# Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

*DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION*

*TIRUNELVELI - 627 012, TAMILNADU*

## M.A. ENGLISH (THIRD SEMESTER)

# Post-colonial Literature

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# Post-colonial Literature

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# UNIT I

## Key Concepts:

- ## Centre/Margin (Periphery)

Emerging in the 1990s, the concept of Centre-Periphery, grounded in hierarchical structure, is a post-colonial concept that positions colonizers at the 'center,' serving as the primary cultural, political, and civilizational authority in imperial endeavors, with the colonies viewed as the 'periphery.' The concept of duality comparing opposing concepts is crucial for examining both colonial and global contexts. This approach affects how we view relationships and spaces, particularly in terms of power relationship and influence. It emphasizes the distinction between where power is dominant (the center) and those that lack it (the periphery). The separation between the core and the periphery, represents an authentic control of 'power' through language and order, while the margins of the colonial realm exist in a state where power is illusory and disorder prevails.

The conception of the center as a permanent and unwavering focal point is continually questioned in post-colonial literature, where the center of order often reveals itself as the ultimate disorder. This understanding signifies both a profound rebellion and a revealing truth. There is no absolute reality. Marginality arises from its relationship with a dominant center, a form of 'Othering' perpetuated by imperial forces. However, dismantling this center does not create a new center of identity; instead, it embraces marginality as a crucial aspect of social experience. As Anna Klobucka points out, the concepts of center and periphery are "shifting and problematic." The conventional understanding of the "centre" includes attributes like authority, vitality, and progress, while the "periphery" is often linked to negative qualities such as exploitation and oppression. Contemporary debates strive to reinterpret the periphery as a site for subversion and potential liberation. An increasing exploration of European peripheral regions in postcolonial literature reveals the importance of shifting the analytical lens from colonial strongholds to these marginalized areas. This transition showcases how the literary imagination of these peripheries creatively engages with the concept of center/periphery dichotomy as intertwined and co-dependent.

- **Dislocation**

Dislocation can originate from several circumstances, such as migration, the painful experience of enslavement, involuntary transportation, or voluntary removal for indentured work. The dialectic of place and dislocation is a recurring theme in post-colonial societies, which can be formed through settlement, intervention, or both. Despite their diverse historical and cultural backgrounds, issues of place, dislocation, and a shared anxiety regarding identity and authenticity are common across all English-language post-colonial literatures. The entire contemporary population has experienced a sense of displacement and "exile," originating from Africa, India, China, the Middle East, and Europe. The West Indian experience exemplifies the most violent and destructive impacts of colonialism. All West Indians have been displaced, similar to populations in settler colonies. For those of African descent, this displacement included the horrors of enslavement, while for others, including Indian and Chinese groups, it resulted from the somewhat less violent disruptions of the subsequent system of indentured labor. As seen in India and Africa, the dominant imperial culture and language were favored over indigenous customs. The state of being without a place is marked by feelings of loss, uncertainty, and a strong desire to return to a home. The longingness encompasses an idealization of the ancestral home, a collective pride, and a desire for return.

Displacement is a central theme in post-colonial literature, reflecting its extensive impact on individual psyches and their societies. While post-colonial subjects strive to navigate the realities of their displacement, they also find opportunities for advancement. Displacement occurs in two phases: physical and psychological. Post-colonial writers address both aspects to illustrate the struggles of their subjects. Physical displacement forces individuals into alien lands, leading to psychological alienation. For many Africans, this physical displacement caused immense suffering and led to a fractured sense of identity. Cultural displacement was pronounced, often propagated through education, literature, and governance. Indians generally experienced more psychological dislocation than physical displacement. As individuals from previously colonized regions, post-colonial writers and others express a desire to inhabit the center—the domain of the colonizers. Despite achieving freedom from colonial domination, they often adopt Western cultural norms, ideologies, education, languages, and lifestyles to integrate into that world. This pursuit fosters both psychological and physical dislocation within post-colonial societies. In their aspiration to

embody Western ideals, many individuals overlook their own cultural heritage, leading to a gradual detachment from their native identities. Consequently, they risk losing their inherent identities in their quest for the allure and perceived superiority exemplified by their former colonizers. They strive to create new identities that reject their ancestral ones, perpetuating their dislocation. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin highlight that a primary focus of post-colonial literature is the exploration of place and dislocation, which gives rise to a unique identity crisis: the need to establish or reclaim a meaningful relationship between self and place. Dislocation may erode a valid sense of self, resulting from migration, experiences of enslavement, forced relocation, or voluntary indentured labor. It can also arise from cultural denigration, characterized by the conscious and unconscious oppression of indigenous identities by those who regard themselves as superior in racial or cultural terms.

- ## Ecological Imperialism

In his influential book, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe* (1986), Alfred Crosby develops the theory of "Ecological Imperialism," which argues that colonization was both a cultural and political oppression as well as an environmental assault. Ecological imperialism serves to reinforce an anthropocentric ideology that legitimizes Western domination over the natural resources of colonized lands. The term "ecological imperialism" involves the deliberate destruction and exploitation of natural resources in colonized lands for scientific and economic gain. Primarily a British endeavor, it represents a systematic reworking of local ecosystems for the benefit of the colonizers. John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark note that this exploitation robbed colonized areas of their resources and was often accompanied by violence against indigenous people, leading to severe environmental degradation that threatens all forms of life, including humans. Colonial practices, such as farming and deforestation, altered natural energy flows and disrupted ecological systems. As a result, many native species faced extinction, showcasing the harmful effects of biological expansion. Europeans assert demographic control rapidly, introducing non-native species and pathogens that disrupted local ecosystems. Europeans assert demographic control rapidly, introducing non-native species and pathogens that disrupted local ecosystems. Ecological imperialism transformed nature into a mere commodity, leading to extensive damage to local ecosystems and the marginalization of indigenous peoples.

In postcolonial discourse, ecological imperialism is crucial for understanding the lingering effects of colonialism in today's world. Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) is a significant contribution in understanding the key elements of ecological imperialism. Nixon's concept of "slow violence" highlights the gradual, often unnoticed environmental destruction that disproportionately affects marginalized communities. This exploitation is not a mere by-product of colonization but a core component of the imperialist mission, reflecting unequal power dynamics that subordinate both the environment and indigenous knowledge to colonial interests.

- ## Eurocentrism

Eurocentrism focuses on European culture, values, and history, often sidelining other civilizations. It assumes that European civilization is superior and represents the height of progress and reason. The idea of Eurocentrism is shaped by history, especially growing stronger during the Renaissance and into the nineteenth century. Eurocentrism is a misleading conception created by Western capitalism, which views European culture as the most advanced and historically valid. This belief in Euro-exceptionalism claims that modernity and progress are exclusively European, often ignoring the darker parts of European history, like colonial violence and the slave trade, while celebrating European achievements. Additionally, Eurocentrism creates a clear division between Europe and other cultures, portraying Europe as civilized and others as primitive. This view often ignores the real economic and social conditions that contributed to European wealth, instead attributing it to cultural superiority. In social sciences, influential thinkers like Marx and Weber have been criticized for treating Western experiences as universal truths, which reinforces this ethnocentric perspective. Eurocentrism offers a skewed view of history that diminishes the significance of non-European cultures and achievements. It promotes the false idea that European culture is the standard for all, undermining the diverse histories around the world and fostering a sense of cultural inferiority among non-European societies.

Eurocentrism emphasizes the predominance of European culture, history, and values in shaping global perspectives, particularly within the framework of colonialism. In reaction to the enduring consequences of colonial rule, post-colonial political theory has arisen to question and

dismantle Eurocentric narratives and power dynamics. This viewpoint often interprets the histories and cultures of non-European societies through a Western lens, characterized by several defining traits:

1. It often dismisses or undervalues non-European societies, perceiving them as inferior to Western cultures.
2. It tends to overlook or minimize the contributions and advancements within Asian or African societies, frequently depicting their histories as mere offshoots of European expansion and civilization.

Eurocentrism is a perspective shaped by the dominance of Western capitalism, asserting that European culture represents the most distinctive and advanced expression of historical development. Eurocentrism operates under the assumption that the trajectory of history is primarily defined by European experiences, thereby marginalizing the rich diversity of global cultures and their histories. It distorts historical understanding by elevating European culture above others, promoting an incomplete and biased perspective on the shared human experience.

- ## Hegemony

Hegemony refers to the ability of the ruling class to persuade other social classes that their interests align with those of the wider society. This influence extends beyond mere economic and political control, encompassing more subtle mechanisms like the control of education and media. The Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci developed and popularized this concept. He uses “hegemony” to describe not only the conditions necessary for the proletariat and its allies to successfully challenge the bourgeoisie but also to analyze the structures of bourgeois power in late 19th- and early 20th-century Western Europe. This form of domination is not exercised through force or overt coercion, but rather through a more nuanced and pervasive influence over economic structures and state mechanisms, such as education and media. Williams emphasizes several key points about hegemony:

- Hegemony shapes lived experiences, creating a sense of reality for most members of society that feels absolute and is difficult to transcend.

- It goes beyond ideology, refusing to reduce consciousness to a formal system that can be easily defined as ideology.
- Lived hegemony is a dynamic process, not a static system, though it can be analyzed as such.
- Hegemony is not merely passive; it must be continually renewed, defended, and adapted in response to ongoing resistance and challenges.
- One of its main functions is to neutralize opposition, effectively managing or even co-opting alternative viewpoints and movements. The dominant culture simultaneously produces and constrains its own counter-culture.
- Hegemony is not all-encompassing; it is misleading to reduce all cultural and political efforts to its framework, as genuine breaks and shifts can and do occur both within and beyond it.

Hegemony plays a crucial role because the ability to shape the thoughts and beliefs of the colonized is the most enduring and powerful aspect of imperial dominance. An empire, therefore, is characterized not merely by the forceful control of subject states, but by the effectiveness of its cultural hegemony. Consent is cultivated through the interpellation of colonized individuals by imperial discourse, leading them to accept Eurocentric values, beliefs, and norms as the most natural and desirable. As a result, the colonized individuals come to see themselves as secondary to these Eurocentric ideals while simultaneously recognizing their centrality. This internalization reinforces the power dynamics at play, illustrating how hegemony operates not just through coercion, but through the shaping of identities and worldviews in ways that serve the interests of the dominant class.

# UNIT II - Poetry

## Kofi Awonoor

## About the poet:

Kofi Awoonor, born on March 13, 1935, in Wheta, Ghana. He initially wrote under the name George Awoonor-Williams. He attended Achimota Secondary School and later the University of Ghana, Legon. His educational journey continued in London and at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he earned his Ph. D. in Comparative Literature in 1972. After completing his doctorate, Awoonor chaired the Department of Comparative Literature at Stony Brook University and also taught at the University of Texas. Awoonor's poetry reflects a deep connection to traditional Ewe culture, emphasizing metaphorical intensity and rhetorical strength. His notable poetry collections include *Rediscovery and Other Poems* (1964), *Night of My Blood* (1971), *Ride Me, Memory* (1973), *The House by the Sea* (1978), and *Until the Morning After* (1987), showcasing his prolific writing career. He served as the editor of *Okyeame* and as an associate editor for *Transition Magazine*, contributing to the literary discourse and fostering new voices in African literature. Awoonor's writings and translations contributed significantly to the understanding and appreciation of African culture and literature.

## Kofi Awonoor – "Easter Dawn"

## Text

That man died in Jerusalem
And his death demands dawn marcher
From year to year to the sound of bells.
The hymns flow through the mornings
Heard on Calvary this dawn.
the gods are crying, my father's gods are crying
for a burial - for a final ritual -
but they that should build the fallen shrines
have joined the dawn marchers
singing their way towards Gethsemane

where the tear drops of agony still freshen the cactus.
He has risen! Christ has risen!
the gods cried again from the hut in me
asking why that prostration has gone unheeded.
The marchers sang of the resurrection
That concerned the hillock of Calvary
Where the ground at the foot of the cross is level.
the gods cried, shedding clayey tears on the calico
the drink offering had dried up in the harmattan the cola-nut is shriveled the yam feast has been eaten by mice
and the fetish priest is dressing for the Easter service.
The resurrection hymns come to me from afar
touching my insides.
Then the gods cried loudest
Challenging the hymners.
They seized their gongs and drums
And marched behind the dawn marchers
Seeking their Calvary
Seeking their tombstone
And those who refused to replace them
In the appropriate season.

## Summary

"Easter Dawn" by Kofi Awoonor is a reflective poem that intertwines themes of Christianity and African traditional beliefs, highlighting the tension between cultural identity and the influence of Western religion. The poem centers on the significance of Christ's death and resurrection while simultaneously lamenting the abandonment of traditional African gods and rituals.

The poem opens with the line "That man died in Jerusalem," referring to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The speaker observes the annual rituals commemorating Christ's death, marked by hymns and the sound of bells at dawn. As these hymns are heard, the speaker connects this with the scene at Calvary, emphasizing that Christ has risen, signaling the importance of the Christian resurrection story. However, the speaker's father's gods are weeping, mourning the neglect of traditional African customs and rituals. The gods cry for their shrines, which have been abandoned, as those who should have maintained them have instead joined the Christian marchers, singing on their way to Gethsemane, where Christ suffered. The gods lament that their once-vibrant traditions have been disregarded.

The poem moves on to describe how traditional offerings—such as yam feasts and drink offerings—have dried up or been consumed by animals. The fetish priest, symbolizing the old ways, is ironically preparing to attend the Easter service, marking the dominance of Christianity over the native beliefs. The speaker feels the impact of the Christian resurrection hymns, but the gods' cries grow louder, challenging the dominance of Christianity. The gods take up their traditional instruments and follow the marchers, searching for their own place in the religious landscape, symbolized by seeking Calvary and their tombstones. Ultimately, the poem captures the conflict between the Christian faith, represented by the dawn marchers, and the forsaken African spiritual traditions. It raises questions about cultural identity, the loss of indigenous rituals, and the coexistence of two belief systems.

## Critical Analysis

At the core of the poem is the tension between the African traditional gods and the Christian faith, symbolized by Christ's resurrection. Awoonor explores the cultural displacement experienced by African communities as they gradually adopt Christianity, leaving behind their indigenous rituals. The gods of the speaker's ancestors are in mourning, lamenting their neglect. This highlights a profound loss of cultural identity, where traditional African values and spiritual practices are overshadowed by Christianity. The speaker mentions that "my father's gods are crying," emphasizing the pain and abandonment felt by the old gods. These gods once occupied a significant place in the lives of the people, but the younger generation has joined the "dawn marchers" – the Christians. This is symbolic of a larger cultural transition where the indigenous people forsake their own religious practices in favor of the foreign Christian faith.

The poem juxtaposes Christian rituals with African traditional practices. The "dawn marchers" who sing of Christ's resurrection are contrasted with the gods' rituals, which have been left undone. The poem describes how traditional offerings, such as the yam feast and cola nut, are no longer observed, and the fetish priest is now preparing for Easter service instead of tending to the gods. This stark contrast illustrates how African spiritual customs are being eroded and replaced by Christianity. Awoonor highlights the profound consequences of this shift by describing how the gods' tears are made of 'clay,' a metaphor for their connection to the earth, which is now

drying up, symbolizing their diminishing relevance. The mention of the "drink offering" drying in the harmattan and the "shriveled" cola nut further reinforces this sense of spiritual neglect and cultural decay.

Calvary, where Christ was crucified, and Gethsemane, where He prayed in agony, serve as important Christian symbols in the poem. The dawn marchers are depicted as walking toward Gethsemane, a place associated with suffering and the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. This symbolizes their devotion to the Christian narrative of salvation and resurrection. However, for the speaker, these Christian symbols stand in contrast to the neglected shrines and rituals of the traditional gods. The gods, in their grief, march behind the Christians, seeking their "Calvary" and "tombstone." This image powerfully conveys the displacement of the indigenous gods, who are left searching for their place in a world that no longer honors them.

The speaker is caught between two worlds—his ancestral traditions and the new Christian faith. While the hymns of resurrection touch him deeply ("the resurrection hymns come to me from afar"), he also feels the agony of his neglected heritage, expressed through the gods' cries. This duality reflects the internal conflict faced by individuals living in post-colonial societies where traditional beliefs and Western ideologies often clash. The speaker's struggle reflects broader questions about identity and cultural survival. The gods cry "from the heart in me," indicating that the speaker's identity is deeply intertwined with these ancestral beliefs, despite the growing dominance of Christianity.

The poem is imbued with postcolonial themes, especially the effects of colonization on religion and culture. Christianity, introduced by colonial powers, is shown to have replaced indigenous religions, creating a rupture in the cultural fabric of African societies. Awoonor's poem can be read as a critique of how colonialism forced a cultural and religious transformation that marginalized the traditions and deities of African societies. The gods, now rendered powerless and forgotten, serve as a metaphor for the loss of cultural autonomy. The fetish priest, who once represented the guardian of these rituals, is ironically preparing for Easter, signifying how even the traditional spiritual leaders have been co-opted into the new religious order.

"Easter Dawn" is a powerful exploration of the conflict between tradition and modernity, indigenous beliefs and Western religion. Through the crying gods and the marchers singing of resurrection, Awoonor captures the deep sense of loss and alienation experienced by those caught between these two spiritual worlds. The poem serves as a lament for the fading traditions of African spirituality, while also questioning the dominance of Christianity in postcolonial societies. It raises poignant questions about cultural survival, identity, and the price of religious conversion.

# Kofi Awonoor – "The Weaver Bird"

## Text

The weaver bird built in our house
And laid its eggs on our only tree.
We did not want to send it away.
We watched the building of the nest
And supervised the egg-laying.
And the weaver returned in the guise of the owner.
Preaching salvation to us that owned the house.
They say it came from the west
Where the storms at sea had felled the gulls
And the fishers dried their nets by lantern light.
Its sermon is the divination of ourselves
And our new horizon limits at its nest.
But we cannot join the prayers and answers of the communicants.
We look for new homes every day,
For new altars we strive to rebuild
The old shrines defiled by the weaver's excrement.

## Summary

The speaker describes how the weaver bird has built its nest in their home, specifically on their only tree. The community does not wish to drive the bird away and instead watches over its

nesting process, indicating their initial hospitality. As the bird becomes comfortable, it starts to claim ownership of the land, presenting itself as the rightful owner. It preaches salvation to the inhabitants, symbolizing the way colonizers impose their beliefs while taking control. The bird is said to have come from the West, where natural disasters have affected others. Its "sermon" represents the new beliefs imposed on the community, limiting their understanding of themselves and their future to the bird's influence. The speaker acknowledges a sense of alienation from the new religious practices, stating they cannot participate in the prayers of the weaver bird's followers. They express a desire to find new homes and rebuild their cultural altars. The poem concludes with the recognition that their traditional shrines have been defiled by the weaver bird's presence. Despite this degradation, the community continues to seek renewal and restoration of their identity and cultural heritage.

## Analysis

The poem opens with the image of the weaver bird constructing its nest in the speaker's home, symbolizing an intrusion into their space. This act signifies not only physical displacement but also the takeover of cultural and spiritual significance. Initially, the speaker and their community do not wish to evict the weaver bird. Instead, they observe and supervise its nesting process, indicating a complex relationship with this foreign presence. This can reflect a passive acceptance of colonial forces and their influence. The weaver bird eventually takes on the guise of an owner, preaching salvation and asserting its authority over the land and its inhabitants. This transformation signifies how colonizers often position themselves as benevolent figures, claiming to offer guidance while actually undermining the local culture. The poem references the weaver bird's origins from the West, a direct nod to colonial powers. The mention of storms that have "felled the gulls" suggests the destructive consequences of colonization on both nature and indigenous societies, hinting at the loss of traditional ways of life. The "sermon" of the weaver bird represents the imposition of new beliefs and values upon the indigenous people. It offers a distorted sense of identity and self-understanding, limiting the community's horizons to the confines of the bird's nest, which symbolizes colonial rule. The speaker notes that they cannot join the prayers of the weaver bird's communicants, highlighting a sense of alienation from the new ideologies being imposed. This reflects the internal conflict faced by colonized peoples who

struggle to reconcile their traditional beliefs with foreign influences. As the poem progresses, the community actively seeks new homes and attempts to rebuild their altars, indicating a desire to reclaim their identity and cultural heritage. This quest underscores the impact of colonization, which has defiled their sacred spaces. The imagery of "old shrines defiled by the weaver's excrement" symbolizes the degradation of indigenous culture and spirituality due to colonial interference. It also emphasizes the urgency for renewal and restoration of cultural integrity. The poem captures the struggle against cultural erasure and the longing for self-determination amid external forces that disrupt traditional ways of life. The poem serves as a powerful commentary on the effects of colonization and the enduring resilience of those who seek to reclaim their identity and cultural heritage despite the challenges imposed by outside forces.

# James Reaney – "Maps"

## About the poet:

James Reaney, a prominent Canadian poet and playwright. Born on September 1, 1926, near Stratford, Ontario, Reaney completed his master's degree at the University of Toronto in 1949 and began teaching English at the University of Manitoba. He later earned a Ph.D. in 1959, focusing on the influence of Spenser on Yeats under the supervision of Northrop Frye.His diverse body of work includes experimental plays for both children and adults, short stories, a children's novel, and notable poetry collections such as *A Suit of Nettles* and *12 Letters to a Small Town*. Reaney won three Governor General's Awards and was recognized as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a member of the Order of Canada. His literary contributions span poetry, drama, and essays, making him a significant figure in Canadian literature. He was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1978, highlighting his contributions to Canadian culture.

## "Maps"

## Text

Five miles up from Pork Street
The maps hang on the wall
Gray-green windows on the world
Before which the scholars stand
And hear the gasp and roll Atlantic

Above, like the cynosure of a Queen Anne's Lace Dance
The dark red island, Britain
Proud and proud.

O there are maps of Asia
Where warm winds blow
When outside the Janus-frost
Rules the bread-white snow.
A sultry coil of breeze,
And a blossom,
Clogged winds of
Cinnamon and amber.

Fat yellow China
and purple India,
Ceylon like a chocolate comfit
The rim and dim ghost of Europe
Where the colour has run out . . .

Whenever we sing
'In days of yore'
We think of the New World's crown.
The green Northwest with its quaint inlets.
The brown Yukon.
Ungava Bay and Newfoundland
Pink fevered Saskatchewan
and purple Alberta.

# Summary

## Stanza 1

The poem opens with a specific location, describing maps that are displayed on the wall. These maps are likened to windows that provide a view of the world. Scholars are portrayed as standing before them, captivated by the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean. Britain is depicted as a proud island.

## Stanza 2

This stanza shifts the focus to Asia, where warm winds are described. It contrasts the warmth of Asia with the cold conditions outside, referred to as "Janus-frost." The imagery evokes a sense of warmth and rich scents, highlighting the allure of the region.

## Stanza 3

The poem mentions specific countries, describing China and India with vibrant colors. Ceylon is compared to a sweet treat. The stanza concludes with a portrayal of Europe as lacking vibrancy and color.

## Stanza 4

In the final stanza, there's a reflection on the past, connecting it to the New World. Various regions in Canada are listed, each with distinct colors, emphasizing their uniqueness and beauty. The stanza captures a sense of pride in the New World's diversity.

# Analysis

The poem begins by mentioning a specific location, five miles from Pork Street, where maps are displayed on the wall. These maps are described as "gray-green windows," suggesting they offer a muted view of the world. Scholars stand before these maps, engaged and listening to the sounds of the Atlantic Ocean, which evokes a sense of wonder and exploration. The image of the ocean rolling like a dance suggests movement and beauty. The "dark red island" refers to Britain, portrayed with pride, emphasizing its historical significance.

In the next stanza, the focus shifts to maps of Asia. The atmosphere is warmer, contrasting with the previous cold imagery. The mention of “Janus-frost” hints at a change from winter to spring, indicating hope and renewal. Outside, there is harsh winter, represented by “bread-white snow.” However, inside, there’s a warm breeze and blooming flowers, creating a feeling of comfort. The "clogged winds" filled with scents like cinnamon and amber evoke richness and exoticism, highlighting the allure of Asia.

The third stanza highlights specific countries in Asia. China is depicted as “fat yellow,” suggesting prosperity and abundance, while India is characterized by its royal purple color, indicating richness and depth. Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) is likened to a sweet treat, evoking beauty and indulgence. In contrast, Europe is described as a "dim ghost," suggesting it lacks the vibrancy of the other regions, with colors that have faded away, indicating a decline in its historical prominence.

The final stanza reflects on nostalgia and history. The phrase “In days of yore” evokes a longing for the past, leading to thoughts of the New World, particularly Canada. The description of various regions in Canada uses vivid colors to celebrate their uniqueness: the "green Northwest" suggests lush landscapes, while the “brown Yukon” reflects its rugged beauty. “Pink fevered Saskatchewan” and “purple Alberta” use bright colors to convey a sense of identity and pride in the Canadian landscape.

In “Maps,” James Reaney contrasts different regions of the world, celebrating the beauty and diversity of places, particularly Canada. The poem highlights a sense of pride in the landscapes and histories that shape our understanding of the world, encouraging readers to appreciate both the familiar and the distant.

## Derek Walcott – “Ruins of a Great House”

## About the author

Derek Walcott (1930-2017) was a distinguished poet, playwright, and essayist from Saint Lucia, whose work profoundly explored Caribbean identity, colonialism, and the intersections of race, history, and culture. His notable achievements include winning the Nobel Prize in Literature

in 1992, which recognized his significant contribution to world literature. Walcott's writing blends Caribbean influences with global literary traditions, making his work resonate internationally.

Born in Castries, Saint Lucia, Walcott grew up in a Methodist household and was deeply influenced by his cultural heritage. His father, a painter, died when Walcott was young, and his mother, a schoolteacher, played a significant role in his upbringing. He began writing poetry at a young age, publishing his first poem at 14. At 18, he published his first collection, *25 Poems*, and later self-funded its distribution. He studied at St. Mary's College in Saint Lucia and the University of the West Indies in Jamaica before moving to Trinidad in 1953, where he began his career as a writer, critic, and playwright. Walcott's early breakthrough came with *In a Green Night* (1962), a collection that established him as a key voice in Caribbean literature. His works often grapple with themes of colonial legacy, cultural fusion, and identity. His most famous work, *Omeros* (1990), is a Caribbean reimagining of Homer's epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and is widely regarded as his magnum opus. He founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in 1959, which became an important venue for his theatrical productions. Walcott's plays, such as *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), address the complexities of post-colonial life, especially the tension between tradition and modernity in the Caribbean.

Throughout his career, Walcott published numerous poetry collections, including *Sea Grapes* (1976), *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981), *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *The Prodigal* (2004), and *White Egrets* (2010). He also wrote several plays, such as *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), *The Joker of Seville* (1974), and *The Capeman* (1997), which he co-wrote with Paul Simon. His works earned him several prestigious awards: the Cholmondeley Award (1969), Obie Award for Best Foreign Play (1971), MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1981), Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry (1988), and the T.S. Eliot Prize (2011), among others. In addition to his literary achievements, Walcott received the Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Lucia in 2016 and an honorary doctorate from the University of Essex in 2008. Walcott's legacy endures through numerous literary awards, his influence on Caribbean and world literature, and tributes like the naming of Derek Walcott Square in Castries and the Derek Walcott Prize for Poetry. His notable works are *Poetry Collections*: *In a Green Night* (1962), *Omeros* (1990), *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *White Egrets* (2010), *Plays*: *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), *The Capeman* (1997), *Other*: *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory* (1993), *What the Twilight Says* (1998). He has won remarkable accolades such as Nobel Prize in Literature (1992), MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1981), T. S. Eliot Prize (2011), Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry (1988), and Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Lifetime Achievement (2004).

# Text

though our longest sun sets at right declensions and

makes but winter arches,

it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness, and

have our light in ashes. . .

Browne, Urn Burial

Stones only, the disjecta membra of this Great House,
Whose moth-like girls are mixed with candledust,
Remain to file the lizard's dragonish claws.
The mouths of those gate cherubs shriek with stain;
Axle and coach wheel silted under the muck
Of cattle droppings.
Three crows flap for the trees
And settle, creaking the eucalyptus boughs.
A smell of dead limes quickens in the nose
The leprosy of empire.
‘Farewell, green fields,
Farewell, ye happy groves!'
Marble like Greece, like Faulkner's South in stone,
Deciduous beauty prospered and is gone,
But where the lawn breaks in a rash of trees
A spade below dead leaves will ring the bone
Of some dead animal or human thing
Fallen from evil days, from evil times.
It seems that the original crops were limes
Grown in that silt that clogs the river's skirt;
The imperious rakes are gone, their bright girls gone,
The river flows, obliterating hurt.
I climbed a wall with the grille ironwork
Of exiled craftsmen protecting that great house
From guilt, perhaps, but not from the worm's rent
Nor from the padded calvary of the mouse.
And when a wind shook in the limes I heard
What Kipling heard, the death of a great empire, the
abuse
Of ignorance by Bible and by sword.
A green lawn, broken by low walls of stone,

Dipped to the rivulet, and pacing, I thought next
Of men like Hawkins, Walter Raleigh, Drake,
Ancestral murderers and poets, more perplex4ed
In memory now by every ulcerous crime.
The world's green age then was rotting lime
Whose stench became the charnel galleon's text.
The rot remains with us, the men are gone.
But, as dead ash is lifted in a wind
That fans the blackening ember of the mind,
My eyes burned from the ashen prose of Donne.
Ablaze with rage I thought,
Some slave is rotting in this manorial lake,
But still the coal of my compassion fought
That Albion too was once
A colony like ours, ‘part of the continent, piece of the
main',
Nook-shotten, rook o'erblown, deranged
By foaming channels and the vain expense
Of bitter faction.
All in compassion ends
So differently from what the heart arranged:
‘as well as if a manor of thy friend's. . . ‘

## Summary

The poem begins with an epigraph from Thomas Browne’s *Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial*, which touches on the unrelenting march of time and how even in summer, winter is always approaching. The speaker begins by describing the ruins of a colonial mansion, with broken stones resembling the scattered limbs of a corpse. The once vibrant girls who lived there are gone, and now, lizards sharpen their claws on the rubble. The cherubs decorating the stone gate appear to be screaming due to staining, and remnants of an old coach are half-buried in dirt and manure. Three

crows settle in nearby trees, symbolizing decay, and the rotting limes smell like “the leprosy of empire,” a reference to the evils of colonization.

The ruins are reminiscent of Greek sculptures and Southern American architecture, invoking the impermanence of beauty. The speaker imagines that a spade left under the trees may have been used to bury someone during the colonial era. The mansion’s former plantation likely grew limes, and the arrogant colonizers are long gone, their legacy faded by the river. The speaker reflects on the craftsmanship of the iron wall that once protected the house but now only shields it from guilt, not from decay. The speaker hears the fall of the empire in the sound of the wind through the limes.

The speaker continues to reflect on British colonization, contemplating figures such as the Sea Dogs of Queen Elizabeth I’s reign, including pirates involved in the slave trade. These men, who plundered and profited from the empire, also contributed to English literature. The poem explores the contradiction between England’s literary greatness and its colonial violence. The speaker then references poets like John Donne and William Shakespeare to emphasize the cyclical nature of colonization and how Britain too was once a victim of foreign tyranny. The speaker’s anger fades into compassion, and the ruins of the mansion become a symbol of a forgotten past.

## Critical Analysis

The poem explores themes of history, colonialism, and the consequences of power through the metaphor of a ruined plantation house. The speaker uses vivid imagery to depict the decay of the mansion, symbolizing the inevitable decline of empire. The broken statues, buried coach parts, and decaying fruit all evoke death and decay, representing the collapse of the colonial system. The marble ruins are linked to both ancient Greece and the American South, evoking impermanence and loss.

Throughout the poem, the speaker reflects on the colonial past, using metaphors like the lime fruit as a symbol of the British Empire’s exploitation. The reference to the “charnel house” and the rotting limes emphasizes the brutal legacy of colonization, with people subjected to violence and death. The speaker’s journey through the ruins is also a meditation on the complex

history of British imperialism, drawing on references to English poets and explorers involved in colonialism.

The poem contrasts the beauty of English literature with the brutality of colonial conquest, leading the speaker to acknowledge the shared suffering of both the colonized and the colonizers. The speaker ultimately moves from anger to compassion, recognizing that even the perpetrators of colonial violence came from a nation that was once itself colonized. The poem uses literary devices like metaphor, metonymy, and allusion to create an ironic and critical reflection on British colonial history. Despite the anger and frustration, the speaker ends on a note of compassion, acknowledging the injustices of the past while recognizing the humanity of both the oppressors and the oppressed.

## Lakdasa Vikramsimha – "Don't talk to me about Matisse"

## Text

Don't talk to me about Matisse, don't talk to me

about Gauguin, or even

the earless painter van Gogh,

& the woman reclining on a blood – spread…

the aboriginal shot by the great white hunter Matisse

with a gun with two nostrils, the aboriginal

crucified by Gauguin the syphilis-spreader, the yellowed

obesity.

Don't talk to me about Matisse…

the European style of 1900, the tradition of the studio

where the nude woman reclines forever

on a sheet of blood.

Talk to me instead of the culture generally

how the murders were sustained

by the beauty robbed of savages: to our remote

villages the painters came, and our white-washed

mud-huts were splattered with gunfire.

## About the author

Lakdasa Wikkramasinha (1941–1978) was a Sri Lankan poet who wrote in both English and Sinhala, blending the two languages in his works. He was educated at St. Thomas' College in Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka, where he studied law. Later, Wikkramasinha became an English teacher, but his deep interest in Sinhala literature inspired him to experiment with fusing Western and South Asian literary traditions in his poetry. His first book, *Lustre: Poems* (1965), was written entirely in English, though he later felt constrained by the use of English, which he saw as the language of colonial oppressors. As a result, he made his writing more anarchic and expressive. His later works, however, did not reflect this rebellious mood. Wikkramasinha's poetry appeared in several local and international journals such as *Madrona*, *Eastern Horizon*, *New Ceylon Writing*, and the *University of Chicago Review*. His books include *Janakiharana and Other Poems* (1967), *Fifteen Poems* (1970), *Nossa Senhora dos Chingalas* (1973), *O Regal Blood* (1975), and *The Grasshopper Gleaming* (1976). He also edited and published *Twelve Poems to Justin Daraniyagala 1903-67* (1971) to honor a Sri Lankan artist of a previous generation. Wikkramasinha's work was known for its clear imagery and exploration of rural Sri Lankan life. His poems often included idiomatic expressions and references to local places, making them resonate with a Sri Lankan audience while remaining relatively unknown outside of the country. Tragically, Wikkramasinha died at the age of 36 in a drowning accident. Despite his short life, his works have left a lasting impact on Sri Lankan poetry, reflecting his struggles with colonialism, his cultural identity, and the blending of Western and South Asian traditions.

## Summary

In this poem, the speaker expresses deep anger and disillusionment with Western artists, particularly the Impressionists, whom he criticizes for their exploitation and inhuman treatment of colonized people. The speaker uses harsh and degrading language, referring to the artists as "earless painter," "syphilis-spreader," and "white hunter," which reflects his disdain for them. The disturbing imagery of "the woman reclining on a blood-spread" and "the aboriginal crucified" suggests that the artists used real-life incidents of violence against colonized peoples as subjects for their paintings. Some critics believe that these images were based on actual events where native people were treated brutally by colonizers.

The speaker is critical of how artists like Matisse, who is accused of exploiting a black woman for his art, depict colonized people as primitive or subhuman. He sees their artwork as a disturbing reflection of colonial attitudes that dehumanized the natives. The poem then shifts to Sri Lanka, where the speaker discusses how the culture and way of life of his people were negatively impacted by Western colonization. He accuses the colonizers of "robbing" the beauty and traditions of the natives, labeling them as "savages," and highlights the violence and destruction inflicted upon the native way of life.

The poet uses the metaphor of colonizers as "painters" who came to Sri Lanka, disrupting the simple and peaceful lifestyle of the people. The image of "white-washed mud huts splattered with gunfire" symbolizes the violent and destructive impact of colonization. Wikkramasinha's use of clear imagery, idiomatic phrases, and references to rural areas in Sri Lanka reflects his connection to his homeland and his desire to express the cultural and personal impacts of colonization.

## Critical Analysis

In *Don't Talk to Me About Matisse*, Wikkramasinha employs a stream-of-consciousness style that reflects the emotional rage and frustration of the speaker. The fragmented, seemingly disjointed thoughts mirror the anger and disillusionment that arise when confronting the brutality of colonial history and its lingering effects on native cultures. The harsh and degrading language used to describe famous Western artists—particularly Matisse—emphasizes the speaker's

contempt for the exploitation of colonized peoples in art. The references to “earless painter,” “syphilis-spreader,” and “white hunter” underline the speaker’s view of these artists as insensitive and complicit in the violence of colonization. The disturbing images of “the woman reclining on a blood-spread” and “the aboriginal crucified” evoke real-life events where colonized peoples were objectified and brutalized, sometimes even used as subjects for the artists’ work. This irony is crucial: the colonizers who painted these scenes treated the very people they depicted as subhuman, reflecting the pervasive colonial mentality that dehumanized native populations.

Wikkramasinha's critique extends beyond individual artists to a broader condemnation of Western colonialism. Through the metaphor of “painters” coming to Sri Lanka, he illustrates how colonizers disrupted native life and culture, framing their actions as violent and destructive. The phrase “beauty robbed of savages” accuses the colonizers not only of physical violence but also of cultural theft, stripping the natives of their heritage and dignity. The imagery of “white-washed mud huts splattered with gunfire” is a potent comment on the impact of colonization on the everyday lives of Sri Lankans. It evokes a sense of violence and loss, as the colonizers imposed their values and way of life on a simpler, more peaceful society. Wikkramasinha’s use of local idiomatic expressions and rural imagery serves to ground his critique in the specific context of Sri Lanka, offering a personal and culturally rooted perspective on the legacies of colonization. The poem reflects Wikkramasinha’s deep ambivalence towards Western culture and its artistic traditions, exposing the contradictions between the celebrated beauty of Western art and its violent, exploitative origins. Ultimately, the poem’s critical tone highlights the ongoing struggle between native cultures and the colonial forces that sought to erase them.

## Pablo Neruda – “The Dictators”

## Text

An odor has remained among the sugarcane:
a mixture of blood and body, a penetrating
petal that brings nausea.
Between the coconut palms the graves are full
of ruined bones, of speechless death-rattles.
The delicate dictator is talking

with top hats, gold braid, and collars.
The tiny palace gleams like a watch
and the rapid laughs with gloves on
cross the corridors at times
and join the dead voices
and the blue mouths freshly buried.
The weeping cannot be seen, like a plant
whose seeds fall endlessly on the earth,
whose large blind leaves grow even without light.
Hatred has grown scale on scale,
blow on blow, in the ghastly water of the swamp,
with a snout full of ooze and silence

## About the Author

Pablo Neruda, born Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto on July 12, 1904, in Parral, Chile, is regarded as one of the most significant poets of the 20th century. His mother, Rosa, died shortly after his birth, and his father, José, remarried when Neruda was a child, moving the family to Temuco, where he grew up. Neruda was introduced to literature early on, publishing his first poem at age 13. He adopted the pen name "Pablo Neruda" in tribute to Czech poet Jan Neruda, which he used for his literary career. Neruda's early works, including *Crepusculario* (1923), were followed by his famous *Veinte Poemas de Amor y una Canción Desesperada* (1924), which gained him widespread recognition. In the 1920s and 1930s, he worked as a diplomat, holding consul positions in countries such as Burma, Ceylon, Java, and Spain, where he experienced the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War. This led him to engage in politics, supporting the Republican side, and later aligning with the Communist Party. During his time in exile, Neruda wrote some of his most influential works, including *Canto General* (1950), an epic poem about Latin America's history and culture. He was politically active, advocating for workers' rights, and was elected a senator in Chile in 1945. However, his outspoken views led to his exile in 1949 when he criticized the Chilean government's oppressive policies. Neruda returned to Chile in 1952, continuing to write and publish prolifically. His later works included *Cien Sonetos de Amor* (1959) and *Memorial de Isla Negra*, a semi-autobiographical series. Neruda's poetic themes ranged from the beauty of Latin

America and love to political and social issues. In 1971, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Neruda's work, known for its sensuality, political engagement, and deep connection to his homeland, made him a central figure in world literature. He passed away on September 23, 1973, just days after the coup that overthrew Chile's government. His legacy endures, and his poems continue to resonate globally.

## Summary

In "The Dictators," the speaker begins by describing a disturbing smell in the sugarcane fields, reminiscent of blood and death, suggesting the land is stained by violence. The poem evokes the presence of bodies, graves, and bones scattered across the land, symbolizing the aftermath of oppression. The figure of a dictator is introduced, portrayed as a finicky, self-serving leader surrounded by a sycophantic group, represented by luxurious objects like wineglasses and collars, emphasizing their disconnect from the suffering outside the palace.

Within the palace, the atmosphere is sterile and opulent, with laughter echoing through the halls, representing the hollow joy of those in power. Meanwhile, the voices of the dead and grieving are ignored, symbolized by falling pollen, representing the unnoticed pain of the oppressed. As the poem progresses, natural imagery like swamps and clogged snouts is used to represent the consequences of violence and the rise of hatred, reflecting the toxic effects of tyranny.

## Critical Analysis

Pablo Neruda’s "The Dictators" is a powerful critique of political oppression, exploring the relationship between the elite class and the marginalized, particularly under dictatorial regimes. The poem is filled with stark contrasts: the fragrant land of sugarcane, which symbolizes wealth and exploitation, is juxtaposed with the imagery of death and decay, suggesting the moral rot beneath the surface of power. Neruda’s vivid and unsettling imagery—blood, dead bodies, bones, luxurious wineglasses, gloved laughter—creates an atmosphere of discomfort, highlighting the discrepancy between the ruler’s indulgence and the suffering of the oppressed. The poem critiques the disconnect between the dictator and the people, positioning the ruler as an out-of-touch figure who enjoys the trappings of power while the masses languish in pain. The luxurious imagery surrounding the dictator—collars, watch dials, expensive laughter—emphasizes the superficiality

and callousness of those who are complicit in maintaining systems of exploitation. Meanwhile, the grieving and suffering of the oppressed are invisible to the rulers, symbolized by the falling pollen and the muffled sounds of the dead.

Neruda's use of nature imagery, such as the swamp, scales, and clogged snout, serves as a metaphor for the stifling environment created by violence and repression. The natural world becomes corrupted, mirroring how human societies and individuals are shaped by political power. The swamp symbolizes the stagnation and distortion of life under authoritarian rule, while the snout represents the physical and emotional toll that silence and oppression take on individuals. At its core, the poem emphasizes the inhumanity and destructiveness of dictatorial power, not just in its violent actions but in its disregard for human suffering. The imagery of blood, death, and the muffled voices of the oppressed conveys the toxic nature of such regimes, where the cries for justice are drowned out by the laughter of those in power. Neruda's language and symbols, drawing from both natural and man-made worlds, work to critique not only political dictators but also the societal systems that uphold such figures of authority.

## Wole Soyinka – "Telephone Conversation"

The price seemed reasonable, location
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived
Off premises. Nothing remained
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,
"I hate a wasted journey--I am African."
Silence. Silenced transmission of
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was foully.
"HOW DARK?" . . . I had not misheard . . . "ARE YOU LIGHT
OR VERY DARK?" Button B, Button A. Stench
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.
Red booth. Red pillar box. Red double-tiered
Omnibus squelching tar. It *was* real! Shamed

By ill-mannered silence, surrender
Pushed dumbfounded to beg simplification.
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis--
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.
"You mean--like plain or milk chocolate?"
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,
I chose. "West African sepia"--and as afterthought,
"Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding
"DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."
"THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?" "Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
Are a peroxide blond. Friction, caused--
Foolishly, madam--by sitting down, has turned
My bottom raven black--One moment, madam!"--sensing
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap
About my ears--"Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather
See for yourself?"

## About the Author

Wole Soyinka is one of Africa's most distinguished and influential literary figures. Born in 1934 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, Soyinka is a writer, poet, essayist, playwright, and political activist. He became the first sub-Saharan African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986, a recognition of his deep engagement with Nigeria's political and cultural landscape. Soyinka's works, which span various genres, including drama, poetry, and novels, often explore themes of political oppression, power, societal change, and the tension between tradition and modernity. He grew up in a Yoruba family and was educated in Nigeria and the UK. His early works, such as *The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Lion and the Jewel*, reflect his exposure to both African traditions and Western

influences. Soyinka is known for his political activism, particularly his opposition to tyranny and corruption, which led to his imprisonment during the Nigerian Civil War and later in the 1990s under military dictator Sani Abacha. His memoir, *The Man Died: Prison Notes*, chronicles his experience as a political prisoner.

Soyinka's plays often integrate African myth, music, and dance, and he has been deeply influenced by both traditional African theatre and European avant-garde movements. Some of his most notable works include *Death and the King's Horseman*, *Kongi's Harvest*, and *Madmen and Specialists*. His poetry collections, such as *A Shuttle in the Crypt* and *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems*, combine personal reflection with social and political commentary. Beyond literature, Soyinka has taught at various universities around the world, including in the United States and Europe. His contributions to global cultural and political discourse, particularly regarding African identity, have made him a prominent figure in international intellectual circles. Soyinka's influence extends beyond literature, as he has been an advocate for human rights and a critic of various political regimes, including those of Nigeria's military dictatorships and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. His legacy includes the establishment of the Wole Soyinka Annual Lecture Series, as well as numerous honors, including honorary doctorates and awards, such as the 2017 Europe Theatre Prize.

## Summary

In “Telephone Conversation,” Wole Soyinka presents a dramatic and ironic exchange between a black man and a white landlady over the phone. The poem is set in the context of a rental inquiry. The black man is seeking a room in response to an advertisement that claims to accept tenants of all races, signaling that race is not an issue. Having faced racism in previous attempts to find housing, the man, cautiously and humorously, calls the landlady from a public telephone booth to inquire about the room.

The conversation begins with the man revealing his race, and almost immediately, the landlady hesitates. She asks him if he is "completely black" or if he is "half-caste," reflecting her skepticism and latent racial prejudice. The black man, attempting to lighten the situation, tells her that his palms and soles are white, indicating that his skin is not uniformly dark. However, this

does not satisfy the landlady, who further probes into the precise nature of his skin color. The man humorously replies, likening his skin tone to "West African Sepia," which is a reference to a dark, brownish tone. When she insists on knowing whether he is dark like "chocolate" or lighter, he sarcastically plays along with her absurd request, describing himself as "a dark brown" or "dim brunette," demonstrating the ridiculousness of her questions. As the landlady continues to ask invasive and uncomfortable questions, the man becomes more agitated. He realizes that no matter how much he explains, his race will always be an obstacle. He pleads with her to meet him in person to see for herself, hoping to escape the humiliation of the phone call. But this plea does not change the situation. In the end, the landlady abruptly ends the conversation by hanging up on him, revealing her true racist nature, despite her earlier claim of accepting tenants of all races.

## Critical Analysis

“Telephone Conversation” is a powerful commentary on racial prejudice and the absurdity of racist attitudes. The landlady's initial claim in the ad that race is not an issue for renting a room directly contradicts her behavior when confronted with the reality of a black man applying for the room. This hypocrisy is central to the poem's critique of the performative nature of many people's anti-racist stances. The landlady, while claiming to be open-minded, reveals her prejudices through her obsessive questioning about the man's exact skin color. The probing into the specifics of his "shade" demonstrates her fixation on racial difference and exposes the limitations of her supposed open-mindedness. Throughout the conversation, the black man is reduced to his physical attributes, particularly his skin color. The landlady's insistence on knowing exactly how "black" he is, rather than engaging with him as a person, dehumanizes him. Soyinka's use of humor and sarcasm in the man's responses—referring to himself as a "dim brunette" or "West African Sepia"—further highlights the absurdity of the landlady’s racial inquiry. The black man, trying to respond politely, is still treated as an object of examination based on his race, rather than as an individual with rights and dignity. The poem exposes the arbitrary nature of racial categorization. The landlady’s questions are nonsensical and rooted in a false belief that skin color is a valid determinant of a person’s worth or character. Soyinka uses this absurdity to show how racial divisions are constructed socially and how they have no true basis in human qualities or worth. The black man’s sarcasm underscores the silliness of categorizing people based on something as superficial as skin color.

Soyinka's use of irony is particularly effective in critiquing racial prejudice. The man's initially humorous tone, as he describes himself as "not completely black" and later as a "dim brunette," contrasts with the underlying anger and frustration he feels. The man's attempts to reason with the landlady reflect the futility of trying to convince someone entrenched in their racist views. The absurdity of her questions and his attempts to placate her with humorous descriptions ultimately make the situation feel farcical, illustrating the ridiculousness of racism. One of the most powerful aspects of the poem is the landlady's use of silence. After the man answers her questions, there is a long pause in the conversation, which the man interprets as a refusal. This silence is the landlady's way of asserting her power and distancing herself from the man. The silence conveys a deep sense of rejection, as if the man's presence is too much to bear for the landlady. The black man's internal frustration builds during this silence, culminating in his sarcastic, angry exclamation that he is "black but not so black that anyone should be ashamed of him." The abrupt end to the conversation, with the landlady hanging up on the man, highlights the final rejection of the black man based purely on his race. Soyinka uses this to show how racist attitudes persist, even in the face of claims to the contrary, and how such attitudes result in the dehumanization and exclusion of people of color from opportunities like housing. The ending reinforces the man's sense of alienation, as he is dismissed and erased from the conversation entirely.

## Syed Amanuddin – "Don't Call me Indo Anglican"

## Text

no i don't want to be
a hotchpotch of culture
a confusion of language
a nullity of imagination
  an abortive affair between an indo and an anglo
i hate hyphens

  the artificial bridges
  between artificial values
  in the name of race religion n language
i damn all hyphenated minds
 prejudiced offsprings of unenlightened souls

i denounce all labels and labelmakers
i refuse to be a moonrock specimen
   to be analyzed labelled n stored
   for a curious gloomy fellow to
    reanalyze reclassify me
    for shelving me again

they call me indo-anglian
   I don't now what they mean
   cauvery flows in my veins
   chamundi hills rise in my mind
with stars afloat
   eyes of the goddess smiling on the
slain demon
   brindavan fountains sing in my
soul

but i am not tied down to my
childhood scene.
   i have led languages by their ears
   i have twisted creeds to force the truth out
   i have burned candles in the caves of prejudice
   i have surged in the oceans of being
   i have flown across the universe on the wings of my thought

they call me indo-anglian
   the mistaken misinformed folk
   n class me with a small group of writers
    cloistering me
    crippling me
i would rather roam with kalidasa n kabir
or go on a spiritual journey with dante
meditate with khayyam on the mathematics of existence
or sing with ghalib the anguish of love
or drown with li po kissing the moon's reflection in the river

they call me indo-anglian
   it's true i write in english
   dream in the language of shakespeare n keats
   but I am not an anglo my friend
   i am a POET
i have lived forty centuries under various names
i am now amanuddin

## Summary

In the first stanza, the poet rejects the label "Indo-Anglican" and any other hyphenated identities. He views such terms as invalid and limiting, as they create confusion and restrict his imagination. He denies being represented by such labels, calling them an "abortive affair" because they do not accurately define him. In the second stanza, the poet denounces the labelers and their attempt to categorize him. He refers to these labelers as unenlightened and prejudiced, questioning their right to impose such labels. He refuses to be treated as a specimen, analyzed by observers who are more interested in categorizing him than understanding him. The third stanza sees the poet reflecting on his childhood memories, which he believes connect him to his Indian roots. He mentions his deep connection to the land, including the Cauvery river, Chamundi hills, and other significant landmarks, showing that despite being labeled "Indo-Anglian," he still feels deeply connected to India and its culture. In the fourth stanza, the poet makes it clear that while he feels Indian, he does not want to be confined by his past or his identity. He has used language to break free from these labels, twisting his beliefs to reveal a broader truth. He has risen above the prejudices of others and has allowed his imagination to expand beyond boundaries. In the fifth stanza, the poet expresses a desire to leave behind the world that labels him "Indo-Anglian" and join the company of dead poets, like Li Po, Kalidasa, Kabir Das, Dante Alighieri, and Omar Khayyam. He would rather drown in the river like Li Po than live under such restrictive labels. In the final stanza, the poet acknowledges that he writes in English, the language of poets like William Shakespeare and John Keats, but rejects the label "Indo-Anglian." He cannot be confined by any national, religious, or cultural identity. He considers himself a poet, transcending time and identity, and in his current life, he is called Amanuddin. This final statement reflects a philosophical perspective on the self and soul, similar to Yeats' views on identity.

## Critical Analysis

In *Don't Call Me Indo-Anglican*, the poet challenges the narrow confines of labels and identities imposed by others. The central theme is the rejection of hyphenated identities like "Indo-Anglican," which the poet sees as limiting and superficial. The poet believes that such labels obscure the true essence of an individual and restrict personal imagination and growth. The poem critiques the tendency of society to categorize people based on superficial traits, such as race,

nationality, or language, without considering the complexity of an individual's identity. The labelers, according to the poet, are ignorant and prejudiced, imposing their views without understanding the person they seek to categorize. The poet, in turn, rejects being treated as an object of curiosity or study, emphasizing his desire to be free from these artificial boundaries. The poet's attachment to his Indian heritage is evident in the third stanza, where he recalls the places and cultural elements that have shaped his identity. However, despite these connections, he does not want to be confined by his childhood or any cultural background. He sees language, especially English, as a means of breaking free from the limitations of identity, using it as a tool to transcend boundaries and rise above prejudice. The fifth stanza's reference to the dead poets reveals the poet's longing for a deeper connection to a timeless, universal world of literature and thought. By naming poets from different cultures and traditions, the poet expresses a desire to transcend national and cultural labels and join the company of great thinkers who were unconstrained by such limitations. Finally, in the last stanza, the poet's refusal to accept the label "Indo-Anglian" underscores his belief that he, as a poet, cannot be confined by any single identity. He sees himself as part of a larger, universal tradition of poets, and his name, Amanuddin, symbolizes his transcendence of all the labels imposed by society. The poem, therefore, reflects a philosophy of the self as fluid, ever-changing, and beyond the constraints of time, culture, and language. This aligns with the ideas of poets like Yeats, who viewed the soul as eternal and not bound by earthly identities.

# UNIT III

## Wole Soyinka – *Death and the King's Horsemen*

## About the author

Wole Soyinka is one of Africa's most distinguished and influential literary figures. Born in 1934 in Abeokuta, Nigeria, Soyinka is a writer, poet, essayist, playwright, and political activist. He became the first sub-Saharan African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986, a recognition of his deep engagement with Nigeria's political and cultural landscape. Soyinka's works, which span various genres, including drama, poetry, and novels, often explore themes of political oppression, power, societal change, and the tension between tradition and modernity. He grew up in a Yoruba family and was educated in Nigeria and the UK. His early works, such as *The Swamp*

*Dwellers* and *The Lion and the Jewel*, reflect his exposure to both African traditions and Western influences. Soyinka is known for his political activism, particularly his opposition to tyranny and corruption, which led to his imprisonment during the Nigerian Civil War and later in the 1990s under military dictator Sani Abacha. His memoir, *The Man Died: Prison Notes*, chronicles his experience as a political prisoner.

Soyinka's plays often integrate African myth, music, and dance, and he has been deeply influenced by both traditional African theatre and European avant-garde movements. Some of his most notable works include *Death and the King's Horseman*, *Kongi's Harvest*, and *Madmen and Specialists*. His poetry collections, such as *A Shuttle in the Crypt* and *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems*, combine personal reflection with social and political commentary. Beyond literature, Soyinka has taught at various universities around the world, including in the United States and Europe. His contributions to global cultural and political discourse, particularly regarding African identity, have made him a prominent figure in international intellectual circles. Soyinka's influence extends beyond literature, as he has been an advocate for human rights and a critic of various political regimes, including those of Nigeria's military dictatorships and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. His legacy includes the establishment of the Wole Soyinka Annual Lecture Series, as well as numerous honors, including honorary doctorates and awards, such as the 2017 Europe Theatre Prize.

## Summary & Critical Analysis

In *Death and the King's Horseman*, the play opens with Elesin Oba, a prominent Nigerian figure, preparing for his ritual suicide to accompany the recently deceased king. He revels in his final day, enjoying the attention of women and celebrating his duties. However, he becomes distracted by a beautiful woman and demands to take her before he dies, despite the consequences. The British colonial officers Simon and Jane Pilkings, unaware of the significance of the ritual, plan to wear sacred robes from a local cult to a fancy-dress ball. Amusa, a Nigerian officer, is horrified by their disrespect and tries to explain Elesin's impending death. Simon, dismissing the customs, orders Elesin's arrest to prevent any disturbances during a visit by the prince of England. Elesin gets ready for his ritual death, is thwarted by the British authorities. The women of the market defy the colonial officers, mocking their authority. Elesin, now distracted by his promise

to the woman, begins to fade into the spiritual realm, unaware of the events unfolding. Elesin's son, Olunde has returned from medical school in England after learning of the king's death. Olunde, understanding the sacred tradition, confronts Simon and Jane about their ignorance and disrespect. He also seeks to stop Simon from preventing his father's suicide. When Elesin fails to fulfill his duty, Olunde disowns him, declaring that he has no father. Elesin is imprisoned, and Simon fails to grasp the significance of his failure to die. Elesin laments the world's loss of balance. Olunde, rejecting his father's failure, sacrifices himself in place of his father. Upon seeing his son's body, Elesin dies by his own hand, fulfilling his duty too late. The bride, now widowed, is counseled by Iyaloja to move forward, focusing on the future.

## Critical Analysis

In *Death and the King's Horsemen*, Soyinka critiques colonialism's disregard for indigenous customs and spiritual practices. Pilkings' lack of respect and understanding of the Yoruba tradition represents the typical colonial mindset that devalues non-Western cultures. This theme also highlights the superiority complex often held by colonizers, who believe they are bringing "civilization" while simultaneously disregarding the deep wisdom embedded in local customs. The tension between personal desire and communal duty is a major source of conflict in the play. Elesin's initial eagerness to perform his duty is eroded by his earthly pleasures, particularly his attraction to a young woman. This human flaw—his inability to prioritize duty over desire—ultimately leads to his failure. The tragedy is magnified when his son, Olunde, steps in to take his place, emphasizing the generational importance of the ritual. Soyinka critiques the individual's failure to uphold communal obligations, and the consequences of such failure reverberate through the community. The play suggests that while there is a sense of destiny and obligation, personal actions and choices still have significant consequences. Elesin's failure to act in accordance with his fate challenges the idea of an entirely predetermined path. Soyinka seems to indicate that while rituals and traditions dictate roles, the individual's failure to fulfill these roles can disrupt the balance of life and death. Soyinka presents women as the custodians of culture and tradition. Iyaloja's role as a leader and spiritual guide contrasts with the patriarchal roles of the male characters, including Elesin. Her strength lies in her adherence to tradition and her ability to influence the course of events, as she plays a key role in trying to hold Elesin accountable. The

women's collective power highlights the theme of social cohesion and the importance of maintaining cultural integrity in the face of external threats. Soyinka contrasts the Western conceptualization of death with the Yoruba understanding, which is more cyclical and integrated into the natural order. The tragic events that unfold in the play reveal the disruption that occurs when Western perspectives impose themselves on systems that view death as a ritualistic passage. The failure of Elesin to fulfill his role disturbs not only the human realm but also the spiritual realm, where death is seen as a necessary, sacred act. Soyinka's use of language is deeply rooted in African oral tradition. The repetition of phrases, the choral nature of the dialogue, and the symbolic costumes contribute to a heightened sense of ritual and drama. The symbolic elements underscore the deep connection between language, culture, and spiritual practice in the Yoruba worldview. Soyinka's mastery of symbolism also adds to the emotional and philosophical complexity of the play, urging the audience to engage not just with the characters but with the themes of life, death, and the consequences of cultural disruption. The play can be seen as a tragic exploration of human fallibility. Elesin is a tragic hero in the classical sense: he is a man of great potential and authority, but his internal conflict and personal desires lead to his downfall. Olunde, on the other hand, represents a higher form of heroism—self-sacrifice for the greater good. Soyinka's exploration of responsibility, both personal and communal, emphasizes the moral complexity of the characters and the broader societal implications of their actions.

## Characters

### **1.** Elesin Oba

**He is** the king's horseman. Elesin is the central character of the play, a man chosen to die in order to accompany the recently deceased king to the afterlife, as per Yoruba tradition. He is strong, charismatic, and enjoys the pleasures of life, especially women. Despite his initial resolve, his commitment to the ritual is tested by earthly distractions, leading to tragic consequences.

### **2.** Olunde

**He is** Elesin's son. Olunde is a well-educated young man who has been studying in England to become a doctor, against his father's wishes. He returns home upon hearing about the king's death and is horrified by his father's failure to carry out his sacred duty. Olunde takes it upon himself to restore honor to the family and community by committing suicide in his father's place.

### **3.** Iyaloja

**She is** the "mother" of the marketplace. Iyaloja is a powerful, wise, and respected figure in the community. She represents the voice of tradition and wisdom. She tries to guide Elesin in fulfilling his duty but is also protective of the social order and the roles people must play. When Elesin falters, she holds him accountable, and she leads the mourning for the dead.

## **4.** Pilkings (Simon Pilkings)

**He is** the British colonial officer. Pilkings is the district officer in charge of the area. He is a symbol of colonial power and authority, and he interferes in the ritual of Elesin's suicide, believing it is a barbaric act that needs to be stopped. His ignorance and lack of respect for Yoruba customs lead to tragic consequences.

## **5.** Jane Pilkings

**She is** Simon Pilkings' wife. Jane is the British wife of Simon Pilkings, who is somewhat naïve about Yoruba culture. She becomes involved in the events of the play through her interactions with Olunde and her husband. Her inability to understand the gravity of the cultural and spiritual conflict leads her to question her own role in the events.

## **6.** Amusa

**He is a** Yoruba police officer. Amusa is the sergeant who works under Pilkings. He is torn between his duty to the British authorities and his Yoruba heritage. He is disturbed by the sight of the egungun costumes worn by the Pilkingses, as they represent a deep cultural reverence, and his efforts to stop Elesin's ritual are thwarted by the women of the market.

## **7.** Praise-Singer

**He is** Elesin's spiritual companion. The Praise-Singer serves as a guide and narrator for Elesin. He constantly reminds Elesin of his sacred duty and the importance of his role as the king's horseman. The Praise-Singer also represents the connection between Elesin and the community's cultural expectations.

## **8.** Joseph

He is Pilkings' servant. Joseph is a servant in the Pilkings household. He is a minor character who helps to explain the significance of the Yoruba ritual to the Pilkingses. His role illustrates the divide between the colonizers and the indigenous people.

## **9.** The Aide-de-Camp

A military officer serving under Pilkings. The Aide-de-Camp is a minor character who aids Pilkings in his role as a colonial officer. He appears during the final scenes of the play, helping to manage the chaos in the wake of Elesin's arrest and the escalating cultural conflict.

### **10.** The Women of the Market

The female community members who support Elesin. These women are important in shaping the social environment around Elesin. They celebrate him, dress him for his ritual, and later protect him from the British officers. They symbolize the collective strength of the community and the women's power in maintaining cultural traditions.

## Themes

### **1.** Cultural Clash and Colonialism

One of the most prominent themes of the play is the clash between indigenous African culture and Western colonialism. The British colonial officer, Simon Pilkings, represents the British Empire's imposition of foreign values and the undermining of native customs. Pilkings views the Yoruba custom of ritual suicide as barbaric and attempts to stop it without understanding its spiritual and cultural significance. His interference leads to tragic consequences.

### **2.** Duty, Honor, and Sacrifice

The concepts of duty and honor are at the heart of the play. Elesin, the king's horseman, is chosen to sacrifice himself in order to accompany the king's spirit to the afterlife. This act of ritual suicide is not just a personal duty but a communal responsibility that ensures the spiritual and social harmony of the Yoruba people. The sense of honor in fulfilling this duty is central to the moral framework of the play.

### **3.** Fate and Free Will

The tension between fate and free will is explored through Elesin's internal struggle. His role as the king's horseman is predestined, and his death is a necessary part of the cosmic order. However, Elesin's own choices, driven by desire and distractions, prevent him from fulfilling his sacred duty. Olunde's decision to take his father's place underscores the idea of sacrifice and the acceptance of one's fate.

### **4.** The Role of Women

Women in the play, especially figures like Iyaloja and the women of the marketplace, are portrayed as the backbone of the community. They hold significant power in maintaining tradition and social order. Iyaloja is a wise, maternal figure who constantly reminds Elesin of his duty, and the women support the ritual even when Elesin falters.

### **5.** The Interplay of Life and Death

The boundary between life and death is a central theme. The ritual suicide that Elesin is supposed to perform is not seen as an end but as a necessary transition to the afterlife, ensuring the spiritual harmony of the kingdom. The play delves into the spiritual significance of death, showing

it as a continuation of life rather than an abrupt end. The clash between Western views of death and the Yoruba cosmology is stark—while the British characters see death as something tragic to be avoided, the Yoruba see it as a natural, sacred passage.

### **6.** The Power of Language and Symbolism

Soyinka's play uses language as a means of conveying deeper meaning. The speech and rituals of the characters often carry symbolic weight. For example, the Praise-Singer's words are not mere compliments but also serve as a reminder of Elesin's responsibilities. The costumes, the songs, and even the physical space are all imbued with symbolic significance, representing the cosmic and social order.

### **7.** Tragic Heroism and the Concept of Responsibility

Elesin's tragic flaw is his inability to fulfill his duty due to his earthly attachments. His failure to commit suicide leads to a cascading series of tragic events. Olunde's self-sacrifice contrasts with his father's failure, highlighting a generational divide and the idea that true heroism lies in accepting one's responsibility to the community, even at great personal cost.

## Derek Walcott – *Dream on Monkey Mountain*

## About the author

Derek Walcott (1930-2017) was a distinguished poet, playwright, and essayist from Saint Lucia, whose work profoundly explored Caribbean identity, colonialism, and the intersections of race, history, and culture. His notable achievements include winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1992, which recognized his significant contribution to world literature. Walcott's writing blends Caribbean influences with global literary traditions, making his work resonate internationally.

Born in Castries, Saint Lucia, Walcott grew up in a Methodist household and was deeply influenced by his cultural heritage. His father, a painter, died when Walcott was young, and his mother, a schoolteacher, played a significant role in his upbringing. He began writing poetry at a young age, publishing his first poem at 14. At 18, he published his first collection, *25 Poems*, and later self-funded its distribution. He studied at St. Mary's College in Saint Lucia and the University of the West Indies in Jamaica before moving to Trinidad in 1953, where he began his career as a writer, critic, and playwright. Walcott's early breakthrough came with *In a Green Night* (1962), a collection that established him as a key voice in Caribbean literature. His works often grapple with themes of colonial legacy, cultural fusion, and identity. His most famous work, *Omeros* (1990), is a Caribbean reimagining of Homer's epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* and is widely regarded as his magnum opus. He founded the Trinidad Theatre Workshop in 1959, which became an important venue for his theatrical productions. Walcott's plays, such as *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), address the complexities of post-colonial life, especially the tension between tradition and modernity in the Caribbean.

Throughout his career, Walcott published numerous poetry collections, including *Sea Grapes* (1976), *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981), *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *The Prodigal* (2004), and *White Egrets* (2010). He also wrote several plays, such as *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), *The Joker of Seville* (1974), and *The Capeman* (1997), which he co-wrote with Paul Simon. His works earned him several prestigious awards: the Cholmondeley Award (1969), Obie Award for Best Foreign Play (1971), MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1981), Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry (1988), and the T.S. Eliot Prize (2011), among others. In addition to his literary achievements, Walcott received the Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Lucia in 2016 and an honorary doctorate from the University of Essex in 2008. Walcott's legacy endures through numerous literary awards, his influence on Caribbean and world literature, and tributes like the naming of Derek Walcott Square in Castries and the Derek Walcott Prize for Poetry. His notable works are *Poetry Collections*: *In a Green Night* (1962), *Omeros* (1990), *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *White Egrets* (2010), *Plays*: *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970), *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1958), *The Capeman* (1997), *Other*: *The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory* (1993), *What the Twilight Says* (1998). He has won remarkable accolades such as Nobel Prize in Literature (1992), MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1981), T. S. Eliot Prize (2011), Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry (1988), and Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Lifetime Achievement (2004).

## Summary

*Dream on Monkey Mountain* is a post-colonial play by Derek Walcott that takes place on an unnamed Caribbean island, where the protagonist, Makak, a self-hating black man, is imprisoned. He experiences a dream in which a white goddess convinces him to embrace his African heritage and rule as a king, with his former jailer, Corporal Lestrade, as his enforcer.

The play begins with a chorus and dancers, followed by Makak being imprisoned by the mulatto Corporal Lestrade, who sees the prisoners as animals. Makak, who is confused and tired, claims that a white woman appeared to him in a vision, urging him to return to Africa. This sets the stage for his journey of self-discovery and eventual transformation in his dreams. Makak's companion, Moustique, finds him and encourages him to return to the market, where they hope to sell the coal Makak has produced. Along the way, they encounter a sick man and perform a healing ritual, which leads to Makak gaining a reputation as a healer. However, Moustique tries to exploit this gift for personal gain, but Makak refuses. The two eventually make their way to the market, where Moustique impersonates Makak to perform healing tricks, but is caught and beaten to death by the crowd. Makak, devastated, falls into another fit.

Makak wakes up back in jail, where he and fellow prisoners Tigre and Souris conspire to escape. Makak stabs Lestrade in a fit of rage, and the group flees into the forest. There, Makak's behavior becomes increasingly erratic as he proclaims himself the king of Africa, promising to take his fellow prisoners there. Lestrade follows them, repentant for his past actions. As Makak's vision of Africa unfolds, he is crowned as a king, but the reality of his newfound power feels hollow. He condemns historical figures, including the white woman from his dream, and ultimately executes her. In a final act of despair, Makak rejects his dream of kingship.

The play ends with Makak back in his cell, now embracing his true identity as Felix Hobain. Moustique, miraculously alive, joins him, and the two return home to Monkey Mountain, signaling a return to their roots. The epilogue suggests a return to normalcy, with Makak finally accepting himself and his place in the world.

## Critical Analysis

*Dream on Monkey Mountain* by Derek Walcott is a powerful exploration of identity, colonialism, and the tension between cultural heritage and imposed colonial structures. The play is steeped in allegory and symbolism, drawing heavily on post-colonial themes. Walcott uses the character of Makak to critique both the colonial powers that oppressed his people and the internalized self-hate that arises from colonial subjugation.

The play also raises questions about personal and collective identity. Makak's journey through hallucinations and dreams can be seen as a metaphor for the psychological trauma of colonization. His belief that he is a king or a healer, despite the fantasy's eventual unraveling, reflects the disillusionment many post-colonial peoples face when seeking to reclaim their heritage.

The structure of the play, which alternates between dream sequences and harsh reality, emphasizes the blurred line between imagination and real life. Walcott critiques both the self-delusion that arises from colonial oppression and the dangerous allure of idealized returns to African roots without understanding the complexities of such a return.

## Characters

1. **Makak** – The central character of the play, Makak is a troubled, older black man who is imprisoned and driven to madness by his experiences. He becomes a symbol of the colonial subject, torn between a dream of returning to Africa and the reality of his identity in the Caribbean. His transformation from a prisoner to a king and back reflects his internal conflict with his past and his place in the world.
2. **Moustique** – Makak's companion and friend, Moustique is a self-serving character who seeks to exploit Makak's powers. He embodies the opportunism that can arise in the face of societal oppression, using Makak's dreams to manipulate others and further his own gain. Moustique's death represents the ultimate betrayal of Makak's dream and his disillusionment with the possibility of change.
3. **Corporal Lestrade** – A mulatto prison officer, Lestrade represents the complicated relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. His mixed heritage puts him at odds with both the white authorities and the black prisoners, embodying the role of the enforcer of colonial law. His eventual breakdown reflects the psychological damage of living within a colonial system.
4. **Tigre and Souris** – Two fellow prisoners, they are initially portrayed as disinterested in Makak's mission, but as the play progresses, they become more involved in Makak's vision, though often for personal gain. Their characters reflect the diverse responses to colonial oppression – ranging from compliance to opportunism to rebellion.

## Themes

1. **Colonialism and Post-Colonial Identity** – One of the central themes of the play is the psychological and cultural damage caused by colonialism. Makak's journey is a direct reflection of the internalized self-hate and confusion that many colonized people face, struggling to reconcile their African heritage with the colonial identity imposed upon them.
2. **Madness and Illusion** – Makak's hallucinations and dreams blur the lines between reality and fantasy. This theme highlights the ways in which the trauma of colonialism can lead to madness, as individuals like Makak seek to escape their realities by constructing

alternate identities and dreams, such as the fantasy of returning to Africa or becoming a king.

3. **Identity and Self-Discovery** – The play explores the complex process of self-discovery, as Makak grapples with who he is. His fluctuating identities – from prisoner to healer, from prophet to king – reflect his search for meaning and belonging in a post-colonial world. In the end, Makak's decision to return to his true name, Felix Hobain, marks a moment of self-acceptance and a rejection of the fantasy he once pursued.
4. **Religion and Spirituality** – The theme of spirituality plays a significant role in the play, particularly through Makak's role as a healer. His connection to African spirituality and his belief in his own divine mission reflects the cultural and religious rebirth that colonized people might hope for. However, this spirituality is also shown to be a source of confusion and eventual disappointment, as Makak's dreams are crushed by the reality of his life.
5. **Power and Authority** – Throughout the play, the shifting dynamics of power are explored. Makak, initially a prisoner, becomes a king in his hallucinations, while Lestrade, a representative of colonial power, loses his authority as the play unfolds. This shift reflects the changing power structures in post-colonial societies and the tension between old and new forms of power.

# UNIT IV

## Chinua Achebe - *Things Fall Apart*

## About the author:

Chinua Achebe, an eminent Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic, is venerated as a pivotal figure in contemporary African literature, with his seminal work, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), standing as a cornerstone in the African literary canon. Born in Ogidi, Colonial Nigeria, Achebe's formative years were shaped by the dual influences of Igbo cultural heritage and postcolonial Christian doctrine, fostering his intellectual prowess and critical acumen. Achebe attended various schools, including St. Philips' Central School and Government College in Umuahia, where he encountered both British and Nigerian educational influences. His schooling highlighted the imposition of English language and culture, which caused him to grapple with feelings of inferiority regarding his own heritage. While studying at the University College Ibadan, Achebe

began writing and critically examining European portrayals of Africa, leading to his desire to present authentic African narratives. Nadine Gordimer referred to him as the "Father of African Literature." In 1975, Achebe delivered a provocative lecture, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," which became a seminal text in postcolonial critique, denouncing figures such as Albert Schweitzer and Joseph Conrad as exemplars of pervasive racism. He served as a Professor of African Studies at Brown University until his demise. His literary repertoire includes notable titles such as *Arrow of God* (1964), *Beware, Soul Brother and Other Poems* (1971)—which garnered the Commonwealth Poetry Prize—and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), which received a Booker Prize for Fiction nomination. Chinua Achebe received numerous prestigious awards, including the Man Booker International Prize in 2007, the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1982, the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2002, the St. Louis Literary Award in 1999, and the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize in 2010. Chinua Achebe, who passed away at the age of 82, is celebrated as Africa's most distinguished novelist and the progenitor of African fiction.

## Summary

The novel is divided into three parts:

**Part One: Life in Umuofia**

The story centers on **Okonkwo**, a respected leader and wrestler in the Igbo village of **Umuofia**. Okonkwo is driven by a desire to distance himself from the perceived failures of his father, Unoka, who was lazy and heavily in debt. Okonkwo becomes wealthy and earns respect by working hard and adhering to the community's strict cultural norms. However, his rigidity and temper often lead to personal and family struggles.

Okonkwo's life takes a turn when **Ikemefuna**, a boy from another village, is brought to Umuofia as part of a peace settlement. Okonkwo grows fond of Ikemefuna, but when the Oracle of the village decrees that the boy must die, Okonkwo participates in the killing, fearing that refusing would make him appear weak. This act haunts him deeply.

**Part Two: Exile in Mbanta**

During a funeral ceremony, Okonkwo accidentally kills a clansman, an offense against the earth goddess. As punishment, he is exiled to his mother's village, **Mbanta**, for seven years. During his exile, Christian missionaries arrive in the region, introducing a new religion and challenging traditional Igbo beliefs.

While in Mbanta, Okonkwo is troubled by the growing influence of the missionaries, who attract converts, including some of his clansmen. Among these is his own son, **Nwoye**, who rejects Igbo traditions and embraces Christianity. Okonkwo sees Nwoye's defection as a personal betrayal.

**Part Three: Return to Umuofia**

After his exile, Okonkwo returns to Umuofia, only to find that the village has changed. The Christian missionaries, supported by British colonial administrators, have established a strong presence. The traditional Igbo way of life is rapidly eroding.

Okonkwo attempts to rally the community to resist colonial rule, but he is met with apathy. When a violent conflict with the colonizers arises, Okonkwo kills a colonial messenger in a final act of defiance. Realizing that his people will not fight back, and feeling that his way of life is irreparably destroyed, Okonkwo takes his own life—an act considered disgraceful by Igbo tradition.

## Characters

1. **Okonkwo** – A proud and ambitious Igbo man whose fear of weakness leads to his tragic downfall.
2. **Nwoye** – Okonkwo's sensitive son who ultimately converts to Christianity to escape his father's expectations.
3. **Ikemefuna** – A boy given to Umuofia as a peace offering, who becomes close to Okonkwo's family but is tragically killed.
4. **Ekwefi** – Okonkwo's second wife, fiercely protective of her only daughter, Ezinma.
5. **Ezinma** – Okonkwo's favorite daughter, whom he wishes were born a son for her strength and spirit.
6. **Unoka** – Okonkwo's father, whose laziness and debt-shirking behavior haunt Okonkwo's

ambitions.

7. **Obierika** – Okonkwo's close friend, who often provides a voice of reason and reflects on Igbo culture.
8. **Mr. Brown** – The first missionary in Umuofia, who attempts to understand and respect the Igbo traditions.
9. **Reverend Smith** – Mr. Brown's successor, who is strict and intolerant, leading to increased tensions with the Igbo.
10. **The District Commissioner** – A colonial official who views the Igbo people as subjects to be controlled, symbolizing colonial arrogance.

## Critical Analysis

Achebe wrote *Things Fall Apart* partly to counter stereotypical depictions of African society, which were common in Western literature. By vividly depicting the Igbo customs, religion, and social structures, he highlights the richness and complexity of African culture. The novel portrays Igbo society's deep respect for religion, rituals, and social norms, particularly around family, masculinity, and justice. Achebe humanizes African society, making readers understand it on its own terms rather than through colonial biases. The use of Igbo language and proverbs enhances cultural authenticity and emphasizes the role of oral tradition. These elements immerse readers in Igbo culture, giving them insight into its values and worldview.

Okonkwo, the protagonist, is a complex character whose downfall aligns with classical elements of tragedy. Like traditional tragic heroes, he possesses a fatal flaw—in this case, a relentless fear of appearing weak, which drives him to make rigid and often harsh decisions. Okonkwo's concept of masculinity is rooted in aggression and power, largely shaped by his rejection of his father, Unoka, whom he deems weak and effeminate. This obsession with masculine strength prevents him from showing affection, compassion, or adaptability. Achebe critiques rigid gender roles through Okonkwo's fate, suggesting that unyielding adherence to a single concept of masculinity can lead to personal and social ruin. Okonkwo's inability to change mirrors his eventual inability to survive in a society that itself is changing. Achebe poignantly illustrates the devastating effects of colonialism on Igbo society. The arrival of British missionaries

and administrators disrupts traditional life, challenging and ultimately dismantling Igbo cultural norms and values.

Characters like Mr. Brown and Reverend Smith embody contrasting approaches to colonialism. While Mr. Brown attempts a respectful and diplomatic method, Reverend Smith's rigidity and intolerance exacerbate tensions, revealing the colonizers' underlying aim to dominate and control. The District Commissioner symbolizes colonial oppression, viewing the Igbo as mere subjects for a book rather than as complex human beings. This character highlights the colonial mindset that reduces indigenous people to study subjects and dismisses their humanity. Achebe reveals how colonialism not only suppresses traditional African cultures but also divides communities and families. Nwoye's conversion to Christianity, for instance, deepens Okonkwo's alienation, illustrating how colonial influence can create irreparable rifts within families and society. The novel explores the tension between tradition and change, as symbolized by Okonkwo's struggle to maintain Igbo customs against the encroaching colonial forces. Okonkwo's resistance to change is rooted in his desire to preserve his heritage, yet this inflexibility also isolates him. Achebe doesn't present change as inherently negative; rather, he shows the complex ways that change can challenge, enrich, or erode societies. Okonkwo's friend Obierika, for instance, reflects a more adaptable perspective and questions Igbo practices, such as the killing of twins and tribal warfare, that may need reevaluation. This theme addresses the broader challenge faced by any culture encountering rapid change, especially one forced upon it by outside influences. Achebe suggests that adaptation and resilience are essential for survival in the face of inevitable transformation.

Achebe presents religion as both a source of personal identity and communal unity for the Igbo, as well as a point of division when Christianity is introduced. The Igbo gods, oracles, and rituals embody their connection to their ancestors and land, while Christianity brings an alternate worldview that undermines these traditions. Nwoye's conversion to Christianity is emblematic of individuals within traditional societies who seek new identities and freedom from restrictive norms. For Nwoye, Christianity offers an escape from the violence and rigidity of his father's world, showing how colonization provided both challenges and opportunities for self-redefinition. Achebe critiques both sides, showing how cultural misunderstandings and lack of respect between the two religions lead to conflict and destruction. Achebe demonstrates the power of language in

maintaining and transmitting culture, while also showing how language can be used as a tool of colonial domination. The British impose English as the official language, eroding Igbo language and, by extension, Igbo identity. By writing *Things Fall Apart* in English, Achebe challenges Western readers to confront the narrative of colonization from an African perspective, effectively using the colonizers' language to critique colonialism. *Things Fall Apart* is a profound exploration of identity, cultural clash, and the impact of colonialism. Achebe's novel is not just a depiction of one man's tragic story, but a powerful commentary on the erosion of indigenous culture and the resilience of African societies in the face of foreign domination. Achebe's work challenges stereotypes and highlighting the consequences of imposing change without understanding.

## Themes

**1. Colonialism and its Impact :** The novel centers on the arrival of British colonialists in Igbo society and how their presence disrupts traditional life. It highlights the clash between indigenous African cultures and European influences, as well as the consequences of colonization for native communities.

**2. Tradition vs Change :** The conflict between tradition and change is central to the novel. The protagonist, Okonkwo, is deeply committed to upholding Igbo traditions, but the introduction of new beliefs and the colonial presence challenge and eventually dismantle these traditions.

**3. Fate and Free Will :** The novel explores the role of fate and individual action in determining a person's life. Okonkwo believes strongly in controlling his own fate, but events unfold that suggest a mix of personal responsibility and the inescapability of fate.

**4. Masculinity and Gender Roles :** Okonkwo's rigid views on masculinity define his actions throughout the novel. He equates strength and dominance with masculinity, often making harsh decisions to uphold his image. The novel examines the roles and expectations of men and women in Igbo society and how gender roles impact individuals.

**5. The Fallibility of Heroes :** Okonkwo is portrayed as a tragic hero. While he is respected and feared for his strength and achievements, his rigid, unforgiving nature leads to his downfall. The theme of the fallibility of heroes is explored as Okonkwo's inability to adapt to change and his tragic flaws contribute to his eventual demise.

**6. The Role of Religion :** The novel explores the role of religion both within the Igbo society and the impact of Christian missionaries. The traditional Igbo religion, centered around deities and ancestral worship, is contrasted with the new Christian faith brought by colonizers, which creates tension and division within the community.

**7. Identity and Belonging :** The theme of identity is explored as characters struggle with the imposition of foreign cultural norms. The novel questions the sense of belonging in a rapidly changing society, as characters like Okonkwo feel torn between preserving their heritage and adjusting to new social structures.

**8. Community and Isolation :** The novel emphasizes the importance of community in Igbo society, where collective decision-making, rituals, and support networks are crucial. Okonkwo's growing isolation as he distances himself from his community and his family underscores the tension between individualism and communal life.

**9. Change and Resistance :** Throughout the novel, the characters experience and respond to change, often with resistance. Okonkwo resists change as he perceives it as a threat to his identity and his culture, but the novel also shows how change can be inevitable, even if it is destructive to individuals and communities.

# Thomas King – "The One about Coyote Going West"

## About the author

Thomas Hunt King, born on April 24, 1943, in Roseville, California, is a renowned Cherokee, Greek, and German-descended novelist, essayist, and scholar recognized as one of North America's most significant contemporary Indigenous writers. Raised primarily by his mother after his father left and later passed away, King pursued diverse early careers, including

serving in the U.S. Navy, working as a photojournalist in New Zealand, and holding jobs as an ambulance driver and bank teller. Despite struggling academically early on, he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Chico State University and a Ph.D. in English from the University of Utah. His doctoral work explored Native American storytelling as literature, marking a foundational study in Indigenous oral traditions. King emigrated to Canada in 1980, teaching Native Studies at the University of Lethbridge and later joining the University of Guelph as a professor of English and Theatre Studies. His literary debut, *Medicine River* (1990), received critical acclaim and inspired a CBC film. His novel *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) was a Governor General's Literary Award finalist, exemplifying his signature blend of oral storytelling and Western narrative. He has also published children's books, including *A Coyote Columbus Story* (1992), and a series of mysteries under the pseudonym Hartley GoodWeather. In non-fiction, King gained prominence with *The Truth About Stories* (2003), based on his Massey Lectures, and *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012), a critical analysis of Indigenous experiences in North America, which won the RBC Taylor Prize and was adapted into a documentary in 2020. As a committed activist, King critiques governmental policies on Indigenous land and rights, particularly addressing land dispossession and identity laws such as Canada's Bill C-31. King continues to inspire as a literary and cultural icon advocating for Indigenous rights and recognition.

## Summary & Critical Analysis

In "The One about Coyote Going West", the narrator tells a story to a coyote about the discovery of the Indians. The narrator introduces Coyote, a trickster figure, who represents the first colonizer. Coyote's journey westward is symbolic of colonization, where she encounters the natural world and tries to reshape it according to her standards. Coyote encounters a smooth river and a round mountain but, unable to appreciate their natural form, she distorts them by adding rocks and rapids to the river, and cliffs and bumps to the mountain. The narrator points out that these changes are misguided, declaring, "the first thing Coyote makes, I tell Coyote, is a mistake." This highlights Coyote's inability to see the true beauty in nature and her inclination to alter it to fit her own perspective. Coyote's journey continues with the introduction of the Big Mistake, a character symbolizing the European settlers and modern society. The Big Mistake represents the introduction of materialistic inventions such as vacuum cleaners and air humidifiers. Coyote and

the Big Mistake develop a relationship based on mutual trust, with the Big Mistake embodying the imposition of new systems, technologies, and values that disrupt the existing world. This character signifies the encroachment of Western materialism and the accompanying loss of Indigenous culture.

The story also features ducks that represent the Native people. The ducks remark, "We got more ducks than we need. I guess we got to be the Indians. And so they do that. Before Coyote or that Big Mistake can mess things up." This line illustrates how Native cultures were forced to conform to the demands of colonizers. The ducks' transformation into "Indians" symbolizes the erasure of Indigenous identity as Native people were pressured to adapt to European norms. Through the interactions between Coyote and the Big Mistake, King reflects on the consequences of colonization. The Big Mistake's influence represents the forces that led to the destruction of Native culture, as Indigenous peoples were compelled to adapt to a new world where their traditions were marginalized. The story's humor highlights the absurdities of colonial practices, with Coyote attempting to undo the damage caused by the Big Mistake, symbolizing the broader struggle of Indigenous peoples to preserve their cultural identity in the face of colonial forces.

Coyote also encounters European settlers in the story, and through her conversation with Raven, she is warned about "them" (the Europeans), but she is too preoccupied with her own whims to fully understand the implications. When the Europeans arrive, they bring systems, structures, and rules that sharply contrast with Coyote's free, flowing, and harmonious way of life. The Europeans' imposition of laws and territories disrupts the natural balance that Coyote represents, symbolizing the clash between Indigenous values and colonial control.

The story serves as a critique of colonialism, with Coyote's confusion and frustration reflecting the difficulties faced by Indigenous peoples as their land and culture were transformed by European settlers. Despite her efforts to restore harmony, Coyote's attempts ultimately fail, underscoring the resilience of Indigenous cultures in the face of overwhelming change. King uses Coyote as a vehicle to explore the complexities of cross-cultural misunderstanding and the consequences of colonization on Native peoples.

The fable concludes with Coyote's efforts to resist the European influence ultimately failing, illustrating how Indigenous peoples were forced to adapt to a world that no longer valued their ways of life. The story uses the trickster figure of Coyote to explore the impact of colonization on Indigenous cultures, showing how European settlers sought to reshape both the land and the people, imposing their standards and values. The Big Mistake, as a symbol of modernity and colonization, represents the destructive forces that led to the loss of Indigenous culture, while Coyote, as the Indigenous spirit, symbolizes the struggle to maintain identity in a changing world.

## Characters

1. **Coyote** : A trickster figure who embodies the first colonizer, reshaping nature to suit her own whims and causing unintended consequences.
2. **The Narrator**: The storyteller who provides commentary on Coyote's actions and reflects on the deeper meanings of her journey.
3. **Big Mistake** : A symbol of European settlers and modern society, representing materialism, technology, and the disruption of Indigenous cultures.
4. **Raven** : A character who warns Coyote about the arrival of Europeans, offering insight into the impending cultural changes.
5. **Ducks** : Symbolic of Native peoples, they represent the forced adaptation and loss of identity in the face of colonization.

## Themes

1. **Indigenous Identity and Stereotypes**: Through the character of Coyote, King addresses the way Indigenous peoples are often viewed through the lens of stereotypes. Coyote's journey to the West is marked by his defiance of these stereotypes, and the story critiques how these images of Indigenous culture are oversimplified or distorted by mainstream society.
2. **Colonization and Cultural Erosion**: The story humorously reflects on the ways that colonialism has affected Indigenous peoples, particularly through the character of Coyote,

who becomes increasingly disconnected from his cultural roots as he moves westward. This can be interpreted as a metaphor for the cultural loss and transformation faced by Indigenous communities due to colonization.

3. **Humor and Satire as Resistance**: King uses humor and satire to critique historical and contemporary issues faced by Indigenous peoples. The absurdity of Coyote's adventures is a tool that allows King to comment on serious matters like colonialism, identity, and the imposition of Western values on Indigenous cultures. This blend of humor and serious commentary is a hallmark of King's writing.
4. **Displacement and Mobility**: The story touches on the theme of displacement, as Coyote's journey represents the movement from one place to another, both physically and culturally. His journey west is symbolic of the broader experience of displacement felt by Indigenous peoples due to colonialism and the loss of land, culture, and autonomy.
5. **Resistance to Westernization**: Coyote's failure to adapt to the "Western" world is a form of resistance to Westernization. His story challenges the expectations of Western society and critiques the idea that Indigenous ways of life should conform to or be replaced by Western ideals.
6. **Mythmaking and Storytelling**: As with much of King's work, storytelling itself is a central theme. In this story, King reflects on the role of myth and storytelling in preserving Indigenous culture and identity. Coyote's journey is both a literal and figurative narrative about the power of stories to shape our understanding of the world, including the challenges that Indigenous people face in a post-colonial society.
7. **The Intersection of Traditional and Modern Worlds**: The story contrasts traditional Indigenous ways of thinking with the pressures of modernity. Coyote's confusion and antics reflect the tension between maintaining traditional cultural practices and facing the demands of the modern, Western-dominated world.
8. **Resilience and Survival**: Despite the challenges he faces, Coyote's perseverance and wit suggest a theme of resilience and survival. His journey, full of misadventures and challenges, mirrors the resilience of Indigenous peoples who continue to survive and adapt despite centuries of colonization and oppression.

# Sam Selvon – *The Lonely Londoners*

## About the author

Samuel Selvon (May 20, 1923 – April 16, 1994) was a Trinidadian novelist and short-story writer of East Indian descent, celebrated for his portrayal of Caribbean life, particularly the experiences of East Indians in the West Indies and abroad. Born in San Fernando, Trinidad, he was the sixth of seven children in a family with mixed heritage—his father was a Tamil Indian immigrant, and his mother was Anglo-Indian with Scottish and Indian roots. Selvon was educated at Naparima College before leaving at age 15 to work. During World War II, he served as a wireless operator in the Royal Naval Reserve, which inspired him to begin writing poetry. After the war, Selvon worked as a journalist for the Trinidad Guardian before moving to London in 1950. There, he worked various menial jobs, including as a clerk at the Indian Embassy, while writing in his spare time. His breakthrough came with his first novel, *A Brighter Sun* (1952), which depicted the lives of East Indians and Creoles in Trinidad. His most notable work, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), portrayed the lives of West Indian immigrants in London using creolized English or "nation language" for both narrative and dialogue, a pioneering technique that captured the immigrant experience and brought him widespread acclaim. Selvon's later works include *Turn Again Tiger* (1958), *Ways of Sunlight* (1957), *The Housing Lark* (1965), and *Moses Ascending* (1975), among others. His writing often explored themes of migration, identity, and the challenges faced by Caribbean people living in Britain. In addition to his novels, he worked on radio scripts, which were broadcast by the BBC, and later taught creative writing in Canada. Selvon's contributions to Caribbean literature were recognized with numerous awards, including two Guggenheim Fellowships, the Hummingbird Medal Gold for Literature (1969), the Chaconia Medal Gold for Literature (1994), and an honorary doctorate from Warwick University (1989). He passed away from chronic lung disease in 1994, and his legacy continues to influence writers such as Zadie Smith and Hanif Kureishi. In 2018, on what would have been his 95th birthday, Selvon was honored with a Google Doodle. His works remain central to discussions of Caribbean literature and the immigrant experience.

# Summary & Critical Analysis

*The Lonely Londoners* (1956) is a landmark work of postcolonial literature by Trinidadian author Samuel Selvon. The novel follows a group of Caribbean and African immigrants living in London in the 1950s, primarily focusing on Moses Aloetta, a Trinidadian man who has been living in the city for six years. Through a series of episodic vignettes, the narrative examines the complex experiences of these immigrants, their dreams, and their disillusionment as they navigate the harsh realities of life in post-war London.

The story begins with Moses, who works as a night laborer, waiting at Waterloo Station to meet a fellow Trinidadian named Galahad (whose full name is Henry Oliver), a new immigrant. Although Moses and Galahad have never met before, Moses has agreed to help him settle in London. As Moses waits for Galahad, he encounters his Jamaican friend Tolroy, who is at the station to pick up his mother. Tolroy, having saved money to bring his mother from Jamaica, is shocked when she arrives with additional relatives—his aunt and cousins—whom he had not expected to support. This situation sets the tone for the challenges immigrants face when they are pressured to help and accommodate their extended families. When Galahad finally arrives, Moses is struck by his naive optimism. Galahad is wearing a tropical suit and has no luggage, claiming he'll buy new belongings once he starts working. Moses views him as inexperienced and frequently warns him to "take it easy," though he still agrees to help him get settled in London. The two men head to Moses's small apartment, where they share a meal and Moses reflects on his own time in the city. The next morning, Galahad, eager to prove his independence, sets off to find a job on his own. He soon gets lost, and Moses, anticipating this, follows him and helps him reach an employment agency. Moses explains the immigrant experience of relying on government welfare, something he scorns, as he believes it undermines the efforts of those trying to make an honest living. Galahad, agreeing with Moses, decides against depending on welfare and begins to look for work instead. The narrator then shifts focus to Captain, or "Cap," a Nigerian immigrant who came to London to study law but squandered his father's money on a hedonistic lifestyle of prostitutes and cigarettes. Unable to fund his education, Cap begins to exploit his white lovers for money, manipulating them and borrowing from friends when he is short on cash. His story serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of abandoning one's goals in pursuit of fleeting

pleasures. As Galahad settles in London, he meets several other immigrants. One of them is Bart, a light-skinned man who tries to pass as Latino and is stingy with his money. Bart fears that the influx of new black immigrants will make life harder for people like him, and he tries to distance himself from those who appear "too black." He becomes infatuated with a white woman named Beatrice, but her father rejects the idea of their marriage. Despite this, Bart continues to search for her and takes a job as a doorman at a nightclub she frequents.

The novel also depicts the lives of other immigrants in London, like the troubled marriage of Tolroy's relatives Lewis and Agnes. Moses tells Lewis a fabricated story about white women cheating on their husbands, which leads to an episode of domestic violence when Lewis suspects Agnes of infidelity. This ultimately causes Agnes to leave him. The novel portrays the ways in which white Londoners both cater to and exploit immigrants. Some white business owners open shops that sell goods specifically for immigrants, such as West Indian food or cigars. The grocery store that Moses frequents becomes a symbol of this niche market, where immigrants can find familiar products. Despite the apparent friendliness of these establishments, the immigrants are still often treated as outsiders, reflecting the complex dynamics of race and class in London. As Galahad spends more time in London, he grows increasingly enamored with the city's lights, energy, and opportunities. However, his idealistic view is shattered when he is confronted with racism. One day, as he walks through the streets dressed in his finest clothes, a child points at him and calls him a "black man." Galahad tries to be friendly and pats the child on the cheek, but both the child and his mother recoil, making him realize that his skin color is a barrier to his full acceptance in the city.

In the later part of the novel, Selvon explores the sexual dynamics between black and white people in London, particularly through Moses's interactions with white men in Hyde Park. In one incident, Moses is approached by a white man who offers him money to have sex with a white woman while he watches. This episode represents the complex intersection of race, exploitation, and desire. The novel's portrayal of interracial relationships in London underscores the tensions that arise from colonial history and racial dynamics in post-war Britain.

# Characters

1. **Moses Aloetta**: A Trinidadian immigrant who has lived in London for six years and serves as a guide and mentor to Galahad, representing the disillusioned, settled immigrant.
2. **Galahad (Henry Oliver)**: A young, idealistic Trinidadian new to London, eager to make his way and often guided by Moses.
3. **Tolroy**: A Jamaican immigrant who is frustrated by the arrival of unexpected relatives and the financial burden of supporting them.
4. **Captain (Cap)**: A Nigerian immigrant who abandons his law studies in favor of a hedonistic lifestyle, relying on others for money and support.
5. **Bart (Bartholomew)**: A light-skinned Caribbean man who tries to pass as Latino, avoids association with darker-skinned immigrants, and clings to his clerical job.
6. **Lewis**: Tolroy's relative who is prone to jealousy and violence, ultimately damaging his relationship with his wife, Agnes.
7. **Agnes**: Lewis's wife, who suffers from his abusive behavior and eventually leaves him, embodying the struggles of immigrant women.
8. **Tanty**: Tolroy's resourceful and independent mother, who has adapted to life in London, maintaining strong ties to her Caribbean roots.
9. **Beatrice**: A white woman whom Bart falls in love with and dreams of marrying, but is ultimately rejected by her father and disappears from his life.
10. **The White Man (Hyde Park encounter)**: A stranger who offers Moses money to have sex with his wife while he watches, symbolizing the commodification of black bodies in London.

# Themes

## 1. Immigration and the Immigrant Experience

The novel portrays the struggles of Caribbean immigrants arriving in London, facing the harsh realities of living in a foreign country. The characters, especially Moses, grapple with feelings of alienation and loneliness as they try to navigate the complexities of life in a city

that feels both exciting and hostile. The sense of displacement is evident, as the immigrants are caught between their past life in the Caribbean and their uncertain future in London.

## **2.** Racism and Discrimination

Racism is a pervasive theme throughout *The Lonely Londoners*. The novel depicts the everyday discrimination that immigrants face, particularly from the white British population. The characters encounter prejudice in various forms, from overt racism to more subtle forms of exclusion. This theme is particularly explored through the characters' experiences of being seen as "other" or inferior, despite their contributions to British society.

## **3.** Loneliness and Isolation

The title itself underscores this theme. The immigrants in the novel are often isolated, physically separated from their families and their homeland, and emotionally disconnected from the broader society. Despite forming a community with other immigrants, they continue to experience a sense of loneliness, both in their relationships with each other and in their encounters with the British public. The isolation is compounded by cultural differences and the emotional toll of living in an unfamiliar city.

## **4.** Identity and Cultural Clash

The theme of identity is explored through the characters' attempts to reconcile their Caribbean heritage with their experiences in London. The characters struggle with questions of self-identity, particularly when confronted with the pressure to conform to British norms while holding on to their own cultural traditions. The immigrants' sense of self is shaped by both their shared experiences of migration and the tension between their Caribbean roots and the dominant British culture.

## **5.** Hope and Disillusionment

Many of the characters arrive in London with hopes of bettering their lives and achieving success. However, as the novel progresses, it becomes clear that these hopes are often met with disappointment. The harsh realities of life in a foreign land—such as low-paying jobs, poor living conditions, and constant discrimination—lead to a sense of disillusionment. Nevertheless, the characters continue to dream, finding small comforts in their community, relationships, and moments of personal triumph.

## **6.** Community and Solidarity

While the characters experience loneliness and alienation, they also find a sense of belonging in the immigrant community. The novel highlights the importance of solidarity and mutual support among the Caribbean immigrants in London. Despite their struggles, the characters look out for each other, sharing resources, stories, and experiences. This theme is especially evident in the relationships between Moses and the other immigrants, who form a tight-knit group despite the challenges they face.

## **7.** Colonial Legacy and Post-Colonial Realities

The novel reflects on the legacy of British colonialism, particularly the way it influences the relationship between Britain and its former colonies. The immigrants in the novel, while British subjects, face a harsh reception in the "mother country." The novel critiques the British notion of imperial superiority and examines the impact of colonialism on both the colonizers and the colonized. The immigrants are caught in the tension between their colonial past and their post-colonial present.

## **8.** Economic Struggles and Social Inequality

The novel emphasizes the economic hardships faced by the Caribbean immigrants in London. Many of the characters work low-paying, menial jobs and live in poor, overcrowded conditions. This theme highlights the social inequality and class divisions

that exist in London, with immigrants often relegated to the margins of society due to both their race and their socioeconomic status.

**9.** The Search for Belonging

Throughout the novel, the characters are on a quest for belonging, whether in their relationships with one another or within the larger British society. They seek acceptance, understanding, and a place where they can feel at home, but often find that the barriers of race and class make it difficult to fully integrate. This search for belonging is one of the driving forces behind the characters' actions and interactions.

**10.** Language and Communication

Language plays a significant role in the novel, particularly in the way the characters speak and communicate. The creolized English used by the immigrants is a reflection of their cultural identity and their connection to the Caribbean. However, this language also marks them as outsiders in London, as they struggle to communicate with the broader British population. The use of dialect in the novel serves as a powerful tool for expressing the characters' experiences and their sense of belonging to a specific cultural community.

# Unit – V

## *The Empire Writes Back* - Chapter 1
## Cutting the Ground: Critical models of post-colonial literatures

In recognizing the distinctive features of post-colonial texts, writers and critics devised four key analytical models. The first focuses on national or regional characteristics, the second identifies common themes across diverse national literatures, such as those within the African diaspora, the third assesses linguistic and cultural elements, and the fourth highlights the significance of hybridity and syncretism.

The USA became the first post-colonial society to create a national literature, which led to important questions about how literature connects to geography and nationality. In the late 18th century, writers like Charles Brockden Brown attempted to adapt British literary styles but realized

significant changes were needed to suit American culture. As American literature established its own identity, other countries, such as Nigeria and India, began to be recognized for their distinctive literary contributions. The study of these national literatures is crucial for understanding post-colonial identity, but there is a risk that nationalism may narrow the understanding of literary diversity.

Post-colonial literature theories emerged when colonies began to be understood based on their own literary traditions rather than just in relation to Britain. Victorian Britain highlighted its empire's exotic nature, downplaying the unique characteristics of its colonies. This was further enforced by colonial education that centered on British works and ideals. Nationalist movements helped shift this focus, allowing for comparisons among different literary traditions. Three key comparison types developed: among countries of the white diaspora, among areas of the Black diaspora, and between these two groups. J.P. Matthews' *Tradition in Exile* was an early work comparing poetry in Canada and Australia, highlighting both similarities and differences.

"Black writing" includes literature from the African diaspora and highlights race as a crucial factor in social inequality. It connects writers of various nationalities but often neglects the cultural distinctions between Black minority literature in powerful nations and works from Black majority populations in independent states. The Négritude movement, initiated by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, sought to promote Black cultural identity but sometimes relied on stereotypes reflective of European biases. Wole Soyinka criticized Négritude for being rooted in European thought while trying to oppose it. The philosophy of Négritude has recently inspired Black consciousness movements in the U.S., led by writers like Langston Hughes and Richard Wright.

A key difficulty in establishing a broader comparative model for literatures is choosing the right name. Early terms like Joseph Jones's "terranglia" were not accepted. While "Commonwealth literature" became popular in the 1960s, it was limited by its political and geographical connotations. Newer terms like "Third World literatures" and "new literatures in English" have emerged, but "new literatures" can imply a Eurocentric bias. The term "post-colonial literatures" is preferred, as it encompasses historical contexts and recognizes the impact of colonialism across different literatures, including those in indigenous languages. This term also allows for exploring the effects of colonialism in various regions, such as Ireland.

Maxwell's influential model of post-colonial literature highlights the tension between language and place, noting how societies use non-native languages to express their local experiences. He divided societies into settler colonies, ike the U.S. and Australia, where European settlers dominated Indigenous populations, and invaded colonies, like India and Nigeria, where local cultures were suppressed. However, his model does not account for the West Indies' complex history of violence and displacement or the dual influences on South African literature due to apartheid. Furthermore, Maxwell's theory may suggest that certain languages are inherently inappropriate for different places, which undermines the existence of post-colonial English literatures.

Post-colonial critics highlight numerous thematic similarities across English literatures. The struggle for independence appears in works like Rao's *Kanthapura* and Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat*. The influence of foreign cultures is present in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* and Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin*. Motifs involving building construction symbolize identity in texts by Naipaul and Rama Rao. The theme of European travelers with native guides is found in Harris's and White's works. Critics note the presence of allegory and irony, with W.H. New discussing a shared ironic tone across cultures. The theme of exile connects to larger concerns of place and identity influenced by colonial history. These shared themes indicate common experiences among post-colonial societies shaped by political and cultural forces.

A major focus in post-colonial studies is the relationship between colonizers and the colonized, informed by theorists like Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi. This approach raises critical questions about the possibility of "decolonizing" culture. Some critics argue for a revival of pre-colonial languages, believing complete independence can be achieved, while others argue that cultural blending is both inevitable and valuable. In countries like India and parts of Africa, there's a call to write in indigenous languages, though critics stress the importance of recognizing cultural hybridity. In settler colonies, language was initially seen as a minor issue, but important debates have arisen regarding cultural authenticity versus syncretism. The dialogues between writers like Wole Soyinka and Chinweizu, as well as Caribbean authors like Edward Brathwaite and Derek Walcott, highlight these issues. Additionally, influences from structuralism and Marxism have enriched post-colonial analysis, while feminist perspectives increasingly inform discussions about colonial power dynamics.

Max Dorsinville's comparative model focuses on the dynamics between dominated and dominating societies, expanding the analysis of oppression beyond colonial contexts to include regions like French Africa and the Caribbean. His framework explains cultural changes through a hierarchy of power, showing how American literature shifted from a dominated to a dominating status, influencing European works. It also examines the complexities within societies, such as Aboriginal literature being dominated by white Australian literature, which is itself influenced by British literature. This model clarifies the relationship of Irish, Welsh, and Scottish literatures to English, given their complicity in imperialism. Dorsinville emphasizes linguistic and cultural imposition, suggesting that dominated literatures frequently resist through subversion. Writers like Salman Rushdie and J.M. Coetzee reinterpret English canon texts to question existing hierarchies and their philosophical foundations.

Post-colonial literary theory adapts European theories thoughtfully, recognizing that they need to be reinterpreted for different cultures. Critics like Homi Bhabha and authors such as Wilson Harris focus on the hybrid cultures that emerge in post-colonial societies. Unlike traditional European views that stress history, post-colonial thinking sees time as fluid. Authors like Salman Rushdie and Joseph Furphy disrupt traditional historical narratives, offering new insights from marginalized perspectives. Bhabha cautions that interpreting post-colonial texts strictly through a historical lens can weaken their revolutionary intent. Derek Walcott advocates for escaping historical resentments and envisioning a "historyless" future. E.K. Brathwaite and Harris stress the mixed cultural identity in the Caribbean, suggesting that imagination can help transcend historical oppressions. In Canada, despite having a mosaic identity, strong theories of literary hybridity are lacking. Overall, post-colonial theory increasingly emphasizes spatial diversity over historical linearity.