



SATHYABAMA

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE

www.sathyabama.ac.in

SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

| SHSA5104 | NEW LITERATURES IN ENGLISH | L | T | P | CREDIT |
|----------|----------------------------|---|---|---|--------|
| | | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

Course Objectives:

- To introduce the students to the body of literary writings that stands evergreen in the regions of Kenya, Africa, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Pakistan.
- To acquaint the students the various genres.
- To acquaint the students with different authors relating to different regions and literature.
- To make the students approach selected texts for their literary value and cultural importance.

Unit I: Poetry

9 Hrs

Detail:

1. Taufiq Rafat :Kitchen
2. Sipho Sepamla :To Whom It May Concern

Non-detail:

1. Jessie Mackey : Noozing of the Sun God.
2. Jeremy Cronin's :A Person is a Person Because of other People
3. Imtiaz Dharker : Minority

Unit II: Prose

9 Hrs

Detail: 1. Margaret Atwood : Communion: Nobody to Nobody

Non-detail: 1. Malala Yousafzai : The Day my World Changed

Unit III: Drama

9 Hrs

Detail: 1. Fugard :SizweBansi is Dead

Non-detail: 1. WoleSoyinka :Madmen and Specialists

Unit IV: Fiction

9 Hrs

1. BapsiSidhwa. : Ice Candy man, Cracking India.
2. Nadine Gordimer :The House Gun (1998)
3. JosphConrad :Heart of Darkness

Unit V: Short Stories

9 Hrs

1. MariamaBa :So Long a Letter
2. Alice Munro :Dear Life
3. Joseph Boyden :Three Day Road

Course Outcomes:

At the end of the course the students will be able to:

- Define the relationship between texts and their cultural contexts.
- Explain complexities and ambiguities, being aware of diverse perspectives
- Develop comparative perspectives
- Analyze the elements of a literary genre and literary and stylistic devices
- Interpret different cultures of various nations through their works.
- Discuss the question of identity and dominance of landscape in new literatures

Prescribed Text:

Walsh, William, Readings in Commonwealth Literature, OUP, London, 1973

References:

1. Narasimhaiah C.D., An Anthology of Commonwealth Poetry, Macmillan, Chennai. 1990.
2. F. Edelson Phyllis , Australian Literature: An Anthology of Writing from the Land Down Under Kindle, 2010
3. Webby, Elizabeth, The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature (Cambridge Companions to Literature), 2000
4. Balachandran, K, Canadian Literature: An Overview 2007.
5. Rahman, Tariq, A History of Pakistani Literature in English 1947-1988, 2015

UNIT – I - New Literatures in English – SHSA5104

Kitchen by Taufiq Rafat

Rafat's poem *Reflections* also indicates the use of *free verse* ("To consider permanence/is to study casual"). Beside this, both poets have used simple language with sophisticated vocabulary in their poetry, having no aspects of rhyme and rhythm. It is also one of the main features of Modern poetry and the above verses exemplify this point.

Modern poetry has called for a return to what were regarded as more classical values. Therefore, the concept of epigraph was introduced in which the poet intends to suggest the central idea of the poem to the reader with the help of classical references. T. S. Eliot, in his poem *The Waste land*, has used the reference of "Inferno" in the epigraph, while at the same time the examples of myths or Greek mythology can also be observed throughout the poem like "Datta" and "Damyata". Similarly in Rafat's *Reflections*, a classical reference of "Buddhists" can be observed in epigraph. The said poem also contains many classical references such as "Ramayan" and etc.

One of the important aspects of Modern poetry is that it has rejected the sentiments and has followed by the imagists, as depicted by Eliot's *The Waste Land*. He has used the images to express his idea and provided a path for reader to imagine like "dry stone", "dead tree" etc. On the other hand, Rafat's also employed this feature of modern poetry in his poems like "gul-mohar", "straight and tall", "wood fires" and "spring". All these examples can be found in his poems *Reflections*, *Village Girl*, *Kitchens* and *Time to Love* respectively.

From Plato onwards, it was believed that every word has its specific meaning, but Saussure, however, challenged this notion and came up with the concept that 'words are just signs'. There is no logical connection between image and word; words are basically signifiers and a word can have multiple meanings. In structuralism philosophy, words no longer have an absolute meaning; the meaning changes as the context changes. Words are signifier that accentuate the signified.

The use of metaphors, along with this concept mentioned as above, can also be observed

in modern poetry. *Eliot's The Waste Land*, itself, is a metaphor and explains the spiritual and intellectual decay of modern world, which he has mentioned as “*unreal city*”. *Rafat* has also employed this convention and his poetry also shows the variety of metaphors, e.g., “*Everything is as clean as hospital*” (*Kitchens*) and “*tall and straight as a sugarcane stalk*” (*Village Girl*) etc.

Many of the modern poets have depicted the modern society as being the infertile part of the cycle. *Eliot's* poem *The Waste Land* also portrays the idea that human beings are isolated and their relations are meaningless, while criticizing his own city as “*unreal city*”. The same idea has also been reflected by *Taufiq Rafat* in his poem *Kitchens*. The poem is basically about the rural and urban life in which *Rafat's* is continuously criticizing the urban life which is full frustration, having less peace of mind in human life with no intimacy. *Eliot* has also highlighted the idea of lack of communication in the modern world in *The Waste Land*, in the line “*Why do you never speak?*”

Comparing the poetry of *Rafat's* with that of other modern poets leads to another common dimension of the fragmented sentence structure. For example, *E. E. Cummings*, another modern poet has mentioned in his poem *Portrait*:

“...he was a handsome man/and what I want to know is...”

The sentence structure that he used is fully fragmented with lack of capitalization. Similarly, *Rafat* also followed this modern tradition, an example being the line “*there she was/tall and straight/as sugarcane stalk*” in his poem *Kitchens*.

There are, however, few contrasting points as well between the poetry of *Rafat* and other modern poets. Modern poets, unlike *Rafat*, have frequently used French and German words in their poems. Further to this, many historical references have also been used by *Eliot* in his poems while, on contrary, the same has not been observed in *Rafat's* poetry. *Rafat* has also used many Pakistani local images in his poetry; this ecological mimetism also makes dominant contrast between his poetry and that of other modern poets. He used the local images of “*Sugarcane stalk*” in *Village Girl* and “*Gul- Mohar tree*” and “*red-arc'd bulbuls*” in *Reflections*. His poem *Kitchens* is all about local Pakistani culture and this fact is evident in the opening line of the poem:

“*kitchens were places, we grew up in*”

Concluding the note, it can be said that modern poetry has clearly rejected the notion of using extreme sentiments in the poetry. It has called for a return to more classical values and has emphasized on the willingness to experiment with non-traditional verse forms which is also used by Taufiq Rafat.

To Whom It May Concern

Sipho Sepamla

The Text

Bearer

Bare of everything but

particularsIs a Bantu

The language of a people in

Southern Africa He seeks to

proceed from here to there Please

pass him on

Subject to these

particulars He

lives

Subject to the provisions of the Urban Natives

Act of 1925Amended often

To update it to his

sophistication Subject to the

provisions of the said Act

He may roam freely within a

prescribed areaFree only from the

anxiety of conscription In terms

of the Abolition of Passes Act

A latter day amendment

In keeping with the moon-age naming

Bearer's designation is Reference

number 417181 And (he) acquires a
niche in the said area

As a temporary sojourner

To which he must
betake himself At all
times

When his services are dispensed with
for the day As a permanent measure of
law and order

Please note

The remains of

R/N 417181 Will

be laid to rest in

peace On a plot

Set aside for

Methodist Xhosa's A

measure also

adopted

At the express request of

the Bantu In anticipation

of any faction fight

Before the Day of

Judgement.

Notes

Sipho Sepamla is a famous South African poet and Novelist. He was born in 1932 in a small town ship called krugersdorp. He lived in a place called Soweto. In 1975 he published his first volume of poems called 'Hurry up to it'. His work 'Soweto I love' in 1977, was banned by the apartheid group. Sipho Sepamla started a movement called 'Federated Union of Black Artists'. Sipho sepamla's 'The root is one' in 1979 made him a renowned novelist. He served as a member of the government's Arts and

Culture Task Group. In 1977 he was awarded the 'Thomas Pringle' award. On 9th January 2007 he breathed his last. In this poem 'To Whom It May Concern' the poet talks about the pathetic state of a person in South Africa. **Sipho Sepamla** uses free style diction to emphasis the condition of a Bantu. Bantu is a person who belongs to a Niger community. The poet begins the poem by mentioning the South African as a Bearer, which means the holder of a cheque or a responsible person, has something to deliver whereas in the next line the poet states he is bare of (without) everything. The poet states that person possesses only one thing that he is a speaker of the language, he has only one identity and he can be included in one group called "the bantu group".

The Government has passed act to consider him on par with the other citizens, but the poet sarcastically states that the man is bereft of any possession and improvement. He does not enjoy any happiness on par with others. One thing is rightly followed and one right is provided to this citizen that he moves from place to place any where ever he likes. The poet states that merely shifting the places the person is in search for his identity and some possessions.

The poet sarcastically intimates that Government and people have provided only a number 417181. This is the only identity and only possession of the Black South African. This Black south African would die one day and will be buried in the same soil and the people who were responsible for his unfortunate end will have to face the consequences from the people and from God.

Judgement Day is a belief in Christianity. It is a belief that the sin will be punished.

Here the poet means that when injustice is rendered to black people by the whites, God would punish them one day. On the other day, any revolt can also become the end of an injustice and when the white people continue their discrimination one day a fight-a revolt would happen to put an end.

In this poem Sipho Sepamla has wonderfully portrayed the conditions of the black people. They do not get identity, work and their standard of living is poor because equality is not followed in the country. Government had implemented equality only as a law in papers, there is discrimination in the country which would

undoubtedly result in a revolt. God would become angry at these discriminations and would punish them for their injustice.

The Noosing of the Sun-God

Jessie Mackay

1910

“Tiraha, Te Ra!

I am Maui,— Maui,

The bantling, the darling;— Maui, the fire-thief,
the jester;— Maui, the world’s fisherman!

Thou art the Sun-God,

Te Ra of the flaming hair.

Heretofore man is thy moth.

What is the life of man,

Bound to thy rushing wings,

Thou fire-bird of Rangi?

A birth in a burning;

A flash and a war-word;

A failing, a falling

Of ash to the

ashes Of

bottomless Po!“I am Maui!

The great one, the little one;

A bird that could nest

In the hand of a woman.

I—I have vanquished

The Timeless, the Ancients.

The Heavens cannot bind me,

But I shall bind thee,

Tiraha, Te Ra!”

Ah, the red day Of the fighting ofMaui!
How he waxed, how he grew;
How the Earth Mothershook!
And the sea was afraid,
And receded and moaned
Like a babe that is chidden.
The rope that was spun
In the White World ofMaui
With blessing andcursing
Curled on thedazzling Neck of Te Ra.
“A pull for the living That gasp in
the light!
A pull forthe dead
In abysses of Po!

A pull for the babes

That are not but shall be

In the cool, in the dawn,
In the calm of Hereafter! Tiraha, TeRa!”
The sky was as mother Of flame andcommotion.
Low leaped
the red fringes

To harass the mountains,
AndMaui laughed out:
“Hu, hu, the feathers

Of the fire-bird of Rangi!”

But the rope of theblessing,

The rope of the cursing,
It shrivelledand broke.
He stooped to the coils
And twisted themthrice,
And thickly he threw it

On the neck of Te Ra. "Twice for the living!
 And twice for the dead!

 And twice for the long Hereafter!

 All the heart of the heavens,
 The heart of the earth,
 Hung on the rope of Maui.
 But the red lizards licked it,
 The fire-knives chipped it,
 It frittered and broke.
 Then Maui stood forth
 On the moaning headlands
 And looked up to Io—
 Io, the Nameless, the Father,
 To whom the eyes pray,
 But whom the tongue names not.
 And a thin voice clave the fire
 As the young moon cleaves the blue
 Like a shark's tooth in the heavens.
 "O my son, my son, and why are thy hands so red?

 Wilt fight the fire with fire, or bind the Eterne with deeds?

 Shatter the strong with strength?—

 Nay, like to unlike is wed;

 What man goes forth to the river to smite a reed with reeds?

 "Soft and wan is water, yet it is stronger than fire;
 Pale and poor is patience, yet it is stronger than pride.
 Out of the uttermost weakness cometh the heart's desire:
 Thou shalt bind the Eternal with need and naught beside.
 "Plait thee a rope of rays, twist thee a cord of light;
 Twine thee a tender thread that never was bought or sold;
 Twine thee a living thread of sorrow and ruth and right,
 And were there twenty suns in Rangi, the rope shall hold.

"Then Maui bowed his head
 And smote his palms together.—
 "Ina, my sister, little one, heed!
 Give me thy hair."
 Ina, the Maiden of Light,
 Gave him her hair.
 Swiftly he wove it,
 Laughing out to the
 skies: "Thrice for the living!
 Thrice for the dead!
 And thrice for the long Hereafter!" The thin little cord
 Flew fast on the wind
 Past the Eyes of the Kings
 To the neck of Te Ra.
 And then was the pull,
 The red lizards licked it,
 The fire-knives chipped it,
 But it stood, but it held!
 And measured and slow
 Evermore was the flight
 Of the fire-bird of
 Rangi.

Jessie Mackay is a New Zealand poet. She was born in 1864. Her parents are Robert and Elizabeth of Scotland. She was born in Rakaia gorge a place in Scotland. She passed away on 23rd of August 1938. In this poem Noosing of the Sun God Jessie talks about the bravery of Maui, a mythical hero. It is believed by the Maori community that the movement of the Sun determines the life span of people. This poem describes how Maui controls the movement of the Sun in his third attempt.

The poem begins with praise on Maui. He is mentioned as the darling of people, he is world's fisher man, the perfect judge by all the people. Maui orders the Sun to stop

(Tiraha means stop) Tera – means Sun. He vows that no one in this world could control him but he could control the Sun. With loud voice when Maui shouts at the Sun, the whole world become frightened.

With all the blessings and curses of the world Maui tried to control the Sun with a rope. The sea was afraid to see such an attempt but the attempt failed. The second time with all the powers Maui attempts again the Sun with its blaze cuts off the thread. Then a divine voice from heaven advises him that strength cannot be controlled by another strength. Fire cannot be quenched with another Fire, water is the softest creation but has the power to quench fire hence Maui is advised to use the softest thing on earth to fight with the Sun.

Maui calls his sister Ina and takes her hair and attempts again and it rightly binds the sun on the neck and Maui has controlled the Sun and has given a long span to human beings.

Though the mythological allusions are used Jessie Mackey uses her wonderful imagination and the war between Maui and Tera is pictured wonderfully hence her poem stands eternal even in these changing times.

A Person is a Person Because of Other People

Mothoke Mothoka Batho Babang (A Person is a Person Because of Other People)

By holding my mirror
out of the window I see
Clear to the end of the
passage.

There's a person down there.

A prisoner
polishing a
doorhandle. In
the mirror I see

him see

My face in the mirror,

I see the
fingertips of
his free hand

Bunch
together, as if to
make

An object the
size of a
badge Which
travels up to
his forehead
The place of
an imaginary
cap.

(This
means: A warder.)
Two fingers are
extended in a vee

And wiggle like two antennae.

(He's being watched.)

A finger of his free hand
makes a watch-hand's arc
On the wrist of his polishing
arm without

Disrupting the slow-slow rhythm of his work.

(Later. Maybe,
later we can speak.) Hey!
Wat maakjydaar?

—a voice from around the corner.

No. Just polishing baas.

He turns his
back to me, now
watch His free
hand, the
talkative one,
Slips quietly
behind

—Strength brother, it says,
In my mirror,
A black fist.

Jeremy Cronin

1. In this poem, Jeremy Cronin a South Africa got arrested for supporting the African National Congress and their efforts to gain political rights for non-white citizens in their country. He shares his prison experiences. A prisoner has to keep silent while trying to communicate with another prisoner. They secretly communicate with each other and tell each other to stay strong through a mirror.

2. From this poem, I learn that this man is a supportive and not prejudice against non-whitecitizens in his country. He is an individual that will do anything to gain justice and do whatis right. He does what he does to help gain political rights for these specific citizens. He wants to maintain communication and strength between the prisoners and he gets hat he wants. This is important because it shows that there is still hope.

3. This situation influences the events and behavior in the general setting of a prison and the particular setting of a South Africa prison because it established a form of communication for prisoners. It affects the emotional impact of the work because they feel closer and more connected which forms a bond. They'll be happier and get work done more efficiently.

4. I think that it was really brave and courageous of Jeremy Cronin to do this. It makes me feel impressed and like there is hope and you should fight for what you want, because you can make a difference, have a story, make history and inspire others to do the same. I've felt this way with learning about the stories of Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, Gandhi and other leaders who made history.

5. I believe the title of the poem means exactly what it says. It fits the poem. I think the title is saying we need each other for company and to validate and support each other. People and their interactions make the world go around. We feel important or needed because of others.

Analysis

The poem is structurally interesting by way of its visual layout. There are no traditional stanza breaks and the narrative is laid out on the left while on the right, small asides provide translations of the wordless interaction. The form thus follows no regular pattern however the insertions add depth and detail to the brief exchange, highlighting the multi-layered and nuanced nature of human communication. The poem is composed of 28 lines which follow no rhyming scheme, perhaps reflecting human speech, which is also irregular and follows no form or rules.

The first line of the poem describes the way in which the narrator is attempting to communicate with another man: with the use of a mirror. We may assume that the owner of the speaking voice has been placed in solitary confinement and, given the poem's political themes, that the prison guards wanted to prevent all contact between prisoners. Bearing in mind the highly forbidden nature of interaction between inmates,

Cronin thus manages to underline the necessity of communication between humans, since these men are thus risking horrible punishment in order to have a simple, brief interaction with each other. From the first line, we see that not only can the men not use verbal communication, they do not even have a direct view of each other. From the poem's beginning, it is imbued with tension and the brief exchange is made all the more intense by the poet's use of the present tense, which gives a sense of immediacy to his words.

In the third line we are introduced to the man who will take part in the exchange with our narrator. It is important to note that he is initially referred to as a "person" and then as a "prisoner". Keeping in line with the title, Cronin is again emphasising that these two men, regardless of their circumstances and situation, are first and foremost human beings, who thrive on communication.

In the mirror I
see him see My
face in the
mirror,
I see the fingertips of his free hand

In these lines, the poet plays with the idea of conversation by repeating the word "see". Not only does this emphasise the numerous obstacles and barriers impeding the communication between the two men, it also introduces a central theme of the poem: wordless conversation. In *A Person is a Person Because of Other People*, the poet draws our attention to the importance of verbal communication through its absence. Vision, therefore, has a large significance in the poem, reflected even in the way it is laid out on the paper.

The poet goes on to describe the first sign the other inmate makes with his hand: "an object the size of a badge". On the right hand side of the text, we are given our first translation, in brackets: "This means: *A warder*." Next, the other man moves his fingers "like two antennae", meaning "(He's being watched)". With these, the poet introduces yet more barriers to communication existing within the prison walls: not only can they not directly see each other, they are also under constant vigilance. The use of these asides, to translate the man's wordless messages link back to the title: the

other inmate is not using easily recognisable symbols and their meanings are in no way as obvious to the reader as they seem to be to the poet. Therefore, the poet's inclusions of the translations allow the reader to understand and thus involve us in the exchange, not only adding more intensity but also extending this communication beyond the two men and beyond even the poem. This emphasises the essential meaning of the title; that the strength of the individual is made greater by their participation in the collective.

A finger of his free hand makes a watch-hand's arc

On the wrist of his polishing
arm without Disrupting the
slow-slow of his work

The third symbol that the man makes is even more ambiguous than the first two. However, Cronin not only extracts a meaning from it but also replaces the sign with what he imagines the man would have said, if he had used words: "*Later*. Maybe, later we can speak." Here, the symbols have taken on even greater significance. Cronin is emphasising that even by taking away the access to words, humans can still express themselves and their personalities, and in this way interact with each other.

Hey! Wat maak jy daar?

Immediately after, comes the sharp demand from the warden. These words, the first spoken of the poem, are in italics and contained on the left hand side of the poem's layout. Despite this question being in Afrikaans, Cronin does not provide a translation, only labelling it "a voice from around the corner." Throughout the poem, Cronin has been subtly minimising the importance of words themselves and we therefore find that a translation of this question is barely necessary, since both its presentation in italics and its source from, presumably, the warden allow us to infer its meaning. The other inmate's response also requires no translation, and enlightens us a little more as to the meaning of the warden's question.

The final lines of the poem describe the last and most important symbol the man makes with his hand. Cronin invites the reader in, again involving us.

now watch(...)

A black fist.

Minority (1997) Imtiaz Dharker

I was born a foreigner.
I carried on from there
to become a foreigner
everywhere I went,
even in the place
planted with my relatives,

six-foot tubers
sprouting roots, their
fingers and faces
pushing up
new shoots of maize and sugar cane.

All kinds of places and groups

of people who have an
admirable history
would, almost
certainly, distance
themselves from me.

I don't fit,

like a clumsily translated poem;

like food cooked in milk
of coconut where you
expected ghee or cream,
the unexpected aftertaste
of cardamom or neem.

There's always a point
that where the language
flips
into an
unfamiliar
taste; where
words tumble
over
a cunning tripwire on the tongue;
where the frame slips,
the reception of an image
not quite tuned,
ghost-outlined, that
signals, in their
midst,
an alien.

And so I
scratch,
scratch
through the
night, at this
growing scab on black and white.

Everyone has the right
to infiltrate a
piece of paper. A
page doesn't fight
back. And, who
knows, these lines
may scratch their

way
into your head –

through all the chatter of
community, family,
clattering spoons,
children being
fed –
immigrate
into your bed,
squat in your
home,
and in a corner, eat your bread,

until, one day, you meet

the stranger sliding down
your street, realise you
know the face
simplified to bone,

look into its outcast eyes

and recognise it as your own.

The Author

- Pakistan-born British poet
- Artist and documentary filmmaker.
- Splits life between England and India - the cultural differences affect her work
- She has won the Queen's gold medal for her English poetry.

"Minority gives a very insightful depiction of what it feels like to be "foreign" in many places. "

"This poem is meant to convey the message that there is beauty in abnormality,

meaning that the people that are often considered outsiders are the truly spectacular ones, as well as the idea of unity in being different."

The speaker in the poem insightfully depicts the feeling of being a foreigner in many places. The poem starts with the line: "I was born a foreigner", you may wonder how can one be born a foreigner? Sadly nowadays in many western countries the children of immigrants can be made to feel this way. The whole of the poem concentrates on the concept of feeling like a foreigner and not fitting in.

- The speaker tells us "I don't fit".
- She compares herself to "food cooked in milk of coconut where you expected ghee or cream" or an "unexpected aftertaste of cardamom or neem".
- Imtiaz uses taste to describe a feeling, the feeling of being an outcast, not fitting in,
- she also includes some relations to her own multicultural background which is Pakistani and Hindi.

Imagery/A simile

There are two main messages to be taken from this use of simile and metaphor. The first is that the foreigner is unable to be properly communicating to the rest of the world

- The speaker describes the poem that he is writing as "growing scab of black on white." The speaker means that the ink is like a scab on the beautiful paper.

All stanzas use images of food and images associated with language to develop the foreigners lack of belongings. The speaker says of themselves that they "don't fit, like a clumsily-translated poem" which is also simile.

- The seventh stanza shows the words "scratching their way into the reader's head." The word "scratch" indicates process in which the words of the poem make their way into the brain of the unwilling reader.
- It then personifies these words as foreigners by describing them "immigrating into the reader's bed, squatting in the reader's home, and in a corner, and eating the reader's bread."

Minority by Imtiaz Dharker

The society in which the “foreigner” finds himself is so obsessed on how he is different

- The poem begins “I was born a foreigner” using the 1st person point of view to present a personal, internal feeling which allows the reader to identify and relate to the speaker – the foreigner.
- In the first stanza, the speaker focuses on establishing that they are a foreigner mentioning that they are foreign ” even in the place planted with their relatives.”
- This means that the foreigner feels foreign even in presence of their loved ones.
- The 3rd stanza uses the simile of the speaker not fitting in, “like a clumsily-translated poem.”
- The following stanza then compares the speaker to food that was prepared with an unexpected substitution of ingredients.
- In the 5th stanza the meaning behind both of these similes is revealed, in the clumsily- translated poem, there is always a spot where “the language flips into an unfamiliar taste,” similar to the unfamiliar taste given from an ingredient substitution in a meal

Analysis:

Minority is a poem about feeling displaced and rejected from society. It conveys to the reader how helpful literature can be in voicing important opinions to society. The poem communicates the idea of exclusion and the feeling of being unwanted to the reader through meaningful lexical choices and imagery.

Dharker begins with the line “I was born a foreigner.” It is impossible to be born a foreigner, as everybody is born somewhere. However, this line helps to convey to the reader straight away that the persona does not belong and faces prejudice even from

the country they were born in due to being the child of an immigrant. In addition to this, throughout the poem, the persona rarely addresses other people, only sometimes referring to the reader as “you.” There is repetition of the personal pronoun “I” throughout suggests that the persona is alone as they do not have anybody else to refer to. This could also suggest how the poet feels she is alone in her thoughts about this subject.

The speaker also uses sensory imagery in order to convey their feelings of being foreign. It is stated that they are “like food cooked in milk of coconut” and there is an “unexpected aftertaste.” The use of this simile expresses to the reader that the persona is not what people expect in their country just as an “unexpected aftertaste” is not what would be expected from a culture’s stereotypical meal.

The following stanza speaks about the language barriers between the persona and the people in the society around them. It is stated that “words tumble over, a cunning tripwire on the tongue.”

This could be referring to how the persona’s unusual accent may be heard significantly when they say some words. The use of the word “cunning” suggests that the language that the person is trying to speak is tricking them. This use of anthropomorphism when describing the “tripwire” suggests that it is not just society that makes her feel like an outcast, but the language she must speak.

The poet then goes on to write about how writing has no judgement and will accept her. She writes that she scratches on the “growing scab of black on white.” By comparing the prejudice to a scab, she is suggesting that there is a wound that she can heal by putting pen to paper; “black on white.” She then states that “a page doesn’t fight back.” This conveys a strong message to the reader that poetry does not judge and she can convey a message more effectively through this than speaking due to her place in society as a “minority.”

Dharker also uses manichean imagery to emphasise her emotion towards the subject of the poem.

She writes “so I scratch, scratch through the night.” The fact that the speaker works on this “through the night” suggests that the problem is keeping the persona awake. The use of “the night” creates a dark atmosphere and a dismal but strong tone as the reader feels as though the persona works extremely hard for their rights and wants them so much that they will stay up all night formulating their feelings into words that can convey a message.

LIFE OF IMTIAZ DHARKER

Imtiaz Dharker (Born 1954) is a Scottish Muslim, poet, artist and documentary filmmaker. She was born in Lahore to Pakistani parents. She was brought up in Glasgow where her family moved when she was less than a year old. She was married to Simon Powell, the founder of the organization Poetry Live, who died in October 2009 after surviving for eleven years with cancer. Dharker divides her time between London, Wales, and Mumbai. She says she describes herself as a "Scottish Muslim Calvinist". Her daughter Ayesha Dharker, is a well known actress in international films, TV and stage. TV and stage. As of 2010 she has written five books of poetry *Purdah* (1989), *Postcards from God* (1997), *I speak for the Devil* (2001), *The Terrorist at my Table* (2006) and *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009) (all self-illustrated). She is a prescribed poet on the British AQA GCSE English syllabus. Her poems *Blessing* and *This Room* are included AQA Anthology, *Different Cultures*, Cluster 1 and 2 respectively. The main themes of her poetry include home, freedom, journeys, geographical and cultural displacement, communal conflict and gender politics. All her books are published by the poetry publishing house Bloodaxe. *Purdah And Other Poems* deal with the various aspects of a Muslim woman's life where she experiences injustice, oppression and violence engineered through the culture of *purdah*. She was part of the judging panel for the 2008 Manchester Poetry Prize, with Carol Ann Duffy and Gillian Clarke. For many she is seen as one of Britain's most inspirational contemporary poets. Dharker is also a documentary film-maker and has scripted and directed over a hundred films and audio-visuals, centring on education, reproductive health and shelter for women and children. In 1980 she was awarded a Silver Lotus for a short film. An accomplished artist, she has had nine solo exhibitions of pen-and-ink drawings.

HER PLACE IN INDIAN POETRY

Imtiaz Dharker (1954-) lives with the passion of an undaunted rebel, not to retreat and

not to fail. The intensity and eloquence of her life and poetic accomplishment have dumbfounded the male- chauvinists and have left her female counterparts in soaring spirits not only inside the Islamic social, cultural and religious setup but also outside it. That is why her life and poetry make a fascinating study in the crushing indictment of the suppressive prescriptions against the freedom, dignity and respectful living of women, especially in the Muslim society. Imtiaz confirms our convictions that socio-cultural and socio-religious restrictions on women have robbed them of all their potentialities leaving them not only physically and mentally handicapped but also psychological wrecks age after age. The lived experiences of Imtiaz have been honestly expressed in her poetry with the courage of conviction. Her humanistic and feminist concerns with her anguish and agony, sympathy and protest give the message silently, though its deafening explosion has been felt everywhere. That is the reason that her rebellion has caused a flutter in the petticoats of the guardians of orthodox religion, custodians of culture and the pettifogging politicians. The substance, spirit and style of her daily living hold everyone to sway. Imtiaz Dharker belongs to that generation of post-independence women poets who have given a convincing assurance that Indian English Poetry matches the best anywhere. Among these poets, we may include Kamla Das, Melanie Silgado, Sujata Bhatt, Eunice de Souza, Mamta Kalia, Tara Patel etc. They have not only broadened the thematic concerns of Indian English Poetry but also shown how words and images

– simple, suggestive and highly evocative – can recite the music of their anguish and agony, their irritations and humor, their observations and reflections with no sign of pretension. This serious and well-considered response to the observed and lived experiences is a drama of daily life here and there poeticized. Not only the technical excellence but also the pain and poignancy endured insuffocation and suppression have found a justifiable outlet in their creative instinct. Imtiaz Dharker regards herself as a Scottish Calvinist Muslim and her poetry is a confluence of three cultures. It reflects and depicts her deeply sensitive and keenly insightful understanding and response to these three cultures. Her sincerity in handling the issues of social, cultural and religious significance sensitizes the reader equally well. The delicacy and the tenderness that run in her silky strains awakens us to the wrongs and songs of the daily life of women under the norms, rules and sanctions laid down by the patriarchal society for power dynamics. She captures even the fleeting moments and thoughts with the rare touch of the artist who is heart and soul, mind and spirit, body and intellect, integrally and

indispensably associated with all that is the fragile fabric of life. The surety Imtiaz gives and the impact she creates in so doing leaves the reader stunned. The exquisite simplicity of her style lends to her poems an inimitable brilliant conversation, a lively and stinging comment trapping us in the enchanting romance of *The 1000 Nights* deconstructed as a morale- booster to feminism.

PURDAH-I One day they said she was old enough to learn some shame. She found it came quite naturally. Purdah is a kind of safety. The body finds a place to hide. The cloth fans out against the skin much like the earth that falls on coffins after they put dead men in. People she has known stand up, sit down as they have always done. But they make different angles in the light, their eyes a slant, a little sly. She half-remembers things from someone else's life, perhaps from yours, or mine – carefully carrying what we do not own: between the thighs a sense of sin. We sit still, letting the cloth grow a little closer to our skin. A light filters inward through our bodies' walls. Voices speak inside us, echoing in the places we have just left. She stands outside herself, sometimes in all four corners of a room. Wherever she goes, she is always inching past herself, as if she were a clod of earth and the roots as well, scratching for a hold between the first and second rib. Passing constantly out of her own hands, into the corner of someone else's eyes while the doors keep opening inward and again inward.

AN EXPLANATION Imtiaz Dharker, with her social and cultural growth and lived experiences spanning three countries- Pakistan, England and India- has shown her subtle artistry in exposing the Purdah System in her title poems, poems related to it, in all its complexes of theme and style. The symbolism inherent in purdah also finds its subtlety and simplicity in alien cultural setting. "Purdah-I" and "Purdah-II" need to be read with "Honour Killing", "Prayer", "Grace" and "Battle-line." This group of poems is packed with vast immensities. We have a fine experience of the force of courage and the force of conviction in the landscape of Imtiaz's poetry, though her poetic potentiality is no less strong in other poems. "Purdah-I" is a discreet protest and an eloquent criticism of the tradition of veil strictly sanctioned and imposed on Muslim women. Our attention is focused on the turning point in the life of a Muslim girl when she suddenly becomes conscious of her sexual growth, others are perhaps more conscious. Imtiaz Dharker, with her social and cultural growth and lived experiences spanning three countries- Pakistan, England and India- has shown her subtle artistry in exposing the Purdah System in her title poems, poems related to it, in all its complexes of theme and style. The symbolism inherent in purdah also finds its subtlety and

simplicity in alien cultural setting. They notice her shame but purdah is a protection against undesirable, vulgar and vile looks of staring people. So Eunice de Souza regards “purdah not just as concealing garment but as state of mind.” Purdah is suppressive and deadening to the intellectual awakening and growth of a woman and it is damaging to her personality. Purdah is a symbol of alienation and isolation from the outside world. It is a wall between the woman and the world. The result is that she is devoid of the first hand experience and the enlightenment this world has to offer. There is nothing refreshing in it; it curbs and restricts the speech and full expression; it is a repression of will and choice.

SOME MORE WORKS OF HER EXPLAINED

In “Grace”, “Prayer” and “Sacrifice”, Imtiaz Dharker narrates how sacred works, truth and grace are perverted in Islamic culture. Muslim women are segregated and suppressed by ironically using the principles of Islam. The poems foreground how the sacred space has been violated by perverting and polluting the Islamic culture—ironically using the tenets of Islam itself. In her poem, Grace, the central idea is mosque. Imtiaz finds that custom enforced by orthodox maulvis in charge as a ‘keeper’ of conscience discriminates Muslim women even at God’s space. In ‘Prayer’, Dharker explodes the hypocrisy of prayers. In her poem, ‘Sacrifice’, Dharker criticises the symbolism of lamb’s sacrifice in Islam.

HER CRITICAL ACCLAMATION

Her work has been described by critic Bruce King as “consciously feminist, consciously political, consciously that of a multiple outsider, someone who knows her own mind, rather than someone full of doubt and liberal ironies”. Alan Ross in London Magazine terms this “a strong, concerned economical poetry in which political activity, homesickness, urban violence, religious anomalies, are raised in an unobtrusive setting, all the more effectively for their coolness of treatment.”

Review:

Minority is a wonderful poem by Imtiaz Dharker. I think Dharker is one of the most exciting poets writing in English today; her work is so fresh and relevant, and I love the way she doesn’t shy away from subject matter that is politically taboo. I particularly love the way she explores identity in her poems.

Minority gives a very insightful depiction of what it feels like to be “foreign” in many places. The poem begins with the line, “I was born a foreigner”. How can you be born a foreigner? Well, sadly today in many of our Western societies (including in the UK and in my adopted country, France) the children of immigrants can be made to feel this way. The poem says, “I was born a foreigner...and “carried on from there/ to become a foreigner everywhere/ I went”. The speaker in the poem seems to belong nowhere – “even in the place/ planted with my relatives”. On returning to the country of her parents, this speaker feels like a foreigner, too. In this situation, many people understandably feel incredibly displaced and victimised, as they find themselves facing prejudice from both the country they were born in, as well as the country of their parents and relatives.

The speaker tells us “I don’t fit”. She compares herself to “food cooked in milk of coconut/ where you expected ghee or cream” or an “unexpected aftertaste/ of cardamom or neem”. I love this use of taste to describe a feeling of being foreign; it’s so evocative. A country’s cuisine is essential to its culture and so I think this is a very clever inclusion here. I also find it very interesting that Dharker imports flavours from her own very multicultural identities, which are (as well as British) Pakistani and Indian.

The subject of the next stanza is language, and this is something that I can relate to personally, having lived, studied and worked abroad for several years now. The speaker talks about “that point where/ the language flips/ into an unfamiliar taste”, and words become a “tripwire”. Is she talking about accent here, where the language might “taste” differently on the tongue? Or is she talking about being unable to find the words for something? I have heard many people say this about being bilingual; it is incredibly frustrating when you cannot think of a word in the language you are trying to speak, because you are afraid that you might be better at one language than another. This only adds to the feeling of *not-belonging* that runs all the way through this poem. The penultimate stanza explores the act of writing, and its role in the creation of identity. Dharker uses beautiful language to describe herself (or the speaker) going “scratch, scratch” at the “growing scab on black and white”. I just love this description of writing as a “scab”. She is writing to make sense of a wound, or even to heal it. Dharker encourages the notion of the transformative and healing power of literature here, and then she remarks upon its democracy. “Everyone has the right/ to infiltrate a

piece of paper”, she writes; the page is not prejudiced; it “doesn’t fight back”. Poetry becomes a medium through which the speaker can freely express herself — a way she can communicate. And perhaps the message will get through to people; literature is a great teacher of empathy. “Who knows”, writes Dharker, perhaps these lines will “scratch their way/ into your head” — break through the prejudices that “community” and “family” can breed.

Perhaps one day, she writes in the final verse, you (the reader) will meet “the stranger sidling down your street” and recognise that face “as your own”. I just love the way the poem suddenly turns on the reader, near the end, with that very direct “you”. Dharker is putting the reader on the spot; these questions are now directly put to us. This poem beautifully displays its author’s belief in the power of literature to transform, educate and create understanding, and I think it’s a wonderful piece.

References:

1. Rahman, Tariq. "Tuafiq Rafat". Retrieved 19 July 2015.
2. <https://www.msmsol.com/2020/11/kitchens-by-taufiq-rafat-analysis.html>
3. <http://tallstoriesbooks.blogspot.com/2012/10/to-whom-it-may-concern-by-siphosepamla.html>
4. <https://litwitsite.wordpress.com/2016/08/22/the-noosing-of-the-sun-god-jessie-mackay/>
5. Jeremy Cronin Archived 13 September 2009 at the Wayback Machine Who's Who
6. <https://poemanalysis.com/jeremy-cronin/a-person-is-a-person-because-of-other-people/>
7. <https://emilyspoetryblog.com/2013/10/09/minority-by-imtiaz-dharker/>

UNIT – II - New Literatures in English – SHSA5104

Communion: Nobody to Nobody –

The eternal triangle: the writer, the reader and the book as go-between

I would like to begin by talking about messengers. Messengers always exist in a triangular situation – the one who sends the message, the message-bearer, whether human or inorganic, and the one who receives the message. Picture, therefore, a triangle, but not a complete triangle: something more like an upside-down V.

The writer and the reader are at the two lateral corners, but there's no line joining them. Between them – whether above or below – is Third point, which is the written word, or the text, or the book, or the poem, or the letter, or whatever you would like to call it. This third point is the only point of contact between the other two. As I used to say to my writing students in the distant days when I had some, "Respect the page. It's all you've got."

The writer communicates with the page. The reader also communicates with the page. The writer and the reader communicate only through the page. This is one of the syllogisms of writing as such. Pay no attention to the facsimiles of the writer that appear on talk shows, in newspaper interviews, and the like – they ought not to have anything to do with what goes on between you, the reader, and the page you are reading, where an invisible hand has previously left some marks for you to decipher, much as one of John Le Carre's dead spies has left a water-logged shoe with a small packet in it for George Smiley. I know this is a far-fetched image, but it is also curiously apt, since the reader is – among other things – a sort of spy. A spy, a trespasser, someone in the habit of reading other people's letters and diaries. As Northrop Frye has implied, the reader does not hear, he overhears.⁸ So far I've spoken primarily about writers. Now it's the turn of readers, more or less. The questions I would like to pose are, first: for whom does the writer write? And, secondly: what is the book's function – or duty, if you like – in its position between writer and reader? What ought it to be doing, in the opinion of its writer? And finally, a third question arising from the other two: where is the writer when the reader is reading? If you really are in the habit of reading other people's letters and diaries, you'll know the answer to that one straightaway: when you are reading, the writer is *not in the same room*. If he

were, either you'd be talking together, or he'd catch you in the act. A common writerly dilemma: who's going to read what you write, now or ever?

Who do you want to read it? Winston Smith's first readership is himself – it gives him satisfaction to write his forbidden thoughts in his diary. When I was a teenager, this account of Winston Smith's blank book was intensely attractive to me. I too attempted to keep such a diary, without result. My failure was my failure to imagine a reader. I didn't want anybody else to read my diary – only I should have access to it. But I myself already knew the sorts of things I might put into it, and mawkish things they were, so why bother writing them down? It seemed a waste of time. But many have not found it so. Countless are the diaries and journals, most obscure, some famous, that have been faithfully kept through the centuries, or the centuries of pen and paper, at least. For whom was Samuel Pepys writing? Or Saint-Simon? Or Anne Frank? There is something magical about such real-life documents. The fact that they have survived, have reached our hands, seems like the delivery of an unexpected treasure; or else like a resurrection.

These days I do manage to keep a journal of sorts, more in self-defense than anything else, because I know who the reader will be: it will be myself, in about three weeks, because I can no longer remember what I might have been doing at any given time. The older one gets, the more relevant Beckett's play *Krapp's Last Tape* comes to be. In this play, Krapp is keeping a journal on tape, from year to year. His only reader – or auditor – is himself, as he plays back bits of the tapes from his earlier lives. As time goes on, he has a harder and harder time identifying the person he is now with his former selves. It's like that bad stock brokers' joke about Alzheimer's Disease – at least you keep meeting new people – but in Krapp's case, and increasingly in mine, you yourself are those new people.

The private diary is about as minimalist as you can get, in the writer-to-reader department, because writer and reader are assumed to be the same. It is also about as intimate, as a form. Next comes, I suppose, the private letter: one writer, one reader, and a shared intimacy. "This is my letter to the World / That never wrote to me," said Emily Dickinson. Of course she might have got more replies if she'd mailed it. But she did intend a reader, or more than one, at least in the future: she saved her poems up very carefully, and even sewed them into little booklets.

"Nobody" is the writer, and the reader is also Nobody. In that sense, all books are anonymous, and so are all readers. Reading and writing – unlike, for instance, acting and

theatre-going – are both activities that presuppose a certain amount of solitude, even a certain amount of secrecy. I expect Emily Dickinson is using “Nobody” in both of its senses – in the sense of an insignificant person, a nobody, but also in the sense of the invisible and never-to-be-known writer, addressing the invisible and never-to-be-known reader.

If the writer is Nobody addressing the reader, who is another Nobody – that hypocrite reader who is his likeness and his brother, as Baudelaire remarked¹⁸ – where do the dreary Somebody and the admiring Bog come into it?

Publication changes everything. “They’d advertise,” warns Emily Dickinson, and how right she was. Once the catalog is out of the bag, the assumed readership cannot consist of just one person – a friend or a lover, or even a single unknown Nobody. With publication, the text replicates itself, and the reader is no longer an intimate, a one to your one. Instead the reader too multiplies, just like the copies of the book, and all those nobodies add up to the reading public. If the writer has a success, he becomes a Somebody, and the mass of readers becomes his admiring Bog. But turning from a nobody into a somebody is not without its traumas. The nobody-writer must throw off the cloak of invisibility and put on the cloak of visibility. As Marilyn Monroe is rumored to have said, “If you’re nobody you can’t be somebody unless you’re somebody else.”

And then doubt sets in. The writer-while-writing and the Dear Reader assumed as the eventual recipient of this writing have a relationship that is quite different from that between the mass-produced edition and “the reading public.” Dear Reader is singular – second-person singular.

Dear Reader is a You. But once both book and Dear Reader

become multiplied by thousands, the book becomes a publishing statistic, and Nobody can be quantified, and thus becomes a market, and turns into the great plural third-person Them, and Them is another thing altogether.

At the beginning of this chapter I raised three questions. The first was about writers and readers – for whom does the writer write? The answers have included Nobody and the admiring Bog. The second question was about books. Considering the book’s position as the intermediate point between writer and reader, what is the book’s function, or its duty? The use of the word “duty” assumes something with a will of its own, and the book as autonomous creature is a literary notion worth examining. There’s a department of the

post office called the DeadLetter Office, for letters that can't be delivered. This term implies that all the other letters are alive; which is nonsense, of course, but nonetheless an ancient and pervasive way of thinking. For instance, the Bible has often been called the living Word of God. Another *for instance* : it was the fashion a few hundred years ago for male writers to speak of their pregnancy – got with wordchild by the Spirit, or even by the Muse, if you can wind your head around that kind of gender transposition: such writers would then describe the book's gestation and its eventual birth. Of course a book is nothing like a baby really – some of the reasons are scatological – but the convention of the living words has been persistent. Thus Elizabeth Barrett Browning, among many others: “My letters!

All dead paper . . . mute and white! – / And yet they seem alive and quivering” One of my university professors, who was also a poet, used to say that there was only one real question to be asked about any work, and that was – is it alive, or is it dead? I happen to agree, but in what does this aliveness or deadness consist? The biological definition would be that living things grow and change, and can have offspring, whereas dead things are inert. In what way can a text grow and change and have offspring? Only through its interaction with a reader, no matter how far away that reader may be from the writer in time and in space. “Poems don't belong to those who write them,” says the lowly poem-filching postman to the poet Pablo Neruda in the film *II Postino*. “They belong to those who need them.” And so it is.

Everything used by human beings as a symbol has its negative or demonic version, and the most demonic version of the text with a life of its own that I can remember comes again from Kafka. There's a Jewish legend concerning the Golem, an artificial man who could be brought to life by having a scroll with the name of God inscribed on it placed in his mouth. But the Golem could get out of control and run amok, and then you were in trouble. Kafka's story is a sort of Golem story. It's called “In the Penal Colony,” and it revolves around a justice machine used by the administration to execute prisoners, who have not been informed beforehand of their crime. To start the machine up, a text with the sentence written on it – a sentence devised by the former commander of the colony, who is now dead – is inserted into the top. The sentence is a sentence in both senses of the word – it's a grammatical sentence, and it's the sentence imposed on the man to be executed. The justice machine then carries out its functions by writing the sentence with an array of pen-like glass needles, in intricate calligraphy and with many flourishes, on the actual body of the condemned man. The criminal is

supposed to achieve illumination after six hours, when he comes to understand what is being written on him. “Enlightenment dawns on the dullest,” says the officer who worships this machine. “It begins around the eyes. From there it spreads out . . . Nothing further happens, the man simply begins to decipher the script, he purses his lips as if he were listening.” (This is a novel method of teaching reading, which has yet to be tested by the school system.)

The end of the story comes when the officer, realizing that the old letter of the law is now a deadletter, sacrifices himself to his own machine; but this time it doesn’t work properly. Its cogs and wheels break off and roll away, but by now the thing has a life of its own and it just keeps on going, scribbling and jabbing, until the officer is dead.

In this story the writer is inhuman, the page is the reader’s body, and the text is indecipherable. Poet Milton Acorn has a line that goes, “as a poem erases and re-writes its poet,” which also makes the text the active partner, but I doubt that Kafka’s variation is quite what he meant.

More usually, the living word is presented in a much more positive light. In the theatre—particularly the Elizabethan theatre – there was often a moment at the end of a play at which the text stepped out of its frame, so to speak, and the play appeared for a moment to be no play at all, but alive in the same sense as its audience. One of the actors would advance out front and address the audience directly. “Hello, I’m not really who you thought I was; actually I’m an actor, and this is a wig. Hope you enjoyed the play, imperfect though it was, and if you did, please treat us actors gently and give us some applause,” was what these speeches in effect were saying. Or there might be a prologue – again, apart from the main action– in which an actor said a few words about the play, and recommended it to the audience, and then stepped back into his frame again and became part of the *dramatis personae*.

These moments of recommendation, or of revelation and conclusion, were recreated by many writers of novels and longer poems in little vignettes, either as a prologue, or as an *envoi*, a sending off. The ancestry of the form is most obvious when a novelist is pretending that his book is some sort of play: Thackeray, for instance, has a section at the beginning of *Vanity Fair* called “Before the Curtain,” in which he says his book is a puppet show within *Vanity Fair* itself – a fair that consists of the readers, among others – and he, the author, is only the Manager of the Performance. And at the end of the book he says, “Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.” But in many prologues or *envois*, the writer reveals himself as

the creator of the work, and writes what amounts to a defense of the book's character, like a letter accompanying a job application or something on a patent-medicine bottle, supposedly from a satisfied client.

Or, at the end of the story, the writer may send off his book as if waving goodbye to it as it sets out on a journey – he or she wishes it well, and sees it on its way; and he may say goodbye also to the reader who has been the silent partner and collaborator thus far on the journey. Prologue and *envoi* have a lot to say about the complex but intimate connection between writer and book, and then between book and reader. Quite frequently the book is little – “Go, little book” – almost as if it is a child, who must now make its own way in the world; but its way – its duty – consists in carrying itself to the reader, and delivering itself as best it can. “You understand,” says Primo Levi in a letter to his German translator, “it is the only book I have written and now . . . I feel like a father whose son has reached the age of consent and leaves, and one can no longer look after him.” One of the most disarming *envois* is by François Villon, the rascally and perennially broke fifteenth-century French poet, who instructed his poem to get a very urgent message through to a wealthy prince: gnomes, and elves, and the grownup leading it was called Brown Owl. Sadly, she did not wear an owl costume, nor did the little girls wear fairy outfits. This was a disappointment to me, but not a fatal one.

I did not know the real name of Brown Owl, but I thought she was wise and fair, and as I needed someone like that in my life at the time, I adored this Brown Owl. Part of the program involved completing various tasks, for which you might collect badges to sew on to your uniform, and in aid of various badge-collecting projects – needlework stitches, seeds of autumn, and so forth – I made some little books, in the usual way: I folded the pages, and sewed them together with sock-darning wool. I then inserted text and illustrations. I gave these books to Brown Owl, and the fact that she liked them was certainly more important to me than the badges. This was my first real writer–reader relationship. The writer, me; the go-between, my books; the recipient, Brown Owl; the result, pleasure for her, and gratification for me.

Many years later, I put Brown Owl into a book. There she is, still blowing her whistle and supervising the knot tests, in my novel *Cat's Eye*, for the same reason that a lot of things and people are put into books. That was in the 1980s, and I was sure the original Brown Owl must have been long dead by then.

Then a few years ago a friend said to me, “Your Brown Owl is my aunt.” “Is?” I said. “She can’t possibly be alive!” But she was, so off we went to visit her. She was well over ninety, but Brown Owl and I were very pleased to see each other. After we’d had tea, she said, “I think you should have these,” and she took out the little books I had made fifty years before—which for some reason she’d kept—and gave them back to me. She died three days later.

That’s my first answer: the writer writes for Brown Owl, or for whoever the equivalent of Brown Owl may be in his or her life at the time. A real person, then: singular, specific.

Here’s my second answer. At the end of Isak Dinesen’s “The Young Man With the Carnation,” God’s voice makes itself heard to the young writer Charlie, who has been so despairing about his work. “‘Come,’ said the Lord. ‘I will make a covenant between Me and you. I, I will not measure you out any more distress than you need to write your books... But you are to write the books. For it is I who want them written. Not the public, not by any means the critics, but Me, Me!’ ‘Can I be certain of that?’ asked Charlie. ‘Not always,’ said the Lord.”

So that is who the writer writes for: for the reader. For the reader who is not Them, but You. For the Dear Reader.

For the ideal reader, who exists on a continuum somewhere between Brown Owl and God. And this ideal reader may prove to be anyone at all – *anyone* at all – because the act of reading is just as singular – always – as the act of writing.

Prologue: The Day my World Changed

Come from a country which was created at midnight. When I almost died it was just after midday. One year ago I left my home for school and never returned. I was shot by a Taliban bullet and was flown out of Pakistan unconscious. Some people say I will never return home but I believe firmly in my heart that I will. To be torn from the country that you love is not something to wish on anyone.

Now, every morning when I open my eyes, I long to see my old room full of my things, my clothes all over the floor and my school prizes on the shelves. Instead I am in a country which is

five hours behind my beloved homeland Pakistan and my home in the Swat Valley. But my country is centuries behind this one. Here there is any convenience you can imagine. Water running from every tap, hot or cold as you wish; lights at the flick of a switch, day and night, no need for oil lamps; ovens to cook on that don't need anyone to go and fetch gas cylinders from the bazaar. Here everything is so modern one can even find food ready cooked in packets.

When I stand in front of my window and look out, I see tall buildings, long roads full of vehicles moving in orderly lines, neat green hedges and lawns, and tidy pavements to walk on. I close my eyes and for a moment I am back in my valley - the high snow-topped mountains, green waving fields and fresh blue rivers - and my heart smiles when it looks at the people of Swat. My mind transports me back to my school and there I am reunited with my friends and teachers. I meet my best friend Moniba and we sit together, talking and joking as if I had never left. then I remember I am in Birmingham, England. The day when everything changed was Tuesday, 9 October 2012. It wasn't the best of days to start with as it was the middle of school exams, though as a bookish girl I didn't mind them as much as some of my classmates.

That morning we arrived in the narrow mud lane off Haji Baba Road in our usual procession of brightly painted rickshaws, sputtering diesel fumes, each one crammed with five or six girls. Since the time of the Taliban our school has had no sign and the ornamented brass door in a white wall across from the woodcutter's yard gives no hint of what lies beyond.

For us girls that doorway was like a magical entrance to our own special world. As we skipped through, we cast off our head- scarves like winds puffing away clouds to make way for the sun then ran helter-skelter up the steps. At the top of the steps was an open courtyard with doors to all the classrooms. We dumped our backpacks in our rooms then gathered for morning assembly under the sky, our backs to the mountains as we stood to attention. One girl commanded, 'L Assaan bash!' or 'Stand at ease!' and we clicked our heels and responded, 'Allah.' Then she said, 'Hoo she yarV or 'Attention!' and we clicked our heels again. 'Allah.'

The school was founded by my father before I was born, and on the wall above us khushal school was painted proudly in red and white letters. We went to school six mornings a week and as a fifteen-year-old in Year 9 my classes were spent chanting chemical equations or studying Urdu grammar; writing stories in English with morals like 'Haste makes waste' or drawing diagrams of blood circulation - most of my classmates wanted to be doctors. It's hard to imagine that anyone would see that as a threat. Yet, outside the door to the school lay not only the noise and craziness of Mingora, the main city of Swat, but also those like the Taliban who think girls should not go to school.

That morning had begun like any other, though a little later than usual. It was exam time so school started at nine instead of eight, which was good as I don't like getting up and can sleep through the crows of the cocks and the prayer calls of the muezzin. First my father would try to rouse me. 'Time to get up, Jani muri,' he would say. This means 'soulmate' in Persian, and he always called me that at the start of the day. 'A few more minutes, Aba, please,' I'd beg, then burrow deeper under the quilt.

Then my mother would come. 'Pisho,' she would call. This means 'cat' and is her name for me. At this point I'd realise the time and shout, 'Bhabi, I'm late!' In our culture, every man is your 'brother' and every woman your 'sister'. That's how we think of each other. When my father first brought his wife to school, all the teachers referred to her as 'my brother's wife' or Bhabi. That's how it stayed from then on. We all call her Bhabi now.

I slept in the long room at the front of our house, and the only furniture was a bed and a cabinet which I had bought with some of the money I had been given as an award for campaigning for peace in our valley and the right for girls to go to school. On some shelves were all the gold- coloured plastic cups and trophies I had won for coming first in my class. Only twice had I not come top – both times when I was beaten by my class rival Malka e-Noor. I was determined it would not happen again.

The school was not far from my home and I used to walk, but since the start of last year I had been going with other girls in a rickshaw and coming home by bus. It was a journey of just five minutes along the stinky stream, past the giant billboard for Dr Humayun's Hair Transplant Institute where we joked that one of our bald male teachers must have gone when he suddenly started to sprout hair. I liked the bus

because I didn't get as sweaty as when I walked, and I could chat with my friends and gossip with Usman Ali, the driver, who we called Bhai Jan, or 'Brother'. He made us all laugh with his crazy stories.

I had started taking the bus because my mother was scared of me walking on my own. We had been getting threats all year. Some were in the newspapers, some were notes or messages passed on by people. My mother was worried about me, but the Taliban had never come for a girl and I was more concerned they would target my father as he was always speaking out against them. His close friend and fellow campaigner Zahid Khan had been shot in the face in August on his way to prayers and I knew everyone was telling my father, 'Take care, you'll be next.'

Our street could not be reached by car, so coming home I would get off the bus on the road below by the stream and go through a barred iron gate and up a flight of steps. I thought if anyone attacked me it would be on those steps. Like my father I've always been a daydreamer, and sometimes in lessons my mind would drift and I'd imagine that on the way home a terrorist might jump out and shoot me on those steps. I wondered what I would do. Maybe I'd take off my shoes and hit him, but then I'd think if I did that there would be no difference between me and a terrorist. It would be better to plead, 'OK, shoot me, but first listen to me.'

What you are doing is wrong. I'm not against you personally, I just want every girl to go to school.'

I wasn't scared but I had started making sure the gate was locked at night and asking God what happens when you die. I told my best friend Moniba everything. We'd lived on the same street when we were little and been friends since primary school and we shared everything, Justin Bieber songs and Twilight movies, the best face-lightening creams. Her dream was to be a fashion designer although she knew her family would never agree to it, so she told everyone she wanted to be a doctor. It's hard for girls in our society to be anything other than teachers or doctors if they can work at all. I was different - I never hid my desire when I changed from wanting to be a doctor to wanting to be an inventor or a politician. Moniba always knew if something was wrong. 'Don't worry' I told her. 'The Taliban have never come for a small girl.'

When our bus was called, we ran down the steps. The other girls all covered their heads before emerging from the door and climbing up into the back. The bus was actually what we call a dyna, a white Toyota TownAce truck with three parallel benches, one along either side and one in the middle. It was cramped with twenty girls and three teachers. I was sitting on the left between Moniba and a girl from the year below called Shazia Ramzan, holding our exam folders to our chests and our school bags under our feet.

After that it is all a bit hazy. I remember that inside the dyna it was hot and sticky. The cooler days were late coming and only the faraway mountains of the Hindu Kush had a frosting of snow. The back where we sat had no windows, just thick plastic sheeting at the sides which flapped and was too yellowed and dusty to see through. All we could see was a little stamp of opensky out of the back and glimpses of the sun, at that time of day a yellow orb floating in the dust that streamed over everything. I remember that the bus turned right off the main road at the army checkpoint as always and rounded the corner past the deserted cricket ground. I don't remember any more.

In my dreams about the shooting my father is also in the bus and he is shot with me, and then there are men everywhere and I am searching for my father.

In reality what happened was we suddenly stopped. On our left was the tomb of Sher Mohammad Khan, the finance minister of the first ruler of Swat, all overgrown with grass, and on our right the snack factory. We must have been less than 200 metres from the checkpoint. We couldn't see in front, but a young bearded man in light-coloured clothes had stepped into the road and waved the van down. 'Is this the Khushal School bus?' he asked our driver. Usman Bhai Jan thought this was a stupid question as the name was painted on the side. 'Yes,' he said.

'I need information about some children,' said the man.

'You should go to the office,' said Usman Bhai Jan.

As he was speaking another young man in white approached the back of the van.

'Look, it's one of those journalists coming to ask for an interview,' said Moniba.

Since I'd started speaking at events with my father to campaign for girls' education and against those like the Taliban who want to hide us away, journalists often came, even foreigners, though not like this in the road.

The man was wearing a peaked cap and had a handkerchief over his nose and mouth as if he had flu. He looked like a college student. Then he swung himself onto the tailboard at the back and leaned in right over us. 'Who is Malala?' he demanded.

No one said anything, but several of the girls looked at me. I was the only girl with my face not covered.

That's when he lifted up a black pistol. I later learned it was a Colt 45. Some of the girls screamed. Moniba tells me I squeezed her hand.

My friends say he fired three shots, one after another. The first went through my left eye socket and out under my left shoulder. I slumped forward onto Moniba, blood coming from my left ear, so the other two bullets hit the girls next to me. One bullet went into Shazia's left hand. The third went through her left shoulder and into the upper right arm of Kainat Riaz. My friends later told me the gunman's hand was shaking as he fired. By the time we got to the hospital my long hair and Moniba's lap were full of blood.

Who is Malala? I am Malala and this is my story.

NOTES

The book begins, "I come from a country which was created at midnight. When I almost died it was just after midday." The speaker—Malala, but unnamed for the time being—explains that one year ago, in the city of Mingora, Pakistan, she was shot by the Taliban, and then taken to a hospital outside of the country. Malala insists that she'll return to her home one day. For the time being, however, she lives in Birmingham, England. Malala finds her new home vastly different from Pakistan—it's far more technologically advanced, but it's also intimidating and alienating. Malala is still unnamed at this point, but she is the assumed speaker, as this is her memoir. The opening sentence of the book has the effect of inextricably tying Malala to her country, and we get a sense of her love for Pakistan—even though she's in a more technologically advanced place(England), she can't wait to return home. We will learn

about many problems in Pakistan, but it's important to remember that Malala herself never wavers in her love for her homeland.

Malala flashes back to “the day everything changed”: October 9, 2012. On this day, Malala was going to her usual classes at school. She describes the school system in Pakistan. Malala's father founded the Khushal School before she was born. It offers an education to girls: chemistry, English language, Urdu, biology, etc. Malala notes that most of her classmates wanted to be doctors when they grew up. She adds that none of her classmates could be viewed as “threats” by any stretch of the imagination. Malala describes the day of October 9 at her school. The day begins at 9, since the students have their yearly exams. Malala's father wakes her up, speaking to her in Persian. Her mother yells for her to wake up as well, teasingly calling her “Pisho,” or “Cat.” Eventually, Malala gets out of bed and prepares for her day of exams. Her rival at school is Malka e-Noor—as she dresses, Malala thinks to herself that she's almost always beaten Malka on her exams. Although we've been informed that this day changes everything, it's not immediately clear what makes it so special. At first it seems perfectly banal: Malala seems like an ordinary teenage girl, bickering with her family and worrying about exams.

Malala's school isn't far from her home, and often she walks there in the mornings. Occasionally she travels to school with her friends in a rickshaw. In recent months, however, she has been taking the bus. Recently, the Malala's mother has been concerned about her daughter's safety. The Malala's father has been an outspoken critic of the Taliban in recent years, and as a result, he's been getting death threats. Nevertheless, Malala's parents agree that the Taliban would never attack a girl. Malala often thinks about what would happen to her if a terrorist from the Taliban attacked her. She always concludes that it would be best to ask the terrorist to listen to her, rather than try to fight back. Since her father has been receiving death threats from the Taliban, Malala has been taking precautions, even though she thinks it unlikely that a Taliban member would attack her.

She locks the gate of her house every night, and prays to Allah more frequently than usual. She talks to her friend Moniba about the Taliban. Moniba wants to be a fashion designer, but because it's difficult for women to find any work other than medicine or education, she tells everyone that she wants to be a

doctor. Moniba assures Malala that the Taliban would never attack a “small girl.”

The fact that there are few career opportunities available to women suggests that the country as a whole is experiencing tough times, but it also suggests that women, far more than men, are being restricted from doing as they please. We already knew that they couldn’t go to school safely, but now we see that they also can’t pursue the jobs they want.

Malala runs to her bus. The other girls in her community, all of them wearing headscarves (burqas) to cover their faces, run to catch the bus as well. Malala reports that her memories of the day become hazy at this point. Her last clear memory is of sitting in the bus, next to Moniba, as the bus turns a corner. In her dreams, she explains, she imagines her father being shot along with her. The reality, however, is this: the bus was suddenly stopped, only a few hundred meters from the school. A young, bearded man stopped the bus driver. He claimed to need “information” about some of the children. The bus driver, Usman Bhai Jan, tells the man that he should go to the school to investigate.

We can sense that something important—perhaps even traumatic—is about to happen, as Malala’s lack of memory about the incident suggests trauma or injury. Based on what Malala has previously said about the state of education and security in Pakistan, we can assume that the bearded man climbing aboard the bus is looking to do harm to the children—not, as he claims, looking for information about them.

Malala and Moniba listen as the young man argues with Usman Bhai Jan. Suddenly, a second man, dressed in white, thrusts open the door and climbs onto the bus. He demands to know which girl is Malala. No one speaks. However, the speaker realizes that she is the only girl not wearing her burqa. Without warning, the man raises a gun—a Colt 45, Malala later learns—and shoots Malala three times. One bullet hits her in the eye and shoulder. The second bullet hits her friend Shazia’s hand. The third hits the arm of her friend, Kainat Riaz. Malala—who now explicitly reveals her name—says that the attacker’s hand was shaking when he fired the gun. Malala explains that she will now tell “her story.”

Reference:

1. Atwood, Margaret (2002). *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. ISBN 0-521-66260-5.
2. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/i-am-malala/prologue-the-day-my-world-changed#:~:text=Malala%20flashes%20back%20to%20%E2%80%9Cthe,School%20before%20she%20was%20born.>
3. "Malala Yousafzai: 'fatwa' issued against gunmen". *The Guardian*. 12 October 2012. Archived from the original on 21 August 2017. Retrieved 21 August 2017.

UNIT – III - New Literatures in English – SHSA5104

SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD

Athol Fugard

Athol Fugard, in full Athol Harold Lannigan Fugard, (born June 11, 1932, Middelburg, South Africa), South African dramatist, actor, and director who became internationally known for his penetrating and pessimistic analyses of South African society during the apartheid period.

Fugard's earliest plays were *No-Good Friday* and *Nongogo* (both published in *Dimetos and Two Early Plays*, 1977), but it was *The Blood Knot* (1963), produced for stage (1961) and television (1967) in both London and New York City, that established his reputation. *The Blood Knot*, dealing with brothers who fall on opposite sides of the racial colour line, was the first in a sequence Fugard called "The Family Trilogy." The series continued with *Hello and Goodbye* (1965) and *Boesman and Lena* (1969) and was later published under the title *Three Port Elizabeth Plays* (1974). *Boesman and Lena*, filmed in 1973 with Fugard as Boesman, played to a wider audience than any previous South African play; another film adaptation was released in 2000.

Fugard's willingness to sacrifice character to symbolism caused some critics to question his commitment. Provoked by such criticism, Fugard began to question the nature of his art and his emulation of European dramatists. He began a more imagist approach to drama, not using any prior script but merely giving actors what he called "a mandate" to work around "a cluster of images." From this technique derived the imaginative if shapeless drama of *Orestes* (published in *Theatre One: New South African Drama*, 1978) and the documentary expressiveness of *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead* (revised as *Sizwe Bansi Is Dead*), *The Island*, and *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act* (all published in *Statements: Three Plays*, 1974).

A much more traditionally structured play, *Dimetos* (1977), was performed at the 1975 Edinburgh Festival. *A Lesson from Aloes* (published 1981) and "Master Harold"...and the Boys (1982) were performed to much acclaim in London and New York City, as was *The Road to Mecca* (1985; film 1992), the story of an eccentric older woman about to be confined against her will in a nursing home. Throughout the 1970s and '80s Fugard worked

to create and sustain theatre groups that, despite South African drama's particular vulnerability to censorship, produced plays defiantly indicting the country's apartheid policy.

After the dismantling of apartheid laws in 1990–91, Fugard's focus turned increasingly to his personal history. In 1994 he published the memoir *Cousins*, and throughout the 1990s he wrote plays—including *Play land* (1992), *Valley Song* (1996), and *The Captain's Tiger* (1997)—that have strong autobiographical elements. Subsequent plays included *Sorrows and Rejoicings* (2002), about a poet who returns to South Africa after years of exile; *Victory* (2009), a stark examination of post apartheid South Africa; *The Train Driver* (2010), an allegorical meditation on white South Africans' collective guilt about apartheid; and *The Painted Rocks at Revolver Creek* (2015), which explores South Africa both before and after apartheid.

Films in which Fugard acted included *Marigolds in August* (1980; written with Ross Devenish) and *The Killing Fields* (1984). Fugard also wrote the novel *Tsotsi* (1980; film 2005). *Notebooks, 1960–1977* (1983) collects selections from Fugard's journals, and *Karoo, and Other Stories* (2005) is a compilation of short stories and journal extracts. Fugard received a Tony Award for lifetime achievement in 2011 and the Japan Art Association's Praemium Imperiale prize for theatre/film in 2014.

'Sizwe Banzi Is Dead'

'Sizwe banzi is dead' is a famous play by Fugard. The theme of the play is the struggle for survival. Many people believed that the cities of South Africa provide great employment opportunities but this play portrays the reality. How a man struggles to continue his life in South Africa is portrayed by Fugard.

Sizwe Banzi's survival:

Sizwe Banzi lives in King William's town with his wife and four children. He does not get a proper job and salary, hence the family suffers. To help his family members he goes to New Brighton, Port Elizabeth in South Africa. He stays with his friend Zola. Sizwe travels a lot everyday to find a job but in vain. Zola also searches employment for Sizwe. Sizwe understands that this city cannot provide him employment. His friend Zola introduces Buntu to Sizwe with the belief that Buntu could help him get employed. Their search continues.

Styles is a person who worked in Ford motor company and quit the job stating his identity is lost. He is not happy in his job, there is no humanity or life in the jobs people do. He opens his own photo studio and lives happily with this new profession. Sizwe goes to a photo studio of a man named Styles. Styles asks the name of the person. Sizwe hesitates and tells he is Robert Zwelinzima. When Sizwe is asked about the need for the photograph, Sizwe answers that it is to send to his wife.

Sizwe is without work permit. The authorities inform him that he should leave the city in three days. The survival of Sizwe and his family members becomes a question. Sizwe and Buntu are upset over the problem. Buntu to console Sizwe takes him to a bar. When they both return, they find a person dead on the pavement. They search his pocket and find that the man is Robert Zwelinzima, who has a work seekers permit. Buntu suggests that Sizwe can live as Robert and make the dead Robert as Sizwe. Sizwe rejects the shift in the beginning but considering his family situation he accepts to live in the name of a dead man. He informs everyone including his wife that the man named Sizwe Banzi is dead.

The play describes the pathetic condition of a man who is jobless. We feel pity on the role of Sizwe. Fugard wonderfully pictured the reality of lifestyle in South Africa. The most painful role a man can take is to live in a man's identity who is no more. Fugard beautifully pictures the life of South Africans and he undoubtedly masters in bringing reality into the play.

"Sizwe Bansi is Dead" was written by Athol Fugard and coauthored by John Kani and Winston Ntshona, the two actors who originally appeared in the play as Styles and Sizwe Bansi. The world premiere of the play occurred in 1972 at the Space Theatre in Cape Town, South Africa. The play provides a view into the social and political racism experienced by black South Africans in the 1970s, although the type of suppression and persecution depicted in the play was present well before the 1970s and would continue into the future.

"Sizwe Bansi is Dead" tells the story of Styles, an intelligent, capable, and talented man who leaves his job as a factory worker to follow his dream of owning a photography studio. Styles pursues his talent with a camera in order to preserve the faces and identities of his people, who would otherwise be forgotten by the rest of the world. The play also tells the story of Sizwe Bansi, a man condemned by his government to a life of poverty. Although he is willing and capable of work, the stamp in his government issued "passbook" refuses him a work permit and tells him that he must leave Port Elizabeth and return to his hometown of King William's Town where there are no work opportunities. This government edict will, in all probability, result in the starvation of Sizwe and his family. Sizwe is taken in by a man named Buntu after he is discovered in a government raid. Sizwe hopes that Buntu will figure out some way for him to remain in Port Elizabeth and find a job to support his family, but Buntu can read and when he looks at Sizwe's passbook he sees that he is three days past due in his return home. He knows Sizwe has no chance of finding a job or remaining in Port Elizabeth with the stamps in his book. However, Sizwe discovers a passbook belonging to a dead man and, after struggling with his decision to give up his own name, decides to adopt the identity of Robert Zwelinzima. The adoption of this new identity ensures that Sizwe will be able to look for a job and provide for his family.

In the early scenes of the play, Styles's musings are interrupted by the entrance of a man named Robert Zwelinzima, who has come to have his picture taken so that he can send it to his wife and children back home. Over the course of the rest of the play, it is revealed that Robert Zwelinzima is actually Sizwe Bansi living under the new identity he has adopted. Just as Sizwe Bansi is forced to essentially "kill" himself in order to preserve his life and the life of his family, his story illustrates the ghostly existence of the black population of South Africa. They are told who they are, where to live, and

how to live, by a book developed and stamped by white men. They are forced to give up their dignity and humanity in order to continue to exist. They are constantly treated as less than human and are certainly never given the respect they deserve. However, Styles's motivation for his photography preserving the faces and memory of his people makes it clear that the taking of Sizwe Bansi's portrait is a moment of hope and triumph. Sizwe Bansi has been forced to alter his name and identity in order to provide for his family, but this photo taken by Styles preserves him forever as both Sizwe Bansi and Robert Zwelanzima. It reveals that he is indeed a human being with an identity and a history. This photo will preserve his name and his life for the generations to come.

The story told in "Sizwe Bansi is Dead" explores the themes of identity, self-worth, racism, and suppression. The passbook that every black man is forced to carry is the foundation for this question of identity. The passbook imposes limits on the employment and travel of all black citizens in South Africa. It takes away their freedom, making them less than men. Their entire lives are contained in this passbook, and with a single stamp one white man can totally alter a black man's future and determine his fate. The characters depicted in the play struggle to maintain their own identities and sense of themselves as human beings under this oppressive rule. Within these circumstances, however, Styles, Sizwe, and Buntu realize that all they own is themselves. The only legacy they have to leave behind is the memory of their lives, so they strive to be the best men they can be and live the best lives they can. They show themselves to be far better men than their white "Baases" because they realize the value of human life and the sacredness of identity.

Styles:

Styles lives in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and used to work at the Ford Motor Company. He now owns a photography studio where he is his own boss and uses his photography skills to preserve the faces and memories of his people. Styles serves as the historical reference for the play as he narrates the details of the cultural environment of South Africa in the 1970s.

Sizwe Bansi

The protagonist of the play, Sizwe has a wife and four children in King William's Town and has come to Port Elizabeth to look for work. His request for an official permit is denied and he is told to return home. Sizwe is able to switch his papers for the papers of a dead man and take on the dead man's identity so that he will be able to find a job and support his family.

Themes

Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, written by Athol Fugard and premiered in 1972, has a number of key themes. The first of them is made clear in the setting of the play: appearances. Styles, the first character we meet, runs a photographic studio: his job is to make people seem to be something they might not be. He calls his studio a "strong room of dreams" and creates fantasies for people who come in, making them look their best. Even his name, "Styles," indicates the play's concern with how we look.

Of course, connected to this is another major theme: race. When Athol Fugard premiered the play in Cape Town, South Africa was under racist apartheid rule. The characters in this play are all disrespected on a daily basis, and Styles's photographs give them dignity. Without the repressive government, the central plot-event wouldn't take place at all.

And speaking of the plot-event, we come to the most important theme of all: identity. Sizwe Bansi is not dead, despite the title; Robert Zwelinzima is dead. But Sizwe has swapped identity cards with Robert, so there is a dead body with Sizwe's identity card in its pocket. This suggests that our identities can be defined by many things, and whether or not you exist within the legal system is the most important. The play asks, "Who is Sizwe Bansi?" and, in doing so, "What does it mean to 'be' someone"?

The play, which premiered in 1972, revolves around the theme of identity as its protagonist, Sizwe Bansi, ultimately decides to relinquish his true identity and assume that of a dead man (Robert Zwelinzima) who has a work permit. The permit will allow Sizwe Bansi to work in Port Elizabeth, where he has moved from his village to find a job, but this

change of identity will mean relinquishing his family ties. The main character must either go back to his family without being able to support it or support it without being able to ever see them again.

This catch-22 situation leads us to the second theme of the play: family. Styles, the photographer Sizwe Banzi goes to to have his picture taken and sent to his wife, thinks of his job as enabling families to stay connected with their past ancestry and present relatives. The primary reason that pushes Banzi to leave his family and go to Port Elizabeth is to look for a job to support his family. In Port Elizabeth, Sizwe finds a sort of alternative family in his friend Buntu.

Finally, the play confronts the clash between human agency and racism. It points out that, in spite of the legalized and institutionalized racism that dominated South African society at the time, human ability to seize opportunities can lead us to defeat racist limitations.

All these themes located within the opening scene where it is clear that both Sizwe and the photographer Style have reinvented their identities and found in this reinvention an opportunity to overcome material and racist limitations.

MADMEN AND SPECIALIST

Wole Soyinka

Wole Soyinka, in full Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka, (born July 13, 1934, Abeokuta, Nigeria), Nigerian playwright and political activist who received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. He sometimes wrote of modern West Africa in a satirical style, but his serious intent and his belief in the evils inherent in the exercise of power usually was evident in his work as well.

A member of the Yoruba people, Soyinka attended Government College and University College in Ibadan before graduating in 1958 with a degree in English from the University

of Leeds in England. Upon his return to Nigeria, he founded an acting company and wrote his first important play, *A Dance of the Forests* (produced 1960; published 1963), for the Nigerian independence celebrations. The play satirizes the fledgling nation by stripping it of romantic legend and by showing that the present is no more a golden age than was the past.

He wrote several plays in a lighter vein, making fun of pompous, Westernized schoolteachers in *The Lion and the Jewel* (first performed in Ibadan, 1959; published 1963) and mocking the clever preachers of upstart prayer-churches who grow fat on the credulity of their parishioners in *The Trials of Brother Jero* (performed 1960; published 1963) and *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1973). But his more serious plays, such as *The Strong Breed* (1963), *Kongi's Harvest* (opened the first Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar, 1966; published 1967), *The Road* (1965), *From Zia, with Love* (1992), and even the parody *King Baabu* (performed 2001; published 2002), reveal his disregard for African authoritarian leadership and his disillusionment with Nigerian society as a whole.

Other notable plays include *Madmen and Specialists* (performed 1970; published 1971), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1995). In these and Soyinka's other dramas, Western elements are skillfully fused with subject matter and dramatic techniques deeply rooted in Yoruba folklore and religion. Symbolism, flashback, and ingenious plotting contribute to a rich dramatic structure. His best works exhibit humour and fine poetic style as well as a gift for irony and satire and for accurately matching the language of his complex characters to their social position and moral qualities.

From 1960 to 1964 Soyinka was coeditor of *Black Orpheus*, an important literary journal. From 1960 onward he taught literature and drama and headed theatre groups at various Nigerian universities, including those of Ibadan, Ife, and Lagos. After winning the Nobel Prize, he also was sought after as a lecturer, and many of his lectures were published—notably the Reith Lectures of 2004, as *Climate of Fear* (2004).

Though he considered himself primarily a playwright, Soyinka also wrote novels—*The*

Interpreters (1965) and Season of Anomy (1973)—and several volumes of poetry. The latter include *Idanre*, and *Other Poems* (1967) and *Poems from Prison* (1969; republished as *A Shuttle in the Crypt*, 1972), published together as *Early Poems* (1998); *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* (1988); and *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known* (2002). His verse is characterized by a precise command of language and a mastery of lyric, dramatic, and meditative poetic forms. He wrote a good deal of *Poems from Prison* while he was jailed in 1967–69 for speaking out against the war brought on by the attempted secession of Biafra from Nigeria. *The Man Died* (1972) is his prose account of his arrest and 22-month imprisonment. Soyinka's principal critical work is *Myth, Literature, and the African World* (1976), a collection of essays in which he examines the role of the artist in the light of Yoruba mythology and symbolism. *Art, Dialogue, and Outrage* (1988) is a work on similar themes of art, culture, and society. He continued to address Africa's ills and Western responsibility in *The Open Sore of a Continent* (1996) and *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (1999).

Soyinka was the first black African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. An autobiography, *Aké: The Years of Childhood*, was published in 1981 and followed by the companion pieces *Ìsarà: A Voyage Around Essay* (1989) and *Ibadan: The Penkele Years: A Memoir, 1946–1965* (1994). In 2006 he published another memoir, *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*. In 2005–06 Soyinka served on the *Encyclopædia Britannica* Editorial Board of Advisors.

Soyinka has long been a proponent of Nigerian democracy. His decades of political activism included periods of imprisonment and exile, and he has founded, headed, or participated in several political groups, including the National Democratic Organization, the National Liberation Council of Nigeria, and Pro-National Conference Organizations (PRONACO). In 2010 Soyinka founded the Democratic Front for a People's Federation and served as chairman of the party.

Madmen and Specialist is a play written by Wole Soyinka. He was born in 1934 in Nigeria. He was educated in England. In 1986 he was awarded with the Noble prize. Wole Soyinka is the first African to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. His most

famous work is 'The lion and the Jewel'. His play *Madmen and specialist* talks about cannibalism and in turn the horrors of war through the arguments or rift between a father and his son.

Dr.Bero is the son of the old man. He is a medical doctor and returns from the civil war in Nigeria. Apart from being a doctor he serves in the intelligence department of the military affairs. He becomes the head of the intelligence in the Army and is fondly called the specialist. His sister is Si Bero. He appoints spies to watch the activities of his father, the old man. Dr.Berobelieves that his father goes against human principles. He argues with his father against cannibalism. Dr.Bero also advises his father to give up the worship of 'AS' the deity formed by his father. The old man as mentioned in the play is not actually an insane; he is also a medical doctor. He argues that man has every right to eat whatever is attacked or killed by him; hence eating human flesh should be made legal. He often points out his son Dr.Bero as you people, meaning the soldiers of the country. The old man calls the deity as 'AS' he brings people and advises them of these principles and convinces them. Many of them become his disciples. Dr. Bero could not tolerate the troubles and unethical measures of his father. He has sent four spies as beggars to watch the actions of his father, when he finds their lives are at stake, he shoots his own father and saves them.

The play *madmen and specialist* was very successful ever since it was enacted. The play was 1 hour and 24 minutes long and the arguments between the father and the son keeps the play engaging. The activities of the protagonist, the old man brings laughter sometimes horror at times. The suspense is maintained throughout, the audience keeps guessing of the future of the rift between the son and the father and at last when the father is killed by his own son a sort of emotional disturbance happens which is the success of this play and playwright Wole Soyinka.

Madmen and Specialists opens with four mendicants at a roadside—Goyi, Cripple, Blindman, and Aafaa. Behind them is Dr. Bero's home with a basement office. To the side is a "semi-open hut" in which are visible two old women, Iya Agba and Iya Mate. The level space in front of Bero's home holds barks and herbs set out for drying. The mendicants, casualties of a recent war, wager parts of their bodies in a dice game and wonder if their former therapist, the Old Man, Dr. Bero's father, will ever fulfill his

promise of taking them on a world tour, during which they would perform as a circus act, the “Creatures of As.” When the doctor’s sister, Si Bero, passes by them on her way home from gathering herbs, they put on their routine to beg for money. Being familiar with their act, she stops it, condemns them for not working for a living, tosses them a few coins nevertheless, and offers them the job of sorting herbs. They bless her for the contribution—all but Aafaa, who sarcastically blesses her brother instead. The others, in fun, follow suit, giving the first hint of Bero’s inhumanity as they stage an arbitrary trial, execution, and burial of Goyi. After describing themselves as serviceable vultures, they reveal the reason they are begging before Bero’s house. Still under orders as Bero’s spies, they have Bero’s father, who is a prisoner in the office, under surveillance.

When Si Bero chooses Blindman to enter the house to get the herbs, the mendicants’ constant bickering escalates into resentment and sarcasm. Si Bero tries to restore order, but when she leaves for the old women’s hut, a fight erupts between Aafaa and Blindman. Amid this uproar, Dr. Bero enters for the first time and must remind them of their orders. They are unhappy with their menial tasks and are distressed over their conflicting obligations to the three strong characters, Bero, Si Bero, and the Old Man. Blindman and Goyi are attracted by the atmosphere of love surrounding Si Bero. Aafaa, who had been a chaplain in the war and had never served under Bero, is the most defiant in his commentary on military intelligence as a cowardly activity; Bero strikes him in the face with his swagger stick.

Bero’s reunion with Si Bero reveals how much Bero has changed since he left for the war. She wants to call all the neighbors to announce his return; he wants privacy. She pours palm wine in front of the threshold as a blessing to the earth; he calls it superstition and declares that he, in shedding blood, has spilled a more potent sacrifice. The scene exposes Si Bero’s ignorance of Bero’s real activities—that he rejected medicine for intelligence operations and thus participated actively in killing, and that he has had the mendicants sequester the Old Man in the basement. On the other hand, Bero is ignorant of her activities. She has engaged the services of the old women, has even installed them on the property so that they can aid her in discovering

medical secrets.

The scene cuts away momentarily to the old women, who fear, as they observe Bero's behavior, that their spiritual energies have been misplaced. Si Bero had vouched for Bero to these "earth mothers," and now it appears that Bero is not to be trusted. When the scene cuts back to the brother and sister, Si Bero explains her activities as a balancing of cosmic forces, the healing power of the herbs against the destructive power of war. Now that Bero seems to have joined the other side, she fears for their father, who left for the war and has not returned. Bero does not yet announce their father's location but assures her that he has been able to keep track of him. He then explains his change of profession as a simple redirection of energies: His new function resembles the old—analysis, diagnosis, prescription—but now the prescription is death: "Power comes from bending Nature to your will."

Madmen and Specialists presents a stark confrontation between good and evil forces. Good it defines as creative, beneficent, and humane; evil as destructive, sadistic, and reductionist. To make sure that the audience does not miss the point, Wole Soyinka provides two supernatural characters—the earth mothers Iya Agba and Iya Mate—to pronounce the law that governs the universe. Nature, they say, operates according to the principle of reciprocity: "We put back what we take, in one form or another. Or more than we take. It's the only law." Anyone who violates that principle is doomed, eventually, to fail. When Bero tries to "proscribe Earth itself" he attempts the impossible task of stepping outside the circle.

In addition, Soyinka gives another "elder" in the play, the Old Man, unusual intellectual powers and a moral sensibility that, in his case, borders on madness. His response to Bero's evil is a disturbing, ironic dialectic that proves even more elusive and provoking to Bero than the philosophical calm of the old women. Like them he strikes certain humanistic chords—"A part of me," he says, "identifies with every human being"—but his dealings with Bero are aggressive and extreme, a kind of psychological shock treatment. He lowered Bero and his fellow officers to the level of beasts when he told them, "All intelligent animals kill only for food . . . and you are

intelligent animals.” With the meal of human flesh, he “robbed them of salvation.” While they are looking for him, they should instead “be looking for themselves.” Like Socrates, the Old Man insists on the importance of the examined life. He fails, however, to enlighten Bero any more than he has the mendicants.

Dr. Bero, also called The Specialist, a medical doctor returning from service in a civil war analogous to the Biafran secession from Nigeria (1967-1970) but generalized by its echoes of similar conflicts such as the 1960-1964 Katangan conflict in the Congo (now Zaire). Bero began service as a doctor but found that he had a talent for intelligence work and has since become the head of intelligence, in which position he acquired the nickname “The Specialist.” He claims to have eaten and enjoyed human flesh, particularly testicles. He has sent four spies, masquerading as beggars, to watch his father, the Old Man, whom he has had confined in the basement surgery of their house. Against his father’s metaphysical proclamations of the new deity As, Bero claims to understand the nature of real (temporal) power. Bero’s four spies are former disciples of the Old Man. When the Old Man recaptures their allegiance and is at the point of “operating” on one of them, Bero appears and shoots him.

The Old Man

The Old Man, Bero’s father, also a medical doctor. He likes his regular arguments with the Priest. During the last of these, he submits that cannibalism should be made legal. Shortly thereafter, he follows his son to war and is given charge of convalescent patients, whom he converts to the partly obscurantist, partly cynical cult of As. His comments on cannibalism threaten to bring severe legal reprisals. His son rescues him and has him taken home to be confined in the surgery. At his first opportunity, he reasserts his control over the beggars. He is shot by Bero as he attempts to cut open the Cripple.

References:

1. "Sizwe Banzi is Dead: Peter Brook". Barbican. Retrieved 24 July 2015.
2. Soloski, Alexis, "Sizwe Banzi Is Dead Remains Alive: A Great Play Bids Its Farewell at BAM", The Village Voice 15 April 2008. Accessed 1 October 2008 (review of production at the Harvey Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Fulton Street, Brooklyn, New York).
3. <http://www.bookrags.com/studyguide-sizwebanzidead/#gsc.tab=0>
4. Liukkonen, Petri. "Wole Soyinka". Books and Writers (kirjasto.sci.fi). Finland: Kuusankoski Public Library. Archived from the original on 2 February 2015.
5. <https://www.enotes.com/topics/madmen-specialists>

UNIT – IV - New Literatures in English - SHSA5104

ICE CANDY MAN

BAPSI SIDHWA

About the author

Bapsi Sidhwa is Pakistan's leading diasporic writer. She has produced four novels in English that reflect her personal experience of the Indian subcontinent's Partition, abuse against women, immigration to the US, and membership in the Parsi/Zoroastrian community. Born on August 11, 1938 in Karachi, in what is now Pakistan, and migrating shortly thereafter to Lahore, Bapsi Sidhwa witnessed the bloody Partition of the Indian Subcontinent as a young child in 1947. Growing up with polio, she was educated at home until age 15, reading extensively. She then went on to receive a BA from Kinnaird College for Women in Lahore. At nineteen, Sidhwa had married and soon after gave birth to the first of her three children. The responsibilities of a family led her to conceal her literary prowess. She says, "Whenever there was a bridge game, I'd sneak off and write. But now that I've been published, a whole world has opened up for me." (Graeber) For many years, though, she says, "I was told that Pakistan was too remote in time and place for Americans or the British to identify with" (Hower 299). During this time she was an active women's rights spokesperson, representing Pakistan in the A

After receiving countless rejections for her first and second novels, *The Bride and The Crow Eaters*, she decided to publish *The Crow Eaters* in Pakistan privately. Though the experience was one she says, "I would not wish on anyone," it marks the beginning of her literary fame (Sidhwa "Interview" 295). Since then, she has received numerous awards and honorary professorships for these first two works and her two most recent novels, *Cracking India* and *An American Brat*. These include the Pakistan National honors of the Patras Bokhri award for *The Bride* in 1985 and the highest honor in the arts, the Sitari-I-Imtiaz in 1991. Her third novel, *Cracking India* was awarded the German Literaturepreis and a nomination for Notable Book of the Year from the American Library Association, and was mentioned as a New York Times "Notable Book of the Year," all in 1991. A Bunting Fellowship from Harvard and a

National Endowment of the Arts grant in 1986 and 1987 supported the completion of *Cracking India*. Most recently she was awarded a \$100,000 grant as the recipient of the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Award in 1993. Her works have now been translated into Russian, French and German. She is currently working on collections of short stories and essays, while fulfilling her duties as Writer-in-Residence and English professor at Mt. Holyoke College. She has also taught college-level English courses at St. Thomas University, Rice University, and The University of Texas, all in Houston, as well as at the graduate level at Columbia University, NY.

Ice Candy Man presents violation of human rights and pathetic conditions during the partition of Subcontinent in 1947. Through the character of Lenny, Bapsi Sidhwa gives the details of how the political changes affect the citizens of India. The novel realistically represents the exploitation and suppression of women. Men using their masculine powers fulfil the desires and brutally assault the women. Sidhwa as a novelist talks about the power and skills of women.

Feminism is a movement which plays a very important role in highlighting the suppression of women in a male dominated society. In this society women are considered inferior to men and they are not given their rights. Many writers suggest some solutions to the degradation of women based on cast, creed, religion and gender biases. *Ice Candy Man* represents a series of female characters who survived the worst time of 1947 in India. The novel represents the realistic picture of Hindu Muslim clashes and the changing political scenario. Emotional turmoil, weakness, killings, brutalities and much more are suffered by women. The whole story is narrated by a female protagonist who shares her personal experiences of partition. She minutely observes men's intentions towards women, the lustful desires of males and the way they treat the women as sexual objects.

Lenny as a narrator moves from childhood to adolescence and during this course of time she understands the changes that occur in society and behaviour of men with women. The whole journey helps her to develop a mature vision of life. She gives a close look at the relationship between men and women. Being a handicapped girl her world is restricted to her house. She spends most of her time with her Godmother. Being a

child she had no inclination to female possession. She never played with dolls. The sexual identity thrust upon her again and again. Her schooling is stopped by her doctor because she is suffering from polio. He said she can marry and live a good life. She does not need to take burden of studies. This suggestion makes her feel that her fate is sealed and marrying and carrying out responsibilities of domestic affairs are the only aims of women. Since ages it is considered that woman's duty is to look after the house, raise children and give comfort to her family. Shashi Deshpande suggests that women should be given enough space to realize their true personality. Simon de Beauvoir holds the opinion that mothers are responsible to inculcate the sense of submission in women. Lenny learns that marriage of a girl is of utmost importance to their parents. Independence and self identity is for men. As a child she enjoys the love of her mother and the protection of her father but the story of Ice Candy Man's love for Ayah destroys her concept of love. The meeting of Godmother and Ice Candy Man open her eyes to the wisdom of truth and compassion. She watches women being raped and men turning to beasts. Women including Ayah become prey of men. Lenny was shocked to see the human mind corrupted so easily. Men were declaring superiority over each other by sexually assaulting women. Shashi Deshpande states that rape is a violation of trust between two people and a greatest violence.

Lenny is shocked to see the changing faces of men and she became aware of religious differences. She knows that men of different religions can never become friends again. To take revenge is the sole purpose of their life. Ayah is kidnapped and she decides to hunt for Ayah, who became a prey of Hindu Muslim riots.

Throughout the novel, Lenny appears as bold, courageous and strong. Sidhwa has given feminist touch to her character who moves forward despite many hurdles. By observing the life of many women she understands the limitations associated with women lives in patriarchal society. Bapsi Sidhwa states that women are always marginalized and she always protest against it. Lenny's mother is another female character, a servile housewife, she limits herself to her home. She represents the traditional woman who never expresses their desire.

Through Lenny Sidhwa shows that men have to dilute their ego and women have to be strong. The mind sets need to be changed in order to establish equality between sexes.

Sidhwa exposes the society, which marginalize women, their growth and development. She has a constructive approach towards women's betterment.

Just as Bepsi Sidhwa said about the marginalization and degradation of women, it is true. Women are always being marginalized and considered inferior over centuries. They are not given their rights. A big change is required at social level, which will acknowledge women as human beings having souls, desires and feelings. Women should utilize their potentials beyond the domestic life to have their own individuality. Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice-Candy Man* deals with the partition of India and its aftermaths. This is the first novel by a woman novelist from Pakistan in which she describes about the fate of people in Lahore. The novel opens with the verse of Iqbal from his poem 'Complaint to God', with this, the child-narrator Lenny is introduced. She is lame and helpless. She finds that her movement between Warris Road and Jail Road is limited. She sees the Salvation Army wall with ventilation slits which makes her feel sad and lonely. The narration is in the first person. Lenny lives on Warris Road. The novelist describes about the localities in Lahore through the Child-narrator. Lenny observes: "I feel such sadness for the dumb creature I imagine lurking behind the wall." Lenny is introvert and she is engrossed in her private world.

One day, Lenny is in her pram, immersed in dreams as usual. Her Ayah attends to her. Suddenly an Englishman interrupts them and he asks Ayah to put Lenny down from her pram. But Ayah explains to him about Lenny's infirmity. Lenny is a keen observer. She has seen how people are fascinated with the Hindu Ayah's gorgeous body. She notices how even beggars, holymen, old people and the youngmen adore her for her feminine grace.

Colonel Bharucha is Lenny's doctor. He is a surgeon. Lenny is brought to the hospital for her limp in one leg. In the first, attempt, plaster on Lenny's leg is removed but still she limps. Soon a new plaster is cast over her leg. Lenny cries out of pain but her mother takes care of her.

Dr. Bharucha's surgery pains Lenny as she has become bed-ridden. The news of Lenny's operation spreads in small Parsi community of Lahore and she has visitors but she cries for Godmother. Lenny lying on the bed observes keenly the reaction of visitors and her parents. After one month, Lenny is allowed to be taken in a

stroller outside her house. Her eighteen year old Ayah Shanta takes her to a zoo.

Lenny's Ayah Shanta has a number of admirers. Ice-Candy-Man is among her admirers. Another companion of Lenny is her electric-aunt, a widow. She also picks up a brother. His name is Adi and Lenny calls him Sissy. He goes to school and Lenny studies at home. When winter comes, Ice-Candy-Man turns into a birdman and in the streets of Lahore, he is seen with birds. Rich ladies give him money for these poor birds to be freed. Ice-Candy-Man is a chatter-box and he can talk on any topic.

One day, the Parsi community assembles in the community hall in the Parsi temple. Two priests prepare for the worship of fire. Lenny observes everything with curiosity. Then the meeting of the Parsi community begins on their stand on Swaraj. Col. Bharucha holds the mike and apprises all -about the latest political developments. After discussions and questions, all agree to observe the middle path—to observe and see. They will not be with the Indian nationalists to oppose the Raj. They fail to come out of their dilemma.

The Ayah takes care of the helpless child Lenny like a sister. Lenny's mother too loves her.

A portion of Lenny's house is lent to the Shankars who are newly married. Shankar's wife Gita is seen welcoming him in the evening. The children observe this couple with curiosity. Gita is a good cook and a good story-teller. She is popular with children. The reader is now introduced to Hari, the gardner, Imam Din, the cook of Lenny's house. Here one finds focus on the character of Imam din. He is sixty five years old. He is "tall, big-bellied, barrel-chested and robust." Imam Din likes to play with children in his spare time. One day Imam Din takes Lenny to his village on his bicycle. Lenny observes every thing keen on her way to the village. There she meets children Ranna and his sisters Khatija and Parveen. This is the village Pir Pindo where Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims live peacefully. Villagers have assembled beneath a huge sheesham tree to discuss about the situation in other cities like Bihar and Bengal. They feel disturbed over the news of Hindu-Muslim riots. The villagers blame the British government for 'inaction in the wake of communal riots. The Chaudhry of Pir Pindo assures them about the safety of everyone in the village if riots break out. Later Lenny and Imam Din return to Lahore.

Ayah has now two more admirers—a chinaman and the Pathan. They are fascinated by

her feminine grace. They visit Lenny's house daily to talk to her. Lenny does not go to school. She goes to Mrs. Pen for her studies. Her house is next to Lenny's Godmother's house on Jail Road— opposite to Electric-aunt's house. Ayah accompanies Lenny to Mrs. Pen's house. After tuition, Lenny goes to her Godmother's house for sometime. One day Mahatma Gandhi visits Lahore. Lenny goes to see Gandhijee with her mother. She is surprised to see him because she has always taken him to be a mythic figure only. Gandhi jee blesses them all and advises them to follow the enema-therapy. Lenny fails to understand as to why people call him a saint. To her, he appears to be 'half clown and half-demon'.

Now it is April and Lahore is getting warmer day by day. Ice-Candy-Man finds his business prospering. By now it has become clear that India is going to be broken. Muslim league wants Pakistan for Muslims. Imam Din, the cook at Lenny's house is worried over the news of communal riots and plans a visit to his village Pir Pindo. Lenny insists to join him on his trip to the village. She still cherishes the memory of her earlier visit to Pir Pindo. On Baisakhi, they visit the Dera Tek Singh near the village. Dost Mohammad joins them. They enjoy the mela and the feast. Now people apprehend trouble. One day the relatives of Imam Din arrive in Lahore to stay with him. They are accommodated in Servant's quarters. Military trucks arrive in Pir Pindo to evacuate Muslims to safer places but the Muslim peasants are confused. They can't leave their home, property and harvest all of a sudden. Mr. Roger's mutilated body is found in the gutters. He was the Inspector General of Police. This news sends shivers among the people of Lahore. Children including Lenny find it a strange incident. Ayah loves Masseur's songs and Ice-Candy-Man loves Ayah for her blooming youth. Ice-Candy-Man is disturbed over the developments in the nearby areas. People start moving to safer places. Riots begin and this leads to confusion among people.

Communal riots spread from towns to small villages like Pir Pindo. Muslims and Sikhs become enemies thirsting for each other's blood. In Lahore, people begin to move to safer places. Hindus and Sikhs leave their houses behind and reach Amritsar. People hear announcements on All India Radio about the division of districts into India and Pakistan. The Parsee community in Pakistan is safe but still worried about its future. Muslim mobs attack Hindu houses. A mob stops outside Lenny's house and enquire about its Hindu servants. They ask about the Hindu Ayah Shanta but the cook Imam Din tells them about her fake departure. Ice-Candy-Man comes forward and asks

Lenny about Ayah. Out of innocence, Lenny discloses about her hiding. The angry Muslims drag her out of Lenny's house. This shocks Lenny and she repents for her truthfulness. A truth can also ruin one's life, Lenny discovers. Ice- Candy-Man takes her to Hira Mandi, the bazars of prostitutes. Ice- Candy-Man's mother was also a prostitute and Ice- Candy-Man becomes a pimp. He is fond of reciting Urdu poetry.

In Pir Pindo village, Sikh crowds attack the Muslim community. Imam Din's family is in trouble but nothing can be done. There is confusion. Muslims in Pir Pindo village get killed and their women gang-raped. Children are butchered mercilessly. Ranna, the playmate of Lenny in Pir Pindo is also wounded and buried under the heap of dead bodies. After some time, he safely moves to other place. His journey of hide and seek has been dealt with in detail by Bapsi Sidhwa. Sidhwa narrates Ranna's ordeal of escape in full fifteen pages. A little boy wounded and shocked, running for life finds suddenly himself alone in the world. Earlier, it had been decided that the women and girls of Pir Pindo would gather at Chaudhry's house and pour the kerosene oil around the house to burn themselves. It was also decided to hide some boys and men in a safer place but nothing worked. Muslims are killed, women molested and children butchered. Only Ranna escapes and finds shelter in a camp in Lahore. When he reached Lahore, he observed, "It is funny. As long as I had to look out for myself, I was all right. As soon as I felt safe, I fainted." Before reaching the camp, Ranna had a tough time: "There were too many ugly and abandoned children like him scavenging in the looted houses and the rubble of burnt-out buildings. His rags clinging to his wounds, straw sticking in his scalped skull, Ranna wandered through the lanes stealing chapatties and grain from houses strewn with dead bodies, rifling the corpses for anything he could use ... No one minded the semi-naked spectre as he looked in doors with his knowing, wide- set peasant eyes." Later, Ranna was herded into a refugee camp at Badami Baug. Then "chance united him with his Noni chachi and Iqbal chacha."

After the abduction of Ayah by the Muslim mob, Lenny remains sad and dejected. She is shocked over the betrayal by Ice-Candy-Man. She finds him to be a changed man. The day he saw the mutilated bodies of his Muslim brethren, he became a different person. His beloved Ayah becomes a Hindu for him. "They drag Ayah out. They drag her by her arms stretched taut, and her bare feet that want to move backwards— are

forced forward instead." This sight proves to be traumatic for poor Lenny and she repents for telling the truth to Ice-Candy-Man. She is guilt-driven: "For three days I stand in front of the bathroom mirror staring at my tongue. I hold the vile, truth—infected thing between my fingers and try to wrench it out: but slippery and slick as a fish it slips from my fingers and mocks me with its sharp rapier tip darting as poisonous as a snake. I punish it with rigorous scourings from my prickling toothbrush until it is sore and bleeding." This act of Lenny shows her sense of guilt. There has been Papoo's marriage but Lenny feels lonely without Ayah. By now Lenny has become mature both in body and mind.

Lenny's Godmother is an influential lady. She loves Lenny, she has established a network of espionage in Lahore. She has information from each corner of Lahore. One day, Lenny's cousin comes with a news that he has seen the Ayah in a taxi dressed like a film actress. After a few days, Lenny too sees Ayah in a car. Now she tells everyone about it and the search for Ayah begins. One Monday, Lenny visits her Godmother's house to tell her about the Ayah. She is told about the Ayah's husband's visit to Godmother's house in the evening. Lenny finds it difficult to wait for the evening. At six o'clock, the bridegroom of Ayah arrives. He is none but Ice-Candy-Man, now dressed in flowing white muslin. He recites a verse from Urdu poetry and greets everyone. He informs that she is married to him and has been accepted in the family of dancers. Godmother scolds him for illtreating Ayah and let her be raped. But he confesses: I am a man! Only dogs are faithful! If you want faith, let her marry a dog." But Godmother reacts wildly by saying: "You have permitted your wife to be disgraced! Destroyed her modesty! Lived off her womanhood! And you talk of princes and poets! You're the son of pigs and pimps!" Ice-Candy-Man weeps and cries but asserts that now he will make her happy by all means. Lenny has been listening to all this. She is angry with Ice-Candy-Man to such an extent that: 'There is a suffocating explosion within my eyes and head. A blinding blast of pity and disillusion and a savage rage. My sight is disoriented. I see Ice-Candy-Man float away in a bubble and dwindle to a grey speck in the aftermath of the blast.'

Ice-Candy-Man stands there with Jinnah—cap in his hand and "his ravaged face, caked with mud, has turned into a tragedian's mask. Repentance, grief and shock are compressed into the mould of his features." Then, Godmother plans a visit to see Ayah, now Mumtaz after her marriage. Lenny insists of going with her to Hira Mandi.

They reach Hira Mandi in atonga. They are led in a well-decorated room with the fragrance of sprinkled flowers. Ice-Candy-Man brings his Mumtaz, the Ayah dressed as a bride before them. Lenny is shocked to see sadness in Ayah's eyes. Lenny observes: "Where have the radiance and the animation gone? Can the soul be extracted from its living body? Her vacant eyes are bigger than ever: wide-opened with what they have seen and felt... She,buries her head in me and buries me in all her finery; and in the dark and musky attar of her perfume."

Leaving Ayah with Godmother 'and Lenny, Ice-Caiidy-Man goes to fetch tea. Now Ayah pleads that she will not live, here anymore and she must go. Godmother asks her to think over it again but Ayah (Mumtaz) insists of going back to her relatives in Amritsar. The visitors return after assuring Ayah that she will be rescued.

Lenny's cousin asks her about a Kotha and her impression of it. Lenny understands by Kotha to be a place of dancing girls. By now Lenny also understands that "the potent creative force generated within the Kotha that has metamorphosed Ice-Candy- Man not only into a Mogul Courtier, but into a Mandi poet. No wonder he founds poetry as if he popped out of his mother's womb spouting rhyming sentences."

After her visit to Hira Mandi, Godmother contacts the government machinery. One day a police party comes to Hira Mandi and takes Ayah away from.Ice-Candy-Man. She is put at the Recovered Women's Camp on Warris Road which is well-guarded. Ice-Candy-Man visits the camp to see his beloved but is beaten up badly by the Sikh sentry. Now Ice- Candy-Man has become a dejected, wandering lover searching for his lost love. He has acquired a new aspect: "that of a moonstruck fakir who has renounced the world for his beloved." Ice-Candy-Man places flowers for Ayah over the wall of the camp every morning and his "voice rises in sweet and clear song to shower Ayah with poems." This routine of offering of flowers and singing of love songs continues for many days.

One day, Lenny learns that Ayah has been shifted to Amritsar with her family there. Ice-Candy- Man has also followed her across the Wagah border into India to pursue his love. The novel endson this sad and tragic note. The novel contains a number of poignant scenes along with scenes of murder and violence. "The novel is a masterful work of history as it relates political events through the eyes of a child." *Ice- Candy-Man* has also been called as a multifaceted jewel of a novel. The novel deals with "the

bloody partition of India through the eyes of a girl Lenny growing up in a Parsee family, surviving through female bonding and rebellion."

Themes

Cracking

The theme of "cracking," which gives the novel its title, refers to the Partition of India into the two countries of India and Pakistan. As a child hearing conversations about this possibility, she imagines that the countries will be literally "cracked," "broken" and "split." She tries to get a straight answer from the adults. At one point she wonders: "Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then?" Of course, what happens is less literal than this, but in a certain sense, this theme of cracking is played out in all of the relationships the novel spends so much time describing. When former friends become enemies or mixed-religion groups start to stereotype each other—or, worse, attack each other—over religion, then the country really has cracked into various pieces.

Sexual awakening

One major theme in the novel is Lenny's slow realizations about the reality of adult sexuality. She learns about sex from watching Ayah and her admirers. She slowly becomes aware of the "involuntary female magnetism" that people like her possess in that they attract the people around them. Lenny is also aware of the sexuality of her mother, Godmother, and the other older women in her life. Lenny's earliest sexual experiences are with Cousin, who often crosses the line in talking about sex or even touching his much younger relative. Throughout the course of the novel, Lenny learns about the dark side of sexuality. When she learns about Ayah being forced into prostitution, she has terrible dreams: "That night I take all I've heard and learned and been shown to bed and by morning reel dizzily on a fleetingly glimpsed and terrible grown-up world." Seeing Ice-candy-man's actions towards Ayah, Lenny learns that sexuality and desire can also be a destructive force.

Sickness

Much of the first half of the novel focuses on Lenny's struggles with polio, which has

damaged her legs and feet and caused her to walk with a limp. Lenny is both worried about her health and also enjoys the attention that being sick wins her. She appears to enjoy visits to the doctor and the worrying of her family. When she gets her cast off, Lenny is worried that she will lose her limp and become just like everyone else. For her, being sick is a mark of being different. Some analyses of the novel by literary scholars compare this theme of Lenny's physical sickness to a metaphorical sickness in Indian society at this time. Just as Lenny's body is racked by polio, the communities described in the novel slowly become sick and dysfunctional as people begin fighting each other based on religion.

Individual and social trauma

Another important theme in the novel is how the trauma that individuals experience gets mirrored in the trauma of an entire society. For example, in the previous theme, we saw that Lenny's sickness often gets compared to a larger sickness in society. Similarly, Ice-candy-man's grief and anger over seeing Muslim civilians slaughtered in a train cause him to light fires and attack people from other religions in Lahore. Others who are subjected to his individual revenge might also then seek revenge. In this way, individual trauma quickly turns into societal trauma and snowballs into something increasingly violent and difficult to heal.

Social groups

The different groups that make up society is a repeated theme in the novel. In the beginning, people from various religions socialize with each other. An example is the diverse group of suitors who harmoniously gather around Ayah. There is also much discussion throughout the novel of how the English play different social groups against each other with the logic of "divide and conquer." The various groups also begin to mistrust each other, particularly Hindus and Sikhs. On the more individual level, Ayah's suitors began to see each other more as "tokens," or stereotypes of the groups they belong to, than people. By the time of Partition, the social groups are no longer able to live in harmony as India and Pakistan descend into violence.

Control over women

The novel shows the various ways that patriarchy, the system by which men have power and authority over women, affects their lives. This is shown to be an older and more general form of violence than Partition, but it is also part of how the inter-communal tensions between religious groups get acted out. For example, Papoo is married off to a man much older than her. She gets no choice in the marriage and is drugged by her family so that she will not protest. Similarly, during Partition different religious groups seek to get revenge against each other by raping or kidnapping the women of the other group. Lenny learns that even after some of these women are recovered, their families do not want them back. Godmother tells her that this is because some men “can’t stand their women being touched by other men.” Lenny finds this unfair that women are seen as property. She is also faced with the reality of how society controls women when Ice-candy-man kidnaps Ayah. When the people around her describe this as “fate,” Lenny reflects “I’ve seen Ayah carried away—and it had less to do with fate than with the will of men.” In the end, Ayah refuses to see her as damaged. After she is freed, she decides to go across the border to her family in India—whether or not they accept her.

Memory

Memory is shown to be unreliable in the novel. The story is narrated by Lenny from years after the events. When describing the fires in Lahore, she describes them as lasting for months though she knows this cannot be true: “But in my memory it is branded over an inordinate length of time: memory demands poetic license.” The theme of memory also comes up when Lenny thinks about how Ranna has gotten over his trauma of nearly being killed by a Sikh mob and then escaping into Pakistan. She looks up to Ranna because he is able to accept his loss by letting his memories of the trauma go. In contrast, Lenny’s refusal to forget makes her a more bitter person: “The small bitterness and grudges I tend to nurse make me feel ashamed of myself. Ranna’s ready ability to forgive a past none of us could control keeps him whole.” In this sense, being able to misremember events or forget them can actually be a healthy thing. To forgive partly relies on forgetting.

Honesty

Lenny is disturbed by her inability to be dishonest. She hates the fact that she cannot get away with anything. Even if she tries to do something sneaky, she eventually admits it to her family. For example, she experiences this when she steals Rosy's jars. Later, Lenny's honesty has even more dire effects. When the mob comes to the Sethi family's house looking for Ayah, Lenny tells Ice-candy- man where she is. This allows him to kidnap her. She curses her own honesty after this event and blames herself for Ayah's kidnapping: "I am the monkey-man's performing monkey, the trained circus elephant, the snake-man's charmed cobra, an animal with conditioned reflexes that cannot lie..." Honesty becomes a curse for Lenny and her tongue a "vile, truth-infected thing."

THE HOUSE GUN

By

Nadine Gordimer

Nadine Gordimer

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) was a South African writer, political activist, and recipient of the 1991 Nobel Prize in Literature. She was recognized as a woman "who through her magnificent epic writing has – in the words of Alfred Nobel – been of very great benefit to humanity".

Gordimer's writing dealt with moral and racial issues, particularly apartheid in South Africa. Under that regime, works such as *Burger's Daughter* and *July's People* were banned. She was active in the anti-apartheid movement, joining the African National Congress during the days when the organization was banned. She was also active in HIV/AIDS causes.

Nadine Gordimer was a Nobel Prize winner whose novels include the Booker Prize-winning *The Conservationist*, Commonwealth Writers' Prize-winning *The Pickup*, and *No Time Like the Present*. Gordimer's short story collections include *Loot* and *Jump and Other Stories*. She also published literary and political essay collections such as *Living in Hope and History*.

Gordimer was a vice president of PEN International and an executive member of the Congress of South African Writers. She was a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in Great Britain and a Commandeur of l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France).

Apartheid in South Africa is officially over, but the violence that underpinned the white regime for nearly 50 years lives on. Today, however, it is as likely to ravage the lives of middle-class whites as any other citizen.

The House Gun

Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*, a story of a white, middle-class family changed forever by violence, doesn't attempt to create an allegory of life in South Africa today. But in her unfolding of this private tragedy, all the themes of anger, guilt, truth and reconciliation that dominate the public scene are just as centrally located.

The family are the Lindgards. Harald and Claudia Lindgard are 'liberal' whites - he a senior insurance executive involved in the housing sector, she a doctor who for years has worked one day a week at a clinic that provides the only health services available to poor blacks. Their only child is 20-something Duncan, an architect, involved in a volatile relationship with a suicidal young woman, Natalie.

One unremarkable evening, a messenger comes to turn Harald and Claudia's calm, protected life inside out. The messenger is from Duncan's household where he lives communally with a handful of young white and black men. Among the things they share is a gun that was "always somewhere about, no use having it for protection if when the time came no one would remember where it was safely stashed away."

Duncan, they are told, has been arrested for using that gun to murder one of his housemates.

Although a murder is at the heart of the story, there is no who-dun-it mystery. There is never any doubt that Duncan pulled the trigger. There is not even a mystery about Duncan's motive, although that reveals itself more slowly. But there is a mystery for

the Lindgards who cannot understand how it is that their intelligent and caring son can be brought to kill another human being.

Overnight, Harald and Claudia become consumed by this question. During the pre-trial period, Harald and Claudia seek the truth in their memories. They examine the choices they made for their son, hoping to identify what combination of influences and events made him a killer. They sent him to a boarding school where a school mate subsequently killed himself. Was their reaction - a lunch and assurances of their love and support - inadequate? They didn't advise him to flee his country to avoid two-years of military service. He didn't see combat, but was his training as a soldier a contributing factor?

But as Harald and Claudia turn over the past, other choices they have made also surface, posing much larger questions of guilt. As an insurance executive, Harald had accepted without questioning that housing for blacks was no business of his.

Their housing was the responsibility of the government, and Harald's sympathies for the victims of the injustices he knew existed led him to do no more than vote against a "government that could have done more." Claudia, who "worked at clinics to staunch the wounds racism gashed" never risked her own safety "by offering asylum when she had deduced they were activists on the run from the police, nor by acting as the kind of conduit between revolutionaries her to-and-fro in communities would have made possible."

In their inaction and refusal to take responsibility, they have been complicit in creating a society where people "breathed violence along with cigarette smoke."

In the midst of their pain and confusion, the Lindgards find a temporary refuge in the Motsamai family. Hamilton Motsamai becomes their son's Senior Counsel after he is recommended to the Lindgards, by a knowledgeable white friend of Harald's, as "eminently capable" of saving Duncan from a lengthy prison sentence or worse.

Ironically, the Lindgards find comfort and support among people who owe them the

least. Motsamai becomes the friend and lawyer who supports Duncan and his parents through a harrowing and unfamiliar process. In his discussions with the jailed Duncan, he plays "father when father cannot" and for Harald and Claudia he is the "man who brings from the Other Side the understanding of people in trouble ..." In a visit to his home, Harald and Claudia meet Motsamai's family - a working-class brother-in-law, someone's sister, a professor friend, his wife and children. They display a vitality and awareness of the world around them that is in sharp contrast to the Lindgard's much more homogeneous and bland lives.

In the same manner, Khulu Dladla, Duncan's gay black housemate, becomes Harald and Claudia's proxy son who conveys Messages to them from Duncan that Duncan can't bring himself to relate.

The relationships between black South Africans and the Lindgards suggest that Gordimer sees the salvation of the country depending on what they can reconcile to. When Afrikaners appear, and there are only two Afrikaner characters in the book, there is a sense of an irrelevant people who have little to contribute to the future. Motsamai sums them up in commenting on the job of warder. The 'chaps' who fill the job of warder understand nothing, he says, and the job itself is "sheltered employment for retarded sons of the Boere."

Society seeks the truth of Duncan's crime in the courtroom. Although Duncan is guilty, the circumstances of the killing raise doubt of his intent and, therefore, of whether he will come out of prison a middle-aged man or a relatively young one. Motsamai argues that it was unendurable provocation and the proximity of the gun, lying on a nearby table through carelessness and coincidence, that drove Duncan to kill. Duncan's future depends on whether or not the judges believe that he did not intend to kill his friend.

It is Motsamai, whose people have suffered the most under apartheid, who reminds the court that incarceration is not meant to punish but to rehabilitate. It should not be used

to identify a scapegoat for society's ills, he says, a scapegoat "whose punishment therefore must be harsh and heavy enough to deal with collective guilt."

In the end, the truth is established. Duncan has been sentenced. But the issues of truth and guilt are not put to rest. Duncan has committed a horrible crime, and he will pay. But his sentence has been tempered by understanding and mercy from the court and he will not pay with his life. But there is no sense of a chapter closing.

Harald hears in the public debate over abolishing the death penalty that there are many for whom execution is "the only reconciliation there is ...". Eventually Duncan will leave prison, but Harald knows that Duncan "shall have this will to his death surrounding him as long as he lives."

In that grim view Gordimer invites a comparison. If one unplanned death, carried out in a moment of tumultuous emotion, can evoke such a determination not to forgive, what must be the result of apartheid's routine torture and murders of tens of thousands over the years? The state may be able to suspend punishment but only the individual can forgive. Each South African must make their own peace with their country's history. And because it is an individual choice, South Africa will always contain in it those who will never agree to be reconciled.

Although the author claims that this is not a detective novel, it has many of the appeals of a conventional "whodunit," particularly in the search for a reason why Duncan Lingard killed his friend, Carl Jespersen.

Duncan's parents spend much of the novel in recollection and introspection, trying to discover some clue from the past that could explain their son's crime. Their agonies of self-doubt, the challenges to their hitherto safe beliefs, the shifts in perception that result from Duncan's action form much of the material of the book. However, it is the black lawyer, Hamilton Motsamai, who discovers the circumstances and events that led to the shooting: Duncan's brief homosexual affair with Jespersen; his

desperate love for Natalie, a girl he saved from suicide; his finding Natalie and Jespersen having sex. Unfortunately, these circumstances shed no light on the mystery; they only deepen it.

In their search for causes, the Lingards confront the possible effects of South Africa's violent history, Duncan's mental instability, the politics of race, and perhaps above all, the easy availability of firearms. The intersection of the personal and the political has always been a part of Nadine Gordimer's fiction, but in *THE HOUSE GUN* it takes a new and more subtle twist. The apolitical Lingards, formerly safe in their upper middle class comfort, are forced to see the world, the news, the justice system, and the meaning of guilt and innocence in wholly new ways.

The novel provides no easy answers to the questions and dilemmas it poses, but the similarities between South Africa and America make this book compelling. Moreover, at the core of this complex but highly readable novel is the subject of much great fiction: the mysteries of the human heart, particularly the forces that drive civilized people to violence. For reasons Duncan himself cannot fully comprehend, "Violence is a repetition we don't seem able to break "

HEART OF DARKNESS

Joseph Conrad

Joseph Conrad, English novelist and short-story writer of Polish descent, whose works include the novels *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), and *The Secret Agent* (1907) and "Heart of Darkness" (1902). During his lifetime Conrad was admired for the richness of his prose and his renderings of dangerous life at sea and in exotic places. But his initial reputation as a masterful teller of colourful adventures of the sea masked his fascination with the individual when faced with nature's invariable unconcern, man's frequent malevolence, and his inner battles with good and evil. To Conrad, the sea meant above all the tragedy of loneliness. A writer of complex skill and striking insight, but above all of an intensely personal vision, he has been increasingly regarded as one of the greatest English novelists.

Heart of Darkness centers around Marlow, an introspective sailor, and his journey up

the Congo River to meet Kurtz, reputed to be an idealistic man of great abilities. Marlow takes a job as a riverboat captain with the Company, a Belgian concern organized to trade in the Congo. As he travels to Africa and then up the Congo, Marlow encounters widespread inefficiency and brutality in the Company's stations. The native inhabitants of the region have been forced into the Company's service, and they suffer terribly from overwork and ill treatment at the hands of the Company's agents. The cruelty and squalor of imperial enterprise contrasts sharply with the impassive and majestic jungle that surrounds the white man's settlements, making them appear to be tiny islands amidst a vast darkness.

Marlow arrives at the Central Station, run by the general manager, an unwholesome, conspiratorial character. He finds that his steamship has been sunk and spends several months waiting for parts to repair it. His interest in Kurtz grows during this period. The manager and his favorite, the brickmaker, seem to fear Kurtz as a threat to their position. Kurtz is rumored to be ill, making the delays in repairing the ship all the more costly. Marlow eventually gets the parts he needs to repair his ship, and he and the manager set out with a few agents (whom Marlow calls pilgrims because of their strange habit of carrying long, wooden staves wherever they go) and a crew of cannibals on a long, difficult voyage up the river. The dense jungle and the oppressive silence make everyone aboard a little jumpy, and the occasional glimpse of a native village or the sound of drums works the pilgrims into frenzy.

Marlow and his crew come across a hut with stacked firewood, together with a note saying that the wood is for them but that they should approach cautiously. Shortly after the steamer has taken on the firewood, it is surrounded by a dense fog. When the fog clears, the ship is attacked by an unseen band of natives, who fire arrows from the safety of the forest. The African helmsman is killed before Marlow frightens the natives away with the ship's steam whistle. Not long after, Marlow and his companions arrive at Kurtz's Inner Station, expecting to find him dead, but a half-crazed Russian trader, who meets them as they come ashore, assures them that everything is fine and informs them that he is the one who left the wood. The Russian claims that Kurtz has enlarged his mind and cannot be subjected to the same moral

judgments as normal people. Apparently, Kurtz has established himself as a god with the natives and has gone on brutal raids in the surrounding territory in search of ivory. The collection of severed heads adorning the fence posts around the station attests to his “methods.” The pilgrims bring Kurtz out of the station-house on a stretcher, and a large group of native warriors pours out of the forest and surrounds them. Kurtz speaks to them, and the natives disappear into the woods.

The manager brings Kurtz, who is quite ill, aboard the steamer. A beautiful native woman, apparently Kurtz’s mistress, appears on the shore and stares out at the ship. The Russian implies that she is somehow involved with Kurtz and has caused trouble before through her influence over him. The Russian reveals to Marlow, after swearing him to secrecy, that Kurtz had ordered the attack on the steamer to make them believe he was dead in order that they might turn back and leave him to his plans. The Russian then leaves by canoe, fearing the displeasure of the manager. Kurtz disappears in the night, and Marlow goes out in search of him, finding him crawling on all fours toward the native camp. Marlow stops him and convinces him to return to the ship. They set off down the river the next morning, but Kurtz’s health is failing fast.

Marlow listens to Kurtz talk while he pilots the ship, and Kurtz entrusts Marlow with a packet of personal documents, including an eloquent pamphlet on civilizing the savages which ends with a scrawled message that says, “Exterminate all the brutes!” The steamer breaks down, and they have to stop for repairs. Kurtz dies, uttering his last words—“The horror! The horror!”—in the presence of the confused Marlow. Marlow falls ill soon after and barely survives. Eventually he returns to Europe and goes to see Kurtz’s Intended (his fiancée). She is still in mourning, even though it has been over a year since Kurtz’s death, and she praises him as a paragon of virtue and achievement. She asks what his last words were, but Marlow cannot bring himself to shatter her illusions with the truth. Instead, he tells her that Kurtz’s last word was her name.

Heart of Darkness follows one man's nightmarish journey into the interior of Africa. No one's going to get eaten by a lion. It all takes place in the past, because what we

have here is a story. Aboard a British ship called the Nellie, three men listen to a dude named Marlow recount his journey into Africa as an agent for the Company, a Belgian ivory trading firm. Along the way, he witnesses brutality and hate between colonizers and the native African people, becomes entangled in a power struggle within the Company, and finally learns the truth about the mysterious Kurtz, a mad agent who has become both a god and a prisoner of the "native Africans."

After "rescuing" Kurtz from the native African people, Marlow watches in horror as Kurtz succumbs to madness, disease, and finally death. In the end, Marlow decides to support Kurtz rather than his company, which is possibly morally dubious and definitely a bad career move. The novel closes with Marlow's guilt-ridden visit to Kurtz's fiancée to return the man's personal letters, and, on that ambiguous note, we end.

Critical Analysis

Considered one of the greatest novelists in English, Joseph Conrad (born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski), Conrad was actually of Polish descent. Although he did not fluently speak English until his twenties, Conrad nonetheless excelled at prose and the written English language, with many of his works having been adapted into film. English was in fact his third language, Polish and French being the first two languages he learned. Conrad led a harsh life as a child (Conover), and when he was only three, his father was imprisoned in Warsaw for his supposed revolutionary political affiliations (Conover) until the family was exiled to northern Russia in 1861 (Liukkonen). In 1869, both of Conrad's parents passed away due to tuberculosis, and he was sent to live with his uncle Tadeusz in Switzerland. While living with his uncle, Conrad persuaded his uncle to let him go to sea (Liukkonen), where his many adventures and journeys laid the foundation for most of his works, which are mostly sea-faring stories. In 1890 he sailed up the Congo River, a journey that provided much of the material for his most notable and highly regarded work *Heart of Darkness*.

During his time in the Congo, Conrad experienced extreme physical and mental stresses, which eventually affected his health for the rest of his life. Resettling in London, Conrad went into exile for various reasons including political (Conover). Ending his mariner career that spanned more than twenty years of sea-faring experiences, Conrad was able to draw from there intricate characters and stories which spoke of the human condition, 83

and the complexities of the inner psyche. One such important literary work titled *Lord Jim*, in which Jim, a young British seaman accompanies his captain and other crew members in abandoning the passengers of their ship. Later hounded by his misdeed, Jim settles at a remote island where the natives title him “Tuan” or “Lord”. While there he protects the villagers from bandits and a local corrupt chief. *Lord Jim* speaks of the rise and fall of the human spirit, and the honor and redemption inherent in noble deeds.

These themes are present throughout Conrad’s stories, and in *Heart of Darkness* he also makes heavy use of colors, primarily white and black, and references to light and dark, often intermingling the socially accepted view of each one respectively. Conrad also deals with the issues surrounding imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*, yet there is also a larger underlying issue of race and equality, or lack thereof, within the overall story.

The story revolves mainly around Marlow, and his journey through the Congo River to meet Kurtz, purported to be a man of great abilities. In his job as a riverboat captain with a Belgian Company organized for trade within Africa, Marlow encounters much brutality against the natives within in the Company’s settlements. The inhabitants of the region have been pushed into forced labor, and they suffer terribly from overwork and ill treatment in the hands of the Company’s agents. The cruelty of the imperial enterprise contrasts sharply with majestic and massive Congo jungle that surrounds the white men’s stations, causing them to appear like small islands amongst the vast darkness of Africa. Amidst problems with the oppressed natives, Marlow manages to survive his time in the Congo, but because of the extreme conditions and harsh living in the area at the time, he returns home with ill health.

The events depicted in *Heart of Darkness* truly could have occurred anywhere, but Conrad chose the Congo for the feeling and impact of the climate, the individuals involved, and the very way of life there. The title itself reflects the “heart of darkness” within men, who can sometimes use others for their own benefit and profit, casting away human life as if it had no value. The title may also refer to the Congo itself, due to the darkness and uncharted territory and mysteries that lurked within at that time. Conrad creates a build-up of tension and mysteriousness to the plot, which causes one to wonder what may happen next, and even though nothing overly climactic occurs, each individual event adds to the foreboding of the story. Deaths and other “dark” happenings are spoken

of, and Conrad's technique in describing these events conveys the darkness and hopelessness of the entire situation.

The story portrays darkness as emanating from the depths of the jungle; it fills men with evil and allows them to act upon it. The main example of this darkness is within the station manager Kurtz, who performs such debauchery in the jungles that he eventually becomes ill and dies. The character of Kurtz could be considered a catalyst for change, and the symbol for the Europeans' failure in the Congo. Unaware of his own evil, Kurtz is unable to fight the darkness within. There is a question of good and evil that is addressed within *Heart of Darkness*; the motifs of "light" and "dark" in which the darkness in Africa is separate from its "blackness", and the "whiteness" in Europe being far removed from the goodness of light.

In a sense, light and dark are polarized; Light represents the falsehoods and corruption in the world symbolized by the white man, whereas dark is a symbol for truth, while the dark natives show the pureness and innocence of humanity. Though there is some ambiguity of whether the title "*Heart of Darkness*" refers directly to Kurtz' dark heart, or to the darkness of the jungle's interior, the latter is more likely, due to the extent of abusive and evil actions portrayed by all the white men, which only grows in intensity with their close proximity to the center of the jungle. These settings and symbols help to portray the theme of universal darkness that Conrad alludes to. Conrad's descriptive passages about the "interminable waterways" of the Congo and the Thames River show the connection between humanity and darkness. Each river flows into each other, and "lead into a heart of immense darkness". This shows that all of humanity is connected through the heart of darkness and the truth.

Ultimately *Heart of Darkness* is a story of the pitfalls and perils of greed, lust, and the corruption of ideals and values by the darkness that dwells within all of mankind. It tells of the madness that the greed for riches or power can create within the heart and mind, and that even the best of intentions can become twisted into something evil and oppressive.

Themes

Groupthink and Stock Characters

This novella is unusual in that the author does not name most of the characters in his book, other than assigning them titles that describe their larger organizational goals. It is not quite an allegory, while he does allow them some individual characteristics of speech and dress, but they are for the most part stand-ins for larger groups. The obvious exception is Marlow, and his reaction against the colonial structures supported by people with names like “the Manager” and “the Lawyer” place him slightly outside this system. Groupthink is evident in named groups like the pilgrims and the natives. These groups have a few outstanding members, such as the native woman of arresting beauty or the red-haired pilgrim drunk with bloodthirstiness, but they mostly move together, make the same decisions, and have the same intentions. Conrad critiques such patterns, in which individual in a society think like other members of their group without stopping to think for themselves. Although Marlow is by no means a heroic character, Conrad does illustrate the need for individual thought by singling him out.

Primitivism

As the crew make their way up the river, they are traveling into the “heart of darkness.” The contradiction, however, is that Marlow also feels as if he were traveling back in time. When Conrad wrote this story, scientists were learning that Africa is the seat of human civilization, and this knowledge is reflected in the fact that the trees are (almost prehistorically) enormous on the route down the river. The paradox of the novel, however, is that by traveling backwards in time, the crew do not move closer to the innocence and purity of the “noble savage” but farther away from it. Words like “pestilent” and “sordid” are used again and again to describe the natives and their land. Conrad seems to claim that the Christian belief that prehistory was untouched by obscurity or evil

is a fallacy. Instead, there is “the horror.” In contrast, it seems, is the more advanced civilization of the colonizers and visitors.

Uncertainty

Nothing in this novella is described in very concrete terms. Shores are hazy. Land looks like a spine sticking out from a man’s back but is not described in topographical terms. Marlow is obsessed with Kurtz before he even meets him, without a clear idea why. A sense of danger pervades the entire trip, and it is mostly dictated by uncertainty. The natives do not seem inherently threatening. On one occasion, they let fly a series of arrows, but these even look ineffectual to Marlow. They are threatening because they might be poisoned. Similarly, Marlow has no clear idea of what the natives might do to him if Kurtz gave them free rein, and it is possible that this uncertainty increases his fear. Kurtz himself is an uncertain figure, ruled as he is by two separate impulses, the noble and the destructive. At the beginning of the novella, the reader perceives that the former is his dominant (or only) characteristic. But with vicious scrawlings on his manuscript and his ruthlessness in extracting ivory from the land, Kurtz proves himself the latter. Marlow’s adherence to Kurtz until the end confuses the matter; one could judge him one way or the other. The idea of “darkness” expresses the theme of uncertainty in the novella.

Imperial Authority

Whatever the conditions in Africa may be, all of the characters agree that they are different from those of Europe. There is a feeling of anything-goes vigilantism that shifts the balance of power from the stewards in a “civilized” state (police, doctors, bureaucrats) to whoever is most threatening. Kurtz is physically quite a weak man, but he maintains enormous sway over the native population through his understanding of their language and his cultural and communication skills. He exploits their appreciation of him as an Other. Marlow’s men use a much more simple means of gaining authority, namely, firearms. This is the tragedy of imperialism in that the arrival of the white man heralds a new order, but in the creation of that order, they retain the tools and the

authority. Black men in this book first appear as members of a chain gang, and they gain little power after that scene.

Religion

Although there is controversy over whether Conrad is critiquing colonialism or not, it is clear that he is critiquing religion. The two groups in the novel, the pilgrims and the natives, are linked by having religious beliefs, and the pilgrims seem at least as bloodthirsty as the natives. The rite in the woods that Marlow describes seems alien but certainly no more dangerous than the ambush. One of the seemingly admirable characteristics of Kurtz, as presented by Conrad, is that he seems just as compelled by African religion as by Christianity but seems beholden to neither. Marlow genuinely admires his ability to independently critique religions. He may not agree with Kurtz's evaluation, but he respects Kurtz's ability to have his own opinions in the face of the various religious traditions he encounters.

Jewelry

Jewelry is a major presence in *Heart of Darkness*. To begin with, it is the main reason for the presence of the colonists in Africa: they are there to strip the country of its ivory. There is a play on colors between the black people and this white valuable good. The most prestigious member of the African community and one of the only characters to be afforded individual characteristics by Conrad is the woman who is presumably Kurtz's mistress. Her first appearance is impressive; she is covered in bangles and other "barbarous ornaments." Her aspect has both attractiveness and ferocity, and she is the only character in the novella who wears jewelry. Despite it being the *raison d'être* of the novella, the other characters have little interest in jewelry, showing an almost Marxist detachment from the good they harvest.

Illness

Illness is a major factor in this novella. It appears in physical and mental forms. Marlow is hired to replace a man who committed suicide, and another instance of suicide is announced by a somber Swedish man. The first thing that Marlow does upon being hired is go to the doctor, who checks both his mental and physical health and provides a very gloomy prognosis. The specter of ill health, or of one's body not standing up to the conditions, is a constant specter in the novella. The mental health issue is particular to *Heart of Darkness*, while the issue of wider health continues in the tradition of Victorian novels, in which men often travel to Africa only to come down with exotic diseases. In the end, it seems that Marlow is more mentally than physically taxed, while Kurtz is clearly both.

Character List

Marlow

The protagonist and main narrator of the story, he stumbles into Africa looking to sail a steamboat and finds much more. He possesses a strong interest in the past. He also has a good work ethic; he views working hard as a means of achieving sanity. In many respects, the worldview of Marlow is that of a typical European. Still, he is intended to be a versatile character, one of the few who does not belong to a distinct class, and he thus can relate to different kinds of people with more ease than his peers.

Kurtz

He is in charge of the most productive ivory station in the Congo. Hailed universally for his genius and eloquence, Kurtz becomes the focus of Marlow's journey into Africa. He is the unique victim of colonization; the wilderness captures him and he turns his back on the people and customs that were once a part of him.

Manager

Marlow's direct supervisor, he is a hard, greedy man who values power and money above all else. Yet he masks this crudeness behind a civilized demeanor. He seems to have an ability to outlive those around him. The Manager would like nothing more than to surpass Kurtz in the ivory trade and see him dead, so that he would no longer interfere with the competitive trade. He makes people uneasy, and the only explanation Marlow offers is that he is "hollow."

Brickmaker

He is the so-called first agent, who is the Manager's pet and spy. He never actually makes bricks; supposedly he is waiting for the delivery of an essential ingredient. The Brickmaker is unlikable, cunning, and contemptible. His behavior flouts Marlow's work ethic.

Russian

Kurtz's devoted companion, he is an idealistic explorer who has wandered to the Congo on a Dutch ship and has been caught in the web of Kurtz's obsessive ivory hunt. He is so young that it is uncertain whether or not he fully understands what he is doing in Africa. He is more or less attracted to the glamor of adventure. His unwavering support of Kurtz makes him humble and admirable.

Natives

They are a collective presence throughout the story. They are never described as individuals.

Chief Accountant

A top official in the main station, he befriends Marlow when he first arrives in Africa. He is a cruel man but ironically also the picture of the "civilized European." Marlow admires his work habits, but this admiration is directed toward his flawless appearance rather than his personality.

Marlow's aunt

She is the connection to the Company in which Marlow receives a position. She appears to be the only female contact Marlow has in his life, and she fully supports the vision of colonialism laid out in Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden."

Kurtz's fiancée

An unnamed woman who only appears in the last few pages of the novel, she is the symbol of a life that Kurtz leaves behind when he arrives in the Congo. She is pure and lives in a dream world built around who she believes Kurtz is. Her impressions of him are so disparate from what the reader observes that we marvel at the change that evidently has come about in Kurtz.

Helmsman

He is responsible for steering Marlow's ship. He is not very experienced and seems unable to make informed decisions under pressure.

Pilgrims

The collective white presence in the story, they accompany Marlow and the Manager on the voyage to Kurtz's station. They exist in opposition to the natives and the cannibals, and their fear makes it apparent that they are unwilling to relinquish preconceived notions about the natives.

Cannibals

They are a specific section of the native presence. They are the grunt crew of Marlow's ship, and they are the only group of natives who ever voice any kind of statement or opinion to the whites. Marlow is surprised at their tranquil manner, and he seems to respect them.

References:

1. <https://literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Literariness.org-Sidhwa-Bapsi-Cracking-India.pdf>
2. <https://www.gradesaver.com/cracking-india>
3. Reading Group Guide, *The House Gun* by Nadine Gordimer, Bookreporter.com
4. David Medalie, "The Context of the Awful Event': Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, v.25, n.4 (December 1999), pp. 633–644.
5. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Heart-of-Darkness>
6. <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/heart-of-darkness/plot-analysis/>

UNIT – V - New Literatures in English – SHSA5104

SO LONG A LETTER

Mariama Bâ

Mariama Bâ was born in 1929 in Dakar, Senegal, then part of French West Africa. She grew up Muslim, attending Koranic school from a young age, and her family was relatively wealthy. Her father served as Minister of Health under the French colonial regime and went on to become one of the first Ministers of State after Senegalese independence. Her mother died when Bâ was young, and so she was raised mostly by her grandparents. Against their wishes she attended college, where she studied law. Upon graduating she became a schoolteacher. Bâ was an outspoken, politically active feminist. In the years leading up to and following Senegalese independence, she wrote essays against French assimilationist policies, joined a number of women's rights advocacy groups, and penned newspaper articles on education, genital mutilation, and the unequal treatment of women in Senegalese society. She had nine children, whom she raised more or less single-handedly after divorcing her husband. *So Long a Letter* (1979) was her first novel. Written in French, it was published to immediate literary acclaim. In 1981 the book won the first ever Noma Award for Publishing in Africa, and it went on to become one of the first novels by an African woman to gain international attention. Bâ, whose health had been declining for years, died later that year. Her second novel, *A Scarlet Song* (1981), was published posthumously.

So Long a Letter

With this work of fiction, Senegalese writer Mariama Bâ explores the inequalities between men and women in Senegal, Islam, and African society. Bâ creates a premise of a fictional letter from Ramatoulaye, a schoolteacher in Senegal, to her good friend Aissatou, now in America. Ramatoulaye, a recent widow, is sequestered in mourning for four months and 10 ten days, as is the custom when a woman's husband dies. During this time, she reminisces about hers and Aissatou's lives as students, then later adapting to their roles as wives. She pensively examines the disintegration of both their marriages using introspection and striving to look backward with equanimity.

Ramatoulaye and Aissatou grew into adulthood at a time when women's liberation was gaining momentum across the globe. It was also a time of newly-acquired

independence in Senegal and the struggle to find a fresh societal model in a modern world. Ramatoulaye observed: “It was the privilege of our generation to be the link between two periods in our history, one of domination, the other of independence.”

The two friends became teachers, contributing to the new landscape of education for girls and boys, rich and poor alike. They were cutting edge feminists and the men they married were modern in their views. Mawdo Bâ, suitor to Aissatou and a caring doctor, married Aissatou, a goldsmith’s daughter, despite Mawdo’s noble heritage. Ramatoulaye did not renounce her religion or customs and she still practiced many cultural traditions, yet she moved forward as a working mother and wife. Her husband Modou Fall wanted to help shape the country’s future, and his work as a lawyer representing trade unions had an impact on governmental decisions.

Trouble befell the marriages that were consummated over twenty years earlier. First, Aissatou’s husband wed a second wife but hoped to continue to live primarily with his first wife. Aissatou would not settle for this and divorced him. Three years later, when Modou Fall took a second wife, he abandoned Ramatoulaye and her twelve children. Ramatoulaye decided to stay legally married, though Modou never set foot in their house again.

Five years after Modou’s betrayal, he had a heart attack and his friend Mawdo was unable to revive him. The mourning and burial of Modou was carried out according to tradition, and Ramatoulaye and her co-wife mourned together in one house as people visited to pay their respects. Ramatoulaye was then house-bound for the rest of her mourning period. It was during this time she found a way to make peace with the past and to embrace the future.

So Long a Letter recounts two different paths taken by Senegalese women whose choices are extremely limited. The novel discusses the stories of lifelong friends Ramatoulaye (who is writing the letter) and Aissatou and the ways that their relationships with men are both similar and different.

Ramatoulaye ends up marrying Moudou Fall, who eventually becomes enamoured with their daughter's young friend Binetou. Moudou takes Binetou as his second wife, and Ramatoulaye is forced to choose divorce or living as a co-wife. Ramatoulaye decides to stay with Moudou, and she explains in her letter how she finds a way of surviving, working, and raising her children in this difficult situation.

Aissatou, on the other hand, marries Mawdo. Mawdo eventually gives in to pressure

from his family to take a second wife. Contrasting with Ramatoulaye's decision, Aissatou divorces her husband, refusing to take part in this oppressive patriarchal tradition of co-wives.

Binetou, Moudou's second wife, also has an interesting and important story in this book. We learn that Binetou comes from an extremely poor family, and that, because her family needs the financial support, she also has little choice in marrying Moudou.

The novel ends with Ramatoulaye reflecting on modernity and the changing world. She reflects on how her children's paths are even more complicated, and perhaps even more hopeful, than hers and Aissatou's. Ultimately, *So Long a Letter* is about women living in a world transitioning between old religious cultures and the new cultures of globalization and feminism. *So Long A Letter*, a work of fiction by Mariama Ba, is set in Dakar, Senegal, where the main character Ramatoulaye writes a letter to her friend, Aissatou, who lives in America. Although Ramatoulaye is a school teacher in Senegal, she is homebound for four months and ten days after her husband dies, as is the custom in her country.

Through the letter the main character conveys her concerns about the inequalities between men and women in their society. The two women grew up in an era when women were attempting to gain their equality in society in a newly global setting. She reminisces about how the women were influenced by this upbringing as she remained in Senegal, which was gaining its own independence, and how her friend left for America. This one letter encompasses the many trials and tribulations that the women experienced through marriage, betrayal, and the deaths of spouses. Ultimately, the letter addresses the inequalities that face women in African, Islamic, and Senegalese societies.

Themes

Marriage

One of the major themes in the novel is marriage. Because the novel is set in an Islamic country, marriage is seen as being something every woman must do in her life. The main character of the novel gets married as well but the union is not a happy one as she is later replaced by a much younger wife. Thus, Ramatoulaye finds herself in the situation of having to learn how to take care of herself and of her children without the help or presence of a man in her life. For her, marriage does not mean protection; rather, it is a painful experience she has to go through in order to survive. But the failed marriages in this novel are not necessarily perceived as being a negative

thing; they are also a way through which a person can grow and better themselves.

Religious tradition

Another theme analyzed in the novel is the idea of Islamic tradition and how it affects a person's life. While Ramatoulaye is a progressive woman in the sense that she wants freedom and wants to be independent, she still submits to the Islamic laws she is exposed to. Even though her husband took a second wife, Ramatoulaye still feels like it is her duty to take care of his funeral and of everything that has to do with her late husband's life. This proves that Islam influenced her life greatly and while she prides herself on being a feminist, she still remains governed by the laws she was taught to respect all her life.

Motherhood

Another theme in the novel is the idea of motherhood. In Islam, women are expected to remain pregnant and have as many children as possible. Ramatoulaye, for example, had 12 children with her husband. In her opinion, this should have been enough to make her husband stay by her side, but this proved to be wrong. Despite this, Ramatoulaye still loved her children and did everything she could to make sure that they are well raised and that they have everything they need. For Ramatoulaye, the relationship she had with her children was more important than anything else and she was willing to do everything in her power to keep them safe and to make them happy.

Romantic Love vs. Friendship

Throughout the novel, Ramatoulaye must navigate the love she has for her husband and the love she has for her best friend. Despite the fact that traditionally, both of them should be happily married, both Ramatoulaye and Aissatou find that marriage does not fulfill all of their needs, and that romantic love often proves to be insufficient for living a full life. Over the course of their lives, they learn that their permanent friendship is stronger than their temporary marriages. At the end of the novel, Ramatoulaye is ready to explore happiness through the friendships she's built with others, choosing not to

find her fulfillment through a man or a romantic relationship—a significant rebellion.

Education

Education is at the center of most of the character's lives in this novel. Modou and Ramatoulaye meet while in school, as do Aissatou and Ramatoulaye. Ramatoulaye and Aissatou are both teachers and are determined to give their children excellent educations as well. In the text, as well as in mid-20th century Senegal more generally, education is one of the most reliable ways to access social mobility. More than that, education is a way for women to move forward in society and for people who are not considered as "high class" as others, like Aissatou, to gain more sociopolitical power. Finally, education represents a potential for enlightenment, not just for individuals, but for the entire country.

Independence

Multiple parties in the novel deal with fighting for and managing independence. On a national level, *So Long a Letter* is set in the context of a Senegal which had recently declared independence from France. As Ramatoulaye acknowledges, her generation is a bridge between colonial Senegal and independent Senegal, and all of the political moves mentioned in the novel concern how Senegal must learn how to exist as an independent nation when it is a country constructed through colonial rule. At the same time, characters like Ramatoulaye and Aissatou struggle to find their own personal independence in these tense political and personal contexts, where there is an enormous amount of potential for them, but they are also extremely limited by tradition and their circumstances. But moments like Aissatou deciding to leave Modou, Ramatoulaye deciding to live without a husband, and the situation with the car show how they manage to find their independence despite the odds.

Women's Rights

Touching on several other themes, the question of rights of women in Senegal and

greater West Africa dominate this novel. All of the main characters are supposedly in support of women's advancement on a political level, but often, their personal circumstances challenge this advocacy. For Modou and Mawdo, their choices concerning polygamous marriage undermine the power that their wives have, despite their political views, as does Daouda's willingness to marry Ramatoulaye but not to be just her friend. Even Ramatoulaye must struggle with balancing her attachment to women's advancement and her dedication to tradition, such as deciding whether or not to disown Aissatou and how to talk to her daughters about sex.

DEAR LIFE

ALICE MUNRO

Alice Munro

Alice Munro is a renowned Canadian short story writer who recently won the Nobel Prize in Literature. The fluidity of her works is said to have been a pathbreaking form in the legacy of short story writing, having transformed the way short stories are written. Her dismissal of a linear narrative to adopt a more complex sense of structure has earned her the admiration and devotion of her fans.

These short stories depict the complex and ambiguous nature of human beings in a simple but distinct form that has made her a revolutionary in the realm of short story fiction. This complexity arises in the form of the unreliability of the narrator in *Meneseteung*, in which one has to rely on external sources to grasp the facts of the story.

In story after story in this brilliant new collection, Alice Munro pinpoints the moment a person is forever altered by a chance encounter, an action not taken, or a simple twist of fate. Her characters are flawed and fully human: a soldier returning from war and avoiding his fiancée, a wealthy woman deciding whether to confront a blackmailer, an adulterous mother and her neglected children, a guilt-ridden father, a young teacher jilted by her employer.

Illumined by Munro's unflinching insight, these lives draw us in with their quiet depth and surprise us with unexpected turns. And while most are set in her signature territory around Lake Huron, some strike even closer to home: an astonishing suite of four autobiographical tales offers an unprecedented glimpse into Munro's own childhood. Exalted by her clarity of vision and her unparalleled gift for storytelling, *Dear Life* shows how strange, perilous, and extraordinaryordinary life can be.

Suffused with Munro's clarity of vision and her unparalleled gift for storytelling, these tales about departures and beginnings, accidents and dangers, and outgoings and homecomings both imagined and real, paint a radiant, indelible portrait of how strange, perilous, and extraordinaryordinary life can be.

Alice Munro's peerless ability to give us the essence of a life in often brief but always spacious and timeless stories is once again everywhere apparent in this brilliant new collection. In story after story, she illumines the moment a life is forever altered by a chance encounter or an action not taken, or by a simple twist of fate that turns a person out of his or her accustomed path and into a new way of being or thinking. A poet, finding herself in alien territory at her first literary party, is rescued by a seasoned newspaper columnist, and is soon hurtling across the continent, young child in tow, toward a hoped-for but completely unplanned meeting. A young soldier, returning to his fiancée from the Second World War, steps off the train before his stop and onto the farm of another woman, beginning a life on the move. A wealthy young woman having an affair with the married lawyer hired by her father to handle his estate comes up with a surprising way to deal with the blackmailer who finds them out.

While most of these stories take place in Munro's home territory - the small Canadian towns around Lake Huron - the characters sometimes venture to the cities, and the book ends with four pieces set in the area where she grew up, and in the time of her own childhood: stories "autobiographical in feeling, though not, sometimes, entirely so in fact." A girl who can't sleep imagines night after wakeful night that she kills her beloved younger sister. A mother snatches up her child and runs for dear life when a crazy woman comes into her yard.

Dear Life

Dear Life is a collection of short stories by Nobel Prize-winning Canadian author Alice Munro, first published by McClelland and Stewart in 2010. The fourteen pieces that comprise this volume take place largely in Munro's native Canada, peopled with characters undergoing major changes or having significant realizations amid the smaller moments of daily life. The New York Times named Dear Life a Notable Book, and the AV Club, The Atlantic, NPR, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Vogue all selected it as one of the best books of the year.

The collection's centerpiece is the title story, which is narrated by an unnamed woman. As the story begins, she grows up in the Ontario countryside in the 1930s. Her parents run a fur business, raising minks and other animals and selling the pelts. Because of the location of her family homestead, the narrator must attend a country school, which she does not like. Her father purchases an old shed in town; this way, he is a tax-paying property owner and can send his daughter to the town school.

There, she makes friends with one of her classmates, but the narrator's mother forbids the two girls from spending any time together. The friend's mother was reportedly a prostitute who had died of a sexually transmitted disease. The narrator harbors a quiet grudge against her own mother for denying the friendship with the other girl.

The narrator focuses instead on schoolwork. Even though most girls of her time and environment did not complete high school, the narrator works hard to achieve this goal for herself. In between, she discovers the joy of reading and becomes a voracious consumer of books. She also helps her mother around the house.

Throughout her childhood, the narrator listens to her mother's stories about a mean old woman in town named Mrs. Netterfield—stories that are just wild enough that the narrator does not really believe them. Mrs. Netterfield was so cruel that she allegedly chased a deliveryman from her property with an ax because there was a mistake in her grocery order. The narrator's mother also claims that Mrs. Netterfield snuck up to her house when she was a child and peered in the windows before scurrying away.

When the fur business fails, the narrator's father finds a job as a guard at a nearby factory. At home, the narrator starts to notice early signs of Parkinson's disease in her mother. Over the years, the symptoms slowly but progressively worsen.

When she is an adult, the narrator moves to Vancouver, where she meets her husband. She still keeps a subscription to her small hometown newspaper. While reading it one day, she comes across a poem written by Mrs. Netterfield's daughter. This discovery inspires the narrator to seek out some old records, which show that the Netterfield family used to live in the house where the narrator grew up.

The narrator's mother eventually dies of Parkinson's. Since traveling to her funeral would be too costly, the narrator stays in Vancouver, but she misses her mother and wishes she could explain things to her. Having learned the truth of her Mrs. Netterfield stories, the narrator regrets not being closer to her mother.

It is this seemingly little moment of discovery—the truth of her mother's stories—that prompts the narrator to reevaluate the entirety of their relationship. Such moments thread throughout the stories in *Dear Life*. In "To Reach Japan," a poet named Greta and her young daughter, Katy, take a train trip to Toronto. This simple act motivates Greta to reflect on her life and her steady marriage, eventually reaching a point in which she flirts with the idea of an extramarital affair and confronts her feelings of maternal guilt. In "Gravel," an older woman remembers her childhood and her normal family—both of which shattered because of a tragedy at a gravel pit.

In "Train," Jackson hops off a train somewhere in rural Ontario, where he meets Belle, a woman several years his senior. Despite the difference in age and a lack of common interests, their relationship is surprisingly normal and successful, proving that miracles need not be showy and majestic to be powerful and enduring. Even when death and long-buried secrets threaten to drive a wedge between them, Jackson and Belle understand how beautiful and profound their bond is, whether in the little moments of a shared life or on Belle's deathbed. Vivien, a young teacher, goes to work at a tuberculosis sanitarium, in "Amundsen," where she falls in love for the first

time in her life, with the arrogant Dr. Fox. In telling her story, Vivien focuses on the quiet moments, the brief gestures, the glances, the words left unspoken—these are what define this experience for her.

The other short stories in *Dear Life* are: "Leaving Maverley," "Haven," "Pride," "Corrie," "In Sight of the Lake," "Dolly," "The Eye," "Night," and "Voices."

THREE DAY ROAD

Joseph Boyden

Joseph Boyden was born the ninth of eleven children to Blanche Gosling and Raymond Boyden, a highly decorated medical officer from World War II. Boyden grew up outside Toronto, Canada, and went to Brebeuf College School, a Catholic all-boys academy in Toronto. He attended York University in Ontario, where he studied Humanities, and later earned a Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of New Orleans in Louisiana in 1995. Boyden worked as a professor in the Aboriginal Student Program at Northern College in Ontario and taught at the University of New Orleans and the University of British Columbia. In 2006, he published his first novel, *Three Day Road*, to popular and critical acclaim and wrote his second novel, *Through the Black Spruce*, in 2008. Most of Boyden's writing focuses on First Nations culture and people, and Boyden himself claims to be of Métis heritage, meaning he is of mixed Indigenous and Euro-American ancestry. Boyden received the McNally Robinson Aboriginal Book of the Year Award in 2005 for *Three Day Road*, an honor that is bestowed upon Indigenous Canadian writers and includes a \$5,000 prize. He became embroiled in controversy in 2016 when a national news outlet claimed no Indigenous ancestors could be found in Boyden's family tree, which is mostly Scottish and Irish. Several Indigenous writers and activists spoke out against Boyden and his seemingly false claims to First Nations heritage, especially considering his acceptance of the McNally Robinson Award, an honor reserved for Indigenous writers only. Boyden maintains his Métis heritage and claims to be of mixed Ojibway and Nipmuc blood. He keeps homes in both Louisiana and Ontario, where he lives with his wife and fellow writer, Amanda Boyden.

Historical Context of Three Day Road

Three Day Road is loosely based on Francis Pegahmagahow, famously known as “Peggy,” an indigenous Canadian World War I hero. Boyden mentions Peggy by name in the novel, and Elijah is constantly trying to live up to Peggy’s untouchable sniping record. The real-life Peggy was a First Nations soldier of the caribou clan who was awarded the MM, or Military Medal—a decoration given to the British Army and other members of the armed forces for bravery in battle—three times during his illustrious military career. Elijah too is awarded the MM in Three Day Road for bravery in the trenches of France. Francis Pegahmaga how was the most effective sniper during World War I and is credited with 378 confirmed German kills. He was wounded in battle and returned home to Canada, where he fathered six children and became chief of the Wasauksing First Nation, just as Elijah dreams of doing in the novel. Peggy died in 1952 at the age of 61. In 2016 on National Aboriginal Day, a bronze statue of Peggy was unveiled in Parry Sound, Canada, where Peggy lived and died.

Three Day Road

Three Day Road is a story of two Friends, Xavier Bird and Elijah Weesegeechak. They are both Cree aboriginals from northern Ontario and are two very skilled hunters. Xavier was raised by his aunt Niska, who taught him how to survive out in the bush. Elijah spent his early years in a school run by nuns where he was meant to be assimilated into white Canadian society. Xavier and Niska freed Elijah from the school and the two boys quickly become best friends.

As the friends become older they quenched their thirst for adventure by joining the Canadian army and fighting in WW1. This is where the friend’s similarities end. Xavier is a quiet and reserved person who believes strongly in maintaining his Cree identity and strongly dislikes the war. Elijah is an outgoing, talkative person who quickly adapts to the white Canadian lifestyle; he begins to enjoy war and lose his identity. Xavier and Elijah, who start off as friends become emotionally separated due to their different upbringings and personality types.

The story is told from the perspectives of Xavier and Niska. The story begins with Niska traveling to the train station to pick up Elijah after the war because of a letter she received. To her surprise she sees Xavier hobble out of the train with crutches and a missing leg. Niska paddles Xavier back to their home on her canoe. During the three day trip back Xavier uses morphine to escape the physical pain of his missing leg but cannot escape the horrors of war. As Xavier drifts off into sleep he recounts the story of his time during the war.

During the war, Xavier and Elijah were quickly noticed for their skill as hunters and are trained to become snipers by Corporal Thompson. The two friends are selected to participate in a sniping competition. The reader learns that Xavier is a more skilled sniper than Elijah but Elijah usually gets all of the credit. Afterwards, Xavier and Elijah are tasked with avenging the death of Sean Patrick, a fellow sniper who was a close friend of Xavier. Elijah misses his shot at the enemy sniper but Xavier saves both of them by making his shot. Again, all the credit is given to Elijah and Xavier begins to realize what is going on. Elijah becomes so corrupted by war he feels the need to prove his killing abilities to those around him. He starts collecting scalps from the enemies he kills as proof of his bravery and honor. Near the end of the story, Xavier becomes slightly deaf and this further separates himself from Elijah and the others. Xavier soon realizes that Elijah is not the same person he once was, he is now damaged beyond repair.

In the novel *Three Day Road*, Elijah Weesageechak and his best friend Xavier Bird, two Cree aboriginals, fight as a sniper team in WW1. Elijah becomes corrupted by the war which leads to his ultimate demise. The war transforms Elijah into an emotionless killing machine. His transformation was due to the loss of his identity, his quest for fame through war, and the use of morphine to escape reality.

In the beginning, when Elijah joined the army he quickly wanted to fit in with the other soldiers. Since he was raised in a residential school and had a natural talent for language, he quickly mastered English. Elijah then chose to use a British accent when

among the other soldiers. "Dear Henry," Elijah says using their code, "would you be a kind chap and make me a cup of tea?" (144). Elijah decided not to speak Cree when around his peers. Instead, he dropped his Cree accent and adopted a British one, to better blend in among the other soldiers. This was Elijah's first step in losing his identity. After Elijah became familiar with the other soldiers, he was chosen to be part of a raid by Corporal Thompson. During the raid, Elijah and Xavier threw mill bombs into a German trench, killing the people inside. When Elijah returned to the Canadian trench, he was asked by Corporal Thompson if he enjoyed the last mission. Elijah furthered himself from Xavier with the reply "It's in my blood" (75). Elijah has gone against the traditional Cree ways he was taught by Xavier and Niska. Instead, he has chosen to embrace war and killing; but in the process it changed who he was. As a result, Elijah only cares about war and his reputation as a deadly sniper.

For example, to further prove his greatest as a soldier, Elijah begins to collect scalps as trophies. "And what will collecting these trophies do for me?" Elijah Asks. "They will buy you honor among us" Francis says. "And we are honorable men" (204). Elijah feels as though he has to prove his killing abilities by amassing scalps. In the process, Elijah begins to enjoy killing and the fame he receives from it. Elijah feels he must use every opportunity he has in order to impress his fellow soldiers. When the Germans retreat from battle, Elijah picks a target far off in the distance and shoots him. The Canadian soldiers around him cheer and say they will never see anything like that again. Elijah arrogantly responds with: "Until the next time you are with me in a similar situation" (243). Elijah feeds off of the attention he is given and craves for more. He is unable to stop killing and has become addicted to the fame he is rewarded with. "I'd go mad in a hospital so far away from it all" (150). To Elijah, killing has become instinctual and without emotional attachment. "Three of them he whispers" "I slit the throats of them so quickly that I surprised even myself" (230). Elijah's killing movements have been perfected through the use of morphine to enhance his senses.

For instance, Elijah uses the morphine on raids with Xavier, in order to get a sense of his surroundings. Xavier describes Elijah while using morphine: "But when the golden liquid is in his veins!" Even at night the world is bathed in a soft light...He can make himself float from his body at will and look down at the world below him" (212). Elijah's natural talent for hunting combined with the morphine makes him twice as deadly. Without the morphine in his veins, Elijah becomes scared of the world which leads him to use it more frequently. As he abuses morphine, the real world becomes distorted. Without fear and pain, war is a game to Elijah. A game he enjoys

and becomes good at. Through the use of morphine, Elijah lacks an anchor to reality and because of this, killing becomes mechanical. While Elijah and Xavier are on a sniping mission, they mistake a woman for an enemy and Elijah shoots her. Xavier angrily questions Elijah's reaction, which killed the woman. Elijah defends himself by responding with "I am trained not to hesitate in situations of danger" (306). Elijah's response is robotic and emotionless. Eventually, Elijah starts to kill Canadian soldiers who get in his way. Xavier realizes Elijah has been completely broken by the war and must be put down. Xavier is forced to kill his best friend; he was no longer the man he used to know.

In conclusion, WW1 was too much for Elijah to handle; he became corrupted beyond repair. His transformation for the worse began with the loss of his identity, which led to his quest for fame through war, and finally the use of morphine to escape reality. In the end, Elijah turned into an emotionless killing machine that became a threat to those around him; which led to his ultimate demise.

Themes

Oppression of First Nations People

The oppression visited upon the indigenous First Nations people is a constant force throughout the novel, dictating the lives and experiences of all major Cree characters. The wemistikoshiw consistently exploit, betray, doubt, mock, ridicule, and distrust Cree. Niska's father is arrested by white men who don't take time to understand Cree culture or the underlying reasons for his murder of the cannibalistic woman. Later, after her romance with the French hunter, Niska is viciously betrayed and mocked by him. Ultimately she chooses to reject the hateful wemistikoshiw town, retreating into the bush. When she has to meet Xavier at the train station, she is frightened and confused by the relentless rush of the wemistikoshiw culture. For Elijah and Xavier, most of the soldiers around them in the war exhibit repeated racism. Officials doubt their ability, or dehumanize them to nothing but rifles firing at Germans. They must work twice as hard as white soldiers to gain recognition and reach higher rank.

Storytelling and the Power of Words

Storytelling appears throughout the novel as an almost compulsive way for characters to share their experiences, release their emotions, and heal. Niska uses storytelling to anchor Xavier to reality, believing that even as he lies unconscious, her words have an impact on his unsteady condition. Stories were central to Niska's childhood as well: her father's storytelling ability enthralled her. As they passed through hard times in the bush, Niska notes on page 33 that "sometimes his stories were all that we had to keep us alive." Throughout the war, Elijah tells Xavier stories—of his past, of his recent exploits on the battlefield—even when Xavier makes it clear that he doesn't want to hear them. Much of the tension in Niska and Elijah's three-day canoe journey centers around Xavier's inability to reveal a story: the explanation of what happened to Elijah. The ultimate revelation of this story brings Niska and her nephew closer together, symbolizing the profound influence that storytelling has on Xavier, Elijah, and Niska. The power of words is also exhibited through the language barrier that, at least at the beginning of the war, separates Xavier from his fellow soldiers, and contributes to Graves' death. The miscommunication created by Joseph Netmaker's letter demonstrates the effects that language can have even beyond the speaker's intentions.

Jealousy

The theme of jealousy manifests itself in several different ways throughout the story. Xavier feels pangs of jealousy when he is overlooked in favor of Elijah—the more gregarious, likable, and talkative of the two friends. Xavier knows that he is a better marksman than his friend, and resents the fact that the officers and fellow soldiers award Elijah with praise and medals, while refusing to acknowledge Xavier's own accomplishments. Additionally, it's implied that the white military officers doubt and mistrust Xavier and Elijah because they are jealous of the pair's sniping ability. The French soldiers say that officers won't verify the Ojibwe sniper Peggy's kill count because of their jealous and racist refusal to acknowledge his superior skill; this makes Elijah decided to scalp his victims so that his battlefield murders cannot be denied. Peggy himself ultimately serves as an object of envy, since Elijah grows frustrated when he continually hears about snipers who are better than him—this jealousy pushes him even further into his determination to kill no matter the cost.

Survival

Survival is a central theme to both Niska and Xavier's experiences. Growing up in the bush, Niska endured famine and watched members of the community turn to madness and cannibalism as the harsh conditions took their toll. The lessons in hunting and divining that Niska teaches Xavier in the bush are essential survival skills, geared at making sure Xavier can eke out a living from the unforgiving landscape. The theme of survival carries over from Canada to Europe, as Xavier and Elijah face repeated life-and-death situations on the battlefield. Xavier's graphic descriptions of the dead bodies and bombed-out towns that he encounters are constant reminders of the difficulty of survival in such an unimaginably hostile arena. The death of almost every member of their original company also exemplifies the scale of the loss of human life that the war inevitably causes. Xavier reconciles the need to kill with his inherent disgust of war by seeing it as a question of survival: shot or be shot. In the end, Xavier's final desperate act of violence against his best friend is also an act of survival. He and Niska understand that, in conditions of incredible adversity, one must "do what they have to do" in order to survive.

Nature

Themes of nature and natural landscape permeate the novel, both in the Canadian bush and the European battlefields. Xavier repeatedly shares detailed, almost obsessive observations of the war landscape—he notes each dugout and crater, since every twist and blip in the land could pose the difference between survival and injury or death. He also notes with sadness that the fields of Europe have been utterly destroyed by the apparatuses of war: the tanks and soldiers, trenches and bombs. Back in Canada, the landscape is important as well, since the Cree find their livelihood in the forest and the animals that inhabit their surroundings. Xavier and Elijah's experience with the forest fire demonstrates the terrifying indifference and destructive capability of the natural landscape.

Visions

Visions are important to the novel as the harbingers of both love and battle, destruction and reunion. Elijah's use of morphine causes him to have out-of-body

experiences where he can envision the world around him as if he were floating above it. This phenomenon fuels his continued use of the drug, as he claims the ability to mentally soar above the battlefield gives him an advantage when the fighting begins. Niska has experienced visions since she was a child, bringing her glimpses of the future. As a child, the visions and the violent convulsions that accompanied them were terrifying to Niska. They also marked her as different from the other children her age; except for her sister, these children tended to avoid her. Niska catches glimpses of the war's astounding intensity in her visions, helping her start to understand the ordeal that Xavier has gone through. Visions can also show a joyful future; Niska dreamed of Xavier before she met him, and the vision of raising Rabbit's young child inspired her to rescue Xavier from the residential school.

Friendship

An important storyline in the novel follows Xavier and Elijah's friendship—a caring, complicated, and ultimately destructive union. Like the plot of the book itself, their friendship is circular. Beginning with the establishment of their relationship as “great hunters and best friends,” the ending of their friendship—and Elijah's life—is characterized by the same phrase. Xavier's final act of murder cannot be disentangled from the care and love he feels toward his friend any more than it can be separated from his revulsion and desire to end a madness that has gone on for too long. Their relationship is marked by competitiveness, but also mutual respect and protection. Elijah translates for Xavier—both the English language and the often incomprehensible acts of the wemistikoshiw—while Xavier shows him the art of bush survival. At times one is dependent on the other; at times anger and barely contained tension saturate their interactions. The nuances of their complex friendship influence the actions that each man takes throughout the novel.

References:

1. Rizwana Habib Latha, "Feminisms in an African Context: Mariama Bâ's so Long a Letter", *Agenda* 50, African Feminisms One (2001), 23.
2. Androne, Mary Jane (2003). *The Collective Spirit of Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc. p. 37. ISBN 1-59221-028-7.
3. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/so-long-a-letter/summary>
4. Kellaway, Kate (29 December 2013). "Dear Life by Alice Munro – review". *The Guardian*. Retrieved 8 February 2014.
5. <https://www.supersummary.com/dear-life/summary/>
6. *Three Day Road*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2005.
7. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/three-day-road/summary>