T D C –Part Two Hons- Paper-IV

Fiction, Story and Essay

A. The Mayor of Casterbridge : a novel by Thomas Hardy

Theme, symbol and motif in the novel, A Mayor of Casterbridge

As a "Story of a Man of Character," *The Mayor of Casterbridge* focuses on how its protagonist's qualities enable him to endure. One tends to think of character, especially in terms of a "Man of Character," as the product of such values as honor and moral righteousness. Certainly Michael Henchard does not fit neatly into such categories. Throughout the novel, his volatile temper forces him into ruthless competition with Farfrae that strips him of his pride and property, while his insecurities lead him to deceive the one person he learns to truly care about, Elizabeth-Jane. Henchard dies an unremarkable death, slinking off to a humble cottage in the woods, and he stipulates in his will that no one mourn or remember him. There will be no statues in the Casterbridge square, as one might imagine, to mark his life and work. Yet Hardy insists that his hero is a worthy man. Henchard's worth, then—that which makes him a "Man of Character"—lies in his determination to suffer and in his ability to endure great pain. He shoulders the burden of his own mistakes as he sells his family, mismanages his business, and bears the storm of an unlucky fate, especially when the furmity-woman confesses and Newson reappears. In a world that seems guided by the "scheme[s] of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing" human beings, there can be no more honorable and more righteous characteristic than Henchard's brand of "defiant endurance."

The value of a good name is abundantly clear within the first few chapters of the novel: as Henchard wakes to find that the sale of his wife was not a dream or a drunken hallucination, his first concern is to remember whether he divulged his name to anyone during the course of the previous evening. All the while, Susan warns Elizabeth-Jane of the need for discretion at the Three Mariners Inn—their respectability (and, more important, that of the mayor) could be jeopardized if anyone discovered that Henchard's family performed chores as payment for lodging.

The importance of a solid reputation and character is rather obvious given Henchard's situation, for Henchard has little else besides his name. He arrives in Casterbridge with nothing more than the implements of the hay-trusser's trade, and though we never learn the circumstances of his ascent to civic leader, such a climb presumably depends upon the worth

of one's name. Throughout the course of the novel, Henchard attempts to earn, or to believe that he has earned, his position. He is, however, plagued by a conviction of his own worthlessness, and he places himself in situations that can only result in failure. For instance, he indulges in petty jealousy of Farfrae, which leads to a drawn-out competition in which Henchard loses his position as mayor, his business, and the women he loves. More crucial, Henchard's actions result in the loss of his name and his reputation as a worthy and honorable citizen. Once he has lost these essentials, he follows the same course toward death as Lucetta, whose demise is seemingly precipitated by the irretrievable loss of respectability brought about by the "skimmity-ride."

The Mayor of Casterbridge is a novel haunted by the past. Henchard's fateful decision to sell his wife and child at Weydon-Priors continues to shape his life eighteen years later, while the town itself rests upon its former incarnation: every farmer who tills a field turns up the remains of long-dead Roman soldiers. The Ring, the ancient Roman amphitheater that dominates Casterbridge and provides a forum for the secret meetings of its citizens, stands as a potent symbol of the indeli-bility of a past that cannot be escaped. The terrible events that once occurred here as entertainment for the citizens of Casterbridge have, in a certain sense, determined the town's present state. The brutality of public executions has given way to the miseries of thwarted lovers.

Henchard's past proves no less indomitable. Indeed, he spends the entirety of the novel attempting to right the wrongs of long ago. He succeeds only in making more grievous mistakes, but he never fails to acknowledge that the past cannot be buried or denied. Only Lucetta is guilty of such folly. She dismisses her history with Henchard and the promises that she made to him in order to pursue Farfrae, a decision for which she pays with her reputation and, eventually, her life

Even the most cursory reading of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* reveals a structural pattern that relies heavily on coincidence. Indeed, the story would hardly progress were it not for the chance occurrences that push Henchard closer and closer to failure. For example, the reappearance of just one long-lost character would test our willingness to believe, but here we witness the return of Susan, the furmity-woman, and Newson, each of whom brings a dark secret that contributes to Henchard's doom. Although we, as modern readers, are unlikely to excuse such overdetermined plotting, we should attempt to understand it. Hardy's reliance on coincidence relates directly to his philosophy of the world. As a determinist, Hardy believed that human life was shaped not by free will but by such powerful, uncontrollable forces as heredity and God. Henchard rails against such forces throughout the novel, lamenting that the world seems designed to bring about his demise. In such an environment, coincidence seems

less like a product of poor plot structure than an inevitable consequence of malicious universal forces.

Casterbridge is, at first, a town untouched by modernism. Henchard's government runs the town according to quaintly traditional customs: business is conducted by word of mouth and weather-prophets are consulted regarding crop yields. When Farfrae arrives, he brings with him new and efficient systems for managing the town's grain markets and increasing agricultural production. In this way, Henchard and Farfrae come to represent tradition and innovation, respectively. As such, their struggle can be seen not merely as a competition between a grain merchant and his former protégé but rather as the tension between the desire for and the reluctance to change as one age replaces another.

Hardy reports this succession as though it were inevitable, and the novel, for all its sympathies toward Henchard, is never hostile toward progress. Indeed, we witness and even enjoy the efficacy of Farfrae's accomplishments. Undoubtedly, his day of celebration, his new method for organizing the granary's business, and his determination to introduce modern technologies to Casterbridge are good things. Nevertheless, Hardy reports the passing from one era to the next with a quiet kind of nostalgia. Throughout the novel are traces of a world that once was and will never be again. In the opening pages, as Henchard seeks shelter for his tired family, a peasant laments the loss of the quaint cottages that once characterized the English countryside.

Henchard's fall can be understood in terms of a movement from the public arena into the private one. When Susan and Elizabeth-Jane discover Henchard at the Three Mariners Inn, he is the mayor of Casterbridge and its most successful grain merchant, two positions that place him in the center of public life and civic duty. As his good fortune shifts when his reputation and finances fail, he is forced to relinquish these posts. He becomes increasingly less involved with public life—his ridiculous greeting of the visiting Royal Personage demonstrates how completely he has abandoned this realm—and lives wholly with his private thoughts and obsessions. He moves from "the commercial [to] the romantic," concentrating his energies on his personal and domestic relationships with Farfrae, Lucetta, and Elizabeth-Jane.

In an act of contrition, Henchard visits Elizabeth-Jane on her wedding day, carrying the gift of a caged goldfinch. He leaves the bird in a corner while he speaks to his stepdaughter and forgets it when she coolly dismisses him. Days later, a maid discovers the starved bird, which prompts Elizabeth-Jane to search for Henchard, whom she finds dead in Abel Whittle's cottage. When Whittle reports that Henchard "didn't gain strength, for you see, ma'am, he couldn't eat," he unwittingly ties Henchard's fate to the bird's: both lived and

died in a prison. The finch's prison was literal, while Henchard's was the inescapable prison of his personality and his past.

The bull that chases down Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane stands as a symbol of the brute forces that threaten human life. Malignant, deadly, and bent on destruction, it seems to incarnate the unnamed forces that Henchard often bemoans. The bull's rampage provides Henchard with an opportunity to display his strength and courage, thus making him more sympathetic in our eyes.

When a wagon owned by Henchard collides with a wagon owned by Farfrae on the street outside of High-Place Hall, the interaction bears more significance than a simple traffic accident. The violent collision dramatically symbolizes the tension in the relationship between the two men. It also symbolizes the clash between tradition, which Henchard embodies, and the new modern era, which Farfrae personifies.

Major Characters in the novel

Michael Henchard

At the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* the ruined Michael Henchard wills that no one remember his name after his death. This request is profoundly startling and tragic, especially when one considers how important Henchard's name has been to him during his lifetime. After committing the abominable deed of selling his wife and child, Henchard wakes from a drunken stupor and wonders, first and foremost, if he told any of the fair-goers his name. Eighteen years pass between that scene on the heath of Weydon-Priors and Henchard's reunion with Susan in Casterbridge, but we immediately realize the value that Henchard places on a good name and reputation. Not only has he climbed from hay-trusser to mayor of a small agricultural town, but he labors to protect the esteem this higher position affords him. When Susan and Elizabeth-Jane come upon the mayor hosting a banquet for the town's most prominent citizens, they witness a man struggling to convince the masses that, despite a mismanaged harvest, he is an honest person with a worthy name.

As he stares out at an unhappy audience made up of grain merchants who have lost money and common citizens who, without wheat, are going hungry, Henchard laments that he cannot undo the past. He relates grown wheat metaphorically to the mistakes of the past—neither can be taken back. Although Henchard learns this lesson at the end of Chapter IV, he fails to internalize it. If there is, indeed, a key to his undoing, it is his inability to let go of his past mistakes. Guilt acts like a fuel that keeps Henchard moving toward his own demise. Unable to forget the events that took place in the furmity-woman's tent, he sets out to punish himself again and again. While he might have found happiness by marrying Lucetta, for

instance, Henchard determines to make amends for the past by remarrying a woman he never loved in the first place. Possessed of a “restless and self-accusing soul,” Henchard seems to seek out situations that promise further debasement. Although Donald Farfrae eventually appropriates Henchard’s job, business, and even his loved ones, it is Henchard who insists on creating the competition that he eventually loses. Although Henchard loses even the ability to explain himself—“he did not sufficiently value himself to lessen his sufferings by strenuous appeal or elaborate argument”—he never relinquishes his talent of endurance. Whatever the pain, Henchard bears it. It is this resilience that elevates him to the level of a hero—a man, ironically, whose name deserves to be remembered.

Donald Farfrae

Farfrae, the young Scotchman, serves as a foil (a character whose actions or emotions contrast with and thereby accentuate those of another character) for Henchard. Whereas will and intuition determine the course of Henchard’s life, Farfrae is a man of intellect. He brings to Casterbridge a method for salvaging damaged grain, a system for reorganizing and revolutionizing the mayor’s business, and a blend of curiosity and ambition that enables him to take interest in—and advantage of—the agricultural advancements of the day (such as the seed-sowing machine).

Although Henchard soon comes to view Farfrae as his adversary, the Scotchman’s victories are won more in the name of progress than personal satisfaction. His primary motive in taking over Casterbridge’s grain trade is to make it more prosperous and prepare the village for the advancing agricultural economy of the later nineteenth century. He does not intend to dishonor Henchard. Indeed, even when Henchard is at his most adversarial—during his fight with Farfrae in the barn, for instance—the Scotchman reminds himself of the fallen mayor’s circumstances, taking pains to understand and excuse Henchard’s behavior. In his calm, measured thinking, Farfrae is a model man of science, and Hardy depicts him with the stereotypical strengths and weaknesses of such people. He possesses an intellectual competence so unrivaled that it passes for charisma, but throughout the novel he remains emotionally distant. Although he wins the favor of the townspeople with his highly successful day of celebration, Farfrae fails to feel any emotion too deeply, whether it is happiness inspired by his carnival or sorrow at the death of his wife. In this respect as well he stands in bold contrast to Henchard, whose depth of feeling is so profound that it ultimately dooms him.

Elizabeth-Jane Newson

Elizabeth-Jane undergoes a drastic transformation over the course of the novel, *even though the narrative does not focus on her as much as it does on other* characters. As she follows her mother across the English countryside in search of a relative she does not know,

Elizabeth-Jane proves a kind, simple, and uneducated girl. Once in Casterbridge, however, she undertakes intellectual and social improvement: she begins to dress like a lady, reads voraciously, and does her best to expunge rustic country dialect from her speech. This self-education comes at a painful time, for not long after she arrives in Casterbridge, her mother dies, leaving her in the custody of a man who has learned that she is not his biological daughter and therefore wants little to do with her.

In terms of misery, one could easily argue that Elizabeth-Jane has a share equal to that of Henchard or Lucetta. Unlike these characters, however, Elizabeth-Jane suffers in the same way she lives—with a quiet kind of self-possession and resolve. She lacks Lucetta's sense of drama and lacks her stepfather's desire to bend the will of others to her own. Thus, when Henchard cruelly dismisses her or Lucetta supplants her place in Farfrae's heart, Elizabeth-Jane accepts these circumstances and moves on with life. This approach to living stands as a bold counterpoint to Henchard's, for Henchard cannot bring himself to let go of the past and relinquish his failures and unfulfilled desires. If Henchard's determination to cling to the past is partly responsible for his ruin, then Elizabeth-Jane's talent for "making limited opportunities endurable" accounts for her triumphal realization—unspectacular as it might be—that "happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain."

Lucetta Templeman

Like Michael Henchard, Lucetta Templeman lives recklessly according to her passions and suffers for it. Before arriving in Casterbridge, Lucetta becomes involved in a scandalously indiscreet affair with Henchard that makes her the pariah of Jersey. After settling in High-Place Hall, Lucetta quickly becomes enamored with Henchard's archrival, Farfrae. Their relationship is peaceful until the town learns of Lucetta's past relationship with Henchard, whereupon they make her the subject of a shameful "skimmity-ride." Although warned of these likely consequences, Lucetta proceeds to love whomever she wants however she pleases. Still, her character lacks the boldness and certainty of purpose that would elevate her to the level of "the isolated, damned, and self-destructive individualist" that critic Albert Guerard describes as "the great nineteenth-century myth." Lucetta emerges not as heroic but as childish and imprudent. Her love for Farfrae, for example, hinges on her refusal to accept Henchard's visits for several days, a refusal that makes her seem more petty than resolute. Similarly, her rapidly shifting affections—Farfrae eclipses Henchard as the object of her desire with amazing, almost ridiculous speed—brand her as an emotionally volatile Victorian female, one whose sentiments are strong enough to cause the most melodramatic of deaths.

Explanations

1.

The difference between the peacefulness of interior nature and the wilful hostilities of mankind was very apparent at this place. In contrast with the harshness of the act just ended within the tent was the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly as they waited in patience to be harnessed for the homeward journey. Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was quiet. The sun had recently set, and the west heaven was hung with rosy cloud, which seemed permanent, yet slowly changed. To watch it was like looking at some grand feat of stagery from a darkened auditorium. In presence of this scene after the other there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kindly universe; till it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud.

In Chapter I, after selling his wife and daughter to a sailor for five guineas, Michael Henchard steps out of the furmity-merchant's tent and considers the world described above. Here, Hardy employs his talent for description that serves to make the physical world of the characters real and accessible, while carrying a symbolic meaning that resonates with the larger themes of the work as a whole. First, he evokes beautifully the natural world of Weydon-Priors: the horses, the surrounding woods, the "rosy cloud[s]" at sunset. With the patient horses that rub their necks lovingly and stand as a counterpoint to Henchard's patently unloving treatment of his wife, the passage departs from strict realism and veers toward symbolism. By contrasting the human and natural worlds in this way and determining that "all terrestrial conditions were intermittent," that love and hate, kindness and cruelty are in constant flux, Hardy effectively sets the stage for his drama.

2.

He advertised about the town, in long posters of a pink colour, that games of all sorts would take place here; and set to work a little battalion of men under his own eye. They erected greasy-poles for climbing, with smoked hams and local cheeses at the top. They placed hurdles in rows for jumping over; across the river they laid a slippery pole, with a live pig of the neighborhood tied at the other end, to become the property of the man who could walk over and get it. There were also provided wheelbarrows for racing, donkeys for the same, a stage for boxing, wrestling, and drawing blood generally; sacks for jumping in.

Several times throughout the novel, Hardy evokes details of a kind of life that was becoming extinct even as he described it. Casterbridge is a town situated between two times: the age of simple, agricultural England and the epoch of modern, industrialized England. The drama enacted between Henchard and Farfrae is, in part, the conflict between tradition and innovation, between the past and the future. Given enough time, the strongest traditions will fade as surely as memories of the past. Thus, Hardy plays the part of the amateur

anthropologist, recalling rather fondly the details of rural living that were eclipsed by the advent of modern technologies. In Chapter XVI, he colorfully describes the day of celebration that Henchard plans. It is a world of simple pleasures—smoked hams and local cheeses—a world in which neighbors have not yet succumbed to the brutal competitiveness of industrial capitalism but instead share ownership of livestock. It is essentially a romantic and nostalgic view of a world that, even during Hardy's time, no longer existed. Nevertheless, Hardy cannot resist including details that confirm his understanding of the brutality of the universe, as in the cruelty inherent in such pastimes as "boxing, wrestling, and drawing blood generally."

3.

Character is Fate, said Novalis, and Farfrae's character was just the reverse of Henchard's, who might not inaptly be described as Faust has been described—as a vehement gloomy being who had quitted the ways of vulgar men without light to guide him on a better way.

This passage from Chapter XVII relates to Farfrae's enormous business success after Henchard requests that he leave his employment and stop courting Elizabeth-Jane. The phrase "Character is Fate," from Novalis, an eighteenth-century German novelist and poet, offers us a context for understanding much of Henchard's ensuing struggle. Henchard blames much of the suffering he endures on cruel forces that are bent on human destruction. In Chapter XVII, however, Hardy reminds the reader that Henchard has much to do with his own downfall. In the same chapter, we read that "there was still the same unruly volcanic stuff beneath the rind of Michael Henchard as when he had sold his wife at Weydon Fair." This "volcanic stuff" refers to Henchard's passionate disposition. Whatever he feels—be it love, hate, desire, or contempt—he feels it overpoweringly. The same holds true for his guilt over selling Susan, which tracks him from Weydon-Priors to Casterbridge, where it overshadows his life for twenty years. His desire to right these past wrongs and his conviction that he deserves to suffer for them account for his suffering as much as any malignant force of the universe.

4.

MICHAEL HENCHARD'S WILL

That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me.
& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.
& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.
& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.
& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.
& that no flours be planted on my grave.
& that no man remember me.

To this I put my name.
MICHAEL HENCHARD

In his introduction to *Modern Critical Interpretations: Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Harold Bloom cites the above passage, taken from the novel's final chapter, as the most powerful and eloquent of all of Hardy's writing. Indeed, there is a remarkable power and beauty in the simplicity of these lines. Henchard's will is the tragic last statement of a tragic man whose unremitting doubts regarding his life's worth not only lead to his death but also follow him there. From the moment Henchard sells his wife at the Weydon fair, he feels a keen anxiety over the value of his name. He pledges a twenty-one-year reprieve from alcohol and sets himself on a course that delivers him to the most honored business and social offices of a small country town. Unsatisfied with this seeming reformation of himself, however, he continues to let his guilt eat away at him and eventually relinquishes the name and reputation he has built for himself. His last wish, to be allowed to die anonymously and to go unremembered, is the ultimate gesture of a man who craves good repute but doubts his own worth.

5.
Her experience had been of a kind to teach her, rightly or wrongly, that the doubtful honour of a brief transit through a sorry world hardly called for effusiveness, even when the path was suddenly irradiated at some half-way point by daybeams rich as hers. But her strong sense that neither she nor any human being deserved less than was given, did not blind her to the fact that there were others receiving less who had deserved much more. And in being forced to class herself among the fortunate she did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforeseen, when the one to whom such unbroken tranquillity had been accorded in the adult stage was she whose youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain.

These lines make up the final passage of the novel and provide a thoughtful, balanced summary of its proceedings. Elizabeth-Jane decides to honor Henchard's last wishes as best she can. She does not mourn him or plant flowers on his grave. She does, however, come close to honoring him inwardly, when she reflects here on the unfair distribution of happiness, which she considers the most valuable human currency. Her reflection mitigates Henchard's obsession with the worth of his name and reputation, for in the face of such a "sorry world," all honor seems "doubtful." But it also grants the fallen mayor a quiet, unassuming kind of forgiveness. She certainly has Henchard in mind when she thinks of the many people who "deserved much more" out of life. Indeed, given that the world emerges as "a general drama of pain," both we and Elizabeth-Jane begin to understand better Henchard's disastrous mistakes and missteps. Even his lie regarding Newson becomes less grievous when

we consider that he meant only to secure a happiness that had, for so many years, eluded him. In such a bleak world, the course of Henchard's life seems not to merit punishment so much as it does pity.

Wuthering Heights –a novel by Emily Brontee

Supernatural elements and symbols in the novel

Catherine and Heathcliff's passion for one another seems to be the center of*Wuthering Heights*, given that it is stronger and more lasting than any other emotion displayed in the novel, and that it is the source of most of the major conflicts that structure the novel's plot. As she tells Catherine and Heathcliff's story, Nelly criticizes both of them harshly, condemning their passion as immoral, but this passion is obviously one of the most compelling and memorable aspects of the book. It is not easy to decide whether Brontë intends the reader to condemn these lovers as blameworthy or to idealize them as romantic heroes whose love transcends social norms and conventional morality. The book is actually structured around two parallel love stories, the first half of the novel centering on the love between Catherine and Heathcliff, while the less dramatic second half features the developing love between young Catherine and Hareton. In contrast to the first, the latter tale ends happily, restoring peace and order to Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The differences between the two love stories contribute to the reader's understanding of why each ends the way it does.

The most important feature of young Catherine and Hareton's love story is that it involves growth and change. Early in the novel Hareton seems irredeemably brutal, savage, and illiterate, but over time he becomes a loyal friend to young Catherine and learns to read. When young Catherine first meets Hareton he seems completely alien to her world, yet her attitude also evolves from contempt to love. Catherine and Heathcliff's love, on the other hand, is rooted in their childhood and is marked by the refusal to change. In choosing to marry Edgar, Catherine seeks a more genteel life, but she refuses to adapt to her role as wife, either by sacrificing Heathcliff or embracing Edgar. In Chapter XII she suggests to Nelly that the years since she was twelve years old and her father died have been like a blank to her, and she longs to return to the moors of her childhood. Heathcliff, for his part, possesses a seemingly superhuman ability to maintain the same attitude and to nurse the same grudges over many years.

Moreover, Catherine and Heathcliff's love is based on their shared perception that they are identical. Catherine declares, famously, "I *am* Heathcliff," while Heathcliff, upon Catherine's death, wails that he cannot live without his "soul," meaning Catherine. Their love denies difference, and is strangely asexual. The two do not kiss in dark corners or arrange

secret trysts, as adulterers do. Given that Catherine and Heathcliff's love is based upon their refusal to change over time or embrace difference in others, it is fitting that the disastrous problems of their generation are overcome not by some climactic reversal, but simply by the inexorable passage of time, and the rise of a new and distinct generation.
Ultimately, *Wuthering Heights*presents a vision of life as a process of change, and celebrates this process over and against the romantic intensity of its principal characters.

As members of the gentry, the Earnshaws and the Lintons occupy a somewhat precarious place within the hierarchy of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British society. At the top of British society was the royalty, followed by the aristocracy, then by the gentry, and then by the lower classes, who made up the vast majority of the population. Although the gentry, or upper middle class, possessed servants and often large estates, they held a nonetheless fragile social position. The social status of aristocrats was a formal and settled matter, because aristocrats had official titles. Members of the gentry, however, held no titles, and their status was thus subject to change. A man might see himself as a gentleman but find, to his embarrassment, that his neighbors did not share this view. A discussion of whether or not a man was really a gentleman would consider such questions as how much land he owned, how many tenants and servants he had, how he spoke, whether he kept horses and a carriage, and whether his money came from land or "trade"—gentlemen scorned banking and commercial activities.

Considerations of class status often crucially inform the characters' motivations in*Wuthering Heights*. Catherine's decision to marry Edgar so that she will be "the greatest woman of the neighborhood" is only the most obvious example. The Lintons are relatively firm in their gentry status but nonetheless take great pains to prove this status through their behaviors. The Earnshaws, on the other hand, rest on much shakier ground socially. They do not have a carriage, they have less land, and their house, as Lockwood remarks with great puzzlement, resembles that of a "homely, northern farmer" and not that of a gentleman. The shifting nature of social status is demonstrated most strikingly in Heathcliff's trajectory from homeless waif to young gentleman-by-adoption to common laborer to gentleman again (although the status-conscious Lockwood remarks that Heathcliff is only a gentleman in "dress and manners").

Brontë organizes her novel by arranging its elements—characters, places, and themes—into pairs. Catherine and Heathcliff are closely matched in many ways, and see themselves as identical. Catherine's character is divided into two warring sides: the side that wants Edgar and the side that wants Heathcliff. Catherine and young Catherine are both remarkably similar and strikingly different. The two houses, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, represent opposing worlds and values. The novel has not one but two distinctly different

narrators, Nelly and Mr. Lockwood. The relation between such paired elements is usually quite complicated, with the members of each pair being neither exactly alike nor diametrically opposed. For instance, the Lintons and the Earnshaws may at first seem to represent opposing sets of values, but, by the end of the novel, so many intermarriages have taken place that one can no longer distinguish between the two families.

Repetition is another tactic Brontë employs in organizing*Wuthering Heights*. It seems that nothing ever ends in the world of this novel. Instead, time seems to run in cycles, and the horrors of the past repeat themselves in the present. The way that the names of the characters are recycled, so that the names of the characters of the younger generation seem only to be rescramblings of the names of their parents, leads the reader to consider how plot elements also repeat themselves. For instance, Heathcliff's degradation of Hareton repeats Hindley's degradation of Heathcliff. Also, the young Catherine's mockery of Joseph's earnest evangelical zealousness repeats her mother's. Even Heathcliff's second try at opening Catherine's grave repeats his first.

In *Wuthering Heights,* Brontë constantly plays nature and culture against each other. Nature is represented by the Earnshaw family, and by Catherine and Heathcliff in particular. These characters are governed by their passions, not by reflection or ideals of civility. Correspondingly, the house where they live—Wuthering Heights—comes to symbolize a similar wildness. On the other hand, Thrushcross Grange and the Linton family represent culture, refinement, convention, and cultivation.

When, in Chapter VI, Catherine is bitten by the Lintons' dog and brought into Thrushcross Grange, the two sides are brought onto the collision course that structures the majority of the novel's plot. At the time of that first meeting between the Linton and Earnshaw households, chaos has already begun to erupt at Wuthering Heights, where Hindley's cruelty and injustice reign, whereas all seems to be fine and peaceful at Thrushcross Grange. However, the influence of Wuthering Heights soon proves overpowering, and the inhabitants of Thrushcross Grange are drawn into Catherine, Hindley, and Heathcliff's drama. Thus the reader almost may interpret Wuthering Heights's impact on the Linton family as an allegory for the corruption of culture by nature, creating a curious reversal of the more traditional story of the corruption of nature by culture. However, Brontë tells her story in such a way as to prevent our interest and sympathy from straying too far from the wilder characters, and often portrays the more civilized characters as despicably weak and silly. This method of characterization prevents the novel from flattening out into a simple privileging of culture over nature, or vice versa. Thus in the end the reader must acknowledge that the novel is no mere allegory.

The constant emphasis on landscape within the text of *Wuthering Heights* endows the setting with symbolic importance. This landscape is comprised primarily of moors: wide, wild expanses, high but somewhat soggy, and thus infertile. Moorland cannot be cultivated, and its uniformity makes navigation difficult. It features particularly waterlogged patches in which people could potentially drown. (This possibility is mentioned several times in *Wuthering Heights*.) Thus, the moors serve very well as symbols of the wild threat posed by nature. As the setting for the beginnings of Catherine and Heathcliff's bond (the two play on the moors during childhood), the moorland transfers its symbolic associations onto the love affair.

Ghosts appear throughout *Wuthering Heights,* as they do in most other works of Gothic fiction, yet Brontë always presents them in such a way that whether they really exist remains ambiguous. Thus the world of the novel can always be interpreted as a realistic one. Certain ghosts—such as Catherine's spirit when it appears to Lockwood in Chapter III—may be explained as nightmares. The villagers' alleged sightings of Heathcliff's ghost in Chapter XXXIV could be dismissed as unverified superstition. Whether or not the ghosts are "real," they symbolize the manifestation of the past within the present, and the way memory stays with people, permeating their day-to-day lives.

Major Characters

Heathcliff

Wuthering Heights centers around the story of Heathcliff. The first paragraph of the novel provides a vivid physical picture of him, as Lockwood describes how his "black eyes" withdraw suspiciously under his brows at Lockwood's approach. Nelly's story begins with his introduction into the Earnshaw family, his vengeful machinations drive the entire plot, and his death ends the book. The desire to understand him and his motivations has kept countless readers engaged in the novel.

Heathcliff, however, defies being understood, and it is difficult for readers to resist seeing what they want or expect to see in him. The novel teases the reader with the possibility that Heathcliff is something other than what he seems—that his cruelty is merely an expression of his frustrated love for Catherine, or that his sinister behaviors serve to conceal the heart of a romantic hero. We expect Heathcliff's character to contain such a hidden virtue because he resembles a hero in a romance novel. Traditionally, romance novel heroes appear dangerous, brooding, and cold at first, only later to emerge as fiercely devoted and loving. One hundred years before Emily Brontë wrote*Wuthering Heights,* the notion that "a reformed rake makes the best husband" was already a cliché of romantic literature, and romance novels center around the same cliché to this day.

However, Heathcliff does not reform, and his malevolence proves so great and long-lasting that it cannot be adequately explained even as a desire for revenge against Hindley, Catherine, Edgar, etc. As he himself points out, his abuse of Isabella is purely sadistic, as he amuses himself by seeing how much abuse she can take and still come cringing back for more. Critic Joyce Carol Oates argues that Emily Brontë does the same thing to the reader that Heathcliff does to Isabella, testing to see how many times the reader can be shocked by Heathcliff's gratuitous violence and still, masochistically, insist on seeing him as a romantic hero.

It is significant that Heathcliff begins his life as a homeless orphan on the streets of Liverpool. When Brontë composed her book, in the 1840s, the English economy was severely depressed, and the conditions of the factory workers in industrial areas like Liverpool were so appalling that the upper and middle classes feared violent revolt. Thus, many of the more affluent members of society beheld these workers with a mixture of sympathy and fear. In literature, the smoky, threatening, miserable factory-towns were often represented in religious terms, and compared to hell. The poet William Blake, writing near the turn of the nineteenth century, speaks of England's "dark Satanic Mills." Heathcliff, of course, is frequently compared to a demon by the other characters in the book.

Considering this historical context, Heathcliff seems to embody the anxieties that the book's upper- and middle-class audience had about the working classes. The reader may easily sympathize with him when he is powerless, as a child tyrannized by Hindley Earnshaw, but he becomes a villain when he acquires power and returns to Wuthering Heights with money and the trappings of a gentleman. This corresponds with the ambivalence the upper classes felt toward the lower classes—the upper classes had charitable impulses toward lower-class citizens when they were miserable, but feared the prospect of the lower classes trying to escape their miserable circumstances by acquiring political, social, cultural, or economic power.

Catherine

The location of Catherine's coffin symbolizes the conflict that tears apart her short life. She is not buried in the chapel with the Lintons. Nor is her coffin placed among the tombs of the Earnshaws. Instead, as Nelly describes in Chapter XVI, Catherine is buried "in a corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor." Moreover, she is buried with Edgar on one side and Heathcliff on the other, suggesting her conflicted loyalties. Her actions are driven in part by her social ambitions, which initially are awakened during her first stay at the Lintons', and which eventually compel her to marry Edgar. However, she is also motivated by impulses that

prompt her to violate social conventions—to love Heathcliff, throw temper tantrums, and run around on the moor.

Isabella Linton—Catherine's sister-in-law and Heathcliff's wife, who was born in the same year that Catherine was—serves as Catherine's foil. The two women's parallel positions allow us to see their differences with greater clarity. Catherine represents wild nature, in both her high, lively spirits and her occasional cruelty, whereas Isabella represents culture and civilization, both in her refinement and in her weakness.

Edgar

Just as Isabella Linton serves as Catherine's foil, Edgar Linton serves as Heathcliff's. Edgar is born and raised a gentleman. He is graceful, well-mannered, and instilled with civilized virtues. These qualities cause Catherine to choose Edgar over Heathcliff and thus to initiate the contention between the men. Nevertheless, Edgar's gentlemanly qualities ultimately prove useless in his ensuing rivalry with Heathcliff. Edgar is particularly humiliated by his confrontation with Heathcliff in Chapter XI, in which he openly shows his fear of fighting Heathcliff. Catherine, having witnessed the scene, taunts him, saying, "Heathcliff would as soon lift a finger at you as the king would march his army against a colony of mice." As the reader can see from the earliest descriptions of Edgar as a spoiled child, his refinement is tied to his helplessness and impotence.

Charlotte Brontë, in her preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, refers to Edgar as "an example of constancy and tenderness," and goes on to suggest that her sister Emily was using Edgar to point out that such characteristics constitute true virtues in all human beings, and not just in women, as society tended to believe. However, Charlotte's reading seems influenced by her own feminist agenda. Edgar's inability to counter Heathcliff's vengeance, and his naïve belief on his deathbed in his daughter's safety and happiness, make him a weak, if sympathetic, character.

Essays and Essayists

Francis Bacon as an essayist with special reference to his essay, "of Studies"

Bacon argues that studies "serve for Delight, for Ornament, and for Ability." For delight, Bacon means one's personal, private education; for "Ornament," he means in conversation between and among others, which Bacon labels as "Discourse." Studies for "Ability" lead one to judgment in business and related pursuits. From Bacon's perspective, men with worldly experience can carry out plans and understand particular circumstances,

but men who study are better able to understand important political matters and know how to deal with problem according to their severity ("Marshalling of Affairs").

At the same time Bacon encourages studies, he warns that 1) too much studying leads to laziness; 2) if one uses one's knowledge too often in conversation with others, then one is showing off; and 3) to be guided solely by one's studies one becomes a scholar rather than a practical man. Bacon's argument about the value of studies is that moderation is the key to using studies appropriately: studies are wonderful only if influenced by experience because a person's natural abilities are enhanced by studies, but studies without experience, lead to confusion in dealing with the outside world.

According to Bacon, dishonest men condemn education; stupid men admire education; but wise men use education as their real world experience dictates. He warns the educated man not to use his education to argument unnecessarily with people; not to assume that education always leads to the correct behavior or understanding; not to use education merely to focus on conversation with others. Rather, Bacon argues, education ("some Bookes") should be read but their advice ignored; other books, ignored completely; and a few books are to be "Chewed and Digested," that is, understood perfectly and used to guide behavior. In addition, Bacon advises that some books can be read by others, who take notes, and the notes can substitute for reading an entire book--but these books should not be those that cover important subjects.

Bacon returns to addressing the effects of reading, conversation, and writing: reading creates a well-rounded man; conversation makes a man think quickly; and writing, by which Bacon usually means argument essay writing, makes a man capable of thinking with logic and reason. Further, Bacon argues, if a man doesn't write very much, he has to have a good memory to compensate for what he doesn't write; if he doesn't exercise the art of conversation, he needs to have a quick wit; and if he doesn't read very much, he has to be able "to fake it," to pretend that he knows more than he does.

History, Bacon argues, makes men wise; poetry, clever; mathematics, intellectually sharp; logic and rhetoric, skilled in argument. Further, Bacon believes that there is no problem in thinking that cannot be fixed by the appropriate study--just as the right physical exercise cures physical illnesses. Every disorder of the mind has a cure--for example, if a man cannot use one set of facts to prove the truth of an un-related set of facts, Bacon advises the study of law.

Money Box by Robert Lynd

Robert Lynd wrote under the pen name ‘Y.Y’. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest essayists of modern English literature. He was an Irishman and was educated at Belfast and started his literary career with delightful sketches of Irish life. After settling in London, he regularly contributed to the various newspaper and magazines. His range of interests was quiet large encompassing almost everything that caught his fancy. Some of his essays like ‘The Money box’, ‘On Good Resolutions’, ‘On Holidays’, suggest the vistas to which his creative mind outspread. His intelligent

mind took fancy to most sundry things or thoughts and his art transformed it into an impressive piece of essay.

‘The Money Box’, is a marvelous piece of essay, full of humor and wit. In this essay, Lynd seeks to discuss an important tussle which every human psyche experiences: the desire of saving and the urge of spending. Lynd is of opinion that human consciousness is made up of two selves: one that saves and the one that spends. The self that wants to save is the wiser and it has all the reasons in the world to provide for the future. But at the same time, it is constantly challenged and is in conflict with the one that spends. The spending self loves every moment of the present and is desirous of living it to the fullest. It sees no reason why the joy of present should be forsaken for the gamble of future. The result is a tussle between the two selves much to the difficulty of the judge which is conscience.

The essay is remarkably laid out with apt anecdotes, allusions and references. Money box serves as just the right tool to elicit the author’s opinion upon saving and spending. The essay begins with a colloquial dialogue between the essayist and his niece who is trying to figure out how to open the money box just before inserting a penny into it. A money box is nothing but an illusion of wealth and therefore an attractive pursuit; but the moment a few pennies...

Dream Children

Charles Lamb entitled the essay “Dream Children” because he never married and naturally never became the father of any children. The children he speaks of in the essay were actually the creations of his imagination or fancy.

Field, pseudonym for the actual person, was Lamb’s grandmother. Lamb presents her as an ideal grandmother in an imaginary and inflated way before his “dream children”—she was extremely pious, fearless and compassionate person besides being the best dancer of the area in her youth.

The essay is subtitled as a ‘reverie’ because Lamb never married and so he never had children. In the essay he created an imaginary picture of a happy conjugal life—a picture which finally dissolves into nothing as he comes back to reality.

Lamb's elder brother, John L—in his youth was a handsome, high-spirited, strong and fearless person. He loved Lamb very much. But subsequently in his old age he became lame-footed and spent the rest of his life in utter hopelessness, irritation and pain.

Lamb had a sister, Mary Lamb, who did not marry since she had attacks of insanity. She has been referred to here as "faithful Bridget" because she never married and was Lamb's only companion in his life. At the sudden breakdown of his reverie, he finds her seated by his side.

The chief characteristic feature of the essay is the author's mingling of pathos and humour. Lamb begins the essay in somewhat deceptive fashion, describing the incidents, full of humour. But gradually he reduces the tone towards the end describing the tragedies of his personal life.

Dream Children is a personal essay. Lamb presents the characters and incidents from his own life—the sketches of his grandmother, Field, his brother—John Lamb, his sister—Mary Lamb, his tragic love-affairs with Ann Simmons. But Lamb is always playing with facts and fictions and transforms the real into the literary.

It is surprising that without ever having children Lamb had acute sense of how children react to the happenings in the world of the adults. By deceptively referring to the meticulous reactions of his dream children, he succeeds in catching the reader immediately. The aesthetic impact of the essay becomes more effective for this reason.

Lamb told his "dream children" that in his boyhood he would enjoy rambling in and around the great country house in Norfolk. He would gaze at the twelve marble busts of Caesars in such an intensely meditative way that it seemed to him after some time that those were coming back to life again, or that he would be himself transformed into marble with them.

Lamb told his "dream children" that in his boyhood he would enjoy rambling in and around the great country house in Norfolk more than the sweet fruits of the orchard. He would remain busy with this though he had no work to do.

Lamb loved his brother John L— very much. But very shortly after his death it seemed to him that death had created such an immeasurable vacuum in his life that it made impossible for him to comprehend the significance of the difference between life and death.

The immediate absence of his brother John Lamb created by his death forced Lamb to feel the gulf the difference between life and death. He understood that death created a permanent absence as the dead cannot be restored to life. Again, death is unknowable and Lamb was forced to reflect on his brother's absence in this way.

In the course of his day-dreaming when Lamb looked at his dream-daughter, her physical resemblance reminded him of his dream-girl Alice W—n, a fictitious name for Ann Simmons who did reciprocate his love.

At the end of his day-dreaming Lamb coming back to reality finds his sister (Bridget) Mary Lamb by his side; but he realises and remembers that his brother James Elia or John Lamb had died and would no more be with them. So he laments his loss thus.

While describing the great country house in Norfolk, lamb tells his “dream children” that the chimney piece of the great hall was decorated by the curving of the story of Robin Redbreasts. At the information that a foolish person pulled it down, Alice’s countenance changed, which suggested that it should not have been done. The word ‘braiding’ here means castigation or censure.

While listening to Lamb’s personal tale, Alice reacts firs by spreading her hands when Lamb says how good, religious and graceful person Field had been. Alice reacts to it either in great astonishment or putting up some pious gesture. She also cries out When Lamb talks about his elder brother’s pain and death. At the information of the great house being stripped off its ornaments John smiled, which suggested the foolishness of the work. He was trying to look brave and impress upon his father that he would not have been afraid of the ghosts like his father. At the end of the story, when Lamb was talking of his elder brother’s pain and death, John, like Alice, began to cry.

In "dream children" Lamb mingles the pathos with humour which can easily be found by the readers. He describes the death of his brother John Lamb that is full of pathos, on the other hand, he tells his readers about his childhood days with his grandmother. He wanders here and there, he all discusses in the humorous way.

On Pleasures of No Longer being very young

Chesterton holds an enduring place in English literature. His presence was formidable —as a writer, critical essayist, Catholic polemicist, the proponent of the social philosophy of Distributism, and in his large physical form. He gained the widest distinction, however, with his Father Brown mysteries, particularly his use of them to consider the darker aspects of human nature.

Chesterton was born into a middle-class London family and he later recalled his childhood with affection, attributing it with endowing in him a religious—at the time, Protestant—perspective. As a young man, Chesterton studied art and literature, enrolling at the Slade School of Art from 1892 to 1895; in fact, his background in drawing and painting is credited for Chesterton's lifelong affinity for vividly detailed, visual prose descriptions. During his time at the Slade School, Chesterton suffered a profound emotional and philosophical crisis, fearing that the external world might be only a projection of the mind. Chesterton emerged from this spiritual breakdown with a much clearer understanding of the more sinister facets of the human mind. And his continued examination of that dusky region was to permeate his entire career. Chesterton delved into the nature of evil and madness with an unique persistence and sensitivity. His wife, the former Frances Blogg, fulfilled an important role in Chesterton's artistry by assisting him in the achievement of a more sanguine

view of life and in the continued formation of his religious convictions. Chesterton first came to public notice with his critical essays—both social and literary. His collection of essays entitled *What's Wrong with the World* (1910) brought him attention, along with Hilaire Belloc, as a leading advocate for Distributism: a social philosophy that argued for a small property-owning democracy which would allocate ownership to as many people as possible, as opposed to supporting the formation of large states, organizations, or corporations. Chesterton continued to actively promote Distributism for the rest of his life, and began in 1916 to edit the magazine *New Witness*, which later became *G. K.'s Weekly*. In order to support this periodical, Chesterton wrote the Father Brown stories, which were first published in the *Saturday Evening Post.*

Chesterton is perhaps most popularly known as the author of the Father Brown detective series, which he wrote from the early 1900s into the 1930s. The stories were collected in *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911), *The Wisdom of Father Brown* (1914), *The Incredulity of Father Brown* (1926), *The Secret of Father Brown* (1927), and *The Scandal of Father Brown* (1935). Chesterton loosely based the title character upon his friend, Roman Catholic priest John O'Connor. O'Connor conveyed to Chesterton the variety of iniquity and perversity confided to him in the confessional. The contrast between the priest's humble demeanor, his knowledge of earthly evil, and his willingness to explore his own soul for the roots of sin within himself, all had a profound influence on Chesterton, and it was those qualities with which he endowed his Father Brown character. When Father Brown is asked by an apprehended criminal whether he is, in fact, the devil himself he responds accordingly: “I am a man and therefore have all devils in my heart.” Throughout his writings, Chesterton consistently strove to instruct his readers. In addition to being an artist, he was committed to influencing the philosophies of his contemporaries. All of his works contain some element of paradox, parable, or allegory to illustrate essential spiritual truths. In Chesterton's essay “A Defense of Nonsense,” he explicated upon his chief purpose in writing: “Nonsense and faith (strange as the conjunction may seem) are the two supreme symbolic assertions of the truth that to draw out the soul of things with a syllogism is as impossible as to draw out Leviathan with a hook.” Although he did not actually convert to Catholicism until 1922, Chesterton expounded the teachings of the Church, as well as his philosophical leanings, for years prior to his conversion. The unique aspect of the Father Brown stories which separates them from uniform, detective genre tales is the character's reliance on determining the motive for a crime, and thereby that of the perpetrator. The stories involve a delving into the criminal psyche in order to understand why the crime has been committed, and in the process to gain a greater understanding of the human condition itself.

The style of Chesterton's Father Brown stories frustrates some critics, who find them lacking in the informative details which normally provide clues to the reader for solving the crime along with the protagonist. But others perceive Chesterton's tales as artistic renderings of a *mystical* school within the scope of the detective story. And for some this aspect gives the genre a literary “lift” that it does not commonly enjoy. For his body of work, Chesterton

is held to be among the eminent British men of letters of the early twentieth century. Although he did not take his Father Brown stories terribly seriously, they are often seen as innovations in detective fiction. In his other writings, Chesterton is frequently considered eccentric, mixing Christian—especially Catholic—theology with that of detective stories, novels, plays, essays, autobiographies, biographies, satiric fantasy, historical works, epics, poetry, and literary criticism.

Pleasures: an essay by Huxley

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

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

No, the dangers which confront our civilization are not so much the external dangers - wild men, wars and the bankruptcy that wars bring after them. The most alarming dangers are those which menace it from within, that threaten the mind rather than the body and estate of contemporary man.
Of an the various poisons which modern civilization, by a process of auto-intoxication, brews quietly up within its own bowels, few, it seems to me, are more deadly (while none appears more harmless) than that curious and appalling thing that is technically known as "pleasure". "Pleasure" (I place the word between inverted commas to show that I mean, not real pleasure, but the organized activities officially known by the same name) "pleasure" what nightmare visions the word evokes! Like every man of sense and good feeling, I abominate work. But I would rather put in eight hours a day at a Government office than be condemned to lead a life of "pleasure"; I would even, I believe, prefer to write a million words of journalism a year.

The horrors of modern "pleasure" arise from the fact that every kind of organized distraction tends to become progressively more and more imbecile. There was a time when people indulged themselves with distractions requiring the expense of a certain intellectual effort. In the seventeenth century, for example, royal personages and their courtiers took a

real delight in listening to erudite sermons (Dr. Donne's, for example) and academical disputes on points of theology or metaphysics. Part of the entertainment offered to the Prince Palatine, on the occasion of his marriage with James I's daughter, was a syllogistic argumentation, on I forget what philosophical theme, between the amiable Lord Keeper Williams and a troop of minor Cambridge logicians. Imagine the feelings of a contemporary prince, if a loyal University were to offer him a similar entertainment!

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

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

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

And if they want literature, there is the Press. Nominally, it is true, the Press exists to impart information. But its real function is to provide, like the cinema, a distraction which shall occupy the mind without demanding of it the slightest effort or the fatigue of a single thought. This function, it must be admitted, it fulfils with an extraordinary success. It is possible to go on for years and years, reading two papers every working day and one on Sundays without ever once being called upon to think or to make any other effort than to

move the eyes, not very attentively, down the printed column.

Certain sections of the community still practise athletic sports in which individual participation is demanded. Great numbers of the middle and upper classes play golf and tennis in person and, if they are sufficiently rich, shoot birds and pursue the fox and go skiing in the Alps. But the vast mass of the community has now come even to sport vicariously, preferring the watching of football to the fatigues and dangers of the actual game. All classes, it is true, still dance; but dance, all the world over, the same steps to the same tunes. The dance has been scrupulously sterilized of any local or personal individuality.
These effortless pleasures, these ready-made distractions that are the same for everyone over the face of the whole Western world, are surely a worse menace to our civilization than ever the Germans were. The working hours of the day are already, for the great majority of human beings, occupied in the performance of purely mechanical tasks in which no mental effort, no individuality, no initiative are required. And now, in the hours of leisure, we turn to distractions as mechanically stereotyped and demanding as little intelligence and initiative as does our work.

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

The Kite- a story by Sommerset Maugham

Kites are a strong symbol in some nations, in dreams and in literature traditions. In all these uses, the positive symbolic meaning of kites represents variations of personal pride, independence, highest hope, accomplishment, freedom and expansion. The negative meaning is feeling out of control or at the mercy of surrounding conditions.

In Somerset Maugham's short story "The Kite," Herbert begins flying kites when he lives happily with his parents and feels free and as though he can accomplish things in life. One of his accomplishments is to marry. Herbert continues to have the same positive feelings

symbolized by his kite although his new wife has a different opinion and sees his kite as a childish diversion that needs to be released.

When they disagree about purchasing a new kite and she sends Herbert back to his parents, his wife breaks his kite, symbolizing the destruction of his freedom, independence and individual accomplishment. He refuses to pay alimony and therefore goes to prison because now the kite has reversed its symbolism and come to represent the negative meanings attached to it.

The kite now means being out of control of his own life (his wife controls him now) and being at the mercy of surrounding circumstances. Herbert goes to jail to protest this and to reestablish--one way or another--control of his own life (One will worry about that choice turning out not so well, but...). Maugham chose a kite to symbolize human relationships because a kite embodies some of the most important concerns in human relationships: freedom, independence, accomplishment, control and manipulation.

The main theme in this short story is - as I see it - family matters. Our most important main character, Herbert, is brought up in a very different way compared to the average child. He is, all through the story extremely close bound to his mother; only at the time where he lives with Betty, he is separated from her. But even when he is physically separated from her, he is still mentally dependent on her, in the way that he can't help to go and see her and his father at the common every Saturday. He either hates here ore loves her more than any other girl. It doesn't, take Herbert many seconds to decide to come and help his parents with their new kite, when he hears that they have found, another boy who can help them with their new kite.

In a figurative sense Herbert hasn't got his umbilical cord cut. A symbol for that might be the kite flying. If you are flying a kite, you must have contact with it all the time trough a line ore a string. So does Beatrice have contact with Herbert the entire time, Herbert can go and get married but in the end, he'll always come back to his mum. Another symbol might be the fact that as Herbert gets older his mother gradually starts buying bigger and more expensive kites. The reason for this is, of course, that she wants to keep him close by herself. This might sound quite normal, but the way she does it is not normal. Her only reason for doing it is to please herself, and keep Herbert from coming out and see what life really is.

I think that he is way too dependent on his mother, his age considered. However this is not Herbert's fault, but his mother's. You might see Herbert and his mother as a couple, where Herbert only has room for one girl at the time, first his mother, then Betty, and then his mother again. His mother on the other hand has room for two men in her life at the same time, Herbert and Samuel.

I have chosen to compare "The Kite" with tree other short stories and one movie. The short stories are "Clara's Day", "The Terrapin" and "A Chip In The Sugar". The movie is "American Beauty". They all have the same main theme, family matters. Particularly "A Chip In The Sugar" is comparable to "The Kite". In both stories the main character is a boy who is extremely dependent on his mother.

The Duchess and The Jeweller : a story by Virginia Woolfe

"The Duchess and the Jeweller" (1938) is a short story by Virginia Woolf. Woolf, being an advocate of addressing the "stream of consciousness," shows the thoughts and actions of a greedy jeweller; Woolf makes a thematic point that corrupt people do corrupt actions for purely selfish motives (and often without regret). It was first published in British *Harper's Bazaar* Magazine in April 1938 and subsequently published posthumously in 1944 in the collection *A Haunted House and Other Short Stories.*

Oliver Bacon is this story's protagonist. Once a poor boy in the streets of London, he has become the richest jeweller in England. As a young man, he sold stolen dogs to wealthy women and marketed cheap watches at a higher price. On a wall in his private room hangs a picture of his late mother. He frequently talks to her and reminisces, once chuckling at his past endeavors.

One day, Oliver enters into his private shop room, barely acknowledging his underlings, and awaits the arrival of the Duchess. When she arrives, he has her wait. In his room, under yellow gloves, he opens barred windows to get some air. Later, Oliver opens six steel safes, each containing endless riches of jewels.

The Duchess and the Jeweller are described as "... friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other..." On this particular day, the Duchess comes to Oliver to sell ten pearls, as she has lost substantial money to gambling. Mr. Bacon is skeptical of the pearl's authenticity, but the Duchess manipulates him into buying them for twenty thousand pounds. When the Duchess invites him to an event that includes a cast of royalty and her daughter Diana, Oliver is persuaded to write a cheque.

In the end, the pearls are found to be fakes, and Oliver looks at his mother's portrait, questioning his actions. However, what Oliver truly bought was not actually the pearls: it was Diana.

The Basement Room- a story by Graham Greene

Left by his parents in the care of their butler and housekeeper, seven-year-old Philip Lane excitedly anticipates exploring the large Belgravia house while learning something about the adult world. Philip loves Baines, the butler, whose adventurous tales about Africa

entrance him, but he dislikes and fears Mrs. Baines, whose very presence terrifies him in the same way that the demons that people his nightmares do.

Once his parents leave the house on their holiday, Philip seeks out Baines in the basement room, entered through a green baize door that separates the family rooms from the servants' quarters. In the basement room, Philip's fear and dislike of Mrs. Baines are reaffirmed as he watches Baines efface himself in her presence. Philip begins to appreciate the conflicting claims of adulthood in a world he yearns for yet fears to enter. He begins to understand fear and coercion and to intuit the meaning of evil. He suspects that undiluted joy, his feeling for Baines, can be threatened by the very presence of those such as Mrs. Baines.

Philip asks Baines to take him for a walk, but Mrs. Baines interferes. The boy escapes alone into the world beyond the Belgravia mansion rather than witness their disharmony. Too timid to venture far, he begins to retrace his steps. In a tea shop he sees Baines, not the cowering individual he recently left but a concerned and affable lover pressing jars of discarded cosmetics, rescued and then rejected by Mrs. Baines from the upstairs rooms in the process of housecleaning, on a young and unattractive girl. Philip thinks that it would be amusing to intrude on.

The action is presented by an omniscient narrator as he presents the events that inhibit the boy from fulfilling himself in the sixty years he lives following the traumatizing experience that constitutes the story's main action. The narrative shifts from an acute and psychologically perceptive account of the boy's refusal to accept Baines's appeal to keep yet another secret, to a view of the dying man who has managed, at best, a life of dilettantism. The contracting and expanding focus allows the reader to appreciate the traumatizing incident and to realize its results on the character of the man that the boy becomes.

The story can also be read as an exercise in meaningful symbolism. The house in Jungian terms can loosely be seen as the integrated personality. The green baize door through which the boy passes to the basement room serves as a Freudian device to distinguish between the conscious and the subconscious, while the sweet cake and the Meccano set with which he never plays function as comments on the nature of existence. The experience of betrayal denies Philip both the sweetness of life and the ability to create. The city beyond the house can be interpreted as the region outside the self, where good and evil exist in mutual tolerance of each other. Outside the house, Philip agrees to keep Baines's secret. Mrs. Baines, however, invades his psyche and catalyzes in the boy a fear of life. Insofar as Philip becomes Mrs. Baines's accomplice by failing to tell Baines that he has inadvertently betrayed their secret, he is in complicity with evil; later, he suffers the death of the heart when he refuses the responsibilities and consequences of an adulthood that he is unprepared to accept. Dream and nightmare, furthermore, afford a coherent imagery that emphasizes the power of evil. As such, the story serves as an epitome of favorite themes and preoccupations that characterize Graham Greene's fictional universe.

Perhaps the story's greatest accomplishment is the immediacy with which the traumatizing episodes are presented. The reader is convinced of the tale's psychological validity as he appreciates and acknowledges the nature of a betrayal that destroys innocence and dooms the individual to a life of waste and loss.

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The Vertical Ladder

As might be expected in a story of suspense in which even the protagonist is undefined except in the most general terms, theme is not prominent in this tale. Particularly noteworthy is the author's control over the reader's attention and the effective expression of psychological nuances in an emotionally packed situation.

The indeterminate ending creates a real cliff-hanger, leaving to the imagination of the reader what the outcome will be. Logic and a realistic mode suggest tragedy; it seems

unlikely that the protagonist is going to be rescued. Because those on the ground really know nothing of the actual plight of the climber and may assume, if they think at all, that he can return from the top by the stairway, their return is improbable.

One significant meaning that emerges from the story is that human beings are often, especially at this age, at the mercy of their impulses, with precious little attention to possible consequences. Many an uneasy parent will recognize this volatile combination of peer pressure, ego sensitivity, and inexperience that often leads to tragedy. The unique character of this exploit, different from usual misdemeanors of urban young people, lends a certain irony to the situation. Unlike pure pleasure-seekers, this young man assumes a pseudoheroic task that derives from a more archaic notion of valor: to climb the mountain and plant his lady's banner at the peak. Even the girl who starts the mean goading of the protagonist succumbs to the ancient meaning of chivalric action when she offers her handkerchief.

The story also emphasizes the existential isolation of each person in his or her private perception of experience. The climber has every reason to believe that no one knows the extremity of his distress. He is cut off both literally and spiritually from communication with his peers or anyone who might help or even sympathize with his predicament. If he lives through this experience, he will have learned a sobering truth about human destiny: The most stressful experiences of life are often the most solitary, and certainly every person does his or her own dying utterly alone.

Any story depending heavily on suspense, rather than on more leisurely sources of reader interest, requires a fast opening to engage the reader's attention and a swift closing after suspense has attained its peak. The climber's abandonment on the tower where he can neither ascend nor reach the ground again certainly provides the latter. William Sansom achieves the first requirement by jumping into the middle of the climb, then backtracking to explain the situation.As he felt the first watery eggs of sweat moistening the palms of his hands, as with every rung higher his body seemed to weigh more heavily, this young man Flegg regretted in sudden desperation but still in vain, the irresponsible events that had thrust him up into his present precarious climb.

This promise of excitement-to-come sustains the reader for the several paragraphs of preliminary events. These lend credibility to the situation, showing how it arises from the natural self-absorption, sexual rivalries, jealousies, and insecurities of young people everywhere. The brief reference to the protagonist's aspiring to "the glamour of a uniform" when he pretends to throw bricks with the special lobbing action of throwing hand grenades suggests a wartime milieu in which heroic action is even more a part of young male psychology.

Sansom is adept at describing how the appearance of an object changes radically from different perspectives. When Flegg first looks up from his position on the vertical ladder, the

effect is quite alien to the impression it gives even a few yards away from the tower. The precision of this passage is remarkable for both its visual accuracy and its psychological effect.