

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS  
General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Subsidiary Level and Advanced Level

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**9695/06**

Paper 6 20th Century Writing

May/June 2006

**2 hours**

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet/Paper

**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

If you have been given an Answer Booklet, follow the instructions on the front cover of the Booklet.  
Write your Centre number, candidate number and name on all the work you hand in.  
Write in dark blue or black pen.  
Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **two** questions.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

This document consists of **15** printed pages and **1** blank page.



EDWARD ALBEE : *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

- 1 **Either** (a) What do you think Nick and Honey contribute to the meaning and effects of the play?
- Or** (b) The following passage opens Act Three, 'The Exorcism'. Discuss the dramatic effects of Martha's soliloquy, showing what it suggests about her condition and her relationships.

[MARTHA enters, talking to herself.]

MARTHA: Hey, hey ... Where is everybody ...? [*It is evident she is not bothered.*] So? Drop me; pluck me like a goddamn ... whatever-it-is ... creeping vine, and throw me over your shoulder like an old shoe ... George? [*Looks about her.*] George? [*Silence.*] George! What are you doing: 5  
Hiding, or something? [*Silence.*] GEORGE!! [*Silence.*] Oh, fa Chri ...  
[*Goes to the bar, makes herself a drink and amuses herself with the following performance.*] Deserted! Abandon-ed! Left out in the cold like an old pussy-cat. HA! Can I get you a drink, Martha? Why, thank you, George; that's very kind of you. No, Martha, no; why I'd do anything 10  
for you. Would you, George? Why, I'd do anything for you, too. Would you, Martha? Why, certainly, George. Martha, I've misjudged you. And I've misjudged you, too, George. WHERE IS EVERYBODY!!! Hump the Hostess! [*Laughs greatly at this, falls into a chair; calms down, looks defeated, says, softly*] Fat chance. [*Even softer*] Fat chance. [*Baby-talk now.*] Daddy? Daddy? Martha is abandon-ed. Left to her own vices at ...  
[*Peers at a clock*] ... something o'clock in the old A.M. Daddy White-Mouse; do you really have red eyes? Do you? Let me see. Ohhhhh! You do! You do! Daddy, you have red eyes ... because you cry all the time, don't you, Daddy. Yes; you do. You cry alllll the time. I'LL GIVE 20  
ALL YOU BASTARDS FIVE TO COME OUT FROM WHERE YOU'RE HIDING!! [*Pause*] I cry all the time too, Daddy. I cry alllll the time; but deep inside, so no one can see me. I cry all the time. And Georgie cries all the time, too. We both cry all the time, and then, what we do, we cry, and we take our tears, and we put 'em in the ice box, in the goddamn 25  
ice trays [*Begins to laugh*] until they're all frozen [*Laughs even more*] and then ... we put them ... in our ... drinks. [*More laughter, which is something else, too. After sobering silence*] Up the drain, down the spout, dead, gone and forgotten. ... Up the spout, not down the spout, Up the spout: THE POKER NIGHT. Up the spout. ... [*Sadly*] I've got 30  
windshield wipers on my eyes, because I married you ... baby! ... Martha, you'll be a songwriter yet. [*Jiggles the ice in her glass.*] CLINK! [*Does it again.*] CLINK! [*Giggles, repeats it several times.*] CLINK! ... CLINK! ... CLINK! ... CLINK!

[*NICK enters while MARTHA is clinking; he stands in the hall entrance and watches her; finally he comes in.*] 35

NICK: My God, you've gone crazy too.

MARTHA: Clink?

NICK: I said, you've gone crazy too.

MARTHA [*considers it*]: Probably ... probably. 40

NICK: You've all gone crazy: I come downstairs, and what happens ...

MARTHA: What happens?

NICK: ... my wife's gone into the can with a liquor bottle, and she winks at me  
... winks at me! ...

MARTHA [*sadly*]: She's never wunk at you; what a shame ... 45

NICK: She is lying down on the floor again, the tiles, all curled up, and she  
starts peeling the label off the liquor bottle, the brandy bottle ...

MARTHA: ... we'll never get the deposit back that way ...

NICK: ... and I ask her what she's doing, and she goes: shhhhhh!, nobody  
knows I'm here; and I come back in here, and you're sitting there going 50  
Clink!, for God's sake. Clink!

Act 3

SAMUEL BECKETT : *Endgame*

- 2 **Either** (a) 'Nothing is funnier than unhappiness,' says Nell. How far and in what ways do you think this comment applies to *Endgame*?
- Or** (b) Discuss the dramatic effects of the following passage, considering the presentation of characters and their relationship here and in the play as a whole.

HAMM: Kiss me. [*Pause.*] Will you not kiss me?

CLOV: No.

HAMM: On the forehead.

CLOV: I won't kiss you anywhere.  
[*Pause.*]

HAMM [*holding out his hand*]: Give me your hand at least. [*Pause.*] Will you not give me your hand? 5

CLOV: I won't touch you.  
[*Pause.*]

HAMM: Give me the dog. [CLOV *looks round for the dog.*] No!

CLOV: Do you want your dog? 10

HAMM: No.

CLOV: Then I'll leave you.

HAMM [*head bowed, absently*]: That's right.  
[CLOV *goes to door, turns.*]

CLOV: If I don't kill that rat he'll die. 15

HAMM [*as before*]: That's right. [*Exit CLOV. Pause.*] Me to play. [*He takes out his handkerchief, unfolds it, holds it spread out before him.*] We're getting on. [*Pause.*] You weep, and weep, for nothing, so as not to laugh, and little by little ... you begin to grieve. [*He folds the handkerchief, puts it back in his pocket, raises his head.*] All those I might have helped. 20  
[*Pause.*] Helped! [*Pause.*] Saved. [*Pause.*] Saved! [*Pause.*] The place was crawling with them! [*Pause. Violently.*] Use your head, can't you, use your head, you're on earth, there's no cure for that! [*Pause.*] Get out of here and love one another! Lick your neighbour as yourself! [*Pause. Calmer.*] When it wasn't bread they wanted it was crumpets. [*Pause. Violently.*] Out of my sight and back to your petting parties! [*Pause.*] All that, all that! [*Pause.*] Not even a real dog! [*Calmer.*] The end is in the beginning and yet you go on. [*Pause.*] Perhaps I could go on with my story, end it and begin another. [*Pause.*] Perhaps I could throw myself out on the floor. [*He pushes himself painfully off his seat, falls back again.*] Dig my nails into the cracks and drag myself forward with my fingers. [*Pause.*] It will be the end and there I'll be, wondering what can have brought it on and wondering what can have ... [*he hesitates*] ... why it was so long coming. [*Pause.*] There I'll be, in the old refuge, alone against the silence and ... [*he hesitates*] ... the stillness. If I can hold my peace, and sit quiet, it will be all over with sound, and motion, all over and done with. [*Pause.*] I'll have called my father and I'll have called my ... [*he hesitates*] ... my son. And even twice, or three times, in case they shouldn't have heard me, the first time, or the second. [*Pause.*] I'll say to myself, He'll come back. [*Pause.*] And then? [*Pause.*] 35 40

And then? [*Pause.*] He couldn't, he has gone too far. [*Pause.*] And then? [*Pause. Very agitated.*] All kinds of fantasies! That I'm being watched! A rat! Steps! Breath held and then ... [*he breathes out*]. Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark. [*Pause.*] Moment upon moment, pattering down, like the millet grains of ... [*he hesitates*] ... that old Greek, and all life long you wait for that to mount up to a life. [*Pause. He opens his mouth to continue, renounces.*] Ah let's get it over! [*He whistles. Enter CLOV with alarm-clock. He halts beside the chair.*] What? Neither gone nor dead? 50

CLOV: In spirit only.

HAMM: Which?

CLOV: Both.

HAMM: Gone from me you'd be dead.

CLOV: And *vice versa*. 55

HAMM: Outside of here it's death! [*Pause.*] And the rat?

CLOV: He's got away.

HAMM: He can't go far. [*Pause. Anxious.*] Eh?

CLOV: He doesn't need to go far.

[*Pause.*] 60

HAMM: Is it not time for my pain-killer?

CLOV: Yes.

HAMM: Ah! At last! Give it to me! Quick!

[*Pause.*]

CLOV: There's no more pain-killer. 65

[*Pause.*]

LES MURRAY : *Selected Poems*

- 3 **Either** (a) One of Murray's characteristic concerns is said to be 'his love of the land and his sense of its spiritual value'. With reference to at least **three** poems, how important do you find this theme in Murray's work, and in what ways is it expressed?
- Or** (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering the ways in which Murray explores memories of childhood.

*The Smell of Coal Smoke*

John Brown, glowing far and down,  
 wartime Newcastle was a brown town,  
 handrolled cough and cardigan, rain on paving bricks,  
 big smoke to a four-year-old from the green sticks.  
 Train city, mother's city, coming on dark, 5  
 Japanese shell holes awesome in a park,  
 electric light and upstairs, encountered first that day,  
 sailors and funny ladies in Jerry's Fish Café.

It is always evening on those earliest trips,  
 raining through the tram wires where blue glare rips 10  
 across the gaze of wonderment and leaves thrilling tips.  
 The steelworks' vast roofed débris unrolling falls  
 of smoky stunning orange, its eye-hurting slump walls  
 mellow to lounge interiors, cut pile and curry-brown  
 with the Pears-Soap-smelling fire and a sense of ships 15  
 mourning to each other below in the town.

This was my mother's childhood and her difference,  
 her city-brisk relations who valued Sense  
 talking strike and colliery, engineering, fowls and war,  
 Brown's grit and miners breathing it, years before 20  
 as I sat near the fire, raptly touching coal,  
 its blockage, slick yet dusty, prisms massed and dense  
 in the iron scuttle, its hammered bulky roll  
 into the glaring grate to fracture and shoal,

its chips you couldn't draw with on the cement 25  
 made it a stone, tar crockery, different –  
 and I had three grandparents, while others had four:  
 where was my mother's father, never called Poor?  
 In his tie and his Vauxhall that had a boat bow  
 driving up the Coalfields, but where was he now? 30  
 Coal smoke as much as gum trees now had a tight scent  
 to summon deep brown evenings of the Japanese war,

to conjure gaslit pub yards, their razory frisson  
 and sense my dead grandfather, the Grafton Cornishman  
 rising through the night schools by the pressure of his chest 35  
 as his lungs creaked like mahogany with the grains of John Brown.  
 His city, mother's city, at its starriest  
 as swearing men with doctors' bags streamed by towards the docks  
 past the smoke-frothing wooden train that would take us home soon  
 with our day-old Henholme chickens peeping in their box. 40

- 4 **Either** (a) 'Raju is transformed from a sinner to a saint, though he is never truly a sinner, and never truly a saint.'  
How far would you agree with this view of Raju's development in the novel?
- Or** (b) Discuss the effects of the writing in the following passage, showing how it contributes to your impression of Raju and Rosie/Nalini and the relationship between them.

She thought of every detail, and dreamed of it night and day. Her immediate need would be a party of drummers and musicians to assist her morning practice. When she was ready to appear before the public, she would tell me and then I could fix her public engagements. I felt rather baffled by her fervor. I wished I could keep pace at least with her idiom. I felt that I ought immediately to pick up and cultivate the necessary jargon. I felt silly to be watching her and listening to her, absolutely tongue-tied. There were, of course, two ways open: to bluff one's way through and trust to luck, or to make a clean breast of it all. I listened to her talk for two days and finally confessed to her, "I am a layman, not knowing much of the technicalities of the dance; I'd like you to teach me something of it." 5

I didn't want her to interpret it as an aversion on my part to the art. That might drive her back into the arms of her husband, and so I took care to maintain the emphasis on my passion for the art. It gave us a fresh intimacy. This common interest brought us close together. Wherever we were she kept talking to me on the various subtleties of the art, its technicalities, and explaining as to a child its idioms. She seemed to notice our surroundings less and less. In Gaffur's car as we sat she said, "You know what a *pallavi* is? The time scheme is all-important in it. It does not always run in the simple style of one-two, one-two; it gets various odds thrown in, and at a different tempo." She uttered its syllables, "Ta-ka-ta-ki-ta, Ta-ka." It amused me. "You know, to get the footwork right within those five or seven beats requires real practice, and when the tempo is varied ..." This was something that Gaffur could safely overhear, as we went up the hill, as we came out of a shop, as we sat in a cinema. While seeing a picture, she would suddenly exclaim, "My uncle has with him a very old song written on a palm leaf. No one has seen it. My mother was the only person in the whole country who knew the song and could dance to it. I'll get that song too from my uncle. I'll show you how it goes. Shall we go back to our room? I don't want to see more of this picture. It looks silly." 10 15 20

We immediately adjourned to Room 28, where she asked me to remain seated, and went into the anteroom and came back with her dress tucked in and tightened up for the performance. She said, "I'll show you how it goes. Of course, I'm not doing it under the best of conditions. I need at least a drummer. ... Move off that chair, and sit on the bed. I want some space here." 25

She stood at one end of the hall and sang the song lightly, in a soft undertone, a song from an ancient Sanskrit composition of a lover and lass on the banks of Jamuna; and it began with such a verve, when she lightly raised her foot and let it down, allowing her anklets to jingle, I felt thrilled. Though I was an ignoramus, I felt moved by the movements, rhythm, and time, although I did not quite follow the meaning of the words. She stopped now and then to explain: "*Nari* means girl – and *mani* is a jewel. ... The whole line means: 'It is impossible for me to bear this burden of love you have cast on me.'" She panted while she explained. There were beads of perspiration on her forehead and lip. She danced a few steps, paused for a moment, and explained, "Lover means always God," and she took the trouble to explain further to me the intricacies of its rhythm. The floor resounded with the stamping of her feet. I felt nervous that those on the floor below might ask us to stop, but she never cared, never bothered about anything. I could see, through her effort, the magnificence of the composition, its symbolism, the boyhood of a very young god, and his fulfillment in marriage, the passage of years from youth to decay, but the heart remaining ever fresh like a lotus on a pond. When she indicated the lotus with her fingers, you could almost hear the ripple of water around it. She held the performance for nearly an hour; it filled me with the greatest pleasure on earth. I could honestly declare that, while I watched her perform, my mind was free, for once, from all carnal thoughts; I viewed her as a pure abstraction. She could make me forget my surroundings. I sat with open-mouthed wonder watching her. Suddenly she stopped and flung her whole weight on me with "What a darling. You are giving me a new lease on life." 30 35 40 45

HAROLD PINTER : *The Caretaker*

5 **Either (a)** 'But you don't understand my meaning!' Davies says at the end of the play. How far and in what ways do you think the difficulty of communication is the central concern of this play?

**Or (b)** Discuss the dramatic effects of this passage, considering how effectively it brings the play to a conclusion.

DAVIES: I got out and ... half way down I ... I suddenly ... found out ... you see ... that I hadn't got my pipe. So I come back to get it ...

[Pause. He moves to ASTON.]

That ain't the same plug, is it, you been ...?

[Pause.]

5

Still can't get anywhere with it, eh?

[Pause.]

Well, if you ... persevere, in my opinion, you'll probably ...

[Pause.]

Listen ...

10

[Pause.]

You didn't mean that, did you, about me stinking, did you?

[Pause.]

Did you? You been a good friend to me. You took me in. You took me in, you didn't ask me no questions, you give me a bed, you been a mate to me. Listen. I been thinking, why I made all them noises, it was because of the draught, see, that draught was on me as I was sleeping, made me make noises without knowing it, so I been thinking, what I mean to say, if you was to give me your bed, and you have my bed, there's not all that difference between them, they're the same sort of bed, if I was to have yourn, you sleep, wherever bed you're in, so you have mine, I have yourn, and that'll be all right, I'll be out of the draught, see, I mean, you don't mind a bit of wind, you need a bit of air, I can understand that, you being in that place that time, with all them doctors and all they done, closed up, I know them places, too hot, you see, they're always too hot, I had a peep in one once, nearly suffocated me, so I reckon that'd be the best way out of it, we swap beds, and then we could get down to what we was saying, I'd look after the place for you, I'd keep an eye on it for you, for you, like, not for the other ... not for ... for your brother, you see, not for him, for you, I'll be your man, you say the word, just say the word ...

15

20

25

30

[Pause.]

What do you think of this I'm saying?

[Pause.]

ASTON: No, I like sleeping in this bed.

DAVIES: But you don't understand my meaning!

35

ASTON: Anyway, that one's my brother's bed.

DAVIES: Your brother?

ASTON: Any time he stays here. This is my bed. It's the only bed I can sleep in.

DAVIES: But your brother's gone! He's gone!

[Pause.]

40



- ASTON: No. I couldn't change beds.
- DAVIES: But you don't understand my meaning!
- ASTON: Anyway, I'm going to be busy. I've got that shed to get up. If I don't get it up now it'll never go up. Until it's up I can't get started.
- DAVIES: I'll give you a hand to put up your shed, that's what I'll do! 45  
 [Pause.]  
 I'll give you a hand! We'll both put up that shed together! See? Get it done in next to no time! Do you see what I'm saying?  
 [Pause.]
- ASTON: No. I can get it up myself. 50
- DAVIES: But listen. I'm with you, I'll be here, I'll do it for you!  
 [Pause.]  
 We'll do it together!  
 [Pause.]  
 Christ, we'll change beds! 55  
 [ASTON moves to the window and stands with his back to DAVIES.]  
 You mean you're throwing me out? You can't do that. Listen man, listen man, I don't mind, you see, I don't mind, I'll stay, I don't mind, I'll tell you what, if you don't want to change beds, we'll keep it as it is, I'll stay in the same bed, maybe if I can get a stronger piece of sacking, like, to 60  
 go over the window, keep out the draught, that'll do it, what do you say, we'll keep it as it is?  
 [Pause.]
- ASTON: No.
- DAVIES: Why ... not? 65  
 [ASTON turns to look at him.]
- ASTON: You make too much noise.
- DAVIES: But ... but ... look ... listen ... listen here ... I mean ...  
 [ASTON turns back to the window.]  
 What am I going to do? 70  
 [Pause.]  
 What shall I do?  
 [Pause.]  
 Where am I going to go?  
 [Pause.] 75  
 If you want me to go ... I'll go. You just say the word.  
 [Pause.]  
 I'll tell you what though ... them shoes ... them shoes you give me ... they're working out all right ... they're all right. Maybe I could ... get down ...  
 [ASTON remains still, his back to him, at the window.] 80  
 Listen ... if I ... got down ... if I was to ... get my papers ... would you ... would you let ... would you ... if I got down ... and got my ...  
 [Long silence.]  
 [Curtain.]

Act 3

JEAN RHYS : *Wide Sargasso Sea*

- 6 **Either** (a) 'Read and write I don't know,' Christophine tells Rochester. 'Other things I know.' Discuss the role and significance of Christophine, in your reading of the novel.
- Or** (b) Discuss the effects of the writing in the following extract, considering what it suggests about the relationship between the two central characters, at this moment and in the novel as a whole.

The dining-room was brilliantly lit. Candles on the table, a row on the sideboard, three-branch candlesticks on the old sea-chest. The two doors on to the veranda stood open but there was no wind. The flames burned straight. She was sitting on the sofa and I wondered why I had never realized how beautiful she was. Her hair was combed away from her face and fell smoothly far below her waist. I could see the red and gold lights in it. She seemed pleased when I complimented her on her dress and told me she had it made in St Pierre, Martinique. 'They call this fashion *à la Joséphine*.' 5

'You talk of St Pierre as though it were Paris,' I said.

'But it is the Paris of the West Indies.' 10

There were trailing pink flowers on the table and the name echoed pleasantly in my head. Coralita Coralita. The food, though too highly seasoned, was lighter and more appetizing than anything I had tasted in Jamaica. We drank champagne. A great many moths and beetles found their way into the room, flew into the candles and fell dead on the tablecloth. Amélie swept them up with a crumb brush. Uselessly. More moths and beetles came. 15

'Is it true,' she said, 'that England is like a dream? Because one of my friends who married an Englishman wrote and told me so. She said this place London is like a cold dark dream sometimes. I want to wake up.'

'Well,' I answered annoyed, 'that is precisely how your beautiful island seems to me, quite unreal and like a dream.' 20

'But how can rivers and mountains and the sea be unreal?'

'And how can millions of people, their houses and their streets be unreal?'

'More easily,' she said, 'much more easily. Yes a big city must be like a dream.'

'No, this is unreal and like a dream,' I thought. 25

The long veranda was furnished with canvas chairs, two hammocks, and a wooden table on which stood a tripod telescope. Amélie brought out candles with glass shades but the night swallowed up the feeble light. There was a very strong scent of flowers – the flowers by the river that open at night she told me – and the noise, subdued in the inner room, was deafening. 'Crac-cracs,' she explained, 'they make a sound like their name, and crickets and frogs.' 30

I leaned on the railing and saw hundreds of fireflies – 'Ah yes, fireflies in Jamaica, here they call a firefly *La belle*.'

A large moth, so large that I thought it was a bird, blundered into one of the candles, put it out and fell to the floor. 'He's a big fellow,' I said. 35

'Is it badly burned?'

'More stunned than hurt.'

I took the beautiful creature up in my handkerchief and put it on the railing. For a moment it was still and by the dim candlelight I could see the soft brilliant colours, the intricate pattern on the wings. I shook the handkerchief gently and it flew away. 40

'I hope that gay gentleman will be safe,' I said.

Part Two

DEREK WALCOTT : *Selected Poetry*

- 7 **Either** (a) 'The past that Walcott explores in his poetry is both historical and personal.' With this comment in mind, discuss ways in which Walcott explores the past. In your answer you should refer closely to at least **three** poems.
- Or** (b) Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering what it means 'to know there are homecomings without home'. How does the poem relate to other Walcott poems that you have read?

*Homecoming: Anse La Raye*

(for Garth St Omer)

Whatever else we learned  
 at school, like solemn Afro-Greeks eager for grades,  
 of Helen and the shades  
 of borrowed ancestors,  
 there are no rites 5  
 for those who have returned,  
 only, when her looms fade,  
 drilled in our skulls, the doom-  
 surge-haunted nights,  
 only this well-known passage 10  
 under the coconuts' salt-rusted  
 swords, these rotted  
 leathery sea-grapes leaves,  
 the seacrabs' brittle helmets, and  
 this barbecue of branches, like the ribs 15  
 of sacrificial oxen on scorched sand;  
 only this fish-gut reeking beach  
 whose spindly, sugar-headed children race  
 whose starved, pot-bellied children race  
 pelting up from the shadows 20  
 because your clothes,  
 your posture  
 seem a tourist's.  
 They swarm like flies  
 round your heart's sore. 25

Suffer them to come,  
 entering your needle's eye,  
 knowing whether they live or die,  
 what others make of life will pass them by  
 like that far silvery freighter 30  
 threading the horizon like a toy;  
 for once, like them,  
 you wanted no career  
 but this sheer light, this clear,  
 infinite, boring, paradisal sea, 35  
 but hoped it would mean something to declare  
 today, I am your poet, yours,  
 all this you knew,  
 but never guessed you'd come  
 to know there are homecomings without home. 40

You give them nothing.  
Their curses melt in air.  
The black cliffs scowl,  
the ocean sucks its teeth,  
like that dugout canoe 45  
a drifting petal fallen in a cup,  
with nothing but its image,  
you sway, reflecting nothing.  
The freighter's silvery ghost  
is gone, the children gone. 50  
Dazed by the sun  
you trudge back to the village  
past the white, salty esplanade  
under whose palms, dead  
fishermen move their draughts in shade, 55  
crossing, eating their islands,  
and one, with a politician's  
ignorant, sweet smile, nods,  
as if all fate  
swayed in his lifted hand. 60

VIRGINIA WOOLF : *Mrs Dalloway*

- 8 **Either** (a) Towards the end of the novel, Mrs Dalloway reflects: 'She felt somehow very much like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living.'  
In the light of this reflection, discuss the role and significance of Septimus Warren Smith in your reading of the novel.
- Or** (b) In the following passage, Mrs Dalloway's party is just beginning. Discuss the effects of the writing in the passage, considering what is suggested here about Mrs Dalloway's world and her relation to it.

There, they were going upstairs; that was the first to come, and now they would come faster and faster, so that Mrs Parkinson (hired for parties) would leave the hall door ajar, and the hall would be full of gentlemen waiting (they stood waiting, sleeking down their hair) while the ladies took their cloaks off in the room along the passage; where Mrs Barnet helped them, old Ellen Barnet, who had been with the family for forty years, and came every summer to help the ladies, and remembered mothers when they were girls, and though very unassuming did shake hands; said 'milady' very respectfully, yet had a humorous way with her, looking at the young ladies, and ever so tactfully helping Lady Lovejoy, who had some trouble with her underbodice. And they could not help feeling, Lady Lovejoy and Miss Alice, that some little privilege in the matter of brush and comb was awarded them having known Mrs Barnet – 'thirty years, milady,' Mrs Barnet supplied her. Young ladies did not use to rouge, said Lady Lovejoy, when they stayed at Bourton in the old days. And Miss Alice didn't need rouge, said Mrs Barnet, looking at her fondly. There Mrs Barnet would sit, in the cloakroom, patting down the furs, smoothing out the Spanish shawls, tidying the dressing-table, and knowing perfectly well, in spite of the furs and the embroideries, which were nice ladies, which were not. The dear old body, said Lady Lovejoy, mounting the stairs, Clarissa's old nurse. 5

And then Lady Lovejoy stiffened. 'Lady and Miss Lovejoy,' she said to Mr Wilkins (hired for parties). He had an admirable manner, as he bent and straightened himself, bent and straightened himself and announced with perfect impartiality 'Lady and Miss Lovejoy ... Sir John and Lady Needham ... Miss Weld ... Mr Walsh'. His manner was admirable; his family life must be irreproachable, except that it seemed impossible that a being with greenish lips and shaven cheeks could ever have blundered into the nuisance of children. 20

'How delightful to see you!' said Clarissa. She said it to everyone. How delightful to see you! She was at her worst – effusive, insincere. It was a great mistake to have come. He should have stayed at home and read his book, thought Peter Walsh; should have gone to a music hall; he should have stayed at home, for he knew no one. 25

Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure, Clarissa felt it in her bones as dear old Lord Lexham stood there apologizing for his wife who had caught cold at the Buckingham Palace garden party. She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticizing her, there, in that corner. Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders! Better anything, better brandish one's torch and hurl it to earth than taper and dwindle away like some Ellie Henderson! It was extraordinary how Peter put her into these states just by coming and standing in a corner. He made her see herself; exaggerate. It was idiotic. But why did he come, then, merely to criticize? Why always take, never give? Why not risk one's one little point of view? There he was wandering off, and she must speak to him. But she would not get the chance. 30

Life was that – humiliation, renunciation. What Lord Lexham was saying was that his wife would not wear her furs at the garden party because ‘my dear, you ladies are all alike’ – Lady Lexham being seventy-five at least! It was delicious, how they petted each other, that old couple. She did like old Lord Lexham. She did think it mattered, her party, and it made her feel quite sick to know that it was all going wrong, all falling flat. Anything, any explosion, any horror was better than people wandering aimlessly, standing in a bunch at a corner like Ellie Henderson, not even caring to hold themselves upright. 45

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