



Manonmaniam Sundaranar University

DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

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B.A ENGLISH (SIXTH SEMESTER)

GLOBAL LITERATURE

Prepared by

Dr. R. Anto Sindhuja

Assistant Professor, Department of English,

St. John's College, Palayamkottai - 627 002

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GLOBAL LITERATURE

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Prescribed Text:

- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/40470/a-dog-has-died>
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<https://allpoetry.com/poem/10379451-Telephone-Conversation-by-Wole-Soyinka>
<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-widening-compass-of-pain/>
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Wole Soyinka. *A Dance in the Forest*. Surjeet Publications, 2018.
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Erica Ferencik. *Girl in Ice*. Scout Press, 2022.

UNIT I: POETRY

PABLO NERUDA: A DOG HAS DIED

About the Author

Following Neruda's birth, his mother passed away, prompting the family to relocate to the town of Temuco, where his father entered into a new marriage. Neruda thrived as a poet at a young age. At the age of 16, he used the pen name Pablo Neruda, most likely in reaction to his father's disapproval of his writing. In 1923, Neruda had already published his initial literary effort, *Book of Twilights*. *Twenty Love Poems*, which was released shortly after, received critical acclaim but also sparked controversy due to its explicit pornographic content. In 1926, due to financial constraints, Neruda assumed a diplomatic role as an honorary consul based in South Asia. Neruda greatly empathised with the South Asian population, whom he perceived as oppressed under colonial governance. During this period, he wrote extensively, publishing numerous collections and shifting from a previous symbolist and lyrical approach to a more intricate and surrealistic framework.

In 1932, Neruda was sent as consul to Madrid, Spain, where he actively advocated for communism, a political ideology that enjoyed significant support from the literary community. The political turmoil that had been developing in Spain in 1936 finally culminated in the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Neruda's lyrical style underwent another transformation, adopting a more straightforward and readily understandable language that pays tribute to the history, culture, and independence of Latin America. Throughout the war, Neruda extensively journeyed across Spain and neighbouring countries, actively amassing backing for the Spanish Republicans. In 1930, Neruda wedded Marijke Vogelzang, who subsequently delivered their daughter Malva Reyes in 1935. Following his divorce from Marijke, he entered into matrimony with Delia del Carril. Malva died of tuberculosis in 1943 when she was nine years old.

In 1948, after a brief period as a Senator and an official member of the Communist party, Neruda was forced to leave Chile due to his authorship of an open letter criticising President Gabriel González Videla's progressively conservative policies. In 1952, following the subsiding of the political climate, Neruda returned to Chile and constructed a residence in the seaside hamlet of Isla Negra. Having acquired considerable fortune, Neruda embarked on numerous travels and persisted in the creation of poetry. In 1969, Neruda was designated as the Chilean

ambassador to France, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1970. He succumbed to cancer in 1973.

Summary

Neruda's poem is composed in free verse, a metrical structure distinguished by its absence of a regular metre or poetic form. The poem consists of eight stanzas with varying line lengths and lacks an overall rhyme scheme. An elegy is a poetic composition that is written to honour or commemorate someone who has passed away. The interpretation of the poem is significantly influenced by its metrical form and genre. Free verse emerged in Modernist poetry during the early 1920s as a response to the casualties and devastation caused by World War I. The formlessness of contemporary poetry arises from the fact that poets no longer hold the belief that conventional literary forms possess the ability to effectively convey profound insights into the human condition. While Neruda does not openly show mistrust towards conventional structures, his discontent with human formality is subtly conveyed through the poem's admiration for the lifestyle and character of his pet.

In the first lines, Neruda gives a simple declarative statement that his dog has died and has been buried. The periods and line-break further the no-nonsense tone of this statement. Here, encapsulated in the stanza break, is the end of the dog's life: The poem enacts his death as an abrupt cutoff. Now that the creature's body is no longer living, its location "next to a rusted old machine" (Lines 1-3) foreshadows the poet's atheism (the dog's body is a machine that can no longer be used, just like the rusted mechanism it is buried near) and the materialism the poet will claim as his orienting philosophy.

The second stanza dwells on the material being of the dog, conjured in Neruda's description of the memorable aspects of the dog's personality and body: "his shaggy coat / his bad manners and his cold nose [...] his fan-like tail" (Lines 5-6, 13). The stanza also makes a massive ontological leap, moving from discussion of his own atheism and materialism (here, a belief that there is no such thing as the soul—that bodies are just composed of material rather than of supernatural substance) to the hope that the dog might be in a special, unreachable kind of heaven. The speaker makes his religious beliefs—or lack thereof—clear in the stanza's initial line, "Someday I'll join him right there" (Line 4). The "there" is not heaven—rather, it is the dog's grave in the garden next to the rusted old machine. The speaker does not believe in heaven

for people: “I, the materialist, who never believed / in any promised heaven in the sky / for any human being” (Lines 7-8). However, his grief over his dog forces.

Analysis

“A Dog has Died” commences with a three-line stanza stating the poem’s core plot: The speaker’s dog has died and been buried “in the garden / next to a rusted old machine” (Lines 2-3). In the second stanza, the speaker notes that one day he will “join him right there” (Line 4) in the garden. He states that though he does not believe in heaven, he does believe in “a heaven I’ll never enter [...] a heaven for all dogdom” (Line 11) where his dog waits for his arrival. The third stanza describes the speaker’s relationship with his dog: The animal was a “companion” (Line 15), but not an equal or a subordinate one. Rather, the dog’s friendship was similar to the friendship of a “star, aloof, / with no more intimacy than was called for” (Lines 19-20). He notes that unlike other dogs, his dog never climbs on his clothes or humps his knee.

The fourth stanza explores the speaker’s understanding of the dog’s gaze. This gaze expresses the dog’s annoyance at wasting his time on his owner, since the dog is such a much purer being.

In the fifth stanza, the speaker describes watching the dog play in the surf of Isla Negra with envy. While the dog is carefree and full of joy, the speaker himself cannot access this uncomplicated joy. The sixth stanza elaborates that dogs feel happiness without self-consciousness or guilt, “as only dogs know how to be happy / with only the autonomy / of their shameless spirit” (Lines 48-49).

The seventh and eighth stanzas form two couplets. The seventh stanza rues that there is no way to say goodbye to the dog, because the speaker and the dog have never lied to one another. In the eighth, the speaker goes back to the matter-of-factness of the first stanza, averring once more that his dog is dead and he has buried him, “and that’s all there is to it” (Line 53).

SEAMUS HEANEY: DIGGING

About the Author

Seamus Heaney was born on April 13, 1939, in Castledawson, County Derry, which is located in Northern Ireland. After obtaining a teacher's diploma in English from St. Joseph's College in Belfast, he secured a lecturer position at the same institution in 1963. During his time at St. Joseph's, he commenced writing and participated in a poetry workshop led by Philip Hobsbaum, alongside renowned poets Derek Mahon and Michael Longley. In 1966, he released the book *Death of a Naturalist* through Oxford University Press.

Throughout his career, Heaney published several collections of poetry, including *Human Chain* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), *District and Circle* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), *Opened Ground* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), which was recognised as a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year, *The Spirit Level* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), *Selected Poems 1966–1987* (Faber and Faber, 1990), and *Sweeney Astray* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983). In addition, he authored numerous works of critique, such as *The Redress of Poetry* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), and translation, including *Beowulf* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), which received the prestigious Whitbread Book of the Year Award.

In June 2012, Heaney received the Lifetime Recognition Award from the Gryphon Trust For Excellence in Poetry. In addition, he was a Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and occupied the position as professor of poetry at Oxford University from 1989 to 1994. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995. Heaney resided in Dublin from 1976 to 2013. Starting in 1981, he also dedicated a portion of his time each year to instructing at Harvard University. In 1984, he was chosen as the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory.

Seamus Heaney passed away in Dublin on August 30, 2013. The *Letters of Seamus Heaney*, edited by Christopher Reid, were published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2024. This publication followed the release of Heaney's translations by the same publisher in the previous year.

Poem Text

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the
flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright
edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked,
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

Summary

The poem commences with the poet seated at his desk, with his pen poised in his hand. However, he becomes unfocused due to the noise of his father's excavation and directs his attention towards the window to observe. The auditory and visual stimuli transport him to a recollection of his grandfather engaged in the laborious task of excavating peat at Toner's Bog (a location I personally explored with my guided tour group). During his childhood, the poet delivered milk to his grandfather in a bottle. Heaney abruptly returns to the present, initially appearing to lament the fact that he would not be continuing the family's heritage of digging. Upon the realisation that the pen is really another type of instrument, it becomes evident that it possesses the ability to delve into memories and the subconscious. Additionally, it has the

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened
up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch
and slap

Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

capacity to incise and elevate, much like a spade. Heaney employs the uncommon term "snug as a gun" to emphasise to his readers that a pen may function as a weapon, evoking the well-known saying 'the pen is mightier than the sword'. Both necessitate a form of stimulus, and in this instance, his father's excavation serves as the stimulus for his composition of this poem.

Heaney's writing evokes a heightened sense of auditory and olfactory perception, as he skilfully describes many sensations like as cleanliness, harshness, roughness, wetness, impact, and chilly solidity. The poem portrays the harsh truth of nature, as humans extract sustenance and resources from the depths of the soil for survival and warmth. As a poet, it is imperative for him to delve profoundly into his thoughts and extract the precise words and imagery. He demonstrates a profound understanding of the intricacies of agricultural existence. The "lug" refers to the upper part of the spade's blade, while the "drill" denotes a neatly arranged row of planted potatoes. He possesses knowledge of the proper grip and manipulation of a spade.

Additionally, it is a poem that explores the themes of love and familial pride. The Heaney men are diligent and proficient in their work. There are no extended intervals of rest - only a brief pause to consume milk, followed by a return to labour. The phrase "By God, the elderly gentleman possessed exceptional proficiency with a digging tool" promptly conveys this affection and sense of honour.

Analysis

"Digging" is an 8-stanza, 31-line poem that starts off in the present, moves into the past and then returns to the present and hints at the future towards the end. It doesn't have a set rhyme scheme as such and alternates between tetrameter and pentameter rhythms, with several shorter lines here and there. Essentially it is a free verse poem with strong internal rhymes, alliteration and assonance, typical textured Heaney.

The reader is taken into the mind of the speaker, who is watching out the window as his father digs the garden. What is notable is the fact that the speaker holds a pen—from the first line, the pen holds the power of the present (and on into the future), whilst the spade used by the father is distanced, a tool of the past.

Gradually, the emphasis shifts from the here and now back into the past, a sensual feel for the land with all its smells and sounds dominating the middle of the poem. The speaker is

reflecting on the rural history of his family and the men who worked the land and concludes that they were born and bred for such toil, whilst he is made for something less manual—he will use the pen in much the same way that his forebears used the spade.

Stanza 1

A non-rhyming couplet, the opening lines set the scene, giving a close-up for the reader of the speaker's finger and thumb holding a pen (with which he is writing?). This pen is powerful and full of life-changing potential—the reference to a gun suggests that it can fire bullets, symbolic ones, of course. Note the slant rhyme of thumb/gun, which loosely binds the lines, whilst enjambment sends the reader straight from the end of the first line onto the second.

Stanza 2

Three lines, with the third and fourth lines fully rhymed, which points to a strong bond. Stretching away from the tetrameter of the opening two lines, these are pentameter, allowing for more content. The speaker can hear someone digging into the soil. It's his father. It must be a familiar sound to the speaker; he knows it's him even before he looks down. Again, enjambment helps the flow of meaning between lines and also between stanzas.

Stanza 3

Another increase in lineation, this time four lines, and not a hint of rhyme this time. What does change, though, is the tense as the speaker, watching his father bend as he goes through the potato drills, goes back in time 20 years, perhaps to when he was a child.

Stanza 4

Five lines, the close-up culmination of all his father's spadework over the years. The speaker was there, observing the hard work, the detail, as his father went about digging up the new potatoes. Verbs like nestled, rooted and buried sit firmly in the rural landscape, whilst boot, knee and hands bring a strong, physical dimension.

Stanza 5

Two simple lines, a condensed summing up of the father's and grandfather's skills with the spade, the tool that allowed them to work the earth and produce food for the family table. There's a kind of rough pride in the way the speaker boasts about their ability. You can picture

the family out in the field, working away in primitive fashion, the father digging, the children helping out, picking up the 'spuds' as they were unearthed.

Stanza 6

With the introduction of the grandfather, the speaker takes the reader deeper into ancestral history. This time, it's not the potato being dug but peat, known locally as turf, which was dried and used for fuel in wintertime. The opening two lines are a child's tribute to an idealised iconic figure within the family, the local hero, the grandfather, champion turf cutter. Toner's bog is the name given to a piece of peat bog not far from Heaney's birthplace, the village of Bellaghy in County Derry.

This stanza brings the reader intimately into a detailed scene where the grandfather is out on the bog with his spade and in comes someone with a drink, milk in a bottle. The memory is vivid, the speaker's observation as keen as the slicing-edge of the spade. Heaney's use of enjambment in this stanza is particularly apt, working within the syntax to produce relevant flow and pause. Note the repeat of the title word.

Stanza 7

The memory of that scene is alive in the speaker's mind. It takes him back to a different time and in so doing releases him from the past. It's a kind of paradox. By remembering these strong male family characters and their reliance on the spade for a living, he now is able to wake up. The family roots are cut, metaphorically and, in his memory, physically. He no longer needs the spade because he is not made of the same stuff as the men of old. This is the enlightenment, the acknowledgment.

Stanza 8

The final stanza is a near repeat of the opening lines. The speaker again feels the pen between finger and thumb and is now committed to working with it, to dig into his heart and mind and produce poetry.

WOLE SOYINKA: TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

About the Author

Wole Soyinka, also known as Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka, was born on July 13, 1934, in Abeokuta, Nigeria. He is a renowned Nigerian dramatist. Upon completing his studies in Leeds, England, he went to Nigeria where he engaged in editing literary journals, teaching drama and literature at the university level, and establishing two theatre companies. The playwright's works, composed in the English language and incorporating elements from West African folklore, frequently centre around the conflicts arising from the clash between established customs and societal advancement. The utilisation of symbolism, flashback, and skillful plotting enhances the complexity and depth of the dramatic structure. The serious plays he wrote demonstrate his dissatisfaction with the dictatorial rule in Africa and with Nigerian society in its entirety.

His works include *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and *From Zia, with Love* (1992). He has written several volumes of poetry; his best-known novel is *The Interpreters* (1965). A champion of Nigerian democracy, he was repeatedly jailed and exiled. In 1986 he became the first black African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Summary

"Telephone Conversation" is a literal representation of its title: a fictional dialogue between an African guy and a landlady, who is assumed to be white, discussing available rental rooms. The poem's idioms indicate that its basic setting is England, specifically London. During the post-war decades, the city experienced a significant increase in the number of African immigrants. This period also witnessed a rise in racial tensions in the country, making discussions on this topic quite common.

The poem commences with the African speaker providing explicit data regarding the location, cost, and other pertinent commercial information. The landlady is initially characterised as having a background of "good-breeding," which makes her inquiries concerning the speaker's skin colour appear unexpectedly and drastically inappropriate. More precisely, she is interested

in determining if he has a light or dark complexion, a distinction that holds significant significance in the prevailing racial climate of that time.

The poem transitions seamlessly between the speaker's contemplation of the issue as a political statement and the landlady's persistent repetition of similar queries. As the debate progresses, it becomes an agonising accumulation of ironic misinterpretation and overt prejudice. As the speaker attempts to respond to the inquiries, the discussion becomes increasingly ironic. The speaker uses logical reasoning to address the woman, but instead of clarifying the situation, it only confuses it further. Initially, the speaker draws a comparison between himself and chocolate. However, he ultimately chooses to describe himself as "West African sepia," fully aware that this term will only serve to perplex his listener even more.

As the speaker adopts a sardonic tone, he proceeds to describe several bodily parts, ranging from his hair to the soles of his feet, in order to convey to her that he, like everyone else, possesses multiple colours. The last verses of the poem convey a message that has both positive and negative implications. The primary point is evident: forming an assessment of an individual's character purely based on their skin colour is the fundamental irrationality of racial bias. In the closing lines, the second layer emphasises the convergence of absurdity with more absurdity. This is a technique that Soyinka frequently employs in his examination of similar scenarios. The speaker asks the woman to personally witness the diverse colours of the bodily parts that he lists.

Analysis

Beyond "Dark" or "Light"

Wole Soyinka's "Telephone Conversation" isn't a casual chat; it's a satirical scalpel, dissecting the ugly abscess of racism through a seemingly mundane phone call. The conversation, ostensibly about renting an apartment, quickly devolves into a stark display of prejudice, exposing its insidious nature through a powerful dialogue of quotes.

The Insidious Creep of Bias

The poem opens with hopeful inquiries about "a flat to let," suggesting a sense of normalcy. But when the speaker declares, "I am African," the tone shifts. The landlady's casual "nice" masks a sudden tension, as her reply, "Which part?" reeks of thinly veiled prejudice. She

seeks to categorize, to fit the speaker into a preconceived box before considering him as an individual.

Colour-Coded Humanity

The crux of the conversation revolves around a grotesque obsession with skin colour. The landlady's repeated, insistent "Are you dark? Or very light?" betrays her warped worldview, where a person's worth is reduced to melanin levels. The speaker's retort, "Madam, I hate a wasted journey—I am African," is both dignified and defiant, refusing to play into her discriminatory game.

Beyond the Binary

The landlady's simplistic binary of "dark" and "light" is shattered by the speaker's nuanced response: "Like brunette, that got us sunburnt." He subverts her expectations, revealing the absurdity of racial categorization in the face of human complexity. His identity cannot be contained in such simplistic terms.

Humour as Resistance

Despite the ugliness of the situation, Soyinka employs wit as a weapon. The speaker's dry commentary on "public hide-and-speak," referring to the hidden nature of prejudice, stings with truth. His witty comparison of himself to a leopard, "But not those with fangs and claws," disarms the landlady with its unexpected humour, while subtly pointing out the absurdity of her fear.

A Conversation Across the Divide

Ultimately, the poem leaves us with a chilling question: is true communication even possible across such a vast chasm of prejudice? The speaker's final, resigned acceptance, "Never mind," speaks volumes. He recognizes the futility of the conversation, the impossibility of bridging the gap with words alone.

PATRICK WHITE: THE WIDENING COMPASS OF PAIN

About the Author

Patrick Victor Martindale White (May 28, 1912 – September 30, 1990) was an esteemed Australian writer who is widely recognised as one of the most important writers in the English language throughout the twentieth century. His novels and short tales are highly praised by critics. The initial publication of his debut book, titled *The Ploughman and Other Poems*, took place in the year 1935. His oeuvre comprises twelve novels, two anthologies of short stories, plays, and non-fiction. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1973. The author effectively employs changing perspectives and the stream of consciousness method in his works of fiction.

Summary

“The Widening Compass of Pain” by Patrick White is not a soothing song for those who have been hurt. It dives right into the power of pain to change things, a change that can be harsh and confusing at first but leads to a better understanding in the end. The title sets the mood: a compass, which is usually a sign of direction, is called “widening,” which makes it sound like a journey into uncharted land where experiences get stronger. This investigation is about a lot more than just physical pain.

The song goes deep into a level that is almost spiritual. Words and phrases like “cruel cold certainty” imply a harsh awakening, a breaking of easy illusions. The picture of the “blade point piercing third eye” is a powerful reminder of how this process of growth can hurt. Pain isn’t just something you have to get past; it’s what makes a new road possible.

But White’s poem goes beyond the pain of one person. The line “speak of the sword of this layer like a sacred syllable in the mouth of the slain” makes me think of a link between my own pain and a bigger, maybe more general, experience. The “sword” could stand for pain, and the “sacred syllable” could stand for the knowledge gained from going through it. By going through this pain and talking about it, the person changes and becomes a voice for a greater understanding, teaching others what they have learned.

In this passage, White talks about the idea of shared experience. The word “slain” could be used to describe anyone who has been through a lot of pain. By talking about their “sword,”

which is their pain, they add something important to our understanding of this strong force. Through pain, their voice becomes part of a bigger chorus, showing how it can change people.

In the end, “The Widening Compass of Pain” shows a difficult and complicated side of pain. It’s not something you should try to avoid at all costs; it’s a force that can help us make big changes. This “widening compass” path may be hard, but it also has the potential to lead us to a new and maybe deeper way of being, one that is more in tune with the complexity of life and the wisdom that comes from navigating its depths.

Analysis

Patrick White’s poem “The Widening Compass of Pain” is a philosophical and poetic look at how people hurt and grow. The poem makes the point that pain can help you grow as a person and help you understand the world and yourself better. It tells the reader to accept their flaws and find strength in them, which will eventually make them more compassionate, aware, and able to live a radiant life.

The first line of the poem compares the fight within and with the world to the two halves of a wishbone that are not broken. This shows how important it is to teach future generations how to deal with life’s problems in a peaceful and smart way. In the poem, getting past problems is seen as a holy and life-changing event, represented by the “sword of the slayer” that cuts through restrictions and frees people.

The “ruined wedding gown of the Japanese plum tree” represents broken goals and dreams, while the “golden chain” represents limits that keep people from growing. Even with these problems, the poem urges people to be open and honest, and to find strength in tough times, which is shown by the phrase “the naked in the doorway of a darker bliss”.

People see the path to self-discovery as a trek, and they gain knowledge and wisdom (called “deltas of insight”) along the way. The poem ends on a positive note, even though there were problems.

GEORGE SEFERIS: HELEN

About the Author

Greek poet George Seferis was born Georgios Seferiades in Urla, near Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey). He worked as a diplomat for the Royal Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1963. His collections of poetry include *Strophe* (Turning Point, 1931), *E Sterna* (The Cistern, 1932), *Mythistorima* (1935), and *Logbook I*, *Logbook II*, and *Logbook III* (1940, 1945, 1955).

In 1914, Seferis and his family moved to Athens. He studied law at the Sorbonne in Paris and entered diplomatic service in 1925. Seferis was exiled from Smyrna when it was claimed by Turkey; he subsequently spent many years living and working outside of Greece. Before World War II, he was posted in England and Albania. During the war he moved with the Free Greek Government to Egypt, South Africa, and Italy. After the war, his diplomatic posts included Ankara, London, Lebanon, and Syria. Seferis served as Royal Greek Ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1957 to 1961. In 1962 he retired and moved to Athens.

Wandering and exile are present in Seferis's poetry, and his work is attuned to the history of Greece—the Nobel Prize committee recognized him as a “representative Hellenic poet.” His poetry often intertwines contemporary speech and experience with Homeric myth, and many of his poems depict the landscape of the Mediterranean. In their foreword to *George Seferis: Collected Poems* (1995), translators Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard noted: “The distinguishing attribute of Seferis's genius—one that he shares with Yeats and Eliot—was always his ability to make out of a local politics, out of a personal history or mythology, some sort of general statement or metaphor.”

George Seferis was an Elected Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and became an Honorary Fellow of the Modern Language Association.

Summary

Helen, a poem based on an ancient legend, belongs to Seferis' collection *Log Book III*; written in 1953, it was published in 1955. Seferis depicts his heroes, the relationship of the poem to the political situation in Cyprus during the 1950s, and lastly, the ideals that are portrayed in

the poem. He does this by combining aspects borrowed from later Greek culture with old Greek mythology.

The poem "Helen" by Seferis is written in free verse and does not have a predetermined rhyme scheme. In this sense, it departs from the conventional forms of poetry. In spite of the fact that the poem is written in a modernist style, the legendary element is so pervasive that it creates a contradiction that links the present with the past. The epigraph of the poem establishes the mythological context, which establishes a connection between the poetry and the tradition of Greek mythology.

According to Homer, the story that Paris chose Helen because she was more beautiful than goddesses continues to exist in the background as the foundation for everything that comes after it and as the initial reason of the Trojan War. It is established in the first three verses of the epigraph that the speaker is in exile as a result of an order from "Appolow," a man who is away from his land. Last but not least, the epigraph reveals, through Helen's own words, that she was never actually present at Troy; rather, there was merely a phantom picture of her there.

While the story establishes the framework of the poem, the myths are further extended as the recollections of the speaker, who reminisces in a dramatic monologue provoked by the nightingale's song and his inability to sleep, tortured by these memories. However, the speaker is unable to sleep because of the memories.

Repetition of the phrase "The nightingales won't let you sleep in Platres," which is written in quotation marks as if it were being spoken by someone else, is another indication that the chorus is being used in the ancient tragedy form. In this form, the chorus frequently repeats certain words, which further connects the poem to the tradition of ancient Greek mythology.

Analysis

The poem begins with the statement that "All Greece hates" certain attributes of Helen, or what may be a statue of Helen. The title, as well as the mention of Greece, solidifies that the speaker is referring to Helen of Troy. The speaker writes that the people of Greece hate her "still eyes" on her "white face," "the lustre as of olives" where she is standing (perhaps referring to her place in Greek identity, or the literal location of the statue), and her "white hands." The

whiteness of her body could refer to her privilege and royalty, her vulnerability and innocence, or simply her aesthetic quality as a stone statue.

The following stanza provides more clues about why Greece hates Helen, and what this hatred symbolizes culturally. Firstly, the speaker repeats the words "All Greece," but this time uses the word "reviles," which gives a momentum to the hatred, as does the anaphora of that initial phrase. The word "reviles" also carries a connotation of contempt and disgust. At this point in the poem, the reader starts to realize that perhaps this complex hatred is unwarranted, insidious, and misplaced. When the speaker notes that Greece hates Helen when she smiles, and even more so when her face reveals nostalgia and pain, the reader encounters the much larger cultural problem of misdirected vitriol against women.

Perhaps in these initial lines, the speaker also touches on the individual and cultural compulsion to forget what is painful. Maybe the fact that Helen is a fixed part of Greek identity, that women are a fixed part of society (and a reminder of male abusers), and that Helen, like many women, will indeed recall the horrors of the past, feels alarming to the instincts of a culture that seeks to forget. Thus, Greece hates Helen because she is a symbol of cultural reckoning, representing the tensions and paradoxes in our patriarchal society. In this poem, the reader observes several simultaneities that access these tensions. One, that Helen inspires desire as a symbol of beauty, but also has a mind of her own. Secondly, she reminds men of their violence, and she both symbolizes and experiences memory, defying the temptation to forget. Thirdly, she maintains an undeniable level of status, import, and value in the Greek imagination. Embodying these qualities together threatens the misogynistic structures that seek to limit, pigeonhole, silence, or degrade women. Thus, H.D.'s use of the phrase "All Greece hates" does not necessarily indicate that all men, or all of culture, impose such pressures on women, but simply that the patriarchy operates in an all-encompassing manner—especially in its infiltration of the collective unconscious.

Notably, in the second stanza, Greece seems to hate Helen both for her human qualities, and her position as a symbol and icon of Greek identity. Greece hates her "still eyes" and "where she stands" (perhaps because they hate the permanence and recognition she has received as a mythical figure). And yet, people also hate her face when she's smiling, and even more when she

remembers her past. Given the story of Helen's legendary beauty, and the fact that her kidnapping allegedly started a ten-year war, one could surmise that the intense hatred comes from a combination of factors. Perhaps, resentment from both men and women around her elusive beauty and fame, anger about how much death and war her kidnapping caused, fury that her inherent humanity resists but also provokes objectification, and frustration that she is both ever-present and completely unattainable. These different reasons for hating Helen within the paradigm of Greek mythology create a strong allegorical link to culture's treatment of women in general.

The third stanza enriches this allegory by further describing and dissecting Helen physically. Greece acknowledges but is "unmoved" by Helen, and will only love her if she is obliterated into ash. The fact that Greece will only love Helen once she is reduced to dust further reveals how Helen activates feelings that a patriarchal culture would hope to repress. To such a culture, a woman is only lovable with no voice to disrupt or demand, no body to represent unattainable desire, no power to intimidate, and no status to envy. The poem ends with the bleak prognosis that Helen, a symbol of all women, is only safe from objectification, vitriol, and contempt once she ceases to exist.

UNIT II: PROSE

OCTAVIO PAZ: THE CLERK'S VISION

About the Author

Octavio Paz was a Mexican poet, writer, and diplomat. He was born on March 31, 1914, in Mexico City, Mexico, and died on April 19, 1998, in the same city. Paz, who received his education at the University of Mexico, released his initial poetry collection, *Savage Moon*, in 1933. Subsequently, he established and oversaw other significant literary publications. His poetry is shaped by the influences of Marxism, Surrealism, existentialism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. It employs vivid imagery to explore philosophical inquiries, with a primary focus on the capacity of humans to transcend existential isolation through the power of passionate love and artistic expression. Among his literary achievements, he authored *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), a significant essay exploring the history and culture of Mexico. From 1962 to 1968, he served as Mexico's ambassador to India. In 1990, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Text:

And to occupy all these blank pages that remain for me with the repetitive inquiry: when does time cease to exist? The anterooms, monuments, intrigues, negotiations with the Janitor, Rotating Chairman, Secretary, Associate, and Delegate. To get a glimpse of the Influential from a distance and to year send my card as a reminder to someone, whose identity is uncertain, that in a secluded place, I am dedicated, consistent, and persevering, yet unsure of my own existence, I also anticipate the arrival of my moment, I too exist. Negative. I resign.

Indeed, I am aware that I have the ability to establish myself firmly in a concept, a tradition, or a fixation. Alternatively, one can recline upon the burning embers of a distressing experience or a glimmer of optimism and remain in that state, refraining from causing any significant commotion. Undoubtedly, my life is not unfavourable as I engage in essential activities such as eating, drinking, sleeping, engaging in intimate relations, acknowledging designated holidays, and visiting the beach during the summer. I have an affinity for people and they reciprocate that sentiment towards me. I approach my condition with a nonchalant attitude, encompassing various ailments such as illness, sleeplessness, disturbing dreams, social events, the concept of mortality, and the metaphorical worm that invades the heart or liver (which also lays eggs in the brain and disrupts even the deepest sleep at night). Additionally, I prioritise the

future over the present, which consistently fails to meet expectations and disappoints. Negative. I hereby relinquish my ration card, identification document, birth certificate, voter's registration, passport, code number, countersign, credentials, safe conduct pass, insignia, tattoo, and brand.

I am presented with a broad expanse of the earth, with entities of various sizes, ranging from large to little. The universe consists of various individuals in positions of power and authority, such as kings, presidents, jailors, mandarins, pariahs, liberators, and the liberated. It also includes judges, witnesses, and those who have been condemned. Additionally, there are celestial bodies like stars of different magnitudes, planets, comets, and other objects that follow the laws of gravity and move in predictable or erratic patterns. All of these entities revolve around an empty space. At the location they assert the position of the central sun, the solar entity, the intense ray formed by the collective observation of all humans, there exists only a void, and even less than a void: the optic organ of a deceased aquatic creature, the disorienting hollow of the eye that collapses inward and gazes upon itself without perceiving. The hollow centre of the whirlwind lacks any substance to occupy it. The springs are severely damaged, the foundations have crumbled, and the connections that linked stars, bodies, and individuals are now nothing more than a complex entanglement of wires and thorns, like a chaotic jungle of claws and teeth that relentlessly torment and consume us. It is impossible for someone to hang themselves using a physical law. The equations perpetually collapse upon themselves.

Regarding the current issue at hand, if it is indeed relevant: I am not affiliated with the authorities. I do not absolve myself of responsibility, but I am neither a judge, nor a witness for the prosecution, nor an executioner. I abstain from engaging in acts of torture, questioning, or enduring the process of being interrogated. I refrain from vociferously beseeching for clemency, nor do I desire to preserve myself or any other individual. Despite the actions they take against us and the things I fail to accomplish, I do not seek forgiveness nor offer forgiveness. Their devotion is as deplorable as their fairness. Do I possess a lack of guilt or wrongdoing? I admit my culpability. Am I culpable? I am not guilty. (I am perceived as innocent when I am actually guilty, and perceived as guilty when I am actually innocent.) I experience feelings of guilt in certain situations, although it is a separate matter. Do you have another song to share? It is the identical tune. Regardless of guilt or innocence, the truth is that I have resigned.

I recall my affections, my discourse, my companionships. I have vivid recollections of everything, perceiving and observing every detail and every individual. Experiencing sadness, but without longing for the past. And most importantly, devoid of hope. I am aware of its immortality, and if we possess any quality, it is the potential for something hopeful. I am no longer burdened by expectations. I have decided to resign from all commitments, regardless of any obstacles, despite any circumstances, and without making any further justifications or granting any forgiveness. I am familiar with the workings of the moral trap and the soporific nature of some words. I have been disillusioned with all those structures made of stone, concepts, and codes. I resign. I no longer support or justify this dilapidated tower. Quietly, I anticipate the occurrence.

A gentle gust of wind, somewhat cool, will begin to blow. The newspapers will report on a period of unusually chilly weather. The individuals will nonchalantly raise and lower their shoulders, carrying on with their lives in the usual manner. The initial fatalities will have a negligible impact on the daily tally, and the personnel at the statistical agency will fail to detect the additional digit. However, eventually, all individuals will start observing one another and inquire: what is occurring? During the upcoming months, there will be continuous rattling of doors and windows, accompanied by creaking of furniture and trees. There will be a prolonged sensation of trembling in the bones and a repetitive sound of teeth hitting together, accompanied by feelings of coldness and raised pimples on the skin. The chimneys, prophets, and chiefs will howl for many years. The mist that lingers above motionless ponds will waft towards the city. At midday, under the ambiguous sun, the breeze will carry the scent of desiccated blood from an abattoir that has been forsaken even by flies.

There is no use in going outside or remaining within. There is no point in building barriers against something that cannot be touched or grasped. A tongue has the power to quench all fires, while a doubt has the ability to uproot all judgements. It will have a ubiquitous presence without having a specific location. It will cause all the mirrors to get blurred. With the ability to pass through barriers and deeply influence beliefs, attire and composed individuals, it will firmly establish itself in the core of every person. Whistling amidst the physical forms, nestled amidst the spiritual essence. Furthermore, all the injuries will be reopened as a result of the skilled and gentle, yet slightly aloof, touch, which will provoke irritation in sores and pimples, rupture

pustules and swellings, and penetrate deeply into the previously poorly healed wounds. Oh endless source of blood, always unfailing! Life can be likened to a knife - a sharp, nimble, precise, and unpredictable blade that descends, slices, and separates. The verbs "to crack," "to claw," and "to quarter" are advancing rapidly against us.

The blade does not gleam amidst the chaos of the future. The source of distress lies not in the sabre itself, but rather in the emotions of fear and the instrument of punishment, the whip. I am referring to what currently exists in our midst. Trembling and whispers, insinuations and murmurs pervade every corner. The light wind sweeps everywhere, causing a powerful Whiplash each time it unravels in the air. Many individuals already bear the purple emblem on their bodies. A gentle breeze emerges from the fields of bygone days and swiftly approaches our present day.

Essay

Some activities and contacts are making the speaker angry and disappointed because they are boring and don't seem to matter. When compared to people with more power or influence, the person wonders what their actions are for and why they are important. In the end, he said that he wanted to stop doing these things.

He thinks about how he might find comfort in habits or obsessions, or in being quiet while going through pain or hope. He talks about the normal things in his life, like eating, drinking, sleeping, and hanging out with friends. But he also talks about his deepest worries and fears, like being sick, having trouble sleeping, and the thought of dying. Despite this, he keeps a positive outlook on their situation and the unknowns of life, eventually expressing a desire to give up societal norms and identities.

Speaker thinks about how big and complicated the world is, full of different people and things, from kings and leaders to regular people. He talks about the laws of gravity that control celestial bodies like stars, planets, and comets. But the speaker says that even though the sun seems to be at the centre of everything, there is really nothing there but nothingness.

He thinks about how empty and chaotic everything is at its core. He seems to be saying that there is nothing solid that can fill the void in life's chaos. The roots of order and connection between people and celestial bodies have been broken. What's left is a jumbled mess of wires and thorns that hurt us.

The speaker makes it clear that they are not taking sides or getting involved in the situation at hand. He won't side with either the abusers or the victims, saying that they don't ask for or give forgiveness. That the speaker doesn't agree with the righteousness or justice of those in power shows a moral uncertainty or resignation.

The speaker thinks back on old loves, conversations, and friendships, remembering them with sadness but not wanting them to come back. He doesn't hold out hope because he knows that memories last forever and that expecting anything else is pointless. The speaker is unhappy with the ideas of "nevertheless," "even," and "in spite of everything." They are also unhappy with reasons and forgiveness. As time goes on, he learns about the traps of morals and the empty promises that some words make. Instead of defending the crumbling tower of their views, he chooses to wait for things to happen in silence and accept what is happening right now.

At first, deaths linked to the cold wave aren't taken seriously, but as time goes on, people become more aware of the strange things going on around them. The windows and doors rattle, the furniture and trees squeak, and there's a general feeling of being cold and uncomfortable. The pictures create a creepy atmosphere where the smell of blood from an empty abattoir makes even the sun's warmth unpleasant.

The speaker talks about a force that affects all parts of life, breaking down walls and beliefs and settling deep inside everyone. This force is like a mouth putting out fires and doubt uprooting decisions. This force makes wounds bleed again and makes pain and suffering worse. The picture of life as a knife that cuts and separates emphasizes how harsh and random life is. The text makes it sound like this force isn't a physical weapon, but rather fear and oppression that is already here and shows itself in trembling, whispers, and hints.

WINSTON CHURCHILL: PAINTING AS A PASTIME

About the Author

Winston Churchill, a British statesman, orator, and author, was born on November 30, 1874, in Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, England. He passed away on January 24, 1965, in London. Churchill served as the prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955. During World War II, he played a crucial role in motivating the British population and guiding his nation to triumph from the verge of defeat.

Summary

Churchill's delightful essay about his artwork was initially published in *The Strand Magazine* as two separate parts: "Hobbies" in December 1921 and "Painting as a Pastime" in January 1922. He accepted the offer of £1000 to write the article, despite his wife's attempts to dissuade him from the endeavour. In her comprehensive analysis, *Winston Churchill: His Life as a Painter* (1990), Mary Churchill, the daughter of the Churchills, documented that Clementine Churchill was fundamentally against Winston's practice of painting what she considered to be low-quality works solely for the purpose of improving their financial situation at home. Clementine expressed concern that publishing about his painting could invite criticism from experienced artists and potentially lead to trivial discussions about him. Winston frequently heeded his wife's counsel, but we should be grateful that, in this instance, he chose not to. "Painting as a Pastime" is a highly enjoyable book to read, according to his daughter. It is filled with enthusiasm and encouragement for others to take up painting, just as Winston himself did when he faced difficulties. Painting became a companion to him for many years to come.

Churchill the artist was not avant-garde. He employed the conventional medium of oil-on-canvas and mostly focused on painting landscapes. He often remarked that his choice of themes, trees in particular, was due to their lack of complaints. However, he also possessed expertise in the genres of still life and portraiture. He had instruction from highly skilled artists like Sir John and Lady Lavery, Richard Sickert, and Paul Maze, and he adopted a somewhat impressionistic style, while also incorporating his own unique elements, as he described in relation to his writing. He created more than 500 paintings and continually downplayed their significance, initially displaying them under a false name. While he did not personally offer any for sale, he did permit one to be auctioned for charitable purposes.

He had a fondness for gifting paintings and would meticulously select from his collection for each recipient. Those individuals who desired a presentation were advised to refrain from making inquiries and instead rely on the assumption that demonstrating genuine interest for his artwork would lead to a presentation. Nevertheless, Churchill was unwilling to part with a significant number of his paintings, and the most extensive collection is still located at his studio at Chartwell. Churchill possessed genuine aptitude and had the potential to become a professional if he had been given sufficient time.

The evolution of the "Painting as a Pastime" text was a protracted process. The essay titled "Hobbies" was published in Nash's Pall Mall in December 1925 and in the Sunday Chronicle on April 20, 1930 under the title "A Man's Hobbies". These two articles were later condensed and republished as "I Ride My Hobby" in America's Cosmopolitan in February 1926, with a reprint in March 1961. Lord Birkenhead, a friend of Churchill, published both essays in a book titled "The Hundred Best English Essays" in 1929, which was published by Cassell. The two articles were reproduced as distinct entries in Thoughts and Adventures (1932). The piece was published in its entirety in Country Beautiful magazine (Vol. 4, No. 2) in 1965. Churchill's passion had become widely recognised and greatly captivated the public by the end of World War II. Odhams Press convinced him to publish the essays as a book, which included eighteen colour plates of his most recent works up until that time. The publication was relevant because Churchill had recently been elected as a "Honorary Academician Extraordinary" by the Royal Academy, and his paintings had been exhibited at the Academy's summer exhibits in 1948. Consequently, the small book achieved immediate success and has garnered the most distribution among all of his single-volume works published after the war.

Analysis

Painting as a Pastime was first published as a two-part article in Strand Magazine in December 1921 and January 1922. The essays were called "Hobbies" and "Painting as a Pastime," respectively.

According to Richard Langworth, different parts and snippets of the piece were published in magazines in 1925, 1926, and 1930, and it was also included in The Hundred Best English Essays in 1929. Churchill's first appearance in a collection book was in Thoughts and Adventures in 1932. It was again split into two separate pieces, just like the first appearance in

Strand Magazine. After writing about the subject for the first time in 1948, almost thirty years, Churchill finally agreed to a book about his hobby and interest.

Painting as a Pastime is a book that Winston Churchill wrote. It came out for the first time in 1948. It's where Churchill thinks about his hobby of drawing and how it makes him feel better mentally and emotionally. He started drawing in 1915 and loved it for the rest of his life. Painting helped Churchill calm down and feel better. He often did it when he was stressed or wanted to get away from his political duties. He painted everything from landscapes to portraits, and he kept painting even while he was busy as a politician.

Churchill once said, "When I get to heaven, I plan to spend a lot of my first million years painting in order to get to the bottom of things." This quote shows how much he loves the art form and how dedicated he is to it.

During World War I, Churchill learned to paint and found comfort in the artistic process. He says drawing is a good way to relax and forget about the problems in the world, and it makes you feel good to finish a project.

He talks about his own experiences, from struggling at first to becoming good at it, stressing how important it is to practice and try new things. Churchill also talks about how art can capture the beauty of nature and how important it is to be creative in everyday life.

The book is full of Churchill's love for painting, which makes readers want to explore their own artistic interests. Even for a politician in the middle of a world war, he shows how art can bring peace, relaxation, and personal growth.

"*Painting as Pastime*" is a sweet and encouraging book that talks about how art can help people feel better and how important it is to make time for creative activities.

UNIT III: SHORT STORY

NADINE GORDIMER: ONCE UPON A TIME

About the Author

Nadine Gordimer, an acclaimed novelist and short story writer, was born in Springs, South Africa, in the year 1923. During her childhood, she resided in Transvaal and commenced her literary endeavours at a young age. She achieved the milestone of publishing her first short tale, titled "Come Again Tomorrow," at the age of 15. Gordimer, at the age of 21, briefly enrolled at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg. During her time there, she had exposure to the social and political climate of South Africa, which later became the central theme of her literary works. Gordimer entered into two marriages during her lifetime. Her first marriage took place in 1949 with G. Gavron, resulting in the birth of one daughter. She subsequently married Reinhold Cassirer in 1954. They had a single male offspring. Gordimer chose to stay in Johannesburg, and her literary works vividly depict the racially tumultuous themes that characterise South Africa's historical narrative.

She authored a total of fifteen novels. Her first novel was the semi-autobiographical *The Lying Days* (1953), followed by *A World of Strangers* (1958), *Occasion for Loving* (1963), *The Late Bourgeois World* (1966), *A Guest of Honour* (1971), *The Conservationist* (1974), *Burger's Daughter* (1979), *July's People* (1981), *A Sport of Nature* (1987), *My Son's Story* (1990), *None to Accompany Me* (1994), *The House Gun* (1998), *The Pickup* (2001), *Get a Life* (2005), and *No Time Like the Present* (2012). Gordimer's short stories have appeared in esteemed publications like the *New Yorker*, *Harpers*, and the *Yale Review*. The stories have also appeared in several anthologies, such as *Face to Face* (1949), *Friday's Footprint* (1960), *Jump: And Other Stories* (1991), *Beethoven Was One-Sixteenth Black* (2007), and *Life Times: Stories* (2011). Nadine Gordimer was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991. Her demise occurred on July 14, 2014.

Summary

Nadine Gordimer's 1989 piece "Once Upon a Time" incorporates various devices and elements commonly found in fairy tales. The title itself alludes to the frequent use of such elements in fairy tales. The story begins with a framing element, where Nadine Gordimer is portrayed as a character who is requested to write a short story for a children's book. She refuses

to do so, as she does not consider it her obligation, despite the person requesting her to write the story claiming it is, and also because she believes that artists should not be compelled to produce work upon request. She believes that this contradicts the concept of artistic freedom.

After refusing the story, Gordimer is disturbed throughout the subsequent night by an unfamiliar noise that initially puzzles her. Upon realising that the source of her fear is not a burglar or any other potential threat, but rather the creaking floorboards, she resolves to calm herself by narrating a story to lull herself back into sleep.

The narrative of "Once Upon a Time" revolves around a family consisting of a husband, wife, and their son, and is narrated in the third person perspective. Gordimer elucidates that the family members had a genuine affection for one another, which is evident in their material things, such as a luxurious house, valuable belongings, financial stability, and even the employment of domestic staff at their suburban residence. Amidst the abundance of positive events in their lives, the man's mother, rumoured to possess great wisdom and supernatural abilities, advises the family to adopt precautionary measures in order to safeguard their current blessings and avoid any potential loss. The family adheres to this guidance by registering in multiple plans and choices to safeguard themselves.

Nevertheless, the family gradually develops an increasing sense of paranoia regarding the occurrences taking place outside their residence. There are instances of civil unrest and incidents of unlawful entry occurring in the predominantly non-white areas of their residential area. In order to alleviate his wife's concerns, the husband enhances the security measures around their residence. Specifically, he constructs a wall and installs electronic gates. The burglaries become more proximate to the family, reaching as close as their next-door neighbor's house, where the maid is subjected to an assault. Consequently, the family resolves to enhance their security measures once again, this time by installing metal bars on the windows and a burglar alarm. However, the alarm system proves to be excessively sensitive and frequently triggers other alarms in the vicinity due to its heightened sensitivity.

The burglaries persist and, in fact, escalate as the burglars exploit the commotion generated by the alarms to unlawfully enter residences. Other families opt to dismiss their assistance, a decision that the main family refrains from making. Consequently, they begin to

curtail their encounters with their personal maid as their paranoia intensifies. The recently terminated employees in the vicinity resort to loitering, which once again unsettles the family. They construct their wall to a greater height, fortifying themselves even more against what they perceive as the perpetual danger posed by the external world.

The escalation persists as the husband and wife conclude that if their family cat can effortlessly climb over their wall, then anyone can do the same. In lieu of increasing the height of the wall, they opt to affix metal barb-like devices at the uppermost part, inspired by their neighbours' walls, as a means to counteract the perceived danger posed by criminals attempting to scale the wall.

Confident in their secure stronghold, the mother chooses to read to her son from a fairy tale book gifted to him by the mother-in-law. The fable she chooses is "Sleeping Beauty," in which the courageous Prince must ascend through sharp thorns in a dense bush to save the princess. Observing the spikes on the outer wall, the youngster perceives them as thorns and decides to imitate the action.

Upon reaching the summit of the wall, he finds himself ensnared, his physical form being lacerated and abraded by the fragments of metal strewn in his vicinity. As the youngster struggles, his situation worsens, prompting the parents to respond to his screams. They see the gardener's desperate attempts to liberate the boy. Once the gardener manages to release the boy, he discovers that the boy has died and carries him back inside the house.

A prominent issue explored in this work is the comprehension and apprehension of the Other. The family, frequently observed, harbours a deep-seated fear of the external world, including anything that is unrelated to their own existence. Specifically, this story addresses the issue of race and the conflicts that arose in apartheid South Africa. The more the effort made by a group of individuals to isolate themselves from the external world and perceived dangers, the more detrimental their situation will become in the future.

Analysis

At the heart of Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" are two groups of people: the whites who live "in a suburb, in a city," and the "people of another colour" who live elsewhere. In the story's South Africa during the last years of the racial segregation policy known as apartheid, the

differences between the groups are emphasized because it is one difference—the difference in skin color—that determines where one lives, works, and receives medical care and education. As different and isolated as the groups are from each other, the narrator uses small details in the story to draw connections between them. More precisely, the narrator suggests small ways in which the white members of this society are more similar than they might imagine to the blacks they desperately want to see as different.

In the first paragraph of the story, the narrator tells that she has been invited to contribute to an anthology, and that the editor has suggested that “every writer ought to write at least one story for children.” The narrator imagines herself telling him, “I don’t accept that I ‘ought’ to write anything.” Immediately, readers of Gordimer’s work are alert to her emphasis on the word “ought,” because so much of her work has dealt with apartheid and the questions of whether one has the agency to make choices regarding one’s own life. The narrator feels, at this moment, free, but soon her imagery suggests the opposite. First, she describes her subconscious as an “echo-chamber,” or an enclosure that distorts. Next, she describes her heart beating furiously “against its body-cage,” before turning to an extended description of “the house that surrounds” her, built on unsteady ground. The sound she heard was “an epicentre of stress” and, she says, “I was in it.” Even the language she uses to describe the sleep that eludes her (“I couldn’t find a position in which my mind would let go of my body—release me to sleep”) suggests entrapment. It is no stretch to see that the husband and wife—and even the pet cat—also become entrapped behind the “prison architecture” and “concentration-camp style” of their security devices; their world becomes smaller and smaller as their walls grow higher.

But the narrator emphasizes as well the limitations imposed by apartheid on South Africa’s black population. She compares her heart’s irregular beating to “the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones” of the migrant mine workers who might have perished in the geologic event that caused her house to shake. While she is enclosed in her house, these workers could be buried alive in a collapsed mine, “interred there in the most profound of tombs.” When thieves break into a neighbor’s house, it is the housemaid who is “tied up and shut in a cupboard.” The narrator is less interested in demonstrating the horrors of apartheid than she is in showing the similarities between oppressed and oppressor. Clearly, the signs screaming

“YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED” look both out and in; the “DRAGON’S TEETH” bite both friend and foe.

Though not much is shown of interaction among the family in the story, it is clear that the housemaid and the gardener, like the husband and wife, love the little boy “very much.” The husband and wife show their love by providing pets and toys for the little boy, reading bedtime stories, and erecting a fence around the swimming pool “so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown.” There are no scenes with the servants and the little boy together until the end, when the housemaid and the gardener are the first to hear the little boy’s screams and the first to reach him. The gardener screams with him and tears his hands trying to free him from the wire. The last image of the story is the four adults—“the man, the wife, the hysterical trusted housemaid and the weeping gardener”—carrying the boy’s body back into the house, united in their terror and grief, the servants showing more emotion than the parents.

The most important connection between the whites and the blacks in “Once Upon a Time” is shown through their fear. The narrator experiences it first; it is her fear of the strange sound in the dark that prompts her to tell the bedtime story. She has chosen, she says, not to install bars on the windows, or to keep a gun, but she has “the same fears as people who do take these precautions.” Yet she realizes what the husband and wife do not: her fear makes her “a victim already,” even if nothing worse ever happens to her than being awakened by her house settling. The husband and wife are afraid, of course. It begins with the wise old witch, who warns them “not to take on anyone off the street,” and leads eventually to the electronic gates, and the alarms, and the added bricks, and the razor wire. The narrator focuses on the wife’s fears, but does not lose sight of how frightened black South Africans must also be. The housemaid voices her fears: she is afraid of being locked in a cupboard like her friend, and she discourages the wife from offering food to the “loafers and tsotsis,” or street thugs, because she is afraid they will rob the house. Though the husband and wife hear the evening news only as it might reflect on their own safety, the narrator points out that in the black townships there are riots, with “buses... being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police.” South Africa at the end of apartheid is as unstable as the ground beneath the narrator’s home, and everyone is afraid.

In “That Other World That Was the World,” a lecture Gordimer delivered as part of Harvard University’s Charles Eliot Norton Lectures in 1994, the author remembers that when she

was young, her mother warned her never to walk past the camp where black miners lived, fearing that she would be unspeakably violated. Many years later, she learned that her friend the black South African writer Es'kia Mphahlele had been warned by his mother never to ride his bicycle past a group of white boys, fearing that he would be beaten. Acknowledging that Mphahlele's fears were more realistic than her own, Gordimer nevertheless concludes that "the extreme unlikelihood that he or I was in any danger in the manner anticipated was part of the paranoia of separation that prevailed, matched each to the colour of his or her skin."

So, everyone is afraid, and everyone has cause to be. But in showing the connections between white and black in South Africa—in showing that fear strikes them both—Gordimer is not equating their suffering or their moral positions. Later in "That Other World That Was the World" (1995), Gordimer contemplates "The Defeated," a story she published in 1952. In the story, a struggling working-class white shopkeeper, recently immigrated to South Africa, mistreats the black miners who are his customers. "In keeping with my ignorance at the time," Gordimer writes, "the story makes too much of an equation between the defeated—the shopkeeper... [and] the black miners. ... For the shopkeeper and the black miner were, in fact, not in the same social pit."

"Once Upon a Time" pointedly refuses to make an equation between the fears felt by the whites and those experienced by the blacks. The whites, for one thing, have much greater control over their lives than the blacks do. The narrator and the husband and wife seem to have enough wealth that they could live somewhere else if they chose to. (Gordimer and her husband considered leaving South Africa, but chose to stay in their homeland.) The husband and wife are "living" in their city, while the "people of another colour" are "quartered" outside it. The housemaid and the gardener are forced to travel into the suburb if they wish to have employment, and the nature of the education system in South Africa means that they—as well as the miners working beneath the narrator's house—have had many fewer opportunities to choose their professions than the husband and wife have had.

More importantly, the husband and wife and narrator have benefited from a system of white privilege all of their lives, and, if they have more to lose, it is simply because they have more. The things stolen from the neighbors' homes are frivolities: "hi-fi equipment, television sets, cassette players, cameras and radios, jewellery and clothing," as well as expensive single-

malt whisky. The thieves, meanwhile, are often “hungry enough to devour everything in the refrigerator,” and the housemaid fears that she, like another trusted housemaid, will be tied up while protecting her employers’ possessions. A widower known to the narrator has been knifed after refusing to pay a man he had hired to do some chores; the laborer went without pay while the widower had enough extra to collect antique clocks. The narrator’s home is literally built above a gold mine, an important part of the foundation of the South African economy. That foundation, the narrator points out, is “undermined ground,” a play on words that emphasizes the oppression and moral corruption that have brought “uneasy strain to the balance and counterbalance” that should hold up a society. The phrase “uneasy strain” is also resonant, as the narrator strains uneasily to hear in the darkness, and the husband and wife’s full-fledged fear begins with a sense of unease. The narrator’s house, like the house in which the husband and wife live, is unstable, built on “an epicentre of stress.”

Gordimer does not suggest that stealing and murder are acceptable or that a wealthy person who is murdered by a poor burglar deserves what he gets. But she asks her readers to consider where the impulse to commit a crime comes from and what response to the threat of danger is appropriate. What good are possessions if they must be constantly guarded? How should uneducated, unemployed people obtain food? What does it mean to be safe? By making the story abstract and detached, a parody of a fairy tale, she is able to exaggerate both the threat and the response, to emphasize the unsustainability of the society that the whites have created, and to raise complex questions. Apartheid was created and maintained to keep people apart, to protect white power and privilege. By highlighting the connections between people ordinarily kept apart, Gordimer demonstrates that no amount of forcible separation and oppression can protect us from being human. It is obvious that people who have no control over where they live and work, who cannot vote for their leaders, and who receive inferior education and medical care would live in fear. In “Once Upon a Time,” Gordimer shows that the oppressors have created their own reasons to fear. In the end, the husband and wife cannot save themselves. No matter how they reinforce it, their house remains unstable and unsafe. Like the narrator, they are “neither threatened nor spared.”

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ: A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS

About the Author

Gabriel García Márquez was born in 1927 in Aracataca, a small hamlet located in a tropical region of northern Colombia, nestled between the mountains and the Caribbean Sea. He was raised by his maternal grandparents. His grandfather was a retired colonel who had been in the civil war at the start of the century. He attended a Jesuit institution and commenced his legal studies, which were subsequently interrupted due to his involvement as a journalist. In 1954, he was dispatched to Rome* on a journalistic mission, and ever then, he has predominantly resided overseas – specifically in Paris, New York, Barcelona, and Mexico – as a result of a somewhat obligatory exile. In addition to his extensive body of fiction, he has also authored screenplays and maintained a career as a journalist.

Summary

The narrative commences with the eponymous elderly gentleman possessing colossal wings descending abruptly into the mire-filled courtyard adjacent to the residence of Pelayo, an individual cohabiting with his spouse, Elisenda, and their ailing offspring. The elderly man communicates in an unfamiliar dialect and his accent resembles that of a sailor.

Their female neighbour informs them that the man is an angel who was likely intended to visit their son, but the continuous rain caused him to deviate from his intended path. On the following day, news spreads rapidly, and the entire community gathers to observe the 'angel'. At this point, Pelayo has restricted the elderly man to his chicken coop and his son's fever has subsided. They had contemplated placing the elderly guy on a makeshift raft with provisions and setting him adrift in the ocean, but their neighbours arrived to witness the alleged celestial being in their midst.

As the day progresses, the townspeople start proposing different ideas for what should happen to this elderly man: one suggests he should become the leader of the entire world, another believes he should be appointed as a highly ranked military officer, and one person thinks he should be used for breeding in order to produce a superior race of beings.

Upon the arrival of the local priest, he proceeds to examine the angel. However, due to the elderly man's lack of comprehension of the Latin language spoken by the priest, Father

Gonzaga deduces that the man cannot possibly be a genuine angel. The angel's wings are excessively soiled, and he lacks the expected level of dignity. However, the locals remain sceptical and persist in gathering in larger crowds, eager to witness the presence of this celestial being firsthand.

Elisenda, recognising a favourable situation, chooses to impose a fee of five cents on each person who desires to observe the elderly guy with wings. During the following week, they amass a substantial amount of wealth by charging individuals to visit the angel. Consequently, their residence transforms into a place of pilgrimage frequented by individuals afflicted with the most peculiar ailments. There is ongoing speculation over the enigmatic old man's nature, whether he is angelic or not.

However, a touring exhibition comes to the town featuring a woman who has been transformed into a spider. This spider is as big as a ram, but has a woman's head. The transformation occurred as a consequence of her disobedience towards her parents. Due to the lesser admission fee for witnessing the performance of the 'act' compared to the five-cent charge for observing the angel, numerous townspeople abandon their queue to view the elderly guy with gigantic wings and instead opt to witness the spider-woman, who is willing to provide detailed explanations about her peculiar condition.

Despite the dispersal of the queue of those awaiting to witness the angel due to the spider-woman's enticement, Pelayo and Elisenda are content as they can utilise the funds they have already acquired to construct an improved dwelling. Nevertheless, the ongoing existence of the angel in their garden becomes a source of irritation for them. Their son contracts chicken pox after spending time with the angel in his chicken farm. They are apprehensive about the angel's impending demise, but eventually he recuperates and takes flight.

Analysis

There is a description by Gabriel García Márquez that says “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings.” This short story is called “a tale for children,” and it could be seen as a kind of fairy tale in many ways. In fact, the main character, the old man who might or might not be an actual angel or some other strange magical being, can be seen as a kind of “fairy” because he shows up at the same time that Pelayo’s son’s health gets better.

This story, like many good fairy tales, mixes myth or fiction with more every day or real things. This combination is also popular in magic realism works, though, and Gabriel García Márquez was very much a part of that literary movement. In magic realist fiction, the world is shown to us in a realistic way, but there are also magical parts in the story. The main magic realist ideas in “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” are easy to spot: a woman who has turned into a huge spider; a man who, whether he is an angel or not, has wings and can fly.

The story and its meaning are centred around these two beings. It’s also about how groups of people react to strange things happening in society, not just about these two people. So, the old man with the huge wings really is a cypher. No one can figure out what he thinks about anything because they can’t understand what he says. That his main virtue is patience. He seems happy to wait in the chicken coop and doesn’t ask Pelayo and Elisenda for much, even though they get rich quickly from him. The spider-woman, on the other hand, met her magical end because she disobeyed her parents, or to put it another way, she was impatient. She wanted to go to a dance but her parents told her she couldn’t, probably because they thought she was too young.

In many ways, these two unique people—one very old and the other young; one male and the other female; one patient and the other flighty; one able to fly and the other stuck on the ground—could not be more different. In fact, the old man is forced to be a fair attraction by his hosts, but the spider-woman comes as part of a travelling show and wants to “sell” her story and get people interested. Also, they stand for very different things. People in the town don’t believe that the old man is really an angel from heaven. But they keep going to the house to see the strange figure, even after Father Gonzaga tells them straight out that the man is not an angel. The spider-woman has changed into a spider, which they can see with their own eyes, but no one from heaven says anything about her fate.

A person reading “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” might wonder if the old man’s claims to be an “angel” are really important: if he is just a strange man with wings and not an angel, does that make him any less interesting to study and speculate about? Clearly, the “crazy” parts of Spider-woman’s illness are reason enough for huge groups of people to want to see her (and pay) her.

RONALD DAHL: LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

About the Author

Roald Dahl had a multifaceted career, serving as a spy, skilled fighter pilot, expert in the history of chocolate, and innovator in the field of medicine. The initial spark of creativity occurred during his time at boarding school, when he had the opportunity to participate in a chocolate bar testing session organised by a nearby chocolate factory. After a span of 35 years, this experience eventually led to the publication of the renowned novel, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Subsequently, he authored numerous other narratives, such as *Matilda*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *Fantastic Mr Fox*, all while situated in a cabin located in his backyard in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire. Upon the publication of *The Minpins*, the author had already completed a grand total of 16 children's stories, which have been translated into a remarkable 68 languages and enjoyed by readers worldwide. He continues to be regarded as one of the most exceptional narrators in the world.

The primary objective of The Roald Dahl Story Company is to safeguard and enhance the cultural significance of Roald Dahl's stories, which are distinguished by their diverse range of characters and imaginative settings. The Roald Dahl brand has sold 300 million books and continues to gain popularity worldwide. A new book is sold every 2.5 seconds, reaching new audiences with inventive advancements in book, theatre, entertainment, and more. The Roald Dahl Story Company is dedicated to disseminating the optimistic themes that lie at the core of all Roald Dahl books - themes that highlight the resilience and capacity of young individuals, as well as the influence of benevolence.

Summary

"Lamb to the Slaughter" is a short story penned by the British author Roald Dahl. It was included in the book *Someone Like You*, which is a collection of Dahl's works published by Penguin Books in New Delhi in 1991. The story effectively employs irony to illustrate the abrupt shifts in human behaviour in response to shifting circumstances.

The narrative revolves around Mrs. Mary Maloney and her spouse, Mr. Patrick Maloney. Upon receiving the news of Patrick's intention to leave her directly from Patrick himself, Mrs.

Maloney loses control and ultimately commits the act of killing him. The phrase "Lamb to the Slaughter" refers to the act of killing an innocent person, in this case, Patrick.

Mrs. Maloney, who is currently in her sixth month of pregnancy, harbours a deep affection for her husband. Patrick, her husband, is a detective. As part of her daily routine, she patiently awaits his return, seated on her chair, engaged in sewing. Upon Patrick's arrival, she extends an invitation for him to partake in some whisky, although she herself indulges just minimally. She observes that Patrick's behaviour is peculiar and he is consuming alcohol more excessively than normal. The glass included a higher proportion of whisky than soda, causing the whisky to visibly float on top of the drink.

Maloney perceives that Patrick is fatigued, so she inquires if he would like some crackers and supper. Typically, they eat at a restaurant on Thursday nights, but that day they did not. Patrick intercepts Mrs. Maloney and candidly informs her that he intends to abandon her. Initially, she experiences disbelief and entertains the notion that she may have only conjured the event in her mind. She descends to the cellar in search of an item for the evening meal and retrieves a substantial leg of lamb. As she walks into the kitchen, she notices Patrick standing in the hallway, instructing her not to prepare dinner for him. However, Mrs. Maloney unexpectedly hurls the lamb at the back of his head, resulting in his death.

It is worth noting that in the story, the leg of lamb is likened to a steel club, indicating the significant weight of the leg. Following the impact, Patrick manages to maintain an upright position for a brief period before ultimately collapsing and succumbing to death.

Following the murder of Patrick, Mrs. Maloney continues to gaze at his lifeless body, clutching the lamb in his hands. As the spouse of a detective, she was aware of the potential consequences she would face, but she was unaware if those consequences would also extend to her unborn child. Consequently, she attempts to behave in a typical manner and places the lamb in the oven for cooking, then hastily goes to her room to practise. She practices her grins and talks in preparation for purchasing veggies from the grocer, Sam, who is located nearby.

She discreetly approaches Sam through the rear entrance and behaves in a genuine manner. Following a conversation and the purchase of cheesecake for dessert, Mrs. Maloney effectively tricks him. Upon her return, she discovers Patrick's lifeless body sprawled on the

floor, prompting her to burst into inconsolable tears. Her tears were genuine and not feigned. She contacts the authorities and two individuals, detective Jack Noonan and O'Malley, who are acquaintances of Patrick, come. She falls directly into the arms of Jack Noonan, weeping, as he attempts to comfort her.

Jack Noonan quickly discovers an injury on Patrick's skull and promptly informs O'Malley. Subsequently, two detectives, a police photographer, an individual with proficient expertise in fingerprints, and a doctor also make their way to the scene. They all pose multiple inquiries to Mrs. Maloney, to which she responds in a natural manner. Upon receiving confirmation from the grocer, Sam, the police begin to suspect that Mrs. Maloney is not the perpetrator and are consequently misled.

After a quarter of an hour, two individuals arrive and transport Patrick's deceased body on a stretcher, while all the males, with the exception of the four investigators, depart. Jack Noonan proposes that Mrs. Maloney either accompany him to her sister's residence or to his own home, where his wife would provide care for her. However, Mrs. Maloney declines the offer and expresses her preference to remain in her current location, seated on her chair. Noonan inquires if there is a wrench or metallic vase in the residence that may have been used to murder Patrick. However, she instructs him to search the garage, suggesting that they may discover such items there.

Mrs. Maloney becomes aware that a greater number of law enforcement officers have encircled her residence in search of the murder weapon. She possesses the capability to perceive the sound of their footfall in the yard and visually detect a sudden burst of light through the curtain. Resuming her performance, she requests Noonan to provide her with whisky and extends an invitation for him to partake as well. Initially, Noonan declines but ultimately accepts it to maintain his productivity. Shortly thereafter, the police officers arrive and confiscate the alcohol, offering comforting words to calm Mrs. Maloney. Remarkably, Mrs. Maloney persuades the policeman to accept the lamb she had been cooking in the oven as a gesture of welcome.

She informs them that, as they were all close acquaintances of her deceased spouse Patrick Maloney, it would have been displeasing to him if they had departed without being

adequately entertained. Once more, she extends the offer of the lamb to them as a gesture of goodwill, and the policeman consents to consume it.

Analysis

The opening scene emphasizes both the “duality” (everything is doubled) of the setting and its emptiness. Like the Maloneys’ marriage, Mary is the only one present, despite the fact that everything around her is meant for two.

Mary’s pregnancy and sewing are examples of her domesticity, epitomizing the traditional roles of women as child-bearers and domestic servants. The narrator emphasizes her objectification by emulating a poetic convention called “blason,” in which a poet describes a woman by targeting various body parts.

Mary fulfills the roles of caregiver and domestic servant through these loving gestures. The fact that Patrick does not reciprocate them highlights the power imbalance of their relationship, which also manifests in the way she prepares their drinks.

As a housewife, Mary is expected to stay in the private sphere of domesticity while her husband goes to work; she has been home alone all day, with no one to talk to. Yet when her husband comes home, Mary is quick to accommodate her husband’s desire for silence. The power imbalance between Mary and her husband is further skewed by her view of him as almost godlike. While her husband’s masculinity is compared to the sun, Mary is a mere “sunbather,” sustained only by her relationship to her husband.

The husband’s breaking of their usual routine and decision to drink more than usual suggests that something is wrong. The husband reinforces his patriarchal power by giving Mary orders and refusing to acknowledge her efforts as his emotional caregiver.

Mary’s attempt to get her husband to eat something is yet another example of her wifely duties as caregiver. Her husband’s rejection of her food is also a rejection of her role within the marriage. As he mentally prepares himself, he looks down as if ashamed, while Mary’s focus is entirely on him, as it has been for their entire marriage.

Mary’s husband’s mention that “it’s kind of a bad time” refers to the fact that he is abandoning not only Mary but also their unborn child. In his promise to send her money and in

his dismissal of her potential emotions and reactions as “fuss,” he implicitly dismisses the idea that his wife is a thinking and feeling human being.

Unwilling to believe her husband’s rejection, Mary clings to her marriage by performing her usual duty of preparing dinner. Her husband, however, rejects both her meal and her.

Mary carries out her own sudden betrayal by killing her husband here. The murder weapon (a frozen leg of lamb) and the narrator’s description of the body comically swaying in the air are examples of Dahl’s black humor. The narrator’s comparison of the lamb to a steel club anticipates the policemen’s search for the murder weapon later in the story.

After the murder, Mary finds the death penalty to be a “relief,” because the life she had with her husband is already over. However, her resolution to survive suggests that her concern for her child exceeds her concern for herself and her marriage.

By cooking the leg of lamb for supper, Mary destroys the evidence of her crime. Unlike the murder, which she commits without fully realizing her actions, the cover-up is clearly premeditated.

Mary establishes her alibi by deceiving Sam, claiming that she is cooking dinner in order to maintain a façade of domestic happiness. She also refers to her husband by name for the first time in the story. Whereas prior to his death, Patrick Maloney was unnamed and idolized for his masculinity and power, the narrator’s and Mary’s naming of him after the murder suggests the dispossession of his masculine power. In order to maintain her façade, Mary engages in a sort of “doublethink,” deceiving herself into behaving a certain way while simultaneously remaining aware of that deception.

Cleverly incorporating kernels of truth into her story, Mary is able to deceive the police, who fail to suspect her as the real culprit. Unlike Patrick, who ignores and does not reciprocate his wife’s love, the various men who investigate Patrick’s murder treat Mary with kindness (if also condescension, at times), signaling a change in her traditionally subordinate gender role.

Whereas Mary had put so much energy into pleasing her husband, only to be rejected, now it is Mary who is refusing the efforts of the policemen who attempt to comfort her. The policemen’s offer to send her to her sister or Noonan’s wife carries with it the assumption that

women (and thus Mary) are caregivers by nature and incapable of violence, again allowing Mary to escape suspicion.

Noonan reinforces this gender stereotype by assuming that the murderer is a man. Describing the weapon as a blunt metal object, Noonan confirms the narrator's previous comparison of the leg of lamb to a steel club, and unwittingly gives Mary enough information for her to point the police in the wrong direction.

Mary's interactions with the policemen highlight her sudden (and perhaps unrealistic) transformation from a submissive housewife to an intelligent and subtly dominant killer. Whereas during her marriage, Mary had to fetch drinks for her husband, now the policemen fetch drinks for her. Whereas Mary had attempted to provide emotional support for Patrick, with no success or reciprocation, now it is the policemen who attempt the same for her. Mary utilizes this new power by persuading the men to drink on the job, subtly undermining their credibility and objectivity.

Mary exercises her power by asking a favor of the men. However, contrary to her claims, the lamb is not a reward for their friendship with Patrick, but rather a betrayal of both Patrick and their profession, leading to the ironic twist of the story. By eating the lamb, the men destroy the evidence of the murder.

The description of Mary as "the woman" signals a greater narratorial distance from the story's main character, indicating the extent of her transformation. The irony of the men's speculation of the murder weapon's location as "under [their] very noses" is another example of Dahl's black humor.

UNIT IV: DRAMA

WOLE SOYINKA: A DANCE OF THE FORESTS

About the Author

Wole Soyinka, also known as Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka, was born on July 13, 1934, in Abeokuta, Nigeria. He is a renowned Nigerian dramatist. Upon completing his studies in Leeds, England, he went to Nigeria where he engaged in editing literary journals, teaching drama and literature at the university level, and establishing two theatre companies. The playwright's works, composed in the English language and incorporating elements from West African folklore, frequently centre around the conflicts arising from the clash between established customs and societal advancement. The utilisation of symbolism, flashback, and skilful plotting enhances the complexity and depth of the dramatic structure. The serious plays he wrote demonstrate his dissatisfaction with the dictatorial rule in Africa and with Nigerian society in its entirety.

His works include *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963), *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), and *From Zia, with Love* (1992). He has written several volumes of poetry; his best-known novel is *The Interpreters* (1965). A champion of Nigerian democracy, he was repeatedly jailed and exiled. In 1986 he became the first black African to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Summary

“A Dance of the Forests” is a play written by Wole Soyinka in 1960, to commemorate Nigeria’s independence from British colonial rule. It is considered one of Soyinka’s most complex and symbolic works, blending elements of traditional African mythology with contemporary political commentary. The play is set in a mythical forest inhabited by various characters representing different aspects of Nigerian society. It takes place during a festival celebrating Nigeria’s independence, where the living and the dead converge to reflect on the nation’s past, present, and future. The play opens with a prologue featuring a chorus of ancestral spirits preparing for the festival. They discuss the significance of the occasion and their role in guiding the living towards a brighter future.

The Arrival of the Living: - Various groups representing different segments of Nigerian society arrive in the forest to participate in the festival. Among them are political leaders, traditional rulers, students, and representatives of various ethnic groups. Throughout the play, characters engage in conversations and encounters that reveal their conflicting ideologies and aspirations. Political leaders argue over the direction of the newly independent nation, while traditional rulers assert their authority and cultural identity. Students express their disillusionment with the older generation and call for radical change, while women demand greater recognition and empowerment.

The climax of the play is the titular dance, where characters from different backgrounds come together to perform symbolic rituals. The dance represents a synthesis of Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage and a collective vision for the future. After the dance, the characters reflect on the challenges and possibilities facing Nigeria as it enters a new era of independence. The play ends with a sense of hope and uncertainty, as the nation grapples with its identity and destiny. The play explores the complexities of Nigerian identity, incorporating 50 elements of traditional folklore and mythology to reflect the country's diverse cultural heritage.

Political Struggle: "A Dance of the Forests" critiques the post-independence political landscape in Nigeria, highlighting the power struggles and ideological conflicts that threaten to divide the nation. Through the voices of students, women, and other marginalized groups, the play advocates for social justice and equality in the newly independent Nigeria. Cultural Revival: Soyinka emphasizes the importance of preserving and celebrating Nigeria's indigenous traditions and customs in the face of modernization and Western influence.

Analysis

"A Dance of the Forests" is a play written by Wole Soyinka. It premiered in 1960, coinciding with Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule. Soyinka's play is deeply rooted in the context of Nigeria's postcolonial experience. It explores themes of cultural identity, political independence, and the complexities of nation-building in the aftermath of colonialism. Through allegorical storytelling and symbolic imagery, Soyinka critiques both the colonial legacy and the challenges of self-governance faced by newly independent African nations. Cultural conflict and hybridity can be seen in this play.

"A Dance of the Forests" depicts the collision of traditional African beliefs and Western influences. The play's characters and rituals represent a diverse range of cultural traditions, highlighting the complexities of cultural hybridity in postcolonial societies. Soyinka interrogates the tensions⁵¹ between tradition and modernity, indigenous spirituality and Christian beliefs, and the struggle to forge a cohesive national identity amidst cultural diversity.

Symbolism and ritual are another aspect of the play. Ritualistic elements play a central role in "A Dance of the Forests," serving as symbolic expressions of collective memory, societal norms, and spiritual beliefs. The forest setting, in particular, serves as a metaphorical space where characters confront their past, present, and future. Through intricate choreography and symbolic gestures, Soyinka evokes the rich cultural tapestry of Nigeria while exploring universal themes of life, death, and rebirth.

This play is a political allegory. The play can be read as a political allegory that reflects Nigeria's socio-political landscape in the wake of independence. Characters such as King and Ghosts represent political leaders and figures from Nigeria's colonial past, while the Forest Spirits symbolize the collective consciousness of the Nigerian people. Soyinka uses allegorical storytelling to critique corruption, abuse of power, and the failure of leadership in postcolonial Africa.

"A Dance of the Forests" is notable for its innovative use of theatrical techniques, including music, dance, and mime. Soyinka draws on Yoruba theatrical traditions and incorporates elements of masquerade and ritual performance to create a visually stunning and immersive theatrical experience. The play's experimental structure challenges conventional notions of narrative and character development, inviting audiences to engage with its themes on a visceral and intellectual level.

Therefore "A Dance of the Forests" is a complex and multi-layered work that offers profound insights into Nigeria's postcolonial experience and the broader dynamics of power, identity, and cultural resistance in Africa. Soyinka's mastery of language, symbolism, and theatricality makes it a timeless masterpiece of African drama.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE: RED OLEANDERS

About the Author

Rabindranath Tagore, born on May 7, 1861, in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, and died on August 7, 1941, in Calcutta, was a multifaceted Bengali artist. He was a poet, short-story writer, song composer, playwright, essayist, and painter. Tagore revolutionised Bengali literature by introducing innovative prose and verse forms and incorporating colloquial language, liberating it from the constraints of traditional models rooted in classical Sanskrit. He played a significant role in promoting Indian culture in the West and vice versa, and is widely recognised as the foremost creative artist of early 20th-century India. In 1913, he achieved the distinction of becoming the inaugural non-European recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Summary

The drama "Red Oleanders" was initiated during Tagore's visit to Shillong, Assam. It was sparked by the sight of a red oleander plant being crushed by fragments of abandoned iron that Tagore encountered while walking. Shortly thereafter, a branch of oleander emerged from the wreckage, bearing a solitary red flower. The observer said that it appeared as if the flower had been formed from the blood of the plant's mercilessly punctured chest. There is a suggestion that the play's title should be accurately translated as 'Blood-Red Oleanders' to convey the idea of the flower's stunning yet poisonous characteristics and its connection to beauty and death in the play.

Rabindranath Tagore's drama "Red Oleanders" (Raktakaravi) was penned in late 1923. Therefore, the original title was not Raktakaravi, but rather Yakshapuri, which translates to The City of Yaksha, the malevolent monarch. Tagore subsequently revitalised the manuscript and renamed it as 'Nandhini' in honour of the story's female lead character. In the 1924 publication of Pravasi, the final version of the title was further modified to Raktakaravi, which translates to "the Red Oleander". The noticeable shift of emphasis is from the city of Yakshapuri to the character Nandhini, and finally to the flower Raktakaravi, so making Raktakaravi primarily a symbolic play.

Red Oleanders is a compelling and emotionally charged play that explores themes of commercial exploitation, oppression, power dynamics, love, and obsession, which are depicted in various ways and forms. The drama revolves around the issue of unethical capitalism, the

abuse of the environment, and the significance of human connections. 'Red Oleanders', as described by Tagore, is a theatrical representation of a familiar truth that has been forgotten. It explores the coexistence of evil and good, the dynamics of greed and human empathy, and the factors that both divide and unite individuals.

The drama revolves around the fundamental concept that both the oppressor and the oppressed have the right to engage in a legitimate struggle against each other. The narrative revolves around Nandhini, an exquisite woman who emerges during a period marked by the subjugation of mankind due to avarice and authority. The monarch, who symbolises immense power, serves as the enemy in the plot and isolates himself behind an impenetrable barrier. He converts a town into a fortress and the inhabitants into labourers who blindly search for gold in the darkness.

The citizens of the nation of Kuvera are diligently excavating valuable gold, extracting it from the subterranean realm. Motivated by an intense desire to selfishly accumulate, the individuals have expelled all the pleasantness from the location. The guy, entangling himself in his own intricacies, has isolated himself from the rest of the cosmos. They have neglected to recognise that the worth of happiness surpasses the worth of wealth; that true satisfaction lies not in power but in affection. Nandhini arrives in this desolate town, where the inhabitants are oblivious to the splendour of nature - the lush meadows, the radiant sunlight, and the profound connections of love and compassion among people. She comes to save humanity from the clutches of a mechanised dictatorship. Ultimately, she liberates the subjugated spirits who are labouring under the surface, albeit at a significant cost. The narrative concludes with a surprising climax as Tagore weaves a complex web of events that ultimately transforms into a parable.

Red Oleanders exhibits a perplexing plot and cryptic speech, yet it leaves no room for uncertainty regarding the character of Nandhini, the play's condemnation, or the importance of the title. It is clear from the pleasant and warm conversations between Nandhini and the Professor, as well as the thoughtful monologue of Bishu in the beginning of the play, that the significance of the symbol of the blooming Red Oleander is related to both freedom and death. The bracelet, which represents this symbol, ultimately ends up being discarded, just like freedom itself. The Professor suggests to Nandhini that her destiny might possess knowledge. The blood-red lustre of the Red Oleander holds a terrible mystery, beyond its mere beauty. It captures the

essence of tragic sorrow in the play, echoing the poignant emotions of "King Lear's" renowned jail speech.

Analysis

The play 'Red Oleanders' was begun during a visit to Shillong, Assam and inspired by the image of a red oleander plant crushed by pieces of discarded iron that Tagore had come across while walking. A short time later, an oleander branch with a single red flower protruded through the debris, as if, he noted, "created from the blood of its cruelly pierced breast". It has been suggested that the play's title might appropriately be translated as 'Blood-Red Oleanders' to indicate the beautiful but toxic nature of the flower and its association with beauty and death in the play. Tagore's play 'Red Oleanders' (Raktakaravi) was written towards the end of 1923. The title, then, was not Raktakaravi but Yakshapurior. The City ofYaksha(the demon king). Tagore further revived the manuscript and retitled it as 'Nandhini' after the name of the female protagonist of the story.

In the final version published in Pravasiin 1924 the title was further revised to Raktakaravi, the Red Oleander. The shift in emphasis, it can be noticed, is from the city (Yakshapuri) through a character (Nandhini) to a flower (Raktakaravi) and makes Raktakaravi essentially a symbolic drama. Red Oleanders is a power and poignant play where commercial exploitation, oppression, power, love and obsession operate on different levels and manifest themselves in different shapes. The play is built around the theme of unscrupulous capitalism, environmental exploitation and the importance of human relationships. The play 'Red Oleanders', according to Tagore, "is an expression of that truth to which we are accustomed that we have forgotten all about it". It is a play about evil and good working side by side, about greed and human sympathy, about that which separate fellow beings and that which keeps us together.

The play is based upon the principle that each must legitimately fight against the other, the oppressor and the oppressed. It is the story of Nandhini, a beautiful woman who appears at a time of the oppression of humanity by greed and power. The antagonist in the story is the king, who represents enormous authority but barricades himself behind an iron curtain. He transforms a town into a fort and the human into digging machines who grope in the dark searching for gold.

The people of the country of Kuvera are engaged in digging out with all their might precious gold, tearing out from the underground world. Driven by the covetous urge for cruel hoarding, the people have banished all the sweetness of life from the place. There man, enslaving himself within his own complexities, has severed himself from the rest of the universe. They have forgotten that the value of joy is greater than the value of gold; that there is no fulfillment in might but only in love. Into this soulless town where people were unaware of the beauty of nature, the green meadows, the dazzling sunshine, the tenderness and love between humans, Nandhini arrives to salvage humanity trapped behind mechanized tyranny. She eventually frees the oppressed souls who are toiling underground, but at a great sacrifice.

The story ends in an unexpected climax after Tagore knits an intricate network of sequences that ultimately becomes a parable. *Red Oleanders* is rather confused in its action and obscure in its dialogue, but there is no ambiguity either about the role of Nandhini or about the indictment delivered by the play or about the significance of the title. From the delightful warm exchanges between Nandhini and the Professor and later from the transporting soliloquy of Bishu in the opening sequence of the play, it is evident that the import behind the symbol of the blossoming Red Oleander in its association with freedom and death, the bracelet of which is finally to 'roll in dust' as with freedom itself. The Professor tells Nandhini, "Perhaps your destiny knows". In this blood-red luster (*Red Oleander*) lays a fearful mystery, not merely beauty, and the moment to the tragic suffering in the play, evoking all the poignancy of "King Lear's" famous prison speech.

Character of Nandhini *Red Oleanders* is a play in one-act. It is a symbolic play based on certain essential truth of life. Tagore's plays at all times have a woman at the centre, which manifests the spirit of defiance against the dictate of the powerful man. In this play, *Red Oleanders*, it is just a frail girl, the daughter of this earth symbolically suggested through the ripe corn- ears colours of her dress, who refutes to comply with the dictates of the Yaksha town. There is a hint towards the end that this refusal of Nandhini will finally snowball into a revolution that will shatter the walls of this demonic palace. Nandhini represents the negation of all the values that the Yaksha kingdom stands for. Nandhini is the soul of the play. Her distinctive feature is the 'red oleander' she wears in her hair, round her neck and on her wrist which become the symbol of the all- powerful treasure – 'freedom'.

Her beauty mesmerizes men regardless of their position or rank. She exudes fearless love, care and belief in freedom. She challenges the king whose passion for her unlocks some humanity in him as she confesses that despite all he has, he is empty and envies her and the man she loves, Ranjan. The king dares not let her into his barbed realm as he fears her beauty and power may weaken his hold (she is after all the voice of love, beauty and allurement to freedom). But finally, his desire to 'know her' conquers his desire for 'power'. She, in turn, fears his desire 'to know her'. Nandhini's presence in the Yaksha town creates consternation among some of the slave miners and their masters. She begs them to return home, but her pleading falls on deaf ears – the man are addicted to gold and even if they were to return home they would eventually return to the mines. Tagore describes Nandhini as the 'treasure house in woman's heart' from whose pervading influence restores the human to the desolated world of man. She symbolizes 'freedom'.(Especially with the garland of red oleanders around her neck, and talks about Ranjan and freedom emphasize the symbolism) She is the challenge of beauty and love.

UNIT V: FICTION

MARK TWAIN: THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER

About the Author

Mark Twain, an American humorist, journalist, lecturer, and novelist, was born on November 30, 1835 in Florida, Missouri, U.S. He gained worldwide recognition for his travel narratives, particularly *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). Additionally, his adventure stories about boyhood, such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), also contributed to his fame. He was a talented storyteller, unique comedian, and cantankerous moralist, who surpassed the perceived constraints of his background to achieve fame as a prominent public figure and one of America's most esteemed and cherished authors.

Summary

"*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*," published in 1876, is a highly cherished and extensively cited literary masterpiece by the renowned American novelist Mark Twain, whose actual name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens. The novel, initially experiencing sluggish sales for the author, can be appreciated on various levels. Youngsters can derive pleasure from the thrilling narrative, while grown-ups can discern and value the use of humour.

Tom Sawyer is a juvenile residing with his Aunt Polly in close proximity to the Mississippi River. He appears to derive the most pleasure from engaging in mischievous activities. Following his absence from school and involvement in a physical altercation, Tom is assigned the penalty of whitewashing a fence. Nevertheless, he cleverly transforms the punishment into a form of amusement and deceives his peers into doing the task on his own. He persuades the boys that the task is a significant privilege, resulting in him receiving valuable trinkets as compensation.

During this period, Tom develops romantic feelings for a young girl named Becky Thatcher. He endures a tumultuous and intense romantic relationship with her, which quickly leads to their engagement. However, she rejects him after learning of Tom's prior engagement to Amy Lawrence. He endeavours to regain Becky's affection, but his efforts prove unsuccessful.

She declines the gift that he attempts to present to her. Feeling deeply embarrassed, Tom hastily departs and conceives a strategy to escape.

At approximately this point in time, Tom encounters Huckleberry Finn, who would later become the main character in Twain's subsequent and highly praised work. Huck and Tom make a pact to rendezvous in the cemetery at midnight in order to experiment with a plan to treat warts using a deceased feline. The boys convene at the cemetery, marking a crucial moment in the narrative as they bear witness to a homicide. Injun Joe murders Dr. Robinson and attempts to shift the responsibility onto the intoxicated Muff Porter. Injun Joe is oblivious to the fact that the lads have witnessed his actions.

Fearing the repercussions of this information, he and Huck make a solemn vow to remain silent. Nevertheless, Tom has profound melancholy when Muff is incarcerated for the homicide of Robinson. Following yet another instance of being turned down by Becky Thatcher, Tom and Huck abscond with their companion Joe Harper. They pilfer some sustenance and make their way to Jackson's Island. Shortly after their arrival, they come across a search party actively seeking three lads who are believed to have drowned, and they quickly realise that they are the boys being sought.

They participate in the pretence for a period of time and only disclose their true identities during their "funerals," entering the church to the astonishment and distress of their relatives. During summer break, Tom persistently flirts with Becky, but his efforts yield only minimal success. Ultimately, consumed with remorse, he provides testimony during Muff Potter's trial, absolving him of the accusation of Robinson's homicide. Potter is set free, as Injun Joe flees through a window in the courthouse.

However, the court case is not the final interaction between Tom and Injun Joe. In the concluding section of the tale, Harry and Becky (just reconciled) become disoriented within one of the caverns. Tom encounters his archenemy unexpectedly. Tom successfully evades Injun Joe's grasp and navigates his way out, subsequently notifying the locals. They then secure the cave, effectively trapping Injun Joe inside. The protagonist ultimately finds happiness when he and Huck stumble upon a chest of wealth, previously owned by Injun Joe, which they then

invest. Tom discovers joy and, to his dismay, Huck discovers social acceptance through adoption.

Analysis

On the surface *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is a child's adventure story but it is actually an ironic commentary on small-town America in the mid-1800s, with the serious theme of a child growing up to be an adult in that context. In broad terms the novel traces Tom's – and also Huck's – development from childish concerns and behaviour to a state of relative maturity. The novel ends before they are adults but the direction of their development is very clear.

The novel appeals to the young adolescent because of the intriguing and delightful adventures of a boy growing up in the mid-nineteenth century, adventures that appeal to the instincts of most young people of any time and country, however. It also appeals to the adult reader in the way that it invokes memories of their own childhood.

Many of the scenes are famous: the scene in which Tom manipulates the other kids into painting a fence he himself was to have painted is as classic and memorable as any scene could be. Tom and Becky lost in the cave, and the boys in the graveyard, capture the essence of childhood, full of fear and excitement. The novel's characters—Tom, Huck Finn, Becky Thatcher, Injun Joe, and Aunt Polly are among the most familiar in American literature.

The novel's appeal is down to Mark Twain's ability to turn the dreams and fears and fantasies of childhood in an obscure southern American town into universal experiences. It is that that makes it one of the favourite, still read, novels of the 19th Century by both children and adults.

The novel is similar in structure to the picaresque English novels of the 18th century, like *The History of Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding, where, instead of there being a clear plot as one may find in a novel by Twain's near contemporary, Charles Dickens, it comes in a series of episodes with each one contributing to a coherent picture of the lives of the children of St. Petersburg, and indeed, of the whole community, including the adults. The murder the boys witness and its aftermath provides a central event that feeds into the lesser adventures of the novel.

Apart from the label “novelist” Mark Twain is famous as a humorist. It’s as though humour is burnt into his nature, as though he cannot help anything he writes having a humorous edge. In Tom Sawyer he is, as he is to become famous for, a satirist and commentator on the foibles of human nature. His satire often points sharply at the absurdities of the human race. In Tom Sawyer he takes a beneficent view of the townsfolk, regarding himself as one of them. He is content with somewhat mild ironic observations and we hear his authorial voice indicating his targets from time to time, like pointing out the gullibility of people when the kids fall for Tom’s trick of getting them to paint the fence for him: “...that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain.”

One of Mark Twain’s main targets in this novel, as in his other works, is the hypocrisy connected with religious services. There is a scene set in Sunday school, which he uses for that kind of satire. He tells us that one boy had memorized so many verses of the Bible so as to win prizes of so many illustrated Bibles that “the strain upon his mental faculties was too great, and he was little better than an idiot from that day forward.”

Mark Twain’s ironic criticism of the adult attitudes and behaviours throughout the novel is set against the development of Tom from childhood to adulthood. He is progressing toward a model of adulthood that is full of hypocrisy. That is a major idea in the novel and something that can’t be resolved. It is that that raises the novel beyond being a simple child’s adventure story.

ERICA FERENCIK: GIRL IN ICE

About the Author

Erica Ferencik, an American writer, essayist, and screenwriter, was born on October 21, 1958 in Urbana, Illinois. She pursued a double major in painting and French at the University of Massachusetts, where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree. Subsequently, she completed her postgraduate studies at Boston University, getting a Masters degree in Creative Writing. Her pieces are published in Salon, the Boston Globe, and on National Public Radio (NPR). She is the writer of the screenplay *The New Mom*, and collaborated with Rick D’Elia in co-writing the script *Mob Dot Com*. She has written nonfiction books, one of which is titled "Radio My Way". She has authored three novels: *Repeaters*, *Cracks in the Foundation*, and *The River at Night*.

Summary

Girl in Ice, the new book from *The River at Night* author Eric Ferencik, stars a young linguist named Val Chesterfield, who's still reeling from the apparent suicide of her twin brother Andy, alleged to have taken his own life in the sub-zero weather of the Greenland coast. Val has never quite believed that her passionate, dedicated brother would take his own life, so she has a hidden motive when she heeds the call of Andy's former research colleague Wyatt Speeks, asking her to travel to Greenland in order to help him make sense of what might be the most stunning scientific discovery of the century: a young girl, miraculously thawed out of the ice that's apparently held her for centuries.

The little girl is speaking a language nobody understands, and she seems to be both ailing and yearning for her long-lost family. Despite herself, Val is both intrigued and sympathetic, which, we must assume, is what blinds her – and only her, as every one of the book's screaming readers will be able to attest – to the nuclear-obvious fact that Wyatt is a lip-curling, mirror-preening, hair-pomading, puppy-microwaving, scene-monologuing, due-paying, card-carrying James Bond villain of such cartoonish proportions that when Greenland customs officials disinterestedly asked him what his reason was for visiting the country, he probably raised a fist to the sky and said, "Evil, my good man! EEEEEEEvil!"

Despite Wyatt's constant ominous and ambiguous hints—and his extra effort of having a menacing female assistant, reminiscent of Frau Farbissina, lurking around, ready to hold the protagonist at gunpoint in the final act—Val is too overcome with grief and confusion to notice this because she is so overcome with confusion. But Ferencik masterfully handles this part of her story as Val examines the mysterious little girl in great detail and quickly develops a close bond with her. The idea of existing in suspended animation on ice is a popular and sentimental subject. Ferencik does a good job of capturing the protagonists' sense of wonder at encountering this phenomena.

Readers looking to enjoy the fuzzy familiarity of this defrosting-enigma gambit will need to pay a predictable price for it when wading through *Girl in Ice*, unfortunately: they get the human popsicles, yes, but they also get prose that reads like it was defrosted from freshman writing student's most purple cast-offs. Things "chilled my blood," Val tells us; sometimes she

“meant business;” “dread coursed through me,” she mentions; “Her body rotated with dream-slowness once, twice, before she began to fade into cerulean depths ...”

Val is overwhelmed with sorrow and confusion, causing her to overlook this situation, even though Wyatt consistently drops subtly threatening clues (and despite his additional effort of having a frightening female accomplice, reminiscent of Frau Farbissina, who is lurking and waiting for the opportune moment to hold the main character at gunpoint in the third act). However, Val thoroughly analyses and rapidly forms a strong connection with the enigmatic young girl, and Ferencik adeptly handles this aspect of her narrative. The author skillfully conveys the sense of awe experienced by the main characters when they come upon the concept of surviving in frozen suspended animation, a familiar and captivating idea.

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Analysis

Girl in Ice takes place at the Tarrarmiut Arctic Science Station, a study centre very far from anywhere else on Earth. It is located off the coast of Greenland. Five months ago, linguist and professor Val Chesterfield’s twin brother Andy reportedly killed himself by walking outside in the middle of the night in nothing but his boxer shorts and freezing to death. What would make Andy kill himself in that way? Val and her brother have been very upset about Andy’s death and don’t believe what they’ve been told about how he died.

Val gets an email from Andy’s boss and fellow researcher Wyatt Speak. In it, he includes a short recording asking her to come to the research station. The recording is only a short clip of a girl speaking a language Wyatt doesn’t know, and he says that he needs Val’s help to figure it out. Val has “the crippling kind” of worry. In the first-person narrative that Ferencik uses to tell the story, she says, “I’m tied to the familiar, the safe, or what I think is safe.” She goes to the nursing home where her 91-year-old father is being cared for to see him. “He had a fierce

intellect and a fiercer temper,” Val said of him as a climate scientist. Andy was always his favourite kid. Their father doesn’t believe that Andy killed himself, so he talks Val into going to Greenland to both figure out what language the girl is speaking and find out the truth about Andy’s death. Andy and Val made a deal to never hurt each other, and Val can’t accept that Andy broke that promise. This helps him convince Val.

Val goes to the study station for a seven-week mission with her anxiety medicine in hand. Along with Wyatt, there are married polar marine scientists named Nora and Rajeev Chandra-Revard. They will be working in a dome over the ice and diving into the cold water to get samples and animals to study. Like Val, they signed a contract that says they can’t talk about the girl anywhere but at the spot. A drunk driver killed Jeanne’s husband and daughter and she lost her job as a mechanic and cook at the station. She chose to leave Minnesota to work with Wyatt at the research facility.

Wyatt talks about how he found the girl stuck in ice, as if she were running. He used a battery-powered saw to cut a big chunk of ice free and brought the girl to camp. He is sure that she thawed out alive. She has only screamed and thrown things around since then, breaking lamps and dumping everything out of kitchen drawers. “She’s scared and mixed up.” Not able to calm down. In fact, she screams and runs away when Val first sees her. Instead of taking a bath, she wears a dirty, way-too-big Christmas jumper that either Wyatt or Jeanne used to have. Wyatt wants to know about any improvement Val makes, but only him.

Ferencik tells an interesting story about how Val, a woman who has to face her problems all of a sudden, forms a bond with a little girl. In the end, her name is found to be Sigrid. Val tries to win the child’s trust even though she is doubting Wyatt, the stories he tells, and his intentions more and more. Val and Sigrid slowly form a weak connection as Sigrid repeats words that Val has a hard time understanding because they only contain small pieces of the languages Val knows. “The language Sigrid speaks was made up by Ferencik to tell the story.” Val is sure that Sigrid is trying to say something very important when she draws the same picture over and over with more and more anger. But what does she want to say? Meanwhile, Val’s worries about Wyatt grow as she finds more information about the studies and experiments he is still doing. Val forms an alliance with Nora and Raj, who are also becoming very wary of Wyatt. She

doesn't tell him about her progress with Sigrid because she's afraid of what he might do with the knowledge.

The vivid writing of Ferencik takes readers to Greenland with Val. The way she writes about Val's trip there, as well as the harsh conditions and landscape, is beautiful, making the setting for her story feel real. Her characters are well-rounded, especially Val, a linguist who is very smart and caring and who just got split from a "rageaholic." She has anxiety that makes it hard for her to fully enjoy life, and her trip to Greenland, where her twin brother died not long ago, makes her worries and fears even worse. But she is dedicated to her job, and when she meets little Sigrid, she feels a strong need to help the child talk about what she has been through so that she can hopefully be sent back to her family and home.

Ferencik says that when Val first comes, Sigrid doesn't see the point in talking to him. If you believe Wyatt's story, she has been stuck in the ice for hundreds of years. She looks to be about seven or eight years old. She woke up in a strange place with people who dress and talk in ways she never thought. As the day goes on, she starts to figure out which adults are her friends and which ones she can't trust. As her illness gets worse, her need for Val to understand what's going on and what she needs grows. As Val starts to put together the hints that Sigrid is giving her, it's clear that she can't waste any more time. She needs to keep her progress from Wyatt, whose behaviour is becoming more and more strange and scary. She becomes more and more protective of Sigrid.

"A deep desire to be understood is a big part of being human," says Ferencik. Really understood, because there is no greater loneliness than not feeling seen. Communication is the main theme of Ferencik's story, but it's not just Val and Sigrid sharing knowledge and feelings with each other. Val has to watch Sigrid's body language, listen to her, pick up on her tone of voice, and look at her pictures (which she hides from Wyatt) to try to figure out what she is saying. Ferencik also shows the different ways that Val and the other characters talk to each other and how that affects their relationships. This is especially true for Val's relationship problems with her father, whom she always thought of Andy as more important than her.

Another theme that comes up in the story is grief. In some way, every character is sad. Val is sad about Andy's death, Sigrid misses her family, and Jeanne has run away to Greenland

after losing her husband and daughter in terrible accidents. While Nora and Raj have lost a child, Wyatt is “grieving himself and his lack of success.” This is one of the reasons why they become close to Sigrid.

Fear and grief go hand in hand, and Val’s worry makes her afraid of many things. Can she get over her fears in time to stop something bad from happening? Ferencik says, “I’ve always loved thrillers that take place in tough places.” And it’s hard to think of a more tough setting. The “great polar Enormity,” as Val calls it, raises the risks of just living. These risks include anything from subzero temperatures and blinding snow to polar bears. The dramatic tension is obvious and compelling because of this, along with Val’s situation and Ferencik’s skillful speeding up of the story towards an explosive ending.

Girl in Ice is an exciting adventure with science fiction and mystery elements. At its core, it is an insightful and thought-provoking look at how people deal with fear and how they talk to each other. It is also a comment on climate change and what we can learn from science. The readers will feel sorry for both Vale and little Sigrid and support Val as she tries to get over her fears and give Sigrid what she needs to stay alive before time runs out.