

"Me? I detest itReggie sold our house."

This passage is extracted from A Handful of Dust, written by Evelyn Waugh. The novel shows how the thoughts of the English society are changed after World War I. People start losing faith in everything even in God. Women betray their husbands only for the sake of fun. Gossiping has become the only thing that people do instead of working. Old traditions and old morals are disintegrating and they have no place in their lives. Hence, the novel focuses on these changes by exposing and dealing with the personal lives of the members of this changing and disintegrating civilization.

These lines are a part of the conversation between Brenda Last and John Beaver when the latter has gone to visit the Lasts at Hetton. They are talking about Hetton, where John says that it is so beautiful and there are a lot of good things in it. On the other hand, Brenda hates it and she thinks that it is so ugly. She says that Hetton is the only thing that Tony cares about and he spends all his money in taking care of it. Even though Brenda does not like Hetton, she cannot say that to Tony since she knows that he is crazy about it and that they cannot leave Hetton and live anywhere else. She also says that living in Hetton costs them a lot of money and if it does was not for Hetton, they would have been so rich.

This kind of conversation gives a hint about the changes that are going to take place. The change will be the separation between Tony and Brenda. It is clear that Brenda begins to like John Beaver as she tells him all about her feeling towards Tony and Hetton. She even goes to visit him in London where they will have a love affair. This shows that Beaver and Brenda are alike in many things, one of them is the loss of morality and traditions.

John Beaver is an aimless lazy person. He has nothing to do in his life except waiting by the phone for someone to ask him for dinner, at the last moment. He lives with his mother, Mrs. Beaver, as he thinks that this will save him about five pounds a week. When he first sees Brenda, he admires her and he likes her personality. Nobody likes Beaver, however, he does not care about that as long as they ask him for dinner. Although he knows that Brenda is a married woman, he agrees to have an affair with her when his mother tells him that. Beaver is considered to be a parasite. He is the one who is responsible for turning Tony's life upside down after having an affair with Brenda.

Furthermore, when Brenda loses her money after her separation from Tony, he leaves her since she does not have enough money to support him. This shows that Beaver does not have any kind of morals or principles and he represents the lack of manly and gentlemanly qualities at that time. Unlike Tony who is

considered to be a gentleman who still keeps the old morals and traditions in his life. Tony is interested in Hetton and he believes that John Andrew, his son, is going to take care of it after his death. When Tony knows about the relationship between Brenda and Beaver, he does not believe it as he has always trusted and believed Brenda.

Brenda Last is Lord St. Cloud's daughter. She is so beautiful that everyone used to like her when she was a young girl. Mrs. Beaver says that everyone has thought that Brenda is going to marry Jock Grant-Menzies at one time but she is wasted on Tony because he does not deserve her. Brenda is totally different from Tony. She does not believe in old morals and traditions. She hates Hetton and that it is so ugly and does not deserve all the money that is spent on taking care of it. When Brenda knows Beaver, she likes him and agrees to have affair with him. She will even buy a flat in London in order to be close to him.

Moreover, when Brenda knows that John Andrew, her son, has died, she thanks God that it is not John Beaver as she has first got confused between the two names. After the death of John Andrew, Brenda asks Tony for divorce and she tells him that she loves Beaver and not him. This shows that Brenda does not have morals and traditions. She also represents the unfaithful wife who betrays her husband only for the sake of having fun.

This passage introduces the main theme of "A Handful of Dust", which is the disintegration of the civilization and morality in the period between the Two World Wars. Society accepts Brenda's affair with Beaver very naturally as if it is not something strange. Everybody is interested in and excited about this affair. The fact that Beaver belongs to a lower class and that Brenda is a married lady, does not seem to bother anyone. It is an example of the disintegration of morality and the loose behaviour that is beginning to replace Victorian traditions and morals. Even the names and the places support the main theme. For instance, "Hetton" which is considered to be a symbol of the old morals and traditions, has become hideous and nobody cares about it. In addition, "Last" shows that Tony is the only one who believes in morality, dignity and traditions and that he is the only one who is still interested in Hetton.

The narrative voice also plays an important role in emphasising the writer's point of view. In "A Handful of Dust", Evelyn Waugh uses the third person narration. This kind of narration allows the writer to go wherever he likes and to get inside the minds and hearts of the characters. The writer also has the advantage of describing all events that take place even if they are happening at the same time. On the other hand, it helps the reader to understand and know more about the events and the characters of the novel.