*Question 6*

*“Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself.” Discuss.*

In *Lanark*, the phrase “Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself” becomes literally embodied in the institute’s eating habits. Symbolically, this imagery represents the cannibalistic nature of human competition for power. As Noakes and Grant tell Lanark, the “recipe” to the pie is “separation.” I see this separation as involving 1.) the practice of isolating oneself (or one’s group) from others, allowing them to be depersonalized (and later consumed), and 2.) positioning oneself (or one’s group) from this isolated state as naturally more fit than the others. This can be seen in the Institute. It exists underground, isolated from the world above, and positions itself as a better society because it “heals” people. But it continually looks to grow larger and uses its alleged goodness as justification for its actions. This includes transforming the bodies of some patients into food, using severe cases of dragonscale as energy sources, and its hope to completely consume the city of Unthank. Interestingly, the only thing that is able to (temporarily) save Unthank is a newly discovered natural resource that the “creature” – the mega-corporations with seemingly more power than the institute – can “eat” and profit off of.

Key Passages:

* *Rima cried, "Oh how kind you are!" and began eating figs. Lanark said passionately,*

*"You are a decent man," and opened the carton of cheese. Noakes sat watching them with a faint wistful smile. He said, "Cannibalism has always been the main human problem. When the Church was a power we tried to discourage the voracious classes by feeding everyone regularly on the blood and body of God. I won't pretend the clergy were never gluttons, but many of us did, for a while, eat only what was willingly given. Since the institute joined with the council it seems that half the continents are feeding on the other half. Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself and the recipe is separation." (101)*

* + Noakes describes how the Church “tranquilized” the people in its position of power. The cannibalistic consumption here is two-fold in that 1.) the Church becomes the divine, separating itself from the fallible world, only to “glut” on the contributions of the latter; and 2.) the individuals consume the emotions and religious messaging thrown at them – such as the “eating of the blood and body of God” – to satiate the urge for meaning and power. But Noakes then acknowledges how the dynamic as changed; power no longer circulates around the Church as it now revolves around the hegemony of the council and the institute.
* *"Who did the council fight?"*

*"It split in two and fought itself."*

*“That's suicide!"*

*“No, ordinary behaviour. The efficient half eats the less efficient half and grows stronger. War is just a violent way of doing what half the people do calmly in peacetime: using the other half for food, heat, machinery and sexual pleasure. Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself, and the recipe is separation.”*

*"I refuse to believe men kill each other just to make their enemies rich.”*

*"**How can men recognize their real enemies when their family, schools and work teach them to struggle with each other and to believe law and decency come from the teachers?"*

* + The ordinary “instinct” to compete for not only survival but power is socially constructed via discourse.As Grant points out, “How can men recognize their real enemies when their family, schools and work teach them to struggle with each other and to believe law and decency come from the teachers?" I read “the teachers” here as the council. The council perpetuates the myth that it is naturally holier than the society it governs, that it can be looked to for guidance. Yet it is continuously looking for more power and greed itself, even willing to consume the pieces of itself that prevent it from growing.
* *”’Men are pies that bake and eat themselves, and the recipe is hate.”*
  + Thaw’s story – as one that falls within Lanark’s story – must also follow the sentiment of “Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself.” On page 124, I see Thaw’s refusal to eat the Shepherd’s pie as a mirror of Lanark’s disgust with the institute’s food. Thaw even describes the Shepherd’s pie as looking like it has human body parts in it. Yet Thaw eventually eats it after hearing that the previous tenant killed herself by sticking her head in the oven (the place where the pie is made). I’m honestly not sure what this means… Is death the “recipe of separation” for him?Importantly, the one time Thaw evokes this language is when he is having an asthma attack, using “hate” at the recipe instead of “separation.” In this moment, he believes hate is the “key” that will solve all of his problems, but he later backtracks on this thought when sitting in sunlight. With the idea of isolation, Thaw does often isolate himself from others, eventually even committing suicide.