Critical Reading Questions:

1. How does the author define "Coventry"? Who is sent? Who sends someone there? Cite one or two examples from the text and one example from your own life where someone has been "sent to Coventry."

* “Coventry is where the author is sent to when her parents are irritated. Every so often, for offence actual or hypothetical, my mother and father stop speaking to me.”
* I feel very related to what the author says because I was sent to Coventry by my mom a lot. When I did something wrong or something that she is not satisfied with, there is a massive silence. She refused to communicate or listen to my explanations unless I followed her will. I feel like this mental abuse is even more toxic than physical abuse.

1. Cusk speaks of the importance of the story for families. Each family has a story that must be upheld. Explain her meaning, cite and example, and write how you have seen this work in your own families or those you know.

* From what the author wrote that she has been terrified of Coventry because that means the ejection from the story, I think the story here is something that holds the family together. It is something to show that “you are in/ you are a part of this family” and when you are kept out of the story, you are exiled. The story is also something that keeps the problems of reality away, and when you are in the story, you are, at least you pretend, you are good.
* Just like what the author has experienced, I have been summoned back to the story when it would raise threaten if I’m absent.

1. Cusk speaks about silence throughout her [essay](https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/34245/assignments/680570?module_item_id=1127801). The silent treatment from her parents, silent retired couples on vacation. How has the meaning of silence shifted for her over time? How does it work with her parents? How does she views silence in those people she observes? With her current husband?

* At first, the silence is the result of failed to control the narratives for her parents. When she saw the silent old couples, silence to her represents “the problem of reconnecting to reality once the story has ended.” When she first met her husband, the silence made her nervous. But gradually the author accepted the silence and realized that it does not necessarily mean a bad thing.

1. Cusk incorporates a lot of physical imagery-- bombed out cathedrals, ruins, marshlands (which if you look up can be a sort of barren wasteland). What is the purpose of these images? How does she use these images to deliver her message of being exiled from her family, or as she puts it, written out of the family story. Explain with examples.

* The purpose of these images is to create a feeling of desolation, which represents her feelings when she is kept out of the story. Specifically, I think the author used marshlands as a metaphor. When she said she found “unable to progress” as she tries to walk out across the marshlands, it represents that she is swamped in dismayed and upset feelings when she was exiled. But when the summer came, the marsh is dry, which implies that the author no longer felt afraid of silence .

1. How has the author's fear of being sent to Coventry shifted over time? Track her initial feelings/ emotions/ reactions from the beginning of the essay to the end.

* At the beginning of the essay, she feels dismayed, upset, angry, and ashamed when she is sent to Coventry by her parents. But after the family dinner where she was sent to Coventry again, she found herself accepting it and even felt safer in those silence. And in the end, she refuses to let her parents take the initiative, she wrote, “I don’t want to leave Coventry. I’ve decided to stay.”

1. Cusk's children are less affected by their grandparents' behavior--how they routinely exile their daughter from their lives. She speaks of them as being quick to forgive, but not without criticism of her children. Why do you think Cusk says towards the end of her essay that "a world without conflict, without "Coventry," is also a world without memory? Explain

- I think the memory mentioned here is a bad memory. It is the memory of being exiled and helpless. Usually, these painful memories are always more unforgettable than good memories. And it is because her children did not experience the cold violence she experienced that she said it is a world without memory.

1. Cusk has spoken about being done with fiction, as she is more concerned with "truth" and "reality." She is undoubtedly a thinking writer. She tends to examine her thoughts from many different angles to arrive at a deeper understanding of herself and perhaps illuminate the truth for her reader too. This essay is a personal essay, but for her to see clearly she writes about herself very simply, and at times, harshly, in resistance to what I would call sentimentality. I consider this another form of exile. Exiling from her own limited POV, in [order](https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/34245/assignments/680570?module_item_id=1127801) to scrutinize, think rationally, and see herself more honestly. Is it successful? What is your reaction to this style of personal essay that is full of personal details, but not in the genre of confessional writing (like a diary entry)? Write a one- two-paragraph response on what it means as a writer to use the first-person narration but in the style of the third-person (with distance, as if watching from the outside)? What does using the intimate first person in such a self-alienating way do to convey her message? How does this stylistic choice show the ways we are exiled from our "true" selves? You are free to incorporate any claims from the book review here to support your ideas, or cite claims from the review you disagree with-- as long as you explain why! :)

- I think this article is successful in terms of using the first-person narration but with the third-person’s distance. While the author tried to be more objective when reflecting on her experience, I am touched and feel related to her experience of being exiled. What I don’t like about this essay is that when she uses this kind of narrative, she looks very judgmental. For example, she said about her female friend, “ It is almost as if she feels that the true story of her family has eluded her; and that the mountain of discarded possessions, like a mountain of unopened husks, would represent the size and scale of the mystery.”

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