

**ENG 333: English Literature II**

**Born: Fall 2001**

**Final Exam: Take-home essay (due by 5pm, December 14)**

## Back to God

*On a yacht in the Mediterranean Sea Lily Briscoe has gathered together some people from all over the world for dinner to share their experience and visions with her. Except her, three other men and one woman sit on the table. On the left side we find the Whiskey priest and a father. Marlow and Miss Adela Quested take the right side. Lily herself sits at the top of the dinner table. The atmosphere is firstly dominated by silence. The characters obviously do not share any experience or vision - until Lily takes the initiative.*

Lily: What does it mean? How do you explain it all?

Adela: Explain what? Tell me please, I'd like to understand it, too.

Lily: I mean, what is the meaning of life?

Marlow: The meaning of life...! By Jove, just try to live it! Pursue your ideals! The meaning is you!

Father: In my life, that includes to take care of those I love? To protect them, to pray for them - that makes me feel a good man.

Priest: It is not only praying that makes you being a good man. It is...

Adela: You are right. I met people in India who try to live their religion. However, I have not quite understood Indian life - although I tried hard. Maybe you could help me?

Marlow: Help with what? Understanding Indian life? How can somebody explain Indian life to you who has not been there?

Lily: Maybe by having a vision? Did you never have one?

Marlow: Of course I had, but based on true life.

Adela: Did it help you understand?

Marlow: By Jove, yes! It made me recognize how to become a remarkable person.

Priest: Remarkably good or remarkably bad?

Father: Why do you ask this? You are a priest. And nevertheless, it sounds like if you wouldn't believe in Goodness of mankind. However, you still can always pray for people - that is what I do.

Adela: For whom do you pray? And how?

Father: For my daughter. I usually walk and pray for an hour for this young child.

Priest: That's not possible for me.

Adela: Not possible? You are a priest and cannot pray for other people. I don't understand that. How can that be. What's the matter about your religion?

Priest: That's not a matter of a certain religion. That's a matter of sin. If you yourself a dominated by your own sins you aren't able to pray for others.

Father: Why don't you confess and get rid of your sins? God always forgives.

Priest: How do you know? How can you talk about God? Because you pray for your daughter? Are you sure you got rid of your sins just by confessing? Or are they still there, somewhere deep inside? - A simple confession wouldn't help me. I decided to become a priest and to fulfill my duties as one. But all I really did was

not to fulfill my duties. I am drunkard, I have lain with a woman, I even have a child. How can I speak to God, how pray for other people when my soul is full of sin?

Lily: But what makes you hold on your faith when you not even believe in yourself and that what you do? You still live for your faith, for God - for your vision. Maybe God has forgiven you for a long time...

Father: Yes, God forgives. I believe in that. I believe he is there to make people happy, to make our dreams come true. Even your soul can recover radical innocence.

Marlow: Radical innocence? My life taught me, nobody is innocent, but everybody has something in himself that makes him special, admirable, remarkable - it can be anything. Your life, your career, your ideas, your faith, your intentions...! By Jove! Everyone is special, some more, some less - but still special, a remarkable person.

Father: No, no! I'll explain you what I mean. Look, for instance, at the priest: He is full of self-hatred. I think, that is his most terrible sin. It makes him unable to pray, because this hatred kills his courage to ask God for anything.

Adela: And getting rid of this hatred would be his radical innocence?

Father: That is what I think.

Adela: Do you think that applies to everyone? Because my soul is burdened, too.

Father: As God is not only focused on single human beings, but on humanity at all - yes.

Don't hate yourself for a mistake you made. Show Him that you regret.

Marlow: To me it seems as if you were the priest. Why don't you defend your position, priest? Is your mind so sinful that a simple father tells you how to live your faith? Show me that you are as remarkable as he is, as we all are.

Priest: To try this, I'd need a brandy. Only alcohol can make me get away from all my misery. Is that the kind of priest you would listen to or ask to pray for you?

Marlow: That is not the point. Your self-pity and the lack of trust in yourself obstruct the practice of your faith. Be a rebel, a rebel against yourself. I saw enemies, criminals, worker - and these were rebels. Why can't you be one then?

Lily: Yes, have a vision, or at least believe in it. It helps you finding back to your way of life. See your life as a painting that has a black line in its middle. Try to fit it in your painting by adding new, colored, and thus expressive parts. The painting has not failed, because of one line that might not fit in it. And so is your life.

Adela: You mean, his mistakes, his sins belong to his life?

Father: ...as God wanted it to be!

Lily: That was what I tried to say. What do you think now, priest?

Priest: I had my vision. It is long ago and it dealt with becoming a good priest. How many visions can one human being have? How many does God allow? I believe in Him, but can't see Him. What kind of priest am I that I am not able to see Him?

Adela: I saw Hindus in India who visualized their Gods by building figures and celebrating them in processions. Isn't that possible for you?

Marlow: Nonsense! This priest is lost in his own soul. He had immense plans, he was on the threshold of great things. But he thinks he has done more harm than good to

his God. But haven't you also lived among savages, being hunted by the police and still trying to do your job? You risked your life for other people - for God!

Priest: I ran away! Away from my duties, my faith and thus away from God! And finally I resigned, not even able to save myself! I wanted to pay for my sins! And here I am, still living in despair. Indeed I have done more harm than good to my God. The next brandy is more important to me than the next Mass, the next confession or the next christening. The life I risked was my own, of course, but I didn't do it for anyone. I did it to survive!

Lily: But doesn't that imply your vision of God, of faith? God had all planned it. He is there. He is the key to the completion of your painting. You think, your unity with God might be broken if you give yourself a second chance. But try it. Try to connect everything. Try to connect the black line with other ones. Maybe this black line itself is only the connection for parts of your life. You are your own artist.

Father: Exactly! That's a way your soul can recover radical innocence. It can still learn at last that it is self-delighting, self appeasing, self-affrighting, and that its own sweet will is Heaven's will!

Priest: You mean, God has not yet condemned me? And my life is not worthless at all?

Marlow: As long as you don't give up yourself - and thus God - He will be with you.

Your profession, your fate is to live and to die with God. To have a vision of Him in life and in death. Help other people to share this vision. If you have something

to say about God in your life, say it. That will make you a remarkable man and people will become aware of God through your character.

Priest: But how can I be a good priest, a good medium of God when even all of you can give me advice for a better fulfillment of my duties? There are too many questions to be answered - and I alone can't find these answers. Where is God then in these moments, where is he to support me? Shouldn't he be there to stand by me? I am just not able to see His beauty! But instead I can recognize the beauty Satan carried down when he fell. I actually want to drink at this moment more than anything, more than to find again my way back to God. Isn't that another sin?

Adela: I think you must be a really bad priest when you rather see Satan than God. You are lost. I condemn you - on behalf of Him, too.

Priest: And you are so right to hate me. But try not to be angry. Pray for me instead, for my lost soul.

Adela: You are not worth praying any more. The sooner you are dead the better.

Lily: Do you think God would appreciate such speech? Don't you think he'd rather prefer those who recognize their sins, who don't blame or judge over other people?

Marlow: I agree. You, Miss Quested, have a heart of darkness, not the priest. His heart is sombre, but yours is so dark that it you dare to judge over other people in God's name. He priest is struggling with his burdened wall. Once, I couldn't understand such behavior either. If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I thought in those times. But meeting a remarkable man whose life and even more his death made me thoughtful. The priest wants justice - no more than justice.

Priest: That's right. This justice would include that I am punished for my sins. I fear, only death would be a relief and the only just punishment for me.

Father: But isn't it God's will and even his duty at least to guarantee mankind a peaceful death? Yours wouldn't be peaceful at all because you are not in peace with yourself and your soul. God will see your repentance of your sins and thus forgive you.

Priest: But I can't say that I wish my sin had never existed. I love the fruit of it. I love my child.

Lily: But nevertheless you consider it a sin, so you know you made a mistake. That is a way of repentance. Accept God's forgiveness, accept his will! And then be aware of a vision to fit the black line in your painting, to make your love complete again.

Priest: Maybe you are right. But what about Miss Quested? If God is able to forgive, shouldn't she be able as well? She has the right to condemn me.

Marlow: But not on behalf of God himself. Nobody has the right to do that. God will show her the right way. Accusations don't make the world a better place. Confessions and repentance do.

Lily: So why don't we start right here. Let us make our confessions to the priest. It will help us, it will help him.

Priest: I don't know why you do this for me. But I think God must be among us. I will hear your confessions. May God be with you!

Lily: Is anybody wanting to begin?

*[Silence.]*

Priest: Well, you shall then all be free from your sins.

Father: But how can you set us free from our sins although we haven't said anything.

Priest: I recognized you are all good people. You have confessed all your sins while you were encouraging me to find God again. Your examples gave me hope, your stories showed me that God is omnipresent. Nobody is guilty for life and everybody able to regret.

Adela: Even I?

Priest: Everybody. God is in all of us. Your behavior was just, was understandable. God knows that and will help you to find your way to be a good woman. I know, you are...!

Adela: So let me make my confessions!

Priest: Of course! I listen!

Adela: Father, I have brought God's name into disrepute. I have rashly accused a good man whose sins burdened his mind. I have thus mistrusted in humanity and the ability to regret. Now I see that everybody deserves God's forgiveness as soon as he regrets his sins. Please take this sin away from me and help me become a better woman that lives justly in this world. Amen.

Priest: You shall be free from your sins. Pray to God and praise him and he will help you with your prayers.

Adela: Thank you!

Marlow: By Jove! Priest, you have made your first step out of your heart of darkness. And so did you, Miss Quested.

Father: Your sins are forgiven. You even can enjoy the love to your child. God will  
always hear a prayer for your child.

Lily: Yes! You are now able to complete your painting. Draw a new line where you feel  
like. Have your vision. I have had my vision - the second time this evening. I am  
glad I could share it with all of you.

*[End.]*