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Course Objectives:

At the end of the course, the student- teachers will be able to discuss the literature in common.

Pre-requisite:

No specific knowledge is required.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMON WEALTH LITERATURE

As a term in literary regional studies, Commonwealth literature is generally believed to refer to the literary products of the independent countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbeans and North America which were once colonized by the United Kingdom. The works of writers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Malaysia and Singapore are therefore regarded as Commonwealth literature.

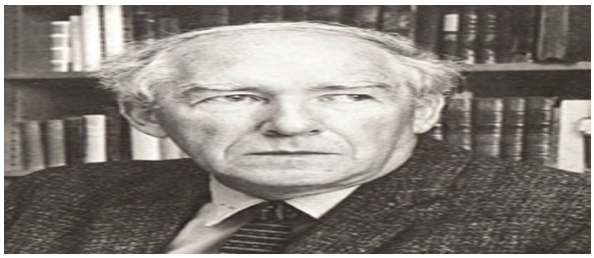
The term "Commonwealth literature" poses significant problems of definition. It has historical, geographic, political and linguistic connotations that simultaneously affirm and revise its status as a distinct body of literary work. The historical fact of colonization by the United Kingdom and the linguistic reality of English as mother tongue or official language do not automatically imply membership of either the Commonwealth as a political organisation or of the body of literary works known as Commonwealth literature.

Unit I

A.D. Hope – Australia

Biography of the poet:

Alec Derwent Hope was born on 21 July 1907 at Cooma, in the Snowy Mountains area of southern New South Wales, where his father was a Presbyterian minister. He was educated at home and at schools in Tasmania and New South Wales as the family moved around to different parishes. Matriculating to Sydney University, he graduated Bachelor of Arts with majors in English and Philosophy in 1928 and won a scholarship to University College, Oxford. His Oxford career, however, was not a distinguished one; he returned to Sydney in 1932 with a disappointing third-class degree and trained as a teacher. In 1937 Hope married Penelope Robinson with whom he had three children. He was appointed lecturer in education at the Sydney Teachers' College in 1937, later becoming lecturer in English there from 1938-44. During the 1940s Hope took part in the Australian Broadcasting Commission's Children's Session, as 'Anthony Inkwell' conducting the literary section of the Argonaut's Club. In 1945 he moved to the University of Melbourne and in 1951 was appointed Professor of English at Canberra University College (later the Australian National University) where he taught until his retirement in 1968.



Although he had been writing for many years, Hope did not publish any of his poems until the 1930s. His first collection, *The Wandering Islands*, did not appear until 1955, by which time he had built a reputation as a poet through publications in various periodicals. It was praised for Hope's skilful use of traditional verse forms and critique of contemporary values and received the

Grace Leven Poetry Prize. His second collection, *Poems* (1960), was published in London, underscoring the fact that for many years Hope was the best-known Australian poet internationally, appearing in many anthologies and receiving in 1965 the Arts Council of Great Britain Poetry Award, in 1968 the Levinson Prize for Poetry (Chicago) and in 1969 the Ingram Merrill Award for Literature (New York).

A small volume of selected poems, *A. D. Hope* (1963) in Angus and Robertson's Australian Poets series, was soon followed by Collected Poems 1930-1965 (1966). Thereafter collections of new poems appeared at regular intervals, interspersed by new editions of *Selected Poems* in 1972, 1986 and 1992, the latter sharing the Australian Capital Territory Book of the Year Award for 1993. *A Late Picking: Poems* 1965-1974 (1975) received The Age Book of the Year Award, Imaginative Writing Prize for 1976. The satiric note so strong in much of Hope's earlier work, and seen especially in his mock-heroic *Dunciad Minor*(1970), a contemporary version of English eighteenth-century poet Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad,* is less evident in his late poems. His interest in mythology, seen as embodying 'the great commonplaces' of human life, remained until the end, as is apparent in the title of his final collection *Orpheus* (1991).

In addition to his many volumes of poetry, Hope was a widely published critic, reviewer and editor. *The Cave and the Spring: Essays on Poetry* (1965) won both the 1965 Britannica-Australia Literary Award and the Volkswagon Award for 1966. After some years in a Canberra nursing home, Hope died on 13 July 2000. In 1981 he had been made a Companion of the Order of Australia for services to literature.

Hope is recognized as one of the most influential and celebrated Australian poets of the twentieth century. Critics classify him as a “classic poet,” in that

much of his work utilized traditional forms and rejected modernist and postmodernist poetic trends. He also incorporated mythology, legends, and fables in his verse. Despite the anachronistic nature of Hope's poetic oeuvre, commentators praise his biting satire, the clarity of his language, and sophistication of his poetic vision and view him as an important contributor to traditional prosody in contemporary poetry.

Major Works

Although Hope's poetry is regarded as stylistically conservative—he utilized the iambic quatrain—the subjects of his verse were varied in scope. He is considered a major writer of erotic verse. Several of his early poems, such as "Phallus," reject the pleasures of sexual relationships and romantic attachment. Yet in later work, the beauty of the human body and the thrill of passion and erotic adventure become a central theme in many of his poems. In others he reflects on the dual nature of love; in "Imperial Adam," for example, Adam finishes a pleasurable sexual tryst with Eve only to visualize that their act has unleashed the first murderer, their son Cain, on the world. Hope is also viewed as a satirical poet, as many of his works poke fun at technology, conformity, and the absurdity of modern life. In "Australia" he notes the lack of culture and intellectual challenges to be found in Australian society. "The Return from the Freudian Islands" skewers the trend of psychological theorizing. Other poems explore such topics as creativity, nature, music, and the wonders of science. Hope's incorporation of myth and legend is viewed as a defining characteristic of his poems. "The End of the Journey" is an imaginative and bleak retelling of the Ulysses-Penelope story. "Paradise Saved" and "Imperial Adam" concern the Edenic myth. In other works Hope discusses the role of the artist in contemporary society and asserts his theory of poetic expression. His long poem, "Conversation with Calliope," investigates the status of epic poetry in our modern world.

AUSTRALIA

A nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey
In the field uniform of modern wars
Darkens her hills, those endless, outstretched paws
Of Sphinx demolished or stone lion worn away.

They call her a young country, but they lie:
She is the last of lands, the emptiest,
A woman beyond her change of life, a breast
Still tender but within the womb is dry.

Without songs, architecture, history:
The emotions and superstitions of younger lands,
Her rivers of water drown among inland sands,
The river of her immense stupidity

Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth.
In them at last the ultimate men arrive
Whose boast is not: 'we live' but 'we survive',
A type who will inhabit the dying earth.

And her five cities, like five teeming sores,
Each drains her: a vast parasite robber-state
Where second-hand Europeans pullulate
Timidly on the edge of alien shores.

Yet there are some like me turn gladly home
From the lush jungle of modern thought, to find
The Arabian desert of the human mind,
Hoping, if still from the deserts the prophets come,

Such savage and scarlet as no green hills dare
Springs in that waste, some spirit which escapes
The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes
Which is called civilization over there.

Summary of A.D. Hope's "Australia":

A.D. Hope is an Australian poet. Australian poets write about aborigines (native Australians) and about their identity in their poems. The poem "Australia" talks about the present condition of Australia.

Australia was once a land of trees, but today it is full of war and soldiers. The lands are now covered by the military uniforms – green and grey. Its hills are dark and broken like the broken lion statues of Egypt.

People call Australia a young country. The poet does not agree with them because Australia has a long history. It has its own songs, arts and history. It may look young as it has a long history to tell.

The aborigines are enslaved by the alien countries. The aborigines do not live but they are said to 'survive'. The five major cities of Australia (Melbourne, Sydney,Perth, Canberra and Adelaide) are colonized. The aborigines are chased out by the alien rulers. The original citizens are no more given equal rights.

The poet is hopeful. He ends the poem with a positive note. He says that some prophet would emerge or come from the Australian ground, who would claim freedom and rights to liberate the aborigines and Australian culture from the colonizers.

Analysis of the poem:

Alec Derwent was one of Australia's greatest poets, who touched the lives of many throughout the world.

Within the seven stanzas of "Australia", A.D hope gives us a very negative one-sided approach to the poem. His poetry explores the spiritual poverty of our land. He insinuates that it takes so much to survive which has prevented Australians from reflecting upon their journey through life. A.D hope is looking down on Australia and our way of life. The somber images of ' a nation of trees, drab green and desolate grey' indicate that Australia is a monotonous and dreary place.

Each stanza consists of four lines with the rhyme scheme being ABBA. Little enjambment exists in the poem; most of the stanzas stand alone as paragraphed.

' ..drab green and desolate grey'

' Her rivers of water down among inland sands'

'Floods her monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth."

A.D Hope uses imagery as a means to convey meaning to the poem. The dark colors portray the insipidness of the landscape. Monotonous tribes refer to the fact that there is no individualism throughout Australia everyone looks and thinks the same. The alliteration helps to once again convey an image ' drab green and desolate grey'. 'She is the last of lands, the emptiest.' A. D Hope uses this metaphor to give the concrete reality that Australia does have human qualities an abstract idea. The tone is mocking Australian culture, our history, our land and the way we live our life.

A.D Hope gives Australia human qualities he refers to the land as a women "they call her a young country'. Australia is Hope's criticism of general Australian society and the country itself.

'a women beyond her change in life, a breast

still tender but within the womb is dry

refers to the fact that Australia is empty the inability to bear children, being infertile a change of life.

Hope's piece outwardly critiques modern civilian talk by talking about the problems and outcomes resulting from colonization.

The first stanza illustrates Hope's discontent with the land through the contrast of "drab green and desolate grey". Through the use of ironic descriptive imagery, Hope showcases his attitudes with the land considering the historical bloodshed that came associated with it "In the field uniform of modern wars" demonstrates the bloodshed that had occurred over this land.

The second stanza addresses the historical issue of colonization and stolen land from the Indigenous Australian community. "They call her a young country, but they lie" – here, Hope points out that our proper history is not properly recognized and is instead dismissed and diminished to little importance. Instead of cultivating a resourceful relationship with the land, we have stripped it of its resources leaving it barren. Through the use of personification of the Australian landscape, Hope creates a lasting impact of the drastic effects this had left on both the land and the poet himself". She is the last of the lands, the emptiness / Awoman beyond her change of life, a breast / Still tender but within the womb is dry" – essentially this points out the bleak mistreatment of land and the erasure of Australia's dark history itself.

The third and fourth stanza condemns the effect of colonization of which in effect transformed into eventual industrialization and capitalism. Instead utilizing and appreciating the natural environment it is now replaced with architecture i.e. buildings. There is now this obsession of inhabiting the land, not for the sake of living for ulterior reasons" Whose boast is not: 'we live' but 'we survive'".

Stanza Five & Six addresses the problem of leaching off the land; this is used through the comparison of "sores" and "parasite". Hope points out that, the "secondhand Europeans" are no different to the predecessor counterparts whereby they continue to exploit the land for financial gain. Towards this section of the poem, Hope is attempting to convince the audience to reject the romanticisation of the Australian landscape and its identity through the use of providing imagery of city-like landscape and urbanization instead of the stereotypical outback. This is backed up with the stark imagery of overpopulation in city-scapes "Where secondhand Europeans pullulate".

The last stanza shows Hope's final jab of his criticism of people and questioning the definition of civilization as a whole. This stanza backs up Hope's entire attitude of being discontented and scathing attitudes of romanticizing the physical identity of the Australian landscape overall. Hope leaves us with the final lines "The learned doubt, the chatter of cultured apes/ which is called civilization of over there" provides a jarring image of Hopes entire attitude and his idea of his Australia.

Theme of A.D. Hope's poem "Australia":

Australia is a country filled with migrating people who came from many part of world. Most of them were dependent people and government took care of each and individual. Even though they were migrating people they had some strict

government rules and regulations. Thus the author wanted to convey their manners and really what they were.

Australia was a poem by A.D.Hope who was born in 21 st July 1907. His major subjects are English and Philosophy. His collection of poem is 'Wandering Island' (1955). His final collection was Orpheus (1992). This was banned because of highly erotic and satirical. The first five stanzas dealt with how the Australia was. There was sarcasm in final line which implied 'cultural apes'. He said that Australia was a mechanical and monotonous land. In this poem his country was intentionally traumatized by author. The poem gave negative perception and affected the life of survival in Australian country. The poem reflected the lack of individualism and spiritual poverty. It was the continent with ambiguous state.

The first stanza conveyed that the trees in Australia were seemed dull which stood in a desolate place. Generally the term NATURE was a charm thing but in this continent it looked like a desolated one. Nobody cared about it. Many people gave importance to face only. They didn't care about inner heart. The author compared this character as 'Sphinx'.
The people in Australia were homogenous. The author called them as Young but it ironically conveyed immature. He pointed out the vulnerability of land and the theme of rebellion. By reading this poem audience had to know that he was against his country. There was no proper sense among them. They were not creative and independent he added.

From the famous spot Cairns to Perth there was only flow of river of stupidity which implied all the people were stupid and foolish. The people in this continent were not living, they were surviving. The so called five teeming stores which indicated Melbourne, Sidney, Perth, Canberra, Adelaide. The

people in these were not had their own identity. They were like parasites which dependent on others.

The author called their mind ‘of Australian dumb like’. He said that their mind was dumb like people who lived in the Arabian Desert. He was waiting whether anyone of prophet would come and tell something good about Australia. They themselves called civilized people but there was no civilization.

Margaret Atwood – Journey to the interior

Biography of the poet:

Margaret Eleanor Atwood was born in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, in 1939. She moved with her family to Sault Ste. Marie, Canada, in 1945 and to Toronto, Canada, in 1946. Until she was eleven she spent half of each year in the northern Ontario wilderness, where her father worked as an entomologist (insect scientist). Her writing was one of the many things she enjoyed in her "bush" time, away from school. At age six she was writing morality plays, poems, comic books, and had started a novel. School and preadolescence brought her a taste for home economics. Her writing resurfaced in high school, though, where she returned to writing poetry. Her favorite writer as a teen was Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), who was famous for his dark mystery stories.

Atwood was sixteen years old when she made her commitment to pursue writing as a lifetime career. She studied at Victoria College, University of Toronto, where she received a bachelor's degree in 1961. Then she went on to complete her master's degree at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1962. Atwood also studied at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 1962 to 1963 and from 1965 to 1967.

Atwood has received more than fifty-five awards, including two Governor General's Awards, the first in 1966 for *The Circle Game,* her first major book of poems; the second for her 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale,* which was made into a movie. In 1981 she worked on a television drama, *Snowbird,* and had her children's book *Anna's Pet* (1980) adapted for stage (1986). Her recognition is often reflective of the wide range of her work. She is also a major public figure and cultural commentator.

MargaretAtwood.

Most of Atwood's fiction has been translated into several foreign languages. A new Atwood novel becomes a Canadian, American, and international bestseller immediately. There is a Margaret Atwood Society, a *Margaret Atwood Newsletter,* and an ever-increasing number of scholars studying and teaching her work in women's studies courses and in North American literature courses worldwide.

Atwood has alternated prose (writing that differs from poetry due to lack of rhyme and closeness to everyday speech) and poetry throughout her career, often publishing a book of each in the same or consecutive years. While in a

general sense the poems represent "private" myth and "personal" expression and the novels represent a more public and "social" expression, there is, as these dates suggest, continual interweaving and cross-connection between her prose and her poetry. The short story collections, *Dancing Girls* (1977), *Bluebeard's Egg* (1983), and especially the short stories in the remarkable collection *Murder in the Dark* (1983) bridge the gap between her poetry and her prose.

Atwood writes in an exact, vivid, and witty, style in both prose and poetry. Her writing is often unsparing in its gaze at pain and unfairness: "you fit into me / like a hook into an eye / a fish hook / an open eye" (from *Power Politics*) "Nature" in her poems is a haunted, clearly Canadian wilderness in which, dangerously, man is the major predator of and terror to the "animals of that country," including himself.

Atwood's novels are sarcastic jabs at society as well as identity quests. Her typical heroine is a modern urban woman, often a writer or artist, always with some social-professional commitment. The heroine fights for self and survival in a society where men are the all-too-friendly enemy, but where women are often participants in their own entrapment.

Atwood is also a talented photographer and watercolorist. Her paintings are clearly descriptive of her prose and poetry and she did, on occasion, design her own book covers. Her collages and cover for *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* bring together the visual and the written word.

Atwood is known as a very accessible writer. One of her projects, the official Margaret Atwood Website, is edited by Atwood herself and updated frequently. The Internet resource is an extensive, comprehensive guide to the literary life of the author. It also reveals a peek into Atwood's personality with the links to her favorite charities, such as the Artists against Racism site, or humorous blurbs she posts when the whim hits. As well, the site provides dates of lectures and

appearances, updates of current writing projects, and reviews she has written. The address is: http://www.owtoad.com

Margaret Atwood's contribution to Canadian literature was most recently recognized in 2000, when she received Britain's highest literary award, the $47,000 Booker Prize. Atwood donated the prize money to environmental and literary causes. Her generosity is not at all a surprising development to her many fans.

JOURNEY TO THE INTERIOR

There are similarities
I notice: that the hills
which the eyes make flat as a wall, welded
together, open as I move
to let me through; become
endless as prairies; that the trees
grow spindly, have their roots
often in swamps; that this is a poor country;
that a cliff is not known
as rough except by hand, and is
therefore inaccessible. Mostly
that travel is not the easy going

from point to point, a dotted
line on a map, location
plotted on a square surface
but that I move surrounded by a tangle
of branches, a net of air and alternate
light and dark, at all times;
that there are no destinations
apart from this.

There are differences
of course: the lack of reliable charts;
more important, the distraction of small details:
your shoe among the brambles under the chair
where it shouldn't be; lucent
white mushrooms and a paring knife
on the kitchen table; a sentence
crossing my path, sodden as a fallen log
I'm sure I passed yesterday

(have I been
walking in circles again?)

but mostly the danger:
many have been here, but only
some have returned safely.

A compass is useless; also
trying to take directions
from the movements of the sun,
which are erratic;
and words here are as pointless
as calling in a vacant wilderness.

Whatever I do I must
keep my head. I know
it is easier for me to lose my way
forever here, than in other landscapes

Summary of Margaret Atwood's "Journey to the interior"

Margaret Atwood is better known as a Canadian author of books rather than a poet. She is a prolific writer and very creative so it is interesting to look at this poem.

Stanza: I

This is obviously an internal journey within contrasted with travelling in the external environment. The first line states that there are 'similarities'. The eyes define the scene as a wall to be broken perhaps a 'flat wall' as the scene only comes from 'known' when entered at a personal level. But what is found in stanza – 1 is that environment is endless as 'prairies' and that it is 'poor country' and not easy going. Well, to get know yourself – who you really are – is perhaps a difficult and endless task. But this is the start of the journey so, hopefully, the country will improve with travel. It is interesting that the cliffs cannot be seen for what they are except at a very base level.

Stanza: II

Destination is unknown except to be vague as a dotted line between points on a map. The endless light and dark could relate to day and night as well as emotional highs and lows. It is guessed that when we start any internal search we have little idea of what might be revealed and again it is a difficult journey to untangle.

Stanza: III

It is the small details in life that have internal effect. Small details can absorb much of our thinking if they have sufficient deep association. 'A shoe among

the brambles under a chair/ where it shouldn't be' –this implies an unfortunate meeting with another person – the 'shoe'
indicatingcrossing another's journey. White mushrooms are immature mushrooms and 'a paring knife' is used to peel fruit to make it edible. What significance these hold for the poet is not known. One could of course liken the personal journey to that of fruit being made acceptable.
A 'sentence crossing' my path has double meaning – life as a sentence, and the written sentence of the poet that is now 'sodden as a fallen log' whereas yesterday it was more acceptable – 'I'm sure I passed yesterday'.

Stanza: IV & V

The search for self is circulating into deep depression to the extent of self – danger. The poet knows within of this danger – ironic self-knowledge given the circumstances.

Stanza: VI

There is no solution comes from any words or from the poet's writing or from the Sun (whether or not indicating religious connection). There is a cry for help.]

Stanza: VII

The solution is eternal – to stay focused and rational – 'keep my head'…a double meaning in a very real sense.

Analysis of the poem:

The poem views the human mind as a landscape. As one delves deeper and deeper into the mind, it seems to widen out in various directions, all equally

daunting and ultimately inscrutable. Only someone endowed with enormous faith in one's own selfhood can launch on such a daring journey and emerge unscathed at the end.

For those who stand outside and the non-observant, human psyche is as flat as any two-dimensional picture: "Flat as a wall." Its shades and colors may seem to be "welded together," as in a landscape painting. One cannot travel through it. But for those endowed with the gift of probing the mind, the mind will "open as I move to let me through," like endless prairies, the vast open grasslands of Canada. It is not that the interior 'landscape' or the 'mindscape' is uniformly fertile; for the mind has its own inaccessible, barren swamps too, capable of producing merely "spindly trees."

The exploration of the interior of the mind is not a straight forward enterprise. It is not a point-to-point, neat "dotted line on map." The daring traveller must traverse several devious routes in order to make some headway. These routes offer a variety of obstacles on the way. Significantly, "there are no destinations" at the end of such a 'journey.'

We are the only owner and tiller of this interior landscape – the mind, neither we can sell them nor lend them to others. In Martine Heidegger's terminology (whom I consider a great "Teacher" of the 20th Century and say further – so far I haven't found another) I would say we are "beings thrown-into-the-world" with a unique interior landscape of mind given to us without a choice. The question is not about 'choice' given or not given. It is more of how much we take time to travel, explore and till the landscape of our mind whose outcome reflects our interior and exterior outlook towards oneself, others and the universe. It says about the unique attitude and character and so on of a person. This aspect is often mentioned by/to each of us when we say to others or hear from others commends like 'you have an inclusive mind,' 'you have a big heart,' and other synonymous phrases. All these commend which passes through our lives unnoticed are actually a mirroring of the landscape of our

mind. Hence I think poet leaves us with a soul-searching question, how much do we travel and explore our mind the unique landscape we possess, and further till it to make it beautiful and fruitful. I think to explore and till the interior landscape of mind and make it beautiful and see it filled with the fruits of our labor is the 'real happiness' of life/a life actualized.

The poem under scrutiny is "Journey to the Interior" which is a monologue, the apt form for introspection. It is a metaphysical poem with a recurring motif of 'journey' with Atwood that she explores in other works like "Surfacing". 'Journey to the Interior' is a subtle, many layered poem with nuances that may be contradictory and therefore wide open to multiple interpretations.

The dream like (surreal) mood is created by a pensive (thinking deeply about something, especially when u r sad or worried), reflective musing (a period of thinking carefully about something or telling people Ur thoughts) tone, at times morbid or melancholic. Written in post-modern style with multiple allusions and disparate (very different from each other) images, it communicates in lateral thinking rather than logical sequential processes. The poem is an allegory as it is a narrative serving an extended metaphor.

The interior referred to in this poem is the psyche of the poetess.

Usually, a person would embark on an imaginary journey which would ideally take place somewhere which provides a pleasant escape from the real world. These destinations are usually part of the physical world as seen pictured within the mind of the journey-taker. In the prose-poem "Journey to the Interior," by Margaret Atwood, the imaginary journey is actually set in the composer's own mind. Through reading the poem, one comes to realize that the poet is exploring her own memory of an actual physical journey, and comparing the experience to that of the event that took place in the real world. Along the way she notices similarities and differences, and encounters various obstacles, presented by her

brain as a confusing web of random images and thoughts.

A sophisticated use of poetic devices and language techniques has been carefully used by the composer to convey her imaginary journey. First person narration has been used to convey the composer's intimate feelings and thoughts. Personal pronouns such as "I," "my," and "me" show how the composer journeys through and experiences the inner workings of her own brain.

Formal language, including the title, has been used to directly refer to the imaginary journey within the text. The title, "Journey to the Interior" and the quote "Travel is not the easy going from point to point…..but that I move surrounded by a tangle of branches," refer directly to the primary plot element of the imaginary journey through the reoccurrence of journey-related words- other words include "destination," "walking," "move" and "path." The line "words here are as pointless as calling in a vacant wilderness," creates a similitude between the composer's own mind and some sort wild jungle. This forces the responder to connote that the composer's journey is taking part in a wild and dangerous mind, which is unforgiving with its densely crowded thoughts.

A very complex punctuation and grammatical structure reflects the workings of the composer's brain as it erratically darts between images, and can be seen in the quote, "under the chair where it shouldn't be; lucent white mushrooms and a paring knife on the kitchen table; a sentence crossing my path." Along with more uses of comas, colons and semi-colons, the eccentric use of punctuation effectively conveys the abruptness of the composer's journey as it skips between different memories and thoughts. As it moves quickly, the journey also encounters impediments along the way.

The composer's own voice emerges in the similitude between the "sentence crossing my path" and the "fallen log." The occurrences of the kitchen table image, and the chair which doesn't belong clearly shows that these

unintentional insertions of random thoughts and images become obstacles in the composer's journey through her mind. Key descriptive words have also been used to form the image of the journey taking place in a confusing environment. Words such as "tangle," "net" and "branches" bring connotations from the responder who refers to the composer's mind as being a complicated web of thoughts, images and memories. Additionally, a confused and bewildered mood is thus created by the composer through these descriptive words and then conveyed to the responder.

All of the included techniques have conclusively shown that the imagined journey undertaken by Margaret Atwood in her poem "Journey to the Interior" is boundless. The composer's mind, and everyone else's mind for that matter, is a completely indecipherable code of a lifelong accumulation of memories which cannot be mapped, or chartered, or conquered. Thus, a journey through the mind is an endless one.

Theme of Margaret Atwood's Poem Journey to the Interior

The poetess utilizes an extended metaphor here- her inner exploration stretches out to the journeying of the mountain.

The use of the words "similarities" (line 1) and "differences" (line 20) shows contrast and allows us to make connections between the physical world and internal realm, and bridge the gap between connotation and denotation.

The poem has various themes such as:

(i) The inner life is complex and if elved into too deeply can be confronting, demoralizing and depressing, leading to madness, even self-harm.

(ii) Life can be absurd, meaningless, directionless, or even futile.

(iii) Sensory perceptions and rational thought processes are not always reliable to gain true self-insight rather a holistic emotional and lateral thinking are needed,.

(iv) Language can be inadequate or an obstacle to express the depths of our feelings.

In this poem the meditative reflection in which Atwood is engaged has three stages. The meditative mind passes through various phases first, the similarities then the differences and finally the exit from the maze.

As one delves deeper into the mind, it stretches out into various directions – incomprehensible and inscrutable. A person with a firm faith can embark on the discovery of the self, and survive unscathed (unharmed) in the process. For the outsiders, the human mind is as limited as a two-dimensional picture "flat as a wall. " The hills from the distance seem "welded together". But from near, the opening between them breaks into vast prairies. Furthermore, it does not imply that the interior landscape or mind is uniformly fertile.

It has its share of barren swamps that are capable of producing "spindly (thin and long but not strong) trees". The "cliff is not known as rough except by the hand. " The world supposes that only tangible objects exist in this world. The unseen are unfathomable (too strange or difficult to be understood). It is not statistically correct and mathematically discrete. There are no fixed points to connect just dotted lines as in a map to trace the geography of a point. Or further, even to trace connections. It is beyond geometry too, in that it cannot be "plotted on a square surface".

A. M. Klein – Portrait of the Poet as Landscape

Biography of the poet:

A. M. Klein (1909-1972), journalist and lawyer, was widely regarded as one of Canada's leading poets. His novel *The Second Scroll* has been acclaimed by scholars and critics as a masterpiece. He contributed significantly to the emergence of a modern, distinctively Canadian literature.

Abraham Moses Klein, born in Ratno, Poland, in 1909, came to Montreal as an infant with his immigrant parents and, except for a brief stay (1937-1938) in Rouyn, Quebec, lived his life there. He was brought up in a religious home, where family ties were close and affectionate. The influence of his home and of the closely-knit Jewish community during his formative years was reinforced by his biblical and Talmudic studies.

Although very much a product of the Jewish ghetto in Montreal, Klein was also influenced by the French-Canadian society with which the Jewish community was in continuing interaction. Though by no means uncritical of some elements in that society, particularly the anti-Semitism voiced frequently during the 1930s, Klein in his poetry and other writings revealed a sensitive understanding and appreciation of the French-Canadian way of life and its values.

A third major formative influence on Klein was the English literary tradition, which paralleled and reinforced the influence of early Hebrew and Yiddish writings—the Bible, the works of medieval Jewish writers such as Yehuda

Halevi, the lbn Gabirols and lbn Ezra, and such contemporaries as Bialik and I. I. Segal. He acknowledged his debt to Shakespeare, Milton, and Keats by direct statement and frequent quotation. His subsequent indebtedness to Joyce and Eliot is equally clear.

Between 1926 and 1930 Klein attended McGill University, where he was active in the Debating Society and cofounded a literary magazine, *The McGilliad.* After graduating he studied law at the Université de Montréal, taking his degree in 1933 and then practicing law in Montreal until he resigned in 1956.

Klein's involvement in Jewish community affairs began early. In the period 1928-1932 he served as educational director of Canadian Young Judaea—a Zionist youth movement—and edited its journal, *The Judaean,* and in 1934 he became president of this national movement. In 1936 he wrote and lectured on behalf of the Canadian Zionist Organization and edited its monthly magazine, *The Canadian Zionist.* Shortly after, he became associated with Samuel Bronfman, the noted distiller-philanthropist and Canadian Jewish leader. In part through Bronfman's good offices, Klein was appointed visiting lecturer in poetry at McGill for three years, 1945-1948. Throughout the 1930s his sympathies for the dispossessed and his passionate anti-fascist stance led him to identify with the C.C.F., a socialist party roughly the equivalent of the British Labour Party. In 1944 he was nominated as a federal candidate in the largely Jewish Montreal-Cartier riding, but withdrew before the election in 1945. He did run—unsuccessfully—in the federal election of 1949 and was somewhat embittered by the extent of his defeat.

In terms of community involvement, by far the most important activity that Klein engaged in was his editorship of *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle.* Klein had contributed to this weekly Anglo-Jewish paper from the late 1920s on and became its editor in 1938, remaining until 1955. Mental illness, evidenced occasionally from 1952 on, resulted in a thwarted suicide attempt in 1954 and

in a period of hospitalization. His withdrawal from public life followed, and he became increasingly reclusive after 1956 until his death in 1972.

Klein's career as a poet began early. During his years at McGill he published poems in *The Menorah Journal, The Canadian Forum, Poetry* (Chicago), and elsewhere. His interest was quickened by his association with the "Montreal Group" of poets and writers, which included A. J. M. Smith, F. R. Scott, Leo Kennedy, and Leon Edel and was centered at McGill. This group represented a significant break with the earlier Canadian tradition of nature poetry and genteel, sentimentalized verse. Although Klein wrote many poems during the 1930s reflecting attitudes shaped by the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, and the rise of fascism, for the most part his major concern and the source of his inspiration was Jewish experience. His first volume of poetry, *Hath Not a Jew* ... (1940), is limited to this Jewish world. Klein drew widely on his knowledge of events and personalities from the past and present and on Jewish fable and folklore to present a tapestry designed to reveal the richness of the Jewish heritage and the sufferings and aspirations of his people. Klein's poetic craftsmanship is clearly evidenced in this volume, in which he used almost every poetic form and device, often quite experimentally, with success.

In 1944 Klein published *The Hitleriad,* a savagely satiric indictment of Hitler and his henchmen. Klein's high expectations regarding this work were unfulfilled as critical reviews ranged widely from acclaim to mild disapproval and a large audience was not reached. In the same year appeared *Poems,* a volume still entirely devoted to themes Jewish, particularly to historic and current anti-semitism. The opening section, however, entitled "The Psalter of Avram Haktani," expressed, for the most part, the poet's religious questioning and affirmation and, at times, a lyrical celebration of personal experience.

In the 1940s Klein moved in a literary circle known as the Preview Group of poets, which included F. R. Scott, P. K. Page, and Patrick Anderson, writers with whom he shared friendship and common literary views. He also associated

with a rival group, the First Statement poets, chiefly John Sutherland, Louis Dudek, and Klein's friend Irving Layton. Partly as a consequence of this renewed literary activity, partly because the war against fascism was drawing to a victorious close, Klein felt freer to direct his creative energy into wider channels than he had been permitting himself for some time, and his final volume of poetry, *The Rocking Chair and Other Poems,* appeared in 1948. Here the experience drawn upon is primarily Canadian rather than Jewish, with Quebec—and more specifically Montreal—its urban and rural landscapes and its people—being the focus of the poet's loving and critical attention. The qualities of irony, of genial and wry humor and biting sarcasm, of tolerance and affectionate understanding of human foibles, of sentiment and passion which characterize his early works are found here also, but there is even greater mastery of his craft, of artistic discipline, than in much of his earlier poetry. For this volume, Klein was awarded the Governor-General's Medal for Poetry in 1949. Eight years later the Royal Society of Canada bestowed the Lorne Pierce Medal for poetry on Klein for his poetic achievement.

Klein's reputation as a writer rests primarily on his poetry, and rarely is mention made of his short stories, although he wrote many over a period of 25 years. Most of them appeared in small magazines of limited circulation and brief duration. The subjects were varied, the majority reflecting some aspect of Jewish life and folk-lore. Like his poetry, they reveal Klein's fascination with the child-like and the macabre and with the comically absurd, the pathetic, and the terrifying.

Klein turned also to the writing of novels. In 1946-1947 he wrote a novel, *That Walks Like a Man,* based on the lgor Gouzenko spy revelations in Ottawa, but failed to find a publisher for it. His next effort was much more successful. Following a journey through Israel, Europe, and North Africa sponsored by the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1949, Klein found a congenial subject, and his novel *The Second Scroll* (1951) may well be regarded as his greatest single

literary achievement. In this novel Klein presented an encompassing vision of Jewish history and destiny and probed the broader question of the nature of good and evil and its bearing on the relationship between man and God. It clearly bears the stamp of greatness.

Klein also applied his special literary gifts to journalism. His major contribution in this field was as editor of *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle,* the foremost Anglo-Jewish journal in Canada. For this paper Klein wrote weekly (1938-1955) two or three editorials and a full page of commentary on topical events. He also frequently added literary articles, book reviews, translations from Hebrew and Yiddish literature, poems, and short stories. As a journalist in the days of threatening Nazism and struggling Zionism, he became the spokesman for the Jewish community. A representative selection of his journalism is to be found in the published collection *Beyond Sambation* (1981).

PORTRAIT OF THE POET AS LANDSCAPE

I

Not an editorial-writer, bereaved with bartlett,
mourns him, the shelved Lycidas.
No actress squeezes a glycerine tear for him.
The radio broadcast lets his passing pass.
And with the police, no record. Nobody, it appears,
either under his real name or his alias,
missed him enough to report.

It is possible that he is dead, and not discovered.
It is possible that he can be found some place
in a narrow closet, like the corpse in a detective story,
standing, his eyes staring, and ready to fall on his face.
It is also possible that he is alive

and amnesiac, or mad, or in retired disgrace,
or beyond recognition lost in love.

We are sure only that from our real society
he has disappeared; he simply does not count,
except in the pullulation of vital statistics-
somebody's vote, perhaps, an anonymous taunt
of the Gallup poll, a dot in a government table-
but not felt, and certainly far from eminent-
in a shouting mob, somebody's sigh.

O, he who unrolled our culture from his scroll-
the prince's quote, the rostrum-rounding roar-
who under one name made articulate
heaven, and under another the seven-circle air,
is, if he is at all, a number, an x,
a Mr Smith in a hotel register,-
incognito, lost, lacunal.

II
The truth is he's not dead, but only ignored-
like the mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow
that shrine with the guilt of their unnoticed world.
The truth is he lives among neighbours, who, though they will allow
him a passable fellow, think him eccentric, not solid,
a type that one can forvie, and for that matter, forego.

Himself he has his moods, just like a poet.
Sometimes, depressed to nadir, he will think all lost,
will see himself as throwback, relict, freak,
his mother's miscarriage, his great-grandfather's ghost,

and he will curse his quintuplet senses, and their tutors
in whom he put, as he should not have put, his trust.

Then he will remember his travels over that body-
the torso verb, the beautiful face of the noun,
and all those shaped and warm auxiliaries!
At firstlove it was, the recognition of his own.
Dear limbs adverbial, complexion of adjective,
dimple and dip of conjugation!

And then remember how this made a change in him
affecting for always the glow and growth of his being;
how suddenly was aware of the air, like shaken tinfoil,
of the patents of nature, the shock of belated seeing,
the lonelinesses peering from the eyes of crowds;
the integers of thought; the cube-roots of feeling.

Thus, zoomed to zenith, sometimes he hopes again,
and sees himself as a character, with a rehearsed role:
The Count of Monte Cristo, come for his revenges;
the unsuspected heir, with papers; the risen soul;
or the chloroformed prince awaking from his flowers;
or- deflated again- the convince on parole.

III
He is alone; yet not completely alone.
Pins on a map of a colour similar to his,
each city has one, sometmies more than one;
here, caretakers of art, in colleges;
in offices, there, with arm-bands, and green-shaded;
and there, pounding their catalogued beats in libraries,-

everywhere menial, a shadow's shadow.
And always for their egos- their outmoded art.
Thus, having lost the bevel in the ear,
they know neither up nor down, mistake the part
for the wh ole, curl themselves in a comma,
talk technics, make a colon their eyes. They distort-

such is the pain of their frustration- truth
to something convolute and cerebral.
how they do fear the slap of the flat of the platitude!
Now Pavlov's victims, their mouths water at bell,
the platter empty.
See they set twenty-one jewels
into their watches; the time they do not tell!

Some, patagonian in their own esteem,
and longing for the multiplying word,
join party and wears pins, now have a message,
an ear, and the convention-hall's regard.
Upon the knees of the ventriloquists, they own,
of their dandled brightness, only the paint and board.

And some go mystical, and some go mad.
One stares at a mirror all day long, as if
to recognize himself; another courts
angels,- for here he does not fear rebuff;
and a third, alone, and sick with sex, and rapt,
doodbles him symbols convex and concave.

O schizoid solitudes! O purities
curdling upon themselves! Who live for themselves,

or for each other, but for nobody else;
desire affection, private and public loves;
are firendly, and then quarrel and surmise
the secret perversions of each other's lives.

IV
He suspects that something has happened, a law
been passed, a nightmare ordered. Set apart,
he finds himself, with special haircut and dress,
as on a reservation. Introvert.
He does not understand this; sad conjecture
muscles and palls thrombotic on his heart.

He thinks an impostor, having studied his personal biography,
his gestures, his moods, now has come forward to pose
in the shivering vacuums his absence leaves.
Wigged with his laurel, that other, and faked with his face,
he pats the heads of his children, pecks his wife,
and is at home, and slippered, in his house.

So he guesses at the impertinent silhouette
that talks to his phone-piece and slits open his mail.
Is it the local tycoon who for a hobby
plays poet, he so epical in steel?
The orator, making a pause? Or is that man
he who blows his flash of brass in the jittering hall?

Or is he cuckolded by the troubadour
rich and successful out of celluloid?
Or by the don who unrhymes atoms? Or
the chemist death built up? Pride, lost impostor'd pride,

it is another, another, whoever he is,
who rides where he should ride.

V

Fame, the adrenalin: to be talked about;
to be a verb; to be introduced as *The:*
to smile with endorsement from slick paper; make
caprices anecdotal; to nod to the world; to see
one's name like a song upon the marquees played;
to be forgotte with embarrasment; to be-
to be.

It has its attractions, but is not the thing;
nor is it the ape mimesis who speaks from the tree
ancestral; nor the merkin joy….
Rather it is stark infelicity
which stirs him from his sleep, undressd, asleep
to walk upon roofs and window-sills and defy
the gape of gravity.

VI

Therefore he seeds illusions. Look, he is
the nth Adam taking a green inventory
in world but scarcely uttered, naming, praising,
the flowering fiats in the meadow, the
syllabled fur, stars aspirate, the pollen
whose sweet collision sounds eternally.
For to praise

the world- he, solitary man- is breath
to him. Until it has been praised, that part

has not been. Item by exciting item-
air to his lungs, and pressure blood to his heart,-
they are pylsates, and breathed, until they map,
not the world's, but his own body's chart!

and now in imagination he has climbed
another planet, the better to look
with single camera view upon this earth-
its total scope, and each afflated tick,
its talk, its trick, its tracklessness- and this,
this he would l ike to write down in a book!

To find a new function for the declassé craft
archaic like the fletcher's; to make a new thing;
to say the word that will become sixth sense;
perhaps by necessity and indirection bring
new forms to life, anonymously, new creeds-
O, somehow pay back the daily larcenies of the lung!

These are not mean ambitions. It is already something
merely to entertain them. Meanwhile, he
makes of his status as zero a rich garland,
a halo of his anonymity,
and lives alone, and in his secret shrines
like phosphorous. At the bottom of the sea.

Summary of A.M. Klein's poem "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape":

In *Portrait of the Poet as Landscape*, A.M. Klein engages with the identity of the poet and the role of his art. The poem is a künstlerroman, which sees the maturity of an artist against the decaying modern society around him. The

insignificance and irrelevance of the poet in the modern age is stressed. It is not clear if the poet is living or dead—it does not matter for "We are sure only that from our real society / he has disappeared; he simply does not count" (Klein 15-16). Klein places the poet in juxtaposition with the public and the reader by using the plural person pronoun: "we" and "our" against the disappeared poet. The public does not care about the poet, nor does the poet appear to care about himself: he is "incognito, lost, lacunal" (Klein 28).

Hence, it would appear the poet has no identity in "our real society." The simile "like the mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow / that shine with the guilt of their unnoticed world" suggests the blame is partially the poet's (Klein 30-31). Klein indicates the poet functions as a reflection of his society, so if society is apathetic, that is partially because the poet is apathetic.

Klein personifies poetry as a female body that provides the poet with love and knowledge. For Klein, this is the purpose of art: to defeat ignorance and bring "the shock of belated seeing" (50). While the language is sincere, "a first love it was," there is a sense of self-indulgence that becomes increasingly obvious and is responsible for the lethargy of artists (Klein 44).

Klein prescribes a social responsibility to the artist. The modern artist, however, seems to be completely self-absorbed by their art, at the expense of the public. The image of the artists who "curl themselves in a comma" suggests a synthesis resulting in art for art's sake with no clear role (Klein 69).

From here, it is not surprising that the artist's identity begins to unravel. He does not have a place in society, and as a result, his art is purposeless. This is particularly in contrast to "the local tycoon who for a hobby / plays poet" (Klein 119-110).The businessman is valued by modern society and as thus, is

able to inform society on a superficial level, “playing” poet. The poet begins to think of himself as an imposter, crucially, not just as an imposter poet, but as an imposter human being, with all “his personal biography, / his gestures, his moods” (Klein 102-103).Klein powerfully links the poetic identity with the human experience.

The main copula “to be” is repeated here to emphasize the poet’s search for identity and meaning. Klein suggests fame determines identity in the modern society, but is irrelevant to the poet. It is this understanding that allows the poet to fully embrace his art even though he is ostracized. The poet is able to accept the irreconcilability of modern society, himself and his art. The poet understands that art is the creation of his own landscape and reality, one that allows “new forms to life, anonymously, new creeds” that compete and complement with modern society (Klein 156). He becomes the landscape by accepting his own invisible omnipresence, “until they map, / not the world’s, but his own body’s chart!” (Klein 144-145)

The poem ends on a powerful image of guarded optimism. The poet has embraced his obscurity, and has not given up his art, “in his secret shines / like phosphorus. At the bottom of the sea” (162-163). The artist has discovered his identity: as his own reality and landscape, at once connected to and separate from modern society.

Analysis of the poem:

A.M Klein's poem “Portrait of the Poet as Landscape” introduces a decline in the prevalence of modern poetry and a reflection of the diminished position of poets within modern society. The first stanza begins with a reference to “Lycidas,” Milton's famous pastoral elegy. Klein refers to the subject as a

“shelved Lycidas,” and the irony in this phrasing is that no one is mourning the loss of the poet. Unlike traditional elegy, the poet is gone yet not missed. In the first section of the poem, Klein suggests that the poet is caught between life and death: “We are sure only that from our real society / he had disappeared; he simply does not count.” In this section, we see the poet being excluded and ostracized from modern society. The significance of the individual poet is diminished by the collective; as “in a shouting mob,” the poet is reduced to “somebody's sigh.” Klein goes on to describe the poet as “he who unrolled our culture from his scroll,” which suggests that the poet is a master at interpreting the world, yet he is still rendered “incognito, lost, lacunal.” The poet is overcome and ignored by his muse. Although the poet can interpret the world, Klein suggests if the poet goes unrecognized and the text unread by the masses, the poet's interpretations are empty.

Section two divulges how the poet's attraction to poetry began despite living in a society that undervalues creativity. Klein opens section two with a simile: “The truth is he's not dead, but only ignored-- / like the mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow / that shine with the guilt of their unnoticed world.” Like a mirror, poetry reflects the world, yet Klein suggests that the world is guilty of neglecting the poet. Ultimately, it is the poet who has to live with the guilt of not being able to make others see their guilt through his work. Using imagery of the body in the third stanza, Klein suggests a sexual connection between the poet, and the text as language is personified as a lover who the poet lusts over. The poet's connection to the text in section two in part frees him from his isolation or at least seemingly makes it more tolerable and personally worthwhile. The poet reflects on “the shock of belated seeing,” showing how poetry has provided him with a new form of sight or perspectives of the world around him. Klein suggests that the poet cannot abandon his art because it has freed him from ignorance.

In Section three, Klein moves outward from the individual poet to artists as a collective group in society. The artists suffer from common isolation but are unable to relate to one another. Klein writes: "They know neither up nor down, mistake the part / For the whole, curl themselves in a comma, / Talk technics, make a colon in their eyes." The artists are too involved with their work to relate to anyone else on a personal level. In these lines, the poet further removes himself from reality and seems to be lost in text. The poet is unable to separate the narratives of his work from everyday life. When the Poet "curls himself into a comma," his body becomes part of the punctuation, and thus the poet loses individual identity and becomes his work. Section three is effective in showing the poet's increasing confusion over the divide between poetry and reality.

By the fourth section, the poet seems to be spiraling into mental degeneration and increasing paranoia. The speaker informs the readers that the poet "thinks an impostor, having studied his personal biography, / his gestures, his moods, now has come forward to pose / in the shivering vacuums his absence leaves," and it is suggested that the poet feels his role in society has not only been taken from him but has been refilled. The role of the poet seems to be dispersed to subjects that the modern economy-based society values, such as businessmen who are referenced in the poem as the "local tycoon." Klein suggests that part of the paranoia comes from the tenants of modernity, meaning that modern poets have become too self-concerned with their own alienation, and this paranoia often leads to acts of self-isolation. The theme of paranoia causes the reader to doubt that the poet is a faultless victim in the isolation seen in the previous sections.

In the fifth section, several definitions of fame are offered. The phrase "to be" is repeated several times, suggesting that to be known is to exist in modern society. Yet the speaker goes on to refute the idea that poets are driven by fame and suggest instead that is "stark infelicity" or hardship that compels the artist. Klein writes that the poet desires "to walk upon roofs and window-sills and

defy / the gape of gravity." What Klein suggests is that the poet is driven by the desire continually to attempt the impossible: the poet works to defy gravity, but also death and anonymity. The fifth section shows the poet's dedication to his art as deeply personal, as opposed to public fame, which offers a potential reason as to why he willing to suffer being ostracized from the social realm.

In the sixth and final section, the poet reaches a new understanding of poetry and seems to find motivation in the ability of language to create new possibilities. Described as the "nth Adam," the poet uses language both to describe and to construct a new personal reality. The concept of the nth Adam challenges modernism by showing the creation of new meaning while remaining aware of history and tradition. The poet is able "to make a new thing" from the "names" or ideas and texts that have come before him. The poet first internalizes the world and then reproduces it through language: "until they map, / not the world's but his own body's chart!". The new world that the poet creates is an extension of the body; thus, the poet becomes landscape.

UNIT – II

J.P.Clark – The Casualties

Biography of the Poet:

J.P. Clark was born at his maternal grandmother's home in the Urhobo village of Erhuwaren on the 6th of December 1933 into two old Izon families, Bekederemo and Adomi, of Kiagbodo, now in the Burutu Local Government Area of Delta State, Nigeria. After his early education at the Native Administration Schools, Okrika and Jeremi (Otughievwen), in the western Niger delta, he went on toGovernment College, Ughelli and the University College, Ibadan, both by entrance examinations, as a Government Scholar and State Scholar.

THE CASUALTIES

The casualties are not only those who are dead.
They are well out of it.
The casualties are not only those who are dead.
Though they await burial by installment.
The casualties are not only those who are lost
Persons or property, hard as it is
To grope for a touch that some
May not know is not there.
The casualties are not only those led away by night.
The cell is a cruel place, sometimes a haven.
Nowhere as absolute as the grave.
The casualties are not only those who started
A fire and now cannot put out. Thousands
Are are burning that have no say in the matter.
The casualties are not only those who are escaping.
The shattered shall become prisoners in
A fortress of falling walls

The casualties are many, and a good member as well
Outside the scenes of ravage and wreck;
They are the emissaries of rift,
So smug in smoke-rooms they haunt abroad,
They do not see the funeral piles
At home eating up the forests.
They are wandering minstrels who, beating on
The drums of the human heart, draw the world
Into a dance with rites it does not know.

The drums overwhelm the guns…
Caught in the clash of counter claims and charges

When not in the niche others left,
We fall.
All casualties of the war.
Because we cannot hear each other speak.
Because eyes have ceased the face from the crowd.
Because whether we know or
Do not the extent of wrongs on all sides,
We are characters now other than before
The war began, the stay-at-home unsettled

By taxes and rumours, the looters for office
And wares, fearful everyday the owners may return.
We are all casualties,
All sagging as are
The cases celebrated for kwashiorkor.
The unforseen camp-follower of not just our war.

Analysis of the poem:

John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, Nigerian poet, is the pioneer of Modern African Literature. He is considered as the most lyrical among Nigerian poets. His poetry is universal for its artistry and descriptive power; and singular for the attention that it draws to it own locality for its imagery and ideology. His poems reflect the fusion of the Western tradition he acquired and the cultural heritage he naturally inherited.

"The Casualties" is named after a collection of poems by J.P.Clark. Clark, among his contemporaries is hailed to be "more simple, down-to-earth in his imagery, more visual and descriptive and less complex, and therefore more African."

The poem points to 1966, the time of the Civil War. Biafra wanted to be free and independent. It affected the common people who were suffering endlessly.

The Battle failed and the problem was silenced. The poet asserts that the causalties are not only the ones who are dead, for they are far from the devastating consequences of the war. They are not only those who are wounded though they are well on the route to death. They await burial by installments as death is the Ultimate escapism. It is not only those who have lost their material assets and property, it is also those who have irretrievably lost their near and dear ones. It is those who long heart-rendingly for a touch. The casualties are not only those led away by the law at night, there is always the uncertainty about the cell. To some it may be a cruel place, to others it may function as a haven.

Furthermore, the casualties are not only those who started a fire and that cannot now extinguish the same. This may be any form of rumour or issue that kindles a controversy or sparks communal violence. The scapegoats are the innocents who had no say in the matter, and they are the victims of the fire. They are also the ones that escape the war, for they reside in the shattered shell of its aftermath. They always experience the walls falling against them. These so-called diplomats remain smug in their rooms smoking.(J.P.Clark was also a diplomat).'Smoking' apart from its literal meaning also connotes the means of alleviating tension using a short-cut.

This stanza refers to the causalities of the war in an ironic and sarcastic stance. These so-called 'casualties' exist outside the scene of ravage and wreckage. Rather than being the emissaries of peace, they are the emissaries of rift. They are smug in room smoking. Here the term 'smoking' apart from its literal meaning may also connote the meaning of alleviating tension using an easy method. They cannot see the funeral fires consuming the forests or natural vegetation. They fail to have a far-sighted view. They are the wandering minstrels who beating on the drums of the human heart, taking advantage of human-sensitivity to certain issues. These drive humanity to a frenzy that is unfamiliar to its basic nature itself. These drums possess a power that overwhelm even guns.

We are thus caught in a chaos of charges and counter-claims.
When not in the niche others have left,
We fall,
All causalities of the war,

The 'niche' referred to here is that of being "politically correct'. Only those who are politically correct ,and are therefore in a 'safe corner'. People are caught in the hatred of communities, or a cause that they see only the crowds In a tumultuous situation nobody can hear each other speak. Nobody sees the innocent individual faces who are unnecessarily made the victims. This is very significant in the contemporary context of terrorism. To know or not know the extent of wrong on all the sides is not a matter of concern for them. 'We are characters now": we do not have an existence of our own. Though we appear to be the "stay- at- home", we are unsettled by rumours of inflation, taxation, rumours etc.

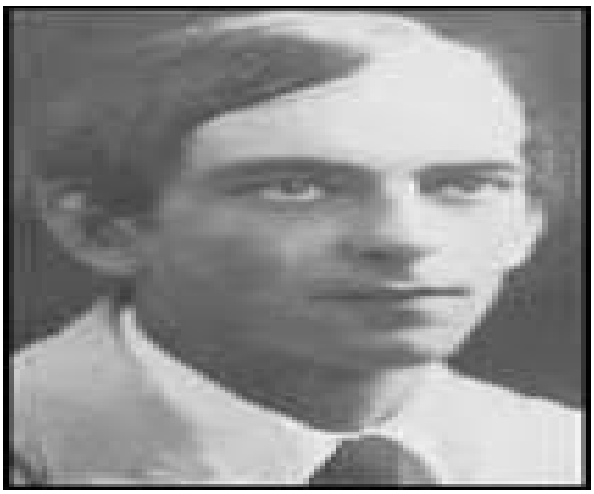
By taxes and rumor, the looter for office
And wares, fearful everyday the owners may return,
We are all casualties,
All sagging as are
The case celebrated for kwashiorkor,
The unforeseen camp-follower of not just our war.

Kwashiorkor is the unseen camp follower of every war:a huge personification of all the deteriorating and devastating effects of the claustrophobic war. Kwashiorkor is an acute form of childhood protein-energy malnutrition. What the poet means to say that the war is like a disease afflicting a child, or a new generation at its very core. It is the children of today that is the future of tomorrow. Therefore the best way to win a war is to prevent it.

Roy Campbell – Poets in Africa

Biography of the poet:

Ignatius Royston Dunnachie Campbell, better known as Roy Campbell, (2 October 1901 – 23 April 1957) was a South African poet and satirist. He was considered by T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas and Edith Sitwell to have been one of the best poets of the period between the First and Second World Wars. Campbell's vocal attacks upon the Marxism and Freudianism popular among the British intelligentsia caused him to be a controversial figure during his own lifetime. It has been suggested by some critics and his daughters in their memoirs that his support for Francisco Franco's Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War has caused him to be blacklisted from modern poetry anthologies.
In 2009, Roger Scruton wrote, "Campbell wrote vigorous rhyming pentameters, into which he instilled the most prodigious array of images and the most intoxicating draft of life of any poet of the 20th century. He was also a swashbuckling adventurer and a dreamer of dreams. And his life and writings contain so many lessons about the British experience in the 20th century that it is worth revisiting them".



Ten Female Contemporary African Poets

Poetry is considered as one of the most universal and important vehicles of human expression as it encapsulates various human experiences in an understandable and well-documented manner.Africa is rich in literature and poetry, and here's a list of contemporary African poets that one should know:

Warsan Shire

Warsan Shire is a Kenyan-born Somali poet and writer who is based in London. She is popularly known for her poetry being adapted into Beyoncé's "Lemonade" album. Her work explores the topics of gender, war, sex, and cultural assumptions. Her body of work includes Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth, released in 2011, Her Blue Body and Our Men Do Not Belong to Us, both released in 2015.

She is passionate about character-driven poetry that tells the stories of people, especially immigrants and refugees who are often portrayed as victims or martyrs, without their human experience being captured. In 2014, she was named the first Young Poet Laureate for London and chosen as poet-in-residence for Queensland, Australia.

Liyou Libsekal

Liyou Libsekal is an Ethiopian poet who spent a number of years in the U.S before returning home to Addis Ababa. Her chapbook, "Bearing Heavy Things", is part of the 2015 African Poetry Book Fund's New Generation African Poets series. Her poetry explores the themes of identity, displacement and the reality of growing up away from home.

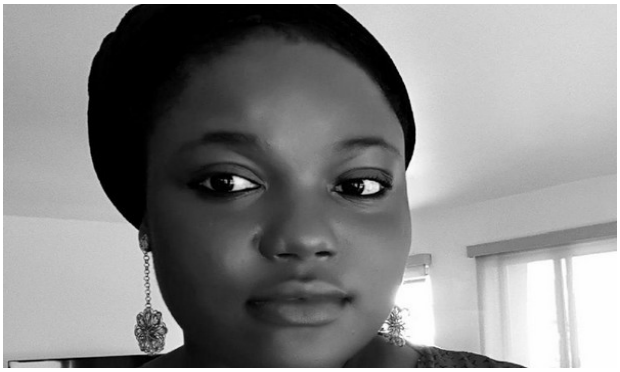
Lebo Mashile

Lebo Mashile is a South African poet who was born in U.S. and returned to South Africa after the fall of apartheid in the 1990s. She is well-known for her

works “In a Ribbon of Rhythm” released in 2005 and “Flying Above the Sky”, which was released in 2008. She is also an actress and producer, having performed in a number of theatre productions, being featured in the 2004 film with Don Cheadle “Hotel Rwanda” and co-producing and hosting the documentary programme L’Attitude, which aired on the South African channel SABC 1.

Mashile regards poetry and its expressive power as the most effective tool to bring about discussion and changes in mental attitude about social issues, especially issues experienced in the socio-political realm of post-apartheid South Africa.

Ijeoma Umebinyuo



Nigerian poet Ijeoma Umebinyuo is making waves with her debut collection of prose poems and poems titled “Questions for Ada”. The book explores themes of femininity, self-love and self-acceptance. She also explores the theme of Africans living in the diaspora and how everyday life is experienced. Critics have described her work as a bible for women.

Harriet Anena

Harriet Anena is a Ugandan poet, author and journalist. As a poet, Harriet wrote her first piece in 2003 titled “The plight of the Acholi child”, which won a writing competition that helped secure her a bursary for A-Level education. She has been published in the Caine Prize anthology was shortlisted in 2013 for the “Ghana Poetry prize” for her poem “We arise”. Her debut collection of poetry is titled “A Nation in Labour” which explores the reality of living through war and under the weight of political mistakes.

Safia Elhillo

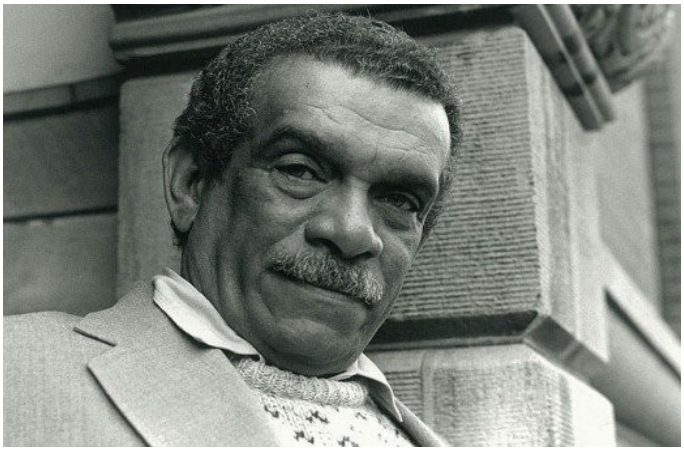
Safia Elhillo is a Sudanese poet who grew up in Washington D.C. She's an NYU graduate and is a Pushcart Prize nominee, co-winner of the 2015 Brunel University African Poetry Prize, and winner of the 2016 Sillerman First Book Prize for African Poets. She has appeared in several journals and anthologies including "The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop," and her work has been translated into Arabic, Japanese, Estonian, and Greek.

She was a founding member of Slam NYU, the 2012 and 2013 national collegiate championship team, and was a three-time member and former coach of the DC Youth Slam Poetry team. She is currently a teaching artist with Split This Rock.

Derek Walcott –A Far Cry from Africa

Derek Walcott, in full Derek Alton Walcott, (born January 23, 1930, Castries, Saint Lucia—died March 17, 2017, Cap Estate), West Indian poet and playwright noted for works that explore the Caribbean cultural experience. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992.

Walcott was educated at St. Mary's College in Saint Lucia and at the University of the West Indiesin Jamaica. He began writing poetry at an early age, taught at schools in Saint Lucia and Grenada, and contributed articles and reviews to periodicals in Trinidad and Jamaica. Productions of his plays began in Saint Lucia in 1950, and he studied theatre in New York City in 1958–59. He lived thereafter in Trinidad and the United States, teaching for part of the year at Boston University.



Walcott was best known for his poetry, beginning with *In a Green Night: Poems 1948–1960* (1962). This book is typical of his early poetry in its celebration of the Caribbean landscape's natural beauty. The verse in *Selected Poems* (1964), *The Castaway* (1965), and *The Gulf* (1969) is similarly lush in style and incantatory in mood as Walcott expresses his feelings of personal isolation, caught between his European cultural orientation and the black folk cultures of his native Caribbean. *Another Life* (1973) is a book-length autobiographical poem. In *Sea Grapes* (1976) and *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), Walcott uses a tenser, more economical style to examine the deep cultural divisions of language and race in the Caribbean. *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981) and *Midsummer* (1984) explore his own situation as a black writer in America who has become increasingly estranged from his Caribbean homeland.

Walcott's *Collected Poems, 1948–1984*, was published in 1986. In his book-length poem *Omeros*(1990), he retells the dramas of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in a 20th-century Caribbean setting. The poems in *The Bounty* (1997) are mostly devoted to Walcott's Caribbean home and the death of his mother. In 2000 Walcott published *Tiepolo's Hound*, a poetic biography of West Indian-born French painter Camille Pissarro with

autobiographical references and reproductions of Walcott's paintings. (The latter are mostly watercolours of island scenes. Walcott's father had been a visual artist, and the poet began painting early on.) The book-length poem *The Prodigal*(2004), its setting shifting between Europe and North America, explores the nature of identity and exile. *Selected Poems*, a collection of poetry from across Walcott's career, appeared in 2007. Aging is a central theme in *White Egrets* (2010), a volume of new poems.

Of Walcott's approximately 30 plays, the best-known are *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (produced 1967), a West Indian's quest to claim his identity and his heritage; *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), based on a West Indian folktale about brothers who seek to overpower the Devil; and *Pantomime* (1978), an exploration of colonial relationships through the Robinson Crusoe story. *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* appeared in 1993. Many of Walcott's plays make use of themes from black folk culture in the Caribbean.

A FAR CRY FROM AFRICA

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt

Of Africa. Kikuyu, quick as flies,

Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.

Corpses are scattered through a paradise.

Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:

"Waste no compassion on these separate dead!"

Statistics justify and scholars seize

The salients of colonial policy.

What is that to the white child hacked in bed?

To savages, expendable as Jews?

Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break

In a white dust of ibises whose cries

Have wheeled since civilization's dawn

From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.

The violence of beast on beast is read

As natural law, but upright man

Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.

Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars

Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,

While he calls courage still that native dread

Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands

Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again

A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,

The gorilla wrestles with the superman.

I who am poisoned with the blood of both,

Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?

I who have cursed

The drunken officer of British rule, how choose

Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?

Betray them both, or give back what they give?

How can I face such slaughter and be cool?

How can I turn from Africa and live?

Summaryof the poem:

A Far Cry from Africa is a powerful poem that sets out one person's divided viewpoint on the subject of British colonial takeover in Kenya, east Africa, and its horrifying consequences for local people and the poet himself.

Stanza 1

The first stanza is an overview of the situation, set in the present. It starts with a highly visual, movie-like opening - the wind ruffling the pelt of Africa - a country, a continent, likened to an animal.

Perhaps these are the winds of change come to disturb a once contented country.

The Kikuyu tribes are then seen as flies battening on to the bloodstreams (to batten is to gorge, or to feed greedily at someone else's expense) and the blood is on the veldt (grassland with trees and shrubs).

Dead bodies are scattered in this beautiful landscape, seen as a paradise, an irony not lost on the speaker. The personified worm, made military, has a cruel message for the world - What is the use of compassion for those already dead?

Officialdom backs up its policies with numbers. Academics point out the relevant facts and figures. But what do these mean when you consider the human cost? Where is the humanity in all of this?

The allusion to the Jews reflects the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis in WW2.

Stanza 2

The opening four lines of the next stanza paint a detailed picture of a typical hunt (for big game) carried out by colonials and settlers. Beaters use sticks and shout as they scour the undergrowth (the rushes), driving out the animals into the open, where they will be shot.

The ibis is an iconic wading bird with a special call and has been a part of the African landscape since humans first used tools. Is this an ironic use of the word 'civilization' (civilization in the USA)?

Lines 15 - 21 seem to reinforce this idea that, in the animal kingdom, evolution dictates who wins and losses, through a pure kind of violence.

But man uses the excuse of following a god, or becoming a god, by causing pain to other humans (and animals). There is an emphasis on the male of the species being responsible for war and pain, and war and peace.

Note the use of special language - *the tightened carcass - the native dread - contracted by the dead.*

Stanza 3

The opening four lines of the last stanza juxtapose historical reference with a visual here and now, embodied in gorilla and superman.

The personification of brutish necessity, as it wipes its hands on a napkin, is an interesting narrative device. Napkins are usually white, but the cause is dirty, that of colonial settlement alongside injustice.

By repeating what the worm cries in the first stanza - *a waste of our compassion* - the speaker is bringing extra weight to the idea of meaningless death. Compassion cannot alter the circumstances. By using *our*, is the speaker implying the compassion of the world, or of those who are African or black?

And what has Spain to do with colonial Kenya? Well, it seems that violent struggle isn't just limited to the continent of Africa. It can happen in Europe too, as with the Spanish civil war (1936-39) which was fought between democratic Republicans and Fascists.

In line 26 the speaker declares a personal involvement for the first time, acknowledging the fact he is divided because of his blood ties to both camps. The use of the word poisoned suggests to the reader that the speaker isn't too happy with his situation, which he deems toxic.

He wants to side with the oppressed but cannot reconcile the fact that the language of the oppressor is the same one he uses to speak, write and live by. The dramatic language heightens the tension:

brutish...dirty...wrestles...poisoned..cursed...drunken....betray...slaughter.

A series of heart-wrenching questions are not, or cannot be, answered.

The bloody conflicts, the deaths, the subjugation, the cruelty, the need for domination, all reflect the dilemma for the speaker. He feels estranged yet a part of African heritage; he feels a love for the language of the British who are the cause of such strife in the tribal lands.

Perhaps the final irony is that, by the very act of writing and publishing such a poem and ending it with a question about turning away from Africa, the speaker somehow provides his own answer.

Analysis of Derek Walcot's poem "A far cry from Africa":

A Far Cry from Africa focuses on the racial and cultural tensions arising from colonial occupation of that continent and the subsequent dilemma for the speaker, Walcott himself, a black poet writing in English.

Derek Walcott, teacher, playwright, poet and artist, as well as Nobel prize winner, was born on the island of St Lucia in the British West Indies.

As he grew up he became aware of his mixed racial ancestry - he had both white and black grandparents - and this theme of roots divided became a rich source of material for some of his poetry.

A Far Cry from Africa, published in 1962, explores the history of a specific uprising in Kenya, occupied by the British, in the 1950s. Certain members of the local Kikuyu tribe, known as Mau Mau fighters, fought a violent 8 yearlong campaign against settlers, who they saw as illegal trespassers on their land.

In the first two stanzas of the poem, the speaker expands on the thorny issue of colonial takeover and its bloody consequences before finally asking himself the awkward question - *How can I face such slaughter and be cool?*

He is caught between love of the English language, with which he expresses himself poetically, and the ancestral blood ties of his African family, who have been oppressed by the very people whose native language he needs, to survive as a poet.

A Far Cry from Africa is a 3 stanza poem, the first stanza containing 10 lines, the second 11 lines and the third 12 lines. It is not a true free verse poem because it does have a rhyme scheme of sorts, best described as erratic.

Theme of Derek Walcot's poem "A far cry from Africa":

Derek Walcott's "A Far Cry from Africa" expresses how Walcott is torn between "Africa and the English tongue [he] love[s]" (30). Several of Walcott's poems – "The Schooner *Flight*" and *Omeros* – include some elements of French patois and West Indian English. The West Indies had "traded hands fourteen times in…wars between the British and French" (*Norton* 2770), and Walcott tied each of these languages together to convey to his readers the extremity of his "racially mixed ancestry" (Farrell 2) and the indeterminacy that often follows such a varying ancestry. In "A Far Cry from Africa," Derek Walcott uses the advantages of hybridity to express unhomliness.

Derek Walcott often described himself as a "mongrel"; both grandmothers were African and both grandfathers were European (*Norton* 2770). He hated the English culture but loved the English language and empathized with the Irish for they were also the victims of colonization. In "A Far Cry from Africa," Walcott does not express all aspects of British and African culture; instead he focuses only on the brutal history of both. He is "poisoned with the blood of both," and he is torn between the two horrific options of a bloodied Africa or the attacker that is England (26).

In order to effectively colonize another's land, the colonizer's culture has to become so widely spread and deeply embedded in the colonized land's culture so that the indigenous peoples will begin to accept that they are inferior to the colonizers. *Mimicry* is a term used to explain the natives' imitating the colonizing country due to their want to be "accepted by the colonizing culture" and their feeling of inferiority and shame for their own culture (Tyson 221). In order to fully dominate a land by supporting their culture as superior, the colonizer must use one of the most powerful conveyances for the dispersion of ideologies: language. When the British colonized the West Indies, they enforced English as the official language, the main means of causing the natives to accept the British culture as their own. However, in "A Far Cry from Africa," Walcott ironically describes how he rejects the British culture – the colonialist ideology – but accepts the British *language* as superior.

As a colonial subject, Walcott would have been seen by the colonizers as ano*ther*, and as half-European, Walcott would have been seen as different from the completely indigenous peoples. While these full-blooded natives would also have learned Standard English along with the French Creole and emulated British culture, their hybridity would not be as extreme as Walcott's background. As a person of mixed blood and having family members that were

European, Derek Walcott would have had a First World upbringing in a Second World country.

“A Far Cry from Africa” uses metaphors, such as “*colonel* of carrion” (5), and ironic statements, such as “corpses are scattered through a paradise” (4), to describe the death and destruction and inhumanity that has occurred in both Africa and Europe. As half-European and half-African, Walcott was privileged to bear both horrible histories. The full-blooded natives’ desire was to look and behave like the colonizers. However, they did not have to bear the burden of being genetically similar to the colonizers, and not only being torn between two cultures but “divided to the vein” (27). Derek Walcott uses his genetic hybridity and cultural hybridity to express the extremity of his unhomliness.

"A Far Cry from Africa" is poet Derek Walcott's cry of pain over the situation in Kenya in the 1950s. At that time, Kenya was still a British colony, and local Kenyans chafed under the long term injustices of British rule. A nationalist uprising of Kenyan nationalists called Mau Mau led to the death of about 13,000 people, most of them Kenyan, along with a huge number of animals.

In the poem, Walcott decries man's inhumanity toward man in trying to enact justice through slaughter, and compares it unfavorably to nature and the animal kingdom. He also expresses anger at the way the deaths are reduced to statistics or abstractions. This obscures the reality of the dead and their suffering, whether they are white or so-called "savages."

Walcott, in his second stanza, then expresses how torn he feels in his loyalties. He is from a British Caribbean colony, so he understands the plight of a colonial, but he also perceives himself as British. He is frustrated with both sides over the violence.

Because he is writing this in the Caribbean, his title is a pun. He is physically "a far cry" from Africa, but he is also hearing a cry of pain that has reverberated far and wide across the earth.

It is the heartfelt emotional intensity of the poet's voice, as well as the vivid natural imagery, that gives this poem its power.

"A Far Cry from Africa" discusses the events of the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya in the early 1950s.

UNIT - III

The Sin Eater
By Margaret Atwood

This is Joseph, in maroon leather bedroom slippers, flattened at the heels, scuffed at the toes, wearing also a seedy cardigan of muddy off-yellow that reeks of bargain basements, sucking at his pipe, his hair greying and stringy, his articulation as beautiful and precise and English as ever:

"In Wales," he says, "mostly in the rural areas, there was a personage known as the Sin Eater. When someone was dying the Sin Eater would be sent for. The people of the house would prepare a meal and place it on the coffin. They would have the coffin all ready, of course: once they'd decided you were going off, you had scarcely any choice in the matter. According to other versions, the meal would be placed on the dead person's body, which must have made for some sloppy eating, one would have thought. In any case the Sin Eater would devour this meal and would also be given a sum of money. It was believed that all the sins the dying person had accumulated during his lifetime would be removed from him and transmitted to the Sin Eater. The Sin Eater thus became absolutely bloated with other people's sins. She'd accumulate such a heavy load of them that nobody wanted to have anything to do with her; a kind of syphilitic of the soul, you might say. They'd even avoid speaking to her, except of course when it was time to summon her to another meal."

"Her?" I say.

Joseph smiles, that lopsided grin that shows the teeth in one side of his mouth, the side not engaged with the stem of his pipe. An ironic grin, wolvish, picking up on what? What have I given away this time?

"I think of them as old women," he says, "though there's no reason why they shouldn't have been men, I suppose. They could be anything as long as they were willing to eat the sins. Destitute old creatures who had no other way of keeping body and soul together, don't you think? A sort of geriatric spiritual whoring."

He gazes at me, grinning away, and I remember certain stories I've heard about him, him and women. He's had three wives, to begin with. Nothing with me though, ever, though he does try to help me on with my coat a bit too lingeringly. Why should I worry? It's not as though I'm susceptible. Besides which he's at least sixty, and the cardigan is truly gross, as my sons would say.

"It was bad luck to kill one of them, though," he says, "and there must have been other perks. In point of fact I think Sin Eating has a lot to be said for it."

Joseph's not one of the kind who'll wait in sensitive, indulgent silence when you've frozen on him or run out of things to say. If you won't talk to him, he'll bloody well talk to you, about the most boring things he can think of, usually. I've heard all about his flower beds and his three wives and how to raise calla lilies in your cellar; I've heard all about the cellar, too, I could give guided tours. He says he thinks it's healthy for his patients -- he won't call them "clients," no pussyfooting around, with Joseph -- to know he's a human being too, and God do we know it. He'll drone on and on until you figure out that you aren't paying him so you can listen to him talk about his house plants, you're paying him so he can listen to you talk about yours.

Sometimes, though, he's really telling you something. I pick up my coffee cup, wondering whether this is one of those occasions.

"Okay," I say, "I'll bite. Why?"

"It's obvious," he says, lighting his pipe again, spewing out fumes. "First, the patients have to wait until they're dying. A true life crisis, no fakery and invention. They aren't permitted to bother you until then, until they can demonstrate that they're serious, you might say. Second, somebody gets a good square meal out of it." He laughs ruefully. We both know that half his patients don't bother to pay him, not even the money the government pays them. Joseph has a habit of taking on people nobody else will touch with a barge pole, not because they're too sick but because they're too poor. Mothers on welfare and so on; bad credit risks, like Joseph himself. He once got fired from a loony bin for trying to institute worker control.

"And think of the time saving," he goes on. "A couple of hours per patient, sum total, as opposed to twice a week for years and years, with the same result in the end."

"That's pretty cynical," I say disapprovingly. I'm suppossed to be the cynical one, but maybe he's outflanking me, to force me to give up this corner. Cynicism is a defence, according to Joseph.

"You wouldn't even have to listen to them," he says. "Not a blessed word. The sins are transmitted in the food."

Suddenly he looks sad and tired.

"You're telling me I'm wasting your time?" I say.

"Not mine, my dear," he says. "I've got all the time in the world."

I interpret this as condescension, the one thing above all that I can't stand. I don't throw my coffee cup at him, however. I'm not as angry as I would have been once.

We've spent a lot of time on it, this anger of mine. It was only because I found reality so unsatisfactory; that was my story. So unfinished, so sloppy, so pointless, so endless. I wanted things to make sense.

I thought Joseph would try to convince me that reality was actually fine and dandy and then try to adjust me to it, but he didn't do that. Instead he agreed with me, cheerfully and at once. Life in most ways was a big pile of shit, he said. That was axiomatic. "Think of it as a desert island," he said. "You're stuck on it, now you have to decide how best to cope."

"Until rescued?" I said.
"Forget about the rescue," he said.
"I can't," I said.

.

This conversation is taking place in Joseph's office, which is just as tatty as he is and smells of unemptied ash-trays, feet, misery and twice-breathed air. But it's also taking place in my bedroom, on the day of the funeral. Joseph's, who didn't have all the time in the world.

"He fell out of a tree," said Karen, notifying me. She'd come to do this in person, rather than using the phone. Joseph didn't trust phones. Most of the message in any act of communication, he said, was non-verbal.

Karen stood in my doorway, oozing tears. She was one of his too, one of us; it was through her I'd got him. By now there's a network of us, it's like recommending a hairdresser, we've passed him from hand to hand like the

proverbial eye or tooth. Smart women with detachable husbands or genius afflicted children with nervous tics, smart women with deranged lives, overjoyed to find someone who wouldn't tell us we were too smart for our own good and should all have frontal lobotomies. Smartness was an asset, Joseph maintained. We should only see what happened to the dumb ones.

"Out of a *tree*?" I said, almost screaming.

"Sixty feet, onto his head," said Karen. She began weeping again. I wanted to shake her.

"What the bloody hell was he doing up at the top of a sixty-foot *tree*?" I said.

"Pruning it," said Karen. "It was in his garden. It was cutting off the light to his flower beds."

"The old fart," I said. I was furious with him. It was an act of desertion. What made him think he had the right to go climbing up to the top of a sixty-foot tree, risking all our lives? Did his flower beds mean more to him than we did?

"What are we going to do?" said Karen.

What am I going to do? is one question. It can always be replaced by *What am I going to wear?* For some people it's the same thing. I go through the cupboard, looking for the blackest things I can find. What I wear will be the non-verbal part of the communication. Joseph will notice. I have a horrible feeling I'll turn up at the funeral home and find they've laid him out in his awful yellow cardigan and those tacky maroon leather bedroom slippers.

I needn't have bothered with the black. It's no longer demanded. The three wives are in pastels, the first in blue, the second in mauve, the third, the current

one, in beige. I know a lot about the three wives, from those off-days of mine when I didn't feel like talking.

Karen is here too, in an Indian-print dress, snivelling softly to herself. I envy her. I want to feel grief, but I can't quite believe Joseph is dead. It seems like some joke he's playing, some anecdote that's supposed to make us learn something. Fakery and invention. *All right, Joseph*, I want to call, *we have the answer, you can come out now*. But nothing happens, the close coffin remains closed, no wisps of smoke issue from it to show there's life.

The closed coffin is the third wife's idea. She thinks it's more dignified, says the grapevine, and it probably is. The coffin is of dark wood, in good taste, no showy trim. No one has made a meal and placed in on this coffin, no one has eaten from it. No destitute old creature, gobbling down the turnips and mash and the heavy secrecies of Joseph's life along with them. I have no idea what Joseph might have had on his conscience. Nevertheless I feel this as an omission: what then have become of Joseph's sins? They hover around us, in the air, over the bowed heads, while a male relative of Joseph's, unknown to me, tells us all what a fine man he was.

.

After the funeral we go back to Joseph's house, to the third wife's house, for what used to be called the wake. Not any more: now it's coffee and refreshments.

The flower beds are tidy, gladioli at this time of year, already fading and a little ragged. The tree branch, the one that broke, is still on the lawn.

"I kept having the feeling he wasn't really there," says Karen as we go up the walk.

"Really where?" I say.

"There," says Karen. "In the coffin."

"For Christ's sake," I say, "don't start that." I can tolerate that kind of sentimental fiction in myself, just barely, as long as I don't do it out loud. "Dead is dead, that's what he'd say. Deal with here and now, remember?"

Karen, who'd once tried suicide, nodded and started to cry again. Joseph is an expert on people who try suicide. He's never lost one yet.

"How does he do it?" I asked Karen once. Suicide wasn't one of my addictions, so I didn't know.

"He makes it sound so *boring*," she said.

"That can't be all," I said.

"He makes you imagine," she said, "what it's like to be dead."

.

There are people moving around quietly, in the living room and in the dining room, where the table stands, arranged by the third wife with a silver tea urn and a vase of chrysanthemums, pink and yellow. Nothing too funereal, you can hear her thinking. On the white tablecloth there are cups, plates, cookies, coffee, cakes. I don't know why funerals are supposed to make people hungry, but they do. If you can still chew you know you're alive.

Karen is beside me, stuffing down a piece of chocolate cake. On the other side is the first wife.

"I hope you aren't one of the loonies," she says to me abruptly. I've never really met her before, she's just been pointed out to me, by Karen, at the funeral. She's wiping her fingers on a paper napkin. On her powder-blue lapel is a gold brooch in the shape of a bird's nest, complete with the eggs. It reminds me of high school: felt skirts with appliques of cats and telephones, a world of replicas.

I ponder my reply. Does she mean *client*, or is she asking whether I am by chance genuinely out of my mind?

"No," I say.

"Didn't think so," says the first wife. "You don't look like it. A lot of them were, the place was crawling with them. I was afraid there might be an *incident*. When I lived with Joseph there were always these *incidents*, phone calls at two in the morning, always killing themselves, throwing themselves all over him, you couldn't believe what went on. Some of them were *devoted* to him. If he'd told them to shoot the Pope or something, they'd have done it just like that."

"He was very highly thought of," I say carefully.

"You're telling *me*," says the first wife. "Had the idea he was God himself, some of them. Not that he minded all that much."

The paper napkin wasn't adequate, she's licking her fingers. "Too rich," she says. "*Hers*." She jerks her head in the direction of the second wife, who is wispier than the first wife and is walking past us, somewhat aimlessly, in the direction of the living room. "You can have it, I told him finally. I just want some peace and quiet before I have to start pushing up the daisies." Despite the richness, she helps herself to another piece of chocolate cake. "*She* had this nutty idea that we should have some of them stand up and give little testimonies about him, right at the ceremony. Are you totally out of your tree? I told her. It's

your funeral, but if I was you I'd try to keep it in mind that some of the people there are going to be a whole lot saner than others. Luckily she listened to me."

"Yes," I say. There's chocolate icing on her cheek: I wonder if I should tell her.

"I did what I could," she says, "which wasn't that much, but still. I was fond of him in a way. You can't just wipe out ten years of your life. I brought the cookies," she adds, rather smugly. "Least I could do."

I look down at the cookies. They're white, cut into the shapes of stars and moons and decorated with coloured sugar and little silver balls. They remind me of Christmas, of festivals and celebrations. They're the kind of cookies you make someone; to please a child.

.

I've been here long enough. I look about for the third wife, the one in charge, to say good-bye. I finally locate her, standing in an open doorway. She's crying, something she didn't do at the funeral. The first wife is behind her, holding her hand.

"I'm keeping it just like this," says the third wife, to no one in particular. Past her shoulder I can see into the room, Joseph's study evidently. It would take a lot of strength to leave that rummage sale untouched, untidied. Not to mention the begonias withering on the sill. But for her it will take no strength at all, because Joseph is in this room, unfinished, a huge boxful of loose ends. He refuses to be packed up and put away.

.

"Who do you hate the most?" says Joseph. This, in the middle of a lecture he's been giving me about the proper kind of birdbath for one's garden. He knows of course that I don't have a garden.

"I have absolutely no idea," I say.

"Then you should find out," says Joseph. "I myself cherish an abiding hatred for the boy who lived next door to me when I was eight."

"Why is that?" I ask, pleased to be let off the hook.

"He picked my sunflower," he says. "I grew up in a slum, you know. We had an area of sorts at the front, but it was solid cinders. However I did manage to grow this one stunted little sunflower, God knows how. I used to get up early every morning just to look at it. And the little bugger picked it. Pure bloody malice. I've forgiven a lot of later transgressions but if I ran into the little sod tomorrow I'd stick a knife into him."

I'm shocked, as Joseph intends me to be. "He was only a child," I say.

"So was I," he says. "The early ones are the hardest to forgive. Children have no charity; it has to be learned."

Is this Joseph proving yet once more that he's a human being, or am I intended to understand something about myself? Maybe, maybe not. Sometimes Joseph's stories are parables, but sometimes they're jsut running off at the mouth.

.

In the front hall the second wife, she of the mauve wisps, ambushes me. "He didn't fall," she whispers.

"Pardon?" I say.

The three wives have a family resemblance -- they're all blondish and vague around the edges -- but there's something about this one, a glittering of the eyes. Maybe it's grief; or maybe Joseph didn't always draw a totally firm line between his personal and his professional lifes. The second wife has a faint aroma of client.

"He wasn't happy," she says. "I could tell. We were still very close, you know."

"What she wants me to infer is that he jumped. "He seemed all right to me," I say.

"He was good at keeping up a front," she says. She takes a breath, she's about to confide in me, but whatever these revelations are I don't want to hear them. I want Joseph to remain as he appeared: solid, capable, wise, and sane. I do not need his darkness.

.

I go back to the apartment. My sons are away for the weekend. I wonder whether I should bother making dinner just for myself. It's hardly worth it. I wander around the too-small living room, picking things up. No longer my husband's: as befits the half-divorced, he lives elsewhere.

One of my sons has just reached the shower-and-shave phase, the other hasn't, but both of them leave a deposit every time they pass through a room. A sort of bathtub ring of objects -- socks, paperback books left face-down and open in the middle, sandwiches with bites taken out of them, and, lately, cigarette butts.

Under a dirty T-shirt I discover the Hare Krishna magazine my younger son brought home a week ago. I was worried that it was a spate of adolescent religious mania, but no, he'd given them a quarter because he felt sorry for them. He was a dead-robin-burier as a child. I take that magazine into the

kitchen to put it in the trash. On the front there's a picture of Krishna playing the flute, surrounded by adoring maidens. His face is bright blue, which makes me think of corpses: some things are not cross-cultural. If I read on I could find out why meat and sex are bad for you. Not such a poor idea when you think about it: no more terrified cows, no more divorces. A life of abstinence and prayer. I think of myself, standing on a street corner, ringing a bell, swathed in flowing garments. Selfless and removed, free from sin. Sin is this world, says Krishna. This world is all we have, says Joseph. It's all you have to work with. It is not too much for you. You will not be rescued.

I could walk to the corner for a hamburger or I could phone out for pizza. I decide on the pizza.

.

"Do you like me?" Joseph says from his armchair.

"What do you mean, do I *like* you?" I say. It's early on; I haven't given any thought to whether or not I like Joseph.

"Well, do you?" he says

"Look," I say. I'm speaking calmly but in fact I'm outraged. This is a demand, and Joseph is not suppossed to make demands of me. There are too many demands being made of me already. That's why I'm here, isn't it? Because the demands exceed the supply. "You're like my dentist," I say. "I don't think about whether or not I like my dentist. I don't *have* to like him. I'm paying him to fix my teeth. You and my dentist are the only people in the whole world I don't *have* to *like*."

"But if you met me under other circumstances," Joseph persists, "would you like me?"

"I have no idea," I say. "I can't imagine any other circumstances."

.

This is a room at night, a night empty except for me. I'm looking at the ceiling, across which the light from a car passing outside is slowly moving. My apartment is on the first floor: I don't like heights. Before this I always lived in a house.

I've been having a dream about Joseph. Joseph was never much interested in dreams. At the beginning I used to save them up for him and tell them to him, the ones I thought were of interest, but he would always refuse to say what they meant. He'd make me tell him, instead. Being awake, according to Joseph, was more important than being asleep. He wanted me to prefer it.

Nevertheless, there was Joseph in my dream. It's the first time he's made an appearance. I think that it will please him to have made it, finally, after all those other dreams about preparations for dinner parties, always one plate short. But then I remember that he's no longer around to be told. Here it is, finally, the shape of my bereavement: Joseph is no longer around to be told. There is no one left in my life who is there only there to be told.

.

I'm in an airport terminal. The plane's been delayed, all the planes have been delayed, perhaps there's a strike, and people are crammed in and milling around. Some of them are upset, there are children crying, some of the women are crying too, they've lost people, they push through the crowd calling out names, but elsewhere there are clumps of men and women laughing and singing, they've had the foresight to bring cases of beer with them to the airport and they're passing the bottles around. I try to get some information but there's no one at any of the ticket counters. Then I realize I've forgotten my passport. I

decide to take a taxi home to get it, and by the time I make it back maybe they'll have everything straightened out.

I push towards the exit doors, but someone is waving to me across the heads of the crowd. It's Joseph. I'm not at all surprised to see him, though I do wonder about the winter overcoat he's wearing, since it's still summer. He also has a yellow muffler wound around his neck, and a hat. I've never seen him in any of these clothes before. Of course, I think, he's cold, but now he's pushed through the people, he's beside me. He's wearing a pair of heavy leather gloves and he takes the right one off to shake my hand. His own hand is bright blue, a flat tempera-paint blue, a picture-book blue. I hesitate, then I shake the hand, butt he doesn't let go, he holds my hand, confidingly, like a child, smiling at me as if we haven't met for a long time.

"I'm glad you got the invitation," he says.

Now he's leading me towards a doorway. There are fewer people now. To one side there's a stand selling orange juice. Joseph's three wives are behind the counter, all in identical costumes, white hats and frilly aprons, like waitresses of the forties. We go through the doorway; inside, people are sitting at small round tables, though there's nothing on the tables in front of them, they appear to be waiting.

I sit down at one of the tables and Joseph sits opposite me. He doesn't take off his hat or his coat, but his hands are on the table, no gloves, they're the normal colour again. There's a man beside us, trying to attract our attention. He's holding out a small white card covered with symbols, hands and fingers. A deaf-mute, I decide, and sure enough when I look his mouth is sewn shut. Now he's tugging at Joseph's arm, he's holding out something else, it's a large yellow flower. Joseph doesn't see him.

"Look," I say to Joseph, but the main is already gone and one of the waitresses has come instead. I resent the interruption, I have so much to tell Joseph and there's so little time, the plane will go in a minute, in the other room I can already hear the crackle of announcements, but the woman pushes in between us, smiling officiously. It's the first wife; behind her, the other two wives stand in attendance. She sets a large plate in front of us on the table.

"Will that be all?" she says, before she retreats.

The plate is filled with cookies, children's-party cookies, white ones, cut into the shapes of moons and stars, decorated with silver balls and coloured sugar. They look too rich.

"My sins," Joseph says. His voice sounds wistful but when I glance up he's smiling at me. Is he making a joke?

I look down at the plate again. I have a moment of panic: this is not what I ordered, it's too much for me, I might get sick. Maybe I could send it back; but I know this isn't possible.

I remember now that Joseph is dead. The plate floats up towards me, there is no table, around is dark space. There are thousands of stars, thousands of moons, and as I reach out for one they begin to shine.

Summary of the short story "The Sin Eater":

In the short story "The Sin Eater", Magaret Atwood introduces the protagonist Joseph, who is presented as a doctor and through the short story she compares him to the Sin Eater. The Sin Eater is a personage who would be paid to take out all the sins, and those sins would be transfer through food. Using characterization, the author is able to illustrate how Joseph only look for a personal gain, from his patients instead of helping them .We should focus on

how Joseph is been compared to the Sin Eater and how Joseph seem to have sexual relation with his patients.

The Sin Eater is been compare to Joseph many times in the short story. The author uses the protagonist Joseph to describe the Sin Eater. They are been compare to illustrate how Joseph is only looking for a personal gain his patients, he always talking about himself. In addition, Joseph seems to be looking for a Sin Eater himself to take all his sins away. In the passage of the short story on p.316: “If you won’t talk to him, he’ll bloody well talk to you... He’ll drove on and on until you figure out that you aren’t paying him so he can talk to you about his plants, youre paying him so he can listen to you talk about yours.” We are able to see how Joseph only talks about himself and look like he just wants to gain a personal g gain: to find a sin eater for him. In many passage of the short story, we are able to see how Joseph holds many sins about himself and is how he looking for a way to get rid of them. We are able to see this in this passage of The Sin Eater on p.320: “I myself cherish an abiding hatred for the boy who lived next door to me when I was eight... I’ve forgiven a lot later transgressions but if I ran into the little sod tomorrow I’d stick a knife into him.” He able to let out one of his sins explaining it to his patients, instead of listening to him.

The author seems to show that there are sexual relation between Joseph and his patients. In the beginning of the short story, Magaret Atwood describes how his patients are all women’s. In this passage of the Sin Eater on p.316: “He gazes at me, grinning away, and I remember certain stories I’ve heard about him, him and women. He’s had three wives, to begin with. Nothing with me though, ever, though he does try to help me on with my coat a bit too lingeringly. Why should I worry? It’s not as though I’m susceptible. Besides which he’s at least sixty, and the cardigan is truly gross, as my sons would say.” In this passage of the short story, we are able to acknowledge that he had at one point of his life three wives and how he only deals with womans most of the

time. All of his wives seem to be almost the same considering they are all blonds according to this passage on p.320:" The three wives have a family resemblance-they're all blondish and vague around the edges." We acknowledge that they are very similar one to another.

First of all, Joseph seems to not really listen to any of his patients and end up talking about himself most of the time. We are aware that Joseph tries to flirt with all of them and he seems to be wondering if they like him. He repeats up to three times to the second wife if she likes him. In this passage of the short story, on p.322: "Do you like me? Joseph says from his armchair. 'What do you mean do I like you? I say. It's early on; I haven't given any thought to whether or not I like Joseph... 'But if you met me under other circumstances, 'Joseph persists, 'would you like me?' 'I have no idea, 'I said. 'I can't imagine any other circumstances.' "We are able to see how he persists many times searching for her to say that she likes him, he seems like he looking for her validation for her. In addition , in this other passage of the text we see how woman's seem to be all over him on p.318 : " When I lived with Joseph there were always these were always these incidents, phones call at two in the morning always killing themselves, throwing themselves all over him, you couldn't believe what went on." Yet again, you can assume him having some sort of sexual relation with his patients.

In conclusion, Joseph only looks for a personal gain from his patients and this is shown through the short story when the author compares the Sin Eater to the protagonist. We conclude that Joseph pretend to listen to his patients and end up only talking about himself. Also, through all the short story we notice that he just looking for a Sin Eater Himself to clear out all his sins and other sins that people have transfer to him. In addition, there are some insinuations that Joseph has sexual relations with his patients, which includes

his three wives's. Finally, after looking of all the aspects of the short story we understand how the still is an exciting tension between him and his patients.

Style and Technique:

The title of "The Sin-Eater" establishes from the story's start the symbolic importance of those who sacrifice themselves for others' sins, and the story opens with a remembered conversation between the narrator and her psychiatrist. At first, readers are as shocked and disturbed by images of eating in the presence of a corpse as the narrator is. That this person is also symbolically devouring the dead person's sins is even more morbid.

The narrator's journey toward self-identity emerges in a series of remembered conversations between her and Joseph that are clearly and precisely portrayed with vivid details. As she searches for meaning, her self-addressed questions reveal a pattern. In every instance, her attempts to get treatment, support, or understanding from Joseph led to his interrupting her in order to catalog his own problems with women and their lack of understanding, as well as his fatigue and the resentment that he directed at his demanding patients.

As the narrator compares Joseph's self-image and view of his life to the realities of his life that are revealed by the comments of his former wives and patients, she recognizes that his life was a sham. This leads to her dream, which brilliantly symbolizes the nature of their relationship. She emerges strong, independent, and courageous, no longer needing a father figure to protect her.

A brief analysis of the short story "The Sin Eater":

In the short story "The Sin Eater" Margaret Atwood creates situation in which women are burdened by the rules and inequalities of their societies and they discover that they must reconstitute a brave, more self – reliant version of her in order to survive. Through the protagonist journey, we find that there is a great

deal of food and nourishment symbols within the context of the story, in regard to allusion to the myth as laid out by Joseph, and within the action of the story. However, it signifies another level of Meta language that holds the fabric of the story together that adds a nourishment element to the story.

JOYCE MARSHALL – THE OLD WOMAN

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR:

JOYCE MARSHALL WAS BORN in Montreal in 1913. After her education at McGill University in Montreal, she moved to Toronto where she remained throughout her life. She is well known for her translation work as well as for her contributions as a freelance editor to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Her best-known translations are works of fiction by the French-Canadian writer Gabrielle Roy, for which she was awarded the Canada Council Translation Prize in 1976. Her own works comprise two novels and a number of short stories, plus many journalistic texts of non-fiction.

Her first novel, *Presently Tomorrow*, appeared in 1946, her second novel, *Lovers and Strangers*, in 1957. Both novels explore new and unusual, even delicate aspects of sexual relationships in subtle language that earned

substantial critical praise: “The fine prose and the subtle exploration of character and motivations that distinguish *Presently Tomorrow* — which achieved some notoriety on publication because of its subject matter — are noticeable once again in *Lovers and Strangers*” (Weaver 1997, 745). What the relationships portrayed in both novels have in common is their precarious nature and the inherent danger of emotional misunderstandings. These aspects also appear again and again in her short stories, most pointedly in “The Old Woman,” which appeared in her first short-story collection, *A Private Place* (1975), but was first published in 1952.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Joyce Marshall was primarily associated with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's radio program “CBC Wednesday Night,” which was developed by Robert Weaver in 1948 and which gave various short-story writers — among them Alice Munro and Mordecai Richler — what could be called “a listening audience” (New 2003, 173). Weaver's reputation as the patron of the Canadian short story, which he owed to his various editorships of anthologies and of the literary journal *Tamarack Review*, supported public recognition of the undisputed talents of these writers. Thus, when *A Private Place* appeared, Marshall was already a well-established Canadian fiction writer, and her collection of short stories was immediately well received.

Almost twenty years after her first success as a short-story writer, Marshall published two further collections of short fiction, *Any Time at All and Other Stories* in 1993 and *Blood and Bone / En chair et en os* in 1995. This latest collection contains seven stories in English along with their French translations, each of which was done by a different translator.

The Old Woman - Joyce Marshall

Summary

Molly and Todd married in England during the war. He was there as a soldier. When Toddy went back to Canada Molly still stays in England because she had to care about her mother.

Three years later she travels to her husband in Canada. Together they go to their home in northern Quebec near to Missawani by train. Molly realizes that Toddy has changed.

When they arrive their home Todd shows her everything but the power plant he works in. He looks after the machines all day. One week later he finally shows the power house to Mary.

After Mary has cleaned the whole house she starts to be bored. She asks her husband if he can teach her how to drive the sleigh but he always claims he has no time because of the machines.

One day a worker asks Molly if she can help his wife who has problems with nursing their child. Molly knows what to do and so she become a birth helper. Her husband does not want her to do that. He wants her to stay at home all day.

One day he does not come home from the power house. So Molly looks after him. She finds him with his machines. He seems to be one with the machines. He does not react when Molly shouts his name. During the years he has fallen in love with his machines. Now they are his life.

Interpretation:
Todd has fallen in love with his machines. Now they are his world. When people are lonely for years they forget real live. They become like Toddy: Bushed. That is one of the problems of the country, especially in the northern regions. People become strange.
The story illustrates the landscape of Canada. The author often describes the beautiful country Molly sees.
Form and Style:

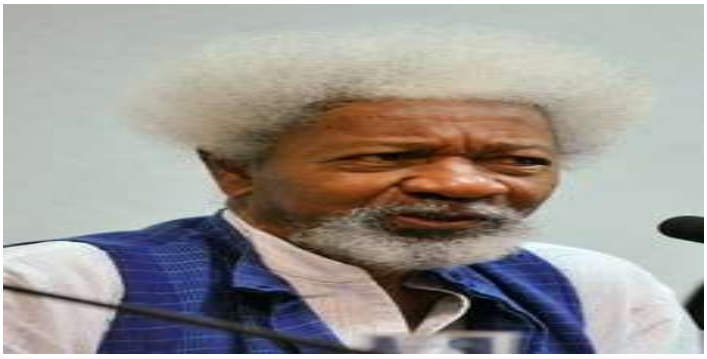
The story is told by a third-person narrator who reports Molly's point of view. It is written in standard English, even the direct speech.

There is no exposition. The story starts with some of Molly's thoughts during her trip to Missawani.

UNIT – IV

Wole Soyinka – The Lion and the Jewel

Biography of the author:



Oluwole Akivande Soyinka was born on the 13th of July 1934 in Abeokuta in Western Nigeria, at the time still a British colony. His father Ayo was a school supervisor and his mother Eniola a shopkeeper, both well-respected members of the local community. Although Soyinka was brought up in an English-speaking, Christian environment, his parents belonged to the Yoruba tribe, and the family often visited the father's ancestral home in Ísará, a traditional Yoruban community.

When Soyinka was twelve, he went to Ibadan to study at the prestigious Government College, and at 18 he enrolled at the city's new university. After

two years, he moved to England to study English Literature at the University of Leeds, where he specialized in drama tutored by the distinguished Shakespeare critic G Wilson Knight. In 1957 Soyinka received his BA and enrolled for a Masters degree, but abandoned it to work in the theatre.

He moved to London and started working as a script-reader for the Royal Court Theatre, and a year later produced his first play, *The Swamp-Dwellers*, at the University of London Drama Festival. During his involvement with the Royal Court, he also wrote work for their regular one-night 'productions without décor', in which he also acted. Meanwhile, both *The Swamp-Dwellers* and his new play, *The Lion and The Jewel*, were produced in his native Ibadan.

In 1960, Soyinka received a Rockefeller grant which enabled him to return to Nigeria to study African drama. He founded a theatre company, 1960 Masks, for whom he both directed and acted in several productions of his own plays. In 1962 he was appointed lecturer in English at the University of Ife, and at around the same time, he also started to write critical and satirical commentary on the political situation in Western Nigeria.

Over the next few years Soyinka continued to write and direct a wide range of plays, from comedies to politically minded plays. He also organized an improvisational 'guerrilla theatre', wrote for radio and television, and published both his first novel and his first collection of poetry. In 1966, *The Lion and The Jewel*was produced at the Royal Court Theatre, and Soyinka shared the annual John Whiting Award with playwright Tom Stoppard.

In 1967, during the Nigerian civil war, Soyinka wrote an article in which he proposed a cease-fire. For this, he was accused of sympathizing with the Biafran rebels, and imprisoned for treason for nearly two years. Soyinka spent much of his prison time in solitary confinement, and has described his traumatic experience in the collection *Poems From Prison*, and the autobiographical novel *The Man Died*. After his release from prison, he went into voluntary

exile, and spent some time in Ghana where he became editor of a leading intellectual journal. In 1975 he returned to Nigeria, and was appointed Professor of English at the University of Ife.

Soyinka continued to write plays, critical essays and film scripts, and in recognition of his achievement, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1986. By this time, his plays were being produced all over the world. He has worked as a guest lecturer at several universities world-wide, including Cambridge, Sheffield and Harvard, where he received an honorary doctorate in 1993.

After participating in a protest march against the military regime in 1993, Soyinka once again went into voluntary exile, dividing his time between the US and France. In 1997 he was charged and tried in his absence for bomb attacks against the army, and the head of state, General Abacha, sentenced Soyinka to death. Upon Abacha's sudden death in 1998, the accusations were cancelled, and in October Soyinka returned to Nigeria. His play *KingBaabu*, which premiered in Lagos in 2001, satirises past and present African dictators, and ismodelled on Alfred Jarry's *King Ubu.*

Wole Soyinka has written over fifteen plays, two novels, and a number of biographical works. His literary essays are collected in *Myth, Literature and the African World*, and his thoughts on theatre can be found in his 1960 essay *Towards a True Theatre*. He now divides his time between Atlanta, Georgia, where he is Professor of the Arts at Emory University, and Nigeria.

Key Facts about *The Lion and the Jewel*

- **Full Title:** The Lion and the Jewel
- **When Written:** 1959
- **Where Written:** Leeds, England

- **When Published:** While the play was first performed in 1959, the script wasn't published until 1962.
- **Literary Period:** Postcolonial African Diaspora
- **Genre:** Drama, Comedy
- **Setting:** Ilujunle, a rural Nigerian village in the late 1950s
- **Climax:** When Sidi reveals that Baroka raped her
- **Antagonist:** Baroka; rapid modernization

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Sidi

Sidi is the village belle of Ilujinle. She's very beautiful and is acutely aware of that fact, especially once the stranger returns to the village with a magazine of photographs that show Sidi in all her glory. Seeing the photographs makes Sidi obsessed with her own image and gives her an exaggerated sense of her power over men. Both Lakunle and Baroka wish to marry Sidi, but she doesn't act particularly interested in marrying either of them—she deems Baroka too old, and Lakunle insults her by calling her dumb and referring to her as a "bush-girl." However, she indicates that she supports her village's traditional way of life by implying that she'd marry any man, provided he paid her bride price.

Lakunle

Lakunle is the young schoolteacher in Ilujinle. He was educated in Lagos, presumably in a British school, which results in Lakunle's overblown sense of his grasp of English. He wishes to modernize the village and wants Sidi to marry him and be a "modern wife." In keeping with his values, Lakunle refuses to pay Sidi's bride price and instead tries to woo her with flowery language and

biblical references. Lakunle speaks about village life and customs as though he finds them abhorrent, though he does seem to enjoy the village's dance performances.

Baroka

Baroka is the Bale (village chief) of Ilujinle. He's known as both the "Lion" because of his strength, and the "Fox" because of his cunning tricks. At 62 he's an older man, but he still performs impressive feats of strength despite his age. He has many wives and concubines, and he marries a new wife every few months. Though Lakunle believes that Baroka is set on preserving his traditional way of life, Baroka believes that progress can be good and necessary. However, he believes that progress must be made on his own terms and that it should not be forced on the village.

Sadiku

Sadiku is Baroka's first wife. She is very loyal to her husband and spends her time acting as a matchmaker to find him new brides and concubines. Her devotion isn't blind and unwavering, however. When Baroka confides in Sadiku that his manhood is gone, she's thrilled to have "scotched" her husband and scored a victory for all women over men. Since Sadiku is Baroka's first wife, traditional values give her a degree of power, and she fears progress and modernity.

Minor Characters

The Wrestler

The Wrestler is a man Baroka employs to wrestle him for exercise.

The Favorite

Baroka's current favorite wife.

The Stranger

The stranger is a photographer from Lagos who stumbled upon Ilujinle sometime before the story starts. He himself never appears in the play, though Lakunle plays his part when the village acts out the stranger's arrival.

The Lion and the Jewel – Summary

The Lion and the Jewel dramatizes a day in the life of three Yoruba villagers in Nigeria. Lakunle, a young, arrogant schoolteacher, and Baroka, the elderly chief, both vie for the hand of Sidi, the "jewel" of the village. Sidi ends up choosing Baroka.

- The audience learns that Sidi won't marry Lakunle because he refuses to pay her bride price. He thinks of himself as a modern, forward-thinking man and disapproves of the outdated custom of paying a bride price.

- Baroka's wife Sadiku, the chieftess of the village, tries to convince Sidi to marry Baroka and join his harem. Sidi refuses on the basis that Baroka is too old for her.

- When Lakunle learns that Sidi isn't a virgin, he grows angry with her, but quickly calms down and offers to marry her again. She turns him down, choosing to marry the wiser and more experienced Baroka.

The play begins as Sidi, the village belle of Ilujinle, enters the square with a pail of water balanced on her head. Lakunle, the western-educated schoolteacher, sees her, runs from his classroom, and takes Sidi's pail. He berates her for carrying loads on her head and not dressing modestly, and she retaliates by reminding Lakunle that the village calls him a madman. Sidi grows angry as Lakunle tells her that women are less intelligent than men because of their small brains. He says that soon the village will have machines to do all the

hard work and he describes the beauty of Lagos, which is an entirely modern city. Lakunle refuses to give Sidi her pail of water back until she agrees to marry him and he offers a number of flowery lines that describe his intense love for her. Sidi reminds him that she'd marry him any day if he'd agree to pay the bride price. Lakunle deems this barbaric and refuses. He grabs Sidi and tells her how wonderful their modern marriage will be. When he kisses her, Sidi is disgusted. Though Lakunle insists that he loves Sidi and that kissing is something normal for modern couples, Sidi replies that kissing is only a way to avoid paying the bride price. She calls Lakunle mad.

A group of young villagers enter the square and tell Sidi that the stranger returned to the village with a magazine of images. Sidi excitedly asks if the stranger made Sidi as beautiful as he said he would, and the girls tell her he did. They say that Baroka, the village Bale, is still looking at the images and is jealous of Sidi, though he pretends to be proud of her. Another girl says that Baroka appears in the magazine as well, but his image is very small and shows him next to the latrines. Upon hearing this, Sidi declares that she's more powerful than Baroka and has no reason to marry Lakunle.

Sidi suggests that they dance the dance of the "lost traveler." She assigns parts to the villagers and forces Lakunle to play the part of the stranger. Despite his initial unwillingness to participate, Lakunle throws himself fully into the dance. The rest of the villagers dance while Lakunle performs realistic miming of driving a car, drunkenly wandering through the jungle, and discovering Sidi in the river. Suddenly, Baroka joins the dance and the action stops as the villagers kneel and bow to him. Lakunle tries to leave, but Baroka insists he stay and they continue the dance. Baroka instructs his attendants to seize Lakunle/the stranger, but he then takes pity on the stranger and sets out a feast in his honor. The stranger takes photographs of the village and is especially entranced by Sidi and her dancing. The dance ends when the stranger vomits. Sidi and the

villagers chase Lakunle towards the actual stranger so he can translate for them, and Baroka muses that he hasn't taken a new wife in five months.

Later that day, Sidi and Lakunle walk down the road. Lakunle carries a bundle of firewood, while Sidi is engrossed in the photographs of herself in the magazine. Baroka's first wife, Sadiku, startles Sidi. Sadiku tells Sidi that Baroka wants to marry her, which makes Lakunle angry. He tells Sidi not to listen, but Sidi insists that she's very powerful now that the stranger has brought her images to the village. Sadiku insists that if Sidi marries Baroka, she'll be very powerful—when Baroka dies, she'll be the new head wife. Sidi refuses and says that Baroka only wants to possess her beauty and keep it for himself. Sidi opens the magazine, shows the photographs to Sadiku, and laments that nobody ever complimented Sidi on her breasts. She calls Baroka old and leathery. Sadiku is shocked, but she invites Sidi to come to Baroka's for a feast anyway. Sidi laughs and says that the women who attend the suppers become wives or concubines the next day. Lakunle inserts himself into the conversation and says that Baroka is called "the fox" for a reason. He describes how Baroka paid off a foreman to reroute a railway away from Ilujinle, thereby robbing Ilujinle of the ability to modernize. He loses himself in thought and muses about how wonderful Baroka's life of luxury with so many wives must be. Sidi and Sadiku slip away.

In Baroka's bedroom, his favorite wife plucks the hairs from his armpit. He tells her that he's going to take a new wife soon and she plucks the hairs harshly. Sadiku enters the bedroom and Baroka sends his favorite away. Sadiku tells her husband that Sidi refused his offer of marriage because of his age. Angry, Baroka lists his achievements of the past week. He lies down, asks Sadiku to rub his feet, and picks up a copy of the magazine. He suggests that it might be for the best, as his manhood ended the week before. Sadiku cries, and Baroka tells her that she cannot tell anyone of this secret.

That evening, Sidi continues to admire the photographs in the village square. Sadiku enters the square, pulls out a carved figure of Baroka, and laughs. She begins a chant of "take warning my masters/we'll scotch you in the end" and dances around the figure. Sidi, shocked, approaches Sadiku and demands to know what's going on. Sadiku swears Sidi to secrecy and whispers in her ear. Sidi is overjoyed and joins in the dance. Lakunle enters the square and watches the women for a moment before deeming them crazy. Sidi suddenly stops and says she wants to taunt Baroka. She decides to go to him, ask forgiveness, and torment him. Sadiku gives her blessing and Sidi runs off.

Lakunle calls the women foolish. Sadiku tells Lakunle he's unattractive and reminds him that he could marry Sidi soon if he paid the bride price. When Sadiku laughs about Lakunle's wish to modernize the village, he insists that she come to school with the children so she can learn to do something besides collect brides for Baroka.

When Sidi enters Baroka's house, he's engaged in a wrestling match with his wrestler. Baroka is annoyed that nobody was there to greet Sidi and keep her out of his bedroom, and he explains that his servants take Sundays off now that they've formed a union. Sidi asks Baroka for forgiveness for her hasty reply. He pretends to not know what she's talking about, throwing Sidi off guard. Sidi asks after Baroka's favorite wife and asks if she was somehow dissatisfied with her husband. Baroka insists he has no time to consider his wives' reasons for being unhappy, which scares Sidi. Baroka asks her to sit down and not make him feel old.

Sidi says that the wrestler will win. Baroka explains that the wrestler *must* win, as Baroka only fights men who challenge him and he changes wrestlers when he learns how to beat them. Similarly, he takes new wives when he learns how to tire the old ones. Sidi tells Baroka that someone brought her an offer of marriage earlier that day and asks Baroka if he'd consent to allow her to marry this man if he were her father. She describes Baroka and answers his questions

about her suitor in such a way as to offend Baroka. Baroka throws his wrestler and Sidi celebrates Baroka's victory. The men begin to arm wrestle and Baroka resumes his line of questioning about Sidi's suitor. Sidi insults Baroka's virility. Baroka wins the match again and sends his wrestler away. He sits down next to Sidi and laments how old he's becoming. He asks if Sadiku invented a story for Sidi, saying that Sadiku is constantly finding new women for him to marry.

Baroka pulls out the magazine and an addressed envelope. He asks Sidi if she knows what the stamp is. Sidi does; she says it's a tax on "talking with paper." Baroka motions to a machine in his bedroom and says he wants to use it to print stamps for Ilujinle with Sidi's face on them. Sidi loses herself in this dream, and Baroka explains that he doesn't hate progress, he hates the sameness that progress brings. He tells Sidi that the two of them are very alike and they fit together perfectly. Sidi wonders if she's dumb like Lakunle says she is, but Baroka says she's simply truthful. He insists that the old and the new must embrace each other as Sidi's head falls onto his shoulder.

In the market that night, Lakunle and Sadiku wait for Sidi to return. A group of mummers passes them and Sadiku suggests they've heard about Baroka. She steals money from Lakunle's pockets and pays the mummers. They dance the story of Baroka's downfall, and Baroka is portrayed as a comical character. Sadiku herself gets to dance the final "scotching" of Baroka.

Sidi runs into the market crying. Both Sadiku and Lakunle try to comfort her, but she won't let them. She says that Baroka tricked them and she's no longer a virgin. Lakunle is angry for a moment, but then says he still wants to marry Sidi and no longer has to pay the bride price. Sidi runs away. Lakunle sends Sadiku after her to find out what she's doing. Sadiku returns and says that Sidi is dressing herself like a bride, and Lakunle insists that he can't get married immediately.

The dancers and Sidi re-enter the square. Sidi is beautiful. She offers Lakunle the magazine and invites him to the wedding. He insists that he must be invited, since he's the groom. Sidi laughs and says she'd never be able to marry him after experiencing Baroka. She asks the musicians to play music while she walks to Baroka's house and the dance begins. A young girl dances suggestively at Lakunle, and he chases after her.

Analysis of the play:

“The Lion and the Jewel” is a powerful play by award-winning Nigerian poet and playwright Wole Soyinka. The play was written in London, and was first performed in 1959 at the Ibadan Arts Theatre. Well received, Soyinka’s groundbreaking play was the first of its kind to use traditional Yoruba poetry, music and dance in play form to express its uniquely Nigerian narrative in English. With its creation and subsequent success, the play allowed Nigerian drama to take its well-earned place in world theater.

The comedy’s location is set in the remote village of Ilujinle, with three main characters providing most of the narrative’s character and plot development. The first character is Lakunle, an easygoing schoolteacher thought of as naïve because he readily accepts Western ideas without actually understanding them. The second character is Baroka, who is the village chief. Unlike Lakunle, Baroka views modern, Western ideas as a real threat to his power. The third main character is Sidi, a gorgeous woman who must choose one of the two male characters for a husband.

Though the characters are considered exaggerated, perhaps intentionally by the playwright, the play itself is unusual for Soyinka in that there is no definitive bad guy or evil plaguing the play. The characters are comical and light, though not without their flaws. For instance, Lakunle is “stuck up” and tends to talk too

much, while Baroka, as village chief, is a cunning adversary. In the end, however, Soyinka's play points to the fact that these two men must work together, that the old and the new must, as in the real world, find a way of working together to bring about change.

Indeed, Soyinka's play presents these opposing views quite clearly in the guise of Baroka and Lakunle. As such, the two men represent what Soyinka's writing embodied, exposing the two sides of major social and political issues that Africa was dealing at the end of the twentieth century. In this way, the "old versus new" is symbolic of tradition versus modernity. The need for the two men to work together highlights the need for communication on a universal scale, regardless of age, likes or dislikes.

The men are not the only ones, however, who bring universal and symbolic themes to the fore in Soyinka's play. In the end, Sidi chooses the older Baroka over Lakunle. Her reasoning is that Baroka is a more experienced lover. Moreover, he shares her views on marriage (Lakunle actually refuses to pay the traditional bride price because he views the practice outdated and demeaning). Sidi, however, views this "demeaning" practice differently. She believes the price will ensure her rights in the marriage. While all of this political/social engineering is taking place, Baroka's other wife—his senior wife, Sadiku—is angered at the entire prospect of another wife. Sidi and Sadiku both show that, though the women in the play do not have as much freedom or choice as the men, they are more than capable of questioning this lack of choice, and more than capable of expressing their views on societal matters, especially those close to their heart.

As critique, the play expresses its views through the combination of Western and Yoruban elements, adding an additionally poignant layer of meaning to the concept of "traditional" working together with modern, Western ideals. Dance and mime are often used during flashback episodes, underscoring past and

present. The scenery also plays homage to the Yoruban elements, with masked figures and dancers around the stage. “The Lion and the Jewel” also ends with a marriage dance where the gods of fertility are invoked. In this way, Soyinka’s play effectively uses Western tropes, staging and plot development while incorporating traditional art and culture, creating a dazzling experience of action, comedy, education, and effective communication.

THEMES:

Tradition vs. Modernity

The Lion and the Jewel was written and first performed the year before Nigeria was granted its independence from Great Britain, and the script was published two years after independence. As such, one of the primary conflicts of the play pits traditional Yoruba customs against a western conception of progress and modernity, as represented by the conflict between Baroka and Lakunle for Sidi's hand in marriage.

Lakunle represents the modern Nigerian man. He wears western clothing, has been educated in a presumably British school, and wants to turn his village into a modern paradise like the city of Lagos. Lakunle doesn't just admire and idolize western society; he actively and loudly despises the traditional customs of his village and the people who support them. This is best illustrated by Lakunle's refusal to pay Sidi's bride price. Sidi indicates that she'd marry Lakunle any time if he'd only pay the price and observe local custom. Lakunle's refusal shows that it's more important to him to convert Sidi to his way of thinking and turn her into a "modern wife" than it is for him to marry her in the first place.

For much of the play, other characters describe Baroka as being directly opposed to modernity and extremely concerned with preserving his village's

traditional way of life. Lakunle, in particular, finds Baroka's lifestyle abhorrent. He describes how Baroka paid off a surveyor to not route train tracks through the outskirts of Ilujinle, thereby robbing the village of a link to the modern world that would modernize the village. However, when Baroka himself speaks, it becomes apparent that he doesn't actually hate modernity or progress. While he obviously delights in the joys and customs of village life, when it comes to modernity he simply hates having it forced upon him. He sees more value in bringing modern customs to the village on his own terms. For example, he argues that creating a postal system for the village will begin to bring it into the modern world without entirely upending the village's way of life. Further, when he does talk about modern ideas that were forced upon him, such as his servants forming a union and taking Sundays off, his tone is resigned rather than angry—he sees it as inevitable and annoying, but not bad.

The competition between Baroka and Lakunle for Sidi’s hand in marriage brings the conflict between tradition and modernity to life. Baroka wishes to add Sidi to his harem of wives, while Lakunle dreams of having one wife who, in theory at least, is his equal. Both men promise Sidi a different version of power and fulfillment. When Baroka dies, Sidi will become the head wife of the new Bale, a position that would make her one of the most powerful women in the village. Lakunle, on the other hand, offers Sidi the possibility of an equal partnership in which she's not required to serve her husband as is traditional. However, the way Lakunle talks to and about Sidi indicates that agreeing to marry Lakunle and embracing modernity won't necessarily be better for her, as modern science provides Lakunle specious evidence that women are weaker and less intelligent than men. Sidi recognizes that Lakunle's idea of modernity might not improve her life; in fact, it might mean that she would have less power and fewer rights than she would have in a traditional marriage.

Baroka's actions (and the fact that he triumphs in the fight for Sidi's hand) suggest that while Lakunle may be right that Ilujinle will indeed need to join

the modern world, modernization and the outright rejection of local custom simply for the sake of doing so are foolish goals that benefit nobody. Instead, Baroka's triumph suggests that progress must be made when and where it truly benefits the village and its inhabitants.

Men vs. Women

The Lion and the Jewel focuses on the competition to win Sidi's hand in marriage, which makes the play, in a sense, a battle of the sexes. As such, the play asks a number of questions about the nature of each sex's power: why men or women are powerful; how they became powerful in the first place; and how they either maintain or lose that power.

The men who fight for Sidi see her only as a beautiful prize to be won; Baroka and Lakunle value Sidi for no more than her beauty and her virginity. Meanwhile, the men in *The Lion and the Jewel* are valued by others (and value themselves) based on what they can do or have already done. Lakunle, for example, values himself because he's educated and he seeks to bring education, modernity, and Christianity to Ilujinle, and Baroka's value derives from his role as the Bale of Ilujinle and his responsibilities to keep his people safe and build his image by taking many wives and fathering children.

To both Baroka and Lakunle, Sidi is a jewel—a valuable object capable of teasing and annoying the men, but an object nonetheless. Lakunle wants Sidi to marry him so he can better perform modernity by taking a modern wife, one who wears high heels and lipstick. Similarly, Baroka wants Sidi to be his wife and complete his harem. While it's unclear whether or not Baroka will keep his promise that Sidi will be his final wife, she too will be the jewel of his wives. To both men, then, marriage to Sidi is a status symbol and an indicator of their power, virility, and the superiority of their respective ways of life (modern versus traditional). Further, the end of the play suggests that what Lakunle wants from Sidi (a modern wife to make him seem more modern) doesn't even

require Sidi specifically; by immediately turning his attention to the next woman who dances at him, Lakunle indicates that while Sidi may have been an appealing prize, he can accomplish his goal of having a modern wife by marrying any woman up to the task. This reduces women in general to objects who must simply play a part in the lives of their husbands.

The idea of reducing people with little power to objects, however, works in reverse as well. When Sadiku believes Baroka's tale that his manhood (virility) is gone, she dances gleefully around a statue of Baroka and chants that women have won the war against men. She knows that Baroka's position of power in the village is tied to his ability to perform sexually and produce children, and she believes that when this specific power is gone, the rest of his power will also disappear, leaving his wives (who are still capable of performing sexually and bearing children) victorious. In this case, when Baroka appears to have lost what gives him power, he's reduced to being represented by an actual object (the statue). However, the play suggests that there's a great deal of difference between Baroka's weakness being represented by an object and the fact that women are literally treated as objects. When Sadiku dances around the statue of Baroka, it's important to note that she cannot celebrate her victory publically. She can celebrate in private and taunt a representation of Baroka, but she cannot taunt Baroka himself. In contrast, Sidi, Sadiku, and other female villagers are teased, taunted, and demeaned to their faces throughout the play. They're grabbed, fondled, raped, and told that they're simple and backwards because they're women. The male characters don't have to privately taunt inanimate objects; their culture, regardless of how they engage with modernity or tradition, allows them to reduce women to objects and treat them as such.

Pride, Vanity, and the Power of Images

As the village belle, Sidi is exceptionally vain. She knows her worth is tied to her beauty, and she wastes no time reminding Lakunle and the other villagers that she's beautiful. However, when the strangercaptures Sidi's beauty on film

and returns to Ilujinle with photographs, Sidi's vanity grows exponentially. The photographs introduce Sidi and the villagers to the power of images, and the ensuing events of the play explore the power derived from imagery and its relationship to pride and vanity.

After the stranger returns to Ilujinle with the magazine of photographs, Sidi deems herself more powerful than Baroka himself. The magazine and the photographs become evidence of her beauty and her power, and they demonstrate the power of images in several different ways. First, Sidi seems to have never seen herself in a mirror before. Because of this, seeing the magazine is the first time that Sidi has the opportunity to interpret her own image herself, rather than interpreting how others see and treat her. This turns Sidi into a Narcissus-like character, obsessed with her own image. While seeing her own image allows her to take possession of her beauty and body, it also blinds her to the fact that others, too, are attempting to control her image and body. For example, while Sidi might misinterpret the particulars of Baroka's interest in her, it's undeniable that the magazine allows him to enjoy Sidi's image without Sidi herself present and it certainly influences his decision to pursue her as a wife.

When the magazine arrives in the village, Sidi isn't the only character who's shown to be vain and prideful. The village girls make it very clear that while Baroka appears in the magazine, it would've been better for him to be left out—the photo of him is tiny and shows him next to the village latrine. By only appearing once, in a small image, and next to the toilets, Baroka's power is greatly reduced. The scorn of the village girls suggests that the image, in some ways, negates the power he has in real life.

Sidi’s newfound sense of beauty and power, combined with Baroka's unflattering photo, leads Sidi to the conclusion that his offer of marriage comes from a desire to possess and control Sidi's worth. Sidi isn't wrong, and it can't be ignored that Baroka certainly wants to control her worth and keep her beauty

for himself by taking Sidi as a wife. However, he also wants to control her worth by putting her photograph on a postage stamp—something that's mutually beneficial for them. By putting Sidi's face on a stamp, Baroka both appeals to her vanity and embraces the power of images. It allows Sidi to enjoy the fame that the magazine brought, while making her even more famous and distributing her image even further. However, it's important to make the distinction that while Sidi will certainly enjoy the fame and recognition that will come from the stamp, fame and recognition are all she'll get. She won't enjoy the economic power from the profits, and she won't be credited with modernizing the village by developing a postal system. Baroka will enjoy both of these things because he ultimately has the power to control Sidi's image and, by extension, Sidi herself.

Language, Words, and Trickery;

The Lion and the Jewel is filled with instances of trickery, particularly surrounding language. Language is the tool by which characters fool one another, create false impressions of superiority, and convince others to support their goals. Thus, language is shown to be a source of power. However, the play ultimately suggests that language is most powerful when used without lies or misdirection, and when it is applied in service of concrete, achievable goals.

Lakunle delights in using big words and flowery language to try to impress Sidi and other villagers. While his grasp of the English language makes him feel powerful, in reality it only makes him look like a fool. For example, when Lakunle describes the custom of paying a bride price as "excommunicated" or "redundant," it becomes obvious to the play's audience that Lakunle doesn't have a complete grasp of English, despite how much he loves and flaunts the language. He uses complicated words because he knows that they are beyond the understanding of his fellow villagers. However, though

he expects such language to be impressive, Sidi tells Lakunle scornfully that his words "always sound the same/and make no meaning." This suggests that even if Sidi isn't specifically aware that Lakunle is misusing words, Lakunle's performance still exposes him for the fool he is, and both the characters and the audience laugh at him for it.

Lakunle’s attempts to woo Sidi by using language she doesn't understand are just one example of characters engaging in trickery to try to achieve their goals. Sadiku and Sidi try to humiliate Baroka by tricking him into believing Sidi has accepted his offer of marriage, Baroka himself tricks both women into believing his manhood is gone, and he tricks Sidi into marrying him. All of these tricks are carried out through the use of language; they're verbal tricks rather than physical tricks. Though the success of the tricks varies from character to character, their verbal nature is indicative of the power of language and words to control others.

The play does, however, draw a distinction between tricks that are meant to spur action (like marriage or modernization of the village), and tricks that are meant to create an emotional reaction, such as humiliation. Sadiku and Sidi's attempt to humiliate Baroka by exposing his supposed inability to perform sexually (an emotional trick) is ultimately unsuccessful and makes both women look like fools in the end. Similarly, while one of Lakunle's goals was to convince Sidi to marry him, he seems far more interested in making himself look educated and modern. These tricks with purely emotional goals only work to make the tricksters themselves look silly. Baroka, on the other hand, has concrete goals and he uses a combination of trickery and telling the truth to achieve them. Much of what Baroka tells Sidi seems to be truthful: he doesn't hate progress and, in fact, he wishes to help spur progress by developing a postal system for the village. By using the truth to his advantage and setting comparatively reasonable and concrete, achievable goals (marriage to Sidi and modernization in moderation), Baroka is able to wield actual power over others.

SYMBOLS:

The Statue of Baroka

The stage directions indicate that the statue of Baroka is well-endowed, which associates the statue with Baroka's power and virility, since he derives power from his ability to have sex with his wives and father children. However, the statue doesn't appear in the play before Sadiku finds out that Baroka's manhood (virility) is gone. When Sadiku uses the statue to mock Baroka's inability to perform sexually, it turns Baroka into a joke and an object. By reducing Baroka to a literal object, the women of the play experience a sense of power and autonomy. This is a sham, however—Baroka is still able to perform sexually, which he reveals when he rapes Sidi. Thus, the statue is indicative of women's place in Yoruba society. Women are treated as living, breathing objects, and the only time they can experience power over men is when the men are reduced to actual objects. However, that power is an illusion.

Postage stamps

Postage stamps, specifically the ones that Baroka plans to print featuring Sidi's photograph, are symbolic of the most effective way (at least in Soyinka's opinion) for Africa to modernize. Unlike railways or unions, which Baroka sees being forced on him, stamps and the development of a postal system represent a way to embrace progress and modernity without completely upending or forsaking Ilujinle's current way of life. Stamps are a modern, Western invention, but they're also something that Baroka can use on his own terms. They will allow him to dictate how, when, and how much Ilujinle progresses.

The Magazine

The magazines that the stranger brings to Ilujinle feature photographs of the village and its residents, including three full pages showing images of Sidi. While Sidi was the village belle long before the magazine arrived, the magazine

becomes the literal source of her power over the course of the play, particularly since it depicts her beauty prominently while insulting Baroka by including only a small picture of him next to a latrine. However, even though the magazine seems to suggest that Sidi is more powerful than Baroka (the village leader), the magazine also turns Sidi into a literal object that can be consumed, used, and distributed by others. The magazine, then, is symbolic of women's existence in Ilujinle; even when women believe they are gaining power, they are still seen as objects to be consumed and controlled by others.

The significance of the play's title:

The significance of the play's title lies in the symbolic nature of these two names. The "Lion" is an elderly man, Baroka, whose power and potency are referred to frequently, and his sexual potency is seen as indicative of his status as a man and, to some extent, as a ruler and chieftain of his village. The lion's symbolic meaning is one of the most legendary of the natural world. The singular male leader of a pride of male and female lions is often the eldest male of the pride. This male lion is dominant and is frequently challenged by younger males. The eldest male keeps his position of power by besting the other males in fighting or by intimidating them into backing down from challenging his dominance, thereby winning the right to mate with the females.

The "jewel" is not a living symbol, and this is appropriate since Sidi is considered valuable for her youth and beauty and is somewhat objectified. She is like a beautiful possession on display at Baroka's side, much like a piece of jewelry or a jewel in a crown. The precious nature of a jewel is often associated with royalty, so Sidi is not only an attractive companion, but also an asset to Baroka's standing as a monarch. Sidi is wooed by a younger man who also admires her beauty, but he is an intellectual and does not possess the animalistic power of the "lionlike" Baroka. It is as if Sidi needs this power of the flesh and blood to balance her abstract existence as an object of beauty. Also, since she is

led to believe that Baroka is impotent, she may think her beauty and worth somehow reawaken his potency, thereby reaffirming her own precious value.

Presentation of women in the play *The Lion and the Jewel:*

The title gives a strong hint about how women are portrayed throughout the play: the "jewel" in question is the beautiful woman Sidi, who is reduced to a coveted object that two men in particular want to possess. These men are the elderly Baroka, the "lion," and the young, western-educated school teacher Lakunle.

Throughout the play women are treated as objects and as subordinate to men. Lakunle, for instance, assumes the unquestioning right early in the play to tell Sidi she should not show so much cleavage or carry a pail on her head. He also asserts dominance by informing her that she has a smaller brain that of a man. After that less than endearing beginning, he tells her he loves her.

Later, during a village performance, the women assume the parts of the wheels of the car, while Lakunle is the driver, again illustrating the subordinate position of women in this society.

Women's status as possessions is shown most clearly in the behavior of Baroka, the lion, who has collected a multitude of wives the way one might collect china. We see him telling one of his wives, who is plucking out his armpit hairs, that he plans to take yet another wife but will allow her to be the only one who gets to pluck his armpit hairs. This comment is half teasing and half manipulative (Baroka wants her to pull harder), but it also illustrates the way women are owned and subordinated in this society.

Women like Sidi do show verve, strength, and agency, but in the end fall in line with traditional cultural values. Sidi, for example, thinks it is shameful that Laklune does not want to pay the bride price for her.

The conflict between tradition and modernity in Wole Soyinka's play The *Lion and the Jewel:*

In the play *The Lion and the Jewel*, Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka **portrays a theme** representative of his Nigerian people: their desire to believe that past **village traditions** of Nigeria are no longer useful for sustaining culture yet also their**inability to let go** of their traditions because they see their beauty and power. Hence, the **conflict** in the play concerns the **traditions of village life** vs. the **desires to modernize**. Different characters represent traditions and modernization.

Lakunle, the schoolteacher, represents the **desire for modernization**. One example of his modernization is seen in the fact that he rejects the village's traditional style of clothing and instead prefers to wear an "old-style English suit." He also speaks of Western ideals; for example, he refuses to pay Sidi's bride-price because he feels the custom subjugates her. In contrast, she feels the custom shows the village her worth.

Both **Sidi** and her other suitor, **Baroka**, the man she decides to marry, represent **Nigerian tradition**. Sidi, in contrast to Lakunle, prefers to hold on to village traditions. Likewise, Baroka, who is the village chief, refuses to modernize the village.

UNIT – V

Chinua Achebe - Things Fall Apart

Biography of the author:

Chinua Achebe (pronounced *Chee*-noo-ah Ah-*chay*-bay) is considered by many critics and teachers to be the most influential African writer of his generation. His writings, including the novel *Things Fall Apart*, have introduced readers throughout the world to creative uses of language and form, as well as to factual inside accounts of modern African life and history. Not only through his literary contributions but also through his championing of bold objectives for Nigeria and Africa, Achebe has helped reshape the perception of African history, culture, and place in world affairs.

The first novel of Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart*, is recognized as a literary classic and is taught and read everywhere in the English-speaking world. The novel has been translated into at least forty-five languages and has sold several million copies. A year after publication, the book won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize, a major literary award.

Achebe was born in the Igbo (formerly spelled *Ibo*) town of Ogidi in eastern Nigeria on November 16, 1930, the fifth child of Isaiah Okafor Achebe and Janet Iloegbunam Achebe. His father was an instructor in Christian catechism for the Church Missionary Society. Nigeria was a British colony during Achebe's early years, and educated English-speaking families like the Achebes occupied a privileged position in the Nigerian power structure. His parents even named him Albert, after Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. (Achebe himself chose his Igbo name when he was in college.)

Key Facts about the novel "Things fall apart":

Full Title · *Things Fall Apart*
Author · Chinua Achebe
Type Of Work · Novel
Genre · Postcolonial critique; tragedy
Language · English
Time And Place Written · 1959, Nigeria
Date Of First Publication · 1959
Publisher · Heinemann Educational Books
Narrator · The narrator is anonymous but shows sympathy for the various residents of Umuofia.

Point Of View · The narration is in the third person, by an omniscient figure who focuses on Okonkwo but switches from character to character to detail the thoughts and motives of various individuals.

Tone · Ironic, tragic, satirical, fablelike

Tense · Past

Setting (Time) · 1890s

Setting (Place) · Lower Nigerian villages, Iguedo and Mbanta in particular

Protagonist · Okonkwo

Major Conflict · On one level, the conflict is between the traditional society of Umuofia and the new customs brought by the whites, which are in turn adopted by many of the villagers. Okonkwo also struggles to be as different from his deceased father as possible. He believes his father to have been weak, effeminate, lazy, ignominious, and poor. Consequently, Okonkwo strives to be strong, masculine, industrious, respected, and wealthy.

Rising Action · Enoch's unmasking of an *egwugwu,* the *egwugwu's* burning of the church, and the District Commissioner's sneaky arrest of Umuofian leaders force the tension between Umuofia and the colonizers to a breaking point.

Climax · Okonkwo's murder, or *uchu,* of a court messenger

Falling Action · The villagers allow the white government's messengers to escape, and Okonkwo, realizing the weakness of his clan, commits suicide.

Themes · The struggle between tradition and change; varying interpre-tations of masculinity; language as a sign of cultural difference

Motifs · *Chi,* animal imagery

Symbols · The novel is highly symbolic, and it asks to be read in symbolic terms. Two of the main symbols are the locusts and fire. The locusts symbolize the white colonists descending upon the Africans, seeming to augur good but actually portending troublesome encounters. Fire epitomizes Okonkwo's nature —he is fierce and destructive. A third symbol, the drums, represents the physical connection of the community of clansmen in Umuofia, and acts as a metaphorical heartbeat that beats in unison, uniting all the village members.

Foreshadowing · The author's initial description of Ikemefuna as an "ill-fated boy," which presages his eventual murder by Okonkwo; the arrival of the locusts, which symbolizes the eventual arrival of the colonizers; Obierika's suggestion that Okonkwo kill himself, which foretells Okonkwo's eventual suicide.

Major Characters

These are the main characters in the novel:

- **Okonkwo:** protagonist whose fatal flaw is his inability to adapt to change and his reverence for needing to appear tough and "manly"
- **Ikemefuna:** clever, resourceful boy, ward of Okonkwo, whom he kills to not appear weak; given to Okonkwo to avoid war
- **Nwoye:** son of Okonkwo, who becomes a Christian, a sensitive boy
- **Ezinma:** daughter of Okonkwo, bold, her father's favorite; the only surviving child of Ekwefi
- **Ekwefi:** Okonkwo's second wife
- **Unoka:** Okonkwo's father, whom Okonkwo strives to be the opposite of; Unoka is lazy and enjoys music and conversation; is gentle, cowardly, and not ambitious; thus, he doesn't have the respect of the townsfolk.
- **Obierika:** best friend of Okonkwo

- **Ogbuefi Ezeudu:** the elder of Umuofia

- **Mr. Brown:** missionary to Umuofia and Mbanta; patient, kind, respectful, open-minded person who builds a school and hospital in Umofia and encourages people to become literate to keep up with the rest of the world; represents colonization

- **the Rev. James Smith:** missionary who contrasts with Mr. Brown in that Smith is strict and doesn't compromise; has no interest in the native peoples' culture; also represents colonization

Plot Overview

Okonkwo is a wealthy and respected warrior of the Umuofia clan, a lower Nigerian tribe that is part of a consortium of nine connected villages. He is haunted by the actions of Unoka, his cowardly and spendthrift father, who died in disrepute, leaving many village debts unsettled. In response, Okonkwo became a clansman, warrior, farmer, and family provider extraordinaire. He has a twelve-year-old son named Nwoye whom he finds lazy; Okonkwo worries that Nwoye will end up a failure like Unoka.

In a settlement with a neighboring tribe, Umuofia wins a virgin and a fifteen-year-old boy. Okonkwo takes charge of the boy, Ikemefuna, and finds an ideal son in him. Nwoye likewise forms a strong attachment to the newcomer. Despite his fondness for Ikemefuna and despite the fact that the boy begins to call him “father,” Okonkwo does not let himself show any affection for him.

During the Week of Peace, Okonkwo accuses his youngest wife, Ojiugo, of negligence. He severely beats her, breaking the peace of the sacred week. He makes some sacrifices to show his repentance, but he has shocked his community irreparably.

Ikemefuna stays with Okonkwo’s family for three years. Nwoye looks up to him as an older brother and, much to Okonkwo’s pleasure, develops a more

masculine attitude. One day, the locusts come to Umuofia—they will come every year for seven years before disappearing for another generation. The village excitedly collects them because they are good to eat when cooked.

Ogbuefi Ezeudu, a respected village elder, informs Okonkwo in private that the Oracle has said that Ikemefuna must be killed. He tells Okonkwo that because Ikemefuna calls him "father," Okonkwo should not take part in the boy's death. Okonkwo lies to Ikemefuna, telling him that they must return him to his home village. Nwoye bursts into tears.

As he walks with the men of Umuofia, Ikemefuna thinks about seeing his mother. After several hours of walking, some of Okonkwo's clansmen attack the boy with machetes. Ikemefuna runs to Okonkwo for help. But Okonkwo, who doesn't wish to look weak in front of his fellow tribesmen, cuts the boy down despite the Oracle's admonishment. When Okonkwo returns home, Nwoye deduces that his friend is dead.

Okonkwo sinks into a depression, neither able to sleep nor eat. He visits his friend Obierika and begins to feel revived a bit. Okonkwo's daughter Ezinma falls ill, but she recovers after Okonkwo gathers leaves for her medicine.

The death of Ogbuefi Ezeudu is announced to the surrounding villages by means of the *ekwe,* a musical instrument. Okonkwo feels guilty because the last time Ezeudu visited him was to warn him against taking part in Ikemefuna's death. At Ogbuefi Ezeudu's large and elaborate funeral, the men beat drums and fire their guns. Tragedy compounds upon itself when Okonkwo's gun explodes and kills Ogbuefi Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son.

Because killing a clansman is a crime against the earth goddess, Okonkwo must take his family into exile for seven years in order to atone. He gathers his most valuable belongings and takes his family to his mother's natal village, Mbanta. The men from Ogbuefi Ezeudu's quarter burn Okonkwo's buildings and kill his animals to cleanse the village of his sin.

Okonkwo's kinsmen, especially his uncle, Uchendu, receive him warmly. They help him build a new compound of huts and lend him yam seeds to start a farm.

Although he is bitterly disappointed at his misfortune, Okonkwo reconciles himself to life in his motherland.

During the second year of Okonkwo's exile, Obierika brings several bags of cowries (shells used as currency) that he has made by selling Okonkwo's yams. Obierika plans to continue to do so until Okonkwo returns to the village. Obierika also brings the bad news that Abame, another village, has been destroyed by the white man.

Soon afterward, six missionaries travel to Mbanta. Through an interpreter named Mr. Kiaga, the missionaries' leader, Mr. Brown, speaks to the villagers. He tells them that their gods are false and that worshipping more than one God is idolatrous. But the villagers do not understand how the Holy Trinity can be accepted as one God. Although his aim is to convert the residents of Umuofia to Christianity, Mr. Brown does not allow his followers to antagonize the clan.

Mr. Brown grows ill and is soon replaced by Reverend James Smith, an intolerant and strict man. The more zealous converts are relieved to be free of Mr. Brown's policy of restraint. One such convert, Enoch, dares to unmask an *egwugwu* during the annual ceremony to honor the earth deity, an act equivalent to killing an ancestral spirit. The next day, the *egwugwu* burn Enoch's compound and Reverend Smith's church to the ground.

The District Commissioner is upset by the burning of the church and requests that the leaders of Umuofia meet with him. Once they are gathered, however, the leaders are handcuffed and thrown in jail, where they suffer insults and physical abuse.

After the prisoners are released, the clansmen hold a meeting, during which five court messengers approach and order the clansmen to desist. Expecting his fellow clan members to join him in uprising, Okonkwo kills their leader with his machete. When the crowd allows the other messengers to escape, Okonkwo realizes that his clan is not willing to go to war.

When the District Commissioner arrives at Okonkwo's compound, he finds that Okonkwo has hanged himself. Obierika and his friends lead the commissioner

to the body. Obierika explains that suicide is a grave sin; thus, according to custom, none of Okonkwo's clansmen may touch his body. The commissioner, who is writing a book about Africa, believes that the story of Okonkwo's rebellion and death will make for an interesting paragraph or two. He has already chosen the book's title: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.*

Plot Analysis

The narrative structure of *Things Fall Apart* follows a cyclical pattern that chronicles Okonkwo's youth in Umuofia, his seven-year exile in Mbanta, and his eventual return home. Each of the novel's three parts covers one of these periods of Okonkwo's life. The novel's three parts also map onto a gendered narrative structure that follows Okonkwo from fatherland to motherland back to fatherland. This gendered narrative structure functions in counterpoint with Okonkwo's ongoing obsession with his own masculinity. Despite every attempt to gain status and become an exemplar of traditional Igbo masculinity, Okonkwo suffers from a feeling of relentless emasculation. Okonkwo's struggle to achieve recognition repeatedly draws him into conflict with his community, eventually leading both to his own downfall and to that of Umuofia and the nine villages.

Part One of *Things Fall Apart* emphasizes Okonkwo's coming-of-age and his attempts to distance himself from the disreputable legacy of his father, Unoka. Okonkwo's tireless efforts and singular drive, along with his local fame as a wrestling champion, go a long way in securing him a place among the titled men of Umuofia. Yet Okonkwo's zeal frequently leads him astray, as when he executes Ikemefuna, the young boy who became his surrogate son after being surrendered to Umuofia by another village to settle a violent dispute. When the clan elders decide it is time for Ikemefuna's execution, an elder named Ogbuefi Ezeudu warns Okonkwo that he should "not bear a hand in [Ikemefuna's]

death." Despite this warning, a moment of panic ultimately drives Okonkwo to bring his machete down on his surrogate son: "He was afraid of being weak." At other points in Part One, Okonkwo shows himself quick to anger with his wives and short in patience with his children. His obsession with upward mobility and traditional masculinity tends to alienate others, leaving him in a precarious social position.

In addition to narrating Okonkwo's struggle to build a distinguished reputation, Part One also provides a broad view of the precolonial Igbo cultural world. Achebe showcases numerous Igbo cultural values, religious beliefs, and ritual practices to provide the reader with a sense of the Igbo world. By the end of Part One, however, both Okonkwo's life and the life of his community teeter on the brink of disaster. The first blow comes with the death of Ogbuefi Ezeudu, the oldest man in the village, and the same man who warned Okonkwo against killing Ikemefuna. The second blow comes when, during Ezeudu's nighttime burial, Okonkwo's gun misfires and kills Ezeudu's sixteen-year-old son. The ominous manslaughter of Ezeudu's son forces the remaining village elders to burn Okonkwo's huts, kill his livestock, and send him and his family into exile for seven years.

Exiled for committing a "feminine" (i.e., accidental) crime, Okonkwo retreats from his fatherland to the land of his mother's kin, a retreat that Okonkwo finds deeply emasculating. This personal sense of emasculation parallels larger cultural and historical changes, as white Christian missionaries begin to infiltrate the lower Niger region, including both Umuofia and Okonkwo's site of exile, Mbanta. The personal and historical senses of emasculation come to a head when an old friend from Umuofia visits Okonkwo in Mbanta to inform him that his eldest son, Nwoye, has abandoned traditional Igbo beliefs and joined the Christian faith. Realizing that this event constitutes a major rupture in his patrilineal line, Okonkwo disowns Nwoye.

By the time Okonkwo and his family leave Mbanta, the growing presence of foreigners in Umuofia has already created deep internal divisions. In addition to

the missionaries who arrived in his absence, government officials also begin to filter in, installing a foreign rule of law. The changes in Umuofia compromise Okonkwo's homecoming, which he hoped would represent a new start. Finding himself once again in a passive, emasculated position, Okonkwo grows increasingly furious with his fellow Umuofians, who refuse to take violent action against the missionaries and force them out. Whereas others praise the British for providing increased access to resources along with medicine and education, Okonkwo sees the British as a cancer whose presence will eventually kill Umuofia and the nine villages.

Following another emasculating incident where colonial officers throw Okonkwo and others in jail and set a steep bail, Okonkwo takes an uncompromising position in favor of tradition. His final acts of violence—murder and suicide—cement the novel's tragedy. This tragedy is, once again, deeply gendered. In the law of Umuofia, an intentional killing constitutes a "masculine" crime. Although Igbo tradition does not explicitly code suicide as a "feminine" crime, killing himself is an unspeakable act that strips Okonkwo of all honor. Thus, his suicide brings a final instance of emasculation, as he will be denied the honor of a proper burial.

Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Locusts

Achebe depicts the locusts that descend upon the village in highly allegorical terms that prefigure the arrival of the white settlers, who will feast on and exploit the resources of the Igbo. The fact that the Igbo eat these locusts highlights how innocuous they take them to be. Similarly, those who convert to Christianity fail to realize the damage that the culture of the colonizer does to the culture of the colonized.

The language that Achebe uses to describe the locusts indicates their symbolic status. The repetition of words like "settled" and "every" emphasizes the suddenly ubiquitous presence of these insects and hints at the way in which the arrival of the white settlers takes the Igbo off guard. Furthermore, the locusts are so heavy they break the tree branches, which symbolizes the fracturing of Igbo traditions and culture under the onslaught of colonialism and white settlement. Perhaps the most explicit clue that the locusts symbolize the colonists is Obierika's comment in Chapter 15: "the Oracle . . . said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts. . . ."

Fire

Okonkwo is associated with burning, fire, and flame throughout the novel, alluding to his intense and dangerous anger—the only emotion that he allows himself to display. Yet the problem with fire, as Okonkwo acknowledges in Chapters 17 and 24, is that it destroys everything it consumes. Okonkwo is both physically destructive—he kills Ikemefuna and Ogbuefi Ezeudu's son—and emotionally destructive—he suppresses his fondness for Ikemefuna and Ezinma in favor of a colder, more masculine aura. Just as fire feeds on itself until all that is left is a pile of ash, Okonkwo eventually succumbs to his intense rage, allowing it to rule his actions until it destroys him.

Themes

Language As Connection to Society

Throughout *Surfacing*, the narrator's feeling of powerlessness is coupled with an inability to use language. When she goes mad, she cannot understand David's words or speak out against his advances. Similarly, when the search party comes for her, she cannot understand their speech, and her only defense from them is flight. Words betray her, as it is by yelling that the search party discovers her. The narrator maintains the false hope that she can reject human

language just as she imagines she can reject human society. She admires how animals know the types of plants without naming them. When she goes mad, she vows not to teach her child language—yet eventually she conquers her alienation by embracing language.

Genre

Tragedy

Things Fall Apart fits the definition of tragedy because it documents both the personal downfall of Okonkwo and the broader erosion of the Igbo cultural world that Okonkwo wishes to defend. From the very beginning of the novel, Achebe clarifies the extent to which Okonkwo's status and sense of self-worth depend on normative Igbo ideas of masculinity. Okonkwo struggles to free himself from his father's disreputable legacy and earn a place among the elders of Umuofia. His zealous pursuit of fame and recognition frequently brings him into conflict with others. Life is tough enough for Okonkwo before the incursion of Christian missionaries and British colonial forces, but the foreigners' arrival in the nine villages marks the end of Igbo autonomy, as well as the end of any possibility for Okonkwo to earn honor as a clan elder. With this double deprivation leaving Okonkwo with no way out, he succumbs to despair and commits suicide, the most abominable act an Igbo man can perform.

Things Fall Apart even has a tragic-sounding title. The title is a quote from W. B. Yeats's ominous poem "The Second Coming." The reference to Yeats provides the novel with a sense of tragic inevitability. Achebe subtly underscores this sense of inevitability by echoing the language of Yeats's poem throughout the story. Achebe echoes one line in particular: "Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." The refrain *loosed upon the world*appears at two significant moments in *Things Fall Apart*. The first comes when Ekwefi disobeys a priestess's command not to follow her to the oracle's cave. In the terrifying dark of the night, Ekwefi recalls "those evil essences loosed upon the

world by the potent 'medicines' which the tribe . . . had now forgotten how to control." The second moment comes just before Okonkwo is cast out of Umuofia for the crime of manslaughter: "[If] the clan did not exact punishment for an offense against the great goddess, [the Earth goddess's] wrath was loosed on all the land and not just on the offender." In both cases, refrains of Yeats's *loosed upon the world* indicate the threat of ultimate tragedy.

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Margaret Atwood – Surfacing

Biography of the author

Margaret Atwood is the author of more than forty volumes of poetry, children's literature, fiction, and non-fiction, but is best known for her novels, which include *The Edible Woman* (1969), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *The Robber Bride* (1994), *Alias Grace* (1996), and *The Blind Assassin*, which won the prestigious Booker Prize in 2000. A book of short stories called *Stone Mattress: Nine Tales* was published in 2014.

Her novel, *MaddAddam* (2013), is the final volume in a three-book series that began with the Man-Booker prize-nominated *Oryx and Crake* (2003) and continued with *The Year of the Flood* (2009). *The Tent* (mini-fictions) and *Moral Disorder* (short fiction) both appeared in 2006. A volume of

poetry, *The Door*, was published in 2007. *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination,* a collection of non-fiction essays appeared in 2011. Her non-fiction book, *Payback: Debt and the Shadow Side of Wealth* was adapted for the screen in 2012. Ms. Atwood's work has been published in more than forty languages, including Farsi, Japanese, Turkish, Finnish, Korean, Icelandic and Estonian.

Margaret Atwood lives in Toronto with writer Graeme Gibson.

Key Facts about the novel Surfacing:

Full Title · *Surfacing*

Author · Margaret Atwood

Type of Work · Novel

Genre · Psychological thriller; mystery; feminist tract; postcolonial novel; environmental tract

Language · English

Time and Place Written · 1972, Canada

Date of First Publication · 1972

Publisher · McClelland & Stewart

Narrator · The unnamed narrator of the novel is also its chief protagonist. She is an artist who goes in search of her missing father. The novel is written entirely from the narrator's perspective, detailing events as they occur while flashing back to events past.

Point Of View · Atwood re-creates the narrator's raw, unfiltered psychology by including the narrator's observations and memories as they occur. The narrator speaks in the first person and does not address a specific audience. Her voice is objective in that it only relates what the other characters say and do, but it is subjective in that she interprets the psychology behind other characters' actions. The narrator is unreliable because she relates memories only to change or deny them.

Tone · The narrator has an anxious, tense tone. She is also paranoid, introverted, wise, educated, and cynically humorous.

Tense · The narrator writes in the present tense, but events in the present trigger past memories.

Setting (Time) · The present (1970s)

Setting (Place) · A remote island in Quebec

Protagonist · The narrator

Major Conflict · The narrator reexamines her place in society, feeling alienated by ideals of marriage and religion that fail to suit her.

Rising Action · The narrator's search for her father, memories of her mother, confrontation of her past, observations of her companions, and reaction to American encroachments on the wilderness all promote in her an emotional numbness.

Climax · While diving, the narrator experiences a vision of her aborted baby that releases several repressed memories.

Falling Action · The narrator abandons her friends and undergoes a psychological madness in which she regresses to a childlike state and literally lives like an animal.

Themes · Language as power; the total alienation of women

Motifs · American expansion; the power

Symbols · The barometer; frogs; the hanged heron; makeup; the ring

Foreshadowing · Joe's fiddling with the narrator's ring foreshadows his later demand for marriage. The narrator's belief that her brother must have had visions after drowning foreshadows her own vision when she nearly drowns. The narrator imagines her father hiding from a search party and ends up hiding in exactly the way she had imagined. The narrator's constant ruminations on language foreshadow her later search for a primal language.

Surfacing

Plot Overview

The unnamed narrator returns to Quebec after years of absence to search for her missing father. She brings her boyfriend, Joe, and a married couple, Anna and David. On the way to a village near her father's island, the narrator visits her father's friend Paul. Paul can provide no new information on how to locate the narrator's father. A guide named Evans takes the narrator and her companions to her father's island, where the narrator searches for clues regarding her father's disappearance. She becomes convinced that her father has gone mad and is still alive.

The narrator works in spurts on her freelance job illustrating a book of fairy tales, but her worries prevent her from accomplishing any real work. David proposes staying on the island for a week. The narrator agrees, though she secretly fears her crazed father's reemergence. During their stay, David launches constant insults at Anna, couching them as jokes. Anna confesses to the narrator that David is a womanizer. She complains that David constantly demands that Anna wear makeup. The four go on a blueberry-picking expedition. They canoe to a nearby island, where Joe unexpectedly proposes to the narrator. The narrator refuses Joe, telling him how she left her last husband and child.

Back on the island, Paul arrives with an American named Malmstrom. Malmstrom claims to be from a Detroit wildlife agency. He offers to purchase the island, but the narrator refuses. She pulls Paul aside and tells him that her father is still alive. Paul seems skeptical. After the visitors leave, David offhandedly accuses Malmstrom of being a C.I.A. operative who is organizing an American invasion of Canada. The narrator looks through her father's records and consequently believes that he is likely dead. She sees that he had been researching Indian wall paintings and that he had marked several sites on a map. She decides to visit a site.

The narrator convinces her friends to accompany her on a camping trip to see the wall paintings. On their way to the campsite, they see a decomposing blue

heron that has been hanged from a tree. David insists on filming the dead heron for a movie he is making called *Random Samples*. The heron's death haunts the narrator. She sees evidence of two campers entering the area beforehand, and she quickly assumes that they are Americans and to blame for the crime. Meanwhile, the four companions set up camp. Anna tells the narrator she has forgotten her makeup and David will punish her. The narrator goes fishing with David and Joe. They encounter the Americans, and the narrator notices an American flag on their boat. The narrator brings her companions to a site from her father's map, but there are no wall paintings. Frustrated and confused, they return to camp. On the way, they again encounter the American campers. The narrator is surprised to discover that the campers are actually Canadian; what she had thought was an American flag is actually a sticker. However, the narrator claims the campers are still Americans because their slaughter of the heron is a distinctly American action.

The four return to the cabin. The narrator locates another site on her father's map but realizes that the government has raised the water level in this part of the lake. She will have to dive to see the paintings. Outside, the narrator observes David tormenting Anna by insisting she take off her clothes for *Random Samples*. Anna eventually relents but then feels humiliated. The narrator asks David why he tortures Anna, and David claims he does so because Anna cheats on him. The narrator canoes to a site from her father's map. She dives repeatedly in search of the paintings. On a particularly deep dive, she sees a disturbing object and screams and swims for the surface. Joe has followed her onto the lake and demands to know what she's doing. She ignores Joe and realizes that what she saw was a dead child. She believes it to be her aborted baby. She changes her story from leaving her husband and child to having an affair with her art professor and being forced to abort their baby.

The narrator's vision throws her into a psychosis. She believes that her father had found sacred Indian sites and resolves to thank the gods for granting her "the power." Joe tries to speak to the narrator, but she remains impenetrable. He

tries to rape her, but he leaves her alone once she warns him that she will get pregnant. Later, David tries to seduce the narrator, telling her that Joe and Anna are having sex. The narrator nevertheless resists David's advances. A police boat comes to the island, and David tells the narrator that the police have found her father's body. Deep in her madness, the narrator refuses to believe David. That night, she seduces Joe so she can get pregnant. She feels that a new child will replace her lost baby. Joe falsely believes that the narrator has forgiven him for cheating on her.

On their last day on the island, the narrator abandons her friends. She destroys David's film and escapes in a canoe. The narrator's companions search in vain for her, eventually leaving the island. Alone on the island, the narrator falls deeper into madness. She destroys the art from her job and nearly everything inside the cabin. She becomes an animal, running around naked, eating unwashed plants, and living in a burrow. She imagines raising her baby outdoors and never teaching it language. She also has visions of her parents. Eventually, hunger and exhaustion bring the narrator to sanity. She looks at herself in the mirror and sees just a natural woman. She resolves not to feel powerless anymore. Paul arrives at the island with Joe. The narrator realizes she loves Joe and resolves to reunite with him. She pauses in the cabin, looking out at Joe, waiting.

The narrative comes to us via an unnamed narrator, who happens to be bringing three friends to the area of Northern Quebec where she grew up. The group includes her boyfriend Joe and another couple, David and Anna. The story begins with the group's trek through the more populated areas in the narrator's old stomping grounds (e.g., an unnamed "city" and a place she refers to as "the company town") to reach the remote cabin where her father had been living—that is, before he disappeared (dunDUNDUN).

We soon learn that the narrator had received a letter from a family friend, Paul, informing her of her father's disappearance—hence the homecoming after what appears to have been a long absence. The narrator had hoped her father would have turned up by the time she got there (so she could just scoot right back home), but no such luck.

When she and the others arrive at the cabin, she finds evidence that her father hasn't been there for a while. They look for him a little bit, but the narrator quickly comes to believe that the search is futile—they'd need a lot more people-power to search the entire island for him.

So, they occupy themselves with fishing, swimming, shooting film for a future amateur cinematic project, and reading—oh, and some pretty intense psychological warfare-romantic drama, too. For example, Joe decides that this recon mission to find the narrator's (probably) deceased father is the perfect opportunity to declare his love and propose. (Hey, why not?) The narrator apparently has some issues with the "L word," so she is less than receptive—which does *not* go over well with Joe.

Meanwhile, David and Anna seem to have a lot of tension between them. David is, shall we say, not the nicest guy; his main joy in life seems to be making fun of Anna and even humiliating her in front of others. To make matters worse (read: skeezier), he openly hits on the narrator in front of Anna *and* Joe, and at one point he even propositions her for sex (he justifies the invitation by telling the narrator that Joe is off having sex with Anna). Ew.

So, yeah, if they had had Facebook back then, "It's Complicated" would have been the relationship status for this wacky quartet, and the faults and fractures in these relationships increasingly take center stage as the novel progresses.

Alongside all of this, the narrator is digging deep into her memories, thinking about her family, her childhood, and a husband-child that she had left behind at some unspecified moment in the past. Despite the fact that she gives up

searching for her dad almost immediately and assumes he is dead, she still wants to know what could have happened to him. When she finds some drawings her father made of weird-looking, seemingly mythical beasts, she briefly considers the possibility that he might just have gone crazy (and might still be alive). However, she soon realizes that the drawings were tracings of nearby rock paintings, not figments of a demented mind, so she goes back to thinking he's probably dead.

She decides to go in search of the rock paintings, trying to gain confirmation for this little bit of the "real" story she's pieced together from what her father left behind. She doesn't have much luck when she takes the others out looking for the first one, but her second attempt—which involves going on a solo dive to look at the side of a nearby cliff—is a bit more… interesting, shall we say. While she's down there, she sees something (she believes it to be the fetus of a baby she had aborted years before) that inspires certain memories or realities to "surface" in her own brain, and we learn that not everything she's told us is entirely accurate.

For example, speaking of the fetus, we learn that the child she supposedly abandoned with her ex-husband was actually never born; she had an abortion (and the father of the child wasn't her husband, but a married man with whom she was carrying on an affair). So, that's some news. After this incident, the narrator comes to believe her father wasn't just cataloguing these existing rock paintings, but also compiling a list of places where these kind of spiritual events or "oracles" (17.26) could occur.

In the wake of this underwater epiphany, she's suddenly not in such a hurry to leave. So, the day she and the others are slated to head home, she opts to stay behind. What happens from there is *definitely* up for interpretation, but she appears to pursue some kind of spiritual communion with her deceased parents (oh yeah, and we should mention that her father's body was found the day before they were supposed to go home).

To get that ball rolling, she engages in a lot of ritualistic behavior, looking for "signs" for what she should be doing at any given moment to gain access to her parents. In her view, this process means getting a lot cozier with nature and her more animalistic side. She destroys basically all of the belongings inside the cabin, strips her clothes off, and makes herself a lair outside. Um… yeah, grief is powerful, y'all.

Eventually, she appears to get what she wants and has visions of both her parents. After that occurs, she seems ready to kind of return to the world. She comes to the realization that she needs to stop being a victim and understands that she is *not* powerless (a belief she had used to convince herself that she couldn't hurt other people). With that epiphany, she goes inside and gets dressed in her clothes (even though she had slashed them all up).

A boat arrives with Paul and Joe, and Joe calls for her. She seems to realize she loves him, and she thinks about what going back with him would mean as she watches him. We are left on a cliffhanger, as we don't know if she ever answers his call.

PLOT ANALYSIS

Most good stories start with a fundamental list of ingredients: the initial situation, conflict, complication, climax, suspense, denouement, and conclusion. Great writers sometimes shake up the recipe and add some spice.

Exposition (Initial Situation)

Water, Water Everywhere

When the story begins, an unnamed narrator is bringing her boyfriend and another couple to the region of Quebec where she grew up. The purpose of the trip is to try to find her father, who has apparently disappeared. Together, the quartet travels out to the island in the middle of a lake where her parents had

had a cabin. In this remote and isolated location, things are going to get pretty cozy pretty quickly.

Rising Action (Conflict, Complication)

Not A Father To Be Found

When they get there, they find that her father still hasn't turned up. The narrator is unsure of what to do next. In fact, she seems unsure about a lot of stuff—her relationships with her boyfriend and other friends are a *big*example. She wavers between thinking her father is dead and, after finding some drawings he did, believing that he might have gone crazy. She eventually realizes that the crazy sketches are actually tracings of rock drawings. So, she goes back to the theory that he's probably dead. Still, she decides it would be worthwhile to hunt down the actual rock drawings and confirm her theory that her father had been pursuing them as well.

Meanwhile, she and her boyfriend, Joe, are fighting because the narrator doesn't want to marry him, and David and Anna (the other couple) are also having drama. David flies his "jerk" flag pretty proudly; his favorite hobbies on the trip seem to include humiliating Anna and making unwelcome sexual advances toward the narrator (his less favorite hobbies include fishing and talking about how much he hates Americans). In short: relations within and between the couples get a little… difficult.

Climax (Crisis, Turning Point)

Between A Rock and A Hard (Possibly Hallucinogenic) Place

Trying to ignore all the crazy romance drama and focus on finding out what happened to her dad, the narrator goes out searching for one of the paintings, which she believes is located on the face of a cliff (submerged under water).

While she's diving down in the lake to try to see the painting, she believes she spies a kind of fish-like figure below, and the moment sparks an epiphany for her—and for the reader. Although it's never really quite clear what she "actually" saw down there, it makes her realize that some of the memories she's been indulging in throughout the trip (and relaying to the reader, of course) aren't exactly accurate. She tells the reader that the figure she sees swimming below her is the fetus of a baby she aborted some time ago. Previously, she had told us about an ex-husband and the child she left with him, but now we learn those memories were inaccurate; instead, they were fictions she had built up in her mind to protect herself from bad memories.

Once she's back on dry land, she comes to the conclusion that her father wasn't just tracking existing rock paintings; he was also finding *new* places that had spiritual power—that is, new sacred spots.

Falling Action

Let's Make Like the Animals And Hide

With her newfound knowledge and apparent connection to the spiritual world in hand, the narrator is not ready to leave the island cabin just yet. So, she hides from the others on the day that they were supposed to scoot. When they leave, she comes back out. At this point, her new mission appears to be to connect with the spirits of her deceased parents. (Oh yeah, we skipped over that part—Paul had come by the previous day to say they had found her father's body.)

To make that happen, she engages in a lot of ritualistic behavior in an apparent attempt to bring herself into harmony with the natural (i.e., non-human) world, stripping off her clothes and even making a lair for herself like an animal. She also goes on a tear, destroying all the clothes and other objects in the house. Eventually, she gets her wish and reports seeing both her mother and her father.

Resolution (Denouement)

Having seen her parents, the narrator seems resigned to returning to the "real" world. While she's back inside getting dressed in her ripped clothes, Joe and Paul arrive. Joe calls out for her, and the narrator lets drop that she now knows she loves Joe and thinks she can trust him. We're not sure what happens from there, though, since Atwood leaves us with a… cliffhanger.

Themes

THEME OF DEATH

The premise of *Surfacing* is that the narrator and her friends are returning to the narrator's childhood home to search for her missing father. Given that mission—and the fact that no one really seems to think the narrator will find her father alive—death is kind of looming over the novel from the outset. The fact that Anna is constantly reading murder mysteries further adds to the kind of sinister, "death is nigh!" mood.

As the story progresses, the narrator struggles with the barriers that death imposes, but she ultimately comes to believe she can cross the line between the living and the dead to communicate with her deceased parents (yes, her dad's body is found toward the end). Through some nature-focused rituals, the narrator believes she achieves this communion, which fortifies her for returning to everyday life.

All in all—at least in the novel's universe—death doesn't end up being as scary or final a force as we might have guessed. In fact, the narrator's friends are actually a lot scarier.

THEME OF MEMORY

Try as she might, the narrator *cannot* keep her memories at bay; being at home seems to make those pesky thoughts of the old days even more persistent and intrusive. However, don't be too eager to believe all the memories that thread

their way into *Surfacing*, since we learn pretty quickly that her recall isn't exactly the best, or most honest. It seems that the narrator has some things in her past that she'd just as soon forget, so her mind has done a little reshuffling, some touch-up painting to make them a bit easier to swallow. However, by the end of the story, she's been forced to confront the reality (?) of her past, which seems to help her figure out a way to move forward in her present.

THEME OF FOREIGNNESS

Even though the narrator of *Surfacing* grew up in the region where she's searching for her father, she feels like a foreigner there (particularly after all the time that's passed). Even apart from that, there's a decent amount of culture clash between English- and French-speaking inhabitants of the region (this was a time when both Canadian nationalism and Quebecois separatism were on the rise), which means that even long-time residents of the region—for example, "Madame" and the narrator's mother—experienced dealing with "foreignness" as part of their everyday lives. Then, of course, there's the fact that Americans are increasingly a presence in the region, which does *not* please the Canadian characters, it seems. (Historically, the result was a tremendous amount of suspicion regarding the values and changes the American presence was bringing with it.) The narrator seems to turn to nature to find refuge from all these social, cultural, and political clashes.

THEME OF RELIGION

Surfacing seems pretty preoccupied with religious figures, particularly Catholic ones, but it's not exactly the most reverent take on Christianity. Rather than subscribing fully to the Catholicism, the narrator seems to have infused her own brand spirituality, which seems more focused on nature and animals, with Christian ideas and figures (her fish-themed reworking of the Lord's Prayer is a good example). The narrator struggles with notions of life and death and the afterlife throughout the novel, but her own personal brand of spirituality seems

to help her emerge with a new sense of identity and purpose at the end of the novel.

THEME OF FAMILY/MARRIAGE

Family and marital relationships are at the core of *Surfacing*. That said, you'd be hard pressed to find one that gives you the warm and fuzzies. The story is littered with failed or ugly marriages, and even the other family relationships (for example, between the narrator and her brother) have a bit of a sinister undertone. The relationships between parents and children don't fare any better, apparently; according to the narrator, it's natural to disown your parents when you reach adulthood, and she claims to have disowned her own child as an infant. (It turns out, however, that she never had the baby she was remembering at all.) All told, people seem pretty isolated in the novel, unable to forge or retain the closest social bonds that exist—that is, the ones that typically occur between family members.

THEME OF WAR

Even though *Surfacing* is not set in wartime, references to World War II (and war in general) pop up pretty frequently. In part, these references stem from the fact that the narrator and her brother were children when World War II was going on, even if they weren't immediately super-conscious of the conflict. The narrator finds her mind drawn frequently toward warfare and violence, even though she claims that it was always her brother who was more interested in that kind of stuff (by contrast, she tried to avoid thinking about such things). With characters like David claiming that a conflict between the U.S. and Canada was imminent and the narrator's own constant sense of being invaded (by memories, by questions about her feelings for Joe, etc.), it feels like war and conflict aren't really so far away from the novel's tranquil reality, ready to bubble up at any time.

THEME OF LOVE

Love is definitely a four-letter word to the narrator of *Surfacing* (well, it's a four-letter word anyway, literally speaking, but you get the point). She spends the early part of the novel musing about the fact that she's never really been able to figure out what that feeling is supposed to be. She apparently dreads the moment in her relationships when the L-word finally becomes an issue, since she can't really come up with the goods her boyfriends are expecting. It's no wonder she's ambivalent about it, though, given the fact that she had a nasty ex who apparently used professions of love to convince her to do whatever he wanted (continue an affair even though he was married, get an abortion, etc.). By the end, she seems to recognize that she loves Joe, but it's unclear what that knowledge will translate into, in terms of their future relationship.

Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory

WATER:

Given its title and the fact that the novel is set largely on, near, and in a lake, we were expecting some pretty good water imagery and symbolism—and we were not disappointed. This notion of "surfacing," which clearly references water, is absolutely central to the novel.

When we first crack the book, for example, we are led to believe that the story is going to be about bringing the truth of what happened to the narrator's dad to the "surface"—and that metaphor gets a literal counterpoint when a fisherman accidentally discovers and drags his body out of the lake.

However, the novel ends up being a lot more focused on the narrator's own journey of self-discovery, which involves getting to a place (mentally, that is) where the truth of her past bubbles up to the (yes, you guessed it) *surface*.

Just to make sure the metaphor of "surfacing" isn't lost on you, the pivotal moment in that journey occurs when she's swimming around in the lake. After

apparently seeing a vision in the water below, she realizes that some of the memories she's been indulging in and sharing with readers have been fictions her mind built up to protect her from some of the harsher truths in her past.

Water's powers of reflection also have some symbolic heft in the novel. The narrator seems to be fascinated by dualities, and she suggests that she herself is split (or doubled?) into two separate beings. For example, when things get a little surreal late in the novel, she reports finding two sets of her *own* footprints side-by-side. It could just be two sets of her footprints from different points in time, but she also seems to suggest that there simply could be two of her walking around.

We're not sure just how that's possible, but the notion that there are somehow two versions of the narrator comes up more than once. When she's out on the water just before her big epiphany, for example, she refers to having an "other shape" that's more a separate being than a mere copy of herself: "I bent my knees and straightened, the canoe teetered like a springboard. My other shape was in the water, not my reflection but my shadow, foreshortened, outline blurred, rays streaming out from around the head" (17.3). What she means by this "other shape" is up for interpretation, of course, but perhaps it's significant that she comes to recognize this separate (spiritual?) form of herself around the time of her pivotal realizations about her past, when she's forced to come to terms with certain unpleasant memories and evaluate her current emotional state and relationships to other people.

All in all, water metaphors do some heavy lifting in *Surfacing*, bringing attention to the rhythms and movements that the narrative uses to "flow" toward big moments and discoveries.

ANIMALS

The line between human and animal gets pretty blurry toward the end of the book, when the narrator decides (as part of her effort to connect with the spirits

of her departed parents) to shed all the trappings of modern life and live like an animal.

Even before that, though, we get the sense that the novel wants to take human beings down a peg and remind them that they're not really so different or that much better than animals. Being like an animal is a supremely good thing in this novel's universe. For example, the narrator loves her boyfriend's furriness and more "vestigial" qualities:

I remember the hair on Joe's back, vestigial, like appendices and little toes: soon we'll evolve into total baldness. I like the hair though, and the heavy teeth, thick shoulders, unexpectedly slight hips, hands whose texture I can still feel on my skin, roughened and leathery from the clay. Everything I value about him seems to be physical: the rest is either unknown, disagreeable or ridiculous (6.24).

Joe's physicality might seem even more desirable to the narrator just then because it serves as a stark counterpoint to the empty intellectualism and psychobabble that David spouts (and uses to hide the fact that he's not very nice).

In the novel, animals are often discussed or used to highlight the stakes of violence and evil. When the narrator and her friends come across a murdered heron while they're hiking, it's one of the biggest, most emotional moments for the narrator—bigger, even, than the discovery of her father's body. Even after they've moved on in the hike, the narrator remains preoccupied with the evil act of killing a bird and stringing it up to rot "just because"—that is, not for food but just because you can.

The narrator seems to have inherited her respect and even reverence for animals and the natural world, and a sense of the delicate balance of human-animal relations, from her dad. Like her, he almost seemed to prefer animals: "He didn't dislike people, he merely found them irrational; animals, he said, were

more consistent, their behavior at least as predictable. To him that's what Hitler exemplified: not the triumph of evil but the failure of reason" (6.37). Although being "animalistic" is often perceived as being one and the same with being irrational, in *Surfacing* it's more a sign of being disconnected from a perverted form of "humanity" that is anything but humane.

CHILDREN AND CHILDBEARING

For a novel with essentially no children in it, it's kind of striking how often the twin topics of children and childbearing come up. The novel seems pretty preoccupied with (and ambivalent about) the power of the female body to conceive a child within it.

In certain cases, this power is presented as a burden, something to be protected against—and the protections themselves can be pretty dangerous, too, in the novel's world. For example, when the narrator and Anna are discussing birth control pills (which were a relatively new thing then), they trade stories about the horrific side effects that the Pill had had for them, including blurry vision and blood clots.

Anna seems angry and resentful at being expected to take on these risks to avoid pregnancy—and, too, at her husband's casual attitude about those risks (hey, it's not *his* health on the line):

"Bastards," she said, "they're so smart, you think they'd be able to come up with something that'd work without killing you. David wants me to go back on, he says it's no worse for you than aspirin, but next time it could be the heart or something. I mean, I'm not taking those kinds of chances" (9.23).

The narrator, for her part, envisions the Pill turning her into a "chemical slot machine" (9.24)—not exactly an appealing thought.

Although one could argue that a woman's control over pregnancy and its prevention is empowering, in *Surfacing* it's portrayed as potentially burdensome and even dangerous, placing lopsided responsibilities and risks on women.

Then, there's the novel's presentation of actually being pregnant and giving birth. Although we later learn that the narrator never actually had a baby, her "memories" of birth say a lot about how she initially views motherhood and maternity and the power it confers on women—or, rather, doesn't:

After the first I didn't ever want to have another child, it was too much to go through for nothing, they shut you into a hospital, they shave the hair off you and tie your hands down and they don't let you see, they don't want you to understand, they want you to believe it's their power, not yours. They stick needles into you so you won't hear anything, you might as well be a dead pig, your legs are up in a metal frame, they bend over you, technicians, mechanics, butchers, students clumsy or sniggering practising on your body, they take the baby out with a fork like a pickle out of a pickle jar. After that they fill your veins up with red plastic, I saw it running down through the tube. I won't let them do that to me ever again. (9.24)

So, yeah, in the narrator's view, pregnancy and birth are horrific, invasive processes.

We later learn, of course, that the pregnancy she remembers throughout the book actually ended with an abortion rather than a birth. Just as she associated her false memories of birth with being victimized and not in control, the narrator recalls not having the reins in her decision to abort, claiming it was her boyfriend's idea: "He said I should do it, he made me do it; he talked about it as though it was legal, simple, like getting a wart removed" (17.24). Then, "he expected gratitude because he arranged it for me, fixed me so I was good as new; others, he said, wouldn't have bothered" (17.24). The narrator's profound passivity in the whole matter is pretty striking—it's clear that she feels like she

is completely powerless to control the situation, even though her body was the "battleground" for everything that was happening.

The novel refers frequently to the narrator's passivity and feelings of powerlessness, and the story of her abortion really highlights those qualities in a big way. Also, the narrator's references to maternity, birth, and abortion seem to draw attention to some potential funkiness and asymmetry in the sexual politics of the time, which may have played into her feelings of powerlessness.

SETTING

Northern Quebec, Canada

The opening lines to the novel put the setting front and center, ensuring that the readers are prepared for the remoteness and wildness of the place we'll be spending over the next 27 chapters: "I can't believe I'm on this road again, twisting along past the lake here the white birches are dying, the disease is spreading up from the south, and I notice they now have sea-planes for hire. But this is still near the city limits; we didn't go through, it's swelled enough to have a bypass, that's success" (1.1). This passage quickly clues us into the fact that we're not exactly headed to a buzzing metropolis, if getting a bypass counts as big news for the city referenced.

Of course, the narrator's family cabin—where most of the novel's action takes place—isn't even in, or particularly near, this city; in fact, to get there, you need take a boat out to the tiny island in the region's lake where it's located. So, yeah—the setting is *very* remote and isolated.

But don't go thinking that all this isolation brings tranquility and peace—far from it. There are clear tensions between the French- and English-speaking natives of the region, and there's also a lot of talk about Americans and their values and habits—and how they are sneaking their way into Canada. In fact, that first sentence's reference to a "disease spreading up from the south" might

be a clever little metaphor for the infusion of Americans and American values into the region, which is a recurrent topic in the novel.

With all of its isolation and the pervasive mood of imminent invasion, the setting is pretty perfect for all the psychological drama that the narrator and her friends are wrapped up in. The narrator seems to feel like she's been invaded, encroached upon in pretty major ways in her life—for example, she claims her ex-boyfriend called the shots regarding her abortion. So the repeated references to culture clash and the encroachment of Americans on Canada are a nice mirror to the narrator's feelings of having her physical space, as well as her being, violated.

NARRATOR POINT OF VIEW

First Person (Central Narrator)/Unnamed Protagonist

The unnamed protagonist is the central narrator of the novel, so everything gets filtered through her perspective and memories. That deep embedded-ness in her mind ends up being a bit problematic in terms our efforts as readers to piece together the story's "reality," because we ultimately realize that her memories are often distorted or outright false.

Take, for example, when the narrator is gazing at Anna lolling around on the dock:

Except for the bikini and the colour of her hair she could be me at sixteen, sulking on the dock, resentful at being away from the city and the boyfriend I'd proved my normality by obtaining; I wore his ring, too big for any of my fingers, around my neck on a chain, like a crucifix or a military decoration. (6.3)

In that moment, we think we're getting deep insight into the narrator's sullen teenage years, but later we realize that there are some holes and distortions in her recall here. It turns out that her "boyfriend" was actually a married man, and

they used the ring sometimes to make getting a hotel room together easier. So, not exactly the picture of teen "normality" she had initially painted, right?

Her most obvious and flagrant distortion, though, is her claim to having had a child. She honestly believes this to be true for about three quarters of the novel, until she suddenly realizes that she had actually had an abortion at the prodding of her married boyfriend (whom she had mistakenly remembered as being her ex-husband and father of her living child).

In short, the unnamed narrator isn't really the most reliable source we've ever come across. That said, her ability to acknowledge the holes in her memory suggests that she has evolved throughout the course of the novel; she is now willing to confront the past head-on—which is an important step in shaking off the passivity and "victim" status that it seems she embraced before she takes that dip in the lake.

GENRE

Psychological Thriller

Surfacing is kind of hard to pinpoint genre-wise. It starts out with some elements of detective fiction—since the search for the narrator's missing father initially drives the action—but then it becomes *much* more about the psychological acrobatics and relationship twists and turns that the four main characters become involved in.

The search for the narrator's father quickly takes a backseat to the narrator's own pursuit of self-knowledge, as she digs deep into her past and confronts some truths she had tried to "sink" some time ago. Alongside all that, there's a lot going on in terms of the characters' relationships—for example, between the narrator and her boyfriend, Joe; between David and Anna; and between Joe and the narrator and David and Anna.

Like what, you ask? Well, Joe wants to marry the narrator, but she's not super-sure about that idea, so there's quite a bit of friction there. And then there are David and Anna, who initially appear like the perfect couple (to the narrator, at least), but they soon make the narrator (and us, right along with her) privy to a lot of drama and even abusiveness and nastiness in their relationship. Case in point: David spends half the novel hitting on the narrator in front of his wife, seemingly with the specific intention of bothering her. So, yeah, they don't really seem like the perfect couple—and that veneer just crumbles more and more as the novel goes on.

On account of the mind games and intense focus on psychological self-discovery, we'd say this novel fits the "Psychological Thriller" genre better than any other.

TONE

Apathetic Disdain

We get the narrative through the "lens" of the narrator's own thoughts and memories. She's a fairly passive and unflappable, even in the face of things that you would expect to upset her a lot. For example, when David and Anna, her supposed friends, decide to mock her mercilessly (and pretty nastily) for not succumbing to David's "charms," she doesn't react at all.

That said, don't be fooled into thinking that her ability to rise above conflict means she's some kind of super-positive goody-goody—quite the opposite, in fact. Overall, it seems like the narrator thinks that things kind of stink, but she feels powerless to change them. A good example of her attitude can be found early in the novel, when she describes the bar where she and her friends stop for a beer before heading to her family's cabin:

It's an imitation of other places, more southern ones, which are themselves imitations, the original someone's distorted memory of a nineteenth century

English gentleman's shooting lodge, the kind with trophy heads and furniture made from deer antlers, Queen Victoria had a set like that. But if this is what succeeds why shouldn't they do it? (3.14)

As you can see here, she paints kind of an ugly picture of the place, and her use of words like "distorted" and "imitation" hint at a certain amount of disdain for the place. However, she steps back from really passing judgment, basically throwing her hands up and saying, "Well, if they like it…" If you've ever heard someone use that phrase to describe someone's wedding dress or other outfit choice, you know it's faint praise indeed—and that kind of half-hearted, half-disdainful "positivity" is the best we get out of the narrator most of the time.

WRITING STYLE

Fluid… So Fluid, with Lots of Comma Splices, It's Stream-of-Consciousness,

Atwood doesn't know her mechanics; rather, she breaks the rules to create a stream-of-consciousness style. The narrative's style reflects the movements of the mind, where thoughts aren't always logical and sequential and don't fit easily into little boxes (or onto either side of a semicolon). Just as thoughts sometimes appear unexpectedly, popping up after an unrelated thought or intruding within a totally separate train of thought, so they pour out in a bit of a jumble in the narrator's narration.

Take, for example, the narrator's thoughts about the first time she met Joe: "Perhaps that was what he liked about me, there must have been something though I can't reconstruct our first meeting, now I can: it was in a store, I was buying some new brushes and a spray tin of fixative" (3.17). This moment gives us her whole thought process as it develops—she goes straight from saying she can't remember something to remembering it, and the use of a comma (rather than a semicolon or a period, which are more "final") highlights the fluidity of that thought process.

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