A yellow starburst graphic with a black outline, containing the text 'OIB oral exam part 2'.

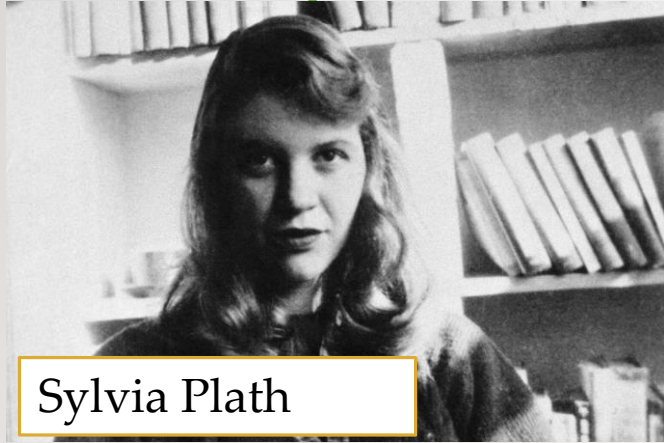
OIB oral
exam part 2

Post-War writing of the 1950's and 1960's

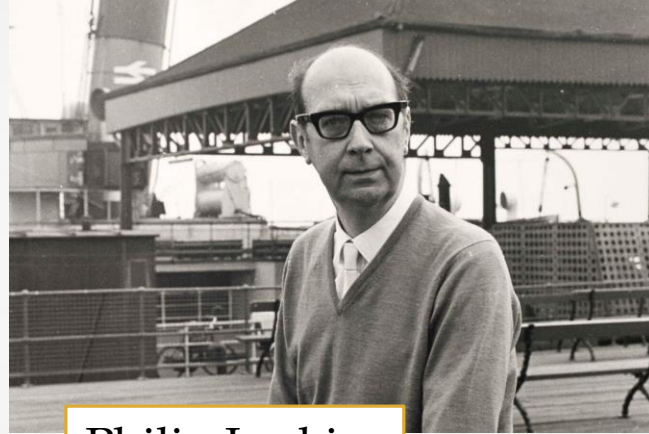
NEW SYNOPTIC TOPIC

IN 2020

Guess who...



Sylvia Plath



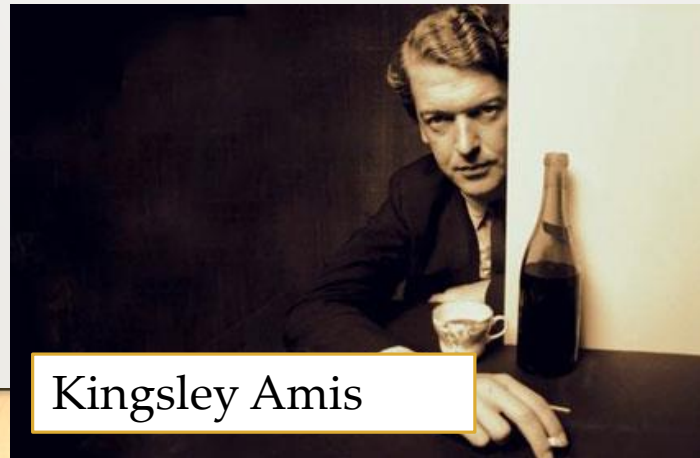
Philip Larkin



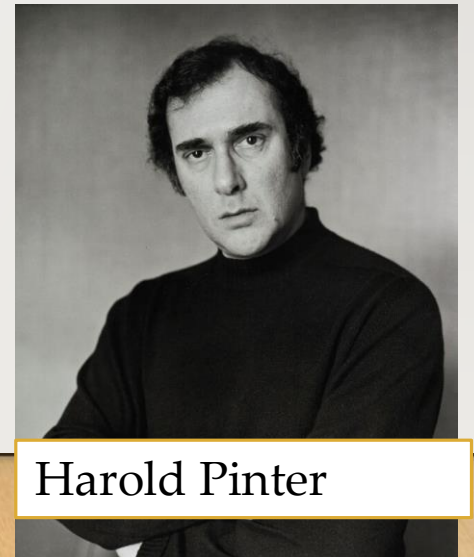
John Osborne



Jack Kerouac



Kingsley Amis



Harold Pinter

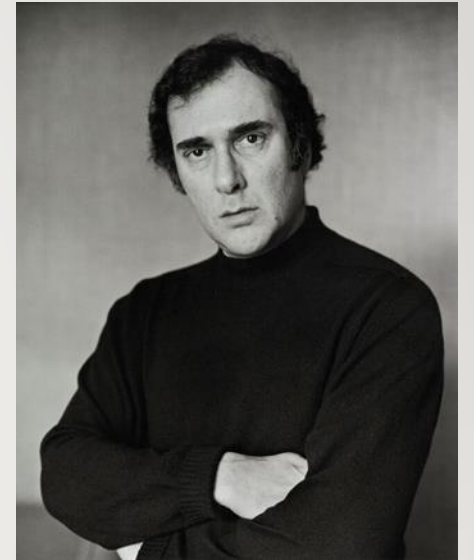


New synoptic topics 2020

- Taught from September 2018

Texts on the OIB syllabus (of which you will study 2 for the oral exam)

- Kingsley Amis: Lucky Jim (1954)
- John Osborne: Look Back in Anger (1956)
- **Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party (1956)**
- Jack Kerouac: On the Road (1957)
- Philip Larkin: The Whitsun Weddings (1964)
- **Sylvia Plath: Ariel (1965)**



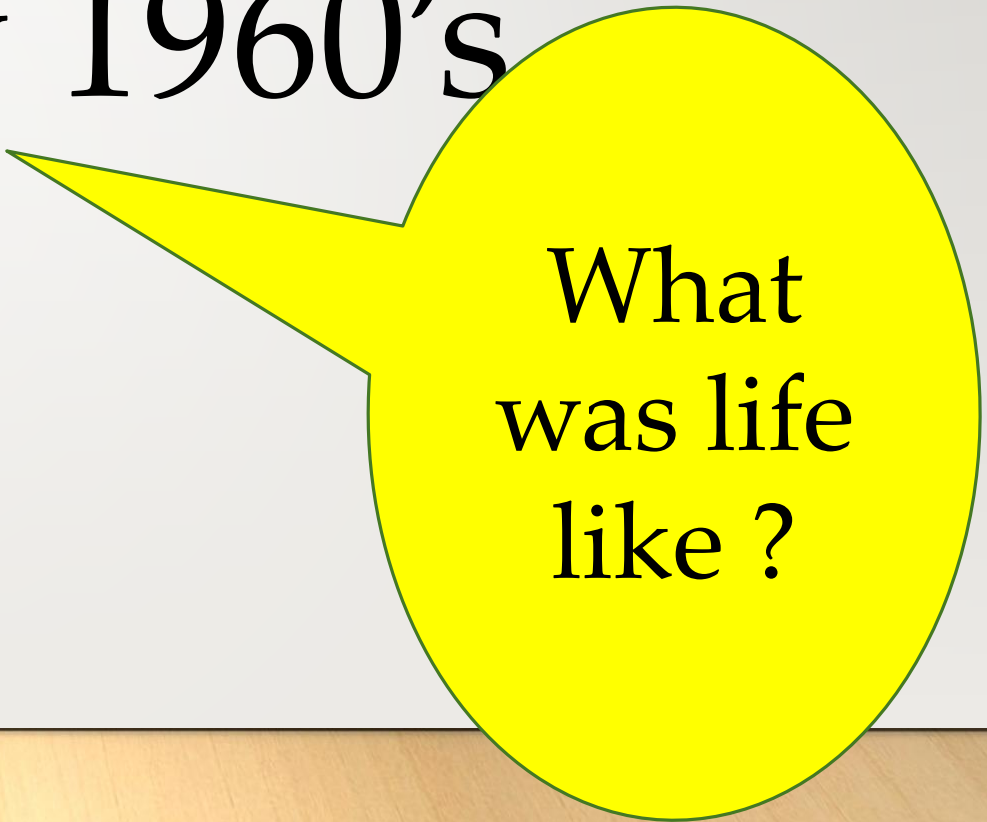
Synoptic Poems (*you will study **all** of these and be able to present them in 3 minutes*)

- Elizabeth Jennings: The Enemies (1955)
- Thom Gunn: On the Move (1957)
- Anne Sexton: Her Kind (1960)
- Ted Hughes: Wodwo (1967)
- Adrian Henri: Tonight at Noon (1967)
- Gary Snyder: A Curse on the Men in Washington, Pentagon (1968)



1950's- early 1960's

BRITAIN AND AMERICA POST WWII

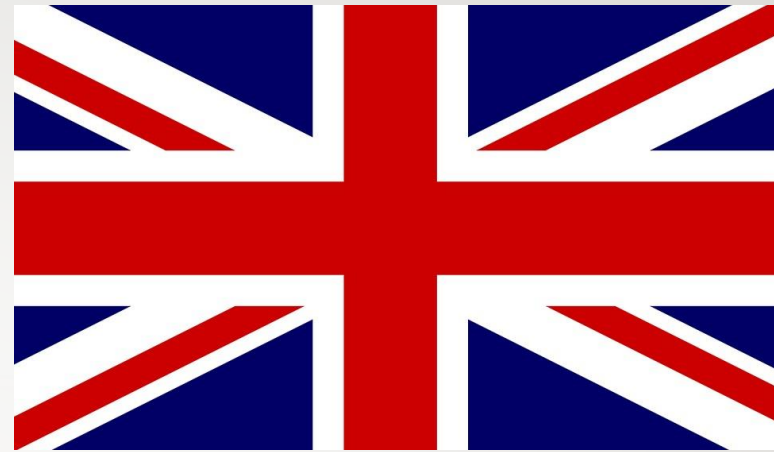


What
was life
like ?

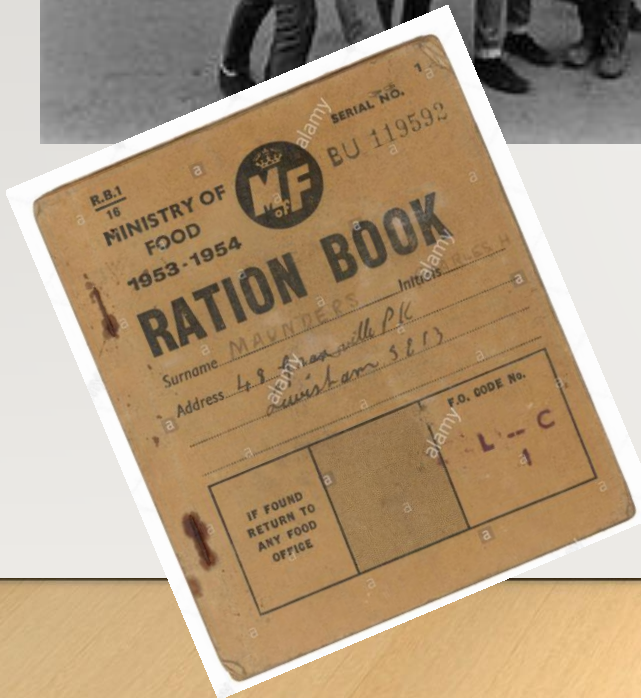
Political context

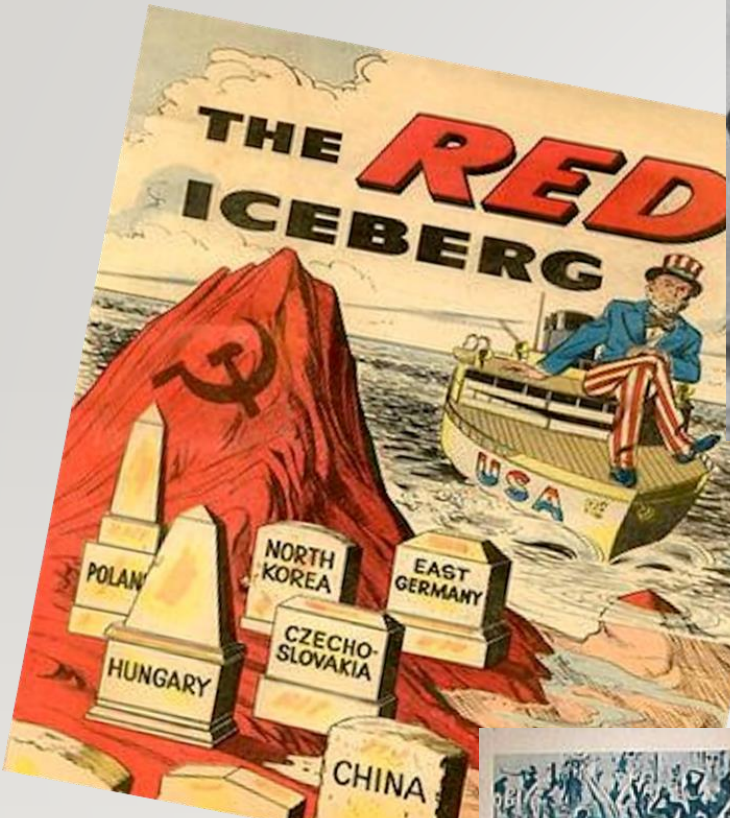


- Harry Truman '45-'53
- Dwight D Eisenhower '53-'61
- JF Kennedy '61-'63
- LB Johnson '63-'69



- Clement Atlee '45-'51
- Winston Churchill '51-'55
- Antony Eden '55-'57
- Harold MacMillan '57-'63
- Alec Douglas-Holme '63-'64
- Harold Wilson '64-'70





Overarching themes

- Uncertainty, powerlessness, alienation, disillusionment: angry young men (and women)
- Decline of British Empire and of Britain's influence in the world; growth of US power
- Cold War; fear of Soviet nuclear threat
- Desire for alternatives to past power structures and authorities; appeal of 'modernity'
- Growth of consumption as expression of identity
- Challenge to the established roles & identities for women
- Youth culture challenges the authority of older generations: arts, fashion and music as expressions of these ideas



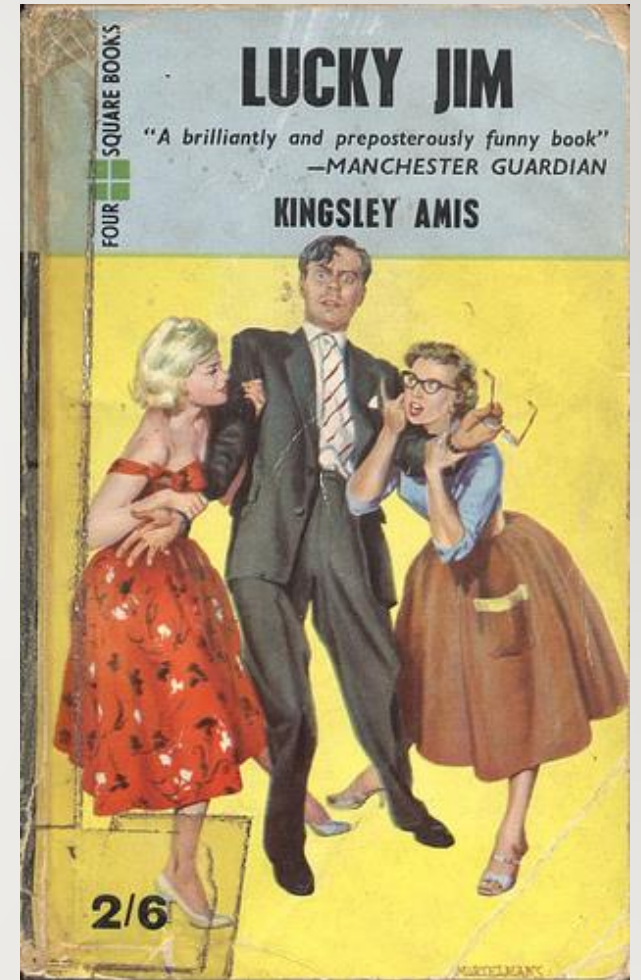
Literary trends

- A rejection of modernism, yet a desire for new forms – or new ways of using established forms
- ‘The movement’: traditional verse forms, daily life, everyday speech, the poetry of ‘eloquent ordinariness’
- The disillusioned writer: cynical, but still deeply moral

Kingsley Amis: Lucky Jim (1954)

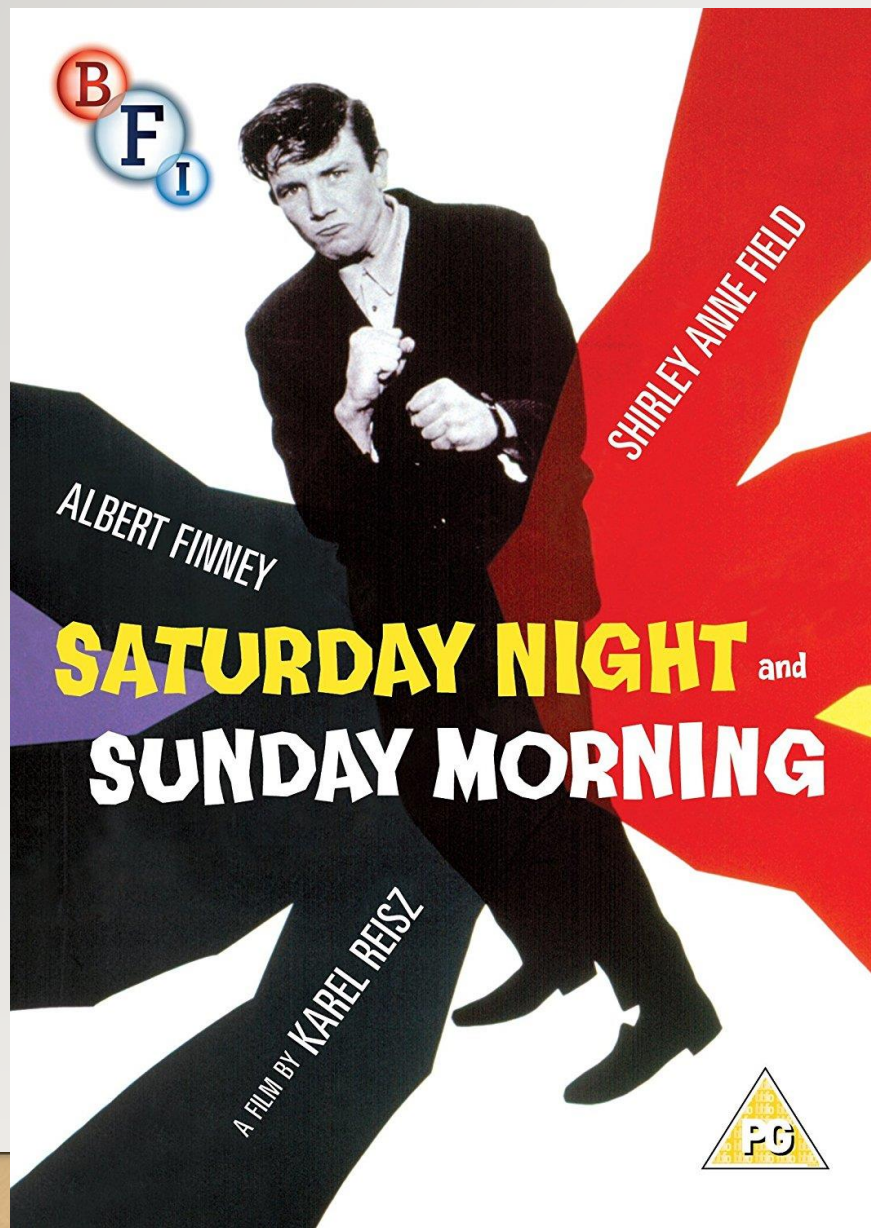
- Dedicated to Philip Larkin; central character, Jim Dixon, partly inspired by Larkin
- Heavily influenced by Larkin's editorial advice
- Disaffected characters in a provincial university after the war: boredom, unhappiness, depression, mediocrity
- Irritation at establishment, authorities and hypocrisy
- Anarchic nature of comedy
- 'A comic howl of hatred...in the grand tradition of English satire' - Olivia Laing
- Amis: a communist turning towards conservatism – anger in two opposite directions
- Despite the detachment, a profound sense of morality:

'And now he needed another dose of luck. If it came, he might yet prove to be of use to somebody.'



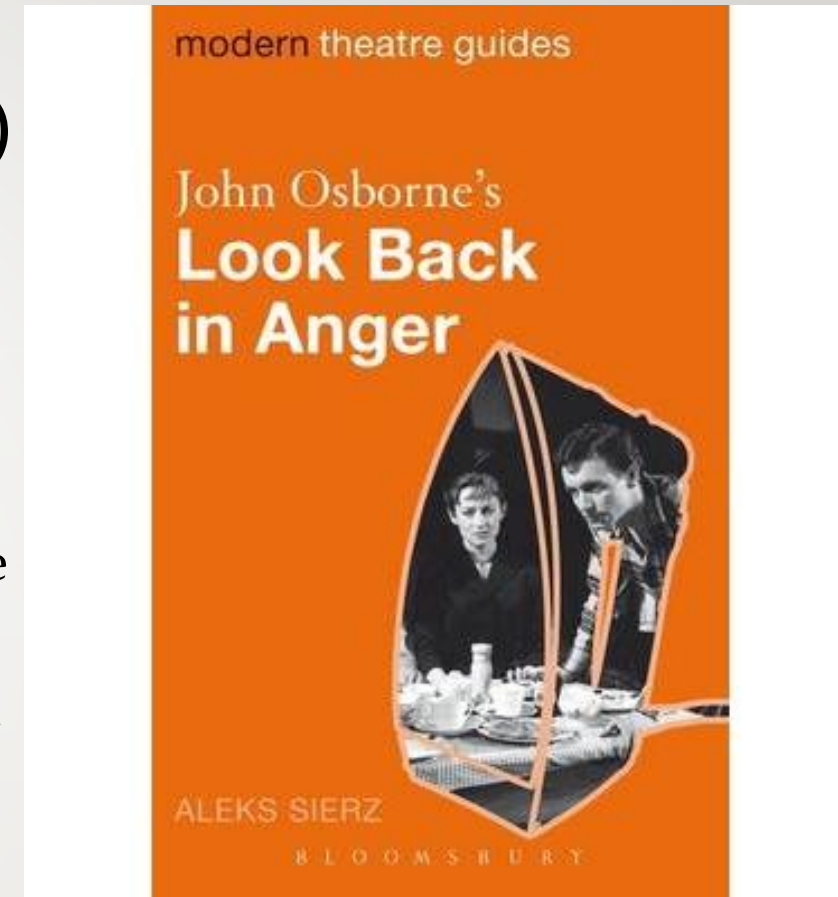
John Bratby: 1950s kitchen sink realism





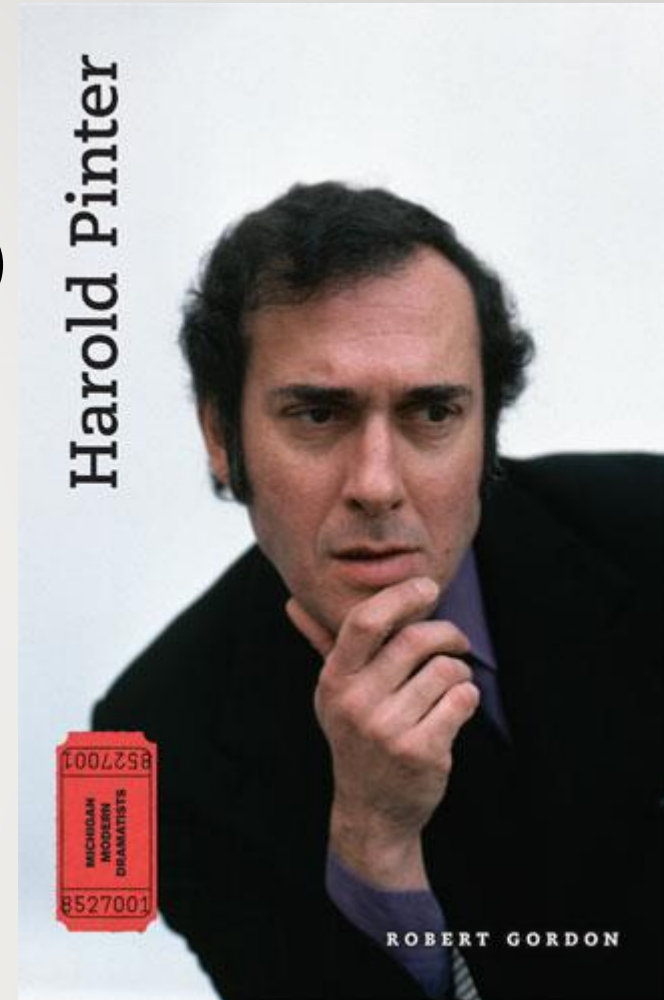
Osborne: Look Back in Anger (1956)

- 'Kitchen sink' realism
- Disaffection of educated working class
- Attack on smugness of middle and upper classes in an unstable post-atomic world
- Nihilism: a sense that there is no cause worth fighting for – just a need to fight
- The role of women: passivity and ironing?
- Savage realist theatrical style in itself an assault on British drama: Osborne 'didn't contribute to British theatre, he set off a landmine and blew most of it up' (Alan Sillitoe)



Harold Pinter: The Birthday Party (1957)

- 'Mr Pinter has got hold of a primary fact of existence. We live on the verge of disaster... There is terror everywhere' (Harold Hobson)
- Existential modernism crossed with realism: a seaside boarding house becomes the setting of an existential threat to the self, from two outsiders from a sinister organisation
- 'Comedy of menace' or 'theatre of the absurd'?
- Removal of certainties: identity, motive, time and place; the oppressors are also victims of mysterious larger forces
- A patriarchal world in which women are confined in their roles and abused
- Disintegration of language: unreliability of what the characters say; slipperiness of meaning
- Political suggestion: the need to resist tyrannies of church and state, the power of Kafkaesque organisation to force conformity. 'Stan, don't let them tell you what to do'
- Yearning for a lost Eden in an uncertain present

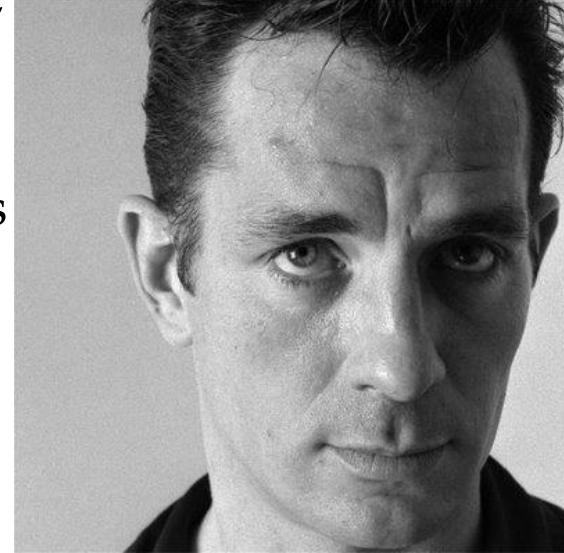


[Cette photo](#) par Auteur inconnu est soumis à la licence [CC BY](#)

Kerouac: On the Road (1957)

The American novel in a post-war capitalist world


- ‘The search for something meaningful to hold on to’; ‘the search for revelation’
- An attempt to rediscover and reinvent the lost America of Walt Whitman; nostalgia for values of American pioneers: references to pioneers’ routes across America; cars and the Greyhound bus as characters
- ‘An attempt to replace the model of manhood dominant in capitalist America with a model rooted in foundational American ideals of conquest and self-discovery’
- The Road: rootlessness and freedom, opposed to the ladder of material success
- Jazz: focus on capturing intensity of present moment; novel initially ‘improvised’ on a 120-foot scroll; references to transitional period in jazz from Charlie Parker to Miles Davis
- Place of women in this reinvention of the original American world?



Philip Larkin: The Whitsun Weddings (1964)



- 'Britain's poet laureate of disappointment' – Joshua Weiner
- 'tenderly observant' – John Betjemen
- Ruthless logic, wit and melancholy; latinate language, embracing metre and resisting modernism
- The lyricism of the ordinary
- Intimate – but not confessional



An Arundel Tomb in ‘an unarmorial age’

- ‘Love isn’t stronger than death just because statues hold hands for 600 years’

An Arundel Tomb

PHILIP LARKIN



Side by side, their faces blurred,
The earl and countess lie in stone,
Their proper habits vaguely shown
As jointed armour, stiffened pleat,
And that faint hint of the absurd—
The little dogs under their feet.



Such plainness of the pre-baroque
Hardly involves the eye, until
It meets his left-hand gauntlet, still
Clasped empty in the other; and
One sees, with a sharp tender shock,
His hand withdrawn, holding her hand.



They would not think to lie so long.

Such faithfulness in effigy

Was just a detail friends would see:

A sculptor's sweet commissioned grace

Thrown off in helping to prolong

The Latin names around the base.

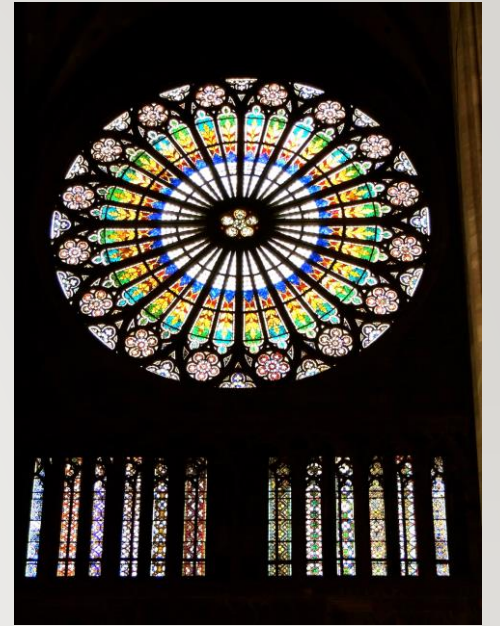





They would not guess how early in
Their supine stationary voyage
The air would change to soundless damage,
Turn the old tenantry away;
How soon succeeding eyes begin
To look, not read. Rigidly they



Persisted, linked, through lengths and breadths
Of time. Snow fell, undated. Light
Each summer thronged the glass. A bright
Litter of birdcalls strewed the same
Bone-riddled ground. And up the paths
The endless altered people came,





Washing at their identity.

Now, helpless in the hollow of

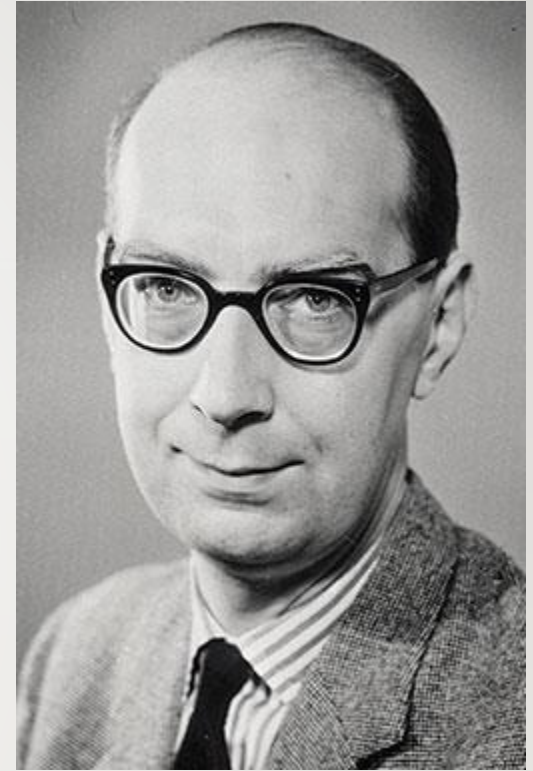
An unarmorial age, a trough


Of smoke in slow suspended skeins

Above their scrap of history,

Only an attitude remains:

Time has transfigured them into
Untruth. The stone fidelity
They hardly meant has come to be
Their final blazon, and to prove
Our almost-instinct almost true:
What will survive of us is love.





Sylvia Plath: Ariel (1965)

- Confessional poetry inspired by Anne Sexton
- 'I am lost, in the robes of all this light' (Witchburning, The Collossus)
- Father, husband, patriarchal state destabilised and dissected by complex, powerful feminine voice
- Trauma and liberation

(Plath's nanny)

Cut

Cut

For Susan O'Neill Roe

What a thrill ----
My thumb instead of an onion.
The top quite gone
Except for a sort of a hinge

Of skin,
A flap like a hat,
Dead white.
Then that red plush.

Little pilgrim,
The Indian's axed your scalp.
Your turkey wattle
Carpet rolls

Straight from the heart.
I step on it,
Clutching my bottle
Of pink fizz. A celebration, this is.
Out of a gap
A million soldiers run,
Redcoats, every one.

Whose side are they on?
O my
Homunculus, I am ill.
I have taken a pill to kill

The thin
Papery feeling.
Saboteur,
Kamikaze man ---

The stain on your
Gauze Ku Klux Klan
Babushka
Darkens and tarnishes and when
The balled
Pulp of your heart
Confronts its small
Mill of silence

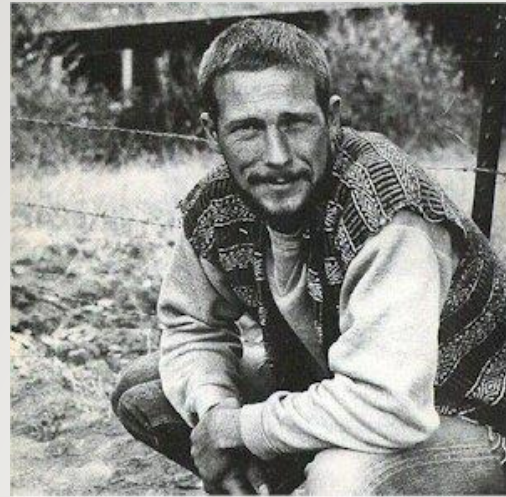
How you jump----
Trepanned veteran,
Dirty girl,
Thumb stump.

24.10.62



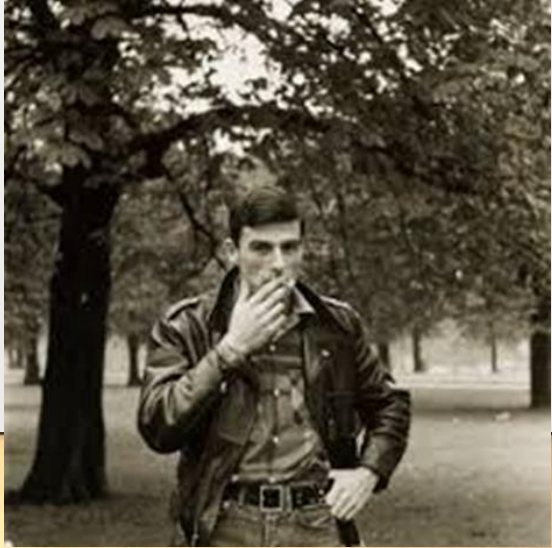
To think about

- Combinations of texts: how do they inform or complement each other? What overview of the topic do they give?
- How do they relate to the six poems?



Post-War Writing of the 1950s and 1960s

SYNOPTIC POEMS



The Enemies Elizabeth Jennings 1955

- Last night they came across the river and
Entered the city. Women were awake
With lights and food. They entertained the band,
Not asking what the men had come to take
Or what strange tongue they spoke
Or why they came so suddenly through the land.

Now in the morning all the town is filled
With stories of the swift and dark invasion;
The women say that not one stranger told
A reason for his coming. The intrusion
Was not for devastation:
Peace is apparent still on hearth and field.

Yet all the city is a haunted place.
Man meeting man speaks cautiously. Old friends
Close up the candid looks upon their face.
There is no warmth in hands accepting hands;
Each ponders, 'Better hide myself in case
Those strangers have set up their homes in minds
I used to walk in. Better draw the blinds
Even if the strangers haunt in my own house'.



Elizabeth Jennings

1926-2001

- Born in Boston, Lincolnshire: UK
- Moved to Oxford aged 6
- Spent the rest of her life in Oxford
- Worked briefly in advertising and publishing in London
- Initially linked to The Movement with Larkin and Amis
- Catholicism



On the Move Thom Gunn 1957

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds
That spurts across the field, the wheeling
swallows,
Has nested in the trees and undergrowth.
Seeking their instinct, or their poise, or both,
One moves with an uncertain violence
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense
Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:
Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boys,
Until the distance throws them forth, their
hum
Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.
In goggles, donned impersonality,
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,
They strap in doubt – by hiding it, robust –
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardiness

Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts

They ride, direction where the tyres press.

They scare a flight of birds across the field:

Much that is natural, to the will must yield.

Men manufacture both machine and soul,

And use what they imperfectly control

To dare a future from the taken routes.



It is a part solution, after all.

One is not necessarily discord

On earth; or damned because, half animal,

One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes

Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.

One joins the movement in a valueless world,

Choosing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,

One moves as well, always toward, toward.



A minute holds them, who have come to go:

The self-defined, astride the created will

They burst away; the towns they travel through

Are home for neither bird nor holiness,

For birds and saints complete their purposes.

At worst, one is in motion; and at best,

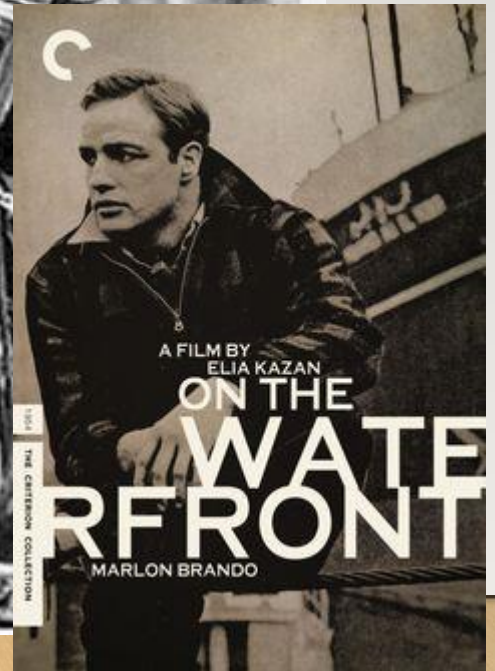
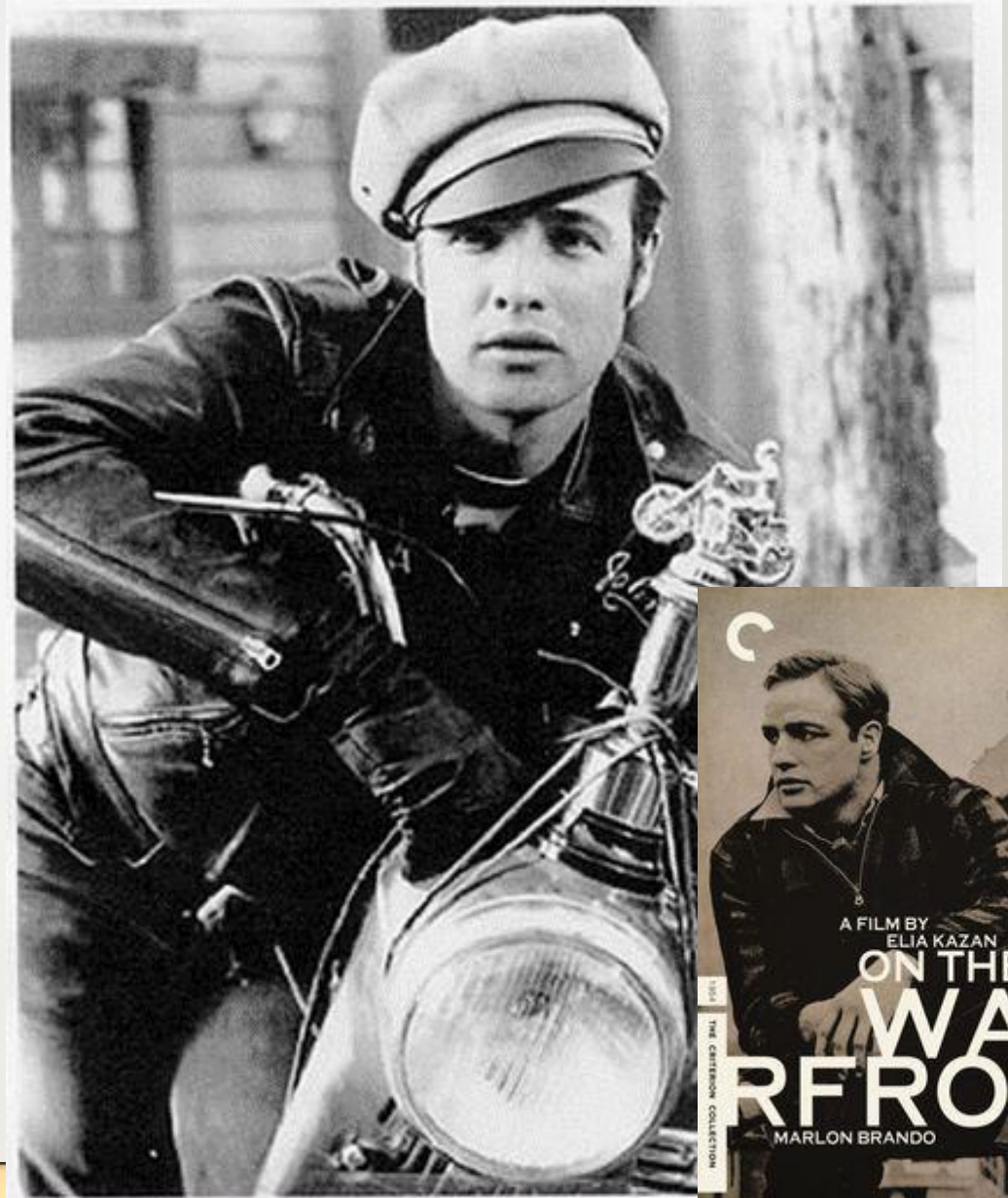
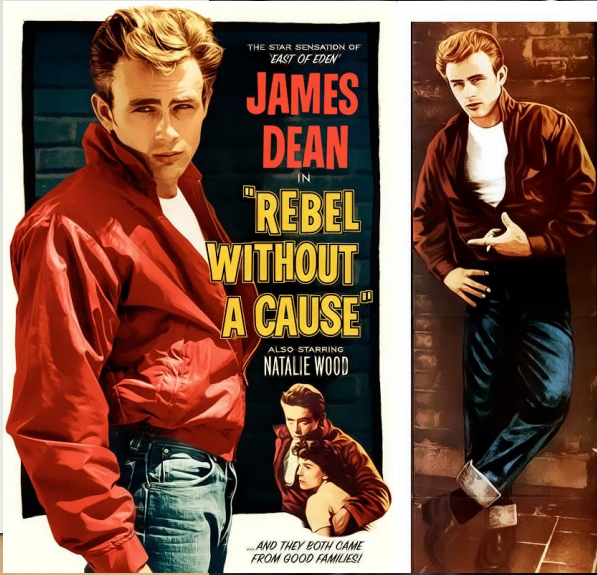
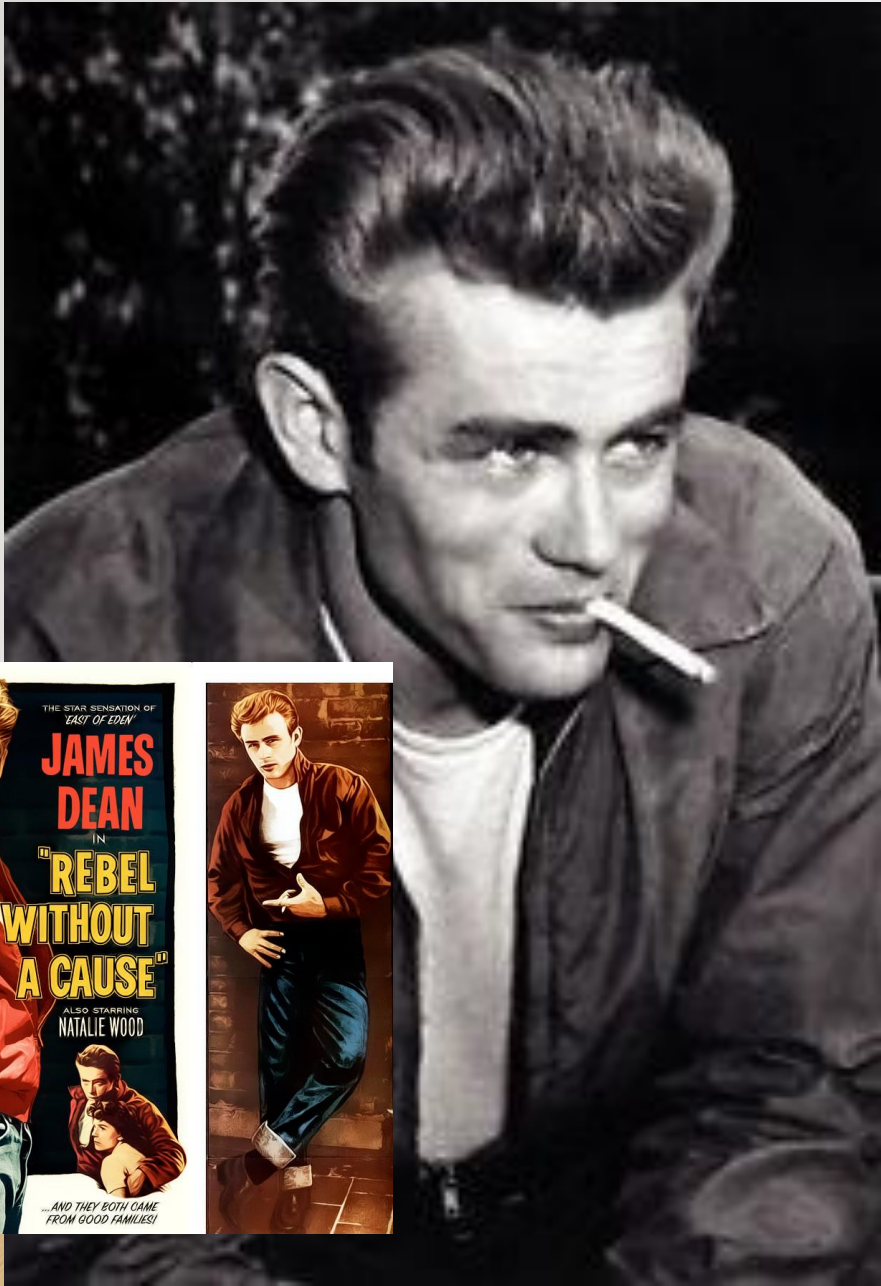
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,

One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Thom Gunn 1929-2004

- Born in Gravesend, Kent
- Happy early childhood, but mother committed suicide after divorce in 1977
- Cambridge English graduate
- Moved to San Francisco in the '60's with his life-long lover Mike Kitay





Her Kind

Anne Sexton, 1960

I have gone out, a possessed witch,
haunting the black air, braver at night;
dreaming evil, I have done my hitch
over the plain houses, light by light:
lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.
A woman like that is not a woman, quite.
I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,
filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,
closets, silks, innumerable goods;
fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:
whining, rearranging the disaligned.
A woman like that is misunderstood.
I have been her kind.



I have ridden in your cart, driver,
waved my nude arms at villages going by,
learning the last bright routes, survivor
where your flames still bite my thigh
and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.
A woman like that is not ashamed to die.
I have been her kind.

Ann Sexton 1928-1974

- Born Massachusetts
- Married at 19, suffering severe post-partum depression after both children's births
- Confessional poet
- First book, *To Bedlam and Part way back* dealt with mental illness



1967

TED
HUGHES

Wodwo



What am I? Nosing here, turning leaves over
Following a faint stain on the air to the river's edge
I enter water. Who am I to split
The glassy grain of water looking upward I see the bed
Of the river above me upside down very clear
What am I doing here in mid-air? Why do I find
this frog so interesting as I inspect its most secret
interior and make it my own? Do these weeds
know me and name me to each other have they
seen me before do I fit in their world? I seem
separate from the ground and not rooted but dropped
out of nothing casually I've no threads
fastening me to anything I can go anywhere

I seem to have been given the freedom
of this place what am I then? And picking
bits of bark off this rotten stump gives me
no pleasure and it's no use so why do I do it
me and doing that have coincided very queerly
But what shall I be called am I the first
have I an owner what shape am I what
shape am I am I huge if I go
to the end on this way past these trees and past these trees
till I get tired that's touching one wall of me
for the moment if I sit still how everything
stops to watch me I suppose I am the exact centre
but there's all this what is it roots
roots roots roots and here's the water
again very queer but I'll go on looking

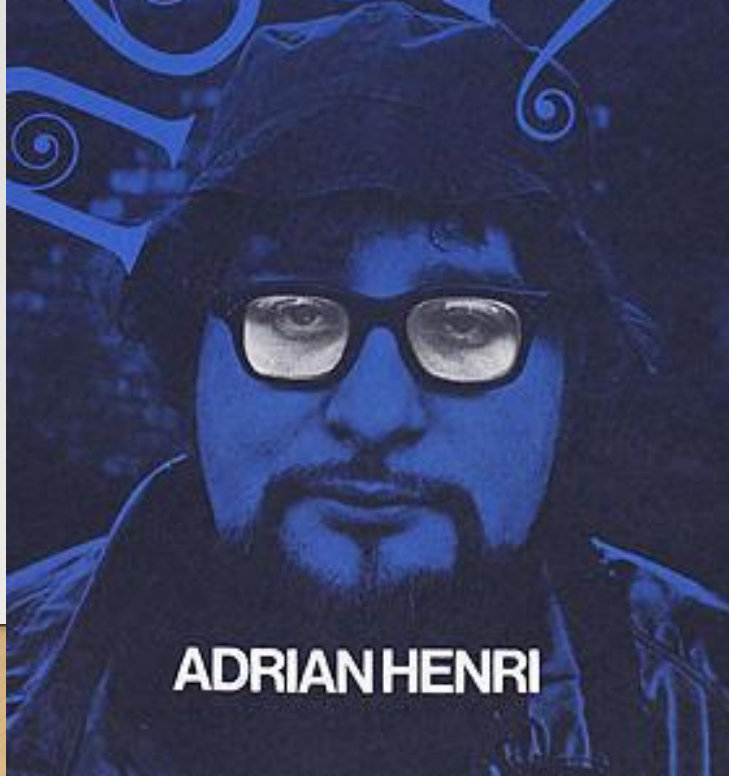
Ted Hughes 1930-
1998



Tonight at Noon **(for Charles Mingus and the Clayton Squares) Adrian Henri 1967*



*Title taken from an LP
by Charlie Mingus,
Tonight at Noon



Tonight at noon
Supermarkets will advertise 3d EXTRA on everything
Tonight at noon
Children from happy families will be sent to live in a home
Elephants will tell each other human jokes
America will declare peace on Russia
World War I generals will sell poppies in the streets on November 11th
The first daffodils of autumn will appear
When the leaves fall upwards to the trees

Tonight at noon
Pigeons will hunt cats through city backyards
Hitler will tell us to fight on the beaches and on the landing fields
A tunnel full of water will be built under Liverpool
Pigs will be sighted flying in formation over Woolton
and Nelson will not only get his eye back but his arm as well
White Americans will demonstrate for equal rights
in front of the Black House
And the Monster has just created Dr Frankenstein

Girls in bikinis are moonbathing
Folksongs are being sung by real folk
Art galleries are closed to people over 21
Poets get their poems in the Top 20
Politicians are elected to insane asylums
There's jobs for everyone and nobody wants them
In back alleys everywhere teenage lovers are kissing
in broad daylight

In forgotten graveyards the dead will quietly bury the living
and
You will tell me you love me
Tonight at noon.



Clayton Squares



Charles Mingus

Adrian Henri 1932-2000

- Born in Birkenhead,
- Brought up in Wales
- Trained as a painter in Newcastle
- Liverpool scene with Roger McGough and Brian Patten
- Mersey Sound



A Curse On the Men In Washington, Pentagon

Gary Snyder 1968

om a ka ca ta ta pa ya sa svaha*

As you shoot down the Vietnamese girls and men
in their fields

Burning and chopping,
Poisoning and blighting,

So surely I hunt the white man down
in my heart.

The crew-cutted Seattle boy
The Portland boy who worked for U.P.
that was me.

I won't let him live. The "American"
I'll destroy. The "Christian"
has long been dead.

They won't pass on to my children.
I'll give them Chief Joseph, the Bison herds,
Ishi, sparrowhawk, the Fir trees,
The Buddha, their own naked bodies,
Swimming and dancing and singing
instead.

As I kill the white man,
the "American"
in me
And dance out the Ghost Dance:
To bring back America, the grass and the streams.

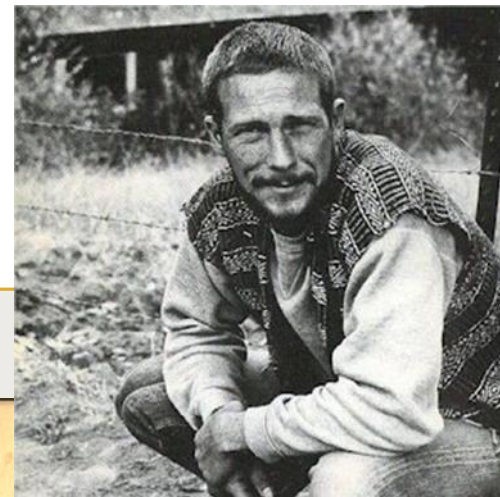
To trample your throat in your dreams.

This magic I work, this loving I give
That my children may flourish

And yours won't live.

hi'niswa' vita'ki'mi

[end]



A CURSE
ON THE MEN IN WASHINGTON, PENTAGON

om a ka ca ta ta pa ya sa svaha

you shoot down the Vietnamese girls and men
in their fields
Burning and chopping,
Poisoning and blighting,

surely I hunt the white man down
in my heart.
crew-cutted Seattle boy
Portland-boy who worked for U.P.
that was me.

on't let him live. The "American"
I'll destroy. The "Christian"
has long been dead.

won't pass on to my children.
give them Chief Joseph, the Bison herds,
sparrowhawk, the Fir trees,
Buddha, their own naked bodies,
swimming and dancing and singing
instead.

kill the white man,
the "American"
in me
dance out the Ghost Dance:
bring back America, the grass and the streams.

trample your throat in your dreams.

magic I work, this loving I give
That my children may flourish
yours won't live.

hi'niswa' vita'ki'mi

* A Tantric Buddhist mantra
for causing a city to tremble

Gary Snyder 1930-

- Beat Generation but...
- Zen Buddhism
- Back to Nature 'deep ecology'
- Celebration of natural order





Jimi Hendrix
Star Spangled
Banner 1969