Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel Study Guide

Answered Prayers: The Unfinished Novel by Truman Capote

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

The three short works in this book are chapters of an uncompleted novel by acclaimed writer Truman Capote. Narrated by what an editor's note suggests is a thinly veiled version of the author himself, the chapters and stories focus on the lives and experiences of individuals, both real-life and fictionalized, that are active in the so-called "high society" of the time. At the core of both the book's narrative and thematic considerations is the experience of loneliness, as well as two of its primary manifestations, which are the exploitation of others and the allure of fame and fortune.

The book opens with an introductory note from its editor who describes the developmental and inspirational circumstances of what Capote originally intended to be a new novel. He comments on how the publication of the author's phenomenally successful book "In Cold Blood" combined with his very active social life and increasing substance addiction make writing the book difficult. Fox also describes how the three chapters included in this publication were each published separately in magazines, how the reaction of Capote's friends was violently negative, how those friends completely rejected him, and how the author suffered a crisis of confidence as a result. Finally, Fox comments on how the author repeatedly indicated to him that he was at work on more of the book, and then outlines his theories as to why the manuscript was never completed.

The first chapter, the longest of the three and the one most clearly anchored in an overall story, is entitled "Unspoiled Monsters." The narrator, writer P.B. Jones, introduces himself, sketches in his history, describes his ambition to be a well-known and published writer, and details the relationships and circumstances into which he entered in order to realize that ambition. The narrative juxtaposes the seediness of Jones' current living situation as a male prostitute making his "home" in the squalid atmosphere of the New York City YMCA with the glittering high life of being sophisticated, wealthy, and leisurely to which he aspires. Names of real-life famous people are placed next to fictionalized versions of their peers, creating a sense of barely disguised reality. Names have been changed to protect to both the guilty and the innocent.

The book's second section is entitled "Kate McCloud," and focuses on the beginnings of the narrator's relationship with vulnerable and indulgent socialite Kate McCloud. The character's background is outlined in detail in the later pages of "Unspoiled Monsters," and her origins as the ambitious daughter of a poor family, her marriage into wealth and social status, her discovery that that marriage was a sham, her departure from it and her entry into a second, which turned out to be both a sham and dangerous. In "Kate McCloud," the narrator describes being introduced to her, his immediate attraction to her, and rapidly being hired to work in her entourage. Throughout this section, he hints in narration at potentially dangerous experiences he shared with Kate but the material published here never explicitly defines what those experiences were.

The final section of the book is both titled and set in "La Côte Basque," a high-end restaurant in New York City where socialites went to both eat and to be seen by other socialites. There, the narrator has lunch with Lady Ina Coolbirth who gossips about friends and diners at the restaurant and tells a pair of lengthy stories. The first is about Ann Hopkins who has gotten away with the murder of her husband. The second is about the ambitious gigolo Sidney Dillon who was taught a humiliating lesson by the socially and politically important wife of a prominent politician. Eventually, the vulnerable Lady Ina reveals that her husband is planning to divorce her, wonders what will become of her, and compares her lot to that of another socialite who became a lesbian after her husband divorced her and lived happily with a new partner.

The narrative concludes with a brief and poetic description of fading beauty and the passage of time.

Editor's Note

Editor's Note Summary

The three short works in this book are chapters of an uncompleted novel by acclaimed writer Truman Capote. Narrated by what an editor's note suggests is a thinly veiled version of the author himself, the chapter/stories focus on the lives and experiences of individuals, both real-life and fictionalized, active in the so-called "high society" of the time. At the core of both the book's narrative and thematic considerations is the experience of loneliness, as well as two of its primary manifestations, exploitation of others and the allure of fame and fortune.

In an introduction to the manuscript, the editor, Joseph M. Fox, a former friend and colleague of the author, Truman Capote, discusses several aspects of the book's history. First is its contract history, how the author received a contract and an advance to write the full novel, how its delivery date was repeatedly postponed, and how the final contract contained a clause that any further payment was contingent upon delivery of a full manuscript. Fox also discusses the book's publishing history, specifically how the author published excerpts from the book as they were completed. This, Fox comments, resulted in the thinly disguised real-life individuals Capote wrote about becoming so angry that he was rejected by the society he both valued as a person and used as a writer.

Then Fox describes the book's creative history, referring first to Capote's intention to echo, in both style and substance, the famous work "Remembrance of Things Past" by Marcel Proust. Fox goes on to discuss how Capote contemplated and changed his style of writing during his book's creation, and how he claimed to have written several more chapters but never actually showed them to anyone else. Fox also describes the author's personal history - in particular, sudden, intoxicating fame resulting from the publication of his work "In Cold Blood," and his gradual descent into drug and alcohol addiction.

Finally, Fox presents theories about what happened to the rest of the book. The first theory, he suggests, is that there is a full manuscript hidden and forgotten somewhere, a circumstance he considers quite unlikely. The second theory, supported by comments by Capote's longtime companion, is that following the publication of the initial chapters and the reaction to them, Capote never wrote another word towards the book's completion, having realized "it would never achieve [the standards] he set for himself." The third theory, to which Fox himself subscribes, is that Capote did in fact write more chapters but destroyed them, for reasons the editor never defines but which are similar to those given for the second theory.

Editor's Note Analysis

Throughout the late 1960's and 70's, and for a time into the early 1980's, Truman Capote was one of the most discussed authors in America. He was renowned for, among other things, the elegant poeticism of his writing, his highly visible social life, his relatively open bisexuality, and the eccentricity of his personal manner. He was a celebrity in a time when both the term and the concept were coming into their own, one who had the talent to back up his notoriety. He was self-righteous and arrogant, supremely confident in his abilities, and witheringly opinionated when it came to the work, lives, and behavior of others. Ultimately, however, and as the editor's note suggests, he was paralyzingly self-conscious and insecure, a self-doubting perfectionist whose ambitions towards both literary quality and social success, the editor suggests, could never be reached. All these aspects to his life and personality define, as the editor suggests, the book's central character and narrator, whom the editor describes in a footnote to his Note as "a sort of dark Doppelganger", or duplicate. In other words, in many ways central character P.B. Jones IS Truman Capote and vice-versa, making the book a sort of veiled autobiography.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 1 - 12

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 1 - 12 Summary

The narrator introduces himself as P.B. Jones and introduces his writings with a contemplation of what he perceives as a clever piece of writing by an eight year old named Florie Rotondo who writes of traveling to the center of the earth to meet "unspoiled monsters" and after she met them, move to the country. He comments in narration that he has himself met "unspoiled monsters," but never did move to the country even though he eventually admits, he would have been wiser to do so.

Jones then describes his current living circumstances, commenting that he might move to the sixth floor where he could be sure of doing himself some serious injury if he climbed out the window. Jones then briefly narrates the first twenty or so years of his life where he was abandoned at an orphanage, his childhood at a convent school, and his early sexual experiences, most of which are homosexual and which, he suggests, were undertaken for payment, at times as minimal as a piece of chocolate. He also describes how he trained as a masseur, was left a substantial sum of money by an infatuated client, and used that money to move to New York City instead of moving to the country. There, he says, his first year was "orgasmic" in the intensity of its pleasure. He describes an early marriage to a "moronic" woman who nevertheless loved the short stories he steadily wrote, the breakup of his marriage during a confrontational Christmas visit with his wife's parents, and his enrollment in a creative writing class where he meets a predatory homosexual publisher, Turner Boatwright.

After polishing a couple of his best short stories, Jones visits Boatwright in his office, and the two of them seduce each other into a relationship that is part-sexual and part-business. Boatwright tells Jones that most of his stories aren't very good, but that he has potential. He also tells Jones that Boatwright will help him, but "I wouldn't recommend it." Jones writes that he wishes he had listened and moved to the country, but "it was too late, for I had already started my journey to the Earth's interior."

At that point, Jones writes that he is running out of paper and might indeed move to the sixth floor.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 1 - 12 Analysis

In this section, the story lays out its essential narrative and thematic foundations, neither of which is mutually exclusive. In terms of the former, the narrator entwines his personal history as an orphan, an ambitious writer, and a sexual opportunist with the author's central thematic concerns of loneliness, the capacity of people to use others, and the allure of fame and fortune. There is the strong sense, even in these early stages, that Jones is, to use the narrative's own terminology, something of a monster. That said, the style with which he tells his story which is witty and at times poetic, while being threaded

with glimpses of intensely vivid emotion is enough compensation for the relative darkness of his material that the narrative is both engaging and entertaining.

It's particularly important, throughout the narrative, to note points at which that darkness surfaces, such points often surfacing briefly, or in passing. In this section, these points include the references to the sixth floor and being able to jump out the window, which suggest that somewhere in his mind the narrator is contemplating suicide, as well as the reference to wishing he had gone to the country, which suggests that he thinks that if he had, his life would have been better. There is also the reference to the narrator having "started his journey" towards the darkness of the earth's interior, which could be a reference to his being a "Hershey Bar whore", to his failed marriage, to his relationship with Boatwright and all the above.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 12 - 45

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 12 - 45 Summary

This next section begins with Jones' comment that he has indeed moved to the sixth floor, but that any attempt to climb out the window would be pointless, as the building is jammed up next to the one beside it. He then goes on to describe the evolution of his relationship with Boatwright, how he attended several parties at Boatwright's apartment in the company of several real-world celebrities including writers William Faulkner and Norman Mailer, photographer Cecil Beaton, and actresses Marlena Dietrich and Greta Garbo). He also writes of encountering two people who eventually become key figures in his life (and who, in the company of so many recognizable real people, are clearly given pseudonyms such as Alice Lee Langman and Kate McCloud.

Jones then describes the evolution of his relationship with noted author Langman, famous for one book and a few short stories more studied than read and who gained both money and a reputation for being too good a writer to be published. Langman and Jones begin a sexual relationship, which eventually leads to his moving in with her and getting her to critique his work and promote it. The intensity of Langman's involvement with Jones results in her losing her reputation for clear thinking and objectivity, and in Jones blaming her for the failure of his first book, titled "Answered Prayers."

After briefly discussing Langman's death, Jones contemplates his next significant relationship, with the real life Denham Fouts. "Denny," Jones says, began his life in Florida and through a sex-and-money defined chain of events, became the paid companion for several wealthy older men, many of whom like the guests at Boatwright's party are real world individuals such as novelist Christopher Isherwood. Jones writes of meeting Denny in Paris and then briefly interrupts his narrative with a description of the desperate sexual promiscuity surrounding him at the YMCA.

Returning to his main story, Jones describes how Denny sent him a first class boat ticket to Paris because Denny was so attracted by Jones' stories. Jones comments, however, that Denny was attracted more by the photograph of him (Jones) on the book jacket of "Answered Prayers" which portrayed him as innocent and beautiful, and suggests that Denny himself lacked such qualities. He narrates how he and Denny explored Paris together, commenting that Jones enjoyed it in the same way as a niece of Alice Lee Langman's enjoyed being shown around New York. He describes Denny's drug addiction and lack of sexual ability, refers to Denny's frequent flights of imagination and fantasy, and describes his departure for Switzerland to try to wean himself off drugs. Jones, who has "no intention of ... seeing Denny again if it could be avoided," moves into a small apartment of his own and begins participating in Paris' literary social life. There he encounters such famous real-life individuals as Jean Cocteau, Simone de Beauvoir, Gertrude Stein, and Jean Paul Sartre.

Jones also encounters Natalie Barney, an expatriate American heiress who, in turn, introduces him to the famous French novelist Colette. On a visit to Colette's home, Jones writes, she tells him to always encourage and respect the angry, ambitious child within, and is given a valuable crystal paperweight, which is a perfect white rose set within the finest crystal as a reminder, a "talisman." Jones writes of keeping the talisman with him even now that he is "down and out," saying that looking at it reminds him of the beautiful and vital Kate McCloud.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 12 - 45 Analysis

This section is notable, as is the book as a whole, for its blend of fact and fiction or thinly disguised as fiction. There are several aspects to this blending, here and throughout the book. In this section, a vivid example is the title of Jones' book, "Answered Prayers" which is, of course, the title of the book in which he is the central character.

Meanwhile, personalities in the so-called "real world" appear in all three chapters/stories published here, but never more numerously than in "Unspoiled Monsters," where the names of the famous and fabulous are dropped thick and fast. The sense here is that Jones is dropping as many names as he can in as short a period of time as he can in order to make himself and his life seem important. The irony, of course, is that there are also several very pointed reference to the narrator's lack of self worth. In other words, he may think he belongs in this crowd, but he doesn't feel as though he truly does. In other words, the name dropping is compensation for a lack of personal identity.

In any case, Denny Fouts, Natalie Barney, and most particularly Colette are the most notable real-world characters appearing in this section. The presence of the latter is particularly important, in that the author's life and work both awaken clear echoes of hers. The crystal paperweight, therefore, can be seen as an unconsciously offered symbol of that affinity, as well as of the idealized beauty striven for by both Colette and the author/narrator. Finally, in tying the paperweight to Kate McCloud, the author is suggesting that her beauty and magic are still preserved and present in his memory, even in the seediness of his present life and with the dangers she brought into his relationship (as hinted at in "Kate McCloud," the second in this selection of chapters.

Also in this section, the author reinforces and/or defines both the sexual and emotional sides of his social life by juxtaposing it with the sexuality of his environment at the YMCA. Specifically, the references to the seedy loneliness of the YMCA juxtaposed with the references to the sexual activity experienced by the characters in the high society world suggests that the latter is infused with the former, that the money, manipulations, power and success of the latter are in fact flimsy disguises and masks for the former.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 45-73

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 45-73 Summary

Back in New York, in the aftermath of a rainstorm, Jones encounters Woodrow Hamilton, a well-to-do stockbroker who reacts to Jones' apparent sorry state with the suggestion that he become a companion for hire by Victoria Self of "The Self Service Agency." Conversation about writing and about Jones' career reveals that Jones is working on a novel, titled "Answered Prayers" like his first work, and that it's to be based on Jones' experiences with Kate McCloud and her friends. Jones and Hamilton discuss the relationship between art and life, referring to Proust's "Remembrance of Things Past." They also discuss the relationship between truth and illusion, with Jones saying that his book is about "truth as illusion," and that "illusion as truth" is another subject.

Upon his arrival at Miss Self's office, Jones encounters a prissy, officious secretary named Butch. When he is interviewed by Miss Self, Jones is surprised by her austere exterior which is softened only by a very expensive watch, which Jones recognizes as a duplicate of one owned by Kate McCloud. After discussing the details of the job, Miss Self sends Jones to his first appointment with a man pseudo-named "Wallace" which, Miss Self comments, is "not really a physical situation. It's more a...nursing problem." Jones' first duty when he meets Mr. Wallace is to walk his dog who is both sexually aggressive and incontinent. Later, the two men lie together in bed where Jones is naked and Wallace is clothed. Jones listens as Wallace speaks at drunken length about how his career has fallen apart and how the critics hate him because he has tried to improve himself and his work. Jones writes that Wallace's attitude is as self-delusional as that of many of his heroines, and then hurries out when Jones mistakenly believes that Wallace wants to put out his cigar on his body.

Jones then writes of his encounter with a blind and elderly masseur in the YMCA, who in turn tells him of his relationship, and eventual breakup, with a woman named Helen who, the masseur says, left him shortly after he had surgery on his legs. Jones relates the man's helplessness to that of Denny Fouts, "for I had been as heartless to him." He writes of Denny asking him to come to Italy, of his own cowardice and of learning of Denny's death from a drug dealer who comments ironically on how it was the cure, rather than the drugs, that was the cause. His recollections of Italy lead him to recollections of happy times in Venice and work on a novel called "Sleepless Millions," which in turn lead to recollections of Peggy Guggenheim who, he comments, he might have married if it hadn't been for his wife, long gone but still legal. He writes of his resentment of those who used Guggenheim for money, but admits that he would have done the same if he hadn't been so convinced that "Sleepless Millions" would make him a fortune. When it is rejected, Jones realizes that he doesn't want to return to New York and America until he is successful, and so despite his feelings about them, he joins up with a group of partying, expatriate Americans. They all, he writes, made strong impressions on him, but none stronger than Kate McCloud.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 45-73 Analysis

There are several points to note about this section, many of which surface in the conversation between Jones and Woodrow Hamilton. The first is the setting in motion of an important element of plot such as Jones' relationship with Victoria Self and, through her, his relationships with her colorful clients. There is the sense here that the foundations are being laid for an important component of the unfinished rest of the book. In other words, the narrative threads of unwoven plot here are at least partially unfulfilled foreshadowing.

The second important point in this section is the reappearance of the title "Answered Prayers" which can be seen as an exact fulfillment of the quote from which it is taken. Jones' prayer for publication has been answered, but the way in which that prayer was realized through the interference of Alice Lee Longman, itself inspired by what might be described as inappropriate sexuality or at the very least, mutual using of one person by another resulted in the shedding of tears. The third noteworthy point about this first section is related to the second. Specifically, the reference to "Remembrance of Things Past" can be seen as a further blurring of the relationship between art and life, in that both narrator Jones and author Capote are, with their respective works titled "Answered Prayers," striving to both emulate and improve upon the narrative technique employed by Proust. Finally, in yet another related point, there is the discussion of the relationship between truth and illusion, with "Answered Prayers", both the Jones version and the Capote version, blurring the lines between the two, both essentially suggesting that truth and illusion are in fact the same thing.

The blurring of reality and illusion is taken even further with the portrayal of Mr. Wallace, a very thinly disguised portrait of playwright Tennessee Williams. It's interesting to note here the relationship between the portrayal of Wallace and the portrayal of the author as contained in the Editor's Note. As the editor describes him, author Capote ends his life and career in a similar state to that experienced by Wallace Williams. At the same time, reality returns to the narrative with the references to Denny Fouts and to Peggy Guggenheim. Both were real people that played important roles in the life of the author, and also embody the narrative's thematic consideration of people using one another.

This section also contains several references to the narrator's relationship with Kate McCloud, and specifically to a traumatic experience the two of them shared. Again, there is the sense that these references are unfulfilled foreshadowing, as the exact circumstances of that experience are never revealed or defined.

Finally, there is the narrator's decision to hook up with the group of American expatriates he claims to despise. There is the sense here that his desire to be associated with their wealth, glamour and freedom overwhelms his resentment, but that ultimately he and the expats have more in common than they realize, which include a profound sense of loneliness and of being outside, of both their home and of the life of the country in which they plant themselves.

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 73 - 97

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 73 - 97 Summary

After a brief comment relating his encounter with Kate McCloud to his return to Paris, Jones describes his time in Tangiers, describing the free, intensely lived nature of the city, its dominance by a small group of socialites, and his relationship with Aces Nelson. Nelson, Jones writes, was a young American who, Jones is told, spends his life moving from rich home to rich home and earns his living both playing games and having sex with rich women. At their first meeting, Aces manipulates Jones into adopting a puppy and then into attending a party at the vacation home of heiress Barbara Hutton. There, conversation with Aces and Hutton leads Jones to reveal he is more of a masseur than a writer, in turn leading Aces to suggest they meet in Paris the following week to consider whether Jones could "help Kate."

The narrative then begins a lengthy recounting of Kate's troubled history, as told to Jones by Nelson at their meeting in the Ritz Hotel Bar. Kate was born into a poor Irish family, but her innate beauty and aristocracy draw the attention of the wealthy McCloud family and especially of son Harry who, even when she was a child, was determined to marry her. And marry her he does, eventually became so obsessively controlling that she tries to leave, only to be convinced to stay by his desperate mother. But when Harry cruelly destroys Kate's horse because she spends so much time riding, even his mother realizes he's dangerous. She arranges for Harry to be put in an asylum and for Kate to get a divorce. Kate later moves to Europe, where she marries a German businessman but spends all her time alone, lunching regularly at a small café where Aces first encounters her. After telling Jones this story, Aces invites him to meet her, saying Kate needs both protection and a "presentable" masseur who can travel with her. Jones, after ignoring what in retrospect seems to be a warning from Mutt, agrees to meet her.

Here the narrative shifts focus back to New York, where Jones at first attempts to get out of an appointment made for him by Miss Self but who is bullied into going. Jones is quite surprised when he meets the client, a Mr. Appleton whom Jones describes as both physically and emotionally attractive. When their sexual encounter is finished, Jones and Appleton chat amiably, and Appleton gives Jones a business card with his contact information, telling him to come visit anytime. After leaving Appleton, Jones makes his way back to the YMCA, angry with himself, drunk on cheap gin, and bidding "a very special good night to tha wise philosopher Florie Rotondo."

Part 1, Unspoiled Monsters, pp. 73 - 97 Analysis

This section, dominated by the presence and story of Kate McCloud, is essentially more of the previously discussed unfulfilled foreshadowing, writing that might be discussed as all set-up without payoff. Granted, there is a certain degree of reader satisfaction to be gleaned from "Kate McCloud," as the result of Kate becoming actually present rather

than just talked about. Since both this section of "Unspoiled Monsters" and "Kate McCloud" are both essentially exposition, laying the groundwork for more story to come, the overwhelming sense in both parts of the work is of a frustrating lack of completeness or as the author might put it, more foreplay than orgasm.

Meanwhile, the line between reality and fiction blurs yet again with the cameo appearance of Barbara Hutton, one of the most famous party girl/heiresses of the mid-twentieth century, a sort of Paris Hilton of her time.

Finally, in this excerpt/chapter's final moments, the narrator returns his consideration to Florie Rotondo and her wishes to visit the center of the world and to find "unspoiled monsters". Here again, the author/narrator allows a sense of regret to creep into the story, a sense that his desire for success, popularity and recognition again overwhelms his better judgment and common sense, that his desperation to assuage a profound loneliness leads him into situations and relationships he would be better off having avoided. In other words, in these final moments the narrative reiterates its primary thematic consideration, its contemplation of the circumstances, manifestations, and after-effects of acting upon, loneliness.

Part 2, Kate McCloud, p. 99 - 124

Part 2, Kate McCloud, p. 99 - 124 Summary

After a busy week working for Miss Self and tired of the atmosphere of the YMCA, Jones takes himself out to the all-night movie show, passing New York's seedy street life along the way. After astonishing himself by shouting back at a street preacher, Jones hurries into the first movie house he sees, which happens to be showing a film starring Montgomery Clift. Recognizing the actor leads Jones into a lengthy anecdote about a dinner party hosted by Turner Boatwright in Clift's honor at which the other guests were Tallulah Bankhead, Estelle Winwood, and Dorothy Parker. The anecdote ends with a crude reference to Clift's homosexual orientation, and Jones returns his narrative focus to the movie theater where he could not stay awake and so went to a bar. There he found the card given to him by Mr. Appleton, recalls the man's invitation to join him at his country home anytime, and at three AM, drunkenly tries to call him. A conversation with a sleepy housekeeper results in Jones telling her to not wake Appleton up.

At that point, Jones again changes his narrative focus, returning to "that winter afternoon in Paris when [he] first met Kate McCloud." He and Mutt accompany Aces to Kate's suite at the Ritz, where they are met by Kate's assistant Corinne and her friend Perla, whom Jones refers to as "The Black Duchess." Conversation continues without Jones for a while, as Kate discusses her love for her young son, the fact that he is being kept from her by her wealthy and vindictive ex-husband and how she has recently been advised to kidnap him. Eventually, Jones is introduced as a masseur and everyone but Kate and Jones leave. Kate submits to a massage, and as she and Jones are discussing his history, Jones experiences intense surges of sexual feeling that eventually force him to leave the room and masturbate. After he returns, and as the massage continues, Kate asks if Mutt can stay with her. Jones agrees. Later, after Kate and the newly re-christened Phoebe have both fallen asleep, Jones contemplates his feelings, realizes that he is prepared to do anything for Kate's approval, and wonders whether "anything" might include kidnapping Kate's son. At that point, Jones takes a "time out," writing that he needs a new notebook.

Part 2, Kate McCloud, p. 99 - 124 Analysis

The "Kate McCloud" chapter feels much more strongly connected to "Unspoiled Monsters" than does "La Côte Basque", that it is part of the same narrative through-line. In spite of the cumbersome narrative detour that is the Montgomery Clift anecdote, there is evidence in "Kate McCloud" of a unity of purpose, event and structure outside of which "La Côte Basque" seems to exist. Such evidence includes an unveiling of further information about Kate McCloud's background (also functioning as a deepening of mystery and suspense), reiteration of the illicit sexuality motif such as Jones' attraction for Kate, and a further reiteration of the book's key themes. Specifically, loneliness is evoked in Kate's desperate longing for her son, while the idea of people using people

emerges in both the use that Kate's husband makes of her and the use Kate and Jones make of each other. Finally in terms of themes, the allure of fame and fortune manifests in Jones' desire to be at least a part of Kate's social success overwhelms both his common sense and his instincts.

But while the previously discussed sense of unfulfilled foreshadowing in "Unspoiled Monsters" is alleviated at least to some degree in "Kate McCloud," the mystery of what exactly passed between Kate and Jones that so evidently traumatized him remains just that, a mystery. The narrative emphasis on the potential kidnapping of Kate's son suggests the possibility that such a kidnapping is at least part of what traumatizes Jones about Kate, but without further evidence and chapters, no absolute conclusion is possible.

Part 2, Kate McCloud, p. 124 - 136

Part 2, Kate McCloud, p. 124 - 136 Summary

Jones' narration suggests the next entry is being written almost a week after the previous one, and tells how he was summoned, on a miserable day, to a meeting with Miss Self. During the meeting, she reminds him of one of the agency's most important rules where there will be no socializing with clients outside of the business engagement. She then asks what passed between Jones and Appleton, and Jones admits that he was given a card, but lies and says he lost it. Miss Self then shows him a letter from Appleton requesting Jones' company at Appleton's country home over Thanksgiving weekend. Expressing surprise when Jones indicates he actually wants to go, Miss Self comments that while it is a breaking of the company's rules, the fee she will charge will make up for it.

The narrative shifts back to the Ritz in Paris where, after leaving Kate asleep, Jones meets Aces in the bar. Shortly after, Aces, is called to the telephone and returns to say that Kate was very impressed with Jones and would like to hire him. Instead of responding to the offer immediately, Jones asks Aces about Kate's husband, Axel Jaeger. Aces tells him that Jaeger is a wealthy German businessman desperate for a male heir to his fortune and company and that as soon as Kate gave birth to their son Jaeger moved himself and the boy into isolation. Aces also says that he believes the Catholic Jaeger, who doesn't believe in divorce, wants to kill Kate so he can gain complete and permanent control over the boy. Eventually, Jones agrees to take the job as Kate's paid companion and masseur. Aces toasts him, assuring him he will never regret it. In narration, Jones comments that "seldom has a more untrue prophecy been prophesied."

That night in his cheap hotel room, Jones has a vivid dream of him and Kate walking on a beach, with a little boy playing fetch with a dog.

Part 2, Kate McCloud, p. 124 - 136 Analysis

Here again, in the development of what might be described as the Appleton sub-plot, there is the sense of narrative through-line and of unfulfilled foreshadowing. It feels very much as though there is more story to come, more plot to unfold, as the relationship between Jones and Appleton develops, but here again, lack of further material means that tantalizing hints become frustratingly stillborn.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to consider the parallels in the Jones and Appleton and the Jones and McCloud relationships. In other words, it is useful to see the reasons why the author chose to juxtapose the two narrative lines so closely.

In terms of the portrayal of Axel Jaeger as something of a monster, there are two points to consider. The first is the manifestation here of one of the book's key themes, the way

people use each other. Jaeger's use of Kate is one of the most, if not the most, self-serving manifestations of this theme in the book. A second, and perhaps more important point, relates to the question of truth vs. illusion as discussed by Woodrow Hamilton and Jones in "Unspoiled Monsters." Is Aces telling Jones the truth, or is he so under the spell of the vulnerable, manipulative Kate that he (Aces) is prepared to say anything in order to help her achieve what she wants? Is he manipulating the truth as a manifestation of his/her desire to "use" Jones? Again, because the manuscript is incomplete, the question is difficult to answer. In the meantime, the question of what is truth, what is illusion, and what is a blend of both is explored further in the manuscript's final chapter of "La Côte Basque."

Finally, in the chapter's final moments, there is the passing "Proustian" comment, another reference to"Remembrance of Things Past" written by Marcel Proust, and Jones' dream. Aside from the references to Kate and to himself, the imagery seems to suggest Kate's son and Mutt/Phoebe, with all four of them being together. There is the suggestion that the unspecified traumatic experience shared by Jones and Kate McCloud is the kidnapping of Kate's son, but again this is no more than a suggestion in this uncompleted text.

Part 3, La Côte Basque, p. 139 - 168

Part 3, La Côte Basque, p. 139 - 168 Summary

This section begins with a short, sharp, and crude story of two cowboys joking about how it takes masturbation to get a day started well, and then continues with Jones' narrative of how he was suddenly waylaid by the sophisticated socialite Lady Ina Coolbirth into lunch at the socially prominent restaurant La Côte Basque. After describing the history of the restaurant and narrating Lady Ina's ordering of a rare champagne and a complicated lunch, Jones narrates Lady Coolbirth's gossipy and sexy story about "Cole" and her pointed comments about the racist and homophobic British Royal Family, suggesting she is avoiding what she really wants to talk about. Jones lets his attention drift and he eavesdrops on a conversation between two other socialites, Mrs. Cooper and Mrs. Matthau, who gossip about Charlie and Oona O'Neill Chaplin and JD Salinger, among others. At one point, Mrs. Cooper is profoundly surprised to learn that the stranger who stopped by their table and acted as though he knows her was her first husband.

At that moment, the two socialites and Lady Ina all notice the arrival of Jackie Kennedy and her sister. Lady Ina speaks of how much more attractive the sister Lee is than Jackie, and then launches into a story of how Jackie's father in law, businessman Joe Kennedy, sexually assaulted her one morning while she was visiting him and his family. Again, Jones' attention drifts, and he finds himself watching a beautiful middle aged woman and a young man enjoying each other's company in a way he finds fascinating. Lady Ina sees who he's looking at and tells Jones the couple has been inseparable for a year or so, keeping each other company while they're both dying of leukemia.

The arrival of another socialite, the recently widowed Ann Hopkins sets Lady Ina off on another long story, this one the truth of how Mrs. Hopkins' late husband actually died. As Lady Ina tells it, Ann Hopkins was young, beautiful, ambitious, and uneducated, married the wealthy David Hopkins with his mother's support and in spite of his father's objections, and trained herself in the art of being a socialite. She also, Lady Ina says, gave birth to three children, cementing her relationship with David's mother, but after a while became both bored with her marriage and sexually promiscuous. David, meanwhile, fell in love with a more appropriate woman and gathered evidence to use against Ann in a divorce. When confronted with this evidence, Lady Ina says, Ann put into motion a plot to kill her husband in a staged home invasion. Ina also claims that with the help of David's mother, desperate to see the children cared for, fixed things with the police and the courts, meaning that David's death was legally declared an accident.

This section of the narrative concludes with the arrival of lunch or an exotic soufflé. Meanwhile, Mrs. Cooper and Mrs. Matthau gossip about another friend, Jane, who turned the tables on her philandering husband and his "peroxide" girlfriend by telling them that Jane had a sexually transmitted disease she had gotten from her husband.

Part 3, La Côte Basque, p. 139 - 168 Analysis

In terms of this story/chapter's literary considerations, several of the book's repeated motifs make further appearances here. These include crude sexuality, loneliness, and, perhaps most notably, the blending of reality and fiction. The Chaplins, the British Royals, the two gossipy socialites, Jackie Kennedy were real people and all appear here undisguised. The character of "Cole" is clearly intended to be perceived as renowned composer Cole Porter, while "Lady Ina" has been generally acknowledged to be a barely veiled portrait of socialite Slim Keith. All these portrayals, thinly disguised or not serve, in the same way as the appearances of other real-life celebrities appearing in these pages, to reinforce the idea that the author/narrator is attempting to increase his own importance, to himself and to his reader, by dropping the names of the important people he associates with. In other words, the author/narrator is attempting to fend off his own loneliness by surrounding himself with people who, in many ways, at least seem to never be lonely. The irony, of course, is that the stories told by Lady Ina and by the author/narrator himself suggest that in fact, these people are profoundly lonely, and themselves fill their loneliness with gossip, affairs, food, and above all self-importance.

In terms of the story/chapter's non-literary considerations, the most important thing to note about this section is that when it was originally published in the mid-1970's, "La Côte Basque" caused a sensation among the "small community" (as editor Joseph Fox calls it) "which [Capote] had set out to describe." The name dropping of real people, the minimal disguising of those whose names weren't dropped, and the revealing of secrets by Lady Ina and the other socialites were, to the people who had considered Capote a trustworthy friend and confidante, a profound betrayal of trust. Capote, editor Fox comments, was essentially banished from the society he had so desperately wanted to be part of, and which he had so ruthlessly mined for material for his work. Fox comments in his Editor's Note that Capote "professed to be undismayed" by what happened but was in fact shaken to the point of being traumatized and unable to write.

Capote's friends, in short, were unable to forgive him. The question is whether he ever became able to forgive himself.

Part 3, La Côte Basque, p. 168 - 180

Part 3, La Côte Basque, p. 168 - 180 Summary

Jones comments in narration that after lunch, Lady Ina seemed almost ready to tell him what she really wanted to tell him, but then she becomes distracted by another story, this one of a woman she identifies only as "the governor's wife" and a middle-aged Jewish stud she calls Sidney Dillon. She tells how Dillon set his mind to seducing the governor's wife because she represented everything he wasn't allowed to be part of. She says that he eventually succeeded, encountering the wife at a dinner party, taking her to the small apartment he shares with his wife, and after some awkward small talk, leading her to his bed. There, Lady Ina says, he attempted to have sex with her but was meeting with no response, with even penetrating her not working. Finally he gives up and as she leaves, he realizes that he and the bed are covered with blood that she had, in fact, been menstruating. Angrily, Lady Ina says, he asked why she came home with him, but then realizes the answer to his won question. "She had mocked him," Lady Ina says, "punished him for his Jewish presumption." At that point, Lady Ina asks why Jones isn't eating. He says he's lost his appetite. Lady Ina says that that's not even the worst of the story. She describes how there were no clean sheets, how Dillon realized he had no friends to trust and to call for help, how he cleaned the sheets himself and went to bed with them damp and how he woke up to find a note from his wife saying he looked too peaceful to disturb, and that she's gone out.

As Jones describes how the restaurant is emptying out, Lady Ina suddenly bursts into tears, admitting she's on her way to Mexico to get a divorce. She describes her growing sense that her husband was cheating on her, how he broke the news to her on a plane from England to the States, and how afraid she is of being alone. She then speaks of her envy of her friend Anita who, Ina says, has gone lesbian and is as happy as she was when she was a girl. She then gets up to go to the powder room.

Jones narrates how, after she left, "the priest and the assassin were sill whispering" at their table, but otherwise the restaurant was empty of customers. The staff was busy getting the restaurant ready for the evening. "It was an atmosphere of luxurious exhaustion," narration comments, "like a ripened, shedding rose, while all that waited outside was the failing New York afternoon."

Part 3, La Côte Basque, p. 168 - 180 Analysis

In the story of Sidney Dillon and the politician's wife, the narrative has its most graphic, its crudest, and its most telling exploration of its secondary theme commenting on the extent to which people will go to use one another. The wife's menstrual blood can be seen as a metaphoric expression of the spiritual and/or emotional "blood" shed by others who have been used, or by those who have come close to being used. Meanwhile, the washing of the sheets can, in its turn, be seen as a metaphoric

expression of the so-called "user's" desire to have a "clean" reputation in the aftermath of the using. At the same time, the story repeats the motif of crude sexuality, reiterating the idea that one of the most common ways people use each other, ore make use of another, is through sexual manipulation.

At the same time, revelation of Lady Ina's impending divorce and of her profound sense of loss all serve as reiterations of the book's central thematic consideration of loneliness, which is also at the heart of why she doesn't tell Jones the truth right off the top. She is afraid not only of the loneliness itself, but of revealing the vulnerability that results from both the loneliness and the admission. It's interesting to note here the parallel, probably unintended by the author, between the story he's telling and the outcome of that story being published. After "La Côte Basque" saw print he, like Lady Ina, was "divorced" from the relationships that gave his life meaning. Her fictionalized fear and loneliness foreshadows his real life experiences of those feelings, yet another manifestation of the blurred line between reality and fiction.

Finally, the book's last words suggest another thematic consideration that, in retrospect, can be seen as underlining and defining all the experiences the incomplete narrative communicates. The rose, the sense of "exhaustion", the "failing afternoon" all become metaphoric representations of the passage of time, of the fleeting and transitory nature of beauty, friendship, relationship, and trust. The superficial striving for connection and for meaning to assuage the existential loneliness fueling and defining all of the book's various stories including the life story of its author can themselves be seen as transitory, as the rose's petals which slowly unfurl, display their beauty, fade, and fall into inevitable oblivion.

Characters

P.B. Jones

P.B. Jones is the book's central character and narrator. It would, in all likelihood, be difficult to define him as a protagonist because although he does play a key role in many of the narratives, his function is more of an observer and storyteller, a listener and transcriber. There is very little sense that he is affected or transformed by any of the events he describes. Granted, in "Unspoiled Monsters" he and the narrative both display many of the characteristics that, if the novel was finished, might define him as a protagonist. He is clearly at the beginning of a journey of some sort, he clearly seems to be taking action and making choices to move him along that journey, and he has a goal that he wants that journey to achieve. The question, however, is this - can a character be a protagonist if that character has only a beginning to his story but no middle and no end?

Jones is, as noted in the Editor's Note, a barely disguised self-portrait by the author, celebrity novelist and commentator Truman Capote. It is therefore tempting, if not irresistible, for the reader to wonder how much of what Jones reveals about himself and his friends/acquaintances is real or fictional. Such speculation aside, however, the main point about this particular blending of fact and fiction is that in the context of artistic and/or literary creation in general, the character is a vivid if tactless example of how art so often mines life for material.

Finally, there is possible metaphoric value in the character's name, a value the book never explicitly explores in either its content or the Editor's Note. As noted earlier, the character's first two names are never revealed. The three initials together of P.B.J. however, can be seen as representing a very common, one might almost say plain, sort of food (a Peanut Butter and Jelly sandwich). A PBJ sandwich, it could be argued, shares a degree of homespun lack of sophistication with the narrator, a characteristic he clearly indicates, in both narration and action, he is desperate to leave behind.

High Society

"High society" is generally used to describe a segment of the population defined by wealth, status and influence that include both the financial and political spheres. Members of "high society" present themselves as sophisticated and worldly, and are often perceived by those outside of "high society" as being both ideal and indulgent. They are simultaneously enviable for their wealth, power, and status and contemptible for their lack of connection with the "real world" of hard work, lack of income, and responsibility. The narrator clearly aspires to be at least peripherally connected to and respected by "high society" since its members represent everything that he was not, is not, and longs to be.

Turner Boatwright, Alice Lee Langman

These two characters play primary, initiating roles in the early stages of Jones' writing career. Boatwright is a literary agent. Langman is a renowned novelist and academic. Both are sexually needy, offer criticism and moral support, and pull strings to bring Jones' work to increased public notice in exchange for him bringing them to greater sexual satisfaction.

Woodrow Hamilton, Victoria Self, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Appleton

These four characters are associated with Jones' history and practice as a prostitute. The dapper Hamilton is an acquaintance who introduces Jones to the very businesslike Miss Self, who in turn runs what would now be described as an escort agency. The unstable Mr. Wallace, who seems to be a very thinly veiled portrait of renowned playwright Tennessee Williams, is one of the agency's clients who uses Jones for merely sexual purposes. The well-off Mr. Appleton, by contrast, seems much more rational than Mr. Williams and not only uses Jones sexually but also seems to simply enjoy his company, eventually inviting him for a visit to his family's ranch.

Kate McCloud

Kate McCloud is a wealthy and troubled socialite whose name recurs several times throughout both "Unspoiled Monsters" and "La Côte Basque" as an important figure of reference in the narrator's experience - many other characters are compared to her, while many of the author's other experiences are compared to those he has with Kate. In the chapter that bears her name, Kate McCloud is portrayed as simultaneously a victim, an ambitious fortune hunter, and a profoundly vulnerable soul, which are characteristics that she shares with the narrator. This shared set of qualities is perhaps why the narrator's apparent relationship with her was so intense.

Aces Nelson

A friend of the rich and famous, a kind of procurer of services and almost a pimp, Aces Nelson is a catalytic figure in the relationship between Jones and Kate McCloud, as well as between Jones and his dog Mutt. It is he who brings them together, and he who explains the circumstances that bring both Kate and Mutt to the point of needing what Jones can provide.

Corinne Bennett, Perla Apfeldorf, Axel Jaeger

These three characters are associated with Kate McCloud, as assistant, friend, and husband respectively. Bennett is supportive and indulgent, Apfeldorf is sharp-tongued

and quick tempered, and Jaeger is cruel and domineering. The actions and attitudes of all three contribute to Kate's intense vulnerability.

Lady Ina Coolbirth

Lady Ina is the central character of "La Côte Basque," a gossipy and unhappy socialite who uses pleasure in the discretion-free stories of her fellow socialites to mask her own sense of grief and loneliness at the breakup of her socially advantageous marriage. There is a sense that the loneliness at the heart of both her character and her actions is a parallel to that of narrator Jones who, as he himself hints at in narration, is just as lonely and just as hidden behind a mask of observant, gossipy, and ruthless storytelling.

Mrs. Cooper and Mrs. Matthau

In "La Côte Basque", a table near that of Lady Ina and the narrator is occupied by two married socialites, Mrs. Cooper and Mrs. Matthau. Their conversations make up almost as much of the content of "La Côte Basque" as does the gossip of Lady Ina, the portrayal of the two women perhaps suggesting that they are less lonely than Lady Ina, but equally as bored and equally as happy to be shredding the lives of their friends.

Ann Hopkins and David Hopkins

The Hopkins' are the subjects of one of Lady Ina's stories. She tells Jones, in considerable detail, of Ann's history, her ambition, and her determination to retain what she has achieved even when David is intent upon divorcing her. That determination, Lady Ina tells Jones, directly led to Ann murdering her husband, while the Hopkins family's determination to avoid scandal at all costs led just as directly to Ann getting away with the killing.

Sidney Dillon and the Governor's Wife

Dillon and the unnamed Governor's Wife are the subjects of another of Lady Ina's stories, the former an ambitious Jewish gigolo and the latter an established, WASP-y socialite. Theirs is a tale of humiliation and manipulation, perhaps an echo of a similar experience undergone by Lady Ina as the result of her husband's affair.

Denham Fouts, Barbara Hutton, Montgomery Clift, Tallulah Ban

Throughout the book, the narrator describes encounters with several "real life" individuals that include the gigolo and writer's muse Fouts, socialite Hutton, movie star Clift, theater stars Bankhead and Winwood, columnist Parker, former First Lady and fashion icon Kennedy. Other, similarly famous and wealthy individuals are also referred

to as intimate partners of which those that are listed here, however, are the most prominent. In the case of all such individuals in the book, there is the very strong sense that the narrator is engaged in "name dropping," the practice of an individual using the names of the rich, famous, or established in order to make him/herself seem more important and/ or impressive. The sense here is that Jones, who clearly sees himself as being inferior and/or an outsider, is trying to impress both himself and his readers by making a point of listing who he knows and demonstrating how well he knows them.

Colette

"Colette" was the pen name of a well-known French novelist whose work drew heavily on real life experiences, and thinly disguised those experiences in her work. In this practice, she is similar in intent and practice to the author of "Answered Prayers," Truman Capote, P.B. Jones, the author's autobiographical protagonist, and Marcel Proust, the author of "Remembrance of Things Past." Her sexual adventurousness, her proto-feminism, her liberal activism and above all her narrative style all reinforce the premise that her presence in the narrative is, on some level, an affirmation of Jones' similar ambition, perspectives and and narrative style, while the gift she gives him, the crystal paperweight, is symbolic of that affirmation.

Objects/Places

New York City

New York City is portrayed throughout the book as a center of contrasts of both possibility and frustration and of hope and of despair. Jones is at his most vulnerable and his most victorious, his most seedy and his most successful, circumstances that are a direct result of the city and the life lived there by Jones and by his various associates.

The YMCA

YMCA is short for "Young Men's Christian Association." There have been YMCA organizations and buildings in almost every city in North America for decades. They have been, and were originally intended to be, places where men could exercise, relax, and in many cases find temporary accommodation for a minimal fee. The YMCA has also been a place where men could have sexual encounters with each other. In recent years the YMCA has rehabilitated both its image and its practices, opening its doors to members of both genders and other religious denominations. As portrayed in the narrative, however, it is an environment defined mostly by an omnipresent and seedy sexuality and an environment that seems to perpetuate his equally omnipresent self-loathing.

Paris

The narrator spends a substantial portion of narrative time in Paris, which he portrays as a center of both sophistication and creativity, and as such a place to which wealthy and artistic expatriates, particularly American, made their temporary homes.

The Ritz Hotel

The Ritz brand has been, for decades, regarded as one of the most expensive, classiest, and exclusive hotel chains in the world. Among all the Ritz branches, the Paris branch has, for almost as long, been viewed as the best of the best. The framing narrative of "Kate McCloud" takes place in the Ritz, but it is referred to several times throughout the narrative in the context outlined above.

Remembrance of Things Past

"Remembrance of Things Past" is the title of a famous novel by French writer Marcel Proust, renowned for its blend of fact and fiction, the way the author uses actual events to fuel and define literary and/or artistic creation. The author of "Answered Prayers" is

on record as suggesting that his work is intended to be both an honoring and an evolution of the narrative techniques employed in "Remembrance of Things Past."

Tangier

Tangiers is a city in Northern Morocco in the Middle East. A centuries-old port city, Tangiers has over the centuries been a place for the wealthy to find recreation, and for those who want to live off the wealthy to find ways of earning their keep.

Mutt / Phoebe

This is the dog unexpectedly given to the narrator during his meeting with Aces Nelson late in "Unspoiled Monsters." Mutt" is the name initially given to the dog by the narrator and Phoebe is the name given to the dog when he is taken over by Kate McCloud. The dog, according to Aces, was originally destined to be eaten by an elderly Asian. It is perhaps possible to see a metaphoric relationship between Mutt and Kate, in that Kate is herself destined to be "eaten" or destroyed by her controlling husband but, like the dog, is rescued when placed into Jones' care.

Colette's Paperweight

During his time in Paris, Jones is introduced to the famed French author Colette, who presents him with a valuable crystal paperweight from her collection.

The Self Service

"The Self Service" is the name of the agency with which the narrator is employed while in New York, providing wealthy clients with companionship of any sort, intellectual, romantic, casual, or sexual. In contemporary terms, the "Self Service" would be referred to as an escort agency. The name of the agency functions on three levels. They are the literal, the ironic, and the double entendre. This last is a term to describe a phrase which has both a literal and a potentially sexual meaning. In this case, the sexual meaning of "self service" can be seen as a reference to masturbation, itself an ironic reference in this case in that the employees of "The Self Service" provided sexual services so that the clients did not HAVE to resort to masturbation.

La Côte Basque

The Côte Basque was a very high class and expensive restaurant in New York City, opening in the late 1950's and remaining open until 2004. In the narrative as in reality, it was a place where wealthy members of the New York social scene, mostly women, met for good times, uninhibited conversation, and to simply be seen.

Themes

Loneliness

In spite of the wit, humor, and occasional poetry with which it is written, there is an overall sense of darkness about the novel and its themes, a darkness anchored in and essentially defined by loneliness. Specifically, there is a strong sense about both narrator and narration that central character P.B. Jones is not only personally lonely, but surrounded by loneliness that in many ways seems to echo his own. While he never explicitly comments that he is lonely, the stories he tells and the way he tells them combine to suggest that at the very least he is acutely sensitive to loneliness, a circumstance which, logic suggests, he has (to coin a phrase) an intimate acquaintance.

To begin with, Jones' frequent references in narration to the atmosphere of the YMCA are shot through with frequent references to searching, to isolation within that searching, and to a sense of pain within that isolation. Then there are the stories he tells about other characters, many of whom act as they do out of a need for human contact. This is particularly true of Kate McCloud, but it is also true of several other and less prominent characters, including Barbara Hutton and the clients to whom Jones is sent by the "Self Service" agency. Finally, there are the characters and circumstances for whom loneliness is never explicitly referred to, but whose actions suggest a desperate and longing reaching for some kind of connection. Alice Lee Langman and Lady Ina Coolbirth are both examples of this kind of loneliness.

Exploitation of Others

The book's primary theme of loneliness manifests, both narratively and thematically in several sub-thematic ways. The first of these is in the way many of the characters exploit or make use of others in order to ease their personal sense of isolation, either consciously or unconsciously.

The manifestations of this particular sub-theme, however, are not limited to easing loneliness. It also manifests in characters who use others for their own advancement. The narrator is quite frank about this aspect of his character and experience, writing in particular of his relationship with Alice Lee Langman which was entirely defined by his need for the connections and respect she can bring into his writing career. The narrative also makes clear, however, that he uses not only Langman but also everyone he meets to increase his social status and reputation. Here the line between author and character becomes quite blurred, since it is generally acknowledged that author Truman Capote desperately sought the status that came with knowing, and knowing the secrets of, the wealthy, privileged, powerful and successful. This, in turn, leads to what is perhaps the primary manifestation of this sub-theme, the very existence of the book itself. It has also been widely acknowledged that although it is technically a work of fiction, it is in fact reality, albeit very thinly disguised. In other words, Capote exploited his friends and

confidantes in order to write this book, to give himself, his work, and his reputation the veneer of being sophisticated and important. As outlined in the "Editor's Note," however, his efforts painfully and irrevocably backfired.

Fame and Fortune

A second sub-theme, co-existing and entwining inextricably with both the main and secondary theme, is the powerful attraction of fame and fortune, both of which are portrayed, right from the book's opening pages, as perhaps the ideal salve for the wounds caused by loneliness. The narrator is quite frank about his ruthless faith that being rich and famous will, at least to some degree, ease his sense of being an outsider, of being alone in a world where, it seems, everyone else belongs to another or to a group. The rich and famous, as individuals AND as a group, seem to the narrator to be ideally placed to be both successful and perceived as such, both situations he longs for. Again, the point must be made that according to the Editor's Note, the author shares similar feelings to his character. The point must also be made that the same could be said of many of the book's readers, both past and present.

It is interesting to note, however, that in the narrator's experience and that of many of the other characters, fame and fortune ultimately prove to be unsuccessful in facing down loneliness. As discussed in "Loneliness" above, there is the sense throughout the narrative that the narrator is writing from a place of ongoing isolation that, no matter what he does or says, he is unable to assuage. The same can also be said of many of the individuals he encounters, most of whom experience/have experienced fame and/or fortune but are still desperate for some kind of meaningful human contact. Such contact could be fleeting or lasting. In either circumstance it is longed for, in most cases whatever contact is achieved is unsatisfactory, making the thematic suggestion that fame and fortune are simultaneously triggers for and masks of profound loneliness.

Style

Point of View

The narrative is written from the first person and past tense point of view, which is specifically, that of the narrator, P.B. Jones. There are several points to note here. The first is that the book's narrative perspective, as is generally the case with most first-person narratives, is entirely subjective, with events, situations and characters described through the experiential and emotional filters of the narrator. In other words, the narrative is an interpretation as much as it is a recounting, said interpretation being defined by the specific prejudices and intentions associated with the person telling the story.

That said, in many cases of works employing the first-person narrative, there is a difference between the perspectives of the author and the narrator. A second point to note about the point of view of "Answered Prayers" is that there is the very strong sense of little or no difference at all between the perspectives of author and narrator. This sense arises from several factors, among them the incorporation of several real-life people, places and events, into the narrative and the author's stated intention to recreate and improve upon the narrative conventions of "Remembrance of Things Past." In addition, there are, as the editor's note also suggests, considerable parallels between author and narrator, in terms of both life experience and style of recounting those experiences. In short, "Answered Prayers" walks a very fine line between autobiography and fiction, a line that on occasion seems to have been crossed to the author's professional and personal detriment.

Setting

The first primary point to note about the narrative's setting is its placement in time. The 1970's were a time of transformation and indulgence, particularly when it comes to sexuality. The early Seventies in particular were the climax (pardon the pun) of the so-called Sexual Revolution, a period in which traditional attitudes and experiences of sexuality were breaking down, sexuality was becoming more openly and more publicly expressed, and there was a wider range of sexual activity on display. This sense of freedom verging on decadence suffuses the narrative, giving it a powerful sense of eagerness for new experience and transformation, of indulgence in those experiences in the hope of achieving that transformation, and need for experience and transformation to aid individuals in their search for escape from what depended upon the individual.

The second primary point about setting, its situation in place, is related, in that its primary settings of New York and Paris as well as its secondary ones including Tangiers were, at the time and to coin a phrase, playgrounds for high society, for those who had more, wanted more, and strove to achieve more. Paris and New York had for several

previous decades already been centers for "the rich and famous" to gather, to play, and to work, but in the 1950's both their reputation and their actuality became more gilded than ever. The irony of course, is that the narrative also includes glimpses of the life beneath that gilding specifically, in the narrator's rooms at the New York YMCA. The seedy loneliness at the heart of the narrator's day to day distance at the "Y" can therefore be seen as evoking similar loneliness and amorality beneath the superficially successful lives of the narrator and his "high society" friends.

Language and Meaning

In most first-person narratives, language is reflective of the character, intent, and circumstances of the narrator. In the case of "Answered Prayers", that narrator is P.B. Jones, an aspiring socialite and writer. This last point is particularly important to note, in that the nature of this particular character allows for the use of language that narratives defined by other, perhaps less educated and central first-person perspectives might not. In other words, the sophistication of vocabulary, sentence structure, and imagery is narrator-related, rather than imposed by the author.

Other elements of the narrator's character reflected by the narrative's language include ambition, self-loathing, a capacity for insight into others, and a certain ruthlessness or lack of compassion. In terms of intent, the wit, pointedness, and vividness of the narrative's language suggests that the narrative is intended to entertain the reader as well as to reveal the human frailties of both the narrator and those about whom he writes. In terms of circumstance, language here functions on two levels. The first is more literal, in that the, colorful evocative nature of the language paints an uncompromising picture of the narrator's uncomfortable environment at the YMCA as juxtaposed with the idealized plushness of the Ritz, the Cote Basque, and the locales to which he is sent by the hard-nosed Miss Self. In other words, language combines with setting to illuminate two contrasting but essential sides of the narrator's character. On another level, however, language functions to reveal depths of feeling and experience that the narrator doesn't necessarily intend to reveal, but the author evidently does. In other words, things the author knows about the narrator but the narrator does not know himself. In the case of Jones, the narrative's occasional manifestations of poetry suggest a sense of real depth to his perceptions, experiences and insight, as well as a depth to his disgust with and dislike of himself.

Structure

The first point to note about the narrative's structure is that as an intended full length work, it is incomplete. As the Editor's Note makes clear, the author intended to incorporate the sections of narrative published here into a novel, one in which the events described in each of this publication's three sections were more structurally linked. It is therefore difficult to comment on the overall structure of "Answered Prayers" in any way other than to consider its three sections as short stories, self-contained

works linked more by narrative point of view, style and theme than by overarching structure or plot.

There is a sense of looseness about each of the three pieces in the book and almost a sense of free association. In other words, that the narrator and author is moving from narration to narration, incident to incident, and experience to experience without a clear and anchoring through-line. "Traditional" narratives are structurally anchored in the cause-and-effect relationship between events they describe, in an overarching action-reaction-action principle, "this happened because that happened because the other happened." In "Answered Prayers," there is an overall sense of what seems like almost drunken rambling, of memory triggering memory, feeling triggering feeling, and idea triggering idea. Another way to look at it is that there is very little sense of there being a narrative or structural point to the stories and that they are meant to communicate experience and feeling and sensation rather than any kind of story.

The point is not made to suggest that this seeming looseness of structure is ineffective. On the contrary, it is in fact a very effective evocation of the relative aimlessness and indulgence of the lives and individuals the narration portrays. It must be remembered, however, that without a clear sense of the whole within which these parts were intended to fit, structural and narrative intent of these stories is ultimately difficult to discern.

Quotes

"More tears are shed over answered prayers than unanswered ones" (St. Teresa of Avila, Preface.)

"'What did they expect?' [Capote] was quoted as saying. 'I'm a writer, and I use everything. Did all those people think I was there just to entertain them?'" (pg. xv.)

"I have met Unspoiled Monsters! Spoiled ones, too. But the UN-spoiled variety is the rara avis: white truffles compared to black; bitter wild asparagus as opposed to garden grown" (pg. 4.)

"I keep thinking that maybe, if I change most of the names, I could publish this as a novel. Hell, I've nothing to lose; of course, a couple of people might try to kill me, but I'd consider that a favor" (pg. 13.)

"I am one of those persons who, when sexually immersed, require serious silence, the hush of impeccable concentration...all the mechanics must be assisted by the deepest fantasizing, an intoxicating mental cinema that does not welcome lovemaking chatter" (pg. 18.)

"It can be argued that even the most decently coupled people were initially magnetized by the mutual exploitation principle - sex, shelter, appeased ego; but still that is trivial, human: the difference between that and truly using another person is the difference between edible mushrooms and the kind that kill: Unspoiled Monsters" (pg. 21.)

"the theme moving through your work, as nearly as I can locate it, is of people achieving a desperate aim only to have it rebound upon them - accentuating, and accelerating, their desperation" (pg. 22.)

"she was a strong in the sureness of her gifts as I was feeble and paranoid in the uncertainty of mine" (pg. 23.)

"I'm the type, and a type by no means rare, who might be your closest friend, a buddy you talked to every day, yet if one day you neglected to make contact, if YOU failed to telephone ME, then that would be it, we'd never speak again, for I would never telephone YOU. I've known lizard-bloods like that and never understood them, even though I was one myself" (pg. 30.)

"I had preserved the faith: I thought of myself as a serious young man seriously gifted, not an opportunistic layabout, an emotional crook who had drilled Miss Langman till she geysered Gugenheims" (pg. 35.)

"the occasions when one does not sacrifice a talisman are at least two: when you have nothing and when you have everything - each is an abyss" (pg. 44.)

"'Think of Proust. Would Remembrance [of things Past] have the ring that it does if he had made it historically literal, if he hadn't transposed sexes, altered events and identities? If he had been absolutely factual it would have been less believable, but...it might have been better. Less acceptable, but better'" (pg. 48.)

"as truth is nonexistent, it can never be anything but illusion - but illusion, the by-product of revealing artifice, can reach the summits nearer the unobtainable peak of Perfect Truth" (pg. 49.)

"I thought he'd thought I meant to steal his pictures, when really what had infuriated him was the pity implicit in my proffered assistance" (pg. 51.)

"I never meant to see him again because he scared me ... it wasn't the drugs and chaos but the funereal halo of waste and failure that hovered above him: the shadow of such failure seemed somehow to threaten my own impending triumph" (pg. 67.)

"Among the planet's most pathetic tribes, sadder than a huddle of homeless Eskimos starving through a winder night seven months long, are those Americans who elect, out of vanity, or for supposedly aesthetic reasons, or because of sexual or financial problems, to make a career of expatriation" (pg. 72.)

"I let myself be led off to meet Kate McCloud. Kate, for whom I would lie, steal, commit crimes that could have, and still could, put me in prison for life" (pg. 94.)

"I hope you never reached the interior of the Planet Earth, never discovered...Unspoiled Monsters. With all my heart, what there is of it, I hope you moved to the country and lived there happily ever after" (pg. 96.)

"'Shut up. Don't call them names. I'm no better than they are. And you are no better than I am. We're all the same person'" (pg. 101.)

"'That's the saddest thing I've ever heard. To kill and destroy, that seems to me a very pathetic thing to call happiness'" (pg. 116.)

"It was as if I'd slipped into a furious white water, an icy boiling current carrying me, slamming me toward some picturesque but dastardly cascade...I had been loved, but I had never known love before, and so I could not comprehend the impulses, the desires careening around my brain like a bobsled" (pg. 123.)

"I saw myself, sword unsheathed, castrating dragons and fighting through infernos to rescue this child and bring him safely to his mother's arms. Pipedreams. Bullshit. And yet, instinct somehow told me the boy was the answer" (pg. 124.)

"At last I wasn't a deadbeat expatriate, an aimless loser; I was a man with a mission in life, an assignment" (pg. 135.)

"'My kind of woman needs a man. Not for sex. Oh, I like a good screw. But I've had my share; I can do without it. But I can't live without a man. Women like me have no other

focus, no other way of scheduling our lives; even if we hate him, even if he's an iron head with a cotton heart...freedom may be the most important thing in life, but there's such a thing as too much freedom'" (pg. 178.)

Topics for Discussion

Do you think there's a line between what an artist can or should use as source material and what s/he should leave alone? What is the balance between discretion and artistry? How far can/should an artist go in his or her search for new truths to incorporate into, and explore in his or her work?

Do you think Truman Capote's use of the lives and experiences of his friends as source material for his writing was reasonable and appropriate, or unreasonable and inappropriate? Why or why not? What do you think your reaction would be if you found that a friend had used experiences from your life, particularly ones revealed in confidence, as material for his or her creative efforts?

What do you think is the meaning of the phrase "unspoiled monster?" What makes a monster unspoiled as opposed to spoiled? Why do you think both Florie and the narrator would find a move to the country appealing after encountering "unspoiled monsters?"

Is P.B. Jones a spoiled monster or an unspoiled one? Explain your answer.

Discuss the parallels between the book's subject matter and tone and contemporary popular culture. In what ways do the gossipy celebrity revelations contained in the book have echoes in contemporary society?

Consider the book's title, "Answered Prayers", and the source of that title as defined in "Objects/Places". Discuss what you believe to be the "answered prayers" in the narrator's life that have caused "more tears [to be] shed"? In what ways do those answers lead to tears? How do you think the title also applies to the life and work of the author?

Discuss ways in which the quote from pg. 101 manifests, or is reflective of, the attitudes and actions of characters throughout the book, as well as what you know/understand of the author.

Discuss what you think are the reasons why the author chose to juxtapose the Jones and Appleton plot with the Jones and McCloud plot. What qualities do the two relationships and sets of circumstances share? What qualities in the one contrast those in the other? What are the thematic and narrative parallels?