

Regime change

Advancing down the road from Niniveh
Death paused a while and said 'Now listen here.

You see the names of places roundabout?
They're mine now, and I've turned them inside out.

Take Eden, further south: at dawn today
I ordered up my troops to tear away

its walls and gates so everyone can see
that gorgeous fruit which dangles from its tree.

You want it, don't you? Go and eat it then,
and lick your lips, and pick the same again.

Take Tigris and Euphrates; once they ran
through childhood-coloured slats of sand and sun.

Not any more they don't; I've filled them up
with countless different kinds of human crap.

Take Babylon, the palace sprouting flowers
which sweetened empires in their peaceful hours -

I've found a different way to scent the air:
already it's a by-word for despair.

Which leaves Baghdad - the star-tipped minarets,
the marble courts and halls, the mirage-heat.

These places, and the ancient things you know,
you won't know soon. I'm working on it now.'

Readings

- Students should read the poem so as to discover the general meaning.
- Through this general meaning symbols, images, figure of speech are manipulated so as to find the accurate meaning of the poem.

Key words

- Heritage
- Civilization
- Seven wonders of the world
- Mesopotamia

Themes

- Civilization vs Primitivism
- Regime change vs war
- Destroying Iraq vs Saddam Hussein
- Death as a war general
- American lack of heritage

Form

- Heroic Couplet
- The use of rhyme, and figure of speech the indicate war

Structure

- Circular structure

Discussion

- Students' responses to the poem.
- Every student should write a critical essay to be discussed in the next lecture.