NEW LITERATURES IN ENGLISH

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE

ENG6 B14

B.A. ENGLISH

(2019 Admission onwards)

CBCSS

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

School of Distance Education,
Calicut University P.O.,
Malappuram - 673 635, Kerala.

19021
UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

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Study Material

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Prepared by:

Doyal Jobin Jacob,
Assistant Professor on Contract,
School of Distance Education
University of Calicut.

Scrutinized by:

Dr. C.A. Assif
Associate Professor of English
MGGAC, Mahe.

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Introduction to the paper

This paper consists of 5 modules starting from literary theories and ending with a study of two films which is an adaptation of 2 famous novels. So, this paper is meant to enhance the reader’s experience of learning literatures of the new style and mode.
MODULE I: INTRODUCTION

Literary Canon: Definition

The term literary canon is a technical term used to describe a set of texts that serve as a recognized standard of stylistic quality, cultural or social significance, and intellectual value. The literary canon is not determined as much as it is adopted by pervasive usage in university and graduate classrooms, as well as reference and citation in academic journals, and it is to a degree based on the influence of curriculum publishers and testing organizations. Because people in a society are most likely to be exposed to the accepted canon of literature, these texts also inform both a generally accepted worldview and determine the "imaginative boundaries" of how that society tends to think. For example, because Aristotle's works were considered part of the literary canon for the last several centuries, western societies have tended to approach questions of warfare and economics through an Aristotelian lens. Essentially, the voice a society hears most often is most likely to carry an outside influence on the people within that society, both in how they think and how they live. The fact that the canon is determined through usage and collaboration makes it both highly adaptable and highly controversial at the same time. In recent years, a push to change what authors and works should be considered canon or canonical has driven a great deal of debate within the western literary world.

Canonical Texts in Literature
The English word canon stems from an older, Greek term (transliterated as Kanon). Originally, this Greek term referred to a "standard" or a "measuring rod" against which something was measured to ensure that it was set correctly. The physical, engineering use of this term eventually took on a metaphoric meaning. Now, the term canon is used to mean an agreed-upon standard against which other, most frequently intellectual, works are measured for quality, long-term value, and influence.

Though different for eastern cultures, the countries and people groups — especially within Europe — of western society have worked within the boundaries of a fairly consistent literary canon for the last 1000 - 1500 years. In general, the western canon has prioritized the voices of the dominant Greco-Roman philosophers, the poets and novelists of France and Britain, and, in more recent centuries, the sociological/philosophical voices of Germany. It is equally true that American novelists, in particular have found their way into the generally accepted canon during the late 19th and throughout the 20th centuries.

Some of the more influential and widely accepted voices of the western literary canon include:

- The Epic of Gilgamesh
- The Bible
- Homer
- Sappho
- Sophocles
- Plato
- Aristotle
• Augustine
• Beowulf
• Dante Alighieri
• Chaucer
• Francis Petrarch
• Miguel de Cervantes
• William Shakespeare
• Jean-Jacques Rousseau
• Frederick Douglass
• William Wordsworth
• Emily Dickinson
• James Joyce
• Franz Kafka
• Virginia Woolf
• T.S. Eliot
• William Faulkner
• Pablo Neruda
• Albert Camus
• John Steinbeck
Commonwealth literature is generally believed to refer to the literary products of the independent countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and North America which were once colonised by the United Kingdom. The works of writers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, Malaysia and Singapore are therefore regarded as Commonwealth literature.

Postcolonialism

The term "Post colonialism" refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until the twenty-first century. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonized. By the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the world was under the control of European countries. At its peak in the late nineteenth century, according to The Norton Anthology of English Literature, the British Empire consisted of "more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the earth: one in four people was a subject of Queen Victoria." During the twentieth century, countries such as India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada, and Australia won independence from their European colonizers. The literature and art produced in these countries after independence became the subject of "Postcolonial Studies," an area of academic concentration, initially in British universities. This field gained prominence in
the 1970s and has been developing ever since. Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said's critique of Western representations of the Eastern culture in his 1978 book, Orientalism, is a seminal text for postcolonial studies and has spawned a host of theories on the subject. However, as the currency of the term "postcolonial" gained wider use, its meaning was expanded. Some consider the United States itself a postcolonial country because of its former status as a territory of Great Britain, but it is generally studied for its colonizing rather than its colonized attributes. In another vein, Canada and Australia, though former colonies of Britain, are often placed in a separate category because of their status as "settler" countries and because of their continuing membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Some of the major voices and works of postcolonial literature are:

- Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958),
- Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961),
- Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988),
- Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1982),
- J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* (1990),
- Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990),
New literatures in English

The New Literatures in English are not that new altogether. They have emerged from processes of colonization that transformed large tracts of the world from the late fifteenth century onwards, and some of them can trace their beginnings to the nineteenth or even late eighteenth century, when English, Irish or Scottish settlers in the Caribbean, Canada or South Africa first began to create an ‘overseas literature,’ and enslaved or colonized people, first began to reflect on their current situation and future perspectives utilizing the medium of what was then ‘the colonizer’s tongue.’ Other literatures in English are indeed new, sometimes startlingly so: as distinct literary fields, West African literature in English emerged in the 1950s, East African literature in English in the 1960s, indigenous writing in Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the 1970s, and Black and Asian British Literature in the 1980s.

Review Exercises

Paragraph questions:-

Why do the critics accuse the canons?

Why common wealth countries are categorized into one common head?

What do you understand from the term post colonialism?

What is meant by overseas literature?
Essay questions:-

Write an essay on literary canons?

Which all countries are regarded as commonwealth countries and why?

Write an essay on post colonialism including the main theorists?

What do you think New Literature is?

Further References

https://iep.utm.edu/literary/

MODULE II : POETRY

Alice Walker: Remember Me?

About The Author

Novelist, poet and feminist, Alice Malsenior Walker, born in Eatonton, Georgia the 9th of February of 1944, Walker is one of the most important and admired African American writers working today. Walker was the youngest of eight children to Willie Lee Walker and Minnie Lou Tallulah Grant. Her father was a sharecropper and a dairy farmer and her mother supplemented the family income by working as a maid. She worked to pay for Alice to attend college. Walker's parents resisted landlords who expected the children of black sharecroppers to work the fields at a young age. Her mother enrolled Alice in first grade at the age of four. Walker grew up with an oral tradition, listening to stories from her grandparent (who was the model for the character of Mr. in The Color Purple) she began to write very privately.

When she was eight years old. "With my family, I had to hide things," she said. "And I had to keep a lot in my mind. Walker was accidentally wounded in the right eye by a gun fired by one of her brothers. The Walkers could not take their daughter to a hospital for immediate treatment. By the time they reached a doctor a week later, she had become permanently blind in that eye. When a layer of scar tissue formed over her wounded eye, Alice became self-conscious and painfully shy. Stared at and sometimes taunted, she felt like an outcast and turned for solace to reading and to writing poetry. After high
school, Walker went to Spellman College in Atlanta on a full scholarship in 1961 and later transferred to Sarah Laurence College near New York City, graduating in 1965. In this same year, Walker met Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal, a Jewish civil rights lawyer. They got married on March 17, 1967 in New York City. Later that year, the couple moved to Jackson, Mississippi where they became the first legally married interracial couple in Mississippi. Walker's first book of poetry was written while she was a senior at high school. While working in the civil rights movements, she took a rest from writing but she resumed her writing career when she joined Ms. Magazine as an editor before moving to California in the late 1970s. In addition to her collected short stories and poetry, Walker's first novel, The Third Life of Grange Copeland, was published in 1970. In 1976, Walker's second novel, Meridian, was published. The novel dealt with activist workers in the South during the civil rights movement, and closely paralleled some of Walker's own experiences. In 1982, Walker published what has become her best-known work, the novel The Color Purple which is about a young troubled black woman fighting her way through not only racist white culture but also patriarchal black culture, it was a resounding commercial success. The book became a bestseller and was subsequently adapted into a critically acclaimed 1985 movie as well as a 2005 Broadway musical. She has published a number of collections of short stories, poetry, and other published work. She expresses the struggles of black people, particularly women, and their lives in a racist, sexist, and violent society. Her writings also focus on the role of women of color in culture and history. Walker is a respected figure in the liberal political community for her support of unconventional and unpopular views as a matter of principle.
"Remember me?" Analysis

The poem, "Remember Me?" is a presentation of an ongoing theme in Alice Walker's literature. This theme is one that ignites Walker's passions because it is one that she lives day-to-day in her life particularly because she lives in an era of progress for woman. This poem represents the healing of a black woman via the hope for that justice. "Remember Me?" is written in first person and it makes reference to Walker's own childhood. The girl in the poem is actually the personification of many black women whose life are darkened by the injustice of being black and women in a world that favours the white men. Walker wants her audience to realize the intersectionality of the oppression that women of colour face as not only women (who are robbed of their rights regularly) but as women that are part of an identity that is also marginalized. Any woman is she white, black, red, yellow, or brown faces this intersectional oppression. Walker wants her audience to comprehend this fact. In addition to the changes of the woman in "Remember Me?" Her female duties are nowhere to be found in the fourth stanza. Also it is notable the fact that Walker plays with plural and singular in the second stanza. The figure in the poem is "the girl /holding their babies / cooking their meals / sweeping their yards / washing their clothes." That Walker included this contradiction in the number of persons involved in the poem shows that her intention is to show the universality of women in this poem. Correspondingly, that these duties are not mentioned in the matching stanza demonstrates that Walker wants to include her hope that women will no longer be condemned to perform these duties as rotting housewives. Hopefully, women now have a choice about their familial duties with the introduction of women's rights in the workplace and birth control. In the fifth stanza, Walker contradicts the historically imperialist symbol of darkness as evil by pairing the words "Dark, / repaired, healed."
Her word, “Listening to you” is her anticipation of the direction that her hope for humanity will take. She repeats third stanza as the sixth stanza purposefully to emphasize that intersectionally oppressed women can give humanity "only hope." Her last two stanzas tell humanity what women are hoping for, which is "Justice and Hope / Hope and Justice." The woman that offers humanity that hope is offering them as a metaphor: flowers. These flowers are twin, she says. There cannot be justice without hope, and there cannot be hope without justice. With a sense of calmness, Walker tells her audience, "let us begin" the struggle to establish those twin flowers as a reality.

The major theme in Walker’s poetry is that of gender and racial discrimination. This discrimination against the so called the coloured people is not restricted to colour but, to gender also. The persona being a black as well a female faces double sided oppression.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

Which are the twin flowers mentioned in the poem?

Which are the duties the persona speaks in the poem?

Answer in a paragraph:-

What is the problem and the hope the persona is speaking in the poem?

Can this poem be read from a feministic point of view?
Is there any significance of using the first person narrative technique?

Essay question:-

Can this poem be considered as a precursor to feminism and to the rights of the coloured people?

Further Reading

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A D Hope: Austrialia

About the author

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

Although he had been writing for many years, Hope did not publish any of his poems until the 1930s. His first collection, *The Wandering Islands*, did not appear until 1955, by which time he had built a reputation as a poet through publications in various periodicals. It was praised for Hope's skilful use of traditional verse forms and critique of contemporary values and received the Grace Leven Poetry Prize. His second collection, *Poems* (1960), was published in London, underscoring the fact that for many years Hope was the best-known Australian poet internationally, appearing in many anthologies and receiving in 1965 the Arts Council of Great Britain Poetry Award, in 1968 the Levinson Prize for Poetry (Chicago) and in 1969 the Ingram Merrill Award for Literature (New York).

*Dunciad*, is less evident in his late poems. His interest in mythology, seen as embodying 'the great commonplaces' of human life, remained until the end, as is apparent in the title of his final collection *Orpheus* (1991).

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

*Poetry Collections*

*The Wandering Islands* (Sydney: Edwards and Shaw, 1955)
*A. D. Hope* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1963)
*Collected Poems 1930-1965* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1966)
*Dunciad Minor* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1970)
*Selected Poems* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973)
*A Book of Answers* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1978)
*The Drifting Continent and Other Poems* (Canberra: Brindabella Press, 1979)
*The Age of Reason* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1985)
*Selected Poems* (Manchester, UK: Carcanet, 1986)
*Orpheus* (North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1991)
A.D Hope was an Australian poet and essayist known for his satirical slant. He was also a critic, teacher and an academic. He was referred to in an American journal as “the 20th century’s greatest 18th-century poet.

"In the poem, "Australia” A.D Hope questions the idea that Australia is civilized. In the first five stanzas the poet talks about Australia. He describes how it is both a new and old country, geologically old but politically new and how it is both a European colony and an independent but a parasitical country. The next two stanzas talk about the wilderness of Australia. The poet describes Australia as being a “nation of trees, drab green an desolate Grey” that “darkens her hills”. He sees Australia as a country that is bleak and almost colourless and dull. This very much resembles the “field uniform of modern wars”, where everything is in shade of grey and green. The poet likens the country to a ‘sphinx’. The sphinx was a figure from Egyptian myths which possessed the body of lion and head of a man. This comparison could be directly related to the author's vision of Australia. The poet suggests that Australia’s realm of intelligence and power have now been “worn away" which suggests that Australia used to be better than it is now. He believes that Australia is a country that is old. People may call Australia “A young country, but they lie". Australia to him is the “last of lands, the emptiest. A woman beyond her change of life, a breast still tender but within the womb is dry”. Australia may be considered as young by the world’s standards, but it is empty within. It has only external beauty but no inner beauty.
Australia to him is devoid of culture which is “without songs, architecture, and history”. He sees Australia as being a country that has neither historical background nor culture to speak of. He believes that it has the capabilities to do so, however, the ideas are drowned among “island sands”. Australia is portrayed as a country that is nothing at all, where there are “monotonous tribes from Cairns to Perth” The five main cities are compared to “five teeming sores”. The people who come to live in Australia do not boast of living but rather merely surviving. He believes that people who move here are rather unwelcome, and they are ”second-hand Europeans” that grow rapidly on these “alien shores”. He sees these people as people who “drain” Australia”. For him it is a" vast parasite robber state” which has lost its original vitality.

The last two stanzas refer to the modern civilization of Australia. For Hope the civilization of Australia is nothing but the false imitation of cultured apes which is mistaken as modern civilization.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What are the 5 cities in the poem compared to?

What does the people lie about Australia?

What is the modern civilisation of Australia refered to?

Answer in a paragraph:-

In the poem is the poet really appreciating the country?

Why does the speaker claims that the people of Australia rather not live, but survive?
Essay question:-

Does the persona have a positive attitude toward Australia, justify?

Further reading

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Derek Walcott: A Far Cry From Africa

About the author

Derek Walcott, a poet and Dramatist, was born in 1930 in Saint Lucia. As he belonged to both African and European roots he identifies himself as a mongrel. This mixed heritage makes him able to identify the post colonial situation more effectively and successfully. He was awarded for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992. In the poem A Far Cry from Africa the poet ironically describes how he rejects the British culture and the colonial ideology.

Analysis

The poem A Far Cry from Africa belongs to post colonial poetry. Mainly the poem discusses the events of the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in the early 1950s. It was a bloody battle during the 1950 between the European settlers and the native Kikuyu tribes in Kenya. Kikuyu was the largest and most educated tribe in Kenya. As the British people invaded more and
more their land they outrageously reacted. The Kenyan tribes rebelled against the British who stole the motherland of them. The rebellion was under a secret organization called Mau Mau. It is estimated a large number of Kikuyu as well as whites were slaughtered during the process.

The poem starts with the painful jarring harsh experience of the rebellion that changed the tranquil peaceful setting of the country. The nation itself compared to an animal, as it indicates it is an animal like a lion. “Tawny pelt” And how Kikuyu started the bloody battle. The Kikuyu are compared to flies who are feeding on blood. Next we are informed the aftermath of the rebellion. The poet describes that the country before the conflict was a ‘paradise’ and with an ironical comment he indicates the death, inhumanity and destruction occurred in the land. There is the juxtaposition of the conflict against something divine with the image of corpses scattered through a paradise. The worms that can be seen as the ultimate emblem of stagnation and decay, cries at the worthless death. Sarcastically poet indicates how the humans are reduced to statistics. And at the same time though scholars justify the presence of white men in Africa and the process of civilizing the natives, the poet indicates the fact that it was a failure with the brutal death of the small white child and his family. People behave like animals ‘savages’ hints and remind us the persecution endured by the Jews. Jews were killed in millions due to their ethnicity during the time of Hitler. Though the time and the place is different the same kind of situations repeat in the world time to time. Next the poet creates a picture of white men in searching for natives who are hiding behind the bushes. The sound of ‘ibises’ hints a bad omen. Again the repetition is shown through the word ‘wheeled’. The civilized men thrived on conquering others. This process of violence and conquering each other indicates the law of the jungle. The violence of ‘beast on beast’ can justify according to
the law of nature, the law of jungle. Yet it cannot be applied to
the ‘upright man’ who are stretching out themselves to reach the
‘divinity’. Apart from the task of stretching themselves to reach
‘divinity’ they end up with ‘inflicting pain’ which is killing and
which is the law of jungle; killing for prey. They call for the
massacre they create by killing as war. Ironically, wars between
people are described as following the beat of a drum an
instrument made of an animal hide stretched over a cylinder.
Though the natives think the act of killing white men brings
them ‘courage’ it ends up with fear. Moreover the poet
emphasizes the fact that though the natives justify their task
mentioning it as a ‘brutish necessity’ and considering it as a
national cause they just clean their hands with ‘the napkin of
dirty cause’. So the poet suggests the fact that the natives’ cause
is dirty and ugly though they consider it as right and nationwide.
He sees a comparison with the West Indians who had their
share of harsh experiences with Spain. The fight is just as the
gorilla wrestles with superman. The gorilla in this context is
compared to natives and superman is compared to white men.
The last two lines indicate the situation of the poet, as he
belongs to both cultures how he feels inferiority regarding the
situation. The mixed heritage of the poet makes him unable to
decide to which he should be partial. The title itself too indicates
the state of mind conflict of the poet, a cry from a great distance
away and moreover it shows the alienation and the inferiority of
the poet. The poem ends with a picture of violence and cruelty
and with the idea of searching for identity.

Review Exercise

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What does the persona ironically describes?
The kakuyu tribes are compared to?

Paragraph questions:

What are the comparisons made in the poem?

What picture is created in your mind when you read the image “the natives are hiding behind the bushes?”

Essay question:

How would you analyse the title of the poem?

Further Reference

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**Faiz Ahmed Faiz: To Autumn**

**About the Author**

One of the foremost poets in the Indian sub-continent, Faiz Ahmed Faiz was born in Sialkot in Pakistan. He studied philosophy and English literature, but poetry and politics preoccupied him more than anything else. For writing poetry that always antagonizes the ruling Žlite and challenges colonial and feudal values, like such rebellious writers as Ngugi of
Kenya and Darwish of Palestine, Faiz had to go to jail repeatedly during both colonial and postcolonial times in Pakistan. Inspired by the Marxist ideology, Faiz's poetry exhibits a strong sense of commitment to lower-class people, yet it always maintains a unique beauty nourished by the long, rich tradition of Urdu literature. His love poems are as appealing as his political poems, and he is considered primarily responsible for shaping poetic diction in contemporary Urdu poetry. Which poems deal with love, and which ones with politics?

Awards

Faiz was the first Asian poet to be awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, the Soviet Union's equivalent to the Nobel Prize in 1963. He used traditional meters and rhythms to compose poetry that was a blend of Romanticism and realism. Before his death he was also nominated for the Nobel Prize.

Popular Poems

A Prison Evening

Each star a rung,

Analysis

Being in a country where there are only two seasons, we can only rely on images of winter, spring, or autumn on postcards, movies or television shows. Through these aids, we see the beauty these seasons bring, maybe to the point that we envy those people experiencing it firsthand. Spring and autumn, the seasons between summer and winter, are seasons when most noticeable transformation takes place. The most obvious one is the change of temperature, swinging from extreme coldness to extreme heat or vice versa. Spring is perceived as a season of
life - the season when flowers start to bloom, birds start to tweet - while autumn or fall is seen as a season of decay - leaves turn to gold, trees become bare. However, autumn is never seen as a "decaying" season in postcards. In fact, "autumn is beauty" for photographers. The magic of combining the colors gold, red, orange and yellow creates a dazzling effect to the image of autumn. Autumn is derived from its "decay" theme and is given life by people through seeing this season as a season of beauty. However, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, brings back the reality, that autumn is indeed a season, not of beauty, but of decay and grief. His choice of words (choosing words with negative connotations) makes his piece a very successful narration of what autumn really is.

"This is the way that autumn came to the trees," is how Faiz starts the poem. This line already gives away the time the narration takes place - the end of autumn or the start of winter - through the shift of tenses, from present to past ("is" to "came"). In fact, the shift in the verb tenses guides the readers on how the different scenes are arranged. In the next 4 lines, the narrator speaks of the transformation the trees undergo during autumn. Unlike saying "the trees lose their leaves" in place of lines 2 and 3, Faiz uses the words "stripped" and "naked" to increase the magnitude of the readers' emotions. It implies grief and horror; especially the phrase "stripped them down to the skin." The use of the word "hearts" in the 4th line further exaggerates the graveness of what autumn brings to the trees (the heart, which is the most vital organ of a human being, is used as a metaphor for leaves).

Man, as well as different animals, enter the scene with the lines "Anyone could trample them out of shape/ undisturbed by a single moan of protest." These lines show the helplessness of the trees during autumn. The leaves of the trees cannot help
but fall onto the ground. And in return, human beings or animals do not even notice that they are walking on these withered leaves. The trees, unfortunately, cannot do anything but look at its leaves, its heart, being stepped on by different beings. Birds, on the other hand, are also given human attributes in lines 8-12. Faiz's way to describe birds ("birds that herald dreams") in line 8 helps to increase the dramatic situation in lines 9-12. He describes the birds as the ones carrying dreams, but they are "exiled from their song"! It was further exaggerated in the next line, "each voice torn out of its throat." The use of voice, throat, and song parallels the plea in the last line of the poem.

After describing how autumn comes to the trees and birds, the narrator pleads to the God of May in lines 13 to 18. He pleads to the God of May since it symbolizes life and renewal (spring is on May). This further supports the claim that the narration happens during winter - the "decaying" (autumn) is over, but the trees are not "revitalized" yet (which happens during spring). Also, pleading to a God creates a sense of urgency - the need to do something about it quickly. This urgency is already foreshadowed through the severity of the descriptive words found in the first and second stanzas.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What does the persona pleads to the God of May?

According the poem who are the ones carrying dreams?
Paragraph question:

Is there any identification of death in this poem, if how?

What is the significance of comparing leaves to ‘heart’?

Essay question:

Can the falling of leaves be compared to human life in any way?

Further reference

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Li Young Lee: I Ask My Mother To Sing

About the Author

Li-Young Lee was born in 1957 in Jakarta, Indonesia, to Chinese parents. His father had been a personal physician to Mao Zedong while in China, and relocated the family to Indonesia. In 1959, the Lee family fled the country to escape anti-Chinese sentiment and after a five-year trek through Hong Kong, Macau, and Japan, they settled in the United States in 1964.

Lee attended the University of Pittsburgh and University of Arizona, and the State University of New York at Brockport.
He has taught at several universities, including North-western and the University of Iowa.

He is the author of *The Undressing* (W. W. Norton, 2018); *Behind My Eyes* (W. W. Norton, 2008); *Book of My Nights* (BOA Editions, 2001), which won the 2002 William Carlos Williams Award; *The City in Which I Love You* (BOA Editions, 1990), which was the 1990 Lamont Poetry Selection; and *Rose* (BOA Editions, 1986), which won the Delmore Schwartz Memorial Poetry Award.

His other work includes *Breaking the Alabaster Jar: Conversations with Li-Young Lee* (Edited by Earl G. Ingersoll, BOA Editions, 2006), a collection of twelve interviews with Lee at various stages of his artistic development; and *The Winged Seed: A Remembrance* (Simon and Schuster, 1995), a memoir which received an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

With regard to Lee's work, the poet Gerald Stern has noted that "what characterizes [his] poetry is certain humility... a willingness to let the sublime enter his field of concentration and take over, a devotion to language, a belief in its holiness."

He has been the recipient of a Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets, a Lannan Literary Award, a Whiting Writer's Award, the PEN Oakland/Josephine Miles Award, the I. B. Lavan Award, three Pushcart Prizes, and grants from the Illinois Arts Council, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship.

Family Memories: “I asked My Mother to Sing,” by Li-Young Lee

*Rose* by Li-Young Lee was published in 1986. This is
Lee first book of poems, in those poems he writes a lot about his father who was “a huge character” for him (Lee, Although Li-Young Lee was of Chinese descent born in Indonesia (Lee, “Seeing the Power of Poetry” In the poem “I ask my Mother to Sing,” (Lee, Rose 50) the narrator is asking his mother and grandmother to sing because he wants to bring images to life of those places where he’s never been before in China. The memory of his father comes to his mind because he used to play the accordion with them when he was alive. Between the many themes of this poem, we can emphasize in how the speaker still have present the memory of his father through their family memories, how sad they felt when they were sharing a happy moment and they remembered not only the absence of their loved one but also memories from their home country. The aim of this poem is to get the reader involved in the narrative of the author in his memories and emotions.

The poem written by Lee speaks to the soul and tries to find the answer to the past and explores issues concerning the identity of persons in the world. Lee said “… I feel that I’m disconnected forever, that I’ll never have any place that I can call home” (Lee, “A Well of Dark Waters” expressing that he does not belong to anywhere. The title seems interesting as it clarifies why both the mother and grandmother sing. Here singing can be taken as a metaphor for pouring out their emotions. The persona is facing the problem of identity crisis and a feeling of homelessness. So through singing the persona is bringing back those forgotten memories in life. So here singing can be taken as a process of strengthening oneself by bringing back those good old memories.
Review Exercise

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What do you think the major theme of the poem is?
Is this poem a recollection of memories?

Paragraph question:-

How is the father described in the poem?
Is there any sense of homelessness in the poem?

Essay question:-

In this poem, can singing be taken as a metaphor and how?

Further reference

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Tenzin Tsundue: When It Rains In Dharmshala

About the Author

Tenzin Tsundue is a restless young Tibetan who, after graduating from Madras, South India, broke all rules and restrictions, crossed the Himalayas on foot and went into forbidden Tibet! The purpose? To see the situation of his occupied country and lend a hand to the freedom struggle. Arrested by China’s border police, and locked up in prison in Lhasa for three months, he was later ‘pushed back’ to India.

Born to a Tibetan refugee family who laboured on India’s border roads around Manali, North India, during the chaotic era of Tibetan refugee resettlement in the early seventies, Tenzin Tsundue is a writer-activist, a rare blend in the Tibetan community in exile. He published his first book of poems, Crossing the Border, in 1999 with money begged and borrowed from his classmates at Bombay University. In 2001 he won the ‘Outlook-Picador Award for Non-Fiction’. His second book, Kora, is already in its eighth edition, and his third title, Semshook, is in its third edition. This the third edition Tsen-GÖl, first published in March 2012.

Tsundue joined Friends of Tibet (India) in 1999 and campaigns among Indians to win support for Tibet. In January 2002, while Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji was addressing Indian business tycoons in Mumbai’s Oberoi Towers, Tsundue scaled scaffolding to the 14th floor to unfurl a Tibetan national flag and a FREE TIBET banner. In April 2005 he repeated a similar stunning one-man protest when Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao was visiting Bangalore. Because of these daring protest actions, Tsundue is often detained and is under police surveillance whenever Chinese leaders visit India.
Tenzin Tsundue’s writings have been published in Indian newspapers and magazines and also in the international media. He is also anthologized in Asian and International literary journals. As a poet, he represented Tibet in Sahitya Akademi’s Second South Asian Literary Conference in New Delhi in January 2005, during Poetry Africa in Durban, 2005, and at Jaipur Literature Festival 2010. Both as an activist and a writer, Tsundue fights tooth and nail for the freedom of his country and plays an important role in the Tibetan political struggle.

Brilliant poem which captures the despair, hope, determination in exile seeking home. Water is presented as a powerful, destructive force yet the poem ends with water as a source of relief, which the subject cannot experience because the environment cries enough. In fact, that Dharamsala area is one of the wettest monsoon places in India. This poem is a tribute to Dharmashala. The word comes from the rich Indian tradition of hospitality, rest for sometime etc.

**Summary**

The poem revolves around the concept of his deplorable state of living in Dharamshala. It points to his aspirations for the independence of his motherland.

Written by T. Tsundue, the poem 'When it Rains in Dharmshala' is the epitome of his desire for the independence of his motherland, Tibet.

His parents fled to India after the Chinese occupation, and when he visited Tibet one day, he was repatriated to India as the authorities declared him an Indian.
He narrates the horrible experience of the three-month-long rainy ordeal that floods his room. His bed is like an island when it rains, surrounded by books and writings of all kinds.

In comparison to his motherland, the place where he's staying will always be deplorable for him, even with all luxuries in the world.

In the poem, he speaks about his life in prison. He was jailed sixteen times by Indian authorities for his anti-China campaign.

Recently, he also held a 500 km march from Dharamshala to Delhi, asking the Indian government to revoke its "one-China, united-China" outlook.

He's a champion of Tibetan Independence. In the poem, his line "Tibet or Kashmir" is controversial, as he attempts to compare Tibet with Kashmir.

He lives in a 300-year-old British mansion in Dharamshala, which is now in a deplorable state, along with four other tenants.

Finally, he ends the poem with an optimistic note and a positive outlook. He says that he cannot stay here (Dharamshala) forever. He aspires for the 'freedom' of his motherland, Tibet.

The poem revolves around the concept of his deplorable state of living in Dharamshala. It points to his aspirations for the independence of his motherland.
**Explanation:**

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His parents fled to India after the Chinese occupation, and when he visited Tibet one day, he was repatriated to India as the authorities declared him an Indian. He narrates the horrible experience of the three-month-long rainy ordeal that floods his room. His bed is like an island when it rains, surrounded by books and writings of all kinds. In comparison to his motherland, the place where he's staying will always be deplorable for him, even with all luxuries in the world. In the poem, he speaks about his life in prison. He was jailed sixteen times by Indian authorities for his anti-China campaign. Recently, he also held a 500 km march from Dharamshala to Delhi, asking the Indian government to revoke its "one-China, united-China" outlook.

He's a champion of Tibetan Independence. In the poem, his line "Tibet or Kashmir" is controversial, as he attempts to compare Tibet with Kashmir. He lives in a 300-year-old British mansion in Dharmshala, which is now in a deplorable state, along with four other tenants. Finally, he ends the poem with an optimistic note and a positive outlook. He says that he cannot stay here (Dharamshala) forever. He aspires for the 'freedom' of his motherland, Tibet.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What does Dharmshala mean to the persona?
Why does the environment cries?

Paragraph question:-

What is the two-sided comparison given to water?

Can this poem be taken as tribute to Dharmsala?

Essay question:-

Does the theme of exile have anything to do with the poem?

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David Diop: The White Man Killed My Father

About the author

Negritude poet David Mandessi Diop was born in Bordeaux to a Senegalese father and a Cameroonian mother. He lived much of his life in France but also spent significant time in West Africa, where he was a strong supporter of the movement for independence from French colonial rule. He died at the age of 33 in an airplane crash on his way home to France from Dakar.

Diop was educated at the Lycée Marcelin Berthelot in Paris. Influenced by the work of Martinique poet Aimé Césaire, Diop composed poems of political resistance, recalling the power of a free Africa and vividly portraying the oppression of
French colonialist rule. Rejecting assimilation into European culture and rhythms, Diop frequently used colloquial and spoken phrasings patterned with rhythmic repetition. At age 15, Diop began publishing his poems regularly in the literary journal *Présence Africaine*, and five of his poems were featured in Léopold Senghor’s *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésienègre et malgache* (1948). He published only one short book of poems during his lifetime, *Coups de pilon (Pounding)* (1956). *Hammer Blows and Other Writings* (1973, translated and edited by Simon Mpondo and Frank Jones), a posthumous translation, was expanded to include a selection of the poet’s previously uncollected prose.

**Analysis**

It is evident that there is a conflict between the indigenous people and the foreigners. The White Man represents the injustice and subjugation which is trusted upon the African people. The world of the black people is full of humiliation and abuse from the colonials. With the lines in the poem one can establish a series of mental image concerning the events that are being described. The boy in the poem has had his father killed, his mother raped and his brother beaten by the White Man who thinks himself to be superior and to do as he pleases. David Diop through his works not only depict the brutalities and sufferings of their brothers but they also try giving hope to look through the other side and to rejuvenate the traditions and cultures of Africa for her children. The title of the poem also very well depicts the racial discrimination the coloured people had to face. The term White is prominent in the poem from the beginning till the end.
Review Exercise

Answer in one or two sentences:-

According to the poem what does the white man represents?
The boy in the poem faces what all brutalities?
Does the title of the poem have anything to say?

Paragraph questions:-

Can this poem be read as a post colonial poem?
Does this poem give any hope?

Essay question:-

Does this poem question the vulnerability of being Black?

Further reference

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Margaret Atwood: Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing

Feministic Themes

About the Author

Margaret Atwood is a famous writer of novels, short stories and also a poet who is known to have her works to contain themes of feminism: “[her works]… reflect Atwood’s long time interest in feminist issues…” (. It is safe to assume that many of her works reflect feminist themes, but not all of them do contain such themes. Helen of Troy Does Countertop Dancing is a poem which surprisingly alludes to the beautiful Helen of Troy of Homer’s The Iliad. This Helen is living in the modern setting and who has a profession of countertop dancing—which could be plainly translated to girls who work in bars, dancing to the fancy of men (and sometimes, of women) who pay so they can see the glorious bodies of the girls move to the music. This type of job is generally considered degrading by many people, as what was even reflected in the poem: “The world is full of women/ who’d tell me I should be ashamed of myself/ if they had the chance/ Quit dancing/ Get some self-respect/ and a day job” (Atwood, lines1-5). However, the Helen of Troy in the poem defends her profession with such sarcasm (Right/ And minimum wage/ and varicose veins, just standing/ in one place for eight hours/ behind a glass counter, lines 6-9) that it reduces her identity to a state in which she is a poor woman who needs money (but I’ve a choice/ of how, and I’ll take the money, lines 18-19). Determining who the persona of the poem is is
imperative in understanding the poem and the themes contained in it. As the introduction states, this poem contains feminism themes with regard to three things mainly: the female as seen as other females, the female as seen by the males and the female as she sees herself.

The Female As Seen As Other Females

The first stanza of the poem already shows how other women look at the Helen of Troy which was portrayed in the poem. The persona of the poem depicts not only women who do counter-top dancing, but those women in general who are judged by others as to have an inferior or lesser type of profession than them—they look at the women below them with disgust as the lines 1-5 of the poem shows, even stating that the persona “should be ashamed” (line 2) and that she should “Get some self-respect” (line 4). When the female herself is seen by the same gender with such contempt and vehemence, the female’s pride and ego is reduced to fragments—for whom else to better understand her than women who share the same convictions that she does? The unfortunate part here is that the opinion and conviction of women are actually created for them and they are just left to accept those pre-created conclusions. In simple terms, the scenes which the eyes of the woman see are actually eyes of created by the society: “…consider what it means to be a woman,…consider how much of what society has often deemed to be inherently female traits are in fact culturally and socially constructed.

The Female As Seen By The Males

The next stanzas in the poem are full of apparent malice by the persona with regard to how her customers watch her when she dances. Her choice of words in describing the scene
before her is that of pure truth and honesty: “They gaze at me and see/ a chain-saw murder just before it happens/ when thigh, ass, inkblot, crevice, tit, and nipple/ are still connected” (lines 27-30). When the person dances, she is reduced to the judgments of the onlookers, and this is where she is most disgusted—not with herself but with the men who are before her and watching her exquisite body sway to the beat of the music. The last and third stanza of the poem contains the most hurtful words that the persona is feeling; this is where she bares her thoughts, real feelings and emotions to the addressee (the readers). These words, in turn, become a mockery to her existence as a female:

The rest of them would like to watch me and feel nothing. Reduce me to components as in a clock factory or abattoir. Crush out the mystery. Wall me up alive in my own body. They’d like to see through me, but nothing is more opaque than absolute transparency. (lines 68-76) Feminism was all about equality and women empowerment and when the persona is reduced “to components” by the mere judgment of onlookers, obviously then, it hoes against the belief or the cause of feminism.

The Female As She Sees Herself

The third and last theme and part is how a woman sees herself as a woman; again, there were allusions and metaphors on how the persona described herself as a person. She used words such as “naked as a meat sandwich” (line 11). Unfortunately, even if the persona considers herself as a beautiful goddess(“I come from the province of the gods”, line 57 and “You think I’m not a goddess? / Try me”, lines 80-81), it is meet with sarcasm and self-deprecation and judgment. Again, this can be traced to what was cited in Guerin et al., in that
women are fulfilling the “constructed” image that was made for them by society, and it is very well known that majority (if not all) forms of society are actually patriarchal in nature—a male-dominated world. If women see themselves as what the world are letting think who and what they are, then it is but natural that women are reduced to inferiority complex and is considered as the weaker sex and not as an equal. In conclusion, the poem does include feminist themes, which serve as an eye-opener to the things that Atwood wants her readers to know—that women are made into who they are and they do not want to conform to this image. The last line of the poem says it all, that if it continues and if a single person, most especially, the male as so much lays a finger on her—she would be the goddess that she wants to be. Being a goddess literally translates to the role and identity of the woman as a powerful entity, that she can be powerful, authoritative, a brave, courageous and smart person—which, in the end is really the whole point of woman empowerment.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

How does other women look at Helen of troy?

What are the feminism themes with regard to 3 things?

Paragraph questions:-

Is this poem for women empowerment?

What is the sarcasm in the poem?
Essay question

Does this poem mocks women, or the society in general?

Further reading

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Yasmine Gooneratne: There Was A Country

The Poem, "There Was a Country" was written by a Sri Lankan Poet, Yasmine Gooneratne. In this poem, the title itself has a justification. Through the word 'Country', she represents both the Oriental (Eastern, Middle East, Far East, and every other parts of Asia) Countries and Occidental (European and other Western) countries. This poem can be interpreted as a comparison of poems of both the parts of the literary world. It is a mere patriotic poem that explains the qualities of Oriental poetry with aesthetic and heritage sense. She describes that the art of poetry from the place or continent where she belongs to contains the elements that are close to the surface of the native and deep to the every aspect of their life.

She adds, that each passing shower under every fence that made with plants, contains a glittering edge and not a bare stream. Those passing showers are not a flowing stream but it bears finely sieved quality of poems and she calls such art as a happiness in return for the cultivation:
"There was a country where fine poems lay close to the surface. Under every hedge each passing shower would bare a glittering edge.

No Stream but, sifted, yielded poetry".

In the second paragraph, she depicts that the outlet of an emotion expressed by a native poet would have its outcome as a rich art and whatever the emotion may, like romance, merriment or anger. she mentions it through the incident that she kicked a stone, just a stone in irritation and when she accidentally saw beneath, the surface started to shine like a valuable mineral as so rich as it brought a precious moment of creation. Through this stanza, she make the readers to realize that the native poets of oriental region naturally has the power to express their emotions accidentally and effortlessly in a rich and aesthetic way. (Here the poetry subjected to the praise of Gooneratne, are the poetry that came before the Colonization):

"I kicked a stone aside in irritation
and saw its under-surface start to gleam
and there beneath my there waited seams
so rich, the merest movement brought creation."

From the third stanza, she began to analyze the purpose and the value of occidental art of poetry. it is not her kind of blaming them, but the reality. She says that, it is not a same kind of poetry that occurs in western countries. If a poem accidentally occurs, they would say that they have not experienced the poetry yet and they stuck and fall upon the poetry they got accidentally and it would caught in a gross of words that left over certain
adjustments that made those poets as they having the habit of borrowing words. Gooneratne also feels that those poems she mean here must be lying i.e. the lacking in its originality:

"Here is not the same. Though poetry occurs, they say, i have not glimpsed it yet, stumbled upon or caught it in a net of words. I feel that poems here must lie."

She again switch to the native poets of orient countries that they are having the plenty blessings of the muse. However the sorrow preoccupied or entirely swallowed their hearts, they can overcome it through such dozens and twenties of her blessings. she compares the blessing to the mine that can never dry as drive and the poet who received such a blessing would be like a bewildered discoverer who wonders pouring themselves down on paper.

Gooneratne has a serious purpose on writing poetry, as she has the strong Asian grief caused by post colonial effects on Asia and she gives the reference of Sri Lanka in particular. Here she wants the grief or any emotion should be strong enough as it serve as a means to the people to convey the inner feelings. Moreover, she doesn't want to write for popularity.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What is the poem “There was a Country” mainly about?

What does the native poets of oriental region has?
Paragraph question:-

What does she analyse the value and purpose of Occidental art?
Justify the title of the poem?

Essay question:-

What is Gooneratne’s serious purpose on writing poetry?

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Gabriel Garcia Marquez: The Handsomest Drowned Man In The World

About the Author

GABRIAL GARCIA MARQUEZ began writing fiction as a young journalist in Bogota, Colombia, in the late 1940s. His masterpiece, Cien anos de soledad (One Hundred Years of Solitude), received worldwide critical acclaim when it was published, first in Spanish in 1967 and then in translation after 1970. Many of his short stories were written before this novel, but were not published collectively until 1972 or later. Thus, readers and critics were already familiar with his style when they read “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World,” one of the short stories published in Leaf Storm and Other Stories in 1972.

Garcia Marquez, considered by many to be Colombia’s foremost writer, has gained much of his recognition by writing stories that operate on a mythical, almost allegorical, level. “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World” takes this type of storytelling into a realm of the fantastic that seems to have no connection to a particular time or place. Nevertheless, Garcia Marquez has been influenced by his upbringing in a coastal Colombian village during the turbulent 1930s. While drawing direct parallels between specific locations and time periods is possible, the nature of Garcia Marquez’s work is such that
readers can understand his characters not only as inhabitants of a local village but, simultaneously, as universal examples of the human race as well. “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World” has always interested critics, both those who interpret the story as a comment on Colombian history or politics and those who seek more global applications for the lessons the story imparts. Many post-modern writers have shown interest in Garcia Marquez’s work as well. They include Chilean writer Isabelle Allende and American writer Toni Morrison, both of whom have adapted Garcia Marquez’s MAGIC REALISM approach in their own works.

Analysis

"The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" is a 1968 short story by Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez. Set on a summer day in a small coastal village in South America, it concerns the villagers’ reaction to the discovery of a corpse washed up on a beach. Though no one can identify the man, the villagers imagine who he might have been, and give him a ceremony celebrating his life. As they plan, they weave a story about the man’s identity, which grows richer and more complex until he seems animated and belonging to their world. Though Márquez is best known for his novels, the story is widely considered one of his greatest works. Márquez went on to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982."The Handsomest Drowned Man in The World" begins on an ordinary Wednesday morning in the village which is made up of only a handful of wooden buildings. A group of children play on the beach, and discover, among the debris washed up from the previous night, the body of a man. The children begin to bury him in the sand; however, the adult villagers soon discover them, and collectively determine that it is appropriate to give him a funeral. Because they have very little land for
burials, they plan to throw him off the cliff into the sea at the funeral’s conclusion. However, first the men set out to search for any surviving relatives. The women stay behind to prepare the man’s body for his funeral.

Because the man is very tall, they cannot fit him into a house. They wash the mud and seaweed from his face and, discovering that he is extremely handsome, begin to wonder about his marvellous life. An old woman argues confidently that his name can only have been Esteban, and the rest ultimately agree. After failing to dress him in their too-small, spare clothes, they decide to dress him in custom-made clothes so that he looks dignified. As they do so, they lament that he must have had trouble fitting into small houses. In the man, they begin to see reflections of their own husbands, and begin to weep. They then place a handkerchief over his face.

The men return from their search for the man’s family empty-handed, and re-join the funeral preparations. The women decorate Esteban with art facts that have religious meaning, including holy water, nails, and a compass. They imagine that the objects will guide Esteban through the afterlife. Observing this, the men grow angry that the women have grown so attached to the man, whom they still see as a dead body. To show them that he is anything but, the women remove the handkerchief from Esteban’s face. They immediately see in him the same humility and grace that the women saw. The women leave to collect flowers from nearby villages, since their own is only sparsely vegetated. Women from the neighbouring villages trickle in to see Esteban. Eventually, the village becomes so crowded that it is difficult to walk without bumping into people.
The funeral attendees decide that Esteban should not be buried without a family, since no one should be sent off as an “orphan.” From among the village’s favourite men and women, they select for him a mother and a father. Then, they select an entire extended family of cousins, aunts, and uncles, which expands until everyone has a familial connection to Esteban. They decide not to bury him at sea using an anchor; instead, they choose to send him over the cliff without weights, imagining that he might one day return to their village. At the same time, they begin to realize how small their home is in the grand scheme of things, and how spare and destitute it is compared to others.

Finally, Esteban is buried at sea. To accommodate their memory of him and the hope of his return, the villagers decide to widen all of their doorways, paint their houses in bright hues, and cultivate beds of flowers all around the village. The villagers hope that someday, a cruise ship will pass by and that its passengers will smell the aroma of their flowers. They imagine that the captain will gesture to the shoreline and tell the passengers that it was where Esteban once lived. "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World" is centrally about the role of imagination and hope in civilization-building, showing that the well-being of a community depends on how it acts towards those it knows least, and on those it can only imagine.

Themes

Myth and the Human Condition

Beauty and Aesthetics

Review Exercise

Answer in one or two sentences:-
Did the villagers give any name to the drowned man?

With the hope of Esteban’s return what did the villagers do?

Paragraph question: -

How did the villagers give the drowned man a funeral?

How can you evaluate this work as the role of imagination?

Essay question: -

Describe how effectively the technique of magic realism is implied in the work?

Further reference

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Alice Munroe: Voices

About the Author

Canadian writer Alice Munro grew up in Wingham, South West Ontario and has written short fiction since 1950. Her books consist of collections of short stories, and one book which has been published as a novel, although it is actually a set of interlinked stories which falls between the two genres. Her
accessible, moving stories are set in her native Canada, in small, provincial towns like the one in which she grew up, and explore human relationships through ordinary everyday events. Although not necessarily directly autobiographical, they reflect the author's own life experiences, are concerned with women's lives and are 'probably unrivalled in their fullness. Born in 1931 to a farming family, Alice Munro won a scholarship to the University of Western Ontario, where she studied from 1949-1951, but she left before graduating and moved to Vancouver. From 1963 she ran a bookshop in Victoria, British Columbia for several years, before returning to Ontario in 1972. She now lives in Comox, British Columbia and Clinton, Ontario. Her first short story was published in Folio, a student literary magazine, in 1950. During the 1950s and '60s her stories were also accepted for broadcast by CBC and for publication in various journals. Since then many more short stories have been published regularly in prestigious periodicals such as The New Yorker, The Paris Review, and Atlantic Monthly. Fifteen of her earliest stories, many of which have autobiographical elements, were collected in her book, Dance of the Happy Shades (1968 Canada, 1974 UK). In Canada it won the Governor General's Literary Award for Fiction, a success she later repeated with further collections Who Do You think You Are? (1978) and The Progress of Love (1986). Lives of Girls and Women (1973) was intended as a novel, and published as one, but is in fact a collection of interlinked stories. In this book, the narrator Del Jordan explains what she hopes to achieve in writing a work of fiction about small-town life in Ontario. It won a Canadian Booksellers Association Award. Who Do You Think You Are? (1978), published as The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose outside of Canada, chronicles the life of a young woman, Rose, growing up in rural Ontario, the theme of identity being central to the book, and was shortlisted for the 1980 Booker
Prize for Fiction. During 1977-1981, Alice Munro travelled widely, visiting Australia and China. In 1983, *The Moons of Jupiter* was published, containing stories also set in Australia and New Brunswick. This was followed by *Friend of My Youth* (1990), which has an interest in adultery and relationships, and *Open Secrets* (1994), winner of the 1995 WH Smith Literary Award. It contains longer stories, as does *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998). In 2009 she was the winner of the Man Booker International Prize, and she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2013.

**Analysis**

“Voices” is the thirteenth story in Alice Munro’s short story collection *Dear Life*. Though each of the final four stories in *Dear Life* (if not each of the stories in this collection) are reflective pieces, to me “Voices” felt the most like the mind simply wandering in the past, allowed to follow one thought and then leave it for another. When “Voices” begins, it appears that it will deal primarily with the relationship between Alice and her mother. Her mother was never quite happy with her position in society and did her best to appear higher: *She said things like “readily” and “indeed so.” She sounded as if she had grown up in some strange family who always talked that way. And she hadn’t. They didn’t. Out on their farms, my aunts and uncles talked the way everybody else did. And they didn’t like my mother very much, either.* However, as the story progresses, we see it is also about the very beginning of Alice’s emergence from the innocence of childhood to the sexual world. Here, at ten years old, she accompanies her mother to a community dance. There she sees a prostitute. She doesn’t know what a prostitute is yet, but she senses scandal (something she also probably doesn’t comprehend) from the way people, in particular her mother, respond to the prostitute’s presence. They
must leave at once, but the way out is blocked by a crying young woman cry and the two young soldiers who are trying to comfort her, their attention tinged with lust that Alice senses and that remains with her:

Their hands blessed my own skinny thighs and their voices assured me that I, too, was worthy of love.

And while they still inhabited my not yet quite erotic fantasies they were gone. Some, many, gone for good. “Voices” was the weakest piece in this collection. That’s saying something about this collection, though, since “Voices” is still a complicated, troubling piece of work.

Themes

The main themes which are implicit in the story are:

Childhood innocence

Maturity from innocence to reality

Worldly truths

**Review Exercises**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

Does the story have the element of innocence?

Do you think the character of the mother has anything to say?

Paragraph questions: -

Analyse the title of the work?
What is the implication of the prostitute in the story?

Essay question: -

Can the action of dancing and the title of the story has any connection?

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Robyn Davidson: Tracks: One Woman’s Journey Across 1700 Miles of Australian Outbreak

About the Author

Robyn Davidson was born at Stanley Park, a cattle station in Miles, Queensland, the second of two girls. When Robyn was 11 years old, her mother committed suicide, and she was largely raised by her unmarried aunt (her father's sister), Gillian. She went to a girls' boarding school in Brisbane. She received a music scholarship but did not take it up. In Brisbane, Robyn shared a house with biologists and studied zoology. In 1968, aged 18, she went to Sydney and later lived a bohemian life in a Sydney Push household at Paddington, while working as a card-dealer at an illegal gambling house. In 1975, Robyn moved
to Alice Springs in an effort to work with camels for a desert trek she was planning. For two years she trained camels and learned how to survive in the harsh desert. She was peripherally involved in the Aboriginal Land Rights movement.

For some years in the 1980s she was in a relationship with Salman Rushdie, to whom she was introduced by their mutual friend Robyn has moved frequently, and had homes in Sydney, London, and India. As of 2014, she resides in Castle Maine, Victoria, Australia.

Summary

The narrator, a young Australian woman named Robyn Davidson, arrives in the small outback town of Alice Springs with her dog Diggity, a small suitcase, and six dollars. Although she has none of the necessary skills or experience, Davidson plans to find and train a group of camels that she can take with her on a trek across the desert. Davidson finds that anti-Aboriginal racism is rampant in Alice Springs, though she herself doesn’t believe that the Aboriginal people are menacing and unintelligent as everyone says.

Davidson takes a job at the local pub and begins living there. She quickly gets some information about the local men who might be able to help her get camels, but the first one she meets, Sallay Mahomet, turns her away when he sees how inexperienced she is. The third man, Kurt, keeps a meticulous ranch and agrees to let Davidson train with him in exchange for selling her a camel cheaply. Davidson accepts the deal and, although Kurt’s abusive and cruel nature quickly becomes clear, she learns a great deal about handling and training camels under his guidance. She also becomes friends with Kurt’s kind wife Gladdy. Soon thereafter, however, Davidson realizes that she
can’t stand Kurt’s domineering treatment and quits, returning to her job at the pub.

Davidson gets more familiar with the abhorrent racism and sexism of Alice Springs. Kurt tries to convince Davidson to return to his ranch and, after she finds faeces on her pillow, she agrees to go back. This time, Kurt and Davidson get along somewhat better, and she loves getting to know each of the camels and their individual personalities. As time goes on, Davidson becomes friends with a group of people who live nearby in an old house. She relies on her new friends for support as Kurt continues treat her cruelly. One day, Davidson again snaps at Kurt and quits her job. Although she is initially horrified at how much time she has lost without making progress toward getting camels, she is happily surprised when Sallay Mahomet offers her a job and promises to give her two camels in exchange for a few months’ work. With Sallay, she learns much more about camels and gains hope for her trip’s success. However, as the one-year anniversary of her move to Alice Springs approaches, Davidson feels unsure of whether she should continue with such a difficult mission. She goes back to Queensland to visit an old friend, who convinces her that the trip is worthwhile.

Back in Alice Springs, Davidson chooses her two camels from Sallay, selecting a young female named Zeleika and an older female named Kate. Her friends move away and leave her the house to live in until they’re able to sell it, so she settles happily into the routines of living alone. Davidson also meets a neighbour named Ada Baxter, a kind Aboriginal woman with whom Davidson develops a close bond. Davidson also meets two young people, Jenny and Toly, who are involved with Aboriginal rights and become her close friends. Though she is happy to have supportive friends, Davidson begins to feel
despondent again, in part because she still has to work with Kurt sometimes. Through Gladdy, she also gets to know some local Aboriginal children and is depressed by the racist oppression they face. One child, Clivie, ends up getting sent to a reform school despite being smart and capable, and Davidson reflects that the schools and other local systems are totally unequipped to support the Aboriginal communities.

Meanwhile, Davidson worries that she may never actually leave for her trip. Kate has a large wound that has become infected, and though Davidson works with the local vets to treat it, it gets worse. One day, Sallay comes to visit and tells Davidson that Zeleika looks pregnant. Even as she looks forward to the baby camel’s birth, Davidson also sees that Kate will not be able to recover. She shoots Kate to put her out of her misery. Davidson grows more and more depressed, both because of Kate’s death and because of her ongoing fear of Kurt. One night, she even contemplates suicide, but snaps out of it with Gladdy’s help. Gladdy soon leaves Kurt and moves away. Davidson is then even more afraid of Kurt, who now seems completely insane. Suddenly, Kurt leaves, having sold the ranch to some strangers who expect Davidson to help with the camels. As she is showing them how to take care of the camels, a normally sweet young bull named Dookie attacks Davidson and she is barely able to subdue him. Frightened, the new owners sell her Dookie and another bull, Bub, for a cheap price. Davidson is delighted to finally have the three camels she needs for her trip.

Davidson continues to prepare while enjoying her friends. She gets to know her camels better and practices tracking them when they wander away. Then one morning, the camels wander so far that Davidson can’t find them. When she finally does, she takes it as a sign that the trip really is meant to
happen. Soon thereafter, Davidson meets a young photographer named Rick who convinces her to ask National Geographic magazine for funding for her trip. She drunkenly writes them a letter and then forgets all about it. When Zeleika’s baby is born, Davidson names him Goliath and begins training him right away. To prepare for the journey, Davidson arranges to take a practice trek to the town of Utopia several days’ walk away. Along with Jenny and Toly, she makes the journey in terrible heat, discovering along the way how much improvement her packs and supplies need. Davidson spends several weeks in Utopia, completing the final adjustments for the real trip. She starts to worry if it’s right to want to be completely independent on her journey, noticing how much everyone else seems to be invested in it.

Meanwhile, Davidson receives word that National Geographic has accepted her proposal and flies to Sydney with Rick to finalize the contract. Though she is initially delighted, she quickly realizes that being accountable to the magazine and having Rick take pictures will corrupt the purely individual experience she had planned on. Though she feels like a sell-out, she continues with the final preparations back in Alice Springs. Davidson’s father and sister come to visit, and she sets out on the trip at last. She is overcome by the beauty of the desert and her complete solitude, only to find Rick taking pictures with his camera around the next corner.

Once Rick is gone, Davidson relishes being alone and settles into a daily routine focused on caring for the camels, managing the packs, and staying on the schedule she has set for herself. Davidson soon arrives in an Aboriginal settlement, reflecting as she does on the horrors of white colonization. She enjoys getting to know the people there and feels fortified before continuing on toward Ayers Rock, where she will meet up with
Rick again. Along the way, she begins to worry about her own courage and fortitude, especially after losing her temper with Bub and beating him at one point. To cope, Davidson relies on rigid routines and schedules, treating the trip “like a nine-to-five job” and checking her clock frequently.

As she gets closer to Ayers Rock, she notices the tourists and bemoans how out of touch they are with the natural splendour of the stunning desert. She enjoys seeing the Rock, and when she meets up with Rick, is surprised to see that he’s brought Jenny along. Though she is glad of the friendly faces, she also resents their intrusion into her solitude. Seeing Rick’s photos from the start of the trip, she’s also stunned at how different they are from her own lived experience. Davidson continues onward with Rick, continuing to come into conflict with him and feeling like his pictures make her trip less authentic. The two try to work out their differences and manage to become friends. Over time, their relationship becomes sexual as well, although Davidson regrets giving him the chance to become emotionally invested in a trip that she intended to be for her alone.

As Rick and Davidson approach the town of Docker, Dookie falls and injures his leg. Davidson stays in Docker for six weeks while he heals, even flying back to Alice Springs to get veterinary advice at one point. While in Docker, Davidson also has her first experience with wild, aggressive bull camels, which she shoots and kills with help from some Aboriginal men. She’s devastated, but doesn’t know how else to protect herself. Toward the end of her stay in Docker, she attends a traditional Aboriginal dance and is delighted to feel accepted by the women there, but her happiness disappears when she’s asked to pay for participating. Davidson feels that she’ll always be on the outside of Aboriginal culture looking in. Soon after leaving, Davidson
encounters another group of wild bull camels and is again forced to kill them. She continues onward in complete exhaustion, beginning to feel detached from reality. After several days of near-madness, Davidson reaches an old settlement and gets water from the mill there, feeling revived. She sees a herd of wild camels and manages to scare them away without hurting any, feeling inspired by their freedom and beauty.

As Davidson continues, she meets a group of friendly older Aboriginal men and one of them, Eddie, decides to accompany her on the two days’ walk to her next destination, Pipalyatyara. Davidson and Eddie enjoy each other’s company immensely and Davidson reflects that he seems much wiser and more stable than most white people, even though Aboriginal culture is commonly considered primitive. They soon arrive in the settlement of Pipalyatyara and meet Glendle, the white community advisor of the Aboriginal people there. Through Glendle, Davidson learns more about the immense challenges and institutionalized oppression facing Aboriginal communities. At one point, Eddie’s wife comes to visit, and Davidson is struck by how warmly and respectfully he treats her, reflecting on how women actually have a lot of authority in Aboriginal communities. Eddie decides to continue with Davidson to Warburton, 200 miles away.

As they walk, Davidson begins to let go over her previous fixation on schedules and efficiency and instead give in to Eddie’s more relaxed, intuitive relationship with time and progress. He also teaches her to notice the land around her and she feels that she gains a much deeper understanding of the order and balance of nature. Having Eddie around also makes the other Aboriginal people they meet much more open to getting to know Davidson. Throughout, Davidson is impressed by how happy and fun-loving Eddie is, even after having lived a
long and difficult life. When they arrive in Warburton, they meet up with Rick, which causes tension when Eddie doesn’t want to be photographed. Glendle arrives to drive Eddie back home, and the group spends a week in Warburton, with Davidson feeling happier than she has for most of the trip.

Davidson sets off on the last major leg of her journey, during which she will spend about a month completely alone. She revels in her new understanding of the land and spends many days appreciating the landscape, which culminates in a joyful roll in a dustbowl with Diggity and the camels. Afterward, she leaves her clock behind, giving up her wish to impose order on every aspect of the trip. Davidson feels grateful for the lessons she has learned in the desert and hopes she won’t forget them when she returns to so-called civilization. She even manages to fight off a wild bull camel without hurting it. Davidson also shares some of the letters she wrote to friends during this time alone, though she never actually mailed them. The letters express boundless delight and love for the desert, despite its many hardships and dangers.

By now, Davidson feels that she has become completely uncivilized, no longer caring at all about her appearance or how to interact politely with others. She heads for a station called Glenayle, beginning to notice how some parts of the land are overgrazed or otherwise impacted by human interference. She rests for a while at Glenayle with a friendly family, then sets off for a three-week journey to the town of Wiluna, which will mark the end of the solo portion of her trip. Davidson continues to be awed by the landscapes she encounters. She realizes that she has grown immensely as a person since she set out, and feels overcome with joy at the privilege of all she’s learned.
However, just as Davidson feels that she understands her place in the world, her idyll is shattered when Diggity eats a poisoned dingo bait and Davidson is forced to shoot her. After that, Davidson continues walking in a daze. The trip becomes surreal, and she barely notices anything until she stumbles upon a peaceful oasis that she calls “an outback amphitheatre.” Davidson dances wildly there to deal with her grief, working herself into a fatigue that leaves her feeling cleansed. Almost immediately thereafter, she gets close enough to some stations that she encounters cars full of members of the press, who rush around her asking questions and taking pictures. Davidson is horrified by the attention and by the simplistic, sexist idea of her as a quirky “camel lady.”

Rick arrives and helps Davidson deal with the press and introduces her to a local man named Peter Muir who lets them stay in his house outside Wiluna. Jenny and Toly also arrive to hide out with Davidson. She also gets countless letters from strangers who heard about her journey, some strange and others encouraging. After several days in Wiluna and some time spent driving through the country to appreciate what she missed while mourning Diggity, Davidson continues on with Rick toward the town by the sea where her journey will end. The last leg goes mostly smoothly, with the two laughing at the camels’ antics and getting along well. Rick departs for a time and Davidson at last reaches the farm where some acquaintances have agreed to adopt the camels.

With help from the camels’ new owners, Davidson and the camels reach the sea at last, where Rick meets up with them again. Davidson cannot believe that the trip is really coming to an end as she watches the camels play on the beach. She spends a week at the beach with Rick, feeling blissfully contended with the results of her trip, even as she fears returning to the outside
world. Finally, the camels’ new owners arrive to take them back to the farm and Davidson says emotional goodbyes to them. With Rick, Davidson goes to the town of Carnarvon, where she encounters another wave of press waiting for her. At a welcome dinner, Davidson is overcome by despair, wishing to return to the desert and feeling unable to acclimate back into day-to-day life. Thinking back, Davidson reflects that the trip was ultimately easy; the only hard part was simply learning to trust herself and take the first step.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:

From where did Robyn set off her journey?

Who is the photographer Robyn had met?

When was the national geographic article published?

Paragraph questions: -

How would you evaluate this as a woman’s journey?

Why do the aboriginal Australians remember her journey?

Essay question: -

Write an appreciation of the journey.

Further References

https://www.girlgottahike.com/blog/2019/02/20/tracks-by-robyn-davidson

Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka was born in Ijebu Isara, near Akeokuta in western Nigeria, on July 13, 1934. His parents, who were from different Yoruba-speaking ethnic groups, were Christians, but other relatives observed African beliefs and deities. Nigeria was at the time a colony of Great Britain. Soyinka grew up, therefore, with exposure to both Yoruban and Western culture.

At twenty he left Nigeria to attend the University of Leeds in England, a university with a strong drama program. After graduation he joined London’s Royal Court Theatre as a script-reader and then as a writer, and produced his first play, The Swamp Dwellers, there in 1959. The next year Nigeria gained independence. Soyinka returned to his homeland, where the Arts Theatre in Ibadan had begun presenting plays by Nigerian playwrights on Nigerian themes, for Nigerian audiences. Soyinka travelled throughout Nigeria, absorbing all he could of the Yoruba people’s rich oral literature, graphic art, dance, and pageantry. He created plays incorporating traditional Yoruban dance, music, and proverbs with political messages about the need for Nigerians to break free from the influences of Western culture. His third play, A Dance of the Forests (1960), is typical of Soyinka’s early work in several ways: it deals with
conflicts between African and colonial values, it is written in English but includes Yoruban materials, and its first productions featured Soyinka as author, producer, director, and performer. Soyinka has written more than a dozen plays, as well as poetry, criticism, and an autobiography. In 1986 he became the first African writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. The award increased his international stature and widened the audience for his political messages. Within Nigeria, Soyinka is a well-known intellectual and political activist, speaking and writing against government corruption. The government has made its displeasure clear and Soyinka lived in the United States for a few years during the late 1990s after being accused of treason. “Some people think the Nobel Prize makes you bulletproof,” he said in an interview with Ciugu Mwagiru. “I never had that illusion.”

Introduction

Death and the King’s Horseman is considered by many to be among the best of Wole Soyinka’s plays, which number more than a dozen. In awarding Soyinka the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, the Swedish Academy drew special attention to Death and the King’s Horseman and Dance of the Forests (1960) as evidence of his talent for combining Yoruba and European culture into a unique kind of poetic drama. Death and the King’s Horseman play tells the story of Elesin, the king’s horseman, who is expected to commit ritual suicide following the death of the king, but who is distracted from his duty. The story is based on a historical event. In 1946, a royal horseman named Elesin was prevented from committing ritual suicide by the British colonial powers. Soyinka alters the historical facts, placing the responsibility for Elesin’s failure squarely on Elesin’s shoulders, so that he might focus on the theme of duty rather than of colonialism. The play is well
known in the United States, frequently anthologized in textbooks as an example of African drama for students and teachers who are increasingly curious about the literature of other parts of the world. Because of its mingling of Western and Yoruban elements, and because of the universality of its theme of cultural responsibility, Death and the King’s Horseman is seen as a good introduction to African thought and tradition. While it is frequently read, however, the play is seldom performed outside of Africa. Soyinka himself has directed important American productions, in Chicago in 1976 and at Lincoln Center in New York in 1987, but these productions were more admired than loved. Although respected by critics, Soyinka’s plays are challenging for Westerners to perform and to understand, and they have not been popular successes.

Plot Summary

Act I

As Death and the King’s Horseman opens, Elesin Oba walks through a Nigerian village market at the close of the business day. He is followed by an entourage of drummers and praise-singers, and as he makes his way through the market he talks with the praise-singer Olohun-iyo about “the other side” and about the importance of “this day of all days.” Apparently, Elesin Oba is enjoying his last day on earth; at night he will go to join his “great forebears.” The women abandon their work of putting away the goods from their stalls and come to flirt with Elesin, who is obviously a great favorite and well known for his sexual prowess and his many conquests. Much of the dialogue is written in rhythmic free verse.
Elesin dances, and chants the story of the Not-I bird, a bird who fails to fulfill his duty. In an exchange with the crowd, laced with Yoruba proverbs, Elesin promises that when the time comes to fulfill his duty he will not delay. Led by Iyaloja, the mother of the market, the women dress Elesin in their richest cloths and dance around him. Suddenly he is distracted by the sight of a beautiful woman whom he has never seen before. Although she is already engaged to someone else, Elesin demands that he be allowed to take her to bed before he dies. Because Elesin is at the threshold between life and death, he cannot be refused. Iyaloja warns him not to be deterred from his duty, and not to bring trouble on the people who will remain. Then, as the other women prepare the young woman to be Elesin’s bride, Iyaloja leaves to prepare the bridal bed.

Act II

This act occurs during the same evening, at the home of the district officer, Simon Pilkings, a British officer stationed in the British colony of Nigeria. Simon and his wife, Jane, are listening to a tango, dancing in the shadows. Amusa, a Nigerian working for the British as a native administration policeman, arrives and is horrified to see that Simon and Jane are dressed in the clothing traditionally worn for the egungun ceremony, costumes sacred to members of a local religious cult. Simon has confiscated the robes from the cult leaders, and he and Jane plan to wear them to win a prize for best costume at a fancy-dress ball the British are holding that night. Although Amusa is a Muslim and not a part of the cult, he respects the clothes and will not speak to Simon until he has removed them.

Amusa and the house-servant Joseph explain that Elesin will commit ritual suicide that night. The alafin or king of Elesin’s people died one month before, but has not yet been buried.
According to “native law and custom” Elesin, as the king’s chief horseman, must kill himself that night so the king will not be alone. Simon and Jane discuss the foolishness of native belief, and remember proudly that Simon helped Elesin’s oldest son, Olunde, leave the village to attend medical school in England, against his father’s wishes. Simon also reveals a surprise: the prince of England will be at the ball. Although Simon does not care personally what happens to Elesin, he cannot afford to have any trouble while the prince is visiting his district. To prevent Elesin’s death, Simon orders him arrested.

Act III

The third Act returns to the market, where one of the stalls has been converted into a wedding chamber. Amusa and two constables are attempting to arrest Elesin, but the women stand around them hurling insults, claiming that working for the white man has cost Amusa his manhood. The women grab the men’s hats and batons, do a mocking imitation of British officers, and send the men away.

Elesin emerges from the wedding chamber, and shows Iyaloja the stained cloth that proves that the bride was a virgin. As he makes plans for his final moments on earth, he listens to the sound of the ritual drumming; he can tell that the king’s horse and dog have already been killed, and that soon it will be his turn to die. As he listens to the drums, he falls into a state of semi-hypnosis, and begins his passage to the next world. He dances his limbs becoming heavier and heavier, as the praise-singer calls out to him, wishing Elesin could stay.

Act IV

The fourth Act opens at the home of the resident, the British chief officer, as the prince enters the ballroom accompanied by
an orchestra playing “Rule Britannia.” The prince admires Simon and Jane’s egungun attire, and then joins the dancing. Alerted by Amusa, Simon and the resident have a whispered conference in the hallway. Simon tells his superior about the “strange custom” that Elesin will be prevented from carrying out, and the men agree that there must be no trouble while the prince is visiting. Realizing that it is midnight, Simon leaves hurriedly for the marketplace, leaving Jane to enjoy the rest of the ball. As soon as Simon is gone, Elesin’s son Olunde steps from the shadows to speak with Jane. He gently rebukes her for wearing the sacred egungun garments for a trivial purpose. He thinks the British are disrespectful people, but praises the courage British men have shown in fighting the Second World War, which is raging in Europe but almost unnoticed in Nigeria. Olunde needs to speak with Simon, and asks for Jane’s help in finding him. Word reached Olunde in England that the king has died, and Olunde knows that on this night he will be called as oldest son to bury his father. He also knows that Simon will try to prevent Elesin’s suicide, and he wants to stop Simon from making this mistake. He tries to explain to Jane that the tradition is sacred, and that it holds the universe on course even if she and Simon cannot understand it. He can calmly accept his father’s death, because he knows it is necessary.

Simon returns, and Olunde thanks him for not interfering. But there is a commotion outside, and Olunde hears Elesin’s voice. Elesin is alive, shouting accusations at the white men who have brought him shame. Against all propriety, the father and son see each other, something they are forbidden to do once the king is dead. Disgusted by Elesin’s failure, Olunde says, “I have no father” and walks away.
Act V

The final Act is set in Elesin’s prison cell. Simon comments on the peaceful night, but Elesin corrects him, telling him that because the ritual has not been enacted the world will never know peace again. Simon cannot understand the importance of Elesin’s failure, and rejects any suggestion that something is amiss. The two discuss Olunde’s fate. Simon is sure that Olunde will return to England to continue his studies. Elesin is proud that his son, who had seemed to reject his own culture, was man enough to reject him. Iyaloja comes to Elesin, reminding him of her earlier warning. She knows that Elesin, not Simon, is at fault for not carrying out his suicide, because he allowed himself to be distracted by the young woman, and Elesin accepts the blame. Iyaloja reveals that she has brought “a burden”: the body of Olunde, who has killed himself in his father’s place. When he sees his son, Elesin manages to strangle himself with his chains. The bride does her wifely duty, closing Elesin’s eyes with dirt, and then leaves with Iyaloja, who counsels her, “Now forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn.”

Themes

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is a central component of the ritual. Only through Elesin sacrificing himself can the ritual be completed. Of course, Elesin cannot complete this successfully, due to both external and internal circumstances. It is Olunde who makes the ultimate sacrifice by taking his own life so he can fulfill the Yoruba ritual. This foreshadowed in the conversation regarding self-sacrifice between Olunde and Jane, who have very different ideas about the nature of this act. Jane finds the captain's
sacrifice distasteful, but Olunde views it as a life-affirming and heroic act.

Ritual

The central ritual of the text -- the king's horseman dying so he can join his master in the afterlife -- is a fascinating component of Yoruba society, but also functions here as a dying country's last gasp in the face of colonial control and oppression. The ritual is important to the Nigerians in all times and places, but there is special import here in that its success or failure seems to say a lot about the status of resistance to the colonizers. When Elesin is prevented from carrying it out, their world seems pushed off its axis; their traditions and beliefs are deeply wounded. The colonizers, to put it simply, have won. Even though Olunde completes the ritual for his father, there is a sense that there is no going back; this culture's way of life is effectively over.

Colonialism

European imperialism/colonialism is ever-present in the text, lurking heavily in the background of all the events. The English presence in Nigeria is by now well established, but is still rife with instability and conflict. The central events of the text are meant to symbolize the larger conflict: Nigerians do not welcome this foreign regime and prefer to conduct their own affairs, no matter how odd and "uncivilized" they seem to the English, but the English believe their role there is positive and necessary, for while they are not only growing rich from their colonial empire, they are supposedly bringing light and progress to the benighted people of Nigeria.
Duty

Elesin and Pilkings represent two differing views on duty, which they both claim to prize highly. Elesin's duty is to perform the sacred ritual that he was meant to. It means dying for his people, and dying in the appropriate fashion. Pilkings's duty is to enforce the laws of the English colonial empire in Africa, which means not allowing the supposedly "barbaric" customs like the king's horseman ritual to continue. He believes he is doing something positive by preventing this ritual; he is saving Elesin's life as well as not allowing the colony to remain uncivilized. Unfortunately, the duties of both men conflict mightily with each other, and this conflict leads to the tragedies of the last act of the play.

Life and Death

Life and death, and the relationship between the two, permeate the text. The entire ritual is concerned with the passage from one state into another, and Elesin's great failure is that he cannot properly make that journey. For those of the Yoruba ritual, death is merely another state in which one can exist, and are cycles interwoven with each other. The Europeans are also concerned with life and death, but their perspective on it is different: life is sacred, death is frightening and has no greater significance other than it must come eventually -- but through God's timing, not man's.

Gender

Although it does not play as major a role as the other themes, gender nevertheless is an important component of the text.
Soyinka has several things to say about gender. On the one hand, the women and girls of the marketplace, particularly Iyaloja, seem to have a great deal of power: their voices are loud and forceful. However, the Bride is completely mute and is more or less an object that is given to Elesin to appease him. She is a cipher who demonstrates how little power Nigerian women can possess. Jane, on the other hand, who represents European women, may seem to have a bit more power than her Nigerian counterparts, as she is able to talk freely with her husband about their various affairs and role in the colony. She does not hesitate to offer her opinion; however, Pilkings's responses to such utterances are telling. He often puts her down and yells at her, revealing his misogyny. Jane may be loud, as Elesin notes, but that is where her voice stops.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences:-

What is the main action described in the play?

Why did the drums resound in the distance?

Paragraph questions: -

Analyse the title?

What is the ritual described in the work and it’s consequences?

Essay question: -

Detail the main storyline of the play?
Further Reading

https://journals.openedition.org › esa

https://journals.sagepub.com › doi › abs

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Eugene O’ Neil : Long Day’s Journey Into Night

About the Author

Although Eugene O’Neill had completed Long Day’s Journey into Night by 1941, it was not produced until 1956, three years after his death. He had originally stipulated that it was not to be produced or published until twenty-five years after he died. However, before his death he gave verbal permission to the Royal Dramatic Theatre to stage it in Stockholm, Sweden, a country that had accorded him a special loyalty throughout his career.

The Stockholm production, which opened on February 10, 1956, was very successful and prompted wide interest in the play. Nine months later, on November 7, the play opened to mixed but mostly favourable reviews at the HELEN HAYES Theatre in New York. Featured in the cast were Frederic March as James Tyrone, Florence Eldridge as Mary, Jason Robards, Jr. as Jamie, Bradford Dilman as Edmund, and Katherine Ross as Cathleen. Jose Quintero both produced and directed the play.

Carlotta O’Neill, the playwright’s widow, saw to the play’s publication in the same year. In 1955 she had copyrighted the work as an unpublished play, and in the following year she asked Random House publish it. The editors declined, even
though they held a sealed copy of the script that O’Neill had originally deposited with them. Mrs. O’Neill then offered the publication rights to the Yale Library, which arranged its release through the YALE UNIVERSITY Press with the provision that the play royalties would be used to endow the Eugene O’Neill Memorial Fund at the Yale School of Drama. The published work met with great critical acclaim and won for O’Neill a fourth Pulitzer Prize.

## Plot Summary

*Long Day’s Journey into Night* is set in the living room of the Tyrone’s shoreline summer home in New London, Connecticut, in August of 1912. The play begins in the morning and ends late at night on the same day.

The work is divided into four acts. It largely consists of painful disclosures and acrimonious exchanges among the four family members, as major crises mount and finally engulf the family in despair. Of central concern are Mary’s relapse into morphine addiction, Jamie’s continued descent into irreversible dissipation, and Edmund’s grim discovery that he has tuberculosis and must enter a sanatorium.

## Act One

The play, which opens just after breakfast, begins on a hopeful note, evident in the affectionate exchange between James and Mary Tyrone, but it is clear that Mary is being carefully watched by her family. Neither her morphine addiction nor Edmund’s obvious ill health are honestly discussed. Instead, the characters fence around the truth with evasive banter, though, at times, resentment and disappointment surface. Tyrone upbraids Jamie, his eldest son, for encouraging Edmund, the younger son, to follow in Jamie’s dissolute footsteps. Jamie, ever critical of
“the OLD MAN,” in turn derides Tyrone as a miser, ultimately to blame for Mary’s addiction and Edmund’s ill health because of his penny-pinching reluctance to pay for competent doctors. To die father and sons, it becomes obvious that Mary is growing unstable, but she blames her edginess on a lack of sleep caused by Tyrone’s snoring and the foggish that sounded throughout the previous night. After the men leave to take up outside chores, Mary sinks into an armchair, clearly in a state of nervous agitation that threatens the last vestiges of her self-control.

**Act Two, Scene One**

The scene opens just before lunch. Edmund and Jamie sneak some of their father’s whiskey and men resort to Jamie’s usual trick of watering the remaining whiskey to disguise their actions. Their discussion shifts from Edmund’s health to their fears about their mother, and Jamie grows distraught because Edmund has let Mary stay upstairs by herself. When she enters, it is evident to both of mem that she has succumbed to the drug; smashing their hopes that she had finally shaken herself free of it. Jamie’s sneering remarks about his father anger Mary, who excuses her husband’s stinginess as the result of his hard life. She also fends off Jamie’s insinuation that she has lapsed into her addiction again. Tyrone enters, and he soon realizes what has happened. After his sons exit for lunch, he remains behind with Mary, angry and defeated by her condition.

**Act Two, Scene Two**

The family returns to the living room after lunch. A telephone call from Dr. Hardy confirms the diagnosis of Edmund’s sickness as tuberculosis. Edmund must keep an afternoon appointment with Hardy. Although the full truth remains hidden from Mary, her verbal attack on Hardy indicates that she knows
that Edmund suffers from more than “a summer cold.” She leaves to go upstairs, and it is clear to the rest that she is going to use more morphine. The father-son recriminations begin again, with Tyrone accusing both Jamie and Edmund of abandoning their Catholic faith to embrace damning alternatives: in Jamie’s case, degeneracy, and in Edmund’s, a gloomy and self-destructive philosophy. Edmund leaves and Jamie warns his father not to put Edmund in a second-rate sanatorium, prone as he is to look for the cheapest way out. Mary returns and, left alone with Tyrone complains about her loneliness and Tyrone’s tight-fisted failure to provide a real home. She bitterly blames Tyrone’s lifestyle for past disasters, including her difficult birthing of Edmund and postpartum pain, then begins to drift into the solace of her romanticized past, when she was in a convent school planning to become a nun or a concert pianist. Edmund returns and pleads with her to stop taking the morphine, but it is clearly to no avail. She can only try to make him stop blaming himself for her renewed addiction.

Act Three

It is early evening, and Mary has sunk further into her drug-induced detachment from reality, which, like the gathering fog outside, “hides you from the world.” She is alone with Cathleen, the servant who had accompanied her on her automobile ride into town to obtain more morphine. She confides in the girl, treating her like a childhood friend while plying her with Tyrone’s whiskey. She tells the servant about her early hopes and her romanticized first impressions of Tyrone. After Cathleen leaves to resume her duties, Tyrone and Edmund enter. Both have been drinking and continue to imbibe while Mary drifts through a reverie on Jamie’s alcoholism, her early married life on the itinerant hotel-hopping theatre circuit, and her expensive satin wedding gown. When Tyrone leaves to fetch another bottle
of whiskey, Edmund tries to tell his mother that he must enter a sanatorium, but she refuses to accept the truth, which, because her own father had died of consumption, she fears is a virtual death sentence. He voices wounding regret that he has “a dope fiend for a mother,” but is immediately contrite and hurries away. The act ends in a confrontation between Mary and Tyrone over Edmund’s condition. Mary refuses to eat dinner, claiming she is tired, and Tyrone then accuses her of slipping off to “take more of that God-damned poison.”

**Act Four**

It is around midnight. Tyrone, morose and almost lost in an alcoholic stupor, awkwardly attempts to play solitaire. Edmund enters, also drunk, and is immediately accused of “burning up money” by leaving the lights on behind him. Edmund attempts to defy his father, and is quick to defend his brother against his father’s ritual complaints about Jamie’s debauchery. Edmund then launches into a self-pitying conceit about being “a ghost within a ghost,” a soul lost in the comfort of the fog. His father only finds him morbid. Edmund continues, reciting depressing poetry and fuelling his father’s anger. They begin to play Casino, but they are constantly distracted from the cards by their concern for Jamie and their fear that Mary will get up and come downstairs. They also continue to drink, reflect on their lives, and trade a mixture of recriminations and affectionate concerns for each other. They discuss Mary and her romantic distortions of the truth about her earlier life in the convent and her father’s wealth. Edmund then takes up Jamie’s theme of Tyrone’s stinginess, evident in Tyrone’s effort to find an inexpensive sanatorium for Edmund. Tyrone offers his familiar excuse, arguing that his family poverty and experience as a child labourer instilled in him a desperate fear of the poor house, turning him into “a stinking old miser.” He reveals his own deep
regret that his fears led him to sacrifice his acting talent for a fixed but secure and very lucrative role in a popular melodrama. Edmund, in his turn, laments the loss of hope found in rare moments at sea, where life, however briefly, seemed to hold some meaning.

Jamie, drunk, lurches through the house and into the room as Tyrone, to avoid a confrontation, retires to the side porch. After recounting his adventure with Fat Violet in a local brothel, Jamie begins a painful confession in which he claims that his bitter resentment towards Edmund has caused him to try to drag Edmund into his own moral quicksand and turn him into a bum. He admits to having been jealous of Edmund and holding him responsible for Mary’s addiction. His love for his kid brother, though stronger than the hate, will not stop him from wanting to see Edmund fail.

When Jamie seems to fall asleep, Tyrone returns and begins his litany of complaints about his oldest son, but he is interrupted when Jamie starts up and begins returning fire with caustic, sneering innuendos.

The men, worn down by drink and a lack of sleep, soon begin to doze, but they quickly grow alert when they hear the piano begin a badly rendered Chopin waltz in a nearby room. Mary, carrying her wedding gown on her arm, then makes the entrance the men have dreaded. She is obviously in a narcotic-induced trance, barely aware of her surroundings. She begins a detached and vacant reverie on her childhood dreams and hopes. The men remain immobilized, making only feeble attempts to break through to her, vainly reciting lines of verse that underscore the helplessness of their situation. Mary’s reverie continues as the men sit quietly in their chairs and an indifferent curtain finally descends.
Themes
Alienation and Loneliness
Deception
God and Religion
Guilt and Innocence
Loyalty
Memory and Reminiscence
Moral Corruption

Review Exercise

Answer in one or two sentences: -
Where is the play set in?
Why did Mary detach from reality?

Paragraph questions:-
Write a character sketch of Mary?
Compare the characters of Mary and Edmund?

Essay question: -
Can the play be considered as a tragedy, if yes how?

Further reference
https://www.researchgate.net › publication › 319536184___
https://www.grin.com › document
https://www.jstor.org › stable
Marc Forster's "The Kite Runner," based on a much-loved novel, is a movie like that. It superimposes human faces and a historical context on the tragic images of war from Afghanistan. The story begins with boys flying kites. It is the city of Kabul in 1978, before the Russians, the Taliban, the Americans and the anarchy. Amir (Zekiria Ebrahimi) joins with countless other boys in filling the sky with kites; sometimes they dance on the rooftops while duelling, trying to cut other kite strings with their own. Amir's friend is Hassan (Ahmad Khan Mahmoodzada), the son of the family's long time servant Ali, who has been with them for years and has become like family himself. Hassan is the best kite runner in the neighbourhood, correctly predicting when a kite will return to earth and waiting there to retrieve it. The boys live in a healthy, vibrant city, not yet touched by war. Amir's father, Baba (Homayoun Ershadi), is an intellectual and secularist who has no use for the mullahs. Baba, whose kindly eyes are benevolent, loves both boys. There is a neighbourhood bully named Assef, jealous of Amir's kite, his skills and his kite runner. On a day that will shape the course of many lives, he and his gang track down Hassan, attack him and rape him. Amir arrives to see the assault taking place, and to his shame, sneaks away. Then a curious chemistry takes place. Amir feels so guilty about Hassan that his feelings transform into anger, and he tries insulting his friend, even throwing ripe
fruit at him, but Hassan is impassive. Then Amir tries to plant evidence to make Hassan seem like a thief, but even after Hassan (untruthfully and masochistically) confesses, Baba forgives him. It is Hassan's father, Ali, who insists he and his son must leave the home, over Baba's protests.

The film has opened with the modern-day Amir, now living in San Francisco, receiving a telephone call from Rahim Khan: "You should come home. There is a way to be good again." Then commences a remarkable series of old memories and new realities, of the present trying to heal the wounds of the past, of an adult trying to repair the damage he set in motion as a boy. For if he had not lied about Hassan, they would all be together in San Francisco and the telephone call would not have been necessary. Working from Khaled Hosseini's best seller, Forster and his screenwriter David Benioff have made a film that sidesteps the emotional disconnects we often feel when a story moves between past and present. This is all the same story, interlaced with the fabric of these lives. There is also a touching sequence as Amir and his father, now older and ill, meet a once-powerful Afghan general and his daughter Soraya (Atossa Leoni). For Amir and Soraya, it is instant love, but protocol must be observed, and one of the movie's warmest scenes involves the two old men discussing the future of their children. To mention once again the eyes, indeed the whole face, of the actor Homayoun Ershadi, as Amir's father; here is a face so deeply good, it is difficult to imagine it reflecting unworthy feelings. What happens back in Afghanistan (and Pakistan) in the year 2000 need not be revealed here, but the scenes combine great suspense with deep emotion. One emblematic moment: A soccer game where the audience, all men and all oddly silent, is watched by guards with rifles. The film works so deeply on the self because one has been so absorbed by its story, by its destinies, by the way these individuals become so important that
we are forced to stop thinking of "Afghans" as simply a category of body counts on the news. The movie is acted largely in English, although many (subtitled) scenes are in Dari, which is an Afghan dialect of Farsi, or Persian.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences: -

Which is the city mentioned in the story?

What did the two old men discuss?

Paragraph questions: -

Does the story comment anything about the tragic elements of war?

What do you think the kite represents?

Essay question:-

Does the story have any elements of friendship?

Further Reading


"Embrace of the Serpent" is a drama about the effect of European colonialism on the Amazon. Shot along the border of Colombia and Brazil, it unfolds in two different historical periods, and features a script developed in consultation with native tribes. And yet it can't quite seem to get out of its own way. It is intelligent and sensitive and assembled with a great care, and worth watching just for its images of the jungle, which is often seen from the points-of-view of a canoe gliding across misty water, or a party of explorers moving through thickets of gnarled trees and shrubs. But this film from Colombian writer-director Ciro Guerra seems aversive to letting a mysterious image or poetic moment linger onscreen, and in the mind, without instantly using it as a springboard to talk about the conflict between whites and the natives they're exploiting (even when the whites are scientists who fancy themselves more enlightened than the typical industrialist or soldier). There is nothing hugely wrong with the movie, but also nothing amazing about it—aside from the mere fact of its existence, of course, which is nothing to sneeze at. Shooting a feature on location in the jungle is no joke, as the jungle waters are filled with snakes, some constricting and others poisonous, and the likelihood of contracting some horrible disease or perishing in an accident must've weighed on the crew's mind. Around each new river bend is a metaphor, a fact that Guerra understands and isn't shy about exploiting. The film's opening credits play out over shots of a immense anaconda giving birth to baby snakes, a sequence with heavy Biblical overtones that works equally well as an analogy for colonialism (one era's invasions of the Garden of Eden inevitably giving birth to another's) or for the resilience of the land and its people. But despite this image and many others like it, the movie never becomes particularly visionary, much
less trippy. It's an earthbound, prosaic story that plays by most of the usual commercial storytelling rules.

The movie's two major white characters are loosely based on real individuals. One is the German ethnologist Theodor Koch-Grunenberg, who in the early 20th century explored the Yapura River and the Rio Negro to the border with Venezuela. The other is the American psychedelic researcher and botanist Richard Evans Schultes, who studied Amazonian ethno-botany in the 1940s. The earlier researcher is named Theo here, and played by Jan Bijvoet of Borgman. He arrives in the story suffering from malaria and requiring home grown medicine and a certain amount of nursing and hand-holding. The other character has been named Evan (Brionna Davis), an American who is searching for a plant called yakruna, which grows on rubber plants and improves their quality; he seems to be retracing Theo's route, and even has some of his journals in a knapsack.

The connective tissue between eras is the character of Karamakate, the last of the Cohiuano. The character is played as a young man by Nilbio Torres and as an older man by Antonio Bolivar. The filmmakers might as well have scored portions of the movie with The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again," because that's the core struggle of Karamakate, who has good reason to believe that no good can come from helping white men, but relents when Evan shows up with his horn-rimmed glasses and gentle demeanour.

Guerra has a great ear for the self-justifying and delusional presentations of both Theo and Evan. He shows us how their politeness and curiosity—compared to that of other Europeans, anyway—keep even the most Sceptical natives from rejecting them out-of-hand. (Karamakate's first words to Theo are "Go
away," but he ends up spending the entire movie in his company.)

We also see how quickly detente can sour, and how paternalistic and ignorant Western attitudes towards natives can be. There's a scene early on where the militant Karamakate blasts Theo's river guide, Manduca (Yauenkü Migue), because his tribe "submitted to the whites without a fight," and we are immediately primed for a betrayal. Then there's a charming scene where Theo and Manduca entertain some of Manduca's fellow villagers by performing a song and dance in their dialect around a campfire, and you can feel both the village's parents and children warming to the European; but the next morning, when he realizes they took his compass, he turns surly and condescending, telling Karamakate that they've been navigating by the sun and stars for thousands of years, and "...if they learn how to use a compass, that knowledge will be lost." "You cannot forbid them to learn," Karamakate says. "Knowledge belongs to all men."

There are sharp observations about the materialism and vanity of the Europeans (Theo insists on carrying all of his research with him in trunks and knapsacks, even when clambering over rocks alongside a river), moments of appalling but historically appropriate violence and terror, and many uncomfortable moments of interaction between the younger and elder versions of Karamakate and the would-be explorers who need his help. But the movie can't seem to leave well enough alone. It can't just show Theo in denial about his inability to let go of his possessions, it has to have Karamakate diagnose his condition in so many words. It can't let us grasp the magnitude of the older Karamakate's loneliness now that he's lost his culture; it has to orient it around a vast chalk mural that he's drawn even though he can't remember what the symbols refer to
anymore, and have him discuss his condition at some length with Evan.

This sort of thing is frustrating because in every other way, the movie is original in concept, remarkable in execution, and filled with characters whose motivations and personalities are developed with clarity and humour.

**Review Exercise**

Answer in one or two sentences: -

What is the story all about?

Paragraph question: -

Comment on the title?

Is there any conflict between the natives and the colonizer?

Essay question: -

Write a character sketch of Theo?

Further Reading
