87), whose poems were set to music by Henry Lawes (1596-1662). 'E.P.' first addresses his book and dispatches it with a message for the listener who once inspired him by singing Waller's song then in L221 breaks off to confess the limited powers of his poetry. The second stanza celebrates the beauty of the singer and listener, and offers to commemorate her in verse. The third warns of the incompleteness of her response and of the transience of all things but beauty. The concert singer whom Pound heard sing Lawes and Waller's song was Raymonde Collignon" (Norton 1063).

Notes (Mauberley)

"*Vacuos...morsus*": "He snaps vacuously at the empty air." This line describes the effort of a dog, Laelaps, in Ovid's Metamorphoses VII to bite at an elusive monster attacking Thebes. Both dog and monster are later metamorphosed to stone (Norton 1063). Mary M. Innes' translation of Ovid reads, "he [Laelaps] seemed to have his victim, but never quite had it, and snapped uselessly at the air."

L245-6 "eau-forte...Jaquemart": Etching by Jaquemart. Jules Jaquemart (1837-80) was a French graphic artist (Norton 1063).

L248 "Messalina": The dissolute and lascivious wife of the Roman emperor Claudius (c 8 A.D.) (Norton 1064).

L249-250 "His true...Flaubert": See line 13.

L258 "Pier Francesca": Piero della Francesca (1420?-92), an Umbrian painter (Norton 1064).

L259 "Pisanello": Vittore Pisano (1397?_1455?), Veronese painter and medallist who made medallions based on Greek coins (Norton 1064).

L260 "Achaia": Southern Greece (Norton 1064).

"*Qu'est*...Caid Ali": "What do they know of love, and what can they understand? If they do not understand poetry, if they do not respond to music; what can they understand of this passion in comparison to which the rose is gross and the perfume of violets a clap of thunder?" This is the translation of the words in French which Pound presents as a sort of quotation, but Caid Ali is only a pseudonym for himself (Norton 1064). Perhaps he is aware that "caid" or "quaid" means prisoner in Urdu.

L261 "diabolus": Refers both to the devil and to the musical term that denotes the interval of the augmented fourth (Norton 1064).

L263 "ANANGKE": Necessity (Norton 1064).

L264 "Arcadia": Greek mountain region thought of as a rustic paradise, but whose mountainous locale carries within it the demystification of the arcadian myth--of life untinged with sorrow.

L267 "NUKTIS 'AGALMA": "Night's jewel." This is a phrase from a pastoral poem by the Greek poet Bion (c100B.C.) in celebration of the evening star (Norton 1064).

L277 "AGATHON": The good (Norton 1064).

L287 "irides": This is the plural of iris, both the flower and the part of the eye (norton 1065).

L288 "botticellian sprays": This is a reference to the Renaissance Florentine painter Sandro Botticelli (1444?-1510) whose famous painting "Primavera" (Spring) depicted a nymph with sprays coming out of her mouth.

L289 "diastasis": Separation (Norton 1065).

L293 "Eros": The Greek god of love, whom the Romans call Cupid. He is the son of Aphrodite (whom the Romans call Venus).
"*Vide*": The Latin for "see."

L300-1 "red-beaked...bit": This is a reference to the red-beaked doves tied to the chariot of Aphrodite when she first landed on the island of Cythera off the Laconian coast (Norton 1065).

L318 "Nietzchean clatter": These are ideas derived from the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) whose bold ethical and aesthetic theories challenged conventional morals and traditional western philosophy (Norton 1066).

L330 "Minoan undulation": The Minoan period was from 2000 to 1500 B.C. According to the French archaeologist, Salomon Reinach, this "undulation" is a stylistic feature of the portrait sculptures by the Cretan Scopas during the Minoan period (Norton 1066).

L336 "*apathein*": The indifference of the Greek gods to the mortal matters (Norton 1066).

L359 "Moluccas": Spice Islands in the Malay Archipelago (Norton 1067).

L363 "Simoon" : Violent wind and sand storm of Near Eastern deserts (Norton 1067).

L376 "Coracle": Small boat covered with animal hide and framed in wicker which the ancient Britons used (Norton 1067).

L384 "Luini": Bernardino Luini (1475?-1532?) was an Italian painter (Norton 1067).

L390-1 "Anadyomene...Reinach": This is an adjective used to describe Aphrodite. It means foam-covered. Reinach's "Apollo" included a reproduction of a head of Aphrodite (Norton 1068).

L394 "Minos": This was the legendary King of Crete.

29.3 THE CANTOS

29.3.1 Cantos I: Text

From THE CANTOS

And then went down to the ship,
Set keel to breakers, forth on the godly sea, and
We set up mast and sail on that swart ship,
Bore sheep aboard her, and our bodies also
Heavy with weeping, and winds from sternward 5
Bore us out onward with bellying canvas,
Circe's this craft, the trim-coifed goddess
Then sat we amidships, wind jamming the tiller,
Thus with stretched sail, we went over sea till day's end.
Sun to his slumber, shadows o'er all the ocean, 10
Came we then to the bounds of deepest water,
To the Kimmerian lands, and peopled cities
Covered with close-webbed mist, unpierced ever
With glitter of sun-rays
Nor with stars stretched, nor looking back from heaven 15
Swartest night stretched over wretched men there.
The ocean flowing backward, came we then to the place
Aforesaid by circe.
Here did they rites, Permedes and Eurylochus,
And drawing sword from my hip 20

I dug the ell-square pitkin;
Poured we libations unto each the dead,
First mead and then sweet wine, water mixed with white flour.
Then prayed I many a prayer to the sickly death's-heads;
As set in Ithaca, sterile bulls of the best 25
For sacrifice, heaping the pyre with goods,
A sheep to Tiresias only, black and a bell-sheep.
Dark blood flowed in fosse,
Souls out of Erebus, cadaverous dead, of brides
Of youths and of the old who had borne much; 30
Souls stained with recent tears, girls tender,
Men many, mauled with bronze lance heads,
Battle spoil, bearing yet dreory arms,
These many crowded about me; with shouting,
Pallor upon me, cried to my men for more beasts; 35
Slaughtered the herds, sheep slain of bronze;
Poured ointment, cried to the gods,
To Pluto the strong, and praised Proserpine;
Unsheathed the narrow sword,
I sat to keep off the impetuous impotent dead, 40
Till I should hear Tiresias.
But first Elpenor came, our friend Elpenor,
Unburied, cast on the wide earth,
Limbs that we left in the house of Circe,
Unwept, unwrapped in sepulchre, since toils urged other. 45
Pitiful spirit. And I cried in hurried speech:
"Elpenor, how art thou come to this dark coast?
"Cam'st thou afoot, outstripping seamen?"
And he in heavy speech:
"Ill fate and abundant wine. I slept in Circe's ingle. 50
"Going down the long ladder unguarded,
"I fell again the buttress,
"Shattered the nape-nerve, the soul sought Avernus.
"But thou, O King, I bid remember me, unwept, unburied,
"Heap up mine arms, be tomb by sea-bord, and inscribed: 55
"*A man of no fortune, and with a name to come.*
"And set my oar up, that I swung mid fellows."

And Anticlea came, whom I beat off, and then Tiresias Theban,
Holding his golden wand, knew me, and spoke first:
"A second time? why? man of ill star, 60
"Facing the sunless dead and this joyless region?
"Stand from the fosse, leave me my bloody bever?
"For soothsay."

And I stepped back,
And he strong with the blood, said then; "Odysseus 65
"Shalt return through spiteful Neptune, over dark seas,
"Lose all companions." And then Anticlea came.
Lie quite Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,
In officina Wecheli, out of Homer.
And he sailed, by Sirens and thence outward and away 70
And unto Circe:
        Venerandam,
In the Cretan's phase, with the golden crown, Aphrodite,
Cypri munimenta sortitá est, mirthful, oricalchi, with golden
Girdles and breast bands, thou with dark eyelids 75
Bearing the golden bough of Argicida. So that:

29.3.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

Pound's most celebrated work is his epic, the Cantos, on which he began composition in 1915 and continued for about fifty years. They were first published as A Draft of XVI Cantos in 1925. According to some critics this epic is a masterpiece of innovation, with its pluralistic open form, to others it is disorderly and obscure. Readers must decide for themselves which critical group to identify with after their own reading is complete.

In Lustra (1917) Pound calls the Cantos a "rag-bag for the 'modern world' to stuff all its thought in" (Norton 1032). In his Selected Essays he called it a poem "including history," with three important foci: 1) men of action (statesmen, warriors, bankers), 2) documents and books and 3) creative genius. These are all explored in an anecdotal and conversational way. History is to be experienced rather than written about as an isolated object. There are a number of long and short excerpts in the poem from literature, biography, letters and the poet's personal memories. On the basis of these some critics find it useful to divide the Cantos into different groups, such as the "Pisan cantos," based on Pound's experience as a prisoner in an American detention camp, the "Malatesta cantos," organised around the figure of the Renaissance soldier and patron Sigismondo Malatesta, the "Chinese history cantos," and the "American cantos." However, it must not be forgotten that there are also intricate links between these different groups which surface through repeated images, associations and phrases. Figures from western civilisation, both epic poets like Homer and Dante and the people in their poems, Odysseus, Cavalcanti (who was also of course a real person whom Dante knew), more recent poets like Browning, Yeats and Eliot, figures from myth like Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and Persephone or Proserpine, daughter of Demeter who was carried off by the God of the Underworld, Pluto, and whose return to earth signified the return of spring, appear and reappear. Three quests dominate the poem, the quest of Odysseus for his home, Ithaca (Homer's Odyssey), the search for Paradise on the part of the exiled Dante (Divine Comedy), and finally the search in the Cantos for an ideal social order and a utopian city, Dioce, "whose terraces are the colour of stars" (Canto 74). However, what is most striking about the Cantos is what R.P. Blackmur calls their "deliberate disconnectedness" (Language as Gesture 140, Norton 1032). They present what Mikhail Bakhtin would call heteroglossia, or a plurality of voices at work at the same time rather than a single controlling voice or poetic persona. Also, the material is deliberately presented in the process of assimilation rather than fully assimilated. In all these ways the Cantos could almost be termed a postmodern poem before its time.

29.3.3 Canto I: Notes

L1-68 These lines are an abbreviated adaptation of Book XI, lines 1-174 of Homer's Odyssey. In this part of the epic Odysseus undertakes his voyage to the underworld, inhabited by the dead. Pound omits most of the meetings Odysseus has with dead souls after he has spoken to Tiresias and concentrates, instead, on the first part of the book, condensing almost 174 lines in Homer's more leisured epic narrative to sixty-seven masterly lines.

L7 "Circe" Circe was an enchanter with whom Odysseus lived with for a year. She told him to get directions from the blind Theban prophet Tiresias (who had prophesied Oedipus's doom) and who was now in the underworld.

L12 "Kimmerian lands" The fog-laden region at the earth's edge where people from myth lived.

L19 "Perimedes and Eurylochus" Two of Odysseus' friends

Rembrandt, The Rape of Proserpina, 1628-9

L21 "pitkin" A small pit. Circe had given Odysseus detailed instructions which he followed to the letter, and digging a pit and pouring libations all around it were a part of her instructions.

L22 "libations" Drink offerings to the gods

L27 "A sheep to Tiresias" This too was part of Circe's instructions: Tiresias must be offered "the finest jet-black sheep to be found in your flock" (Odyssey X) once Odysseus returns to Ithaca. Here Pound seems to conflate the sheep to be sacrificed back in Ithaca with the "young ram and black ewe" that Circe instructed Odysseus to sacrifice in the underworld and that she left tied by his ship just before he left her land and sailed for the underworld (Odyssey X).

L28 "fosse" A ditch

L29 "Erebus" Another name for Hades, the underworld land of the dead. At times the word Hades is also used to refer to the king of the underworld, Pluto.

L33 "dreory" Dripping with blood—from the Old English *dreorig*

L38 "Pluto...Proserpine" Daughter of Demeter and wife of Pluto, the god of the underworld, who forcefully carried her off to the underworld. Also called Persephone.

L48 "'Cam'st thou afoot?'" Elpenor, till recently, was a living part of Odysseus' crew. Unfortunately he drinks too much in Circe's castle, slips on the ladder and breaks his neck. Although this incident is described in the Odyssey X, in the following book Odysseus appears surprised to see Elpenor and wonders how he could have reached the underworld so fast on foot since he wasn't with them on the ship. The sudden presence in the underworld of a man who was living only the day before adds a poignant note.

L50 "ingle" Corner

L53 "Avernus" A lake near Naples and also the entrance to Hades

L58 "Anticlea" Odysseus' mother. Pound's adaptation entirely elides the emotional charge of this glimpse Odysseus has of his mother. The last time he had seen her she had been alive and now, although he sees her, he can say nothing until he has offered the blood libation to Tiresias which would help him speak (Circe gave very specific instructions to this effect). The sadness of the moment is underlined once Anticlea does speak—she tells Odysseus that it is not old age or illness that has robbed her of life "and all its sweetness" but "my heartache for you, my glorious Odysseus, and for your wise and gentle ways" (Odyssey XI). This passage too is omitted by Pound.

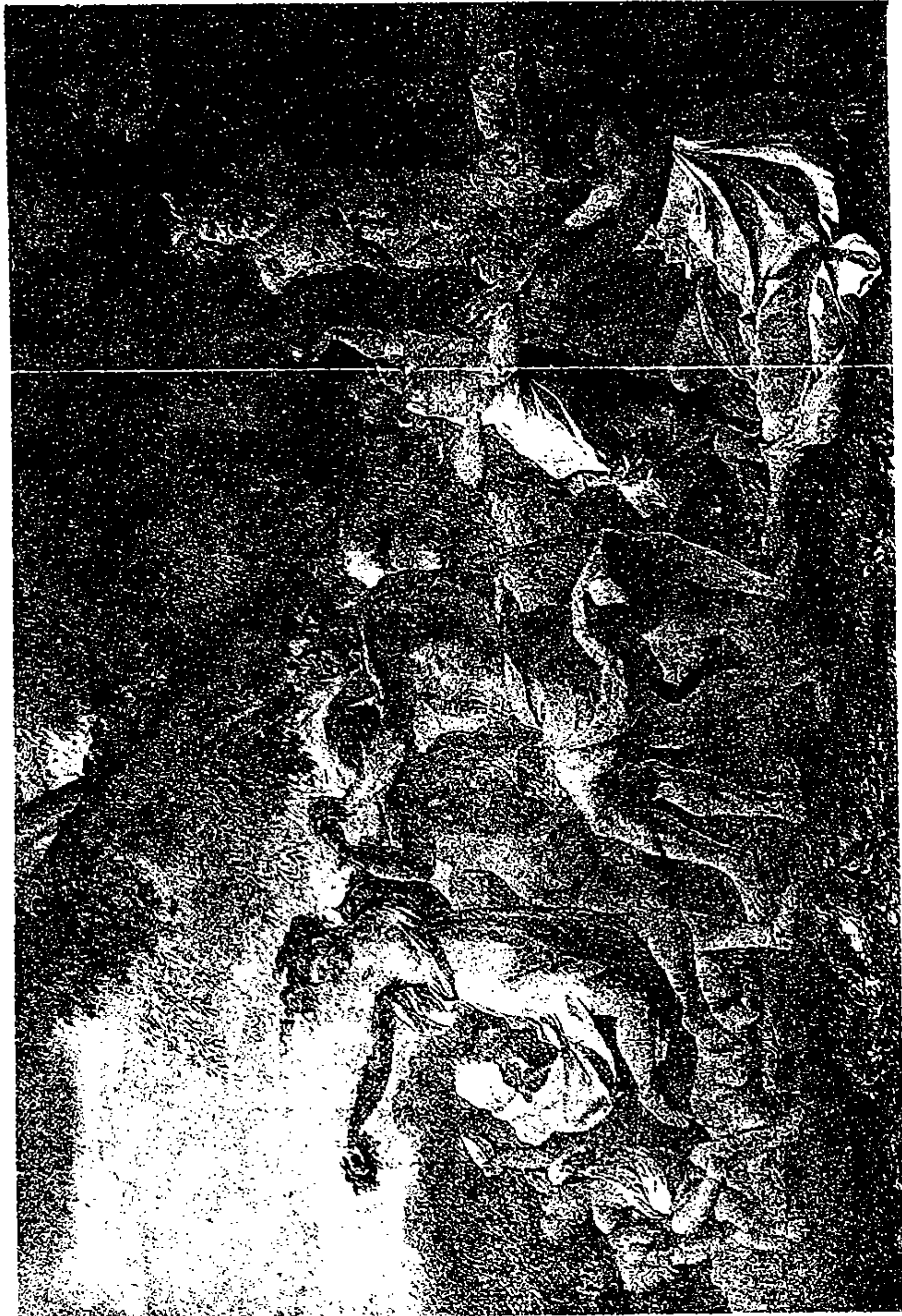
L60 "A second time?" They met once before on earth

L62 "bever" Libation

L66 "Neptune" God of the Sea who was going to delay Odysseus' return home by a tempest

L69 "officina" Workshop

L69 "In officina...Homer" Pound admitted to using the Renaissance Latin translation of Homer produced by Andreas Divus in the Paris workshop of Wechel in 1538 (Norton 1070)



Poussin, Bacchanalian Revel, mid 17th century

L72 "Venerandam" Commanding reverence—this phrase is used of Aphrodite, the god of Love (called Venus by the Romans)

L74 "Cypri....est" Latin for "the fortresses of Cyprus were her appointed realm" (Norton 1070)

L74 "oricalchi" Of copper (Norton 1070)

L76 "Argicida" The Greeks are known as Argi, but there are a number of other associations here. Pound combines a number of mythical figures here, Aphrodite, Proserpine and Hermes. Aphrodite was the killer of the Greeks during the Trojan war (she supported Paris and Helen) while Proserpine or Persephone was the figure to whom Aeneas, the hero of the Roman poet Virgil's epic, the Aeneid offered the golden bough before going to the underworld. The golden bough was sacred to the goddess Diana and is here conflated or associated with Hermes, the slayer Argus of the numerous eyes (Argicida) and freed Io (Norton 1070)

29.3.4 Canto XVII: Text

So that the vines burst from my fingers
And the bees weighted with pollen
More heavily in the vine-shoots:
Chirr—Chirr—chir—rikk—a purring sound,
And the birds sleepily in the branches. 5
            ZAGREUS! IO ZAGREUS.
With the first pale-clear of the heaven
And the cities set in their hills,
And the goddess of the fair knees
Moving there, with the oak-woods behind her, 10
The green slope, with white hounds
      leaping about her;
And thence, down to the creek's moth, until evening,
Flat water before me,
      And the trees growing in water, 15
Marble trunks out of stillness,
On past the palazzi,
      in the stillness,
The light now, not of the sun.
            Chrysophrase, 20
And the water green clear, and blue clear;
On, to the great cliffs of amber.
            Between them,

Cave of Nerea,
      She like a great shell curved, 25
And the boat drawn without sound,
Without odour of ship-work,
Nor bird-cry, nor any noise of wave moving,
Nor splash of porpoise, nor any noise of wave moving,
Within her cave Nerea, 30
            She like a great shell curved
In the suavity of the rock,
            Cliff green-gray in the far,
In the near, the gate-cliffs of amber,
And the wave 35
            green clear, and blue clear
And the cave salt-white, and glare-purple,

Cool, porphyry smooth,
the rock sea-worn.
No gull-cry, no sound of porpoise, 40
Sand as of malachite, and no cold there,
the light not of the sun.

Zagreus, feeding his panthers,
the turf clear as on hills under light.
And under the almond-trees, gods, 45
with them, *choros nympharum*. Gods,
Hermes and Athene,
As shaft of compass,
Between them, tembled—
To the left is the place of fauns, 50
sylva nympharum;
The low wood, moor-scrub,
the doe, the young spotted deer,
leap up through the broom-plants,
as dry leaf amid yellow. 55
And by one cut of the hills
the great alley of Memnons.
Beyond, sea, crests seen over dune
Night sea churning shingle,
To the left, the alley of cypress. 60
A boat came,
One man holding her sail,
Guiding her with oar caught over gunwale, saying:
" There, in the forest of marble,
" The stone trees—out of water— 65
" the arbours of stone—
" marble leaf, over leaf,
" silver, steel over steel,
" silver beaks rising and crossing,
" prow set against prow, 70
" stone, ply over ply,
" the gilt beams flare of an evening"
Borso, Carmagnola, the men of craft, '*I vitrei*,
Thither, at one time, time after time,
And the waters richer than glass, 75
Bronze gold, the blaze over the silver,
Dye-pots in the torch-light,
The flash of wave under prows,
And the silver beaks rising and crossing.
Stone trees, white and rose-white in the darkness, 80
Cypress there by the towers,
Drift under hulls in the night.

"In the gloom the gold
Gathers the light about it."...

Now supine in burrow, half over-arched bramble, 85
One eye for the sea, through that peek-hole,
Gray light, with Athene.
Zothar and her elephants, the gold loin-cloth,
The sistrum, shaken, shaken,
the cohorts of her dancers. 90
And Aletha, by bend of the shore,
With her eyes seaward,
and in her hands sea-wrack

Salt-bright with the foam.
Kore through the bright meadow, 95
with green-gray dust in the grass:
"For this hour, brother of Circe."
Arm laid over my shoulder.
Saw the sun for three days, the sun fulvid,
As a lion lift over sand-plain; 100
and that day,
And for three days, and none after,
Splendour, as the splendour of Hermes,
And shipped thence
to the stone place, 105
Pale white, over water,
known water,
And the white forest of marble, bent bough over bough,
The pleached arbour of stone,
Thither Borso, when they shot the barbed arrow at him, 110
And Carmagnola, between the two columns
Sigismundo, after that wreck in Dalmatia.
Sunset like the grasshopper flying.

29.3.5 Canto XVII: Critical Appreciation

Canto XVII

This canto deals with myth and Renaissance history. Three movements dissolve into one another rather like a film sequence. The first one deals with the voyage of Odysseus through the Mediterranean en route to Ithaca, the second deals with Jason's voyage to the island Colchis in pursuit of the Golden Fleece, and the third describes the entry of a ship into the lovely Italian town of Venice built on water. The canto creates a tension between the loveliness of the Mediterranean islands, the marble beauty of Venice and the hint of approaching dangers and corruption. Rather than the moments of violence themselves, what Pound creates are those moments in ancient myth that immediately precede the violence. The importance of vision and sight are stressed and rather than reaching any definite conclusion or destination it is the gift of the journey that is memorable. Among the personae or masks that Pound assumes are those of Jason, Ulysses, Zagreus or Dionysius, the Greek god of wine and rebirth and joy, Pluto or Hades, the god of the underworld, his wife Proserpine or Persephone or Kore whom he abducted from earth but whom he was forced to send back to earth every year for the spring months (Persephone thus symbolises the return of spring after winter) and Actaeon, Cadmus of Thebes' grandson, who, while on a hunt, caught a glimpse of the goddess Diana as she was bathing, was changed into a stag by the enraged Diana and torn apart by his own hounds by way of punishment (Ovid's Metamorphosis III).

29.3.6 Notes

L6 "ZAGREUS! IO ZAGREUS" "Zagreus, I am Zagreus!" Zagreus was the son of Proserpine and Zeus. Zeus seduced her before she was abducted by Pluto (Hades). Occasionally Zagreus is identified with Dionysus ("twice-born") (Norton 1070)

L9 "goddess of the fair knees" Diana, goddess of chastity and of the hunt

L9-15 This long description of the idyllic countryside seen through the eyes of Actaeon is comparable to Ovid's lengthy description in the Metamorphoses III. The beauty of the countryside lulls one into a feeling of calm which is violently disrupted by the transformation of Actaeon by Diana and his ensuing bloody death:

"While they [Actaeon's hounds] held their master down, the rest of the pack gathered, and sank their teeth in his body, till there was no place left for tearing. Actaeon groaned, uttering a sound which, though not human, was yet such as no stag could produce." (Metamorphoses III 225-259)

Pound does not describe the death but readers familiar with the Actaeon story will feel a chill down their spine while reading these lines.

L16 "Marble trunks...stillness" This is the first view of Venice, an incredible Italian city built on and surrounded by water. Here Pound describes its palaces ("palazzi" L17) as coming out of nature and entering art. This is what Pound's friend, the painter and art critic Adrian Stokes (1854-1935) believed. Stokes, in his book The Stones of Rimini (1934), wrote "Amid the sea Venice is built from the essence of the sea" (Norton 1071)

L20 "Chrysophrase" apple-green variety of the precious stone chalcedony

L24 "Nerea" This could mean the nymph Calypso, the daughter of Atlas, who kept Ulysses in her island cave for seven years (Odyssey V)

L41 "malachite" Green mineral taking a high polish

L46 "*choros nympharum*" Chorus of nymphs (Norton 1071)

L47 "Hermes and Athene" Hermes is the messenger god and the patron of merchants and thieves; Athena is the goddess of wisdom. Both were Ulysses' supporters. Hermes helped Ulysses escape from Calypso while Athena calmed the sea for his final voyage home (Odyssey V)

L51 "*sylva nympharum*" the nymphs' forest

L57 "Memnons" This man was called the "son of dawn" and was the commander of the Ethiopian troops in support of Troy. Apparently his statue near Thebes, here compared to an "alley of cypress," made a sound when the first rays of the sun touched it (Norton 1072)

L60 "cypress" coniferous tree associated with mourning

L73 "Borso, Carmagnola" Borso d'Este (1431-71) of Ferrara, Italy, was a patron of learning and a failed peacemaker on whom there was an assassination attempt made in Venice; Francesco Bussone da Carmagnola (1390?-1432) was a mercenary soldier who was tried for treason and executed between two columns (Norton 1072)

L73 "*i vitrei*" The famous Murano glassmakers of Venice

L83-4 "In the gloom...about it" Hugh Kenner explains that this is quoted from Canto 11 except that there "about" is "against" and that this is derived from a distich(couplet) by Pindar (Norton 1072)

L88, L91 "Zothar" "Aletha" These are probably fictitious names (Norton 1072)

L89 "sistrum" Jingling instrument or rattle used by the ancient Egyptians

L95 "Kore" Proserpine or Persephone

L97 "Circe" See note to Canto I, L7. Circe's brother was Aetes, the King of Colchis, their father the sun. Aetes had a cult of the sun on his island and guarded the Golden Fleece, Jason's quarry. So through the person of Circe's brother, two of the

movements in this canto, that of Odysseus and Circe and that of Jason and the Golden Fleece are linked by Pound.

L112 "Sigismundo...Dalmatia" Sigismondo Malatesta (1417-1468) was the ruler of Renaissance Rimini, Italy, and admired by Pound. He was an art patron and against the corrupt papacy; he fought for Venice and travelled up to the Dalmatian coast in a failed crusade in 1464 (Norton 1073).

29.4 LET US SUM UP

Pound was a rebel in his own life, often having to suffer acutely as a result of his convictions, as he did when accused of being anti-semitic (against the Jews). This rebellious spirit is reflected in his poetry which is crammed with erudite fragments of classical, Renaissance, and contemporary legend, literature and history. He also had a deep interest in Chinese history and literature. He writes for a very sophisticated, highly-educated reader, but all the learning in his poems often lies side by side with slang or colloquial diction. He believed in rebuilding and purifying the canon of English and American literature and was a great supporter of new talent.

While "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is filled with satiric glimpses of the shallow intellectual life of London to which the poet is bidding adieu, Canto I is a retelling of a part of Homer's Odyssey and Canto XVII deals with Renaissance history. Many different quests lie at the heart of the Cantos and particular images and references to classical, legendary and historical figures, knits together this otherwise fragmented, enormously difficult, excessivley ambitious poem, bristling with intellectual energy.

29.5 GLOSSARY

Vorticism: This was derived from art by Pound. It was a short-lived reaction to romantic and vitalist theories of futurism. It stood for the abstract and non-representational in art. The vortex or whirlpool is energy, but it is energy that has undergone a metamorphosis into form.

Dramatic Monologue: This is a poem written in the form of a single speech by a lone speaker with an audience where a miniature drama unfolds and one is aware of the reactions of the audience even though that audience never utters a word. Browning used the form to great effect in poems like "My Last Duchess."

Persona: Greek word for "mask." It means the disguise adopted by the poet or novelist when he/she does not want to address the reader in his/her own voice.

"Fleshly School of Poetry": This is a pejorative term used by Robert Buchanan to describe the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, both painters and poets. This group or Brotherhood as they were called included poets like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne and it advanced the style and spirit of italian painting before the Renaissance painter Raphael. It delighted in the sensuous aspects of art.

Heteroglossia: The simultaneous existence of different voices in a narrative, be it prose or poetry. The voices may be those of the narrator, the narrator's personae, or of different characters.

29.6 QUESTIONS

Q.1. What form does Pound choose in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley"? Can you justify his choice?

Q.2. Identify any three of the following figures in his poetry and analyse how Pound uses them in his poetry: A)Aphrodite or Venus B)Persephone or Proserpine C)Dionysius or Zagreus D)Sigismondo E)Ulysses F)Circe

Q.3. Is "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" a fragmented poem or a well-integrated one? Give reasons for your answer.

29.7 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 30 ADRIENNE RICH (1929--)

Structure

30.0 Objectives
30.1 Life and Works
30.2 "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"
30.2.1 Text
30.2.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
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30.3 "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law"
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30.3.2 Background and Critical Appreciation
30.3.3 Notes
30.4 Let Us Sum Up
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30.6 Questions
30.7 Further Reading

30.0 OBJECTIVES

In this, last unit of the block, we study the life and works of the only woman and the only postmodern poet in our collection: Adrienne Rich. Besides studying two of her poems in detail, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" and "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law," this unit also explores Rich's strong feminist beliefs and her crusade as a lesbian feminist activist.

30.1 LIFE AND WORKS

Adrienne Rich is probably the best-known living female poet in the world today. She was born in Baltimore, Maryland on May 16, 1929. The family was well educated and well off, but conscious of being set apart as Jewish. From a very young age, she composed poems, trying to please her demanding and meticulous father. Her mother, who had studied music, opted for the family over a career. Rich graduated from the exclusive women's college, Radcliffe, one of the seven sister colleges to the Ivy League ones, in 1951. There she was not taught by any female faculty and did not read works by any female poet. She published her first collection of poetry, A Change of World, in the well-known Yale Younger poets' series. W.H. Auden's preface praises her metre and diction and says the poems are "neatly and modestly dressed, speak quietly but do not mumble, respect their elders but are not cowed by them, and do not tell fibs." (Norton 2023). Four years later appeared The Diamond Cutters which was well-received, despite Randall Jarrell's rather disparaging comment about the poet sounding like "a sort of princess in a fairy tale" (Norton 2023).

Rich married Alfred Conrad, a Harvard economist, in 1953 and had three sons before she was thirty. Even at this stage, she was filled with a burning desire to make something of her life and not merely conform to the Victorian stereotype of women as the angel in the house. Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law was the title of her next collection which only appeared, understandably, eight years later in 1963.

In 1966, Rich moved with her husband and children to New York City where her husband had a teaching position at City College. Husband and wife were both very

active in the resistance movement against the Vietnam War. Rich taught for a while in the SEEK programme for disadvantaged people and as a result of her commitment to social causes her poetry underwent a change. Leaflets(1969) and The Will to Change (1971) reflected her new concerns both in subject matter and style. She moved increasingly away from the perfectly structured poems of her earlier volumes to a more improvisational and intense verse form. There were turbulent changes taking place in Rich's private life as well. In 1970, she left her husband and later that same year her husband committed suicide.

Diving into the Wreck (1973) continues Rich's exploration into both her environment and her psyche. This book received the National Book Award in 1974. Rich rejected the prize as an individual but accepted it in the name of all women--she did this in a statement which she co-wrote with two other female nominees, both black, Audre Lord and Alice Walker. In 1974 she also became professor of English at City College, New York and began research for her prose work, Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution, which appeared in 1976. The book examines myths and reality about motherhood through a study of personal diaries, anthropology, politics and medicine. In 1976, Rich published Twenty-one Love Poems in which she used the Elizabethan sonnet sequence to express not heterosexual love but a lesbian attachment. As she says in her famous essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum" "lesbian" is a word that to her does not simply mean two women going to bed with one another--one can also be a part of the "lesbian continuum"--i.e. believe in eroticised female friendship. In her work, It is the Lesbian in Us (1976) she wrote

> Even before I wholly knew I was a lesbian, it was the lesbian in me who pursued that elusive configuration. And I believe it is the lesbian in every woman who is compelled by female energy, who

gravitates toward strong women, who seeks a literature that will express that energy and strength. It is the lesbian in us who drives us to feel imaginatively, render in language, grasp, the full connection between woman and woman. (Norton 2024-5)

From 1976-79 Rich was professor of English at Douglass College. She then retired from academics and moved to a small town in Massachusetts from where she edited, along with Michelle Cliff, the lesbian-feminist journal, Sinister Wisdom. Her next two books, The Dream of a Common Language and A Wild Patience Has Taken me This Far appeared in 1978 and 1981 respectively. While preparing a collected volume edition of her poems, she wrote "one task for the nineteen--or twenty-year-old who wrote the earliest poems here, was to learn that she was neither unique nor universal, but a person in history, a woman and not a man, a white and also Jewish inheritor of a particular Western consciousness, from the making of which most women have been excluded" (Norton 2025).

30.2 "AUNT JENNIFER'S TIGERS"

30.2.1 Text

Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the tree;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty.

Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool 5
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon aunt Jennifer's hand.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by. 10
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid.

30.2.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

"Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"

This short poem appeared in 1951. In three stanzas of four lines each rhyming aabb ccdd eeff, Rich brings out the contrast between the wonderful freedom of the work of art that Aunt Jennifer has produced, embroidered tigers prancing across a screen (a room-divider) and the constraints of Aunt Jennifer's personal life.

In the first stanza there is a description of the tigers, Aunt Jennifer has embroidered on her screen, of their rich colours, their free movement, their lack of fear and their self-assurance.

In the next stanza, there is a contrast between Aunt Jennifer's artistic creations, the tigers, and Aunt Jennifer herself. Aunt Jennifer is timid and weak. She feels bowed down not just physically but also emotionally by the weight of her wedding ring. In other words, the wedding ring is a symbol of the oppressive male-dominated environment in which Aunt Jennifer lives.

In the final stanza the poet underlines the contrast between the hard and oppressive and terrified life Aunt Jennifer led in a male-dominated environment and how her spirit ranged free only in her artistic creation, the tigers on the screen. The tigers have all the spirit, all the energy and all the courage that Aunt Jennifer lacked in her own life. Rich is probably trying to say that art may be a form of release for women who are trapped in an oppressive domestic environment, something that Rich herself went through in her own life. You can compare this poem to Wallace Stevens' poem, "The Emperor of Ice Cream." There too there is a woman who embroidered a shawl that is now spread over her dead body. But note that Stevens has nothing to say about the particularly feminine difficulties that dead woman may have gone through in her life. In other words, her sex does not matter to Stevens, except in that embroidery is an art associated with women rather than with men. It could just as well have been the dead body of a man. For Rich, however, a person's sex is crucial.

30.2.3 Notes

Stanza 1

L1 "prance" rise by springing from hind legs

L2 "topaz denizens" yellow (like the semi-precious stone topaz) inhabitants

L4 "sleek chivalric certainty" the tigers are smooth, gallant (like the medieval knights) sure of themselves and of their existence. Note the alliteration of the "s" sound, denoting the smoothness and self-assurance of the tigers, frightened as they are, of no man.

Stanza 2

L5 "fluttering" moving in an agitated way

L7 "wedding band" wedding ring

Stanza 3

L10 "ringed with ordeals" surrounded by hard tasks. "Ringed" also recalls the "wedding band" or ring mentioned in Stanza 2.

30.3 "SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW"

30.3.1 Text

1

You once a belle in Shreveport,
with henna-colored hair, skin like a peachbud,
still have your dresses copied from that time,
and play a Chopin prelude
Called by Cortot" "*Delicious recollections* 5
Float like perfume through the memory."

Your mind now, moldering like wedding-cake,
heavy with useless experience,rich
with suspicion, rumor, fantasy,
crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge 10
of mere fact. In the prime of your life.

Nervy, glowering, your daughter
wipes the teaspoons, grows another way.

2

Banging the coffee-pot into the sink
she hears the angels chiding, and looks out 15
past the raked gardens to the sloppy sky.
Only a week since They said: *Have no patience.*

The next time it was: Be insatiable.
Then: *Save yourself; others you cannot save,*
Sometimes she's let the tapstream scald her arm, 20
a match burn to her thumbnail,

or held her hand above the kettle's snout
right in the woolly steam. They are probably anglels,
since nothing hurts her anymore, except
each morning's grit blowing into her eyes. 25

3

A thinking woman sleeps with monsters.
The beak that grips her, she becomes. And Nature,
that sprung-lidded, still commodious
steamer-trunk of *tempora* and *mores*
gets stuffed with it all: the mildewed orange-flowers, 30
the female pills, the terrible breasts
of Boadicca beneath flat foxes' heads and orchids.

Two handsome women, gripped in argument,
each proud, acute, subtle, I hear scream
across the cut glass and majolica 35
like Furies cornered from their prey:
the argument *ad feminam,* all the old knives
that gave rusted in my back, I drive in yours,
ma semblable, ma soeur!

Knowing themselves too well in one another: 40
their gifts no pure fruition, but a thorn,
the prick filed sharp against a hint of scorn...
Reading while waiting
for the iron to heat,
writing, *My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun—* 45
in that Amherst pantry while the jellies boil and scum,
or more, often,
iron-eyed and beaked and purposed as a bird,
dusting everything on the whatnot every day of life.

5

Dulce ridens, dulce loquens, 50
she shaves her legs until they gleam
like petrified mammoth-tusk.

6

When to her lute Corinna sings
neither words nor music are her own;
only the long hair dipping 55
over her cheek, only the song
of silk against her knees
and these
adjusted in reflections if an eye.

Poised, trembling and unsatisfied, before 60
an unlocked door, that cage of cages,
tell us, you bird, you tragical machine-
is this *fertilisante douleur?* Pinned down
by love, for you the only natural action,
are you edged more keen 65
to price the secrets cf the vault? has Nature shown
her household books to you, daughter-in-law,
that her sons never saw?

7

"To have in this uncertain world some stay
which cannot be undermined is 70
of the utmost consequence."
Thus wrote
a woman, partly brave and partly good,
who fought with what she partly understood.
Few men about her would or could do more, 75
hence she was labeled harpy, shrew and whore.

8

"You all die at fifteen," said Diderot,
and turn part legend, part convention.
Still, eyes inaccurately dream
behind closed windows blankening with steam. 80
Deliciously, all that we might have been,
all that we were-fire,tears,
wit, taste, martyred ambition-
stirs like the memory of refused adultery
the drained and flagging bosom of our middle years. 85

9

Not that it is done well, but
that it is done at all? Yes, think
of the odds! or shrug them off forever.
This luxury of the precocious child,
Time's precious chronic invalid,- 90
would we, darlings, resign it if we could?
Our blight has been our sinecure:
mere talent was enough for us-
glitter in fragments and rough drafts.

Sigh no more, ladies. 95
Time is male
and in, his cups drinks to the fair.
Bemused by gallantry, we hear
our mediocrities over-praised,
indolence read as abnegation, 100
slattern thought styled intuition,
every laps forgiven, our crime
only to cast too bold a shadow
or smash the mold straight off.

For that, solitary confinement, 105
tear gas, attrition shelling.
Few applicants for that honor.

10

Well,
she's long about her coming, who must be

more merciless to herself than history. 110
Her mind full to the wind, I see her plunge
breasted and glancing through the currents,
taking the light upon her
at least as beautiful as any boy
or helicopter, 115
        poised, still coming,
her fine blades making the air wince

but her cargo
no promise then:
delivered 120
palpable
ours.

30.3.2 Background and Critical Appreciation

This powerful, angry poem was composed between 1958-1960 and published in 1963. It makes a very important statement about Rich's feminism. It is a lament, a scream, a plea and a hope that the lot of gifted women, all women may change, even if the price to be paid is a heavy one.

The title "Snapshots" suggest carelessly taken photographs of family members at unguarded moments. They have none of the studied formality of photographs taken in a studio or by a professional photographer. "Daughter-in-law" is an intriguing term, the mystery of which is solved in Part 6 of this poem. By this term Rich means woman, whom she sees as nature's daughter-in-law, rather than her daughter, because nature's son, man, refuses to let there be a natural relationship between woman and nature. What intervenes and falsifies the relationship is patriarchy, man's disguise for his love of power and domination.

The first part of this poem shows the rapid change in a woman once marriage and motherhood befall her. Earlier she was lovely and fresh; rumours and suspicions beset now her mind. She is supposedly in the prime of her life, but she hates every minute of it and her daughter is hostile to her, grows away from her.

In the next part Rich wonderfully creates the anger and frustration of a woman who wants to be more than just a wife, a mother and a household worker. She imagines the woman to be hearing "probably angels" who tell her to be impatient, to be insatiable, and to save herself because she cannot save others. Note that all the things the angels tell her run counter to what patriarchy has deemed fit for women--the angels in the house--who ought to serve their husbands and children and not think of any life outside their home and, most of all, not think of themselves. Note also that the woman is barely conscious of hurting herself in the hot water from the tap or the fire from a matchstick or the steam from a kettle--she is already so emotionally and perhaps even physically bruised and battered that "nothing hurts her anymore" (L24).

In the third part Rich speaks of the old nature argument about women--women are biologically inferior, the weaker sex. Instead of attacking the true enemy, man, women waste much of their energy attacking each other, like furies deprived of their rightful quarry. These are the monsters that a "thinking woman" sleeps with and ultimately becomes. In other words, a woman who thinks for herself is already a monster in the eyes of the patriarchal establishment.

In the fourth part Rich imagines the life of another thinking woman, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), and a favourite of hers. This nineteenth century reclusive American poet lived in Amherst, Massachusetts, all her life. One of her poems begins with the line "My Life had stood--a Loaded Gun--." Yet for all her genius, she was

surrounded not by fellow poets and writers, but by pans containing boiling jellies, by dusters and by irons--household paraphernalia.

In the fifth part The woman is trying to conform to the patriarchal stereotype of the sweetly smiling, softly speaking lady, shaving her legs so that her body hair does not disturb the men's delicate sensibilities. But even as she shaves her legs, she is aware that they shine like the tusks of a dead, prehistoric animal, the mammoth. In other words, she realises that by conforming to male stereotypes of women she is trying to conform to something outdated and lifeless, something that denies her own individuality.

In part six Rich suggests that women are somehow always positioned outside the hub of things as a creature conditioned only to love and serve and perhaps see to the household accounts--men, nature's "superior" creations cannot possibly be expected to deal with anything that is trivial or mundane. Rich is being ironic here--that is, she obviously does not believe in these myths propagated by patriarchy about woman's place within the house and in her intrinsic inferiority.

In the seventh part Rich is talking about how women who struggle against great odds to make a significant contribution to civilisation are given ugly labels. Their contribution is undermined because they do not conform to patriarchal notions of the woman's fit place--that is, in the house, tending to her husband and children.

In part eight Rich speaks of how women do in fact die at fifteen in a certain sense--their dreams die, their selfhood dies. They become partly conventional and partly legend--that is, their sense of their own reality is sapped. They cannot change their lives, they merely wish for change; they dream of lost opportunities--"all that we might have been." And the reality of what they are, "fire, tears, wit, taste, martyred ambition," stirs within their sagging middle aged chest.

In part nine Rich says that certain women have been comfortable with the role and image patriarchy has given them. They have been content with "mere talent" and have not been too ambitious. Rich speaks of how women have been duped by flattery into accepting their own mediocre work. Flattery has prevented them from striving to achieve something tremendous--to "smash the mold"--to create a new way of looking at things. And for those few heroic women who have tried just that the pains have been so intense that few women have opted for it.

After the pains and horrors described in the previous part Rich in part ten ends on a more hopeful not by prophesying that the woman of the future will be "more merciless to herself than history"--she will be hard on herself, harder even than history (Rich has already described in the previous stanzas all the ways in which history has subjected women to oppression). She says this new woman will be "at least as beautiful as any boy/or helicopter." This implies that the woman will be part machine, part boy--here sex and her humanness will have to be changed in certain respects. When we look around society today we can see the truth of Rich's words--women now increasingly opt for a career, some of them dress like men, and many ignore the conventional roles society has given them of wife and mother and homemaker. They are also like a helicopter in the sense that they fly, they conquer new worlds, and also they have a little bit of the machine in them. Rich is suggesting that women have to cut themselves off from the nurturing role given them by history and create a new function for themselves, even if this means curtailing their motherly and domestic instincts. Otherwise a clear break with the past and women's freedom will not be possible. They will then not just "promise" to deliver, but actually deliver a new millennium--her "cargo" will be women's freedom to be herself, to mould her own history. The elements of nature, the sea and the wind, will also recognise the ability of this new woman--the air is described as "winc(ing)" under the impact of the new woman's blades. Nature who earlier showed only her household books to

woman, her daughter-in-law (L67), now winces under the force and impact of the new woman.

30.3.3 Notes

Stanza 1

L1 "belle" good-looking young woman with many male admirers. From the French word meaning beautiful.

L4 "Chopin" Frederich Chopin (1810-1849) was a Polish composer and pianist who settled in Paris in 1831. He is a famous romantic composer.

L5-6 "Cortot...*memory*" This remark was made by Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), a well-known French pianist, in his 1930 work Chopin: 24 Preludes. (Norton 2026)

L7 "moldering...cake" the woman who was once a beauty finds that her mind is now crumbling and rotting like wedding cake. The simile points out that the woman's mind and the cake are equally fragile and equally susceptible to decay. The words "heavy" and "rich" carry on the simile. Wedding cake is rich and heavy on the stomach; similarly, the woman's mind is heavy with rumours and suspicions.

L12 "glowering" frowning

Stanza 2

L18 "insatiable" not be satisfied, content

L25 "grit" dust

Stanza 3

L 29 "*tempora* and *mores*" times and customs. A phrase made famous by the Roman orator Cicero in his lament "O tempora! O Mores!" (Alas, how the times have changed and morals have degenerated!)

L32 "Boadicea" British queen at the time of the Roman emperor Nero who led her people in a brave though ultimately unsuccessful revolt against Roman rule (Norton 2027).

L35 "cut glass" crystal

L35 "majolica" a kind of glazed and ornamented Italian ware.

L36 "Furies" the Greek goddesses of vengeance that made frequent appearances chasing murderers in Greek tragedies.

L36 "cornered from" deprived of

L37 "*ad feminam*" Rich's feminized version of the logical fallacy, *ad hominem*, which means when one attacks a person's character rather than attack his logic or his arguments.

L39 "*ma semblable, ma soeur!*" Again, Rich feminizes the last line of the French poet Charles Baudelaire's poem *Au Lecteur*: "*Hypocrite lecteur!--mon semblable--mon frere!*" ("Hypocrite reader, my double, my brother.") "*Soeur*" means sister in French.

Stanza 5

L50 "*Dulce ridens dulce loquens*" "sweetly laughing, sweetly speaking" from the Roman poet Horace's famous ode, *Integer vitae*.

Stanza 6

L53 "When...sings" This is the first line of a poem by the English poet Thomas Campion (1567-1620) (Norton 2027)

L63 "*fertilisante douleur*" French for fertilising sorrow.

L66-8 "Nature shown...saw" Nature is personified as a woman with grown sons and all women are her daughters-in-law rather than her daughters. Through this image Rich is suggesting that patriarchal tradition has always seen women in a subordinate position to men and that they have presented this subordinate position as something natural rather than something created.

Stanza 7

L69-71 "To have....consequence" These lines are from Mary Wollestonecraft's Thoughts on the Education of Daughters, London 1787. Wollestonecraft, (1759-1797) the mother of Mary Shelley who wrote Frankenstein was the authour of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, one of the first works to argue for women's rights. (Norton 2028)

"stay" place

"undermined" challenged

"consequence" importance

L76 "harpy, shrew and whore" a harpy is a mythical monster with a woman's face and body and a bird's wings and claws. It is supposed to signify greed. A shrew is a disparaging word used for quarrelsome women.

Stanza 8

L77 Diderot: Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was a French philosopher, playwright and critic as well as the writer of an encyclopaedia. This statement of his is from Lettres a Sophie Volland and quoted by Simone de Beauvoir in Le Deuxieme Sexe (The Second Sex)(1949) (Norton 2028).

L84-5 "stirs like...years" This simile compares women's perceptions of what they are upsetting them like the memory of "refused adultery." Men had made propositions to married women which they had refused--now, perhaps, looking back, they wish they had acted otherwise.

L85 "drained and flagging" depleted and sagging not just physically but also emotionally

Stanza 9

L86-7 "Not...at all" This is an allusion to Samuel Johnson's observation to Boswell about a woman preaching being like a dog walking on its hind legs: "It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all" (Norton 2028). This is a typically sexist remark about men's thoughts about women's limited abilities. The comparison with the dog is meant to be insulting.

L92 "Our blight...sinecure" "blight" means a withering disease and "sinecure" an office of profit or honour without any obligations or duties.

L94 The phrase "rough drafts" refers to a writer preparing something for publication and being content with not making the final draft and polishing up her work. This could be a reference to Rich's own vocation as poet, which she had to subordinate so many times because of her commitments to her family.

L95-6 "Time is male...fair" Time is personified as a man who toasts or praises only beautiful women.

L97 "Bemused" stupefied

L100 "indolence" laziness

L100 "abnegation" denial of oneself

L101 "slattern" careless

L105-6 "solitary confinement...shelling" The rigours of making a revolutionary change in women's lives are compared to being imprisoned for a crime, being gassed in a war and being shelled. These metaphors drawn from war and from jail suggest the tremendous hardships that the few heroic women who try to change their own and other women's lives face.

30.4 LET US SUM UP

Adrienne Rich is the only postmodern poet in our collection and the only female voice. One can immediately distinguish a difference in the point-of-view from the other preceding male poets when one reads her work. In the first poem she makes the point about the suppression of Aunt Jennifer by her husband subtly--it is only in her embroidery that Aunt Jennifer's spirit finds free expression. In the second poem Rich's tone is far more straightforward, wounded, angry and embittered. She can no longer distance herself from the suffering of woman--this is a poem that seems to be wrenched out of her own guts. Feminism's rejection of the unreasonable demands that patriarchy puts on women finds strident expression here.

30.5 GLOSSARY

Feminism: A doctrine that advocates or demands for women the same rights granted men, as in political, economic and social status.

Lesbian: A woman who is a homosexual.

Patriarchy: A system of social organization in which descent and succession are traced through the male line. Also taken by feminists to represent an unjust social system in which men always have more rights than women, and where women are denied equality.

Sexist: The quality of promoting strereotyping of social roles on the basis of gender in a negative and demeaning way. For example, if you say "Oh, women should stick to being housewives, that's all they're good for" that is a sexist remark.

30.6 QUESTIONS

Q.1. Do the two poems by Rich, "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" and "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" have anything in common? What are the differences between them?

Q.2. Explain the use of the word "Daughter-in-law" in the poem, "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law."

Q.3. Would you call Rich a feminist? Give reasons for your answer.

Q.4. Compare any poem by Rich to any poem by a male poet in this unit. How can you tell from this comparison that Rich is a woman and the other poet is a man?

30.7 FURTHER READING

Beauvoir, Simone de. The Second Sex. Trans. H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage, 1974.

Gelpi, Albert and Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi. Adrienne Rich's Poetry. New York: Norton, 1975.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, eds. The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English. New York: Norton, 1985.

Uttar Pradesh
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MAEN-05
AMERICAN LITERATURE

Block

7

AMERICAN SHORT STORY

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Diverse definitions of the short story, you would notice in this study, derive from the diverse preferences and predilections of its practitioner-critics; and while each of these definitions points to some significant constituent(s) of the short story, as definition it also leaves something wanting. The genre of short story, thus viewed, defies definition. At the same time, its various definitions are useful, for taken together, they are strongly suggestive of its wide variety and flexibility. You may then broadly speaking, consider the short story as 'a vehicle for everyman's talent.'

The stories prescribed for your study in this block consist of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" by Ernest Hemingway and "The Bear" by William Faulkner which make quite a study in contrast. You may figure out without much effort some of the points of contrast between them, such as the length of each of them, the time-span they cover, the number and variety of their characters, the use of or disregard for plot in them, and so forth. But there are subtler and nuanced contrasts too which require more serious attention and probe, such as the organization of their materials, their verbal strategies, their narrative techniques, the various other skills and devices with which they make their kind of statements. This study attempts to help you notice and understand quite some of them. It also attempts to help you realize how compelling (or otherwise) these two short stories are, and what is the extent of the depth, power and artistry which have gone into the making of each of them.

Close textual readings of these two stories in this study are contextualized and located both in the oeuvre of their authors and the tradition of the American short story. It also draws your attention to the contested (im)partiality of the critical discourse in prioritizing the novel over the short story, as also the possible course and directions the short story genre is likely to take in future.

We are thankful to the American Center Library for pictures used in this block.

UNIT 1 THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this introductory unit, we shall study the core features of the short story in general and the American short story in particular. To this end, besides a few initial broadsides on positioning the short story in chronological history, the unit examines several major definitions of this genre. It notes the inadequacies and usefulness of these definitions, and suggests what essentially makes for a well-made short story. In the main, it posits a revaluation of the varied growth and major contributions to the American short story with special reference to Edgar Allan Poe, O.Henry, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Barth. The unit also makes a few open-ended observations of the future directions the short story may take.

1.1 INTRODUCING THE SHORT STORY

The short story, it needs be affirmed even at the risk of mouthing a cliché, is at once old and new. It may be as old as the adventure tales of the Odyssey or the religious/moral tales of the Bible. Nearer home, it may be as old as the stories woven into the Mahabharata or those included in the Panchantantra. But as a distinct art form, i.e., as a highly organized and deftly executed short narrative, it is 'a young art' which emerged in the nineteenth century and which has fast come of age. The short story, therefore, is as old as the human instinct to tell and listen to a story and as new as man's/woman's craft of writing it.

The ascendency and the subsequent establishment of the novel towards the end of the eighteenth century quite possibly encouraged, by example, the growth of shorter fiction as an autonomous genre of English literature. More important, however, was the speedy emergence of periodicals and magazines during the first quarter of the nineteenth century whose readers made insistent demand for short and compact fiction, completed in one issue. The editors of these magazines and papers, keen to boost their circulation and sales, made handsome payments to those writers who could meet their requirements. The short story thus registered its raison d'... smoothly stepped into a space of its own.

1.2 DEFINITIONS: THEIR INADEQUACIES AND USEFULNESS

Encyclopedia Britannica, a treasure-house of information and knowledge, offers a broad-based and workable sense of what a short story is about. It points to certain mutually interdependent elements of a short story, namely "theme, or the idea on which the story centres; plot, or the planned sequence of action; characters, or the persons who perform the action; and setting, or the time and place of the story." It therefore surmises that a short story "unfolds some kind of idea through the action and interaction of characters at some definite time and place." The Encyclopedia also acknowledges the scope for flexibility in situating these elements in a given short story. Such a formulation is obviously too wide open to pinpoint the distinctive character of the short story. It may serve the purpose of the generalists but it leaves things wanting for a specialist, e.g. the practicing short story writers and the critics of the short story.

The specialists have defined the short story more precisely but always in terms of their own predilections and perceptions, is, in terms of what they consider the core feature of a short story. Their definitions reflect not merely the variations of emphasis in regard to the above-referred elements but also affirmation of one element to the negation of another. The sharply edged inclusions and exclusions of various elements in their definitions often derive from these writers' practice of the craft of story writing in varied and even contradictory ways. Sir Hugh Walpole, for instance, asserts the supremacy of plot as the distinguishing feature of a short story which, according to him, should be "a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement." Turgenev on the contrary maintains that the short story for him is "the representation of certain persons … whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting." To him writing stories "was never an affair of plot – that was the last thing he thought of." Again, Ellery Sedgewisck stresses on two constituents of plot as the key features of a short story. He holds that "a story is like a horse race. It is the start and the finish that count most." And many others, including Maupassant, would not agree more. But we have Anton Chekhov who finds no use for the beginning and the end in a story. He observes that "a story should have neither beginning nor end."

Further, Edgar Allan Poe, an early and masterly practitioner of the art of modern short story, gives the pride of place to a certain "pre-conceived effect" realized through the plot of a story. In his famous review of the Twice-Told Tales by Hawthorne, he maintains that "in the whole composition (of a short story) there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to one pre-established design." Such an emphasis on a pre-decided unity and totality of effect has also been considered too schematic and prescriptive, and by implication restrictive by several short story writers and critics. The French story writer Merimee, to name just one of them, refuses to subordinate his concern for 'objectivity' and 'impartiality' in a short story to Poe's over-riding accent on the totality of a pre-planned effect. He insisted, time and again, that the short story should, like any other work of art, be allowed to "stand and speak before the reader" on its own and not according to a pre-formulated strategy of its author.

Besides these conflicting definitions, quite a number of short story writers and critics have pointed to the tremendous significance of brevity in a short story. Some of them even tend to suggest the only distinguishing feature of a short story is that it must not be long. H.G. Wells, therefore, used to say that a story "may be horrible or pathetic or funny or beautiful or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential, that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud." Chekhov said much the same thing when he advised the short story writers that if they described a gun

hanging on the wall on page one, sooner or later that gun must go off in the story. Poe also held that a story must be short, although he added that it must not be so short that the 'pre-established design' is not realized. And we have Barry Pain who graphically suggested that the uncommon requirement of a short story was "much the same commonsense that prevents a hostess for giving a very large dance in a very small room."

These observations, however telling or epigrammatic, merely draw attention to the obvious in a short story, and do not really take us far. Nor do the divergent if not contradictory definitions discussed earlier help us in arriving at a consensus. You may, then, naturally think that they all lend much controversy an uncertainty to what constitutes a short story. You may even hold that the absence of indisputable accuracy and satisfactory finality in any of them seems merely to serve the cause of critical confusion.

But the inadequacy of these definitions also implies that the short story is too many things to contain in one single definition. This inadequacy is, indeed, an acknowledgement and affirmation of the limitless possibilities in terms of sheer range of material which this genre has come to realize and continues to realize. It is also suggestive of the infinite flexibility in the modes of writing which the short story easily lends itself to. The fact that there is no definition of short story which can be universally and uniformly acceptable demonstrates that it has evolved, in effect, as a vehicle for every man's/woman's talent. There are, then, plotted stories as also plotless stories; stories which span over a lifetime and stories which sharply telescope a few tiny moments of life, unelaborated and unexplained; stories which have a definite beginning and a definite end, stories which do not bother for such requirements; stories which are prose-poems with all the loveliness of a lyric and stories which are pieces of solid prose in which all emotions, all actions, all reactions are fixed and glazed like in a finely built house; stories which are intricate and cobweb-like and stories which make for a direct, straightforward and gripping reportage; stories which focus on a character without turning into a mere character-sketch and stories which transmute certain ideas and concerns without lapsing into the fixity of an essay. All this points to the insistent and eternal fluidity of the short story and its myriad, inexhaustible manifestations.

It is in this context that several critics have shunned from defining the short story. They have applied judicious discriminations and discernments, and distanced themselves from these highly personalized, exclusivist, and essentialist definitions. Elizabeth Bowen, for instance, has aptly observed that the first and foremost necessity of the short story is its "necessariness." According to her, whatever a short story writer writes about—a state of mind, a moment of revealment, a chain of images, a narrative of events—should be "pressing enough and acute enough to have made the writer write it." E.J.O' Brien has also stressed this qualitative aspect of the short story when he said that the challenge of a short story is how vitally compelling the writer makes whatever he writes. The essential feature of a short story, in this sense, is that it gives you a wound you do not easily get over; and its acid test, you may well remember, is the measure of its depth, power and artistry.

1.3 THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

In this section we have a close look at the growth and development of the American short story vis-à-vis the short story in Europe. We also take note of the major American exponents of this genre, their contribution towards exploring, enlarging and diversifying the scope of the short story, and their innovations and experimentations with the form.

1.3.1 Origins: The First Phase

No year may be cited for the exact origin as much of the American short story as for its counterpart in Europe, although both of them grew up in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Of the earliest stalwarts of American short story, the major ones are Washington Irving (1783-1859), Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (1805-1864). They were contemporaries, and largely wrote in the first half of the nineteenth century. Washington Irving, living in England for most part of his creative period, was encouraged by the reception accorded to his Sketch Book (1819-20), and issued three additional volumes of stories and sketches before 1832. However, although his "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" belong to the classics of American short story, his mode of writing was rather "too leisurely" and the stories therefore often lacked "dramatic tension". Nonetheless, Irving was perhaps the first American to clearly recognize that the short story was a distinct form of literature which required, he wrote to his brother-in-law, " a constant activity of thought and nicety of execution." The key word 'constant' in this phrase conveys the sense of an 'unceasing' and 'persistent' application of mind and art in writing a story and relates, however faintly, to the latter-day definitions of short story as a highly organized, intense and complete genre of literature.

It was, however, Edgar Allan Poe who for the first time formulated a set of principles governing the composition of a short story. His propositions about the short story, as stated in his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales in 1842 (cited earlier), laid down three neat and precise rules: (1) a story must aim at one predetermined effect; (2) it must vigorously exclude everything which does not contribute to that effect and thus possess complete unity; and (3) it must be short, but not so short that the 'pre-established design' cannot be realized. Several critics have found such a theory too restrictive and rigid: but it worked extremely well in his own case. The consummate artistry of his stories – "The Fall of the House of Usher", "Ligeia" and "The Cask of Amontillado" – has seldom been excelled. Poe's theory and practice, indeed, make for a major landmark in the history of short story, if only because he was astute enough to recognize quite some of the essential features of a well-made story; namely, coherence, completeness, mathematical exactitude and artistic unity. Relatively speaking, if Irving focussed attention on creating life-like characters in his short stories, Poe forces attention to the importance of a skillfully plotted/constructed story.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, a close contemporary of Poe and Irving, is better known as a novelist than as a short story writer. Marked by artistic epiphany, his stories like "young Goodman Brown" and "Birthmark" belong to the realm of allegory and parable. However, the depiction of revelatory moments in his stories is often manipulated by a schematic interplay of ideas and moral concepts, and he remains less of an influence as a short story writer than Poe and Irving. Greater contribution to the short story of the time was rather made the writers from across the Atlantic, especially the Russian's like Nokolai Gogel and Alexander Pushkin and the French like Prosper Merimee and Honore de Balzac. "The Overcoat" by Gogol, written in the year 1842 in which Poe published his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, is a pleasure to read even today. It is subtly suggestive of human anxiety and compassion, and compels attention to a character gripped in a tight-holding situation. Dostovesky has rightly acknowledged its pervasive influence when he remarked, "We have all emerged from 'The Overcoat'. "At about the same time, the French writer Merimee maintained that a short story must be allowed to speak for itself without intrusions and impositions of any kind. His stress on the values of 'objectivity' without prejudice to those of 'technical brilliance' in this genre and his assertion that a story must proceed organically have in course of time become the mainstay of all well-written short stories.

1.3.2 American Short Story after Poe

American short story after Poe, broadly spanning over the second half of the nineteenth century, was more prolific than impressive. In fact, it offered a curious juxtaposition of stories which were mere tissues of clevernesses with those which had substance and craft, of stories which gloried in artifice and trickery and played to the gallery with those which respected artistry and endeavoured creativity; in sum the popular short story and the quality short story. The two strands, of course, are not necessarily exclusive of each other and quite a number of the finest short story writers combine the two: but the story writers of this period noticeably looked like practicing one to the exclusion of the other. The period very largely threw up either the facile, journalistic and unexperimental story or the serious, meaningful and innovative story. The former kind was represented by writers like Bret Harte (1839-1914) and Stephen Crane (1871-1900). Instinctively aware, like a good journalist, of the popular American demand for a direct, fast-track story of effect, Bret Harte wrote smart and mechanically turned out stories which earned him instant recognition and fame. His "Luck of Roaring Camp", indeed, became 'a national sensation', and Harte was, in a manner of speaking feted as something of 'a national institution'. He evolved and adhered to the best-selling formula for writing a story, the ingredients of which included "people, humour, movement, colour, suspense, surprise, the touch of sentimentalism, the wave of regret, the laughter behind tears." O.Henry, if anything, perfected this formula with great aplomb. More of a showman than a story writer, he had something for everybody in the market-place of story-telling. He, of course, had a sense of tragedy, a certain sympathy for the underdog, and was tirelessly interested in people and could make them tirelessly interesting. Backed by these gifts, he might have become, with vigorous, disciplined application of his craft, a great short story writer. But he chose the easy way out: or perhaps, given the adverse and crushing circumstances especially of his early life, he had to. And thus, even the widely talked about surprise-ending in the best of his stories like "The Gift of the Magi" and "The Last Leaf", on reflection, seems little better than trick-ending. Maupassant, the great French master story writer also used surprise-ending in quite some of his stories: but, as an artist, he was very well aware that surprise-ending alone is its own limitation; O.Henry, the journalist, was perhaps not. Therefore, although quite possibly the greatest popularizer of the short story – greater than even Maupassant – O.Henry remains not much above a second-rate albeit talented story writer who didn't or couldn't exploit his talent.

Outside the shaping and peaking of the popular American short story, the period did witness several innovative and path-breaking writers who were seriously committed to the art of story-telling. Ambrose Bierce, too bitterly uncompromising to be popular, rejected by his time and isolated, was rather a purist who painstakingly distinguished literature from journalism. His stories, such as those included in his volume <u>In the Midst of Life</u> are highly individualized endeavours reflecting intensely personal perceptions of men and things. His touch of impressionism and his conscious effort to compress the short story and to interpret character through casual and apparently irrelevant incidents anticipate the later twentieth century writers. In fact, Bierce remains the major connecting link between Poe and the American short story today. Simultaneously, Stephen Crane, who according to Conrad never knew how good his best work was, introduced and integrated the features and facets of 'naturalism' and 'determinism' in American short story. Fearlessly honest and ruthlessly realistic, he didn't initially find any taker for his work from among the American publishers: and his powerful stories like "Maggi" and "The Open Boat" tellingly testify the tragic irony of it all. Yet Crane belongs to that select group of American short story writers who not only enriched but also widened the range of the genre. Like Bierce, he belongs to today rather than the day before yesterday. While the short story in the second half of the nineteenth century America yielded a mixed package, in Europe it was profusely dotted with the names of number of masterly writers: Guy de Maupasant (1850-93), Anton Cheekhov (1860-1904), Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), R.L.Stevenson (1850-94), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), Ivan

Turgenev (1813-83), and several others. Of them the first three. Maupassant, Chekhov and Tolstoy draw greater attention as short story writer: and their stories evidence varied shades of similarities and striking colours of contrast. All the three of them, for instance, reflect an intense inquisitiveness about human conditions: but whereas Maupassant and Chekhov knew a wide variety of human beings, Tolstoy's knowledge of it was wider still and seemed limitless. Further, both Maupassant and Chekhov, as gifted short story writers, knew when to hold their tongue and how not to go on a second too long. Tolstoy, although not that meticulous and insistent about these concerns, paid full honour of recognition to the short story in its own right and never treated it as a mere by-product of novel. Primarily known as the author of memorable novels like *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* which earned him an international salute, Tolstoy lent a certain concentration of force and high finish to his short stories, comparable with the very best of Maupassant and Chekhov. Again Maupassant and Chekhov, with their high regard for 'objectivity', would not entangle themselves and their characters in the coils of contemporary morality. For Tolstoy, however, aesthetic and moral concerns are simply inseparable; and his stories leave a lasting impression of a great organic force. His objectivity, therefore, lies in his dispassionate and impartial exploration of myriad facets of human nature. Finally, as for their methods, relatively speaking, Maupassant is direct, swift, logical, naturalistic and brilliant; Chekhov is oblique, apparently casual, beguilingly conversational and subtly gripping; and Tolstoy is more catholic, composite and life-like, for as John Bayley observed, "If life could write, it would write just as Leo Tolstoy did." Few American short story writers are comparable to these three towering figures in the discipline of modern short story. Among a large number of their stories, "Boule de Suif" and "The Necklace" by Maupassant, "The Darling" and "Ward No. 6" by Chekhov, and "Family Happiness" and "The Death of Ivan Ilytch" by Tolstoy are compelling little masterpieces. You will find them, I very much hope, a delight to read and re-read.

1.3.3 Renaissance in American Short Story

During the early decades of the twentieth century, while in Europe and more particularly in Britain writers like Katherine Mansfield, A.E.Coppard, James Joyce and D.H.Lawrence kept the flag of short story high and steady, in America the one short story writer who stood out, aside of Henry James (1843-1916), Hamlin Garland (1860-1940) and Edith Wharton (1862-1937), was Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) Anderson broke free both from the popular, mechanical and stereotypical stories of O.Henry and Bret Harte as well as the unnoticed although serious writing of Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane. He also turned his back to European influences and indeed heralded the twentieth century renaissance in American short story. He adhered to the indigenous material and wrote authentically about the remote and obscure Americans of a wide variety living in the Ohio valleys, moving "out of nowhere into nothing". Adopting the midwestern prose rhythms with a studied stylessness which kept him closer to 'life' than to 'art' he reflected much respect for words, and lent colour and significance to his otherwise colourless and insignificant people. His short stories, at once tough and tender, are suffused with human persistence and heavy melancholy. Andersons's volume of stories Winesburg, Ohio and his short stories like "I Want to Know Why" and "Death in the Woods" are among the finest of American short stories.

1.3.4 Hemingway and Faulkner

The most widely acknowledged voices of the American short story during the second quarter of the twentieth century are those of Ernest Hemingway (1898-1961) and William Faulkner (1897-1962), the two authors we shall discuss at greater length in subsequent units. Both Hemingway and Faulkner, initially much under the influence of Sherwood Anderson, sheared away from the older traditions of English and American short story. However, Hemingway's commitment to his craft went several steps ahead of Andersons's stress on keeping his stories closer to 'life' than to 'art'

and on a certain 'studied stylelessness' in writing. Hemingway, in a manner of speaking, was a man with an axe. He vigorously pruned the language, evolved the 'iceberg principle' of writing, used telling understatements, and conveyed multiple meanings largely through symbolic and ironic implications. Faulkner too pruned the language but he did so like one prunes a tree so that it blossoms anew and prodigiously, and lends "the highest possible degree of saturation" to his work. Hemingway's "A Clean Well-Lighted Place", a four paged story, and Faulkner's "The Bear", running into close to a hundred pages, in this sense, are their representative stories prescribed for your study.

Further, Hemingway initially like Anderson, located his stories in the suburbs of Chicago and in Michigan where he lived during his early impressionable years. But later he became too much 'a citizen of the world' and his characters then were isolates severed from family, community and society at large living in various parts of the globe including Italy, Spain, France, Switzerland, Cuba, and of course the U.S.A. On the contrary, Faulkner, much more like Anderson, focused all along on the regional, in his case, the American South; and his works evoke the decadent and transitional life-cycles of the aristocracy and the very poor in the towns and countryside of this region as well as the inbuilt social anxieties and racial tensions of their lives. Finally, Hemingway was mainly a tragic writer who tested his characters' capacity for establishing their 'gallantry in defeat' and for acquiting themselves with 'grace under pressure' of most trying circumstances. He explores in his works what humans can be and what humans can do in the face of certain death, often enough violent death. But Faulkner's scale of intended emotions is widely different. He is 'a romantic cursed with a pair of realistic eyes'; and he captures intricate and tangled human relationships at varied levels of struggles and conflicts, all suffused with an atmospheric passion and grandeur of their own. The extent to which these two master story writers enriched and enlarged the American short story is matched by few American writers before and after them.

1.3.5 Contemporary American Short Story

At the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, the American short story had covered a long distance, broken much fresh ground, and diversified in several directions. Its bag was large and heavy for it contained a wide variety, such as stories of relaxed characterization (Irving) and those of pre-established effect (Poe); stories which came close to allegory and parable (Hawthorne) and those which looked competent but machine-made (Harte); stories which registered high seriousness (Bierce) and those which ushers in 'naturalism' and 'determinism' (Crane); stories with surprise-ending which could also degenerate into trick-ending (O.Henry) and those which were, genuinely and firmly, rooted in the region and local colour (Anderson); stories which were like floating little iceburgs (Hemingway) and those which evoked the inexorable decadence and transition of the American South (Faulkner). Besides, there were many more kinds of stories by many more writers of very considerable talent, notably Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Henry James, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, Richard Wright, William Saroyan, Bernard Malamud, and several others. All of them contributed stories which reflect, astutely and searchingly variously aspects of the American people, society, community, culture, and the nation at large, often enough coupled with innovations and experimentations with the form.

Quite a number of new trends and developments have rapidly transformed the ambience of creative writing in America in the second half of this century. American people were now constantly gripped with making adjustments and coming to terms with, for instance, the explosion of technology, the rise of consumerism, the near total discontinuities of older family and community ties, the entrenchment of high individualism, the growth of nuclear families, the shifting sands of the political scenario from the cold war and the American involvement in the Korean and the Vietnamese wars to the present day emergence of America as the only super power

the better organized and articulated ethnic, black and feminist voices, the demands of ruthless competitiveness, the modernist structure of American society, the increasing pressu . of the postmodem sensibility with its foregrounding or irreverence and subversions and problematizing of all given 'norms', 'meaning', 'sense of reality', and so forth.

It is in such unsettling and unstoppable contexts that authors like Robert Coover (1932-), John Barth (1930-), Donald Barthelme (1933-), Joyce Carol Oates (1938-) and John Updike (1932-) have written their stories in the sixties and the seventies of this century. Faced with successive waves of disorientations and discontinuities all around, some of them have felt compelled to reexamine and redefine the concept of a well-made short story all over again. The position such writers seem to take is that "the hallmarks of the well-made story – consistency of style, rationality of structure, and steadiness of viewpoint – cannot represent the illogic of our lives." It may be noted that in jettisoning the tradition of short story too radically, these writers come dangerously close to causing a total collapse of artistic control in their writing. Nonetheless, the finest of their stories, such as John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse" and Robert Coover's "The Magic Poker" successfully reflect the "paradoxical desire to go beyond 'the action of conventional dramatic narrative' without losing the human 'effect of drama' which is the foundation of the story teller's craft." This rejection of the outmoded, depleted and nearly exhausted conventions of narrative and yet the attempt to recapture its original energies (now enlarged into a whole new discipline of narrationality) sets these stories apart not only from what preceded them but also from the present-day postmodern short story. Rather amorphous in nature and eclectic in approach, the postmodern story rejects all norms lock, stock and barrel and leans too heavily on the tropes of parody and pastiche, of interrogation and skepticism, and on the strategies of the deconstruction of all imagined and artistic constructs. And in as much as it throws the entire heritage of the short story upside down, the postmodern short story may even be called an anti-story: but its definitive evaluations are still in the making. As for its future prospects, we may better refrain from making any predictions about the direction the short story will take, for while the criticism of short story is based on the past, i.e., on whatever short stories have already appeared, the forms of short story will be shaped by future events, many of them "adventitious and unpredictable."

1.4 LET US SUM UP

The short story, we have noticed, is both old and new. Even as all the major definitions of the short story leaves something wanting, they do signify its wide variety. The American short story achieved this wide variety largely through its major practitioners such as Poe, O.Henry, Anderson, Hemingway, Faulkner and Barth. The directions the short story may take in future will depend on the unpredictable course of life in future.

1.5 GLOSSARY

Denouement: The final unravelling of plot or fiction.

Plot: The plan, design, scheme or pattern of events in a play, poem or work of fiction.

Epigrammatic: a short witty statement in verse or prose which may be complimentary, satiric or aphoristic.

Genre: Type or class of literary work, form or technique. It is a French term. The genre into which literary works are classified are numerous. The most common names are epic, satire, novel, essay, biography, short story.

Epiphany: It is a standard term for the description frequent in modern poetry and fiction, of a sudden flare into revelation of an ordinary object or scene. Christian thinkers used this term to signify a manifestation of God's presence in the world.

Allegory: It is a narrative in which a subject of a higher spiritual order is described in terms of that of a lower. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a prime allegory.

Parable: a short tale that illustrates a moral principle.

Impressionism: The term probably derives from Claude Monet's painting Impression : Soleil Levant (first exhibited in Paris in 1874). The impressionists were a school of painters who were particularly concerned with the transitory effects of light, and they wished to depict the fleeting impression from a subjective point of view. They were not interested in a precise representation; the resulting impression depended in the perception of the spectator.

Naturalism: In literary criticism a word, sometimes used loosely as a synonym for realism and also in reference to words which show a pronounced interest in, sympathy with and love of natural beauty (e.g. much of the poetry of Wordsworth.

Trope: figurative use of a word (as of 'tread' in 'The years like great black oxen tread the world)

Parody: Imitation of another writer's work, where ridicule is the main objective. John Phillip's *The Splendid Shilling* (1705) parodised the style of Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. Examine Poe's definition of the short story and its influence on the subsequent American short story writers.

2. Do you agree with the view that the twentieth century short story primarily offers perceptions on human characters? Give reasons in support of your answer.

3. Point out the distinguishing features of the contemporary American short story with illustrations from the stories you have read.

1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. H.E. Bates, *The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey* (1950).
2. Arthur Voss, *The American Short Story: A Critical Survey* (1973).
3. Philip Stevick (edited), *American Short Story: A Critical History*: 1900-45 (1984).
4. Gordon Weaver (edited), *American Short Story: A Critical History*: 1945-80 (1983).
5. JaEllen Clarey and Susan Lohafer (edited), *Short Story Theory at Crossroads* (1989).

UNIT 2 HEMINGWAY: *A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE*

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Ernest Hemingway
  2.1.1 Chronology
  2.1.2 Themes and Concerns
  2.1.3 Modes of Writing
  2.1.4 Autobiographical Element
  2.1.5 Objectivity
  2.1.6 Code of Conduct
  2.1.7 Symbolism
  2.1.8 Irony
2.2 *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*
  2.2.1 Introducing the Story
  2.2.2 Contrasted Characters
  2.2.3 Narrative Techniques
  2.2.4 Theme of Nothingness
  2.2.5 Autobiographical Element
  2.2.6 Objectivity
2.3 Let Us Sum Up
2.4 Glossary
2.5 Questions
2.6 Suggested Readings

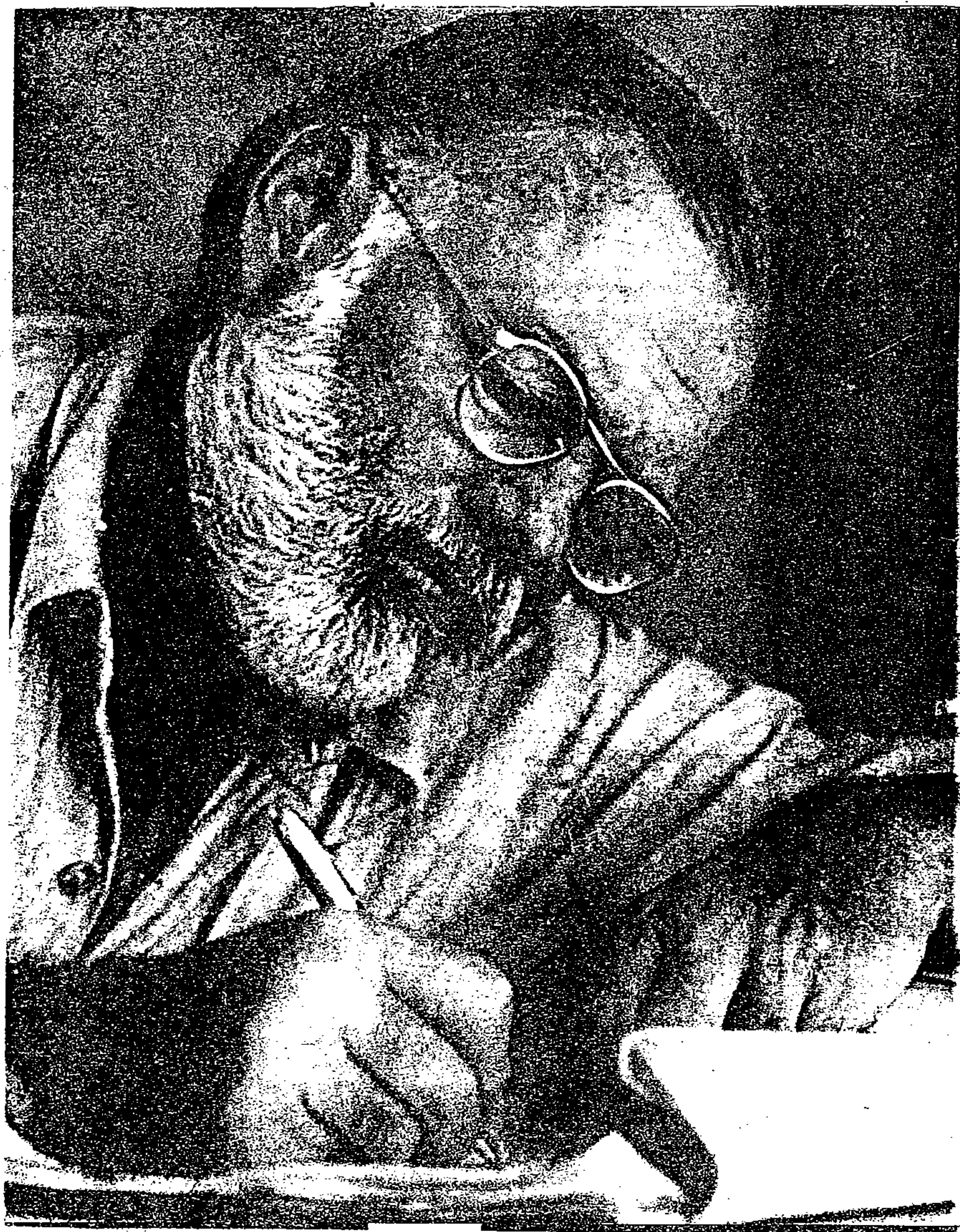
2.0 OBJECTIVES

This second unit is focussed on a close reading of the distinctive features of both Hemingway the short story writer and his short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place." It begins with a select chronology, and moves on to discuss and evaluate the author's major themes and concerns, his mode of writing, autobiographical predilections, artistic objectivity, code of conduct, and narrative techniques, especially those of symbolism and irony. The text of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is critically examined and assessed largely in the context of these tropes. The twin objectives foregrounded in this unit, then, are to assist you in realizing the kind of short story writer, Hemingway is and the kind of short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" makes.

2.1 ERNEST HEMINGWAY

2.1.1 Chronology

The following chronology, largely based on the one made out by Earl Rovit, offers a concise biographical perspective on the major events in the life of Ernest Hemingway. It is of course selective, not comprehensive; and during the course of your readings on this author you may notice several other milestones in his life. You may then draw up your own chronology of events relating to Hemingway's life and works.



Ernest Hemingway

1899	Born on July 21 in Oak Park, Illionois, son of Dr. Clarence E. and Grace Hall Hemingway.
1917	After graduation from Oak Park High School, worked as a reporter on the Kansas City Star.
1918	Enlisted as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross in Italy; was severely wounded under mortar fire at Fossalta di Piave on July 8.
1920-1924	Worked as a reporter and foreign correspondent for Toronto Star and Star Weekly. Met Sherwood Anderson (1920-21), married Hadley Richardson (1921), published Three Stories and Ten Poems in Paris (Contact Publishing Co., 1923), made friends with Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. As correspondent, covered Greco-Turkish War (1922) and interviewed Clemenceau and Mussolini.
1925	Published in *Our Time* (New York: Boni and Liveright), his first collection of short stories.
1926	Published The Torrents of Spring (a novel) and The Sun Also Rises (a novel) with Charles Scribner's Sons. All subsequent works except The Spanish Earth came under Scribner's imprint.
1927	Divorced Hadley Richardson; married Pauline Pfeiffer. Published Men Without Women (a collection of short stories).
1928-1938	Set up his home at Key West, Florida.
1929	Published A Farewell to Arms, his first widely acknowledged novel.
1930	Hurt in automobile accident in Montana.
1932	Published Death in the Afternoon (a book on bullfighting).
1933-1934	Published Winner Take Nothing (1933) a collection of short Stories. Made first safari to Africa; also visited Paris and Spain.
1935	Published Green Hills of Africa (a book on big-game hunting).
1936-1938	Covered the Spanish Civil War for the North American Newspaper Alliance. Published To have and have not (1937) A novel; helped in preparation of the film, The Spanish Earth (published in 1938) a film-script; and issued The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories (1938).
1940	Divorced by Pauline Pfeiffer; married Martha Gelhorn. Published For Whom the Bell Tolls, another widely acknowledged novel.
1942-1945	War Corespondent in Europe, flew with the Royal Air Force, participated in Normandy invasion, and attached himself to the Fourth Infantry Division to liberate Paris. Divorced from Martha Gelhorn to marry Mary Welsh in 1944.
1950	Published Across the River and Into the Trees (a novel)
1951	Published The Old Man and the Sea, yet another widely acknowledged novel.
1953-1954	Revisited Africa; suffered two airplane crashes; was reported dead in the world press. Received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.
1961	Died of self-inflicted wounds at his home in Ketchum, Idaho, on July 2.

2.1.2 Themes and Concerns

Hemingway's theme, condensed in one word howsoever simplistic and inadequate, is the violence at the heart of men and things. Its figurations include not only physical violence but also psychic violence, not only the violence of war but also the violence in everyday life, not only the threats and confrontations with violence but also its consequences. This foregrounding of violence also impinges on Hemingway's choice of characters, situations, sense of life and world, and evokes the emotions of fear, pain, hurt, anxiety, empathy, tension, trauma and so forth. Hostile critics of Hemingway censure such a preoccupation with violence as an obsession, find his fictional world narrow and limited, and insist that less is simply less in Hemingway. But his admirers consider such a pre-eminent positioning of violence quite authentic,

and while they acknowledge the limited nature of his world they insist that it is intense and poignant and that in Hemingway's oeuvre less is more.

Young Hemingway, far right, with his family, 1906

To move from this broad spectrum violence as the presiding metaphor in Hemingway's works to the specific and particular themes in his short stories, we notice that they are mainly focussed on the (i) shocks of experience, (ii) violence of war, (iii) man-woman relationships, (iv) quintessential nothingness, and (v) celebrations of values. Boy-protagonist of his stories of shocking, violent experiences are often caught unawares when they, for instance, encounter the contract-killers at a small-town lunchroom ("The Killers") or face the threatened, pointless violence of a demented ex-prizefighter ("The Battler") or witness the violent, ironically tragic death of the much-maligned father ("My Old Man"). The impact of such experiences stupefies and shatters them: nonetheless, contrary to several critics, their stories may not be categorized as the stories of initiation. For they hardly evince any sense of better understanding of the 'self' and the 'surroundings' in their protagonists after the impact, and carry nothing of the ritualisitic elements that accompany all initiations. Slightly different are the stories focussed on the violence of war which Hemingway used to call "invaluable and irreplaceable" as a subject and in which he captures "people under tremendous stress and before and after". These stories transmit the predicament for instance, of the older people and the animals left behind during the evacuation of a village under threat of imminent bombardment ("Old Man at the Bridge") or the shell-shocked soldiers whose wounds may have healed but who continue to suffer from the neurosis and frequent nervous break-down ("A Way You'll Never Be") or those who despite their discipline and control over this post-wound neurosis spend sleepless nights

listening to the silkworms eating in the dark ("Now I Lay Me"). They etch out the irrational, impersonal, devastating face of violence the savagery and grimness of which is occasionally countered by the intermittent camaraderie and togetherness of some of the men-at-war.

Subtly suggestive of surface calm and inward restlessness, of high tension and gnawing anxiety are Hemingway's stories of man-woman relationships between unmarried lovers or married couples. Now and then these stories depict sexual inhibitions and deviations in such relationships ("Mr. And Mrs. Elliot" and "The Sea Change"): but more often than not they deal with the temperamental incompatibilities and marital maladjustments between males and females, such as the fertility wish in woman and the evasion of parental responsibility in man ("Cat in the Rain" and "Hills Like White Elephants") or the sullen acquiescence of a wife in the dogged insistence of her husband on forbidden fishing ("Out of Season"), and so forth. Almost as a rule, the male in these stories is determined and dominant and the female submissive but tense and uncertain the former sadistic and the latter masochistically pliant. By investing his women with a greater sense of responsibility and commitment in love/marital relationships which his men fail to share, much less demonstrate, Hemingway the artist seems to castigate the real-life, egotistic, self-aggrandizing Hemingway, and tends to echo Melville's telling phrase: "the conflict of convictions spins against the way it drives".

A class apart, however, are the stories of the ultimate nothingness, of an overwhelming and all-engulfing *nada* which go far beyond gender conflicts and draw attention to a "God-abandoned world", a world with nothing at the centre". Characters in these stories, resigned as they are to all kinds of losses and gloom, find themselves "not in His (God's) Kingdom" ("Soldier's Home"), are irretrievably landed in extremely hostile situations ("In Another Country") and are increasingly deprived of the few redeeming bits of sunshine in the midst of surrounding darkness ("A Clean Well-Lighted Place"). These are essentially stories of total resignation to living without any shred of hope, to living with nothingness.

In contrast, the stories of celebration, of the triumphant ideals in the midst of violent death depict the protagonists of courage. These protagonists withstand and fight the worst challenges of life, make a supreme all-out effort to do whatever they hold closest to their heart, and in a manner of speaking achieve it in death. Plunged in a most trying situation, therefore, a Macomber, for instance, regains his selfhood as a big-game hunter ("The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber") and a Harry his as a writer ("The Snows of Kilimanjaro"); and a Manuel preserves his honour as a bullfighter ("The Undefeated"). The suffering and death of these characters, however, do not involve any proverbial fatal-flaw, nor any particular set of circumstances pitted against them; nor do they derive fom any secret cause or commotion in the moral order. The stark and inevitable tragedy of these people is just a condition of their lives if only because they refuse to be broken by the world; and in Hemingway's scheme of things, people who refuse to be broken have to be killed. "Commitment in Hemingway's books leads to disaster; and complete commitment to complete disaster", say J.J. Benson. Nonetheless, their acceptance of death with dignity and their gallantry in moments of grief and death is "bracing rather than dispiriting": it affirms the principle of the possibilities of life and of how best can man acquit himself as man.

The themes and concerns of Hemingway create, as R.R.Weeks observes, "a limited range of characters, placed in quite similar circumstances, and measured against an unvarying code." Also, such characters largely remain isolates and expatriates severed from the context of their family, community, society and country, and engage themselves rather exclusively in out-door activities. Naturally then, the range and scope of Hemingway's creative explorations stays restricted in that it relates to "no past, no traditions, no memories" and reflects little sense of "religion, morality, politics, culture or history." Significant areas of human experience are therefore

blocked out to Hemingway readers: but whereas "we may regret this exclusive glorification of brute courage in Hemingway", we "doubt if it is literary criticism to do so". Harry Levin has neatly summed up the strength and limitation of Hemingway's thematic achievement in his remark: "That he has succeeded within limits, and with considerable strain, is less important than that he has succeeded, that a few more aspects of life have been captured for literature". Thus considered, Hemingway's theme(s) more than vindicate their validity and stand out at least in as much as they stand apart.

2.1.3 Modes of Writing

Hemingway's most memorable lesson in writing came from Lionel Moise, an older colleague of his journalistic days at the Kansas City Star. Moise used to say: "Pure objective writing is the only true form of story-telling. No stream of consciousness nonsense: no playing dumb observer one paragraph and God Almighty the next. In short, no tricks." Hemingway religously followed theis golden piece of advice during the course of his writing, both journalistic and literary. Of course he got out of journalism before it began to use up the juice needed for creative writing; but he repeatedly acknowledged, as a latter-day eminent fictionist, the debt he owed to Moise.

In his writing, therefore, Hemingway always endeavoured to cut out emotional exaggeration without lapsing into emotional suppression either. He attempted at once to stimulate and regulate emotion, and to keep it clean and functional. His emphasis, therefore, fell upon the right selection of external details – facts, images, events and actions-which automatically evoked the inward emotion in the reader. In Hemingway's critical parlance this communicated not only "what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel" but also "what really happened in action ... the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion."

This method of using selective but representative details of experience in order to evoke the intended emotion came close to what T.S.Eliot had described, more than a decade earlier, as the use of "objective correlative" in any artistic creation. Eliot had defined the objective correlative as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." Likewise, Hemingway also sought to reproduce 'the real thing' which came through in the right selection of external details and consisted of 'what really happened in action .... The sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion.' The resemblance between the two theories was too conspicuous to be merely accidental: and Eliot was the first to state it in English criticism.

Characteristically perhaps, the belligerent Hemingway not only gave the impression of devising this technique on his own but also struck a needlessly dismissive and hostile attitude towards the author of "The Waste Land" and "Four Quartets." He has gone on record offering to grind "Mr Eliot into a fine dry powder" and sprinkle "that powder over Conrad's grave" if this could bring Conrad back to life. This vitriolic comment was perhaps his typical defence mechanism to preempt any possible suggestion of his indebtedness to Eliot. A titan of ego, Hemingway has used this strategy against a host of major contemporary writers, including Sherwood Anderson, Gertude Stein, Scott Fitzgerald and Ford Madox Ford, from each of whom he learned something or the other. It must however be said to Hemingway's credit that in practice he invariably moulded his learnings into something of his own and successfully whittled out one of the most powerful and durable prose-styles of our age.

Whatever the exact measure of Hemingway's debt to Eliot, this method of objective rendering of emotion was truly challenging. It wasn't merely a matter of clever artifice and charming mannerisms as Leon Edel made it out to be. Nor was it simply

the fact that Hemingway invested his writing with "an aura of emotion – by walking directly away from emotion!" It required rigorous concentration on the part of the author as also right absorption and assimilation of experience, and called for its controlled and objective expression. It was a high ideal of prose-writing that Hemingway set for himself, as rewarding as it was demanding. It entailed, as argued by Earl Rovit, the transference of the precise "emotion from the neural system to the texture of a prose narrative," for "caught and frozen in the narrative, the emotion would be safe from the fritterings of time and the distortion of memory." Hemingway learnt it the hard way, and achieved it in the best of his prose-passages.

2.1.4 Autobiographical Element: Biographical Criticism

Ernest Hemingway enjoys a formidable reputation as an autobiographical writer. When once asked if he was writing about himself in his books, he retorted: "Does a writer know anyone better?" His books corroborate this remark, and convey an unmistakable feel of the places he lived in, the activities he was involved in, and the people he came to know. They depict the oppressively genteel Oak Park (where Hemingway was born), the uninhibiting Michigan woods (where he had his early fishing and shooting), and the cities of Paris, Madrid and Venice (where he spent some of the most eventful years of his life). No less do they capture the areas of Hemingway's major interests, such as bullfighting, deep-sea fishing, big-game hunting and the war, all of which he closely watched as a correspondent or particularly liked or disliked make for a large part of his fictionalized world. Pointing to this proximity between his books and the exploits and adventures of his life Hemingway himself remarked: "We have been there in the books ... and where we go, if we are any good, there you can go as we have been."

These autobiographical aspects of Hemingway's works do excite our curiosity about Hemingway the man; but they do not enhance our critical awareness of his works more than marginally. They trigger the identification of the author's fictional characters and situations with their possible counterparts in his life, but not necessarily the illumination of the books themselves. Hemingway's art, though deriving from his life, is intrinsically different in character: it is life-like yet not a copy of his life. It does not describe something that has existed; it makes something that has never existed before. It does not come directly out of the world around him; it comes out of him, out of his imaginative absorption and transmutation of reality. It is not dependent on the extraneous facts of life for the quality of its achievement; it is an organic whole, complete in itself, having an internal logic of its own.

Inadequate appreciation if not total neglect of his autonomy of a work of art has blurred the perspective of some of the major biographical and psycho-biographical critics of Hemingway. They have overplayed their hand in that they have suggested sweeping resemblances between Hemingway's life and his art leading to myopic interpretations of his works. They rightly assert that Hemingway refuses to stay out of his books and that the author and his books are of a single piece; but some of them almost mistake Hemingway the man for the Hemingway hero, and hand out dazzling distortions of his works. Such critics build up their arguments, for instance, on the centrality of the war-wound Hemingway once received (Philip Young) or the Oedipal conflict he experienced in the family context (Richard Hovey) or the public postures he acquired and the personal pronouncements he liberally made (Steward Sanderson) and then proceed on to impose these views all over his works. They, therefore, write with one eye cocked on what they knew of the author and the other on his books. Their gaze is fixed on "an inextricable, twinned, double-exposure image" of Hemingway/Hemingway hero. Basically author-oriented, such criticism distracts us from examining Hemingway's fictions for their own sake. Ben Ray Redman's words of caution, spelled out in his review of Across the River and Into the Trees, seem eminently sensible. He observes: "Perhaps we really do know too much about Hemingway, or at least his public poses, to judge his work impartially. If this is so, all of us ... should do our heroic best to thrust aside our knowledge, or half-

knowledge. Otherwise we shall never be able to see clearly the book in hand, the book-in-itself."

If the biographical critics tend to lose sight of making legitimate and necessary discriminations and distinctions between Hemingway and the Hemingway hero, the author's penchant for self-gratifying, autobiographical writing at places gives way to his totally unacceptable self-glorification. He then throws to wind all the basic norms of separating and distancing himself from his created work, and replaces the much needed artistic discipline by notations of self applause. Edmund Wilson brings home this uncondonable lacunae when he contrasts Hemingway's Green Hills of Africa and Death in the Afternoon with his short stories. He suggests that when Hemingway expounds his sense of life "in his own character of Ernest Hemingway, the Old Master of Key West," as he does in Green Hills Africa and Death in the Afternoon "he has a way of sounding silly": but when he transmits this sense of life objectively, as in most of his short stories, the outcome is "as hard as crystal and as disturbing as a great lyric." The two books, therefore, tend to become "fatuous or maudlin" in contrast to the short stories where Hemingway's art stays "severe, intense and deeply serious." The primary of artistic transformation of reality over mere self-expression, which Northrop Frye insisted on in the case of Wordsworth's poetry, is therefore quite applicable to Hemingway's works. Frye held: "There is no self-expression in Wordsworth's poem, because once the poem is there the individual Wordsworth has disappeared. The general principle involved is that there is no such thing as self-expression in literature." In vintage Hemingway too the self is taken over by the artistic output; and whenever it attempts precedence over art it inevitably bludgeons the artistic endeavour.

It therefore follows that both Hemingway the man and Hemingway the artist, though aspects of the same personality, stood far apart. This distinction, otherwise a commonplace of literary criticism, stays at the centre of any meaningful discussion of Hemingway's works. Hemingway the man was obviously the self but Hemingway the artist was, in a manner of speaking, the other self. The man aimed at public acclamation, the artist at a niche of immortality. The man went for money, the artist into what money does to man. The man flaunted his courage, the artist probed the problems of holding on to one's courage. The man revelled in his virility, the artist captured the adjustments and maladjustments in man-woman relationships. The man paraded himself as a war-hero and a war-veteran, the artist kept up a lifelong love-hate affair with war. The man was at times a reckless public brawler, the artist was reticent and disciplined. The man was at times a reckless public brawler, the artist was reticent and disciplined. The man sought to excel others; the artist to excel himself, to scrutinize his own self-divisions and self-conflicts, and to resolve these into controlled art.

2.1.5 Objectivity

Early in life, Hemingway the artist, disciplined, probing, self-divided and ambivalent, realized the paramount significance of artistic objectivity in writing. In an article published in the Esquire Magazine in 1935, he wrote: "As a man, things are as they should be or should not be. As a man you know who is right and who is wrong. You have to make decisions and enforce them. As a writer you should not judge. You should understand." The implications in this journalistic piece, appropriately called "Monologue to the Maestro," are clear: as a writer Hemingway is concerned with what is and not what "should be or should not be," with who is who and not "who is right and who is wrong," with imaginative realization and projection of experience and not with pronouncing judgement on it.

It is therefore interesting to note how Hemingway's creative anxiety manifested itself through his ambivalence when not conflicting attitudes and responses towards the subjects he wrote about, such as big-game hunting, deep-sea fishing, bull-fighting and the war. He came to love and admire the animals he hunted, feel a sense of oneness and brotherhood with the fish he harpooned and bagged, and experience 'the

moment of truth' in bullfights when "man and bull form one figure as the sword goes all the way in, the leaning after it, death uniting the two figures." Likewise he found the experience of war invaluable and irreplaceable as also irrational and devastating. Thus Hemingway's sense of relating himself with the hunter and the hunted, the bullfighter and the bull, the fisherman and the fish and of love-hate relationship with the war helped him to write "without tricks and without cheating, and 'with nothing that will go bad afterwards."

Some of the general aspects of Hemingway's objectivity have been pointed out by Robert C.Hart in his article "Hemingway on Writing" published in College English in 1957. He refuses to force his material and bend his fictions, Hart opines, to any preconceived design. Ideas in his short stories, therefore, are not subjectively imposed upon but objectively lived out. Action is not what should happen but "what would have to happen as it (the story) goes along." Themes are seldom meant to solve a problem, and never "to confirm a solution already laid down." Characters are not fictionalized prejudices and partialities of the author but artistic explorations into human nature, a certain pressing forward into it. And structures keep out "what is non-functional or even malfunctional," and imply prose as "architecture, not interior decoration."

On these fundamentals Hemingway made no compromise. He was critical of the writers who evaded or ignored these requirements. He criticized Poe for his predetermined effects even if these were "marvellously constructed", Melville for the excess of rhetoric, and Hawthorne and company for not using "the words that survive in language." He even disapproved of Tolstoy, a writer he admired most, for that part of War and Peace "where Tolstoy tampered with the truth to make it fit his conclusions." His endeavour throughout remained "to write as truly, as straightly, as objectively and as humbly as possible."

2.1.6 Code of Conduct

The code of conduct, so insistently discerned and so vigorously established in Hemingway's oeuvre by Philip Young, has also been a matter of much debate and controversy. Quite a number of Hemingway's works do embody great admiration for certain values of the code such as courage, honour, duty, discipline etc. But not all of them seem to adhere or even relate to the norms of the code. The code unquestionably operates "among various sporting figures" of Hemingway's short stories and the code hero in distinctly noticeable in some of them. But contrary to Philip Young's proposition, both the code and the code hero do not offer "solution to the problems of a large number of the protagonists of Hemingway's short stories, if only because they neither figure in nor are relevant to them. Their protagonists, when confronted with a test-situation or a nasty experience, do not look to any 'code' or 'code hero': they look to life itself, and learn or fail to learn from it. The code of conduct, therefore, may be central and basic to some of Hemingway's short stories; but it is also irrelevant and beside the point in quite a good number of them.

It is in this sense that the presence of courage and honour in Manuel, an old-growing but intensely committed bullfighter, is an integral and indispensable aspect of his character in "The Undefeated": but the same sense of courage and honour is not required of Nick in "The Battler" when he is threatened with the thoughtless violence of Ad. It may even be stupidly hazardous of Nick's father in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" when he is provoked into quarrelling by Dick Boulton, a bum. Again, lack of physical courage in Macomber who bolts when charged by the lion he had wounded is clearly cowardly of him as a big-game hunter in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber": but the need for this kind of bravery may be utterly irrelevant to the older waiter in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" [illegible] is involved in the larger fate of mankind

It therefore seems more appropriate to say that Hemingway's characters, instead of seeking to follow the code as defined and elaborated by Philip Young, seek what James B. Colvert calls "a new morality in action" based on empirical methods and practical experiences. They "reject all value judgements of the past" and "consciously search out the meaning of experience." The meaning arises for them out of their interaction with other characters in the specific fictionalized context. It is rooted in the author's consideration of real-life experiences, not in any infallible and dogmatic code of conduct.

2.1.7 Symbolism

Symbolism and irony, attributes of the art of implication and indirection, are among the major narrative techniques of Hemingway. He makes ample use of both of them in order to interpret the complex reality of his times imaginatively and to lend multiple nuances and resonances to his writing. E.M. Halliday, making the distinction between the two, observes that all human perceptions are "reducible" finally to perceptions of likeness of perceptions of difference, and that symbolism, in the main, points to the "perceptions of likeness" and irony to "those of difference". He also adds that "symbolism signifies through a harmony, irony through a discord; symbolism consolidates, irony complicates; symbolism synthesizes, irony analyzes." Symbolism in Hemingway, we may further add is often a visible sign of something invisible, the small tip of the iceberg on the surface of water suggestive of its seven times larger mass under the surface. It is also a concrete and distinctly notable manifestation of the less concrete and less distinctly notable facet of human experience.

The use of symbolism in Hemingway, it needs be noted, is vastly different from that of the better known symbolists like Poe, Hawthorne and Melville. Unlike theirs, his symbols are not designed to serve the ends of some fable, parable or allegory: nor do they dwell in the realms of magic, mystery or fantasy. In fact Hemingway's kinship with "Poe and Hawthorne and Melville: the haunted and nocturnal writers, the men who dealt in images that were symbols of an inner world," as suggested by Malcolm Cowley, can not be pressed very far. It was a tentative observation made to draw attention to the then unnoticed symbols in Hemingway's works. To be sure, Cowley himself admitted that Hemingway's method was "not in the least like theirs," that his visions though as terrifying as those of Poe ("The Pit and the Pendulum," for instance) were invariably " copied from life, " and that in his fictions he never "seems to loosen his grip on reality" which may not quite be the case, for instance, with Hawthorne in The Marble Fawn. "Haunted" therefore Hemingway may be, as suggested by Cowley, but haunted by an experienced physical reality of the world in our time. "Nightmares" there are in his books, but these are "realities that have become a nightmare.

Hemingway therefore makes the best of both realism and symbolism to communicate his meanings. He retains all the naturalistic and factual details of a realist seeking meaning in actual experience: but he also unfolds the complexity and multiplicity of human experience through its secondary meanings at symbolic level. It is due to such an aesthetic stance that Hemingway's symbols are connotative not denotative, contextual not allegorical. Their significances vary with changing situations. They even trip themselves. The high mountains, associated with peace, permanence and immortality in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" also symbolize the conditions of unnatural living in "An Alpine Idyll," leading to much of the shame and confusion of the upland peasant. Also, they are debunked in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" itself, for while tramping along the snowy mountains feet get bloody and people die. Again, women often symbolic of the home in Hemingway, are nowhere around the "home" the old man seeks for himself in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" or Nick makes for himself in "Big Two-Hearted River." In fact, many a time Hemingway's aim is simply a symbolism of association. The utterances of his characters on such occasions are at once factual and symbolic. Take for instance, "(I am) with all those who need a light for the night" in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place:" "You could not get

away from the sun" in "An Alpine Idyll;" I'm not in His Kingdom" in "Soldier's Home."

It therefore appears that Hemingway was totally on the side of Nick Adams (In "The Three-Day Blow") who disapproved of the symbol of naked sword between the forest lovers lying together. Like Nick he would wonder "what good the sword would do. It would have to say edge up all the time because if it went over flat, you could roll right over it and it wouldn't make nay trouble". Like Nick, too, he wouldn't find it "practical' enough. To be practical, symbols for Hemingway have to be rooted in real-life experiences and operate convincingly.

2.1.8 Irony

The principle of irony in Hemingway largely rests on what Heakon Chevalier has called a contrast between appearance and reality, between surface meaning and under-the-surface meaning. Behind such contrast stands out "the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain." Manifestations of this principle of contrast in Hemingway's short stories are persistent, recurring and varied. It may be a contrast within a character, or within a situation; or a contrast between two characters, or between two situations. Also, it may be a contrasted view of an idea, an ideal, an episode, an event and an action. As a rule, the sharper the contrast, the more striking the irony; also, the more complex the contrast, the more cumulative the effect of irony.

This cardinal principle of ironic contrast in Hemingway manifests itself in various facets and forms of "confident unawareness" in his characters which may be both real and pretended. When real this confident unawareness may be complete or partial, and when pretended it may be self-assertive or self-deceptive. Complete unawareness, the commonest and simplest prop for irony, is reflected for example in the platitudinous American mother in "A Canary for One" who, impervious to reality, insists that "American men make the best husbands" or in the blindly confident younger waiter in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" who, impatient to go home and unaware of the horrors of *nada*, bullies the old man (the last, lone customer) into leaving the clean, bright café. Compared with this complete unawareness, Hemingway's use of incomplete unawareness, a mix-up of awareness and unawareness in various measures, is subtler and more effective. It is betrayed, for instance, by the doctor in "Indian camp" which is distinctly competent at surgery but totally ignorant of the consequences of humanly intolerable emotional strain; or by Mr. Frazer in "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio" who has plenty of knowledge but little understanding.

At the other end of the scale, as opposed to the real unawareness (complete or partial) the pretended unawareness is a 'mask of dissimulation,' a certain "pretending to be what one is not and pretending not to be what one is." It may be self-assertive as in the American in "Hills Like White Elephants" and the man in "the Sea Change" who both refuse to see the reality even though it stares them in the face. But it may also be self-deceptive as in the Elliots in "Mr. And Mrs. Elliot" who pretend to be "very happy" in a situation of perverted compromise, or in Jig in "Hills Like White Elephants" who pretends to "feel fine" even as she unwillingly submits to a forced abortion.

However, quite often in Hemingway the contrast emerges not between a reality and an appearance but between two contextual realities. It points not to the correction of a false experience by a true one, but to two real and true experiences. It then suggests flat. ironic dualities in life each true in its own right, for the reader does not see what is and what merely seems. Human experiences, then, go their contrary or opposite ways, convincingly refuting one another. They are impelled by contradictory pulls, and yield antithetical and antipodal meanings. Ironic contrasts then shade off into ironic contradictions and ironic self-contradictions, typical of the present-day drift in

the concept of irony. In "The Battler," for instance, when Nick is knocked off a moving freight by an apparently friendly brakeman he realizes the need to be tough; but soon after, when he witnesses the degeneracy and mental sickness of Ad, the tough ex-prizefighter, he realizes that toughness also does not do.

Of the many critics of Hemingway who have discussed the function of irony in his fictions, E.M. Halliday has cogently made out the case: "The ironic gap between expectation and fulfillment, pretense and fact, intention and action, the message sent and the message received, the way things are thought or ought to be and the way things are – this has been Hemingway's great theme from the beginning; and it has called for an ironic method to do it artistic justice." J.J. Benson, however, notes the greater significance of ironic detachment in Hemingway's art and finds it central to a good number of Hemingway stories and novels and instrumental in restraining too close an identification of their protagonists with the author.

To be sure, Hemingway's kind of ironic detachment prevents him from accepting half-truths in his long odyssey to arrive at the truth. It keeps him longer on the way and avoids any hasty finality. The finality in the form implied discriminations, affirmations even resolutions may come; but not before the author has taken into account the fuller context, the multiplicity of possibilities, the complexity of issues involved; not too soon or too easily. All this makes for the characteristic Hemingway's view and method of resolving the discords of life into controlled art.

2.2 *A CLEAN WELL-LIGHTED PLACE*

2.2.1 Introducing the Story

Almost all the significant short stories of Hemingway came out between 1921 and 1938. "Up in Michigan," his first short story, was written in '1921; followed by the publication of In Our Time, his first collection of short stories, in 1925: Two more collections, Men without Women and Winner Take Nothing, appeared in 1927 and 1933 respectively. Crowning them all came The Fifth Column and The First Fortynine Stories in 1938, the volume which included all the earlier stories and a few new ones and which finally established his reputation as a short story writer.

Themes and concerns of these stories as also their modes of writing and formal strategies have already been examined at considerable length in the preceding section. Of Hemingway's formal strategies, it may be noted here, his objective writing and his use of symbolic and ironic implications contributed hugely towards his success as a short story writer. The objective writing helped him to eliminate authorial intrusions and comments and to strip down the delineation of his material to 'the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion', and his symbolic and ironic implications engendered multi-layered significances in the creative endeavour. They led to a foregrounding of the skills of condensation and compression in his stories as well as of the projection of maximum meanings through minimum words, and went a long way in shaping him as a powerful short story writer.

Little wonder, therefore, if some of the perceptive Hemingway critics consider him a greater short story writer than a novelist. Ray West, for instance, holds that Hemingway's supremacy is "least in question" in his stories which, he suggests, may not be the case with the author's novels. Philip Young also gives greater kudos to the stories. Summing up Hemingway's literary situation Young concludes: "Hemingway wrote two very good early novels several very good stories and a few great ones." P.F. Paolini goes a step further and categorically maintains: "It would be neither wrong nor overbold to see the best of Hemingway in his short stories," for they embody " a kind of 'Hemingway in its purest state." Such observations are a glowing testimony to what Hemingway could achieve with his masterly pruning of language and his iceberg principle of writing.

"A Clean well-lighted Place," included in Hemingway's short story collection Winner Take Nothing forces attention to this impressive control of the author over his craft. Published in the year 1933, it is rather a plotless story in which nothing much happen. In the late hours of night, at a clean well-lighted café, two waiters one young and the other old, while attending upon their lone last customer, an old man of eighty, intermittently talk about his recently attempted suicide: and when the old man finally leaves the café, they pull down the shutters and go home. But this simple story-line is so deftly handled with a profusion of vigorously controlled techniques that the outcome leaves an indelible effect. Through the bits and pieces of the narrative and the dialogues Hemingway builds up a gripping contrast between the two waiters, imbues their behaviour and conduct with disciplined strokes of symbolism and irony, and tellingly inscribes the theme of nothingness and night, of the all-powerful and all-engulfing sense of 'nada', especially in the old man's life. The story also relates to the autobiographical aspects of Hemingway's life and his affinity with the existentialist writers like Sartre and Camus: but in the main it makes for a brightly focussed but stark portraiture of an old man whose despair exists beyond his plenty of money and who walks out of the clean well-lighted café only when he has to, 'unsteadily but with dignity', precisely the way it was with him. The mere four-page story, evocatively chiselled and crafted, remains a chilling little masterpiece, and understandably, a favourite of Hemingway.

2.2.2 Contrasted Characters

The pattern of contrast between the characters of the younger and the older waiters rapidly gathers momentum as the story forges ahead with the alternation of its narrative and dialogues. Although the two waiters work together at the same café, temperamentally they stand poles apart. The younger waiter is not aware of the old man's (their last customer) needs outside of money and material satisfaction: to him these are 'nothing' and absurd and for no reason. But the older waiter allows room for such needs since these may drive people to kill themselves. The younger waiter is in a hurry to close the cafe: the older waiter is unhurried because "there may be someone who needs the cafe" at these odd hours. The younger waiter, though he waits upon the old man, is sarcastic and hostile; and taking advantage of his customer's deafness says. "You should have killed yourself last week". But the older waiter knows that the old man is clean and has dignity and "that is all that is provided for these hours". The one is cynical and callous about the soldier with the girl and says, "What does it matter if he (the guard) gets what he's after?" The other is compassionate and says, "He (the soldier) had better got off the street now". The one is "all confidence" all faith in himself oblivious of the test-situations of life in which these may prove altogether brittle and fragile. He has youth and a wife to go home to, and does not see the possibility that he may someday be as old as the old man and may outlive the wife like the old man. The other waiter can visualize such terrors of human existence and can identify with the old man's predicament.

2.2.3 Narrative Techniques

The younger waiter, therefore, betrays a sense of arrested awareness and his perceptions are restricted to noticing only his needs of and their fulfilment with a wife, a job, youth, confidence and money. His concerns are myopic, constricted and self-centered,reckoning only with the immediate, transcient and altogether personal. (We may note his sarcastic remark to the old deaf man and his callous observation about the soldier with the girl.) He does not see that in the flux and whirligig of man's life job does imply loss of job, wife does imply loss of wife, youth does imply age, confidence death of confidence, and money loss of money. He stands in sharp ironic contrast with the older waiter who is conscious of all these atrophying and despairing implications and who reflects larger awareness, concern and empathy. Hence, to the younger waiter the old man tried to kill himself for 'nothing' (for no reason) because he has plenty of money, but to the older waiter the despair of the old man who has now turned eighty, is deaf, unsteady on his feet, and bereft of a wife, is

a despair beyond plenty. The older waiter can see that the old man's home, traditionally a symbol of security and comfort, has, as Carlos Baker indicates, turned into a symbol of 'not-home', and the clean well-lighted café may be the only 'home' where he prefers to stay in as long as permitted. Confronted with this larger awareness of the dark forces of multifaceted 'nada' the older waiter symbolically affirms his solidarity with all the benighted brethren: he is with "those who like to stay late at the café. With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night." And towards the end of the story when he ponders that he himself would not be able to sleep at night, he self-deceptively says to himself: "It is probably only insomnia. Many must have it" In fact, it is, more probably, insomnia caused by nada although one wouldn't ever be too sure of it. The dispassionate notations of the lived experience of 'nada', couched in ironic dualities and symbolic nuances very much stay at the centre-stage of the story.

2.2.4 Theme of Nothingness

Despite all the fellow-feeling and solidarity of the older waiter with the cruel predicament of the old man, it needs to be noted, 'nada' has the last laugh in the story. While turning off the lights of the cafe the older waiter continues to reflect on the old man's fate and says aloud: "It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too... Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it was all 'nada'". Indeed in a universe which is stripped of all meaning and where man is finally deprived of all the things that can sustain him, 'nada' is the stark reality. The older waiter acknowledges the centrality an omnipotence of this swirling an encircling tide of 'nada', of humankind reaching the end of its tether, and of God having abandoned the world. The older waiter therefore replaces, in blasphemous terms, the lord's prayer with the 'nada' prayer.

> Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.

This stoic and pensive resignation to 'nada' is further affirmed when on the way home the older waiter stops at a bar, and in response to the barman's question "What's yours?" says "Nada". Perhaps what he really wants are clean well-lighted places of life but in the midst of surrounding nada can ask only for a bit of the same. Perhaps, as H.M. Campbell suggests, "In his weary fancy he even imagines that the effects of 'nada' may be overcome if he considers that he is drinking it. If the younger waiter is an unconscious victim of life's ironic contingencies, the older waiter is their conscious victim: and neither of them can do anything to dispel them.

This projection of the overwhelming power of nothingness and ot man's ways of facing down this power by maintaining his separate identity and dignity brings Hemingway close to the existentialist writers. It may however be noted that whereas "to Sartre the meaninglessness is basically an idea (and) to Camus, the absurd is a concept." Hemingway's sense of meaninglessness and absurdity is not based on any philosophical idea or concept. In writing about them he merely reports on life as he finds it. To him all ideas and concepts are valueless: life's experience is the only value. He cares for an idea only to the extent it is "derived from seeing life," and refuses to "see life according to an idea." This story also attests such a contention and depicts "the irreducible hazards and pains of life" without philosophizing or conceptualizing them.

2.2.5 Autobiographical Element

Such ceaseless assaults of nothingness as projected in this story, it may be argued, took their toll from Hemingway himself during the last few years of his life. Those were the days of a very special kind of agony for the always one-up, always

charismatic Hemingway. Most of his friends and companions were either dead or estranged and he had frequent spells of depression and loneliness. His proverbial strength and stamina had gone and he could no longer hunt or fish or shoot the way he once used to. His magic capacity to turn out enduring prose (the ultimate weapon against life) seemed to have gone bad forever and the right words wouldn't simply come to his mind. In sum, he was reduced to a wreck of his former self both in life and in art. Shockingly discovering that he had now landed 'in another country' where the 'clean well-lighted places' of life were getting increasingly shut to him, Hemingway may have pulled the trigger into his forehead and embraced 'the old whore' with self-inflicted wound.

This could be, as Earl Rovit has suggested, the author's "way of selling a position that could no longer be held" calculated punishment of that aspect of himself which had failed him in his need." This could also be his way of demonstrating that he could be destroyed, even self-destroyed, but not defeated. But this was also and quite simply a situation of his destruction at the hands of an omnipotent nothingness. It was sad but inevitable, in view of how he saw and lived life; a case of aggressive isolation in a world which refused to make sense any more and where the presiding metaphor became the nothingness of it all. The epigraph Hemingway wrote for his volume of short stories Winner Take Nothing, could as well be applicable to him: "Unlike all other forms of lutte or combat, "such are the conditions in the game of life that Hemingway "shall take nothing; neither his ease, nor his pleasure, nor any notions of glory. If take he must, he takes his own life.

2.2.6 Objectivity

Whatever the extent of the resemblance between the latter-day predicament of Hemingway and that of the protagonist in "A Clean Well-lighted Place," it does not in the least compromise his high regard for objective writing. His objectivity in this depiction of potted human conditions lies in what Wayne C. Booth has called an artist's "impassibilite." The author remains at once concerned yet detached, at once ardent yet reasonable. He keeps out any intrusive streak of rhetoric, and maintains "an impassioned rejection of passion." In doing so, he acquires a sort of classical control over his material, and attempts only to discern and realize, and not to judge. Of course, his implicit assumptions, leanings, approvals and disapprovals, discriminations and distinctions are not wiped out from the story, for his is an objectivity within the folds of artistic propriety and norms and not a scientist's neutrality. A scientist, dealing with physical material and chemical salts can be legitimately neutral towards them: but an artist, dealing with human material, emotions and values, cannot be neutral likewise. Hemingway's objectivity in "A Clean Well-lighted Place" therefore lies in his letting his people speak for themselves, in his letting his narrative unfold itself: the author just holds his tongue and, in a manner of speaking, keeps his hands off the story.

2.3 LET US SUM UP

Hemingway's themes, characters and situations signify a limited world; nonetheless they make for, you must have observed, an intensely realized world. Again, his mode of writing and techniques are simplicity itself: nonetheless this simplicity conveys a lot more than it seems to convey. "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is a glowing testimony to such a practice of the craft of short story writing.

2.4 GLOSSARY

Irony: The expression of one's meaning by saying something which is the direct opposite of one's thoughts, in order to make one's remarks forceful.

Metaphor: Metaphor is "an implied comparison" "a simile without 'like' or 'as'. It is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them.

Objective Correlative: In his essay, 'Harlet and His Problems' T.S. Eliot used this term to explain how emotion is best expressed in poetry. "Objective correlative is a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion, such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

Realism: it denotes a literary movement of the nineteenth century. It shows real life, omitting nothing that is ugly and painful and idealizing nothing, in art and literature.

Symbolism: an artistic and poetic movement or style using symbols and indirect suggestion to express ideas emotions etc.

2.5 QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the characters of the two waiters pointing to the role they play in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place"
2. Examine the theme of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and the techniques Hemingway employs to project this theme.
3. Discuss the major concerns of Hemingway in his short stories and the formal strategies he often adopts in highlighting them.

2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (1966).
2. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (revised edition) 1974.
3. Scott Donaldson, *By Force of Will: The Life and Art of Ernest Hemingway* (1978).
4. Frank Scapella (edited), *Hemingway: Essays of Reassessment* (1990).
5. Kenneth H. Rosen (edited), *Hemingway Repossessed* (1994).

UNIT 3 WILLIAM FAULKNER: *THE BEAR*

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 William Faulkner
  3.1.1 Chronology
  3.1.2 Faulkner: Then and Now
  3.1.3 Themes and Concerns
  3.1.4 Modes of Writing
  3.1.5 The Yoknapatawpha County
3.2 *The Bear*
  3.2.1 The relevance/Irrelevance of Section Four
  3.2.2 Theme of Growing up/Initiation
  3.2.3 Modes of Writing in "The Bear"
  3.2.4 Men and Nature: Affinities and Polarities
3.3 Let Us Sum Up
3.4 Glossary
3.5 Questions
3.6 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit attempts to help you understand and evaluate both William Faulkner as a fictionist and "The Bear" as his long short story. Starting off with a select chronology which covers significant biographical details on the author's life and publication information on his work, it examines the early critical debate on and the subsequent critical reputation of Faulkner, the interfusion of his themes in most of his books, his distinctive verbal and technical strategies, especially the stream of consciousness, and the 'specificity' and 'universality' of his imagined Yoknapatawpha country. It then moves on to consider the major features of "The Bear," including the much contested relevance/irrelevance of its section 4, the foregrounding of the theme of initiation in the story, the affinities and polarities between man and nature as evidenced in it, and Faulkner's use of language, at once dense and intense, in this story. The endeavour is not only to familiarize you with what is often called the difficult terrain of Faulkner's oeuvre but also to evoke your pro-active critical interest in him especially in his story "The Bear."

3.1 WILLIAM FAULKNER

3.1.1 Chronology

This chronology is largely based on the one given in *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, edited by Philip M. Weinstein (1995). You may, during the course of your readings on this author, notice several other significant bits of information on his life and works and draw up your own chronology.

1897 — First of four sons of Murry C. Faulkner and Maud Butler Faulkner, William C. Faulkner was born on September 25 in New Albany, Mississippi. The family name was spelled "Falkner" until WF added the "u" in 1919.

1902 — The Faulkner family moved to Oxford, the seat of the University of Mississippi. After an indifferent secondary education, he began a friendship with Phil Stone (Four years older), reading widely in classics and contemporary literature.

William Faulkner

1918	Attempted to enlist in the U.S. Air Corps to fight in World War I, but rejected because of insufficient height.
1919-20	Enrolled as a special student at the University of Mississippi, studied French, wrote a play entitled *Marionettes*. completed his first volume of verse - *The Marble Faun*- which (with Phil Stone's help) was eventually accepted for publication.
1921-23	Worked in a New York bookstore managed by Elizabeth Prall, Sherwood Anderson's future wife. Returned to Oxford to serve as university postmaster, a job he notoriously mishandled; in 1923 was fired from it.
1924	*The Marble Faun* was published in December.
1925	Travelled to New Orleans, was introduced (through Elizabeth Prall) to Sherwood Anderson and his literary circle. Completed his first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, a "lost generation" story which Anderson's publishers, Horace Liveright, accepted for publication.
1926	*Soldiers' Pay* was published in February.
1927	*Mosquitoes*, set in New Orleans, was published in April by Liveright

1928	The third novel, *Flags in the Dust*, rejected by Liveright was accepted by Harcourt, Brace, on condition that it be shortened. Began writing *The Sound and the Fury* in the spring and finished it by early fall.
1929	Shortened and renamed, *Flags in the Dust*, was published as *Sartoris* in January. Began writing *Sanctuary*. *The Sound and the Fury*, his first indisputable modernist masterpiece, rejected by Harcourt, Brace, was accepted by Cape and Smith. Married Estelle Oldham (a childhood sweetheart now a divorcee). *The Sound and the Fury* was published in October.
1930	*As I Lay Dying* was published in October by Cape and Smith, giving WF's fictional country its name of Yoknapatawha.
1931	*Sanctuary*, begun before publication of the two previously comple masterpieces and first conceived as a potboiler, was heavily revised before being published in February. Began writing scripts for MGM and Warner Bros, off and on for 20 years.
1932	Light in August, WF's first major treatment of racial turmoil, was published in February by Smith and Haas.
1934-35	*Doctor Martino and other Stories*, a collection of detective stories, was published in April.
1936	*Absalom, Absalom!* was published in October by Random House, thereafter WF's permanent publisher.
1938	*The Unvanquished*, a collection of Civil War stories, was published in February.
1940	*The Hamlet*, the first novel of the Snopes trilogy, was published in April.
1942	*Go Down, Moses and Other Stories*, WF's broadest and most sustained scrutiny of black-white relations, was published in May.
1945	Malcolm Cowley's edition of *The Portable Faulkner* was published in May by the Viking Press. Except for *Sanctuary*, WF's novels were out of print; Cowley's ably introduced volume made WF's work inexpensively available to a large reading public.
1948	*Intruder in the Dust* was published in September.
1950	Won the Nobel Prize for Literature, travelled with his daughter Jill to Stockholm, and delivered his famous Nobel Prize acceptance speech.
1951	France awarded him the Legion of Honor. From this point on, WF's work received critical (indeed "canonical") attention and brought him. financial security. Increasingly, he wrote and spoke out on political (especially racial) issues. Travelled extensively during the 1950s as a sort of cultural ambassador for the State Department.
54	Won the Pulitzer prize.
7	*The Town*, the second novel of the Snopes trilogy, was published in May. Taught as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia. Second period at the University of Virginia, February to June.

1959	*The Mansion*, the final volume of the Snopes trilogy, was published in November.
1962	Died unexpectedly (probably of a heart attack) in a clinic at Byhalia, Mississippi. His funeral took place the next day in Oxford.
1963	*The Reivers* won the Pulitzer prize.

3.1.2 Faulkner: Then and Now

Whatever critical attention the canon of William Faulkner attracted until the year 1945 was largely uncomplimentary when it was not hostile. He had by that time published most of his major books including *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom*! (1936) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942), but critics and reviewers mostly remained unimpressed. The common refrain was that "Faulkner is basically confused in thought and unclear in style." Alfred Kazin, a widely acknowledged and respected critic, for instance, noticed Faulkner's innovations and resourcefulness but complained that he "was curiously dull, furiously commonplace, and often meaningless, suggesting some ambiguous irresponsibility and exasperated sullenness of mind, some distant atrophy or indifference." Wyndham Lewis was harsher still when he observed that Faulkner's characters were "energized and worked-up to no purpose-all 'signifying nothing', "and that besides 'ill-selected words,' the "destiny" or "doom" behind his fiction was merely " a fraudulent device for operating the puppets." Quite in the same vein Clifton Fadiman held that Faulkner's "Anti-Narrative or a set of complex devices [are] used to keep the story from being told... confusing the reader and otherwise enabling Mr. Faulkner to demonstrate that as a technician he has Joyce and Proust punch-drunk!" And Maxwell Geismar who otherwise admired Faulkner's craft and called *The Sound and the Fury* a magnificent novel, insisted that there was a gradual decline in Faulkner's talent because of which he "moved steadily towards the perverse and the pathological and the denial of humanity."

Literary tastes and sensibility, and correspondingly explorations and evaluations, even among the most sensitive and discerning critics, may not only honestly trip but contradict each other: and the above-referred critics, therefore, had every right to their opinion. This was more so in the case of Faulkner, for he was, as a writer, discomfortingly uneven, stunningly original and innovative, and at places difficult to comprehend. Some of this problematic was sensed by Conrad Aiken who found Faulkner's prose " strangely fluid and slippery and so bewildering" that sometimes one felt "tempted to give it up." He realized that Faulkner was ceaselessly struggling to find the right 'form', for "he wanted a medium as a continuum without stops or pauses, a medium which is always of the moment yet is as fluid and undetectable as life itself." At the same time, to him Faulkner's inventiveness, like that of Balzac and James, was "of the richest possible sort-a headlong and tumultuous abundance, an exuberant generosity and vitality, which makes most other contemporary fiction look very pale and chaste indeed." Such notice, however, was taken by a minority of critics right until the early forties, and from most others Faulkner received either short shrift or plain disparagement.

Quite probably, a part of this problematic (a small part though) may be laid at the door of Faulkner himself. He was the kind of person who would not be solicitous about his work, who would put a book at the back of his mind soon after completing it, and who would at times not bother even to keep a personal copy of it on publication. He would not even discuss his work with his peers during the period of writing at or after. He would rather keep his distance from the literary glitterati or whatever of it obtained during his day, and would never seek to benefit from the comments of contemporary critics on his work. Although an uncertain judge of his work, he was much less certain of the judgement of other readers. He seemed to write more for himself than for his readers, as also because he had to rather than he wanted to. In sum, he was a solitary writer, an inward-looking, self-taught and self-contained person who would often be brooding over the tangled human situation in

the Deep South and who happened to be a man of genius. The none-too-planned and instinctive way in which Faulkner went about the business of living and writing, the quirky and unkind bits and pieces of fate, and the inhospitable and yet-to-mellow critical climate and tradition of the thirties and the early forties, all threatened to seal the publishing prospects of Faulkner in future.

The critical discourse, however, began to change tracks in its assessment of Faulkner from 1946 onwards. It became more writer-friendly and understanding, and Faulkner's reputation, gradually but steadily, began to rise, the continuing voices of dissent and disagreement notwithstanding. Did it come to happen because of the emergence of a more inclusive modernist critical agenda which, consequent upon the disillusion and trauma of the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the thirties in the United States, was willing to revaluate and accommodate the healthier parts of past conventions and modes of living cherished by Faulkner, or because of the growing centrality of the critical position which focused more closely on the text including Faulkner's and strongly implied that everything else was rather extraneous to literary criticism, or because of a combination of these and several other factors, is far from certain. What seems certain, as argued by Lawrence H. Schwartz in his well-researched book *Creating Faulkner's Reputation* (1988) is that several individual and institutions collectively contributed to this upswing in Faulkner's literary reputation. Schwartz named primarily Malcolm Cowley, the New Critics, the New York Intellectuals, the Viking Random Publishing House, and the Humanities Division of Rockefeller Foundation, and held that in the post-world war II scenario Faulkner indeed emerged as a representative of cultural democracy and pluralism, of individualism in collison with the domination of any ideology, and of the preservation of personal values. But the breakthrough for this resurgence of interest in Faulkner studies, in any case, came first and foremost with the influential "Introduction" Malcolm Cowley wrote for the volume *The Portable Faulkner* (Viking 1946) and the seminal and highly perceptive essay Robert Penn Warren wrote on Faulkner during the same year.

Cowley's "Introduction" came at a time when more than most books of Faulkner had gone out of print, and were "little read and often disparaged." He stemmed this stereotypical tide, and skillfully pushed "the scope and force and interdependence of Faulkner's work as a whole" into the consideration of his readers. He was the first critic to notice the pivotal emergence/significance of the half-mythical, half-real Yoknapatawpha county in Faulkner's books with the imagined Jefferson town as the seat of the county. More important, he discerned what he called Faulkner's "legend of all the Deep South" and "a whole interconnected pattern" of this legend in the "troubled and painful heritage" of the South and in its increasingly mechanizing, dehumanizing and disaffecting future. It is not that Cowley didn't acknowledge Faulkner's lapses and deficiencies: the early "worthless poems", the early immature" stories, the thinly related themes, inapt narrative structures, "awkward experiments" in form, and so forth. But he also put his finger at the distinctive quality of Faulkner's imagination which may not have been disciplined or sophisticated like that of Henry James or James Joyce, but which had" a power, a richness of life, an intensity to be found in no other American writer." Cowley's crowning insight came when he argued that the miniature land Faulkner wrote about made for not only the "entire South" but "rather the human situation revealed in Southern terms." His "Introduction," therefore, powerfully evoked the sense of lived life in Faulkner's books, and effectively claimed that Faulkner's 'fables' stand for "a universal human drama."

Unlike Cowley, Robert Penn Warren didn't attempt to contextualize either Faulkner or his work; instead, he concentrated on the printed word, the word in the fiction of the author, and its implications. Warren, thus, probed and critiqued various aspects of Faulkner's art, and observed: "William Faulkner has written nineteen books which for range of effect, philosophical weight, originality of style, variety of characterization, humour, and tragic intensity, are without equal in our time and

Country." Not a devotee but an astute critic of Faulkner, he attempted to put Faulkner's admirers and detractors in place. He noted that Faulkner's "tragic intensity" could at times lapse into "mere emotionalism," his "technical virtuosity" into "mere complications, " his "philosophical weight" into "mere confusion of mind," and his dense yet intense prose into something " wildly rhetorical." Like Cowley, he also acknowledged that Faulkner was " a very uneven writer, " but emphasized the strength of this limitation when he asserted that Faulkner's unevenness was "in a way, an index to his vitality, his willingness to take risks, to try for new effects, to make new explorations of material and method." What Warren suggested was that although a very major American writer, Faulkner's limitations were "inextricably intertwined" with his great achievements. His perceptions, in retrospect, are in the nature of pioneering criticism of Faulkner by a pioneering New Critic.

From now on recognition came to Faulkner at a fairly good pace if not in quick succession. The American Academy not only gradually included his work in the canon but placed it on the top shelf of American literature. The trickle of articles and books on Faulkner soon turned into a steady stream: and in the fifties and sixties hardly an issue of a scholarly journal would appear without an article on Faulkner and hardly a year would pass without the publication of a serious book on him. His reputation also began to travel across the Atlantic, and subsequently across the Pacific. He received the National Book award in 1950 and again in 1955, and Legion of Honour in 1951. His books twice won the Pulitzer Prize, *A Fable* in 1955, and *The Rivers* in 1963. At the invitation of the University of Virginia, he spent two terms as a writer in Residence in 1957 and again in 1958. And the international salute came to him with the award of the Noble prize in the year 1950. In his brief but landmark speech on the occasion of receiving the prize he declined " to accept the end of man" and maintained that it was the writer's privilege " to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honour and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of the past...The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail." In invoking the writer to help man endure and prevail, Faulkner may be deemed rather prescriptive and too advisory. Nonetheless, these concluding words were totally in consonance with the latter-day, honest-to-God, humanely concerned Faulkner speaking from an august international platform.

But the dissatisfaction with and disapproval of Faulkner's work didn't fail to register itself in the midst of all this celebration and icon duly of the author. Much in the manner of Wyndham Lewis, Sean O'Faolain, writing in the late fifties, thought that Faulkner's style was but a "demagogue's careless, rhetorical, and often meaningless language" which betrayed " an inward failure to focus clearly," in sum, "a lack of intelligence." Also Walter J. Slatoff, in the sixties, observed that Faulkner's prose was luxuriant to a fault and "represents an overabundance of oxymorons, contradictions, oppositions, polarities, which remain unresolved," and that the choice he makes in each of these cases in "the choice not to choose." And although the later Kazin revised some of his earlier opinions about Faulkner, eloquently defended his work against the charge of being primarily " a neurotic manifestation," called *Light in August* a great book, and gave a brilliant expose of Joe Christmas as "the incarnation of man," he nevertheless found Faulkner "compelling rather than believable." He reinforced this objection against Faulkner when he argued "that there is a gap between the talent ("compelling") and the meaning ("believable") and that the polarities and contradictions of material [in Faulkner] have not been 'really' but into 'harmony'."

This pursuit of 'harmony,' of some 'elaborate but coherent aim,' of locating 'meaning' in a work of art stands on quite questionable grounds, as is cogently argued by Robert Penn Warren in his *Introduction* to *Faulkner* (Twentieth Century Views) in the late sixties. Warren notices that "what many readers prize in Faulkner's work is often the fact of the polarities, contradictions, and inharmonious elements" inherent in life, resulting into " a battle that can never be finally won." and

that the creative process in Faulkner, as indeed in any writer, need not necessarily be "deductive." To him, it is not the "meaning" in Faulkner's fiction but the struggle and effort that goes into creating "meaning" which matters. In any case, whatever "meaning" any book arrives at, "will always rest in perilous balance," embedded in its contextuality and specificity. Something of this disturbing absence of meaning but engaging richness, variety and contrariness of Faulkner was suggested by Russell Roth in *Faulkner Studies* when he wrote that Faulkner's work "flatly denies, or contradicts, or takes issue with most of our fundamental and most dearly cherished assumptions regarding our relation as individuals with the world." Allen Tate's admiration for Faulkner was, however, of a different order: he didn't ever like Faulkner the man but he immensely liked Faulkner the writer "who since the early thirties I have thought was the greatest American novelist after Henry James; a novelist of an originality and power not equaled by his contemporaries, Hemingway and Fitzgerald." Tate therefore observed that Faulkner's "work must be re-read" and "talked about." John Crowe Ranson, however, was particularly struck by the resemblances between Faulkner and the great Elizabethan dramatist John Webster "in the force of his horror, as in the rightness of his sense of human goodness, as in the gift of a language which is generally adequate to the effects intended." He added that imperfections of Faulkner's work "both large and small" notwithstanding, his "perfections are wonderful and well-sustained, and without exact precedent anywhere." The encycloaedic two-volume work of J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery in *Two Decades of Faulkner Criticism* and later *Three Decades of Faulkner Criticism* contributed enormously in re-reading and re-interpreting the author, and in refining and correcting the earlier critical positions/insights. There were also written a large number of exegeses of his work in the fifties and sixties which rather threatened to transform Faulkner into a cult figure but which also, through close textual analysis, rebutted the charge that his work was 'complicated' and 'self-indulgent,' and demonstrated how 'to discriminate values and methods among the individual items" of his entire oeuvre. In short, by the end of the sixties Faulkner was firmly entrenched as an exceptionally talented, highly inventive, weakly disciplined, variously comparable, major American fictionist of the day.

From the seventies right upto the turn of the century, the best of Faulkner has stood the test of time. There has of course been during this period an unprecedented explosion of critical theory; and ever new discourses have both enriched and confounded the critical endeavour, especially with the increasing application of the conceptual and theoretical formulations of Postmodernism, Deconstruction, Post-colonial Theory and Feminism. A whole new range of perspectives and ideologies, of critical tools and tropes, of idiom and terminology has surfaced and taken over the critical function. In addition, over these decades, shifts in the preferences and tastes of the new generations of readers have brought about almost a sea-change in critical revaluations and final pronouncements on all major writers. In the midst these far-reaching changes and challenges, better books of Faulkner have not only emerged unscathed but have consistently arrested attention and earned appreciation. Contemporary critical responses largely find him an enduring achiever as a creative artist. Thadious M. Davis, for instance, holds that Faulkner will endure for "his construction of race" as something "central to his representation of characters," for the problematic of his racial subjectivity in "othering or objectifying of blacks," and for his "location of history and memory as major cites" of his fiction. Davis also acknowledges Faulkner's contribution in his "creation of a language of loss, longing, and desire as the articulation of a modern American sensibility" and for his "location of history and memory as major cites" of his fiction. Davis also acknowledges Faulkner's contribution in his "creation of a language of loss, longing, and desire as the articulation of a modern American sensibility" and in his "envisioning of environment, "the Yoknapatawpha landscape of Mississippi, as both "ecological and social," with a world-view and human concern which roundly rejects the Atomic Bomb and the "aftermath of the Nuclear Age."

While Thadious Davis discerns a certain "ethical realism" in the linkages of these aspects of Faulkner's work, Richard Moreland, in *Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, problematizes the issue rather differently and considers Faulkner's work "modernist and correspondingly critical in its relationship to the social contexts in which and about which Faulkner wrote." Coupled with these perceptions, is the ethnicity and gender-conscious criticism of Faulkner, for example by Lothar Honnighausen, which engages seriously with the author's books. No longer do the critics view Faulkner's art as "a well-wrought urn" of Cleanth Brooks" observation; instead they discern various inescapable incongruities, for instance; between Faulkner's advocacy of a "Go Slow Policy" for racial integration and his strong and path-breaking views on it, between his liberalism and radical reformism on the one hand and conservatism and ameliorism on the other. Probably it is for this reason that critics like Arthur Kinney remind us repeatedly of the need to "contextualize" Faulkner, and to probe and revaluate his various attitudes as "conditioned by the socio-cultural patterns of his time and place."

The interest in and the impact of Faulkner today stands percolated among the writers and critics all over the world, probably because he "speaks to the hearts of the people." His influence in Japan, Great Britain, Russia and several other countries is already well-documented in *Faulkner: International Perspectives*. He has also been acknowledged as a vigorously engaging fictionsit by Jean-Paul Sartre, Andre Malraux and Albert Campus in France, and by Hermann Hesse, Gottfried Benn and Peter Handke in Germany. The Italian novelists Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini have translated several of his books into Italian and consider them as object-lessons on the craft of fiction-writing. The most talked about Latin American novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, referred to him as "his master William Faulkner" and another, Jorge Edwards confessed that "the reading of Faulkner showed me, for the first time in my life, that there is a kind of poetry that can go into narrative fiction." Such accolades from major world-class writers apart, the entry on Faulkner in the latest edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* opens with the statement: "More books and scholarly articles have been written about Faulkner than about any other American writer of the twentieth century." It may also be added that he became a rôle model for a number of American writers who came after him, including Flannery O' Connor, Eudora Welty and Toni Morrison. Simultaneously however, we are to remember that Faulkner ever remained "too subtle and too difficult" to become a "popular author," and belonged to the class of those writers whose works are "more admired than read." Nonetheless the best of his books which deal with the subjects he felt 'in his bones' and in which he wrote 'his guts' release and will continue to release abiding pleasure.

3.1.3 Themes and Concerns

Quite unlike Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway, broadly speaking there is no 'central theme' in the fictions of William Faulkner. Several themes, overlapping and interconnecting each other, tend to emerge from his books. To isolate these themes from their contexts and to enumerate them may sound rather reductive and simplistic. Nonetheless it would be appropriate to indicate them in their specificity and particularity in order to discern what Faulkner is trying to say in his works and what are his major preoccupations and concerns.

Although Faulkner is largely considered a modernist writer, one of his themes, paradoxically as it were, seems to be anti-modernism. In his books he turns his back on the contemporary enterprise of mechanization and industrialization because, he feels it dehumanizes people and turns them into "a kind of human cash register," bereft of belongingness to any community and rootedness in any society. Instead, he celebrates "the glory of the past" because it preserves essential human virtues such as "courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice." This however does not obviate from him the fact that the agrarian, rural society of the past is also largely "inward-turning, backward-looking" and that such a social order is inevitably headed towards a steady decline and decay. He also notices that the past is

getting "frozen in its virtues and vices" and suffers from "massive immobility" and "unchangeableness of human condition.

This mixed retrieval of the past in Faulkner is closely associated with another theme, that of simultaneous affirmation and questioning of the values of the feudal, elitist families of his day. Oriented towards the past but coming into maturity in the 20th century, his young characters from these families not only learn of the legendary courage and endurance of the family patriarchs who established themselves in the Mississippi wilderness but also of their guilt and shame, of appropriation and marginalization of the 'other'. Driven by antithetical feelings, therefore, while the young protagonists are drawn to the family for the security it provides they are also repulsed by it for some of its unforgivable and disaffecting practices and traditions. There is a certain collison of their innocence/idealism with the reality of their lives which shocks and confuses them. Indeed, it connects their predicament with what some critics call the theme of natural man (close to the primitive man) versus social man (close to the modern man), or that of a difficult and painful initiation/transition from adolescence into manhood, especially for his well-meaning and conscientious young people.

Such contradictions inherent in the family fortunes of the descendants of the white planters in the Deep South are unisolably bound to the theme of racial discriminations and Faulkner's unambiguous disapproval of the institution, preservation and perpetuation of the system of slavery. To him it was "a terrible crime against humanity" and a "self-inflicted curse" on the white people. However, in his rejection of the racial subjection and abuse of the black for the profit and pleasure of the white, Faulkner kept shuttling between the positions of an ameliorist and a radical reformist. It is possible that his (white) racial subjectivity did not allow him to take any firm position. and retained his constructions of human conditions within what is usually called the white man's discourse of 'humanistic' and 'universal' tradition. Nonetheless his largely unbiased problemization of racialization and racial confrontation and his insistent and continued concern for a happy race relationship are treated with a considerable amount of self-reflexivity and with unusual "insight, clarity and artistry."

More than Faulkner's interrogation of race-relationships, family fortunes, and the past, the theme that receives Faulkner's recurring and almost persistent attention is the ambience of the Deep South. It may however be argued that the South is more of a setting or atmosphere than a theme, quite like the Wessex of Thomas Hardy or the Ireland of W.B. Yeats: but in as much as what Faulkner writes about is his theme, the South stays well within the ambit of his themes. In any case, Faulkner created a fictional world, located it in the Deep South, called it the Yoknapatawpha county with 'Jefferson' as its capital, and modeled it on the Northern Mississippi region with Oxford as the seat of its university. He inhabited this imagined land with the Native Americans, the African Americans, the European Americans, including several of their landowning and erstwhile rich families with inter-connections resonant of the history and the past of them all. He called it "a cosmos of my own" in which he enacted the drama of the faith and loss of faith in the past with rhetorical flourishes and incessant flow of language (attributes close to Faulkner and the Southerners in General), and of the near impossibility of consensual conclusions (attributes of his modernist sensibility). It may be added that this broad theme of the Deep South also included a more specific theme of the nobility and steadfastness of human beings while facing the worst onslaughts of life, and indicated how mankind endures and attempts to prevail.

The inclusion of the past in the present context and of the present in the past context, the acceptance and repudiation of family fortunes and heritage, the explorations of the self-inflicted curse on a racialist society, the attraction-repulsion drives towards a tangled South, the possibility of human nobility and fortitude in the midst of the wasteland of violen[illegible] brutality, and depravity are, therefore, several of the major

themes Faulkner writes about. At the same time, as implied earlier, he was too "fecund, various and restless" an artist to confine his pronouncements on human situation to a single theme or concern. What is more, he roundly indicates that in each of his themes there are inherent contradictions and conflicts of human experience. Possibly it is for this reason that some of Faulkner's critics find his work 'unresolved,' 'obscure' and 'meaningless.' What these critics miss out is that he refuses to rush into arriving at facile resolutions or clarity of meanings, and suggests that there is nothing like the 'last word,' or 'final resolution.'

A consideration of the interactions, interrelationships and inter-twining of these themes in Faulkner's major books yields a more concrete realization of what he is trying to say. The degree and extent of their presence and function in any particular book is, of course, a matter of authorial emphasis dictated by the nature and needs of the book in hand. But they do act in conjunction with one another, and often enough integrate and make a unified whole. The decline of the Compson family which has had generals and wealthy planters as ancestors stays, for instance, at the heart of *The Sound and the Fury*. The alcoholic Mr. Compson, the genteel and whining Mrs. Compson, the incestuous Quentin, the transparently idiotic Benjy and the meanly maneouvring Jason are all suggestive of the tensions and dissensions of a family that is falling apart and going under. At the same time, an affirmative counter-force in the book obtains in the person of the large-hearted and infinitely patient black woman Dilsey who, despite the injustice inflicted on her by men and god, characterizes hope and charity, endurance and naturalness. The book commingles and interfuses the themes of illicit love instead of the warmth of family affections, of decaying and perverse presence of feudal elite, of humanistic values, of amelioristic race-relations, and of glorious past. However, their darker hues and facets assume terrifying proportions in *As I Lay Dying* in which the decline of a family reaches its rock-bottom when all filial obligations are trampled under feet and reduced to shreds. The unbridled sexuality of the family patriarch Anse and the scandalizing vengefulness of the second son Darl turn things utterly chaotic and beyond redemption despite the dutifulness and loyalty of the other two sons, Cash and Jewel. The perverse forcefully sways and unhinges the normative in this tale of over-abundance of the meanest and the wilest in human conduct, of the worst of human lust and malice that can come to pass in a family.

Faulkner's major emphasis, however, gets divided between the individuals and the community in some of his books. In *Light in August*, for instance, he examines how a certain community gets driven "to crufixion of themselves and one another." Its obsession with self-righteousness, its refusal to forgive human frailty, its stern spirit of persecution leave no space for people like Joe Christmas. Notably, the might of the community in this book is linked up with the strands of not only ruthless and thoughtless patriotism (Fascism) but also with the doomed human plight in the face of strong racial discriminations in the South. Caught in extremely painful self-divisions, Joe refuses to pass as a white (although he very well could) probably because his father may have been a black: but he also refuses to accept his Negro status probably because his father may have been a white. In this state of high-voltage tension he happens to kill Joanna Burden and is subsequently lynched, notwithstanding the kindly and sympathetic characters in the community like Gail Highwater, Lena Grove and Byron Bunch who prefer to extend charity. Further, if *Light in August* portrays the lower depths of a puritanical community obsessed with self-righteousness, *The Hamlet* depicts an altogether different community of rednecks, farmers, and non-slaveholders who are humane, tormented and defrauded. This community is, systematically and cunningly, cheated by the Snopes family, especially Flem, who entertains no rules of fair play. In such books Faulkner integrates strong, persistent, racial discriminations, the Southern codes and modes of conduct, the human cunning and nobility, obsessions and spirit of freedom with the basic issue of what a community can do and, inversely, what can be done to a community.

Not the community but the whole region of Northern Mississippi and its institution of chattel slavery take precedence over every other thing in several books of Faulkner. In such books he critiques the issues involved in the "racialization, racial construction and racial division" in the South, and keeps his distance from certain aspects of the "Southern white consciousness" even as he remains" a part of the general American white consiousness." In *Absalom, Absalom!* for instance, the problem of 'Colour Line' takes a frightfully destructive dimension in that the mansion called 'Sutpen's Hundred' which is raised on the seeds of racial segregation, is driven, despite its phenomenal rise, to a gradual but steady extinction, as if by destiny. The refusal of Thomas Sutpen, and later of his son Henry, to accept the black as human equal turns into their fatal flaw; and notably, the vengeance on the Sutpen family is wrecked by Thomas Sutpen's own son by the othered (mulatto) woman. At the same time and in contrast to the harsh and unpardonable racial positions ad taboos and their consequences which dominate the theme of *Absalom, Absalom!* The warm and abiding inter-racial friendship between the white Bayard Sartoris and the black Ringo shines all through the pages of *The Unvanquished*. Also, Bayard defies the Southern tradition and decides not to avenge the murder of his father, for the father (Elder Sartoris) had goaded his rival and killer, Edmond, to the point "where he had to murder or face himself as a coward." In terms of human attributes, if the story of Thomas Sutpen deals with his tremendous grit and determination coupled with an overweening ambition and blinding racial prejudice, that of Bayard Sartoris brings into relief his moral courage and fortitude, and his belief in the sanctity and equality of all human beings. His character and conduct anticipates that of Ike in "The Bear".

We have noticed the presence of human goodness and nobility, impinging in minor or major ways upon the course of events in more than most of the Faulkner books referred to so far. But some of his books are primarily a celebration of the theme of humanism and humanistic values. The *Wild Palms*, consisting of two stories "Old Man" and "The Wild Palms," for instance, points to what humankind, given the courage of conviction, is capable of doing and can do. The convict in "Old Man" who is given a skiff and ordered to find the missing woman and man, spots the woman, eight months' pregnant, and in his attempt to return with her, braves the tumultuous Mississippi floods, confronts alligators, ducks and misdirected gunshots and reaches back. He acquits himself with raw courage and immense endurance and vast funds of human piety. In return, when sentenced to ten additional years "for political reasons," he asks for nothing " but just permission to endure and endure to buy air, to feel sun," and feel the earth under his feet. He remains unperturbed, treasuring his fate, and is happy with it, and therefore truly 'free' The young couple in "The Wild Palms," forgo the security and respectability of middleclass life, she her household comforts and he his medical profession, and happily endure continued suffering and deprivation. Finally when she dies, following an abortion, he is imprisoned for having performed it. The lovers establish the 'reality' of romantic love, for they don't merely believe in it but "act on their belief." And hence, though tempted to destroy himself the lover, surviving the beloved, treasures the memory of it all, and is happy and contented with it. There is no theorizing or comment in either of these stories; the author doesn't denigrate or eulogize either experience. There is however an implied affirmation of the effort and struggle in doing what these characters do and this affirmation lends meaning to the experience they undergo.

The emphasis on human traits in Faulkner, especially those of human courage and dignity, acquires mellower and more sombre hues in "The Bear," the story prescribed for your study. In this story of the yearly 'rites' of the chase and the final hunt of Old Ben," the enormous bear with a mutilated paw," Faulkner builds up the character of Sam Fathers, "the taintless and incorruptible" Chickawaw Indian, with masterly strokes. Sam Fathers unobtrusively educates Ike about how to traverse the wilderness and how to hunt. He empathizes with Old Ben who is protective of all little bears in the woods and who never attacks human beings save in self-defence. He alone discerns that they need a much bigger, stronger, and more courageous dog to effectively bay and turn Old Ben. He captures and trains such a dog (the Lion)

patiently and painstakingly over the years. He accepts the basic principles of the wilderness, those of the struggle for survival and the cyclic pattern of life and death, so that at some point of time and age it is all right that Old Ben is killed and he himself dies. He is a man of few words working for Major de Spain, but his supreme skills and quiet dignity draw wide attention and respect. He thus emerges in the story as a pillar of human nobility, endurance, strength, courage and compassion, and is aptly called 'the Chief' of the hunting expedition. This theme of human nobility and fortitude in the story blends with the theme of Ike's initiation, at the threshold of adulthood, into the values of Sam Fathers, and is suggestive of the 'free' man in him trapped by the extremely tight-holding barriers of society.

In our reading of the oeuvre of Faulkner, therefore, racial and hierarchical classifications are constructed and deconstructed; family fortunes and past history alternate between acceptance and repudiation; communities may retain their sanity or go amuck; life may or may not be brutal, violent and destructive; and human spirit may succeed in enduring the worst contingencies with fortitude or wallow in its own aberration and depravity. But capsulizing and subsuming them all is Faulkner's awareness of the antipodal human experiences and antithetical thought-processes. All too often there come up polarities and oppositional dialectics, too hard if not well-nigh impossible to resolve. In this broader context, as Faulkner has himself observed, his core theme is "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself." It is also, in a manner of speaking, the enforcement of Melville's famous dictum: "The Conflict of Convictions spins against the way it drives."

3.1.4 Modes of Writing

Faulkner's detractors have criticized him more for his modes of writing than for his themes and concerns. To them his narrative structures and techniques as well as his use of language obfuscate his meanings when they do not render them altogether incomprehensible. What therefore Faulkner's admirers consider his amazing technical virtuosity and his ingenuity in writing appear to them conspicuously unacceptable weaknesses of the author. A more objective scrutiny, however, indicates that most of the tropes of Faulkner's narrativity are attributes of his artistic strength. although at times he does betray, in a manner of speaking, the weakness of this strength.

Narrative Structures and Narrative Techniques

Faulkner's narrative structures often deviate from the norms of chronological time. The basic premise seems to be that while the human body exists in a certain sequence of time, the human mink operates both within and outside it. In his books, therefore yesterday, today and tomorrow get interfused and look indivisible; and affirm the presentness of the past as much as the pastness of the present in human experience. Take for instance *Go Down, Moses* which has intended to be read as 'a unified novel' by Faulkner who, noticeably, dropped the words "and other stories" from the title in its second and subsequent printings. In dealing with the fortunes of the generations of McCaslin family in general and Ike in particular, the author in this book keeps moving back and forth from the 1850s to the fourth decade of the twentieth century. In fact, he breaks and fragments its chronological time and refashions and reorganizes it after his own manner. Therefore, while the first chapter/story of the book takes place in the 1850s and the second and third are set in 1940, the fourth and fifth go back to the 1880s and the sixth and seventh again occur in 1940. This kind of narrative movement of the events of the distant past, the recent past and the present in Faulkner, with little regard for time-sequence, has been called 'montage structuring' by Edmond Volpe. It indicates that the author essentially views the events as integral constituents of a largely composite whole and of a more inclusive human experience, and not in terms of mere temporal tags. It also makes room for greater lateral spread of his books than for mere linear development, and lets them shine as multi-edged mosaics in fragmented time-schemes. The sequence of events in *Light in August*, for instance is limited to the period of one week and consists of murder of Joana Burden and the consequent lynching of the murderer, Joe Christmas soon after he is declared

a black. But the book covers a whole range of historical, sociological and psychological motivations and positions of individuals and the community they live in, all of which lend greater resonance and vibrancy to the present action. Likewise, *The Sound and the Fury* concretizes the decision of Quentin Compson to commit suicide, but in doing so it chronicles a wide variety of his experiences, including his childhood memories, parental and familial relationships, societal and racial dichotomies and polarities, and the back and forth thought-processes and conduct of several other characters which bear upon the terrible fate of Quentin in an extended time-frame.

More significant than montage structures which seemingly drift and sprawl but actually expand and enrich the meanings of Faulkner's books, are his distinct narrative techniques. Of them the most widely noticed one is the employment of the 'stream of consciousness'/interior monologue' in his first-person narratives. Broadly speaking both the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue are considered synonymous, suggestive of the 'interiorization' of experience, of 'introspective writing.' They largely derive from the impressionistic tradition according to which "life does not narrate but makes impression on our brains" and disregard all "logic, conventional syntax and at times even punctuations." However, whereas the stream of consciousness records the flow and continuum of impressions, the interior monologue largely addresses these impressions to one's ownself. In the former there is greater self-revealment, in the latter, more of self-communion. Both are, in any case, geared to wielding greater focus on inward, psychological realization of experience rather than its socio-cultural revealment.

Three of the four sections of *The Sound and the Fury* are adaptations of this technique, and the latter book exemplifies its variations and experimentations. The multiple, first-person, interiorized points of view in this novel forcefully reveal the disturbed and disordered impulses and thoughts of Quentin readying himself for suicide, the highly muddled sensations of the idiot boy Benjy through which time past and time present merge and inter-flow in his mind, and the ironic self-communion of Jason often tinged with bitter humour and frustration. Faulkner combines these introspective revealments with occasional use of his own rhetorical voice as a chorus, not as an intrusion. This helps us in getting a fuller perspective on the 'witty but alcoholic lawyer' Mr. Compson, the pre-occupations with the 'faded glories and present indignities' on the part of Mrs. Compson, the patience and nobility of the black Dilsey, 'the magnificently delivered Negro sermon' in vernacular ('Bredden! Look at dem little chillen settin dar'), and so forth. In sum, the impressions of the major first-person narrative voices and the author's rhetorical voice add up to a powerful sense of the decline and fall of a family which once had generals and wealthy planters as ancestors but which now suffers from total absence of familial love and mutual respect and has almost gone to seed. Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, if anything, is all the more daring an experiment in this technique. It concentrates on the thoughts and feelings of one character in each section at a time, and with fifteen of them in the book the story breaks into sixty sections. This lends amazing width and variety to the forward movement of the story and invests the narrative with what Henry James has called "the highest possible degree of saturation." The author gives each member of Addie Bundren's family an opportunity to ponder over his/her relationship with others, especially with Addie; and does not pretend that at the journey's end any of them goes home any the wiser. It too needs be noted that Faulkner's replacement of the deeper-searching four points of view in *The Sound and the Fury* with the wider-ranging and all too many view-points in *As I Lay Dying* clearly reflects his predilection for experimentation within the self-name narrative technique.

Use of Language

Faulkner's use of language has often been criticized by his detractors for what they consider to be its prolixity and complexity as also its ambiguity and obscurity. To them his prose all too often turns 'over-elaborate,' 'intermittently incoherent' and

even 'ungrammatical.' His diction and syntax, they maintain, tends to obfuscate rather than communicate his meanings; and his long sentences are difficult to follow, for their clauses do not develop from the main subject or verb of the sentence but grow out of and proliferate from the varied preceding clauses. It should, of course, be acknowledged that at times Faulkner's sentences run into a number of pages (*The Intruder in the Dust* and *"The Bear")*; or else abandon normal punctuation marks and the prose just 'rolls on'; or else become uncomfortably innovative and use too many parentheses in a single paragraph which complicate rather than clarify or explain his meanings. Also, on occasions, his rhetorical voice turns too sweeping and his narrative, threatens to sink into an 'anti-narrative.'

But this kind of writing in Faulkner, although not an exception, is nonetheless not representative of his stylistic strategies. Far too often his prose is not only appropriately worded but is all along engaging and stimulating. Marked at once by density and intensity, it is rich and resonant, and arrests our attention. The experience he then conveys is evocative and exciting, and not the least turgid or over-elaborate. Consider, for instance, the passage in "The Bear," when after weeks of eager wandering in the wilderness to sight Old Ben, after relinquishing his gun and compass and watch, Ike, walking all by himself, notices the impressions of 'the crooked paw' in 'the wet ground,' and then, finally, Old Ben himself:

> Then he was the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and it stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool land vanish without even any movement of its fins.

The scene concretizes the way Ike and Old Ben (the bear) come face to face in the myriad, musing, eternal woods. Faulkner's prose, lucid and limpid, sensitively registers how Old Ben looks of a piece with the surrounding wilderness. He doesn't 'emerge' or 'appear' from the woods, he is 'just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling.' Nor does he withdraw or walk into the woods, he just 'fades' and sinks' into them. Faulkner is obviously evolving Old Ben into a strong symbol of the immemorial woods and investing him with larger-than-life, almost epical proportions ('bigger,' 'dimensionless,' and so forth). At the same time, he seasons his narrative stance with a right measure of verisimilitude. Thus Ike notes that Old Ben is "not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected." The passage also draws attention to the way Old Ben finally moves without any uneasy, unseemly haste. The encounter underscores Old Ben's quiet dignity, unstated fearlessness, and vast reserves of naturalness as well as Ike's patience, curiosity, and human piety. Far from being difficult or opaque, it lands forward movement to the story towards a fuller enactment of the dream of chase and hunt on the scale of a Greek tragedy.

In addition, it may be noted, there is often enough simply a spontaneous flow of language in Faulkner. It expands and completes itself according to the ideas arising in the mind of a particular character or out of a situation. It then acquires a 'vocal quality' of a 'compulsive talker' which, Volpe tells us, Faulkner certainly was, although only in the company of friends and close acquaintances. The language on such occasions consists of short, simple sentences, using clear, concrete nouns and pronouns and strong verbs. The turns of expression are naturally geared to the intended effect. Note for instance the following sentences of Major de Spain in "The Bear" when he (mistakenly of course) suspects Old Ben for the killing of his colt:

> "I'm disappointed in him. He has broken the rules: I didn't think he would have done that. He has killed mine and McCaslin's dogs. but that was all right. We gambled the dogs against him; we gave each other warning. But now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, out of season too. He broke the rules. It was Old Ben, Sam."

This spontaneous flow of ideas in Faulkner's diction and syntax is also instinctively coupled with his fidelity to how people speak in the Deep South, and imbues his prose with a quaint inexplicable charm. He, then, reproduces to singular effect although with some deviations from the standard English grammar and spellings, "the slow drawl of the Southern Negro [black], the tone of the red-neck's speech-pattern, and the more refined tones and diction of the educated towns people." He had, we are told, read and enjoyed various things in various writers such as "Keat's aesthetics and A.E. Houseman's pessimism, Beardley's sophistication and Sherwood Anderson's Western regionalism, Balzac's panoramas and Joyce's stream of consciousness, Swinburne's sound effects and Eliot's verbal skills." Several of these devices are interfused and integrated with "the inspiration [he drew] from his own Southern oral tradition."

Other Devices

However even as Faulkner's stylistic and narrative powers eclectically received the influence of diverse and heterogeneous materials and methods, he was far too indigenous a writer, self-absorbed, self-cultivated and self-taught, to follow any of them. Also, his creative and innovative energies were too strong and individualistic to be directly influenced by any writer. In fact his narrative aesthetics was altogether his own: and besides his narrative structures, narrative techniques and use of language, the flash of the bits and pieces of his innovations leap out in the white heat of his imagination in the specific context of the subject of his books. There is, for instance, the emergence of symbolist leitmotif technique in *Sartoris* which transforms a real stallion into 'an aesthetic icon of motion in stasis,' of explosive energy barely under control: "The stallion stood against the yawning cavern of the livery stable door like a motionless bronze flame and along its burnished coat ran at intervals little tremors of paler flame, little tongues of nervousness and pride. "Likewise, there is in *Sanctuary* the cubist caricature of Popeye who looks "like a mask carved into two simultaneous expressions," and who is closely symbolic of the modern mechanical and industrial products. His eyes "looked like rubber knobs," his face" like the face of a wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten," and his tight suit and stiff hat "all angles, like a modernistic lampshade", and this is followed by the damning comment that he was the man "who made money and had nothing he could do with it," a characteristic malaise of much of the modernistic developmental enterprise. Again, there are surrealistic notations of Joe Christmas's fear of female sexuality in *Light in August:*

> "In a cave he seemed to see a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, death colored and foul." And then, there is in the same book, the prose-poem of his castration and apotheosis: "The pent black blood…seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket,…soaring into their memories forever and ever."

While these unpremeditated innovations are woven into the texture of Faulkner's prose on the spur of the moment as it were, his regard for the dialectics of language and society manifest's itself quite significantly in his books. In *Light in August* itself, the style acquires a socio-cultural dimension in describing the living patterns of the Calvinists: "The clean, Spartan room…In the windows he clean, darned curtains…The boy sat in a straight chair…an enormous Bible…He wore a clean shirt." In *Sartoris*, his first major book, socio-linguistic communication is reflected in the seemingly amused but essentially sardonic voice of Aunt Jenny: "Who thought of putting niggers into the same uniforms with white men. Mr Vardaman knew

better." In a good number of his books Faulkner thus has successfully attempted to renew and reinvent the language in order to imbue it authentically with its social and cultural ambience.

It may finally be remembered that while commenting on his own mode of writing as well as that of Thomas Wolfe, Faulkner once observed: "We tried to crowd and cram everything, all experience, into each paragraph, to get the whole complete nuance of the moment's experience, of all the recaptured light rays, into each paragraph." His verbal and narrative strategies in crowding and cramming his paragraphs the way he wanted may occasionally have betrayed misplaced zeal and suffered from some kind of excess. But by and large they have led to the enrichment and intensification of whatever experience he meant to portray, so that most of his books dazzle and at times hypnotize us like few other books do. Such a kind of uneveness in writing was but natural for a writer who possessed enormous creative and inventive powers but who didn't choose to be too disciplined as an artist.

3.1.5 The Yoknapatawpha County

William Faulkner's work is closely associated with the American South quite like that of Thomas Hardy is with Wessex, of W.B. Yeats with Ireland, and of Robert Frost with northern New England. These writers obviously use widely different materials and methods: nonetheless their preoccupation with the specificities of their regions and cultures links them together and puts their work in sharp contrast to that of other writers. Also, they have a meeting ground in that all of them deal with "a basically agricultural economy, a life of farms, villages and small towns, an old-fashioned set of values, and a still vital religion with its cult, creed, and basic norms of conduct," which set them apart from the writers of the cities and metropolitan towns. But in noticing the particularities of these regions we may better refrain from conceptualizing on them in terms of the remarks made by various characters in their books and mistaking them as their authors' observations, and worse still, as the central consciousness of the work. A character essentially conveys his/her perception or point-of-view in a certain context/situation which may or may not be reliable, or may be partially so. For instance, Faulkner's complex and ambivalent attitude towards the American South and its style of life with all his antithetical and polyphonic meanings is simply not embodied in any particular character. His position is indeed "a mixture of deep affection and furious disapproval, of abiding loyalties and sharp, specific disagreements," a mixture which it is neither possible nor useful to unmix. The better course, is to focus attention, as far as possible, on the minutest nuances and contours of the entire oeuvre of Faulkner in order to arrive at some kind of collective and composite awareness of his sense of the region.

It may also be noted that Faulkner deals with the provincial society of the American South as "a positive resource- an instrument for developing and refining his [aesthetic] meaning," and not as a subject of sociological discourse. Hence his fictional meaning should not be misconceived as some sociological-historical fact about the South and his 'mythic county' as a place inlaid with a 'factual substratum.' The attempt, for instance, to pick holes in Faulkner's treatment of Benjy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* on factual and legal grounds, seems rather misplaced: and yet this is precisely what Dr. Winthrop Tilley does in his article "The Idiot Boy in Mississippi" published in the *American Journal of Mental Deficiency.* Dr Tilley maintains that the unusual sexual interest displayed by Benjy towards the school girls passing by his house runs counter to the formidable clinical evidence that most idiots are 'comparatively unexcitable' and 'sexually low-geared,' and that Benjy is therefore a "fabricated literary idiot," literally incredible. He also adds that the gelding of Benjy at Jason's instance in the book also goes against the legal provisions which maintain that "Castration was specifically forbidden in the statute. The underlying assumption in such studies is that if "the fiction is good, the facts must be correct" and if "the facts are incorrect, the fiction is bound to be poor." However, notwithstanding such critiques and comments the fact remains that Faulkner's dramatization of the mental notations of Benjy seem quite "a plausible guess"

and "constitute a convincing imaginative account" of the situation. What is clean missed out by Dr Tilley is the distinction between the truth of fiction which is embodied in coherence and aesthetic value and the truth of history which is rooted in hard and incontrovertible facts of life. We have, therefore, to guard against such 'sociologizing' of literature and looking for 'excessive literalism" in it. To be sure, Faulkner's books tell us a good deal about the life in north Mississippi and the American south: but the truth implicit in it is the truth of fiction and not of history, and much less of case-studies and sociological-anthropological treatises.

The Yoknapatawpha County, so named in numerous novels of Faulkner, inhabiting the rich which planters and the black former slaves and the poor and not-so-poor whites, embodying the inter-connections between them over several generations, is a whole imagined landscape created by the author. It is of course modelled on the Northern Mississippi region (the Lafayetta County) of the American South, with Jefferson as the county seat approximating the real-life Oxford, the seat of the University of Mississippi. In creating it, Faulkner has both transcribed and transmuted the geography, the history, and the cultural configurations of its people including" [Chickasaw] Indians, slaves, plantation owners, Civil War soldiers, bushwhackers, genteel old ladies, veterans, first of the Civil War, then of World War I, and finally of World War II, exploiters, servants, peddlers, preachers, lawyers, doctors, farmers, college students, and many others." He has also captured the lived and felt sense of its wide, sprawling surroundings, "the rich delta land of the hunt," "the sand and brush country," and the "dusty roads, swamps, cemeteries....the great river, sometimes smooth and deep but when in flood, wild, turbulent, and destructive." This creative-exploratory process was at once absorbing and self-fulfilling for Faulkner; and he felt like having discovered that "my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it," and also felt like having "created a cosmos of my own." It was with this feeling that during the period of writing *Absalom, Absalam!* He drew up his now famous map of this legend of Yoknapatawpha County and inscribed, in a manner of speaking, his signature on it: "Jefferson Co., Mississippi Area, 2400 Square Miles – Population, Whites, 6298; Negroes 9313, William Faulkner, sole Owner and Proprietor."

Set in this Yoknapatawpha County, Faulkner's books about the white planters and their descendants, about the towns people and woodsmen, about the poor whites and Chickawaw Indians and black slaves manifest close inter-connections. It seems "as if each new book was a chord or segment of a total situation always existing in the author's mind." Obviously then, there are echoes and reverberations of inter-textuality in these books, such as between certain chapters of *Sartoris* and the story "There was a Queen," or between *The Sound and the Fury* and the story "That Evening Sun," between *Sanctuary* and *The Hamlet,* Armstid in *As I Lay Dying* and in *Light in August.* the Indian chief named Doom in "Red Leaves" and "A Justice," and so forth. Such features of inter-textuality in Faulkner's books and of self-reflexivity in his characters, with all their subtle and illuminating variations, additions, alterations, shifts of emphasis, new perceptions, even suggestions of inconsistencies, enlarge and enrich their meanings and lend them greater resonances and richness.

More significantly, each of his work then "seems to reveal more than it states explicitly and to have a subject bigger than itself." At the same time each of them contributes to the making of what Malcolm Cowley calls the "parable and legend of all the Deep South." His books, in this sense, are "like blocks of marble from the same quarry: they show the veins and faults of the mother rock." They all transmit the unmistakable feeling of the slow-paced and self-contained South, of the violent, valiant and temperamental South, of the proud though derided South, of the South with a collective history, geography and cultural heritage/burden, of the backward-looking, inward-turning, brooding and pre-dominantly agrarian South, of the South which like some irresistible and inscrutable riddle kept Faulkner enthralled and despairing all along his preoccupation with it.

Although the Yoknapatawpha County of the American South constitutes the location, the ambience, and the human resource of more than most novels and short stories of Faulkner, it is probably in *Absalom, Absalom!* That we came across the most extended critique of the socio-historical and cultural scenario of the American South. Early in this book Shreve McCannon, a Canadian room-mate of Quentin Compson at Harvard, says: "Tell me about the South. What is it like there? What do they do there? Why do they live there? Why do they live at all?" Quentin, deeply self-engrossed and after some initial reluctance, tells him the story of the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen, a miniature fictional account of the region. The narrative focusses on the single-minded, blinding ambition of Sutpen to own a big plantation and to found a dynasty with at least one son to inherit it. In his endeavour to realize ' this design' he goes to the West Indies and marries a rich planter's daughter there who bears him a son Charles Bon, but abandons her on learning that she has 'Negro blood'; returns home and swindles the Chickasaws into obtaining a hundred square miles of land to set up the mansion, 'Sutpen's Hundred,' along with big plantation; marries again and begets two children, Henry and Judith, from his second wife, and becomes the biggest cotton planter in Yoknapatawpha. Nemesis begins revealing its hand when Henry comes home from the University of Mississippi with Charles Bon who is subsequently engaged to Judith, but who is ordered from the house as soon as Sutpen recognizes him as his son from his first wife. It thickens with the outbreak of the Civil War in which Sutpen acquits himself with acts of courage, heroism and dignity, but before he returns home, Henry, on his way home with Charles Bon who now insists increasingly on marrying Judith, kills him, not because he is 'half-brother' to her but because he has 'mixed blood.' Sutpen, finally, returns to find his wife dead, his son a fugitive, his slaves dispersed, and his land likely to be seized for debt. His renewed efforts yet to carry out 'the design' fail, and he is reduced to a store-keeper. Doggedly as though, he scandalizes his sister-in-law Rosa Coldfield by proposing to beget a son from her in which case they can eventually marry, seduces a poor white Milly Jones who gives birth to a girl, and is consequently killed by her grandfather. Judith doesn't survive him for long and 'Sutpen's Hundred' is now "haunted rather than inhabited by an ancient mulatto women, Sutpen's daughter by one of the slaves." Later, Henry returns home, but apprehending arrest for the murder of Charles Bon, he sets fire to 'Sutpen's Hundred.' Nemesis falls, thick and fast, and with devastating effect.

The novel is strongly symbolic of and runs parallel to the saga of the South, and weaves itself into 'a tragic fable of Southern history.' Sutpen's ruthless and unscrupulous ways, of course, may not represent the better traditions of the landed southern aristocracy with certain appreciable norms and values and its own code of conduct. He may also look like some "Northern robber baron," "an alien" and even, as Quentin once remarks, "trash, unoriginal" despite his valour and heroism in defending the south in the Civil War. But the core issues in the tangled South are underscored through his character and conduct in the book, e.g., those of the deeply entrenched racial abuse and subjection of the blacks percolated by the generation of whitemen, and their cunning appropriation of the land from its ancient rightful owners, the Chickasaws. We therefore feel that although it was not in Sutpen's character (as rightly argued by Cleanth Brooks), it certainly was 'in his fate' (as maintained by Malcolm Cowley) that Sutpen becomes "emblematic of the South." The defeat of the South in the Civil War seemed to remedy this unconscionable and repressive social order and mitigate the self-inflicted curse on the Southern whites, but Faulkner uses a further and final turn of the screw in delineating this situation. He tends to suggest that the evil is not in the social and cultural systems alone but in human nature itself, and therefore the malady and the curse continue albeit through other means, perfected by the carpet baggers who came in the wake of the Civil War with the Northern armies and by the earlier marginalized but now strong and exploitative other Southerners who began to take over the centre-stage. Thus viewed, the book depicts not only the predicament and destiny of the South but of human conditions at large. In any case the intricate and tormented past and present of the South rouses passionate ambivalence in Faulkner who seems to position himself

rather close to Quentin who towards the end of the book bursts out spontaneously and vehemently: "I don't hate it. I don't! I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it." He only critiques it as one profoundly concerned with its fate.

Faulkner's abiding preoccupation with the South is also reflected in its varied manifestations by him. Large number of his protagonists, descendants of planters after the Civil War and others alike, find the transition too much to adjust with. They may thus fail because they are too obsessed with the past to face the present (Highwater), or invite too many risks and hazards (young Bayard Sartoris), or destroy themselves with alcohol (Quentin's father), or are too straightforward and therefore manoeuvered and stripped of their power and influence (old Bayard Sartoris), and so forth likewise, the commoners and the poor, most of them well-meaning and admirable, signify some kind of "smoldering rage beneath the surface" of the Southern reality which is "intense, tormented and brutal." In fact, his *Sanctuary* can well be read as a powerful narrative of the rape and corruption of the south by the onslaught of a moral, mechanized, modernist life-style. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County moves this Southern reality "into the dimension of art" and offers us "the thrill of encountering strong literature."

Finally, the world of this Yoknapatawpha County, as depicted in Faulkner's fiction as a whole, is amazingly and disturbingly rich and intricate. People in this county, including those living in the town of Jefferson, are inextricably connected with "the physical land and the climate." Their experience is located in a particular time of the history of American South, e.g., from around the Civil War onwards. Their relationship to history, their collective memory, and their common unspoken assumptions make for their bonding into a community. At the same time the aspects of "the harsh realism" and "the much-advertised violence" in the midst of this community points to its need to evolve into a "true community" or face extinction. Also, the collision of this community with the modern man and modernity devastates its concrete particularity. Nonetheless, its people are made of strong stuff: and their provinciality in no way forecloses their mirroring the triumphs and defeats of the universal human spirit.

3.2 *THE BEAR*

3.2.1 The Relevance/Irrelevance of Section Four

"The Bear" which consists of five sections, was published by Faulkner both with and without Section 4. Reworked from two magazine stories, it appeared as a chapter/story of *Go Down, Moses* (1942) in five sections. But when reprinted in his book about wilderness, *Big Woods* in the year 1955, Faulkner himself omitted section 4 of the story. The former version (with all the five sections) is marked by greater richness and resonance, more so when studied in the context of the larger theme of *Go Down, Moses*, i.e. "the relation between the white and the black descendants of old Carothers McCaslin" and by implication of all white and black people. But the latter version (deleting section 4) makes for a more compact and compelling reading and is a landmark American short story about the chase and final hunt of the big bear, Old Ben. The difficult and long fourth section, it seems, lent greater overtones and compositeness to the story which served its purpose well; but it certainly wasn't indispensable, and "The Bear" stayed a gripping tale totally complete in itself without this section.

It is evident that quite some of the major difficulties if not lapses of Faulkner's prose are visited on section 4 of the story whereas the rest of the sections are written in clear prose using concrete nouns and strong verbs. In this section the style turns overelaborate, ambiguous and even eccentric at places, consisting of circuitous thoughts and their articulations, particularly by Ike which is quite a contrast to the limpid and at places hypnotic flow of language in other sections. In fact, section 4 includes a sentence which runs into close to six pages in print with a two-page

parenthesis in the middle, consisting of several paragraphs each of which begins with a small letter, as also a good deal of quoted matter. This sentence is almost the longest in all American fiction, except for the fact that Faulkner himself exceeded its length in a sentence of his story "The Jail." The sentence ("To him it was... finished, unalterable, harmless.") poses quite a challenge to the reader to connect its 'subjects' to the predicates,' to retrieve the 'subordinate clauses' and to keep out the intertwining obfuscation and obscurity. However, it needs be added, that the reader who perseveres and prodes through such complexity and prolexity is amply rewarded for his patience. The section helps him in no small measure to discover one of Faulkner's most impressive themes: "The belief in Isaac McCaslin's heart that the land itself has been cursed by slavery, and that the only way for him to escape the curse is to relinquish the land."

The tangled and shifty argument between Isaac and his elder cousin, Edmonds McCaslin, in section 4 over the former's repudiation of his inheritance takes place five years after the events of section 3. It is coupled with various drifts and digressions such as the back and forth movement of narrative, detachable episodes, memories and recalls, the impact of characters long dead and events that happened generations ago, and spells of the stream-of-consciousness; although it is followed up by powerful scene between Ike and his wife towards the end. Two experiences that loom large in Ike's mind during the course of this argument are: that he had his initiation into manhood under the tutelege of Sam Fathers in the wilderness, and that he was shocked and revolted by reading in the old family leaders about the depravity of his grandfather, old Carothers McCaslin and the crime of incest he had committed. Interspersed in the argument are, of course, various strands of the "family history. the history of America, the history of the South and the meaning of participation in the Civil War, the relation of the Negro to the white and of man to nature."

Initially in this section Ike adopts a moral-ethical position and tells McCaslin that he (Ike) doesn't actually own the land for the simple reason that his father didn't own any land to transmit it to him. He also advances the argument further and says that the old Chickasaw Indian chief who first sold the land too didn't really own it, "for in the very act of selling it, the Indian forfeited his claim" to it. But this moral position, Ike later accepts, doesn't hold any legal and societal validity, and subsequently concedes to McCaslin that "his grandfather did have the title to the land." He then adopts a curiously historical-religious approach in that the land was accursed and God brought the white man to it "as doctors use fever to burn up fever, poison to slay poison." Since the whiteman failed to serve His purpose, Ike holds, "God brought about the Civil War," and the defeat of the South in the Civil War was providential. But he refuses to disown his people and insists that God didn't turn his face against the South: he only decided that they suffer for they could "learn nothing save through suffering." Such arguments, wobbly and incoherent, add up to no eloquent defence of Ike's act of repudiation. They may even be dismissed as his fanciful interpretation of the American history, the cursed south, and Providence, but they are strongly suggestive of an honestly troubled mind. Ike has lately came of age, and what he says is intuitive, not a cogent and well thought-out rationale.

The argument also turns on and relates to the (sub) human condition of the blacks who inherit nothing save the deprivations of poverty, the log cabins, the battered and faded overalls, the frayed five-cent straw hats – sort of surviving badges of their past slavery. When Edmonds refers to the "promiscuity and violence and instability' of the blacks, Ike responds by praising their endurance and pity, their fidelity land love of children, both black and white, and the virtues they derive from their "old free fathers a long time free than us." The mention of the word 'free' brings Sam Fathers to Ike's mind, who was ' a free man par excellence' and who showed him 'the way to freedom.' He also recalls his honest bafflement some seven years' ago at Edmonds' question (based on the information given by Sam Fathers) why he had not used the gun when the old bear was well within his shooting range. And in the midst of these stream-of-consciousness associations, to Edmonds' observation that the land is 'cursed,' his reply, presumably because of his decision to divest himself of his

patrimony, is, "I m free" – free from, the succession to the land and consequently, of the curse. Later, he maintains, "Sam Fathers set me free."

Spells of the stream-of-consciousness with their abrupt surfacing and exists, back and forth movement of the narrative sequence which is obviously neither linear nor lateral, frequent absorptions of Ike into memory, notations of recall, and the collages of seemingly detachable episodes in this section, tend to render the reading rather meandering, unfocussed and tortuous. However it is worth noting that more than most of them relate, directly or indirectly, concretely or vaguely, to the central concerns of the section, i.e., the problematic of inheritance, of its renunciation and acceptance. Two episodes stand out particularly vividly as telling commentary on this discourse on inheritance. First that the ambivalences about the share of Fonsisba, in respect of the inheritance left by old Carothers McCaslin to Tomey's Turl, her father, turn out none too easy to resolve. And second that the fond hopes roused about the inheritance of a purportedly silver cup filled with gold pieces and left for Ike by his maternal uncle, Hubert Beauchamp, are reveled to be laughably illusory. For when Ike, at twenty-one, opens the inherited package he discovers only ' a cheap tin filled with worthless paper' of duly signed 1OUs by the now dead Hubert Beauchamp. Both the episodes unravel some of the intricacies involved in matters of inheritance, the first in terms of race-relations, and the second in terms of roused expectations of owning some of the ancestral gold where none exists.

The dramatic scene between Ike and his wife towards the close of this section epitomizes how the decisions on inheritance taken with the best of intentions can turn questionable, get messy, and unhinge the most intimate spaces in human relationship. In making his renunciation Ike has been oblivious of 'the needs and desires of his wife' who is not only not prepared to renounce the plantation but also doesn't understand why her husband should want to do so. On impulse she therefore 'locks the door of their rented room,' takes off her clothes, and "calls him to her bed, using the body to extort from being adequate or just. He says o himself: "She is lost. She was always lost;" and a little later thinks that few human beings, especially not women, would understand that renunciation of material things is the road to freedom. One may in all fairness doubt the veracity of such an article of blind faith in Isaac.

It is however interesting to note that Faulkner too in real life, seemed to be on the side of Isaac. Years after the publication of "The Bear", answering questions at the University of Virginia, he commented uncharitably on the conduct of Isaac's wife and called "her ethics those of a prostitute." This was, quite possibly, one more classic example where an author doesn't really make a discriminating critic of his own work. More discriminating and perceptive was the critic, Andrew Lytle, who maintained that her renunciation of her modesty and offer of her naked body in the story is "the measure of her desperation." He argued that the institution of marriage is strengthened as much by the physical location of property as "in the joining of flesh." This powerful scene and all that precedes it relate to the problems involves in taking crucial decisions of life. The reader, confronted with varied episodes, encounters and accounts in varying modes and style, of course, tends to get befuddled and lose the storyline. But in the main, section 4 crams and huddles together the self-divisions and self-revaluations of Isaac vis-à-vis the process of coming of age, of entering into manhood and citizenship.

3.2.2 Theme of Growing up/Initiation

Both 'initiation' and 'growing up' point to a process of acquiring greater awareness of one's ownself and one's surroundings, of how to conduct oneself in the world of 'men and things,' and suggest a movement away from adolescence to manhood, from immaturity to maturity. However, whereas 'growing up' is a more general term, the term 'initiation' is rather loaded with specific meanings, especially by anthropologists. They maintain that the process of initiation denotes 'the rites of passage from childhood or adolescence to maturity' which were practiced by many

primitive tribes and communities, and were accompanied by the enactment of rituals. They also hold that this process was often enough 'painful,' designed to test the adolescent's strength and courage, endurance and loyalty to his tribe, and at the end gave him a feeling of being born again. In fiction, however, 'initiation' is largely seen in a broader perspective of man's education and evolution, and may be 'tentative or uncompleted or decisive.' "The Bear," in fact, manifests some and not all the features of initiation: it is focussed on an adolescent, on his education in the skills of hunting, on his increasing self-awareness and understanding of his surroundings, on a brief ' enactment of ritual' and a feeling of 'rebirth.' But it is not intended to fit the straitjacket of any technical definition of initiation: it rather stays quite close to the broader—based concept of 'growing up.'

When Ike in "The Bear" goes to the big woods at the age of ten, he feels as though he was born again and experiences a close affinity with it as though he was inheriting it. He learns fast, under Sam Fathers' patient, skilful and wise tutelage, about how to cock the gun, to slant it in whichever direction required, to take position, to pull the trigger with precision, and not to be afraid even when scared. He also learns how to walk through the thick and dense wilderness which has "no fixed path" and opens "before his advancement" and closes "behind his progress"; and rapidly acquires the habit of eating coarse food and sleeping in harsh sheetless blankets" as hunters do. However, despite his best efforts, Ike fails to see the old bear, the indomitable 'head bear,' the biggest game in these ancient woods, called Old Ben. His anxiety to see Old Ben, 'the enormous bear with a mutilated paw,' ranging in these immemorial ancient woods, now owned by Major de Spain, becomes all the more pressing when he learns that the animal has already seen him. The patient and enduring Sam, with a familiar but expressionless face 'until it smiled,' tells him the reason:

> "It's the gun, "Sam said. He stood beside the fence, motionless, the old man, son of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief, in the battered and faded overalls and the frayed five-cent straw hat which had been the badge of the Negro's slavery and was now the regalia of his freedom. The camp - the clearing, the house, the barn and its tiny lot with which Major de Spain in his turn and scratched punily land evanescently at the wilderness – faded in the dusk, back into the immemorial darkness of the woods. The gun, the boy thought. The gun. "You will have to choose," Sam said.

Of his own volition and 'in humility and peace and without regret' Ike therefore relinquishes 'the gun,' and walks into the green, markless wilderness " as Sam had coached and drilled him." Even so, when unsuccessful for quite some time, he realizes that he was still 'tainted' by the 'silver watch' he was wearing and the 'compass' he was using. The rules of the game are vitally important and have to be observed, and he decides to observe them all. It is soon after relinquishing the watch and the compass that he first notices 'the crooked print' of Old Ben's paws in swampy ground one after the other, and then, finally, the bear:

> Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.

It is significant to note that though Old Ben had seen Ike earlier when he was without any weapon, it hadn't attacked him. Later, after his first face-to-face encounter, when Ike sees Old Ben while holding a gun, he too doesn't shoot at it. This acceptance of co-existence and this instinctive attitude not to harm each other is suggestive of a

curious bonding between Ike and Old Ben and reflects the first stage/step in Ike's initiation into the life in the midst of the musing, inscrutable woods.

An increasingly decisive initiation of Ike as a hunter, complete with the attending ritual, begins when he kills his first buck at the age of thirteen and Sam marks his face with its 'hot blood.' It is reinforced when Ike kills his first bear in the next November, and grows into a better woodsman than most others who are much older than himself, and gets to know each territory – 'bayou, ridge, landmark trees and path' – within twentyfive miles of the camp. He is now familiar with those 'game trails that even Sam Fathers had never seen' and unmistakably discerns and distinguishes the footprints of Old Ben from those of other older bears who have equally large footprints. He notices the unimaginable prowess and speed of Old Ben who rushes through the corridors of trees and timber 'as a locomotive would,' and realizes why it would take a dog, as Sam had spoken to him, with extraordinary courage and speed and size to bring him to bay:

> If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old make bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater.

This process of Ike's education, yet to be completed, suggests that it is not, at least in sheer physical terms, an initiation from adolescence to youth, and much less to manhood, for he is only thirteen years of age. It is rather an initiation from an early, inexperienced, raw adolescence to a later, more experienced, and mellower one. It is part of his acquisition of the skills, duties and obligations of his vocation. It is a sort of his 'individuation' in Jungian terms, a process of his self-discovery which sets him apart from others.

The day of reckoning, or 'the moment of truth' as Hemingway would have called it, comes in Ike's growth as a hunter and man when in the final chase of Old Ben he is, encouragingly but appropriately, named by Major de Spain to lead the hunt. By now much has sunk into his consciousness and assimilated by it, especially about Sam, Old Ben, Lion, and Boon. He knows that it is not only he but Sam too who would not like to shoot Old Ben himself, although as a committed hunter in the employ of Major de Spain he, painstakingly and persistently, prepares Lion to help accomplishing this task. He also knows that Lion is compulsively and impersonally violent and ruthless where Boon is blindly and foolhardily so, and that both are alike in as much as the eyes of both of them are 'depthless' and free of any "meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness." He also knows that although seemingly 'absolved of mortality' Old Ben too would someday or the other not like to 'last any longer,' and has recently even been stopped and bayed by Lion although to no avail because Boon, who had rushed to the scene, characteristically, misfired at him, even in five attempts.

In this final chase, after some hectic galloping of the hunters' horses, wild running of the dogs led by Lion, and fastest possible crossing of the river, at the time when Ike sights Old Ben, Lion is clinging to his throat, the old bear is raking at its belly with his forepaws, and Boon, flinging himself astride the old bear, fatally strikes him near his throat where his life was. It is at the same time that Sam Fathers falls face down in the trampled mud; he can't speak except a few words 'in the tongue of his old fathers,' and when being taken back, entreats Major de Spain outside his dark little hut: "Let me out, master. Let me go home." The doctor who examines him diagnoses 'exhaustion,' common to old people of his age,' and says, "He just quit" but will certainly be 'all right' with rest and nourishment. But Ike knows that he is "going to die." In this poignant, action-packed situation Ike also senses a curious 'togetherness' in the destiny of the dead Old Ben and the dying Sam and Lion. He starkly exposed to the aspects of the perennial and at times fatal struggle for survival in nature, and learns that it needs courage on the part of the involved ones to accept it.

He also notices a certain commonness in the working of the fatality around the three of them which transcends the immediate and the contingent and draws attention to what operates beyond and above and outside the limits of the present. "Sam's eyes were probably open again on that profound look which saw further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog." Sam has been Ike's spirit's father,' has taught him so much with such dignity and skills, and is now passing though some inscrutable, impenetrable experience at this point of life's end. Strong concern and compassion arise in Ike who, much to the consternation and resentment of his cousin McCaslin, insists on staying with Sam while others are packing to return. He may be of little help to Sam, but he would like to be available and around. General Compson, who senses some of this uncontrollable disturbance in Ike, lets him stay and admonishes McCaslin:

> "You've got one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you ain't even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing, and fearing too maybe, but without being afraid, that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear none of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark....."

The process of Ike's growing up/initiation in "The Bear" is finalized with the finesse of controlled art in the concluding section five of the story which takes place two years later. Ike had earlier sensed the co-existence of man and nature in the experience of Sam and his ownself vis-à-vis Old Ben. On this last visit to the big woods the same kind of experience repeats itself when he encounters a six-feet long deadly snake, with its head raised as high as his knee. The creature would not attack him until it is attacked upon; and doesn't. More valuable and comforting is the lesson Ike learns when he reaches the graves of Sam and Lion:

> After two winters' blanketings of leaves and flood-waters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves any more at all. But those who would have come this far to find them would not need headstones but would have found them as Sam Fathers himself had taught him to find such: by bearings on trees: and did, almost the first thrust of the hunting knife finding (but only to see if it was still there) the round tin box manufactured for axle-grease and containing now Old Ben's dried mutilated paw, resting above Lion's bones.

Ike notices the ephemerality and transience of human existence vis-à-vis the immemorial and eternal nature. What is more he realizes that human existence is a part of the larger cyclic existence and perpetuity of nature. It is a soothing and elating thought to him that man does partake something of the circularity and immanence of nature, that there is in this sense no death, that Sam is not dead, "not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth," in "myriad yet undiffused" manifestations of nature. This may look like Ike's taking a 'sacramental view of nature,' but it also suggests that "man's attitude towards nature is a function of the health of his own nature."

The towering irony of what follows soon after can hardly be lost on Ike. The frenzied and hysterical Boon is sitting under the sweet Gum Tree, surrounded by scores of frantically leaping and darting squirrels, and hammering the barrel of his dismembered gun with its breech: he shouts at the approaching Ike: "Get out of here! Don't touch them! Don't touch a one of them! They are mine!" Unstated though it is, Ike must have felt, as we do, that man's possessiveness about nature may turn him mad, and his attempt to ruin nature may ruin him. The lesson is not the less important in today's world of fast growing ecological imbalances due to unthinking devastation and destruction of nature by man.

3.2.3 Modes of Writing in "The Bear"

Of the major voices of hostile criticism against the modes of writing in Faulkner, we may recall Clifton Fadiman who, even in the author's widely acknowledged novel *Absalom, Absalom!* notices "the Anti-Narrative or a set of complex devices used to keep the story from being told." Likewise Wyndham Lewis attempts to have good sport at the expense of Faulkner's style when he finds little more to it than a façade of "ill-selected words," and adds that the 'destiny' or 'doom' behind Faulkner's fiction is "merely a fraudulent device for operating the puppets." Sean O' Faolain too picks holes in the author's use of language and calls it not the "artist's meaningful language" but the "demagogue's careless, rhetorical and often meaningless language." One wonders how justifiable or relevant such uncharitable observations are in the context of "The Bear," a grippingly written story. Does its narrativity really "keep the story from being told?" Does it build-up to a situation of doomed wilderness and fatal destiny of Old Ben and Lion look 'merely a fraudulent device'? And does its language read like ' a demagogue's rhetorical and meaningless language'? Or is it that such generalized, harsh comments are altogether pointless in relation to "The Bear" and deserve instant dismissal?

We may better remind ourselves of Faulkner's own notion that whatever a writer tells determines his mode of writing. What he tells us in "The Bear" is the retrieval of an intense experience of the past through the process of cumulative memory. Since often enough these processes of retrieval do not operate in human mind in any rigid format of time sequence, there is in this story, as indeed in the larger book *Go Down, Moses* which includes it, a sense of fragmented time, a disruption of chronological order, a juxtaposition of the present with the past. Thus the conference at the commissary between Ike and Edmonds on the issue of the former's repudiation of his heritage which actually takes place five years after the events of section 3 in "The Bear," constitutes section 4 while Ike's last visit to the woods which takes place only two years after the events of section 3, is narrated in section 5 of the story.

Faulkner's disregard of the chronological time and his use of what Edmond Volpe calls ' the montage structure' helps foregrounding the urgency and primacy of the issue of tainted heritage, more so in the larger context of *Go Down, Moses*, and probably therefore, gets precedence over the poignant and moving conclusion of the story. Furthermore, the excessively harsh comments made by several critics on section 4 who find its arguments tortuous and confusing and its episodes unrelated and detachable do not seem quite justifiable. The arguments and episodes unrelated and detachable do not seem quite justifiable. The arguments and episodes are of course tangled at places and therefore not easy to follow, more so when coupled with the flow of Ike's stream-of-consciousness: but so is the state of mind of the protagonist at this juncture which the author is attempting to portray. For instance, even while Ike affirms his decision to repudiate the land he legally owns, he also interrogates his ownership right over it and observes: "I can't repudiate it. it was never mine. It was never Father's and uncle Buddy's to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never Gandfather's to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation." The section in such situations captures Ike's self-conflicts and self-divisions as much as it narrates his over-riding decision to renounce the patrimony.

Faulkner's devices of recall, of repetition of key phrases/sentences, and of the working of stream-of-consciousness are, in a manner of speaking, metaphorical extensions of the montage structure in "The Bear." There is, for instance, the recall of the 'big Negro' in Section 3 of the story who was once shot at five times by Boon from less than ten feet away, but remained unhurt because Boon was and continues to be "a notoriously bad shot:" or of the half-grown bear who, frightened at the first entry of the train into the woods, climbed a fragile branch and clung to it for thirty six hours going 'without even water'; or of the day when Ike had shot his first buck and the jealous and snarling Ash had insisted on going to shoot a deer or something, but

made a total nuisance of himself in doing so. All these recalls do not diminish but heighten and enrich the contexts in which they flash out. The same, however, may not be said of the stream-of-consciousness passages in section 4 which in fact tend to make it a difficult reading with poor recompense. At the same time, Faulkner's device of the reiteration of key sentences works out tellingly in this story. The sentence – "So he should have hated and feared Lion" – appears three times in section 2 of "The Bear," and makes a finely nuanced incremental effect. It is used for the first time right at the beginning of this section when Ike is fast growing into a skilful woodsman and hunter. It occurs a second time in the middle when he has developed an empathy for the Old Ben although he knows that someday this big bear himself may not want 'to last longer' and Ike himself happens to lead the final hunt. It recurs a third time towards the end of the section when Ike muses about the 'fatality' of it all "like the last act on a set stage." In view of the fact that this section relates Sam's trapping and readying the impersonally malignant and unbelievably strong and courageous Lion to hold and fight the invincible-looking Old Ben, the reiterations of "So he should have hated and feared Lion" signal a muted foreboding of things to come, of the beginning of the end. The subtle force of the device matches the intensity of conception in the story.

For those critics of Faulkner who find his language 'inflated and turgid' and his syntax 'incoherent and confusing,' "The Bear" may be an irrefutable reason to reconsider and review their position. If anything, the language in this story, except for a few passages in section 4, not only meticulously articulates the intended experience but at once expands and limits it, explores and defines it. Consider for instance the following passage towards the end of section 5 which appears soon after Ike notices the graves of Sam and Lion, dead two years ago. What precedes it are Ike's notations of the ephemerality of mortal beings vis-à-vis the immanence of nature. Therefore the graves are now untracably ravaged by two springs' floodwaters and two winters' blanketing of leaves; and he locates them by their bearings in nailed tin-boxes on the adjoining trees. These, Ike reflects, as:

> No abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark again in their immutable progression, and, being myriad, one: and Old Ben too. Old Ben too; they would give him his paw back even, certainly they would give him his paw back: then the long challenge and the long chase, no heart to be driven and outraged, no flesh to be mauled and bled....

From the preceding musings on the transcience of living beings in contrast with the permanence of nature, the narrative moves on to Ike's growing realization that Sam and Lion aren't really dead "because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth," and that therefore living beings too do not die. There is a fine-tuned spontaneity in the language and syntax in the direction of the intended experience. Faulkner's rhetorical voice unobtrusively vivifies Ike's feelings that Sam and Lion have now become a part of the immemorial and immortal nature, of its vitality and continuity, of its cyclic pattern and myriad manifestations. The rhythmic steady flow of words recounts some of the multitudineous facets of nature ("leaf and twig ... being myriad, one") and transmutes the passage into an evocative reading. It gets studded with fast-moving, concrete images, reflective of a controlled sweep in the musings of Ike and typical of Faulkner's "creation of new poetic language in fiction." There is a suggestion of the co-existence between man and nature ("no heart to be driven...") towards the end of the passage in despite of the 'challenge' and the 'chase' which reaffirms the core theme of the story. In such passages, Faulkner's prose, at once dense and intense, captures the fuller nuances and contours of his characters and their contexts, and turns the content into an achieved content.

Faulkner's smaller stylistic devices also significantly enhance his meanings. He uses, for instance, verbals in "The Bear" in order to convey how exactly it was with a certain character at a certain point of time. Ash's awkward and alarming euphoria and his self-cogratulatory monologue when he mistakenly assumes that "he had now hunted his dear" are all captured in a string of verbals as under:

> ...an old man's garrulous monologue beginning with where he was at the moment then of the woods and of camping in the woods and of eating in camps then of eating then of cooking it and of his wife's cooking...

However, the prioritization of the sequential chronicling of language in the above passage gives way to greater stress on the spatial whenever the occasion demands it. Faulkner's use of verbals then spreads out laterally: and even yields to a thickening and deepening of the emotional bearings of a situation. Note the woodsmen and swamp-dwellers who flock to the camp of Major de Spain to have a look at the hunted Old Ben and the fatally wounded Lion. The narrative points to the quiet awe and wonder of these woodsmen as they recall to one another the earlier hunting adventures and sense in the present event the culmination of a legend in the history of the land:

> There were almost a hundred of them squatting and standing in the warm and drowsing sunlight, talking quietly of hunting, of the game and the dogs which ran it, of hounds and bear and deer and men of yesterday vanished from the earth, while from time to time the great blue dog would open his eyes, not as if he were listening to them but as though to look at the woods for a moment before closing his eyes again, to remember the woods or to see that they were still there.

Critics who have faulted Faulkner for lapses and unevenness in his modes of writing, therefore, need to acknowledge that such lapses are least visited on "the Bear," widely rated as one of his better fictions. It may also be borne in mind that he considered all narrative techniques and stylistic devices as some kind of "meagre and fragile thread" with which an author spins "the little surface corners and edges of men's secret and solitary lives." In "The Bear" this thread is spun exquisitely to the greater enjoyment of his readers. Meagre and fragile it may be, but it weaves a rich and resonant story of a bear, a man and a dog which rises up almost to an epic scale. "The Bear" strongly evidences not mere Faulkner's tremendous imaginative stamina but also his masterly modes of writing.

3.2.4 Man and Nature: Affinities and Polarities

Varied manifestations of nature obtain in the works of Faulkner. He depicts it as a background, as reflective of man's state of mind, as a contrast to human condition, as a force to struggle with, as a cyclic phenomenon, as a continuity seen in historical time, and so forth. In "The Bear" he prioritizes both the positive and the hazardous aspects of nature alongside its cyclic pattern and immanence which seek man to 'endure' and 'prevail.'. The story tends to suggest that man doesn't merely exist in the midst of nature, he has to strive so that he moves on from mere 'being' to 'becoming' and realizes his potential and defines himself more fully. Man's union with nature, Faulkner implies in the story, is not an 'easy union' but a strenuous and risk-involving companionship. Nature is a kind of workshop for man to evolve and mature the stoic attributes of endurance and courage and the Christian attributes of love and human compassion.

There is of course 'sensitive' apprehension' and 'loving contemplation' of nature in "The Bear" as it is in most other books of Faulkner. It notes, for instance, "those windless Mississippi December days which are a sort of Indian summer's Indian summer," or the "slow drizzle of November rain just above the ice point." We may go backwards in this yearly calender with Faulkner, and recall "the tranquil sunset of

October hazy with windless wood-smoke," or "the moonless September dusk, the trees.... Squatting like huge fowl," or "the hot still pinewiney silence of the August afternoon," and so forth. We may also note that Faulkner celebrates God's gift of bounteous nature to the South which includes "the woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild winters for men and animals." Nature's support in man's engagement with life's normal activities is simply irrefutable.

Notwithstanding Faulkner's notations of the miraculous freshness of nature "charged with the power of animal innocence" he expects man, as Cleanth Brooks says, "to struggle with nature" for nature "is the necessary theatre of man's activity, the realm in which man must prove himself." It is in this quest that the hunters in "The Bear" annually go to the big, ancient and eternal woods, largely in the pursuit of the game and partly to keep the rendezvous with the indomitable and fearless Old Ben since "they had no actual hope" of slaying it. Although the camp and the woods they stay in, sprawling over an area of over a hundred miles, belong to Major de Spain, this socio-economic hierarchy is instantly dissolved and replaced in the wilderness by a natural one which operate's on its own terms regardless of one's birth or race. Accordingly, Sam Fathers, although a Chickasaw Indian who works for Major de Spain, is not only the 'guide' but 'the chief, the prince' in this hunting party, for he epitomizes the courage and skill, endurance and patience of a supreme hunter. Boon Hogganbeck, although he boasts of white ancestry, is essentially a man of blind courage and is a poor if not reprehensible shooter; and therefore a plebeian who stays far below Sam in this class-division. And Ash, uncouth and skilless, and basically accompanying the party as a cook remains at the bottom of this class-system, not because he is black but because he is good-for-nothing when not a nuisance as a hunter. Others including Major de Spain, General Compson, McCaslin Edmonds, and Isaac McCaslin (the protagonist) belong to various points in between this scale. What brings them together, however, is that all of them accept the norms and the code of hunting and subsist on eating whatever they hunt and sleep in coarse, sheetless blankets. This however is not what Edmond Volpe calls the uncovering of 'the natural man' in them nor indicative of what he considers 'an unbridgeable gap' between 'the social man and the buried natural man.' Nor is it suggestive of, as Cleanth Brooks rightly points out, any kind of primitivism in Faulkner nor of his following Rousseau's call for 'return to nature.' It is just a matter of 'disciplined effort' and 'difficult choice' they make of their own volition as hunters.

Of man's activities in the midst of nature it is Sam Fathers, the wisely observant chief, who first notices that in chasing the mighty Old Ben the dogs are mortally afraid. He draws Ike's attention to their abject and hysteric sounds when they race reluctantly to bay and hold the invincible Old Ben; and he repeatedly murmurs, more to himself than to others, that they sorely need a much stronger, bigger and a lot more courageous dog to fight the old bear, the "phantom, epitome, and apotheosis of the old wild life." In this situation, however, Faulkner implies the complete self-sufficiency of nature when Sam comes across such a dog not in 'the fyce' brought by Ike from the town of Jefferson but in the giant dog somehow captured by Sam a little later in the woods themselves, and confined to the crib adjacent to his hut. The dog weighs, as he guesses, some 90 pounds, possesses 'a tremendous chest,' is 'better than thirty inches at the shoulders,' and is always in motion. Such is its undiminishing ferocity and brute courage and quiet determination that it keeps hurling itself, in protest for confinement as it were, against the door of the crib without howling at all, for more than a week, each time falling with a heavy thudding sound, rattling the sturdy structure and clattering the door. Sam doesn't train or tame it in any stereotypical sense of the term: instead he nurtures and rears it to bay and holds and fights the enormous Old Ben who is already a living legend:

> Of corncribs broken down and rifled, of shoats and grown pigs and even calves carried bodily into the woods and devoured, and traps and deadfalls overthrown and dogs mangled and slain...

There is a foreboding of the ultimate and of resignation to this ultimate in Sam which may include his death. He gladly accepts to let happen whatever is fated to happen. He acquiesces in this unavoidable and natural course of life with a sense of duty and purpose and with a feeling of peace and love and human compassion. There is a similar foreboding about the fate of Old Ben who may now not "want to last any longer," and would let his life pass and merge into the life of nature. Locked in this deadly struggle, the wild, violent and uncontrollable Lion too is, unconsciously and explosively, heads to be a part of whatever is to happen. The third-person narrator of the story drops half-hints and half-stated suggestions about it:

> It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be part of it too or even just to see it too.

These muted observations of the third-person narrator on the increasingly fatal struggle and inevitable death in the midst of nature begin gathering weight when we learn that Lion doesn't ever cry while on the trail and that the other hounds are taking courage in its company and shedding their abjectness and hysteria in running the big bear. Even in its first two pursuits, Lion is able to stop and hold Old Ben: but in the first the hounds wouldn't just go in and Old Ben breaks away and takes to the river, and in the second Boon, as is his wont, misfires repeatedly even from close range and Old Ben again breaks free of them. However, there is no mistaking or lapse in the last stage of the third and final chase when Lion leaps up and keeps holding Old Ben tight by the throat and Old Ben, half erect, begins raking at its belly. This time Boon, as though driven by some overpowering, mad fury, flings himself astride the big bear and thrusts the glinting blade of his knife under his throat, and all the three of them fall:

> For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade. Then they went down.... then the bear surged erect raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps towards the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man, dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.

This deadly struggle is obviously to be viewed as part of the continuum of nature and he perpetuity of the struggle for survival among those who inhabit it. The three articipants in this struggle make for a blend that cannot be unblended. Also, far rom making it an occasion for any celebration by the hunters, the narrator reflects rong empathy towards the big bear by lending epic grandeur to his fall/collapse. In ct, the narrator even relates and corresponds it, not accidentably but deliberately, th the fall/collapse of Sam. And when the spent out Sam feels at peace with nself, and sees "further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and dying of a dog," Faulkner's emphasis shifts from the transient and transitory sent to the abiding and immanent in nature. Humans and non-humans, he tends to gest, are all parts of the continuity and eternity of nature, of its grand and erishable scheme of thing, in which each of them in supposed to partake the ing struggle for survival and accept the inevitable death with courage.

e last section of the story Faulkner plants several iconic images of the onslaught lustrialization and mechanization on nature and the consequent denudation and dation of the woods, which are suggestive of the polarities between nature and y. Compelled by the changing economic scenario Major de Spain has sold the

3.3 LET US SUM UP

What deserves reiteration in this unit is that Faulkner's genius is inward-turning even as it constructs the predicament of not only individuals but of several communities and societies in the Deep South and interrogates the chequered history and heritage of the past. His imaginative stamina is amazingly prodigious and his verbal and narrative strategies, though uneven, are often evocative. "The Bear," except for its controversial section 4, stands out as a gripping tale of several overlapping and inter-connecting themes as well as of a masterly handling of linguistic and narrative techniques. The story richly evidences the vigour, range and artistry of Faulkner as a fictionist.

3.4 GLOSSARY

Oxymoron: A figure of speech which combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect. As in Lamb's celebrated remark : 'I like a smuggler. He is the only honest thief'.

Deconstruction: a method of critical analysis of philosophical and literary language.

Diction: choice and use of words.

Syntax: sentence construction.

3.5 QUESTIONS

1. Attempt a critique of the fluctuations in the critical fortunes of Faulkner right up to the turn of the twentieth century.
2. Discuss the aspects of 'specificity' and 'universality' in Faulkner's imagined world of 'Yoknapatawpha Country.'
3. How does Faulkner integrate the theme of Ike's 'invitation' with that of 'Colour Line' in "The Bear"? Give illustrations in support of your answer.
4. Examine the controversy over the relevance/irrelevance of section 4 in "The Bear" and substantiate it with examples from this story.

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Robert Penn Warren (edited), *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays (1966).*
2. Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country(1966).*
3. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (edited), *Faulkner: International Perspectives* (1984)
4. Richard C. Moreland, *Faulkner and Modernism: Rereading and Rewriting*(1990).
5. Philip M. Weinstein, *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner (1995)*

UNIT 4 COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Hemingway and Faulkner
 4.1.1 Themes and Concerns
 4.1.2 People and Places
 4.1.3 Use of Language
 4.1.4 Narrative Techniques
4.2 *A Clean Well-Lighted Place* and *The Bear*
4.3 Let Us Sum Up
4.4 Questions
4.5 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit examines the similarities and dissimilarities between Hemingway and Faulkner as short story writers, as also between their stories, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear." It takes note of the fairly shared human values in their characters and the limited affinity in their concern about violence. In the main, it studies the widely different materials and methods these two writers employ. In view of their contrasted use of language, it concludes with a view of the critical debate on the right degree of words in an author's statement.

4.1 HEMINGWAY AND FAULKNER

Hemingway and Faulkner were strikingly close contemporaries. They were born within one year of each other (Faulkner in 1897, Hemingway in 1898), and wrote most of their major works in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Also, both of them initially drew from the indigenous tradition of the American short story, and in their early writing reflected the influence of several American writers, especially Sherwood Anderson. However, and quite understandably, as their geniuses matured, their materials and methods came to be distinctly their own, and significantly contributed to the enrichment and diversification of the American short story. As indicated earlier, this unit shall briefly note some of the characteristic features of their craft, and take a comparative view of these two writers.

4.1.1 Themes and Concerns

The predominant theme in Hemingway is the violence at the heart of men and things; and, as several of his critics have noted, it is not so much the fact of violence as of what violence does to people. It is manifested in his novels and short stories, for instance, through the activities of big-game hunting, bullfighting, deep-sea fishing and the war; through suicides attempted or committed; through wounds received or self-inflicted; through pain and shocks, death and destruction triggered by it. Quite often, it subsumes and absorbs Hemingway's other themes of human relationships and love, of human achievements and failures, and remains almost a necessary condition of life in his books. Faulkner's work, however, does not reflect any predominant theme; instead, he writes about several interconnecting and intertwining themes, including those related to violence. The major ones among them are, for instance, the past glory and guilt of the landed aristocracy in the South and the

denigration of the institution of slavery and of its subsequent avatar of racial discrimination; the attraction-repulsion derives towards the brooding, proud, defeated and derided South; the affirmations of the ancient, lonely, often unappreciated and misconstrued human attributes of courage, fortitude, compassion and dignity; and so forth. Often enough, Faulkner registers his antithetical feelings and self-divisions in his engagement with these themes, and attempts to explore the experience they capsulize rather than force any consensual resolutions on them. Quite probably, for this reason, he used to insist that he wrote about "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

4.1.2 People and Places

The sense of people and places in Hemingway and Faulkner, again, has little in common. Characters, as depicted in Hemingway's books look like isolates, served from the context of the family, the community, the society and the country at large. They reflect little sense of "religion, morality, politics, culture or history," and relate to "no past, no tradition, no memories." They are often enough expatriates and rootless people engaged in outdoor activities, and belong nowhere. In fact Hemingway maintains a certain anonymity about wherever he locates his people. Faulkner's people, in contrast, are inextricably entrenched in the specificity and particularity of the family, the community, the society, and the region of Northern Mississippi with interconnections criss-crossing over several generations. They are engrossed in familial and dynastic relationships and their aberrations, and his books generate an interminable process of constructions, deconstructions and critiques of individuals vis-à-vis societal forces and pressures. Of a piece with it, his sense of place is indelibly etched out as 'Yoknapatawpha Country,' slow-paced, self-contained, agrarian; violent, valiant and temperamental; brooding, backward-looking and inward-turning which at once enthralls and despairs the author. However, despite this distinction between the locations and preoccupations of the characters of Hemingway and Faulkner their shared human values bring them together. The noblest of Hemingway's protagonists are supposed to acquit themselves with 'grace under pressure' while those of Faulkner are expected to 'endure' and whenever possible to 'endure and prevail' against all odds. Human dignity and honour, courage and compassion, fortitude and gallantry, and such other attributes are what the characters of both the writers hold closest to their hearts.

4.1.3 Use of Language

In the use of language Hemingway is a conscious and disciplined artist ("the discipline of Flaubert", he used to advocate). In his writings, therefore, he always endeavoured to cut out emotional exaggeration without lapsing into emotional suppression, and tried to keep emotion clean and well-regulated. He wanted to communicate, as he wrote in *Death in the Afternoon*, what really happened in action ...the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion." His theory of emotion also adhered to what he called the iceberg principle of writing, reiterated to George Plimpton in his Paris Interview: "I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg." He, therefore, would cut out scores of words to make one word meaningful, and is reported by Philip Young to have revised the last chapter of *A Farewell to Arms* thirty two times before he was done with it. He was for intensity in prose, and abjured both density and rhetoric while Faulkner, on the other hand, was both dense and rhetorical. Faulkner wanted, as he himself observed, to "crowd and cram" his pages with words, and fill them "with highest possible degree of saturation." At the same time, it needs to be added, that his density, far from getting 'inflated and turgid,' grows only to further explore and enrich the experience. Likewise, his rhetoric, far from being 'incoherent and confusing and demagogic,' functions to resonate the contours and nuances of his characters and situations. Not infrequently does his spontaneous flow of words, studded with concrete, fast-moving images, read like "a new poetic

language in fiction." Faulkner's density, although not that of a disciplined artist, makes for intensity, and his rhetoric for a vibrant prose. In sum, the stylistic strategies of Hemingway and the stylistic powers of Faulkner, although far apart, succeeded tellingly in whittling out an engaging and durable prose, notwithstanding the fact that Hemingway's disciplined emotion at times yielded mere emotional numbness and Faulkner's prolixity at times served only the cause of critical confusion.

4.1.4 Narrative Techniques

Major narrative techniques of both Hemingway and Faulkner, markedly related to their contrasted use of language, operate through widely different modes of writing. Hemingway's most prominent techniques of symbolism and irony, in consonance with his iceberg principle of writing, function through the art of implication. Broadly speaking, he implies his 'perceptions of likeness' in terms of symbols and those of 'difference' in terms of irony. His symbols, visible signs of something invisible, are concrete, condensed and telling metaphors for a character, a situation, an event, or even a whole range of experience. His irony involves both the traditional ironic contrasts and latter-day ironic contradictions. Ironic contrasts obtain between the 'appearance' and the 'reality' of things; and ironic contradictions between two ironic dualities of life both true in their own right. Hemingway uses both symbols and irony in concert; and while his ironies signify a 'discord' his symbols signify a 'harmony,' ironies 'complicate' while symbols 'consolidate,' and ironies 'scrutinize' while symbols 'synthesize' the human experience in his books. On the other hand, Faulkner's most distinct technique is the use of the stream-of-consciousness which follows the principle that "life does not narrate but makes impressions on our brains." In the stream-of-consciousness narrative, therefore, there is notation of these impressions exactly as they are made on brains, as a succession of unconnected and heterogenous images and objects, involving little coherence or logic, and oblivious of proper syntax and even punctuations. Further, although it is suggestive of 'introspective writing' carrying 'self-communion' and 'self-revealments,' in Faulkner such revealments and communions reveal an individual's own sense and opinion of others in the family, the community, and the society at large. Also, his use of multiple streams of consciousness considerably checkmates the constraints of the limiting first-person perspective in his books. Divergent themes and concerns, sense of people and place, use of language and techniques in Hemingway and Faulkner demonstrate that the polarities between them far too exceed the similiarities.

4.2 *A CLEAN WELL-LIGHTED PLACE* AND *THE BEAR*

"A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear" are two different kind of stories. The former deals with the terrible fate of an old man, is completed within the duration of a few hours and the space of less than 4 pages: the latter treats the 'growing up' of an adolescent. Ike, spans over more than 10 years and runs into over a 100 pages. The former uses sparse narrative, bits of dialogue, and very few characters; the latter is written in a spontaneous flow of rhetorical narrative and reveals almost a panoramic range of characters. Nothing much happens in the former story; but a great deal of action takes place in the latter. To move to their specific features at some length: thematically "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" unfolds the despairing predicament of an old man of eighty, bereft of wife and children, almost deaf, unsteady on feet who attempted to commit suicide the previous week. He is the lone, last customer at a clean well-lighted café nowhere he stays and drinks until the waiters pull down the shutters. His deprivation, infirmity, handicaps and loneliness are all manifested in the stark nothingness he is now confronted with, which, as Carlos Baker defines, is "something called Nothing which is so huge, terrible, overbearing, inevitable, and omnipresent that, once experienced, it can never be forgotten." In contrast to this

dispiriting theme, "The Bear" is focused on the sombre but bracing 'growing up' of Ike, descendent of the legendary Old Carothers, who, under the tutelage of Sam Fathers in the woods, acquires the hunting skills and the courage and compassion human beings are capable of. Although still an adolescent, he is befittingly named to lead the final, successful chase of old Ben; and later, despite pragmatic objections of otherwise well-disposed McCaslin and others, repudiates his inheritance. In terms of locale, it seems that "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is deliberately situated in an anonymous place, for such ceaseless assaults of nothingness could have struck any old man at any place in any country: but the story of chase, of the appropriation of land, and of racial discriminations in "The Bear" is naturally embedded in the particularity and peculiarity of the American South and the tangled fabric of its community/society.

Of the characters in the two stories, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" transmits, through the intermittent bits of conversation between the two waiters (one young and the other old) at the café, their traits as well as those of the old man. We note the arrested myopic awareness of the young waiter which clearly betrays his brittle sense of security. He is confident, young, has a wife and a job, and is too self-contained and glued to his present to foresee, much less visualize, that youth implies age, confidence may yield to loss of confidence, wife to absence of wife, and job to loss of job. In contrast to his incomprehension and insensitivity towards the gnawing despair of the old man, the old waiter registers greater awareness and human concern and empathy. He is unhappy at the unseemly haste with which the young waiter forces the old man to leave the café, and articulates his solidarity "with all those who like to stay late at the café. With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night. "This extremely limited number of characters and scale of their characterization in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" stands far apart from "The Bear" which involves a wide variety of characters from the hunting community and the American South. Of them, Sam Fathers, although he works for Major de Spain, is 'the chief, the prince' who nurtures the untameable Lion (the dog captured by him) with amazing skills and persistence in order to motivate it to hold and bay Old Ben, even as he empathizes a good deal with this legendary head bear. Unobtrusively, he possesses vast reserves of human courage and compassion, of endurance and dignity and humility which Ike learns from him, and grows from a raw, uncomprehending adolescent into a mellowing, understanding youth. Ike also learns from him the acceptance of the struggle for survival in the midst of wilderness with an accent on the principle of co-existence between men and animals. All this stands in sharp contrast with Boon's possessiveness of nature. Boon essentially remains 'violent, insensitive and unreliable,' despite his bravery and fidelity to Major de Spain and McCaslin. Notably, his eyes are "without depth or meanness or generosity or viciousness or gentleness or anything else" exactly like, Faulkner tells us, those of Lion. After its own manner, Lion also combines 'unbroken courage' and 'indomitable spirit' with a 'cold and impersonal malignance' and with a 'will to pursue and kill.' The major traits of many others who feature in "The Bear" may likewise be noted. They convincingly evidence much greater range of characters in this story than in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place."

To come to the modes of writing, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" uses verbal restraint and techniques of implications and indirections while "The Bear" uses verbal profusion and techniques of narrative recall (involving the presentness of the past and the pastness of the present) and occasional flashes of the stream-of-consciousness. The one, apart from its sparse narrative and fewer characters, hardly depicts any event or incident: the other, aside of a large number of characters, includes a surfeit of events and incidents. The one inscribes the utterly terrible, despairing 'nothingness' confronted by an old man, through the use of an unavailing symbol of a clean well-lighted café, and of the ironies involved in the unawareness of the younger waiter and the awareness of the older waiter: the other crams and crowds the narrative and uses recalls and streams-of-consciousness to accomplish the steady maturing of Ike. The one piles intensities and keeps out densities: the other is at once dense and

intense. The two modes of writing, the restrained and the expansive, indeed, relate to the critical war waged on the question of the right degree of statement and best reflected in the correspondence between Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe in the thirties. In his letter to Wolfe in 1937, Fitzgerald wrote:

> The novel of selected incidents has this to be said that the great writer like Flaubert has consciously left out the stuff that Bill or Joe (in the case of Zola) will come along and say presently. He will say only the things that he alone sees. So Mme. Bovary becomes eternal while Zola already rocks with age.

Wolfe's reply to this was, however, more perceptive and thoroughgoing. He wrote:

> There are no novels of unselected incidents. You couldn't write about the inside of a telephone booth without selecting... You say that the great writer like Flaubert has consciously left out the stuff that Bill or Joe will come along presently and put in. Well, don't forget, Scott, that a great writer is not only a leaver-outer but also a putter-inner, and the Shakespeare and Cervantes and Dostoevsky were great putter-inners – greater putter-inners, in fact, than taker-outers – and will be remembered for what they put in – remembered, I venture to say, as long as Monsieur Flaubert will be remembered for what he left out.

Clearly then there is no point in lionizing one way of writing at the expense of the other. Success of neither of them is inevitable. It depends on its practitioner, on what he makes or fails to make of it, on how well he organizes and how deftly he executes his material and with what powers, depth and artistry. Viewed in such terms, the chilling little masterpiece ("A Clean Well-Lighted Place") of Hemingway is as poignant and compelling as the epical saga of chase and its absorbing aftermath ("The Bear") in Faulkner.

4.3 LET US SUM UP

Apart from their belongingness to the indigenous American short story tradition and the shared human values of their characters, there is little in common between Hemingway and Faulkner as short story writers, especially in their modes of writing. About the same may be said of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear."

4.4 QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast Hemingway and Faulkner as short story writers.
2. Attempt a comparative reading of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear."

4.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Donold R. Noble, *Hemingway: A Revaluation (1998).*
2. Evans Harrington and Ann Abadie (ed.), *Faulkner and the Short-Story* (1992).

Text: *The Bear*

THERE WAS A MAN AND A DOG TOO THIS TIME. TWO BEASTS, COUNTing Old Ben, the bear, and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck, in whom some of the same blood ran which ran in Sam Fathers, even though Boon's was a plebeian strain of it and only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible.

He was sixteen. For six years now he had been a man's hunter. For six years now he had heard the best of all talking. It was of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document:—of white man fatuous enough to believe he had bought any fragment of it, of Indian ruthless enough to pretend that any fragment of it had been his to convey; bigger than Major de Spain and the scrap he pretended to, knowing better; older than old Thomas Sutpen of whom Major de Spain had had it and who knew better; older even than old Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, of whom old Sutpen had it and who knew better in his turn. It was of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive, and the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and reliefed against it, ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter;—the best game of all, the best of all breathing and forever the best of all listening, the voices quiet and weighty and deliberate for retrospection and recollection and exactitude among the concrete trophies—the racked guns and the heads and skins—in the libraries of town houses or the offices of plantation house or (and best of all) in the camps themselves where the intact and still—warm meat yet hung, the men who had slain it sitting before the burning logs on hearths when there were houses and hearths or about the smoky blazing of piled wood in front of stretched tarpaulins when there were not. There was always a bottle present, so that it would seem to him that those fine fierce instants of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated and distilled into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank, drinking not of the blood they spilled but some condensation of the wild immortal spirit, drinking it moderately, humbly even, not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring hereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them. Thus it seemed to him on this December morning not only natural but actually fitting that this should have begun with whisky.

He realised later that it had begun long before that. It had already begun on that day when he first wrote his age in two ciphers and his cousin McCaslin brought him for the first time to the camp, the big woods, to earn for himself from the wilderness the name and state of hunter provided he in his turn were humble and enduring enough. He had already inherited then, without ever having seen it, the big old bear with one trap-ruined foot that in an area almost a hundred miles square had earned for himself a name a definite designation like a living man:-the long legend of corn-cribs broken down and rifled, of shoats and grown pigs and even calves carried bodily into the woods and devoured and traps and deadfalls overthrown and dogs mangled and slain and shotgun and even rifle shots delivered at point-blank range yet with no more effect than so many peas blown through a tube by a child—a corridor of wreckage and destruction beginning back before the boy was born, throug which sped, not fast but rather with the ruthless and irresistible deliberation of a locomotive, the shaggy tremendous shape. It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print, shaggy, tremendous, red-eyed, not malevolent but just big, too big for the dogs which tried to bay it, for the horses which tried to ride it down, for the men and the bullets they fired into it; too big for the very country which was its constricting scope. It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was

wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name, and through which ran not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;—the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed childless and absolved of mortality—old Priam reft of his old wife and outlives all his sons.

Still a child, with three years then two years then one year yet before he too could make one of them, each November he would watch the wagon containing the dogs and the bedding and food and guns and his cousin McCaslin and Tennis's Jim and Sam Fathers too until Sam moved to the camp to live, depart for the Big Bottom, he big woods. To him, they were going not to hunt bear and deer but to keep yearly rendezvous with the bear which they did not even intend to kill. Two weeks later they would return, with no trophy, no skin. He had not expected it. He had not even feared that it might be in the wagon this time with the other skins and heads. He did not even tell himself that in three years or two years or one year more he would be present and that it might even be his gun. He believed that only after he had served his apprenticeship in the woods which would prove him worthy to be a hunter, would he even be permitted to distinguish the crooked print, and that even then for two November weeks she would merely make another minor one, along with his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson and Walter Ewell and Boon and the dogs which feared to bay it and the shotguns and rules which failed even to bleed it, in the yearly pageant-rite of the old bear's furious immortality.

His day came at last. In the surrey with his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson he saw the wilderness through a slow drizzle of November rain just above the ice point as it seemed to him later he always saw it or at least always remembered it—the tall and endless wall of dense November woods under the dissolving afternoon and the year's death, somber, impenetrable (he could not even discern yet how, at what point they could possibly hope to enter it even though he knew that Sam Fathers was waiting there with the wagon), the surrey moving through the skeleton stalks of cotton and corn in the last of open country, the last trace of man's puny gnawing at the immemorial flank, until, dwarfed by that perspective into an almost ridiculous diminishment, the surrey itself seemed to have ceased to move (this too to be completed later, years later, after he had grown to a man and had seen the sea) as a solitary small boat hangs in lonely immobility, merely tossing up and down, in the infinite waste of the ocean while the water and then the apparently impenetrable land which it nears without appreciable progress, swings slowly and opens the widening inlet which is the anchorage. He entered it. Sam was waiting, wrapped in a quilt on the wagon seat behind the patient and steaming mules. He entered his novitiate to the true wilderness with Sam beside him as he had begun his apprenticeship in miniature to manhood after the rabbits and such with Sam beside him, the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm Negro-rank quilt while the wilderness closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him, opening before his advancement as it closed behind his progress, no fixed path the wagon followed but a channel nonexistent ten years ahead of it and ceasing to exist ten yards after it had passed, the wagon progressing not by its own volition but by attrition of their intact yet fluid circumambience, drowsing, earls, almost lightless.

It seemed to him that at the age of ten he was witnessing his own birth. It was not even strange to him. He had experienced it all before, and not merely in dreams. He saw the camp—a painless six-room bungalow set on piles above the spring high-water—and he knew already hot it was going to look. He helped in the rapid orderly disorder of their establishment in it and even his motions were familiar to him, foreknown. Then for two weeks he ate the coarse, rapid food—the shapeless sour bread, the wild strange meat, venison and bear and turkey and coon which he had never tasted before—which men ate, cooked by men who were hunters first

and cooks afterward; he slept in harsh sheetless blankets as hunters slept. Each morning the gray of dawn found him and Sam Fathers on the stand, the crossing, which had been allotted him. It was the poorest one, the most barren. He had expected that; he had not dared yet to hope even to himself that he would even hear the running dogs this first time. But he did hear them. It was on the third morning—a murmur, sourceless, almost indistinguishable, yet he knew what it was although he had never before heard that many dogs running at once, the murmur swelling into separate and distinct voices until he could call the five dogs which his cousin owned from among the others. "now," Sam said, "slant your gun up a little and draw back the hammers and then stand still."

But it was not for him, not yet. The humility was there; he had learned that. And he could learn the patience. He was only ten, only one week. The instant had passed. It seemed to him that he could actually see the deer, the buck, smoke-colored, elongated with speed, vanished, the woods, the gray solitude still ringing even when the voices of the dogs had died away; from far away across the somber woods and the gray half-liquid morning there came two shots. "now let your hammers down," Sam said.

He did so. "You knew it too," he said.

"Yes," Sam said. " I want you to learn how to do when you didn't shoot. It's after the chance for the bear or the deer has done already come and gone that men and dogs get killed."

"Anyway, it wasn't him," the boy said, "It wasn't even a bear. It was just a deer."

"Yes," Sam said, "it was just a deer."

Then one morning, it was in the second week, he heard the dogs again. This time before Sam even spoke he readied the too-long, too-heavy, man size gun as Sam had taught him, even though this time he knew the dogs and the deer were coming less close than ever, hardly within hearing even. They didn't sound like any running dogs he had ever heard before even. Then he found that Sam, who had taught him first of all to cock the gun and take position where he could see best in all directions and then never to move again, had himself moved up beside him. "There," he said, "Listen." The boy listened, to no ringing chorus strong and fast on a free scent but a moiling yapping an octave too high and with something more than indecision and even abjectness in it which he could not yet recognise, reluctant, not even moving very fast, taking a long tome to pass out of hearing, leaving even then in the air that echo of thin and almost human hysteria, abject, almost humanly grieving, with this time nothing ahead of it, no sense of a fleeing unseen smoke-colored shape. He could hear Sam breathing at his shoulder. He saw the arched curve of the old man's inhaling nostrils.

"It's Old Ben!" he cried, whispering.

Sam didn't move save for the slow gradual turning of his head as the voices faded on and the faint steady rapid arch and collapse of his nostrils. "Hah," he said. "Not even running. Walking."

"But up here!" the boy cried. "Way up here!"

He do it every year," Sam said. "Once. Ash and Boon say he comes up here to run the other little bears away. Tell them to get to hell out of here and stay out until the hunters are gone. Maybe." The boy no longer heard anything at all, yet still Sam's head continued to turn gradually and steadily until the back of it was toward him. Then it turned back and looked down at him—the same face, grave, familiar, expressionless until it smiled, the same old man's eyes from which as he watched there faded slowly a quality darkly and fiercely lambent, passionate and proud. "He

don't care no more for bears than he does for dogs or men neither. He come to see who's here, who's new in camp this year, whether he can shoot or not, can stay or not. Whether we got the dog yet that can bay and hold him until a man gets thee with a gun. Because he's the head bear. He's the man." It faded, was gone; again they were the eyes as he had known them all his life. "He'll let them follow him to the river. Then he'll send them home. We might as well go too; see how they look when they get back to camp."

The dogs were there first, ten of them huddled back under the kitchen, himself and Sam squatting to peer back into the obscurity where they crouched, quiet, the eyes rolling and luminous, vanishing, and no sound, only that effluvium which the boy could not quite place yet, of something more than dog, stronger than dog and not just animal, just beast even. Because there had been nothing in front of the abject and painful yapping except the solitude, the wilderness, so that when the eleventh hound got back about midafternoon and he and Tennis's Jim held the passive and still trembling bitch while Sam daubed her tattered ear and raked shoulder with turpentine and axle-grease; it was still no living creature but only the wilderness which, leaning for a moment, had patted lightly once her temerity. "Just like a man," Sam said. "Just like folks. Put off as long as she could having to be brave, knowing all the time that sooner or later she would have to be brave once so she could keep on calling herself a dog, and knowing before hand what was going to happen when she done it."

He did not know just when Sam left. He only knew that he was gone. For the next three mornings he rose and ate breakfast and Sam was not waiting for him. He went to his stand alone; he found it without help now and stood in it as Sam had taught him. On the third morning he heard the dogs again, running strong and free on a true scent again, and he readied the gun as he had learned to do and heard the hunt sweep past on since he was not ready yet, had not deserved other yet in just one short period of two weeks as compared to all the long life which he had already dedicated to the wilderness with patience and humility he heard the shot again one shot, the single clapping report of Walter Ewell's rifle. By now he could not only find his sand and then return to camp without guidance, by using the compass his cousin had given him he reached Walter waiting beside the buck and the moiling of dogs over the cast entrails before many of the others except Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim on the horses, even before Uncle Ash arrived with the one-eyed wagon-mule which did not mind the smell of blood or even, so they said, of bear.

It was not Uncle Ash on the mule. It was Sam returned. And Sam was waiting when he finished his dinner and, himself on the one-eyed mule and Sam on the other one of the wagon team, they rode for more than three hours through the rapid shortening sunless afternoon, following no path, no trail even that he could discern, into a section of country he had never seen before. Then he understood why Sam had made him ride the one-eyed mule which would not spook at the smell of blood, of wild animals. The other one, the sound one, stopped short and tried to whirl and bolt even as Sam got down, jerking and wrenching at the rein while Sam held it, coaxing it forward with his voice since he did not dare risk hitching it, drawing it forward while the boy dismounted from the marred one which would stand. Then, standing beside Sam in the thick great gloom of an. ient woods and the winter's dying afternoon, he looked quietly down at the rotted log scored and gutted with claw-marks and, in the wet earth beside it, the print of the enormous warped two-toed foot. Now he knew what he had heard in the hounds voices in the woods that morning and what he had smelled when he peered under the kitchen where they huddled. It was in him too a little different because they were brute beast and he was not, but only a little different—an eagerness, passive an objectless, a sense of his own fragility and impotence again the timeless woods, yet without doubt or dread; a flavor like brass in the sudden run of saliva in his mouth, a hard sharp constriction either in his brain or his stomach, he could not tell which and it did not matter; he knew only that for the first time he realised that the bear which had run in his listening and loomed in his dreams since before he could remember and which therefore must have existed in the listening and the dreams of his cousin and Major de Spain and even old General

Compson before they began to remember in their turn, was a mortal animal and that they had departed for the camp each November with no actual intention of slaying it not because it could not be slain but because so far they had no actual hope of being able to. "it will be tomorrow," he said.

"You mean we will try tomorrow," Sam said, "We aint got the dog yet."

"We've got eleven," he said. "They ran him Monday."

"And you heard them," Sam said. "Saw them too. We aint got the dog yet. It wont take but one. But he aint here. Maybe he aint nowhere. The only other way will be for him to run by accident over someboy that had a gun and knowed how to shoot it."

"that wouldn't be me," the boy said. "It would be Walter or Major or—"

"It might," Sam Said. "You watch close tomorrow. Because he's smart. That's how come he has lived this long. If he gets hemmed up and has got to pick out somebody to run over, he will pick out you."

"How?" he said. "How will he know.... "He ceased. "You mean he already knows me, that I aint never been to the big bottom before, aint had time to find out yet whether I.." He ceased again, staring at Sam; he said humbly, not even amazed: "it was me he was watching. I don't reckon he did need to come but once."

"You watch tomorrow," Sam said. "I reckon better start back. It 'll be long after dark now before we get to camp."

The next morning they started three hours earlier than they had ever done. Even Uncle Ash went, the cook, who called himself by profession a camp cook, and who did little else save cook for Major de Sapin's hunting and camping parties, yet who had been marked by the wilderness from simple juxtaposition to it until he responded as hey all did, even the boy who until two weeks ago had never even seen the wilderness, to a hound's ripped ear and shoulder and the print of a crooked foot in a patch of wet earth. They rode. It was too far to walk: the boy and Sam and Uncle Ash in the wagon with the dogs, his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson and Boon and Walter and Tennie's Jim riding double on the horses; again the first gray light found him as on that first morning two weeks ago, on the stand where Sam had placed and left him. With the gun which was too big for him, the breech-loader which did not even belong to him but to Major de Spain and which he had fired only once, at a stump on the first day to learn the recoil and how to reload it with the paper shells, he stood against a big gum tree beside a little beyou whose black still water crept without motion out of a cane-brake, across a small clearing and into the cane again, where, invisible, a bird, the big woodpecker called Lord-to-God by Negroes, clattered at a dead trunk. It was a stand like any other stand, dissimilar only in incidentals to the one where he had stood each morning for two weeks; a territory new to him yet no less familiar than that other one which after two weeks he had come to believe he knew a little—the same solitude, the same loneliness through which frail and timorous man had merely passed without altering it, leaving no mark nor scar, which looked exactly, as it must have looked when the first ancestor of Sam Fathers' Chickasaw predecessors crept into it and looked about him, club or stone axe or bone arrow drawn and ready, different only because, squatting at the edge of the kitchen, he had smelled the dogs huddled and cringing beneath it and saw the raked ear and side of the bitch that, as Sam had said, had to be brave once in order to keep on calling herself a dog, and saw yesterday in the earth beside the gutted log, the print of the living foot. He heard no dogs at all. He never did certainly hear them. He only heard the drumming of the woodpecker stop short off, and knew that the bear was looking at him. He never saw it. He did not know whether it was facing him from the cane or behind him. He did not move, holding the useless gun which he

knew now he would never fire at it, now or ever, tasting in his saliva that taint of brass which he had smelled in the huddled dogs when he peered under the kitchen.

Then it was gone. As abruptly as it had stopped, the wood pecker's dry hammering set up again, and after a while he believed he even heard the dogs—a murmur, scarce a sound even, which he had probably been hearing for a time, perhaps a minute or two, before he remarked it, drifting into hearing and then out again, dying away. They came nowhere near him. If it was dogs he heard, he could not have sworn to it; if it was a bear they ran, it was another bear. It was Sam himself who emerged from the cane and crossed the bayou, the injured bitch following at heels as a bird dog is taught to walk. She came and crouched against his leg, trembling. "I didn't see him," he said. "I didn't Sam."

"I know it," Sam said. "He done the looking. You didn't hear him neither, did you?" "No," the boy said. "I—"

"He's smart," Sam said. "Too smart." Again the boy saw in his eyes that quality of dark and brooding lambence as Sam looked down at the bitch trembling faintly and steadily against the boy's leg. From her raked shoulder a few drops of fresh blood clung like bright berries. "Too big. We aint got the dog yet. But maybe some day."

Because there would be a next time, after and after. He was only ten. It seemed to him that he could see them, the two of them shadowy in the limbo from which time emerged and became time; the old bear absolved of mortality and himself who shared a little of it. Because he recognised now what he had smelled in the huddled dogs and tasted in his own saliva, recognised fear as a boy, a youth, recognises the existence of love and passion and experience which is his heritage but not yet his patrimony, from entering by chance the presence or perhaps even merely the bedroom of a woman who has loved and been loved by many men. *So I will have to see him*, he thought, without dread or even hope. *I will have to look at him*. So it was in June of the next summer. They were at the camp again, celebrating Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthdays. Although the one had been born in September and the other in the depth of winter and almost thirty years earlier, each June the two of them and McCaslin and Boon and Walter Ewell (and the boy too from now on) spent two weeks at the camp, fishing and shooting squirrels and turkey and running coons and wildcats with the dogs at night. That is, Boon and the Negroes (and the boy too now) fished and shot squirels and ran the coons and cats because the proven hunters not only Major de Spain and old General Compson (who spent those two weeks sitting in a rocking chair before a tremendous iron pot of Brunswick stew, stirring and tasting, with Uncle Ash to quarrel with about how he was making it and Tennie's jim to pour whisky into the tin dipper from which he drank it) but even McCaslin and Walter Ewell he were still young enough, scorned such other than shooting the wild gobblers with pistols for wagers or to test their marks manship.

That is, his cousin McCaslin and the others thought he was hunting squirrels. Until the third evening he believed that Sam Fathers though so too. Each morning he would leave the camp right after breakfast. He had his own gun now, a new breech-loader, a Christmas gift; he would own and shoot it for almost seventy years, through two new pairs of barrels and locks and one new stock, until all that remained of the original gun was the silver-inlaid-trigger-guard with his and McCaslin's engraved names and the date in 1878. He found the tree beside the little bayou where he had stood that morning. Using the compass he ranged from that point; he was teaching himself to be better than a fair woodsman without even knowing he was doing it. On the third day he even found the gutted log where he had first seen the print. It was almost completely crumbled now, healing with unbelievable speed, a passionate and almost visible relinquishment, back into the earth from which the tree had grown. He ranged the summer woods now, green with gloom, if anything actually dimmer than they had been in November's gray dissolution, where even at noon the sun fell only in windless dappling upon the earth which never completely dried and which crawled

with snakes—moccasins and watersnakes and rattlers, themselves the color of the dappled gloom so that he would not always see them until they moved; returning to camp later and later and later, first day, second day, passing in the twilight of the third evening the little log pen enclosing the log barn where Sam was putting up the stock for the night. "you aint looked right yet," Sam said.

He stopped. For a moment he didn't answer. Then he said peacefully, in a peaceful rushing burst, as when a boy's miniature dam in a little brook gives way; "All right. Yes. But how? I went to the bayou. I even found that log again. I—"

"I reckon that was all right. Likely he's been watching you. You never saw his foot?'

"I..." the boy said. "I didn't... I never thought..."

"It's the gun," Sam said. He stood beside the fence, motionless, the old man, son of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief, in the battered and faded overalls and the frayed five-cent straw hat which had been the badge of the Negro's slavery and was not the regalia of his freedom. The camp—the clearing, the house the barn and its tiny lot with which Major de Spain in his turn had scratched punily and evanescently at the wilderness—faded in the dusk, back into the immemorial darkness of the woods. The gun, the boy thought. The gun. "You will have to choose," Sam said.

He left the new morning before light without breakfast, long before Uncle Ash would wake in his quilts on the kitchen floor and start the fire. He had only the compass and a stick for the snakes. He could go almost a mile before he would need to see the compass. He sat on a log, the invisible compass in his hand, while the secret night-sounds, which had ceased at his movements, scurried again and then fell still for good and the owls ceased and gave over to the waking day birds and there was light in the gray wet woods and he could see the compass. He went fast yet still quietly, becoming steadily better and better as a woodsman without yet having time to realise it; he jumped a doe and a fawn, walked them out of the bed, close enough to see them—the crash of undergrowth, the white scut, the fawn scudding along behind her, faster than he had known it could have run. He was hunting right, as Sam had taught him, but that didn't matter now. He had left the gun; by his own will and relinquishment he had accepted not a gambit, not a choice, but a condition in which not only the bear's heretofore inviolable anonymity but all the ancient rules and balances of hunter and hunted had been abrogated. He would not even be afraid, not even in the moment when the fear would take him completely;blood, skin, bowels, bones, memory from the long time before it even became his memory-all save that thin clear quenchless lucidity which alone differed him from this bear and from all the other bears and bucks he would follow during almost seventy years, to which Sam had said: "Be scared. You cant help that. But don't be afraid. Aint nothing in the woods going to hurt you if you don't corner it or it don't smell that you are afraid. A bear or a deer has got to be scared of a coward the same as a brave man has got to be."

By noon he was far beyond the crossing on the little bayou, farther into the new and alien country than he had even been, travelling now not only by the compass but by the old, heavy, biscuit-thick silver watch which had been his father's. He had left the camp nine hours ago; nine hours from now, dark would already have been an hour old. He stopped, for the first time since he had risen from the log when he could see the compass face at last, and looked about, mopping his sweating face on his sleeve. He had already relinquished of his will, because of his need, in humility and peace and without regret, yet apparently that had not been enough, the leaving of the gun was not enough. He stood for a moment-a child alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. The he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. He removed the linked chain of

the one and the looped thong of the other from his overalls and hung them on a bush and leaned the stick beside them and entered it.

When he realised he was lost, he did as Sam had coached and drilled him: made a cast to cross his backtrack. He had not been going very fast for the last two or three hours, and he had gone even less fast since he left the compass and watch on the bush. So he went slower still now, since the tree could not be very far; in fact, he found it before he really expected to and turned and went to it. But there was no bush beneath it, no compass nor watch, so he did next as Sam had coached and drilled him: made this next circle in the opposite direction and much larger, so that the pattern of the two of them would bisect his track somewhere, but crossing no trace nor mark anywhere of his feet or any feet, and now he was going faster though still not panicked, his heart beating a little more rapidly but strong and steady enough, and this time it was not even the tree because there was a down log beside it which he had never seen before and beyond the log a little swamp, a seepage of moisture somewhere between earth and water, and he did what Sam had coached and drilled him as the next and the last, seeing as the sat down on the log the crooked print, the warped indentation in the wet ground which while he looked at it continued to fill with water until it was level full and the water began to overflow and the sides of the print began to dissolve away. Even as he looked up he was the next one, and, moving, the one beyond it; moving, not hurrying, running, but merely keeping pace with them as they appeared before him as though they were being shaped out of thin air just one constant pace short of where he would lose them forever and be lost forever himself, tireless, eager, without doubt or dread, panting a little above the strong rapid little hammer of his heart, emerging suddenly into a little glade and the wilderness coalesced. It rushed, soundless, and solidified-the tree, the bush, the compass and the watch glinting where a ray of sunlight touched them. Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear; it was just there immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot drappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as a big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone it didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.

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So he should have hated and feared Lion. He was thirteen then. He had killed his buck and Sam Fathers had marked his face with the hot blood, and in the next November he killed a bear. But before that accolade he had become as competent in the woods as many grown men with the same experience. By now he was a better woodsman than most grown men with more. There was no territory within twenty-five miles of the camp that he did not know—bayou, ridge, landmark trees and path; he could have led anyone direct to any spot in it and brought him back. He knew game trails that even Sam Fathers had never seen; in the third fall he found a bucks's bedding-place by himself and unbeknown to his cousin he borrowed Walter Ewell's rifle and lay in wait for the buck at dawn and killed it when it walked back to the bed as Sam had told him how the old Chickasaw fathers did.

By now he knew the old bear's footprint better than he did his own, and not only the crooked one. He could see any one of the three sound prints and distinguish it at once from any other, and not only because of its size. There were other bears within that fifty miles which left tracks almost as large, or at least so near that the one would have appeared larger only by juxtaposition. It was more than that. If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, So long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater.

He could find the crooked print now whenever he wished, ten miles or five miles or sometimes closer than that, to the camp. Twice while on stand during the next three years he heard the dogs strike its trail and once even jump it by chance, the voices high, abject almost human in their hysteria. Once, still-hunting with Walter Ewell's rifle, he saw it cross a long corridor of down timber where a tornado had passed. It rushed through rather than across the tangle of trunks and branches as a locomotive would, faster than he had ever believed it could have moved, almost as fast as a deer even because the deer would have spent most of that distance in the air; he realised then why it would take a dog not only of abnormal courage but size and speed too ever to bring it to bay. He had a little dog at home, a mongrel, of the sort called fyce by Negroes, a ratter, itself not much bigger than a rat and possessing that sort of courage which had long since stopped being bravery and had become foolhardiness. He brought it with him one June and timing them as if they were meeting an appointment with another human being, himself carrying the fyce with a sack over its head and Sam Fathers with a brace of the hounds on a rope leash, they lay downwind of the trial and actually ambushed the bear. They were so close that it turned at bay although he realised later this might have been from surpirse and amazement at the shrill and frantic uproar of the fyce, it turned at bay against the trunk of a big cypress, on its hind feet; it seemed to the boy that it would never stop rising, taller and taller, and even the two hounds seemed to have taken a kind of desperate and despairing courage from the fyce. Then he realissed that the fyce was actually not going to stop. He flung, the gun down and ran. When he overtook and grasped the shrill, frantically pinwheeling little dog, it seemed to him that he was directly under the bear. He could smell it, strong and hot and rank. Sprawling, he looked up where it loomed and towered over him like a thunderclap. I was quite familiar, until he remembered: this was the way he had used to dream about it.

The it was gone. He didn't see it go. He knelt, holding the frantic fyce with both hands, hearing the abased wailing of the two hounds drawing further and further away; until Sam came up, carrying the gun. He laid it quietly down beside the boy and stood looking down at him. "You've done seed him twice now, with a gun in your hands," he said. "This time you couldn't have missed him."

The boy rose. He still held the fyce. Even in his arms it continued to yap frantically, surging and straining toward the fading sound of the hounds like a collection of live-wire springs. The boy was panting a little. "Neither could you," he said. "You had the gun. Why didn't you shoot him?'

Sam didn't seem to have heard. He put out his hand and touched the little dog in the boy's arms which still yapped and strained even though the two hounds were out of hearing now. He's done gone," Sam said. "You can slack off and rest now, until next time." He stroked the little dog until it began to grow quiet under his hand.

"You's almost the one we wants," he said. "you just aint big enough. We aint got that one yet. He will need to be just a little bigger than smart, and a little braver than either." He withdrew his hand from the fyce's head and stood looking into the woods where the bear and the hounds had vanished. "Somebody is going to, some day.'

"I know it, " the boy said. "That's why it must be one of us. So it wont be until the last day. When even he dont want it to last any longer."

So he should have hated and feared Lion. It was in the fourth summer, the fourth time he had made one in the celebration of Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthday. In the early spring Major de Spain's mare had foaled a horse colt. One evening when Sam brought the horses and mules up to stable them for the night, the colt was missing and it was all he could do to get the frantic mare into the lot. He had thought at first to let the mare lead him back to where she had become separated from the foal. But she would not do it. She would not even feint toward any particular part of the woods or even in any particular direction. She merely ran as if she

couldn't see, still frantic with terror. She whirled and ran at Sam once, as if to attack him some ultimate desperation, as if she could not for the moment realise that he was a man and along-familiar one. He got her into the lot at last. It was too dark by that time to back-track her, to unravel the erratic course she had doubtless pursued.

He came to the house and told Major de Sapin. It was an animal of course, a big one and the colt was dead now, wherever it was. They all knew that. "It's a panther," General Compson said at once. "The same one. That doe and fawn last March." Sam had sent Major de Spain word of it when Boon Hogganbeck came to the camp on a routine visit to see how the stock had wintered—the doe's throat torn out, and the beast had run down the helpless fawn and killed it too.

"Sam never did say that was a panther," Major de Spain said. Sam said nothing now, standing behind Major de Spain where they sat at supper, inscrutable, as if he were just waiting for them to stop talking so he could go home. He didn't even seem to be looking at anything. "A panther might jump a doe, and he wouldn't have much trouble catching the fawn afterward. But no panther would have jumped that colt with the dam right there with it. It was Old Ben, "Major de Spain said. "I'm disappointed in him. He has broken the rules. I didn't think he would have done that. He has killed mine and McCaslin's dogs, but that was all right: We gambled the gods against him; we gave each other warning. But now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, out of season too. He broke the rules. It was Old Ben, Sam." Still Sam said nothing, standing there until Major de Spain should stop talking. "We'll back-track her tomorrow and see," Major de Spain said.

Sam departed. He would not live in the camp; he had built himself a little hut something like Joe Baker's, only stouter, tighter, on the bayou a quarter-mile away, and a stout log crib where he stored a little corn for the shoat he raised each year. The next morning he was waiting when they waked. He had already found the colt. They did not even wait for breakfast. It was not far, not five hundred years from the stable-the three-months colt lying on its side, its throat torn out and the entrails and one ham partly eaten. It lay not as if it had been dropped but as if it had been struck and hurled, and no cat-mark, no claw-mark where a panther would have gripped it while finding its throat. They read the tracks where the frantic mare had circled and at last rushed in with that same ultimate desperation with which she had whirled on Sam Fathers yesterday evening, and the long tracks of dead and terrified running and those of the beast which had not even rushed at her when she advanced but had merely walked three or four paces toward her until she broke, and General Compson said, "Good God, what a wolf!"

Still Sam said nothing. The boy watched him while the men knelt measuring the tracks. There was something in Sam's face now. It was neither exultation nor joy nor hope. Later, a man, the boy realised what it had been, and that Sam had known all the time what had made the tracks and what had torn the throat out of the doe in the spring and killed the fawn. It had been foreknowledge in Sam's face that morning. *And he was glad,* he told himself. He was old. *He had no children, no people, none of his blood anywhere above earth that he would ever meet again. And even if he were to, he could not have touched it, spoken to it, because for seven years now he had had to be a Negro. It was almost over now and he was glad.*

They returned to camp and had breakfast and came back with guns and the hounds. Afterward the boy realised that they also should have known then what killed the colt as well as Sam Fathers did. But that was neither the fist nor the last time he had seen men rationalise from and even act upon their misconceptions. After Boon, standing astride the colt, had whipped the dogs away from it with his belt, they snuffed at the tracks. One of them a young dog hound without judgment yet, bayed once, and they ran for a few feet on what seemed to be a trail. Then they stopped, looking back at the men, eager enough, not baffled, merely questioning, as if they were asking "Now what?" Then they rushed back to the colt, where Boon, still astride it, slashed at them with the belt.

"I never knew a trail to get cold that quick," General Compson said.

"Maybe a single wolf big enough to kill a colt with the dam right there beside it don't leave scent," Major de Spain said

"Maybe it was a hant," Walter Ewell said. He looked at Tennie's Jim. "Hah, Jim?"

Because the hounds would not run it, Major de Spain had Sam hunt out and find the tracks a hundred yards farther on and they put the dogs on it again and again the young one bayed and not one of them realised then that the hound was not baying like a dog striking game but was merely bellowing like a country dog whose yard has been invaded. General Compson spoke to the boy and Boon and Tennie's jim: to the squirrel hunters. "You boys keep the dogs with you this morning. He's probably hanging around somewhere, waiting to get his breakfast off the colt. You might strike him."

But they did not. The boy remembered how Sam stood watching them as they went into the woods with the leased hounds-the Indian face in which he had never seen anything until it smiled, except that faint arching of the nostrils on that first morning when the hounds had found Old Ben. They took the hounds with them on the next day, though when they reached the place where they hoped to strike a fresh trail, the carcass of the colt was gone. Then on the third morning Sam was waiting again, this time until they had finished breakfast. He said, "Come" He led them to his house, his little hut, to the corn-crib beyond it. He had removed the corn and had made a deadfall of the door, baiting it with the colt's carcass; peering between the logs, they saw an animal almost the color of a gun or pistol barrel, what little time they had to examine its color or shape. It was not crouched nor even standing. It was in motion, in the air, coming toward them—a heavy body crashing with tremendous force against the door so that the thick door jumped and clattered in its frame, the animal, whatever it was, hurling itself against the door again seemingly before it could have touched the floor and got a new purchase to spring from. "Come away," Sam said, "fore he break his neck." Even when they retreated the heavy and measured crashes continued, the stout door jumping and clattering each time, and still no sound from the beast itself-no snarl, no cry.

What in hell's name is it?" Major de Spain said.

"It's a dog," Sam said, his nostrils arching and collapsing faintly and steadily and that faint, fierce milkiness in his eyes again as on that first morning when the hounds had struck the old bear. "It's the dog."

"The dog?" Major de Spain said.

"That's gonter hold Old Ben,"

"Dog the devil," Major de Spain said. "I'd rather have Old Ben himself in my pack than that brute. Shoot him."

"No," Sam said.

"You'll never tame him. How do you ever expect to make an animal like that afraid of you?"

"I dont want him tame," Sam said; again the boy watched his nostrils and the fierce milky light in his eyes. "But I almost rather he be tame than scared, of me or any man or any thing. But he wont be neither, of nothing."

"Then what are you going to do with it?"

"You can watch," Sam said.

Each morning through the second week they would go to Sam's crib. He had removed a few shingles from the roof and had put a rope on the colt's carcass and had drawn it out when the trap fell. Each morning they would watch him lower a pail of water into the crib while the dog hurled itself tirelessly against the door and dropped back and leaped again. It never made any sound and there was nothing frenzied in the act but only a cold and grim indomitable determination. Toward the end of the week it stopped jumping at the door. Yet it had not weakened appreciably and it was not as if it had rationalised the fact that the door was not going to give. It was as if for that time it simply disdained to jump any longer. It was not down. None of them had ever seen it down. It stood, and they could see it now-part mastiff, something of Airedale and something of a dozen other strains probably, better than thirty inches at the shoulders and weighing as they guessed almost ninety pounds, with cold yellow eyes and a tremendous chest and over all that strange color like a blued gun-barrel.

Then the two weeks were up. They prepared to break camp. The boy begged to remain and his cousin let him. He moved into the little hut with Sam Fathers. Each morning he watched Sam lower the pail of water into the crib. By the end the week the dog was down. It would rise and half stagger, half crawl to the water and drink and collapse again. One morning it could not even reach the water, could not raise its forequarters even from the floor. Sam took a short stick and prepared to enter the crib. "Wait," the boy said, "let me get the gun—"

'No," Sam said. "He cant move now. " Nor could it. It lay on its side while Sam touched it, its head and the gaunted body, the dog lying motionless, the yellow eyes open. They were not fierce and there was nothing of petty malevolence in them, but a cold and almost impersonal mali gnance like some natural force. It was not even looking at Sam nor at the boy peering at it between the logs.

Sam began to feed it again. The first time he had to raise its head so it could lap the broth. That night he left a bowl of broth containing jumps of meat where the dog could reach it. The next morning the bowl was empty and the dog was lying on its belly, its head up, the cold yellow eyes watching the door as Sam entered, no change whatever in the cold yellow eyes and still no sounds from it even when it sprang, its aim and co-ordination still bad from weakness so that Sam had time to strike it down with the stick and leap from the crib and slam the door as the dog, still without having had time to get its feet under it to jump again seemingly, hurled itself against the door as if the two weeks of starving had never been.

At noon that day someone came whooping through the woods from the direction of the camp. It was Boon. He came and looked for a while between the logs, at the tremendous dog lying again on its belly, its head up, the yellow eyes blinking sleep at nothing: the indomitable and unbroken spirit. What we better do," Boon said, "is to let that son of a bitch go and catch Old Ben and run him on the dog." He turned to the boy his weather-reddened and beetling face. "Get your traps together. Cass says for you to come on home. You been in here fooling with that horse-eating varmint long enough."

Boon had a borrowed mule at the camp; the buggy was waiting at the edge of the bottom. He was at home that night. He told McCaslin about it. "Sam's going to starve him again until he can go in and touch him. Then he will feed him again. Then he will starve him again, if he has to.'

"But why?" McCaslin said. "What for? Even Sam will never tame that brute."

"We don't want him tame. We want him like he is. We just want him to find out at last that the only way he can get out of that crib and stay out of it is to do what Sam or somebody tells him to do.He's the dog that's going to stop Old Ben and hold him. We've already named him. His name is Lion."

Then November came at last. They returned to the camp. With General Compson and Major de Spain and his cousin and Walter and Boon he stood in the yard among the guns and bedding and boxes of food and watched Sam Fathers and Lion come up the lane from the lot—the Indian, the old man in battered overalls and rubber boots and a worn sheepskin coat and a hat which had belonged to the boy's father; the tremendous dog pacing gravely beside him. The hounds rushed out to meet them and stopped, except the young one which still had but little of judgment. It ran up to Lion, fawning. Lion didn't snap at it. He didn't even pause. He struck it rolling and yelping for five or six feet with a blow of one paw as a bear would have done and came on into the yard and stood, blinking sleepily at nothing, looking at no one, while Boon said, "Jesus, Jesus—Will he let me touch him?"

"You can touch him" Sam said. "He dont care. He dont care about nothing or nobody."

The boy watched that too. He watched it for the next two years from that moment when Boon touched Lion's head and then knelt beside him, feeling the bones and muscles, the power. It was as if Lion were a woman-or perhaps Boon was the woman. That was more like it-the big, grave, sleepy-seeming dog which, as Sam Fathers said, cared about no man and no thing; and the violent insensitive, hard-faced man with his touch remote Indian blood and the mind almost of a child. He watched Boon take over Lion's feeding from Sam and Uncle Ash both. He would see Boon squatting in the cold rain beside the kitchen while Lion ate. Because Lion neither slept nor ate with the other dogs though none of them knew where he did sleep until in the second November, thinking until then that Lion slept in his kennel beside Sam Fathers hut, when the boy's cousin McCaslin said something about it to Sam by sheer chance and Sam told him. And that night the boy and Major de Spain and McCaslin with a lamp entered the back room where Boon slept—the little, tight, airless room rank with the smell of Boon's unwashed body and his wet hunting-clothes—where Boon, snoring on his back, choked and waked and Lion raised his head beside him and looked back at them from his cold, slumbrous yellow eyes.

"Damn it, Boon," McCaslin said. "Get that dog out of here. He's got to run Old Ben tomorrow morning. How in hell do you expect him to smell anything fainter than a skunk after breathing you all night?"

"The way I smell aint hurt my nose none that I ever noticed," Boon said.

"It wouldn't matter if it had," Major de Spain said. "We're not depending on you to trail a bear. Put him outside. Put him outside. Put him under the house with the other dogs."

Boon began to get up. "He'll kill the first one that happens to yawn or sneeze in his face or touches him."

"I reckon not," Major de Spain said. "None of them are going to risk yawning in his face or touching him either, even asleep. Put him outside, I want his nose right tomorrow. Old Ben fooled him last year. I don't think he will do it again."

Boon put on his shoes without lacing them; in his long soiled underwear, his hair still tousled from sleep, he and Lion went out. The others returned to the front room and the poker game where McCalin's and Major de Spain's hands waited for them on the table. After a while McCaslin said, "Do you want me to go back and look again?"

"No," Major de Spain said. "I call," he said to Walter Ewell. He spoke to McCaslin again. "If you do, don't tell me. I am beginning to see the first sign of my increasing age: I don't like to know that my orders have been disobeyed, even when I knew when I gave them that they would be—A small pair," he said to Walter Ewell.

"How small?" Walter said.

"Very small," Major de Spain said.

And the boy, lying beneath his piled quilts and blankets waiting for sleep, knew likewise that Lion was already back in Boon's bed, for the rest of that night and the next one and during all the night of the next November and the next one. He thought then: *I wonder What Sam thinks. He could have Lion with him, even if Boon is a white man. He could ask Major or McCaslin either. And more than that. It was Sam's hand that touched Lion first and Lion knows it.* Then he became a man and he knew that too. It had been all right. That was the way it should have been. Sam was the chief, the prince; Boon, the plebeian, was his huntsman. Boon should have nursed the dogs.

On the first morning that Lion led the pack after Old ben, seven strangers appeared in the camp. They were swampers: gaunt, malaria-ridden men appearing from nowhere, who ran trap-lines for coons or perhaps farmed little patches of cotton and corn along the edge of the bottom, in clothes but little better than Sam Fathers and nowhere near as good as Tennie's jim's, with worn shotguns and rifles, already squatting patiently in the cold drizzle in the side yard when day broke. They had a spokesman; afterward Sam Fathers told Major de Spain how all during the past summer and fall they had drifted into the camp singly or in pairs and threes, to look quietly at Lion for a while and then go away; "Mawnin, Major. We heerd you was aimin to put that ere blue dawg on that old two-toed bear this mawnin. We figgered we'd come up and watch, if you don't mind. We wont do no shooting, lessen he runs over us."

"You are welcome" Major de Spain said. "You are welcome to shoot. He's more your bear than ours."

"I reckon that aint no lie. I done fed him enough cawn to have a sheer in him. Not to mention a shoat three years ago."

"I reckon I got a sheer too," another said. "Only it aint in the bear." Major de Spain looked at him. He was chewing tobacco. He spat. "Hit was a heifer calf, Nice un too. Last year. When I finally found her, I reckon she looked about like that colt of yourn looked last June."

"Oh," Major de Spain said. "Be welcome. If you see game in front of my dogs, shoot it."

Nobody shot Old Ben that day. No man saw him. The dogs jumped him within a hundred yards of the glade where the boy had seen him that day in the summer of his eleventh year. The boy was less than a quarter-mile away. He heard the jumps but he could distinguish no voice among the dogs that he did not know and therefore would be Lion's, and he thought, believed, that Lion was not among them. Even the fact that they were going much faster than he had ever heard them run behind Old Ben before and that the high thin note of hysteria was missing now from their voices was not enough to disabuse him. He didn't comprehend until that night, when Sam told him that Lion would never cry on a trail. "He gonter growl when he catches Old Ben's throat," Sam said "But he aint gonter never holler, no more than he ever done when he was jumping at that two-inch door. It's that blue dog in him What you call it?"

"Airedale," the boy said.

Lion was there; the jump was just too close to the river. When Boon returned with Lion about eleven that night, he swore that Lion had stopped Old Ben once but that the hounds would not go in and Old Ben broke away and took to the river and swam for miles down it and he and Lion went down one bank for about ten miles and crossed and came up the other but it had begun to get dark before they struck any trail

where Old Ben had come up out of the water, unless he was still in the water when he passed the ford where they crossed. Then he fell to cursing the hounds and ate the supper Uncle Ash had saved for him and went off to bed and after a while the boy opened the door of the little stale room thunderous with snoring and the great grave dog raised its head from Boon's pillow and blinked at him for a moment and lowered its head again.

When the next November came and the last day, the day on which it was not becoming traditional to save for Old Ben, there were more than a dozen strangers waiting. They were not all swampers this time. Some of them were townsmen, from other county seats like Jefferson, who had heard about Lion and Old Ben and had come to watch the great blue dog keep his yearly rendezvous with the old two-toed bear. Some of them didn't even have guns and the hunting-clothes and boots they wore had been on a story shelf yesterday.

This time Lion jumped Old Ben more than five miles from the river and bayed and held him and this time the hounds went in, in a sort of desperate emulation. The boy heard them; he was that near. He heard Boon whooping; he heard the two shots when General Compson delivered both barrels, one containing five buckshot, the other a single ball, into the bear from as close as he could force his almost unmanageable horse. He heard the dogs when the bear broke free again. He was running now; panting, stumbling, his lungs bursting, he reached the place where General Compson had fired and where Old Ben had killed two of the hounds. He saw the blood from General Compson's shots, but he could go no further. He stopped, leaning against a tree for his breathing to ease and his heart to slow, hearing the sound of the dogs as it faded on and died away.

In camp that night—they had as guests five of the still terrified strangers in new hunting-coats and boots who had been lost all day until Sam Fathers went out and got them he heard the rest of it; how Lion had stopped and held the bear again but only the one eyed mule which did not mind the smell of wild blood would approach and Boon was riding the mule and Boon had never been known to hit anything. He shot at the bear five times with his pump gun, touching nothing, and Old Ben killed another hound and broke free once more and reached the river and was gone. Again Boon and Lion hunted as far down one bank as they dared Too far; they crossed in the first of dusk and dark overtook them within a mile. And this time Lion found the broken trail, the blood perhaps, in the darkness where Old Ben had come up out of the water, but Boon had him on a rope, luckily, and he got down from the mule and fought Lion hand-to-hand until he got him back to camp. This time Boon didn't even curse. He stood in the door, muddy, spent, his huge gargoyle's face tragic and still amazed. "I missed him," he said. "I was in twenty-five feet of him and I missed him five times."

"But we have drawn blood," Major de Spain said. "General Compson drew blood. We have never done that before."

"But I missed him," Boon said. "I missed him five times. With Lion looking right at me."

"Never mind," Major de Spain said. "It was a damned fine race. And we drew blood. Next year we'll let General Compson or Walter ride Katie, and we'll get him."

Then McCaslin said, "Where is Lion, Boon?"

"I left him at Sam's," Boon said. He was already turning away. I aint fit to sleep with him."

So he should have hated and feared Lion. Yet he did not. It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would nor grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too.

-3-

It was December. It was the coldest December he had ever remembered. They had been in camp four days over two weeks waiting for the weather to soften so that Lion and Old Ben could run their yearly race. Then they would break camp and go home. Because of these unforeseen additional days which they had had to pass waiting on the weather, with nothing to do but play poker, the whisky had given out and he and Boon were being sent to Memphis with a suitcase and a note from Major de Spain to Mr. Semmes, the distiller, to get more. That is, Major de Spain and McCaslin were sending Boon to get the whisky and sending him to see that Boon got back with it or most of it or at least some of it.

Tennie's Jim waked him at three. He dressed rapidly, shivering, not so much from the cold because a fresh fire already boomed and roared on the hearth, but in that dead winter hour when the blood and the heart are slow and sleep is incomplete. He crossed the gap between house and kitchen, the gap of iron earth beneath the brilliant and rigid night where dawn would not begin for three hours yet, tasting, tongue palate and to the very bottom of his lungs the searing dark, and entered the kitchen, the lamplit warmth where the stove glowed, fogging the windows, and where Boon already sat at the table at breakfast, hunched over his plate, almost in his plate, his working jaws blue with stubble and his face innocent of water and his coarse, horse-mane hair innocent of comb-the quarter Indian, grandson of a Chickasaw squaw, who on occasion resented with his hard and furious fists the intimation of one single drop of alien blood and on others, usually after whisky, affirmed with the same fists and the same fury that his father had been the full-blood Chickasaw and even a chief and that even his mother had been only half white. He was four inches over six feet; he had the mind of a child, the heart of a horse, and little hard shoe-button eyes without depth or meanness or generosity or viciousness or gentleness or anything else, in the ugliest face the boy had ever seen. It looked like somebody had found a walnut a little larger than a football and with a machinist's hammer had shaped features into it and then painted it, mostly red; not Indian red but a fine bright ruddy color which whisky might have had something to do with but which was mostly just happy and violent out-of-doors, the wrinkles in it not the residue of the forty yeas it had survived but from squinting into the sun or into the gloom of cane-brakes where game had run, baked into it by the camp fires before which he had lain trying to sleep on the cold November or December ground while waiting for daylight so he could rise and hunt again, as though time were merely something he walked through as he did through air aging him no more than air did. He was brave, faithful, improvident and unreliable; he had neither profession job nor trade and owned one vice and one virtue: whisky, and that absolute and unquestioning fidelity to Major de Spain and th boy's cousin McCaslin. "Sometimes I'd call them both virtues," Major de Spain said once. "Or both vices," McCaslin said.

He ate his breakfast, hearing the dogs under the kitchen, wakened by the smell of frying meat or perhaps by the feet overhead. He heard Lion once, short and peremptory, as the best hunter in any camp has only to speak once to all save the fools, and none other of Major de Spain's and McCaslin's dogs were Lion's equal in size and strength and perhaps even in courage, but they were not fools; Old Ben had killed them last year.

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Tennie's Jim came in as they finished. The wagon was outside. Ash decided he would drive them over to the log-line where they would flag the outbound log-train and let Tennie's Jim wash the dishes. The boy knew why. It would not be the first time he had listened to old Ash badgering Boon.

It was cold. The wagon wheels banged and clattered on the frozen ground; the sky was fixed and brilliant. He was not shivering, he was shaking, slow and steady and hard, the food he had just eaten still warm and solid inside him while his outside shook slow and steady around it as though his stomach floated loose. "They wont run this morning." he said. "no dog will have any nose today."

"Cep Lion," Ash said. "Lion don't need no nose. All he need is a bear." He had wrapped his feet in towsacks and he had a quilt from his pallet bed on the kitchen floor drawn over his head and wrapped around him until in the thin brilliant starlight he looked like nothing at all that the boy had ever seen before. "He run a bear through a thousand-acre ice-house. Catch him too. Them other dogs don't matter because they aint going to keep up with Lion nohow, long as he got a bear in front of him."

"What's wrong with the other dogs?" Boon said. "What the hell do you know about it anyway? This is the first time you've had your tail out of that kitchen since we got here except to chop a little wood."

"Aint nothing wrong with them," Ash said. "And long as it's left up to them, aint nothing going to be. I just wish I had knowed all my life how to take care of my health good as them hounds knows.'

"Well, they aint going to run this morning," Boon siad. His voice was harsh and positive. "Major promised they wouldn't until me and Ike get back."

"Weather gonter break today. Gonter soft up. Rain by night." Then Ash laughed, chuckled. somewhere inside the quilt which concealed even his face. "Hum up here, mules!" he said, jerking the reins so that the mules leaped forward and snatched the lurching and banging wagon for several feet before they slowed again into their quick, short-paced, rapid plodding. "Sides, I like to know why Major need to wait on you. It's Lion be aiming to use. I aint never heard tell of you bringing no bear nor no other kind of meat into this camp."

Now Boon's going to curse Ash or maybe even hit him, the boy thought. But Boon never did, never had; the boy knew he never would even though four years ago Boon had shot five times with a borrowed pistol at a Negro on the street in Jefferson, with the same result as when he had shot five times at Old Ben last fall. "By God," Boon said. "he aint going to put Lion or no other dog on nothing until I get back tonight. Because he promised me. Whip up them mules and keep them whipped up. Do you want me to freeze to death?"

They reached the log-line and built a fire. After a while the log-train came up out of the woods under the paling east and Boon flagged it. Then in the warm caboose the boy slept again while Boon and the conductor and brakeman talked about Lion and Old Ben as people later would talk about Sullivan and Kilrain and , later still, about Dempsey and Tunney. Dozing, swaying as the springless caboose lurched and clattered. he would hear them still talking about the shoats and calves Old Ben had killed and the cribs he had rifled and the traps and deadfalls he had wrecked and the lead he probably carried under his hide—Old Ben, the two-toed bear in a land where bears with trap-ruined feet had been called Two-Toe or Three-Toe or Cripple-Foot

for fifty years, only Old Ben was an extra bear (the head bear, General Compson called him) and so had earned a name such as a human man could have worn and not been sorry.

They reached Hoke's at sunup. They emerged from the warm caboose in their hunting clothes, the muddy boots and stained khaki and Boon's blue unshaven jowls. But that was all right. Hoke's was a sawmill and commissary and two stores and a loading-chute on a sidetrack from the main line, and all the men in it wore boots and khaki too. Presently the Memphis train came. Boon bought three packages of popcorn-and-molasses and a bottle of beer from the news butch and the boy went to sleep again to the sound of his chewing.

But in Memphis it was not all right. It was as if the high buildings and the hard pavements, the fine carriages and the horse cars and the men in starched collars and neckties made their boots and khaki look a little rougher and a little muddier and made Boon's beard look worse and more unshaven and his face look more and more like he should never have brought it out of the woods at all or at least out of reach of Major de Spain or McCaslin or someone who knew it and could have said, "Don't be afraid. He wont hurt you." He walked through the station, on the slick floor, his face moving as he worked the popcorn out of his teeth with his tongue, his legs sparddled and stiff in the hips as if he were walking on buttered glass, and that blue stubble on his face like the filings from a new gun-barrel. They passed the first saloon. Even through the closed doors the boy could seem to smell the sawdust and the reek of old drink. Boon began to cough. He coughed for something less than a minute. "Damn this cold," he said. "I'd sure like to know where I got it."

"Back there in the station," the boy said.

Boon had started to cough again. He stopped. He looked at the boy. "What?" he said.

"You never had it when we left camp nor on the train either." Boon looked at him, blinking. Then he stopped blinking. He didn't' cough again. He said quietly:

'Lend me a dollar. Come on. You've got it. If you ever had one,you've still got it. I don't mean you are tight with you money because you aint. You just don't never seem to ever think of nothing you want. When I was sixteen a dollar bill melted off of me before I even had time to read the name of the bank that issued it." He said quietly: "let me have a dollar ,Ike."

"You promised Major. You promised McCaslin. Not till we get back to camp."

"All right," Boon said in that quiet and patient voice. "What can I do on just one dollar? You aint going to lend me another."

"You're damn right I aint," the boy said, his voice quiet too, cold with rage which was not at Boon, remembering: Boon snoring in a hard chair in the kitchen so he could watch the clock and wake him and McCaslin and drive them the seventeen miles in to Jefferson to catch the train to Memphis; the wild, never-bridled Texas paint pony which he had persuaded McCaslin to let him buy and which he and Boon had bought at auction for four dollars and seventy five cents and fetched home wired between two gentle old mares with pieces of barbed wire and which had never even seen shelled corn before and didn't even know what it was unless the grains were bugs maybe and at last (he was ten and Boon had been ten all his life) Boon said the pony was gentled and with a towsack over its head and four Negroes to hold it they backed it into an old two-wheeled cart and hooked up the gear and he and Boon got up and Boon said, "All right, boys. Let him go" and one of the Negroes—it was Tennie's Jim—snatched the towsack off and leaped for his life and they lost the first wheel against a post of the open gate only at that moment Boon caught him by the

scruff of the neck and flung him into the roadside ditch so he only saw the rest of it in fragments: the other wheels it slammed through the side gate and crossed the back yard and leaped up onto the gallery and scraps of the cart here and there along the road and Boon vanishing rapidly on his stomach in the leaping and spurting dust and still holding the reins until they broke too and two days later they finally caught the pony seven miles away still wearing the hames and the headstall of the bridle around its neck like a duchess with two necklaces at one time. He gave Boon the dollar.

"All right," Boon said. "Come on in out of the cold."

"I aint cold," he said.

"You can have some lemonade."

"I don't want any lemonade.

The door closed he bid him. The sun was well up now. It was a brilliant day, though Ash had said it would rain before night. Already it was warmer: they could run tomorrow. He felt the old lift of the heart, as pristine as ever, as on the first day; he would never lose it, no matter how old in hunting and pursuit: the best, the best of all breathing, the humility and the pride. He must stop thinking about it. Already it seemed to him that he was running, back to the station to the tracks themselves: the first train going south; he must stop thinking about it. The street was busy. He watched the big Norman draft horses, the Percherons; the trim carriages from which the men in the fine overcoats and the ladies rosy in furs descended and entered the station. (They were still next door to it but one). Twenty years ago his father had ridden into Memphis as a member of Colonel Sartoris' horse in Forrest's command, up Main street and (the tale told) into the lobby of the Gayoso Hotel where the Yankee officers sat in the leather chairs spitting into the tall bright cuspidors and then out again, scot-free—

The door opened behind him. Boon was wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. "All right," he said. "Let's go tend to it and get the hell out of here."

They went and had the suitcase packed. He never knew where or when Boon got the other bottle. Doubtless Mr. Semmes gave it to him. When they reached Hoke's again at sundown, it was empty. They could get a return train to Hoke's in two hours; they went straight back to the station as Major de Spain and then McCaslin had told Boon to do and then ordered him to do and had sent the boy along to see that he did. Boon took the first drink from his bottle in the washroom. A man in a uniform cap came to tell him he couldn't drink there and looked at Boon's face once and said nothing. The next time he was pouring into his water glass beneath the edge of a table in the restaurant when the manager (she was a woman) did tell him he couldn't drink there and he went back to the washroom. He had been telling the Negro waiter and all the other people in the restaurant who couldn't help but hear him and who had never heard of Lion and didn't want to, about Lion and Old Ben. Then he happened to think of the zoo. He had found out that there was another train to Hoke's at three o clock train until he came back from the washroom for the third time. Then they would take the first train back to camp, get Lion and come back to the zoo where, he said, the bears were fed on ice cream and lady-fingers and he would match Lion against them all.

So they missed the first train, the one they were supposed to take, but he got Boon onto the three o clock train and they were all right again, with Boon not even going to the washroom now but drinking in the aisle and talking about Lion and the men he buttonholed no more daring to tell Boon he couldn't drink there than the man in the station had dared.

When they reached Hoke's at sundown. Boon was asleep. The boy waked him at last and got him and the suitcase off the train and he even persuaded him to eat some supper at the sawmill commissary. So he was all right when they got in the caboose of the log-train to go back into the woods; with the sun going down red and the sky already overcast and the ground would not freeze tonight. It was the boy who slept now, sitting behind the ruby stove while the springless caboose jumped and clattered and Boon and the brakeman and the conductor talked about Lion and Old Ben because they knew what Boon was talking about because this was home. "Overcast and already thawing," Boon said. "Lion will get him tomorrow."

It would have to be Lion, or somebody. It would not be Boon. He had never hit anything bigger than a squirrel that anybody ever knew except the Negro woman that day when he was shooting at the Negro man. He was a big Negro and not ten feet away but Boon shot five times with the pistol he had borrowed from Major de Spain's Negro coachman and the Negro he was shooting at outed with a dollar-and-a-half mail-order pistol and would have burned Boon down with it only it never went off, it just went snick-snicksnicksnicksnick five times and Boon still blasting away and he broke a plate-glass window that cost McCaslin forty-five dollars and hit a Negro woman who happened to be passing in the leg only Major de Spain paid for that, he and McCaslin cut cards, the plate-glass window against the Negro woman's leg. And the first day on stand this year, the first morning in camp, the buck ran right over Boon; he heard Boon's old pump gun go whow, whow, whow, whow, whow, and then his voice: "God damn, here he comes! Head him! Head him!" and when he got there the buck's tracks and the five exploded shells were not twenty paces apart.

There were five guests in camp that night, from Jefferson: Mr. Bayard Sartoris and his son and General Compson's son and two others. And the next morning he looked out the window, into the gray thin drizzle of daybreak which Ash had predicted, and there they were, standing and squatting beneath the thin rain, almost two dozen of them who had fed Old Ben corn and shoats and even calves for ten years, in their worn hats and hunting coats and overalls which any town Negro would have thrown away or burned and only the rubber boots strong and sound, and the worn and blueless guns and some even without guns. While they ate breakfast a dozen more arrived, mounted and on foot: loggers from the camp thirteen miles below and sawmill men from Hoke's and the only gun among them that one which the log-train conductor carried: so that when they went into the woods this morning Major de Spain led a party almost as strong, excepting that some of them were not armed, as some he had led in the last darkening days of '64 and '65. The little yard would not hold them. They overflowed it, into the lane where Major de Spain sat his mare while Ash in his dirty apron thrust the greasy cartridges into his carbine and passed it up to him and the great grave blue dog stood at his stirrup not as a dog stands but as a horse stands, blinking his sleepy topaz eyes at nothing, deaf even to the yelling of the hounds which Boon and Tennie's Jim held on leash.

"We'll put General Compson on Katie this morning," Major de Spain said. "He drew blood last year; if he'd had a mule then that would have stood, he would have—"

"No," General Compson said. "I'm too old to go helling through the woods on a mule or a horse or anything else any more. Besides, I had my chance last year and missed it, I'm going on a stand this morning. I'm going to let that boy ride Katie."

"No, wait," McCaslin said. "Ike's got the rest of his life to hunt bears in. Let somebody else—"

"No", General Compson said. "I want Ike to ride Katie. He's already a better woodsman than you or me either and in another ten years he'll be as good as Walter."

At first he couldn't believe it, not until Major de Spain spoke to him. Then he was up, on the one-eyed mule which would not spook at wild blood, looking down at the

dog motionless at Major de Spain's stirrup, looking in the gray streaming light bigger than a calf, bigger than he knew it actually was –the big head, the chest almost as big as his own, the blue hide beneath which the muscles flinched or quivered to no touch since the heart which drove blood to them loved no man and no thing, standing as a horse stands yet different from a horse which infers only weight and speed while Lion inferred not only courage and all else that went to make up the will and desire to pursue and kill, but endurance, the will and desire to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh in order to overtake and slay. Then the dog looked at him. It moved its head and looked at him across the trivial uproar of the hounds, out of the yellow eyes as depthless as Boon's as free as Boon's of meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness. They were just cold and sleepy. Then it blinked, and he knew it was not looking at him and never had been, without even bothering to turn its head away.

That morning he heard the first cry. Lion had already vanished while Sam and Tennie's Jim were putting saddles on the mule and horse which had drawn the wagon and he watched the hounds as they crossed and cast, snuffing and whimpering, until they too disappeared. Then he and Major de Spain and Sam and Tennie's Jim rode after them and heard the first cry out of the wet and thawing woods not two hundred yards ahead, high, with that abject, almost human quality he had come to know, and the other hounds joining in until the gloomed woods rang and clamored. They rode then. It seemed to him that he could actually see the big blue dog boring on, silent, and the bear too: the thick, locomotive-lime shape which he had seen that day four years ago crossing the blow-down, crashing on ahead of the dogs faster than he had believed it could have moved, drawing away even from the running mules. He heard a shotgun, once. The woods had opened, they were going fast, the clamor faint and fading on ahead; they passed the man who had fired-a swamper, a pointing arm, a gaunt face, the small black orifice of his yelling studded with rotten teeth.

He heard the changed note in the hounds' uproar and two hundred yards ahead he saw them. The bear had turned. He saw Lion drive in without pausing and saw the bear strike him aside and lunge into the yelling hounds and kill one of them almost in its tracks and whirl and run again. Then they were in a streaming tide of dogs. He heard Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim shouting and the pistol sound of Tennie's Jim's leather thong as he tried to turn them. Then he and Sam Fathers were riding alone. One of the hounds had kept on with Lion though. He recognised its voice. It was the young hound which even a year ago had had no judgment and which, by the lights of the other hounds anyway, still had none. Maybe *that's what courage is*, he thought. "Right", Sam said behind him. "Right. We got to turn him from the river if we can."

Now they were in cane: a brake. He knew the path through it as well as Sam did. They came out of the undergrowth and struck the entrance almost exactly. It would traverse the brake and come out onto a high open ridge above the river. He heard the flat clap of Walter Ewell's rifle, then two more. "No," Sam said. "I can hear the hound. Go on."

They emerged from the narrow roofless tunnel of snapping and hissing cane, still galloping, onto the open ridge below which the thick yellow river, reflectionless in the gray and streaming light, seemed not to move. Now he could hear the hound too. It was not running. The cry was a high frantic yapping and Boon was running along the edge of the bluff, his old gun leaping and jouncing against his back on its sling made of a piece of cotton plowline. He whirled and ran up to them, wild-faced, and flung himself onto the mule behind the boy. "That damn-boat!" he cried. "It's on the other side! He went straight across! Lion was too close to him! That little hound too! Lion was so close I couldn't shoot! Go on!" he cried, beating his heels into the mule's flanks. "Go on!"

They plunged down the bank, slipping and sliding in the thawed earth, crashing through the willows and into the water. He felt no shock, no cold, he on one side of

the swimming mule, grasping the pommel with one hand and holding his gun above the water with the other, Boon opposite him. Sam was behind them somewhere, and then the river, the water about them, was full of dogs. They swam faster than the mules; they were scrabbling up the bank before the mules touched bottom. Major de Spain was whooping from the bank they had just left and, looking back, he was Tennie's jim and the horse as they went into the water.

Now the woods ahead of them and the rain-heavy air were one uproar. It rang and clamored; it echoed and broke against the bank behind them and reformed and clamored and rang until it seemed to the boy that all the hounds which had ever bayed game in this land were yelling down at him. He got his leg over the mule as it came up out of the water. Boon didn't try to mount again. He grasped one stirrup as they went up the bank and crashed through the undergrowth which fringed the bluff and saw the bear on its hind feet, its back against a tree while the bellowing hounds swirled around it and once more Lion drove in, leaping clear of the ground.

This time the bear didn't strike him down. I caught the dog in both arms, almost loverlike, and they both went down. He was off the mule now. He drew back both hammers of the gun but he could see nothing but moiling spotted houndbodies until the bear surged up again. Boon was yelling something, he could not tell what; he could see Lion still clinging to the bear's throat and he saw the bear, half erect, strike one of the hounds with one paw and hurl it five or six feet and then, rising and rising as though it would never stop. stand erect again and begin to rake at Lion's belly with its forepaws. Then Boon was running. The boy saw the gleam of the blade in his hand and watched him leap among the hounds. hurdling them, kicking hem aside as he ran, and fling himself astride the bear as he had hurled himself onto the mule, his legs locked around the bar's belly, his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung, and the glint of the knife as it rose and fell.

It fell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade. Then they went down, pulled over backward by Boon's weight. Boon underneath. It was the bear's back which reappeared first but at once Boon was astride it again. He had never released the knife and again the boy saw the almost infinitesimal movement of his arm and shoulder as he probed and sought; then the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps toward the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.

He and Tennie's Jim ran forward. Boon was kneeling at the bear's head. His left ear was shredded, his left coat sleeve was completely gone, his right boot had been ripped from knee to instep; the bright blood thinned in the thin rain down his leg and hand and arm and down the side of his face which was no longer wild but: was quite calm. Together they prized Lion's jaws from the bear's throat. "Easy, goddamn it." Boon said. "Cant you see his guts are all out of him?" He began to remove his coat. He spoke to Tennie's Jim in that calm voice; "Bring the boat up. It's about a hundred yards down the bank there. I saw it." Tennie's Jim rose and went away. Then, and he could not remember if it had been a call or an exclamation from Tennie's Jim or if he had glanced up by chance, he saw Tennie's Jim stooping and saw Sam Fathers lying motionless on his face in the trampled mud.

The mule had not thrown him. He remembered that Sam was down too even before Boon began to run. There was no mark on him whatever and when he and Boon turned him over, his eyes were open and he said something in that tongue which he and Joe Baker had used to speak together. But he couldn't move. Tennie's Jim brought the skiff up: they could hear him shouting to Major de Spain across the river. Boon wrapped Lion in his hunting coat and carried him down to the skiff and they carried Sam down and returned and hitched the bear to the one-eyed mule's saddle-bow with Tennie's Jim's leash-thong and dragged him down to the skiff and got him

into it and left Tennie's Jim to swim the horse and the two mules back across. Major de Spain caught the bow of the skiff as Boon jumped out and past him before it touched the bank. He looked at Old Ben and said quietly: "Well." Then he walked into the water and leaned down and touched Sam and Sam looked up at him and said something in that old tongue he and Joe Baker spoke. "You don't know what happened?" Major de Spain said.

"No, sir," the boy said. "It wasn't the mule. It wasn't anything. He was off the mule when Boon ran in on the bear. Then we looked up and he was lying on the ground." Boon was shouting at Tennie's Jim, still in the middle of the river.

"Come on, goddamn it!" he said. "Bring me that mule!"

"What do you want with a mule?" Major de Spain said.

Boon didn't even look at him. "I'm going to Hoke's to get the doctor," he said in that calm voice, his face quite calm beneath the steady thinning of the bright blood.

"You need a doctor yourself," Major de Spain said. "Tennie's Jim—"

"Damn that," Boon said. He turned on Major de Spain. His face was still calm, only his voice was a pitch higher. "Cant you see his goddamn guts are all out of him?"

"Boon! Major de Spain said. They looked at one another. Boon was a good head taller than Major de Spain; even the boy was taller now than Major d Spain.

"I've got to get the doctor," Bon said. "His goddamn guts-------"
"All right," Major de Spain said. Tennie's Jim came up out of the water. The horse and the sound mule had already scented Old Ben; they surged and plunged all the way up to the top of the bluff, dragging Tennie's Jim with them, before he could stop them and tie them and come back. Major de Spain unlooped the leather thong of his compass from his buttonhole and gave it to Tennie's Jim. "Go straight to Hoke's," he said. "Bring Doctor Crawford back with you. Tell him there are two men to be looked at. Take my mare, Can you find the road from here?"
"Yes, sir," Tennie's Sim said.
"All right.", Major de Spain said, "Go on." He turned to the boy. "Take the mules and the horse and go back and get the wagon. We'll go on down the river in the boat to Coon bridge. Meet us there. Can you find it again?"
"Yes, sir," the boy said.
"All right. Get started."
He went back to the wagon. He realised then how far they had run. It was already afternoon when he put the mules into the traces and tied the horse's lead-rope to the tail-gate. He reached Coon bridge at dusk. The skiff was already there. Before he could see it and almost before he could see the water he had to leap from the tilting wagon, still holding the reins, and work around to where he could grasp the bit and then the ear of the plunging sound mule and dig his heels and hold it until Boon came up the bank. The rope of the led horse had already snapped and it had already disappeared up the road toward camp. They turned the wagon around and took the mules out and he led the sound mule a hundred yards up the road and tied it. Boon had already brought Lion up to the wagon and Sam was sitting up in the skiff now and when they raised him he tried to walk, up the bank and to the wagon and he tried to climb into the wagon but Boon did not wait; he picked Sam up bodily and set him on the seat. Then they hitched Old Ben to the one-eyed mule's saddle again and dragged him up the bank and set two skid-roles into the open tail-gate and got him into the wagon and he went and got the sound mule and Boon fought it into the traces, striking it across its hard hollow-sounding face it into the traces, striking it across its hard hollow-sounding face until it came into position and stood trembling. Then the rain came down, as though it had off all day waiting on them.

They returned to camp through it, through the streaming and sightless dark. hearing long before they saw any light the horn and the spaced shots to guide them. When they came to Sam's dark little hut he tried to stand up. He spoke again in the tongue of the old father: then he said clearly: "Let me out. Let me out."
"He hasn't got any fire," Major said. "Go on!" he said sharply.
But Sam was struggling now, trying to stand up. "Let me out, master," he said. "Let me go home."
So he stopped the wagon and Boon got down and lifted Sam out. He did not wait to let Sam try to walk this time. He carried him into the hut and Major de Spain got light on a paper spill from the buried embers on the hearth and lit the lamp and Boon put Sam on his bunk and drew off his boots and Major de Spain covered him and the boy was not there, he was holding the mules, the sound one which was trying again to bolt since when the wagon stopped Old Ben's scent drifted forward again along the streaming blackness of air, but Sam's eyes were probably open again on that profound look which saw further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog. Then they went on, toward the long wailing of the horn and the shots which seemed each to linger intact somewhere in the thick streaming air until the next spaced report joined and blended with it, to the lighted house. the bright streaming windows, the quiet faces as Boon entered, bloody and quite calm, carrying the bundled coat. He laid Lion, blood coat and all, on his stale sheetless pallet bed which not even Ash, as deft in the house as a woman, could ever make smooth.

The sawmill doctor from Hoke's was already there. Boon would not let the doctor touch him until he had seen to Lion. He wouldn't risk giving Lion chloroform. He put the entrails back and sewed him up without it while Major de Spain held his head and Boon his feet. But he never tried to move. He lay there, the yellow eyes open upon nothing while the quiet men in the new hunting clothes and in the old ones crowded into the little airless room rank with the smell of Boon's body and garments. and watched. Then the doctor cleaned and disinfected Boon's face and arm and leg and bandaged them and, the boy in front with a lantern and the doctor and McCaslin and Major de Spain and General Compson following, they went to Sam Father's hut. Tennie's Jim had built up the fire; he squatted before it. dozing. Sam had not moved since Boon had put him in the bunk and Major de Spain had covered him with the blankets, yet he opened his eyes and looked from one to another of the faces and when McCaslin touched his shoulder and said, "Sam. The doctor wants to look at you," he even drew his hands out of the blanket and began to fumble at his shirt buttons until McCaslin said, "Wait. We'll do it." They undressed him. He lay there-the copper-brown, almost hair-less body, the old man's body, the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless-motionless, his eyes open but no longer looking at any of them, while the doctor examined him and drew the blankets up and put the stethoscope back into his bag and snapped the bag and only the boy knew that Sam too was going to die.

"Exhaustion," the doctor said. "Shock maybe. A man his age swimming rivers in December. He'll be all right. Just make him stay in bed for a day or two. Will there be somebody here with him?"
"There will be somebody here," Major de Spain said.
They went back to the house, to the rank little room where Boon still sat on the pallet bed with Lion's head under his hand while the men, the ones who had hunted behind Lion and the ones who had never seen him before today, came quietly in to look at him and went away. Then it was dawn and they all went out into the yard to look at Old Ben, with his eyes open too and his lips snarled back from his worn teeth and his eyes open too and his lips snarled back from his skin which were the old bullets (there were fifty-two of them, buckshot rifle and ball) and the single almost invisible slit under his left shoulder where Boon's blade had finally found his life. Then Ash began to beat on the bottom of the dish-pan with a heavy spoon to call them to breakfast and it was the first time he could remember hearing no sound from the dogs under the kitchen while they were eating. It was as if the old bear, even dead there in the year, was a more potent terror still than they could face without Lion between them.

The rain had stopped during the night. By midmorning the thin sun appeared, rapidly burning away mist and cloud, warming the air and the earth; it would be one of those windless Mississippi December days which are a sort of Indain summer's Indian summer. They moved Lion out to the front gallery, into the sun. It was Boon's idea. "Goddamn it," he said, "he never did want to stay in the house until I made him. You know that." He took a crowbar and loosened the floor boards under his pallet bed so it could be raised, mattress and all, without disturbing Lion's position, and they carried him out to the gallery and put him down facing the woods.
Then he and the doctor and McCaskin and Major de Spain went to Sam's hut. This time Sam didn't open his eyes and his breathing was so quiet, so peaceful that they could hardly see that he breathed. The doctor didn't even take out his stethoscope nor even touch him. "He's all right," the doctor said. "He didn't even catch cold. He just quit."
"Quit?" McCaslin said.
"Yes. Old people do that sometimes. Then they get a good night's sleep or maybe it's just a drink of whisky, and they change their minds."
They returned to the house. And then they began to arrive-the swamp-dwellers, the gaunt men who ran trap-lines and lived on quinine and coons and river water, the farmers of little corn-and cotton-patches along the bottom's edge whose fields and cribs and pig-pens the old bear had rifled, the loggers from the camp and the sawmill men from Hoke's and the town men from further away than that, whose hounds the old bear had slain and traps and dead-falls he had wrecked and whose lead he carried. They came up mounted and on foot and in wagons, to enter the yard and look at him and then go on to the front where Lion lay, filling the little yard and overflowing it until there were almost a hundred of them squatting and standing in the warm and drowsing sunlight, talking quietly of hunting, of the game and the dogs which ran it, of hounds and bear and deer and men of yesterday vanished from the earth, while from time to time the great blue dog would open his eyes, not as if he were listening to them but as though to look at the woods or to see that they were still there. He died at sundown.
Major de Spain broke camp that night. They carried Lion into the woods, or Boon carried him that is, wrapped in a quilt from his bed, just as he had refused to let anyone else touch Lion yesterday until the doctor got there; Boon carrying Lion, and the boy and General Compson and Walter and still almost fifty of them following with lanterns and lighted pine-knots—men from Hoke's and even further, who would have to ride out of the bottom in the dark, and swampers and trappers who would have to walk even, scattering toward the little hidden huts where they lived. And Boon would let nobody else dig the grave either and lay Lion in it and cover him and then General Compson stood at the head of it while the blaze and smoke of the pine-knots streamed away among the winter branches and spoke as he would have spoken over a man. Then they returned to camp. Major de Spain and McCaslin and Ash had rolled and tied all the bedding. The mules were hitched to the wagon and pointed out of the bottom and the wagon was already loaded and the stove in the kitchen was cold and the table was set with scraps of cold food and bread and only the coffee was hot when the boy ran into the kitchen where Major de Spain and McCaslin had already eaten. "What?" he cried. "What? I'm not going."
"Yes," McCaslin said. "Were going out tonight. Major wants to get on back home."
"No!" he said, "I'm going to stay."
"You've got to be back in school Monday. You've already missed a week more than I intended. It will take you from now until Monday to catch up. Sam's all right. You heard Doctor Crawford. I'm going to leave Boon and Tennie's Jim both to stay with him until he feels like getting up."
He was panting. The others had come in. He looked rapidly and almost frantically around at the other faces. Boon had a fresh bottle. He upended it and started the cork by striking the bottom of the bottle with the heel of his hand and drew the cork with his teeth and spat it out and drank. "You're damn right you're going back to school," Boon said. "Or I'll burn the tail off you myself if Cass don't, whether you are sixteen

or sixty. Where in hell do you expect to get without education? Where would Cass be? Where in hell would I be if I hadn't never went to school?"

He looked at McCaslin again. He could feel his breath coming shorter and shorter and shallower and shallower, as if there were not enough air in the kitchen for that many to breathe. "This is just Thursday. I'll come home Sunday night on one of the horses. I'll come home Sunday, then. I'll make up the time I lost studying Sunday night. McCaslin," he said, without even despair.

"No, I tell you," McCaslin said. "Sit down here and eat your supper. We're going out to--------"

"Hold up, Cass," General Compson said. The boy did not know General Compson had moved until he put his hand on his shoulder. "What is it, bud?" he said.

"I've got to stay," he said. "I've got to."

"All right," General Compson said. "You can stay. If missing an extra week of school is going to throw you so far behind you'll have to sweat to find out what some hired pedagogue put between the covers of a book, you better quit altogether—And you shut up, Cass," he said, though McCaslin had not spoken. "You've got one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you aint even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing and fearing too maybe but without being afraid, that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear non of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark; maybe by God that's the why and the wherefore of farms and banks—I reckon you still aint going to tell what it is?"

But still he could not. "I've got to stay," he said.

"All right," General Compson said. "There's plenty of grub left. And you'll come home Sunday, like you promised McCaslin? Not Sunday night: Sunday."

"Yes, sir," he said.

"All right," General Compson said. "Sit down and eat, boys," he said. "Let's get started. It's going to be cold before we get home."

They ate. The wagon was already loaded and ready to depart; all they had to do was to get into it. Boon would drive them out to the road, to the farmer's stable where the surrey had been left. He stood beside the wagon, in silhouette on the sky, turbaned like a Paythan and taller than any there, the bottle tilted. Then he flung the bottle from his lips without even lowering it, spinning and glinting in the faint starlight, empty. "Them that's going," he said, "get in the goddamn wagon. Them that aint, get out of the goddamn way." The others got in. Boon mounted to the seat beside General Compson and the wagon moved, on into the obscurity until the boy could no longer see it, even the moving density of it amid the greater night. But he could still hear it, for a long while: the slow, deliberate banging of the wooden frame as it lurched from rut to rut. And he could hear Boon even when he could no longer hear the wagon. He was singing, harsh, tuneless, loud.

That was Thursday. On Saturday morning Tennie's Jim left on McCaslin's woods-horse which had not been out of the bottom one time now in six years, and late that afternoon rode through the gate on the spent horse and on to the commissary where McCaslin was rationing the tenants and the wage-hands for the coming week, and this time McCaslin forestalled any necessity or risk of having to wait while Major de Spain's surrey was being horsed and harnessed. He took their own, and with Tennie's Jim already asleep in the back seat he drove in to Jefferson and waited while Major de Spain changed to boots and put on his overcoat, and they drove the thirty miles in the dark of that night and at daybreak on Sunday morning they swapped to the waiting mare and mule and as the sun rose they rode out of the jungle and onto the low ridge where Boon's spade-marks still showed and beyond the grave the platform of freshly cut saplings bound between four posts and the blanket-wrapped bundle upon the platform and Boon and the boy squatting between the platform and the grave until Boon, the bandage removed, ripped, from his head so that the long scoriations of Old Ben's claws resembled crusted tar in the sunlight, sprang up and threw down upon them with the old gun with which he had never been known to hit

anything although McCaslin was already off the mule, kicked both feet free of the irons and vaulted down before the mule had stopped, walking toward Boon.
"Stand back," Boon said. "By God, you wont touch him. Stand back, McCaslin." Still McCaslin came on, fast yet without haste.
"Cass!" Major de Spain said. Then he said "Boon! You, Boon!" and he was down too and the boy rose too, quickly, and still McCaslin came on not fast but steady and walked up to the grave and reached his hand steadily out, quickly up to the grave and reached his hand steadily out, quickly yet still not fast, and took hold the gun by the middle so that he and Boon faced one another across Lion's grave, both holding the gun, Boon's spent indomitable amazed and frantic face almost a head higher than McCAslin's beneath to heave as though there were not enough air in all the woods, in all the wilderness, for all of them, for him and anyone else, even for him alone.
"Turn it loose, Boon," McCaslin said.
"You damn little spindling—" Boon said. "Don't you know I can take it away from you? Don't you know I can tie it around your neck like a damn cravat?"
"Yes," McCaslin said, "Turn it loose, Boon."
"This is the way he wanted it. He told us. He told us exactly how to do it. And by God you aint going to move him. So we did it like he said, and I been sitting here ever since to keep the damn wildcats and varmints away form him and by God—"
Then McCaslin had the gun, down-slanted while he pumped the slide, the five shells snicking out of it so fast that the last one was almost out before the first one touched the ground and McCaslin dropped the gun behind him without once having taken his eyes from Boon's.
"Did you kill him, Boon?" He said. Then Boon moved. He turned, he moved like he was still drunk and then for a moment blind too, one hand out as he blundered toward the big tree and seemed to stop walking before he reached the tree so that he plunged, fell toward it, flinging up both hands and catching himself against the tree and turning until his back was against it, backing with the tree's trunk his wild spent scoriated face and the tremendous heave and collapse of his chest, McCaslin following, facing him again, never once having moved his eyes from Boon's eyes. "Did you kill him, Boon?"
"No!" Boon said. "No!"
"Tell the truth," McCaslin said. "I would have done it if he had asked me to." Then the boy moved. He was between them, facing McCaslin; the water felt as if it had burst and sprung not from his eyes alone but from his whole face, like sweat.
"Leave him alone!" he cried. "Goddamn it! Leave him alone!"

then he was twenty-one. He could say it, himself and his cousin juxtaposed not against the wilderness but against the tamed land which was to have been his heritage, the land which old Carothers McCaslin his grandfather had bought with white man's money from the wild men whose grandfathers without guns hunted it, and tamed and ordered or believed he had tamed and ordered it for the reason that the human beings he held in bondage and in the power of life and death had removed the forest from it and in their sweat scratched the surface of it to a depth of perhaps fourteen inches in order to grow something out of it which had not been there before and which could be translated back into the money he who believed he had bought it had had to pay to get it and hold it and a reasonable profit too: and for which reason old Carothers McCaslin, knowing better, could raise his children, his descendants and heirs, to believe the land was his to hold and bequeath since the strong and ruthless man has a cynical foreknowledge of his own vanity and pride and strength and a contempt for all his get: just as, knowing better, Major de Spain and his fragment of that wilderness which was bigger and older than any recorded deed: just as, knowing better, old Thomas Sutpen, from whom Major de Spain had had his fragment for money: just as Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, from who Thomas Sutpen had had the fragment for money or rum or whatever it was, knew in his turn that not even a fragment of it had been his to relinquish or sell.

not against the 'wilderness but against' the land, not in pursuit and lust but in relinquishment, and in the commissary as it should have been. not the heart perhaps but certainly the solar-plexus of the repudiated and relinquished: the square, galleried, wooden building squatting like a portent above the fields whose laborers it still held in thrall '65 or no and placarded over with advertisements for snuff and cures for chills and salves and potions manufactured and sold by white men to bleach the pigment and straighten the hair of Negroes that they might resemble the very race which for two hundred years had held them in bondage and from which for another hundred years not even a bloody civil war would have set them completely free himself and his cousin amid the old smells of cheese and salt meat and kerosene and harness, the ranked shelves of tobacco and overalls and bottled medicine and thread and plow-bolts, the barrels and kegs of flour and meal and molasses and nails. the wall pegs dependant with plowlines and plow-collars and hames and trace-chains, and the desk and the shelf above it on which rested the ledgers in which McCaslin recorded the slow outward trickle of food and supplies and equipment which returned each fall as cotton made and ginned and sold (two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on), and the older ledgers clumsy and archaic in size and shape, on the yellowed pages of which were recorded in the faded hand of his father Theophilus and his uncle Amodeus during the two decades before the Civil War, the manumission in title at least of Carothers McCaslin's slaves:

'Relinquish', McCaslin said. 'Relinquish. You, the direct male descendant of him who saw the opportunity and took it. bought the land, took the land, got the land no matter how, held it to bequath, no matter how, out of the old grant, the first patent, when it was a wilderness of wild beasts and wilder men, and cleared it, translated it into something to bequeath to his children, worthy of bequeathment for his descendants' ease and security and pride and to perpetuate but the only and last descendant in the male line and in the third generation, while I am not only four generations from old Carothers, I derived through a woman and the very McCaslin in my name is mine only by sufference and courtesy and my grandmother's pride in what that man accomplished whose legacy and monument you think you can repudiate' and he

'I cant repudiate it. It was never mine to repudiate. It was never Father's and Uncle Buddy's to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never Grandfather's to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudaite because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Grand-father for bequeathment and repudiation. Because it was never Ikkemotubbe's fathers' fathers' to bequeath Ikkemotubbe to sell to Grandfather or any man because on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realised, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever, father to father to father, and the man who bought it bought nothing.'

'Bought nothing?' and he

'Bought nothing. Because He told in the Book how He created the earth, made it and looked at it and said it was all right. and then He made man. He made the earth first and peopled it with dumb creatures, and then He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread. And I know what you are going to say,' he said, 'That nevertheless Grandfather-' and McCaslin

'__did own it. And not the first. Not alone and not the first since, as your Authority states, man was dispossessed of Eden. Nor yet the second and still not alone, on down through the tedious and shabby chronicle of His chosen sprung from Abraham, and of the sons of them who dispossessed Abraham, and of the five hundred years during which half the known world and all it contained was chattel and revokeless thrall to this commissary store and those ledgers yonder during your grandfather's life, and the next thousand years while men fought over the fragments of that collapse until at last even the fragments were exhausted and men snarled over the gnawed bones of the old world's worthless evening until an accidental egg discovered to them a new

hemisphere. So let me say it: That nevertheless and notwithstanding old Carothers did own it. Bought it, got it, no matter; kept it, held it, no matter, bequathed it: else why do you stand here relinquishing and repudiating? Held it, kept it for fifty year, until you could condoned-or did He? looked down and saw-or did He? Or at least did nothing: saw, and could not, or did not see; saw, and would not, or perhaps He would not see-perverse, impotent, or blind: which?' and he
'Dispossessed.' And McCaslin
'What?' and he
'Dispossessed. Not impotent: He didn't condone; not blind, because he watched it. And let me say it. Dispossessed of Eden. Dispossessed of Canaan, and those who dispossessed him dispossessed him dispossessed, and the five hundred years of absentee landlords in the Roman bagnios, and the thousand years of wild men from the northern woods who dispossessed them and devoured their ravished substance ravished in turn again and then snarled in what you call the old world's worthless twilight over the old world's gnawed bones, blasphemous in His name until He used a simple egg to discover to them a new world where a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another. And Grandfather did own the land nevertheless and notwithstanding because He permitted it, not impotent and not condoning and not blind because He ordered and watched it. He saw the land already accursed even as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's father old Issetibbeha and old Issetibbeha's fathers too held it, already tainted even before any white man owned it by what Grandfather and his kind, his fathers, had brought into the new land which He had vouchsafed them out of pity and sufferance, on condition of pity and humility and sufferance and endurance, from that old world's corrupt and worthless twilight as though in the sailfuls of the old world's tainted wind which drove the ships_' and McCaslin
'Ah'.
'_and no hope for the land anywhere so long as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's descendants held it in unbroken succession. Maybe He saw that only by voiding the land for a time of Ikkemotubbe's blood and substituting for it another blood, could He accomplish His purpose. Maybe He knew already what that other blood would be, maybe it was more than justice that only the white man's blood was available and capable to raise the white man's curse, more than vengenace when_' and McCaslin
'Ah.'
'_ when He used the blood which had brought in the evil to destroy the evil as doctors use fever to burn up fever, poison to slay poison. Maybe He chose Grandfather out of all of them He might have picked. Maybe He knew that Grandfather himself would not serve His purpose because Grandfather was born too soon too, but that Grandfather would have descendants, the right descendants; maybe He had foreseen already the descendants Grandfather would have, maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progenitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free_' and McCaslin
'The sons of Ham. You who quote the Book: the sons of Ham.' And he
'There are some things He said in the Book, and some things reported of Him that He did not say. And I know what you will say now: That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You don't need to choose. The heart already knows. He didn't have His Book written to be read by what must elect and choose, but by the heart, not by the wise of the earth because maybe they don't need it or maybe the wise no longer have any heart, but by the doomed and lowly of the earth who have nothing else to read with but the heart. Because the men who wrote His Book for Him were writing about truth and there is only one truth and it covers all things that touch the heart.' and McCaslin
'So these men who transcribed His Book for Him were sometime liars.' And he
'Yes. Because they were human men. They were trying to write down the heart's truth out of the heart's driving complexity, for all the complex and troubled hearts which beat after them. What they were trying to tell, what He wanted said, was too simple. Those for whom they transcribed His words could not have believed them. It had to be expounded in the everyday terms which they were familiar with and could comprehend, not only those who listened but those who told it too, because if they

who were that near to Him as to have been elected from among all who breathed and spoke language to transcribe and relay His words, could comprehend truth only through the complexity of passion and lust and hate and fear which drives the heart, what distance back to truth must they traverse whom truth could only reach by word-of-mouth?' and McCaslin

'I might answer that, since you have taken to proving our points and disproving mine by the same text, I dont know. But I don't say that, because you have answered yourself: No time at all if, as you say, the heart knows truth, since although you admitted three generations form Old Carothers to you, there were not three. There were not even completely two. Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy. And they not the first and not alone. A thousand other Bucks and Buddies in less than two generations and sometimes less than one in this land which so you claim God created and man himself cursed and tainted. Not to mention 1865.' And he

'Yes. More men than Father and Uncle Buddy,' not even glancing toward the shelf above the desk, nor did McCAslin. They did not need to. To him it was as though the ledgers in their scarred cracked leather bindings were being lifted down one by one in their fading sequence and spread open on the desk or perhaps upon some apocryphal Bench or even Altar or perhaps before the Throne Itself for a last persual and contemplation and refreshment of the Allknowledgeable before the yellowed pages and the brown thin ink in which was recorded the injustice and a little at least of its amelioration and restitution faded forever into the anonymous communal original dust

the yellowed pages scrawled in fading ink by the hand first of his grandfather and then of his father and uncle, bachelors up to the past fifty and then sixty, the one who ran the plantation and the farming of it and the other who did the housework and the cooking and continued to do it even after his twin married and the boy himself was born

the two brothers who as soon as their father was burried moved out of the tremendously-conceived, the almost barnlike edifice which he had not even completed, into a one-room log cabin which the two of them built themselves and added other rooms to while they lived in it, refusing to allow any slave to touch any timber of it other than the actual raising into place the logs which two men alone could not handle, and domiciled all the slaves in the big house some of the windows of which were still merely boarded up with odds and ends of plank or with the skins of bear and deer nailed over the empty frames: each sundown the brother who superintended the farming would parade the Negroes as a first sergeant dismisses a company, and herd them willynilly, man woman and child, without question protest or recourse, into the tremendous abortive edifice scarcely yet out of embryo, as if even old Carothers McCaslin had paused aghast at the concrete indication of his own vanity's boundless conceiving: he would call his mental roll and heard them in and with a hand-wrought nail as long as a flenching-knife and suspended form a short deer-hide thong attached to the door-jamb for that purpose, he would nail to the door of that house which lacked half its windows and had no hinged back door at all so that presently and for fifty years afterward when the boy himself was big to hear and remember it, there was in the land a sort of folk-tale: of the countryside all night long full of skulking McCaslin slaves dodging the moonlight roads and the Patrol-riders to visit other plantations, and of the unspoken gentlemen's agreement between the two white men and the two dozen black ones that, after the white man had counted them and driven the home-made nail into the front door at sundown, neither of the white men would go around behind the house and look at the back door, provided that all the Negroes were behind the front one when the brother who drove it drew out the nail again at day-break

the twins who were identical even in their handwriting, unless you had specimens side by side to compare, and even when both hands appeared on the same page (as often happened, as if, long since past any oral intercourse, they had used the diurnally advancing pages to conduct the unavoidable business of the compulsion which had traversed all the waste wilderness of North Mississippi in 1880 and '40 and singled them out to drive) they both looked as though they had been written by the same perfectly normal ten-year-old boy, even to the spelling, except that the spelling did

not improve as one by one the slaves which Carothers McCaslin had inherited and purchased—Roscius and Phoebe and Thucydides and Eunice and their descendants, and Sam Fathers and his mother for both of whom he had swapped an underbred trotting gelding to old Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief from who he had likewise bought the land, and Tennie Beauchamp whom the twin Amodeus had won from a neighbour in a poker-game, and the anomaly calling itself Percival Brownlee which the twin Theophilus had purchased, neither he nor his brother ever knew why apparently, from Bedford Forrest while he was still only a slave-dealer and not yet a general (It was a single page, not long and covering less than a year, not seven months in fact, begun in the hand which the boy had learned to distinguish as that of his father:

Percavil Brownly 26yr Old. Cleark @ Bookepper. Bought from N.B.Forest at Cold Water 3 Mar 1856 $265. dolars

And beneath that, in the same hand:

5 mar 1856 No bookkeeper any way Cant read. Can write his name but I already put that down My self says he can Plough but don't look like it to Me. Sent to Field to day Mar 5 1856

and the same hand:

6 Mar 1856 Cant plough either Says he aims to be a Precher so may be he can lead live stock to Crick to Drink

and this time it was the other, the hand which he now recognised as his uncle's when he could see them both on the same page:

Mar 23th 1856 Cant do that either Except one at a Time Get shut of him

Then the first again:

24 Mar 1856 Who in hell would buy him

then the second:

19th of Apr 1856 Nobody You put yourself out of Market at Cold Water two months ago I never said sell him Free him

The first:

22 Apr 1856 Ill get it out of him

the second:

Jun 13th 1856 How $1 per 265$ 265 yrs Wholl sign his Free paper

Then the first again:

1 Oct 1856 Mule josephine Broke Leg @ shot Wrong stall wrong niger wrong everything $100 dolars

and the same:

2 Oct 1856 Freed Debit McCaslin @ McCaslin $265. Dolars

then the second again:

Oct 3th Debit Theophilus McCaslin Niger 265$ Mule 100$ 365$ He hasnt gone yet Father should be here

then the first:

3 Oct 1356 Son of a bitch wont leave What would father done the second:

the second:

29th of Oct 1856 Renamed him

the first:

31 Oct 1856 Renamed him what

the second:

Chrstms 1856 Spintrius

took substance and even a sort of shadowy life with their passions and complexities too as page followed page and year year; all there, not only the general and condoned injustice and its slow amortization but the specific tragedy which had not been condoned and could never be amortized, the new page and the new ledger, the hand which he could now recognise at first glance as his father's:

Father dide Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Callina 1772 Missippy 1837. Dide and burid 27 June 1837
Ruskus, rased by Grandfather in Callina Don't know how old. Freed 27 June 1837 Don't want to leave. Dide and Burid 12 Jan 1841
Fibby Roskus Wife, bought by grandfather in Callina says Fifty Freed 27 June 1837 Don't want to leave. Dide and burd 1 Aug 1849
Thucydus Roskus @ Fibby Son born in Callina 1779. Refused 10acre peace fathers Will 28 June 1837 Refused Cash offer $200. Dolars from A.@ T.McCaslin 28 Jun 1837 Wants to stay and Work it out

And beneath this and covering the next five pages and almost that many years, the slow, day-by-day accruement of the wages allowed him and the food and clothing-the molasses and meat and meal, the cheap durable shirts and jeans and shoes and now and then a coat against rain and cold – charged against the slowly yet steadily mounting sum of balance (and it would seem to the boy that he could actually see the black man, the slave whom which the black man could never be free so long as memory lasted, entering the commissary, asking permission perhaps of the white man's son to see the ledger-page which he could not even read, not even asking for the white man's word, which he would have had to accept for the reason that there was absolutely no way under the sun for him to test it, as to how the account stood, how much longer before he could go and never return, even if only as far as Jefferson seventeen miles away) on to the double pen-stroke closing the final entry:

3 Nov 1841 By Cash to Thucydus McCaslin $200. dolars Set Up blacksmith in J. Dec 1841 Dide and Burid in J. 17 feb 1854
Eunice Bought by Father in New Orleans 1807 $650. dolars. Marrid to Thucydus 1809 Drownd in Crick Cristmas Day 1832

And then the other hand appeared, the first time he had seen it in the ledger to distinguish it as his uncle's, the cook and housekeeper whom even McCaslin, who had known him and the boy's father for sixteen years before the boy was born, remembered as sitting all day long in the rocking chair from which he cooked the food, before the kitchen fire on which he cooked it:

June 21th 1833 Drownd herself

And the first:

23 Jun 1833 Who in hell heard of a niger drownding him self

and the second, unhurried, with a complete finality; the two identical entries might have been made with a rubber stamp save of the date:

Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself

And he thought *But why? But why?* He was sixteen then. It was neither the first time he had been alone in the commissary nor the first time he had taken down the old ledgers familiar on their shelf above the desk ever since he could remember. As a child and even after nine and ten and eleven, when he had learned to read, he would look up at the scarred and cracked backs and ends but with no particular desire to open them, and though he intended to examine them someday because he realised that they probably contained a chronological and much more comprehensive though doubtless tedious record than he would never get from any other source, not alone of his own flesh and blood but of all his people, not only the whites but the black one too, who were as much a part of his ancestry as his white progenitors, and of the land which they had all held and used in common without regard to color or titular ownership, it would only be on some idle day when he was old and perhaps even bored a little since what the old books contained would be after all these years fixed immutably, finished, unalterable, harmless. Then he was sixteen. He knew what he was going to find before he found it. He got the commissary key from McCaslin's room after midnight while McCaslin was asleep and with the commissary door shut and locked behind him and the forgotten lantern stinking anew the rank dead icy air, he leaned above the yellowed page and thought not Why drowned herself, but thinking what he believed his father had thought when he found his brother's first comment: Why did Uncle Buddy think she had drowned herself? finding, beginning to find on the next succeeding page what he knew he would find, only this was still not it because he already knew this:

Tomasina called Tomy Daughter of Thucydus @ Eunice Born 1810 dide in Child bed June 1883 and Burd. Yr stars fell

nor the next:

Turl Son of Thucydus @ Eunice Tomy born Jun 1883 yr stars Fell Fathers will

And nothing more, no tedious recording filling this page of wages day by day and food and clothing charged against them, no entry of his death and burial because he had outlived his white half-brothers and the books which McCaslin kept did not include obituaries: just Fathers will and he had seen that too: old Carothers' bold cramped hand far less legible than his sons' even and not much better in spelling, who while capitalising almost every noun and verb, made no effort to punctuate or construct whatever, just as he made no effort either to explain or obfuscate the thousand-dollar legacy to the son of an unmarried slave-girl, to be paid only at the child's coming-of-age, bearing the consequence of the act of which there was still no definite incontrovertible proof that he acknowledged, not out of his own substance but penalising his sons with it, charging them a cash forfeit on the accident of their own paternity; not even a bribe for silence toward his own fame since his fame would suffer only after he was no longer present to defend it, flinging almost contemptuously, as he might a cast-off hat or pair of shoes, the thousand dollars which could have had no more reality to him under those conditions than it would

have to the Negro, the slave who would not even see it until he came of age, twenty-one years too late to begin to learn what money was. *So I reckon that was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger he thought. Even if My son wasn't but just two words. But there must have been love he thought. Some sort of love. Even what he would have called love: not just an afternoon's or a night's spitton.* There was the old man, within five years of his life's end, long a widower and, since his sons were not only bachelors but were approaching middle age, lonely in the house and doubtless even bored since his plantation was established now and functioning and there was enough-money now, too much of it probably for a man whose vices even apparently remained below his means: there was the girl, husbandless and young, only twenty-three when the child was born: perhaps he had sent for her at first out of loneliness, to have a young voice and movement in the house, summoned her, bade her mother send her each morning to sweep the floors and make the beds and the mother acquiescing since that was probably already understood, already planned: the only child of a couple who were not field hands and who held themselves something above the other slaves not alone for that reason but because the husband and his father, and the white man himself had travelled three hundred miles and better to New Orleans in a day when men travelled by horseback or steamboat, and bought the girl's mother as a wife for

and that was all. The old frail pages seemed to turn of their own accord even while he thought *His own daughter His own daughter. No No Not even him* back to that one where the white man (not even a widower then) who never went anywhere any more than his sons in their time ever did and who did not need another slave, had gone all the way to the New Orleans and bought one. And Tomey's Terrel was still alive when the boy was ten years old and he knew from his own observation and memory that there had already been some white in Tomey's Terrel's blood before his father gave him the rest of it; and looking down at the yellowed page spread beneath the yellow glow of the lantern smoking and stinking in that rank chill midnight room fifty years later, he seemed to see her actually walking into the icy creek on that Christman day six months before her daughter's and her lover's (Her first lover's he thought, Her first) child was born, solitary, inflexible, griefless, ceremonial, in formal and succinct repudaition of grief and despair who had already had to repudiate belief and hope

that was all. He would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he; the yellowed pages in their fading and implacable succession were as much a part of his consciousness and would remain so forever, as the fact of his own nativity:

> Tennie Beauchamp 21yrs Won by Amodeus McCaslin from
> Hubert Beauchamp Esqre Possible Strait against three Treys in
> Sigt Not called 1851 Marrid to Tomys Turl 1859

and no date of freedom because her freedom, as well as that of her first surviving child, derived not from Buck and Buddy McCaslin in the commissary but from a stranger in Washington and no date of death and burial, not only because McCaslin kept no obituaries in his books, but because in this year 1883 she was still alive and would remain so to see a grandson by her last surviving child:

> *Amodeus McCaslin Beauchamp Son of tomys Turl @ Tennie*
> *Beauchamp 1859 dide 1859*

Then his uncle's entire, because his father was now a member of the cavalry command of that man whose name as slave-dealer he could not even spell: and not even a page and not even a full line:

> *Dauter Tomes Turl and tenny 1862*

and not even a line and not even a sex and no cause given though the boy could guess it because McCaslin was thirteen then and he remembered how there was not always enough to eat in more places than Vicksburg:

> *Child of tomes Turl and Tenny 1863*

And the same hand again and this one lived, as though Tennie's perseverance and the fading and diluted ghost of old Carothers' ruthlessness had at last conquered even starvation: and clearer, fuller, more carefully written and spelled than the boy had yet seen it, as if the old man, who should have been a woman to begin with, trying to run what was left of the plantation in his brother's absence in the intervals of cooking and caring for himself and the fourteen-year-old orphan, had taken as an omen for renewed hope the fact that this nameless inheritor of slaves was at least remaining alive long enough to receive a name:

James Thucydus Beauchamp Son of Tomes Turl and Tenny Beauchamp Born 29th december 1864 and both Well Wanted To call him Theophilus but Tride Amodeus McCaslin and Callina McCaslin and both dide so Disswaded Them Born at Two clock A,m, both Well

But no more, nothing; it would be another two years yet before the boy, almost a man now, would return from the abortive trip into Tennesse with the still-intact third of old Carothers' legacy to his Negro son and his descendants, which as the three surviving children established at last one by one their apparent intention of surviving, their white half-uncles had increased to a thousand dollars each, conditions permitting, as they came of age, and completed the page himself as far as it would even be completed when that day was long passed beyond which a man born in 1864 (or 1867 either, when he himself saw light) could have expected or himself hoped or even wanted to be still alive; his own hand now, queerly enough resembling neither his father's nor his uncle's nor even McCaslin's, but like that of his grandfather's save for the spelling:

Vanished sometime on night of his twenty-first birthday Dec 29 1885. Traced by Isaac McCaslin to Jackson Tenn. And there lost. His third of legacy $1000,00 returned to McCaslin Edmonds Trustee this day Jan 12, 1886

But not yet: that would be two years yet: and now his father's again, whose old commander was now quit of soldiering and slave-trading both; once more in the ledger and then not again and more illegible than ever, almost indecipherable at all from the rheumatism which now crippled him and almost completely innocent now even of any sort of spelling as well as punctuation, as if the four years during which he had followed the sword of the only man ever breathing who ever sold him a Negro, let alone beat him in a trade, had convinced him not only of the vanity of faith and hope but of orthography too:

Miss sophonsiba b dtr t t @ 1869

But not of belief and will because it was there, written, as McCaslin had told him, with the left hand, but there in the ledger one time more and then not again, for the boy himself was a year old, and when Lucas was born-six years later, his father and uncle had been dead inside the same twelve-months almost five years; his own hand again, who was there and saw it, 1886, she was just seventeen, two years younger than himself, and he was in the commissary when McCaslin entered out of the first of dusk and said, 'He wants to marry Fonsiba,' like that: and he looked past McCaslin and saw the man, the stranger, taller than McCaslin and wearing better clothes than McCaslin and most of the other white men the boy knew habitually wore, who entered the room like a white man and stood in it like a white man, as though he had let McCaslin precede him into it not because McCaslin's skin was white but simply because McCaslin lived there and knew the way, and who talked like a white man too, looking at him past McCaslin's shoulder rapidly and keenly once and then no more, without further interest, as a mature and contained white man not impatient but just pressed for time might have looked. 'Marry Fonsiba?' he cried. 'Marry Fonsiba?'

and then no more either, just watching and listening while McCaslin and the Negro talked:

'To live in Arkansas, I believe you said'.
'Yes. I have property there, A farm.'
'Property? A farm? You own it?'
'Yes'.
'You dont say Sir, do you?'
'To my elders, yes'.
'I see. You are from the North.'
'Yes. Since a Child.'
'Then your father was a slave.'
'Yes. Once.'
'Then how do you own a farm in Arkansas?'
'I have a grant. It was my father's. From the United States. For military service
'I see,' McCaslin said. 'The Yankee army.'
The United States army,' the stranger said; and then himseir again, crying it at McCaslin's back:
'Call aunt Tennie! I'll go get her! I'll-'But McCaslin was not even including him; the stranger did not even glance back toward his voice, the two of them speaking to one another again as if he were not even there:
'Since you seem to have it all settled,' McCaslin said, 'why have you bothered to consult my authority at all?'
'I don't,' the stranger said. 'I acknowledge your authority only so far as you admit your responsibility toward her as a female member of the family of which you are the head. I don't ask your permission. I—'
'That will do!' McCaslin said. But the stranger did not falter. It was neither as if he were ignoring McCaslin nor as if he had failed to hear him. It was as though he were making, not at all an excuse and not exactly a justification, but simply a statement which the situation absolutely required and demanded should be made in McCaslin's hearing whether McCaslin listened to it or not. It was as if he were talking to himself, for himself to hear the words spoken aloud. They faced one another, not close yet at slightly less than foils' distance, erect, their voices not raised, not impactive, just succinct:
'—I inform you, notify you in advance as chief of her family. No man of honor could do less. Besides, you have, in your way, according to your lights and upbringing—'
"That's enough, I said,' McCaslin said. 'Be off this place by full dark. Go'. But for another moment the other did not move, contemplating McCaslin with that detached and heatless look, as if he were watching reflected in McCaslin's pupils thetiny image of the figure he was sustaining.
'Yes', he said 'After all, this is your house. And in your fashion you have... But no matter. You are right. This is enough.' He turned back toward the door; he paused again but only for a second, already moving while he spoke: 'Be easy. I will be good to her'. Then he was gone.
'But how did she ever know him?' the buy cried. 'I never even heard of him before! And Fonsiba, that's never been off this place except to go to church since she was born—'
'Ha', McCaslin said. 'Even their parents dont know until too late how seventeen-year-old girls ever met the men who marry them too, if they are lucky'. And the next morning they were both gone, Fonsiba too. McCaslin never saw her again, nor did he, because the woman he found at last five months later was no one he had ever known. He carried a third of the three-thousand-dollar fund in gold in a money-belt, as when he had vainly traced Tennle's Jim into Tennessee a year ago. They—the man—had left an address of some sort with Tennie, and three months later a letter came, written by the man although McCaslin's wife Alice had taught Fonsiba to read and write too a little. But it bore a different postmark from the address the man had left with Tennie, and he travelled by rail as far as he could and then by contracted stage and

then by a hired livery rig and then by rail again for a distance: an experienced traveller by now and an experienced bloodhound too and a successful one this time because he would have to be; as the slow interminable empty muddy December miles crawled and crawled and night followed night in hotels, in roadside taverns of rough logs and containing little else but a bar, and in the cabins of strangers and the hay of lonely barns, in none of which he dared undress because of his secret golden girdle like that of a disguised one of the Magi travelling incognito and not even hope to draw him but only determination and desperation, he would tell himself: *I will have to find her. I will have to. We have already lost one of them: I will have to find her this time.* He did. Hunched in the slow and icy rain, on a spent hired horse splashed to the chest and higher, he saw it-a single log edifice with a clay chimney which seemed in process of being flattened by the rain to a nameless and valueless rubble of dissolution in that roadless and even pathless waste of unfenced fallow and wilderness jungle—no barn, no stable, not so much as a hen-coop: just a log cabin built by hand and no clever hand either, a meagre pile of clumsily-cut fire-wood sufficient for about one day and not even a gaunt hound to come bellowing out from under the house when he rode up—a farm only in embryo, perhaps a good farm, maybe even a plantation someday, but not now, not for years yet and only then with labor, hard and enduring and unflagging work and sacrifice; he shoved open the crazy kitchen door in its awry frame and entered an icy gloom where not even a fire for cooking burned and after another moment saw, crouched into the wall's angle behind a crude table, the coffee-colored face which he had known all his life but knew no more, the body which had been born within a hundred yards of the room that he was born in and in which some of his own blood ran but which was now completely inheritor of generation after generation to whom an unannounced white man on a horse was a white man's hired Patroller wearing a pistol sometimes and a blacksnake whip always; he entered the next room, the only other room the cabin owned, and found, sitting there in the only chair in the house, before that miserable fire for which there was not wood sufficient to last twenty-four hours, in the same ministerial clothing in which he had entered the commissary five months ago and a pair of gold-framed spectacles which, when he looked up and then rose to his feet, the boy saw did not even contain lenses, reading a book in the midst of that desolation, that muddy waste fenceless and even pathless and without even a walled shed for stock to stand beneath: and over all, permeant, clinging to the man's very clothing and exuding from his skin itself, that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion, that boundless rapacity and folly, of the carpet-bagger followers of victorious armies. 'Don't you see?' he cried, 'Don't you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse? Granted that my people brought the curse onto the land: maybe for that reason their descendants alone can—not resist it, not combat it—maybe just endure and outlast it until the curse is lifted. Then your peoples' turn will come because we have forfeited ours. But not now, Not yet. Don't you see?"

The other stood now, the unfrayed garments still ministerial even if not quite so fine, the book closed upon one finger to keep the place, the lensless spectacles held like a music master's wand in the other workless hand while the owner of it spoke his measured and sonorous imbecility of the boundless folly and the baseless hope: 'You're wrong. The curse you whites brought into this land has been lifted. It has been voided and discharged. We are seeing a new ear, an era dedicated, as our founders intended it, to freedom, liberty and equality for all, to which this country will be the new Canaan—'
'Freedom from what? From work? Canaan?' He jerked his arm, comprehensive, almost violent: whereupon it all seemed to stand there about them, intact and complete and visible in the drafty, damp, heatless, Negro-stale, Negro-rank sorry room—the empty fields without plow or seed to work them, fenceless against the stock which did not exist within or without the walled stable which likewise was not there. 'What corner of Canaan is this?'

'You are seeing it at a bad time. This is winter. No man farms this time of year.'
'I see. And of course her need for food and clothing will stand still while the land lies fallow.'
'I have a pension,' the other said. He said it as a man might say *I have grace or I own a gold mine.* 'I have my father's pension too. It will arrive on the first of the month. What day is this?'
'The eleventh,' he said. 'Twenty days more. And until then?'
'I have a few groceries in the house form my credit account with the merchant in Midnight who banks my pension check for me. I have executed to him a power of attorney to handle it for me as a matter of mutual—'
'I see. And if the groceries don't last the twenty days?'
'I still have one more hog.'
'Where?'
'Outside,' the other said.' It is customary in this country to allow stock to range free during the winter for food. It comes up from time to time. But no matter if it doesn't; I can probably trace its footprints when the need—'
'Yes!' he cried. 'Because no matter: you still have the pension check. And the man in Midnight will cash it and pay himself out of it for what you have already eaten and if there is any left over, it is yours. And the hog will be eaten by then or you still cant catch it, and then what will you do?'
'It will be almost spring then, the other said. 'I am planning in the spring—'
'It will be January, he said. 'And then February. And then more than half of March—' and when he stopped again in the kitchen she had not moved, she did not even seem to breathe or to be alive except her eyes watching him; when he took a step toward her it was still not movement because she could have retreated no further: only the tremendous fathomless ink-colored eyes in the narrow, thin, too thin coffee-colored face watching him without alarm, without recognition, without hope.
'Fonsiba', he said. 'Fonsiba. Are you all right?'
'I'm free,' she said. Midnight was a tavern, a livery stable, a big store (that would be where the pension check banked itself as a matter of mutual elimination of bother and fret, he thought) and a little one, a saloon and a blacksmith shop. But there was a bank there too. The president (the owner, for all practical purposes) of it was a translated Mississippian who had been one of the Forrest's men too: and his body lightened of the golden belt for the first time since he left home eight days ago, with pencil and paper he multiplied three dollars by twelve months and divided it into one thousand dollars; it would stretch that way over almost twenty-eight years and for twenty-eight years at least she would not starve, the banker promising to send the three dollars himself by a trusty messenger on the fifteenth of each month and put it into her actual hand, and he returned home and that was all because in 1874 his father and his uncle were both dead and the old ledgers never again came down from the shelf above the desk to which his father had returned them for the last time that day in 1869. But he could have completed it:

> *Lucas Quintus Carothers McCaslin Beauchamp. Last surviving son and child of Tomey's Terrel and Tennie Beauchamp March 17, 1874*

except that there was no need: not *Lucius Quintus @c @c @c*, but *Lucas Quintus*, not refusing to be called Lucius, because he simply eliminated that word from the name; not denying, declining the name itself, because he used three quarters of it: but simply taking the name and changing, altering it, making it no longer the white man's but his own, by himself composed, himself selfprogenitive and nominate, by himself ancestored, as, for all the old ledgers recorded to the contrary, old Carothers himself was
and that was all: 1874 the boy; 1888 the man, repudiated denied and free; 1895 and husband but no father, unwidowered but without a wife, and found long since that no man is ever free and probably could not bear it if he were; married then and living in Jefferson in the little new jerrybuilt bungalow which his wife's father had given them: and one morning Lucas stood suddenly in the doorway of the room where he was reading the Memphis paper and he looked at the paper's dateline and thought *It's*

his birthday He's twenty-one today and Lucas said: 'Whar's the rest of that money old Carothers left? And McCaslin
'More men than that one Buck and Buddy to fumble-heed that truth so mazed for them that spoke it and so confused for them that heard yet still there was 1865:' and he
'But not enough. Not enough of even Father and Uncle Buddy to fumble-heed in even three generations not even three generations fathered by Grandfather not even if there had been nowhere beneath His sight any but Grandfather and so He would not even have needed to elect and choose. But he tried and I know what you will say. That having Himself created them He could have known no more of hope than He could have pride and grief but He didn't hope He just waited because He had made them: not just because He had set them alive and in motion but because He had already worried with them so long: because He had seen how in individual cases they were capable of anything any height or depth remembered in mazed incomprehension out of heaven where hell was created too and so He must admit them or else admit His equal somewhere and so be no longer God and therefore must accept responsibility for what He himself had done in order to live with Himself in His lonely and paramount heaven. And He probably knew it was vain but He had created them and knew them capable of all things because He had shaped them out of the primal Absolute which contained all and had watched them since in their individual exaltation and baseness and they themselves not knowing why nor how nor even when: until at last He saw that they were all Grandfather all of them and that even from them the elected and chosen the best the very best He could expect (not hope mind: not hope) would be Bucks and Buddies and not even enough of them and in the third generation not even Bucks and Buddies but—'and McCaslin
'Ah:' and he
'Yes. If He could see Father and Uncle Buddy in Grandfather He must have seen me too. —an Isaac into a later life than Abraham's and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore safe declining the altar because maybe this time the exasperated Hand might not supply the kid-' and McCaslin
'Escape:' and he
'All right. Escape—Until one day He said what you told Fonsiba's husband that afternoon here in this room: *This will do. This is enough*: not in exasperation or rage or even just sick to death as you were sick that day: just *This is enough* and looked about for one last time, for one time more since He had created them, upon this land this South for which He had done so much with woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild summers for men and animals and saw no hope anywhere and looked beyond it where hope should have been, where to East North and West lay illimitable that whole hopeful continent dedicated as a refuge and sanctuary of liberty and freedom from what you called the old world's worthless evening and saw the rich descendants of slavers, females of both sexes, to whom the black they shrieked of was another specimen another example like the Brazilian macaw brought home in a cage by a traveller, passing resolutions about horror and outrage in warm and air-proof halls: and the thundering cannonade of politicians earning votes and the medicine-shows of pulpiteers earning Chautauqua fees, to whom the outrage and the injustice were as much abstractions as Tariff or Silver or Immortality and who employed the very shackles of its servitude and the sorry rags of its regalia as they did the other beer and banners and mottoes redfire and brimstone and sleight-of-hand and musical handsaws: and the whirling wheels which manufactured for a profit the pristine replacements of the shackles and shoddy garments as they wore out and spun the cotton and made the gins which ginned it and the cars and ships which hauled it, and the commissions for selling it: and He could have repudiated them since they were his creation now and forever more throughout all their generations until not only that old world from which He had rescued them but this new one too which He had revealed and led them to as a sanctuary and refuge were become the same worthless tideless rock cooling in the last crimson evening except that out of all that empty sound and bootless fury one silence, among that loud and moiling all of them just one simple horror and outrage and was crude enough to

act upon that, illiterate and had no words for talking or perhaps was just busy and had no time to, one out of them all who did not bother Him with cajolery and adjuration then pleading then threat and had not even bothered to inform Him in advance what he was about so that a lesser than he might have even missed the simple act of lifting the long ancestral musket down from the deerhorns above the door, whereupon He said *My name is Brown too* and the other *So is mine* and He *Then mine or yours cant be because I am against it* and the other, *So am I* and He triumphantly *Then where are you going with that gun*? and the other told him in one sentence one word and He: amazed: Who knew neither hope nor pride nor grief *But your Association, your Committee, your officers. Where are your Minutes, your Motions, your Parliamentary Procedures*? And the other *I aint against them. They are all right I reckon for them that have the time. I am just against the weak because they are niggers being held in bondage by the strong just because they are white.* So He turned once more to this land which He still intended to save because He had so much for it—'and McCaslin

'What?' and he

'—to these people He was still committed to because they were his creations-' and McCaslin

'Turned back to us? His face to us?' and he

'-whose wives and daughters at least made soups and jellies for them when they were sick and carried the trays through the mud and the winter too into the stinking cabins and sat in the stinking cabins and kept fires going until crises came and passed but that was not enough: and when they were very sick had them carried into the big house itself into the company room itself maybe and nursed them there which the white man would have done too for any other of his cattle that was sick but at least the man who hired one from a livery wouldn't have and still that was not enough: so that He said and not in grief than either Who had made them and so could know no more of grief than He could of pride or hope: *Apparently they can learn nothing save through suffering, remember nothing save when underlined in blood*—'and McCaslin

'Ashby on an afternoon's ride, to call on some remote maiden cousins of his mother or maybe just acquaintances of hers, comes by chance upon a minor engagement of outposts and dismounts and with his crimson-lined cloak for target leads a handful of troops he never saw before against an entrenched position of backwoods-trained riflemen. Lee's battle-order, wrapped maybe about a handful of cigars and doubtless thrown away when the last cigar was smoked, found by a Yankee Intelligence officer on the floor of a Saloon behind the Yankee lines after Lee had already divided his forces before Sharpsburg. Jackson on the Plank Road, already rolled up the flank which Hooker believed could not be turned and, waiting only for night to pass to continue the brutal and incessant slogging which would fling that whole wing back into Hooker's lap where he sat on a front gallery in Chancellorsville drinking rum toddies and telegraphing Lincoln that he had defeated Lee, is shot from among a whole covey of minor officers and in the blind night by one of his own patrols, leaving as next by seniority Stuart that gallant man born apparently already horsed and sabred and already knowing all there was to know about war except the slogging and brutal stupidity of it: and that same Stuart off raiding Pennsylvania hen-roosts when Lee should have known of all of Meade just where Hancock was on Cemetery Ridge: and Longstreet too at Gettysburg and that Longstreet shot out of Saddle by his own men in the dark by mistake just as Jackson was. His face to us? His face to us?' and he

'How else have made them fight? Who else but Jacksons and Stuarts and Ashbys and Morgans and Forrests? —the farmers of the central and middle-west, holding land by the acre instead of the tens or maybe even the hundreds, farming it themselves and to no single crop of cotton or tobacco or cane, owning no slaves and needing and wanting none and already looking toward the Pacific coast, not always as long as two generations there and having stopped where they did stop only through the fortuitous mischance that an ox died or a wagon-axle broke. And the New England mechanics who didn't even own land and measured all things by the weight of water and the cost of turning wheels and the narrow fringe of traders and ship-owners still looking backward across the Atlantic and attached to the continent only by their counting-

houses. And those who should have had the alertness to see: the wildcat manipulators of mythical wilderness townsites; and the astuteness to rationalise: the bankers who held the morgages on the land which the first were only waiting to abandon and on the railroads and steamboats to carry them still further west, and on the factories and the wheels and the rented tenements those who ran them lived in; and leisure and scope to comprehend and fear in time and even anticipate: the Boston-bred (even when not born in Boston) spinster descendants of long lines of similarly-bred and likewise spinster aunts and uncles whose hands knew no callus except that of the indicting pen, to whom the wilderness itself began at the top of tide and who looked, if at anything other than Beacon Hill, only toward heaven-not to mention all the loud rabble of the camp-followers of pioneers: the bellowing politicians, the mellifluous choiring of self-styled men of God, the—'and McCaslin
'Here, here. Wait a minute:' and he
'Let me talk now. I'm trying to explain to the head of my family something which I have got to do which I don't quite understand myself, not in justification of it but to explain it if I can. I could say I don't know why I must do it but that I do know I have got to because I have got myself to have to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in. But you are the head of my family. More, I knew a long time ago that I would never have to miss my father, even if you are just finding out that you have missed your son. —the drawers of bills and the shavers of notes and the schoolmasters and the self-ordained to teach and lead and all that horde of the semi-literate with a white shirt but no change for it, with one eye on themselves and watching each other with the other one. Who else could have made them fight: could have struck them so aghast with fear and dread as to turn shoulder to shoulder and face one way and even stop talking for a while and even after two years of it keep them still so wrung with terror that some among them would seriously propose moving their very capital into a foreign country lest it be ravaged and pillaged by a people whose entire white male population would have little more than filled any one of their larger cities: except Jackson in the Valley and three separate armies trying to catch him and none of them ever knowing whether they were just retreating from a battle or just running into one and Stuart riding his whole command entirely around the biggest single armed force this continent ever saw in order to see what it looked like from behind and Morgan leading a cavalry charge against a stranded man-of-war. Who else could have declared a war against a power with ten times the area and a hundred times the men and a thousand times the resources, except men who could believe that all necessary to conduct a successful war was not acumen nor shrewdness nor politics nor diplomcy nor money nor even integrity and simple arithmetic but just love of land and courage—'
'And an umblemished and gallant ancestry and the ability to ride a horse,' McCaslin said. 'Don't leave that out.' It was evening now, the tranquil sunset of October mazy with windless woodsmoke. The cotton was long since picked and ginned, and all day now the wagons loaded with gathered corn moved between field and crib, processional across the enduring land. 'Well, maybe that's what He wanted. At least, that's what He got'. This time there was no yellowed procession of fading and harmless ledger-pages. This was chronicled in a harsher book and McCaslin, fourteen and fifteen and sixteen, had seen it and the boy himself had inherited it as Noah's grandchildren had inherited the Flood although they had not been there to see the deluge: that dark corrupt and bloody time while three separate peoples had tried to adjust not only to one another but to the new land which they had created and inherited too and must live in for the reason that those who had lost it were no less free to quit it than those who had gained it were: —those upon whom freedom and equality had been dumped overnight and without warning or preparation or any training in how to employ it or even just endure it and who misused it not as children would nor yet because they had been so long in bondage and then so suddenly freed, but misused it as human beings always misuse freedom, so that he thought *Apparently there is a wisdom beyond even that learned through suffering necessary for a man to distinguish between liberty and license*; those who had fought for four years and lost to preserve a condition under which that franchisement was anomaly and paradox, not because they were opposed to freedom as freedom but for the old

reasons for which man (not the generals and politicians but man) had always fought and died in wars: to preserve a status quo or to establish a better future one to endure for his children; and lastly, as if that were not enough for bitterness and hatred and fear, that third race even more alien to the people whom they resembled in pigment and in whom even the same blood ran, than to the people whom they did not, —that race threefold in one and alien even among themselves save for a single fierce will for rapine and pillage, composed of the sons of middleaged Quartermaster lieutenants and Army sutlers and contractors in military blankets and shoes and transport mules, who followed the battles they themselves had not helped to gain, sanctioned and protected even if not blessed, and left their bones and in another generation would be engaged in a fierce economic competition of small sloven farms with the black men they were supposed to have freed and the white descendants of fathers who had owned no slaves anyway whom they were supposed to have disinherited and in the third generation would be back once more in the little lost country seats as barbers and garage mechanics and deputy sheriffs and mill and gin-hands and power-plant firemen, leading, first in mufti then later in an actual formalised regalia of hooded sheets and passwords and fiery christian symbols, lynching mobs against the race their ancestors had come to save: and of all that other nameless horde of speculators in human misery, manipulators of money and politics and land, who follow catastrophe and are their own protection as grasshoppers are and need no blessing and sweat no plow or axe-helve and batten and vanish and leave no bones, just as they derived apparently from no ancestry, no mortal flesh, no act even of passion or even of lust: and the Jew who came without protection too since after two thousand years he had got out of the habit of being or needing it, and solitary, without even the solidarity of the locusts and in this a sort of courage since he had come thinking not in terms of simple pillage but in terms of his great-grand-children, seeking yet some place to establish them to endure even though forever alien: and unblessed: a pariah about the face of the Western earth which twenty centuries later was still taking revenge on him for the fairy tale with which he had conquered it. McCaslin had actually seen it, and the boy even at almost eighty would never be able to distinguish certainly between what he had seen and what had been told him: a lightless and gutted and empty land where women crouched with the huddled children behind locked doors and men armed in sheets and masks rode the silent roads and the bodies of white and black both, victims not so much of hate as of desperation and despair, swung from lonely limbs: and men shot dead in polling-booths with the still wet pen in one hand and the unblotted ballot in the other: and a United States marshal in Jefferson who signed his official papers with a crude cross, an ex-slave called Sickymo, not at all because his ex-owner was a doctor and apothecary but because, still a slave, he would steal his master's grain alcohol and dilute it with water and peddle it in pint bottles from a cache beneath the roots of a big sycamore tree behind the drug store, who had attained his high office because his half-white sister was the concubine of the Federal A.P.M.: and this time McCaslin did not even say Look but merely lifted one hand, not even pointing, not even specifically toward the shelf of ledgers but toward the desk, toward the corner where it sat beside the scuffed patch on the floor where two decades of heavy shoes had stood while the white man at the desk added and multiplied and subtracted. And again he did not need to look because he had seen this himself and, twenty-three years after the Surrender and twenty-four after the Proclamation, was still watching it: the ledgers, new ones now and filled rapidly, succeeding one another rapidly and containing more names than old Carothers or even his father and Uncle Buddy had ever dreamed of; new names and new faces to go with them, among which the old names and faces that even his father and uncle would have recognised, were lost, vanished—Tomey's Terrel dead, and even the tragic and miscast Percival Brownlee, who couldn't keep books and couldn't farm either, found his true niche at last, reappeared in 1862 during the boy's father's absence and had apparently been living on the plantation for at least a month before his uncle found out about it, conducting impromptu revival meetings among Negroes, preaching and leading the singing also in his high sweet true soprano voice and disappeared again on foot and at top speed, not behind but ahead of a body of raiding Federal horse and reappeared for the third and last time in the entourage of a

travelling Army paymaster, the two of them passing through Jefferson in a surrey at the exact moment when the boy's father (it was 1866) also happened to be crossing the Square, the surrey and its occupants traversing rapidly that quiet and bucolic scene and even in that fleeting moment and to others beside the boy's father giving an illusion of flight and illicit holiday like a man on an excursion during his wife's absence with his wife's personal maid until Brownlee glanced up and saw his late co-master and gave him one defiant female glance and then broke again, leaped from the surrey and disappeaed this time for good and it was only by chance that McCaslin, twenty years later, heard of him again, an old man now and quite fat, as the well-to-do proprietor of a select New Orleans brothel; and Tennie's Jim gone, nobody knew where. and Fonsiba in Arkansas with her three dollars each month and the scholar-husband with his lensless spectacles and frock coat and his plans for the spring; and only Lucas was left, the baby, the last save himself of old Carothers' doomed and fatal blood which in the male derivation seemed to destroy all it touched, and even he was repudiating and at least hoping to escape it; —Lucas, the boy of fourteen whose name would not even appear for six years yet among those rapid pages in the bindings new and dustless too since McCaslin lifted them down daily now to write into them the continuation of that record which two hundred years had not been enough to complete and another hundred would not be enough a discharge; that chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South, twenty-three years after surrender and twenty-four from emancipation—that slow trickle of molasses and meal and meat, of shoes and straw hats and overalls, of plowlines and collars and heel-bolts and buckheads and clevises, which returned each fall as cotton—the two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equ?tors yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on: and he

'Yes. Binding them for a while yet, a little while yet. Through and beyond that life and maybe through and beyond the life of that life's sons and maybe even through and beyond that of the sons of those sons. But not always, because they will endure. They will outlast us because they are—' it was not a pause, barely a falter even, possibly appreciable only to himself, as if he couldn't speak even to McCaslin, even to explain his repudiation, that which to him too, even in the act of escaping (and maybe this was the reality and the truth of his need to escape) and heresy: so that even in escaping he was taking with him more of that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon, because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his widower's house and get a child on her and then dismiss her, because she was of an inferior race, and then bequeath a thousand dollars to the infant because he would be dead then and wouldn't have to pay it, than even he had feared. 'Yes. He didn't want to. He had to. Because they will endure. They are better than we are. Stronger than we are. Their vices are vices aped from white men or that white men and bondage have taught them: improvidence and intemperance and evasion-not laziness: evasion: of what white men had set them to, not for their aggrandisement or even comfort but his own—' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on: Promiscuity. Violence. Instability and lack of control. Inability to distinguish between mine and thine—' and he

How distinguish, when for two hundred years mine did not even exist for them?' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on. And their virtues—' and he

'Yes. Their own. Endurance-'and McCaslin

'So have mules:' and he

'—and pity and tolerance and forbearance and fidelity and love of children—' and McCaslin

'So have dogs:' and he

'—whether their own or not or black or not. And more: what they got not only not from white people but not even despite white people because they had it already from the old free fathers a longer time free than us because we have never been free—' and

it was in McCaslin's eyes too, he had only to look at McCaslin's eyes and it was there, that summer twilight seven years ago, almost a week after they had returned from the camp before he discovered that Sam Fathers had told McCaslin: an old bear, fierce and ruthless not just to stay alive but ruthless with the fierce pride of liberty and freedom jealous and proud enough of liberty and freedom to see it threatened not with fear nor even alarm but almost with joy, seeming deliberately to put it into jeopardy in order to savor it and keep his old strong bones and flesh supple and quick to defend and preserve it; an old man, son of a Negro slave and an Indian king, inheritor on the one hand of the long chronicle of a people who had learned humility through suffering and learned pride through the endurance which survived the suffering, and on the other side the chronicle of a people even longer in the land than the first, yet who now existed there only in the solitary brotherhood of an old and childless Negro's alien blood and the wild and invincible spirit of an old bear; a boy who wished to learn humility and pride in order to become skillful and worthy in the woods but found himself becoming so skillful so fast that he feared he would never become worthy because he had not learned humility and pride though he had tried, until one day an old man who could not have defined either led him as though by the hand to where an old bear and a little mongrel dog showed him that, by possessing one thing other, he would possess them both; and a little dog, nameless and mongrel and many-fathered, grown yet weighing less than six pounds, who couldn't be dangerous because there was nothing anywhere much smaller, not fierce because that would have been called just noise, not humble because it was already too near the ground to genuflect, and not proud because it would not have been close enough for anyone to discern what was casting that shadow and which didn't even know it was not going to heaven since they had already decided it had no immortal soul, so that all it could be was brave even though they would probably call that too just noise. *'And you didn't shoot,' McCaslin said. 'How close were you?'*

'I don't know,' he said. 'There was a big wood tick just inside his off hind leg. I saw that. But I didn't have the gun then.'

'But you didn't shoot when you had the gun,' McCaslin said. 'Why?' But McCaslin didn't wait, rising and crossing the room, across the pelt of the bear he had killed two years ago and the bigger one McCaslin had killed before he was born, to the bookcase beneath the mounted head of his first buck, and returned with the book and sat down again and opened it. 'Listen,' he said. He read the five stanzas aloud and closed the book on his finger and looked up. 'All right,' he said. 'Listen,' and read again, but only one stanza this time and closed the book and laid it on the table. 'She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,' McCaslin said: 'Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair.'

'He's talking about a girl,' he said.

'He had to talk about something,' McCaslin said. Then he said, 'He was talking about truth. Truth is one. It doesn't change. It covers all things which touch the heart-honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love. Do you see now?' He didn't know. Somehow it had seemed simpler than that, simpler than somebody talking in a book about a young man and a girl he would never need to grieve over because he could never approach any nearer and would never have to get any further away. He had heard about an old bear and finally got big enough to hunt it and he hunted it four years and at last met it with a gun in his hands and he didn't shoot. Because A little dog—But he could have shot long before the fyce covered the twenty yards to where the bear waited, and Sam Fathers could have shot at any time during the interminable minute while Old Ben stood on his hind legs over them....

He ceased. McCaslin watched him, still speaking, the voice, the words as quiet as the twilight itself was: 'Courage and honor and pride, and pity and love of justice and of liberty. They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds to becomes truth, as far as we know truth. Do you see now?' and he could still hear them, intact in the twilight as in that one seven years ago, no louder still because they did not need to be because they would endure: and he had only to look at McCaslin's eyes beyond the thin and bitter smiling, the faint lip-lift which would have had to be called smiling; —his kinsman, his father almost, who had been born too late into the old time and too soon for the new, the two of them juxtaposed and alien now to each other against their

ravaged patrimony, the dark and ravaged fatherland still prone and panting from its etherless operation:

'Habet then.-So this land is. indubitably, of an by itself cursed:' and he
'Cursed:' and again McCaslin merely lifted one hand, not even speaking and even toward the ledgers: so that. as the stereopticon condenses into one instantaneous field the myriad minutia of its scope, so did that slight and rapid gesture establish in the small cramped and cluttered twilit room not only the ledgers but the whole plantation in its mazed and intricate entirety-the land, the fields and what they represented in terms of cotton ginned and sold, the men and women whom they fed and clothed and even paid a little cash money at Christmas-time in return for the labor which planted and raised and picked and ginned the cotton, the machinery and mules and gear with which they raised it and their cost and upkeep and replacement—that whole edifice intricate and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even yet with at time downright savagery not only to the human beings but the valuable animals too. yet solvent and efficient and more than that: not only still intact but enlarged. increased; brought still intact by McCaslin, himself little more than a child then, through and out of the debacle of chaos of twenty years ago where hardly one in ten survived, and enlarged and increased and would continue so, solvent and efficient and intact and still increasing so long as McCaslin and his McCaslin successors lasted, even though their surnames might not even be Edmonds then: and he: 'Habet too. Because that's it: not the land, but us. Not only the blood, but the name too; not only its color but its designation: Edmonds, white, but, a female line, could have no other but the name his father bore; Beauchamp, the elder line and the male one, but black. could have had any name he liked and no man would have cared, except the name his father bore who had no name—' and McCaslin.
'And since I know too what you know I will say now, once more let me say it: And one other, and in the third generation too, and the male, the eldest, the direct and sole and white and still McCaslin ever, father to son to son—' and he
'I am free:' and this time McCaslin did not even gesture, no inference of fading pages, no postulation of the stereoptic whole, but the frail and iron thread strong as truth and impervious as evil and longer than life itself and reaching beyond record and patrimony both to join him with the lusts and passions, the hopes and dreams and griefs, of bones whose names while still fleshed and capable even old Carothers' grandfather had never heard: and he: 'And of that too:' and McCaslin

'Chosen, I suppose (I will concede it) out of all your time by Him as you say Buck and Buddy were from theirs. And it took Him a bear and an old man and four years just for you. And it took you fourteen years to reach that point and about that many, may be more. for Old Ben. and more than seventy for Sam Fathers. And you are just one. How long then? How Long?' and he 'It will be long. I have never said otherwise. But it will be all right because they will endure—' and McCaslin.
'And anyway, you will be free. —No, not now nor ever, we from them nor they from us. So I repudiate too. I would deny even if I knew it were true. I would have to. Even you can see that I could do no else. I am what I am; I will be always what I was born and have always been. And more than me. More than me, just as there were more than Buck and Buddy in what you called His first plan which failed:' and he
'And more than me:' and McCaslin
'No. Not even you. Because mark. You said how on that instant when Ikkemutebbe realised that he could sell the land to Grandfather. it ceased forever to have been his. All right, go on: Then it belonged to Sam Fathers, old Ikkemotubbe's son. And who inherited from Sam Fathers, if not you? co-heir perhaps with Boon, if not of his life maybe, at least of his quitting it?' and he
'Yes. Sam Fathers set me free.' And Isaac McCaslin. not yet Uncle Ike, a long time yet before he would be uncle to half a county and still father to none. living in one small cramped fireless rented room in a Jefferson boardinghouse where petit juries were domiciled during court terms and itinerant horse- and mule-traders stayed, with his kit of brand-new carpenter's tools and the shotgun McCaslin had given him with his name engraved in silver and old General Compson's compass (and, when the

General died, his silver-mounted horn too) and the [illegible] cot and [illegible]ss and the blankets which he would take each fall into the woods for more than sixty years and the bright tin coffee-pot

there had been a legacy, from his Uncle Hubert Beauchamp, his godfather, that bluff burly roaring childlike man from whom Uncle Buddy had won Tomey's Terrel's wife Tennie in the poker-game in 1859-'possible strait against three Treys in sigt Not called'-: no pale sentence or paragraph scrawled in cringing fear of death by a weak and trembling hand as a last desperate sop flung backward at retribution, but a Legacy, a Thing, possessing weight to the hand and bulk to the eye and even audible: a silver cup filled with gold pieces and wrapped in burlap and sealed with his godfather's ring in the hot wax, which (intact still) even before his Uncle Hubert's death and long before his own majority, when it would be his, had become not only a legend but one of the family lares. After his father's and his Uncle Hubert's sister's marriage they move back into the big house, the tremendous cavern which old Carothers had started and never finished, cleared the remaining Negroes out of it and with his mother's dowry completed it, at least the rest of the windows and doors and moved into it, all of them save Uncle Buddy who declined to leave the cabin he and his twin had built, the move being the bride's notion and more than just a notion and none ever to know if she really wanted to live in the big house or if she knew before hand that Uncle Buddy would refuse to move: and two weeks after his birth in 1867, the first time he and his mother came down stairs, one night and the silver cup sitting on the cleared dining-room table beneath the bright lamp and while the cleared dining-room table beneath the bright lamp and while his mother and his father and McCaslin and Tennie (his nurse: carrying him) — all of them again but Uncle Buddy—watched, his Uncle Hubert rang one by one into the cup the bright and glinting mintage and wrapped it into the burlap envelope and heated the wax and sealed it and carried it back home with him where he lived alone now without even his sister either to hold him down as McCaslin said or to try to raise him up as Uncle Buddy said, and (dark times then in Mississippi) Uncle Buddy said most of the niggers gone and the ones that didn't go even Hub Beauchamp could not have wanted: but the dogs remained and Uncle Buddy said Beauchamp fiddled while Nero fox-hunted

they would go and see it there; at last his mother would prevail and they would depart in the surrey, once more all save Uncle Buddy and McCaslin to keep Uncle Buddy company until one winter Uncle Buddy began to fail and from then on it was himself, beginning to remember now, and his mother and Tennie and Tomey's Terrel to drive: the twenty-two miles into the next county, the twin gateposts on one of which McCaslin could remember the half-grown boy blowing a fox-horn at breakfast dinner and supper-time and jumping down to open to any passer who happened to hear it but where there were no gates at all now, the shabby and over-grown entrance to what his mother still insisted that people call Warwick because her brother was if truth but triumphed and justice but prevailed the rightful earl of it, the paintless house which outwardly did not change but which on the inside seemed each time larger because he was too little to realise then that there was less and less in it of the fine furnishings, the rosewood and mahogany and walnut which for him had never existed anywhere anyway save in his mother's tearful lamentations and the occasional piece small enough to be roped somehow onto the rear or the top of the carriage on their return (And he remembered this, he had seen it: an instant, a flash, his mother's soprano 'Even my dress! Even my dress!' loud and outraged in the barren unswept hall: a face young and female and even lighter in color than Tomey's Terrel's for an instant in a closing door; a swirl, a glimpse of the silk gown and the flick and glint of an ear-ring: an apparition rapid and tawdry and Illicit yet somehow even to the child, the infant still almost, breathless and exciting and evocative: as though, like two limpid and pellucid streams meeting, the child which he still was had made serene and absolute and perfect rapport and contact through that glimpsed nameless illicit hybrid female flesh with the boy which had existed at that stage of juviolable and immortal adolescence in his uncle for almost sixty years; the dress, the face, the ear-rings gone in that same aghast flash and his uncle's voice: 'She's my cook! She's my new cook! I had to have a cook, didn't I?' then the uncle himself, the face alarmed and aghast

too yet still innocently and somehow even indomitably of a boy, they retreating in their turn now, back to the front gallery, and his uncle again, pained and still amazed, in a sort of desperate resurgence if not of courage at least of self-assertion: 'That's why! That's why! My mother's house! Defled! Defled!' and his uncle: 'Damn it, Sibbey, at least give her time to pack her grip:' then over, finished, the loud uproar and all, himself and Tennie and he remembered Tennie's inscrutable face at the broken shutterless window of the bare room which had once been the parlor which they watched, hurrying down the lane at a stumbling trot, the routed compounder of his uncle's uxory: the back, the nameless face which he had seen only for a moment, the once-hooped dress ballooning and flapping below a man's overcoat, the worn heavy carpet-bag jouncing and banging against her knee, routed and in retreat true enough and in the empty lane solitary young-looking and forlorn yet withal still exciting and evocative and wearing still the silken banner captured inside the very citadel of respectability, and unforgettable).
the cup, the sealed inscrutable burlap, sitting on the shelf in the locked closet, Uncle Hubert unlocking the door and lifting it down and passing it from hand to hand: his mother, his father, McCaslin and even Tennie, insisting that each take it in turn and heft it for weight and shake it again to prove the sound, Uncle Hubert himself standing spraddled before the cold unswept hearth in which the very bricks themselves were crumbling into a litter of soot and dust and mortar and the droppings of chimney-sweeps, still roaring and still innocent and still indomitable: and for a long time he believed nobody but himself had noticed that his uncle now put the cup only into his hands, unlocked the door and lifted it down and put it into his hands and stood over him until he had shaken it obediently until it sounded then took it from him and locked it back into the closet before anyone else could have offered to touch it, and even later, when competent not only to remember but to rationalise, he could not say what it was or even if it had been anything because the parcel was still heavy and still rattled, not even when, Uncle Buddy dead and his father, at last and after almost seventy-five years in bed after the sun rose, said: 'Go get that damn cup. Bring that damn Hub Beauchamp too if you have to:' because it still rattled though his uncle no longer put it even into his hands now but carried it himself from one to the other, his mother, McCaslin, Tennie, shaking it before each in turn, saying: 'Hear it? Hear it?' his face still innocent, not quite baffled but only amazed and not very amazed and still indomitable: and, his father and Uncle Buddy both gone now, one day without reason or any warning the almost completely empty house in which his uncle and Tennie's ancient and quarrelsome great-grandfather (who claimed to have seen Lafayette and McCaslin said in another ten years would be remembering God) lived, cooked and slept in one single room, burst into peaceful conflagration, a tranquil instantaneous sourceless unanimity of combustion, walls floors and roof: at sunup it stood where his uncle's father had built it sixty years ago, at sun-down the four blackened and smokeless chimneys rose from a light white powder of ashes and a few charred ends of planks which did not even appear to have been very hot: and out of the last of evening, the last one of the twenty-two miles, on the old white mare which was the last of that stable which McCaslin remembered, the two old men riding double up to the sister's door, the one wearing his fox-horn on its braided deerhide thong and the other carrying the burlap parcel wrapped in a shirt, the tawny wax-daubed shapeless lump sitting again and on an almost identical shelf and his uncle holding the half-opened door now, his hand not only on the knob but one foot against it and the key waiting in the other hand, the face urgent and still not baffled but still and even indomitably not very amazed and himself standing in the half-opened door looking quietly up at the burlap shape become almost three times its original height and a good half less than its original thickness and turning away and he would remember not his mother's look this time nor yet Tennie's inscrutable expression but McCaslin's dark and aquiline face grave insufferable and bemused: then one night they waked him and fetched him still half-asleep into the lamp light, the smell of medicine which was familiar by now in that room and the smell of something else which he had not smelled before and knew at once and would never forget, the pillow, the worn and ravaged face from which looked out still the boy innocent and immortal and amazed and urgent, looking at him and trying to tell him

until McCaslin moved and leaned over the bed and drew from the top of the nightshirt the big iron key on the greasy cord which suspended it, the eyes saying Yes Yes Yes now, and cut the cord and unlocked the closet and brought the parcel to the bed, the eyes still trying to tell him even when he took the parcel so that was still not it, the hands still clinging to the parcel even while relinquishing it, the eyes more urgent than ever trying to tell him but they never did; and he was ten and his mother was dead too and McCaslin said, 'You are almost halfway now. You might as well open it:' and he: 'No. He said twenty-one:' and he was twenty-one and McCaslin shifted the bright lamp to the center of the cleared dining-room table and set the parcel beside it and laid his open knife beside the parcel and stood back with that expression of old grave intolerant and repudiating and he lifted it, the burlap hump which fifteen years ago had changed its shape completely overnight, which shaken gave forth a thin weightless not-quite-musical curiously muffled clatter, the bright knife-blade hunting amid the mazed intricacy of string, the knobby gouts of wax bearing his uncle's Beauchamp seal rattling onto the table's polished top and, standing amid the collapse of burlap folds, the unstained tin coffee-pot still brand new, the handful of copper coins and now he knew what had given them the muffled sound: a collection of minutely-folded scraps of paper sufficient almost for a rat's nest, of good linen bond, of the crude ruled paper such as Negroes use, of raggedly-torn ledger-pages and the margins of newspapers and once the paper label from a new pair of overalls, all dated and all signed, beginning with the first one not six months after they had watched him seal the silver cup into the burlap or the same table in this same room by the light even of this same lamp almost twenty-one years ago:

I owe my Nephew Isaac Beauchamp McCaslin five (5) pieces Gold which I.O.U. constitutes My note of hand with Interest at 5 percent.

Hubert Fitz-Hubert Beauchamp

At Warwick 27 Nov 1867

and he: 'Anyway he called it Warwick:' once at least, even if no more. But there was more:

Isaac 24 Dec 1867 I.O.U. 2 pieces Gold H.Fh. B.I.O.U. Isaac 1 piece Gold 1 Jan 1868 H.Fh.B

then five again then three then one then one then a long time and what dream, what dreamed splendid recoup, not of any injury or betrayal of trust because it had been merely a loan: nay, a partnership:

I.O.U. Beauchamp McCaslin or his heirs twenty-five (25) Pieces Gold This & All preceeding constituting My notes of Hand at twenty (20) percentum compounded annually. This Date of 19th January 1873

Beauchamp

no location save that in time and signed by the single not name but word as the old proud earl himself might have scrawled Nevile: and that made forty-three and he could not remember himself of course but the legend had it at fifty, which balanced: one: then one: then one: then one and then the last three and then the last chit, dated after he came to live in the house with them and written in the shaky hand not of a beaten old man because he had never been beaten to know it but of a tired old man maybe and even at that tired only on the outside and still indomitable, the simplicity of the last one the simplicity not of resignation but merely of amazement, like a simple comment or remark, and not very much of that:

One silver cup. Hubert Beauchamp

and McCaslin: 'So you have plenty of coppers anyway. But they are still not old enough yet to be either rarities or heirlooms. So you will have to take the money:' except that he didn't hear McCaslin, standing quietly beside the table and looking

peacefully at the coffee-pot and the pot sitting one night later on the mantel above what was not even a fireplace in the little cramped icelike room in Jefferson as McCaslin tossed the folded banknotes onto the bed and, still standing (there was nowhere to sit save on the bed) did not even remove his hat and overcoat: and he

'As a loan. From you. This one:' and McCaslin

'You cant. I have no money that I can lend to you. And you will have to go to the bank and get it next month because I wont bring it to you:' and he could not hear McCaslin now either, looking peacefully at McCaslin,. His kinsman, his father almost yet no kin now as, at the last, even fathers and sons are no kin: and he

'It's seventeen miles, horseback and in the cold. We could both sleep here:' and McCaslin

'Why should I sleep here in my house when you wont sleep yonder in yours?' and gone, and he looking at the bright rustless unstained tin and thinking and not for the first time how much it takes to compound a man (Isaac McCaslin for instance) and of the devious intricate choosing yet unerring path that man's (Isaac McCaslin's for instance) spirit takes among all that mass to make him at last what he is to be, not only to the astonishment of them (the ones who sired the McCaslin who sired his father and Uncle Buddy and their sister, and the ones who sired the Beauchamp who sired his Uncle Hubert and his Uncle Hubert's sister) who believed they had shaped him, but to Isaac McCaslin too

as a loan and used it though he would not have had to: Major de Spain offered him a room in his house as long as he wanted it and asked nor would ever ask any question, and old General Compson more than that, to take him into his own room, to sleep in half of his own bed and more than Major de Spain because he told him baldly why: 'You sleep with me and before this winter is out, I'll know the reason. You'll tell me. Because I don't believe you just quit. It looks like you just quit but I have watched you in the woods too much and I don't believe you just quit even if it does look damn like it:' using it as a loan, paid his board and rent for a month and bought the tools, not simply because he was good with his hands because he had intended to use his hands and it could have been with horses, and not in mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene as the young gambler buys a spotted shirt because the old gambler won in one yesterday, but (without the arrogance of false humility and without the false humbleness of pride, who intended to earn his bread, didn't especially want to earn it but had to earn it and for more than just bread) because if the Nazarene had found carpentering good for the life and ends. He had assumed and elected to serve, it would be all right too for Isaac McCaslin even though Isaac McCaslin's ends, although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would be always incomprehensible to him, and his life, invincible enough in its needs, if he could have helped himself, not being the Nazarene, he would not have chosen it: and paid it back. He had forgotten the thirty dollars which McCaslin would put into the bank in his name each month, fetched it in to him and flung it onto the bed that first one time but no more; he had a partner now or rather he was the partner: a blasphemous profane clever old dipsomaniac who had built blockade-runners in Charleston in '62 and '3 and had been a ship's carpenter since and appeared in Jefferson two years ago nobody knew from where nor why and spent a good part of his time since recovering from delirium tremens in the jail; they had put a new roof on the stable of the bank's president and (the old man in jail again still celebrating that job) he went to the bank to collect for it and the president said, 'I should borrow from you instead of paying you:' and it had been seven months now and he remembered for the first time, two-hundred-and-ten dollars, and this was the first job of any size and when he left the bank the account stood at two-twenty, two-forty to balance, only twenty dollars more to go, then it did balance though by then the total had increased to three hundred and thirty and he said, 'I will transfer it now:' and the president said, 'I can't do that. McCaslin told me not to. Haven't you got another initial you could use and open another account?' but that was all right, the

coins the silver and the bills as they accumulated knotted into a handkerchief and the coffee-pot wrapped in an old shirt as when Tennie's great-grandfather had fetched it from Warwick eighteen years ago, in the bottom of the iron-bound trunk which old Carothers had brought from Carolina and his landlady said, 'Not even a lock! And you don't even lock your door, not even when you level!' and himself looking at her as peacefully as he had looked at McCaslin that first night in this same room, no kin to him at all yet more than kin as those who serve you even for pay are your kin and those who injure you are more than brother or wife and had the wife now, got the old man out of jail and fetched him to the rented room and sobered him by superior strength, did not even remove his own shoes for twenty-four hours, got him up and got food into him and they built the barn this time from the grouped up and he married her: an only child, a small girl yet curiously bigger than she seemed at first, solider perhaps, with dark eyes and a passionate heart-shaped face, who had time even on that farm to watch most of the day while he sawed timbers to the old man's measurements: and she: 'Papa told me about you. That farm is really yours, isn't it?' and he

'And McCaslin's:' and she

'Was there a will leaving half of it to him?' and he

'There didn't need to be a will. His grandmother was my father's sister. We were the same as brothers:' and she

'You are the same as second cousins and that's all you ever will be. But I don't suppose it matters:' and they were married, they were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth's long chronicle, his too because each must share with another in order to come into it and in the sharing they become one: for that while, one: for that little while at least, one: indivisible, that while at least irrevocable and unrecoverable, living in a rented room still but for just a little while and that room wall-less and topless and floorless in glory for him to leave each morning and return to at night; her father already owned the lot in town and furnished the material and he and his partner would build it, her dowry from one: her wedding-present from three, she not to know it until the bungalow was finished and ready to be moved into and he never know who told her, not her father and not his partner and not even in drink though for a while he believed that, himself coming home from work and just time to wash and rest a moment before going down to supper, entering no rented cubicle since it would still partake of glory even after they would have grown old and lost it: and he saw her face then, just before she spoke: 'Sit down:' the two of them sitting on the bed's edge, not even touching yet, her face strained and terrible, her voice a passionate and expiring whisper of immeasurable promise: 'I love you. You know I love you. When are we going to move?' and he

'I didn't—I didn't know—Who told you—' the hot fierce palm clapped over his mouth, crushing his lips into his teeth, the fierce curve of fingers digging into his cheek and only the palm slacked off enough for him to answer:

'The farm. Our farm. Your farm:' and he

'I'—then the hand again, finger and palm, the whole enveloping weight of her although she still was not touching him save the hand, the voice: 'No!No!' and the fingers themselves seeming to follow through the cheek the impulse to speech as it died in his mouth then the whisper, the breath again, of love and of incredible promise, the palm slackening again to let him answer:

'When?' and he

'I—' then she was gone, the hand too, standing, her back to him and her head bent, the voice so calm now that for an instant it seemed no voice of hers that he ever remembered: 'Stand up and turn your back and shut your eyes:' and repeated before he understood and stood himself with his eyes shut and heard the bell right for supper below stairs and the calm voice again: 'Lock the door:' and he did so and leaned his forehead against the cold wood, his eyes closed, hearing his heart and the sound he had begun to hear before he moved until it ceased and the bell rang again below stairs and he knew it was for them this time and he heard the bed and turned and he had never seen her naked before, he had asked her to once, and why: that he wanted to see her looking at him naked because he loved her but after that he never mentioned it

ɜain. even turning his face when she put the nightgown on over her dress to undress
night and putting the dress on over the gown to remove it in the morning and she
ould not let him get into bed beside her until the lamp was out and even in the heat
`summer she would draw the sheet up over them both before she would let him turn
her: and the landlady came up the staris up the hall and rapped on the door and
en called their names but she didn't move, lying still on the bed outside the covers,
ɪr face turned away on the pillow, listening to nothing, thinking of nothing, not of
m anyway he thought then the landlady went away and she said, 'Take off your
ɔthes:' her head still turned away, looking at nothing, thinking of nothing, waiting
r nothing, not even him, her hand moving as though with volition and vision of its
vn, catching his wrist at the exact moment when he paused beside the bed so that he
ver paused but merely changed the direction of moving, downward now, the hand
awing him and she moved at last, shifted, a movement one single complete inherent
ɪt practiced and one time older than man, looking at him now, drawing him still
wnward with the one hand down and down and he neither saw nor felt it shift,
lm flat against his chest now and holding him away with the same apparent lack of
y effort or any need for strength, and not looking at him now, she didn't need to,
: chaste woman, the wife, already looked upon all the mean who ever rutted and
w her whole body had changed, altered, he had never seen it but once and now it
ɪs not even the one he had seen but composite of all woman-flesh since man that
ɜr of its own will reclined or its back and opened, and out of it somewhere, without
y movement of lips even, the dying and invincible whisper: 'Promise:' and he
'Promise?'

'The farm.' He moved. He had moved, the hand shifting from his chest once
ɪre to his wrist, grasping it, the arm still lax and only the light increasing pressure
the fingers as though arm and hand were a piece of wire cable with one looped
l, only the hand tightening as he pulled against it. 'No', he said. 'No:' and she was
: looking at him still but not like the other but still the hand: 'No, I tell you. I wont.
ɪnt. Never:' and still the hand and he said, for the last time, he tried to speak
ɪrly and he knew it was still gently and he thought, *She already knows more than I
h all the man-listening in camps where there was nothing to read ever even heard
They are born already bored with what a boy approaches only at fourteen and
ɜen with blundering and aghast trembling:* 'I cant. Not ever. Remember:' and still
steady and invincible hand and he said Yes and he thought, *She is lost. She was
n lost. We were all born lost* then he stopped thinking and even saying Yes, it was
: nothing he had ever dreamed, let alone heard in mere man-talking until after a
time he returned and lay spent on the insatiate immemorial beach and again with a
vement one time more older than man she turned and freed herself and on their
lding night she had cried and he thought she was crying now at first, into the
ɜed and wadded pillow, the voice coming from somewhere between the pillow and
cachinnation: 'And that's all. That's all from me. If this dont get you that son
talk about, it wont be mine:' lying on her side, her back to the empty rented
m, laughing and laughing.

/

went back to the camp one more time before the lumber company moved in and
an to cut the timber. Major de Spain himself never saw it again. But he made
n welcome to use the house and hunt the land whenever they liked, and in the
ter following the last hunt when Sam Fathers and Lion died, General Compson
Walter Ewell invented a plan to corporate themselves, the old group, into a club
lease the camp and the hunting privileges of the woods—an invention doubtless
ɪe somewhat childish old General but actually worthy of Boon Honganbeek
self. Even the boy, listening, recognised it for the subterfuge it was: to change
eopard's spots when they could not alter the leopard, a baseless and illusory hope
hich even McCaslin seemed to subscribe for a while, that once they had
uaded Major de Spain to return to the camp he might revoke himself, which even
ɔoy knew he would not do. And he did not. The boy never knew what occurred
n Major de Spain declined. He was not present when the subject was broached

and McCaslin never told him. But when June came and the time for the double birthday celebration there was no mention of it and when November came no one spoke of using Major de Spain's house and he never knew whether or not Major de Spain knew they were going on the hunt though without doubt old Ash probably told him: he and McCaslin and General Compson (and that one was the General's last hunt too) and Walter and Boon and Tennie's Jim and old Ash loaded two wagons and drove two days and almost forty miles beyond any country the boy had ever seen before and lived in tents for the two weeks. And the next spring they heard (not from Major de Spain) that he had sold the timber-rights to a memphis lumber company and in June the boy came to town with McCaslin one Saturday and went to Major de Spain's office-the big, airy, book-lined second-storey room with windows at one end opening upon the shabby hinder purlieus of stores and at the other a door giving onto the railed balcony above the Square, with its curtained alcove where sat a cedar water-bucket and a sugar-bowl and spoon and tumbler and a wicker-covered demijohn of whisky, and the bamboo-and-paper punkah swinging back and forth above the desk while old Ash in a tilted chair beside the entrance pulled the cord.

"Of course," Major de Spain said. "Ash will probably like to get off in the woods himself for a while, where he wont have to eat Daisy's cooking. Complain about it, anyway. Are you going to take anybody with you?"

"No sir," he said. "I thought that maybe Boon—" For six months now Boon had been town-marshal at Hoke's; Major de Spain had compounded with the lumber company—or perhaps compromised was closer, since it was the lumber company who had decided that Boon might be better as a town-marshal than head of a logging gang.

"Yes," Major de Spain said. "I'll wire him today. He can meet you at Hoke's. I'll send Ash on by the train and they can take some food in and all you will have to do will be to mount your horse and ride over."

"Yes sir," he said. "Thank you." And he heard his voice again. He didn't know he was going to say it yet he did know, he had known it all the time: "Maybe if you..." His voice died. It was stopped, he never knew how because Major de Spain did not speak and it was not until his voice ceased that Major de Spain moved, turned back to the desk and the papers spread on it and even that without moving because he was sitting at the desk with a paper in his hand when the boy entered, the boy standing there looking down at the short plumpish gray-haired man in sober fine broadcloth and an immaculate glazed shirt whom he was used to seeing in boots and muddy corduroy, unshaven, sitting the shaggy powerful long-hocked mare with the worn Winchester carbine across the saddle-bow and the great blue dog standing motionless as bronze at the stirrup, the two of them in that last year and to the boy anyway coming to resemble one another somehow as two people competent for love or for business who have been in love or in business together for a long time sometimes do. Major de Spain did not look up again.

"No. I will be too busy. But good luck to you. If you have it, you might bring me a young squirrel."

"Yes sir," he said. "I will."

He rode his mare, the three-year-old filly he had bred and raised and broken himself. He left home a little after midnight and six hours later, without even having sweated her, he rode into Hoke's, the tiny log-line junction which he had always thought of as Major de Spain's property too although Major de Spain had merely sold the company (and that many years ago) the land on which the sidetracks and loading-platforms and the commissary store stood, and looked about in shocked and grieved amazement even though he had had forewarning and had believed himself prepared: a new planing-mill already half completed which would cover two or three acres and what looked like miles and miles of stacked steel rails red with the light bright rust of newness and of piled crossties sharp with creosote, and wire corrals and feeding-troughs for two hundred mules at least and the tents for the men who drove them; so that he arranged for the care and stabling of his mare as rapidly as he could and did not look any more, mounted into the log-train caboose with his gun and climbed into

the cupola and looked no more save toward the wall of wilderness ahead within which he would be able to hide himself from it once more anyway.

Then the little locomotion shricked and began to move: a rapid churning of exhaust, a lethargic deliberate clashing of slack couplings traveling backward along the train, the exhaust changing to the deep slow clapping bites of power as the caboose too began to move and from the cupola he watched the train's head complete the first and only curve in the entire line's length and vanish into the wilderness, dragging its length of train behind it so that it resembled a small dingy harmless snake vanishing into weeds, drawing him with it too until soon it ran once more at its maximum clattering speed between the twin walls of unaxed wilderness as of old. It had been harmless once. Not five years ago Walter Ewell had shot a six-point buck from this same moving caboose, and there was the story of the half-grown bear: the train's first trip in to the cutting thirty miles away, the bear between the rails, its rear end elevated like that of a playing puppy while it dug to see what sort of ants or bugs they might contain or perhaps just to examine the curious symmetrical squared barkless logs which had appeared apparently from nowhere in one endless mathematical line overnight, still digging until the driver on the braked engine not fifty feet away blew the whistle at it, whereupon it broke frantically and took the first tree it came to: an ash sapling not much bigger than a man's thigh and climbed as high as it could and clung there, its head ducked between its arms as a man (a woman perhaps) might have done while the brakeman threw chunks of ballast at it, and when the engine returned three hours later with the first load of outbound logs the bear was halfway down the tree and once more scrambled back up as high as it could and clung again while the train passed and was still there when the engine went in again in the afternoon and still there when it came back out at dusk; and Boon had been in Hoke's with the wagon after a barrel of flour that noon when the train-crew told about it and Boon and Ash, both twenty years younger then, sat under the tree all that night to keep anybody from shooting it and the next morning major de Spain had the log-train held at Hoke's and just before sundown on the second day, with not only Boon and Ash but Major de Spain and General Compson and Walter and McCaslin, twelve then, watching it came down the tree after almost thirty-six hours without even water and McCaslin told him how for a minute they thought it was going to stop right there at the barrow-pit where they were standing and drink, how it looked at the water and paused and looked at them and at the water again, but did not, gone, running, as bears run, the two sets of feet, front and back, tracking two separate though parallel courses.

It had been harmless then. They would hear the passing log-train sometimes rom the camp; sometimes, because nobody bothered to listen for it or not. They vould hear it going in, running light and fast, the light clatter of the trucks, the xhaust of the diminutive locomotive and its shrill peanut-parcher whistle flung for ne petty moment and absorbed by the brooding and inattentive wilderness without ven an echo. They would hear it going out, loaded, not quite so fast now yet giving ts frantic and toylike illusion of crawling speed, not whistling now to conserve team, flinging its bitten laboring miniature puffing into the immemorial woodsface vith frantic and bootless vainglory, empty and noisy and puerile, carrying to no lestination or purpose sticks which left nowhere any scar or stump as the child's toy oads and transports and un-loads its dead sand and rushes back for more, tireless and nceasing and rapid yet never quite so fast as the Hand which plays with it moves the oy burden back to load the toy again. But it was different now. It was the same ain, engine cars and caboose, even the same engine men brakeman and conductor to hom Boon, drunk then sober then drunk again then fairly sober once more all in the pace of fourteen hours, had bragged that day two years ago about what they were oing to do to Old Ben tomorrow, running with its same illusion of frantic rapidity etween the same twin walls of impenetrable and impervious woods, passing the old ndmarks, the old game crossings over which he had trailed bucks wounded and not ounded and more than once seen them, anything but wounded, break out of the oods, up and across the embankment which bore the rails and ties then down and to the woods again as the earth-bound supposedly move but crossing as arrows avel, groundless, elongated, three times its actual length and even paler, different in

color, as if there were a point between immobility and absolute motion where even mass chemically altered, changing without pain or agony not only in bulk and shape but in color too, approaching the color of wind, yet this time it was as though the train (and not only the train but himself, not only his vision which had seen it and his memory which remembered it but his clothes too, as garments carry back into the clean edgeless blowing of air the lingering effluvium of a sick-room or of death) had brought with it into the doomed wilderness even before the actual axe the shadow and portent of the new mill not even finished yet and the rails and ties which were not even laid; and he knew now what he had known as soon as he saw Hoke's this morning but had not yet thought into words: why Major de Spain had not come back, and that after this time he himself, who had had to see it one time other, would return no more.

Now they were near. He knew it before the engine-driver whistled to warn him. Then he saw Ash and the wagon, the reins without doubt wrapped once more about the brake-lever as within the boy's own memory Major de Spain had been forbidding him for eight years to do, the train slowing, the slackened couplings jolting and clashing again from car to car, the caboose slowing past the wagon as he swung down with his gun, the conductor leaning out above him to signal the engine, the caboose still slowing, creeping, although the engine's exhaust was already slatting in mounting tempo against the unechoing wilderness, the crashing of draw-bars once more travelling backward along the train, the caboose picking up speed at last. Then it was gone. It had not been. He could no longer hear it. The wilderness soared, musing, inattentive, myriad, eternal, green; older than any mill-shed, longer than any spurline. "Mr. Boon here yet?" he said.

"He beat me in," Ash said. "Had the wagon loaded and ready for me at Hoke's yistiddy when I got there and setting on the front steps at camp last night when I got in. He already been in the woods since for daylight this morning. Said he gwine up to the Gum Tree and for you to hunt up that way and meet him." He knew where that was: a single big sweet-gum just outside the woods, in an old clearing; if you crept up to it very quietly this time of year and then ran suddenly into the clearing, sometimes you caught as many as a dozen squirrels in it, trapped, since there was no other tree near they could jump to. So he didn't get into the wagon at all.

"I will," he said.

"I figured you would," Ash said, "I fotch you a box of shells." He passed the shells down and began to unwrap the lines from the brake-pole.

"How many times up to now do you reckon Major has told you not to do that?" the boy said.

"Do which?" Ash said. Then he said: "And tell boon Hoggan-beck dinner gonter be on the table in a hour and if yawl want any to come on and eat it."

"In an hour?" he said. "It aint nine o clock yet." He drew out his watch and extended it face-toward Ash. "Look." Ash didn't even look at the watch.

"That's town time. You aint in town now. You in the woods."

"Look at the sun then."

"Nemmine the sun too," Ash said. "If you and Boon Hogganbeck want any dinner, you better come on in and get it when I tole you. I aim to get done in that kitchen because I got my wood to chop. And watch your feet. They're crawling."

"I will," he said.

Then he was in the woods, not alone but solitary; the solitude closed about him, green with summer. They did not change, and, timeless, would not, anymore than would the green of summer and the fire and rain of fall and the iron cold and sometimes even snow

the day, the morning when he killed the buck and Sam marked his face with its hot blood, they returned to camp and he remembered old Ash's blinking and disgruntled and even outraged dis-belief until at last McCaslin had had to affirm the fact that he had really killed it: and that night Ash sat snarling and unapproachable behind the stove so that Tennie's Jim had to serve the supper and waked them with breakfast already on the table the next morning and it was only half-past one oclock and at last out of Major de Spain's angry cursing and Ash's snarling and sullen rejoinders the fact emerged that Ash not only wanted to go into the woods and shoot a deer also but

he intended to and Major de Spain said, 'By God, if we don't let him we will probably have to do the cooking from now on:' and Walter Ewell said, 'Or get up at midnight to eat what Ash cooks:' and since he had already killed his buck for this hunt and was not to shoot again unless they needed meat, he offered his gun to Ash until Major de Spain took command and allotted that gun to Boon for the day and gave Boon's unpredictable pump gun to Ash, with two buckshot shells but Ash said, 'I got shells:' and showed them, four: one buck, one of number three shot for rabbits, two of bird-shot and told one by one their history and their origin and he remembered not Ash's face alone but Major de Spain's and Walter's and General Compson's too, and Ash's voice: 'Shoot? In course they'll shoot! Genl Cawmpson guv me this un'– the buckshot–'right outen the same gun he kill that big buck with eight years ago. And this un'-it was the rabbit shell: triumphantly— 'is oldern thisyer boy!' And that morning he loaded the gun himself, reversing the order: the bird-shot, the rabbit shell: triumphantly— 'is oldern thisyer boy!' And that morning he loaded the gun himself, reversing the order: the bird-shot, the rabbit, then the buck so that the buckshot would feed first into the chamber, and himself without a gun, he and Ash walked beside Major de Spain's and Tennie's Jim's horses and the dogs (that was the snow) until they cast and struck, the sweet strong cries ringing away into the muffled falling air and gone almost immediately, as if the constant and unmurmuring flakes had already buried even the unformed echoes beneath their myriad and weightless falling, major de Spain and Tennie's Jim gone too, whooping on into the woods; and then it was all right; he knew as plainly as if Ash had told him that Ash had now hunted his deer and that even his tender years had been forgiven for having killed one, and they turned back toward home through the falling snow—that is, Ash said, 'Now whut?' and he said, 'This way'—himself in front because, although they were less than a mile from camp, he knew that Ash, who had spent two weeks of his life in the camp each year for the last twenty, had no idea whatever where they were, until quite soon the manner in which Ash carried Boon's gun was making him a good deal more than just nervous and he made Ash walk in front, striding on, talking now, and old man's garrulous monologue beginning with where he was at the moment then of the woods and of camping in the woods and of eating in camps then of eating then of cooking it and of his wife's cooking then briefly of his old wife and almost at once and at length of a new light-colored woman who nursed next door to major de Spain's and if she didn't watch out who she was switching her tail at he would show her how old was an old man or not if his wife just didn't watch him all the time, the two of them in a game trail through a dense brake of cane and brier which would bring them out within a quarter-mile of camp, approaching a big fallen tree-trunk lying athwart the path and just as Ash, still talking, was about to step over it the bear, the yearling, rose suddenly beyond the log, sitting up, its forearms against its chest and its wrists limply arrested as if it had been surprised in the act of covering its face to pray: and after a certain time Ash's gun yawed jerkily up and he said, 'You haven't got a shell in the barrel yet. Pump it:' but the gun already snicked and he said, 'Pump it. You haven't got a shell in the barrel yet:' and Ash pumped the action and in a certain time the gun steadied again and snicked and he said, 'Pump it:' and watched the buckshot shell jerk, spinning heavily, into the cane. This is the rabbit shot: he thought and the gun snicked and he thought: The next is bird-shot: and he didn't have to say Pump it; he cried, 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' but that was already too late too, the light dry vicious snick! Before he could speak and the bear turned and dropped to all-fours and then was gone and there was only the log, the cane, the velvet and constant snow and Ash said, 'Now whut?' and he said, 'This way. Come on:' and began to back away down the path and Ash said, 'I got to find my shells:' and he said, 'Goddamn it, goddamn it, come on:' but Ash leaned the gun against the log and returned and stooped and fumbled among the cane roots until he came back and stooped and found the shells and they rose and at the moment the gun, untouched, leaning against the log six feet away and for that while even forgotten by both of them, roared, bellowed and flamed, and ceased: and he carried it now, pumped out the last mummified shell and gave that one also to Ash and, the action still open, himself carried the gun until he stood it in the corner behind Boon's bed at the camp

—; summer, and fall, and snow, and wet and saprife spring in their ordered immortal sequence, the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to old man born of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief who had been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved: and he would many someday and they too would own for their brief while that brief unsubstanced glory which inherently of itself cannot last and hence why glory: and they would, might, carry even the remembrance of it into the time when flesh no longer talks to flesh because memory at least does last: but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife.

He was not going toward the Gum Tree. Actually he was getting farther from it. Time was and not so long ago either when he would not have been allowed here without someone with him, and a little later, when he had begun to learn how much he did not know, he would not have dared be here without someone with him, and later still, beginning to ascertain, even if only dimly, the limits of what he did not know, he could have attempted and carried it through with a compass, not because of any increased belief in himself but because McCaslin and Major de Spain and Walter and General Compson too had taught him at last to believe the compass regardless of what it seemed to state. Now he did not even use the compass but merely the sun and that only subconsciously, yet he could have taken a scaled map and plotted at any time to within a hundred feet of where he actually was: and sure enough, at almost the exact moment when he expected it, the earth began to rise faintly, he passed one of the four concrete markers set down by the lumber company's surveyor to establish the four corners of the plot which Major de Spain had reserved out of the sale, then he stood on the crest of the knoll itself, the four corner-markers all visible now, blanched still even beneath the winter's weathering, lifeless and shockingly alien in that place where dissolution itself was a seething turmoil of ejaculation tumescence conception and birth, and death did not even exist. After two winters' blanketings of leaves and the flood-waters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves anymore at all. But those who would have come this far to find them would not need headstones but would have found them as Sam Fathers himself had taught him to find such: by bearings on trees: and did, almost the first thrust of the hunting knife finding (but only to see if it was still there) the round tin box manufactured for axle-grease and containing now Old Ben's dried mutilated paw, resting above Lion's bones.

He didn't disturb it. He didn't even look for the other grave where he and McCaslin and Major de Spain and Boon had laid Sam's body, along with his hunting horn and his knife and his tobacco-pipe, that Sunday morning two years ago; he didn't have to. He had stepped over it, perhaps on it. But that was all right. *He probably knew I was in the woods this morning long before I got here*, he thought, going on to the tree which had supported one end of the platform where Sam lay when McCaslin and Major de Spain found them—the tree, the other axle-grease tin nailed to the trunk, but weathered, rusted, alien too yet healed already into the wilderness' concordant generality, raising no tuneless note, and empty, long since empty of the food and tobacco he had put into it that day, as empty of that as it would presently be of this which he drew from his pocket—the twist of tobacco, the new bandanna handkerchief, the small paper sack of the peppermint candy which Sam had used to love; that gone too, almost before he had turned his back, not vanished but merely translated into the myriad life which printed the dark mold of these secret and sunless places with delicate fairy tracks, which, breathing and biding and immobile, watched him from beyond every twig and leaf until he moved, moving again, walking on; he had not stopped, he had only paused, quitting the knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression and, being myriad, one: and Old Ben too, Old Ben too; they would give him his paw back even, certainly they would give him his paw back: then the long challenge and the long chase, no heart to be driven and outraged, no flesh to be mauled and bled-Even as he froze himself, he seemed to hear Ash's parting

admonition. He could even hear the voice as he froze, immobile, one foot just taking his weight, the toe of the other just lifted behind him, not breathing, feeling again and as always the sharp shocking inrush from when Isaac McCaslin long yet was not, and so it was fear all right but not fright as he looked down at it. It had not coiled yet and the buzzer had not sounded either, only one thick rapid contraction, one loop cast sideways as though merely for purchase from which the raised head might start slightly backward, not in fright either, not in threat quite yet, more than six feet of it, the head raised higher than his knee and less than his knee's length away, and old, the once-bright markings of its youth dulled now to a monotone concordant too with the wilderness it crawled and lurked: the old one, the ancient and accursed about the earth, fatal and solitary and he could smell it now: the thin sick smell of rotting cucumbers and something else which had no name, evocative of all knowledge and an old weariness and of pariah-hood and of death. At last it moved. Not the head. The elevation of the head did not change as it began to glide away from him, moving erect yet off the perpendicular as if the head and that elevated third were complete and all: an entity walking on two feet and free of all laws of mass and balance and should have been because even now he could not quite believe that all the shift and flow of shadow behind that walking head could have been one snake: going and then gone; he put the other foot down at last and didn't know it, standing with one hand raised as Sam had stood that afternoon six years ago when Sam led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be a child, speaking the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: "Chief," he said: "Grandfather".

He couldn't tell when he first began to hear the sound, because when he became aware of it, it seemed to him that he had been already hearing it for several seconds- a sound as though someone were hammering a gun-barrel against a piece of railroad iron, a sound load and heavy and not rapid yet with something frenzied about it, as the hammerer were not only a strong man and an earnest one but a little hysterical too. Yet it couldn't be on the log-line because, although the track lay in that direction, it was at least two miles from him and this sound must be coming from: whoever the man was and whatever he was doing, he was somewhere near the edge of the clearing where the Gum Tree was and where he was to meet Boon. So far, he had been hunting as he advanced, moving slowly and quietly and watching the ground and the trees both. Now he went on, his gun unloaded and the barrel slanted up and back to facilitate its passage through brier and undergrowth, approaching as it grew louder and louder that steady savage somehow queerly hysterical beating of metal on metal, emerging from the woods, into the old clearing, with the solitary gum tree directly before him. At first glance the tree seemed to be alive with frantic squirrels. There appeared to be forty or fifty of them leaping and darting from branch to branch until the whole tree had become one green mael-strom of mad leaves, while from time to time, singly or in twos and threes, squirrels would dart down the trunk then whirl without stopping and rush back up again as though sucked violently back by the vacuum of their fellows' frenzied vortex. Then he saw Boon, sitting, his back against the trunk, his head bent, hammering furiously at something on his lap. What he hammered with was the barrel of his dismembered gun, what he hammered at was the breech of it. The rest of the gun lay scattered about him in a half-dozen pieces while he bent over the piece on his lap his scarlet and streaming walnut face, hammering the disjointed barrel against the gun-breech with the frantic abandon of a madman. He didn't even look up to see who it was. Still hammering, he merely shouted back at the boy in a hoarse strangled voice:

"Get out of here! Don't touch them! Don't touch a one of them! They're mine!"

Text: *A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE*

It was late and every one had left the café except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the electric light. In the day time the street was dusty, but at night the dew settled the dust and the old man liked to sit late because he was deaf and now at night it was quiet and he felt the difference. The two waiters inside the café knew that the old man was a little drunk, and while he was a good client they knew that if he became too drunk he would leave without paying, so they kept watch on him.
"Last week he tried to commit suicide," one waiter said
"Why?"
"He was in despair."
"What about?"
"Nothing."
"How do you know it was nothing?"
"He has plenty of money."
They sat together at a table that was close against the wall near the door of the café and looked at the terrace where the old man sat in the shadow of the leaves of the tree that moved slightly in the wind. A girl and a solider went by in the street. The street light shone on the brass number on his collar. The girl wore no head covering and hurried beside him.

"The guard will pick him up," one waiter said.
"What does it matter if he gets what he's after?"
"He had better get off the street now. The guard will get him.
They went by five minutes ago."
The old man sitting in the shadow rapped on his saucer with his glass. The younger waiter went over to him.
"What do you want?"
The old man looked at him. "Another brandy," he said.
"You'll be drunk," the waiter said. The old man looked at him. The waiter went away.

"He'll stay all night," he said to his colleagues. "I'm sleepy now. I never get into bed before three o'clock. He should have killed himself last week."
The waiter took the brandy bottle and another saucer from the counter inside the café and marched out to the old man's table. He put down the saucer and poured the glass full of brandy.
"You should have killed yourself last week," he said to the deaf man. The old man motioned with his finger. "A little more," he said. The waiter poured on into the glass so that the brandy slopped over and ran down the stem into the top saucer of the pile. "Thank you," the old man said. The waiter took the bottle back inside the café. He sat down at the table with his colleague again.
"He's drunk now," he said.
"He's drunk every night."
"What did he want to kill himself for?"
"How should I know."
"How did he do it?"
"He hung himself with a rope."
"Who cut him down?"
"His niece."
"Why did they do it?"
"Fear for his soul."
"How much money has he got?"
"He's got plenty."
"He must be eighty years old."
"Any way I should say he was eighty."
"I wish he would go home. I never get to bed before three o'clock. What kind of hour is that to go to bed?"

"He stays up because he likes it."
"He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me."
"He had a wife once too."
"A wife would be no good to him now."
"You can't tell. He might be better with a wife."
"His niece looks after him. You said she cut him down."
"I know."
I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing."
"Not always. This old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk. Look at him."
"I don't want to look at him. I wish he would go home. He has no regard for those who must work."
The old man looked from his glass across the square, then over at the waiters.
"Another brandy," he said, pointing to his glass. The waiter who was in a hurry came over.
"Finished," he said, speaking with that omission of syntax stupid people employ when talking to drunken people or foreigners. "No more tonight. Close now."
"Another," said the old man.
"No. Finished." The waiter wiped the edge of the table with a towel and shook his head.
The old man stood up, slowly counted the saucers, took a leather coin purse from his pocket and paid for the drinks, leaving half a peseta tip.
The waiter watched him go down the street, a very old man walking unsteadily but with dignity.
"Why didn't you let him stay and drink?" the unhurried waiter asked. They were putting up the shutters. "It is not half-past two."
"I want to go home to bed."
"What is an hour?"
"More to me than to him."
"An hour is the same."
"You talk like an old man yourself. He can buy a bottle and drink at home."
'It's not the same.
"No, it is not," agreed the waiter with a wife. He did not wish to be unjust. He was only in a hurry.
"And you? You have no fear of going home before your usual hour?"
"Are you trying to insult me?"
"No, hombre, only to make a joke."
"No," the waiter who was in a hurry said, rising from pulling down the metal shutters. "I have confidence. I am all confidence. I am all confidence."
"You have youth, confidence, and a job," the older waiter said. "You have everything."
"And what do you lack?"
"Everything but work."
"You have everything I have."
"No. I have never had confidence and I am not young."
"Come on. Stop talking nonsense and lock up."
"I am of those who like to stay late at the café," the older waiter said. "With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night."
"I want to go home and into bed."
"We are of two different kinds," the older waiter said. He was now dressed to go home. "It is not only a question of youth and confidence although those things are very beautiful. Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the café."
"Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long."
"You do not understand. This is a clean and pleasant café. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves."
"Good night," said the younger waiter.
"Good night," the other said. Turning off the electric light he continued the conversation with himself. It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be

clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee. He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

"What's yours?" asked the barman.

"Nada."

"Otro loco mas," said the barman and turned away.

"A little cup," said the waiter.

The barman poured it for him.

"The light is very bright and pleasant but the bar is unpolished," the waiter said.

The barman looked at him but did not answer. It was too late at night for conversation.

"You want another copita?" the barman asked.

"No, thank you," said the waiter and went out. He disliked bars and bodegas. A clean, well-lighted café was a very different thing. Now, without thinking further, he would go home to his room. He would lie in the bed and finally, with daylight, he would go to sleep. After all, he said to himself, it is probably only insomnia. Many must have it.

Uttar Pradesh
Rajarshi Tandon Open University

MAEN-05
AMERICAN LITERATURE

Block

8

AMERICAN DRAMA

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION : AMERICAN DRAMA

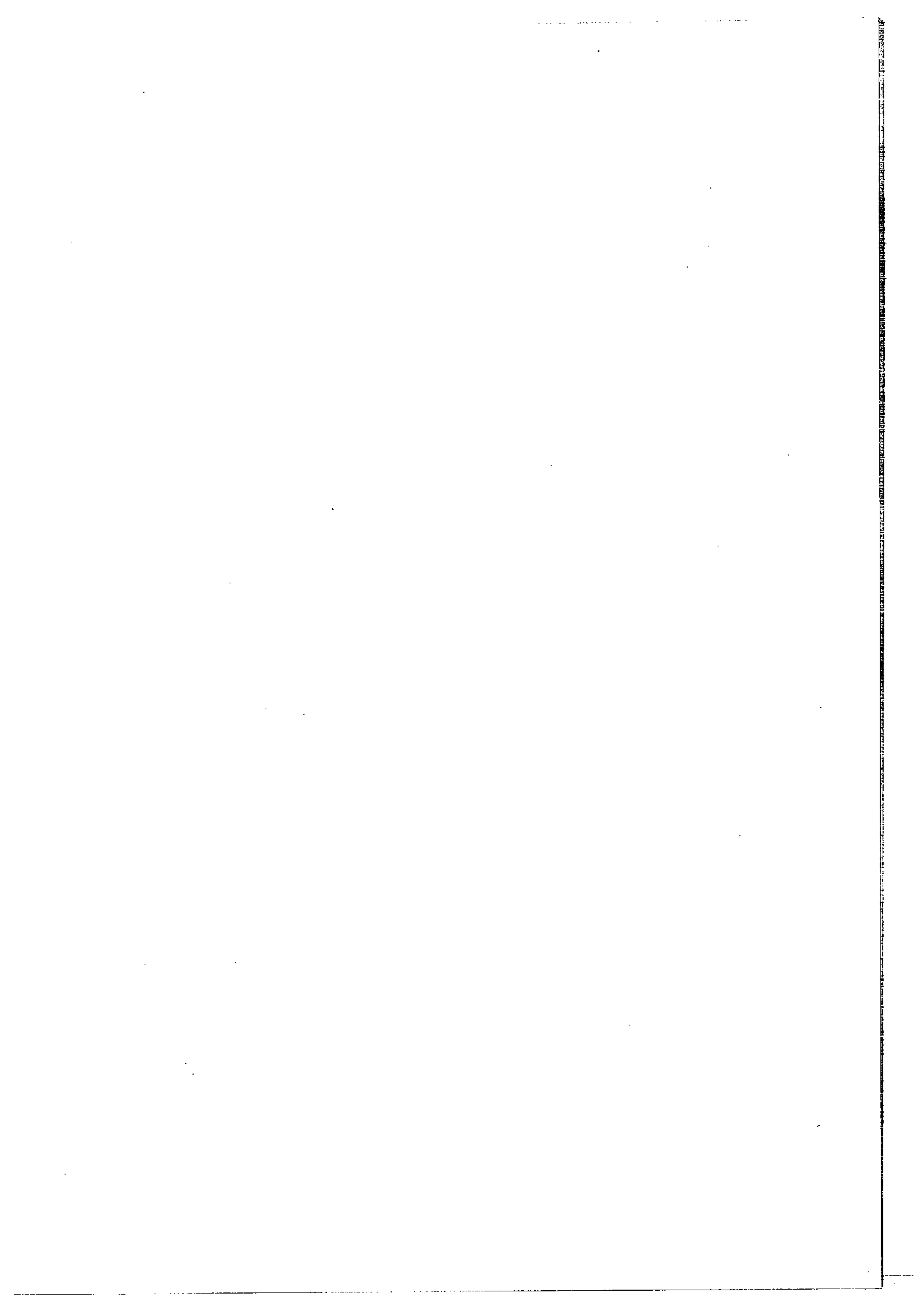
Drama, Arthur Schopenhauer said, is the perfect reflection of human existence and tragedy is the highest form of drama. A course in drama presents a very engaging intellectual and aesthetic task to the student. Drama flourishes in periods of cultural excellence as it did in ancient Greece and in Elizabethan England but functions, more easily, as an artistic medium of cultural concern at any given point in a nation's history and, thus, becomes a national or cultural exercise in self-definition.

Drama, in America, gained a critical reckoning only in the 20th century though its history is coextensive with the history of the making of the nation. It comes of age, as did the nation, in the 20th century and acquires a modernity of form and substance. Modern American Drama emerges through an excruciating cultural reflection and a keen search for artistic comprehensiveness. In a matter of a few decades, Drama claimed the effective leadership of the nation, so much so, the world came to see America through its dramatists like Eugene O' Neill and Arthur Miller.

This block on American Drama begins (Unit I) with an introductory survey of American Drama from its early theatrical endeavors in colonial America till the emergence of Eugéne O' Neill as a champion of modernist values. No history of drama in a nation reads like the precise political and cultural history of the nation as does the history of American drama up to this point. Unit II presents the problem of human identity in O' Neill's ***The Hairy Ape***, a concern for the problem that characterized America as it grew into an industrial giant. Unit III discusses Arthur Miller's ***Death of a Salesman*** as a tragedy, a predicament that explained America in the middle of the 20th century. Unit IV discusses the novel structure of ***Death of a Salesman***. The last unit, Unit V, presents a comparison between Eugene O' Neill and Arthur Miller, the two postwar dramatists, one emerging after the first world war and the other after the second world war. Between their distinct points of view, they define America in the 20th century.

The five units, each emerging largely from the preceding one and, constituting the block, present American drama as one artistic and cultural statement.

(We are grateful to The Indo-American Center for International Understanding, Hyderabad for the photographs used in this block.)



UNIT 1 AMERICAN DRAMA : AN INTRODUCTION

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Beginnings of American Drama
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1.7 Romantic and Popular Drama
1.8 The American Melodrama
1.9 The American Drama: The Actorly tradition
1.10 The Beginning of theatrical realism in America
1.11 The rise of realistic Drama
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1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit proposes to examine the growth of the American drama from its beginnings in the 17th century to the emergence of modern American drama in the 1920's. Every struggle, national, cultural and artistic, in this long process of growth has finally shaped the powerful medium of 20th century American drama. This unit is designed to equip the student to approach the 20th century American drama with perspectives of dramatic history, art and ideas.

1.1 BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN DRAMA

A serious discussion of American drama usually begins with Eugene O' Neill and the 1920's in America. Eugene O' Neill made the world of letters reckon with American drama as a literary genre. But the genre had been struggling to exist for more than two hundred years by then. Even before the birth of America as an independent nation in 1776, theatrical activity bore witness to European immigration and the British colonial rule of the immigrant settlers. With the predominance of the English settlers, theatrical activity in America was a clear manifestation of the English love of theatre, especially after the great Elizabethan period in drama that easily resisted the opposition of the puritans to theatrical activity in England.

1.2 PURITAN HOSTILITY TO THEATRICAL ACTIVITY

The English loved entertainment and pageantry but the early settlers in America, preoccupied with physical and spiritual survival in an alien land cherished the puritan belief in hard work, frugality and piety. For them, theatrical activity was anathema.

So much so, the production of a play called ***Ye Bare and Ye Cubb*** in 1665, possibly the first theatrical performance in America, resulted in the trial of the actors. In fact, many colonies in America enacted laws prohibiting theatrical activity.

1.3 THEATRE IN THE 17TH CENTURY COLLEGES

The puritan opposition to theatre could not sustain itself for long. Aware of the new cultural beginnings, the colonies sought intellectual and oratorical exercises theatrical activity afforded. After a good deal of hesitation, the early colleges in several colonies permitted theatrical activity. For the students, theatrical activity was an immense relief from the rigors of classical education. Further, several oratorical skills necessary for a career in business or Law could be acquired through theatrical activity.

1.4 COLONIAL DRAMA

It did not take long for theatrical activity to grapple with the overall colonial cultural experience. The first play written by an English Governor, Robert Hunter ***Androboros*** (1714) dramatises the growing sense of independence felt by the Americans. More satirical than dramatic, ***Androboros*** charts out the course American drama was to follow for the next two centuries - Drama as a political tool. The issues for the early settlers were numerous – the arbitrariness and irrationality of British colonial rule and its systems of law and government. The focus could not be lost on the sectarian antagonism of the settlers themselves. Several popular plays of the period like ***The Paxton Boys*** (1732), ***The Trial of Atticus*** (1771), whose authorship was unknown, Robert Munford's ***The Candiates of The Humours of a Virginia Election*** (1770), Thomas Godfrey's ***The Prince of Parthia*** (1759) were primarily historical, chronicling America as an emerging nation getting ready to shed the colonial yoke.

1.5 DRAMA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Though the early settlers regarded themselves as Englishmen living in North America, the British tendency to treat them as the colonial subjects lit the fires of rebellion and freedom. Patriotism for the cause of the American nation exploded as a political force, however, to be countered by the loyalists to the British crown. Drama became an instrument of pamphleteering for either the cause of nationalism or loyalty to the crown. Instead of being conflictual and dialogic in itself, drama became a faithful and monologic servant of a political cause. Mercy Otis Warren's plays, ***The Adulateur*** (1772), ***The Defeat*** (1773), ***The Group*** (1776), ***The Blackheads*** (1776) and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's ***The Battle of the Bunkers Hill*** (1776) presented revolutionary rhetoric than drama. An anonymous play, ***The Battle of Brooklyn*** (1776) took up the loyalists' cause and satirized leaders like George Washington.

Drama failed its own cause as well as that of the nation as a land of freedom. It promoted political conformity in the place of freedom. However, a truly American voice that carried certain dramatic strength was that of Robert Munford whose play ***The Patriots*** (1779) critically examines the simplistic arguments of the divergent political forces. Munford sets future intellectual tasks for the American nation.

1.6 NATIONALISTIC DRAMA

The nation of America was born in 1783 with the decisive victory of the nationalist forces against the British colonial power. In fact, the birth of the nation was the beginning of a long struggle for cultural independence from the British. To be different from the British and to display a vibrant Americanness was the riding passion of the new republic. Robert Taylor, the first playwright of the nation, grapples with dramatic tasks of the new nation. Falling inescapably in the format of British Comedy, particularly that of Sheridan's ***The School of Scandal,*** Taylor's ***The Contrast*** (1787) takes upon the burden of drawing a contrast between the Americans who are themselves, as one character puts it "the true born Yankee son of liberty" and those Americans who continue to be victims of servility to the British. Tylor was keen on asserting nationalist sentiments than any sense of drama. The credit for rooting drama in America goes to William Dunlop. He introduced Melodrama in his plays which flourished in the 19th century America but, more importantly, he gave drama its most important characteristic, dramatic conflict. Resisting early nationalist sentiments, Dunlop creates a very admirable British character, Major John Andre in his famous play ***Andre*** (1798). The point of the play was a critical examination of the unqualified antagonism towards the British on the part of George Washington who refused to pardon John Andre who conspired to destroy an American Garrison but displayed exemplary humanness in saving a young American captain.

The point of attack shifts from the British to the decadent British aristocratic values in James Nelson Baker. Baker who foresees the continued hold of British aristocratic values in the guise of chivalry. Set in England, his plays, ***Marmion***(1812) and ***Superstition*** (1824) forewarn America how the 16th century Scotland lost its freedom to the British in its adherence to British values of aristocracy.

1.7 ROMANTIC AND POPULAR DRAMA

The surge of literary romanticism across the national ~~and~~ continental barriers in the early 19th century blurs the focus of the nationalist cause in America and the nation joins the continent in responding to the aesthetic values of romanticism. The American playwrights seek transamerican plots as well as the audiences for these plays. ***Brutus : The Fall of Taraquin*** (1819) by John Howard Payne, ***The Gladiator*** (1831) by Robert Montgomery Bird, ***Francesca da Rimini*** (1853) by George Henry Baker fashion out American romantic tragedy with its focus on the sheer romantic impulses of the dramatic character than any other cause. The American romantic tragedy did not further the cause of the American drama but promoted the literary and aesthetic credentials of the American playwright on the continent and, concomitantly, at home.

The romantic drama, however, could not grapple with the concerns and aspirations of the growing nation. The nineteenth century witnessed the growth of the nation in a continued expansion of the national boundaries on the west. The myth of the frontier seiged national imagination and held sway for a century on the American minds and the Indian play and the Stage Yankee explained American drama until the nation came to be gripped with the civil war. John Augustus Stone's ***Metamora*** (1828), James Kirke Poulding's ***The Lion of the West*** (1830), Samuel Woodworth's ***The Forest Rose*** (1825) and Anna Cora Mowatt's ***Fashion*** (1845) present a paradigm - shift from both the romantic and nationalist drama. First, there is the domestication of the romantic impulse in the westward struggles of the nation. Secondly, the urban based and tragically inclined American protagonist gets ruralized and emerges

comically, both in his person and temperament as Yankee. The Indian plays and the Yankee contribute to the proliferation of dramatic efforts in America, thereby creating a popular medium of national history in the making, though the medium has to wait for decades to be truly dramatic.

John Augustus Stone

Along side the Indian play and the Yankee, popular drama grappled with the institution of slavery, that divided the nation, brought about a civil war and forced a redefinition of the nation. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, ***Uncle Tom's Cabin*** (1852) sets the task of national redefinition. George. H. Aiken's adaptation of the novel for the stage, was a tremendous success in pressing the dramatic medium in the service of a national cause.

1.8 THE AMERICAN MELODRAMA

Popular causes dominated American drama right from its inception. However, as a genre, American drama, in the course of the 19th century, lent itself to one dramatic premise – melodrama. In fact, until the beginning of modern drama, based on the rational and scientific principles of realism and naturalism, melodrama could claim a history of two centuries on the English and the American stage. As commonly understood, melodrama meant a departure from credibility and working out of a fantasy. As Gary A. Richardson puts it,

> .... A moustache – twirling villain attempts through dastardly means to compromise the personal or financial integrity of the golden haired heroine until prevented by a white-clad hero who arrives in the nick of time to preserve chastity and rightful titles, and oversee a denouement replete with poetic justice....images of heroes pushed from cliffs and heroines about to be sawed in two do suggest some of the appeals of Melodrama... (1)

The description particularly fits popular Indian cinema. What sustains Indian cinema explains the durability of the melodramatic form during the 18th and 19th centuries on the English and the American stage. Disagreeing with the 20th century critics of Melodrama such as Bernard Shaw and William Archer, Gary Richardson writes

> They do not acknowledge its durability, its cross – cultural popularity, its service as an agent of socialisation, as its later function as a forum in which conflicting ideologies could confront each other and, to a certain extent resolve the social and political tensions of the emerging western industrial capitalist states of the 19th century ... Melodrama became the projected fantasy life of an America caught up in a period of unprecedented flux [2]

Dion Boucicault

It is through this genre that Augustan Daly, Dion Boucicault, Bartley Campbell, Bronson Howard and David Belasco presented America on the stage during the most formative period in its history. Melodrama had a two fold task: make the stage action appetitising and thrilling to the audience even if it were to be undramatic. Secondly, address, not so much the problems of the nation but the individual's preoccupation with the issues of family, social position, wealth and class. The high ideals of American individualism and democratic equality get discounted in the immediate pressures of the individual ego, though their ultimate success is always guaranteed in the facile resolution of the issue, on hand in the plays. As could be seen in popular plays like Boucicault's ***The poor of the New york*** (1857), Daly's ***Under the Gaslight*** (1867), Howard's ***Shenandoah*** (1888) and Belasco's ***The Girl of the Golden West*** and ***The Heart of Maryland*** (1895), melodrama posits a nation of two societies, one of aristocratic rich and the other of the poor or of the north and the south in America, or a world of aristocratically conceived individualism and the bourgeois individualism. In the evaluation of the American nation during the 19th century, melodrama looks at the intersecting and conflicting societies of the nation and works for their reconciliation. melodrama progresses through a carefully planned world of misunderstanding, intrigue, sudden danger, loss of position and prestige - all these to be pleasantly retrieved at the end of the play. The dramatic action is rather romantic

rather than credibly realistic and the task of the playwright is one of gentle correction of the societal conflicts.

As Melodrama chooses to reckon with gentle tasks in a rather romantic way, a female character, quite often, emerges as the protagonist of the play. Laura Courtland in Daly's play, ***Under the Gaslight*** is the most enthralling character of the 19th century American drama.

Though dramatically facile, Melodrama, nonetheless, achieves a quiet redefinition of America in the post-civil war period, its growth from a liberated colony, through a process of ethnic integration, expanding frontiers and growing industrialization and urbanization of an essentially agrarian economy. The plays of Daly and Boucicault have gained enthusiastic audiences not only in America but on the European stage as well. Melodrama elevated American drama to the international stage partly reversing the trend of only importing plays from Europe into America, thereby allaying fears of cultural colonization of America by Europe inspite of gaining national independence.

1.9 THE AMERICAN DRAMA : THE ACTORLY TRADITION

Right from its inception in colleges as an exercise in oratorical skills, to its emergence as a popular medium in the 19th century, both at home and abroad, American drama displayed an actorly tradition. It could never evolve itself as a discipline in dramatic art. Shakespeare's plays were a great attraction to the American audiences in the 18th and 19th centuries. Quite often, his plays outnumbered the native ones on the stage in different parts of the country. Nonetheless, the native dramatic art remained largely uninfluenced either by the Shakespeare's or the Elizabethan dramatic imagination and art. The actor in the place of the playwright acquired pre-eminence on the American stage. In fact, it was the actors from England, like Anthony Aston, Adam Hallam and his sons, David Douglass who braved the hostile puritan environment in the 18th century to make theatre possible in the first instance, in America. The great Shakespearean actors from England like Edmund Kean, Junius Brutus Booth and Charles Mcready established theatre as a popular medium of entertainment in America.

The native American actors, beginning with the earliest of them, Edwin Forrest, further strengthened the pre-eminence of the actor in the American dramatic tradition. It was Forrest, more than the playwright or the play, who evolved the myth of the frontier hero and his rugged American individualism in the 19th century through his acting in plays like ***Metamora***. With his flamboyant acting, Forrest was a cult figure in the middle of the 19th century America. He evoked such patriotic fervour among the audiences that when the British actor Mcready was to perform in New York in 1840, Forrest's ardent followers created a serious disturbance resulting in the death of 22 people when the National Guard fired on the violent mob of Forrest's followers.

Edwin Booth, son of Junius Brutus Booth and Charlotte Cushman, the greatest female actress on the American stage in the 19th century, strengthened the actorly pre-eminence in the dramatic medium. Though both were primarily Shakespearean actors, they equally excelled in American Melodrama. They brought great maturity to American acting, a maturity the American dramatic art could not gain. Richard Moody sums up the nature of dramatic art in America.

> Players and plays enriched American life since the mid-eighteenth century. And players more than plays have drawn audiences to the playhouse. Not until late in the 19th century some would say not until the advent of Eugene O' Neill in the 1920's had the play

> exerted any compelling magnetic power. It was the actor, supported by his managers, producers and directors who had given the American theatre its remarkable vigor and incredible variety [3]

1.10 THE BEGINNINGS OF THEATRICAL REALISM

The pre-eminence of the actor in American drama and theatre suffered a great deal in the later decades of the century, first, on account of the rise of the stage manager, or what is called Regisseur in the production of a play, subordinating the actor to his discipline and authority and, secondly, to the rise of theatrical and dramatic realism. The first phenomenon became all the more forceful when playwrights, like Augustin Daly, David Belasco and Steele Mockage assumed the role of producer-director for their plays. However, the actorly tradition did not die down as such, for the actor, though exceptionally in a few cases, rather than the playwright, continued to define the play for the audience.

Realism in theatre began earlier than in drama. The old actor based theatre presupposed a need to be unreal on the stage in order to reach out to the audience. Bernard Hewitt points out the unreality even in the best of American acting.

> Miss Cushman is the best magic actress in English drama whom we have had on the American stage. Dignity, feeling, sound sense and the most deliberate and studious care are marked characteristics of her acting. Viewing her as she was before the incessant repetition of one abnormal delineation had exaggerated her force and impressiveness to the borders of the grotesgue or the ghastly...,

The alternative to stage histrionics came in the form of a shift of focus from the actor to the scene. Steele Mackage creates a portable stage for his play ***Hazel Kirke*** (1880). It was the first significant move towards stage realism.
Bernard Hewitt writes:

> In the Madison Square theatre an entire Box setting with heavy three-dimensional pieces and the actors too, if need be, could be removed and replaced by another in forty seconds. It had no apron or procenium doors.. All these characteristics were part of the trend towards realism in production. The machinery was needed to shift the realistic scenery. The production must be flamed by the procenium arch to create the realistic illusion [5]

Hazel Kirke is a significant departure from Melodrama in that it is no world of heroes and villains but a domestic arena of familial misunderstanding played out on shifting stages within Box – like house setting. Both the stage or stages and the drama there on begin a process of interiorization totally foreign to the ethos of melodrama, and its predecessors, romantic and national drama as well.

A further advance in stage tradition was carried out by David Belasco who still persisted with sensational melodramas. To Belasco goes the credit for the finest triumph in realistic stage management. In Belasco's production of a French play, ***Gaza*** in 1895, realistic effects such as the making of thunder, lighting, wind and galloping horses behind the scenes are achieved with "*the dexterity of a master mechanic*".

The stage realism of the sort championed by Mackage and Belasco, is not a matter of individual inclination and effort but a distinct theatrical ideology taking shape on the Continent in the latter part of the 19th century. The earliest theoretician of the

realistic stagecraft was Duke of Saxe Meiningen who popularized realism through the concepts of ensemble acting and ruthless realism on the stage. What the Duke attempted was evolved ideologically by Andre Antoine in France through his ***Theatre Libre*** in Paris, Otto Brahm in Berlin through his ***Frie Buhne***. Stage environment or realism, ensemble acting, directional supremacy and the elimination of unrealistic stage effects were the passionate causes championed by these theatrical movements. The thoughtful American producers and directors like Belasco and others responded enthusiastically to the new European tidings. For them, it was a two-fold task: First, they had to realize the new theatrical art on the American stage which never allowed itself any notions of art. Secondly, these playwrights had to contend with the increasing hold of the business interests, which developed into theatrical syndicates controlling the American stage. The realistic experimentation had to succeed on its own to force the established theatre or theatre interests to follow the new realistic formulations. Success could not be delayed for long for the idea of verifiable realism in all fields of knowledge is the motto and value championed by modern science taking roots in 19th century Europe and America. Further, the industrial revolution facilitated by modern science started creating conditions of scientific culture, and the 19th century American or European society had no choice but to base itself on them.

1.11 THE RISE OF REALISTIC DRAMA IN AMERICA

The rise of theatrical realism in the late 19th century did not *ipso facto* bring about realistic drama. Belasco's Melodramas staged in realistic style illustrate that realistic drama is not a matter of theatrical formulations. Drama was never a privileged element in American theatre since its inception in the 18th century. Drama flourishes in periods of great cultural reflection as it did in ancient Greece, Rome and the 16th century Elizabethan England. The playwrights in these periods were the foremost thinkers of society. The rise of modern science and the consequent industrial revolution in Europe and America in the latter part of 19th century brought about a paradigm shift in the socio-economic situation necessitating a deep cultural reflection.

William Dean Howells regarded as the father of literary realism in America, is a theoretician of realist drama as well. In several of his writings, including his reviews of plays for the periodicals, like *Harpers, Atlantic Monthly*, Howells traces the growth of realistic drama in America. For him, the rise of realist drama, like the rest of literature, is an evolutionary progress from romanticism. Romanticism included Melodrama, both European and American as well. The next stage of development from romanticism was that of the French Well-Made Play and the English Problem Play. The French Well-Made Play in the hands of playwrights like Eugene Scribe, Victorian Sardou, Alexander Dumas and Emile Augier, is a dramatic structure of "*a complex plot with a maximum of theatrical ingenuity and an absolute minimum of thought*". It is realistic in the choice of its subject matter and linear in the progress of the plot and enacts an archetypal action with a preordained conclusion and moral. The English problem play, though it borrows certain elements of the French Well-Made Play, is structured both in form and content to deal with an important socio-economic problem of contemporary relevance. The playwrights like Bernard Shaw, Henry Arthur Jones, Arthur Wing Pinero and Oscar Wilde made literature, through the problem play, an effective instrument of intellectual reflection on the contemporary socio-economic issues. There was a proliferation of problem plays in America during the 1890's but they lacked the intellectual vigor of the British problem play. They often displayed an enthusiasm to dramatize an issue and, in the process, tended to contrive the plot to force a particular conclusion and a moral.

Realistic drama, through an evolutionary growth from romanticism, made very humble beginnings in America during the last decade of the 19th century. The

American playwrights, as Howells sees, were obsessed with plot, a burden of Melodrama, to be able to give a realistic drama "*fresh in motive, pure in tone, high in purpose and very simple and honest in method*". Howells found his ideal realistic drama in the plays of the Norwegien playwright, Henlik Ibsen, who ushers in a new epoch in the history of drama. In fact, in his thoughtful perception of the greatness of Ibsen's drama, Howells was able to foresee the direction American drama has to take, as it did in the 20th century, in order to emerge as an effective medium of cultural reflection. Howells, writes

> The problem which a play of Ibsen hinges upon is as wide as the whole of life, and it seeks a solution in the conscience of the spectator for the future rather than the present: it is not an isolated case; it does not demand what he would do, or would have done in a given event. [6]

Ibsen's play ***Ghosts*** charts out the course of 20th century European and American drama. It de-emphasizes the preeminence of man and makes him a mere human person predestined to toil against the forces of nature, and in the specific context of the play, the force of biology that appears in the form of the dreaded disease, syphilis. Howells not only defends Ibsen against the charge of degeneration in making human predicament so loathsome, but asserts Ibsen's role as a moralist in exploring the ailments of society.

> A great many good, elderly minded people think it dreadful Ibsen should show us that the house we have lived in so long is full of vermin, that its drainage is bad, that the roof leaks and the chimney smokes abominably ; but if it is true, it is not well for us to know it is dreadful because it is so, not because, he shows it so, .. It is not by the solution of the problems that the moralist teaches, but by the questions that his handling of them suggests to us expecting ourselves....what he can and must do ethically, is to make us think of ourselves, and look to it whether we have in us the making of this or that wrong, whether we are hypocrites, tyrants, pretenders, shams, conscious or unconscious; whether our most unselfish motives are secret shapes of egoism; ... this is what Ibsen does; he gives a pause; and in that bitter muse he leaves of us thinking not of his plays, but of our lives; not of his fictitious people, but of ourselves. [7]

Howells had no illusion about the fact that Ibsen would readily catch the imagination of the American theatre – goers but he was sure that "*for Ibsenism there is already great acceptance and there will be greater and greater for he is the master who has more to say to our generation in the theatre than any other*".

Nonetheless, American theatre haltingly moved towards realism in the last decades of the 19th century and the first of 20th century in its concern for the topical social issues of the time – Benson Howard's ***A Texas Steer*** (1896), ***The Banker's Daughter*** (1873) and ***Henrietta*** (1887), ***A Trip to China Town*** (1891), Edward Harringan's ***Dan's Tribulations*** (1884), Benman Thomson's ***The Old Homestead*** (1886). James A. Herne kindles the hopes of Howells in attempting an Ibsenite drama of sorts in his plays like ***Margaret Fleming*** (1890), ***Shore Acres*** (1892) and ***Griffith Devenport*** (1899). Dealing with infidelity and double standards in marriage, ***Margaret Fleming*** comes down heavily on the patriarchal order of society. It explodes the fiction, common to melodrama, of the ever forgiving wife in the well-drawn character of Margaret. The play was too bitter for American tastes of the times like Ibsen's ***Ghosts*** was to the European tastes of the time. If Ibsen's play was banned for considerable periods of time, Herne faced serious problems in getting his plays staged.

James A. Herne

Besides the ruthless realism of Ibsen' s type, the play triumphs in mastering realistic art. Gary Richardson points out the significance of the play for American drama:

> The points to which the general public most objected are, of course, the very elements that set this play apart as "unequalled in realism by any other known American drama of its century". Here are demonstrably real characters in an emotionally charged but non-Melodramatic action. Here is dialogue which is plain and direct and avoid the excess of Melodrama. Here is an action that can be represented through understated acting and performed within simple sets while using the technical resources of the theatre only to facilitate a greater understanding of the characters and the situation rather than as a substitute for such exploration. Finally, here is a play which focuses squarely on an important issue. For the first time on the American stage, a playwright chooses to question seriously the assumptions of the dominant patriarchal social and moral codes [8]

Margaret Fleming falls short of only one quality - literary drama, that Howells associates with great realist drama. Howells' dissatisfaction with American drama was that it has never been good literature. Theatrical preponderance never allowed American drama to emerge as literature and it is this failure that puts American drama in poor light when compared with American fiction or poetry. Theatrical preeminence not withstanding, it was difficult for the literary drama to emerge on the American stage which was basically a commercial proposition, more so by the end of the century catering to the easily excitable tastes of the American public. Literary drama to register itself effectively on the stage required, greater inherent, intellectual and artistic strength and a more discerning public. America had to wait for another two decades at the turn of the century, until the emergence of Eugene O' Neill that synchronized with the growth of literary drama as well as the maturing of American critical temper. There begins the truly great American drama. Realistic literary, insightful and critical – what William Dean Howells dreamt and visualised.

1.12 SUMMING UP

The growth of American drama since the sixteenth century upto 1920 is the history of America as a nation, culture, art, literature and intellect. As a nation, America progressed from the settlement of European immigrants, through the British colonial rule, the struggle for independence and its triumph, civil war and the westward expansion. As a culture, America journeyed from the values of British aristocracy to a sort of Darwinian capitalism. In art and literature, it embraced romanticism, melodrama and realism. In intellect, what began as a search for an identity emerges as a scientifically tempered American eclecticism.

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5. Ibid pp.237
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1.14 KEYWORDS

Genre: Class or category of artistic endeavors having a particular form, content or technique. Genre particularly means a distinctive literary type.

Puritan: A section of people in the 16th century England who believed that Roman Catholics had perverted Christianity from its doctrines. A puritan is a purist who rejects the compromises of everyday life. The puritans were the early settlers in America.

Pageantry: An elaborate and spectacular display on stage, quite often concealing a lack of real importance or meaning. During the Renaissance period, it came to mean a dramatic performance staged for a civic occasion.

Anathema: A person or a thing detested or loathed.

Romanticism: A literary movement in the later 18th and early 19th centuries with its emphasis on imagination and feeling. It expresses the uniqueness of self and believes in the innate goodness of man who is

corrupted by civilization. Hence its admiration for the primitive and the child and opposes anything strictly rational.

Histrionics: A behavior deliberately affected or self-consciously emotional. Any exaggerated experience of an emotion on stage for the sake of impressing the audience is called histrionics.

Regisseur: A person who exercises total control on the production of a play.

Syphilis: A venereal disease affecting particularly genitals and often congenital.

Eclecticism: An attitude that avoids dependence on a particular idea or belief and seeks to take dynamically the best from everything and combines different things for optimum use and benefit.

1.15 QUESTIONS

1. Examine the growth of American drama during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
2. Discuss how the nationalist spirit of the early American playwrights weakened their dramatic instincts.
3. The success of the American Melodrama was at the expense of the values of the dramatic medium. Discuss.
4. What exactly is the difference between dramatic and theatrical traditions. Discuss how the lack of mature American drama contributed to the growth of the actorly tradition in America.
5. Discuss how theatrical realism qualifies the actorly tradition in America.
6. Discuss how Henrik Ibsen contributed to the growth of modern American drama.
7. Discuss Henry Dean Howells' ideas on realistic drama.
8. Examine the salient features of a romantic play, melodrama, well – made play, problem play and a realistic play.

1.16 SUGGESTED READINGS

Craik T.W. Ed. ***The Revels History of Drama in English. Volume VIII American Drama.*** Metheun New York 1977. Discusses American drama and theatre since its beginnings to 1961 with a distinct focus on actors, managers, producers, directors and playwrights during the different periods of national history

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UNIT 2 THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN *THE HAIRY APE*

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction: Eugene O' Neill
2:2 *The Hairy Ape* and the America of the 1920's
2:3 The Tragic Problem of Identity in *The Hairy Ape*
2:4 Scene I & II: *The Hairy Ape*: Elusive Identity and the Tragic Illusion
2:5 Scene III: Tragedy of Situation
2:6 Scene IV to VII: Tragic Conflict: Fluctuating Identities
2:7 Scene VIII: Tragic Denouement and the Predicament of Human Identity
2:8 The Problem of Identity: Naturalistic Fixity and Expressionistic Revolt
2:9 Summing Up
2:10 References
2:11 Keywords
2:12 Questions
2:13 Annotations
2:14 Suggested Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit examines the problem of identity in Eugene O' Neill's play, *The Hairy Ape* and analyses the problem in terms of the limitations of the human situation and also in terms of the human inability to accept the limitations of his situation.

2.1 INTRODUCTION: EUGENE O' NEILL

Eugene O' Neill is William Dean Howells' dream come true in America - the first major American dramatist who gave the nation powerful drama besides good theatre. He made drama, as Howells wanted, a literary medium in America. Secondly, he made drama powerfully realistic, not in a literal sense but as an interpretative mode of social reality – an effective medium of cultural reflection. O' Neill, like Ibsen in the 19th century Europe, is the first playwright thinker in 20th century America.

Eugene O' Neill's father, James O' Neill was an actor. His career as an actor was dominated by the role of the protagonist, Edmund Dantes which he played in the stage version of Alexander Dumas' novel, ***The Count of Monte Cristo*** (1844). James played the role for more than six thousand times. In spite of his great talent, he was never acceptable in any other role. The play defined not only James' life and career but shaped the lives of all the members of the O' Neill family. Eugene O' Neill was, in fact, born into the theatrical ethos of the play in particular, that his father lived. There was the whole tradition of the late 19th century American theatre that went with the play- sentimental melodrama, its stage tricks and facile rhetoric. Eugene acquired an intimate knowledge of theatrical practice and a keen sense of theatre in the theatrical environment of his family. Theatre and playwriting came to him naturally though, he did not think of it, initially for a career. O' Neill has to be primarily understood as a theatre practitioner - writing and producing plays. O'Neill the dramatist is a later development in his career or rather the maturing of his theatrical talent. Though O' Neill did not relish the theatrical ethos of the 19th century melodrama, he could not escape being shaped up by that tradition which

came to him as a family inheritance through his father and had a rather constrictive influence on him during his growing years both as a man and a playwright. O' Neill's obsession with the revenge motive, and a certain historical context in several of his plays, the scenic designing of his early plays, preoccupation with family as an ambiguity or mystery, a hallmark of even his best plays, use of asides, soliloquies, disguises and masks, could be traced to O' Neill's prolonged exposure to the staging of ***The Count of Monte Cristo*** and through it to the whole tradition of 19th century melodrama. To an extent, O' Neill's success as a playwright, even as a modern dramatist in rebellion against the 19th century tradition of melodrama, lay in his being rooted in the popular theatrical tradition, however outdated it may have became by his time. The association with the popular tradition helped him to modernize tradition and, thus, change the course of American drama. It also assured him an easy theatrical reach to the audience which would have been difficult for him if he were to emerge totally as a modern dramatist.

Eugene O'Neill

O' Neill the dramatist, particularly the modern dramatist, emerges, partly in his restlessness with the theatre of his time, and, partly, in his feverish desire to use the medium of drama to understand himself. In thirty years of his dramatic career, very few plays emerged which did not reflect O' Neill's own quest for an identity. He brought intense subjectivity to the dramatic medium which he strove to make objective or realistic.

Though sufficiently well-educated in Catholic boarding schools, and at Princeton and Harvard Universities for brief periods, O' Neill taught himself more than he was ever taught. His convalescence at a Connecticut's sanatorium in 1913 for tuberculosis was a crucial period in his life and career. Illness and an attempt at suicide, drove him into a life of solitude and deep learning. It is during this period, O' Neill reads avidly August Strindberg, Henrik Ibsen, Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer, a

reading that shaped his thought and dramatic art. In fact, O' Neill's early plays like ***Servitude*** (1914), ***Before the Breakfast*** (1916), ***The Web*** (1914) are directly modeled after the plays of Shaw, Ibsen and Strindberg. In fact, Ibsen and Strindberg's realism diversifies the direction of O' Neill's early plays of Sea, or what are called, plays for their setting of the Glencarin deck like ***Bound East far Cardiff*** (1916), ***The Moon of the Carribees*** (1918) presenting atmospheric realism. In these plays, O' Neill's inspiration was Joseph Conrad's romantic belief in nature. O' Neill's struggle with continental realism began with his full length play ***Beyond the Horizon*** (1920) and ***Anna Christie*** (1924). O' Neill's first dramatic success ***The Emperor Jones*** (1920) bears witness to his continued belief in the primacy of nature over man, and at the same time, reflects his growing acceptance of the human drama in the continental mode of realism and expressionism.

The 1920's was a great period of experimentation and innovation in American theatre. At the outset, it was a period of intellectual sensitivity to European drama and the theatrical trends like naturalism and expressionism it initiated. For the first time in the American theatrical history, non – commercial theatre, given to art than profit, sprang up - ***The Chicago Little Theatre*** (1914), ***The Washington Square Players*** (1915) which later became ***The Theatre Guild*** and ***The Provincial Players*** (1916) in New York. O' Neill's early plays were produced by the provincial players while the production of the later plays was done by the Theatre Guild. However, what is important, more than the particular theatre, was O' Neill's association with particular theatre personalities who shaped O' Neill's dramatic imagination considerably. The leader of the ***Provinceton Players***, George Cram Cook and his wife Susan Glaspell searched for native talents in American drama and found and established O' Neill as a representative of the significant American drama in the 1920's. The editor of ***Theatre Arts***, Sheldon Cheney, charts out the direction the new American drama and Eugene O' Neill should take. Cheney visualised, among other things, a psychological drama stimulating both emotionally and intellectually, which is neither the old melodrama nor the new photographic sort of naturalism. Until the end of his dramatic career, O' Neill cherished Cheney's ideals.

Besides, Cheney's idealism, O' Neill owes much to the drama critic, Kenneth Macgowan and his collaborator, Robert Edmond Jones. Excepting the last few plays, O' Neill not only produced most of his plays in association with them but was deeply influenced in his dramatic imagination by them.

Macgowan and Jones mark the experimental, and, particularly, the expressionist, phase of O' Neill's dramatic career. Macgowan believed in a refusal to be merely realistic i.e. making theatre totally representational of the objective reality. Theatre has to be anti-realistic or expressionistic in order to penetrate the psychological and spiritual truth. He believed in the collaborative effort of the designer, the director and the playwright in the creation of the theatre that would not totally depend on dialogue and the actor but would strive to capture on the stage the inner form of the play. Theatre should be presentational, an ensemble emerging freely in color. design, scenic setting and in, what is called, the choreographic acting. O' Neill's plays, ***The Hairy Ape*** (1922), ***Desire Under the Elms*** (1924), ***The Great God Brown*** (1926), and ***Lazarus Laughed*** (1928), belong to this phase dominated by Mcgowan. The growing expressionist stance of the plays is a process of internalization of the American socio-familial situation of his time.

Beginning in 1928, O' Neill begins a highly individualist phase of dramatic writing with plays like ***Strange Interlude*** (1928), ***Mourning Becomes Electra*** (1931), ***The Iceman Cometh*** (1946), and ***Long Day's Journey Into Night*** (1955). Powerfully realistic in dramatising the socio-familial situation, the plays however, acquire the quality of an intensely felt personal statement by O' Neill, characterized by a skeptical attitude to life, rather than self-sustaining drama. O' Neill's skepticism elevates the tragic ethos of his plays and makes the genre of tragedy distinctly O' Neillian just as the tragedies of Shakespeare were distinctly Shakespearean.

A great popular playwright with unparalleled success on the American stage, O' Neill gained equally in critical estimate. His first full length play, ***Beyond the Horizon***, ***Anna Christi*** and ***Strange Interlude*** were awarded the coveted Pulitzer prizes. O' Neill was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936, crediting him with the distinction of elevating American drama to the heights of great literature.

2.2 *THE HAIRY APE* AND THE AMERICA OF THE 1920'S.

Though ***The Hairy Ape*** was written for the stage in 1921, a short story with the same title was done regarding the revolt of a stoker who joins the I.W.W. Where the earlier sea heroes of the Glencarin plays, were products of nature, the stoker in ***The Hairy Ape*** is a product of American industrial capitalism. While the sea heroes were committed to nature, the stoker in this play is committed to steel that makes the ship. The change of ambience within the unchanged setting of O' Neill's plays brings out the burden of the growth of the nation, from its agrarian beginnings to a highly industrialized capitalist state by 1920's. What should have been a prosperous and self-confident nation, however, displays a sense of cultural poverty in the aftermath of the first world war. Fredrick Hoffman sums up the decade. "*The American was an industrial giant, an emotional dwarf*"[1]. Puritanism that dominated the growth of the nation was accused to have *"drained away all its spiritual resources in the struggle to survive and that continues to struggle in the midst of plenty because life itself no longer possesses any meaning* " [2]. Hoffman pinpoints a threefold failure of the nation as it presents itself in the 1920's – Failure of communication, failure of social meaning and, a failure of morality [3].

O' Neill occasions his tragedy, ***The Hairy Ape*** to synchronize with his sense of cultural failure amid material success of the nation – O' Neill writes to McGowan about what he tried to do in the play

> .... I have tried to dig deep in it, to probe in the shadows of the soul of man bewildered by the disharmony of his primitive pride and individualism at war with the mechanistic development of society...[4]

The mechanistic development of society or the progress of science *per se* is not the undoing of man but the specific materialist values man associated with the development or progress. Hard work and individualism that brought about the ever-vibrant American character and society should usher in a human society lest its own success should be its tragic undoing. Responding to an optimism that tragedy and American character are incompatible, O' Neill answers

> Suppose some day we should suddenly see with the clear eyes of a soul the true valuation of all our triumphant brass band materialism: should see the cost – and the – result in terms of eternal verities! What a colossal, one hundred percent American tragedy that would be ... Tragedy not native to our soul? Why, we are tragedy, the most appalling yet written or unwritten [5]

2.3 THE TRAGIC PROBLEM OF IDENTITY IN *THE HAIRY APE*

O'Neill presents a specific socio-economic situation in the play in an authentic portrayal of the capitalist culture of the 1920's in America. The protagonist, Yank and the female opposite, Mildred are representative characters of the hard-working

industrial labor and the parasitic (as the Marxist would call) proprietary capitalist class. The dramatic conflict, as it begins in the play, is an inescapable social conflict of a capitalist economy. Mildred, inspite of her best intentions, abhors Yank and provokes him to abhor her, and Yank, without intending to do so, begins a class struggle. Nevertheless, the class conflict is not the burden of the play but the failure of the capitalist economy to promote an interacting society based on human worth and dignity. For O' Neill, the problem is, at once, immediate as it exists in the American capitalist society of 1920's and also a universal one in that, in the whole process of civilization, man has been alienating himself from others and also alienating himself from his own being. O' Neill explains:

Louis Wolheim as Yank in *The Hairy Ape*

A Scene from Provinceton Players' production of *The Hairy Ape*

> " **The Hairy Ape** was propaganda in the sense that it was a symbol of man who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not acquired in a spiritual way. Thus, not being able to find it on earth nor in heaven, he's in the middle, trying to make peace, taking the worst unches for both of them " [6].

What O' Neill plans to do in the play is to delineate the human condition that is blessed with an endless creativity by virtue of which he creates structures: God, religion, society, capitalism and socialism etc but none of them can subsume him totally. Greater the structures of creativity, as in the present day civilization in the 20th century, greater is the alienation of man from his fellow beings, from the very accomplishments of his civilization, and also from himself. More than anything else, self-alienation characterizes the human situation in the 20th century. O' Neill writes about the play

> The subject here is the same ancient one that always was and always will be the one subject for drama, and that is man and his struggle with his own fate. The struggle used to be with the Gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt to "belong" [7]

Belonging definitively is a human impossibility for what man can belong to is often his own creation which does not subsume him. Hence the problem of human identity.

2.4 SCENE I & II. *THE HAIRY APE*: ELUSIVE IDENTITY AND THE TRAGIC ILLUSION

The setting of the play is a transatlantic liner sailing from New York. The crew of the ship have a reductive appearance and behavioral patterns and, dramatically are simnly voices. Contrastively, there is one character, Yank who is *"broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful and more sure of himself than the rest"* [8]. Yank is a highly accentuated human being compared to the rest of the people. *He "represents to them a self expression, the very last word in what they are, that most highly developed individual"* [9].

The contrast between Yank and the fellow stokers is significant. Yank is, a naturalistically drawn representative stoker, with the necessary self-confidence and expression whereas the other stokers are not only robbed of representational strength but are made caricatures of hard-working stokers. Even Yank is contemptuous of them. Not withstanding Yank's naturalistic strength, and the essential realism of the situation on the deck, O' Neill forbids any naturalistic treatment of the scene, for O' Neill was keen to make the possible realistic strength of the situation as well as of Yank an alterable tentative premise. Peter Egri explains:

> In **The Hairy Ape**, the dramatist's personal participation is fairly obvious; the factual representation changes into emotional presentation. Descriptive pictures are substituted by images involving or implying a simile:... The final outcome of the stage directions, supported by the title of the play, suggests a dramatic contrast between wild animals trapped, captured and caged and explosive energy imprisoned, compressed and contained: [10]

Long and Paddy are the other two stokers in the scene besides Yank, who are developed as characters but function as a critical comment on Yank's strength. Yank has a sense of belonging to the ship. Ship is home for him. For others, it is a sinking ship, a hell. They are not born into it, but, Long would say, are dragged into it by the capitalist class. Yank rejects Long's Marxist division into the exploiters and the exploited or alienators and the alienated. He would consider the people on the upper deck, the upper strata of society, as just a "*baggage*". They don't belong to the stokehole whereas the stokers belong.

Long is sarcastic about their belonging to the ship. Paddy joins Long's sarcasm.

> We make the ship to go, you're saying? Yerra, that almighty God have pity on us [11]

For him, belonging was a thing of the past when they were sailors and belonged to the sea.

> ' Twas them days men belonged ships not now. It was them days a ship was a part of the sea, and the man was a part of the ship, and the sea joined all together and made it one. (Scornfully) Is it one wid this you'd be. Yank-, black smoke from the funnel's smudging the sea, smudging the decks – the bloody engines pounding and throbbing and shaking – wid divil a sight of sun or a breath of clean air – choking our lungs wid coal dust – breaking our backs and hearts in the hell of the stockhole ... I am thinking caged in by steel .... Is it to belong that you are wishing?[12]

For both Long and Paddy, through differing perspectives, consider Yank pursuing something that is elusive. Long would say the ship belongs to the capitalist class, and Paddy would say that the steaming ship alienates the stoker and itself is alienated from the sea. Industrialism has created, on the one hand, a non-working proprietary class and a destructive life-taking machines on the other. For them, Long's sense of belonging is illusory. Long himself displays youthful fancy in his belonging.

> Sure, Sure, I'm the part of the engines' ... Twenty five knots a hour... I am steam and oil for de engines;.. And I am what makes iron into steel ! Steel ! dat stands for de whole ting...And I'm steel.. Steel...Steel......[13].

Scene II, presents Mildred, at the opposite end. While Yank cherishes his youthful manliness, Mildred bemoans her female inanities.

> I am a waste product in the Bessemer process – like the millions or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the by-product, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it [14].

Mildred, the daughter of the president of Nazareth Steel and Chairman of Board of Directors would like to "*discover how the other half lives in the stokehole on the ship and would like to be of some use in the world, like to be sincere, to touch life somewhere*". However, she has neither the "*vitality nor integrity*" that her grandfather as a puddler had, which, down the generations, got burnt away in the affluence they had come to possess. Even her earnest desire to see the world of vitality and integrity, she is aware, sounds ridiculous like a leopard complaining of its spots.

Industrialism has recklessly thrown her into a class as the hardworking stokers were thrown into another class. As Long would complain, they are not born but driven into the class they are in. Mildred also bemoans her predicament.

2.5 SCENE III : TRAGEDY OF SITUATION

Mildred wants to undo, at least partially, an identity she has come to inherit, while Yank cherishes an identity he has come to acquire and possess. There is an in-built tragedy of aspirations, as O' Neill would view, in the human situation. There is a determinism of human instincts, attitudes or of the forces in the objective situation beyond human control or, what O' Neill would himself call, a determinism of fate, that will simply undo the most judiciously felt human aspirations or desires.

Mildred's encounter with Yank has, thus, the determinism of human instincts and attitudes, besides that of the situation wherein both Mildred and Yank are forced into identities other than the ones they seek and cherish.

As Mildred enters the stokehole, even before her encounter with Yank, she "*turns paler*", and "*shivers with fright inspite of the blazing heat*". She finds it difficult to retain her enthusiastic appearance, which according to her aunt, who accompanies her, is affectation and a "*pose of eccentricity*". She is what her class has made her to be. Attempting to be different from what she is, does neither any good to her nor to those to whom she is sympathetic as she already made the poor on the New York's East side "*so much poorer in their own eyes*". The aunt's words prove prophetic. On seeing Yank, Mildred is

> paralyzed with horror, terror, her whole personality crushed, beaten in, collapsed, by the terrific impact of this unknown, abysmal brutality, naked and shameless [15].

In a reversal of all her sympathy for the "*other half*", that lives in the stokehole, she calls him a "*filthy beast*" and unable to bear the very sight of the "*other half, she faints*". Intellectual understanding is one thing and bringing her own person into that understanding is totally a different matter and, it is at the level of the person, our identities lie. Mildred proves that she as a person, whatever be her aspirations, belongs to her class, the affluent and the beautiful, who cannot interact with the poor and the ugly.

2.6 SCENE IV TO VII : TRAGIC CONFLICT; FLUCTUATING IDENTITIES

Where Mildred's story of seeking a humane identity ends, Yank, who proudly thought he belonged to the world of steel and industry, begins to wonder about his identity. Furiously angry at being called a filthy beast, nonetheless, beneath the anger, there is the fear whether he is a beast, since the physical strength he is proud of also belongs to a beast. As the fourth scene begins, Yank is a brooding figure "*seated on a bench*" in the "*exact attitude of Rodins The Thinker*" and, what he himself says "*try to think*".

Mildred's insulting remark makes him unsure of himself. Earlier, Paddy and Long couldn't stifle his sense of pre-eminence in the industrial world. When Long repeats his socialist analysis of they being the slaves of the capitalist class, Yank looks at him "*bewilderedly*", and asks whether it is all true – "*is all dat straight goods*" – though he continues to be contemptuous of Long's assertion of socialist power and equality in the eyes of God. It was Paddy's reminder that Mildred looked at him as if he were a " *hairy ape escaped from the zoo*" raises an agonizing doubt about himself.

> Hairy Ape , huh, Sure ! Dat's de way she looked at me, aw light. Hairy Ape, so dat's me... [16]. Worse for his self-awareness is the charge that he scared Mildred I scared her? Why de hell should I scare her? Who de hell is she? Ain't she de same as me [17]

Yank's problem was that Mildred who called him a beast, is totally unknown to him, a mystery.

> What is she? What's she come from? Who made her? Who give her de naive to look at me like dat?[18]

Though Yank swears revenge on her, he is fearfully aware that there is another world, another set of values defining him and the world of the ships, engines and steel where he is pre-eminent and his set of values, of strength, hard work and productivity may mean nothing. Even when Paddy tells him that he is foolish in paying so much attention to Mildred, who is a trifling, Yank is painfully aware, not so much of Mildred but of what she has done to him and what has happened to him through her.

Scene V presents an accentuation of Yank's tragic conflict and the problem of fluctuating self - identity. Throughout the scene, Yank is in a flight from himself. He is more a reaction to what Mildred calls him than his own self. Even after three weeks, when Long brings him to the Fifth Avenue, Yank's obsession with what Mildred had done to him not only remains but becomes acute. Long tries to induce a class awareness in Yank but he is unable to target Mildred.

> Aw Hell! I don't see no one, see – like her. All dis give me a pain.
> It don't belong......It gives me a pain [19].

Long succeeds in diverting Yank's attention from Mildred to an extent though he can not convert him to the peaceful socialist struggle. The affluence and the reckless spending of the affluent class at the expense of the starving poor does not provoke Yank but Yank is insulted by the expensive monkey fur on display in a shop's window. He is not only called an ape but even his skin seems to have been torn away from him for a display. The animal skin on display, at once, objectifies Mildred's charge of his being a beast. What he feels is the forced identity becomes him. Where Long wanted peaceful action against the class enemies, Yank chooses beastly action. He bumps into a gentleman, accosts a lady and stops a fat man from getting into the bus. A policeman is called and Yank is arrested.

Yank's violence is more psychological than physical. Mildred's insulting remark inverts the process of self-assurance and congratulation into a process of self-degradation. Yank's mental state resembles what R.D. Laing characterizes as the schizoid state of mind, a state of mind becoming increasingly characteristic of our time. A schizoid person experiences a rupture in his relationship with the world and also a disruption of his relation with himself. He *"experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isolation"*. Facing an *"ontological insecurity"*, he is more preoccupied with preserving than gratifying himself. He is psychologically destructive towards others though outwardly he conceals his destructiveness purely as an existential strategy. It is this ability to cope up with anxiety about oneself and restrain the acutely felt destructiveness towards others saves many a maddening tragedy in our time.

Yank's outbursts on the fifth avenue show his singular incapacity to live even like a schizoid in the world.

Scene VI presents Yank's increasing self-depredation not only of himself as an individual but of all the values of much cherished identity as a champion of the new industrial culture. The steel bars of the prison cell represent Mildred, her father and their attempts to degrade him:

> Sure – her old man- president of the steel trust – makes half de steel
> in world – steel – where I taught I belonged – driven' from - movin –
> in dat – to make her and cage me in for her to spit on ..... He made
> dis – dis cage ! Steel ! It don't belong, dat's what! Cages, cells,
> locks, bolts, bars – dat's what it means ! hardin! me down wit him at
> de top! But of will drive trou! *Fire that melts it !* [20]

Steel that was home becomes an enemy. He would be a fire and melt steel. The champion of machines and industrial culture becomes its bitterest foe.

In the seventh scene, Yank seeks internal subversion of the world of steel. One who always thought of *"straight goods"*, Yank joins industrial workers of the world (I.W.W) in the hope that they are industrial wreckers of the world, as they were accused of. In traversing from a totally positive to the negative identity, Yank proves that his own ego, his own sense of individual is more important than any set of values that he fondly cherished for long. All human identities are subordinate to the identity of one's own ego. Human identity is primarily psychological, not essentially social or economic. Man has to buy peace at this level and the lack of it results in a war with oneself. When I.W.W doesn't serve the purpose of a wounded ego, and is further called a brainless ape, an identity Mildred already gave him, Yank keeps brooding about himself.

> So dem holds don't tink I belong, neider. Aw, to hell
> wit'em!.....Gimme a dollar more a day and make me happy! Tree

> square a day and cauliflowers in the front yard – ekal rights a woman and kids – a lousy vote – and I am all fixed for Jesus, huh! Aw, hell! what does dat get yuh? dis tings in your inside, ... It is way down – at de bottom.. yuh can't grab it and yuh can't stop it. It moves and everything moves. It stops and de whole world stops.......I am a busted Ingersoll ... [21]

2.7 SCENE VIII: TRAGIC DENOUEMENT AND THE PREDICAMENT OF HUMAN IDENTITY

The last scene presents the tragic denouement. From I.W.W, Yank lands himself in a Zoo, as if he were driven into it by the world of capitalists and socialists. The human world rejected him because he tried to possess it, instead of being possessed by it. The gorilla in the zoo looks better in its predicament than a man. It is champion of its world. It belongs, a belonging denied to man. The human world is '*hell*' for it which never allows any sense of the self or identity. In a despairing sense of self-condemnation, Yank seeks to belong to the gorilla and as if to cement this bond of belonging, he goes to embrace it. But the gorilla simply does not trust Man, a man who is not trusted in his own world. The gorilla crushes him to death in an act of self - defence, repeating the story of man in his world in the world of animals as well. When man cannot belong to man, how can he belong to the animals? Yank queries: Christ: where do I get off at? Where do I fit in ? [22]

The truth, finally, dawns on him. The only way to belong is to be possessed either by the world or by the animals. Yank welcomes his final fate.

> No quittin; get me ! croak wit your boots on! ladies and gents, step forward and take a slant at the one and only – one and original – Hairy Ape from the wilds of – [23].

And perhaps, The Hairy Ape at last belongs - the tragedy of belonging and of seeking an identity.

2.8 THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY: NATURALISTIC FIXITY AND EXPRESSIONISTIC REVOLT

Yank's restless anxiety for an identity or for a gratifying self-image, the resulting mental anguish and conflict and, finally, his tragic death bring us to the question of O' Neill's vision of man, his struggles and his predicament. Why didn't Yank continue to be satisfied with the much cherished sense of belonging? Why did he allow a total stranger, Mildred to hurt his pride and why did he go riotous on the Fifth Avenue and land himself in jail? Why did he choose to be the destroyer of the world of steel of which he was proud? Why did he descend down to the level of gorilla and embrace it to his own death?

The answers lie in O' Neill's vision of man and his predicament, as influenced by naturalists like Ibsen and Strindberg and his vision of the nature of human struggles as influenced by German expressionists like George Kaiser and Ernest Toller. In O' Neill's naturalistic view, there is no escape from Yank's problem of identity in the situation as he was placed. Naturalism, as originally formulated by Emile Zola under inspiration from biological sciences, de-emphasized human individuality and made him one of the living animals with no scope whatsoever for an identity, significance and individualist action. Man suffers from the fixity of his socio-psychological situation. However hard he fights against the fixative situation, there is no escape from it.

In spite of boundless strength of character, Yank meets a tragic end. O' Neill, however, subtitles ***The Hairy Ape*** as a comedy of ancient and modern life in eight scenes. For O' Neill, Yank's predicament is tragi-comic. In fact, in calling Yank's predicament tragi-comic, O' Neill reflects the belief of the naturalists, that human experience is so versatile that to call it comic or tragic would be inauthentic. Hence, human experience is essentially tragi-comic, as the comic incongruity and irrationality always contribute to the tragic rhythm and irony of life and the attritive tragic struggle and defeat give rise to comic ludicrousness. The concept of tragedy, both among the classical and Elizabethan playwrights, was an instrument to celebrate the freedom, heroism and grandeur of a select individual and to reaffirm the preconceived moral order. The new bourgeois of the 19th century which becomes popular in Ibsen, Chekhov and Strindberg dispenses with the idea of individual heroism, the irreplaceable moral order and locates the tragedy in the individual's attritive struggle with society. In the place of pessimism, on account of the determinism of fate and God and the final moral affirmation, modern bourgeois tragedy presents a state of ennui and affirms only skepticism, for the nature of his struggle and experience quite often unbecomes him and the final denouement, if it could be called so, since his struggle is endless, remains tentative. His denouement becomes final, only when the individual, out of sheer attrition, inflicts a definitive defeat or death on himself.

Yank's is, definitely, a modern naturalistic tragi-comedy. For all his self-confidence and pivotal role in the new industrial order, he cannot have any individualistic identity. All attempts at a distinct identity are situationally impossible and foredoomed to fail.

O' Neill however, does not aim, primarily to present his naturalistic predicament. He aims to dramatize Yank's inability to accept the deindividualization forced on him by the industrial order. Being human is to fight for a distinct identity, however frustrating and self-defeating it could be. It is this struggle that characterizes humanness. O' Neill dramatizes the self-expressive human struggle in the play.

The Hairy Ape is significant for this expressionistic revolt. Throughout the play, as the stage directions indicate, O' Neill was keen to present this expressionism of setting, scene and characterization. In the stage directions to scene I of the play, O' Neill writes:

> The treatment of this scene, or of any other scene in the play, should by no means to be naturalistic. The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship imprisoned by white steel... .The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads. They cannot stand upright [24]

Naturalism builds up a scene or character by objective description. Scenes and characters derive strength from the objectivity of the situation. O' Neill robs the workers in the stokehole, excepting Yank, of the naturalistic strength. Even the naturalistic build up of Yank in the first scene is exploded gradually in the later scenes. The explosion of a scene, setting or character by a riotous use of noise, color or by a physical or mental reduction or accentuation for the purpose of objective distortion to present a mental state that comes to exist in opposition to the objective reality of the situation is called expressionism.

Basically, expressionism is a revolt against the dehumanization of man by science and society. It believes in expressiveness as against a communicativeness of the cognitive and emotive process. It presents the essentials of things instead of the things themselves. Normal consciousness is dissolved and the dense core of one's passion is climaxed. All naturalistic detail and logical transitions between things are eliminated. The expressionistic perception concretizes itself in the formation of

certain images and these images just stop at expressing the intensity of the perception or emotion, and never evolve themselves symbolically.

In drama and theatre, expressionism involves an emotive concentration in words, dialogues, scenes, and other individual parts eroding the structural unity and ethos of the plays. It was anti-literary in that it tried to destroy the elaborate structure of Latin Grammar of the European languages to facilitate the thrust of human urges through a sort of telegraphic style of writing linking one peak of emotion with another. As dramatic art, expressionism aims at freeing drama of the Aristotelian absolutes of plot, language and character. As theatrical art, expressionism attempted to destroy representational stage reality and theatrical illusion. Initially, expressionism arose in postwar Germany. George Kaiser's ***Morn to Midnight*** (1920), Ernest Toller's ***Man and the Masses*** (1920) attempted a revolution to free man from slavery to the established system of values.

O' Neill was only fascinated with the German expressionists. McGowan's belief in expressionist theatre largely shaped the writing of ***The Hairy Ape***. O' Neill uses expressionism for a rather limited purpose of characterising Yank's revolt against the societal identity forced on him before he accepts, in his tragic end, the naturalistic limitations of his situation. O' Neill tries to balance the naturalistic strength of his character with the expressionistic undoing of his revolt. O' Neill writes:

> The newest thing now in playwriting is the opposite of the character play. It is the expressionistic play. For expressionism denies the value of characterization .... For expressionism tries to minimize everything on the stage that stands between the author and the audience......I personally do not believe that an idea can be readily put over to an audience except through characters... the real contribution of the expressionist has been in the dynamic qualities of his plays. They express something in modern life better than did the old plays. I have something of this method in **The Hairy Ape**. But the character Yank remains a man and everyone recognizes him as such [25].

Until Scene V, Yank is presented in naturalistic strength, not withstanding Long and Paddy's critical comments on his individualism, while the first scene and the other stokers are rendered totally expressionistic in their dehumanized existence. The scene presents images of a cage or a prison and Yank's self-confidence is the only liberating image. Scene III further reinforces this image through "*dim lighting*", tumult of noise and the gorilla appearance of the blackened faces of the stokers. In scene V, the crowd is presented as "*a procession of*" gaudy marionettes. Yank's self-confidence is hurt by Mildred's remark. He is furious yet controlled. In Scene V, on the Fifth Avenue, Yank's controlled fury explodes expressionistically in revolt against people on the avenue. The violence is not against the people as such but against the image forced on him. The sight of the monkey fur in the furriers' aggravates his rage as if the skin in the window is a personal insult. Intensely raging with anger, Yank bounces back against Mildred. Here, Yank is in total flight from himself, a state of characterlessness. In Scene VI, in the prison in Blackwell island, Yank dissolves his character into a revolt against the world of steel, which once represented but now appears to represent Mildred and her father. In the next scene, Yank seeks an expressionistic destruction of the world of steel through I.W.W. Frustrated, Yank chooses to accept, expressionistically, the identity of gorilla and in a similar expressionistic gesture embraces gorilla to his death. But this frustrating death that does not give him a sense of belonging, either to the world of steel or to the world of gorilla, Yank admits the naturalistic impossibility of a human identity in the world. In recognizing this fact and also in recognizing the inescapability of his tragic expressionistic revolt, he re-emerges as a human character, a mature and a thoughtful one that he was not at the beginning of the play. As a play, ***The Hairy Ape*** structures

a continual human revolt against a fixative human situation. Peter Egri sums up the nature and design of the play:

> The structure of **The Hairy Ape**, like the character portrayal of the play, is also Janus-faced. It is made up of a sequence of scenes as in expressionist drama. On the other hand, the scenes are specifically organized both internally and externally. Practically, each of them shows a short story-oriented pattern of a scaled down one actor having a miniature exposition, plot, development and climactic crisis.........At the same time, the scenes do not fall apart into isolated units but constitute an organic whole............the structure of a play then displays a transitional quality that calls for an elucidation from the viewpoint of the poles between which it represents a transition [26].

2.9 SUMMING UP

Though O'Neill claims that the human problem he presents in the play is both ancient and modern man's struggle with his fate or predicament, it is particularly O' Neill's story of modern man in the 20th century. To be modern is to be proud of oneself for having created a great civilization of science but his own creation, the industrial civilization, renders him insignificant and alienates him from others as well as from himself. Yet there is no escape from struggling to be himself - distinctively human. This struggle is man, both to create a civilization and to be himself.

The Hairy Ape is the first 20th century play to present what becomes a man in this century. Several plays, very significant ones, in the course of the 20th century go back to the problem posed by O' Neill in his play – the predicament of man in the 20th century industrial civilization – Elmer Rice's ***The Adding Machine*** (1928), Arthur Miller's ***The Death of a Salesman*** (1949), Edward Albee's ***The Zoo Story*** (1960), Sam Shepard ***The Operation Sedewinder*** (1970) and David Mamet's ***Glengary GlenRoss*** (1984). The problem is the same one of human identity. Where does man stand in relation to the new industrialized world and where does he stand in relation to his own humanness?

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2.11 KEYWORDS

Choreographic: Refers to an acting that consists of dance-like movements, gestures and other movements on the stage which, instead of dialogue, attempt to convey meaning and also present dramatic action.

Capitalism: Though capitalism, as an economic system in which capital is privately owned goes back to early historical periods, it normally refers to the industrial capitalism of 20th century wherein there is a monopolistic control of industries and individual enterprise is limited to the top few and the large working class has only a limited or marginal role or identity.

Denouement: (French) unknotting. Denouement refers to events that follow the climax of the plots. It also means ultimate predicament.

Ingersoll: An inexpensive watch widely used during the 1920's.

Janus-faced: Having two faces, one looking forward, one looking backward like the Roman deity, Janus. It also means having two contrasting qualities.

Leopard complaining of its spots: As spots of black markings are an inseparable feature of a leopard, it cannot complain of its spots; so too a person cannot complain of the characteristic features of his or her class or situation.

2.12 QUESTIONS

1. Briefly discuss the influences that marked O' Neill's career as a playwright.
2. Discuss ***The Hairy Ape*** as a play of the 1920's.
3. What are the distinguishing features of O' Neillian tragedy as illustrated in ***The Hairy Ape***.
4. Illustrate the title of the play, ***The Hairy Ape*: *A Comedy in Eight Scenes***.
5. Discuss ***The Hairy Ape*** as a naturalistic tragedy of human identity and explain how a naturalist accounts for what O' Neill calls the comedy in the play.
6. Critically comment on O' Neill's use of expressionism in ***The Hairy Ape***.
7. Could you call ***The Hairy Ape*** an expressionistic comedy or tragedy? Give reasons for and against such a description.

2.13 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

1. We lives in ' ell, comrades – and right enough we'll die in it. And who's ter blame, I arsks yer?
2. Dis is a man's job, get me? It belongs. It runs distub.
3. Hell, sure, dat's my fav'rite climate. I eat it up! I git fat on it! It's me makes it hot!. It's me makes it roar !
4. But I'm afraid I have neither the vitality nor integrity. All that was burnt out in our stock before I was born.
5. Pardon me for my outburst. When a leopard complains of its spots, it must sound rather grotesque.
6. And you and me, comrades, we' re is slaves! And the skipper and mates and engineers, they're is slaves too ! And she's is bloody daughter and we're all' er slaves too!
7. Votes , hell ! Votes is a Joke, see. Votes for women! Let dem do it.
8. You mean change the unequal conditions of society by legitimate direct action or with dynamite ?
9. He got me, aw right I am trou. Even him didn't tink, I belonged .

2.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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A discussion of O' Neill's plays as characteristically American tragedies.

UNIT 3 *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* AS TRAGEDY

Structure

3:0 Objectives
3:1 Arthur Miller and The American Milieu
3:2 Arthur Miller's concept of Tragedy
3:3 Death of a Salesman: Analysis of the text
3:4 Death of Salesman as Tragedy: An Assessment
3:5 Summing Up
3:6 References
3:7 Key Words
3:8 Questions
3:9 Annotations
3:10 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses the cultural mileu in which Arthur Miller writes, his concept of tragedy, ***Death of a Salesman*** as a Miller tragedy and an assessment of the play as a tragedy both in terms of Miller's formulations and, also, in terms of the norms of tragedy formulated from the times of the Greeks to the present.

3.1 ARTHUR MILLER AND THE AMERICAN MILIEU

Arthur Miller

Eugene O' Neill established Modern American Drama as a powerful genre of American literature. In doing so, he brought both the American nation and the dramatic medium into sharp critical reckoning. The playwrights who followed him, Elmer Rice and Clifford Odets explored the cultural milieu and the dramatic medium in order to define and redefine the changing American cultural situation and psyche. What is significant about the dramatic endeavors of these playwrights is their keen

concern for the societal condition of man under the repressive technology and industrial capitalism. Technology and industry, themselves do not posit any antagonism to man but the economic determinism it imposes on human lives puts a heavy premium on what have been characteristically American aspirations and convictions, individualism, struggle and achievement through honesty, enterprise and hardwork. Equally frustrating is the position of man in the family either on account of the puritanic irresolution of the sexual conflicts or on account of mutual expectations, individual infirmities, grievances and failures. Family acquires a primacy in the American cultural situation both as a major preoccupation of the American individual and, more importantly, as the significant determinant of the individual's socio-economic goals. Culturally, familial concerns and socio-economic goals tend to merge indistinguishably into each other, so much so, that what has become popular as a cultural ideal known as "the American Dream", has come to explain both the American family as well as the society.

In its basic premise, "the American Dream" goes back to the early puritan settlers in America who considered themselves "*to be God's special emissaries on a mission into the wilderness*", with the task of establishing "*a Jerusalem renewed*" – In practical terms, it meant establishing an economic civilization in the wilderness of the American continent. In the given situation, the puritan piety came to reside in "*industry, thrift, social responsibility and avoidance of sensuality*". The religious aspirations and economic endeavors acquired a singularity of purpose. Thomas. E. Porter writes:

> Virgin land, undeveloped resources......... all allowed scope for enterprise and imagination. The successful man became the idol of the public; the road to success was pointed out from the pulpit, in the marketplace, by the family fireside.......It is possible .... to trace the unique American attitude toward "success" to roots in our puritan past, to see this ideology as a secularization of the Protestant ethic. [1]

The transformation of an essentially religious urge into a secular socio-economic dream motivates the making of the nation from a virgin land in the 16th and 17th centuries into an industrial giant in the 20th century. Max Weber believed that the growth of capitalism in the West has much to do with the Protestant Calvinism's encouragement of individual enterprise and accumulation of capital in the hope of being favored or be the '*elect*' of God. This was nowhere truer than in America. The work ethic and the success motive were championed by every thinker who exercised a decisive influence on American cultural attitudes. "*Early to bed and early to rise make a man healthy, wealthy and wise*" : Benjamin Franklin drilled the aphorism endlessly into the ears of the Americans in the 18th century. Ralph Emerson's doctrine of self-reliance reinforced the Protestant work ethic.

The growth of American capitalism has also raised the fervor of the religious doctrine of material success. The Baptist preacher, Russell H. Conwell, in his celebrated lecture ***Acres of Diamonds,*** first delivered in 1861 but repeated thousands of times in the next fifty years, asserted that one need not travel world over to find diamonds but could create wealth in one's own backyard, provided one has the will to do it. One need not be apologetic about making wealth, for it is not simply for one's own happiness but for common good, that could be achieved only through individual efforts.

Making wealth, thus, emerged as a religio-social passion. Horatio Alger's novels, during the last decades of the 19th century immortalised a rags to riches story. The Horatio-Alger hero is a poor boy who emerges a millionaire through sheer hard work and honesty. As the nation progressed into the 20th century, The American Dream, the ideals of freedom, democracy and equality of opportunity by which the nation defined itself came to mean, rather exclusively, economic success and material

happiness. As capitalism progressed from an era of abundant opportunities during the 18th and the 19th centuries, where one had to simply pick up an opportunity and reach success through honest hard work, to an era of stiff competitiveness in the 20th century, attention has come to be focussed on what gives success other than honesty and hard work. One has to succeed with people to gain success – the days of succeeding with the virgin land are long over. The aphorisms of Benjamin Franklin worked in the 18th century, Conwell's and Alger's hero in the 19th century. The 20th century America presented stiff human challenges where they have been only material challenges earlier. Dale Carnegie comes with answers for the human challenges in business and industry in his book, ***How to Win Friends and Influence People*** (1936). For Carnegie, personality is the major ingredient of success in business or industry. The impersonality machines and technology imposed on human beings could be fought back through a carefully nourished cult of personality. The worker, the entrepreneur and the salesman succeed not through hard work and honesty alone but largely through the force and strategies of human personality.

Arthur Miller shapes his plays in this techno – human cultural ethos of mid 20th century America. Born in 1915, in a New York Jewish family, Miller witnessed, during the great depression in the nineteen thirties, the sudden explosion of the economic myths of American capitalism built over the century. Miller dramatises the tragic denouement that inevitably awaits any carefully built cultural myth. In ***All My Sons*** (1947), Miller's first significant play and in ***Death of Salesman*** (1949), Miller locates his heroes in two traditional American institutions, the American family and the American business enterprise, the values of which have either, alternatively, synchronised or collided with each other. As to O' Neill and Odets, so also, for Miller, family, as a structure of elemental human relationships, is the fulcrum of society. Miller's Jewish ethnic values of familial authority and responsibility make family a formidable determinant of social values as well. With a non-ethnic perspective, Miller, however, views human condition in a continuum, "*with familial relation at one extreme*" and "*a primarily social relationship at the other*", where the problem faced by man and the demands made on him tend to be of one kind. In his essay on ***The Family in Modern Drama***, Miller sets out the broad human problem characterizing the American socio-familial scene.

> How may a man make of the outside world a home? How and in what ways must he struggle, what must he strive to change and overcome within himself and outside himself, if he is to find the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity and honor which, evidently, all men have connected in their memories with the idea of family? [2]

The American milieu Miller reckons with is an interactive flux of the socio-familial scene wherein the social forces have acquired an unprecedented economic pressure and the familial values have to withstand this pressure and also retain social identity and significance since the failure at a social level entails a two fold failure – social as well as familial.

3.2 ARTHUR MILLER'S CONCEPT OF TRAGEDY

Eugene O' Neill predicted that the price of triumphant materialism would be a hundred percent American tragedy, "*most appalling yet written or unwritten*". This is only one aspect of O' Neill's vision of the tragic predicament of America. There was also a tragic irresolution of puritanized sexual and egoistic conflicts burdening the American soul with avoidable guilt and pessimism. Elemer Rice presented a horrifying comic pull of the technocratic industrial America which is far more tragic in its presentation of human predicament. The leftist playwrights of the nineteen

thirties like Clifford Odets, draw a despairing picture of the American family and the capitalistic economic system. Barring Odet's call for revolutionary action, the images of American society, presented were essentially one of negation of American individualism and of economic paradise. The focus shifts from individual to society, from what the individual aspires to what society could do.

The shift has much to do with the growth of the naturalistic vision of life since the late 19th century. Naturalism has not only shifted the dramatic conflict from the interplay between different human elements to the interaction between the individual and society within the context of a dynamic and historical change but also has come to look upon environment as the chief determinant of individual's socio-psychological being. M.W. Steinberg writes:

> As the twentieth century approached, various forces were making for realism in drama with its emphasis on people and situations drawn from ordinary life ...... perhaps an even more important aspect of the new drama was the post-Darwinian emphasis on environment as a shaping force in life. Man was seen as the product and from one point of view the victim, of his surroundings. Increasingly, writers became preoccupied with social institutions, political and economic issues....... The primary concern was with the external factors that operated on the protagonist rather than with the inner crisis experienced by him when challenged by his conditions. [3]

The implications of such a deterministic view is the formulation of a concept of a social play and the problems such a social play presents for a notion of tragedy. Arthur Miller describes the gap between a social play and a tragedy.

> In all of them, from O' Neill's through the best of Anderson, Sidney Howard, and the rest, the underlying log jam, so to speak, the unresolvable paradox, is that, try as he will, the individual is doomed to frustration......... The image is that of the individual scratching away at a wall beyond which stands society, his fellow men. Sometimes he pounds at the wall, sometimes he tries to scale it or even blow it up, but at the end the wall is always there, and the man himself is dead or doomed to defeat in his attempt to live a human life.......... The tragic victory is always denied us because, I believe, the plays cannot project with any conviction what the society, in the playwright's view at any rate, has failed to prove. [4]

The unmitigated individual failure, for Miller, denotes our contemporary distance from tragedy, for tragedy does not lie in individual failure, *per se* but in our education or learning, the failures afford us. Further, the individual's disjuncture with society in contemporary times, as envisioned in social drama or in naturalism, precludes a positive action or understanding that alone makes us capable of tragedy. Drawing inspiration from the Greeks for a concept of tragedy, Miller writes:

> The preoccupation of the Greek drama with ultimate law, with the Grand Design, so to speak, was therefore an expression of a basic assumption of the people, who could – not yet conceive, luckily that any man could long prosper unless his polis prospered. The individual was at one with society; his conflicts with it, were, in our terms, like family conflicts the opposing sides of which nevertheless shared a mutuality of feeling and responsibility......Religion is the only way we have any more of expressing our genuinely social feelings and concerns, for in our bones we as people do not otherwise, believe in our oneness with a larger group. But the religiousness of the Greek drama of the classical time was more worldly; it expressed a social concern, to be sure, but did so on the

> part of a people already unified on earth rather than the drive of a single individual toward personal salvation. [5]

"*The debilitation of tragic drama*", Miller writes, is on account of "*the fracturing and the aborting of the need of man to maintain a fruitful kind of union with his society*" [6]. In the place of a fruitful relation, which entails a perseverant struggle, modern man seeks a facile adjustment with society – " *we have set up a a goal ..... which can best be characterized as "happiness" – namely, staying out of trouble*" [7] where we have to fight meaningfully and fruitfully, we make a "*truce*" with society. The result is a withdrawal from conflict, struggle and affirmation that characterize tragedy.

> For deep down we no longer believe in the rules of the tragic contest: we no longer believe that ultimate sense can be made of social causation, or in the possibility that any individual can, by a heroic effort, make sense of it. Thus the man that is driven to question the moral chaos in which we live ends up in our estimate as a possibly commendable but definitely odd fellow, and probably as a compulsively driven neurotic........In the heroic and tragic time the act of questioning the way things are implied that a quest was being carried on to discover an ultimate law or way of life which would yield excellence; in the present time the quest is that of man made unhappy by rootlessness and, in every important modern play, by a man who is essentially a victim [8]

Tragedy in modern times, Miller views, has not transcended the state of pathos. In fact, pathos has come to appropriate tragedy – "*We have abstracted from the Greek drama its air of doom, its physical destruction of the hero, but its victory escapes us*".[9]

The reason for the pathetic predicament of man in the contemporary industrial state is not so much because of the power of the state but largely on account of the under valuation of the human worth of an individual to which the individual consciously subjects himself.

> In short, the absolute value of the individual human being is believed in only as a second value; It stands well below the needs of efficient production. We have finally come to serve the machine. The machine must not be stopped, marred, left dry, or outmoded......Our pity for the victim is mixed, I think. It is mixed with an air of self-preserving superiority. ....so long as modern man conceives of himself as valuable only because he fits into some niche in the machine – tending pattern, he will never know anything more than a pathetic doom. [10]

Though close to the Greeks and the Elizabethans, in characterizing tragedy as a self-elevating human endeavor and understanding, Miller looks upon the Greek and the Elizabethan tragedy as restrictive and partisan in limiting the tragic ability to the aristocratic few. Miller's tragedy encompasses everyone in society, in tune with the historical democratisation of society characteristic of our times – "*the common man is as apt a subject of tragedy in its highest sense as kings were*", [11] for modern psychiatry which derived its insights from Greek tragedy, finds no distinction between a king and a common man as far as the tragic proclivities are concerned. Further, the common man would never have been able to appreciate tragedy, if he were not capable of it.

For Miller, what is required for tragedy is a person "*who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing – his sense of personal dignity*" [12]. The tragic struggle is the compulsion experienced by man "*to evaluate himself justly*". The destruction of man in the process of the struggle "*posits a wrong or evil in his environment*" and

there emerges "*the morality of tragedy and its lesson*" - "*The discovery of the moral law, which is what the enlightenment of tragedy consists of, is not the discovery of some abstract or metaphysical quantity*" [13] but the essence of all that is pre-eminently human.

In an age of democracy and freedom, which is also the age of brute technological power and mass hysteria, Miller looks upon tragedy, through which man can rest in eminence.

> The tragic right is a condition of life, a condition in which the human personality is able to flower and realise itself. The wrong is the condition which suppresses man, perverts the flowing out of his love and creative instinct. Tragedy enlightens and it must, in that it points the heroic finger at the enemy of man's freedom. The thrust for freedom is the quality in tragedy which exalts. The revolutionary questioning of the stable environment is what terrifies" [14]

Miller, thus, contemporizes the concept of tragedy, that characterized the Greek and Elizabethan cultural and dramatic imagination, to meet the challenges of industrialism, technocracy, and democracy in mid 20th century America.

3.3 *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*: ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

The play opens in Willy Loman's house. Miller describes the unfolding tragedy – "*An air of a dream clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality*"[15]. The particular tragedy of Willy Loman, and many like him, is that reality is not confronted on its terms but with a perspective of dream that, at best, confounds both. The play has a two fold movement, the mundane economic struggles of Loman and his family and his dream world through which he tries to prospectivise his daily struggles.

As a salesman, Loman is "*tired to death*" as he "*couldn't make it, and couldn't drive anymore*". But as he drives, he is "*dreaming again*" and has "*strange thoughts*". There is no escape from journeying for he is a '*New England man*' not required in New York. The problem is not him but his son, Biff. So much of "*personal attractiveness gets lost*", but "*he could be big in no time*". But what future he has always having "*to get ahead of the next fella*" and that's how one "*builds the future*". He remains a boy at thirty four, unable to grow into a job or marriage. Loman's second son, Happy is no better but he has good dreams. "*apartment, car, and plenty of women*". Their problem is, as Biff says, that they "*weren't brought up to grub for money*" and they just "*don't know how to do it*". Nonetheless, they plan big, a corporation like Loman Brothers even though Biff compulsively steals little things. For Willy, '*who is tired to dream*', the road ahead of him is that of his sons. He is lost in thoughts about Biff. Biff has to finish his schooling, be careful with girls, his stealing the football for practice is the strength of his initiative, Bernard who complains against Biff's indifference to studies, probably, does not have the charismatic appeal of Biff.

> Bernard can get the best marks in the school, y' understand but when he gets out in the business world, y' understand you are going to be five times ahead of him. That's why I thank Almighty God you're both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes the appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want, you take me, for instance, I never have to wait in a line to see a

> buyer "Willy Loman is here !" That's all they have to know and I go right through. [16]

The tragic fallacy unfolds itself forcefully - the simple industry of Bernard doesn't take him far in business, but the personal magnetism of his son would guarantee him five times greater success than Bernard's. Loman has the Dale Carnegie vision of success through sheer force of personality for his sons. He would reinforce Carnegie's vision by unabashedly lying about himself. While he failed miserably in his job, he claims to have succeeded eminently. Instead of cautioning his children against the kind of failure he experienced, Willy tries to motivate his children, with his obsessive belief in the cultural myth of personality syndrome.

Willy alternates between unabashed lies and inescapable confessions: "*I am tellin' you*", "*I was sellin thousands and thousands*" but "*people don't seem to take to me*", "*they just pass me by*" and "*I get the feeling that I will never sell anything again*" [17]. Similarly, there is, on the one hand, a total, even a self-effacing, commitment to the family and, on the other hand, an infidelity to Linda which he would rationalize as one necessary to fight his loneliness and failures of a travelling salesman.

Willy's tragic error is that he does not view his lies or infidelity as failures of his character but as necessary evils an individual has to cope up with in pursuit of the cherished cultural ideals. The reality of his life, his inability to drive long distances, dwindling income and mounting bills, and ever failing sons need not be faced squarely but be fought with a sense of what would have been missed opportunities or with an incurable hope or optimism in future possibilities.

As he talks to Linda about his failing appearance, he lapses semiconsciously into recollecting the amorous affections of the woman he meets on his journey. As he thinks of the near fatal accident in Yonkers, he remembers his brother, Ben and regrets why he didn't go to Alaska and make big like him who "*started with clothes on his back and ended up with diamond mines*". When Charley enquires from him whether he wants a job and offers him one, in view of his miserable plight, Willy resents his offer. Willy gets into reminiscing about Ben and his own early days as he talks to Charley. Ben is the ideal for Willy, a Horatio Alger story of rags to riches. He would not so much regret for not having been a Ben in spite of occasional thoughts of missed opportunities and being "*temporary*" in life, for that would mean a dilution of his belief that personality would do wonders but he very much wishes his sons to succeed like Ben.

As Willy lied about his success as salesman, so would he lie about his sons cherishing him as an ideal father and obeying him blindly. Biff understands Willy's deceptions and would never credit him with any character. Linda describes the socio-familial tragedy of Willy Loman.

> I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made lot of money... He is not the finest character ever lived. But he's a human being... The man is exhausted.....A small man can be as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty six years.... opens up unheard of territories to their trade mark and now in his old age they take his salary away" [18]

To Biff's charge that those who threw him away were "*ungrateful bastards*", Linda replies.

> Are they any worse than his sons. When he brought business, when they were young, they were glad to see him...... Now he takes his valises out of the car and pulls them back and takes them out again and he's exhausted...... And you tell me he has no character ? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit ? [19]

Willy was not unaware of his place in the family. But what matters to him is success, or the myth of success. He would delude himself to be a successful salesman, so also he would delude himself to be a much respected and successful father. What matters to him is the dream he has for his sons.

When Happy informs him that Biff is going to see Oliver for some help in their "*great idea to sell sporting goods*" and establish "*a Loman line*", Willy's dream for his sons is enlivened again.

For Willy, the "*Loman Line is a one million dollar idea*" and Biff should conduct himself in all dignity, when he goes to see Oliver. He sees "*great things*" for his sons and their "*troubles are over*". They should "*start big*" and "*end big*". Biff "*who always started low*" should not be "*modest*" and "*undersell himself*" and should demand "*no less than fifteen thousand dollars*" [20].

Willy would not allow his dream for his son to be affected by anything - his own failure, Biff's failure and even by Biff's low estimate of him. Biff has to be both a Horatio Alger hero of adventure and a Dale Carnegie leader of human challenges.

Act I presents "*tired to death*" Willy Loman and his ever failing sons graduating themselves through nothing but their limitations and failures into mythical heroes of incorrigible optimism and self-congratulatory hopes.

Act II begins in this airy atmosphere of expectations. Willy would go to Howard and seek work in New York itself and Biff would meet Oliver to seek his help for what is planned as the "*Loman Line*" of enterprise. The sons, cocksure of their success, plan "*to blow*" Willy to a "*big meal*" at six o'clock at Frank's Chop House as a victory celebration.

Willy's meeting with Howard is traumatic for Willy's request for work in New York is not only rejected, he is thrown out of his job for being old and unproductive. The service rendered by Willy does not earn rewards when he cannot serve anymore. For Howard, business is business and no room for sentiments. He pays no attention to Willy's bitter complaint : "*You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away – a man is not a piece of fruit*" [21]. Unfortunately, in the impersonal logic of industrial capitalism, there is no scope for human values. Willy does not, nor cares to, understand how the economic system works. He simply cannot unlearn his faith in human ability working wonders in capitalist enterprise. Even Ben's story of rags to riches in the countryside is trivial compared to what is possible in industrial America.

> It's contacts, Ben, contacts ! The whole wealth of Alaska passes over the lunch table at the Commodore Hotel and that's the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end up with diamonds here on the basis of being liked. [22]

As a part of his faith, he still thinks Biff would make up with Oliver,

> He wants Biff very badly. Called him in from the West. Long distance, Carte Blanche, special deliveries. [23]

Willy doesn't have the same faith in Biff. He cannot understand why Biff doesn't make the grade anywhere. He confesses to Bernard that Biff's failure has been haunting him like a ghost for fifteen years and wonders whether it was his fault. But Willy as he shaped himself can never comprehend either his or Biff's failure. His obsession with his individual ability is so debilitating that he would not do the most obvious – accept Charley's offer of a job in New York, a thing for which he begged Bernard. As Charley taunts him, Willy will never "*grow up*" and Willy as a salesman

fails to understand that what matters in the world is not what he is or what he thinks of himself but "*what you can sell*".

Oliver's indifference brings Biff to his senses and makes him realize the "*ridiculous lie*" his life has been and for fifteen years he has been living on dreams and lies Willy has been feeding him with. When Biff goes to Willy to share the facts of his life, Willy has no use for facts. What he requires is "*good news*" to tell Linda, for he is left with no more stories to tell her. Inspite of Biff's frantic efforts to make Willy see the facts, Willy would like to delude himself with the dream he has for Biff. He would rather recognize Biff's lesser evils like failing in Mathematics and stealing Oliver's pen. He is less uncomfortable with these failures for which he is not directly responsible but he cannot reckon with Biff's bigger failure in life for which he is more responsible than Biff himself.

Biff's alround failure makes him sympathetic to Willy, a sympathy he wasn't capable of earlier – "*A fine, troubled prince. A hardworking, unappreciated prince....... A good companion. Always for his boys*" [24]. What Linda pleaded earlier with him for Willy, Biff goes to plead with Happy, "*you could help him – I can't! Don't you understand..... He is going to kill himself*" [25]. Biff partners Willy's guilt, for he failed in everything, while Willy failed him with his biggest dream.

But Biff would not forgive him for his infidelity to Linda. His sympathy for Willy turns into aversion when he finds him in the hotel room with a woman. He condemns Willy as "*fake*", for if he could deceive Linda, his mother, he could do anything. His phoney dreams for him could be forgiven but not his dishonoring their very relationship that subsists through the mother.

Through his dreams, lies, failures and marital infidelity, Willy has reached the end of his road. After Biff's condemnation, Willy could only look up to a withdrawal from his socio-familial aspirations and functions. He would regress to a state dominated by nature's creativity.

> Oh, I'd better hurry. I've got some seeds..... Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground [26].

As he plants carrots in his compound, Ben comes back to his memory. He always maintained a posture of superiority – of Dale Carnegie type of success in the city ove Ben's Horatio Alger type of success in the country. He has to protect his superiority and also live down Biff's condemnation and hand down a legacy to the family they could live by – the insurance policy of 20 thousand dollars they would get in case of his death which may partially undo all the wrongs he did to the family.

> What a proposition, ts ts. Terrific, Terrific 'cause she's suffered'. Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me [27].

There is an alternative to socio-familial success – self-sacrifice though it is an inversion of his cherished dreams: "*A man can't go out the way he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something ..... It is a guaranteed twenty thousand dollar proposition*" [28]

Willy gains a new self-assurance that at least through his death he would regain Biff's respect.

> Oh, Ben, that's the whole beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shining in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand. Not like an appointment. This would not be another damned fool appointment, Ben, and it changes all the aspects. Because he thinks I'm nothing, see, and so he spites me. But the funeral..... that funeral will be massive... he will see it with his eyes

> once and for all-he'll see what I'm. Ben! He is in for shock, that boy!.... why can I give him something and not have him hate me [29]

Having decided on a course of action that would lift Biff from his miserable plight, Willy would not accept Biff leaving the house and doing what he is capable of. He would not accept that he undid Biff through his dreams nor does he agree that they are "*dime a dozen*" but distinctly Lomans. Biff is deliberately underrating himself just to "*spite him*". When Biff breaks down and pleads that he doesn't spite Willy anymore and begs him to understand that he is "*nothing*" and let him go before Willy's phony dream harms them further, Willy gains the assurance, that Biff likes him and if Biff likes him, his dream for him would succeed though perversely. Success matters to him, genuine or perverse.

> Oh, Biff! Staring wildly: He cried! Cried to me. He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise: That boy – that boy is going to be magnificent! .... Loves me......always loved me. Isn't that a remarkable thing?.....he will worship me for it .... can you imagine the magnificence with twenty thousand dollars in his pocket [30]

Willy for the first time in his life, is not dreaming of success but senses it – "*I gotta go..... when the mail comes, he will be ahead of Bernard again*"[31]

Willy goes, to his death by driving his car to the wall.

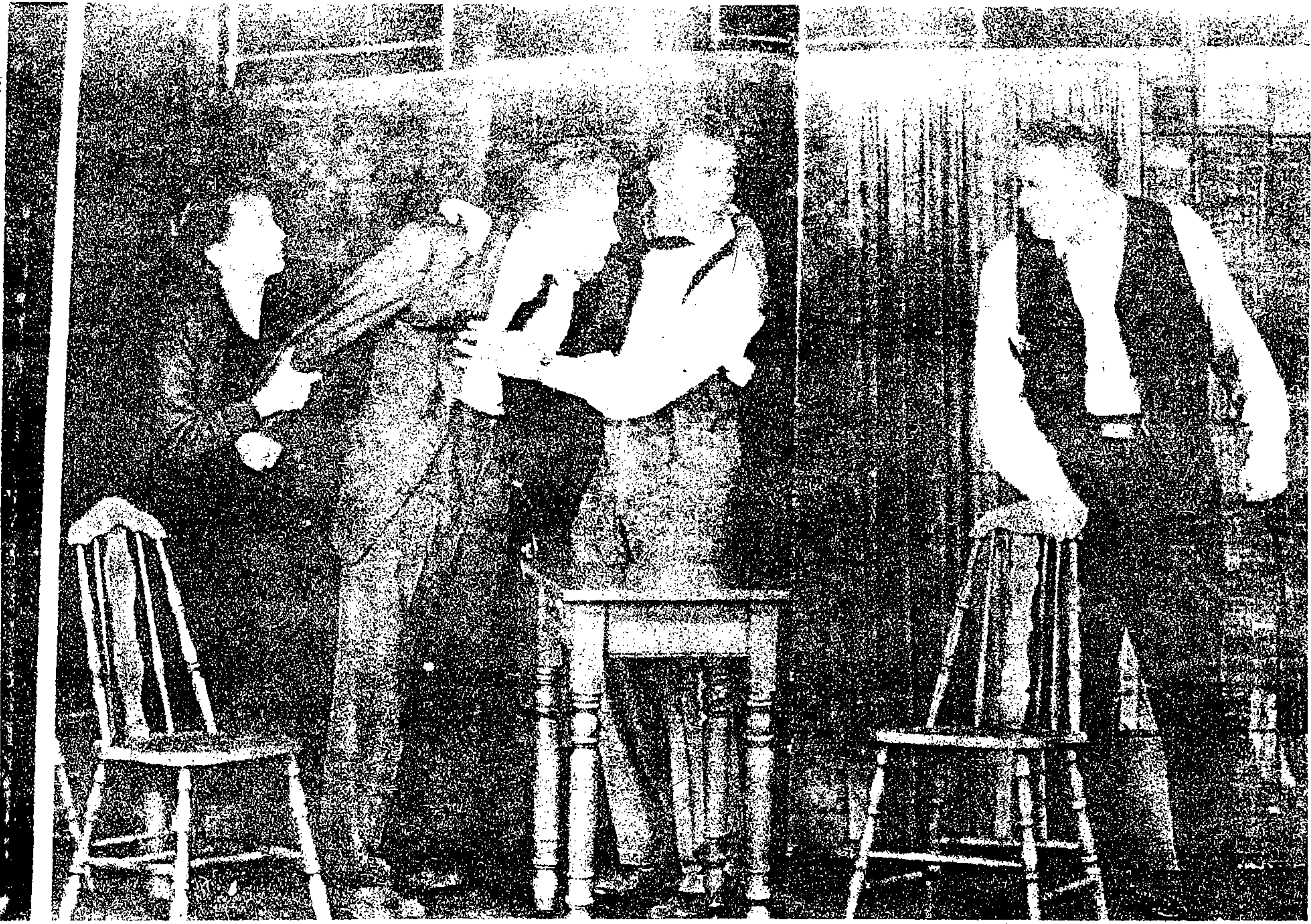
Requiem sums up Willy's tragedy. His funeral has only his family members and his only friend, Charley. No salesman was present, for the world of salesmen is indifferent, impersonal and "*rough*". Willy cleared all the instalments, and left the family "*free and clear*". He just required a little salary to live on but he died because, Charley says, "*no man only needs a small salary*". He was a wonderful father but, Biff says, "*had the wrong dreams. All, are wrong*". Happy would try to prove that "*Willy did not die in vain*". He would try to win Willy's dream for him. If Willy's was a tragedy, it was not an individual's tragedy, a failure of Willy's ability or character but is, inescapably, that of his profession and the country. Charley sums up the socio-economic tragedy Willy represents for his nation.

> Nobody dast blame this man. You don't understand: Willy was a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you law or give you medicine. He is a man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back – that's an earthquake .... A salesman is got to dream.........It comes with the territory [32].

If Willy didn't dream he would have undone the salesman that he was. In dreaming, rather tragically, he makes the salesman *par excellence*.

3.4 *DEATH OF SALESMAN* AS TRAGEDY: AN ASSESSMENT

Traditional critics are not inclined to credit ***Death of a Salesman*** as a tragedy, for Willy Loman, even if one were to admit that a common man could be the subject of tragedy, lacks tragic stature. Willy lacks both the outstanding qualities, and grievous faults that make one a tragic hero. The charge against Willy is that he is more pathetic than tragic. Suffering has not earned him any insight into the illusory nature of his ideals – he remains at the end what he was in the beginning. Willy dies for a cause but chooses death at a point of alround failure. Moreover, the cultural myths, the Horatio Alger story, or Dale Carnegie type of success, Willy cherishes are found in their rejection in the play where as a tragedy is a structure of affirmation of a cultural myth.



Kermit Bloomgarden's production of *Death of a Salesman* (1949) - Mildred Dunnock as Linda, Arthur Kennedy and Camelon Mitchell as Biffard Happy and Leej-Cobb as Willy Loman

In his Introduction to **The Collected Plays**, Miller sets out the ideas that went into making ***Death of a Salesman***. Firstly, he did *"not set out to write tragedy but to show the truth as he saw it"* [33]. He meant the play "*less a play than a fact*". Secondly, the stature of the tragic hero is not dependent upon his rank in society but the availability of alternatives in whose choice he could play a heroic role. Miller's hero, Willy Loman, sets out as a salesman fighting out failure in his career, a failure determined in terms of the norms of success. The norms of success are set by the American cultural myths that are a part of his nationhood. Willy's problem is that in his mental make-up and aspirations, he is a quintessential American who could only live and die on Americanism. The failing salesman has to desperately and even hopelessly, struggle to succeed for, Miller says, success in American cultural myth is a right to live and *"a failure in society and business has no right to live*". Additionally, success in society is an ideal of fatherhood in family. A failure in society or business is a still greater failure in the family.

Even if Willy were to discard the societal norms of success, he has to live as a father in the family, a task that would have set him again into society. The social and the familial are bi-polar and oppositional though their struggles are often, inseparably, intermixed. Willy acquires a tragic stature in fighting a desperate and hopeless social role to uphold a familial value. Miller gives exactly this tragic role to Willy Loman.

> My attempt in this play was to counter this anxiety with an opposing system which, so to speak, is in race for Willy's faith and it is the system of love which is the opposite of the law of success. [34]

Consequently, much of the dramatic action in the play takes place in Willy himself struggling to remind and enthuse himself about the familial value and role. Success in this role is not written off, for he could succeed in this role through the success of his sons. The end of his social role would deprive his sons of a role model for them to follow.

Miller does not limit the meaning of the play to Willy Loman's struggles in spite of the attention he pays and the force he lends to his characterization. Miller intends Willy Loman to be totally consumed by the inexorable logic of the social conditions and the pressures it creates on the individual. Throughout the play, Willy Loman is driven, rather ritualistically towards his tragic end which has all the force of a preordained predicament, no matter how self-willed and positive may be the end on the part of Willy Loman. The force of tragedy in ***Death of Salesman*** emerges largely from the ritualistic pattern of the play and the sheer preponderance of the plot over individualist action as visualised by Aristotle. As in a Greek play, what emerges through the play is a greater understanding of the working of society. If, in Greece, the tragic story consisted in demonstrating that "*the polis - the whole people had discovered some aspect of the grand design which also was the right way to live together*", ***Death of a Salesman*** presents a similar logic in the working of the industrial, capitalist America. It was a "*ritual enactment*" in a Greek play, that "*throws light on "the metaphysical order" wherein the society sacrifices some man in order to reach its "basic and fundamental laws" and justify its existence*". Tragic form is a "*ritualistic gesture*" that helps in a reconciliation with existence. ***Death of a Salesman*** is an exercise in this tragic form, where Willy Loman is a tragic premise though in terms of the forces he encounters and in terms of his own inability to face up to the forces, he is a pathetic figure.

The strength of ***Death of a Salesman*** as tragedy emerges when attention is shifted from the predicament of the protagonist, Willy to the impact of the play on the audience. Thomas E. Porters points out where the significance of ***Death of a Salesman*** as tragedy lies.

> In **Death of a Salesman** Miller taps a popular formula for the structure of the drama. Although the Dale Carnegie approach, the cult of personality is on the wane in the present generation, the drive for success is very much alive. Willy's plight, grounded in the excesses of the previous generation, but fostered by attitudes still shared by the present generation draws from audience both recognition of the illusion and sympathy for the visionary. Willy's suffering is real and deep. America cannot accept the success myth – "Horatio Alger" is now a term of derision – but there is no real substitute for it. Because Miller has built his play around an American dream, he strikes deep into the consciousness of the audience. The contemporary American, because he cannot solve the dilemma either, becomes involved in the sufferings of Willy the person as he watches the death of Willy the Salesman.[35]

The tragedy of ***Death of a Salesman*** emerges partly from the audience's critical recognition that the myths cherished by Loman hold no more good in mid 20th century America and partly, from its empathy, not withstanding its critical recognition, for Loman who suffers both for wrong dreams and also for the lack of alternative cultural ideals to live by. Both in the pursuit of outdated ideals and also in the lack of alternative ideals, the average American partakes Loman's predicament though many may not have driven themselves to a pathetic or tragic end as Loman does. It is in the totality of audience response, critical as well as empathic, ***Death of a Salesman*** generates powerful tragic feelings. Unlike the Greeks and the Elizabethans, Miller is writing a realistic tragedy. The realistic tragedy since Ibsen chose to be critical in a spirit of Modern Science and representational in a democratic sense, while asserting a contemporariness in its cultural attitudes and ideas. The sense of immediacy that characterizes realism forces it to put every cultural attitude or idea to the strict test of time. Cultural attitudes look askance at themselves in the march of time. Realism derives its strength and power in exposing the sheer irrelevance, if nothing else, of the persistence of the past, however recent it could be. The present and the realistic tragedy dramatizes the pathetic conflict between what has been and what requires to be. ***Death of a Salesman*** is a tragedy of 19th century individualism, in the mid 20th century capitalist America. Individualism succeeded in the making of the nation but in an impersonal culture of the highly developed capitalist, technocratic society, it is a tragedy.

3.5 SUMMING UP

Death of a Salesman perfects the genre of realistic tragedy that began with Eugene O' Neill. The realistic tragedy, unlike the earlier forms of American drama in the 18th and the 19th centuries, is an instrument of cultural reappraisal. The play appeals to the common man even today. Salesman is the primary cultural icon of the industrial, and more so of, the contemporary post-industrial America. The icon does not stand any more for mere cultural aspirations. It stands for the burden of the aspirations and, possibly much more, for the price one has to pay for the failure of the aspirations. ***Death of a Salesman*** is the existential ethic of the millions and millions of Americans. Drama was never rhythmically so close to the American lives in the last two to three centuries as the realistic tragedy of Arthur Miller.

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33. "*Introduction to Collected plays*". ***The Theater Essays of Arthur Miller.*** p.144 & 146.
34. Ibid p.149
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3.7 KEYWORDS

Max Weber (1864-1920): German social scientist who in his classic work, ***The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*** (1905) argued that both Protestantism, Protestant Calvinism in particular, and Western capitalism idealize economic struggles and material happiness.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790): American author, scientist and philosopher. He was associated with the making of the American constitution. (1706-1790)

Russell H. Conwell (1843-1925): The American Baptist clergyman who founded Conwell Temple University.

Horotia Alger (1832-1899): The American novelist whose pet theme was the rags to riches story.

Dale Carnegie (1888-1995): American author and teacher.

Depression: The great financial crisis in America during 1930's marked by Stock Market crash, low production, low retail sales, business failures and mass unemployment.

Adonis: In Greek mythology, Adonis is a handsome young man loved by Aphrodite, Goddess of love and beauty.

Empathy: The projection of one's own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him better. Theatrical empathy consists in the audience seeing themselves in the character on the stage.

3.8 QUESTIONS

1. Examine the American milieu in which Arthur Miller emerges as a dramatist.
2. Discuss Arthur Miller as a theorist of tragedy.
3. Examine Miller's distinction between Greco-Elizabethan tragic hero and the modern tragic hero.
4. Discuss how ***Death of a Salesman*** attempts to go beyond the boundaries of social drama to emerge as a tragedy.
5. Critically examine ***Death of a Salesman*** as a realistic tragedy.

3.9 ANNOTATIONS

Annotate the following passages with reference to the context.

1. The grass don't grow anymore, you can't raise a carrot in the backyard. They should've had a law against apartment houses.
2. There's more people! That's what's ruining this country! Population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening.
3. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I am not getting anywhere!
4. That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate! What a mistake! He begged me to go.
5. At that age I had a faulty view of Geography, William. I discovered after a few days that I was heading due south, so instead of Alaska, I ended up in Africa.

6. Great inventor, Father with one gadget he made more in a week than a man like you could make in a lifetime.

7. I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of life.

8. Like a young god. Hercules – something like that. And the Sun, the Sun all around him.

9. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it's all cut and dried, and there is no chance for bringing friendship to bear – or personality. You see what I mean.

10. Remarkable proposition, but you you've got to be sure you're not making a fool of yourself.

3.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

Harold Bloomed. ***Arthur Miller's Salesman.Critical Interpretations***. New York. Chelesa House publishers 1988. Contains four significant essays, Esther Merle Jackson's "*Death of a Salesman*: Tragic myth in the Modern Theatre," Ruby Cohn's "The Articulate Victims of Arthur Miller," William Heyen's "Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and The American Dream" and William Aames "Tragic form and the possibility of meaning in *Death of a Salesman*."

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Clinton.W.Trowbridge "*Arthur Miller: Between Pathos and Tragedy*" **Modern Drama** 10, 3 December 1967. 221-32. Discussion of Miller's plays in terms of the elements of pathos and tragedy.

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CLA Journal. 1993. September – 37:1 29-41 presents the view that ***Death of a Salesman*** affirms the American family values.

UNIT 4 THE NOVEL USE OF STRUCTURE IN *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

Structure

4:0 Objectives
4:1 Dramatic Structure: 20th Century Perspectives
4:2 Arthur Miller and the Concept of Dramatic Structure in ***Death of a Salesman***
4:3 ***Death of a Salesman***: Structural Analysis
4:4 The Novel Use of Structure in ***Death of a Sales..***
4:5 Summing Up
4:6 References
4:7 Key Words
4:8 Questions
4:9 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses the notions of dramatic structure in the 20th century and Miller's idea of dramatic form with particular reference to ***Death of a Salesman*** and also presents a structural analysis of the play.

4.1 DRAMATIC STRUCTURE: 20TH CENTURY PERSPECTIVES

Dramatic structure in the Greco-Elizabethan tragedy essentially conforms to the Aristotelian formulations of tragic form like ***Chorus, agon pathos, thernos, anagnorisis, peripeteia*** and ***theopany***. The basic premise underlying the Greco-Elizabathan tragedy is the existence of an unfaltering communal order to which the tragic individual ascribes after questioning the order and revolting against it. The communal experience of the tragic individual and also of the movement of the play is ritualistic. There was a uniformity and universality of the tragic experience as well as of the tragic form. Drama was a matter of traditional absolutes in form and content. Under the influence of the Renaissance ideas, Elizabethan Drama began an implicit questioning of the traditional absolutes even as it accepted them.

The advent of modernism brought about relativism in human thinking, a relativism that refuses to accept the traditional absolutes. Matei Calinescu points out what it is to be modern.

> From the point of view of modernity, an artist whether he likes it or not – is cut off from the normative past with its fixed criteria, and tradition has no legitimate claim to offer him examples to imitate or directions to follow. At best, he invents a private and essentially a modifiable past. His own awareness of the present, seiged in its immediacy and irrestible transitoriness appears as his main source of inspiration and creativity. In this sense, it may be said that for the modern artist the past imitates the present far more than the present imitates the past [1].

The significance of modernism is that it recognizes the self-consciousness of the artist and the objective validity of his situation and emphasizes their mutual

perceptual dependence. Modernism has an epochal significance for dramatic art. Modern Drama, basically a structure of what is called '*Dramatic realism*' shifts the focus of the western dramatist from the universal context of human predicament to an interaction between the individual and society within the context of a dynamic social and historical change. Consequently, much of the tragic conflict in modern drama has a historical perspective. Though the individual is perennially in conflict with society, the conflict tends to be largely between two visions of time. The rapidly changing society in 20th century finds the individual lagging behind historical change. The individual suffers either from the burdens of the past or from the unacclimatized rigors of the present. More than the interactional inability to cope up with the immediate pressures of his situation is an intense sense of crisis in his mind which accounts for much of the pathetic or tragic predicament in his individuality more than in society.

Consequently, Modern Drama "*removes the ground of the tragic conflict from outer event to inner conflict*". Dramatic form becomes an imitation of consciousness or dramatization of a point of crisis in the human mind in a substantial departure from Aristotle who insisted that drama, particularly tragedy, is an imitation of human action. Though the internalization of dramatic conflict existed to an extent in classical drama and in Shakespeare, it gained currency in the romantic period. Esther Merle Jackson writes:

> The concept of tragedy as a crisis within the consciousness appears to have emerged clearly in the Romantic period, particularly in the **Sturm** und **Drang** movement in the theatre of Goethe, Schiller, Coleridge, Wagner and Nietzsche. Oddly enough, the idea continued to dominate the theatre of the so-called "Realists". It gained a "systematic dramaturgy in Expressionism"; It has, throughout this century, intensified its hold upon the contemporary imagination. We may, thus, read the Western drama – Classicism, Neo-classicism, Romanticism, Realism, and Expressionism – as a continuous development; the gradual narrowing of theatrical focus upon the movement of crisis within the individual consciousness. The adoption of this concept by modern dramatists has accounted for major alternations in form. The new form is not a representation of ordinary modes of action, an imitation of events in themselves. It is, rather, concerned with the representation of consciousness, with the limitation of a single moment of experience [2].

The initial impulse behind modern drama and its realism is a rejection of established values and realism, in the sense of conforming to objective reality as a means of dramatising obsolete values. Robert Brustein characterizes the movement of modern drama as essentially a '*theatre of revolt*'. Even the further development of realism in naturalism, based on Emile Zola's belief that literature is an extension of biological sciences and, as such, has to be ruthlessly scientific, felt the need to reach out to the subjective needs of the human mind. Martin Esslin points to the 20th century perspectives of naturalism:

> Once it is realized that the view of Naturalism as a mere attempt to create photographic reproductions of external reality is a very superficial one, and that, indeed, the essence of the Naturalists endeavor was an existential value-free scientific and experimental exploration of reality in its widest possible sense (including the subjective reality of the artist's temperament through which he perceives external reality) and that this approach logically led to the rejection of all ready-made formal conventions and implied the acceptance of organic form dictated by the nature of subject matter ….. …..Naturalism opened the floodgates for a new stream of poetic possibilities in the theater [3].

Significantly, 20th century naturalism recognized the need for expressiveness as against mere representionality. The inadequacy of naturalism in dealing with the essentially dynamic and emotive relationship between the human mind and the objective world gave rise to postwar expressionism firstly in Germany and, later on the continent. Ralph Freedman points out the similarities as well as the differences between naturalism and expressionism:

> Expressionistic style, then, is more than expressive language; It is a particular kind of expressive language. Indeed, it exists as a pivot between two phases of style which had emerged from the nineteenth century. One is the "underground" style of heightened romanticism: .... The other is the style of naturalism i.e. a heightening of realistic depiction, in which the poet is suppressed. Expressionism partook of both these styles, and worlds, at once. Not only concerned with the self's 'remarkable visions', refusing to absorb objects into dream but intensifying them by dream, the expressionistic style focussed attention on the world of things. Distortions were not to lead to formations of symbols; Sensations were not to be frozen into golden birds of heraldic significance. Rather, the world of objects was distorted to reveal its essential meaning. And "essential" is a value term imported by people. Expressionism, therefore, described the relations between man and object; it commanded engagement [4].

Both naturalism and expressionism posit an antagonism between man and society. While the former limits itself to presenting the pathos or tragedy of the individual in the technocratic industrial culture of the 20th century, the latter presents the irrepressible revolt of the individual against dehumanization in such culture.

For dramatic structure, the differing perspectives of naturalism and expressionism make a substantial difference. Naturalism delineates a linear progression of dramatic action in the manner of Greco-Elizabethan tragedy. The distinction of the naturalistic dramatic form is the evolution of a powerful theatrical illusion of the external world. The play is a '*slice of life*' and the artistic value is a total verisimilitude on the stage. In fact, stage verisimilitude and theatrical illusion tend to be so rigorous that the playwrights like Ibsen and Strindberg left powerful traces of a concealed or repressed subjectivity of the characters in their plays, even as they strove to uphold the naturalist norms of total objectivity. In fact, expressionism seeks to unburden the concealed or repressed subjectivity of a naturalistic play. The unburdening of the subjectivity is done by a positive disregard to the linear progression of dramatic action, and its spatio-temporal framework. In addition, there is an emotive concentration in words, dialogues, scenes presenting both a syntactical explosion and an erosion of the organic structural unity of the play. Further, expressionism distorts the objective reality to make the distorted reality synchronize with the emotive agitation being experienced by the character (please refer to 2:4, for expressionistic delineation of scenes and characters, and 2:8 for expressionistic revolt in Eugene O' Neill's ***The Hairy Ape***).

Expressionism alters, substantially, the dramatic form in the 20th century from an individualist perspective. Naturalism and expressionism sought focus on the individual at a particular point of historical change but did not contemplate the possibility of a continual historical change the individual experiences. Further, there was the rejection of individualism itself by the powerful currents of Marxism in 20th century Europe. Bertolt Brecht seeks a renewal of the very notion of dramatic art from the standpoint of continual historical change. Brecht rhetorically poses the problem for dramatic art in 20th century:

> Can we talk about money in the form of iambics?.... Petroleum rebels against the five acts.....To clarify a figure today by character traits, an action of today by motives which would have been sufficient in our father's day is impossible [5]

Traditional theatre as well as the modern theatre of individualism, for Brecht, promote the Aristotelian notion of dramatic art with its total focus on individual experience. Brecht writes:

> The great individuals were the subject matter, and this matter produced the form of these dramas. It was the so called dramatic form, and "dramatic" meant: wildly agitated, passionate contradictory, dynamic.....In Shakespeare you see this precisely: through four acts Shakespeare drives the great individual ..... this produces the form..... The first sentence of the tragedy is only written for the second one, and all the sentences exist only for the last sentence. It is the passion which keeps this machinery in motion and the purpose of the machinery is the great individual experience [6].

Brecht rejects the very notion of an individual experience – "*The notion of a continuous I is a myth. Man is a constantly disintegrating and self-renewing atom*" [7]. Hence "*the human essence must be conceived of as an ensemble of all social relationships*" [8] and the dramatic form as it has grown over the centuries with its focus on individual experience fails and "*the new epic form that Brecht conceives is the only one capable of compassing those processes which serve dramaturgy as the material for a comprehensive picture of the world*" [9]

Theatrically, naturalism with its one point formula of theatrical illusion emerges as the enemy of Brecht's epic theatre. Traditional theatre's focus on empathy and the naturalist's on theatrical illusion seeks to draw the spectator both emotively and intellectually into stage action precluding any critical response on the part of the spectator. The theater of illusion seeks an immediate effect on the audience glossing over their social differences. It attempts to reduce the audience into an artificial collective whereas the contemporary society presents so much of difference in terms of class distinctions and interests. Hence the need for an alienation effect in the place of a '*cathartic effect*' or illusionism.

With a firm belief in Einstein's epistemological relativism and Marxian dialectical understanding of human reality in historical terms, Brecht struggles to revolutionize the dramatic art by replacing the categories of traditional theater by his epic theatre: plot is replaced by narrative and the significance of the character is submerged in the significance of the idea. The progression of the story through action, character development and a linear sequence to a climax at the end is replaced by a montage of scenes, each independent of the other and at times, counterpoised against one another. The thematic suggestiveness of the dramatic theatre becomes the objective ideological argument of the epic theatre. The dramatic sensation, feeling and experience give way to a dialectical understanding of the interacting processes of reality.

The spectator must be distanced from the play and the actor from his role. This alienation, a structuring principle of the play is meant to historicize both the character and the incidents of a play for giving the spectator a specific perspective of time and place of the dramatic character and action. Darko Suvin sums up Brecht's 20th century perspectives on dramatic art.

> By the 19th century, bourgeois aesthetics had wholly forgotten the traditional implications of mimesis – reacting with a sterile denial of any relation between art and nature. In most of the 19th and in the early 20th century, it rested on the two axioms of individualism –

> conceiving the world from the individual as the ultimate reality – and illusionism taking for granted that an artistic representation in some mystic way directly reproduces or "gives" man and the world. Against this, Brecht took up a position of a productive critique, showing the world as changeable, and of what I shall for want of a better term call dialectics: conceiving the world as a process and man as emergent..... No existing social relations (including the ones in the first communist states) are unique or final: all of them should be met by dialectic critique, keeping in mind the possibility and necessity of change. Art is not a mirror which reflects the truth existing outside the artist...... Brecht sees art as a dynamo, an artistic and scenic vision which penetrates nature's possibilities, which finds out the "co-variant" laws of its processes, and makes it possible for critical understanding to intervene in them. This attitude attempts to raise art to an ontologically – or at least epistemologically – higher plane of creative significance than illusionism [10].

Besides the tremendous influence of Brecht not only on Euro-American drama but on dramatic art all over the world, the implications of Brecht's formulations are immense for a playwright. He does not have to feel, anymore, constricted either by the traditional theatre or by the naturalistic or expressionistic drama. So too is his freedom in terms of socio-psychological ideas. Brecht heralded an era of eclectic thinking both in the realms of ideas and dramatic forms or structures.

4.2 ARTHUR MILLER AND THE CONCEPT OF DRAMATIC STRUCTURE IN *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

There was a rich and varied history of dramatic experimentation for Arthur Miller to look back to when he wrote ***Death of a Salesman***. For Miller, ***Death of a Salesman*** is not only a matter of tragic socio-economic experience, but a dramatic experience that transforms the manifold human life into a highly perceptive and enlightening structure. The form of a play, for him does not "*spring*" from '*nowhere*' nor from the "*temperamental choice of the playwright*". The form emerges instinctively from the subject itself. Every dramatic form expresses a particular human relationship "*each of them suited to express either a familial relation at one extreme, or primarily social relation at the other*" [11]. The familial and the social have forced dramatic art into structures of realism and expressionism – "*the force or pressure that makes for realism, that even requires it, is the magnetic force of the family relationship within the play*" and expressionism "*is a form of play which manifestly seeks to dramatize the conflict of either social, religious, ethical or moral forces per se, and in their naked roles, rather than to present psychologically realistic human characters in a more or less realistic environment*" [12]. This split between the private and the social life of man makes it difficult for dramatic form to present human reality comprehensively in any particular structure.

Miller presents contending structures of realism and expressionism in ***Death of Salesman.*** Realism is dictated by the conformist role Willy Loman seeks to play both in the family and society, accepting and cherishing both the familial and social codes. Nevertheless, he is forced into a social struggle by a temporal maladjustment. He tries to live by an increasingly non-existent socio-familial code. Consequently, the expressionistic thrust in the play is a pressure of time both at the thematic and structural levels – "***Death of a Salesman*** *explodes the watch and the calender*" [13]. Miller writes:

> The compacting of time destroys the realistic style not only because it violates our sense of reality, but collapsing time inevitably emphasises an element of existence which in life is not visible or ordinarily felt with equivalent power, and this is its symbolic meaning [14].

The collapsing of time, particularly of the past and present, in the mind of Willy Loman creates an expressionistic structure within the broad realistic form of the play. Miller explains:

> ...... a method one might call linear or eventual in that one fact or incident creates the necessity for the next. The salesman image was from the beginning absorbed with the concept that nothing in life comes "next" but that everything exists together and at the same time within us; that there is no past to be "brought forward" in a human being, but that he is his past at every moment and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to [15]

The reductivity of Loman to a temporal flux shapes the dramatic thrust of the play. The temporal flux is, thematically, a contradiction of images and ideas. The first scenic image Miller wanted to create on the stage was ***The Inside of His Head*** "*and inside of his head was a mass of contradictions*". Within a realistic structure, Miller wanted to dispense with the very ingredients of realistic structure – firstly, the notion of a stable and consistent dramatic character – Miller aimed at an expressionistic internalization of socio-familial issues in the mental processes of the character and, thereby, create a new structure of a play where the human mind rather than society emerges as the primary social premise. – "*I wished to create a form which, in itself as a form would literally be the process of Willy Loman's way of mind*" [16]

Listing out several images that occur in the play, Miller says that the play exists in the "*structural images*". Miller recalls what he wanted to do in the play:

> It came from structural images. The play's eye was to revolve from within Willy's head, sweeping endlessly in all directions like a light on the sea, and nothing that formed in the distant mist was to be left uninvestigated. It was thought of as having the density of the novel form in its interchange of viewpoints, so that all roads led to Willy, the other characters were to feel it was their play, a story about them and not him [17].

Willy is the centralizing force of the play in that only the play's nucleus is located within him. Equally central to the play's structure is the fact that Willy's point of view is one among the many, presented in the play's structure of images, that he has to contend with. With all the centralizing focus, Willy is not so much intended to present an individual but a world of individuals and its interactional dynamics. Miller intended a dramatic structure that presents a deindividualized focus on the individual.

> Above all, in the structural sense, I aimed to make a play with the veritable countenance of life. To make the one the many, as in life, so that "society" is a power and a mystery of custom and inside the man and surrounding him, as the fish is in the sea, and the sea inside the fish, his, birth place and burial ground promise and threat: [18].

Clearly, the very dramatic structure is intended to be coextensive with the dramatic vision. There is no particular human experience to be dramatized as such for all experiences fall into broad existential patterns. Hence, the play ends with what it has begun with.

> The ultimate matter with which the play will close is announced at the outset and is the matter of its every moment from the first....The play was begun with only one firm piece of knowledge and this was that Loman was to destroy himself. How it would wander before it got to that point I did not know and resolved not to care. I was convinced only that if I could make him remember enough he would kill himself, and the structure of the play was determined by what was needed to draw up his memories like a mass of entangled roots without end or beginning. ...... In dramatic terms the form, therefore, is the process, instead of being a once-removed summation or indication of it: [19].

Death of a Salesman is Miller's attempt at evolving a dramatic structure that does not exist independently but resides in the very dramatic experience which the play presents.

4.3 *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

In terms of what Miller had to say about ***Death of a Salesman*** the notion of structure has to be culled from what is presented in the play. The basic dramatic premise in that Willy would destroy himself by what he is made to remember. Memory is the chief antagonist in the play. It determines the predicament of the protagonist and through him the predicament of others dependent on him. Memory intrudes into the present and blends with it, thereby distorting the present and generating a conflict between two moments in the present – one present as it stands on its own and the second as shaped by the past. This conflict has several levels and dimensions in the play.

First, the polyscenic setting of the play. Loman's house is the main set of the play where much of the action takes place and the other scenes are played on the forestage. Within the house, different rooms are separated by imaginary wall lines. When the action is in the present, the imaginary wall lines are observed and in the memory scenes, these wall lines are forgotten. The polyscenic set with imaginary wall lines and their absence in memory, at once centers the play in Willy. Willy is rooted in the house and, concomitantly in the family and his forays both into the outside world and into the flights of memory are not only secondary but are also adversial to his stable familial position. Throughout the first Act, Willy, and members of his family, are at home and they are visited by the family friend, Charley and his son, Bernard.

The familial drama in the first Act begins with Willy's return from a business trip and ends with Willy's plan to meet his boss, Howard and Biff with his expected benefactor Oliver, the next day. Willy returned after narrowly missing an accident on the road, lost as he was observing the beautiful scenery around in his own dreams. At sixty, Willy is at loggerheads with himself, either physically over working, or, mentally, cannot keep himself to what he is doing. When he is not lost in himself, he is seiged by his failure to make enough money or by his eldest son, Biff's failure, at thirty four, to make any money. As if to compound his problems, there is the claustrophobic feeling of being '*boxed*' in the apartment house, where there is no feel of nature.

As Willy goes out to breathe fresh air the scene opens up in the boy's room where Biff and Happy are lost in their own dreams. For a while, two scenes are simultaneously presented- Biff and Happy talking in their room and Willy mumbling to himself in the parlor. As Willy enters the kitchen, mumbling to himself, he is joined by Happy and Biff. Even before they join him, Willy keeps talking about his sons as if he is in conversation with them. His earlier frustration is suddenly lost in

his bright hopes for himself and his sons. No sooner, Bernard enters to remind Biff of his exams and the possibility of his flunking if he weren't to study Maths. Willy would not be disillusioned by what Bernard says but, on the other hand, would gloat over Biff's supposed superiority over Bernard and, as if that were not enough, boasts about his own wonderful salesmanship. He continues to do so even after the boys leave but gradually comes down to admitting to Linda that he hardly makes money and that people simply ignore or laugh at him. However, he would still like to delude himself that he fails because he is not dressed to advantage.

Linda assures him that he is handsome and the suggestion simply drives him into recollecting an amorous escapade with a woman during his road journeys. The memory withdrawal is gradual and the woman is first called Linda, in continuation of his conversation with her. As if he were talking with Linda, he justifies his relationship with the woman during the business trips. The woman who emerges from darkness to the brightening area on the stage disappears into the darkness leaving Willy with Linda and promising her "*to make it all up*".

Willy's memory of his guilt-ridden unfaithfulness to Linda in the face of her unremitting love, polyscenically presented, is an early indicator of his tragic undoing since inspite of being rooted in the family, he has an inclination and tendency to uproot himself. More than his unfaithfulness, his memory's fond indulgence in it to the extent of confusing Linda with the woman, is scenically highlighted in the emerging play's structure of the spilt present where a present dominated by a repressive past goes to annihilate the present, bright and rooted in itself.

Willy's unfaithfulness extends itself indirectly to Biff who suddenly becomes an easy object of his guilt and anger from being a hero of his deluded aspirations a little while ago. Memory brings back his hypocrisy in the form of the laughter of the woman. Willy asks her to shut up. However, the 'her' incidentally becomes Linda who was about to say something. Willy continues to live simultaneously in the past or in the present dominated by the past and in the present of the play.

Again, when Bernard comes to complain against Biff, Biff is back in admiration, more as a prelude to his admiration for Ben, his model of success that Biff should follow. But, his own and his sons' failure simply glare at Ben's success. Charley, who comes to visit him and offers him a job dramatizes the wide gap between his aspirations and achievement. It is not Charley that can enthuse him but Ben and Memory replaces Charley with Ben causing an initial confusion in Willy between the two. As Willy and Charley keep playing cards, Willy talks to Ben simultaneously in memory. Irritated, Charley goes away leaving Willy to Ben. Willy gets deeply engrossed in Ben's tales of adventure, even when Bernard and Charley come back to him to tell him that the watchman is chasing Biff for stealing. Willy is not only unmoved, but keeps gloating over his sons' skills forcing them to leave Willy to his dreams. Even after Ben disappears from memory, his ideas continue to have a grip on him.

The scene that follows, between Linda and Biff, presents a stark contrast between Ben made Willy, wanting to conquer the world, and Willy the father, in whom the son finds no character. Linda extends the contrast to the sons: adoring children when the father was successful and ungrateful ones when the father is old and unsuccessful. Again when a dream proposal comes before them, of seeking Oliver's help in starting a business in sports goods, the contrast dissolves – they are a respectful father and obedient children.

Within the broad structure of a spilt present, Act I presents alternating forms of character, viewpoints and mutual estimates. The point of the play in the first Act is a Brechtian exploration of character - character not as a thinking and behavioral concept but as a dialectic of differing selves to be understood as such by the other characters as well as by the audience. One could see Linda and The woman as Willy's own character traits. So also the adventurous Ben and the pragmatic Charley in Willy. Willy himself could be seen in Biff, both in his self – confidence and

despairing states and Biff in his faithful and unfaithful stances in Willy's attitude to Linda. The whole of the first Act, plays out time and character possibilities, both realistically and expressionistically.

Act II begins charting out the dream proposals arrived at, near the end of the first Act. Willy is to meet Howard for a position in New York and Biff is to meet Oliver to seek his help for his project. Through the various convolutions of hopes and failures, the first Act ends on a optimistic note. It is the dream that triumphs over the ever-failing reality. But, in a reversing trend, the second Act, within the continuing structure of the spilt present, dramatises the total failure of the dream.

In the breakfast scene, Willy foresees a cosy future arriving through their dream projects. But in the following scene at Howard's office, played on the forestage; Willy has the most shattering experience of his life. He is not only denied a position in New York but is fired from his job for being too old to carry on. This is the most powerful naturalistic scene in the play. Willy bitterly complains that he is eaten like an orange and thrown away like its peel. Willy fights back the frustration the only way it could – a fall back on Ben in the past. Willy fights the present failure with the self-confident rejection of Ben's offer in the past. In the next scene at Charley's office, Willy attempts and gains a realistic understanding of his and Biff's situation though he would not accept Charley's offer of a job. In the next scene, at Frank's Chop House, Willy's understanding of reality deepens when he learns that Biff failed to even talk to Oliver, much less win over him. In the following scene at the hotel room, where Biff finds him in the company of The woman, he stands condemned as a '*fake*' by Biff. Scene after Scene in the second Act forces Willy to admit the hypocrisy of the social façade of success and, finally, even the familial façade of a devoted father is brought down by Biff.

The progression of the Second Act is Willy's eventual admission of reality and a withdrawal into himself, a self-battered by the world, rather than the self enthused by Ben, though an interaction with Ben inevitably follows. He wants to succeed like Ben – though not in the way he did – bequeath a legacy to his son in the form of an insurance amount of 20 thousand dollars through self- inflicted death.

The last scene in the house belongs to Biff's intense self-recognition, though much of it should be Willy's. Having decided to succeed in his own way, there is no need for a self-appraisal for Willy as there is for Biff. Self-appraisal comes in a different way for Willy by driving his car to the wall and to his death.

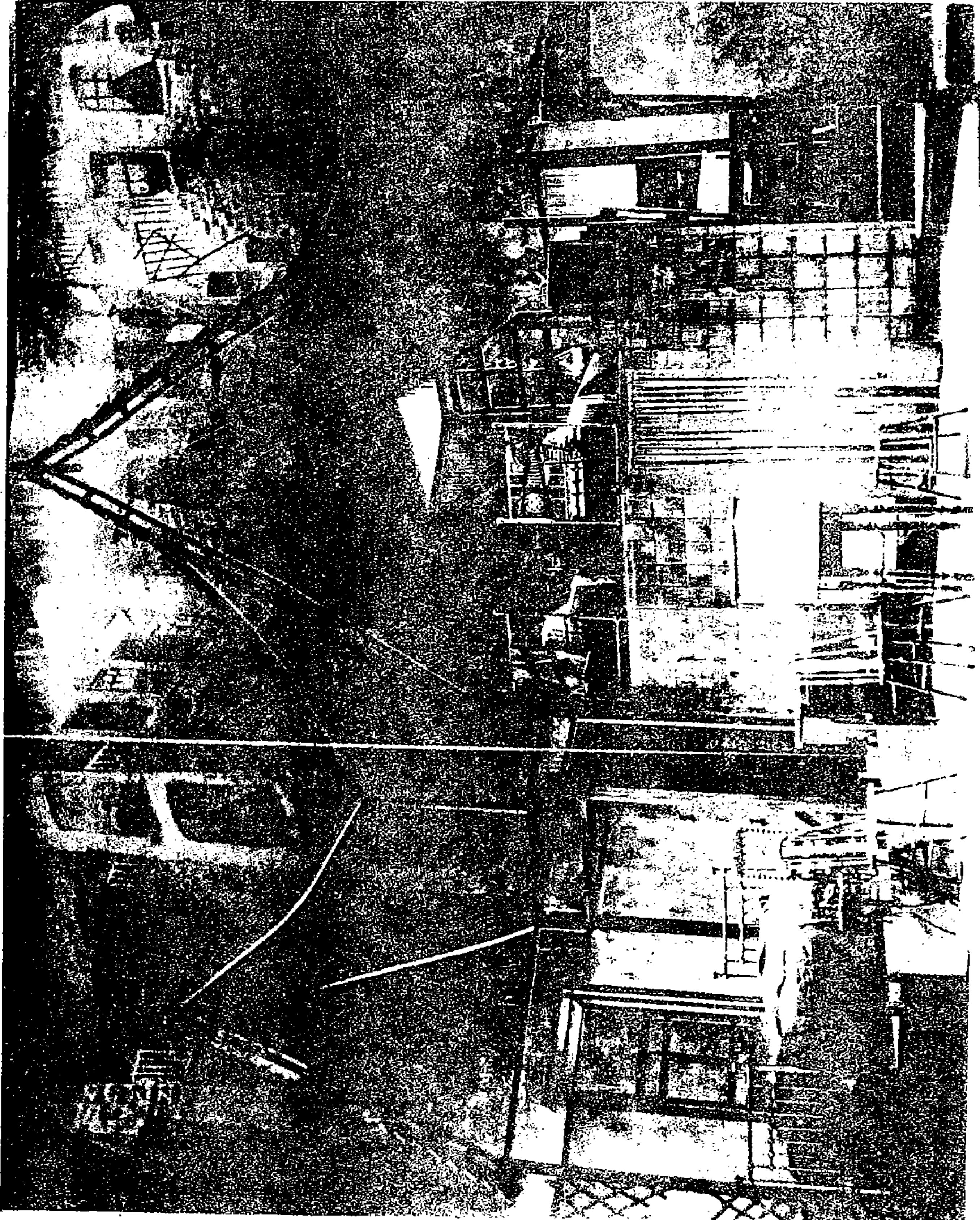
Structurally, the Second Act builds up a realistic understanding on the part of Willy and Biff and also a realistic triumph through Willy's self-willed death. The First Act presented a triumph of dream over reality and in the second Act, reality triumphs over dream through understanding, recognition and self-willed sacrifice and death. As in the First Act, there is a Brechtian exploration of character as a dialectic of different selves to be understood as such by the other characters as well as by the audience. In a structural progression from the First Act, the characters come to recognize and resolve the dialectic of selves within themselves. Willy and Biff gain a Brechtian understanding and recognition of themselves. The polyscenic stage plays out human drama, with powerful realism and subtle expressionism.

Requiem, at the end of the play, sums up what Miller attempted through the two Acts, presenting Willy, and through him the whole socio-familial order in America for an understanding of the audience – that they, like Willy, are not individuals but a compendia of diverse socio-familial values and dreams. Their inescapable but optimistic struggles for these values, irrespective of success or failure, provide the existential ethos for society.

Dramatic structure, as Miller attempted to shape it, is a compendium, abstracting the multiple elements of a human situation.

4.4 THE NOVEL USE OF "STRUCTURE" IN *DEATH OF A SALESMAN*

Structurally, ***Death of a Salesman*** has a certain precedent in Ibsen's flashback techniques which Miller used in his earlier play, ***All My Sons***. Peter Szondi sums up Miller's unique structural achievement in ***Death of a Salesman***.



> Miller .... had, while following in Ibsen's footsteps, come to understand the manner in which the dramatic form resists this thematic and the costs attached to making the former serve the latter..... the contradiction between a remembered past conveyed by the thematic and the spatio-temporal present postulated by dramatic form; the resulting need to contrive a supplementary action with which to motivate the analysis; .... Miller tries to escape these contradictions by surrendering dramatic form. Fundamental here is the fact that he does not disguise the analysis as action. The past is no longer forced into open discussion by a dramatic conflict....Instead, the past achieves representation in the same way that it emerges in life itself – of its own accord... In **Death of a Salesman,** on the other hand, the past is not played as a thematic episode; the present and its action constantly overflow into the play of the past. No troupe of actors enters: without saying a word, the characters can become actors enacting themselves because the alternation between the immediate personal and the past remembered events is anchored in the epic principle of form operative here. The dramatic unities are likewise abolished – indeed, abolished in the most radical sense : memory signifies not only multiplicity of times and places and also the absolute loss of their identity. The temporal spatial present of the action is not simply relativised in terms of other presents; on the contrary, it is in itself relative [20].

Without Brecht's ideological perspectives, Miller uses his epic form to avoid the formalistic thrust of the given dramatic forms. ***Death of a Salesman*** makes any dramatic form tentative in terms of the given dramatic experience. In making the given dramatic concepts and categories relative to dramatic needs, the play makes the notion of form or structure a concomitant proposition to dramatic experience.

4.5 SUMMING UP

At a time, when dramatic forms gained specific points of view structuring dramatic experience to a particular end, ***Death of a Salesman*** expands the horizons of dramatic experience by the sheer multiplicity of human experience and open-ended structures. The novel use of structure in ***Death of a Salesman*** consists in Miller's use of dramatic structure eclectically to suit the complexity of human experience.

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4.7 KEY WORDS

Chorus: In Greek drama Chorus is a group of performers who sing and dance at regular intervals. Chorus sometimes functions as a character representing humanity and standing as a foil to the hero.

Agon: A debate or a contest in a Greek play, normally between the protagonist and the antagonist.

Pathos: Suffering experienced by the people who are in no way responsible for the suffering.

Thernos: Lamentation or ode. It normally takes the form of a choral dirge.

Anagnorsis: Disclosure, discovery or recognition. The term includes the tragic hero's recognition of his tragic condition and also the ultimate nature of the world.

Peripeteia: A sudden reversal of situation often occuring in a tragedy. It also occurs as an irony when an action produces the opposite of what was intended.

Theopany: A manifestation or appearance of God. It also refers to a realization of God by a man.

Dialectics: Juxtaposition or interaction of conflicting ideas or forces.

Sturm and Drang Movement: Storm and Stress. A German literature movement in the later 18th century, that rejected the rational doctrines of Enlightenment and looked forward to turbulent emotions.

Verisimilitude: The quality of a work of art that gives the reader a feeling that it is close to life or that it is an acceptable representation of reality.

4.8 QUESTIONS

1. Critically examine the various notions of dramatic form in the 20th century.
2. Discuss Miller's views on dramatic realism and expressionism.
3. Discuss Miller's views on the dramatic structure of ***Death of a Salesman***.
4. Discuss the problem of the spilt present in ***Death of a Salesman***.
5. Examine the nature of realism and expressionism in ***Death of a Salesman***.
6. Examine ***Death of a Salesman*** as a Brechtian play.
7. Miller abolishes dramatic form in ***Death of a Salesman***. Discuss.
8. How do you explain the novel use of structure in ***Death of a Salesman***.

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Harold Bloom ed. Arthur Miller's Salesman. ***Critical Interpretations,*** New York. Chelsa House Publishers. 1988.
Contains Peter Szondi's "Memory and Dramatic Form in *Death of a Salesman*" which discusses Miller's innovations in dramatic structure in ***Death of a Salesman***

Leah Hadomi "Fantasy and Reality: Dramatic Rhythm in *Death of a Salesman*" in **Modern Drama** 188. June 31:2 pp 157-174 Structural analysis of *Death of a Salesman.*

Brenda Murphy Miller: ***Death of a Salesman : Plays in Production***. Cambridge University Press. 1995. Discussion of different productions of ***Death of a Salesman*** particularly that of the Broadway Production in 1949.

UNIT 5 A COMPARISON BETWEEN EUGENE O' NEILL AND ARTHUR MILLER

Structure

5:0 Objectives
5:1 Post I First War and Post Second War Drama
5:2 Drama of Social Reality
5:3 Psychological Drama
5:4 Towards a Dramatic Vision
5:5 Autobiography and Drama
5:6 Dramatic Art
5:7 Theatricality
5:8 Summing Up
5:9 References
5:10 Keywords
5:11 Questions
5:12 Suggested Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses the points of dramatic convergence as well as of divergence in the plays of Eugene O' Neill and Arthur Miller. An attempt is made in this unit to see the 20th century American drama as one broad phenomenon.

5.1 POST I WORLD WAR AND POST II WAR AMERICAN DRAMA

Curiously enough, the two of the greatest American dramatists, Eugene O' Neill and Arthur Miller emerged on the scene in the aftermath of the world wars. Wars create, culturally, conditions of dislocated psyche for a sensitive artist. The dramatic endeavors of Eugene O' Neill in the 1920's and of Arthur Miller in the 1940's respond, primarily, to a certain sense of dislocation or alienation. Though the alienation presented by the playwrights emerges in the socio-familial order in the growing industrialism of the nation, and not directly traceable to the wars, world wars provide a context for the drama of alienation. The ambience makes the dramatic endeavors of O' Neill and Miller gain a particular historical perspective which, but for the world wars, they would have lacked.

The changing natural and social environment generating alienation at the level of the human self and society is the basic dramatic impulse in O' Neill and Miller. O' Neill begins his dramatic career by exploring the problem of human unrelatedness in a fast changing world while Miller begins by exploring the growing lack of correlation between the private and the public worlds. For both, the shrinking of the human space in the societal canvas is the major dramatic preoccupation. The only difference in their worlds of shrinking human space is that early O' Neill heroes experience the estrangement with the world as something happening suddenly with a catastrophic effect whereas Miller's heroes, throughout, have to reckon with the ever-failing interactional dynamics between the individual and society. The social matrix of the 1920's, and that of the 1940's present a difference of dramatic ethos and tasks for oth the playwrights.

Both O' Neill and Miller grew enormously in their dramatic vision over the decades – O' Neill from 1920's through 1950's and Miller from the 1940's through the 1960's. A comparison of their early and late plays, and also those intersecting in the forties presents points of dramatic convergence as well as of divergence.

5.2 DRAMA OF SOCIAL REALITY

An important characteristic of O' Neill's early sea plays and significant plays like ***The Hairy Ape*** (1922) and ***The Emperor Jones*** (1922) and Miller's first significant play ***All My Sons*** (1947) is the pressure of the social reality of the times impinging on the dramatic world. O' Neill presents powerful images of the miserable plight of the underdog in the new industrial order- the hapless industrial worker, sailor and the farmer. Further, there is the plight of the Negro in the condition of utter racial inequality. Miller presents the self-degrading immorality in the business world in his time where, for sheer profiteering, defective engines are supplied to the war planes causing the death of the several pilots in the war.

Early in his dramatic career, O' Neill conceived theatre as life – "*the substance and interpretation of life*" and would *interpret "life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character*" [1]. Dramatic art has to be approached from the perspective of life and dramatic character from the perspective of the people as they are. Miller similarly wanted dramatic art emerge from the lives of the people – "*the present, always the present, to which the dramatic form must apply .... and forms do die when they lose their capacity to open up the present*" [2]. It is the concern for the people around them, their lives, problems and their concerns that motivates the dramatic careers of O' Neill and Miller.

The course of the dramatic careers of both the playwrights is a process of deepening their understanding of the contemporary human lives, psychologically and situationally. O' Neill proceeds with his dramatic imagination centered on a universalizing context. Miller looks up, equally, to universalizing contexts but for Miller, the universal is intensely socio-economic or socio-familial.

5.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL DRAMA

As O' Neill moves into the 1930's and Miller into the 1950's, their social concerns ·ain a psychological dimension. O' Neill comes to reckon with a tremendous mplexity in human nature, and Miller with the difficulty of moral choice for man as very condition of freedom. Both come to locate human predicament within the flictual complexity of human impulses rather than in the adversial position of man ıciety. The popularity of the insights of modern psychoanalysis, following nund Freud's formulations on human nature, in America since the 1930's brings ; shift of focus. O' Neill planned to create a modern psychological drama based on Greek legend in ***Mourning Becomes Electra*** (1932) and the central impulse in Miller's writing of ***The Crucible*** (1953) was not "*social but the interior psychological question*" [3] at the back of all human motivation. The point of attack in both the plays which have a new England setting, is what has come to characterize American attitudes to private and public issues – puritan moral hypocrisy and the irresolution of psychic conflicts. O' Neill's purpose in the play is to prove that human nature in the reckoning of modern psychology is as deterministic as the Greek idea of fate. In what he calls a structure of '*unreal realism*', O' Neill tries to decipher the inner realism of human nature through its apparent unrealism of the surface action. His play presents an unending series of human relationships, solely governed by, what Sigmund Freud calls, the basic Oedipus and Electra complexes in human

nature. Characters in the play are dramatic approximations of Freudian concepts. Lovelina is her father's girl and Orin is his mother's boy. Their puritanical but sensuous mother, Christiane incites both their libidinal and puritanical frenzy that contributes to the murders of Erza Mannon and Adam Brant and to her own suicide. The loss of the parents leads to a dangerously incestous intimacy between Orin and Lovelina leading to Orin's suicide and Lovelina's mental agony. The characters have always been aware of what ails them but feel entrapped in a repressive psychological situation.

Miller, with a differing social perspective, explores the same unreal realism of the characters. The 17th century Witchcraft trial in Salem presented in the play is a telling commentary on the compulsive McCarthism of the 1950's responsible for the trial of the several leftist intellectuals in America. With a non-existent witchcraft in the play, as was the incident concerning witchcraft in the 17th century Salem, the trial of the accused for practicing witchcraft dramatises the particular motivation of every character either in defense of, or in testimony against the accused. The protagonist, John Proctor, cherishes his profession as a minister, loves his life, and, above all, cares for his social respectability and, as such, his inability to protect law and its innocent victims has a justifiability in terms of his emotional and social self. T.E. Porter writes:

> This emotional factor in the case is not accounted for by the rules. It is irrational, alogical but very real. Once the witchcraft scare has spread through the town, it becomes the channel by which fear, greed, sexual repressions, irresponsibility can be sublimated into "evidence". The law can help create a scapegoat on which the secret sins of the community can be visited [4].

The much adored American law in ***The Crucible*** like the much avowed Puritanism in ***Mourning Becomes Electra*** inverts the cherished values of individualism.

5.4 TOWARDS A DRAMATIC VISION

O' Neill's plays belonging to the final phase of writing, like ***The Iceman Cometh*** and ***Long Days Journey into Night*** written around 1940 but produced in 1946 and 1956, respectively, invite comparison with ***Death of a Salesman*** (1949) and ***After The F*** (1964). Both ***The Iceman Cometh*** and ***Death of a Salesman*** have salesmen as t protagonists, and more importantly, they are the champions of the cherished American dream. Both make the salesman a representative American figure, is a growing belief that all Americans, at bottom, are salesmen. The differen between the salesmen is that O' Neill's salesman, Hickey is "*adrift in the ur*" while Miller's Willy Loman is "*adrift in contemporary American society*". Christopher Innes sums up the difference in the dramatic perspectives of O' Miller.

> Where Hickey's "smile of self-confident affability and hearty good fellowship.......makes everyone like him on sight", Willy jokes "too much" and his claim to be "well-liked" is a symptom of insecurity......Where O' Neill makes his salesman a death figure, Willy is a reversed Haratio Alger.....Hickey is the archetype, "the Iceman of Death", while Willy is typical – a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash-can like all the rest of them.......But where O' Neill presents dreams as a common denominator of humanity being in essence "the pursuit of happiness" Miller deals with only those dreams that relate to the egoism of success and the cult of personality. **The Iceman Cometh** focusses on the product peddled,

> happiness in the present or personal improvement, and the pseudo-religious nature of the ideal of progress. **Death of a Salesman** deals with the motivation, the myth of success and its effect on the salesman ....In O' Neill it is the recognition of the reality created by the Protestant work ethic with its burden of guilt that is deadly. driving men alternately to suicide, existential despair, or the debilitating drink of "pipe dreams", Miller presents only one "phony dream", the ethos underlying American commercialism [5].

O' Neill gives a metaphysical dimension to the American dream while Miller dramatises the immediate social context of the dream. For O' Neill, the American dream is a broad existential predicament, and, for Miller, it is an impracticality or a failure in mid-century America.

O' Neill's ***Long Day's Journey into Night*** and Miller's ***After The Fall*** are summative in design of the total dramatic output of the playwrights. The plays present a definitive vision of life, partially realized in the earlier plays. The focus shifts from a sense of failure to an admission of one's own responsibility, choice, and guilt. O' Neill's play is a familial drama, of New England's Irish Catholicism presenting a tragedy of mutual expectations, infirmities, grievances and failures. Miller's play is a play of marital cruelties and ungrateful friendships. The symbol of German concentration camp emerges intermittently in the play highlighting human cruelty and suffering, characteristic of the Jewish experience of holocaust and survival guilt. Both the plays have the format of self-trial but the existential strategies adopted by the characters in O' Neill and Miller's plays are radically different. For O' Neill's Mary Tyronne, a regressive escape into the past is an ecstatic flight whereas grappling with the present is a slow agonizing march of time. Each of the Tyronnes is an ocean of thought and feeling presenting a complex world of his being. Every one of them becomes an existential problem for others. James Tyronne's miserliness, Mary's addiction, Edmund's tuberculosis and James' jealousy of his brother afflict them all, more than their individual frustrations. Nevertheless, Mary's ecstatic flight into the past is no escapism. There is an acute awareness of life's limitations and also a determination to live through life's limitations. Mary tells her husband:

> James ' We've loved each other ! We always will ! Let's remember only that, and not try to understand what we cannot understand, or help the things that cannot be helped – the things life has done to us we cannot excuse or explain [6].

Miller's Quentin in ***After The Fall***, with two marital failures behind him and about to enter a third marriage, painfully realizes that people's concern for others is always egoistic and causes so much of eventual oppression and violence in the human relationships that no societal force could inflict the same on any individual. Understanding others where spontaneous love is not forthcoming, a sense of responsibility towards others and also a responsibility for one's choices and decisions would obviate much of the human failure and frustration. Looking into his personal life, Quentin finds that early in life, his self-centered mother made him an accomplice in her unmotivated cruelty towards his father. He and his second wife, Maggie are the victims of a similar cruelty towards each other. He also recognizes how he made a virtue of innocence out of his evasion of responsibility towards his friend, Mickey in not defending him before the committee on un-American activities. For Miller, the human predicament is a life after the fall, a life condemned to guilt and evil. There are no remedies to this predicament other than an awareness of the predicament of evil and guilt and a constant attempt to limit and transcend it and bring an element of sanity and peace to the human world.

In their own ways, O' Neill and Miller present an enormous progression in thought and vision from their early dramatic endeavors. Beginning with either an

individualist perspective on society or with a societal perspective on the individual, both come to locate the human world within the individual itself. Though O' Neill began in a Strindbergian fashion seeking a theatricalized dramatic power, he succeeds like Ibsen in making the dramatic medium an instrument of critical reflection. Miller was an Ibsenite throughout, a rather faithful one to begin with and finally an Ibsen *par excellence*. In coming to focus on continual human struggle and a necessary will to sustain the struggle, O' Neill and Miller reflect the existentialist vision of Arthur Schopenhauer and Albert Camus.

5.5. AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND DRAMA

O' Neill's ***Long Day's Journey into Night*** and Miller's ***After The Fall*** are the playwrights' autobiographies transmuted into powerful drama, a transmutation achieved through a lifelong struggle to come to terms with themselves in their familial and social environment. Dramatic art resolved their socio-personal conflicts and intellectual dilemmas, a resolution that would have been, possibly, difficult to arrive at, unaided by their dramatic imagination.

Long Day's Journey into Night is not so much significant for the outright parallelism between the dramatic story and the playwright's life. What is more significant is the maturity O' Neill displays in understanding his own familial story and his own human and intellectual self with which he struggled in play after play from the beginning. Edwin A. Angel points out how O' Neill resolves the familial conflicts in ***Long Day ......*** and how the play is a culmination of his lifelong dramatic endeavors to come to terms with his familial world.

> The portrait of Edmund, the playwright as a young man, is a replica of familial O' Neillian heroes early and late. Like Smitty of **The Moon of the Caribbees,** he is a melancholy, self-pitying inebriate. Like Robert Mayo of **Beyond The Horizon** and Stephen Murray of **The Straw**, he is a victim of tuberculosis. Like Michael Cape of **Welded**, he is suicidal because he finds life "intolerably insulting". Like Dion Anthony of **The Great God Brown**, he is a forlorn, mocking ironist. Like Richard Miller of **Ah, Wilderness!** he is an irreverent adolescent, given to quoting Victorian poetry. Like John Loving of **Days Without End,** he is a skeptical son of catholic parents. Like Larry Slade of **The Iceman**, he is a purgatorial ghost, paying off sins that he never committed.........The Father, up to a point a facsimile of the many fathers with whom O' Neill had dealt so harshly in the past, is raised at last to something human and pitiful...... Whereas the father is forgiven, the mother is not quite; for she remains an enigma to O' Neill....... "It is as if, inspite of loving us, she hated us" !....The play is one of self-discovery and spiritual victory[7].

The tragic world of O' Neill' s play is the tragedy of his own life. Norman A. Chaitin points out how O' Neill himself was the tragic premise of his plays:

> "O' Neill lived all his life with death in his body. Death was with him all the time, inside him. He feared it, in the end was "a little in love" with it .....O' Neill was born with what Unamuno called the tragic sense of life"[8].

Long Day..... transcends the normal theatrical power and appeal of a play in theatre. Travis Bogard points out:

> Verisimilitude does not necessarily lead to a universal statement. However, when **Long Day's Journey into Night** is played, another

> dimension opens. In the theatre, the suffering of the playwright is more real, if that is possible, than that of his characters. The audience shares them both......Pain exists in a double layer, one that can seem a fiction, one that must be a truth as the truth of suffering has seldom been stated. An emotion appropriate to an aesthetic experience and an emotion evoked by reality join to create in the spectators a capacity for pity that extends well beyond the boundaries of theatre.......[9].

While O' Neill attempted a self-discovery in ***Long Day........***, Miller attempted a self-analysis in ***After The Fall.*** If the dramatic instinct in O' Neill is a certain restlessness at the despairing human condition, the dramatic instinct in Miller is a state of dilemma as to how this despair can be eliminated or reduced. If Nietzsche and Schopenhauer enthused O' Neill, Marxism and liberalism enthused Miller. Before ***After The Fall,*** Miller never invested himself in his plays; he was not temperamentally equipped to do so. The compulsion to be confessional or self-critical on the part of Miller is partly because of the new self-critical mood of the 1960's and partly his own realization that his heroes in the earlier plays like Joe Killer in ***All My Sons,*** Willy in ***Death of a Salesman***, John Proctor in ***The Crucible***, Eddie Carbone in ***A View From The Bridge*** struggled with images forced on them in society with the consequence that they lived and died without ever, substantially grappling with themselves. Miller's own societal vision of man or his firm belief in man's rootedness in society precluded a serious self-struggle on the part of his heroes. It is the collapse of this social vision that accounts for the self-searching playwright and his protagonist. Quentin in ***After The Fall*** is the self-searching Miller. Maggie, Quentin's wife, is his own estranged wife, Merlin Monroe, the famous American film actress. Mickey, Quentin's friend, is Miller's own friend and associate, Elia Kazan. Quentin's arraignment before the committee on un-American activities was Miller's own arraignment before the committee. More importantly, Miller, for the first time in his play comes to reckon with his own Jewishness in the place of his erstwhile Americanism. Harold Clurman writes:

> It is the first of Miller's plays where the main emphasis is almost entirely personal.....Still **After The Fall** is not only an extension of the themes to be found in Miller's previous plays; It is a reaffirmation through a reversal..... He not only confesses, he accuses himself. The Jury is his alter ego - in the audience; the evidence is provided by the testimony of his memory..... **After The Fall** is the signal step in the evolution of Arthur Miller as man and artist. The play's auto-criticism exposes him to us; it also liberates so that he can go on free of false legend and heavy halo [10].

The dramatic self-analysis of O' Neill and Miller, possibly, follow culturally nourished view points - O' Neill's Catholicism and Miller's moralistic Puritanism. O' Neill achieved a capacity for love and forgiveness and Miller satisfied his puritan conscience – "*The Puritan conscience is a complex phenomenon. Even while it holds fast to its conviction of rightness, it is haunted by a need for the expiation of its own sins*" [11].

Long Day's Journey into Night is a religious play – one *of "self-discovery and spiritual victory"*. ***After The Fall***, which is Miller's own ***Long Day's Journey into Night***, is a play of ruthless conscience and puritan moralism.

5.6 DRAMATIC ART

O' Neill and Miller have fashioned the realistic tragedy in 20th century America in the same way Ibsen and Strindberg had fashioned the European realistic tragedy in the 19th century. In the evolution of the tragic form, O' Neill and Miller display a greater

fascination and admiration for the Greek tragic form than, possibly, Ibsen and Strindberg, and passionately endeavored to capture the spirit of Greek tragic form in a totally different cultural and historical ethos. The Greek tragic myth is the structuring principle of O' Neill's plays like ***Mourning Becomes Electra*** and ***Desire Under the Elms*** and the secular myths that dominated Miller's plays structured his plays in a similar manner. The Greek idea of fate or preordained end explains plays like ***The Hairy Ape*** and ***Death of a Salesman*** though the end does not affirm the communal myths but present a critical questioning along with the assertion of the worth of the individual rebel. Dramatic or human experience, for O' Neill and Miller, as it was for the Greeks, is ritualistic with little scope for individual choice and action, for society, as Miller would say, is a *"God like power"* in contemporary society and O' Neill would believe not *"in relations of man to man but of man to God"* [12]. Hence tragedy is the limitation of man against God-like powers and O' Neill and Miller, like the Greeks, would locate tragedy in the human limitations and the tragic action in the refusal to accept the limitation. Given the nature of modern society where individual tragic action leads to no communally gratifying relationship as it happens in Greek tragedy, the question O' Neill and Miller had to address was the possibility of tragedy, intellectually and morally, in modern society. Would the unrewarding individual struggles in our society, be simply pathetic, falling short of a tragic condition or victory ? It is the Greek concept of tragic victory that motivates O' Neill and Miller in visualizing what a modern tragedy should aim at. Miller writes:

> The social drama in this generation must do more than analyze and arraign the social network of relationships. It must delve into the nature of man as he exists to discover what his needs are, so that those needs may be amplified and exteriorized in terms of social concepts. Thus, the new social dramatist, if he is to do his work, must be an even deeper psychologist than those in the past and he must be conscious at least of the futility of isolating the psychological life of man lest he fall always short of tragedy and return again and again to the pathetic swampland where the waters are old tears and not the generative seas from which new kinds of life arise.[13]

It is this explorativeness of tragedy that elevates the realistic tragedies of O' Neill and Miller. Realism and tragedy are built in oppositional points of view. Much of 20th century realism and naturalism have rarely enabled drama to go beyond the untragic pathos. O' Neill and Miller presented a versatile dramatic imagination and experimentation to make the realistic dramatic medium, which historically locates their dramatic endeavors, as comprehensive an art as any art form to date. It is a remarkable achievement for both the playwrights not to feel constricted by the demands of the realistic form and register with the audience the contemporaneity of dramatic action and thought. At times, realist axioms like verisimilitude, dramatic illusion and spatio-temporal framework came in the way of dramatizing what they felt as the realism of human lives. They dispensed with the axioms and used anti-realistic devices to promote, what they considered, authentic realism. O' Neill used anti-realistic devices like asides and masks and Miller enlarged the concept of the dramatic present to include the recurring past. Character stability and consistency, the cornerstones of realistic art, have been de-emphasized by both to project the recurrent cultural destabilization characteristic of the modern times. Both felt the need for dramatic expressivity even as they envisioned the unchanging realism of human lives. The use of dramatic expressionism, which arose ideologically to traumatize the unchanging human condition, is functionally used by O' Neill and Miller to dramatize possible states of mind rather than to create states of characterlessness as expressionism endeavored to do.

O' Neill and Miller have vastly enlarged and sophisticated the concept of realistic aesthetic to grapple effectively with the complexities of contemporary life, both representationally and presentationally. It is this achievement that excludes the

constrictive division in American theatre between realism and expressionism that, at times, characterizes European drama and it is this achievement that explains the stability of realistic art in America over the decades, unlike Europe where it suffered traumatic reversals.

5.7 THEATRICALITY

O' Neill and Miller, revolutionized American theatre, to make it a powerful medium of cultural expression in America. " *The theatre to me is a life – the substance and interpretation of life ...... the one true theatre is a theatre returned to its highest and sole significant function as a temple where the religion of a poetical interpretation and symbolic celebration of life is communicated to human beings*"[14] ,O' Neill declared. In fact, O' Neill's primary contribution is the evolution of literary drama to the actorly dominated American theatre but O' Neill's greater contribution lies in making the script and the production of the play implicit in the very act of writing the play. As such, *the 'essentially symbolic or the masked'* drama of O' Neill emerges in many plays as a sort of plastic theater relying on the non-literary elements on the stage for a dramatic statement. Beginning with the use of drums, dance and pantomime in ***The Emperor Jones*** (1921) O' Neill endeavors to perfect theatrical devices like masks to illustrate the reality of human lives lurking under surface appearances in plays like ***The Great God Brown***. O' Neill's contribution to theatre through plays like ***The Great God Brown*** (1925) and ***Lazarus Laughed*** (1926) is a concept of theatrical reality based on the multi dimensionality of human nature. Human interaction, as illustrated by the insights of modern psychoanalysis, is more a means of distortion and concealment of human impulses and thoughts than their expression. Theatre, as it is used to a one-dimensional presentation of human nature, must evolve a theatrical structure of communication that illustrates the processes of communicative distortion and concealment. Like asides O' Neill uses in ***Strange Interlude*** to present the interior monologue of the characters on the stage, masks theatricalize the vicariousness inherent in contemporary living and as O' Neill goes to explore this vicariousness further in plays like ***The Iceman Cometh*** and ***Long Day.....*** the theatrical symbol becomes redundant as the roles the characters play themselves becomes masks. The characters do not require masks since the character, as dramatically and theatrically conceived, is simply a point of departure for role playing. O' Neill struggled to bring a multidimensional human reality to the theater, a reality that does not admit theatrical illusion on the stage but succeeds, within a broad sequential and logical structure, in reaching out to the audience with all the intimacy and power with which realistic theatre intends to reach the audience.

Similarly Miller, relied on theatrical communication for the success of his plays – "*the lessons of a play, its meaning and theme, had to spread out like a contagion if they were to be aesthetic, in which case few would be aware they were even infected*"[15]. The power, Miller's play, ***Death of a Salesman*** derives is no less from its theatrical production than from the power of the literary text. If the peculiar dramatic structure of the play constituted its thematic force, its presentation on the stage, through the evolution of scenic images, and theatricalizing the expressionistic time and space constituted a substantial process of the writing of the play itself. Miller had only a minimal text and the play took final shape through the creative collaboration of Miller the playwright, director, Elia Kazan and the designer, Joe Mielziner and the actor, Lee J. Cob. "*A play waiting for a directorial solution*" [16] – This was how ***Death of a Salesman*** presented itself to the director, Elia Kazan. The point, absolutely, is not the dramatic incompleteness of the play in the hands of Miller but simply an illustration of the fact that Miller's dramatic achievement lay in making the play emerge through its own theatrical primacy. The sheer theatrical ingenuity of ***Death of a Salesman*** could be seen in its failure to succeed as a film. Miller writes:

> ....(**Death of a Salesman**) failed as a motion picture.....(because) the dramatic tension of Willy's memories was destroyed by transferring him, literally, to the locales he had only imagined in the play .....The horror is lost – and drama becomes narrative – when the context actually becomes his imagined world .... The setting on stage was never shifted.... Indeed, his terror springs from his never-lost awareness of time and place......The movie's tendency is always to wipe out what has gone before, and it is thus in constant danger of transforming the dramatic into narrative [17].

Death of a Salesman belongs to a period when mass media like television had not yet elbowed out theatre as a popular medium of art, a phenomenon that took another two to three decades to happen and, theatre has had to struggle to exist, leave alone survive, ever since. Through his theatrical triumph in ***Death of a Salesman***, Miller asserted, not only in his time but for the decades to come, the relevance of theatrical art in an age of mass media and also the indispensability of theatrical art in contemporary times to dramatize the complexity of the human mind.

5.8 SUMMING UP

In their distinct individual ways, O' Neill and Miller present a broad similarity of dramatic endeavors, imagination and vision. Where they differed, it is either a difference of points of view or a difference of particular dramatic concerns, to which they respond. They made much of the 20th century American drama and they made it a formidable medium of American art and cultural expression. Without them, one would have heard very little of American drama.

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5.10 KEY WORDS

Oedipus Complex: The term is used in Freudian psychology to denote a psychological condition in which a male develops an excessive love for his mother accompanied by a corresponding hatred for the father. The term is derived from Sophocles' Oedipus the King where Oedipus kills his father and marries his own mother.

Electra Complex: Feminine equivalent of Oedipus complex. Sexual attraction of a girl to her father. The term is derived from a character in Greek trilogy by Aeschylus, known for her abnormal fascination for her father.

McCarthism: The term, derived from the controversial U.S. Senator, McCathy refers to the feverish anticommunism that gripped America in the aftermath of the second world war.

Arthur Schopenhauer: Eighteenth century German philosopher who rejects Schopenhauer's materialism and subjective idealism and focusses on *Will* which is both the human *Will* as well as that of the objective world. It is this *Will* in the sense of a strong determination for action that accounts for the continual existence of man and the objective world.

Albert Camus: French novelist, essayist and playwright who emerged as one of the greatest literary spokesmen of 20th century. One of the champions of philosophy of existentialism which rejects all kinds of idealism looking up to the essence of things than things themselves. Camus looks upon the human condition as one of irremediable absurdity but exhorts that man must come to grips with the absurdity of his condition by fighting it as heroically as he could. For him, there could be no other meaning or value in human life other than a struggle with the absurdity inherent in it. His most important works are ***The Myth of Sisyphus*** (1942), ***Caligula*** (1944) and ***The Rebel*** (1951).

5.11 QUESTIONS

1. Eugene O' Neill and Arthur Miller are postwar dramatists in America. Discuss.
2. Critically examine the early plays of O' Neill and Miller and point out how they reflect the respective periods in which they were written.

3. Examine myth as a structuring principle in O' Neill and Miller's plays.

4. The contribution of O' Neill and Miller lay in the field of psychological drama. Discuss.

5. Discuss ***Long Day's Journey into Night*** and ***After The Fall*** as autobiographical plays.

6. Examine the contribution of O' Neill and Miller to the evolution of American dramatic art.

7. Explain whether it is the dramatic medium or the stage that accounts for the popularity of O' Neill and Miller in America.

8. Dramatic convergence, rather than divergence in O' Neill and Miller is significant. Discuss.

5.12 SUGGESTED READINGS

Travis Bogard "***Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O' Neill***. New York Oxford University Press. 1972. Discussion of O' Neills plays mainly in terms of his theatrical effort.

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Block Conclusion: Tragic Perspectives in American Drama

As you have gone through these units, scanning American dramatic history, witnessing the emergence of modern American drama and its struggle, over the decades, with a sort of artistic and cultural ambivalence and its tentative triumphs in resolving these ambivalences, you would have surely grasped an essential artistic and cultural statement being made throughout.

Artistic eclecticism and comprehensiveness of the tragic form is the first premise of American drama. It cherished Greek tragedy but modified some of its basic norms and brought in mutually opposing dramatic styles to suit its own historical needs. The American realistic tragedy that emerges through the plays of Eugene O' Neill and Arthur Miller is the most comprehensive dramatic form to emerge in the history of dramatic literature.

Secondly, it makes a cultural statement about what it is to be a human individual in 20th century America. To be human is to be individualistic and both imply a tragic condition. To be tragic, or to be particularly capable of tragedy, one has to be several things – passionately aspiring, face frustration and failure on account of aspirations, and, finally grow into an understanding of one's own predicament and become capable of self-abnegating gestures that would enable one to succeed where they have failed.

An intensely human statement emerges from the discussion on American drama in the foregoing units of the block.

Uttar Pradesh
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MAEN-05

AMERICAN LITERATURE

Block

9

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison

Block Introduction

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In Blocks II and V of this paper on American Literature, we studied two classics of American fiction. Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), both written by white Americans.

This book introduces you to the third and a more recent novel in the course, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) by a black American woman writer or what we now call an African American writer, Toni Morrison. I hope you know that she won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993.

The reason for including a novel by Toni Morrison is manifestly to introduce you to the rich and varied world of African American writing, particularly to the world of African American women's writing, without which American literature is incomplete.

Of the many such women novelists Toni Morrison is the best known and no course in American literature would be considered complete without a novel by her.

The literary canon is happily opening up now and is being reshaped and African American literature is getting institutionalized in traditional English departments in universities--a task in which Toni Morrison has played no small part. It is a sign of changing times that Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) should be prescribed reading for English Honours students of the University of Delhi.

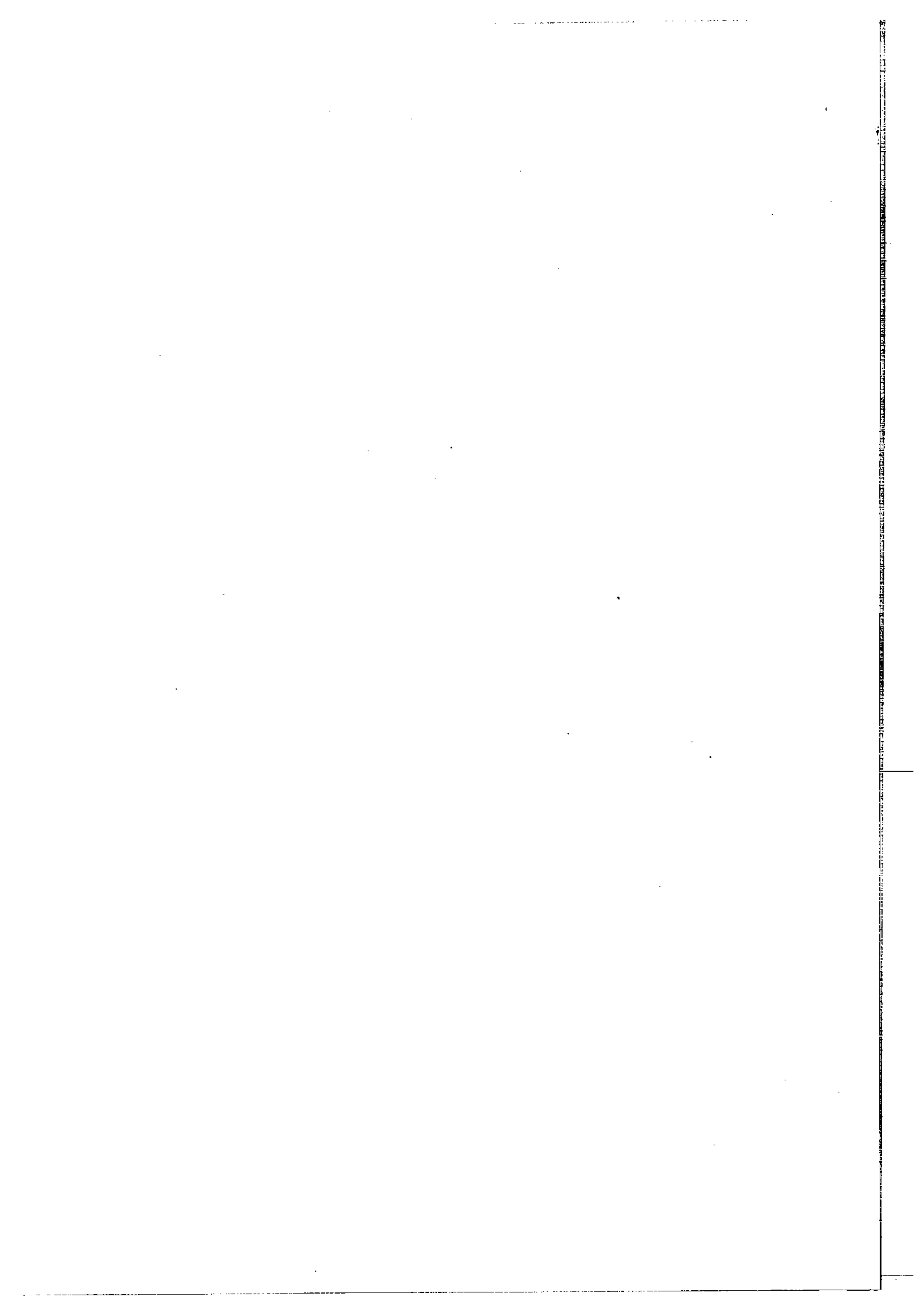
I would like you to read the prescribed novel i.e. *The Bluest* Eye and one or two other novels by African American novelists, if possible. I would certainly like you to dip into an anthology of African American literature or African American Women's Literature for a start. Three books come to mind:

1. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Gen. Eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, 1997.
2. *African-American Literature: An Anthology* edited by Demetrice A. Worley and Jesse Perry, Jr., 2nd ed., 1998.
3. *The Unforgetting Heart: An Anthology of Short Stories by African American Women (1859-1993)* edited by Asha Kanwar, 1993.

There are other books also mentioned in the bibliography. A reading of a few pieces by women will give you an idea of how these writers have vocalized black women's experiences and what it means to be black and female and poor in America.

This block has a two-fold objective: to provide you with the background to African American literature and some of its major distinctive concerns and to enable you to analyse *The Bluest Eye* so that you can read it with greater understanding and enjoyment.

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.[1]
>
> W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)



UNIT 1 *THE BLUEST EYE* : BACKGROUND

Structure

1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introducing Toni Morrison
1.2 Toni Morrison—Life and Works
  1.2.1 Toni Morrison—A Chronology
  1.2.2 Novels
  1.2.3 Salient Points concerning Toni Morrison's Life and Art
1.3 A Note on Terminology
1.4 *The Bluest Eye*
  1.4.1 Genesis of the Novel
  1.4.2 Autobiographical Touches
  1.4.3 Title of the Novel
1.5 Summing Up
1.6 Questions
1.7 Further Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The Unit is meant to introduce you to Toni Morrison who is the most important African American novelist and to her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970).

1.1 INTRODUCING TONI MORRISON

I have used the author's name in place of the name of the text purposely. I want you to go beyond *The Bluest Eye* which is of course the prescribed text. Reading and coming to grips with it is most important but hardly ever enough. Read at least one other novel of hers—read *Beloved* which in many ways is even a more absorbing novel. This will help to strengthen your grip on *The Bluest Eye*, give you a fuller understanding of Toni Morrison and also equip you better to face your examination.

In *Huckleberry Finn* you were introduced to a white American writer, Mark Twain, writing about a runaway black slave in the company of a white boy. In *The Bluest Eye* we skip almost eight decades and we read about the doomed quest of a young poor black girl-child for blue eyes in racist America.

As you read the novel I would like you to keep the following questions in mind:

1. What particular areas of black experience has the writer chosen to focus on?
2. Is Pecola's quest for blue eyes hers alone or is it something wider?
3. How do blacks view themselves in the novel? Is there a similarity in their points of view?
4. How do whites appear in the novel?

While looking for answers, keep comparing *The Bluest Eye* with *Huckleberry Finn* and other texts in your course, which present blacks and their experience.

1.2 TONI MORRISON—LIFE AND WORKS

1.2.1 Toni Morrison—A Chronology

1931 18 Feb. born Chloe Anthony Wofford in Lorain, Ohio to George Wofford and Ramah Willis.
1953 B.A. Howard University in Washington, D.C.
1955 M.A. Cornell University; worked on alienation in the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf for her M.A. dissertation; Instructor in English at Texas Southern University, Houston, 1955-57.
1957 Instructor in English at Howard University, 1957-64.
1958 Marries the Jamaican architect, Harold Morrison.
1964 has two children: Harold Ford and Slade Kevin, divorces Harold Morrison.
1965 Senior Editor, Random House in New York City.
1970 *The Bluest Eye*.
1971 Associate Professor of English at State University of New York at Purchase. 1971-72
1973 *Sula*.
1974 Edits *The Black Book* (anthology)
1975 Receives National Book Award nomination and Ohioana Book Award for *Sula*.
1977 *Song of Solomon* (Book-of-the-Month Club Selection): receives National Book Critics Circle Award and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award for *Song of Solomon*; visiting lecturer at Yale University. 1976-77.
1980 Member, National Council on the Arts.
1981 *Tar Baby*; elected member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

1984 Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at the State University of New York at Albany, 1984-89.
1986 Play *Dreaming Emmet* first produced at Albany N.Y. on Jan.4; receives the New York State Governor's Art Award; visiting lecturer, Bard College, 1986-88.
1987 *Beloved*; Regent's Lecturer at University of California, Berkeley.
1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction and Robert F. Kennedy Award for *Beloved*; receives Melcher Award and Columbus Foundation Award; receives Elizabeth Cady Stanton Award from National Organisation of Women.
1989 Robert F. Goheen Professor of Humanities at Princeton University; wins the Modern Language Association of America's Commonwealth Award in Literature.
1992 *Jazz*; *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, a book of literary criticism; edits Race-*ing Justice, En*-Gendering *Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*.
1993 Nobel Prize for literature; delivers the Nobel Lecture.
1994 Nobel Lecture published.
1998 *Paradise*.

1.2.2 Novels

Sula (1973)

As in *The Bluest Eye* the focus in her second novel *Sula* (1973) is on women, this time on friendship between two women, Sula and Nel. This subject, according to the writer, is special, and different and has never been depicted as the major focus of a novel before *Sula*. Nel is a traditional nurturing woman whereas Sula represents the New World adventurous woman. Morrison presents them as complementary opposites and explores their relationship not only to one another but to the community as well. Some critics see the novel as undermining the centrality of heterosexual or romantic love.

Song of Solomon (1977)

This novel of Toni Morrison's brought her national recognition. It received the National Book Critics Award and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award. It was also the first book by a black author since Richard Wright's *Native Son* in 1940 to be a Book-of-the-Month Club main selection.

Based on the African American folktale about the oppressed Africans who flew back to Africa to escape slavery, the novel is an exploration of the fabulous past of a black family living in a small industrial city on the shores of Lake Michigan. The quest for family fortunes and roots is undertaken by Milkman Dead who goes to Virginia for this purpose. But there is no hidden gold and at the end we see Milkman and her aunt Pilate reburying her father Jake's bones on Solomon's Leap. Milkman's unwilling search for identity ends with his acceptance of his personal and familial past. The novel is rich in elements of fantasy, fable, song, allegory and story-telling and evidences Morrison's delight in the use of language.

Tar Baby (1981)

As the preceding three novels, Toni Morrison's concern in *Tar Baby* (1981) is with the quest for wholeness. But this quest is conducted in a setting in which the whites are a dominant presence—Valerian Street, a retired candy manufacturer and Margaret his second wife, who own an island in the Caribbean and live there along with their black servants Sydney and Ondine. Their niece Jadine is Valerian's protégé and has been educated in Paris. The writer studies the convulsions caused in this "paradisal" atmosphere by the entry of a black young man Son. There are no easy choices for

Jadine and Son who are united by their passion for each other but drift apart because of their different values.

The novel uses the folktale of the tar baby to suggest that Jadine and Son are the tar baby or a trap for one another that prevents them from realizing themselves. *Tar Baby* is a complex examination of the dilemma of blacks in contemporary America and of their relationship to the whites.

In *Beloved* (1987) Morrison shifts her focus again and retells the story of slavery and the sufferings it entailed. Set in 1873 and based on a real life incident in which Margaret Garner, a slave woman killed her child in order to save her from slavery, Morrison combines free play of imagination with history to represent the implications of slavery both for the former slaves and for their cultural descendants. She had discovered the story while editing *The Black Book*. The writer's narrative is multidirectional and polyphonic. Among the several voices we hear are those of Sethe the slave mother, Baby Suggs, her mother-in-law, Paul D, Sethe's lover, and most insistent of all, Beloved the child who Sethe mercy-killed but who haunts the house and who later becomes flesh to live in it. Making use of folk motifs and practices and the oral tradition of story-telling, Morrison explores the meaning of freedom and motherhood and love.

Jazz (1992) forms the second novel of Morrison's trilogy on love. Like *Beloved*, *Jazz* too was sparked off by a real life incident—a photograph of a young girl who was shot by her lover at a party but who refuses to identify her assailant. The photograph was taken by the great African American photographer James Van Der Zee and was included in Camille Billops's *The Harlem Book of the Dead*.

The novel tells the story of the 50-year-old Joe Trace's killing of his teenaged paramour Dorcas and his wife Violet's attempt to disfigure her [Dorcas's] face during her funeral. Set in the Harlem of 1920s, the novel makes use of jazz as its structuring principle. Like Faulkner, Morrison lets the readers view the happenings from several points of view, not only as the omniscient narrator sees them but from the points of view of several other characters also including that of Malvonne, Joe's neighbour, Rose Dear, Violet's mother, True Belle, her grandmother, Alice Manfred, Dorcas's aunt and Felice, her girl friend. The novel and Morrison's book of critical essays—*Playing in the Dark* also published in 1992 were both reviewed on the front page of the *New York Times Book Review*.

The summaries of Toni Morrison's novels have I hope given you some idea of the range and complexity of her work, her roots in African American history and oral tradition and the innovative narrative techniques used in her novels. Her prime focus is what it means to be an African American, particularly an African American woman in white America.

1.2.3 Salient Points concerning Morrison's Life and Art

On the basis of the outline of Morrison's biography and the account of her works and her interviews the following points could be made:

1. Toni Morrison was born and brought up in Lorain, Ohio, which is in the north but her maternal grandparents had emigrated from Alabama to Ohio in order to escape racism and poverty and to find greater opportunities for their children. Her father likewise left Georgia to escape the racial violence rampant there. She grew up in what has been called "a vibrant African American culture." In her interview Toni Morrison talks of the rich cultural and imaginative life of her family. Part of the family entertainment was telling stories, particularly ghost stories at which her father excelled. Her

grandmother would ask her about her dreams and from this she learnt not to hide the "secret," "unwashed self" that gets expressed in dreams. She also developed respect for her southern roots.

A Word About Ohio

Ohio is central to Toni Morrison. *The Bluest Eye* is set in Lorain, Ohio, Sula is set in Medallion, Ohio and her masterpiece *Beloved* is also set in post-Civil War Ohio.

Ohio is crucial in Toni Morrison not only because she was born there but also because the state was one of the major stations on the Underground Railroad and it represented "an escape from stereotyped black settings being neither plantation nor ghetto." Like Pauline Williams in *The Bluest Eye*, her mother's family shifted from Alabama to Lorain, Ohio via Kentucky, and again like Cholly her father shifted from Georgia to Loraine, Ohio. There were steel mills in Ohio, which held promise of jobs to aspiring migrants from south. Other openings included serving in white households.

2. Morrison inherited a legacy of resistance to oppression and exploitation. She often tells the story of her mother's letter of protest to Franklin D. Roosevelt against being given insect-infested flour when the family received public assistance.
3. Morrison worked on the theme of alienation in the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf for her M.A. dissertation. Both these authors were concerned with the inner life of their characters and were known for their innovative styles. These were to be important elements in Morrison's own novels later on.
4. Morrison and the Black Experience:

According to the well-known African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois, American historians were trying to exclude African Americans from American history. But, as Du Bois claimed, "the black experience stood at the centre of national history." Retrieving the history of this black experience, 'the presence and the heartbeat of black people'[2] was, according to Toni Morrison, of the utmost importance for establishing the identity of African American people.

Her novels could be seen as part of this process of recovering the past. This process involves not only recovering but also reconstructing and re-visioning the past with the help of creative imagination. The two novels where this process is most obvious are *Beloved* (1987) and *Jazz* (1992).

5. Morrison and Women Characters:

In a 1986 interview Toni Morrison explained that she came to writing fiction because she felt that "There were no books about me, I didn't exist in all the literature I had read . . . this person, this female, this black did not exist. . . ."[3] So she stepped in to fill the vacancy.

In the beginning she was "just interested in . . . placing black women center stage in the text, and not as the all-knowing, infallible black matriarch but as a flawed here, triumphant there, mean, nice, complicated woman, and some of them win and some of them lose. I'm very interested in why and how that happens, but here was this vacancy in the literature that I had any familiarity with and the vacancy was me, or the women I knew. So that preoccupied me a great deal in the beginning" (Christina Davis: 419). This explains her focus on Pecola and Claudia and Frieda in *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and on Sula and Nel in *Sula* (1973).

Later on she was also to be "interested in the relationships of black men and black women and the axes on which those relationships frequently turn, and how they complement each other, fulfil one another or hurt one another and are made whole or prevented from wholeness by things that they have incorporated into their psyche" (Christina Davis: 419)

6. Morrison and Black Audience:

Toni Morrison specifically addresses black Americans. She says she has no intention being "universal," "a word hopelessly stripped of meaning for me. Faulkner wrote what I suppose could be called regional literature and had it published all over the world. It is good—and universal—because it is specifically about a particular world. That's what I wish to do." She rejects the suggestion that "to write for black people is somehow to diminish the writing." For she said - "From my perspective, there are only black people" (Thomas LeClair: 374).

In a 1986 interview she uncompromisingly narrows her audience to include only black American women: "I write for black women. We are not addressing the men, as some white female writers do. We are not attacking each other, as both black and white men do. Black women writers look at things in an unforgiving/loving way. They are writing to repossess, re-name, re-own" (Sandi Russell: 46). She refers to the black woman writer's "unblinking gaze" citing Gloria Naylor's description of the rape scene in *The Women of Brewster Place* and says that several white women writers had this uncompromising female gaze but no white woman writer had yet explored the roots of racism as deeply as their black contemporaries.

She however clarified elsewhere that she did not write "women's literature as such. I think it would confine me. I am valuable as a writer because I am a woman, because women, it seems to me, have some special knowledge about certain things. [It comes from] the way in which they view the world, and from women's imagination."[4]

7. Morrison's Views on Art:

For Toni Morrison writing novels is not indulgence in "some private closed exercise of my imagination," nor is it a fulfilment of some "personal dreams." A black artist, for her, "is not a solitary person who has no responsibility to the community" (Christina Davis: 418-19). The best art, she says, is political. It must "effect change—improvement—take cataracts off people's eyes in an accessible way. It may be soothing; it may be painful, but that's his [the writer's] job—to enlighten and to strengthen . . ." But if she thinks that a novel has to be "socially responsible," she at the same time acknowledges that it must be "uncompromisingly beautiful" as well.[5]

In another interview she said she wrote what she called "village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe. I think long and carefully about what my novels ought to do. They should *clarify* the roles that have become obscured; they ought to *identify* those things in the past that are useful and those things that are not; and they ought to give *nourishment*" (Thomas LeClair, 370).

8. Morrison and Orality:

As a student of Howard University, Morrison joined the Howard University Players and her experience with this group taught her much "about voice, pitch and nuance." No wonder Toni Morrison is so particular about the oral quality of her work.

9. Morrison and the Reader:

Toni Morrison believes in a close relationship between the writer and the reader. She "expects, demands participatory reading." She says that her "language has some holes

and spaces so that the reader can come into it." She hopes that her books won't provide "easy, passive, uninvolved and disengaged experiences–television experiences . . . I won't do that" (Christina Davis: 419). She wants a mentally alert reader who thinks and participates and helps in constructing the meaning of the text.

1.3 A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

While reading about African American writing you will come across several terms used to describe it—Negro literature, black American literature, Afro-American literature and African American literature. Of these the first is no longer in use. Between Afro-American and African American, the latter is preferred because presumably it gives full weightage to the two components in the literary heritage--African and American. The term black American literature, however, continues to be acceptable.

1.4 *THE BLUEST EYE*

1.4.1 The Genesis of *The Bluest Eye*

In her Afterword to the Penguin edition of the novel Toni Morrison recounts an incident that led first to a short story and then to the novel.

One day a girl in her school expressed a wish for blue eyes. The younger Morrison felt angry at this: "The sorrow in her voice seemed to call for sympathy, and I faked it for her, but, astonished by the desecration she proposed, I 'got mad' at her instead."[6] Toni Morrison recalled the incident some 20 years later in the 1960s when the black leaders were shouting, "Black is beautiful" in assertion of their racial pride. The result was a short story which she wrote in 1962 for a writer's workshop she attended while teaching at the Howard University. The story elicited a favourable response from some members of the group.[7]

She took it up again for revision in 1964 (after she had divorced her husband in 1964 and had settled in Syracuse with her two sons). The novel was only three-fourths complete when she sent it to an editor who liked it. Thereupon the novel was completed and published in 1970.

1.4.2 Autobiographical Touches

The genesis of the novel in a childhood incident has already been pointed out. Toni Morrison insists that her novels are not autobiographical. But there are some parallels between some details in *The Bluest Eye* and her own life experiences.

The story is set in the town of Lorain, Ohio where she had grown up. The MacTeer girls Claudia and Frieda are roughly of the same age that the younger Toni Morrison and her elder sister would have been in 1941 when the novel is set. Like her mother, Mrs. MacTeer likes singing. And like her father, Mr. MacTeer throws a man down the stairs and a tricycle after him when he suspects him of molesting his daughters.

As pointed out earlier, Pauline Williams' family shifts from Alabama to Kentucky and then to Lorain, Ohio. And again like father, Cholly moves from Georgia to Lorain, Ohio.

1.4.3 Title of the Novel

The story of the novel deals with the tragic search of a poor black girl for blue eyes. But why 'the bluest eye'?

This is obviously a reference to the American myth of success and the sense of competition according to which you need to be always ahead of your neighbours or those you know. The title shows that the blacks have absorbed this sense of competitiveness as well as the white standards of beauty symbolized by blue eyes. That is why Pecola is not satisfied when as she thinks Soaphead Church has 'given' her blue eyes. She wants them the bluest of all.

1.5 SUMMING UP

This Unit tries to put you in possession of facts concerning the life and work of Toni Morrison who is among the foremost African American writers writing today. I have also given you some details about her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) including its genesis in a childhood incident.

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. I would like you to go back to your text *The Bluest Eye* and think of the questions raised in 1.1 above.

2. On the basis of the novel, what can you say about the attitude of Toni Morrison towards the whites?

1.7 FURTHER READINGS

Cooper-Clark, Diana. "Toni Morrison," in *Interviews with Contemporary Writers*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986, 190-211.

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Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. Picador, 1970. All further references to the novel will be indicated by the abbreviation *BE* followed by the page numbers.

Russell, Sandi. "It's O.K. to say O.K." [An Interview essay] *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*. Ed. Nellie Y. McKay, 43-46.

'*The Bluest Eye*', in *Literature and Its Times*, Volume 4, Joyce Moss and George Wilson. Detroit: Gale, 1997.

UNIT 2 A BRIEF VIEW OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Structure

2.0 Objectives
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Harlem Renaissance
2.3 Social Changes and Civil Rights (1940-60)
2.4 The Black Power and Black Arts Movement (1960-70)
2.5 African American Women's Writing since 1970
2.6 Summing Up
2.7 Glossary
2.8 Questions
2.9 Further Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

Unit 2 aims to give you a very brief idea about the main developments in African American literature, particularly the literature of African American women writers. This will help you to place Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* in the context of African American literature and understand it better.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The birth of African American literature is an evidence of the irresistible human urge for freedom and for freedom of expression. Slavery is described as being "naturally and necessarily" the "enemy of literature."[8] Yet ironically, it provided a fertile ground for the creation of a new literature that was produced by the oppressed and that indicted the oppressors.

Africans were considered an inferior race incapable of producing literature. The Scottish philosopher David Hume suspected the Negroes to be "naturally inferior" to the whites and that there never was "a civilized nation of any other complexion other than white."[9] Immanuel Kant, the German philosopher held that the Negroes of Africa had by nature "no feeling that rises above the trifling"[10] and that they were fundamentally different from the whites in the "mental capacities as in color. Chiming in with these views was the view of Thomas Jefferson who said in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787) that Phillis Wheatley's compositions [she was the first African American poet] were "below the dignity of criticism."[11] Yet the same African Americans produced a literature that has both richness and variety. It is a literature of pain and survival, of struggle for freedom and equality and of the quest for identity. It is a literature that records their triumphs and defeats, their fears and dreams.

The oral tradition of this literature began in the form of spirituals, blues, ballads, sermons and folktales which both cheered the slaves and also gave them comfort.

Its written forms included early poetry of Phillis Wheatley published in 1772 and several slave narrative written by slaves themselves or their sympathetic white masters. But whether poetry or slave narratives, or in other forms, early African American

literature was built round the twin quest for freedom and equality. Phillis Wheatley's poem 'On Being Brought From Africa to America' is given below:

> 'Twas mercy brought me from my pagan land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, that there's a Savior too:
> Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
> Some view that sable race with scornful eye:
> "Their colour is a diabolic dye."
> Remember, Christians, Negroes black as Cain
> May be refined and join the angelic train.[12]

2.2 HARLEM RENAISSANCE (EARLY 1920S – EARLY 1930S)

Harlem Renaissance is the term used for the burst of creativity among African American writers and artists in the nineteen twenties and the early part of the thirties in New York City, particularly in the Harlem district.

The term 'Renaissance' which literally means <u>rebirth</u> is loosely applied to this creativity (efflorescence, for it was really a birth) for this was the first opportunity African Americans had to create and celebrate the uniqueness of their culture.

The Harlem Renaissance is attributed to two factors:

i) the large scale migration of blacks from the rural south to the urban north in search of jobs and a better life for themselves and their children.

ii) the industrial expansion in the north had created a new demand for labour which was filled in by blacks. The beginning of World War I also required the employers to recruit blacks in order to replace white males who had gone to war.

Though blacks settled in several northern cities like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and Cleveland, New York City was the chosen destination—it was the largest, most cosmopolitan and most renowned of American cities. Harlem district particularly became the cultural and artistic centre of African Americans, or as the African American James Weldon Johnson put it, "the Negro capital of the world."

The Harlem Renaissance was characterized by a new spirit of achievement and opportunity for collective creative expression by African American writers. This was in contrast to the individual efforts by earlier literary figures. The movement was also marked by an emphasis on the African heritage of American blacks. Africa was no longer perceived as a primitive land or source of shame and hatred for black Americans. It became a symbol of pride.

Here are some important events that could be described as landmarks in the movement.

i) The first was the publication of Claude McKay's militant sonnet *If We Must Die* (1919). Though there is no reference to race in it, the sonnet strikes a new note of defiance against racism and racist violence. Here is full text of the sonnet:

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honour us though dead!
O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back![13]

ii) James Weldon Johnson's anthology of verse *The Book of American Negro Poetry* came out in 1922. In the preface the coloured poet is urged to do in America what Synge had done for the Irish Literary Renaissance.

iii) Even more important than Johnson's anthology that helped to define the emerging new confident spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, was the anthology entitled *The New Negro* (1925) by Alain Locke, a Howard University Professor. The anthology contained essays, stories, poems and art work and included works by white writers as well. The work has been described as "virtually the central text of the Harlem Renaissance."

iv) Some conservative African American critics believed that black literature should present African Americans in a positive light and thus help "uplift" the race. But the younger, more radical among them wanted a realistic view of African American life to be presented. Both these tendencies were reflected in the literature produced during the Harlem Renaissance.

v) The New York City provided publishing opportunities galore to black writers. The period also saw the publication of several magazines/periodicals. These periodicals worked hard to stimulate a cultural awakening by sponsoring writing contests and in various other ways. Two important periodicals were: *Crisis* published by the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) and edited by W.E.B. Du Bois and *Opportunity* edited by Charles S. Johnson.

vi) The prominent writers of the time were Claude Mckay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Nella Larsen and Langston Hughes. Other important names were James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Sterling Brown, Dorothy West and Jessie Fauset.

Of these two may be mentioned here. Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was among the first who were drawn to Harlem and who helped to define the spirit of the age. A prolific writer and versatile artist, he was widely regarded as the poet of his people and was called the poet laureate of black America. Following Whitman he announced: "I, too, sing America/ . . . I am the darker brother/ . . . I too, am America." The other writer is Countee Cullen (1903-1946) who began his literary career by looking to Africa for inspiration and produced some of the most haunting lyrics of the Harlem Renaissance. Determined not to be labelled as a racial writer, he was "actuated by a strong sense of race consciousness." In his poem "Yet Do I Marvel," he asks God:

Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black and make him sing.

In another poem he recalls an old incident in Baltimore when as a child of eight he was called "nigger" by a white child of the same age:
Once riding in old Baltimore.

Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,
I saw a Baltimorean
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,
And he was no whit bigger,
And so I smiled, but he poked out
His tongue, and called me "Nigger."

I saw the whole of Baltimore
From May until December;
Of all the things that happened there
That's all I remember.[14]

vii) An important if controversial feature of the Harlem Renaissance was the help and patronage received by black writers from the whites. Notable among these whites were Carl Van Vechten and Charlotte Osgood Mason. Vechten helped to launch the career of Langston Hughes. Mason an elderly woman financially supported a number of black writers like Hurston, Hughes and Locke. But she did not hesitate to impose her own ideas on these writers.[15]

viii) The end of the Harlem Renaissance was triggered off by the Great Depression of 1929.

2.3 SOCIAL CHANGES AND CIVIL RIGHTS (1940-1960)

This period between the end of the Harlem Renaissance and the beginning of the Black Power movement of the sixties and early seventies saw numerous momentous events and the social, political and cultural changes they reflected and influenced.

(i) Second Wave of Migration from South to North: The period saw the second wave of migration of blacks from the poor south to industrial north.

(ii) The New Deal: Franklin D. Roosevelt elected President in 1932 gave the country a programme of economic measures called The New Deal. The New Deal was meant to counteract the effects of the Great Depression of 1929 that had gravely affected the economy.

(iii) The Federal Writers' Project: As part of the New Deal, the Federal Writers' Project was initiated in 1935 to enable writers to earn a living while they continued to write. The Federal Writers' Project supported more than 6 thousand writers. Those African American writers who participated in the project included established writers like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Arna Bontemps and new talents like Richard Wright, Robert Hayden, Frank Yerby and Margaret Walker.

(iv) Civil Rights: The end of World War II fought in order to counter fascism brought disillusionment to many black soldiers who on returning from the war discovered that they were denied their civil rights.

The period saw a number of African American writers responding to the Civil Rights movement. These included writers like Gwendolyn Brooks, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Lorraine Hansberry and Ernest Gaines.

(v) The U.S. Supreme Court May 1954 ruling on *Brown vs. The Topeka Board of Education* desegregated public schools.

(vi) The year-long bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama in December 1955 was led by Martin Luther King Jr. This was a new kind of movement, a non-violent, passive protest movement.

(vii) Truman constituted a Commission on Civil Rights in 1947.

(viii) End of Colonialism in Africa: European colonial domination of Africa came to an end and numerous independent republics including Ghana, Nigeria, Senegel and Algeria were formed.

(ix) Black Writers and Civil Rights: During this period a number of African American writers responded to the civil rights movement. These included Gwendolyn Brooks, Melvin Tolson, Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry and Ernest Gaines who expressed their views in their works.

(x) In his *Blueprint for Negro Writing* (1937), Richard Wright indicated how the new writing was different from the writings of the Harlem Renaissance: "Generally speaking, Negro writing in the past has been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays, prim and decorous ambassadors who went a-begging to white America. They entered the Court of American Public Opinion dressed in the knee-pants of servility, curtsying to show that the Negro was not inferior. . . ."[16] The black writers were urged to forsake bourgeois privilege and discover the undiscovered group soul.

(xi) Urban Realism, Determinism and Social Protest: Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* (1940) depicted a young black who finds himself alienated in the city. The novel combines urban realism with naturalism and protests the conditions and the environment in which the blacks lived in the urban north.

Other writers like William Attaway, Chester Himes and Ann Petry also wrote strong social protest novels.

(xii) Ralph Ellison was among those who found Wright's social realism aesthetically restrictive. In 1952 he published the novel *Invisible Man* that won the National Book Award. In his acceptance speech he said he was "forced to conceive of a novel unburdened by the narrow naturalism which has led, after so many triumphs, to the final and unrelieved despair which marks so much of our current fiction."[17] With social responsibility he combined a careful attention to the novel as an art form. The publication of *Invisible Man* opened up the way to black modernist fiction.

(xiii) The third great novelist of the period was James Baldwin (1924-1987) who had a troubled relationship with his puritanical stepfather and his mentor and literary father Richard Wright. The latter introduced him to the editor of *Zero* magazine which published his important essay *Everybody's Protest Novel* (1949) in which he was critical of both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Richard Wright's *Native Son* as examples of the limitations and the excesses of such fiction. Besides essays which won him acclaim as the 'conscience of the nation,' he wrote *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and 6 other novels and plays.

(xiv) Both Ellison and Baldwin first acknowledged and then disowned Richard Wright as their literary father.

2.4 THE BLACK POWER AND BLACK ARTS MOVEMENTS (1960-70)

(i) Black Power:

(a) As a concept black power expresses the determination of the blacks to define and liberate themselves. It is based on the belief that "group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society." Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton explain:

> The adoption of the concept of Black Power . . . is a call for black people in this country to unite to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of humanity. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organisations and to support those organisations. It is a call to reject the racist organisations and values of this society.[18]

Black power apparently means many things to many people.

(b) The phrase 'Black Power' was popularized during a civil rights protest march through the south in 1966. In Greenwood, Mississippi, one of the rest stops of the march, Carmichael of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee leapt to the stage and asked not for love and forbearance but for Black Power.

(c) Two black leaders who symbolized black power in their vastly different ways were Malcolm X, the charismatic, militant Minister of the Nation of Islam and Martin Luther King Jr. equally charistmatic but non-violent Southern Baptist preacher who rose to national eminence in the 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery.

(d) As evidence of the gathering black power, the African American fight for civil rights was in full force during the 1960s. There were black revolts across the nation, in Harlem (1964), Watts (1965), Newark and Detroit (1967) and elsewhere in 1968 following the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

(e) The 1960s also saw the enactment of several laws. The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 prohibited discrimination in public accommodation, schools, and jobs The Voting Rights Act of 1965 made discrimination in voting because of colour, religion or national origin illegal.

(ii) "Black is Beautiful"

As a sign of new power, a new African American slogan was heard across the country—**Black is beautiful**.

(iii) The Black Arts Movement: The objective of the movement was to transform the manner in which black people in the USA were defined and treated. According to Larry Neal, a major proponent of the movement, "Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. In order to perform this task, the Black Arts Movement proposes a

radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconolgy."[19]

The movement was launched in 1965 when LeRoi Jones and other black artists opened the Black Arts Repertoire Theatre School in Harlem. Jones whose play *Dutchman* provided a powerful artistic model for the new black aesthetic was a major architect of the movement. Though this particular school in Harlem closed down, black art groups started springing up in cities across America. Black musicians like Little Richard, Chuck Berry, B.B. King, Otis Redding and others became style setters at the national and international levels. Black actors and actresses also started playing major, more visible roles in films and on the TV. Numerous mass periodicals and journals also grew up.

According to Larry Neal, the movement was aimed at consolidating the African American personality. And it has not been essentially a literature of protest. It has instead turned its attention inward to the internal problems of the community. It is a literature primarily directed at the conscience of black people.

(iv) Besides Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), other poets who spoke for all African Americans were Nikki Giovanni, Haki Madhubuti, Sonia Sanchez, June Jordan, and Mari Evans. As for novels Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966) and William Melvin Kelley's *Dem* (1967) were important. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley and *Soul on Ice* (1968) by Eldridge Cleaver and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) by Maya Angelou were among the powerful autobiographies/ biographies that appeared.

(v) A landmark of the movement was the publication of *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* edited by Amiri Baraka and Larry Neal in 1968 which is a handhook of themes, techniques and personalities connected with the black aesthetic.

2.5 AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S WRITING SINCE 1970

The 1970s and 1980s saw an afflorescence of African American women's writing. This was the result of the intersection of two movements—the women's rights movements and the black power movement.

The women's rights movement inevitably led to an increased awareness of the inequality of black women who were known in folk wisdom to be "the mule uh de world." Because of the growing public interest in women's issues, African American women writers started attracting increased attention. Many of them like Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan, Audre Lorde and Alice Walker had been activists in the civil rights and the women's movement and they began to explore racism in the women's movement and sexism in the black power movement.

The year 1970 was a landmark in respect of the African American women's writing. That year saw the publication of several important books—Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Toni Cade Bambara's anthology *The Black Woman* and three first novels: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland. The Bluest Eye* and *His Own Where* by Alice Walker, Toni Morrison and June Jordan respectively. This was more than a chronological coincidence. These novels showed common features. They showed *first* that their authors were addressing a black audience rather than a white one. *Second*, they focussed not on a monolithic black

community but on specific black communities. *Third*, these novels were about black women and their relationship with black men rather than about the relationship between blacks and whites. Though excluded from both the black power and women's movements--most of the feminists were and are still middle class whites--, black feminists have not responded with "a counter-politics of exclusion." They in fact felt compelled to restate their position vis-a-vis black men, and that "we struggle together with Black men against racism while we also struggle with Black men about sexism." This, according to Bernard W. Bell, explains why Alice Walker chose the term 'womanist' rather than 'feminist' to signify a black feminist or feminist of colour, a woman who among other things, is audaciously committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.[20]

The new voices were not confined to the field of novel, though African American women novelists far outnumber poets and dramatists. Here are a few more names:- poetry: Gloria Naylor, Rita Dove, Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde and June Jordan; drama: Adrienne Kennedy and Ntozake Shange. These writers produced a large number of novels and books of poems and came to command a large and loyal readership. The sales figures of the novels of Toni Morrison have been described as 'phenomenal.' All this speaks for the vitality of the African American women writers' movement. "The community of black women writing in the United States," to quote feminist critic Hortense Spillers, "now can be regarded as a vivid fact of national life."

> In case you need more information, please look up *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* and the other books mentioned in the Unit.

Three important public events in the 1990s gave official recognition to the strength of black women writers' voice. First, Maya Angelou became the first African American and first woman to read her poetry at a US Presidential Inauguration in 1992. Second, in 1993 and 1995 Rita Dove became the first African American and first woman to be named Poet Laureate of the USA. And third, Toni Morrison was the first African American woman novelist to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

African American women writers not only became highly visible through their creative endeavours but also as scholars who helped to retrieve some past voices. Alice Walker, for instance, rescued the classic work of her ancestor Zora Neale Hurston, especially her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983) she reclaimed and commemorated the legacy of southern black women by focussing on their art forms such as quilting, gardening and storytelling. Toni Morrison edited *The Black Book* (1974), a scrapbook of African American history that includes folk recipes as well as historical events.

Scholarship in the area of African American women's writing took the form of digging up black history as was done by Gerda Lerner who in her *Black Women in White America* (1973) documented information on the role of black women in American history. Mary Helen Washington's *Black-Eyed Susans: Classic Stories by and about Black Women* (1975) is an important literary anthology. Toni Cade Bambara's anthology has already been mentioned.

As a result of the efforts of writers and scholars like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Barbara Smith, African American literature has now come to be taught in white universities in the USA. Toni Morrison in her influential lectures collected in *Playing in the Dark* (1991) persuasively argues that American or white American literature cannot be understood fully without understanding the black presence or even the absence of blacks in it. Like a seminal thinker that she is, she has compelled a reassessment of the black presence in American literature.

Last but not least, Toni Morrison's efforts as editor at the Random House in helping black women writers to get published must also be mentioned.

2.6 SUMMING UP

In this Unit I have tried to give you brief and selective background information about African American writing that will enable you to approach *The Bluest Eye* as a knowledgeable reader with enjoyment and understanding.

For reasons of space we have confined ourselves to the story of African American literature from the Harlem Renaissance onwards and towards the end have emphasized African American women's writing. The cavalcade of this writing forms a splendid spectacle with the African American writer struggling to find his/her true voice in a society in which he/she occupies a significant place. To my mind perhaps the most remarkable thing is that African American women long regarded as 'the mule uh de world' have at long last found their own voice and have produced a steady stream of novels, poems and plays that command an audience which is both black and white.

2.7 GLOSSARY

Canon: means a collection or list of sacred books etc. accepted as genuine; also the recognized genuine works of an author: a literary canon would be a list of books considered essential for study in a university as part of a course.

Folktales: Folktales have been part of the African American kit for survival and sustenance. Two of the well-known tales are "All God's Chillen Had Wings" and "The Wonderful Tar Baby Story" have been made use of by Toni Morrison in her novels, *Songs of Solomon* (1977) (based on a story in which the Negroes oppressed by slavery fly back to Africa) and *Tar Baby* (1981).

Jazz: Name given to music that was developed by black Americans in south in the first decades of the 20th century. Jazz evolved as a result of the blending of ragtime, brassband music, native American music, spirituals, work songs and the blues. It developed primarily as a city phenomenon strongly influenced by "the music-in-motion of the modern train." It is collaborative music that celebrates life and possibility and the human will to keep going.

Several African American writers have either written about jazz music or have referred to it in their work. Toni Morrison has named one of her novels, *Jazz* (1991).

Spirituals: Negro spirituals are religious songs sung by African Americans since slavery began and were first collected by Richard Allen in 1801.

The Blues: A type of slow, sad music, usually sung by a single voice accompanied by one or more instruments. , It originated in rural south among African Americans. The music relied on a call/response pattern between singer and audience. Structurally the blues generally take the form of three-line stanzas with four beats in a line. The second line repeats the first, sometimes with variation and the third line gives some answer to or comments on the situation in the first two lines:

St. Louis Blues
I hate to see the evenin' sun go down.
I hate to see the evening sun go down.
'Cause my baby, he done left this town.

Trouble, trouble, I've had it all my days,
Trouble, trouble I've had it all my days,
It seems that trouble's going to follow me to my grave.

2.8 QUESTIONS

1. What is the poet's attitude towards colour in lines 5-6 of Phillis Wheatley's poem?

2. Is Claude Mckay's attitude in his sonnet 'If I Must Die' different from Phillis Wheatley's attitude in her poem?

3. How does the white child look at the black child in Countee Cullen's poem 'Incident'?

4. Can you relate these attitudes to *The Bluest Eye*?

2.9 FURTHER READINGS

"All God's Chillen Had Wings," "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story" and "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox," *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. Gen Eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997, 102-03, 120-21.

Bell, Bernard W. *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachussets Press, 1987.

Lester, Julius. "People Who Could Fly," *African-American Literature: An Anthology*. Eds. Demetrice A Worley and Jesse Perry, Jr. Lincolnwood, Illinois: NTC Pub. Group, 1998, 11-14.

The Bluest Eye

Naylor, Gloria. "Kiswana Browne," *The Unforgetting Heart: An Anthology of Short Stories by African American Women (1859-1993)*. Ed. Asha Kanwar. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1993, 211-21.

The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. Gen. Eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Norton, 1997.

This is a valuable reference work to consult, and also to have on your desk if possible.

UNIT 3 *THE BLUEST EYE* AND ITS NARRATIVE

Structure

3.0 Objectives
3.1 Introduction
3.2 The Story
  3.2.1 Autumn
  3.2.2 Winter
  3.2.3 Spring
  3.2.4 Summer
3.3 The Structure of the Narrative
  3.3.1 White Primer as Epigraph
  3.3.2 Claudia as a Narrator
  3.3.3 The Omniscient Narrator
  3.3.4 Other Voices
  3.3.5 Toni Morrison on Her Narrative Technique
  3.3.6 The Narrative as a Whole
3.4 Summing Up
3.5 Questions
3.6 Further Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit aims to analyse the narrative of the novel and the elements that go into the making of it.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The choice of the way in which a writer tells her/his story is never random. It is a deliberate decision bound up with the total meaning of the novel, with what the author wants to say. As we said in the study material on *Huckleberry Finn* ("The Narrative Structure," 25), there are four elements involved in this: first, the teller of the tale; second, the events that make up the story; third, how the teller presents these events, or the discourse; and fourth, the audience. We shall attempt to understand the components of the narrative of the novel and analyse how the narrative achieves it effect.

But before we discuss these components and how they contribute to the total effect, let us refresh our memory with an outline of the sequence of events in the novel.

3.2 THE STORY

The narrative is divided into four parts, each part named after a season, beginning with autumn and ending with summer.

The narrative begins with an excerpt from a Dick-and-Jane primer taught to American children and printed in three ways. It is first printed in a normal way, then without

capitalization and punctuation, and finally without capitalization and punctuation and also without spaces between words. This excerpt describes a happy white American family and is meant to serve as an ironic epigraph to the whole novel.

Thereafter there is an introductory note by Claudia MacTeer, a girl child, grown adult who narrates much of the story telling us how Pecola who had been made pregnant by her own father Cholly Breedlove lost her child in miscarriage. Claudia and her sister performed a magic procedure for the safe birth of the child but to no effect.

Each part opens with Claudia speaking in her own voice and giving us some of Pecola's story to which she has been a witness. This testimony is complemented by an omniscient narrator who offers information about things which Claudia could not have witnessed. Sometimes there are other voice too. The second section is headed by an appropriate run-together portion of the excerpt from the primer.

3.2.1 Autumn

Claudia begins by describing her family's poverty and the old, cold, green house they lived in, the irritability of the elders towards the children, and the loving care provided to them by the mother. The family takes Mr. Henry Washington as a roomer (we would call him a tenant). For some days Pecola comes to stay with them and shares a bed with them because her father has burnt their house down. Pecola adores Shirley Temple, a movie star, whose picture appears on a glass tumbler. But Claudia does not like her [the movie star]. She also hates baby dolls with blue eyes and hates them enough to destroy them and wants to tear down little white girls who are like them. Pecola starts menstruating and Frieda tells her that she can have a baby but both Claudia and Pecola wonder how.

The omniscient narrator supplies details of the poor, cramped store front where the Breedloves—Cholly, the husband, Pauline, the wife, Sammy, the son and Pecola—live. Three prostitutes live on the second floor. The Breedloves perceive themselves to be ugly in contrast to the pervasive white standards of beauty. We are given a glimpse of the love-less querulous life they live there. Lonesome and despised at school, Pecola prays for blue eyes that will make her beautiful and even prevent her parents from quarrelling. She goes on to buy candies wrapped in paper having the pictures of Mary Jane, another movie star printed on it but the white storekeepr Yacobowsky avoides touching her while giving her the candy. The three black prostitutes, particularly Miss Marie are nice to her.

3.2.2 Winter

Claudia recalls the bitter cold of the winter and how the arrival of a rich, light complexioned coloured girl, Maureen Peal, who enchants everyone—teachers and students alike—distracts them from it. Frieda and Claudia are both irritated and fascinated by her. One afternoon while walking back from school with Maureen, they rescue Pecola from black boys who are tormenting her with racial and sexual abuse. Later Claudia is provoked into fighting with Maureen who plumes herself on being "cute." At home their roomer is entertaining two prostitutes in their mother's absence.

The next section describes black women who have migrated from South and have adopted white values. One of them, Geraldine, thinks of herself as "colored," which means they are 'neat and quiet' as against niggers who are "dirty and loud." Her son Junior lures Pecola returning from school into their well-appointed house and cruelly flings his cat at her and then blames her for killing it. Finally Pecola is thrown out by his mother as a "nasty little black bitch."

3.2.3 Spring

Claudia reports that her parents throw their roomer Henry out for trying to molest Frieda. Innocently believing that whiskey will save them from being ruined and from being big and fat, they look for Pecola. Since her father is a drunkard, they think she will supply them with drink. Pecola is at the house of the white family of the Fishers where her mother works and they go there. In the kitchen Pecola accidentally spills hot berry cobbler which burns her legs, for which she is punished by her mother.

The second section consists of three chapters dealing with Pauline, Cholly and Soaphead Church. Pauline's family came from Alabama via Kentucky to Lorain in the north. This third person account of Pauline's background and relationship with Cholly is punctuated with first person snatches of Pauline's memory. As a young woman she is addicted to movies from which she derives all her values which are white values and all her dreams of beauty and love, which are white dreams. In course of time, her dreams of a happy life deteriorate. Ultimately when Pecola is born, she knows she (Pecola) is ugly. Finally she ends up by being an ideal servant in a white family.

The second chapter picks up Cholly's story beginning with his abandonment by his mother in a junk heap when he was four days old and his retrieval by his great aunt Jimmy. As a young boy he suffers sexual humiliation at the hands of the whites. When he goes to seek help from his father he is rejected. Unloved and unloving, his own inadequacy as a father comes out most clearly when he staggers home drunk one day and rapes his own daughter.

The third chapter traces the West Indies origin of Soaphead Church, a mulatto, who Pecola, now on the verge of madness, approaches for the gift of blue eyes. Soaphead Church feels sorry for Pecola, gets rid of a troublesome dog with her help, makes her believe that he has given her blue eyes and writes a letter to God reprimanding him for his injustice.

3.2.4 Summer

Frieda and Claudia are promised a bicycle by their parents if they sell seeds. During their sales visits to family friends and acquaintances they learn that Pecola has been pregnant by her father and that almost the entire community is hostile and want Pecola's baby to die. The sisters however want the baby to live. They decide to plant seeds, bury their money as an act of sacrifice, say magic words, pray God to let the baby to live and wait for the seeds to sprout.

The next section opens with an imaginary conversation between Pecola and a 'friend' of hers who is probably a part of her. Pecola is happy at acquiring blue eyes but she keeps on seeking assurance from her friend that her eyes are the bluest of all. We also learn that she was assaulted by Cholly a second time also.

After the conversation Claudia tells us that their efforts on behalf of Pecola's baby fail for the child dies. The Breedlove family disintegrates. Cholly dies while Sammy goes away. Mrs. Breedlone lives alone in a small brown house on the edge of the town with her demented daughter. Claudia feels guilty because Pecola's destruction gives them and indeed the whole community feelings of superiority. Pecola is treated as a pariah and scapegoat.

3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE

Toni Morrison's narrative technique in *The Bluest Eye* must be seen in the light of her major aims as a novelist. Her fiction expresses the aspirations of African American

characters, their desire not only to survive but thrive, in the face of white domination. Though in her later novels Morrison expands her thematic concerns to explore man-woman relationships among the blacks, in the first two novels it is the women who occupy centre stage in the texts.

In *The Bluest Eye* she focuses on a very young poor black girl who would acquire blue eyes symbolic of beauty in white racist America.

Morrison presents this quest with the help of a carefully designed narrative. She takes the traditional frame of sequential narrative and makes several changes to suit her purposes.

3.3.1 White Primer as Epigraph

A major innovation is the use as an epigraph of an excerpt from a white school primer extensively taught in all schools in the US--white and black--depicting the white ideal of a happy home and family. In an interview, Toni Morrison explained her intention:

> In *The Bluest Eye* I used the primer story, with its picture of a happy family, as a frame acknowledging the outer civilization. The primer with white children was the way life was presented to the black people. As the novel proceeded I wanted that primer version broken up and confused, which explains the typographical running together of the words.
>
> (LeClair, 376)

This excerpt is given in three versions that suggest gradations from happy orderliness to chaos. The first version suggests an ideal white family complete with a beautiful home with mother, father, brother, daughter, and friend, with love to spare for the cat and the dog. In the context of the novel this ideal is represented by the Fisher family where Pecola's mother Pauline Breedlove works. This white ideal of a happy family and home is meant to suggest the pressure of white standards under which the blacks in America live. More specifically, it provides the context in whom Pecola's doomed quest for blue eyes must be seen.

The second version printed without capitalization and without punctuation is a diminished copy of the first but it still makes some sense in retrospect and suggests the world of the aspiring lighter-complexioned Geraldines and the Maureen Peals.

The third version without capitalization or punctuation or spaces between words stands for the overcrowded and chaotic world of the poor blacks. This version anticipates the disorder and moral chaos of the Breedloves, especially Cholly's rape of his daughter Pecola.

Toni Morrison puts the run-together version to further use. She dislocates it further and uses appropriate snippets from it to head the sections in which the narration is done by the omniscient narrator. These snippets are always used ironically. For instance when the omnipresent narrator is talking about the storefront house of the Breedloves, the portion that serves as an epigraph describes the happy, white home. The effect of these headings is also to show how white standards are an everpresent intrusion in the lives of the blacks. There are not many white characters in the novel but the white standards that govern life in America are ubiquitous.

Morrison introduces another innovation by choosing a female perspective from which the story is viewed and told. A comparison with *Huckleberry Finn* will bring out the different narrative strategy adopted by Toni Morrison. Twain was interested in making a white boy discover the full humanity of a black adult and in studying the impact of the challenge that such a discovery poses to his inherited prejudices.

Morrison modifies the pattern and chooses a very young black girl who is an observer-participant in the story her main narrator. Barbara Christian calls Morrison's use of Claudia as a narrator one of her "most brilliant strokes." This observation is true because the destructive myth of white beauty is peculiarly relevant to women. So, though tougher than Pecola, and more fortunate than her in enjoying the love of her parents, Claudia faces the same challenge posed by this destructive myth that pervades the black community, and along with her sister fights hard for survival. Claudia is a couple of years younger than Pecola and they study in the same school, and so are naturally thrown into each other's company. Also, Pecola comes to stay with the McTeers for a few days. So her testimony is both natural and invaluable.

But Claudia's is not the only voice in the novel. Since she, because of her age and circumstances cannot be in possession of the entire story, Morrison resorts to the device of an omniscient third person narrator who fills in the gaps left by Claudia. Specifically the omniscient narrator furnishes background information on the Breedloves, Geraldine and her family and Soaphead Church and also reports the incestuous rape of Pecola by her father.

Another important feature of Morrison's narrative is that though *The Bluest Eye* is a quest novel, the novelist does not appeal to the motive of curiosity. Claudia's narrative begins at the end—by summarizing the tragic ending of Pecola's story. In a prefatory note--it is Claudia grown into an adult speaking—she tells us about the failure of her and her sister's attempts to make Pecola's baby live through the use of a magical incantation and the disintegration of the Breedlove family. She also announces the focus of the narrative—"There is really nothing more to say—except why. But since *why* is always difficult to handle, one must take refuge in *how*" (3). Which means we are promised an account of the various stages in Pecola's life, that lead first to her pregnancy and then to the death of her baby.

The cyclic nature of Claudia's narrative is also suggested by the season headings Morrison gives to the four parts of the novel. The narrative cycle begins with the part entitled Autumn and ends with Summer. The ironic suggestion is that Pecola's story is not the usual story of birth, death and rebirth, from planting to harvest to planting, rather it is a story that moves from pathos to tragedy and finally to madness.

Each part of the narrative begins with Claudia recalling the days of her companionship and of her memories of Pecola. This is followed by the voice of the omniscient narrator who complements the narrative. The two narratives alternate till the last part entitled Summer where the two narrative voices converge in the voice of the adult Claudia who now speaks for the entire black community as well.

3.3.2 Claudia as a Narrator

Claudia's narrative is the narrative of an adult who is trying to recall or recapture her childhood experiences. She is the focalizer, she is the one who sees. But Claudia the adult lets us see things as she saw and understood (or did not understand) them as a child and then lets us see how those things appear to her as an adult now.

The opening paragraph shows Claudia speaking as though everything that happened in the past is unrolling before her eyes now. The vividness of the memory is reflected in the choice of the present indefinite tense. She describes things in the manner of one who knows what will happen next and what she will or will not understand. This reminiscent tone continues for almost three pages. The whole description is dense with concrete details—details which are likely to register on the mind of a child of nine or so. It means that Claudia *shows* far more than she *tells*. Examine this sentence:

> Rosemary Villanucci, our next-door friend who lives above her father's cafe, sits in a 1939 Buick eating bread and butter (BE).

The impression that she shows more than she tells is true whether she is recalling her mother's love for her or her impression of their roomer or her memory of Pecola's menstruation. Here are some examples:

(i) But was it really like that? As painful as I remember? Only mildly. Or rather, it was a productive and fructifying pain. Love, thick and dark as Alaga syrup, eased up into that cracked window. I could smell it—taste it—sweet, musty, with an edge of wintergreen in its base—everywhere in that house. (BE)

(ii) He smelled wonderful. Like trees and lemon vanishing cream, and Nu Nile Hair Oil and flecks of Sen-Sen.
He smiled a lot, showing small even teeth with a friendly gap in the middle. (BE)

(iii) I picked up the pants with two fingers and looked about for something to dig a hole with. A rustling noise in the bushes startled me, and turning towards it, I saw a pair of fascinated eyes in a dough-white face. Rosemary was watching us. (BE)

These memories form part of the dense texture of the novel and lend authenticity to it.

Another characteristic of Claudia's narrative is that instead of giving us a systematic account of Pecola's life joined together by cause-and-effect, she focuses on key episodes in her life—and in her own. This suggests an elliptic-fragmented style of narration. Commenting on her composition of the first novel, she said she wanted to shock her audiences: "My beginnings as a novelist were very much focused on creating this discomfort and unease in order to insist that the reader rely on another body of knowledge." Her first narrative, she said, was "the story of a shattered, fractured perception resulting from a shattered, splintered life" (quoted in Wendy Harding *et al*, 155).

3.3.3 The Omniscient Narrator

The sections narrated by the omniscient narrator vary in number. *Autumn* has two such sections, one dealing with the Breedloves' household and the other with the Breedlove family. *Winter* has one section that deals with the humiliation faced by Pecola at the hands of Junior and his mother Geraldine. *Spring* has three sections—that give background information about Pecola's mother Pauline, Pecola's father Cholly and Soaphead Church who 'gives' her the blue eyes she seeks.

The last part, *Summer*, presents a variation on this pattern of alternation. Here Claudia as usual opens with her narration of how the news of Pecola's pregnancy has got around in the community which is largely unsympathetic. But this is not followed by the narration of the omniscient narrator. Instead, we are given an extended conversation—we don't know whether it's real or imagined—between Pecola who believes she has got blue eyes and a 'friend' of hers. And then we have Claudia who speaks in her own person reporting the death of Pecola's baby and expressing the collective guilt of the community on whose periphery Pecola and her mother now live. Earlier Claudia had spoken for herself and on behalf of her sister Frieda. Now when she uses 'we', she seems to be speaking for the entire black community. The irony of the narrative is patent. Pecola had wanted the bluest of blue eyes and be closely integrated with the whites. But she ends up by being treated as a pariah even by her own community.

3.3.4 Other Voices

Claudia's and the omniscient narrator's are not the only voices one hears in the novel, however. In the section on the Breedlove family which shows a violent quarrel between Pauline and her husband Cholly, Pecola prays for blue eyes and in fact thinks of them as a panacea. She feels that even her parents would stop quarrelling if she had blue eyes. At this point appear five lines in italics which presumably constitute her prayers.

> *Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run, Jip, run. Jip runs. Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes. Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes. Blue-like Mrs Forrest's blue blouse eyes. Morning-glory-blue eyes. Alice-and-Jerry-blue-storybook-eyes.* (BE)

But a much greater presence in the narrative is the voice of Pauline in the third person account of her background and her relationship with Cholly which is supposed to be given by the omniscient narrator. This account is punctuated with the first person snatches of Pauline's memory. There are a total of 6 snatches, the last three of them much longer than the first three. Only the last intrusion that ends the section is prepared for by a hint in the third person account: "They were musings, idle thoughts, full sometimes of the old dreaminess, but not the kind of thing she cared to dwell on" (BE).

The novel then is an aggregate of all these voices and the total effect of the novel depends not on any one voice but on all of them taken together.

Here is a summary of the narrative of the novel:

Season-wise division of the narrative in four parts, Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer.

Each part consists of

i. a first person account by Claudia recalling her childhood association with Pecola Breedlove.

ii. An account by an omniscient narrator of an aspect of the life of the Breedlove family, consisting of one/more chapters. The chapters are unnumbered and use an appropriate snippet from the run-together version of the primer quoted in the beginning.

Autumn:

i. Claudia—recalls her own family and Pecola's brief stay in their house.

ii. Omniscient narrator—describes the poor house of the Breedloves and the loveless life of the family which is full of violence. (2 chapters)

Winter:

i. Claudia—recalls how Pecola is tormented by black boys and her rescue by them and how they find their roomer entertaining two women.

ii. Omniscient narrator—tells the story of immigrant blacks like Geraldine and of Pecola's torment at the hands of her son and her being thrown out by her. (one chapter)

Spring:

i. Claudia—recalls their roomer Henry's molestation of Frieda and how she and sister Frieda visit the Fisher house where Pecola's mother is a servant in search of Pecola.

ii. Omniscient narrator—tells the story of
a. Pecola's mother Pauline, of the death of her dream.
b. Pecola's father and of her rape by him.
c. A spiritualist fraud Soaphead Church, a mulatto who 'gives' Pecola the blue eyes she is seeking.

Summer:

i. Claudia—recalls the story of Pecola's rape by her father and of their vain attempt to make her baby live.

ii. A conversation between Pecola and a 'friend' who is probably a part of herself is followed by Claudia summing up Pecola's sad story and her acceptance of her share of blame for making the unfortunate girl a pariah and scapegoat.

3.3.5 Toni Morrison on Her Narrative Technique

Here it would be interesting to know what the author herself had to say about the narrative strategy in her first novel. She was plainly not satisfied with the handling of the narrative voices. This came out frankly in a 1977 interview:

> When I wrote that section on Cholly . . . , I thought it would be very hard for me because I didn't know that as intimately as I knew Pauline . . . But it is the only time. I've ever written anything in my life when it all came at once. . . . When I got to Pauline, . . . I could not do it. I could not make it. I didn't know what to write or how. And I sort of copped out anyway in the book because I used two voices, hers and the author's. There were certain things she couldn't know and I had to come in. And then there were certain things the author would say that I wanted in her language–so that there were the two things, two voices, which I had regarded, at any rate, as a way in which to do something second-best. I couldn't do it straight out the way I did every other section.
>
> (Stepto: 386-87)

In an interview published in a volume entitled *Interviews with Contemporary Novelists* by Diana Cooper-Clark, published in 1986, she even said she would have liked to "rewrite" the novel: "I wouldn't have the mother, for example, speaking. That wasn't any good because she didn't know enough. Then I wrote it with the Narrator speaking. That wasn't any good, it sounded pompous. So I mixed them, and that's a cop-out because I couldn't do it right; now I know how. And the ending wouldn't be that way. I mean, it would have that information but I would have more courage there" (200-01).

The additional point that the author is making in this interview relates to her dissatisfaction with the ending. She says she "would have more courage there." Does she mean that she would make Claudia behave more courageously at the end? Or is she referring to the prime victim, Pecola?

Ending of novels are often a problem. But I leave you to figure it out. I also wish to leave you with an assignment—*how would you have ended the novel*? Would you want to suggest a better ending? At the start of this Unit we had said that there were four elements in a narrative: the teller, the events, the discourse and finally the audience. What is the effect of the audience on the narrative? It is the blacks who constitute Toni Morrison's audience. In an interview she says: "From my perspective, there are only black people. When I say 'people' that's what I mean. Lots of books written by black people about black people have had this "universality" as a burden. They were writing for some readers other than me" (LeClair, 374). This specifically black audience shapes the narrative because the novelist can take a whole lot of things for granted which she would have had to explain if she had a white audience in view. The writer takes an example from our text itself:

> If I say "Quiet is as kept," that is a piece of information which means exactly what it says, but to black people it means a big lie is about to be told. Or someone is going to tell some graveyard information, who's sleeping with whom. Black readers will chuckle. There is a level of appreciation that might be available to people who understand the context of the language.
>
> (LeClair, 373-74)

In justification of her practice of writing about and for specific people, she says that only then can one be universal. She refers to Faulkner's regional literature and says: "It is good—and universal—because it is specifically about a particular world" (LeClair, 374).

3.3.6 The Narrative as a Whole

What is the total effect of the narrative? The narrative is dense and compact and also lyrical.

The novel ends sombrely on a note of tragedy. Pecola deluded into believing that she has acquired blue eyes, loses her sanity and is treated as a pariah living on the periphery of the village along with her mother. This tragic note is sounded in the closing words of Claudia. But the novel is not altogether without hope. Claudia herself as a child was tough and did not succumb spinelessly to the onslaught of the myth of white beauty. So even though she makes a compromise later and feels guild-ridden at the end, the novel is not without hope so long as there are characters like Claudia and Frieda to stand up to the destructive idea of physical beauty.

3.4 SUMMING UP

The novelist makes use of several devices to make her narrative effective—an epigram from a white, extensively-used primer to suggest the enveloping presence of white civilizational standards under which the blacks live; the choice of a very young black girl, Claudia, who has been a schoolmate of Pecola and who treats her sympathetically, as the main narrator; and an omniscient third person narrator to complement Claudia's version. The choice of Claudia enables Toni Morrison to present a particularly feminine childlike point of view to the events in the life of a poor black girl. Addressed primarily to black people, the narrative focuses on key episodes without logical development and is fragmented. The writer's aim was to administer a shock to her audience's expectations.

3.5 QUESTIONS

1. Write a summary of each of the four parts of the novel.

2. Write an essay on the appropriateness of Claudia as the main narrator in *The Bluest Eye*.

3. Can you suggest an alternative ending to the novel?

4. Discuss the use of the excerpt from the Dick and Jane primer as an epigraph.

3.6 FURTHER READINGS

Cooper-Clark, Diana. *Interviews with Contemporary Novelists*. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1986.
[The interview with Toni Morrison is at pages 190-211.]

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory*. Oxford: OUP, 1997.
[Chapter 6 on "Narrative," 83-94) is extremely lucid and indispensable reading for all students.]

Harding, Wendy and Jacky Martin. *A World of Difference: An Inter-Cultural Study of Toni Morrison's Novels*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994.
[Chapter 8 is entitled "Narration as the Past Remembered" (149-70.]

LeClair, Thomas. "'The Language Must Not Sweat': A Conversation with Toni Morrison," in *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and K.A. Appiah. New York: Amistad, 1993, 369-77.

Russell, Sandi. "'It's OK to say OK,'" in *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. Nellie Y. McKay. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1988, 43-47.

Stepto, Robert B. "'Intimate Things in Place": A conversation with Toni Morrison," in *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, 378-95.

UNIT 4 THE DANGEROUS IDEA OF PHYSICAL BEAUTY IN *THE BLUEST EYE*

> If you are white you are right: if you are brown you can stick around; but if you are black . . . get back.
>
> —Calvin Hernton

Structure

4.0 Objectives
4.1 Introduction: The White Standards of Beauty
4.2 Changing Attitudes to Colour and Their Treatment in Black Fiction
  4.2.1 Assimilationism
  4.2.2 "Black is beautiful"
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4.3 Beauty Culture in American Society and *The Bluest Eye*
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4.6 Glossary
4.7 Questions
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4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Unit is first to examine the different attitudes to colour and their treatment in black fiction and then to analyse the novel *The Bluest Eye* with focus on the problem of colour.

4.1 INTRODUCTION: THE WHITE STANDARDS OF BEAUTY

The valorization of white over black probably goes back to ancient times. An Asiatic religion Manicheism founded by Mani, a Persian in the third century, is based on the struggle of two eternal conflicting principles: *God and matter*, or *light and darkness*.

In the context of America, according to Charles S. Johnson, the concept of blackness has held an unfavourable connotation in the popular mind. "'Black is evil,' 'black as sin,' 'black as the devil' are phrases which suggest the emotional and aesthetic implications of this association. The evil and ugliness of blackness have long been contrasted in popular thinking with the goodness and purity of whiteness."[21] In other words, white and black are not merely a matter of pigmentation but have come to acquire moral connotation.

The dominion of the whites over the blacks in the USA was justified as natural on the ground that the black race was "by nature incapable of freedom and marked out for slavery."[22] A French diplomat and ethnologist, Count Joseph Arthur De Gobineau, who is called the father of racism, erected this pernicious belief into a theory: "I . . . have no hesitation in regarding the white race as superior to all others in beauty . . .

Human groups are unequal in beauty; and this inequality is rational, logical, permanent, and indestructible."[23]

The idea of the 'inherent,' superiority of the white and other lighter complexions over black complexion persists to this day not only in the USA but elsewhere too including in India. In America black skin colour is associated with thick lips and kinky hair and ugliness whereas the white complexion goes with straighter hair and blue eyes and good looks. This conventional white notion of beauty is reaffirmed by Knight Dunlap: a Professor at the prestigious John Hopkins University at Baltimore:

> The type which is highest in value tends to approximate the European type, wherever the European type becomes known. All dark races prefer white skin. . . .
>
> The broad flat nose and the thick wide lips are often repulsive because they suggest the African, if for no other reason. But I suspect that the thick lips are also a defect because they are in themselves a hindrance to efficient speech.[24]

Professor Dunlap's book went on to suggest strategies for "racial betterment" for breeding more beautiful people and fewer undesirables.

Since whiteness also goes with political power, white standards of beauty have become dominant. Helped by the modern means of communication they have become universal and have sunk into the psyche of all Americans, particularly the psyche of African Americans. As W.E.B. De Bois says, African Americans see themselves with a double consciousness—"this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."[25] This contempt is often internalised by the blacks and results in self-loathing, psychological oppression, loss of identity and worse. It also sometimes leads to violence towards other blacks. That is why, according to Toni Morrison "the concept of physical beauty as virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the western world." For obvious reasons these standards of beauty damage the women far more than they damage the men. This is illustrated in the novel in the opening chapter under the Winter section where black children are shown taunting Pecola with "black e mo," a variation on the centuries old racial slur "blackamore." In such a situation, a light complexion becomes highly desirable. Maureen Peal described as a "high-yellow dream child" belongs to this category of blacks. So do Geraldine and her son Junior. A lighter complexion opened up the possibility for a black person to pass off as a white. This theme has been treated by several authors like Walter White, Jesse Fauset and Nella Larsen. The last of them wrote a novel that bore the title *Passing* (1929).

This obsession with physical beauty has led to the production of cosmetics that supposedly help to lighten the complexion, straighten the hair and achieve other desirable results. This whole complex of ideas about colour is at the base of Toni Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye*.

4.2 CHANGING ATTITUDES TO COLOUR AND THEIR TREATMENT IN BLACK FICTION

How do the blacks perceive themselves? Broadly there are three attitudes to colour that could be discerned. These are:

i. Black is ugly. It is something to be ashamed of and to run away from. One solution of it is assimilation.

ii. Black is beautiful.

iii. Black is neither ugly nor beautiful, black is.

4.2.1 Assimilationism

According to Bernard W. Bell, assimilationism is "the process by which different ethnic groups are absorbed into the larger community. It projects the image of America as a melting pot of nationalities. . . ."[26] The popular assumption behind the creed was that blacks had to disown their colour and their black culture and had to become white in outlook if not in actual fact in order to become first class American citizens. According to novelist George Schuyler (1895-1977) assimilation was the key to survival for African Americans. His novel *Black No More* (1931) which tells the story of Dr. Crookman, a black man who has devised an electrical process for blanching black skins is a satirical treatment of the irrationality of colour prejudice.

Are there any assimilationists in our novel?

4.2.2 "Black is Beautiful"

This attitude is exemplified in a poem of Langston Hughes, "I, Too," in which the Negro speaker says –

> I am the darker brother.

And then goes on –

> They'll see how beautiful I am
> And be ashamed.
> I, too, am America. (*Norton*: 1258)

The echo of Walt Whitman is clear in the first and the last lines. Langston Hughes was critical of those black writers who had the urge towards whiteness, "the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible" (Norton: 1267). Such an artist would not interest himself "in interpreting the beauty of his own people. He is never taught to see that beauty. He is taught rather not to see it, or if he does, to be ashamed of it when it is not according to Caucasian patterns" (Norton: 1268). The idea—that black is beautiful—became a creed of the black nationalism of the 1960s and has been forcefully articulated by Hoyt Fuller (1923-81) who in his "Towards a Black Aesthetic" (1968) said:

> Across this country, young black men and women have been infected with a fever of affirmative. They are saying: 'We are black and beautiful.' . . . After centuries of being told, in a million different ways, that they are not beautiful, and that whiteness of skin, straightness of hair, and aquilineness of features constituted the only measures of beauty, black people have revolted. The trend has not yet reached the point of avalanche, but the future can be clearly seen in the growing number of black people who are snapping off the shackles of imitation and are wearing their skin, their hair, and their features 'natural' and with pride. In a poem called 'Nittygritty' . . . Joseph Bevans Bush puts the new credo this way:
>
> > . . . We all gonna come from behind those
> > Wigs and start to stop using those
> > Standards of beauty which can never

Be a frame for our reference; wash
That excess grease out of our hair,
Come out of that bleach bag, and get
Into something meaningful to us as
Nonwhite people—Black people. . . .
(*Norton*: 1813)

Three years later Addison Gayle Jr. in his anthology *The Black Aesthetic* (1971) described as "the theoretical bible of the Black Arts Movement" wanted the committed black author to accept the proposition—Black is beautiful—and produce images commensurate with the proposition (*Norton*: 1870).

4.2.3 "Black is neither ugly nor beautiful, black is"

This attitude is expressed in a novel by Wallace Thurman (1902-34). In *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), the central character Emma Lou's tragic quest for love and respect ends with the realization that

> What she needed to do now was to accept her black skin as being real and unchangeable, to realize that certain things were, had been, and would be, and with this in mind begin life anew, always fighting, not so much for acceptance by people, but for acceptance of herself by herself.[27]

This positive rational attitude comes up again in two short stories: one entitled "Reena" (1962) by Paule Marshall and the other "Kiswana Brown" (1980) by Gloria Naylor. In the first the eponymous central character Reena whose experiences with men both black and white have not made her bitter tells her friend her plans for her children: 'I will feel that I have done well by them if I give them, if nothing more, a sense of themselves and their worth and importance as black people. . . . They must have their identifications straight from the beginning. No white dolls for them!" (Norton: 2064). In the second Mrs. Browne tells her daughter who is romantically nationalistic: "I am alive because of the blood of proud people who never scraped or begged or apologized for what they were. They lived asking only one thing of this world—to be allowed to be. And I learned through the blood of these people that *black isn't beautiful and it isn't ugly—black is*. It's not kinky hair and it's not straight hair—it just is.[28]

4.3 BEAUTY CULTURE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY AND *THE BLUEST EYE*

The racist idea of physical beauty that reveres light skinned people with blue eyes and blond hair is a key idea in the novel because it controls the narrative and leads directly to Pecola's tragedy.

These standards are relentlessly reinforced through popular cinema and other media characteristic of a consumer culture—"through every billboard, every movie, every glance" (*BE*) and are transmitted, among others, to the poorest of the blacks in town.

Toni Morrison mentions some of these pop-culture references in the novel. For example, Pecola is fascinated by candies wrapped in paper bearing the picture of Mary Jane with blue eyes and blond hair ["To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes—eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane" (*BE*)]. And Mary Jane was the name of a Hollywood actress.

While staying with the MacTeer family, Pecola drinks milk out of a blue-and-white cup that bears the silhouette of the Hollywood actress Shirley Temple's dimpled face. Significantly the cup comes from the kitchen of the MacTeers whose children try to resist the pressure of white standards to Claudia always got a big, blue-eyed baby doll for Christmas ("Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs—all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured," *BE*). Pecola's mother Pauline in her younger days had tried to model her hair style on the white actress Jean Harlow and of course all her values and dreams were derived from the movies she saw.

Other Hollywood actress who are mentioned in the text are Clark Gable, Heddy Lamarr, Greta Garbo, Ginger Rogers and Claudette Colbert.

A few black movie stars are also mentioned. Bojangles referred to by Claudia (*BE*) is Bill Robinson who starred as a dancer in many Depression era movies opposite Shirley Temple. Pecola's name reminds Maureen Peal of the mulatto girl of the same name in *Imitation of Life* (1934). In this Depression era movie an extremely light skinned black actress Fredie Washington plays the part of Pecola, a young woman of mixed parentage who tries to pass for white.

The obsession with beauty has also led to a mammoth cosmetic industry that feeds on the insecurity and the fantasy of the blacks and that promises the impossible in lightening the complexion, straightening the hair, and achieving other desirable objectives.

Inevitably the text refers to several brands of cosmetics. For example, Mrs. MacTeer's boarder Henry uses the Nu Nile Hair oil and flecks of Sen Sen and smells wonderful. Migrant brown girls from Mobile and other places use lifebuoy soaps, Cashmere Bouquet Talc, and soften their skin with Jergens Lotion. They straighten their hair with Dixie Peach which was a hair pomade used for straightening hair and keeping it in place.

Incidentally the only dissenter among all these is Claudia MacTeer who dismembers the blue-eyed dolls she receives as gifts to discover the secret of "the magic they weaved on others."

All these references show how deeply the racist standards of beauty have sunk into the consciousness of the blacks and how they influence their behaviour.

4.4 PECOLA'S QUEST FOR BEAUTY

The Bluest Eye explores the disastrous consequences of the western notion of physical beauty on a young poor impressionable black girl, Pecola. The idea is essentially racist because the features it glamorises—white skin with blue eyes and blond hair—are Caucacian in origin, and it is particularly dangerous because it equates white skin with personal worth and virtue and implies that those who do not have these features are not beautiful and are therefore inferior.

Toni Morrison goes to the extent of saying that the equating of physical beauty with virtue "is one of the dumbest, more pernicious and destructive ideas of the Western world, and we should have nothing to do with it. Physical beauty has nothing to do with our past, present, future."[29] More specifically, it can damage one's self image, destroy happiness and kill off creativity.

The Bluest Eye

Toni Morrison works out this idea in terms of its devastating effects on a poor luckless, loveless, black family, ironically called the Breedloves, father Cholly, mother Pauline, son Sammy and most of all, daughter Pecola. The novel focuses on how whites and blacks in different ways help to push her over the brink of sanity. For this it indicts not only the men but also the whole dominant culture that has popularized these oppressive white standards through every available medium—from Hollywood movies to elementary school primers, drinking cups and candy wrappers.

Inevitably colour consciousness is a constant presence in the text and together with economic status has a determining influence on how the characters view themselves and relate to others. Apart from the broad colour divide between whites and blacks there is a caste system within the blacks themselves, depending on the lightness of their skin and the economic means. A colour profile of the town population as reflected in the novel will be of help here.

At the top of the hierarchy are the whites whose physical presence in the novel is minimal—confined only to Rosemary Villanucci, MacTeer's neighbour, the Jewish immigrant Mr. Yacobowski, the white Fisher doll child, and the two white hunters who urge young Cholly to carry on with his love making to Darlene.

Just below the whites are the very light-complexioned blacks represented in the text by the schoolgirl Maureen Peal who is described as a "high-yellow dream child" with sloe green eyes. As rich as the richest of the white girls, she is adored by teachers and students alike. Then come the sugar brown migrants from Mobile and other places, who are well off and who have learnt to do the "white man's work with refinement" (*BE*). These browns take pride in being "colored" and distance themselves from the "niggers." That is why Geraldine does not allow her son Junior to play with the latter. She explains to him the difference between colored people and niggers. "They were easily identifiable. Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. He belonged to the former group . . ." (*BE*). She is acutely conscious of the fact that "the line between colored and nigger was not always clear, subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant." So in winter she applied Jergens Lotion on his face to keep the skin from becoming ashen.

Then there is a mulatto in Micah Elihue Whitcomb, immigrant from the West Indies whose family could be traced back to people who tried to lighten their complexion and thinning out the family features by marrying "up" (*BE*). More importantly his ancestors had believed with De Gobineau that "all civilization derive from the white race" and that "a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it" (*BE*). However, as time passed, it became difficult for them to maintain their whiteness. Micah Elihue Whitcomb nicknamed Soaphead Church now has a "lightly browned skin." The three prostitutes, Poland, China and Miss Marie who like Soaphead Church hate all men constitute a non-descript category.

The Breedloves with their low self-esteem and poor economic status are at the very bottom of the scale. Blackness for them is a stigma: for the whites it is a mask of worthlessness and for the blacks of shame and embarrassment.

Pecola's tragedy begins much before we find her praying for blue eyes—which are for her a symbol of white beauty. She accepts the conventional standards that she has absorbed uncritically from the consumer society that surrounds her. But a more direct source of her obsession with blue eyes is her mother Pauline who in her younger days had given herself up to dreams fed by movies. "She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen" (*BE*). The loss of a front tooth marked the beginning of the death of her dream

Thereafter she gave up trying to imitate the white actress: "There I was, five months pregnant, trying to look like Jean Harlow" and settled down "to just being ugly" (*BE*).

Pecola, when she was born, was "a right smart baby" with "eyes all soft and wet," her "head full of pretty hair" but in her scale of absolute beauty she was ugly. Pauline transmits both the self-contempt and the obsession with physical beauty—which are really two sides of the same coin—to her daughter. Later she tries to achieve acceptance and respectability in the only way possible for a black woman of her class—by being an "ideal servant" in a rich white household. However Toni Morrison is at some pains to point out that like her mother's, Pecola's ugliness is not a matter of her features but arises out of her conviction: ". . . you realized that it came from conviction, their [the Breedloves'] conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, 'You are ugly people.' They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance" (*BE*).

The groundwork for her tragedy is thus laid. Pecola's tragic journey brings her in contact with different characters whose attitude towards her shows them up. Toni Morrison's fragmented narrative gives us an opportunity to study these attitudes by giving us close-ups of their meetings with Pecola.

The episode of Pecola's visit to Mr. Yacobowski's grocery store for Mary Jane candies illustrates the dynamics of the colour prejudice in the novel. Her efforts to communicate with him are evidence of the vast hiatus that exists between the world of the whites and the blacks caused by colour. For the immigrant Jew Pecola is metaphorically as well as literally beneath his notice. Because he sees the blacks in the mass, he does not see the individual beneath the skin colour. So even though the blacks are highly visible, they are paradoxically not easily seen, they are invisible. As the omniscient narrator says, "He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see" (*BE*). This "total absence of human recognition on his part she attributes to "distaste," distaste for her for her blackness, for her ugliness (*BE*). This distaste internalized by her takes the form of settled low self-esteem. Only anger can give her "a sense of being," "an awareness of worth," but her anger lasts only a brief while.

If Mr. Yacobowski is quietly contemptuous of Pecola, Maureen Peal the high-yellow dream child is tolerant of and even condescending to her. She even gets Pecola an icecream but once her superiority is challenged she proves to be no less hostile and insulting to her than the black boys who have been tormenting her. The black boys had hurled racial and sexist insults at her –

Black e mo Black e mo Ya daddy sleeps neckked (*BE*)

But once they leave, frightened by her presence, she herself asks if she [Pecola] had seen a naked man. And after she has fallen out with Claudia and Frieda, she runs away screaming: "I *am* cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly, black e mos. I *am* cute" (*BE*). Notice the violence of blacks against blacks. This torment issues out of their self-contempt.

Geraldine's hostility towards Pecola is even more pronounced because as a brown black woman, her ascension to whiteness is always precarious, never more so than when there is someone like Pecola to remind her of her blackness. Hence her outburst against the bewildered Pecola who her sadistic son Junior had invited to play in their house and later tormented by throwing his cat at her: "You nastily little black bitch: Get out of my house" (*BE*).

Even more tragic than the examples of rejection cited above is Pecola's humiliation at the hands of her own mother in the Fisher kitchen. The kitchen is the space that Pauline, neglectful of her own home, has made for herself in the white household and thus represents her complete subservience to the white masters. This is the source of Pecola's humiliation. The spilling of the peach cobbler is purely accidental and it is Pecola's legs that get burnt by the hot liquid but Pauline is unmindful of it and in fact adds insult to injury by beating her and turning her out of 'her' kitchen (*BE*). "Crazy fool . . . *my* floor, mess . . . look what you . . . work . . . get on out . . . now that . . . crazy . . . *my* floor, *my* floor . . . *my* floor" (*BE*). Ironically this expulsion takes place in the presence of the Fisher doll child who represents what Pecola has dreamed of becoming. Moreover, the mother's silence in response to the white child's query about Pecola's identity amounts to a virtual disowning of her own daughter.

We have seen the process of Pecola's isolation and victimization. The biggest irony however is that her own mother and father, themselves victims of the racist society, should complete that process. The mother accomplishes this by withholding her love while the father's "love"—"horrific love" as it has been called, proves even more disastrous and all but pushes her over into insanity. The confused motivation that leads Cholly to rape his daughter has been dealt with in a subsequent Unit. Whatever other emotions entered into the act, tenderness was a part of it. But wildly 'free' as he is, he is unable to express his tenderness in a positive way, hurting her irremediably. Lunacy is only a step away.

Having been failed by most people around her including her own parents for her ugliness, Pecola is more convinced than ever before of her dire need for the miraculous gift of blue eyes, a gift she believes Soaphead Church can bestow. In an interview, Toni Morrison explained that she wanted someone to grant Pecola's request or make her believe that her request for blue eyes had been granted. Hence her choice of a figure connected with fortune-telling, dream-telling who believed in the rightness of her request.

> I had to have someone . . . who would give her the blue eyes. And there had to be somebody who *could*, who had the means; that kind of figure who dealt with fortune-telling, dream-telling and so on, who would also believe that she was right, that it was preferable for her to have blue eyes. And that would be a person like Soaphead. In other words, he would be wholly convinced that if black people were more like white people they would be better off. And I tried to explain that in terms of his own West Indian background—a kind of English, colonial, Victorian thing drilled into his head which he could not escape. I needed someone to distil all of that, to say, 'Yeah; you're right, you need them. Here I'll give them to you' and really believe that he had done her a favour. Someone who would never question the request in the first place. That kind of black.
>
> (Stepto: 388-89; italics in the original)

Unlike Maureen Peal and Geraldine, Soaphead Church is meant to be 'sympathetic' to Pecola. But in his conviction that if black people were more like whites, they would be better off, he is essentially belongs with them. His letter to God is an interrogation of God's unjust dispensation and also implies the unavailability of divine help in sorting out the colour problem. In that sense it ironically articulates the need to come to terms with it in purely human terms.

The situation is not completely hopeless, however. Toni Morrison tries to redress the balance by making the prostitutes living above the Breedloves' storefront home entirely sympathetic—sympathetic to Pecola. One of them, Miss Marie calls Pecola by affectionate names like 'dumplin,' 'puddin,' 'chittlin' and 'sweetin.' But since the prostitutes are social pariahs, their support to Pecola is not enough to sustain her ego.

The only other characters who actively sympathize with Pecola are the MacTeer children. Claudia the narrator and her sister Frieda. They alone stand up to the pressure, brought on by popular culture in favour of the white stereotype of beauty. They are presented as a contrast to the Breedloves. Economically they are only slightly better off but emotionally they belong to a happier home and are more secure and mentally they are much much tougher and more self-assured. When the honeyed response that Maureen Peal gets everywhere shakes their faith in themselves, they recall her words asserting her cuteness and say: "If she was cute—and if anything could be believed, she *was*—then we were not. And what did that mean? We were lesser. Nicer, brighter, but still lesser" (*BE*). The important thing is that Claudia and Frieda as children are able to ask these questions that challenge the irrationality of the colour mystique that equates white complexion with virtue and intelligence.

Claudia does more—she tries to seek the source of the myth of white superiority by dismembering white dolls. Later she transfers this violence to white girls only to learn that this disinterested violence is repulsive and therefore shameful and seeks refuge in fraudulent love. The suggestion is that she does not become more humane—she learns only to adjust- "the change was adjustment without improvement" (*BE*), to compromise. In time, according to adult Claudia, they all joined the band that learned to worship Shirley Temple. At the end Pecola is left to flounder all alone busily trying to seek an assurance from an invented 'friend' that the eyes that Soaphead Church has 'given' her are the bluest of all.

4.5 SUMMING UP

The presence of white characters in *The Bluest Eye* is minimal but the white standards of beauty which Pecola aspires to achieve are ubiquitous. Because of the impossibility of attaining those standards, Pecola's quest for blue eyes is foredoomed to failure and she becomes mad. The novel raises some hope by making the main narrator Claudia a dissenter to begin with who questions the basis of the magical appeal of white beauty but in the end she too compromises.

4.6 GLOSSARY

Garbo, Greta (1905-90): real name Greta Gustafsson Swedish film actress; came to Hollywood in 1924 and is considered by many as the greatest of all film actresses.

Imitation of Life (1934): Name of the picture mentioned by Maureen Peal when Pecola, Claudia, Frieda and she are returning home from school.

Claudette Colbert is a penniless widow who becomes rich with the help of a recipe devised by her maid Louis Beavers. But when their daughters grow up they are faced with trouble. Beavers' daughter played by Fredie Washington can pass for white and rejects her mother. And Colbert's daughter falls in love with her mother's boyfriend.

	The film was remade in 1959. But in the earlier version the daughter who passes for white is played by Fredie Washington who is an extremely light-skinned woman of mixed parentage. Her name in the film is Pecola.
Lake Erie:	One of the five great lakes of North America.
Mulatto:	a person of mixed white and black parentage
octoroon:	a person of one-eighth Negro blood.
passing:	(used for a person with some Black ancestry) be accepted as a White.
quadroon:	the offspring of a White person and a mulatto, a person of one quarter Negro blood.
Sen Sen:	was a tiny black chiplike breath mint.
Shirley Temple (1928):	White American film actress, the most famous of all child stars, who from 1934 played leading roles in a succession of stories often adopted from children's classics.

4.7 QUESTIONS

1. How do you account for Pecola's low self-esteem and her quest for blue eyes?
2. Why does she want the bluest eyes of all?
3. What, according to you, is the solution of the colour problem in America?
4. Do you agree with the ending of the novel? If not, how would you have liked Toni Morrison to end it?

4.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 SEX AND LOVE IN *THE BLUEST EYE*

Structure

5.0 Objectives
5.1 Introduction
5.2 Sexuality and Children
5.3 Death of a Dream and After/ Pauline Breedlove
5.4 Love That Hurts/CholiyBreedlove
5.5 Commercial Sex
5.6 Child Molesters
5.7 Sexuality Among the Whites
5.8 Summing Up
5.9 Glossary
5.10 Questions
5.11 Further Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit is meant to show what it is to be black and female and poor in white America. More specifically, it shows (i) how false ideals of beauty and love of the dominant white culture can seduce young blacks especially girls, exemplified in *The Bluest Eye* by Pecola and can cause immense damage to them psychically; (ii) also how victimisation at the hands of whites can traumatise young blacks and impair their capacity to love in a healthy way; (iii) and finally how in a society where blacks play a subservient role to the whites and try to behave like whites, they tend to deny their own sexuality.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Section entitled Spring, Toni Morrison clubs romantic love along with physical beauty and calls them "probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought" (*BE*). But while the quest for physical beauty is a major theme in *The Bluest Eye* the quest for romantic love or rather the popular notion of it is only *part* of the writer's engagement with *love* in the novel. In fact in a 1977 interview she acknowledged that love is the central theme of all her work.

> Actually, I think, all the time that I write, I'm writing about love or its absence. Although I don't start out that way.... But I think that I still write about the same thing, which is how people relate to one another and miss it or hang on to it . . . or are tenacious about love.[30]

So far as *The Bluest Eye* is concerned, sex and love are a major preoccupation which is natural in a *bildungsroman*, a novel about growing up. As we said earlier, this novel is about growing up *black* and *female* and *poor* in racist America. Pecola Breedlove who is the central character ironically comes from a loveless poor home which is almost broken. Claudia the narrator and her sister Frieda belong to a more stable home where they are loved, but economically they are only slightly better off. Since Claudia is recalling her childhood days with Pecola, we have an eyewitness account of their curiosity and their fears about menstruation, pregnancy, and what love

is. The awakening of children to their sexuality and later to love is a natural part of the process of maturation and the achievement of selfhood. What complicates the process is the fact that the three children with whom the novel is centrally concerned are surrounded by the dominant standards of white behaviour.

Toni Morrison also gives us a peep into how the possibilities of love among the blacks living in white society get aborted or distorted. She shows us two ways in which this happens. We are shown what happens when a black woman tries to shape her entire existence around dreams of romantic love she has absorbed from white movies and when the reality catches up with her and the dream dies.

The capacity for love can also get distorted because of the viciousness and insensitivity of the white society. The death of romantic love in one case and the distortion of love in the other both lead to serious consequences for the psychic health of individuals, and damage their ability to relate to one another in a positive manner.

Besides, the writer lays a great deal of stress on the quality of sex life in marriage. Pauline's marriage with Cholly is "shredded with quarrels" but the memory of fulfilling sex with him in the earlier days of marriage still lingers in her mind. On such occasions she had felt as if she were "laughing between my legs" and as if "it be rainbow all inside" (*BE*). On the other hand, Toni Morrison is critical of aspiring black women like Geraldine who in order to fit themselves to do the white man's work with "refinement" give their bodies to their men only "sparingly and partially." Her cat has taken the place of her husband. They thus deny themselves the pleasure of complete surrender to passion or what is called *funk* in the novel. Geraldine like most characters in the novel is a typical character—she appears as an orthodox middle class Negro woman who as Calvin Hernton says is far more rigid, repressed, and neurotic than any other female in America.

Finally, we are given a glimpse of commercial sex in the persons of three prostitutes, China, Poland and Miss Marie. They live in the apartment above the Breedloves' store-front. Shunned by all the respectable women, they are all very friendly to Pecola who visits them and runs errand for them. This adds a touch of moral ambiguity to the novel.

Altogether these different facets add up to make a compact picture of love and sexuality among the blacks living in white society.

Now I want you to look for answers to the following questions as you read the text:

1. How do Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda respond to Pecola's menstruation?
2. What is the source of Pauline's education in romantic love?
   What dreams does she have?
   How does she get disillusioned?
   What effect does her disillusionment have on her personal life?
3. What does Toni Morrison think of romantic love? Which lines show it?
4. What, according to Toni Morrison, is the place of healthy sex/lust in married life?

5.2 SEXUALITY AND CHILDREN

The curiosity and fears of children towards their awakening sexuality are brought into sharp focus in the episode of the discovery of Pecola's menstruation in the beginning itself. She is now capable of bearing children and is in a sense more vulnerable than

before. These are early hints that anticipate her later pregnancy. Pecola's innocent query—how do you get somebody to love you?—though unanswered in the beginning, is tragically answered in the end when her own father makes love to her. It is not a pleasant experience for her. Even this is foreshadowed in the text. Miss Marie, one of the whores, has told Pecola about her love for Dewey Prince. Pecola wonders: "What did love feel like? How do grown-ups act when they love each other? . . . Into her eyes came the picture of Cholly and Mrs Breedlove in bed." "He making sounds as though he were in pain, as though something had him by the throat and wouldn't let go. Terrible as his noises were, they were not nearly as bad as the no noise at all from her mother. It was as though she was not even there" (*BE*). She naturally associates the event with "choking sounds and silence."

The episode in which four black boys hurl insults at Pecola for her black skin and for the relaxed sleeping habits of elders is also very revealing.

> Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e m black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo . . . (*BE*)

The insults at once help us to get an idea of the self-hatred of these black children and also help to prepare us for Pecola's helpless encounter with her father later on. The tragic irony is that the fatal love of her father is all the love that Pecola will ever experience. The adult Claudia's comments on the episode also anticipate Pecola's status as a scapegoat:

> They danced a macabre ballet around the victim, whom, for their own sake, they were prepared to *sacrifice* to the flaming pit.
> (*BE*)

5.3 DEATH OF A DREAM AND AFTER/PAULINE BREEDLOVE

Pauline's case illustrates what happens when a black young woman abandons herself to her quasi-religious fantasies about a saviour and later absorbs vague romantic dreams and values from the movies that she sees. All this proves a major disabling factor in her relationships with her husband, her children and her surroundings.

Like a typical teenager, Pauline used to fantasize. She is acutely conscious of her deformity in her foot and at fifteen imagined that some one would come to redeem and deliver her and by his mere glance straighten her foot:

> In church especially did these dreams grow. The songs caressed her, and while she tried to hold her mind on the wages of sin, her body trembled for redemption, salvation, a mysterious rebirth that would simply happen, with no effort on her part. In none of her fantasies was she ever aggressive, she was usually idling by the river bank, or gathering berries in a field when a someone appeared, with gentle and penetrating eyes—who with no exchange of words—understood; and before whose glance her foot straightened. . . . The someone had no face, no form, no voice, no odor, . . . the Presence would know what to do. She had only to lay her head on his chest and he would lead her away to the sea, to the city, to the woods . . . forever.
> (*BE*)

The entry of Cholly in her life is like the expected coming of the stranger: "He came big, he came strong, he came with yellow eyes, flaring nostrils, and he came with his

own music" (*BE*). But this doesn't last long. Cholly isn't the dependable romantic hero Pauline wants. Later when the marriage starts deteriorating, she seeks escape into the comfortable world of movies. Her dreams are revived. Inevitably the world of the movies glamorizes white standards and values. These she absorbs uncritically.

> She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen. (*BE*)

In the pictures she finds the fulfilment of her fondest wishes:

> There at last were the darkened woods, the lonely roads, the river banks, the gentle knowing eyes. There the flawed became whole, the blind sighted, and the lame and halt threw away their crutches. There death was dead, and people made every gesture in a cloud of music. (*BE*)

Her alienation from her grim surroundings is complete:

> *Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard. and looking at Cholly hard.*
>
> (*BE*)

She had tried to copy the hairstyle of the actress Jean Harlow. But soon harsh reality catches up with her in the form of a lost front tooth:

> *There I was. five months pregnant, trying to look like Jean Harlow. and a front tooth gone. Everything went then. . . . I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly.* (*BE*)

Her overvaluation of white beauty results in her self-hatred. An even more serious result is her emotional impoverishment. Having little self-esteem she is unable to show love or affection to her husband or her children..

We can now see the source of Pecola's fixation on blue eyes and her low self-esteem. Pauline's gaze had been fixed on the image of a deliverer, a redeemer, a saviour who would come from nowhere and rescue her. Her daughter Pecola wants blue eyes that symbolize white beauty and that will make her loveable. Her overvaluation of white standards of beauty, her self-hatred, and her desire to be liked and loved—all these Pauline passes on to her daughter. As often happens, all these traits get accentuated when they are transmitted to the next generation. Pauline is a hardworking woman who has a talent for arranging things and who derives immense satisfaction in doing so. She could in fact be called an artist whose potentialities have remained unrealized ("She missed—without knowing what she missed—paints and crayons,"). There is a hint of wasted talent here.

When her world lies in a shambles around her, Pauline goes back to church, neglects her home, fights with her husband furiously and seeks satisfaction in being a martyr who has to bear the cross of her husband and children ("Holding Cholly as a model of sin and failure, she bore him a crown of thorns, and her children like a cross," 98). She also tries to bolster up her self-esteem by being an ideal servant in the home of a wealthy white family, the Fishers ("Here she found beauty, order, cleanliness, and praise." *BE*).

Pauline of course looks after Pecola after the rape by her own father but her alienation from her own family is clear in the incidental spilling of the hot berry cobbler by Pecola in the Fisher kitchen. When the doll child in the Fisher household asks Pauline who she [Pecola] is, she virtually denies her own child.

5.4 LOVE THAT HURTS/CHOLLY BREEDLOVE

One of the recurrent problems in the novels of Toni Morrison is the problem of good and evil. She interrogates the twin concept and attempts a redefinition of it.

> I started out by thinking that one can never really define good and evil. Sometimes good looks like evil: sometimes evil looks like good—you never really know what it is. It depends on what uses you put it to.[31]

Toni Morrison thus moves away from the stereotypes of good and bad characters and is fascinated by characters who are not good in a conventional way. She asks: "... what about the woman who . . . is . . . a rule-breaker, a kind of law-breaker, a lawless woman? . . . she becomes more interesting . . . because of that quality of abandon."[32] This description which is true of Sula in a novel of the same name is applicable to black men also. "I do not find men who leave their families necessarily villainous."[33] She in fact finds "tremendous possibility of masculinity among black men."

> Sometimes you see it when they do art things, sometimes just in personality and so on. And it's very, very deep and very, very complex and such men as that are not very busy. They may end up in sort of twentieth-century contemporary terms being also unemployed. They may be in prison. They may be doing all sorts of things. But they are adventuresome in that regard.
> (Stepto: 386)

Ajax in *Sula and Cholly in The Bluest Eye* are such characters. In the latter novel the writer takes the stereotype of "a bad nigger"—who abdicates all family responsibilities and deserts his family—and re-presents his character in a manner that generates sympathy for him. What attracts Toni Morrison to Cholly is that he is a "free man"—

> not free in the legal sense, but free in his head. You see, this was a free man who could do a lot of things . . .
> (Stepto: 385)

Toni Morrison obviously sees great potential in Cholly but there is a big discrepancy between the potential and what he actually achieves in the novel, namely, his rape of his daughter. In the interview Toni Morrison goes so far as to say that "Cholly . . . lives a very *tragic* life, tragic in the sense that there was no reward . . ." (Stepto: 385).

Toni Morrison takes a very sympathetic view of Cholly right through—from the day he was abandoned as a four-day old child on a garbage heap to his rape of his own daughter. The whole narrative giving us the background of Cholly's upbringing converges on his motives in making forced love to his own daughter Pecola.

The question is: Do you agree with the writer's view of Cholly? What is your own estimate of him? Other important questions that will arise are:

2. Why does the narrative give us background information on Cholly's childhood?
3. Why does the narrative focus on the Cholly-Darlene episode?
4. What makes Cholly rape his daughter?
5. What particular gesture/incident ignites his desire for his daughter?
6. In what sense can Cholly's rape be considered an act of giving?
7. What is your own reaction to Cholly's rape?

Keep these questions in mind as you read the novel, particularly the sections dealing with Cholly and his rape

Let us now make an estimate of Cholly's character. Cholly begins life as a homeless child. His father Samson Fuller had run away and his mother had abandoned him on a junk heap when he was four days old. It was his Great Aunt Jimmy who retrieved him from the junk heap and brought him up till she died when he was 14.
A key event in his early life happens during Aunt Jimmy's funeral when he is sexually humiliated by two white men while trying to have sex with a cousin in the open. The white men surprise them in their love making and shining their flashlight on his behind urge him to carry on: "Go on. Go on and finish. And nigger, make it good" (*BE*).
This is a key episode for several reasons. This traumatic event renders him incapable of expressing his way in a positive way. Powerless to fight the white men, he turns his hatred towards Darlene. It is also the first of a "myriad other humiliations, defeats and emasculations" (*BE*) that Cholly is to face in his life and that fill him with hatred for the whites and plunge him into depravity.

Second, his horror at having impregnated Darlene and his running away to seek his father's guidance shows the rightness of his moral impulse. But the rejection by his father leaves him morally adrift, free, "dangerously free" as Toni Morrison puts it: "Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they *alone* interested him (*BE*). Henceforth his life takes a down turn.

When we first meet him in the novel his marriage to Pauline has already been shredded into violent quarrels. As a result of his accumulated frustration, he has lost all ambition, hope and curiosity and has sunk into drunkenness.

Inadequate as a husband, he is even more inadequate as a parent. Why does he rape his daughter? Cholly's emotions at the time of rape are confused. When he comes home drunk he finds his 11-year old daughter Pecola standing hunched over the sink, washing dishes. "The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love" (*BE*). Her posture with her head to one side as though crouching from "a permanent and unrelieved blow" fills him with revulsion. Why did she have to look so whipped? She was a child—unburdened—why wasn't she happy? The clear statement of her misery was an accusation. This is succeeded by guilt at his own helplessness to do anything for her: "What could he do for her—ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned-out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter?" (*BE*). Just then an innocent gesture on her part—one foot scratching the back of her calf with her toe—which is similar to Pauline's gesture at their first meeting (*BE*), sparks off a burst of desire in him together with tenderness. It is in this befuddled state of mind that he closes in upon his daughter.

The doing of a wild and forbidden thing is horrifying. But Morrison hopes horror will only be part of the reader's reaction.

> I tell you at the beginning of *The Bluest Eye* on the very first page what happened, but now I want you to go with me and look at this, so when you get to the scene where the father rapes the daughter, which is as awful a thing, I suppose, as can be imagined, by the time you get there it's almost irrelevant because I want you to *look* at him and his love for his daughter and his powerlessness to help her pain. By that time his embrace, the rape, is all the gift he has left.[34]

In another interview she remarks: "he might love her in the worst of all possible ways because he can't do this and can't do that. He can't do it normally, healthily and so

on. So it might end up this way [in the rape].[35] Clearly Morrison wants us to understand the circumstances and Cholly's state of mind leading to the fatal embrace. Cholly in his guilt and helplessness wants to show love and give something of himself to her but he is incapable of doing that in a positive way. The only thing he thinks he can gift to her is his manhood—his ability to procreate—that's all that is left to him. His rape then is love that appears as violence, an example of what has been called "horrific love." As Nellie Mckay suggests, "Within the novel Morrison demonstrates that even with the best intentions, people hurt each other when they are chained to circumstances of poverty and low social status. 'Violence' says Morrison, is a distortion of what, perhaps, we want to do.'"[36] It is for this reason perhaps that the writer calls Cholly's life tragic.

At the end Claudia understandingly acknowledges:

> Cholly loved her. I'm sure he did. He, at any rate, was the one who loved her enough to touch her, envelope her, give something of himself to her But his touch was fatal, and the something he gave her filled the matrix of her agony with death. *Love is never any better than the lover.*
>
> (*BE*

5.5 COMMERCIAL SEX

Commercial sex in the form of three black prostitutes, China, Poland and Miss Marie, forms an important of the collage of sexuality in the black community being described in *The Bluest Eye*. Living on the margin of society, these women have banded themselves together and represent reverse exploitation. They hate "men, all men [the emphasis is Toni Morrison's] without shame, apology, or discrimination" and merrily victimize their clients whenever they can and their clients come from all sections: "Black men, white men, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Jews, Poles, whatever—all were inadequate and weak, all came under their jaundiced eyes and were the recipients of their disinterested wrath" (*BE*). This suggests that commercial sex is a great leveller. Toni Morrison's portrayal of them is sympathetic—they are described as "Three merry gargoyles. These merry harridans"—for they sympathize with Pecola who apart from Claudia and Frieda is shunned by everyone else. This incidentally is another evidence of Toni Morrison's avoidance of moral absolutism in her portrayal of characters.

5.6 CHILD MOLESTERS

There are child molesters too—two of them and both are sex-starved. There are—Henry Washington who is a roomer with the MacTeers and who touches Frieda on her breast and is thrown down the stairs and out of the house by Mr. MacTeer The other is Soaphead Church who similarly exploits little black girls and whose act of 'giving' blue eyes to Pecola gives her final push into insanity.

5.7 SEXUALITY AMONG THE WHITES

White sexuality comes off poorly in the novel The two whites who surprise Cholly and Darlene in their lovemaking are presented as voyeurs They are obviously

obsessed with the famed sexual prowess of Negroes and urge Cholly to perform. The irony is that this urging emasculates the boy and traumatizes him.

5.8 SUMMING UP

The following points could be made:

I. Sex and Love:

1. Love among the blacks in *The Bluest Eye* could be defined either by its absence or distortion.

2. Its absence or distortion could be traced to the unattainable ideals of love and beauty that are broadcast in thousand different ways in white America and which ultimately fill the unresisting blacks with self-disgust and which cripple them emotionally and psychologically. The novel has been seen "as a meditation on the nature of desire itself, directed as it always is to a goal that can never be achieved."

3. Another source of distortion is the humiliation suffered by the blacks at the hands of whites.

4. Passion is seen as coming in the way of aspiring black women who wish to deny their origins and be as much like whites as possible. Healthy sexuality is only a distant memory.

5. Since most characters in the novel are typical, what happens to them applies to a large number of blacks like them. This makes the picture of the state of love among the blacks as presented in the novel representative.

II. Moral ambiguity in characters:

1. Toni Morrison avoids the moral absolutism of good and evil and works the gray areas in between.

   Cholly is an example of a character who is neither wholly good or bad, whose intentions go awry and whose gesture of 'love' takes the form of rape of his daughter.

2. There is a moral ambiguity about the three prostitutes also.

   There are other morally ambiguous characters in Toni Morrison's novels.

5.9 GLOSSARY

Jean Harlow (1911-37): Hollywood actress who died at 26.

5.10 QUESTIONS

1 Why does Toni Morrison choose a young poor black girl to undertake the quest for beauty and love?

2. What does Frieda's father do when he discovers that their roomer. Mr. Henry has tried to molest her? Can you think of another instance which shows that Claudia's parents love her?

3. How does this differ from the treatment Pecola receives from her parents?

4. What part does the poverty of the Breedloves play in the tragedy of the family?

5.11 FURTHER READINGS

'*The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison,' in *Literature and Its Times*, Vol.4. Ed. Joyce Moss and George Wilson. Detroit: Gale, 1997, 49-57.

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UNIT 6 CONCLUSION

Structure

6.0 Objectives
6.1 Introduction
6.2 Scapegoating as a Motif
6.3 Language and Style
6.4 Literary Echoes
6.5 Folk Elements
6.6 Critical Approaches to *The Bluest Eye*
6.7 Summing Up
6.8 Questions
6.9 Selected Bibliography

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit is meant to discuss some of the remaining elements that contribute to the total meaning of the novel, namely, scapegoating, language and style, literary echoes and folk elements. It will also, finally, give an idea of how *The Bluest Eye* has been viewed by critics over the years.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

A novel is a complex whole in which the elements constituting it are closely integrated. The motif of scapegoating is an important part of the total design of it. Another key element is the language and style. In her Nobel Prize Lecture (1993) Toni Morrison has said that whether language lives or dies depends upon those who use it. Referring to "the mid-wifery properties" of language, she says that it should help in the birth of new ideas, it should "permit new knowledge" and "encourage the mutual exchange of ideas" and warns against "policing" the language. In her interviews she also talks about her agenda as a writer which is "to restore the language that black people spoke to its original power. That calls for a language that is rich but not ornate."

Every literary work has necessarily to have literary echoes of writers and writings gone by and *The Bluest Eye* is no exception. The sense of the black community is strong in the novel and the presence of folk elements in it is an index of this presence. All these elements have been welded together to form the rich texture of the novel.

The text is central to any academic study—so it is with *The Bluest Eye*—and the reader must always come back to it but it is also important to know how other, perhaps more practised readers have looked upon it. The value of criticism lies in its ability to illuminate the text.

But remember, reading is also a communal activity with everyone contributing to the common pool of understanding and appreciation.

6.2 SCAPEGOATING AS A MOTIF

A scapegoat, according to dictionary, is a person or thing made to bear the blame that should fall on others as an expedient. This symbolic act involves the shifting the blame to others and sacrificing them and thus freeing oneself of guilt and becoming clean and wholesome.

In *The Bluest Eye* the whole society, the blacks no less than the whites are responsible for victimizing Pecola. The society is culpable because it has given her values and ideals through the education system and other ways, that are inaccessible but which she has fully internalized. The blacks are responsible—and the novel concentrates on her victimization by her own people—because they haven't learned to accept their blackness and have tried/are trying to deny their blackness and other evils that go with it.

In an essay Chikwenye Ogunyemi offers a sound analysis of how scapegoating operates in *The Bluest Eye*:

> Running through the novel is the theme of the scapegoat. Geraldine's cat, Bob the dog and Pecola are the scapegoats supposed to cleanse American society through their involvement in some violent rituals.[37]

The motive of the scapegoat is anticipated even before Geraldine's dismissal of Pecola in the torment that the black boys inflict on her.

Black e mo Blacke mo Ya daddy sleeps nekked

When the black boys hurl this double result at her, they are ironically giving vent to their self-hatred for their own blackness. They are also castigating her for the relaxed sleeping habits of adults which may be applicable to their own fathers.

> They danced a macabre ballet around the *victim*, whom, for their own sake, they were prepared to *sacrifice* to the flaming pit.
>
> (*BE*)

Geraldine and her son both similarly treat Pecola as a victim. In this scene she is a double victim—because Junior hurls the cat that his mother loves more than she loves him and later lays the blame for killing the cat on her [Pecola]; and because he shares his mother's hatred for the niggers. On her part the mother compares her to a fly ("Like flies they hovered; like flies they settled. And this one had settled in her house", *BE*) and flings her out just as her son had flung the cat at her. For her Pecola represents the vileness of poverty which she associated with blackness.

The third event that employs the scapegoat motif is the use that the fraudulent spiritualist makes of him to get rid of the dog.

The crowning irony of the novel is that the final act of victimization takes place at the hands of her father who ought to have shielded her from harm. The scapegoat motif becomes clearer when the victim is blamed/judged by the society in which she lives. Here are some significant voices:

i.	". . . the girl was always foolish."	(*BE*)
ii.	"Well, they ought to take her out of school."	(*BE*)
iii.	"Ought to. She carry some of the blame."	(*BE*)
iv.	"How come she didn't fight him?"	(*BE*)

According to Claudia she and her mother move to the edge of town. Pecola is now like "a grounded bird." The cleansing of the town is complete at Pecola's expense with Claudia now speaking for the entire black community:

> All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so

beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humour. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous.

(*BE*)

By presenting Pecola as a scapegoat Toni Morrison is actually indicting the whole society. And this society includes not only those who had contempt for Pecola but those who like Claudia and Frieda loved her and who fought with Maureen Peal for her. They too in course of time lost their childhood pride in themselves and joined the band that learned to worship Shirley Temple. The pattern of scapegoating in *The Bluest Eye* suggests that Toni Morrison's characters have all accepted white American standards of beauty and love. They are divided selves, acutely consciousness of their blackness but forever trying to erase this stigma.

6.3 LANGUAGE AND STYLE

Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize Lecture[38] (1993) is a meditation on language, its power and the responsibility of the writer for its health. Like prophets of old, she conveys this through the story of a blind old woman known for her wisdom and some young visitors who wish to put her to test.

These visitors come before her and one of them asks her; "Old woman, I hold in my hands a bird. Tell me whether it is living or dead." She does not reply for a long time but when she does, she says: "I don't know, I don't know whether the bird you are holding is dead or alive, but what I do know is that it is in your hands. It is in your hands" (*BE*). Toni Morrison interprets the story to mean that whether language is dead or alive depends upon those who use it. Language, she says, is partly a system and partly a living thing. When it lives, it is "a device for grappling with meaning, providing guidance, or expressing love" (*BE*). But it can die "out of carelessness, disuse, indifference, and absence of esteem, or killed by fiat" (*BE*). It can die, she continues, when its users "forgo its nuanced, complex, mid-wifery properties, replacing them with menace and subjugation" (*BE*). She warns against the use of sexist language, racist language, and theistic language, all of which, she says, are "typical of the policing languages of mastery, and cannot, do not, permit new knowledge or encourage the mutual exchange of ideas" (*BE*).

Toni Morrison has said that she writes for her own people, particularly for black women and part of her project as a writer is "to restore the language that black peop. spoke to its original power. That calls for a language that is rich but not ornate" (Thomas LeClair: 371). By rich we are probably to understand rich in suggestiveness, rich in lyrical quality, rich in intensity. This intensity is a quality that has been praised in *The Bluest Eye*.

I. Among the many things that could be said about Toni Morrison's language in *The Bluest Eye* perhaps the most important is the *orality* of her writing. In an interview with Christina Davis, she said that she makes what she calls "aural literature."

> It has to read in silence and that's just one phase of the work but it also has to *sound* and if it doesn't *sound* right . . . Even though I don't speak it when I'm writing it, I have this interior piece, I guess, in my head that reads, so that the way I hear it is the way I write it and I guess that's the way I would read it aloud.
>
> (Christina Davis: 418)

As she has said earlier, she has a black audience in mind and her work must appear to speak to that audience—it must be "a spoken story"—for only then would her audience reader be able to participate in the experience.

This oral quality is evident in Claudia's narrative which is both a recalling and a confession. And the confessional mode is the oral mode. This confessional tone is combined with that of a storyteller and is set in the beginning itself immediately following the three versions of the extract from the primer.

> *Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. . . .*
> *There is nothing more to say—except* why. *But since* why *is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in* how. (*BE*)

The confessional tone is even more salient at the end of the narrative after the imaginary conversation between Pecola and her 'friend.'

> So it was . . . (*BE*)

During this confessional moment Claudia's voice merges with that of the community and she owns up to betraying Pecola by making a scapegoat of her.

> All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us . . .
> (*BE*)

Two other ways which help emphasize the oral quality are as under:

(i) Claudia's narrative uses words as they are spoken. Here are some examples

> cu-ute (*BE*)
> di-i-me (*BE*)
> Nooo (*BE*).
> Shut uuuup (*BE*)
> Awwwwww woman! (*BE*)

(ii) Use of italics to express spoken emphasis:

> -What the devil does *anybody* need with *three* quarts of milk? (16)
> -*Boy*friends? *Boy*friends? Chittlin', I ain't seen a *boy* since nineteen and twenty-seven. (*BE*)

II. Toni Morrison's fictional prose is finely crafted. An important characteristic of it is repeated balanced phrasing. Here are some examples, with italics added wherever necessary.

(1) "They . . . saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from *every* billboard, *every* movie, *every* glance (*BE*).

(2) "And Pecola. She hid behind hers. *Concealed, veiled, eclipsed*"— (*BE*).

(3) He [Mr. Yacobowski] does not *see* her. Because for him there is nothing to *see* (*BE*).

(4) Three *merry* gargoyles. Three *merry* harridans (*BE*).

(5) . . . her laughter came like the sound of many rivers, *freely, deeply, muddily* . . (*BE*).

(6) Wherever it erupts, this Funk, they wipe it away; where it crusts, they dissolve it; wherever it drips, flowers, or clings, they find it and fight it until it dies (*BE*).

(7) The someone had *no* face, *no* form, *no* voice, *no* odor (*BE*).

(8) He came big, he came strong, he came with yellow eyes, flaring nostrils, and he came with his own music (*BE*).

(9) Little by little we began to piece a story together, a secret, terrible, awful story (*BE*).

(10) Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humor. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous. Even her waking dreams we used—to silence our own nightmares" (*BE*).

Notice the variation in the repeated phrases and also the variation from the earlier patterns at the end.

III. Use of Irony:

Notice the following example:

> He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see. How can a fifty-two-year old white immigrant storekeeper with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth, his mind honed on the doe-eyed Virgin Mary, his sensibilities blunted by a permanent sense of loss, *see* a little black girl?" (*BE*)

IV. Memorable Phrases:

Toni Morrison gives us several memorable sentences in a quiet sort of way.

i. Adults do not talk to us—they give us direction (*BE*).
ii. People had owned it, but never known it (*BE*).
iii. Love is never any better than the lover (*BE*).

Can you spot any other example?

6.4 LITERARY ECHOES

Each reader will react to *The Bluest Eye* in his/her own way. But a reader who comes to the text after wide reading, that is, a reader with a cultivated consciousness, will enjoy it much, much more. For he/she will have the additional joy of discovering or stumbling upon echoes from other literary texts and finding old bells ringing in the mind.

I have been able to spot the following echoes:

1. The omniscient narrator's description of brown girls from the south "And like hollyhocks they are narrow, tall, and still. Their roots are deep, their stalks are firm, and only *the top blossom nods in the wind*" (*BE*).

The italicised words recall Wordsworth's description of daffodils as "tossing their heads in sprightly dance."

2. Later the omniscient narrator records the distaste of such girls for the sex act.

> While he [her husband] moves inside her, she will wonder why they didn't put the necessary but private parts of the body in some more convenient place—like the armpit, for example, or the palm of the hand. Someplace one could get to easily, and quickly, without undressing. (*BE*)

The alternative location of sex organs suggested here is reminiscent of what Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82) says in his *Religio Medici* (1642).

3. When Frieda tells Claudia about their roomer Mr. Henry touching Frieda on the breast, Claudia innocently says:

> "No [I'm not jealous], I just get tired of having everything last." (*BE*)

This recalls what a character (the yellow bearded man) says to his co-worker in Sean O'Casey's play *Purple Dust* (1940) when he finds he is missing most of the fun while working on the roof. When he is informed that the lass of the house has run away on the horseback, "with only her skin as a coverin'" he says

> Yellow-Bearded Man (*with aggravated anguish in his voice*). It is like me to be up here out a sight o' the world with great things happenin'!
> (Act I, last line)

Later when someone accidentally lets a roller go down a slope, he says:

> Didn't I think it was an earthquake? (*Testily*) An' don't be tellin' me these things while I'm up here. Can't you wait till I'm down in the world o' men, and can enjoy these things happenin'?" (Act II)

The humour of these lines both in Toni Morrison and in Sean O'Casey's play lies in the fact that the characters who say these lines are perfectly serious.

4. Cholly's sex act with Darlene which is interrupted by the whites amounts to emasculation. This is followed by his rejection by his own father. At this point the omniscient narrator describes how he is given back his manhood by these women. "They [three women] give him back his manhood, which he takes aimlessly" (*BE*). This belief in therapeutic sex recalls an incident in Robert Anderson's play *Tea and Sympathy* (1953) in which the understanding wife of the headmaster offers herself to a sensitive adolescent in order to restore his masculinity.

   (This belief in sex as having therapeutic value, as a cure for all ills, is a facile belief and one wonders how Toni Morrison came to acquire it.)

5. But perhaps the clearest and the most meaningful literary echo in the novel is that of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854). *Walden* is invoked in order to clarify the state of mind of Pecola after she thinks she has been given blue eyes by Soaphead Church.

   Here are the two texts:

Toni Morrison:

> The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendril, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. (*BE*)

Thoreau's *Walden*:

> If a man does not keep pace with his companion, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however, measured or far away. .
>
> (Conclusion to *Walden*)

Thoreau here is talkingly approving of a dissenter, of a person who does not keep step with others but follows a different path in pursuit of what he considers to be the truth.

The echo is ironic because while Thoreau's non-conformist is meant to go places towards truth and self-realization, Pecola's non-conformity imprisons her in her delusions. There is praise for her single-minded pursuit of what she considers to be her true objective i.e. blue eyes, and criticism of others including Claudia and Frieda who have made compromises with the racist society. But there is simultaneously a recognition of waste of so much young promising human potential.
<u>Note for the student</u>: If you identify some other literary echo in *The Bluest Eye*, please share it with us.

6.5 FOLK ELEMENTS

Community or the neighbourhood is a very strong presence in *The Bluest Eye* as it is in other novels of Toni Morrison. The community gave life and sustenance to the people. In case of sickness or other trouble the community took care of them. But it also "meddled in your lives a lot." The folk elements in the novel are a part of Toni Morrison's sense of the presence of the community in the novel. Some of these elements are as follows:

1. <u>Caring</u>:

In spite of the presence of several disruptive elements in the novel like Pauline's unmotherlike behaviour towards Pecola or Geraldine's aloofness or Cholly's rape of his daughter, the novel shows how people take care of each other. When the Breedlove family is put outdoors—a criminal act in the community—Pecola comes to stay with the MacTeers for a few days and Claudia and Frieda try hard to keep her from feeling outdoors. The same caring is evident in the many attempts made by neighbours to cure Aunt Jimmy.

2. <u>Traditional Medicine</u>:

When all attempts to cure Aunt Jimmy fail, M'Dear is sent for. A competent midwife she is known to be a "decisive diagnostician," and is regarded as "infallible" by the community. And all speculations cease when she says: "You done caught cold in your womb. Drink pot liquor and nothing else" (*BE*).

3. <u>Belief in Magic</u>:

Pecola's prayer to God to make her disappear is predicated upon the belief that such a thing is possible. She also believes that the boon of blue eyes will magically solve all the problems.

Like Pecola, Claudia and Frieda also try magic—to make Pecola's baby live. This they do by planting marigold seeds and saying the right magical incantation. If the marigolds flower they will know that Pecola's baby will live. But eventually while Pecola enters the world of fantasy thinking she has finally 'got' blue eyes, Claudia and Frieda have their feet on the terra firma of reality

Pecola's wish to be transformed through blue eyes links her with several fairytale heroines. Cinderella is the name of a girl uncared for and disregarded by her family in a fairy tale in which she tries to be transformed from a charwoman to a belle. Sleeping Beauty waited for a hundred years for the prince to awaken her.

- Can you think of other examples of this kind from mythology or folklore?

4. Pecola as a grounded bird:

After Maureen Peal, the high-yellow dream girl, insults Pecola and Claudia and Frieda ("I *am* cute! And you ugly!" *BE*), Claudia the narrator compares Pecola to a bird which seemed to fold into herself, like a pleated wing" (*BE*). Later, after she thinks she has been given the bluest of eyes, Claudia again compares her to a bird that tries vainly to fly:

> Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach-- (*BE*)

These references recall a familiar black folktale entitled All God's Children had Wings. According to the folktale "all Africans could fly like birds, but owing to their many transgressions, their wings were taken away" (*BE*). The irony of this reference is that Pecola has been grounded for no fault of her own.[39]

5. Folk speech also enters the language of the novel. When Pauline says that it is "cold as a witch's tit" (*BE*) in her house, she is using a familiar folk expression. A few lines later when she says- "If *working like a mule* don't give me the right to be warm, what am I doing it for?"—she is using a familiar image used for black women.

The insult hurled at Pecola by the four black boys—"Black e mo Black e mo"—they are using a racist insult which is centuries old.

All these folk elements ground the novel in the reality of black life so that the tragic experience of a black girl that Toni Morrison wants to share with her primary audience—black women—makes sense to them.

6.6 CRITICAL APPROACHES TO *THE BLUEST EYE*

Toni Morrison's writing career of 30 years has been very productive in more ways than one. Beginning with *The Bluest Eye* in 1970, she has written seven novels to date plus literary and cultural criticism. She won the Nobel Prize in 1993 preceded by the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for *Beloved* (1987) which remains her best novel so far. Her acceptance speech on the later occasion was a paean to language in which she talked on both the power of language and the responsibility of the writers who use it. She has also been chiefly responsible for effecting a quiet revolution in the world of American academies—she has caused an expansion of the canon in American literature. As a

consequence no course in American literature would be considered complete without a novel by her. She is indeed a formidable presence on the American literary scene.

In her novels Toni Morrison has attempted to retrieve/capture black experience which American historical memory was trying to distort or even erase. In a 1988 interview with Christina Davis she said: ". . . the reclamation of the history of black people in this country is paramount in its importance because while you can't really blame the conqueror for writing history his own way, you can certainly debate it. There's great deal of obfuscation and distortion and erasure, so that the presence and the heartbeat of black people has been systematically annihilated in many, many ways and the job of recovery is ours" (413). This task of recovering black experience has meant Toni Morrison's engagement with both the past and the present and the trauma that often went with the experience. While she writes out of the specificities of race and class and gender her ultimate focus is the universal problem of the quest for identity, the relation between the individual and the community, the problems of good and evil, love, and guilt.

During this period as many as 14 books have been written on her novels—which are either full-length studies or collections of critical essays on her work. Most of these have been published during the 1990's. Included in these studies is one by K. Sumana published in 1998. besides, there are many other studies involving other African American women writers and also some canonical British and American writers like Christina Rossetti, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Faulkner and Philip Roth. There are of course numerous articles on various aspects of the novels that she has published. The criticism of her work is growing apace, which is an evidence of the vitality and density of her novels.

Critics have generally placed her work within one of four contexts—race, gender, comparative American/Western literature, and universality of concerns. These approaches are however by no means exclusive.

We shall now concentrate on how *The Bluest Eye* has been viewed by the critics over the years.

In an Afterword to the Penguin edition of *The Bluest Eye* in November 1993, Toni Morrison said: "With very few exceptions, the initial publication of *The Bluest Eye* was like Pecola's life: dismissed, trivialized, misread." Since she has achieved celebrity status, it is easy for her to pick holes in the early reviews. But if one goes by the reviews of Ruby Dee in *Freedomways* and of Haskel Frankel in *New York Times Book Review*, the two early reviews to which most Indian readers are likely to have access in Nellie McKay's *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, her complaint is less than fair. Ruby Dee, herself a black, entitles her review "Black Family Search for Identity" which hits the nail on the head and also talks of the personal impact of the novel on her. In the last paragraph she says: "In *The Bluest Eye* she has split open the person [Pecola] and made us watch the heart beat. . . ."[40] This reminds us of what Toni Morrison has said about retrieving the heartbeat of black people referred to earlier in this section.

Haskel Frankel, presumably a white, finds fault with her construction and thinks that Frieda and Claudia though they offer a contrast to Pecola "serve little purpose beyond distraction," which is a gross misreading of the novel. But we shouldn't forget that the writer herself according to her interview with Diana Cooper-Clark was dissatisfied with the narrative: "I would rewrite *The Bluest Eye*. I wouldn't have the mother, for example, speaking. . . . and the ending wouldn't be that way" (200-01). But on the positive side, Frankel uses much the same metaphor when he describes Toni Morrison (minus the fuzziness born of flights of poetic imagery) as "a writer of considerable power and tenderness, someone who can cast back to the living, bleeding heart of

childhood and capture it on paper" (McKay, ed., 20). Also the reviewer credits Toni Morrison for creating vivid scenes—he lists three: Pecola's first "ministration"; Pecola's being thrown out by Geraldine, and young Cholly's interrupted sex act and says: "Given a scene that demands a writer's best, Miss Morrison responds with control and talent." The review ends on a positive note: "With the flaws and virtues tallied, I found myself still in favour of *The Bluest Eye*. There are many novelists willing to report the ugliness of the world as ugly. The writer who can reveal the beauty and the hope beneath the surface is a writer to seek out and encourage" (McKay, ed., 21).

John Leonard writing in *The New York Times* commended her for "prose so precise. . . that the novel becomes poetry.". The *Newsweek* reviewer R.A. Sokolov applauded her for her "skill to convince you that she is telling it like it is without telling you that's what she's doing—and that you'd better pay attention to her."[41] In fact it could be said that these reviewers had alerted us to a new talent on the American literary scene. As time went on and as other books of the writer came out, *The Bluest Eye* started receiving fuller attention either singly or together with other novels in articles and books.

An important early essay was "Order and Disorder in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*" (1977) by Chickwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi. Though the critic's "discovery" of the triadic patterns in the novel—the triple repetition of the primer passage, the three themes of sex, racism, and love, the three black family women—Geraldine, Mrs. MacTeer, and Mrs. Breedlove, and three black prostitutes suggesting the rape of France, China and Poland by more powerful forces in World War II—is clearly a case of over-reading, the essay offers several penetrating insights. These include the repetitive use of the paragraph from the primer to point out the disparity between the worlds of the whites and the blacks, the theme of scapegoating, the novel as being rooted in black literary tradition, the deft handling of the narrative, the typicality of characters and the presentation of old problems "in a fresh language and with a fresh perspective," i.e. as seen through the eyes of adolescent girls. There is also an initial attempt to analyse the language of the novel when the critic quotes the first sentence of the opening Section entitled Autumn—"*Nuns* go by as *quiet* as *lust*, and *drunken* men with *sober* eyes *sing* in the lobby of the Greek hotel . . ." (emphasis added)—and remarks that the juxtaposition of *nuns* with *lust* and *drunken men* with *sober* suggests the disorder and moral chaos of the novel.

These insights have been developed/modified/built upon by later critics. For example, Barbara Christian's book *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition. 1892-1976* (1980) contains an essay "The Contemporary Fables of Toni Morrison" which analyses the structure of *The Bluest Eye* (and of *Sula*) in terms of the elements of the Dick and Jane primer, the voice of Claudia and the nature image—which form the building blocks of the novel and invites attention to the theme of inversion of truth.

Besides, Phyllis Klotman, Donald B. Gibson and other critics consider Toni Morrison's use of the different versions of the primer as being centrally important in the novel. The motif of the scapegoat and the use of the different narrative voices in *The Bluest Eye*, form part of Michael Awkward's exploration in his "'The Evil of Fulfilment': Scapegoating and Narration in *The Bluest Eye*" (1989).

Trudier Harris's *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison* (1991) locates Toni Morrison's work in the tradition of African American folktale and in her essay on *The Bluest Eye* concentrates on the several folk elements made use of in the text.

Denise Heinze's *The Dilemma of 'Double Consciousness': Toni Morrison's Novels* (1993) uses W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness" as a framework for discussing Toni Morrison's treatment of American ideals about beauty, family and

society. In *Toni Morrison's Fiction* (1996) Jan Furman says that Toni Morrison's novels are "instruments for transmitting cultural knowledge filling a void once occupied by storytelling" and adds that the black woman 'is an evolving presence' in her work. And though, she says, Toni Morrison's novels are culturally specific, they are not restrictive and their appeal cuts across race and gender. Jill Matus's book *Toni Morrison* (1998) in the Contemporary World Writers Series treats literature as a form of cultural and historical memory and says that Toni Morrison's novels are powerfully engaged with "questions of history, memory and trauma." The critic has explored how the novels function as cultural memory. In *The Bluest Eye* she focuses on the narrative exploration of anger and shame.

Two other articles both on love or the failure of love need to be mentioned. In Jane Bakerman's "Failures of Love: Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison" (1981) she quotes Toni Morrison who says that the central theme of all her novels is love or rather the absence of love, and then relates this basic theme to the initiation motif in *The Bluest Eye* (and also to *Sula* and *Song of Solomon*). The other essay is Terry Otten's "Horrific Love in Toni Morrison's Fiction" (1993) in which the critic starts from the premise that Toni Morrison's characters defy morally absolute categories and that her fictional characters are a "combination of virtue and flaw," and then argues that Cholly's rape of his daughter is an "act of love and rage" and calls it an example of horrific love.

6.7 SUMMING UP

Our journey in the company of Toni Morrison and her first novel *The Bluest Eye* is coming to a close. We have examined the novel from several angles—we have taken a close look at the narrative, at its theme of black pursuit of white standards of beauty, and at the distortion that takes place when characters run after illusory ideals or tragically show violence in the name of love. Other subjects discussed are language and style, literary echoes and folk elements and finally the major ways in which the critics have viewed *The Bluest Eye* over the thirty years from its publication.

6.8 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the use of the excerpts from the primer in *The Bluest Eye*.
2. What narrative strategies does the writer use in *The Bluest Eye*?
3. Why does Toni Morrison describe the ideal of physical beauty a most destructive idea in the history of human thought?
4. What part does the black community in Lorain, Ohio play in the novel *The Bluest Eye*?
5. Cholly Breedlove commits incest with his daughter Pecola. Why then does the writer want us to view him sympathetically? Discuss.
6. "The novel is not merely the story of Pecola—it deals with the entire community." Discuss.
7. Discuss Pecola Breedlove as the central character of the novel.

8. Discuss *The Bluest Eye* as a novel of initiation.

9. Discuss the language and style of *The Bluest Eye*.

10. In what way is *The Bluest Eye* a woman-centred novel? Discuss.

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