WOMEN'S WRITING

SEMESTER - V

III BA ENGLISH LITERATURE

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UNIT 1

1.Maya Angelou - Phenomenal women

2.Judith Wright - Woman to Man

3.Kishwar Naheed - I am not that woman

4. Carol Ann Duffy - Originally

UNIT 2

1.Jean Rhys - The day they burned the books

2.Virgina Woolf - Shakespeare's Sister

UNIT 3

1.Nadine Gardiner - A correspondence course

2.Katherine Manfield -An ideal family

3.Alice Munro - The photographer

UNIT 4

Meena Alexander - Nampally road

UNIT 5

Suzan-Lori Paris - Topdog / Underdog

UNIT 1

1.Maya Angelou's Phenomenal Women

About the Author:

Maya Angelou was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and is credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees

About the poem

Summary

Stanza One:

In a reflective tone, the speaker recalls her interactions with other women. She explains that "pretty women" often look at her and wonder what makes her so attractive and alluring. The speaker is quick to point out that, unlike these conventionally-beautiful women, she is not "cute" and does not possess a model's figure. For this reason, other women are baffled by her appeal and want to uncover the secret to her powerful presence. The speaker attempts to solve this mystery by describing her unique physical characteristics and mannerisms.

However, she claims that when she tries to explain her allure to these women, they never believe her. The speaker insinuates that they may be jealous, or perhaps they are simply incapable of believing that a woman who does not fit conventional standards of beauty can be beautiful at all. The speaker concludes the stanza with a refrain about being a "phenomenal woman." She proclaims with pride that she is not merely a lovely woman, but an exceptional one.

Stanza Two:

The speaker proceeds to describe her effect on men. She explains how she exudes a powerful sensuality that draws their attention whenever she walks into a room. Each time she walks before them calmly and confidently, they either stand up at her arrival or melt from their desire for her. They then swarm around her, vying for her attention. As in the first stanza, the

speaker details her physical attributes and mannerisms as a means of explaining her effect on others. From the power in her look to the swing of her hips, the speaker is capable of seducing the opposite sex by merely standing before them. The stanza concludes with the refrain of being a phenomenal woman, once again reaffirming the speaker's confidence and justifying other people's reactions when they notice her.

Stanza Three:

In the third stanza, the speaker continues her reflections on men. This time, she draws a parallel between the reactions of both women and men when they notice her. She states that, like other women, men have also wondered what is so special about her. However, she takes her analysis to another level when she suggests, for the first time, that she actually possesses another kind of beauty altogether. She has a mysterious inner beauty that men cannot see or understand even when she tries to show them. They are blind to what makes a woman beautiful from within, as they only judge her—and likely other women as well—based on her physical looks. Using sensual language, the speaker describes physical attributes and mannerisms that make up her beautiful and enigmatic aura. At the end of the stanza, the speaker repeats the refrain about being a phenomenal woman.

Stanza Four:

The speaker addresses the listener for the first time, summarizing her qualities and explaining how her previous recollections should help the listener understand her better. Now, at the present time, the listener should be able to comprehend the speaker's life and appreciate her qualities. The speaker explains that she does not bow her head in shame, as she is proud of who she is. She also does not draw attention to herself willingly—she is simply being herself, which naturally draws others to her. She tells the listener that he/she should be proud of her when she walks by, as she is a confident and self-respecting woman. The speaker details additional qualities about herself, describing her joyous walk, the natural beauty of her physical attributes, and the world's need for a woman like her. All of these things have happened in her life because she is a phenomenal woman and is proud of it, marching to the beat of her own drum.

Analysis

In the first stanza, the speaker does not appear to address anyone in particular. Based on the poem's use of the first person, the reader may assume that the speaker is Maya Angelou,

describing her personal experiences. While the poem as a whole does not follow a set rhyme scheme, Angelou uses several rhymes in this particular stanza to give the poem a rhythmic feel from the outset. The speaker indicates that the other women who look at her curiously are specifically “pretty women.” Immediately, the reader is led to understand that the speaker does not consider herself part of this category. As she describes in the stanza’s second line, she does not fit the typical definition of beauty as embodied by fashion models. When the speaker tries to explain the secret to her beauty, the women believe she is telling “lies.” The use of such a strong term suggests that they are not only in disbelief but jealous as well—they accuse the speaker of being a dishonest woman because they envy her.

Despite the women’s pettiness, the speaker has a triumphant spirit. She describes her features and gestures in precise detail, using words that create an image of herself as larger than life. The “reach” of her arms, the “span” of her hips, and the “stride” of her step indicate graceful movement and the notion of taking up space in an uninhibited manner. The speaker is waltzing through life with a confident stride, and the “curl” of her lips suggests not just a facial feature but perhaps a proud smile as well.

At the stanza’s conclusion, the speaker cites the refrain that is later repeated at the end of all subsequent stanzas. The speaker uses a play on words with the word “phenomenal,” also creating a rhyme. The adverb “phenomenally” modifies the verb “to be,” as if being a woman is not just a passive status but an action that demands attention. She is not merely a woman; she actively embodies all that comes with womanhood—beauty, intelligence, grit—and does so in a phenomenal manner. With the words, “that’s me,” she sums up her confidence with a strong affirmation that she is indeed wonderful.

Interestingly, the word “phenomenal” may be interpreted in different ways. On one hand, it can be interpreted as exceptional and amazing. However, one might also read it as unbelievable—like a natural phenomenon that defies human expectations. The latter definition parallels the attitude of the women described in the stanza—they do not believe the speaker just as they might doubt any phenomenon deemed mysterious or unlikely to occur. Nevertheless, the speaker delights in her power and rejects other women’s cynicism. "Phenomenal" also means, in the most basic sense, something that is visible or perceptible; so the speaker's amazingness is also something that people can't help but see, no matter how unbelievable or surprising it may seem.

In the second stanza, the tone of the speaker shifts from simply confident to both confident and seductive. She describes her attitude as “cool” when she enters a room. She is not intimidated in the least by men, as she is aware of her power over them. With the words, “and to a man,” she sets up a comparison and contrast with the women described in the first stanza. While she drives women to doubt and envy, she drives men to lust. When men see her, those who are sitting stand up. This suggests that the men are actually intimidated by her, and not vice versa. They are eager to be at her service and say all the right things to capture her attention. Angelou also uses hyperbole to exaggerate her effect on men, claiming that some actually fall down to their knees in her presence. These men are less collected than those who stand up, as they simply fall for her so deeply that they surrender to her on their knees.

The speaker then illustrates through figurative language how these men circle her like bees, as if she is sweet like honey. They are eager to be near her and pursue her. In this stanza, the speaker uses nouns that evoke energy and light to describe her allure. This time, she explains that the “fire” in her eyes and the “flash” of her teeth cast a spell on men. The fire may refer to sexual energy or simply confidence—her eyes essentially hypnotize the men around her. The flash indicates light, suggesting shiny white teeth that glisten when she smiles. The “swing” evokes the feeling of dance, as if her hips are rotating in both a beautiful and suggestive manner. The “joy” in her feet likewise indicates the pride and contentment she feels in being the woman she is. Once again, she reaffirms this belief at the conclusion of the stanza when she repeats that she is a phenomenal woman. This repetition continues to give the poem a musical quality, as if the speaker is reciting a powerful ballad about the joys of being an incredible woman.

In stanza three, the speaker refers again to how other women respond to her by mentioning that “men themselves” have also wondered about her allure. These men fail to understand what makes her so appealing and are baffled by her powerful hold over them. The speaker’s statement that these men try often to “touch her inner mystery” may suggest many things. The word “touch” has a sexual connotation, as in a man trying to seduce a woman. These men are most likely ready to make love to her, and the speaker insinuates that they are unsuccessful in their attempts at seduction. She has power and control over her own body. However, her inner mystery also implies all the beautiful things that make up a human soul—hopes, dreams, and personality traits, to name a few. Viewed in this light, the idea of men trying to touch her inner mystery may be more innocent. They may be trying to understand what makes her who she is, but they fail to grasp or “touch” these truths. They “cannot

see"—are blind to—the beauty that lies within, as society has taught men to judge women superficially (hence the earlier mention of "fashion models"). Even when the speaker tries to show them her beauty—whether by letting them come closer physically or attempting to explain her passions and show her feelings—they fail to understand.

Nonetheless, the speaker is unfazed by these men's reactions and continues to show pride in herself. In this stanza, her attributes and gestures are more sexualized than in previous stanzas. The speaker describes the "arch of her back," creating an image of a sensual female. Her smile is like the sun, once again referring to light and the radiance of her beauty. Most explicitly, she mentions the movement of her breasts, describing them as they "ride" or move back and forth when she walks. Lastly, she refers to a personal style that is graceful, suggesting that she is not only sensual but almost holy with her bright and soft appearance. The mention of "grace" implies the opposite of sexuality, like purity. The speaker still emphasizes that she can indeed possess both holy and sensual qualities—combined, they make her a phenomenal woman just as women depicted in religion are deemed divine and sacred. Once again, the answer to all these mysteries is very simple: She is quite simply a phenomenal woman, and she knows how to be a woman phenomenally.

By addressing the listener directly in the fourth and final stanza, the speaker shifts the meaning of the poem slightly. She is not just singing her own praises and rejoicing in herself; rather, she has been telling this story about her life to a listener with the hope of getting this person to understand and respect her. The listener is not indicated, but one may surmise that the speaker—Angelou herself—is appealing to the whole world to recognize her dignity and role as a powerful and confident woman. She tells the listener that it should now be clear just why she does not bow her head—she is not ashamed of who she is. The phrase also conjures an image of African slaves who were often shamed or told to look down and be obedient. The speaker is rising above her ancestors' pains and holding her head up high.

The speaker also indicates her humility by stating that she does not try to win people's attention. She does not "shout" or make any commotion by raising her voice in order to make others notice her. Rather, all the characteristics she has described throughout the poem are either completely silent or subtle. A look, a smile, a swing of the hips—they are all powerful gestures demonstrated quietly. This is why the listener should be proud of the speaker—she is simply living life on her own terms without trying to bother or manipulate anyone. She states again that she believes her power stems from her subtle qualities. The "click" of her heels

suggests both femininity and a joyous walk, while the “bend” of her hair suggests the natural way in which her hair falls and makes her beautiful. The “palm” of her hand may refer simply to the natural color of her skin, or perhaps it suggests a gentle human touch such as holding one’s hand or making an offering. The last attribute is perhaps the most intriguing. The speaker declares a “need for my care,” suggesting that the rest of the world not only desires her but needs her as well. She is needed as a powerful and phenomenal woman, and this line ties in well with the previous line that mentions her palm. She has much to offer the world, and this is all because she is a truly phenomenal woman.

2.I AM NOT THAT WOMEN -- by KishwarNaheed

“I am not that woman” is a poem written by KishwarNaheed, an Indian born poet who migrated to Pakistan. This poem shows the stereotyping of women in a patriarchal society. The phrase ‘that woman’ in the title of the poem mocks at the general conception of women in a male- chauvinistic society.

The author opposes the control of men over women. She says that her reputation is not limited to selling socks and shoes i.e., as a half naked model on the poster. The woman too possesses an intellect and individuality which was not recognized by the men. The speaker tries to explain how the women are discriminated by the men. She complains that the man tries to conceal her identity in the walls of stone, while he wanders around free as the breeze. But she says that her voice cannot be smothered or stifled by stone walls.

The speaker highlights how the women have been crushed by the customs and traditions for generations. She says that light cannot be hidden in darkness. The Man takes flowers from her only to leave her thorns. However, Man is ignorant to the fact that chains cannot smother her fragrance.

The poet also refers to how a woman’s life is ruined with the dowry sytem. Due to this, she becomes a liability for her parents. The parents regard themselves as free after ridding themselves of the burden.

Her chastity is not regarded, her motherhood is not respected and her loyalty is not reciprocated. It is now high time for her to be flower-free: to fully blossom realizing

herself. The poet finally ends saying that the nation can be called free when the women are given liberty.

3.Originally by Carol Ann Duffy

b‘Originally’ by Carol Ann Duffy is a three stanza poem which is divided into sets of eight lines. The stanzas do not follow a specific rhyme scheme, nor do they contain one overpowering technique. Duffy makes use of a number of different ways of contrasting images in her reader’s minds.

Throughout the poem, Duffy has utilized alliteration. This is most obvious in the first stanza with the repetition of the ‘f’ sound. It can be seen in “fell,” “fields,” and “fathers,” all within the first few lines.

Additionally, the first stanza is told from a very personal perspective, as if the events are happening almost in real-time. On the other hand, the two following stanzas seem to come from a place of greater knowledge. As if the child from the first section has grown up and is looking back on her life during this time period.

It is also important to note the title of this piece, ‘Originally.’ This word only comes into its full relevance in the final lines as the speaker contemplates what it means to originate from somewhere. She is clearly torn between the world she has made herself a part of, and the place she physically came from. You can read the full poem here.

Summary of Originally

‘Originally’ by Carol Ann Duffy describes a child’s transformation after emigrating to a new country.

The poem begins with the speaker describing a car ride that took her and her family from their home country to a new one. They were all jammed together and thinking the same thoughts, that they wanted to go home. That was not possible though as the placed they loved was many miles in the past and “vacant.” It was home no longer.

In the second stanza the speaker has started to become a part of her new settings but is still frightened by the voices and actions of the people around her. She does not know how to contend with the boys who seem so grown up, or with her parent's anxieties.

In the final stanza she describes what it was like to lose her original accent and begin to sound like the other students. She also speaks on all the things she knows she has lost since coming to this new country and the questions she still has about her identity.

Analysis of Originally

Stanza One

In the first stanza the speaker begins by letting the reader know that she is traveling with a group of people.These events are not happening in the present moment, they are being recalled at a later time. All the same, this first stanza seems to be more confined to the moments of the present than do the following two sections.

The speaker describes the family traveling together as being within "a red room." While this phrase seems strange and out of context, but as one continues through this section it becomes clear that it is in reference to the car they are driving. It has come to be much more than a car, they have spent so much time in it, with all of their possessions, it is as if they live there.

The mother and father are struggling with this journey just as much as the children are. He is driving, and she is "singing [his name] to the turn of the wheels. The mother is constantly telling him what to do and where to go. On top of this, the speaker's "brothers" are crying, one of them is truly "bawling."

She sees them all as feeling the same way. Their thoughts are cast back to the place they came from, "Home, / Home." It is many miles away by now, back in a city they used to love, on a street and in a house that is now "vacant." It seems as if the family is moving unwillingly, or at least that the kids are.

The speaker is quite young at this time and is not crying like her brothers, but contemplating what is happening while staring at a stuffed animal toy which has lost its eyes. She holds its hand for comfort.

Stanza Two

In the second stanza the speaker is clearly much older. She is looking back on the times of her childhood in which she felt like an emigrant. She sees childhood as being one big constant emigration in which one is forced from one situation to another and is made to learn and relearn the culture and customs.

Some of these moments of emigration are “slow” and leave one feeling “resigned.” Others are “sudden” and provide no time for preparation. No matter what type of emigration it is, it always leaves one with the wrong accent and without an understanding of the “familiar.” Nothing is comforting and everything is seems to be out-of-place. It is easy for one, especially a child, to get lost, physically and mentally.

When growing up in different places a child would also be comforted with “big boys / eating worms,” something quite intimidating, and the sounds of shouted words that are not understood.

The speaker continues on to state that in her situation, her parents were always anxious and that their anxiety was transferred to her. She never stopped wanting to go back to “our own country.”

Stanza Three

In the final section of the poem the speaker is explaining what it means to become accustomed to a new home and culture. Eventually one forgets the past and all the other places they have called home. A transformation takes place.

This process is something the speaker is easily able to recall. She remembers forcing herself to speak in a new accent and how it felt like her “tongue [was] / shedding its skin like a snake.” She finally heard her own voice become identical to those in her classroom.

Now she has grown up and long since moved past the childish fears of a new place. There is still something out-of-place in her identity though. She knows how much she has lost from her past and when she is asked, “Where do you come from?” She doesn’t know how to answer.

Should she lay claim to her birth place? Or maintain her new identity to which she has become so accustomed?

4.**Judith Wright's Women to man**

Introduction

The poem Woman to Man written by Judith Wright describes the feelings of a woman from the time of sexual encounter with her husband until the time of labour. She expresses her feelings as a wife as well as the holder of her future offspring in her belly.

Stanza 1

> The eyeless labourer in the night,
> the selfless, shapeless seed I hold
> builds for its resurrection day---
> silent and swift and deep from sight
> foresees the unimagined light.

In the first stanza, the poet says that in the night she had a sexual encounter with her husband that was meant for pleasure resulted in some consequences as well.

This sexual encounter between the couple led to the creation of something in her body that has no shape and identity. She cannot see it, however, its growth is deep and fast as well which she, as the holder, can predict it. Thus it holds possibility.

Stanza 2

There is no child with a child's face;
this has no name to name it by;
yet you and I have known it well.
This is our hunter and our chase,
the third who lay in our embrace.

In the second stanza, the seed that she held after the sexual encounter has started attaining shape. Wright says that the creature is still shapeless and also has no shape. Still, she and her husband know well that they have created it and it will develop into a human.

The poet considers the creature both as their hunter as well as their chase. It is a hunter because it accompanied the sexual encounter between the couple which was meant for joy and pleasure. On the other hand, it is their chase as well because humans perform sex for it. Poet says that it will become the third one in the family.

Stanza 3

This is the strength that your arm knows,
the arc of flesh that is my breast,
the precise crystals of our eyes.
This is the blood's wild tree that grows
the intricate and the folded rose.

In the third stanza, the poet explains the stage of its further development in her belly. According to Wright, the infant will possess in it the energy and strength of the man (its father) as well as the flesh of woman (its mother) that it will gain in this stage.

Thus it has become the star of its parents. Like a tree, it will also grow into a human and like the unfolding of rose flower it will develop the ways, manners, nature and all other traits of its parents.

Stanza 4

This is the maker and the made;
this is the question and reply
the blind head butting at the dark,
the blaze of light along the blade.
Oh hold me, for I am afraid.

In the fourth stanza, Wright describes the final stage of the infant in her belly. According to her, the infant that she made (created) along with her husband will be another maker (like them) in the future.

It is both a creature that raises the question in her mind as well as the answer to her questions. It is an enlightened brain (without eyes) that is searching for the rays of light as it is at about to come into the world (along with the blade).

A blade is a tool that cuts something. Here the dawn, which has very scarce sun rays can is the blade that cuts day and night. Thus the child is at this stage (between prenatal which is dark and natal stage which is shining.

It’s coming out into the world makes the poet afraid. I think it is the labour pain that frightens her. Thus the poem starts in the dead of night (when they have sexual encounter) and ends in the dawn.

UNIT 2

1.Jean Rhys The day they burned the books

About the Author

Jean Rhys Facts

Jean Rhys (1890-1979) is best known for her novel, Wide Sargasso Sea, which was published in 1966 when she was 76. Rhys's life was profoundly marked by a sense of exile, loss, and alienation-dominant themes in her novels and short stories. Despite critical acclaim at the end of her life, Rhys died in 1979 still doubting the merit of her work.

Rhys was born Ella Gwendolen Rhys (sometimes spelled Rees) Williams on August 24, 1890 in Roseau, on the Caribbean island of Dominica. Her father, Rhys Williams, was a Welshman who had been trained in London as a doctor and emigrated to the colonies. Her mother, Minna Lockhart, was a third-generation Dominican Creole. According to her biographer, Carole Angier, Rhys associated her mother with conformity and the "civilizing" mission of the English in the colonies at the end of the Victorian period. Her mother, Rhys claimed, was cold, disapproving, and distant. In one of the notebooks she kept during her life, Rhys recorded a time when her mother, after an attempt to discipline her daughter, gave her "a long, sad look," and said, "'I've done my best, it's no use. You'll never learn to be like other people.'" Rhys writes, "There you are, there it was. I had always suspected it, but now I knew. That went straight as an arrow to the heart, straight as the truth. I saw the long road of isolation and loneliness stretching in front of me as far as the eye could see, and further. I collapsed and cried as heartbrokenly as my worst enemy could wish."

Early Literary Career

In 1923, Lenglet was finally arrested and extradited. Rhys, alone and desperate, turned for support to the writer Ford Madox Ford, who had published some of her short stories in the Transatlantic Review. Rhys became involved in a complicated and, by her own account,

abusive relationship with Ford and his mistress, Stella Bowen. She wrote about this relationship in her first novel, Quartet, published in 1929. When the affair ended, she returned for a short time to her husband and daughter, who were now in Amsterdam, but Lenglet's suspicions about her relationship with Ford and Bowen brought the marriage to an end. When Lenglet and Rhys separated, Rhys left Maryvonne in her father's care. Though her affair with Ford Madox Ford helped to end her marriage, and brought her much unhappiness and pain, the encounter nonetheless allowed Rhys entry into the contemporary literary world. Her career as a writer was finally launched.

During the next ten years, Rhys would write three more novels, After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie, (1930); Voyage in the Dark, (1935); and Good Morning Midnight, (1939). In 1992, Ann Hulbert, a reviewer for the New Republic, described Rhys's early work: "The style of her novels is pristinely pared down in describing depravity and excess, perfectly balanced in evoking instability; she is a master of dialogue between characters for whom communication is mostly a lost cause." After the publication of Quartet, Rhys met Leslie Tilden Smith, a literary agent who helped her find publishers for her novels. They married in 1934, after living together for five years. During the time she wrote most of her early novels, Rhys depended on Smith to type her manuscripts, subsidize trips to Paris, and manage her writing life. The process of writing for Rhys was always a difficult one; over the course of these years she became severely depressed.

With the start of World War II in 1939, Smith was gone much of the time. The short stories Rhys produced during this period, none of which were published until later in her life, are marked by violence and paranoia. In 1945, Smith died suddenly, leaving Rhys completely alone and virtually helpless. Two years later, she married Smith's cousin and estate executor, a soliciter named Max Hamer. Like Rhys's first husband, he became involved in illegal financial dealings. By this time, Rhys had virtually disappeared from public view; her novels went out of print and she was presumed dead. By 1949, Rhys, as she put it, "cracked" and assaulted a neighbor who was rude to her. She spent a week on the hospital ward of Holloway prison before being released on probation. Shortly after this, Hamer was arrested for stealing checks. While he served his prison term, Rhys lived in poverty and continued to drink.

Summary:

Jean Rhys' "The Day They Burned the Books" is centered on the conflict of cultural identity. The narrator and her friend Eddie are both English descending children growing up in the

Caribbean. The narrator is a full blown white English girl while Eddie has an English father and colored mother. Eddie's father is obsessed with his English heritage and expects Eddie to be too. Both children are unsure of their true cultural identity.

When people who had never seen England before talked about it around Eddie, he remained silent. This gave the narrator doubts about 'home.' Eddie claims that he does not like strawberries or daffodils, which are English, even though his father constantly talks about them. The narrator states that her relations with the few 'real' English boys and girls she had met were awkward. She says that if she called herself English, she was told that she is not English, but a horrid colonial. Both children were also ridiculed by the black children.

Eddie's father built a room onto their house to store his books from England. Eddie's mother hated this room. When Eddie's father died, Eddie claimed the room and books as his own. One day, Eddie's mother and their housekeeper Mildred went into the room and started pulling books off the shelves and piling them into two heaps. Eddie's mother planned to burn one of the piles of books. Eddie and the narrator tried to prevent the books from being burned by both of them grabbing and saving one.

Both children struggle with their cultural identity because they have English roots, but are growing up in the Caribbean. Eddie does not want to be English like his father, but when his father dies, he is angry at his mother for burning his father's English books. Those books are Eddie's closest tie to being English and he cherishes them. His father tries to force an English identity upon him while his mother tries to take his English identity away.

Jean Rhys had similar life experiences as the narrator and Eddie. She was raised in Dominica, but had a Welsh father and Creole mother. She felt out of place in Dominica, but estranged from her European roots. Since Rhys can relate to the characters in her story, this enabled her to become an influential women's writer of the twentieth century.

2.**Virginia woolf's Shakespeare's Sister**

Virginia Woolf, giving a lecture on women and fiction, tells her audience she is not sure if the topic should be what women are like; the fiction women write; the fiction written about women; or a combination of the three. Instead, she has come up with "one minor point--a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." She says she will use a fictional narrator whom she calls Mary Beton as her alter ego to relate how her thoughts on the lecture mingled with her daily life.

A week ago, the narrator crosses a lawn at the fictional Oxbridge university, tries to enter the library, and passes by the chapel. She is intercepted at each station and reminded that women are not allowed to do such things without accompanying men. She goes to lunch, where the excellent food and relaxing atmosphere make for good conversation. Back at Fernham, the women's college where she is staying as a guest, she has a mediocre dinner. She later talks with a friend of hers, Mary Seton, about how men's colleges were funded by kings and independently wealthy men, and how funds were raised with difficulty for the women's college. She and Seton denounce their mothers, and their sex, for being so impoverished and leaving their daughters so little. Had they been independently wealthy, perhaps they could have founded fellowships and secured similar luxuries for women. However, the narrator realizes the obstacles they faced: entrepreneurship is at odds with child-rearing, and only for the last 48 years have women even been allowed to keep money they earned. The narrator thinks about the effects of wealth and poverty on the mind, about the prosperity of males and the poverty of females, and about the effects of tradition or lack of tradition on the writer.

Searching for answers, the narrator explores the British Museum in London. She finds there are countless books written about women by men, while there are hardly any books by women on men. She selects a dozen books to try and come up with an answer for why women are poor. Instead, she locates a multitude of other topics and a contradictory array of men's opinions on women. One male professor who writes about the inferiority of women angers her, and it occurs to her that she has become angry because the professor has written angrily. Had he written "dispassionately," she would have paid more attention to his argument, and not to him. After her anger dissipates, she wonders why men are so angry if England is a patriarchal society in which they have all the power and money. Perhaps holding

power produces anger out of fear that others will take one's power. She posits that when men pronounce the inferiority of women, they are really claiming their own superiority. The narrator believes self-confidence, a requirement to get through life, is often attained by considering other people inferior in relation to oneself. Throughout history, women have served as models of inferiority who enlarge the superiority of men.

The narrator is grateful for the inheritance left her by her aunt. Prior to that she had gotten by on loathsome, slavish odd jobs available to women before 1918. Now, she reasons that since nothing can take away her money and security, she need not hate or enslave herself to any man. She now feels free to "think of things in themselves"‹she can judge art, for instance, with greater objectivity.

The narrator investigates women in Elizabethan England, puzzled why there were no women writers in that fertile literary period. She believes there is a deep connection between living conditions and creative works. She reads a history book, learns that women had few rights in the era, and finds no material about middle-class women. She imagines what would have happened had Shakespeare had an equally gifted sister named Judith. She outlines the possible course of Shakespeare's life: grammar school, marriage, and work at a theater in London. His sister, however, was not able to attend school and her family discouraged her from independent study. She was married against her will as a teenager and ran away to London. The men at a theater denied her the chance to work and learn the craft. Impregnated by a theatrical man, she committed suicide.

The narrator believes that no women of the time would have had such genius, "For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people." Nevertheless, some kind of genius must have existed among women then, as it exists among the working class, although it never translated to paper. The narrator argues that the difficulties of writing--especially the indifference of the world to one's art--are compounded for women, who are actively disdained by the male establishment. She says the mind of the artist must be "incandescent" like Shakespeare's, without any obstacles. She argues that the reason we know so little about Shakespeare's mind is because his work filters out his personal "grudges and spites and antipathies." His absence of personal protest makes his work "free and unimpeded."

The narrator reviews the poetry of several Elizabethan aristocratic ladies, and finds that anger toward men and insecurity mar their writing and prevent genius from shining through. The

writer AphraBehn marks a turning point: a middle-class woman whose husband's death forced her to earn her own living, Behn's triumph over circumstances surpasses even her excellent writing. Behn is the first female writer to have "freedom of the mind." Countless 18th-century middle-class female writers and beyond owe a great debt to Behn's breakthrough. The narrator wonders why the four famous and divergent 19th-century female novelists‹George Eliot, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, and Jane Austen--all wrote novels; as middle-class women, they would have had less privacy and a greater inclination toward writing poetry or plays, which require less concentration. However, the 19th-century middle-class woman was trained in the art of social observation, and the novel was a natural fit for her talents.

The narrator argues that traditionally masculine values and topics in novels‹such as war‹are valued more than feminine ones, such as drawing-room character studies. Female writers, then, were often forced to adjust their writing to meet the inevitable criticism that their work was insubstantial. Even if they did so without anger, they deviated from their original visions and their books suffered. The early 19th-century female novelist also had no real tradition from which to work; they lacked even a prose style fit for a woman. The narrator argues that the novel was the chosen form for these women since it was a relatively new and pliable medium.

The narrator takes down a recent debut novel called Life's Adventure by Mary Carmichael. Viewing Carmichael as a descendant of the female writers she has commented on, the narrator dissects her book. She finds the prose style uneven, perhaps as a rebellion against the "flowery" reputation of women's writing. She reads on and finds the simple sentence "'Chloe liked Olivia.'" She believes the idea of friendship between two women is groundbreaking in literature, as women have historically been viewed in literature only in relation to men. By the 19th century, women grew more complex in novels, but the narrator still believes that each gender is limited in its knowledge of the opposite sex. The narrator recognizes that for whatever mental greatness women have, they have not yet made much of a mark in the world compared to men. Still, she believes that the great men in history often depended on women for providing them with "some stimulus, some renewal of creative power" that other men could not. She argues that the creativity of men and women is different, and that their writing should reflect their differences. The narrator believes Carmichael has much work to do in recording the lives of women, and Carmichael will have to write without anger against men. Moreover, since every one has a blind spot about themselves, only women can fill out the

portrait of men in literature. However, the narrator feels Carmichael is "no more than a clever girl," even though she bears no traces of anger or fear. In a hundred years, the narrator believes, and with money and a room of her own, Carmichael will be a better writer.

The pleasing sight of a man and woman getting into a taxi provokes an idea for the narrator: the mind contains both a male and female part, and for "complete satisfaction and happiness," the two must live in harmony. This fusion, she believes, is what poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge described when he said a great mind is "androgynous": "the androgynous mindŠtransmits emotion without impedimentŠit is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided." Shakespeare is a fine model of this androgynous mind, though it is harder to find current examples in this "stridently sex-conscious" age. The narrator blames both sexes for bringing about this self-consciousness of gender.

Woolf takes over the speaking voice and responds to two anticipated criticisms against the narrator. First, she says she purposely did not express an opinion on the relative merits of the two genders--especially as writers--since she does not believe such a judgment is possible or desirable. Second, her audience may believe the narrator laid too much emphasis on material things, and that the mind should be able to overcome poverty and lack of privacy. She cites a professor's argument that of the top poets of the last century, almost all were well-educated and rich. Without material things, she repeats, one cannot have intellectual freedom, and without intellectual freedom, one cannot write great poetry. Women, who have been poor since the beginning of time, have understandably not yet written great poetry. She also responds to the question of why she insists women's writing is important. As an avid reader, the overly masculine writing in all genres has disappointed her lately. She encourages her audience to be themselves and "Think of things in themselves." She says that Judith Shakespeare still lives within all women, and that if women are given money and privacy in the next century, she will be reborn.

Unit 3

AN IDEAL FAMILY

-KATHERINE MANSFIELD.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD (1888- 1923)

She is one of the most talented writers of the modern short story in English; Katherine Mansfield was born in new Zealand. Her first volume of sketches was In a German pension (1911).Mansfield is regarded as one of the pioneers of the avant-garde movement in the short story writing. Her themes varied from the difficulties and ambivalences of families and sexuality, to fragility and vulnerability of relationship, to include the complexities and insensitivities of the rising middle classes, the social consequences of war, and the attempt to extract beauty and vitality from mundane life experiences.

SUMMARY

The story demonstrates the manner in which patriarchal values betray men into accepting gender roles that enslave them to a marginalized position of making money. The story presents the life of Mr.Neave who realizes too late in life that he is a victim of the gender nature of identity. The public sphere of the work place and the domestic sphere of the home create specific gender roles for men that define and control their identity. The tragedy of Mr. Neave is that he is a victim of the patriarchal structure of family, which marginalizes him and reduces his contributions to the financial level. He is not recognized as a figure of authority by the women and depended son in the family. This reversal of the sexual politics leads to his sense of alienation.

Patriarchy, prescribe certain social and gender roles for men. It rein forces these through the institutions of family, marriage and work. The adoption of the mask is necessary for the men to be respected and feared. The can be read as the tragedy of Mr. Neave who adopts a strong and masculine role in the contexts of family, which ironically leads his marginalization. His alienation occurs from identification with the persona of the patriarch. The irony in the story is that is internalization of his masculinity his alienated him from his wife and children, instead of making him powerful.

The physical settings of the story moves between Mr.Neave's of his which he after work and his seaside mansion. Both places consider spaces of male authority, where Mr.Neave Consider powerful. The narrative is also said in the psyche of Mr.Neave as we see him move

from the reality to a dream life phantasty setting. The psychological setting is the site office recognition of irrelevance. The other important setting for the story is the patriarchal institution of marriage and family. Marriage constructs roles for its functionaries- wife, husband, children, and parents – and conditions individuals to play them out and any deviation from this role play leads to frustration and unhappiness. The story exposes the construction and deconstruction of expectations that marriage with patriarchy fosters.

CHARACTER

MR. NEAVE

He is the protagonist of the story who gains knowledge not only of the state of alienation from the self in which he lives , but also of the essential in authenticity of the existence in which he helps to support his family.

The focus of the narrative is the fragmented self of Mr. Neave, a successful businessman and a figure of authority. The author presents him as a victim of his gender, age, social values and family. As a husband and father, he is to be considered the head of the family. Through the story, he is made aware of his alienation and estrangement. He lives in a world between dream and reality. His extended reveries are symbolic of his search for acceptance from his family and an identity for himself. The dreams are also an articulation of his fear of loss of power and identity.

CHARLOTTE AND THE GIRLS

Mr. Neave's wife, charlotte, represents the internalization of feminine roles of wife and mother. She has become habituated to the domestic identity imposed upon her, where her husband and children are her priority. She and her children are economically dependent on Mr. Neave and submit to his authority.

She represent an aspect of womanhood that patriarchy fears- motherhood. Charlotte supports her son taking over the business from Mr. Neave. She also calls for him to retire or take up hobbies, thus reducing his powers within the domestic sphere. She also interacts more with her daughters, ignoring Mr. Neave's as he slips into his dreams. For Mr. Neave, charlotte represents the loss of his authority and the agent of the destabilizing of the power of patriarchy.

Mr. Neave's daughters are primarily portrayed as submissive; because they are not economically independent and therefore do not overtly challenge their father's authority.

However, they subvert his power by remaining unmarried and spending his money. As Mr.Neave is aware.

HAROLD

The only other male character in the story, Harold is marked by his physical absence from the narrative. He is only referred to by other characters, especially Mr. Neave, who detests his indifference to the business. Harold represents the young patriarch who expresses a sense of entitlement because of his gender identity.

Harold was too handsome, too handsome by far; that had been the trouble all along. No man had a right to such eyes, such lashes, and such lips; it was uncanny. As for his mother, his sisters, and the servants, it was not too much to say they made a young god of him; they worshipped Harold, they forgave him everything; and he had needed some forgiving ever since the time when he was thirteen and he had stolen his mother's purse, taken the money, and hidden the purse in the cook's bedroom.

The description of Harold recalls Milton's claim that god created man in his own image. His gender and status offer Harold the love and subjection of all women. He for god and she for god in him as Milton suggests in paradise lost. The incident of the stolen purse is an instance of the privilege that is afforded to men under patriarchy. As the son of a rich man, Harold believes that he is entitled to money, power and privilege. The framing of the cook for the theft is an example of the patriarchal belief that he can blame others for his crimes.

SYMBOLISM

Buildings

In the beginning of the story, we see Mr.Neave walking back home from his office. The walk symbolizes the movement towards a state of recognition achieved by the father of the family , in which he comes to see that his life has been wasted, squandered in supporting his family in an expensive and superficial mode of existence. The walk, followed by a brief nap before dinner, represents a moment of realization, in which the protagonist understands that he has become a false self, a persona, existing only in his role of businessman and family provider.

The twin's buildings of the office and house symbolize the social structures that define Mr. Neave's identity. '' Three broad steps'', swing doors and vestibule invoke the opulent office whose portals have overwhelmed the protagonist and claimed the better part of his life. In the

presentation of the house, the emphasis is upon an imposing front, with resulting lack of privacy and depth.

Women's voices and control of speech

The second symbolic representation of Mr.Neave's marginalization is in his recognition of the increased voice of the women in the family .For instance, he remarks that when she was a little girl, she had spoken softly and had even stuttered, but now ''whatever she said- even if it was only 'Jam, please, father'', her voice rang out as though she were on the stage''. This new harsh voice suggests the victory of the woman characters in gaining voice and the consequent domination of the masculine voice of the father. Mr. Neave's interactions with the woman in the family are marked by his stuttering and the disruptions of his words by his daughters. They symbolize the death of the patriarchal control over the speech of women.

DREAMS AND REALITY OF WALKING

The story begins with a home that leads to recognition of the protagonist's alienation; the story presents the breaking down of his masculine self through a series of dream sequences. The first of which is when Mr. Neave dozes in an armchair, while his wife and daughters chatter and later as he rests for a moment in the dressing room before dinner. The dreams are an extension of his psychological turmoil and are presented as a walking phantasty that grows increasingly dream like until the sequence becomes part of a dream proper. As Mr. Neave recognizes the figure in the dream as himself, he comes to the realization that he has wasted his life working at office and that he has bid goodbye to the reality of a loving family, represented in the figure of the wife who embraces him in the dream. The opening of his dressing- room door distrups the presentation of this significant memory. The process of self-awareness is complete when he realizes that "there had been some terrible mistake.

IRONY IN THE TITLE

THE TITLE "An ideal family" is ironic. The family structure under patriarchy has the father as the head who symbolizes authority and power over the women and children. The irony is that in the story ,the patriarchal family structures are reversed, with Mr.Neave pushed to the margins, neglected and forgotten by his wife and children.

The ideal in the title refers to the social ideals by which Mr.Neave tries to run his family. However, through the course of the story, he understands that the social values of money,

business and popularity are unreal. Therefore the Image of the ideal family is fragmented and challenged and ultimately proved false.

2.**Nadine Gardiner : A Correspondence course**

Context :

The story belongs to the anthology something out. There which contains narratives based on the lives of affluent White South Africans. The author presented satarical and ironic observations on the social presentation of these rich people. In this story , the focus of satire is the liberal ideology advocated by the protagonist Pat Haberman . The story follows the experience of Pat as her comfortable belief system is shattered when her daughter embraces the liberal cause of an escaped convict named Roland Carter.

The story can be read as a satire of liberal feminism in the context of contemporary politics. Pat Haberman ' s liberal values are the belief that a justice society allows individuals to exercise their freedom and to fulfil their rights. However in this context of the story. Pat's liberal feminism is challenged by her daughter's assertion of autonomy.

Settings :

The story is set in an un- named city in contemporary South Africa. The African setting is not directly relevant to this story, as the central action is psychological. In many stories by Gordimer, the reality of African politics is important to the experience of the characters. As Harold Bloom points out " her South African characters, exist in the shadow of a gun. They are menaced by repressive laws, unpredictable violence and cruel historical process". However in this story. The political reality forms a background to the individual story. The small domestic story of treachery is played out on a landscape of psychological violence.

Characters :

The central feature of the story is the personal betrayal of Pat by her daughter Harriet. They are the two main characters. Who serve to explore the fears and uncertainties of temporary South Africa. The two women also represents the twin aspect of the liberal feminism- valorising individual right or the common good.

Pat :

The story is in reality the education of middle aged , liberal – minded divorces Pat Haberman. Pat has rejected her husband's money- grubbing country-club life for independence with her daughter Harriet, now a graduate student. The divorce is an instance of asserting her liberal self the belief in equal opportunities for all. Pat considers, her life with the Haberman, a conservative, capitalist figure as a " Criminal record " , equating " his dinners drunken golf club dances and Gymkhanas " as the selfish pursuit of pleasure and self- fulfilment. In the very first scene of her introduction, we witness Pat's adoption of liberal values . As a mother , she also tries to develop the same ideals in her daughter.

Harriet has been brought up to realise that her life of choices and decent comfort is not shared by the people in whose blackness it is embedded..... And since she has been adult she has head her place. Even if silent in the ritualistic discussion of what can be done about this by people who have no aptitude for politics but who won't like Haberman. Pat Haberman after her bitter marriage has constructed a life whose existence is shaped by moral standards that are liberal. She encourages her daughter to understand that the life of white privilege – with a right to education and life – is guaranteed to her by the colour of her skin. He whiteness ensures that she is secure from the conflicts of race and liberty that is the reality for Africans in South Africa. Both Pat and Harriet are insured from the radical political conflicts of Africa some where " out there" . This illusion of security is challenged when Harriet gets involved with an escaped political prisoner .

The initial correspondence between Harriet and Roland are encouraged and supported by Pat . Her rhetorical question " you're going to write to him ? How could you refuse ? " illustrates that pat sees the exercise an example of her liberal ideal of a just and compassionate society where individual freedom to write letters flourishes . She proudly speaks about the letters at parties, holding up Roland Carter as an emblem of the liberal cause. Her daughter's correspondence serves to boost her identity and sense of superiority.

Sometimes she added was that more people who talked liberalism didn't make the effort to write to political prisoners, show them they still were regarded as some part of the community.

The carefully censored letters are Pat's vicarious embrace of the liberal ideology. Roland Carter's jail break is initially a cause for celebration as the symbol of assertion of individual freedom. More than Harriet , it is pat who follows the news avidly to catch all the details of the escaped convict . She also imagines the various ways

in which Roland evaded capture and the possible seneries of his escape to safety across the border.

However within a few months of the jail break and with no new information on his re- capture, Pat forgets about Roland and returns to her life of " white suburban amnesia". The term is the author 's indictment of the liberalism of white people like Pat who embrace a cause as it is either fashionable or advantageous to her . This is in contrast to every day struggles of African against prejudices of race , class and gender that cannot be forgotten.

Roland 's jail break though initially celebrated slowly transforms into fear . He represents the radical political conflicts that are part of Black Africa " out there" and have no place in the safe neighbour hood of White Africa. His escape shatters the illusion of safety that Pat had constructed around her liberal ideology . As long as he remained safely behind the walls of the prison, Pat is comfortable embracing values of individual liberty and rights . However his escape brings the possibility of the invasion of her constructed her liberal ideology. The Big bad wolf of truth could at any time destroy this construction.

When Pat discovers a bundle of clothes that Harriet has left out for the escaped prisoner . She becomes aware of the difference between her and her daughter' s liberalism. She begins to understand her daughter 's deeper commitment to the cause. When the man actually appears on the doorstep , she is overcome by terror. She sees Harriet 's action as a betrayal of her trust . Pat's fear for herself and her daughter makes her aware of the constructed nature of her home , which she herself had opened up by professing liberal values, Pat's values collapse she locked that door, wanted to beat upon it, whimper ... The walls that closed her in were observing her. She tried not to hear the voices that came through them. – even the subdued laugh .... she filled a tooth glass at the wash basin, and a prisoner tending his one sprig of green , gave water to the pot of African violets for what she had done to her darling girl , done for .

The last lines of the story see her home violated by the entry of someone from " out there" . However his entry has been facilitated more by Pat's profession of liberal values than Harriet 's inviting Roland home expose the hollowness of Pat's liberalism and she becomes a victim or prisoner of her own ideals.

Harriet :

The story presents the pressures of living in South Africa through the close mother – daughter relationship of Pat and Harriet. A mother's protective instinct for her child is central to this story of conflicting loyalties. Harriet is a Pat's daughter and grows up adopting the liberal ideologies of her mother. She was five when her parents divorced and therefore was never corrupted by the capitalist life style of her father. Her liberalism goes beyond the words of her mother.

".....by the time of Harriet was twenty .she had her degree and was working in a literacy programme for blacks , sponsored by a liberal foundation.... She wears sandals thronged between the toes , German print wraparound skirt decorated with braid by Xhosa Women in a Soweto . Self- help project, and last year cut her shawl of pale brown hair into a permanent Afro".

The lines prove that Harriet embraces the liberal cause more deeply than the mother . She is more personally involved in the program for the natives and adopts their fashion in dress and hairstyle. She is presented as more comitted to the ideals of liberalism than her mother. It is to her that Roland writes and she who begins the correspond with him . Her correspondence is a natural extension of her beliefs in the rights of individual freedom. Harriet's work in the liberal programme has also made her aware of the advantages of her white privilege that the Blacks lack.

In the story, Harriet is initially seen as an extension of Pat and her ideals . Except for a few passages in the narrator's voice, we are presented with Harriet 's thought as perceived by Pat. From her mother's consent and approbation from the beginning . When she first receives a letter from Roland, she is not aware of who he is and only her mother's insistence makes her begin the correspondence. However , once she becomes less communicative with her mother. This is obvious in the section she reads Roland 's letters, she is not privy to Harriet replies . Pat assumes that there could not " be anything particularly personal in them" . She dismisses the concerns and fear of others.

There was no doubt all through she wasn't going to bring it up with Harriet , the likelihood that one's name would go into some file . Certainly there was a record of everyone who associated in any way with a political prisoner. Even if one had never so much as met him. The reader is led to believe along with pat that nothing sinister exists in the correspondence. The authors delibrate focus on Pats reactions to the jail break makes

us overlook Harriet ‘s non- reaction to the same . We do not realise that she does not realise that she does not express either surprise or fear on heaving the news . Therefore it comes as a shock when Pat and we discover the clothing and shoes left by Harriet for Roland. Since her mother believes her to be an innocent girl, we are stunned by the revalation of her involvement with Ronald.. Harriet becomes a silent and calm contrast to the vociferous liberalism of Pat she also becomes the authors means to expose the emptiness of her mother's ideals.

Ronald carter :

As English journalist serving nine years in a maximum security jail in pretoria for political offences, Roland Carter is the catalyst for the education of Pat . He responds to an article by Harriet in an academic magazine and thus begins the course of correspondence of the tittle. Roland is a man of mystery , whatever we know of him is filtered through the perspective of Pat . When we first hear of him , he is serving his sentences for an un-named political crime.

He got twelve years . The journalist from east London. Furthering The aims of the African national congress - something like that . Struggled false identity papers for exiles or was one of the pamphlets bomb people ? .... was he the one who said in court he had no regrets? That's him.

Pat is aware of him through her reading of the papers and following his case on the media . She is not aware of his ideologies. He represents the liberal ideals embraced by white people that Pat is in awe of just as she is proud of her daughter’s correspondence. She is proud to be associated with an in acrcerated liberal. It is towards the end of the story that the readers are made aware of the story that the readers are made aware of the symbolism of his character. He along with Harriet represents the novel dilemma that destroys the white privilege of people like Pat. He is the contigency that was not visible in Pat's liberal construction of her reality . His violations of Pat's home was assisted by her own profession of liberal values.

Themes :

The main theme of the story is the constructed nature of reality as represented by the fragile liberalism . Of Pat Haberman . Throughout the constructed nature of her world . Her liberal values are a means to overlook the reality of the Blacks in south Africa

and escape the duty that comes with adopting a mark of liberalism . The arrival of Roland from the world of reality exposes the hollow Ness of her ideals and the fragile construct of her world of safety and security.

The story is the experience of blind white liberals placed in a situations of moral difficulty. Pat's reaction is an incident of the insularity of the white south Africans who presented to be socially normally conscious yet fail when confronted with the reality of African politics and racism.

The story also represents the coming together of the private and public world. The private world is the one of white privilege enjoyed by Pat and Harriet. The public world is the one of out there represented by the news reports and articles of his escape. The encounter between the two worlds happens when Harriet begins the correspondence . The consequences of this encounter produce the conflict in the story and shatter the safe world of Pat's empty principles.

Symbolism – Title :

The title refers to the series of letters exchanged between Harriet and Roland that the form the core of the story. They carry on the correspondence over many years and it serves to established an emotional connection between them. It is only because of the correspondence that Roland is confident of her help and comes to see Harriet after his jail break. The innocuous nature course of their correspondence veils a consequence that is the life altering for Harriet and life threatening for the mother.

The title also refers to the education of Pat that happens through the course of the story . She like the distance education learners understood the reality behind her daughter's correspondence very late. She is too distant emotionally and mentally from her daughter to completely understand her motivations. Therefore the reality at the end of the story comes as a betrayal of her values . Harriet and Roland serve as a symbols of the destruction of Pat's liberal ideas.

3.**Alice Munro : The Photographer**

The epilogue to *Lives of Girls and Women* begins by talking about suicides. "This town is rife with suicides," Del would often hear her mother say. Though when she grew up Del figured that her mother was wrong and that Jubilee couldn't have more suicides than the statistical average, her mother could certainly go a while naming the men and women who'd killed themselves over the years (which, since Del is probably right about the statistical average, means this can all be very bleak). Del settles on two, the two by drowning, bringing us back to the terrifying climax in "Baptism."It also takes us back to "Changes and Ceremonies," where we already read about Miss Farris's suicide by drowning. Now we hear a bit about seventeen-year-old Marion Sherriff's.

Marion was a wonderful tennis player in the high school, so great, in fact, that they have a trophy named after her which they give to the best girl athlete in the school. Each year the winning girl's name is engraved on the trophy which is then put back in a case at the school. Why did Marion commit suicide? Was she pregnant, as many suspect? And what is the fate of these other girls? That question lingers in the book entitled *Lives of Girls and Women*, where so many of the women are drowning, even if they are still walking around on dry ground.

That's not where this epilogue goes explicitly. Rather, Del focuses on her first attempts at writing stories. That said, I think this is Munro's way of suggesting just how important it is to get at those other stories, the ones that appear nondescript, the ones that might look boring at first, the ones that result from Del's epiphany:

> People's lives, in Jubilee as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable — deep caves paved with kitchen linoleum.

In Del's first attempt at writing a novel she focuses on the Sherriff family because many in town, including her mother, always said, "Well, there is a family that has had its share of Tragedy!" Marion died by drowning, her brother died an alcoholic, and another brother is in the asylum at Tupperton — "I picked on the Sherriff family to write about; what had happened to them isolated them, splendidly, doomed them to fiction."

In this book, Marion's name has been changed to Caroline, which has a romantic sound. As we see the following lengthy, but important and extremely well crafted passage, the real Marion disappears quickly into this more romantic girl of fiction:

> Her name was Caroline. She came ready-made into my mind, taunting and secretive, blotting out altogether that pudgy Marion, the tennis player. Was she a witch? Was she a nymphomaniac? Nothing so simple!
>
> She was wayward and light as a leaf, and she slipped along the streets of Jubilee as if she was trying to get through a crack in an invisible wall, sideways. She had long black hair. She bestowed her gifts capriciously on men — not on good-looking young men who thought they had a right to her, not on sullen high-school heroes, athletes, with habits of conquest written on their warm-blooded faces, but on middle-aged weary husbands, defeated salesmen passing through town, even, occasionally, on the deformed and mildly deranged. But her generosity mocked them, her *bittersweet flesh, the color of peeled almonds*, burned men down quickly and left a taste of death. She was a sacrifice, spread for sex on moldy uncomfortable tombstones, pushed against the cruel bark of trees, her frail body squashed into the mud and hen dirt of barnyards, supporting the killing weight of men, but it was she, more than they, who survived.

In the novel, a mysterious photographer comes to the highschool:

> The pictures he took turned out to be unusual, even frightening. People saw that in his pictures they had aged twenty or thirty years.

Most people fear him, yet Caroline runs after him. This is the man she falls for, the man who impregnates her. Then, one day she finds his car overturned in a ditch, empty. She walks to her death in the river. Caroline's brother in the asylum receives the photograph taken of Caroline: her eyes were white.

This is the older Del recalling, with some degree of embarrassment, her first jabs at narrative: "I had not worked out all the implications of this myself, but felt they were varied and powerful." Of course, Caroline's story has absolutely nothing to do with the Sherriff's real life; it's derived from Del's own experiences in the library. Yet there is some connection to reality. This still comes from Jubilee, a place Del looks down on as she turns it into her "black fable."

Then, one day she goes on a walk to see if her exam results have arrived. They haven't, but she passes the Sherriff's yard and Bobby Sherriff, home from the asylum for who knows how long, invites her to come in sit down for some cake. Del looks around and sees all the ordinary items: "The ordinariness of everything brought me up short, made me remember. *This was the Sherriff's house*."

She is struck by these items. She sees the door frame that Marion walked through on her way everywhere, including to the river.

> And what happened, I asked myself, to Marion? Not to Caroline. *What happened to Marion?* What happened to Bobby Sherriff when he had to stop baking cakes and go back to the asylum? Such questions persist, in spite of novels. It is a shock, when you have dealt so cunningly, powerfully, with reality, to come back and find it still there.

This is where I think the story comes back to the fate of all those other girls on that trophy — "such questions persist, in spite of novels." The ordinary, the mundane, the quotidian: that's where Del — that's where Munro — dwells when she becomes a writer. She makes lists of the ordinary, though "no list could hold what I wanted, for what I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together — radiant, everlasting."

This is an exceptional ending for at least two reasons: first, it ushers Del — and, with her, Munro — into her vocation as a writer; and, second, it is the culmination of everything we've read before as we explored, by way of so many different avenues, the lives of girls and women.

Betsy

The sublime Alice. In her memoir, Sheila Munro says:

> I read once that when a certain group of well-known Canadian women writers got together to discuss literature, they referred to my mother as “The Sublime Alice.”

The last piece in the book, *Lives of Girls and Women*, indicates why Alice Munro deserves to be called sublime.

Above all, there is her concern with humility. In “Epilogue: The Photographer,” Munro mentions how at one point in her life, Del viewed everything her mother said “with skepticism and disdain.” The reader is left to judge, given what we have read in the previous seven stories, if Del has grown beyond that stage, or at least has grown into struggling with that attitude. Del’s mother is present in every story — sometimes brave, sometimes foolish, and always, completely, deeply human. The adult Del treats her gently, all the while telling us what the critical, unforgiving, adolescent Del thought. Two things stay with me: Del’s enormous, delicate understanding of her mother’s difficult upbringing and Del’s identification with her mother’s fierce intellectual ambition. When Del tells us she had been disdainful of her mother at one point, I think we see the book is proof this is a school of thought from which she has graduated.

In her stories, Munro privileges various points of view above her own: we understand both Del and her mother; we understand Fern and Naomi; we understand Garnet and Jerry Storey; we understand Miss Farris and Mr. Boyce. We understand that each life has its push-pull struggle. Above that, Munro does not intrude.

This “epilogue” also tells the story of an encounter Del had at 18 with Bobby Sherriff, the local guy who had been in and out of the asylum. Bobby invites Del onto his porch to have some tea and cake. This encounter provokes in Del a variety of revelations about the nature

of writing, but at this point, I am interested in the revelation she has about herself. When saying good-bye, Bobby wishes her good luck. Del remembers back:

> People's wishes, and their other offerings, were what I took then naturally, a little distractedly, as if they were never more than anything more than my due.
>
> Yes, I said, instead of thank you.

The reader admires such honesty — that Del can admit what she used to be like, that she thought it was *her due* to be admired or wished well. Now she can indicate what she *should have been like*, and Munro offers this apologia for Del; as the very last words in her book, she offers a tribute to humility.

During this morning "tea" with Bobby Sherriff, Del realizes that the gothic novel she had been writing about his family was a failure. Some "damage had been done." She means she knows the novel is a failure. She does not explain precisely what the damage was, except that we know she has fictionalized many of the details of Sherriff family story, and she knows, too, that while she used to feel the story she had written was "true," she didn't exactly know what that truth was. Perhaps the truth was "I did not pay much attention to the real Sherriffs." Perhaps the real truth was, as she realized in time, "the ordinariness of everything" is what mattered rather than using reality to create a clever take or make of real people a "black fable." Slowly, Del, the writer, is learning the uses of writing — not to be clever, and not to get revenge, but instead writing should represent "every last thing." It is every last thing and "every layer of speech and thought" that should be "radiant" and "everlasting." It is what is represented that is important, not the author.

Another face of the sublime in Alice Munro has to do with her use of autobiographical detail. The writing is so plain-spoken, so understated, and so properly elliptical, that Munro herself is a shadow in the background. For instance, in "Epilogue" Munro opens with Del's mother remarking, "This town is rife with suicides." Several suicides are recounted. Del focuses on the death of Marion Sheriff, one of whose brothers died an alcoholic and the other spent a lot of time in the local asylum. Del tells how her mother's boarder thought that a suicide at

seventeen must be because of pregnancy. The boarder asks, “Otherwise, why drown yourself at seventeen?”

That question is not answered. Instead, Del shifts immediately to talking about how “the only thing to do with my life was write a novel.” But the idea of suicide is in the air — without books, without writing, what would life be? On the one hand, there is the life of the mind, and on the other, something as blank, something as black, perhaps, as the Wawanash River. But Munro does not say that. She leaves you to think it.

That kind of shift is ordinary in Munro, and the reader is trusted to read between the shifts, to read into the juxtapositions. That is sublime.

As everyone who reads the “Epilogue” can see, Munro lays out her own ArsPoetica:

> [. . .] what I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together — radiant, everlasting.

And that is sublime as well.

All of *Lives of Girls and Women* is true to that goal of every last thing “held still and held together.” Just to pick one thread from many, I want to look at how she views writing itself, since writing is the topic of the “Epilogue” and also the topic of its ArsPoetica.

Writing and reading comprise a vast terrain in *Lives of Girls and Women*. There are the tabloids that Uncle Benny reads and that little Del loves, too, and there are the newspapers, like the *Jubilee Herald-Advance*, that her mother reads. Her Uncle Craig keeps locked boxes full of precious newspaper clippings that will help him write his history. Del herself reads magazine articles, such as the one by a “famous New York psychiatrist.” There are the Bibles her grandmother wants the local poor man to read, the encyclopedias her mother wants the farm families to buy, and the nursing textbooks Naomi’s mother wants no one to read. There is the Book of Common Prayer, and there are the hymns sung at church, at home, at funerals and revivals, and there are children’s folksongs sung in the street. There is even a patriotic school song that Del teaches Uncle Benny. There is the library, where *Wuthering*

Heights, *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*, *Kristen Lavransdatter*, *Look Homeward, Angel*, and Tennyson and Browning are "worlds of creation." There are Del's father's copies of H.G. Wells's *Outline of History* and *Robinson Crusoe* and also his James Thurber; there is Addie's Tennyson, the gift to her from Miss Rush. There is the King Arthur in the Grade Seven Reader, there is Browning in the University exam.

Del is not the only reader: her mother favors reading that makes her think, like the magazine article "Heirs of the Living Body" that proposed that human organs could be *transplanted*. One year Addie joined a Great Books discussion group, and the next year enrolled in a correspondence course on the "Great Thinkers of history." In contrast, Del's father preferred to read the same books over and over, like personal bibles. Uncle Benny preferred the tabloids. Fern, the boarder, has a stash of sexual how-to lore and a little collection of salacious verse like "The Lament of the Truckdriver."

Del herself prefers the library — she tells us: "I was happy in the library." This is where she could read an adventure about an orphaned baby (*The Winning of Barbara Worth*), as well as a Norwegian epic by Nobel Prize winner Sigrid Undset.

Writing abounds in many forms in this book. Uncle Benny wants to write a letter, but he has to ask Del to write it, because he can't write. There is Uncle Benny's wife, who can barely write, but manages to get a letter to him after she has run away, asking, not for forgiveness, but for her favorite yellow sweater. Del's classmate Frank Wales cannot spell but can sing like an angel. Del's mother writes "op-ed" pieces for the paper and advocates things like free birth control for everyone. She also writes romantic descriptions for the paper, essays she signs "Princess Ida." Addie does the crossword puzzles, and she concocts writing games for her ladies' tea party. As town clerk, Uncle Craig writes documents like licenses, but he also writes family trees and local history, both of which strike Del as lifeless. There are Uncle Craig's sisters who *tell stories*. Uncle Bill writes, too; he writes a will in which he leaves a bequest of $300 to his sister, blood money, really, meant to erase the damage he'd done as an adolescent, when he'd abused Addie in the barn. There are two important sermons: one by the Anglican minister on Easter Sunday, the one that makes no sense to Del, and is the beginning of the end of her experiment with religion; and one the revivalist gives about the sinner crossing above the fires of hell on a rope bridge, the threads of the bridge being

continually nicked by the sinner's sins. And there is Del herself, known to be a great essay writer.

Ghastly Mr. Chamberlain writes love letters of some sort to Fern.

The high school "writes" maxims on the schoolroom walls like "*Time and Energy are my Capital; if I Squander them, I shall get no Other*."

And Del writes a novel and locks it up in her uncle's lock box, having stashed her uncle's useless clippings and thousand pages of manuscript in the basement.

Such are the layers of thought in reading and writing in *Lives of Girls and Women*, held still and held all together, ordinary and radiant and — most of all — believable.

Del says:

People's lives, in Jubilee as elsewhere, were dull, simple, amazing and unfathomable — deep caves paved with linoleum.

Unit 4

Meena Alexander: Nambally Road

About the novel

Meena Alexander's novel Nampally Road takes place in the city of Hyderabad amidst unrest and opposition to Chief Minister Limca Gowda, whose oppressive and violent rule has spurred the city's residents into protest. Set during India's fraught state of emergency from 1975-1977, enacted by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, where in the aftermath of war with Pakistan, elections were suspended and the government launched a massive crackdown on civil liberties and any forms of opposition. The book focuses on a young woman who has returned from England in order to both teach literature and make sense of herself and her own history. Mira Kannadical has returned after finishing her education in England. Arriving in a changed city, she becomes involved with Ramu, a passionate political activist. As her relationship with Ramu deepens, so too does her understanding of the political situation in Hyderabad. Mira struggles to reconcile her studies, her love of poetry and literature, with the violent reality of her city. The novel's vivid and poetic language traces Mira's burgeoning political awareness as she witnesses life on Nampally Road and grows more involved with the protests surrounding the brutal gang rape of a young Muslim woman, Rameeza Be, and the murder of her husband at the hands of police. In this two-part excerpt, Mira attempts to explain the beauty and relevance of Wordsworth to her students. As Mira searches for a way to make sense of what literature can mean when confronted with such bloodshed and to examine what Wordsworth can signify for a people terrorized by the state, Ramu arrives to take her to the police station where Rameeza is being held. What follows is a strange moment of clarity as Mira is pulled from the classroom, her space of abstract thought and poetic meditation, and into the middle of a fierce protest at the police station. Originally published in 1991, the novel has been reprinted by Orient Blackswan in 2013. - Shakti Castro

About the Author

***Meena Alexander** was born in Allahabad and raised in both India and the Sudan. She is the author of two novels, Nampally Road, and Manhattan Music, and seven collections of poetry, among them Birthplace with Buried Stones and House of a Thousand Stones. She is the author of several books of essays and an autobiography published in 1993. She received her Bachelor's degree in French and English from Khartoum University in Sudan, and her PhD in English from the University of Nottingham. She is currently Distinguished Professor of*

English and Women's Studies at CUNY. Professor Alexander is an award-winning scholar, poet, and writer whose work frequently focuses on issues of identity and migration.

Principal Characters

Siddharth

Siddharth was a friend of Mira. They became friends in England. Siddharth was a few years older than Mira. They met each other during a protest march organized by the students against Margaret Thatcher. The government of Mrs. Thatcher had stopped giving free milk to young school children. The university students conducted a strong agitation against this decision and both Siddharth and Mira actively took part in that agitation. Siddharth was an expert in reading the sarod. He even gave concerts in England. During one of these concerts a white girl called Vanessa fell in love with him. They moved together ever since that day.

When Mira received a teaching job in Hyderabad, she went directly to the flat of Siddharth in Nottingham. Siddharth was not able to go to India for a long time because his research in mathematics was in a confused condition. So he asked Mira to visit his mother in Hyderabad when she reached India. He even drew a map of Nampally Road and gave it to Mira. He also gave detailed directions to Mira but didn't mention anything about planes, trains or buses. "After all, who needed that stuff? He concentrated on the footpaths".

Mira spent a few hours with Siddharth and his girlfriend Vanessa before leaving for India. They served her a fine dinner made up of rabbit casserole and table wine.

Dr.Durgabai (Little Mother)

DurgabaiGokhale was the mother of Siddharth. When Mira came to India, Siddharth asked her to meet his mother who lived in Hyderabad. When Mira visited Durgabai, the latter insisted that Mira should stay with her. Mira accepted this offer and started living in her Nampally Road mansion as a paying guest. Mira always addressed Durgabai as 'Little Mother'.

Durgabai was a doctor. She was an obstetrician, gynecologist and a pediatrician all rolled into one. She gave vaccinations and medicines to young children. She also attended to the special

health problems faced by the womenfolk. She also attended the job of delivering babies. Rarely she even helped unmarried girls to get an abortion.

Durgabai had very little facilities in her clinic—a single metal bed for the patients, an old washbasin and a few medical equipments.. that was all. But her clinic was a great comfort for the poor people since she didn't charge any fee from them. Nampally Road area in Hyderabad was inhabited by extremely poor people.

Durgabai's father was also a doctor. He built their house on the Nampally Road some seventy years ago. He was a doctor in Nizam's palace and he rose to the rank of Chief Court Physician.

Durgabai's husband Kailash went to England for a higher degree in medicine. He was a drunkard. On his way back to India, he fell down from the ship and died.

Raniamma

Rani was the fat servant of Dr.Durgabai. She served Durgabai for the last 25 years ever since Durgabai got her from an orphanage. Rani's favorite pastime was watching Telugu movies. As she had very little work in the doctor's house, she used to see films on a daily basis. The Sagar Talkies on the Nampally Road was adjacent to their house and Rani enjoyed one matinee every day. She worshipped Telugu stars like Akbar, Mumu and Jehangir. Rani was also interested in visiting the Swami Chari of the neighbouring ashram. According to Rani, the speech of the swamiji was so good that it raised her to the sky like a flying swan. Rani's closest friend was a Christian lady called Laura Ribaldo who lived in the next house.

Laura Ribaldo

Laura Ribaldo was the nearest neighbor of Dr.Durgabai. Laura's three sisters were in Canada and she also wanted to reach there. Her husband Henry was a cruel man who used to beat her everyday. Laura found consolation in her friendship with Raniamma who was the servant of the doctor. Both of them enjoyed their regular visits to Sagar Talkies, the next-door cinema house. Both of them had a taste in synthetic clothing and soft drinks. Even to the places of worship, they moved together in spite of belonging to two different religions. Rani accompanied Laura to the Catholic church and Laura joined Rani when she visited the ashram of Swami Chari.

Laura made regular correspondence with her sisters in Canada. They wrote to her about beautiful shopping malls and palatial buildings in Canada. ‘Why, even the vegetables there are covered in plastic’, she told Rani. This was quite unbelievable to Rani because plastic was treated like a precious thing in Hyderabad. They washed and dried old plastic bags so as to use them again and again. Laura was an extremely thin woman and when she walked with Rani it looked quite singular because the latter was very fat. Laura used to wear black lace during her visits top the church and the ashram.

Essay.1

MIRA’S ATTEMPTS TO ADJUST WITH EUROPEAN CULTURE

Mira Kannadical was an Indian girl who completed her studies from the Midlands in England. The period spent in England was a real challenge to Mira. She found it very difficult to adjust to the lifestyle of Europeans. Mira was an Indian girl with her own individual ideas about life. But she had to adjust a lot while she studied in the United Kingdom.

From the very early childhood Mira was accustomed to eating with her right hand. But Englishmen never ate with their right hands because the fork is always held with the left hand. It is the knife that finds its place in the right hand of the Englishman. They cut the food into small pieces using the knife and the fork and finally take them one by one to the mouth with the end of the fork. The Indian way of eating with bare fingers is considered indecent in Europe.

Mira was a naturally right-handed person and trying to eat with her left hand made eating an uncomfortable ordeal for her. According to traditional Hindu belief, the left hand is polluted and hence it is not suitable for eating.

Mira had to make many other adjustments while she lived in England. Mira was given little lessons in table manners and etiquette by Miss. Foxglove who was the daughter of her hostel warden. She taught Mira how to hold her knife while eating, how to swallow food gracefully and how to wash them down with wine. Mira followed the example of Miss. Foxglove as best as she could but she failed miserably. Mira felt herself a great mockery. She even overheard Miss.Foxglove whisper to somebody else that Mira was ‘a brilliant child, but out of place in the Midlands’.

Mira was born in India a few years after the national independence and she didn't agree to her mother's decision for an arranged marriage for her. She went to England as an undergraduate student and spent several years there. Life in England was a torture to Mira because she couldn't adjust with the fast lifestyle of the European people. She attended some dancing parties of the students but they disgusted her because of the loud music and the harsh lights. She even tried to go out every evening with a different boyfriend according to the western custom. Europeans considered it a permanent commitment or attachment to have the same boyfriend for a longer period.

Mira wanted to write a few poems so as to find out a separate identity for herself. She wanted to make up a personality that had some meaning and continuity in it. She wanted to establish what she was. She thought that by writing a few poems or even a few prose pieces, she could start to give a meaning to her life. The novelist makes it very clear that Mira had a complex inter-cultural personality because she was an Indian girl who got a colonial education.

Essay.2
Mira's search for identity

When Mira got a teaching job in Hyderabad, she gladly accepted it because she thought that going to India would give her a chance to establish a clearer identity for herself. Once she reached in Hyderabad, she felt that she was no more a girl in confusion but a woman of firm standing. In any case her mind had grown stronger. She could live her life fully only in her own country. Mira decided to make William Wordsworth her role model in life. Wordsworth was one of the English poets whom Mira read very closely as a part of her M.A. final year studies. He had written several poems on nature especially about beautiful places where he wanted to return again and again. He was a great poet and he haunted the memory of Mira. She loved Wordsworth because he understood suffering and desire that could not let itself free. Mira wanted to become a poet by achieving the clarity of Wordsworth.

When Mira started living in Hyderabad, she had minor problems about readjusting with the Indian society. Once Mira started eating with her left hand by mistake and this shocked many Andhrites who saw it. She started teaching English literature at the SonaNivas College, Hyderabad. The professor allotted her the lectures on Wordsworth and Mira became a favourite among the students of SonaNivas. During her free time, Mira continued her attempts to write poems. She had a good collection of little notebooks hidden under her bed.

Ramu made fun of the creative attempts of Mira and commented that no one had the right to impose ideas on the readers. Mira explained that writing poems was a mission in her life. She was 25 years old and she hardly knew what she was writing. She was very much confused inside her mind in spite of all her western education. She wanted to become a poet so as to establish a new identity for herself. Otherwise her mother will dress her up in silks and gold and marry her off to some rich engineer or estate owner. Mira strongly felt that she may not be able to survive such a marriage. According to Mira, marriage was a personal matter and she will commit into a marriage only when she is fully prepared for the arrangement.

Mira's search for identity makes a sharp turn when she sees Rameeza Be for the first time inside the Gowliguda police station. Rameeza's sari was stiff with blood. She lay curled up on the mud floor of the prison room just behind the wooden desk. Her face was held up by the mud. Mosquitoes were buzzing over her and still both her eyes were open. She was breathing in a jagged, irregular manner. Mira gripped the cell bars and looked at her for a long time. She bent forward and put her hand inside through the prison bars and touched the damp forehead of Rameeza. The hair from her head was plastered in a light mat on her cheeks and it was held together with blood.

Very soon someone carried away Rameeza to the house of Maitreyiamma where she was given good rest and medical attention. It was a long and painstaking process but Rameeza finally emerged healthy because of the strong herbal medicines of Maitreyiamma. Ramu and Mira visited Rameeza in that house and her pathetic condition extremely influenced Mira. 'I wished', Mira wondered, 'I could give up my own useless life in some way that could help her'. Thus, Mira finally found her identity. She understood that she was nobody else other than an ordinary Indian. The suffering of Rameeza Be was the suffering of an entire nation and Mira's mission in life was to seek a solution to give relief to millions of Rameezas in India. Mira became half an Indian by returning to India and deciding to settle down permanently here. She became a full Indian when she understood that her mission in life was to serve India, her motherland.

Essay.3

The plight of the ordinary Indian under Limca Gowda' rule

When Mira came to India and started teaching at the SonaNivas College, Limca Gowda was the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. He was a totalitarian ruler and suppressed the

opposition parties cruelly. He became the chief minister after winning the election by spreading false stories about the former chief minister Mr. NGR.

Gowda ruled the state with the help of a specially created secret police organization called the Ever Ready men. The Ever Ready men wore khaki uniforms and each one of them was provided with a motorcycle. The policies of Limca Gowda were very harmful for the poor people of the state. He imposed a heavy tax on oranges and the poor orange sellers found it hard to survive. So they organized themselves under the banner of 'Orange Sellers of Telugu Desham' and staged a protest march aginst the chief minister. Mira and Ramu witnessed the march from the window of Bolaram's New Mysore Café. About one hundred men and women marched forward with red flags shouting slogans against the cruel rule of the chief minister. Some of them carried a pile of oranges clutched in their arms. Within a few minutes, the Ever Ready men arrived on motorcycles and started attacking the procession. The policemen started beating the orange sellers with lathis, dragged and kicked them. Very soon the whole procession was scattered and dispersed.

The life of the poor was extremely pathetic under the rule of Gowda. The villages were neglected and even basic health facilities were not provided to most of them. Dr.Durgabai remembers the case of village boy who was attacked by a leopard. The child didn't receive any medical attention for several weeks. Finally the child's father had to carry him to Hyderabad by walking 50 miles into the city. The man had no money with him, just the clothes on his back and his dying son in his hands. Durgabai tried her best to save the child but she was not successful in her efforts as the child's brain was completely damaged.

Injustice was widespread in Hyderabad. The poor didn't get any justice from the authorities. There was no drinking water, no schools and not even good road in the villages of Andhra Pradesh. The chief minister was only interested in strengthening his rule. He made preparations for conducting an elaborate celebration of his own birthday so as to increase his popularity. Limca Gowda wanted to achieve the popularity of NGR who was his rival and the former chief minister.

Limca Gowda was an extremely corrupt politician. In the name of his own son-in-law, he started a company manufacturing soda water. The company produced lime-coloured soda water under the trade name 'Limca Soda'. The water used for making this cool drink was neither filtered nor purified. Once hundreds of Hyderabadis who consumed this soda during a

wedding celebration were hospitalized because of abdominal pain and violent vomiting. But the chief minister only tried to support his company by getting photographed publicly with a bottle of 'Limca Soda' in his hand. He went on drinking it bottle after bottle and soda water started dribbling down his chin. Because of the chief minister's public display, the soda became a fashionable thing in Hyderabad and people continued to drink it even when the price was raised considerably.

Injustice was not limited to Hyderabad and the whole country was in a spell of dictatorship because the prime minister in New Delhi was the iron fisted lady who had declared a national emergency just for the purpose of suppressing her political enemies. But the chief minister of Hyderabad was a great favourite of the Indian Prime Minister and she frequently called him to Delhi for political consultations. Whenever the Chief Minister travelled to Delhi, elaborate and expensive arrangements were made to beautify the city and the airport with decorations and archways. All this money was siphoned away from the fund meant for the development of the poor Andhrites. Wherever Gowda travelled, a large number of secret police and Ever Ready men escorted him in a big motorcade. Ramu taught Mira how to press against the college walls so as to escape from the mud being thrown at her good clothes by the speeding convoy.

The poor people of Andhra Pradesh became desperate but they could do nothing against the Chief Minister publicly as all opposition was cruelly suppressed using the police forces. So they organized secret and underground organizations to work against Limca Gowda. Ramu and Mira were active workers of these secret organizations.

Essay.4

The Significance of Rameeza's Suffering in the Novel

Rameeza Be was a little woman who lived in a mountain village near Hyderabad. She came to the city with her husband. They went to see the celebrated 'Isak Katha' at Sagar Talkies. When the film finished, it was late at night. They started walking back to the house of some relative in the town. Suddenly a group of drunken policemen attacked them. Rameeza was raped by all the policemen. Her husband was violently attacked and his brain was beaten out. Later his dead body was recovered from a well behind the police station which was identified by his brother who was a lorry driver in Hyderabad. Rameeza became extremely ill because of the gang rape. There was a rumour in Hyderabad that Rameeza Be was hidden inside the

police station so as to hush up the whole story of murder and rape. One day Ramu walked into the Gowligudapolice station and enquired about Rameeza. The policemen became nervous and angry and shouted Ramu out of the police station.

Very soon the people got agitated and organized in small groups. They marched into the Gowliguda police station and attacked it. It was a gracious building built in the British style with stone steps, wooden pillars and whitewashed walls. They found Rameeza imprisoned in one of the cells. She was lying on the floor and Mira touched her forehead through the iron bars. The cell was broken in and Rameeza was taken to the house of Maitreyiamma. The agitators have brought numerous bottles filled with kerosene. Somebody lit a matchstick and suddenly the old wooden building of the police station began to burn. Within a few minutes hundreds of reserve police and gangs of Ever Ready men arrived on the scene. But they could do nothing as the building was completely destroyed. The rioters have already dispersed. A small number of rioters remained throwing stones and bricks at the policemen and they were immediately arrested and taken away.

Very soon the riot spread all over the city. The government tried to control the issue with all their might. The students were an active part of the revolutionary movement and so the classes couldn't be conducted at the SonaNivas College. The law and order situation was so bad that the normal evening shows of the Sagar Talkies was cancelled. Curfew was imposed for several days and it was removed only after the situation came under control. Once the city returned to normalcy, the birthday celebrations of the chief minister started. Limca Gowda arrived for the celebrations with a procession of horsemen and elephants. Trumpets and horns were played when he entered the venue of the pageant. Limca Gowda's birth, childhood and youth were depicted on the stage in a highly dramatic style by inducing myth after myth into the episodes. The last stage was meant to be the appearance of film stars for singing songs in praise of the chief minister. A huge cardboard model of the ancient inner city of Hyderabad was displayed on the stage. Limca's birthplace was specially highlighted in red light.

Suddenly a cracking sound was heard from the top of the cardboard city. A sheet of flame appeared and soon fire began to lick the entire stage. There was immediate confusion and people began run for their lives. There was a big sound of something exploding inside the cardboard city and thousands of wires, bulbs and cardboard pieces began to scatter all around the place. The wind rose high and firemen couldn't control the flames. All around the pageant venue, people began to run in wild haste. There were men, women, society matrons, soldiers,

sailors, peasants, street children, princes of state and poor sweepers of latrines. Within a few minutes the birthday celebrations organized with the effort of several months collapsed. Mira ran fast and escaped to the lotus pool behind the Public Gardens. To her great surprise, the water in the pool was found burning. A fire had been lit in the water. Mira remembered the ancient saying of Nagarjuna that if a fire is lit in water no one can extinguish it.

It was very clear that the people of Hyderabad had taken revenge for the rape of Rameeza and the murder of her husband by destroying the chief minister's ambitious birthday celebrations. But more riot was to follow soon. When Mira finally reached home, Durgabai was found with some bandage in her hand. She mentioned to Mira that Ramu enquired for her. These words gave great relief to Mira because it showed that Ramu was still alive in spite of organizing all the dangerous anti-government activities in the underground. Another delight waited for Mira at the gate of Durgabai's house. It was Rameeza Be who had recovered from her serious illness. Mira rushed to her and touched her hand. At that moment, she felt that there was some hope left for the poor people of Hyderabad

Unit 5

Suzan Lori Paris –Topdog/Underdog

Introduction

Topdog/Underdog is a Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Suzan-Lori Parks that premiered on Broadway in 2002 and the West End in London. Parks, also the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship Genius Grant, was the first African-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize. She was a protégé of writer and theorist James Baldwin. The initial off-Broadway show starred Don Cheadle (Booth) and Jeffrey Wright (Link). The Broadway cast of the show, directed by George C. Wolfe, featured hip-hop artist Mos Def taking over the role of Booth.

Topdog/Underdog Plot Summary

The play is about two African-American brothers, Lincoln (nicknamed Link) and Booth. Their father thought that the relationship between John Wilkes-Booth and President Abraham Lincoln would be a funny joke. The choice of naming the children for an assassin and his target foreshadows how tumultuous the relationship between Link and Booth would become.

Both brothers were abandoned by their parents and have depended on each other for survival since they were teens. Link, the older of the two brothers, was a master of Three-Card Monte. Three-Card Monte is a card game usually used by confidence men to trick players into betting on whether they could identify a target card from three possible card choices. Link retired from the con after a friend was killed during a game. He found honest work at a carnival, ironically, impersonating Abraham Lincoln. People would pay to walk up behind him and shoot him.

Although Booth is the younger brother, he is highly opinionated and has followed in his brother's footsteps as a con man. He is working toward being the best Three-Card Monte player ever. He is also a petty thief who steals from area stores.

The first half of the play focuses on Booth, who is trying to convince Link to leave his job at the carnival and get back to hustling Three-Card Monte. Booth thinks that since Link is a better card player than he is, they can work together to make even more money. We learn that Booth was recently kicked out by his ex-wife Cookie, and is living with his brother. His life consists of hustling and enjoying a life of pleasure while reminiscing about his childhood. Link doesn't like his brother's laziness or career path. This disconnect is the cause for the

majority of their conflict. Most of what Booth wants for the future is tied to getting Link away from the carnival and back in the card game.

The major issues seem to come to a head and reach resolution in the second half of the play. Booth gets stood up by a woman that he has been seeing and gets hustled by his brother Link. All of these things seem to push him over the edge, and in a rage, Booth kills them both at the end of the play.

Character Analysis

Lincoln

Lincoln, often referred to by Booth as “Link,” is the older brother by five years. Link is in his late thirties and used to be married to a woman named Cookie, but she slept with Booth and subsequently the two divorced. He plays the guitar and works as an Abraham Lincoln impersonator. As an impersonator he dresses up in Lincoln attire, including whiteface, and sits quietly in the dark while people pay to come into the “theater” and shoot him with a prop gun. Link used to work on the streets as a successful card hustler, but he quit cold turkey after his close associate, Lonny, was shot and killed. He is the “topdog.”

Booth

Booth is the “underdog.” The younger of the two brothers, Booth is unemployed but desperately trying to teach himself three-card monte so that he can be a successful card hustler like his brother. Early on in the play he gives himself the nickname “3-Card” and threatens to shoot anyone who doesn’t call him by his new name, forshadowing his irrationality and more violent instincts. He has been seeing a woman named Grace off and on for the last two years, and he is largely motivated to earn money so that he can impress her. Though he is not employed, he is the one who rents the apartment and controls its comings and goings.

Grace

Booth’s love interest, who never appears on stage. Booth talks extensively about Grace, saying things like, “Shes in love with me again but she dont know it yet.” In the play’s final scene, Booth reveals that Grace told him he has “nothing going on,” rejecting him and expressing distaste for the ring he gave her. In response, he tells **Lincoln**, he killed her.

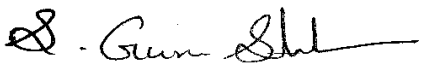
Cookie

Lincoln's ex-wife, who never appears on stage. Still, the brothers talk about her, and Booth explains that she came to the apartment one night when her marriage with Lincoln was falling apart. Apparently, she complained that Lincoln was having impotency problems, and expressed a desire to have extramarital relations (just as Lincoln himself was having with other women). As such, she and Booth had sex. Booth tells this to Lincoln as a way of taunting him, saying, "I had her. Yr damn wife. Right in that bed." Lincoln, for his part, is indifferent, merely saying, "I dont think about her no more."

Lonny

A fellow conman with whom Lincoln used to hustle. While Lincoln served as the dealer in Three-Card Monte, Lonny would subtly encourage passersby to join the game. However, hustling can be dangerous, and on Lincoln's final day throwing cards, Lonny was killed. This is why Lincoln doesn't want to re enter the life of a conman.

Signature of HOD



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