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1 Introduction

Derrek Walcott is a Nobel laureate and preeminent West Indian literary figure and is included among the leading contemporary English-language writers of poetry and drama. Born of mixed European and African heritage, he uses literature to explore themes of ethnicity, cultural chauvinism, and political inequality. Moreover, he examines these subjects in a manner that leads to psychological and moral insights pertinent not only to the clash of Western and Caribbean culture, but to the universal human condition. Having learned English as a second language, and acutely aware of its status as the language of colonial power, Walcott has assimilated the bulk of the Western literary canon—from Greek epics to modernism—skillfully employing its techniques and traditions in his works, while never losing sight of his Caribbean identity. Walcott's poetry, particularly in *In a Green Night* (1962), *Another Life* (1973), and *Omeros* (1989), is celebrated for its dazzling use of sophisticated poetic forms, heartfelt self-examination, and evocative descriptions of Caribbean life.

2 About The Author

Derrek Walcott was born on the island of Saint Lucia, a former British colony in the West Indies, poet and playwright who was trained as a painter but turned to writing as a young man. He published his first poem in the local newspaper at the age of 14. Five years later, he borrowed \$200 to print his first collection, *25 Poems*, which he distributed on street corners. Walcott's major breakthrough came with the collection *In a Green Night: Poems 1948-1960* (1962), a book which celebrates the Caribbean and its history as well as investigates the scars of colonialism and post-colonialism. Throughout a long and distinguished career, Walcott has returned to those same themes of language, power, and place. His recent collections include *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000), *The Prodigal* (2004), *Selected Poems* (edited by Edward Baugh, 2007) and *White Egrets* (2010). In 1992, Walcott won the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Nobel committee depicted his

work as “a poetic oeuvre of great luminosity, sustained by a historical vision, the outcome of a multicultural commitment.”

A Nobel laureate and preeminent West Indian literary figure, Walcott is included among the leading contemporary English-language writers of poetry and drama. Born of mixed European and African heritage, he uses literature to explore themes of ethnicity, cultural chauvinism, and political inequality. Moreover, he examines these subjects in a manner that leads to psychological and moral insights pertinent not only to the clash of Western and Caribbean culture, but to the universal human condition. Having learned English as a second language, and acutely aware of its status as the language of colonial power, Walcott has assimilated the bulk of the Western literary canon—from Greek epics to modernism—skillfully employing its techniques and traditions in his works, while never losing sight of his Caribbean identity. Walcott's poetry, particularly in *In a Green Night* (1962), *Another Life* (1973), and *Omeros* (1989), is celebrated for its dazzling use of sophisticated poetic forms, heartfelt self-examination, and evocative descriptions of Caribbean life.

Since the 1950s Walcott has divided his time between Boston, New York, and Saint Lucia. His work resonates with Western canon and Island influences, sometimes even shifting between Caribbean patois and English, and often addressing his English and West Indian ancestry. According to *Los Angeles Times Book Review* contributor Arthur Vogelsang, “These continuing polarities shoot an electricity to each other which is questioning and beautiful and which helps form a vision altogether Caribbean and international, personal (him to you, you to him), independent, and essential for readers of contemporary literature on all the continents.” Known for his technical control, erudition, and large canvases, Walcott is, according to poet and critic Sean O’Brien “one of the handful of poets currently at work in English who are capable of making a convincing attempt to write an epic...His work is conceived on an oceanic scale and one of its fundamental concerns is to give an account of the simultaneous unity and division created by the ocean and by human dealings with it.”

Many critics point to *Omeros* (1990), an epic poem reimagining the Trojan War as a Caribbean fishermen's fight, as Walcott's major achievement. The book is “an effort to touch every aspect of Caribbean experience,” according to O'Brien who also described it as an *ars poetica*, concerned “with art itself—its meaning and importance and the nature of an artistic vocation.” In reviewing Walcott's *Selected Poems* (2007), poet Glyn Maxwell ascribes Walcott's power as a poet not so much to his themes as to his ear: “The verse is constantly trembling with a sense of the body in time, the self slung across metre, whether metre is steps, or nights, or breath, whether lines are days, or years, or tides.”

Walcott is also a renowned playwright. In 1971 he won an Obie Award for his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, which *The New Yorker* described as “a poem in dramatic form.” Walcott's plays generally treat aspects of the West Indian experience, often dealing with the socio-political and epistemological implications of post-colonialism and drawing upon various forms such as the fable, allegory, folk and morality play. With his twin brother, he cofounded the Trinidad Theater Workshop in 1950; in 1981, while teaching at Boston University, he founded the Boston Playwrights' Theatre. In addition to his Nobel Prize, Walcott's honors include a MacArthur Foundation “genius” award, a Royal Society of Literature Award, and, in 1988, the Queen's

Medal for Poetry. He is an honorary member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. He is Professor of Poetry at Essex University.

Poet and playwright. Teacher at St. Mary's College, Castries, St. Lucia, West Indies, 1947-50 and 1954, Grenada Boys' Secondary School, St. George's, Grenada, West Indies, 1953-54, and at Jamaica College, Kingston, 1955. Feature writer, 1960-62, and drama critic, 1963-68, for *Trinidad Guardian* (Port-of-Spain, Trinidad); feature writer for *Public Opinion* (Kingston), 1956-57. Cofounder of St. Lucia Arts Guild, 1950, and Basement Theatre, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad; founding director of Little Carib Theatre Workshop (later Trinidad Theatre Workshop), 1959-76; Boston University, assistant professor of creative writing, 1981, visiting professor, 1985, currently professor of English. Visiting professor at Columbia University, 1981, and Harvard University, 1982 and 1987. Also lecturer at Rutgers University and Yale University.

Let us make an analysis of some of his poems:

3 A City's Death By Fire

After that hot gossamer has levelled all but the church'd sky,
I wrote the tale by tallow of a city's death by fire;
Under a candle's eye, that smoked in tears, I
Wanted to tell, in more than wax, of faiths that were snapped like wire.
All day I walked abroad among the rubble'd tales,
Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar;
Loud was the bird-rocked sky, and all the clouds were bales
Torn open by looting, and white, in spite of the fire.
By the smoking sea, where Christ walked, I asked, why
Should a man wax tears, when his wooden world fails?
In town, leaves were paper, but the hills were a flock of faiths;
To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath
Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,
Blessing the death and the baptism by fire.

3.1 Analysis of the poem

Walcott's poem "City's Death by Fire" is a lyrical; poem imbued with expression of intensive feelings of loss, sadness and disillusionment that come with the destruction of the city. The persona talks of "faiths that were snapped like wire" (line 4) due to the city's death. And the circumstances under which the poem is written "under a candle's eye that smoked in tears" (line 3) delivers a sullen picture of great sadness. The intensity of the loss is captured in the personification in the title of the poem "A City's death by Fire". A city is said to die yet it is not a living organism that dies. However, the metaphor captures the existence of the town which in totality is like an organism that has life. When the fire consumes the city, its heritage such as buildings and daily activities of the city is completely destroyed and which cannot be brought back to original form.

The poem is also effective in its communicating due to use of imagery. The imagery is rich and is extensively captured in various metaphors employed in the poem. The fire is referred to as the “hot gospeller”, an indication of the fire’s might and the manner in which it widely spread like the way gospel is spread. This is followed by the metaphor “churched sky” which means that the sky like untouchable church is never affected by the fire. Together with the metaphor of ‘hills that were flocks of faith’ (line 11) which gives the picture of many sheep grazing in peace, help draw a sharp contrast between the persona’s “wooden world” and the natural world which is not affected by the fire. This contrast in the two world’s created by the images of the two worlds show how unreliable and insecure the persona’s world that has been created by humans is and therefore worth not putting trust in. Therefore to alter persona’s mistaken faith in man made world, his world has to go through a transformation captured in the image enhancing allusion of “baptism by fire”.

Loss of persona’s faith in his “wooden world” is captured on the similes “...faiths that were snapped like wire” which shows that the impact of the fire is so sudden and which suddenly demands a new way of looking at life. People’s faith in their indestructible world is suddenly broken and thus their pain as their belief is destroyed. The persona is shocked at the walls that stood on the street “...like liars”. The walls give a false picture of the reality; of the city as it were before its destruction and which cannot now be brought back to life. However, in the last stanza the persona expresses much hope for the town and its people since there “baptism” by fire marks the beginning of a new well founded faith that is not based on man made things.

3.2 Some solved questions with answers:

1. Who is the Speaker in the poem? Describe.

The speaker is identified several times in the poem by the first person pronoun ‘I’, but it is a bit ambiguous as to who the speaker really is. It seems to be written in the point of view of a bystander, either that saw the events of the poem take place, or arrived shortly after it all to witness the aftermath of the fire. Either way, he observes all the details of the burned city with a certain incredulity and bewilderment.

2. Who is the audience of the poem?

The audience seems mainly to be aimed at the surviving residents of the city. The second part of the poem focuses on reassuring the people that everything will be restored in the end. The poem also seems to reach out to the rest of the world. The last lines of the poem make you think a bit more, as a reader, rather than just looking onward at the aftermath and not feeling like a part of the audience.

3. What is the situation and setting of the poem?

The poem takes place in a fairly large city, during the aftermath of a large fire. The speaker walks around the ruins of the city, gazing at all the destruction. He vividly describes

all of the burned buildings, the crumbling walls, and the rubble left after the fire. The once great city has been reduced to mere rubble, mortar and bricks.

4. State the poem's central idea or theme in a single sentence.

Even if all the terrible destruction and devastation of the fire has crippled the people of the city, eventually normal life will begin again and people will live on with love, acting as a living testimony to what happened.

5. Describe structural pattern of the poem both in terms of visual patterns and sound patterns (stanzas, rhyme scheme, meter, free verse, alliteration, repetition, etc.)

The poem does have end rhyme present. In the beginning, it rhymes lines 1 and 3, 2 and 4, 5 and 7, and 6 and 8. But after line 8, it stops the regular rhyme scheme, only rhyming the words 'fails' and 'nails' for the rest of the poem. No other rhyme is present, and the poem is written in free verse with no apparent meter to it. There are several examples of alliteration though: tale by tallow, smoking sea, wooden world, etc. He doesn't use repetition thoroughly, but the whole poem gives off biblical, fire-like images through its choice in words. The shape of the poem itself even looks a bit like a fire, with its peaks and dips.

6. Comment on the poem's diction. How does diction relate to tone?

The poem is very specific in all of its diction and word choices. Walcott uses several words, such as 'blessing', 'baptism', 'nails', and 'Christ' to give off a holy, biblical image and feeling about the poem. It's almost as if the fire is a purging sort of rebirth for the entire, which alludes to the story of Jesus Christ's Crucifixion and him rising from the grave three days later. The diction and word choice gives a serious tone and mood to the poem, and draws the reader into the aftermath of the fire.

7. Is imagery dominant? Explain.

Yes. It is dominant throughout the entire poem. The word choices and placement of the lines of poetry help to create image after image, as the speaker of the poem walks through the burned city. Images of burned buildings, ruined walls, and piles of rubble immediately spring to mind when Walcott describes the aftermath. The lines at the beginning and the end even give the readers specific pictures, even if they don't focus on the fire.

8. Is the poem narrative (creating a "story" of sorts) or lyric (suggestive rather than concrete, often expressing a single emotion)?

The poem is a bit more lyric in structure rather than narrative. It provokes more than one emotion in the reader, however. I think that the poem gives off two distinct feelings, transforming the reader from one feeling to the next as it progresses on with the poem. In the beginning, as the speaker is walking through the burned, charred aftermath of the fire, the reader feels sorrow and disbelief for the people of the city. But as the poem continues on and ends on the 'renewal'-

type feeling, it causes the reader to change his initial feelings of sorrow into hopefulness for the future. Sorrow/sadness→ hopefulness/possibility.

9. Comment on figurative language (metaphor, extended metaphor, simile, idiom, personification).

This poem is full of metaphors and allusions, and has some personification present as well. The majority of metaphors and personification centers around the landscape after the fire, including the remaining walls, the clouds, the hills, and the leaves. Lines 5,6, 7, 11, and 12 have these personifications, and they bring out a feeling of both destruction (lines 5-7), and then later in the poem, renewal (Lines 11-12).

10. Explain any symbols. Is the poem allegorical?

There are a few symbols in the poem. The candle mentioned in line 3 is continually referenced to throughout the poem, through word choice and metaphors. The candle can be seen as a symbol for life; as it continues to burn and whittle away, it still gives off light and goes on. It can be connected back to the last couple lines of the poem, with the leaves and hills. The clouds and the fire-like imagery associated with it can also be seen as a symbol. It's like the pillar of fire in the Bible that guides the Israelites through the desert, symbolizing the hope and possibility of the future that the people of the city must have. It is another symbol that life goes on. And though there are symbols present in the poem, I don't think the poem is focused on being allegorical in any specific way.

Walcott is a master and creating beautiful imagery and pictures through his word choice, structure, and tone. He integrates simple words and common language into more formal and extravagant words, to create a unique blend that in many ways is similar to the goals of T.S. Elliot. Walcott comes off to be a modernist/post-colonial poet following in Elliot's footsteps, trying to create a unique art in the form of his poetry, while varying his work. In 'A City's Death By Fire', Walcott uses the more serious tone, more formal language, and a different structure than some of his other works. He seeks to vary each of his works to produce a uniqueness and a specific image associated with it.

4 Love After Love

The time will come
when, with elation,
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,
and say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you
all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf,
the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

4.1 Analysis of the poem:

Derek Walcott's poem "Love After Love" is a poem about rediscovering yourself after an emotional problem felt by the individual in the poem. Though the author never directly states what caused the emotional harm the clues in the contexts most likely lead to break up in a relation. "Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, the photographs, the desperate notes" is typical action one would do after ending a relationship, and "Give back your heart to itself, to the stranger who has loved you all your life, whom you ignored for another" further suggest the individual is recovering from a broken relationship. Rediscovering yourself as a mean of overcoming the emotional pain is a the main theme in the poem. "Peel your own image from the mirror" refers to taking the old image of yourself and peeling away the aspects that cause you harm or you dislike to create the person you wish to be. "Give back your heart to itself" the author wishes to go back to loving yourself rather than being upset all the time. "Feast on your life" ties all of the poems concepts. All of the previous ideas have been to lift your spirit, to rid yourself of those aspects of your life that caused you harm and then to create a new "you" which you are happy with. By feasting on this new "you" you will gain strength, just like when feasting on food, which you will use to advance through the emotional pains.

The poem is free verse which is the way all the poems I've seen from him are written. The poem use enjambment primarily, and the poem is only eight sentences of which five are simple sentences: four with two or less words and one with four words. These two complex sentences give a drawn out feeling to the poems which the simple sentences afterwards contrast. Without the complex sentences the poem would be entirely about eating food. It makes sense what the poet was trying to say and he didn't try to hid some deep meaning in it. The usage of the word eat and feast kept making think of cannibals but that didn't make sense at all with the poems title.

Derek Walcott's four-stanza poem 'Love After Love' is essentially telling us how to love ourselves after the end of a relationship. In it he speaks directly to the reader, repeatedly using the words 'you', 'your' or 'yourself', and employing the imperative form of the verb.

Walcott recognises that, following a break-up, a love of oneself will not come immediately, but 'The time will come'. He emphasises the joy involved, as he says that it will be with 'elation' that you will 'greet yourself' at your door or as you look at yourself in the mirror. The first stanza ends with the idea that you will smile at yourself.

The second stanza opens with the image of considering yourself as a guest that you invite to sit down and eat. Walcott stresses that you will love 'again the stranger that was yourself', conveying the idea that you used to love yourself before becoming involved in a relationship. That was so long ago, however, that the person you were then seems like a stranger now. The short imperative sentences of line 8, 'Give wine. Give bread', link the process directly to the idea of Holy Communion, but in this case with yourself rather than with God. The instruction follows

to 'Give back your heart to yourself', as though you are the one worthy of your love now that you have come to the end of a relationship with another. The second stanza ends with the repetition of the idea that you are a stranger to yourself after so many years of loving someone else.

Walcott uses enjambment to link one stanza to the next, and so the opening of the third stanza begins 'All your life', continuing the idea that you have always loved yourself. Yet you did not recognise this fact; you 'ignored' that love by loving someone else. Walcott uses the phrase 'who knows you by heart' in line 11 to show how well you know yourself, with the use of the word 'heart' underlining the feeling of love. Line 12, the final line of the third stanza, uses the imperative once again to tell you to 'Take down the love-letters from the bookshelf'. This idea leads into the fourth and final stanza that continues with 'The photographs, the desperate notes' which you should also take down. Walcott then suggests that you 'Peel' pictures of yourself from the mirror. Having gathered all of these, the poem ends with the idea that you sit down and 'Feast on your life'. Instead of looking at photographs and reading love letters that remind you of the break-up of your relationship, you look at your own life and appreciate the person that you are.

Walcott's poem is a mere fifteen lines long with stanzas and lines of varying length. The stanzas flow from one into the next, and the idea of loving yourself is developed throughout the poem with references to both religion and the welcoming of guests or feasting. Very brief sentences are interspersed with longer, flowing ones. In some cases the imperative verb on its own constitutes a sentence, such as 'Eat.' 'Sit.'

'Love After Love' introduces an original way of being positive following the end of a relationship. Rather than wallowing in self-pity or dwelling on the person who is no longer part of your life, it demonstrates a way of having a positive attitude to life. The person that you are has value, and you should recognize it and learn to love yourself.

The poem "Love After Love" by Derek Walcott has a free verse structure. It has an extremely touching meaning to it. This poem is saying that at one point in your life, you will realize that the only true person that will be there for you in the end, is yourself. In that turning point in life, when you look into the mirror and conclude that yourself has always loved you, then you will begin to give back to that same "stranger who was yourself" (7). Take yourself back and accept all your flaws and weaknesses. Sit and love being with yourself. Be at peace again. Remove anything from your mind that you thought was negative about yourself and learn to love the person that you are. When you do, it will be like you have found your best friend again. This also ties into a possible theme for this poem. One theme I got out of this was "Self-Compassion". It is simple, but if you don't love yourself, then nothing will fall into place. If you love yourself, then life is simple. This piece could most definitely speak to anyone having trouble loving themselves. In my personal opinion, the picture can be tied into the overall concept of this poem. It is also a very simple picture, but when you read the words and look at the picture, they both go hand in hand. It is very evident what the meaning of the poem is. I believe anyone could read it and come up with a general understanding of the meaning. In order to love yourself, you must sit down and piece together every event in your life and eventually you will see who you truly are as a person.

4.2 Some solved questions with answers:

How does the poem talk about self discovery and identity.?

The author Derek Walcott creates an ironic image of you greeting yourself at your own door. I feel that Walcott is trying to convey the idea of some where in life you are isolated from your own self, and therefore, there comes a time where you will re-join with your self. The poem is about learning whatever lesson you have to learn that leads you back to the true strength and beauty of yourself. Also I think it reflects that only in death are we born and able to see the selves we and who we were. I think that this can happen over and over again in one's life time. We grow and are able to look back at the person we were and recognize the change and embrace that change. But most importantly I think the poem is about learning to love yourself.

What does the poet seek to inspire from the poem "Love after Love"?

Walcott seeks to inspire hope in someone who has been broken by a past relationship. Walcott first starts off by ensuring the reader that "The time will come"; they will be able to see themselves again as they once were or even better. He then goes on to tell the reader to "Take down the love letters..." (Line 12). This part of the poem portrays the reminders or memories we may have after a dissolved relationship. Releasing those feelings and letting go of the past may be a painful thing to do, but it is highly necessary as to have the life that is waiting for us. Walcott's strong language and metaphors make this poem so relatable. Like Jose said it's easy to understand and the poet doesn't try to hide a deeper meaning. Walcott simply talks about a situation that we've all faced, heartache. Walcott is trying to ignite a sort of endurance within the reader to fully enjoy the rest of their life despite the pain.

What is the theme of the poem?

A general idea about what the poem that can be achieved after reading the poem is many people are busy running around and too busy to sit down and reflect with themselves and be at peace. If you don't love yourself, who will? If you aren't happy with yourself then nothing else in your life fits in the right place. Many times in life we get bogged down by our responsibilities and we don't have time to find ourselves. I know from personal experience that being a student athlete keeps you busy... You have school work, practice, church commitments, social life, extra curricular activities, boyfriends, girlfriends that it's really easy to get lost in the big ole world. I feel as though Walcott is saying finding yourself is important and being at peace with you and who you are can help you on your journey through life.

Comment on the ending of the poem.

The ending says that no matter what happens you will have yourself to love. People shouldn't worry about their problems or relationships because in the end they have themselves to love and appreciate life with. Some people are too busy and that they should slow down and not worry about their problems anymore and take in what life has to offer. If you love yourself everything will fall in place, and this is true because you won't have any problems if you love yourself exactly the way you are. I believe a lot of people have a hard time loving themselves because

they are so insecure, but I think this needs to stop because people shouldn't spend a vast majority of their lives hating themselves and what goes on.

5 A Far Cry From Africa

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt
Of Africa, Kikuyu, quick as flies,
Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.
Corpses are scattered through a paradise.
Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:
'Waste no compassion on these separate dead!'
Statistics justify and scholars seize
The salients of colonial policy.
What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
To savages, expendable as Jews?
Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break
In a white dust of ibises whose cries
Have wheeled since civilizations dawn
From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.
The violence of beast on beast is read
As natural law, but upright man
Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.
Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars
Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,
While he calls courage still that native dread
Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,
The gorilla wrestles with the superman.
I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?

5.1 Analysis of the poem:

A Far Cry from Africa by Derek Walcott deals with the theme of split identity and anxiety caused by it in the face of the struggle in which the poet could side with neither party. It is, in short, about the poet's ambivalent feelings towards the Kenyan terrorists and the counter-terrorist white colonial government, both of which were 'inhuman', during the independence struggle of

the country in the 1950s. The persona, probably the poet himself, can take favor of none of them since both bloods circulate along his veins.

He has been given an English tongue which he loves on the one hand, and on the other, he cannot tolerate the brutal slaughter of Africans with whom he shares blood and some traditions. His conscience forbids him to favour injustice. He is in the state of indecisiveness, troubled, wishing to see peace and harmony in the region. Beginning with a dramatic setting, the poem "A Far Cry from Africa" opens a horrible scene of bloodshed in African territory. 'Bloodstreams', 'scattered corpses,' 'worm' show ghastly sight of battle. Native blacks are being exterminated like Jews in holocaust following the killing of a white child in its bed by blacks.

The title of the poem involves an idiom: "a far cry" means an impossible thing. But the poet seems to use the words in other senses also; the title suggests in one sense that the poet is writing about an African subject from a distance. Writing from the island of St. Lucia, he feels that he is at a vast distance- both literally and metaphorically from Africa. "A Far Cry" may also have another meaning that the real state of the African 'paradise' is a far cry from the Africa that we have read about in descriptions of gorgeous fauna and flora and interesting village customs. And a third level of meaning to the title is the idea of Walcott hearing the poem as a far cry coming all the way across thousands of miles of ocean. He hears the cry coming to him on the wind. The animal imagery is another important feature of the poem. Walcott regards as acceptable violence the nature or "natural law" of animals killing each other to eat and survive; but human beings have been turned even the unseemly animal behavior into worse and meaningless violence. Beasts come out better than "upright man" since animals do what they must do, any do not seek divinity through inflicting pain. Walcott believes that human, unlike animals, have no excuse, no real rationale, for murdering non-combatants in the Kenyan conflict. Violence among them has turned into a nightmare of unacceptable atrocity based on color. So, we have the "Kikuyu" and violence in Kenya, violence in a "paradise", and we have "statistics" that don't mean anything and "scholar", who tends to throw their weight behind the colonial policy: Walcott's outrage is very just by the standards of the late 1960s, even restrained. More striking than the animal imagery is the image of the poet himself at the end of the poem. He is divided, and doesn't have any escape.

"I who am poisoned with the blood of both, where shall I turn, divided to the vein?" This sad ending illustrates a consequence of displacement and isolation. Walcott feels foreign in both cultures due to his mixed blood. An individual sense of identity arises from cultural influences, which define one's character according to a particular society's standards; the poet's hybrid heritage prevents him from identifying directly with one culture. Thus creates a feeling of isolation. Walcott depicts Africa and Britain in the standard roles of the vanquished and the conqueror, although he portrays the cruel imperialistic exploits of the British without creating sympathy for the African tribesmen. This objectively allows Walcott to contemplate the faults of each culture without reverting to the bias created by attention to moral considerations.

However, Walcott contradicts the savior image of the British through an unfavorable description in the ensuing lines. "Only the worm, colonel of carrion cries/ 'waste no compassion on their separated dead'." The word 'colonel' is a punning on 'colonial' also. The Africans associated

with a primitive natural strength and the British portrayed as an artificially enhanced power remain equal in the contest for control over Africa and its people. Walcott's divided loyalties engender a sense of guilt as he wants to adopt the "civilized" culture of the British but cannot excuse their immoral treatment of the Africans. The poem reveals the extent of Walcott's consternation through the poet's inability to resolve the paradox of his hybrid inheritance.

The ongoings in Kenya magnified an internal strife within the poet concerning his own mixed heritage. Walcott has both African and European roots; his grandmothers were both black, and both grandfathers were white. In addition, at the time the poem was written, the poet's country of birth, the island of St. Lucia, was still a colony of Great Britain. While Walcott opposes colonialism and would therefore seem to be sympathetic to a revolution with an anticolonial cause, he has passionate reservations about Mau Mau: they are, or are reported to be, extremely violent—to animals, whites, and Kikuyu perceived as traitors to the Mau Mau cause. As Walcott is divided in two, so too is the poem. The first two stanzas refer to the Kenyan conflict, while the second two address the war within the poet-as-outsider/insider, between his roles as blood insider but geographical outsider to the Mau Mau Uprising. The Mau Mau Uprising, which began in 1952, was put down—some say in 1953, 1956, or 1960—without a treaty, yet the British did leave Kenya in 1963. Just as the uprising was never cleanly resolved, Walcott, at least within the poem, never resolves his conflict about whose side to take.

He has been given an English tongue which he loves on the one hand, and on the other, he cannot tolerate the brutal slaughter of Africans with whom he shares blood and some traditions. His conscience forbids him to favour injustice. He is in the state of indecisiveness, troubled, wishing to see peace and harmony in the region. Beginning with a dramatic setting, the poem "A Far Cry from Africa" opens a horrible scene of bloodshed in African territory. 'Bloodstreams', 'scattered corpses,' 'worm' show ghastly sight of battle. Native blacks are being exterminated like Jews in holocaust following the killing of a white child in its bed by blacks.

"I who am poisoned with the blood of both, where shall I turn, divided to the vein?" This sad ending illustrates a consequence of displacement and isolation. Walcott feels foreign in both cultures due to his mixed blood. An individual sense of identity arises from cultural influences, which define one's character according to a particular society's standards; the poet's hybrid heritage prevents him from identifying directly with one culture. Thus creates a feeling of isolation. Walcott depicts Africa and Britain in the standard roles of the vanquished and the conqueror, although he portrays the cruel imperialistic exploits of the British without creating sympathy for the African tribesmen. This objectively allows Walcott to contemplate the faults of each culture without reverting to the bias created by attention to moral considerations.

However, Walcott contradicts the savior image of the British through an unfavorable description in the ensuing lines. "Only the worm, colonel of carrion cries/ 'waste no compassion on their separated dead'." The word 'colonel' is a punning on 'colonial' also. The Africans associated with a primitive natural strength and the British portrayed as an artificially enhanced power remain equal in the contest for control over Africa and its people. Walcott's divided loyalties engender a sense of guilt as he wants to adopt the "civilized" culture of the British but cannot

excuse their immoral treatment of the Africans. The poem reveals the extent of Walcott's consternation through the poet's inability to resolve the paradox of his hybrid inheritance.

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5.2 Some solved questions and answers:

What is the theme of the poem?

A Far Cry from Africa by Derek Walcott deals with the theme of split identity and anxiety caused by it in the face of the struggle in which the poet could side with neither party. It is, in short, about the poet's ambivalent feelings towards the Kenyan terrorists and the counter-terrorist white colonial government, both of which were 'inhuman', during the independence struggle of the country in the 1950s. The persona, probably the poet himself, can take favor of none of them since both bloods circulate along his veins.

What does the idiom a far cry mean?

The title of the poem involves an idiom: "a far cry" means an impossible thing. But the poet seems to use the words in other senses also; the title suggests in one sense that the poet is writing about an African subject from a distance. Writing from the island of St. Lucia, he feels that he is at a vast distance—both literally and metaphorically from Africa. "A Far Cry" may also have another meaning that the real state of the African 'paradise' is a far cry from the Africa that we have read about in descriptions of gorgeous fauna and flora and interesting village customs. And a third level of meaning to the title is the idea of Walcott hearing the poem as a far cry coming all the way across thousands of miles of ocean. He hears the cry coming to him on the wind. The animal imagery is another important feature of the poem. Walcott regards as acceptable violence the nature or "natural law" of animals killing each other to eat and survive; but human beings have been turned even the unseemly animal behavior into worse and meaningless violence. Beasts come out better than "upright man" since animals do what they must do, any do not seek divinity through inflicting pain. Walcott believes that human, unlike animals, have no excuse, no real rationale, for murdering non-combatants in the Kenyan conflict. Violence among them has turned into a nightmare of unacceptable atrocity based on color. So, we have the "Kikuyu" and violence in Kenya, violence in a "paradise", and we have "statistics" that don't mean anything

and “scholar”, who tends to throw their weight behind the colonial policy: Walcott’s outrage is very just by the standards of the late 1960s, even restrained. More striking than the animal imagery is the image of the poet himself at the end of the poem. He is divided, and doesn’t have any escape.

How is violence and cruelty brought out in the poem?

The wind "ruffling the tawny pelt of Africa" refers to the Mau Mau Uprising that occurred in what is now independent Kenya, roughly from October 20, 1952, to January of 1960. During this span, the white government called an emergency meeting against a secret Kikuyu society that came to be known as Mau Mau and was dedicated to overthrowing the white regime. Against the backdrop of a cruel, long-lasting British colonialism erupted the more short-term cruelty of Mau Mau insurrection. While some versions have it that Mau Mau was put down by 1953 and others by 1956, the government kept the state of emergency in place until the beginning of 1960. It is the violence of Mau Mau that most disturbs Walcott, apparently because it makes Africans look even worse than their British oppressors. There were many stories of Mau Mau violence directed at Derek Walcott's "A Far Cry from Africa," published in 1962, is a painful and jarring depiction of ethnic conflict and divided loyalties. The opening images of the poem are drawn from accounts of the Mau Mau Uprising, an extended and bloody battle during the 1950s between European settlers and the native Kikuyu tribe in what is now the republic of Kenya. In the early twentieth century, the first white settlers arrived in the region, forcing the Kikuyu people off of their tribal lands. Europeans took control of farmland and the government, relegating the Kikuyu to a subservient position. One faction of the Kikuyu people formed Mau Mau, a terrorist organization intent on purging all European influence from the country, but less strident Kikuyus attempted either to remain neutral or to help the British defeat Mau Mau.

Bring out the pathos in the poem A Far Cry from Africa.

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6 The Schooner *Flight*

1 Adios, Carenage

In idle August, while the sea soft,
and leaves of brown islands stick to the rim

of this Caribbean, I blow out the light
by the dreamless face of Maria Concepcion
to ship as a seaman on the schooner *Flight*.
Out in the yard turning gray in the dawn,
I stood like a stone and nothing else move
but the cold sea rippling like galvanize
and the nail holes of stars in the sky roof,
till a wind start to interfere with the trees.
I pass me dry neighbor sweeping she yard
as I went downhill, and I nearly said:
“Sweep soft, you witch, ’cause she don’t sleep hard,”
but the bitch look through me like I was dead.
A route taxi pull up, park-lights still on.
The driver size up my bags with a grin:
“This time, Shabine, like you really gone!”
I ain’t answer the ass, I simply pile in
the back seat and watch the sky burn
above Laventille pink as the gown
in which the woman I left was sleeping,
and I look in the rearview and see a man
exactly like me, and the man was weeping
for the houses, the streets, that whole fucking island.

Christ have mercy on all sleeping things!
From that dog rotting down Wrightson Road

to when I was a dog on these streets;
if loving these islands must be my load,
out of corruption my soul takes wings.
But they had started to poison my soul
with their big house, big car, big-time bohbohl,
coolie, nigger, Syrian, and French Creole,
so I leave it for them and their carnival—
I taking a sea bath, I gone down the road.
I know these islands from Monos to Nassau,
a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes
that they nickname Shabine, the patois for
any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw
when these slums of empire was paradise.
I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
I had a sound colonial education,
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation,
But Maria Concepcion was all my thought
watching the sea heaving up and down
as the port side of dories, schooners, and yachts
was painted afresh by the strokes of the sun
signing her name with every reflection;
I knew when dark-haired evening put on
her bright silk at sunset, and, folding the sea,
sidled under the sheet with her starry laugh,

that there'd be no rest, there'd be no forgetting.
Is like telling mourners round the graveside
about resurrection, they want the dead back,
so I smile to myself as the bow rope untied
and the *Flight* swing seaward: "Is no use repeating
that the sea have more fish. I ain't want her
dressed in the sexless light of a seraph,
I want those round brown eyes like a marmoset, and
till the day when I can lean back and laugh,
those claws that tickled my back on sweating
Sunday afternoons, like a crab on wet sand."
As I worked, watching the rotting waves come
past the bow that scissor the sea like silk,
I swear to you all, by my mother's milk,
by the stars that shall fly from tonight's furnace,
that I loved them, my children, my wife, my home;
I loved them as poets love the poetry
that kills them, as drowned sailors the sea.
You ever look up from some lonely beach
and see a far schooner? Well, when I write
this poem, each phrase go be soaked in salt;
I go draw and knot every line as tight
as ropes in this rigging; in simple speech
my common language go be the wind,
my pages the sails of the schooner *Flight*.

But let me tell you how this business begin.

2 Raptures of the Deep

Smuggled Scotch for O'Hara, big government man,
between Cedros and the Main, so the Coast Guard couldn't touch us,
and the Spanish pirogues always met us halfway,
but a voice kept saying: "Shabine, see this business
of playing pirate?" Well, so said, so done!

That whole racket crash. And I for a woman,
for her laces and silks, Maria Concepcion.
Ay, ay! Next thing I hear, some Commission of Inquiry
was being organized to conduct a big quiz,
with himself as chairman investigating himself.

Well, I knew damn well who the suckers would be,
not that shark in shark skin, but his pilot fish,
khaki-pants red niggers like you and me.

What worse, I fighting with Maria Concepcion,
plates flying and thing, so I swear: "Not again!"

It was mashing up my house and my family.

I was so broke all I needed was shades and a cup
or four shades and four cups in four-cup Port of Spain;
all the silver I had was the coins on the sea.

You saw them ministers in *The Express*,
guardians of the poor—one hand at their back,
and one set o' police only guarding their house,
and the Scotch pouring in through the back door.

As for that minister-monster who smuggled the booze,
that half-Syrian saurian, I got so vex to see
that face thick with powder, the warts, the stone lids
like a dinosaur caked with primordial ooze
by the lightning of flashbulbs sinking in wealth,
that I said: "Shabine, this is shit, understand!"
But he get somebody to kick my crutch out his office
like I was some artist! That bitch was so grand,
couldn't get off his high horse and kick me himself.
I have seen things that would make a slave sick
in this Trinidad, the Limers' Republic.
I couldn't shake the sea noise out of my head,
the shell of my ears sang Maria Concepcion,
so I start salvage diving with a crazy Mick,
name O'Shaugnessy, and a limey named Head;
but this Caribbean so choke with the dead
that when I would melt in emerald water,
whose ceiling rippled like a silk tent,
I saw them corals: brain, fire, sea fans,
dead-men's-fingers, and then, the dead men.
I saw that the powdery sand was their bones
ground white from Senegal to San Salvador,
so, I panic third dive, and surface for a month
in the Seamen's Hostel. Fish broth and sermons.
When I thought of the woe I had brought my wife,

when I saw my worries with that other woman,
I wept under water, salt seeking salt,
for her beauty had fallen on me like a sword
cleaving me from my children, flesh of my flesh!
There was this barge from St. Vincent, but she was too deep
to float her again. When we drank, the limey
got tired of my sobbing for Maria Concepcion.
He said he was getting the bends. Good for him!
The pain in my heart for Maria Concepcion,
the hurt I had done to my wife and children,
was worse than the bends. In the rapturous deep
there was no cleft rock where my soul could hide
like the boobies each sunset, no sandbar of light
where I could rest, like the pelicans know,
so I got raptures once, and I saw God
like a harpooned grouper bleeding, and a far
voice was rumbling, "Shabine, if you leave her,
if you leave her, I shall give you the morning star."
When I left the madhouse I tried other women
but, once they stripped naked, their spiky cunts
bristled like sea eggs and I couldn't dive.
The chaplain came round. I paid him no mind.
Where is my rest place, Jesus? Where is my harbor?
Where is the pillow I will not have to pay for,
and the window I can look from that frames my life?

3 Shabine Leaves the Republic

I had no nation now but the imagination.
After the white man, the niggers didn't want me
when the power swing to their side.
The first chain my hands and apologize, "History";
the next said I wasn't black enough for their pride.
Tell me, what power, on these unknown rocks—
a spray-plane Air Force, the Fire Brigade,
the Red Cross, the Regiment, two, three police dogs
that pass before you finish bawling "Parade!"?
I met History once, but he ain't recognize me,
a parchment Creole, with warts
like an old sea bottle, crawling like a crab
through the holes of shadow cast by the net
of a grille balcony; cream linen, cream hat.
I confront him and shout, "Sir, is Shabine!
They say I'se your grandson. You remember Grandma,
your black cook, at all?" The bitch hawk and spat.
A spit like that worth any number of words.
But that's all them bastards have left us: words.
I no longer believed in the revolution.
I was losing faith in the love of my woman.
I had seen that moment Aleksandr Blok
crystallize in *The Twelve*. Was between
the Police Marine Branch and Hotel Venezuelana

one Sunday at noon. Young men without flags
using shirts, their chests waiting for holes.
They kept marching into the mountains, and
their noise ceased as foam sinks into sand.
They sank in the bright hills like rain, every one
with his own nimbus, leaving shirts in the street,
and the echo of power at the end of the street.
Propeller-blade fans turn over the Senate;
the judges, they say, still sweat in carmine,
on Frederick Street the idlers all marching
by standing still, the Budget turns a new leaf.
In the 12:30 movies the projectors best
not break down, or you go see revolution. Aleksandr Blok
enters and sits in the third row of pit eating choc-
olate cone, waiting for a spaghetti West-
ern with Clint Eastwood and featuring Lee Van Cleef.

4 The Flight, Passing Blanchisseuse

Dusk. The *Flight* passing Blanchisseuse.
Gulls wheel like. from a gun again,
and foam gone amber that was white,
lighthouse and star start making friends,
down every beach the long day ends,
and there, on that last stretch of sand,
on a beach bare of all but light,

dark hands start pulling in the seine
of the dark sea, deep, deep inland.

5 Shabine Encounters the Middle Passage

Man, I brisk in the galley first thing next dawn,
brewing li'l coffee; fog coil from the sea
like the kettle steaming when I put it down
slow, slow, 'cause I couldn't believe what I see:
where the horizon was one silver haze,
the fog swirl and swell into sails, so close
that I saw it was sails, my hair grip my skull,
it was horrors, but it was beautiful.

We float through a rustling forest of ships
with sails dry like paper, behind the glass
I saw men with rusty eyeholes like cannons,
and whenever their half-naked crews cross the sun,
right through their tissue, you traced their bones
like leaves against the sunlight; frigates, barkentines,
the backward-moving current swept them on,
and high on their decks I saw great admirals,
Rodney, Nelson, de Grasse, I heard the hoarse orders
they gave those Shabines, and that forest
of masts sail right through the *Flight*,
and all you could hear was the ghostly sound
of waves rustling like grass in a low wind

and the hissing weeds they trailed from the stern;
slowly they heaved past from east to west
like this round world was some cranked water wheel,
every ship pouring like a wooden bucket
dredged from the deep; my memory revolve
on all sailors before me, then the sun
heat the horizon's ring and they was mist.
Next we pass slave ships. Flags of all nations,
our fathers below deck too deep, I suppose,
to hear us shouting. So we stop shouting. Who knows
who his grandfather is, much less his name?
Tomorrow our landfall will be the Barbados.

6 The Sailor Sings Back to the Casuarinas

You see them on the low hills of Barbados
bracing like windbreaks, needles for hurricanes,
trailing, like masts, the cirrus of torn sails;
when I was green like them, I used to think
those cypresses, leaning against the sea,
that take the sea noise up into their branches,
are not real cypresses but casuarinas.
Now captain just call them Canadian cedars.
But cedars, cypresses, or casuarinas,
whoever called them so had a good cause,
watching their bending bodies wail like women

after a storm, when some schooner came home
with news of one more sailor drowned again.
Once the sound “cypress” used to make more sense
than the green “casuarinas,” though, to the wind
whatever grief bent them was all the same,
since they were trees with nothing else in mind
but heavenly leaping or to guard a grave;
but we live like our names and you would have
to be colonial to know the difference,
to know the pain of history words contain,
to love those trees with an inferior love,
and to believe: “Those casuarinas bend
like cypresses, their hair hangs down in rain
like sailors’ wives. They’re classic trees, and we,
if we live like the names our masters please,
by careful mimicry might become men.”

7 The Flight Anchors in Castries Harbor

When the stars self were young over Castries,
I loved you alone and I loved the whole world.
What does it matter that our lives are different?
Burdened with the loves of our different children?
When I think of your young face washed by the wind
and your voice that chuckles in the slap of the sea?
The lights are out on La Toc promontory,

except for the hospital. Across at Vigie
the marina arcs keep vigil. I have kept my own
promise, to leave you the one thing I own,
you whom I loved first: my poetry.
We here for one night. Tomorrow, the *Flight* will be gone.

8 *Fight with the Crew*

It had one bitch on board, like he had me mark—
that was the cook, some Vincentian arse
with a skin like a gommier tree, red peeling bark,
and wash-out blue eyes; he wouldn't give me a ease,
like he feel he was white. Had an exercise book,
this same one here, that I was using to write
my poetry, so one day this man snatch it
from my hand, and start throwing it left and right
to the rest of the crew, bawling out, "Catch it,"
and start mincing me like I was some hen
because of the poems. Some case is for fist,
some case is for tholing pin, some is for knife—
this one was for knife. Well, I beg him first,
but he keep reading, "O my children, my wife,"
and playing he crying, to make the crew laugh;
it move like a flying fish, the silver knife
that catch him right in the plump of his calf,
and he faint so slowly, and he turn more white
than he thought he was. I suppose among men

you need that sort of thing. It ain't right
but that's how it is. There wasn't much pain,
just plenty blood, and Vincie and me best friend,
but none of them go fuck with my poetry again.

9 Maria Concepcion & the Book of Dreams

The jet that was screeching over the *Flight*
was opening a curtain into the past.

"Dominica ahead!"

"It still have Caribs there."

"One day go be planes only, no more boat."

"Vince, God ain't make nigger to fly through the air."

"Progress, Shabine, that's what it's all about.

Progress leaving all we small islands behind."

I was at the wheel, Vince sitting next to me
gaffing. Crisp, bracing day. A high-running sea.

"Progress is something to ask Caribs about.

They kill them by millions, some in war,
some by forced labor dying in the mines
looking for silver, after that niggers; more
progress. Until I see definite signs
that mankind change, Vince, I ain't want to hear.

Progress is history's dirty joke.

Ask that sad green island getting nearer."

Green islands, like mangoes pickled in brine.

In such fierce salt let my wound be healed,
me, in my freshness as a seafarer.
That night, with the sky sparks frosty with fire,
I ran like a Carib through Dominica,
my nose holes choked with memory of smoke;
I heard the screams of my burning children,
I ate the brains of mushrooms, the fungi
of devil's parasols under white, leprous rocks;
my breakfast was leaf mold in leaking forests,
with leaves big as maps, and when I heard noise
of the soldiers' progress through the thick leaves,
though my heart was bursting, I get up and ran
through the blades of balisier sharper than spears;
with the blood of my race, I ran, boy, I ran
with moss-footed speed like a painted bird;
then I fall, but I fall by an icy stream under
cool fountains of fern, and a screaming parrot
catch the dry branches and I drowned at last
in big breakers of smoke; then when that ocean
of black smoke pass, and the sky turn white,
there was nothing but Progress, if Progress is
an iguana as still as a young leaf in sunlight.
I bawl for Maria, and her *Book of Dreams*.

It anchored her sleep, that insomniac's Bible,

a soiled orange booklet with a cyclop's eye
center, from the Dominican Republic.

Its coarse pages were black with the usual
symbols of prophecy, in excited Spanish;
an open palm upright, sectioned and numbered
like a butcher chart, delivered the future.

One night; in a fever, radiantly ill,
she say, "Bring me the book, the end has come."

She said: "I dreamt of whales and a storm,"
but for that dream, the book had no answer.

A next night I dreamed of three old women
featureless as silkworms, stitching my fate,
and I scream at them to come out my house,
and I try beating them away with a broom,
but as they go out, so they crawl back again,
until I start screaming and crying, my flesh
raining with sweat, and she ravage the book
for the dream meaning, and there was nothing;
my nerves melt like a jellyfish—that was when I broke—
they found me round the Savannah, screaming:

All you see me talking to the wind, so you think I mad.

Well, Shabine has bridled the horses of the sea;
you see me watching the sun till my eyeballs seared,
so all you mad people feel Shabine crazy,

but all you ain't know my strength, hear? The coconuts
standing by in their regiments in yellow khaki,
they waiting for Shabine to take over these islands,
and all you best dread the day I am healed
of being a human. All you fate in my hand,
ministers, businessmen, Shabine have you, friend,
I shall scatter your lives like a handful of sand,
I who have no weapon but poetry and
the lances of palms and the sea's shining shield!

10 Out of the Depths

Next day, dark sea. A arse-aching dawn.
“Damn wind shift sudden as a woman mind.”
The slow swell start cresting like some mountain range
with snow on the top.
“Ay, Skipper, sky dark!”
“This ain't right for August.
“This light damn strange,
this season, sky should be clear as a field.”

A stingray steeplechase across the sea,
tail whipping water, the high man-o'-wars
start reeling inland, quick, quick an archery
of flying fish miss us! Vince say: “You notice?”
and a black-mane squall pounce on the sail
like a dog on a pigeon, and it snap the neck

of the *Flight* and shake it from head to tail.

“Be Jesus, I never see sea get so rough

so fast! That wind come from God back pocket!”

“Where Cap’n headin? Like the man gone blind!”

“If we’s to drong, we go drong, Vince, fock-it!”

“Shabine, say your prayers, if life leave you any!”

I have not loved those that I loved enough.

Worse than the mule kick of Kick-’Em-Jenny

Channel, rain start to pelt the *Flight* between

mountains of water. If I was frighten?

The tent poles of water spouts bracing the sky

start wobbling, clouds unstitch at the seams

and sky water drench us, and I hear myself cry,

“I’m the drowned sailor in her *Book of Dreams*.”

I remembered them ghost ships, I saw me corkscrewing

to the sea bed of sea worms, fathom pass fathom,

my jaw clench like a fist, and only one thing

hold me, trembling, how my family safe home.

Then a strength like it seize me and the strength said:

“I from backward people who still fear God.”

Let Him, in His might, heave Leviathan upward

by the winch of His will, the beast pouring lace

from his sea-bottom bed; and that was the faith

that had fade from a child in the Methodist chapel

in Chisel Street, Castries, when the whale-bell

sang service and, in hard pews ribbed like the whale,
proud with despair, we sang how our race
survive the sea's maw, our history, our peril,
and now I was ready for whatever death will.
But if that storm had strength, was in Cap'n face,
beard beading with spray, tears salting his eyes,
crucify to his post, that nigger hold fast
to that wheel, man, like the cross held Jesus,
and the wounds of his eyes like they crying for us,
and I feeding him white rum, while every crest
with Leviathan-lash make the *Flight* quail
like two criminal. Whole night, with no rest,
till red-eyed like dawn, we watch our travail
subsiding, subside, and there was no more storm.
And the noon sea get calm as Thy Kingdom come.

11 After the Storm

There's a fresh light that follows a storm
while the whole sea still havoc; in its bright wake
I saw the veiled face of Maria Concepcion
marrying the ocean, then drifting away
in the widening lace of her bridal train
with white gulls her bridesmaids, till she was gone.
I wanted nothing after that day.
Across my own face, like the face of the sun,

a light rain was falling, with the sea calm.

Fall gently, rain, on the sea's upturned face
like a girl showering; make these islands fresh
as Shabine once knew them! Let every trace,
every hot road, smell like clothes she just press
and sprinkle with drizzle. I finish dream;
whatever the rain wash and the sun iron:
the white clouds, the sea and sky with one seam,
is clothes enough for my nakedness.

Though my *Flight* never pass the incoming tide
of this inland sea beyond the loud reefs
of the final Bahamas, I am satisfied
if my hand gave voice to one people's grief.

Open the map. More islands there, man,
than peas on a tin plate, all different size,
one thousand in the Bahamas alone,
from mountains to low scrub with coral keys,
and from this bowsprit, I bless every town,
the blue smell of smoke in hills behind them,
and the one small road winding down them like twine
to the roofs below; I have only one theme:

The bowsprit, the arrow, the longing, the lunging heart—
the flight to a target whose aim we'll never know,
vain search for one island that heals with its harbor

and a guiltless horizon, where the almond's shadow
doesn't injure the sand. There are so many islands!
As many islands as the stars at night
on that branched tree from which meteors are shaken
like falling fruit around the schooner *Flight*.
But things must fall, and so it always was,
on one hand Venus, on the other Mars;
fall, and are one, just as this earth is one
island in archipelagoes of stars.
My first friend was the sea. Now, is my last.
I stop talking now. I work, then I read,
cotching under a lantern hooked to the mast.
I try to forget what happiness was,
and when that don't work, I study the stars.
Sometimes is just me, and the soft-scissored foam
as the deck turn white and the moon open
a cloud like a door, and the light over me
is a road in white moonlight taking me home.
Shabine sang to you from the depths of the sea.

6.1 Analysis of the poem:

The Schooner *Flight* folds together local history (the collision of European and African in the Caribbean, the aftermath of a racially mixed colonial society) and mythic history—Homer's and Vergil's myths of national origin, of the voyage as shaping, redemptive ordeal. To put it differently, the poem is negotiating between local history as such and a local history—of the Caribbean or the Mediterranean—claiming universal shape, meaning, and importance. History, narratives and understandings of the past, is the method, the topic, and the crux of this poem. *SF*

begins in *medias res*, and doubles back repeatedly (the first section ends, "let me tell you how this business begin"). The voyage forward is punctuated with memories or visions of the past. Walcott constructs his long lyric on the model of an epic (as he was to do at greater length in *Omeros*, more recently), marshaling the resources of a tradition, and this is true both of the poem's recursive structure and its passages of densely allusive language. Topically, the poem is profoundly concerned with the ways the present encodes the past: in social arrangements, in language, in genetic inheritance, however occulted. It is because Shabine is of mixed descent that he has no place in a society in which black pride follows white power, and must go wander on the sea; the descent which denies him a conventional identity (ancestors who acknowledge him, a place in one society or another) by that denial leaves him virtually anonymous, with all the advantages as symbol and disadvantages for life so entailed. The landscape and seascape through which Shabine and the *Flight* travel are layered with a history of violence across racial and national lines, and the obtrusion of that history into Shabine's consciousness forms a good deal of the narrative.

"The Schooner *Flight*" begins with expulsion and weeping. A hint of leaving Paradise behind ("I ... watch the sky burn/above Laventille pink as the gown/in which the woman I left was sleeping")—more clearly, though, a sense of Shabine shaking the dust from off his feet, the just man separating himself from the unrighteous: "They had started to poison my soul." If the landscape of line 1 ("idle August, while the sea soft") sounds idyllic, its *otium* translates into a lethal stasis: Shabine "stood like a stone," and his "dry neighbour ... look through me like I was dead." In the landscape so surveyed, even nature looks man-made and tacky, the sea "rippling like galvanize," the stars "nail holes ... in the sky roof." Nature is not only reified but divided: the wind "interfere with the trees."

The sea contains a human past, which becomes visible here to Shabine; yet the dead suspended in Walcott's ocean are not only Shabine's predecessors as Caribbean man but also his **[page 325]** predecessors as poet. The passage echoes Ariel's song in *The Tempest*: "Of his bones are coral made,/Those are pearls which were his eyes,/Nothing of him that doth fade,/But doth suffer a sea-change,/Into something rich and strange." Shabine reverses the Shakespearean transformation, recognizing sand and coral (no pearls here) as the bones of the dead. In *The Tempest*, Ariel's song mocks Alonso's grief for his son, believed drowned, with the proffer of a mere body made "rich and strange" in its dying. Here, drowning is deaestheticized and de-particularized: these bones are the traces of a long history. The passage both echoes and turns Shakespeare, playing on ideas of mourning and fetishistic attachment to the body which the poem engages elsewhere—and in its context, it registers the pressure, if not unequivocally the oppression, of literary ancestors on Shabine's effort to salvage something of value from the past.

As lover, Shabine imagines himself bound to a dead past, immune to the promise of a regenerate future; he looks back to Maria Concepcion like a mourner fixed at graveside, grieving for a body. Shabine's departure, however fortuitous for the project of leaving Maria Concepcion, is motivated in lines which take us back to the poem's ambitions as a kind of national epic.

I had no nation now but the imagination.
After the white man, the niggers didn't want me
when the power swing to their side.
The first chain my hands and apologize "History";
the next said I wasn't black enough for their pride (350).

"History" is proposed as another name for stasis and repetition, what immobilizes Shabine and what makes alternatives to chaining his hands impossible or invisible. Only a few lines further, that laconic apology, "History," is personified as an occulted ancestor; if history is the problem for Shabine, it is also evidently the source.

I met History once, but he ain't recognize me.
...
I confront him and shout, 'Sir, is Shabine!
They say I'se your grandson. You remember Grandma,
your black cook, at all?' The bitch hawk and spat.
A spit like that worth any number of words.
But's all them bastards have left us: words (350).

Shabine wants and even needs a narrative about the past, yet History itself won't give him one. What happens next speaks tellingly to the poem's strategies overall: Shabine's desire for ancestral history finds spectacular fulfillment in the vision of a whole flotilla of ghost ships reenacting the collective past. Yet the passage which ushers in the vision of history is one of the poem's most purely lyrical, and *least* historical, moments, brief enough to quote in full.

Dusk. The *Flight* passing Blanchisseuse.
Gulls wheel like from a gun again,
and foam gone amber that was white,
lighthouse and star start making friends,
down every beach the long day ends,
and there, on that last stretch of sand,
on a beach bare of all but light,
dark hands start pulling in the seine
of the dark sea, deep, deep inland (351–2).

The voice of "The *Flight* passing Blanchisseuse" gives us a context of harmony and repetition. The gulls wheel "again," day ends, as night falls you see the stars. The star and the lighthouse agree, nature and man in harmony. For all the passage's generality, we feel we know where we are, in this landscape virtually stripped of referents but oriented around the order of land and water, light and dark, punctuated by the seamarks of lighthouse and star. The passage's one geographical referent, Blanchisseuse, places the *Flight* off the northern coast of Trinidad, about to leave it for the open sea, and clearly this is where Shabine's renewing "sea-bath" (346) begins;

the poem's conclusion invokes some cosmic laundress (*une blanchisseuse*) as the agent of cleansing and renewal.

Fall gently, rain, on the sea's upturned face
like a girl showering; make these islands fresh
As Shabine once knew them! Let every trace,
every hot road, smell like clothes she just press
and sprinkle with drizzle (360).

Thus, in "Shabine Encounters the Middle Passage" the bones spread as coral and sand "from Senegal to San Salvador" are reassembled into their living form and context, appearing as an armada of ghost ships assembled out of the dawn fog:

frigates, barkentines, the backward-moving current swept them on,
and high on their decks I saw great admirals,
Rodney, Nelson, de Grasse
slowly they heaved past from east to west
like this round world was some cranked water wheel,
every ship pouring like a wooden bucket
dredged from the deep (352).

Shabine sees these men—o'war in some detail—names, the men's "rusty eyeholes like cannons"—and hears "the hoarse orders/they gave those Shabines," "the hissing weeds they trailed." As the ghost ships sail through and past the *Flight*, he casts his mind back to the past he shares with them: "my memory revolve on all sailors before me." When the sun comes over the horizon, the war ships vanish, and a second vision follows.

Next we pass slave ships. Flags of all nations,
our fathers below deck too deep, I suppose,
[page 330] to hear us shouting. So we stop shouting. Who knows
who his grandfather is, much less his name?
Tomorrow our landfall will be the Barbados (353).

Walcott stakes a claim for the power of lyric to repeal the passage of time, and permit construction of a past in shapes we can live with and understand—in other words, poetry's power to reproduce history as myth. These middle sections of the poem make the claim good, though not innocently. In the section which follows ("The Sailor Sings Back to the Casuarinas"), a melancholy and cultivated voice laments that history, particularly colonial history, can never be evacuated from poetry, which will always be haunted by "the pain of history words contain" (354). Even the casuarinas bend with grief in the wind, mourning another of the drowned sailors who in this poem seem to mark history's killing power; the power of images to console is never total.

Shabine, too, is not quite done with the past. At the climax of the storm which takes up the poem's penultimate section, "Out of the Depths," the ghost ships of "The Middle Passage" return: not as signs of a buried ancestry but as harbingers of death.

... sky water drench us, and I hear myself cry,
"I'm the drowned sailor in her *Book of Dreams*."
I remembered them ghost ships, I saw me corkscrewing
to the sea—bed of sea—worms, fathom pass fathom,
my jaw clench like a fist, and only one thing
hold me, trembling, how my family safe home.
Then a strength like it seize me and the strength said:
"I from backward people who still fear God."

[page 332] Let Him, in his might, heave Leviathan upward
by the winch of His will, the beast pouring lace
from his sea—bottom bed; and that was the faith
that had fade from a child in the Methodist chapel
in Chisel Street, Castries, when the whale—bell
sang service and, in hard pews ribbed like the whale,
proud with despair, we sang how our race
survive the sea's maw, our history, our peril,
and now I was ready for whatever death will (359).

When peace comes after this storm, it comes not only to air and water but to virtually all the storms the poem has evoked; rage and desire ebb. One looks to this passage, then, for resolution of a great deal, and it seems particularly pressing to understand the work it does, and how that work gets done.

The faith Shabine lost was in "the revolution" and "the love of my woman"; what seizes him now is not *that* faith but an earlier one, the rediscovered faith in a God who can lift sinking bodies, "heave Leviathan **[page 333]** upward by the winch of his will." (Milton also hovers here, in his invocation of a God who acts in defiance of water: "So Lycidas, sunk low but mounted high, through the dear might of him that walked the waves.")

Finding this faith, Shabine also finds the place in which it originated. In his recuperation of the faith "that had fade from a child" Shabine reidentifies himself with a community which sings its own history, a sustaining version of the past not as misfortune but as endurance: "we sang how our race/survive the sea's maw, our history, our peril." What is recuperated as faith is remarkably local ("in the Methodist chapel/in Chisel Street, Castries"), and grounded not so much in an inward experience (conviction of sin, experience of grace) as in a communal worship which seeks to understand its own past in the terms of a Biblical narrative about election, exile, survival. This, I think, is the logic of Walcott's storm—scene, and the method of Shabine's redemption. Shabine imagines himself as a drowned sailor, bound to the fate of "them ghost—ships," but in an instant recognizes that he need not die or resemble the dead. Rather, he finds a belief that he may live, and that belief that living may be possible makes it possible. In

his recognition of that faith as coming from a community, he finds a history which locates and makes sense of this moment, both in terms of his personal past and in terms of a shared, communal narrative.

At the same time, "Out of the Depths" has its incoherences when taken with the rest of the poem. These are perhaps best identified by asking whether the "re—" of "rediscovered," "reidentifies," "recuperation" indicates recursion or renewal. The poem anticipates and subsequently claims the second; yet the passage, in some measure, suggests the first. Symptomatically, this pivotal moment in the poem carries a particularly dense inhabitation of antecedent voices, from the section title's direct quotation of Psalm 130 to the more or less explicit echoes of *Jonah*, *Matthew*, "Lycidas," and "The Wasteland" ("Here, said she, / Is your card, the drowned Phoenician sailor";⁴ "I'm the drowned sailor in her *Book of Dreams!*"). The echoes these allusions set in motion open the storm to a mythic dimension where Shabine's near-drowning participates in an archetypal narrative of death and rebirth. Echoes of a poem like "The Wasteland" italicize Shabine's similarities to figures like the Fisher (334) King; to the extent that he is a figure symbolic of a nation, for Shabine to survive his ordeal by storm means good fortune not for him only but for the people of whom he is a symbol. It is not clear, though, that Shabine is a mythic figure in quite that way, removed from time and contingency; to the extent that this is still a poem about the imaginative coming to terms with history, the profusion of antecedent texts also signals a resurgence of the past's pressure.

In this narrative otherwise concerned with breaking free of the past, coming to terms with the past, releasing the past, salvation comes at a moment described in the language of regression: "Then a strength like it seize me and the strength said: / 'I from backward people who still fear God.' / ... that was the faith that had fade from a child in the Methodist chapel ... " Shabine embraces as literally salvific "backwardness," belatedness, a return to childhood. This backward turn, moreover, embraces an unreformed past, a childhood faith of fear, pride, and despair as well as survival. It reckons with the crises of corruption and division in the poem's earlier sections ("Raptures of the Deep," "Shabine Leaves the Republic") by forgetting them, returning to a moment before these things took place: "like this round world was some cranked water-wheel," time again moving backward.

If the crisis of the poem in "Out of the Depths" undoes the earlier work of leaving the past behind, its conclusion, "After the Storm," is less than firmly committed to the communal context the previous section has reconstituted; arguably, its undeniable lyric power comes with the move away from that context. The final stretch of the poem is strangely depopulated. It begins with the end of desire, as Shabine sees "the veiled face of Maria Concepcion marrying the ocean, then drifting away... I wanted nothing after that day." After the storm, both the local "we" of "Shabine Encounters the Middle Passage" and the communal "we" of "Out of the Depths" vanish—only the first person singular remains. Though Shabine is still aboard the *Flight*, no one else appears with him. Lovers, shipmates, churchgoers have been subsumed by the sea itself—"the sea my first friend; now, my last"—and this line signals a turn towards nature which becomes a merging, first figurative ("the moon open/a cloud like a door") and then almost literal: "Shabine sang to you from the depths of the sea." (335)

The evocative last line echoes endings by Milton and Eliot, both the final, framing turn to the third person in "Lycidas" ("So sang the uncouth swain to th'oaks and rills") and the uncanny, drowned voice which concludes "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "We have lingered in the chambers of the sea/By sea girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown/Till human voices wake us and we drown" (*Collected Poems*, 7). Each of these two great antecedent poems ends with an ironizing disclaimer. "This was an uncouth song, not *my* song." Or, in "Prufrock," I am excluded from the song, it is not my song, not addressed to me, and I cannot linger in the place of its singing and live. Walcott's turn towards the third person, by contrast, does not seem to disavow the poem which precedes it; the song is claimed by or for the speaker, as well as the power to inhabit the deep place it comes from (Prufrock's "chambers of the sea") and to own it as a *native* place. In that sense, this poem attempts to trump Milton and Eliot both; it also deironizes them, asserting that drowned sailors may survive, that one may sing from beneath the sea, that a poem may be written without being framed and disavowed by the authorial voice.

If as a *living* voice Shabine sings "from the depths of the sea," it can no longer be said that he has everything in common with other islanders. In "After the Storm" Terada sees Shabine pulling "his perspective as far back as it can go," to a "nearly posthumous distance" (114). It is from that distance that Shabine speaks his blessing on the islands left behind, a distance from which those islands, if "all different size," begin to share generic features, even to look alike.

Open the map. More islands there, man,
 than peas on a tin plate, all different size,
 one thousand in the Bahamas alone,
 from mountains to low scrub with coral keys,
 and from this bowsprit, I bless every town,
 the blue smell of smoke in hills behind them,
 and the one small road winding down them like twine
 to the roofs below ... (360)

With the turn from local detail and a contextualized personal history to a more general, Romantic nature, the poem's ending abandons the (336) "we" it has worked towards earlier in favor of an isolate vatic self whose power to bless comes with distance.

Shabine is no Aeneas. More a descendant than a father, he has left his own children behind, and renounces desire more for peace than duty. It's instructive to compare the end of this poem with *Omeros*, in which the fisherman Achille considers a Virgilian project before finding it impossible.

He might have to leave the village for good, its hotels and marinas,
 the ice-packed shrimps of pink tourists, and find someplace,
 some cove he could settle like another Aeneas,
 founding not Rome but home, to survive in its peace
 far from the discos, the transports, the greed, the noise.⁵

Like Shabine, Achille is disgusted with his fallen world, imagines a fresh start; yet he ends by returning home, not finding or founding a new one, because there was "no cove he liked as much as his own village ... no bay parted its mouth under him like Helen." Aeneas' project of a new foundation is untenable for Achille because he can accept no substitute for what he has. Home and woman are to be repossessed in the knowledge of loss and imperfection. For Shabine, the notion of home itself exists only in a metaphysical sense which makes it practically unlocatable, a "vain search" for an Eden before guilt: "one island that heals with its harbour/and a guiltless horizon, where the almond's shadow/doesn't injure the sand." Unlike Achille's canoe, the schooner *Flight* has no landfall in prospect.

The imaginative work performed on history in the middle sections of the poem is aimed in part at the rediscovery of community and lineage, yet "The Schooner *Flight*"'s protagonist keeps moving past the points of potential reintegration he locates—signaled by shifts from "I" to "we"—and the imagined communities they offer. In retrospect, Shabine's statement "I had no nation now but the imagination" looks like a final shift of commitment from nation *to* imagination, an imagination whose typical mode is movement, sublimation, flight:

If Shabine begins as "any red nigger," in an anonymity which makes him legion, his final apotheosis as the "genius of the shore," or as a voice singing from the caves of the sea, operates on different terms, replacing representative man with representing man, epic with an artistic *bildungsroman* in which to gain a voice, one loses the body, and with it the body's world.

The narrator and Plunkett, the poet and the historian, are faulted for the same tendencies: an attachment like Shabine's to what is history, over and done with, but also a detachment from those who endure that history's consequences in the present. The *Omeros*—poet regards the fisherman Achille, who sometimes becomes Homer's Achilles, with a complicated and wounded love recorded in "this book, which will remain unknown and unread by him" (320). Virgil and Homer give the poem [page 338] a clear and celebratory statement of theme—"I sang of quiet Achille, Afolabe's son" (320)—but the poem meditates over and over on the torsions of that project, how to write for or about Achille, or Helen.

The long poem represents its own project as virtually impossible, or impossible to perform with integrity; *Omeros* leads its poet through the circle of hell where selfish poets suffer, and he scarcely escapes "falling towards the shit they stewed in" (293). By contrast, "The Schooner *Flight*" gives us a Shabine for whom poetry is still the solution, rather than an intricate dilemma. As a man, he is disappointed, scapegoated, sickened by his life; as a poet, he suffers no more challenge than a moment of ridicule and a knife fight, which he wins. In the last lines of the poem, Shabine sails down a "road in white moonlight" secure in the double identity of singer and protagonist, Shabine the poet singing Shabine the fisherman individual and collective. But the end is not untroubled. The absence of happiness from this solitary peace, the fruitless search for an island which will heal and remove guilt, look forward to the more self-critical or self-conscious programme of *Omeros*, and suggest that the poet's story is only now beginning.

6.2 Some solved Questions and Answers:

How does The voice of "The *Flight* passing Blanchisseuse" gives us a context of harmony and repetition?

The voice of "The *Flight* passing Blanchisseuse" gives us a context of harmony and repetition. The gulls wheel "again," day ends, as night falls you see the stars. The star and the lighthouse agree, nature and man in harmony. For all the passage's generality, we feel we know where we are, in this landscape virtually stripped of referents but oriented around the order of land and water, light and dark, punctuated by the seamarks of lighthouse and star. The passage's one geographical referent, Blanchisseuse, places the *Flight* off the northern coast of Trinidad, about to leave it for the open sea, and clearly this is where Shabine's renewing "sea-bath" (346) begins; the poem's conclusion invokes some cosmic laundress (*une blanchisseuse*) as the agent of cleansing and renewal.

What does the phrase, Dark hands represent in the poem?

The phrase "dark hands" represent visually the act of recollection whose results we see in the section which follows, seining the sea for sunken ships. That is, we see what amounts to the poet (Shabine, Walcott) exerting the power to make the sea surrender the past, not as ground up bones but as coherent images, virtually to turn time back to before dissolution, as if "this round world was some cranked water wheel." That power emerges—or, at least, is represented—through a brief recourse to lyric, the general, the timeless, the natural; the detour out of narrative replenishes its energies from another source.

Who is Shabine in this long poem?

In this concluding piece of the poem, Shabine is virtually only a voice ("voice to one people's grief"). Rather than a myth for the hybrid self, this is a myth for the poet; yet Shabine's *primary* identification as poet, hand, voice, comes late enough that it serves as conclusion rather than as topic. The case is different in Walcott's later, longer poem *Omeros*. There, Shabine's identities as poet, historian, fisher/voyager precipitate as the three distinct characters of "I," Major Plunkett, and Achille, only to subject that "I" to a thorough-going critique. *Omeros'* "I," a Caribbean poet, indicts himself for a "literature as guilty as History," guilty of a remorse which insists on hearing in the present only the echoes of the past, guilty of nostalgia for "the myth of rustic manners," of a privileged detachment which falsifies.

What are the dilemmas of Shabine mentioned in this poem?

The dilemma which are mentioned for Shabine in the opening sections of the poem is a curious one. Diving, he has a vision of God, and a "far voice" tells him, "If you leave her, I shall give you the morning star." The imperative, however, is simply to "leave her," not to return to married life; it is voiced against what appears less an inability to *choose* (between Maria Concepcion, the wife and children) than an inability to *release*, to let go. Indeed, Shabine's attempt to comply simply replaces Maria Concepcion with other lovers: "when I left the madhouse I tried other women but, once they stripped naked, their spiky cunts bristled like sea-eggs and I couldn't dive" (350). He is pressed to abandon this love which has divided him "from my children, flesh

of my flesh," not for integration but for a further division from that body which he mourns just as body: (326)

I ain't want her

dressed in the sexless light of a seraph,
I want those round brown eyes like a marmoset, and
till the day when I can lean back and laugh,
those claws that tickled my back on sweating
Sunday afternoons, like a crab on wet sand (347).

How does Shabine claims an affiliation with History in this poem?

Shabine insistently claims an *affiliation* with History. But this history turns out to be not so much the narrative he seeks (why you are chained, or the story of my black cook) as a silence. History refuses to perform its function: will not remember, will not speak, will not deliver a narrative of origins or trace the linkage of the present to the past. It is at this moment—disavowed by History—that Shabine voices the double loss of faith which seems to be at the center of the poem. "I no longer believed in the revolution/I was losing faith in the love of my woman." Under the malevolent gaze of History, the hopes for communal or individual renewal wither. Yet even here, Shabine's rebuff by History leads not to a repudiation of the past, or a turn towards creating more (328) viable futures, but to a renewed desire for history, and for narratives more true and/or less enervating than those of the spaghetti Westerns which play at the close of this section, "Shabine Leaves the Republic."

7 Dark August

So much rain, so much life like the swollen sky
of this black August. My sister, the sun,
broods in her yellow room and won't come out.

Everything goes to hell; the mountains fume
like a kettle, rivers overrun; still,
she will not rise and turn off the rain.

She is in her room, fondling old things,
my poems, turning her album. Even if thunder falls
like a crash of plates from the sky,

she does not come out.
Don't you know I love you but am hopeless
at fixing the rain ? But I am learning slowly

to love the dark days, the steaming hills,
the air with gossiping mosquitoes,
and to sip the medicine of bitterness,

so that when you emerge, my sister,
parting the beads of the rain,

with your forehead of flowers and eyes of forgiveness,

all with not be as it was, but it will be true
(you see they will not let me love
as I want), because, my sister, then

I would have learnt to love black days like bright ones,
The black rain, the white hills, when once
I loved only my happiness and you.

7.1 Analysis of the poem:

Derek Walcott has substantial meaning in his mind while writing this poem. He speaks about learning to love the dark days even when the sun won't come out. This can be related to living each day like it's your last, or it can also be related to loving black people as much as white people. White people can be referred to in this poem as bright ones and blacks can be referred to as dark ones. Walcott tries to put across the point to love even when things aren't as good as they could be. Even when someone wants happiness they won't always get it. This poem doesn't have a particular rhyme pattern, but it still gives good meaning. The poem can refer to a dark period in life and happiness (the sun) just won't come through. Walcott uses this mood in most of his poems in my opinion. Everything that Walcott talks about in his poems can be related to dark days, love, happiness, and overcoming those bad periods in life. He uses concrete imagery in this poem to help the reader picture exactly how dark this time was and to picture the sun actually trying to peek through. Going back to the racial concern, that was a dark period of time for most people. Everyone should be equal. Walcott may not have been thinking about race when writing this, but it is one thing that came to the top of my head. There should never be dark days for anyone. Walcott's poems sadden the readers quite a bit when its read because of the depression that the writer is in. A possible theme, just like stated earlier, could be to live each day like it's your last. Even on a dark day, learn to make it as bright as you can.

7.2 Solved questions with answers:

What does the poem refer to?

The poet refers dark weather as a bad days which comes in human life. He actually wants to say that there are many things which can't be fixed like rain which is the negative spiral of love. At last he says that the dark August (bad days in life) is sure to come again but he has learnt to love the bad weather and rains.. That means no matter how the harsh life seems we must not lose hope and see the positive sides of life rather than negative.

Whom does the poet miss in this rainy day?

The narrator is describing a rainy day, and longs for the sun to come out, calling it his sister. There is a shift in the middle of the poem, when the narrator changes from an anxious, dark mood to a lighter, hopeful one.

How does the sun personify in this poem?

The sun, representing happiness and joy, is personified as a sister, brooding and remembering the happiness of the past, but refusing to emerge and alleviate the depressing bad weather. The person feels love but is hopeless at fixing the rain, the negative spiral of a relationship. However there is a stoic hope for the future as the experience of sadness and pain results in a deeper strength and appreciation for the future happiness which will emerge through the trials of life, when feelings of guilt and blame are absolved by forgiveness and love, and a more mature understanding of what it means to live and to love and to be human- the spirit endures.

What does the alliteration swollen sky, sister sun, dark days, forehead flowers, learnt to love present the readers?

The alliteration (swollen sky, sister sun, dark days, forehead flowers, learnt to love), the \"s\" sounds, and the enjambment used (one sentence pulled through several stanzas) paint a melancholy picture. There is a shift at the end of the 4th stanza; at first the speaker was waiting, almost hopeful. The energy was fairly high, with words such as yellow, broods, kettle, crash of plates, and thunder, all of which either sound harsh or represent an obnoxiously \"loud\" item/action. Then the tone changes. The speaker is no longer upset or anxious, but he has accepted what he cannot control and is learning to deal with it with a sad tranquility.

How is this poem unique?

This poem is unique in its own way and is very intricate upon what he is trying to respond to. I think this poem has a lot of potential for a vivid explanation to the way he is trying to assert his meaning across to the reader

How does Walcott contrast elemental images in the poem?

Walcott contrasts elemental images with homely ones: rain, mountains, thunder with kettles, plates, room. This contrast seems to distinguish what we humans can control with what nature, the world hands to us. When the narrator says \"I am hopeless at fixing the rain\" it suggests confusion between the two categories, leading to an unspecified conflict.

The end of the poem presents an imagined future in which the forgiven narrator has learned to embrace both dark and happy experiences which provide \"bitter medicine.\"

As with much of Walcott's poetry, reductive interpretations miss the breadth, the richness of ideas implied in the diction.

8 Midsummer Tobago

Broad sun-stoned beaches.

White heat.
A green river.

A bridge,
scorched yellow palms

from the summer-sleeping house
drowsing through August.

Days I have held,
days I have lost,
days that outgrow, like daughters,
my harbouring arms.

8.1 Analysis of the poem:

The first image that crosses the mind of the readers is almost that exact image from above. A beautiful body of water, sand, and a bridge. This is a very short poem, but it also has a ton of meaning behind it. This poem has no rhyme pattern, but it is easy to read and stay interested. Throughout the writing, Walcott used imagery to help the reader (me) visualize what was being said. Derek Walcott stated "days I have held, days I have lost" (8-9). At any point in time in someone's life, things can be going absolutely wonderful, until one day it is gone. This poem makes a comparison in line ten about "days that outgrow, like daughters, my harbouring arms." (10-11). Men have daughters that grow like weeds and eventually outgrow the families and start their own. As Walcott stated in "Midsummer, Tobago", he once held beautiful days and now they are gone. As I read, I assumed that this is a place Walcott was once living and is now a place that he has outgrown. He misses it, but just like a daughter outgrowing a father's arms, he outgrew a place he once called home. One possible theme can be summed up as "Let go and let God". There are a lot of things in life that a normal human being cannot control. A person can't control when and when not to let go of something. It just happens. You just have to move on and let the man upstairs take control. This theme is also something that I have applied to my life recently. While choosing colleges I have just let go of things and been patient to see what has bubbled up to the surface. I knew that great things would eventually happen and now I have the opportunity I never thought I would, and that is to play college football. Back to the poem, it is evident that Walcott had to let go of something and let his gut take him where he needed to be. The first thing that comes to the minds of the readers immediately is the thought of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean Island. So when he was describing the "Broad sun-stoned beaches."

(Line 1) it can be pictured as the beautiful scenery of the beaches over there and how much the sun hits the shore. Walcott is a resident of Tobago, off “from the summer-sleeping house drowsing through August” (Line 6-7) for a break from his normal life and that “days that outgrow, like daughters, my harbouring arms.” (Line 10-11) he’s a father enjoying the last few days of a beautiful summer he has remaining. Walcott writes this poem in more of a journal entry format because he’s simply expressing his thoughts and feelings about his summer, even though towards the end his tone is melancholy and apologetic. As understood, the speaker’s setting is in Tobago during midsummer. The speaker is relaxing, and gazing over the beauty of the Caribbean. In lines 2-5 Walcott says, “White heat. A green river. A bridge, scorched yellow palms” when describing the view out of his summer home in Tobago. While summer continues, the speaker realizes how short his summer was and “Days I have held, Days I have lost” (Line 8-9) pertaining to how fast his summer went by. Imagery definitely played a major role throughout this poem, which also helped with understanding it as well. Walcott really did a great job with writing this piece of work.

1 Who is the speaker of the poem?

The speaker of the poem is not clearly revealed and is left a bit ambiguous, but Walcott does use the words ‘I’ and ‘my’. It seems to be some resident of Tobago, off at his summer home for a break from his normal life. From the last 2 lines of the poem, one can tell he is a father. He seems to be enjoying the last beautiful days of summer he has left.

2 Who is the target audience in this poem?

The poem doesn’t really speak to a specific audience, and acts as more of a general piece of writing. The poem itself just seems like a journal entry by the speaker/writer, expressing his thoughts and feelings for that particular day in the summer. His feelings are somewhat remorseful and a bit sad to read in the last couple of lines.

3 Where does the poem take place?

The poem takes place in Tobago around midsummer. Wow. That’s a stretch, eh? The situation seems to be a relaxing summer’s day on the island, with the speaker of the poem expressing his thoughts as he gazes out at the beauty of the Caribbean. The island is vividly described with fantastic imagery, using clever word choice/placement. No specific event, however, seems to have occurred or is being described.

4. How is the poem structured?

The poem is structured in couplets with the exception of the first line. This makes the poem flow easily from stanza to stanza when it’s read. It’s a bit of a stretch, but the structure of the poem itself is almost like the lapsing waves on a shoreline, flowing in and out in the same way the poem does. There are no rhyme patterns present whatsoever, and it’s written in a free-verse style. There are similar meter patterns within the couplets, but nothing seems to stay

consistent throughout the poem. Due to the lack of rhyme in the poem, there aren't many cases of assonance or consonance. But there are a few cases of alliteration, such as 'sun-stoned' and 'summer sleeping house', in lines 1 and 6, respectively. Repetition is only truly used once. In the 4th and 5th couplets, Walcott repeatedly begins the phrases with the word 'days'.

5. What is the uniqueness about the poem?

The poem uses very specific words and diction to create the unique, beautiful image of the Caribbean Walcott is known for. The descriptions of the surroundings and the imagery present paint a vivid picture of a tropical summer get-away in midsummer. The words describing color, such as 'white', 'green', and 'yellow', are examples of the simple, yet thought-provoking words Walcott uses to bring the reader into the poem. No specific words seem to stick out, but all of Walcott's word choices give off powerful responses in the reader. The diction used brings out a joyful, awestruck feeling for the first 7 lines, as the reader is enthralled by the beautiful imagery. And then the tone carefully transitions to a more regretful one for the rest of the poem, as the speaker's thoughts are presented.

6. Comment on the imagery of the poem?

Imagery is definitely dominant. The word choice, the structure of the poem itself, and the setting all bring out the specific feelings of a warm, pleasant Caribbean getaway from the reader. The summer air and colorful scenery add to the poem in a unique way to generate an image of relaxation and tranquility.

9 Blues

Those five or six young guys
lunched on the stoop
that oven-hot summer night
whistled me over. Nice
5 and friendly. So, I stop.
MacDougal or Christopher
Street in chains of light.

A summer festival. Or some
saint's. I wasn't too far from
10 home, but not too bright
for a negro, and not too dark.
I figured we were all
one, wop, negro, jew,
besides, this wasn't Central Park.
15 I'm coming on too strong? You figure
right! They beat this yellow negro
black and blue.

Yeah. During all this, scared
on case one used a knife,
20 I hung my olive-green, just-bought
sports coat on a fire plug.
I did nothing. They fought
each other, really. Life
gives them a few kicks,
25 that's all. The spades, the spicks.

My face smashed in, my bloody mug
pouring, my olive-branch jacket saved
from cuts and tears,
I crawled four flights upstairs.
30 Sprawled in the gutter, I
remember a few watchers waved
loudly, and one kid's mother shouting
like 'Jackie' or 'Terry,'
'now that's enough!'
35 It's nothing really.
They don't get enough love.

You know they wouldn't kill
you. Just playing rough,
like young Americans will.
40 Still it taught me something
about love. If it's so tough,
forget it

9.1 Analysis of the Poem:

After reading this poem, I am glad to have family and friends that love me unconditionally. At first, I was confused as to what this poem was about. The poem has some end rhyme and some imagery to paint a picture. I wasn't sure if the author was the one involved in the fight or not. As I continued to read, I began to see the true meaning of the poem. It wasn't about the fight that was going on or the gory details about who was getting hit and how hard. It was about the fact that there are actually children in the world who aren't loved enough to know that fighting is unnecessary. Some lines that really stuck out to me were at the end starting at line 30 and ending at line 35. The fact that some parents would say that fighting is "nothing really" makes me sad for the kids who have to grow up thinking that is true. Derek Walcott said it perfectly by stating that "they don't get enough love." I have been very fortunate with my family and friends because

they support me in everything that I do, leading me to never need or want to fight to let out my anger. The last stanza hit home for me because I agree completely with the line "If it's so tough, forget it." I honestly believe that if a kid has to try that hard in order to be loved, it isn't worth getting the love of the people they are trying for. I believe that love is discoverable in anybody. Therefore, a child should never have to try so hard to receive love from another person. It should come naturally, and there are plenty of people who are willing to love others. The good definitely outweighs the bad. This poem is a good wake up call for people to read and realize that some people are really treated like they are not deserving of love. This makes me thankful for the ones that love me, and teaches me to remember to always love others no matter the circumstances.

9.2 Solved questions and Answers:

What is the theme of the poem Blues?

The poem Blues is about racism and the violence that comes with it. By just looking at the title and reading the first few lines, I thought this poem was going to discuss music and how people sing about the blues when they are down. Instead, this poem went into racism and the affects of it. The poet's face has been smashed in, with his bloody mug pouring. It offers wisdom because it lets me know that racism is still in affect in America, and that needs to stop. We are all put at danger when it comes to racism. Whether a Jew, black man, Asian, etc, we can all fall into a role that someone might hate. We need to pay more attention to racism in the United States, and it will be interesting to see who our new president will be next year, considering that it can be a black man or a woman. Many people believe that if we have a black man in office, he has a good chance of being shot. With Hurricane Katrina, it opened our eyes to racism in the United States. It still exists, even though we think that racism only died in the 1960's.

How is stark realism brought about in the poem?

it really brings you down to reality, and gives you a 'slap in the face' about what post-slavery american were really like. We all hear stories about how integration was a struggle for blacks, and how unwelcoming the whites were.

My face smashed in, my bloody mug
pouring, my olive-branch jacket saved
from cuts and tears,
I crawled four flights upstairs.

Just the imagery here alone can give the reader an vivid mental picture about what was going on.

I wasn't too far from
home, but not too bright
for a nigger, and not too dark.

You get the idea that the narrator is a mixture of black and white, by saying 'not too bright for a nigger, and not too dark' saying that he's lighter than most blacks, but not light enough to be white, signifying that in his ancestors, there was an interracial couple, which was severely frowned upon at this time. The 'I wasn't too far from home' can mean the physical location of where he was, or his ancestry. Home can signify his family and where they came from, meaning he's not too far from his native land.

What is the basic theme of this poem?

This poem by Derek Walcott is a bit difficult to analyze given that it is rather difficult to figure out when it was written. However, a line does appear that strikes discord is.

"I figured we were all one, wop, nigger, jew, besides, this wasn't Central Park."

It means that in his eyes, (probably Derek Walcott's Eyes), he viewed himself as the same as the same as these other groups. He even used the terms that were used to refer to certain groups of people that had undergone their hardships in the past. But, even though all 3 groups had been discriminated against, he was beaten up and on top of that for nothing. His group was still considered lower even after considerable attempts in history to correct that.

I did nothing. They fought
each other, really. Life
gives them a few kcks,
that's all. The spades, the spicks.

This line was a symbol of the war within the world on how to deal with these many racial groups and how it caused problems within their own groups as individual opinions waged war on each other.

You know they wouldn't kill
you. Just playing rough,
like young Americans will.
Still it taught me something
about love. If it's so tough,
forget it.

This last piece suggests how opinions of America are formed. Played rough and like to try to fix things but, if it was, then it may cause so much trouble, then maybe their help is not worth it.

10 The Virgins

Down the dead streets of sun-stoned Frederiksted,
 the first free port to die for tourism,
 strolling at funeral pace, I am reminded
 of life not lost to the American dream;
 5 but my small-islander's simplicities
 can't better our new empire's civilized
 exchange of cameras, watches, perfumes, brandies
 for the good life, so cheaply underpriced
 that only the crime rate is on the rise
 10 in streets blighted with sun, stone arches
 and plazas blown dry by the hysteria
 of rumor. A condominium drowns
 in vacancy; its bargains are dusted,
 but only a jeweled housefly drones
 15 over the bargains. The roulettes spin
 rustily to the wind—the vigorous trade
 that every morning would begin afresh
 by revving up green water round the pierhead
 heading for where the banks of silver thresh.

Analysis of the Poem:

Walcott is not sympathetic to tourism, especially when tourism can affect the Virgin island's identity, isolation, and simplicity for the sake of capitalism. On one hand he seems to be saying that tourism is good for the island's local economy, then on the other hand he seems to be saying that tourism has come at a price---crime, crowds, failed real estate sales and locals seeking the American dream from the tourists seeking sunny weather. The imagery of the sun hints at the fact that the great weather there will continue to draw tourists to the islands, and because of this, the island has lost its identity and it will no longer be in isolation or left alone as long as there are hundreds of tourists willing to visit there year round.

The Virgins," they both portray a time and place lost tottime and world change. William Blake's poem talks of his London lost to crime and the undirected attention to the cities hygiene, drugs, and prostitution. He talks of the loss of the city and the inability to go back to a time that is lost where London thrived. Derek Walcott's poem talks of his home town of Fredenkstad lost to tourism like a poison flowing through [your] [????], slowly killing away all that once was taking away his small country hometown. Yet at the same time booming the city to great new things and bringing in society and riches. Walcott's poem is able to still grasp on the picture of what Fredrikstad once was and how simple life used to be. The same issues appear in both poems to great towns are becoming modern and growing in times whereas the people are lost, all that they know in that process. Blake's poem shows a town that has already been ravaged by time whereas Walcott shows a town in the process at the toll of time.

10.2 Some solved Questions with Answers:

1) Did you find yourself sympathizing with or questioning the speaker's viewpoint? Explain.

I sympathize with the speaker's viewpoint, as a local of a tourist destination I understand his view of the Virgin Islands and how they have "died" to the tourism and the American dream.

2) What is the tourist reminded of as he strolls the streets of Frederiksted?

The tourist is reminded of life not lost to the American dream and his small-islander's simplicities.

3) How does Walcott ironically represent the "good life" of "the American dream"? How does his picture compare with your ideas of "the American dream" and "progress"?

Walcott ironically depicts the "good life" as an island being overtaken by tourism that has lost its luster and charm and turned into a cheap and crime ridden city. The typical image of "the American dream" is rolling plains, apple pie, freedom, hard working citizens earning a living doing an honest days work. "Progress" of the American people is seen as industry, suburbia, growth, and money.

4) How do you explain line 2? What other images in the poem suggest decay and emptiness?

Line 2 explains the demise of the island and its fall to tourism. Images of the town such as "blown dry" "drowns in vacancy" "spins rustily in the wind" all depict a town in ruins. The images suggest a city in the desert dry and deserted, not an island in the Virgin Islands.

5) What positive images suggest the island "simplicities" that once existed in Frederiksted?

Frederiksted once engaged in simplistic trading of fish at the pier.

6) Sum up what you think Walcott is saying about the changes he sees. Who or what is responsible for the changes? Are the changes for the better or for the worse?

Walcott is conveying his dislike for tourism and “industry” on the Island which seems to be responsible for the changes. The changes that have occurred with the arrival and departure of tourism have negatively affected the island and the islanders.

7) Have places within the United States fallen victim to “the American dream” in ways similar to Walcott’s description of Frederiksted? Explain your answer, and discuss your reactions.

Detroit has fallen victim to “the American dream” in similar ways to Walcott’s description of Frederiksted. Detroit was resurrected by the car industry boom, but after car companies started moving their factories, the city fell to ruins, leaving slums and thousands of people jobless.

11 White Egrets

*This page is a cloud between whose fraying edges
a headland with mountains appears brokenly
then is hidden again until what emerges
from the now cloudless blue is the grooved sea
and the whole self-naming island, its ochre verges,
its shadow-plunged valleys and a coiled road
threading the fishing villages, the white, silent surges
of combers along the coast, where a line of gulls has arrowed
into the widening harbour of a town with no noise,*

its streets growing closer like a print you can now read,

two cruise ships, schooners, a tug, ancestral canoes,

as a cloud slowly covers the page and it goes

white again and the book comes to a close

11.1 Analysis of the poem:

Colonial history is a common feature that is found in most of Walcott's poems. However in *White Egrets*, the reader will find friendships and love mingled with waves of more universal significance. Friends are scattered or lost, but the central image offers an alternative to this sadness: "the egrets stalk through the rain / as if nothing mortal can affect them". Elegy and regret are to the fore, as in "The Acacia Trees", with its superb evocation of presence and loss in thinking of dead friends: "I go down to the sea by another road/ with manchineel shadows and stunted sea grapes/ dwarfed by the wind. I carry something to read:/ the wind is bright and shadows race like grief,/ I open their books and see their distant shapes/ approaching and always arriving, their voices heard/ in the page of a cloud, like the soft surf in my head."

There is also the need to face errors and sins. There have been failures of love, and the taste of loss and failure is bitter and persistent – "love and the suffering that love likes". Yet *White Egrets* is not a confessional work in the exposed sense we encounter in Robert Lowell or John Berryman. The poems hold little interest as gossip, seeking instead for the truthfulness of intense distillation. Walcott's combination of honesty and tact will not last long as firewall against the curious, but it speaks for an artistic seriousness he is at pains to protect, since poetry is his vocation, and any confession will have to face an unforgiving verdict at the bench of art itself. At times he wonders if his gift itself has withered, whether he should let it go – like, he says, a woman who deserves not to be injured.

The book extends its leavetaking beyond the personal life into dramatised images of the end of the British empire. In "The Spectre of Empire", a Conradian exile, white-suited and fallen from grace, haunts the scenes of lost power. Not for the first time, Walcott examines his complex fascination with an imperium whose exploitation of human and natural resources happened to offer him a language which both condemns and affirms but above all evokes, and which now speaks for the levelling effects of mortality on both great and small.

A lesser writer might be content to mark this recessionary, to retire into a safe simplicity, but Walcott manifests a technique at once immensely assured and driven by restless musical curiosity. The same combination of pride and ruthlessness requires him to decide that in his other art, painting, he cannot meet his own standards. At least, he comments, he has discovered this for himself, and it seems typical that self-knowledge should take the form of dignity rather than despair. The view of the sea, light falling on the sea, and the sound of the sea will suffice, whatever judgment the poet delivers on himself, and it is part of his gift to imagine peace even he if cannot achieve it – which takes us back to Dante.

In *White Egrets*, Derek Walcott's new collection of poems, the last section of "In the Village" begins, "If I fall into a grizzled stillness / sometimes... it is because of age / which I rarely admit to, or, honestly, even think of."

It's a bit funny, coming across these lines halfway through the book. The poems of *White Egrets* read like those of a writer obsessed with old age and the failings that come with it. In one poem, the narrator -- the first-person Walcott figure -- grapples with his memory. He pleads "help me, Muse" in a recollection of "the yellow fading hotel, and now, Christ! Her name?" In another, he is haunted by Death euphemized as "the postman, the scyther, Basil, whatever you call him -- a cyclist silently exercising on Sunday."

Meditations on love and lust, nature and the supernatural, and a complicated relationship with New World and Old World cultures are the foundation of Walcott's oeuvre. In *White Egrets*, Walcott's silent reaper lurks at the edge of each poem, in their subjects as well as in their framing. Of the individually dedicated poems in the collection, one is an elegy and another in memoriam, for Walcott's fellow Caribbean poets Aimé Césaire and John Hearne; if still alive, they would be not much older than him.

But however much truth there may be in the poems' age-related curses and neuroses, the poems that question the poet's skill are some of the most deftly crafted. Perhaps this is Walcott's clever joke -- or an extended exercise to explore a subject rarely admitted to or thought of.

Consider how Walcott addresses two of his characteristic subjects. In his work, a fierce love of literature has always paralleled a lust (and love) for women. Critics have argued that literature gets more respect from Walcott than any female. By *White Egrets*, both poetry and women are slipping from the old man's grasp, and Walcott makes a rueful union of the two. In poem number 32 in the collection (which begins "Be happy now at Cap, for the simplest joys—"), the narrator says:

If it is true
that my gift has withered, that there's little left of it,
if this man is right then there's nothing else to do
but abandon poetry like a woman because you love it
and would not see her hurt, least of all by me.

But Walcott's writing shows little sign of withering, though it's now more quietly contemplative than the railing young man of "A Far Cry from Africa" (1972). The symbolic literary suicide that ends "Be happy now at Cap..." is as romantic and startling an illustration of death as a Tiepolo painting.

[S]o walk to the cliff's edge and soar above it,
the jealousy, the spite, the nastiness, with the grace
of a frigate over Barrel of Beef, its rock;
be grateful that you wrote well in this place,
let the torn poems sail from you like a flock
of white egrets in a long last sigh of release.

The tenderness of the language belies a writer acknowledging his mortality. Talk that his ability is now suffering is perhaps a mask for another concern: a realization that there will never be enough time to write. Walcott tucks clues of this into other poems: "My veins bud, and I am so / full of poems, a wastebasket of black wire" says the voice in "In the Village," who is only kept from writing because someone has removed his typewriter from his desk.

White Egrets can also be read as the twilight work of a writer who has now answered his career-long questions about empire and colonial history—or, at least has achieved something close enough to resolution. The voice who cried, "How can I face such slaughter and be cool? / How can I turn from Africa and live?", unable to reconcile his love of Africa and of conquering Britain, isn't completely tempered ("A Far Cry From Africa"). But, now "reflect[ing] quietly on how soon I will be going," he pursues peace with a complicated heritage ("In Amsterdam"). Looking at "rubicund Flemish faces" in Holland, he wants to repaint them and claim them as his own. "I feel something ending here and something begun," he says.

"The perpetual ideal is astonishment": Derek Walcott sees no point in aiming for anything less than great poetry, and he has certainly achieved it. The penalty he has sometimes paid lies in being tempted to grandiloquence in the effort to ignite the charge of imagination and feeling which makes his best work (for instance "The Schooner Flight") so compelling and authoritative. Published in poet's 80th year, *White Egrets* contains work of both kinds. The best is remarkable, with passages as good as anything he has written.

The 54 poems in the collection take the reader from Walcott's native St. Lucia, to New York City and Western Europe and back. Walcott may have reconciled his relationship with the West, but *White Egrets* ends in the Caribbean. In a poem that begins "No opera, no gilded columns, no wine-dark seats" -- chronicling the "banalities" of European culture that are absent in the islands -- the parting images of a harbour town gives another hint that Walcott is not yet done producing. The poem ends, "So much to do still, all of it praise."

11.2 Solved questions with answers:

What are the egrets refer to in this poem?

Egrets, in this collection, are multitaskers. Walcott even refers to himself as an "egret-haired Viejo". And there is no need to shy away from the observation that egret is only one letter away from regret – Walcott does not resist the rhyme. His particular regret is about unrequited love – the keen humiliation of the old man who falls for a younger woman:

"It is the spell/ of ordinary, unrequited love. Watch these egrets/

stalk the lawn in a dishevelled troop, white banners/ forlornly trailing their flags; they are the bleached regrets/of an old man's memoirs, their unwritten stanzas./ Pages gusting like wings on the lawn, wide open secrets."

How are the egrets on duty to rescue him?

The egrets are again on duty to rescue him from himself and, for a second time, he likens them to poems. Actual and written landscapes frequently become hybrids in Walcott's work – a stale device upon which he over-relies. Wriggling insects are "like nouns", sunflowers are "poems we recite to ourselves", barges "pass in stanzas along canals". The breakers Walcott loves so much are trusted collaborators. They roll and smash their way into poem after poem. They shore up the verse. And birds become gracefully blameless alter egos.

How is this poem a collection of moments of lofty, salted beauty?

This poem is a collection of occasional moments of lofty, salted beauty. The last – untitled – poem (printed below) has an aerial perspective: it is a farewell to a blue world. There is a sense that it has been written by a grand old man of the sea (with a Victorian command of the iambic pentameter). But what one must finally salute is the courage it takes to look failure in the eye as Walcott does (he is ruthless about his attempts at painting) and write on, regardless.

How is Walcott considered to be a landscape artist?

Walcott is to a remarkable degree a landscape artist because almost everything arrives on the page via place, light, climate and tide, and out of these arise the rich moral and imaginative reveries which fill the book. Language and place seem continuous: in "Spanish Series", "A train crosses the scorched plain in one sentence." Part of Walcott's power lies in the fact that the physical world is almost always there for its own sake. The avoidance of allegory and of mechanical equivalents between the interior and exterior realms is an important feature of his contribution to the romantic tradition, one he shares with Seamus Heaney.

Why is White Egrets a book of self accusation?

White Egrets is also a book of self-accusation. Again in "Spanish Series", there is "The boring suffering of love that never tires./ Though you change names and countries, España, Italia,/smell your hands, they reek of imagined crimes./ The cypresses writhe in silence, while the oaks, sometimes,/ rustle their foliate lyres." The background presence of Dante can be felt both in the emotional power and the combination of beauty and stringent matter-of-factness. Watching ancient tourists, Walcott finds himself to be "one of them /.../ wracked by a whimsical bladder and terrible phlegm."

12 A Prodigal

The brown enormous odor he lived by
was too close, with its breathing and thick hair,
for him to judge. The floor was rotten; the sty
was plastered halfway up with glass-smooth dung.
Light-lashed, self-righteous, above moving snouts,
the pigs' eyes followed him, a cheerful stare--
even to the sow that always ate her young--

till, sickening, he leaned to scratch her head.
But sometimes mornings after drinking bouts
(he hid the pints behind the two-by-fours),
the sunrise glazed the barnyard mud with red
the burning puddles seemed to reassure.
And then he thought he almost might endure
his exile yet another year or more.

But evenings the first star came to warn.
The farmer whom he worked for came at dark
to shut the cows and horses in the barn
beneath their overhanging clouds of hay,
with pitchforks, faint forked lightnings, catching light,
safe and companionable as in the Ark.
The pigs stuck out their little feet and snored.
The lantern--like the sun, going away--
laid on the mud a pacing aureole.
Carrying a bucket along a slimy board,
he felt the bats' uncertain staggering flight,
his shuddering insights, beyond his control,
touching him. But it took him a long time
finally to make up his mind to go home.

12.1 Analysis of the Poem:

Walcott is a much-travelled man, all the more so since winning his Nobel in 1992, and *The Prodigal* is a long (100-page) nomadic poem, picking its way across two continents. The guilt of a native son eats into it here and there - shouldn't a man loyal to family and homeland stay put? And doesn't absorption into mainstream European culture disqualify a black man from speaking for his tribe? But a sense of privilege or good fortune is greater: "be happy", he tells himself - here you are, in your 75th year, still with your wits about you. Though there's sadness for the loss of his twin brother Roddy, and for Joseph Brodsky and other friends, the key note Walcott strikes isn't lamentation but gratitude, not least for all the places he has been.

The poem begins on a train in Pennsylvania, and the rhythm of that train establishes the metre, a leisurely blank verse. The journey takes us halfway round the world - to Pescara, Genoa, Zermatt, Lausanne, Milan, Rimini, Cartagena, Guadalajara, Santa Cruz and Soufriere - but this is no whistle-stop tour. Instead Walcott ambles from one city to the next, sometimes using the first-person, sometimes the third, with no obvious purpose or destination, but leaving time to take in this café or that art gallery ("Museums are the refuge of the prodigal"), and allowing the eye to rest appreciatively on things of beauty, especially when they're female ("the peaches of summer are bouncing / on the grids of the Milanese sidewalks / in halters cut close to the coccyx"). Walcott is conscious of sounding both old and old-fashioned, but he gives us due warning: his train broke down somewhere between Balzac and Lautreamont, he says, just past Baudelaire Station, "and has been stuck there since".

In his celebrated epic poem *Omeros* (1990), Walcott took Homer to the Caribbean, turning Achilles and Philoctetes into local fishermen. *The Prodigal* lacks that kind of narrative pull and energy, and it takes a while for the reader to get the hang of it, to see that its shape isn't the arc of a journey but comes from the drift of the poet's mind. What we're offered aren't travel diaries so much as lecture notes - on art, exile, migration, race, empire, love and "the monstrous map ... called Nowhere" where all of us are headed.

Wherever he goes on his grand tour, "the smell of history" goes with him. In Switzerland, he confronts the terrible beauty of the Alps, a snowlit landscape he knows from childhood books, all the more threatening because of its unvaried whiteness. In Italy he admires the statues of generals and admirals, imperial invaders though they must have been. In Pescara, meeting a young Serb who blames the war in Kosovo - indeed "all war" - on the Jews, he contemplates "the tidal motion of refugees". In eastern Germany he hears the sound of a shovel and imagines corpses being covered over. Europe's past may be troubled, but he envies the culture and, despite his skin colour, feels oddly at home there, an honorary son.

Sometimes the romantic associations of Europe are more personal. "What was adored, / the city or its women?" he wonders. Women flit through all his treasured places, whether gliding like Nereids in their lissome summer dresses or bringing warmth to the Alpine wastes ("her body steaming with hues of a banked hearth, / her eyes the blue-green of its dying coals"). But there's a poignancy to these snapshots, now that Walcott has reached his silver age: they flee from him who sometime did him seek. He pictures himself as "an old white egret beating priapic wings" or "an old setter that has stopped chasing pigeons / up from the piazza". More prosaically, he mentions his ailing eyesight and bad teeth, and puzzles at the image in the mirror, the cottony white hair and heron-shanks. "Look at it any way you like, it's an old man's book," he says, and though the geriatric self-image borders on pastiche, the sense of mortality is real enough: "Gradually it hardens, the death-mask of Fame".

Old age exacts a price, on art as well as bodies. Some of the poetry here feels too studiously post-colonial. It isn't tired but its tirelessness can exhaust the reader. Instead of a single clinching metaphor, we get fists of them, till the clinch becomes a stranglehold. "The twig-brown lizard scuttles up its branch / like fingers on the struts of a guitar," Walcott writes, elegising his dead twin and their lost childhood. It's a powerful image, but instead of leaving it there he adds a string of other music and war images (stuttering outbursts of bougainvillea, bayonets of begonia, the moon's blank tambourine, and so on), which undo the effect. Or again: an "inferny of ice" is an excellent coinage (infinite/infernal/eternal), ruined by the use of "eternity" in the next line. There's a similar heavy-handedness when Walcott repeatedly describes the world being made word, or the body becoming text - crows in the snow like commas, the exclamation mark of a belfry, hair coming down both sides of a woman's face like parentheses, the infinite paragraph of a boulevard, and much more besides.

In *The Prodigal*, the star of the promenading is Europe, with its aged grandeur, broad avenues and insistent monuments to the past. If the Caribbean has been "absolved of a history/ it did not commit," as Walcott once wrote, then Europe trudges on, unable to escape the history it is guilty of, but beautiful still in its somberness, in its knack for fiction, for re-imagination. While Europe must realize exile through its stories, Walcott's Caribbean will emerge from innate exile to

compose its own version of Genesis. Thus Walcott the wanderer is stuck between two worlds, one trying to escape its refined-ness, the other trying to define its newness.

In *The Arkansas Testament* Walcott wrote, “to have loved one horizon is insularity; / it blindfolds vision, it narrows experience.” In *The Prodigal*, Walcott recalls a time when he held onto a more parochial dogma: “There was a vow I made, rigid apprentice, / to the horizontal sunrise, acolyte/ to the shallows’ imprecations, to the odour/ of earth turned by the rain . . . as the natural powers I knew, swearing not to leave them/ for real principalities in Berlin or Milan.” This is the poet that embarked on that virginal journey to New York, the skeptical traveler longing to find belonging – or hemispheric continuity – but realizing instead the nightmare of alienation. Subsequent journeys, and the exilic meditations that they inspired, have produced less tragic deductions. In *The Prodigal* the tenor of Walcott’s verse is at times that of tearful joy, as when he so tenderly intones, “to go to Germany for the beautiful phrase/ *unter den Linden*, which, like a branch in sunshine/ means ‘without History, under the linden trees.’

Towards the end of Derek Walcott's new poem, there's a conversation about the benefits of travel. "'You don't know Paris? ... You've got to go.' 'Why?' 'It will change your life.' 'I like my life.' 'You think here is enough?'

'For me it is ... I can see Martinique.'"

The here in question is St Lucia, Walcott's birthplace, and the argument sounds like one the poet might be having with himself. As an apprentice poet, he tells us elsewhere in *The Prodigal*, he made a vow to stay true to the local - "to the freight train of the millipede, to / the dragonfly's biplane, and the eel's submarine" - rather than leaving for the principalities of Europe. It was a young man's vow, and perhaps he'd have broken it anyway. But the opportunities his poetry of "fealty" brought him were what made the vow impossible to keep - all those festivals to attend, and prizes to receive, and invitations to elsewhere. "Approbation had made me an exile", he concludes:

"my craft's irony was in betrayal,
it widened reputation and shrank the archipelago
to stepping stones, oceans to puddles, it made
that vow provincial and predictable
in the light of a silver drizzle in, say, Pescara."

12.2 Some solved questions and answers:

What does the poem tell the readers?

The poem tells us that this will be Walcott's last book. With luck, he may yet surprise himself with another. But if not, the climax of *The Prodigal* - as light breaks from "the other shore" and the poet rediscovers his dead twin - is a moving place to end.

How has Walcott envision migration ?

When Walcott journeyed to New York in the fifties, he envisioned the migration as something of a Guevarian expedition into the universal America, that utopian dream, which inhabits the spirit of people and landscapes from the Yukon to Tierra del Fuego. If what he found was a prosaic city of angular concrete and icy repression, the particular cynicism Walcott took back to St. Lucia with him would pass on. In the final chapters of *The Prodigal* Walcott adopts a melancholic tone quite different from the one he affected as a young man in Manhattan. Reflecting on the time he has spent in Italy, Walcott plaintively concludes: "until after a while there was nothing left of him/ except this: a name cut on a wall that soon/ from the grime of indifference became indecipherable." Perhaps what was once a cold, disaffected remoteness has become a gaze burdened instead by the aloofness of its subject. Faced with his own mortality, the poet sees a world ready to let his words die. The Caribbean then, those islands that are reborn every day and do not believe in the pretense of remembrance, is as it ever was, the home and the theatre for this irrevocable artist of the New World.

What does Walcott find at the end?

Walcott finds his voice again towards the end of the journey. It's a sadder and wiser voice than the one we heard in *Omeros*, self-questioning, even self-accusing ("Prodigal, what were your wanderings about?"), worrying away at his "mongrel" identity and chameleon habits, and wondering if the freedom to live between worlds has now gone - "I should have known that I would wind up beached / as I began". But he doesn't wind up beached. Nor is there an apologia for a life spent on the hoof. Instead the poem ends epiphanically and elatedly off the coast of St Lucia, among white-crested Alpine waves and with the vision - no mere vision - of a school of dolphins.

What happens wherever Walcott goes during his world tour?

Wherever Walcott goes on his grand tour, "the smell of history" goes with him. In Switzerland, he confronts the terrible beauty of the Alps, a snow lit landscape he knows from childhood books, all the more threatening because of its unvaried whiteness. In Italy he admires the statues of generals and admirals, imperial invaders though they must have been. In Pescara, meeting a young Serb who blames the war in Kosovo - indeed "all war" - on the Jews, he contemplates "the tidal motion of refugees". In eastern Germany he hears the sound of a shovel and imagines corpses being covered over. Europe's past may be troubled, but he envies the culture and, despite his skin colour, feels oddly at home there, an honorary son.

What is the theme of the poem?

In *The Prodigal*, the star of the promenading is Europe, with its aged grandeur, broad avenues and insistent monuments to the past. If the Caribbean has been "absolved of a history/ it did not commit," as Walcott once wrote, then Europe trudges on, unable to escape the history it is guilty of, but beautiful still in its somberness, in its knack for fiction, for re-imagination. While Europe must realize exile through its stories, Walcott's Caribbean will emerge from innate exile to

compose its own version of Genesis. Thus Walcott the wanderer is stuck between two worlds, one trying to escape its refine ness , the other trying to define its newness.

A Dance Of The Forests

1 Introduction

2 About the author

3 Analysis of the major characters

4 Summary of the play

5 Analysis of the play

6 Theme of the play

7 Solved questions and Answers

1 Introduction:

A Dance of the Forests is basically a play written by Wole Soyinka in 1960. It has enjoyed more neglect since it was written than any other of his plays. The so-called 'complexity' of the play has been principally responsible, thus, since it was performed for the Independence Celebration in 1960, only feeble attempts have been made to perform it, the most successful one being the production of Mr. Inih Ebong, the then director of the Calabar University Theatre, University of Calabar. As Inih Ebong comments in the 1982 production brochure:

Since 1980, however, there has been no prominent record of any successful production of the play and theatre directors and Soyinka's audience seem, according to Ukala (8):

... to be more profoundly worried by the nature and use of the dance and music in the play. It is held by some that these complicate the play beyond comprehension.

Amongst Soyinka's plays, therefore, *A Dance of the Forests* appears to be the most anomalous. There is a guiding concept that needs to be put into consideration and, in fact, the play is about one of the most philosophical and introspective among Soyinka's plays, but once one digests this concept, the play becomes easier to understand. In this play, as in the subsequent ones, Soyinka's socio-political concern takes centre stage and this is responsible for his dramaturgical approach. Running through many of Soyinka's old and new plays; *Kongi's*

Harvest, A Play of Giants, The Jero Plays, The Swamp Dwellers, The Beatification of Area Boy, From Zia with Love, King Baabu is the motif of symbolism. The characters and plots act as symbols highlighting Soyinka's constant concern with the abnormal socio-political situations in Nigeria. The play also provides an insight into the history of the entire cosmos and the consequence of past actions and inactions of man within the revolving structure of history. These are intricately woven into the domineering issues of fear and leadership in the play.

Moreover, the play juxtaposes the socio-political situation beyond the context of Nigeria's independence to spy into the future, thereby reinforcing the theme of fear. There is, therefore, the gloomy foreboding of the Nigeria Civil War and the advent of cacodemic dictatorship which took Nigeria by storm in the 1980's and 1990's, the atrocities of which render Mata Kharibu's in *A Dance of the Forests* inconsequential. One must hasten to draw the rein; however, the play is not a reference to the Nigerian situation alone, but is in the words of James Gibbs, it is "a general thing". One should also understand that a large part of this play was taken from an earlier work. James Gibbs maintains that *A Dance of the Forests* was actually drawn from "The Dance of the African Forests" which is a vitriolic anti-apartheid play.

Among Wole Soyinka's expressionistic plays, *A Dance of the Forests* seems to be the most difficult and elusive. After reading the play, one cannot but wonder whether it is a play at all. Plot wise, not only is the cause and effect model disregarded, but the simple plot structure is jettisoned for a complex form in which disentanglement and re-arrangement is required. The play, for example, begins in media res with the appearance of the Dead Woman and the Dead Man. The reason for which they leave the world of the dead for that of the living is not only cloudy as at this stage, but their dialogue is also esoteric, suggesting nothing. In terms of characterization, not only is there no discernible protagonist or antagonist, but the practice in classical drama whereby the gods act as antagonists to their subjects is also jettisoned. Moreover, the story line of the play in which the living invites their dead ancestors to grace their celebration is not only a distortion and exaggeration of reality, but also a fantasy that overrides fidelity to the actual appearance of things.

The play focuses was written by Wole Soyinka upon to celebrate Nigeria's independence in October 1960. The Gathering of the Tribes referred to in the play is, therefore, the new Nigerian polity. The Tribes' celebration is, however, dented by the fact that (i) the commissioned totem which was supposed to represent the spirit of the gathering turns out to be a sacrilegious epitome of evil and (ii) the representatives of the 'proud' ancestral past turn out to be victims of past despotism and violence crying for justice. Their presence causes a play-within-a-play, depicting past evil, to be enacted. The work ends in a spate of negative prophetic utterances and a climactic failure to lead a half-child (abiku) to safety. The play, therefore, aimed at countering the (now) unfounded euphoria of the independence days. Why celebrate the birth of an abiku? But, like the officials in the play, the Nigerian officials in charge of the independence celebrations rejected the play.

DISCOURSE

Wole Soyinka's plays, generally, are infused with a sense of the futility of human actions. The plays dramatize mankind's cycle of failure in the bid for moral evolution. Not only do they suggest the existence of a supernatural conspiracy against mankind, they portray man himself as being, as it were, genetically prone to evil.

The efforts of the protagonist avails little in influencing the final outcome of events. In *A Dance of the Forests* the chief protagonist, Demoke, is a thoughtful and reticent artist who is made to recognize, through the revelation of a past epoch in which he had been active, the continual re-enactment of man's evil nature generation after generation. What he is called upon to do to free mankind from this cycle of failure is revealed only at a symbolic level (he should lead the half-child, itself a symbol of a threatened posterity, through the Forest, to the light of day). But by the end of the play, it becomes evident that apart from attaining an indeterminate kind of quietist wisdom he fails to accomplish this mission or any other thing significant enough to liberate mankind from 'the destructive path of survival' (Soyinka, 79). His totem would seem to be the most significant of all his actions in the play. But even this, as we would soon see, is ultimately ineffectual.

Man's perennial attempt to redefine his existence and participate in the formulation of his destiny appears to be consistently frustrated by a cast-iron determinism. The determinism is two-faceted. On the one hand, tragedy is imposed by motivelessly malignant existential or supernatural agencies, but on the other hand, man's nature is partly responsible for the misfortunes. It is this blend of hubris and dike that makes attempts by man to challenge his fate tragically heroic.

It may be argued that the sacrificial gestures of the heroes are significant and not futile since they leave behind examples of actions that are capable of revolutionizing society. For example, Oyin Ogunba points to the example of Eman in Wole Soyinka's 'The Strong Breed' (Soyinka) and argues that the societal guilt generated by his self-sacrifice is capable of permanently affecting the attitude of the community to carriers in the future. It is significant that Ogunba prefixes his observation with 'it looks as if...'. Chikwenye Ogunyemi, however, uses less uncertain terms, arguing that, like Christ, Eman, through his life and death, disrupts traditional life, bringing about a 'doubtful' new way of life. Admittedly, it is possible to project into the future beyond the dramatized event and conjecture, quite plausibly, that Eman's (or indeed Demoke's) society becomes revolutionized and is not ever the same again. It should be pointed out, however, that this paper approaches texts, not as poetic creations capable of yielding endless meanings but as dramatic events, set within specific temporal frameworks. The question, therefore, is that of what is realized in dramatic terms, not what is visualized or deduced. Soyinka's plays, 'The Strong Breed' inclusive, do not dramatize Ogunyemi's new way of life or new and old orders co-existing in doubtful harmony. They unfold, instead, defiant actions by heroes who resent the statusquo and the tragedy that results invariably from these actions, since the statusquo always emerges triumphant. One does not deny to an extra-textual perspective the right to see the events as significant and capable of yielding moral lessons. What one would continue to state and demonstrate unequivocally despite this, is that, these heroic gestures, within the framework of the world in which they occur, are futile, since they fail to achieve significant results. The occasional Soyinkan hint at the possibility of a new beginning, as also observed by the critics cited above, would be properly seen as running counter to the internal logic of the dramatic events.

It is true that the Ants talk of 'the good to come' and of a time when the 'ring of

scourges' would be complete and the hair would rise on tails like scorpions (79). A good time would, hopefully, come when the persecuted would violently free themselves from the bondage of tyranny. But what we witness is the drama of human failure in the bid to bring about this good time. As a court poet, Demoke had been forced, against professional ethics, to flatter a bloodthirsty queen to he had truly detested. In fact, in this play, only the Warrior can, strictly-speaking, be described as heroic. But even his heroism is futile. He asserts that his rebellion against the despotic monarchy had 'started a new disease that catches quickly' (57) that is, the ability to think for oneself, a thing Madame Tortoise confesses she has noticed among his soldiers (64). However, he does not seem to be certain that the new disease is capable of revolutionizing society. He confesses (and indeed discovers at his resurrection) that the old pattern cannot be broken: 'Unborn generations will, as we have done, eat up one another' (55). What is dramatized in his rebellion is therefore the impotence of this outcry. As the Historian rightly tells him:

This thing cannot last. It is unheard of.

In a thousand years it will be unheard of...

You only throw your life away uselessly (57)

Forest Head, referring to him later, describes him as part of the waste of history (70), and this is a man who refuses to fight a frivolous and unjust war. It is significant that he is emasculated and thus becomes a symbol of helpless rage and perpetual impotence. His wife too, by dying pregnant and being perpetually in that state (as Dead Woman) is another form of impotence (this is despite her bold affront in storming into the courts of Mata Kharibu pleading for the release of her husband). The couple's actions are portrayed as unconstructive and foolish, lacking any fruit or significance. The Questioner therefore puts it aptly when he says of Dead Man:

Three lives he boasted of, and each

A complete waste foolishly cast aside....

What did he prove, from the first when,

Power at his grasp, he easily

Surrendered his manhood. It was surely

The action of a fool. (71 & 72).

Unfortunately, had the Warrior taken the power Madame Tortoise offered, it would have been like Christ accepting to bow to Satan in order to gain control of the entire world, a most unfortunate alternative.

It is, ironically, to the passive but artistic gestures of Demoke that one must turn for significance. The plays infuse one with a sense of the futility of human actions alright, but, it may be argued, this very awareness has the potential of generating a positive response. Referring to another of Soyinka's works, *The Interpreters*, Annemarie Heywood says that at the end: "The reader is left with an intolerable open paradox--'the choice of a man drowning' a disequilibrium calling for commitment and action". She goes on to say that *A Dance of the Forests* ends this way too. If this is true of *A Dance of the Forests*, it ought to be true also of Demoke's ugly totem, a symbol or picture of mankind's fulfilled evil, a kind of artistic representation of the tragic nature of man as crystallized in the person of Madam Tortoise (23). Like tragic drama, the totem should unfold to man the bestial depth of his depraved soul and create in him tragic recognition. Thus, the totem ought to have the same kind of effect that the presence of the accusing ancestors has on the community. By being forced to stare at the mirror of original nakedness (82) the community should, as in 'The Strong Breed' become guilt-stricken, and this should in turn lead to a revolution.

Unfortunately, only Adenebi notices the significance of the totem (23). Meanwhile, the community refuses to be accused on that glorious day of their celebration. Even the play-within-the-play, revealed to what might be described as a representative selection from the community, fails to reveal any change more tangible than an indeterminate 'quietist wisdom' in its audience. Demoke's artistic gesture is therefore also futile in concrete social terms. No revolution is dramatized or is shown to emanate from the baring of these several mirrors of original nakedness. As Forest Head half-soliloquizes in disillusionment at the end of the play-within-the-play:

Trouble me no further. The foolishness of

beings whom I have fashioned closer to me weary
 and distress me. Yet I must persist, knowing
 that nothing is ever altered. My secret is my
 eternal burden – to pierce the encrustation of
 soul-deadening habit, and bare the mirror of
 original nakedness--knowing full well, it is all futility. (82)

His disillusion is in consonance with what we see dramatized. The spirits of the Palm, the Dark, Precious Stones, Pachyderms, Rivers and the chorus of waters, all without exception, prophesy future doom and high-light the evil nature of man. Man's future as we see symbolized by the first triplet is a headless end. The Half-Child (itself a symbol of weak hope, an abiku doomed to die) loses in the game with the figure in red (the mischievous spirit Eshuoro who seeks the punishment and destruction of man). The lamentations of the Ants (the oppressed and the martyred of society) clearly underline the futility of attempts at reform through self-sacrifice. The Half-Child's messianic egg warmed in a bed of rushes (80) is swallowed by a serpent, a symbol of supernatural and social oppression and fatal cyclic repetitions. This foreshadows Demoke's action in handing back the Half-Child to be re-wombed. An artist and easily the most sensitive of the group, he had, in an impulsive moment, rescued the Half-child from apparent danger. Evidently, the play he had just witnessed had taught him eternal lessons. But confronted with the menace of a Forest that would not let him pass with the doomed thing in his hands, he hands back the Half-Child to the Dead Woman, who herself fears the pangs of rebirth. Eshuoro, enemy of mankind, yells for joy and the jubilation is shared by the triplets, embodiments of man's great spiritual corruption.

It is possible that since the gathering of the tribes finally makes sacrifice and seeks the path of expiation (instead of the earlier offensive stance when it had refused to look at the images of its ignominious past) it probably shares in the tuition which Demoke likens to searing lightening (85). But even if this is so, there is no evidence that this tuition is effected through any human action. Had the desire for expiation been linked with Demoke's totem, it would have become evident that Soyinka has faith in the ability of tragic art to awaken the slumbering Nigerian masses, in particular, and mankind in general. The way the play ends, however, the value of the

tragic recognition becomes even questionable. As in his other plays, Soyinka fails to dramatize the barely implied sense of hope for the future. When Demoke ends the play with the pessimistic 'And the lightning made his bid--in vain', he re-unites the movement of the play with its tragic highlights and creates the impression that the paradoxical verbally-asserted hope is little more than a poetic fancy. *A Dance of the Forests* thus teaches that in the struggle for moral evolution, man is recurrently defeated by his own nature. Those who rebel against this inexorably tragic fate succeed only in making futile gestures of defiance. The main stream of society moves on towards a grim future unperturbed.

2 About the author:

Wole Soyinka was born in Isara a place in Nigeria, on July 13, 1934. As a child he became increasingly aware of the pull between African tradition and Western modernization. Aké, his village, was populated mainly with people from the Yoruba tribe and was presided over by the *ogboni*, or tribal elders. Soyinka's grandfather introduced him to the pantheon of Yoruba gods and other figures of tribal folklore. He was a precocious student, he first attended the parsonage's primary school, where his father was headmaster, and then a nearby grammar school in Abeokuta, where an uncle was principal. Though raised in a colonial, English-speaking environment, Soyinka's ethnic heritage was Yoruba, and his parents balanced Christian training with regular visits to the father's ancestral home in 'Isarà, a small Yoruba community secure in its traditions. His parents, however, were representatives of colonial influence: his mother was a devout Christian convert, and his father was a headmaster at the village school established by the British. Soyinka recalls his father's world in 'Isarà, *A Voyage Around "Essay"* (1989) and recounts his own early life in *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981), two of his several autobiographical books. *Aké* ends in 1945 when Soyinka is eleven, with his induction into the protest movement that during the next decade won Nigeria's freedom from British rule. The political turbulence of these years framed Soyinka's adolescence and early adulthood, which he chronicles in his most recent autobiographical work, *Ibadan, The Penkelemes Years, A Memoir: 1946-1965* (1994).

Soyinka published poems and short stories in *Black Orpheus*, a Nigerian literary magazine, before leaving Africa to attend the University of Leeds in England. He returned to Nigeria in

1960, shortly after the country's independence from colonial rule. In 1965 Soyinka was arrested by the Nigerian police, accused of using a gun to force a radio announcer to broadcast incorrect election results. No evidence was ever produced, however, and the PEN writers' organization soon launched a protest campaign, headed by William Styron and Norman Mailer. Soyinka was eventually released after three months. He was next arrested two years later, during Nigeria's civil war for his vocal opposition to the conflict. Soyinka was particularly angered by the Nigerian government's brutal policies toward the Ibo people, who were attempting to form their own country, Biafra. After he traveled to Biafra to establish a peace commission composed of leading intellectuals from both sides for the conflict, the Nigerian police accused Soyinka of helping the Biafrans to buy jet fighters. This time Soyinka was imprisoned for more than two years, although he was never formally charged with a crime. For the majority of his arrest, he was kept in solitary confinement. Although he was denied reading and writing materials, Soyinka created his own ink and began to keep a prison diary, writing on toilet paper and cigarette packages. This diary was published in 1972 as *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*. In 1993 Soyinka began a period of self-imposed exile from Nigeria due to General Ibrahim Babangida's refusal to allow a democratic government to take power. Babangida appointed General Sani Abacha as head of the Nigerian state and Soyinka, along with other pro-democracy activists, was charged with treason for his criticism of the military regime. Facing a death sentence, Soyinka left the country in 1994, during which time he traveled and lectured in Europe and the United States. Following the death of Abacha, who held control for five years, the new government, led by General Abdulsalem Abubakar, released numerous political prisoners and promised to hold civilian elections, prompting Soyinka to return to his homeland. Soyinka has held teaching positions at a number of prestigious universities, including the University of Ghana, Cornell University, and Yale University. He also served as the Goldwin Smith professor for African Studies and Theatre Arts at Cornell University from 1988 to 1991. Soyinka has received several awards for his work, such as the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986

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Wole Soyinka is among contemporary Africa's greatest writers. He is also one of the continent's most imaginative advocates of native culture and of the humane social order it embodies. Born in Western Nigeria in 1934, Soyinka grew up in an Anglican mission compound in Aké. A

precocious student, he first attended the parsonage's primary school, where his father was headmaster, and then a nearby grammar school in Abeokuta, where an uncle was principal. Though raised in a colonial, English-speaking environment, Soyinka's ethnic heritage was Yoruba, and his parents balanced Christian training with regular visits to the father's ancestral home in 'Isarà, a small Yoruba community secure in its traditions.

Wole Soyinka is the recipient of the 1986 Nobel Prize for Literature. He is often referred to as one of Africa's finest living writers. His plays, novels, and poetry blend elements of traditional Yoruban folk drama and European dramatic form to create both spectacle and penetrating satire. His narrative technique is based on the African cultural tradition where the artist functions as the recorder of the mores and experiences of his society. Soyinka's works reflect this philosophy, serving as a record of twentieth-century Africa's political turmoil and the continent's struggle to reconcile tradition with modernization. Through his nonfiction works and essay collections, Soyinka has established an international reputation as an unflinching commentator on political injustice and knowing provocateur of social criticism.

The author is essentially a playwright, Soyinka is also recognized as a prolific essayist, poet, novelist and theatre director. He is also one of the continent's most imaginative advocates of native culture and of the humane social order it embodies. He writes mainly in English. His works are distinguished by their exploration of the African world view, and are steeped in Yoruba mythology, imagery and dramatic idioms. His satiric pen, directed at the leadership iniquities on his continent and inhuman conduct among people, has also produced powerful works.

As a human rights activist who declares that human liberty is his abiding religion, Soyinka has endured incarceration at the hands of repressive regimes. He has been placed on trial on trumped-up charges of treason and has undergone spells of political exile. In the midst of several violent and repressive African regimes, Soyinka was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986 to become the first African Laureate.

Nigeria gained independence in 1960 and Soyinka has always been critical of its dictators ever

since. In 1967, in what became one of his most contentious essays, —The Writer in a Modern African State, he questioned the Negritude movement. Soyinka sees that negritude affirms one of the central Eurocentric prejudices against Africans, namely the dichotomy between European rationalism and African emotionalism. In his essay —Reparations, Truth and Reconciliation (1999), Soyinka defended the idea that the West should pay reparations for crimes committed against African people.

Soyinka's representation of Postcolonial African identity will be examined in the light of his two plays, *The Bacchae of Euripides* and *A Dance of the Forests* to show how this writer's idiom of cultural authenticity both embraces hybridity and defines itself as specific and particular. His works conceptualize identity in ways that modify colonial perception of 'Africaness'. Soyinka has been one of the most outspoken critics of the concept of *negritude*, - 7 - which has been associated with Leopold Senghor, the writer and former President of Senegal. Soyinka sees that *negritude* encourages into self-absorption and affirms one of the central Eurocentric prejudices against Africans. Soyinka negates the inferiority of Africans by saying— A Tiger does not show his tigritude but acts.

Soyinka's works have frequently been described as demanding but rewarding to read. While many critics have focused on Soyinka's strengths as a playwright, others have acknowledged his skill as a poet, novelist and essayist. Henry Louis Gates Jr. in *Wole Soyinka: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Resources* (1986) has written that Soyinka —is a master of the verbal arts. His English is among the finest and most resonant in any literary tradition, fused seamlessly as it is with the resonances and music of the great lyrical, myth-dense Yoruba tradition. Mpalive Hnagson Msiska in *Postcolonial Identity in Wole Soyinka* (2007) approaches Soyinka's works through a generic classification of his texts. James Gibbs Lindfors in *Research on Wole Soyinka* (1993) defines Soyinka as a poet, novelist, journalist, critic, academic man of the theatre, political activist and writer. Uzor Maxim Uzoatu in *The Essential Soyinka* (1993) hails Soyinka as —a father figure and mentor to multitudes. Nobody comes into Soyinka's presence without being moved. Nkengasong in *Samuel Beckett, Wole Soyinka and the Theatre of Desolate Reality* (1980) reads plays of Beckett and Soyinka against the background of the presumptions of myth criticism. He delineates the human condition of desolate reality and quest for salvation in both

playwrights. All these texts by and large focus on the thematic context of Soyinka's works. Soyinka's works carry political import to a large extent. Nigeria is a federal republic in Western Africa that was formerly a British dependency. Nigeria became an independent member of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1960. The following year it was joined by the northern - 8 - part of the British Cameroons, a United Nations trust territory. In 1963, Nigeria adopted a republican constitution but retained its Commonwealth membership.

When did Nigeria as a nation come into being? And how did it come into being? Nigeria was an artificial creation, and it was a creation, which did not take into consideration either the wishes or the will or the interests of the people who were enclosed within that boundary. They were lumped together. So, the genesis of Nigeria, as with many African countries, is very flawed. Western Nigeria is a complex of powerful city states and the first of these is Ife. In the 1830s the new city states of Ibadan and Abeokuta were found as civil war became endemic. Soyinka has been closely associated with these states. In the 1890s, the British declared a protectorate over Western Nigeria. Wars and slave trade continued. Since, it was formed by the decisions of the European powers. Nigeria was an unnatural creation. It has more than 300 languages although English is the official language. The various linguistic groups naturally have different political, economic, social and religious traditions, much as in the various states and union territories of India. The nations and polities within Nigeria range from the small to the large. The largest of Nigeria's so-called nations are Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Tiv, Edo, Ijaw, Ibibio, Ibo and Yoruba.

Soyinka recalls his father's world in *'Isarà, A Voyage Around "Essay" (1989)* and recounts his own early life in *Aké: The Years of Childhood (1981)*, two of his several autobiographical books. *Aké* ends in 1945 when Soyinka is eleven, with his induction into the protest movement that during the next decade won Nigeria's freedom from British rule. The political turbulence of these years framed Soyinka's adolescence and early adulthood, which he chronicles in his most recent autobiographical work, *Ibadan, The Penkele Years, A Memoir: 1946-1965 (1994)*.

At twelve Soyinka left Aké for Ibadan to attend that city's elite Government College and at 18 entered its new university. But in 1954, his ambition focused on a career in theater, Soyinka traveled to England to complete a degree in drama at Leeds, under the well-known

Shakespearean critic, G. Wilson Knight. After graduation in 1957, Soyinka extended his European apprenticeship by working several years as a script-reader, actor, and director at the Royal Court Theatre in London. This period also saw the composition of Soyinka's first mature plays, *The Swamp Dwellers* and *The Lion and the Jewel*, and their successful staging in both London and Ibadan. In 1960 a Rockefeller research grant enabled Soyinka, now 26, to return to Nigeria. There he assembled his own acting company, produced a new play, *A Dance of the Forests*, and timed its opening to coincide with the country's official celebration of independence in October.

Though Soyinka's return from England had been widely welcomed, *A Dance of the Forests* at once placed him at odds with Nigeria's newly installed leaders as well as with many of his fellow intellectuals. Thematically, the play presents a pageant of black Africa's "recurrent cycle of stupidities," a spectacle designed to remind citizens of the chronic dishonesty and abuse of power which colonialism had bred in generations of native politicians. Stylistically, *A Dance of the Forests* is a complex fusion of Yoruba festival traditions with European modernism. Hostility greeted the play from almost all quarters. Nigerian authorities were angered by Soyinka's suggestion of wide-spread corruption, leftists complained about the play's elitist aesthetics, and African chauvinists -- those proponents of pure Negritude whom Soyinka labels "Neo-Tarzanists" -- objected to his use of European techniques.

What Soyinka's critics failed to appreciate was the radical originality of his approach to liberating black Africa from its crippling legacy of European imperialism. He envisioned a "New Africa" that would escape its colonial past by grafting the technical advances of the present onto the stock of its own ancient traditions. Native myth, reformulated to accommodate contemporary reality, was to be the foundation of the future, opening the way to "self-retrieval, cultural recollection, and cultural security."

From this perspective, the critics of *A Dance of the Forests* appear unwitting neocolonialists, their ideas mere replays in African costume of the West's own indigenous myths of liberalism, Marxism, and regressive racism. Soyinka dreamed instead of a truly de-colonized continent, where an autonomous African culture assimilated only those progressive elements of recent history that were consistent with its own authentic identity.

Over the next seven years, from posts at the universities in Ife, Lagos, and Ibadan, Soyinka pursued his hopes for a reborn Nigeria with inventiveness and energy. He wrote and directed a variety of plays, ranging from comedies like *The Trials of Brother Jero*, a popular exposé of religious charlatans, to a series of politically charged tragedies, *The Road*, *The Strong Breed*, and *Kongi's Harvest*, each of which turns on the modern world's interruption of ancient ritual practice. Beyond these full-length plays, Soyinka composed satirical revues, organized an improvisational "guerrilla theater," and wrote for radio and television. He also published his first novel, *The Interpreters* (1965), and his first book of poetry, *Idanre and Other Poems* (1967).

Not only did much of this large body of work openly challenge Nigerian authorities, but Soyinka also involved himself in practical politics. His actions led to a brief detention, trial, and acquittal in 1965. Then in 1967 came extra-judicial arrest and imprisonment for more than two years, much of it in solitary confinement. Soyinka recounts this trauma in *The Man Died* (1972), another of his autobiographical works.

Following his release in 1969, Soyinka went into voluntary exile and soon after entered a second period of intense creativity. Among its highlights were a book of poems, *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (1972), a new novel, *Season of Anomy* (1973) -- both bitter reflections on his years of confinement -- additional street satires, and, perhaps most important, two extraordinary tragic dramas, *Madmen and Specialists* (1970) and *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975).

Complementing this literary outburst, Soyinka delivered lectures and wrote essays that discussed the nature of his art, traced its roots in Yoruba tradition, and compared his aesthetic principles and practice to those of other writers, both African and European. Some of this criticism Soyinka revised and published as *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976). Most of the rest he collected a decade later in *Art, Dialogue & Outrage* (1988). The political history that animates Soyinka's cultural thought in these two volumes is the subject of *The Open Sore of a Continent* (1996). This book traces Nigeria's decline into increasingly inhumane military governments, a deterioration epitomized by the 1995 execution of fellow playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa as well as by the death sentence pronounced on Soyinka himself in 1997.

For Euro-American readers, these three books form an indispensable introduction to Soyinka's art. At its center and guiding its artistic mission lies the idea of "organic revolution," which

Soyinka contrasts with the neocolonial practices that black Africa absorbed from European imperialism. As he defines the concept, organic revolution is a process of communal renewal reached in moments of shared cultural self-apprehension -- moments whose manner and content are particular to each society. Such revolution is inherently local and cyclical, qualities more appropriate to African culture, Soyinka argues, than the global teleologies of either Marxist communism or capitalist nationalism. Indeed, Soyinka's mode of liberation ultimately displaces the logic of Western politics with the rhythms of native ritual. For the revolution he advocates rejects the abstractions of both dialectical materialism and market economics for the particularity of ceremonial healing -- of the divisions that isolate individuals from society and sever both from their sustaining integration with nature.

The god whose ritual Soyinka offers as the model for this organic restoration is Ogun, who risks his own life to bridge the abysses that separate the three stages of Yoruba existence -- the world of the ancestors, the world of the living, and the world of the unborn. Ogun, as Soyinka reads the myth, is unique among tribal deities because he is at home in none of these three structured states of experience. Rather, his realm is the chaotic region of transition between them, what Soyinka calls the "fourth stage" of the Yoruba universe, a condition where opposites collide without resolution in "a menacing maul of chthonic strength that yawns ever wider to annihilate" all social and natural order. Ogun's heroic passage through this realm not only preserves the connections between the ancestors, the living, and the unborn. It also revitalizes the Yoruba cosmos by benignly channeling into it fresh energies from the fourth stage.

This model of social revolution is essentially one of recurring crisis, where novel and alien forces are regularly mastered and integrated into the matrix of tradition and custom. It is to the challenge of this crisis that Soyinka commits his art, and only within its context can the signature gestures of his style achieve their full meaning. But once seen in the framework of Ogun's encounter with the fourth stage, Soyinka's discordant mixing of genres, his willful ambiguities of meaning, his unresolved clashes of contradictions cease to be the aesthetic flaws Western critics often label them and become instead our path into an African reality fiercely itself and utterly other.

Major Works

Soyinka's early dramas focus upon the dichotomies of good versus evil and progress versus tradition in African culture. For example, *The Swamp Dwellers* (1958) condemns African superstition by showing religious leaders who exploit the fears of their townspeople for personal gain. Commissioned as part of Nigeria's independence celebration in 1960, *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) warns the newly independent Nigerians that the end of colonial rule does not mean an end to their country's problems. The play features a bickering group of mortals who summon up the egungun—spirits of the dead, revered by the Yoruba people—for a festival. They have presumed the egungun to be noble and wise, but they discover that their ancestors are as petty and spiteful as anyone else. While Soyinka warns against sentimental yearning for Africa's past in *A Dance of the Forests*, he lampoons the indiscriminate embrace of Western modernization in *The Lion and the Jewel* (1959). The plot revolves around Sidi, the village beauty, and the rivalry between her two suitors. The story also follows Baroka, a village chief with many wives, and Lakunle, an enthusiastically Westernized schoolteacher who dreams of molding Sidi into a “civilized” woman. *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960) was written in response to a request for a play that could be performed in a converted dining hall in Ibadan. Drawing on his observations of the separatist Christian churches of Nigeria, on Ijebu folk narratives, and on theatrical conventions exploited by dramatist Bertolt Brecht, Soyinka constructed a vigorous comedy around the character of a messianic beach prophet. Brother Jero—a trickster figure who sets up a shack on Bar Beach, Lagos, prophesying golden futures in return for money—belongs to one of the revivalist Christian sects that existed at the time of Nigerian independence. In *Kongi's Harvest* (1965), the demented dictator of the state of Isma, has imprisoned and dethroned the traditional chief, Oba Danlola. To legitimize his seizure of power, Kongi has laid claim to the Oba's spiritual authority through his consecration of the crops at the New Yam Festival.

Stylistically separated from his early farces, Soyinka's later plays rely heavily on classical theatrical devices as a vehicle for Soyinka's potent political and social satires. *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite* (1973), an adaptation of the play by Euripides, reinvents the

classic tale as a meditation on the nature of personal sacrifice within unjust societies. *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) combines powerful dramatic verse and characterization with a structure that incorporates contrast and juxtaposition. The play is based on an actual 1945 incident of a colonial officer's intervention to prevent the royal horseman, the Elesin, from committing ritual suicide at his king's funeral, whereupon the Elesin's son would take his father's place in the rite. *A Play of Giants* (1984) is a surreal fantasy about international poetic justice in which an African dictator, on a visit to the United Nations in New York, takes a group of Russian and American delegates hostage. He threatens to release the Soviet-supplied rockets from his embassy arsenal unless an international force is sent to crush the uprising in his own country. *The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope* (1995) centers around Sanda, a security guard at a Lagos shopping mall, who ensures that customers are protected when entering and leaving the shop. Despite his position at the mall, the charming Sanda routinely organizes local scams and robberies. It is eventually revealed that Sanda is an ex-revolutionary who had sacrificed his higher education to organize political protests. Soyinka's fictional work expands on the themes expressed in his plays, constructing sweeping narratives of personal and political turmoil in Africa. Soyinka's first novel, *The Interpreters* (1965), is essentially a plotless narrative loosely structured around the informal discussions between five young Nigerian intellectuals. Each has been educated in a foreign country and has returned on the eve of Nigerian independence, hoping to shape Nigeria's destiny. They are hampered by their own confused values, however, as well as by the corruption they encounter in their homeland. *Season of Anomy* (1973), takes the central concerns from *The Interpreters* and selects a new moment at which to consider the choices confronting those working for change. The plot follows a variety of characters including an artist named Ofeyi, a cold-blooded assassin named Isola Demakin, and a harmonious community called Aiyero in a narrative that is thematically linked to the myths of Orpheus and Euridice.

The prose in Soyinka's nonfiction works and essay collections is largely based on his own life and his personal political convictions. *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* collects Soyinka's diaries during his imprisonment by Nigerian police for travelling to Biafra to establish a peace commission. He has also composed a trilogy that reflects on his life and the life of his family—*Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981), *Ìsarà: A Voyage around Essay* (1989), and

Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years: A Memoir, 1946-65 (1994). While *Aké* and *Ibadan* focus on Soyinka's personal life—*Aké* concerns his childhood, while *Ibadan* recounts his teen years to his early-twenties—*Ìsarà: A Voyage around Essay* is a biography of Soyinka's father. *Myth, Literature, and the African World* (1976), Soyinka's first essay collection, combines lucid criticism of specific texts with discussions that reveal the scope of Soyinka's acquaintance with literary and theatrical traditions as well as his search for an idiosyncratic perspective. He further explores his interest in the role that politics and literature play in modern Africa in *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture* (1988). *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* (1996) reprints a series of vitriolic lectures where Soyinka denounces the Nigerian government under the dictator Sani Abacha and laments the indifference of the West to the present state of Nigerian politics. In *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness* (1999), Soyinka discusses the role of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and questions the nature of objective political truths.

Soyinka has also published several collections of poetry, including *Idanre and Other Poems* (1967), *Ogun Abibiman* (1976), and *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems* (1988). Composed over a period of twenty-four hours, *Idanre* collects a series of mythological poems that feature Yoruba terminology and display subtle manipulations of words, images, and idioms. In *Idanre*, Soyinka draws particular influence from stories associated with the Yoruba mythological figures Ogun, Atunda, Sango, and Oya, and the Idanre Hills. In the twenty-two-page poem *Ogun Abibiman*, Soyinka combines a direct call for African states to take action against the Apartheid movement in South Africa with a mythologized manifesto for the country's liberation. The treatise describes Ogun, Yoruba god of war, joining forces in a violent and mystical union with the legendary Zulu chieftain Shaka. Soyinka published *Samarkand and Other Markets I Have Known* in 2002, a poetry collection that offers reflections on modern politics, his exile from Nigeria, and such writers as Josef Brodsky and Chinua Achebe.

Critical Reception

Soyinka's work has frequently been described as demanding but rewarding to read. Although his plays have been widely praised, they are seldom performed, especially outside of Africa. He has been acknowledged by many critics as Nigeria's finest contemporary dramatist and one of its

most distinguished men of letters. While many critics have focused on Soyinka's strengths as a playwright, others have acknowledged his skill as a poet, novelist, and essayist as well. Henry Louis Gates Jr. has written that Soyinka is "a master of the verbal arts. His English is among the finest and most resonant in any literary tradition, fused seamlessly as it is with the resonances and music of the great lyrical, myth-dense, Yoruba tradition." The most significant aspect of Soyinka's work, critics have noted, lies in his approach to literature as a serious agent of social change and his commitment to promoting human rights in Nigeria and other nations.

Commentators have maintained that the humor and compassion evident in his writings, as well as his chilling portrayal of the consequences of political greed and oppression, add a universal significance to his portrayals of West African life. His incorporation of Yoruba mythology and ritual in his work has been a recurring topic of critical interest. His poetry, novels, and nonfiction works have attracted an international readership. Soyinka was the first African to win the Nobel Prize for Literature and he has been applauded by commentators for the versatility and power they have observed in his work.

3 Major Characters:

Forest Father

Forest Father or Forest Head, the chief god who controls the universe of this play. In the pantheon of Yoruba gods, he is called Osanyin (oh-SAH-nyihn). He is the supreme arbiter who rules both humans and lesser gods. Because he represents the divine qualities of justice and mercy, he despairs of the continuous evil of humanity's history but believes that humankind may be improved if mortals can be made to admit the consequences of their acts as part of history. He designs the dance to expose past and present wickedness. He is concerned and sympathetic but all-powerful, reserving his supreme power to restrain and ultimately decide the outcome of the dance and therefore the outcome of the world. In his mortal guise, he masquerades as Obaneji, who leads the party into the forest.

Aroni

Aroni (ah-ROH-nee), “the Lame One” who opens the play. He is the messenger of the great Forest Head, and it is he who selects the dead man and woman who reflect the violent past that lives on in the grim practices of the present-day characters

Eshuro

Eshuro (ay-SHEW-roh), one of the aspects of Oro, god of the dead, who has qualities of the Yoruba god of mischief, Eshu. He is spiteful and antagonistic to humankind and demands from Forest Head vengeance against Demoke. He becomes the “figure in red” who controls the “bloody triplets” who, at the point of potential reconciliation, snatch the half-child representing the human future. It is his final chance to destroy the human race, as he so bitterly desires.

Agboreko

Agboreko (ahg-boh-RAY-koh), an Elder of the Sealed Lips who exists as a soothsayer between the two existences.

4 Summary of The Play:

A Dance of the Forests presents a complex interplay between gods, mortals, and the dead in which the ideal goal is the experience of self-discovery within the context of West African spiritualism. The living have invited two glorious forefathers to take part in a feast and celebration—the “Gathering of the Tribes.” The god Aroni, however, explains in the prologue that he received the permission of the Forest Head to select instead “two [obscure] spirits of the restless dead”: the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, a captain and his wife from the army of the ancient Emperor Mata Kharibu. These two were selected because in a previous life they had been violently abused by four of the living. The four mortals are Rola, an incorrigible whore nicknamed Madame Tortoise, who was then a queen; Demoke, now a carver and then a poet; Adenebi, now council Orator and then Court Historian; and Agboreko, Elder of Sealed Lips, a soothsayer in both existences. They have been selected because of past debauchery, which Aroni hopes can be expiated through revelation. Aroni further explains in the prologue that the Forest Head, disguised as a human, Obaneji, invites the four mortals into the forest to participate in a

welcome dance for the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, who Aroni takes under his wing after the living ostracize them. The dance is interrupted by the wayward spirit Eshuoro.

Eshuoro seeks vengeance for the death of Oremole, a devotee of Oro and apprentice to the carver Demoke, who killed Oremole by pulling him off the top of the araba tree that they were carving together. Ogun, the patron god of carvers, defends Demoke. Ogun (the god of iron, war, and craftsmanship of the Yoruba, Soyinka's own society) and Oro (the Yoruba god of punishment and death) represent antithetical forces that continuously interact until their hypothetical synthesis, through which the mortals would attain self-understanding.

As the play itself begins, the dead pair, encrusted in centuries of grime, are observed from a distance by Obaneji as they are rejected in turn by mortals Demoke, Rola, and Adenebi, who refuse to hear their case. While the mortals play charades with their inglorious backgrounds, the Dead Woman observes that the living are greatly influenced by the past accumulation of the dead: "The world is big but the dead are bigger. We've been dying since the beginning." She implies that the living are in no position to be choosy about which of their past lives they confront first.

Human existence and its relationship to the cosmos, both physical and terrestrial, has been a subject of vigorous debate. In this paper, I see Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests* as an artistic and imaginative intervention in the debate. In this regard, I analyze the play as an imaginative exploration of the existential complexities of the human race. Even though most critics appear to constrict the play's worldview and its attendant message just to the socio-political situation in Nigeria, I extend the discussion and contend that the play's localized worldview is a microcosm of its universalizing perspective. Secondly, as against the reading of critics such as that of Obi Maduakor that the play "is one of the first works to establish Soyinka's reputation as a moralist" (186), I believe that, on the contrary, he (Soyinka) refuses to make simple moral judgments or to resolve his dramatic action. Using Lois Tyson's categorization of a complex phenomenon as one that is paradoxical, ironic, ambiguous, and tension oriented, especially in relation to opposing tendencies, I argue that Soyinka's message in this play is that the seeming polarities between

freedom and liberation, good and evil, morality and immorality are relative and not easily defined.

The ceremony for the self-discovery of the four mortals consists of three parts: first, the reliving of the ancient prototype of their present crimes; second, the questioning of the dead couple; and third, the welcoming dance for the dead couple. As a preliminary step, the four mortals are compelled to reveal their secrets. In Demoke's passionate account of his killing of his apprentice. *A Dance of the Forests* was premiered in 1960 during the celebrations of Nigeria's independence from the British Empire, and it is the first play Wole Soyinka wrote and also the first of his plays that I read. It's a challenging but also rewarding play with none of the flaws and excesses one expects from a young writer. The tone is not the one of a novice but of a wise writer who has spent a lot of time thinking about the great issues of human existence.

This is also a remarkably unusual play: it draws copiously from Yoruba religion – half the characters are either spirits or gods – and it juxtaposes a mythical glorious African past with a prescient vision of a corrupt post-colonialist society. On top of that, it's a dense text, with careful attention to form, with a slow drip of information. I had to re-read some passages a few times to properly grasp what was going on. After a re-read recently, I'm still not sure I fully understand it. The play is filled with observations about religion, tradition, history, honour, freedom, forgiveness, courage, love. And it mixes dialogue with poetry, acting with dancing.

The Human Community is celebrating the Gathering of the Tribes and has requested the presence of illustrious dead people from their past, the 'builders of empires' and descendants of their 'great nobility' in order to celebrate all that is 'noble in our nation.' But things don't go according to plan. "We asked for statesmen and we were sent executioners," a human complains. The spirits send two restless souls to the surface, a Dead Man and a Dead Woman, victims of this same glorious past, to confront the descendants of their killers. Those descendants are Rola, a prostitute rumoured to have led two lovers to kill themselves over her, Demoke, a murderous carver who made a totem for the feast but also offended Eshuoro (a Trickster spirit in the Yoruba religion), and Adenebi, a corrupt clerk. Guiding those three through a magic-filled dreamscape is

the gentle, patient Obaneji (in fact Forest Head, the father of the gods) for a reckoning with the gods and the spirits.

If one goes into the details of this play, one may find that there are no marks of Pirandello, Beckett, Ionesco, Albee or Pinter in this play, neither the absurd nor the realistic drama. Instead it harkens back to *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and the ancient Greek plays because of the way the gods interfere with the mortals' lives and how debts of murder pass from generation to generation to be collected by spirits. The world of this play is one of rituals, traditions and where the spiritual exists in everything. Demoke, for instance, has carved the sacred tree *araba* into a totem; *araba* is the symbol of Eshuoro. Demoke was afraid of heights, so he carved the tree only up to a certain height and then decided to cut down the top. His apprentice, a follower of Eshuoro, climbed up above his master in provocation, so Demoke pulled him down to his death. Now he's doubly guilty of murder and offending a spirit. Like him, the other two mortals are running away from guilt. In a play where the spiritual and the material interweave so freely anything can happen. The forest is a magical place where the laws of time are suspended. This gives the author freedom to pursue some interesting experiments with the play's form. For instance, at one point Forest Head shows a spirit a scene from the past; this interruption of the main plot acts as a play within the play; but there's a continuity between the events depicted in the past and the ones happening in the present. This also allows the actors to star in multiple roles.

In this play within the play, the reader is brought to Mata Kharibu's ancient kingdom, where a soldier (the Dead Man) refuses to fight in an unjust war. The war has started over a trifle. Mata Kharibu, having stolen the woman of another man (like Helen of Troy, to which the play directly alludes), now decides that the slighted man must return her wardrobe to her. When he refuses, Mata Kharibu declares war. The soldier's refusal introduces a new idea in the world: he's thought for himself and decided that he doesn't want to serve an unjust master. He's dangerous because the germ of freedom may contaminate the other soldiers, loyal to him. The woman is Madame Tortoise (the ancestor of Rola). In the court we find also the Court Poet (Demoke – he remains an artist throughout history, it seems) and the Historian (Adenebi), who finds no precedent for the soldier's crime. Madame Tortoise tries to seduce the soldier into killing Mata

Kharibu and sharing the power with her, but he refuses. So he's punished for his moral convictions, along with his wife (the Dead Woman).

History repeats itself in the present; it's no wonder Rola says "this whole family business sickens me. Let everybody lead their own lives." The author is perhaps warning against the danger of historical amnesia; the creation of a new nation, with its promises of freedom, can look like a clean start, but, he warns, it is important to understand the past in order to forge a better future, lest the new beginning, contaminated by the errors of the past, leads to nowhere. Those who like to seek new knowledge outside what was prescribed by the school text books know that an educational system always paints a country's past in a better light than reality. Writers, by their typical position of questioning, work to wrest us from the harmful complacency of nostalgia.

Demoke in the present kills a follower of Eshuoro; the Court Poet implicitly throws off the roof a novice vying for the attentions of Madame Tortoise. In the past, the rebellious soldier is sold to a slave-dealer, along with 65 soldiers loyal to him, with the help of the corrupt Historian. In the present, Adenebi reacts nervously when Obaneji relates an incident involving a bus that burned down with 65 people in it: the bus could only contain 40 people, but the owner had bribed a clerk to declare the bus fit to take in 70, so when a fire broke out inside the overcrowded bus, nicknamed Incinerator, there were only five survivors. Obaneji, disguised as tolerant court clerk, wonders if Adenebi might know the corrupt clerk involved:

It's impressive that Soyinka wrote this play when he was twenty-six-years old: it's a mature text, both in content and form; Soyinka already shows a developed sense of life full of humanity, of wisdom, of mocking compassion for the follies of people, and peppered with dark humour.

5 Analysis of The Play:

A Dance of the Forests presents a complex interplay between gods, mortals, and the dead in which the ideal goal is the experience of self-discovery within the context of West African spiritualism. The living have invited two glorious forefathers to take part in a feast and celebration—the "Gathering of the Tribes." The god Aroni, however, explains in the prologue

that he received the permission of the Forest Head to select instead “two [obscure] spirits of the restless dead”: the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, a captain and his wife from the army of the ancient Emperor Mata Kharibu. These two were selected because in a previous life they had been violently abused by four of the living. The four mortals are Rola, an incorrigible whore nicknamed Madame Tortoise, who was then a queen; Demoke, now a carver and then a poet; Adenebi, now council Orator and then Court Historian; and Agboreko, Elder of Sealed Lips, a soothsayer in both existences. They have been selected because of past debauchery, which Aroni hopes can be expiated through revelation. Aroni further explains in the prologue that the Forest Head, disguised as a human, Obaneji, invites the four mortals into the forest to participate in a welcome dance for the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, who Aroni takes under his wing after the living ostracize them. The dance is interrupted by the wayward spirit Eshuoro.

Eshuoro seeks vengeance for the death of Oremole, a devotee of Oro and apprentice to the carver Demoke, who killed Oremole by pulling him off the top of the araba tree that they were carving together. Ogun, the patron god of carvers, defends Demoke. Ogun (the god of iron, war, and craftsmanship of the Yoruba, Soyinka’s own society) and Oro (the Yoruba god of punishment and death) represent antithetical forces that continuously interact until their hypothetical synthesis, through which the mortals would attain self-understanding.

As the play itself begins, the dead pair, encrusted in centuries of grime, are observed from a distance by Obaneji as they are rejected in turn by mortals Demoke, Rola, and Adenebi, who refuse to hear their case. While the mortals play charades with their inglorious backgrounds, the Dead Woman observes that the living are greatly influenced by the past accumulation of the dead: “The world is big but the dead are bigger. We’ve been dying since the beginning.” She implies that the living are in no position to be choosy about which of their past lives they confront first.

The ceremony for the self-discovery of the four mortals consists of three parts: first, the reliving of the ancient prototype of their present crimes; second, the questioning of the dead couple; and third, the welcoming dance for the dead couple. As a preliminary step, the four mortals are compelled to reveal their secrets.

Among Wole Soyinka's expressionistic plays, *A Dance of the Forests* seems to be the most difficult and elusive. After reading the play, one cannot but wonder whether it is a play at all. Plot wise, not only is the cause and effect model disregarded, but the simple plot structure is jettisoned for a complex form in which disentanglement and re-arrangement is required. The play, for example, begins in media res with the appearance of the Dead Woman and the Dead Man. The reason for which they leave the world of the dead for that of the living is not only cloudy as at this stage, but their dialogue is also esoteric, suggesting nothing. In terms of characterization, not only is there no discernible protagonist or antagonist, but the practice in classical drama whereby the gods act as antagonists to their subjects is also jettisoned. Moreover, the story line of the play in which the living invites their dead ancestors to grace their celebration is not only a distortion and exaggeration of reality, but also a fantasy that overrides fidelity to the actual appearance of things.

Derek Wright confirms the difficult and elusive nature of this play with his statement that it is "the most uncentered of works, there is no discernible main character or plot line, and critics have been at a loss to say what kind of play it is or if it is a play at all and not a pageant, carnival or festival" (81). Likewise, Mathew Wilson has described the play as a "baffled incomprehension" and "a resistant text that resists assimilation" (3). Insisting on the difficult and resistant nature of the play, he quotes the incomprehension of a student thus:

Since I cannot make any direct connection to *A Dance of the Forests* other Than religion, something that I personally do not believe in, I conclude that I cannot position myself into the Yoruba culture at this time. I have attempted To float my soul into the pages of Soyinka's work, but I have failed. It is (as) Though my spirit entered the jungle, looked around, understood nothing, and Left.... I just cannot relate to Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*....My Conclusion is that for me, and for most of the people of the West, there may Not be an entrance into the Yoruba world (10-11).

By invoking the homogeneous ratiocination that the difficulty of the play is "for most people of the West," this student suggests that it is the difference in the world view of the West and the Yoruba people that is responsible for his inability to enter into the world of the play. But the fact

is that it is not the “intellectual laziness” of the West to understand African Literature which Soyinka speaks of in an interview that occurs here. Rather, it is the inherent difficulty of this play in itself, for as Wilson informs readers in the contradictory nature of any given text, while this student cannot enter into the aesthetic vision of this play, he and other students were able to gain entry into the Yoruba world of Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman*. The student’s passage is therefore not an enactment of incomprehension as a result of the problems of cross-cultural understanding and interpretation as Wilson would have us believe. Rather it is in the nature and structure of this play.

As such it has received little or no critical attention. Adebisi Ademakinwa acknowledges this phenomenon when he also notes that the play “has enjoyed more neglect since it was written than any other of his (Soyinka’s) plays. The so-called ‘complexity’ of the play has been primarily responsible, thus, since it was performed for the Independence Celebration in 1960, only feeble attempts have been made to perform it...” (81). Similarly in 1982, Mr. Inih Ebong, the then director of the Calabar University Theatre comments in the production brochure of the play that:

To the best of our knowledge, the play has only been produced once, directed by Wole Soyinka himself, and performed by the 1960 Masks on Nigeria’s attainment of independence. Calabar University Theatre is today proud to become the second producer of *A Dance of the Forests*, more than twenty years after it was first produced (Cited in Ademakinwa 81).

This play has not only been feebly performed on stage, it has also received little critical reviews. In JSTORS’ entire Web literary library, for instance, there are only four full fledged essays on this play and three limited reviews. Taking into account the import of the play in Soyinka’s development as a dramatist and the play’s direct link to Nigeria’s independence celebration in 1960, it ought to have enjoyed a lot more critical attention. The need for this present endeavour is therefore undeniable.

To further complicate matters is the monolithic interpretation that has been offered by those who have ventured to analyze the play. For example, it is Maduakor's opinion that the play establishes Soyinka's reputation as a moralist (186). Likewise, Ademakinwa sees the play just as an "inflection of Wole Soyinka's Socio-Political concern" (81). In a similar vein, in a scant review of the play, Maya Jaggi remarks that the play is a depiction of Soyinka's disillusionment with the Nigeria he met after his return from Britain in 1960 (55). The foregoing reductive approaches to the reading of the play that see it just as a socio-political commentary is undoubtedly owing to the fact that Soyinka wrote it in 1960 as part of the celebration of Nigeria's independence. Thus, while not invalidating these observations, this essay opines that there is much more to this play than critics have acknowledged.

Plot Construction:

A Dance of the Forests presents a complex interplay between gods, mortals, and the dead in which the ideal goal is the experience of self-discovery within the context of West African spiritualism. The living have invited two glorious forefathers to take part in a feast and celebration—the "Gathering of the Tribes." The god Aroni, however, explains in the prologue that he received the permission of the Forest Head to select instead "two [obscure] spirits of the restless dead": the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, a captain and his wife from the army of the ancient Emperor Mata Kharibu. These two were selected because in a previous life they had been violently abused by four of the living. The four mortals are Rola, an incorrigible whore nicknamed Madame Tortoise, who was then a queen; Demoke, now a carver and then a poet; Adenebi, now council Orator and then Court Historian; and Agboreko, Elder of Sealed Lips, a soothsayer in both existences. They have been selected because of past debauchery, which Aroni hopes can be expiated through revelation. Aroni further explains in the prologue that the Forest Head, disguised as a human, Obaneji, invites the four mortals into the forest to participate in a welcome dance for the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, who Aroni takes under his wing after the living ostracize them. The dance is interrupted by the wayward spirit Eshuoro

Wole Soyinka's Complex Theory of Drama.

Soyinka's dramaturgy as defined by him resists such unidirectional interpretation/or reductive approach. Soyinka himself in his "The Fourth Stage: Through the Mysteries of Ogun to the Origin of Yoruba Tragedy" (which has been regarded as Soyinka's theory of drama), alludes to the uncertainties and variegated meanings that characterize his plays when he opines that:

Language in Yoruba tragic music...transcends particularization (of meaning) to tap the source whence spring the familiar weird melodies. This Masonic union of sign and melody, the true tragic music unearths cosmic uncertainties which pervade human existence, reveals the magnitude and power of creation, but above all creates a harrowing sense of omni-directional vastness where the creative intelligence resides and prompts the soul to futile exploration (Cited in Alain Severac 42).

Similarly, Chinua Achebe commenting on Soyinka's complex dramaturgy asserts, "It is the very nature of creativity, in its prodigious complexity and richness, that it accommodates paradoxes and ambiguities. But this, it seems, will always elude and pose a problem for the uncreative, literal mind. The literal mind is the one-track mind, the simplistic mind, the mind that cannot comprehend that where one thing stands, another will stand beside it" (Cited in Biodun Jeyifo 181). For example, at the centre of Soyinka's creative genius is Ogun, who Soyinka himself acknowledges as "the first symbol of the alliance of disparities" (Cited in Akporobaro et al 286). He is "the Dionysian-Apollonian-Promethean essence - a god of creation as well as of destruction; a god of love as well as hatred; a god of protection as much as of punishment. It then follows that beside everything that can be termed "good" in Soyinka's play is that which can be described as "bad"- what is regarded in Hegelian philosophy and in William Blake's poetry as the marriage of contraries. However, while in Hegelian philosophy, these contraries naturally resolve themselves, in Soyinka's aesthetic world they stubbornly resist such resolution. Rather they lead to a Keatsian negative capability or to aporias (Severac 46).

According to Stephen Cohen, a Keatsian negative capability is "openness to experience and a flexibility of perspective" (265). To Ronald Tetreault, it refers to a reading that acknowledges "conflict and indeterminate meaning" (371). This phenomenon is often illustrated

with Prometheus in Greek mythology, from which Soyinka derived his “Promethean essence.” Prometheus was a champion of mankind, known for his wily intelligence. He stole fire from Zeus and gave it to mortals to prevent their extinction. Zeus then punished him by having a great eagle eat his liver everyday. But no sooner is his liver eaten that it grows up to be eaten again (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). It is obvious that at the heart of this myth is the tension between judgment and sympathy, what can be regarded as indeterminate meaning. While in one breath we judge Prometheus for stealing, in the other we sympathize with him because he stole to prosecute an act of kindness. Similarly, is the contrast between Dionysus and Apollo. While Dionysus is the ancient Greek god of wine, ritual madness and ecstasy, and the driving force behind Greek theater, Apollo is the god of the sun, music and poetry. In modern literary usage, the contrast between them symbolize principles of individualism vs. collectivism, light vs. darkness, or civilization vs. primitivism; and according to Soyinka, Ogun, who is at the center of his dramaturgy is an embodiment of all these.

It is, then, not a surprise that at the end of *A Dance of the Forests*, none of the three fundamental conflicts, namely that between Ogun and Eshuoro; between the living and the dead; and the conflict between the living and the unborn is resolved. All that the reader is aware of from the authorial direction is that “Ogun enters (the stage) bearing Demoke, eyeing the sky anxiously. He is armed with a gun and cutlass. The sun creeps through; Ogun gently lays down Demoke, leaves his weapons beside him, flees. Eshuoro is still dancing as the foremost of the beaters break on the scene and then he flees after his Jester”(Dance 83). What is the reader to make out of this? How is the reader to understand and interpret the action of Aroni who just leads out the Dead Woman with the Half-Child out of stage? Robert Fraser poses a similar question – “What precisely is happening at this point in the play?” (367); and commenting on Eldred Jones’ reading of this episode, he states that Jones, “after a lengthy consideration of this episode, which he admits is crucial, ultimately has to confess himself baffled by its import” (Cited in Fraser 367). Thus, at the end of this play Soyinka raises more questions than answers. Therefore, Soyinka is too convoluted a writer to be restricted in his dramatic vision. As Louis Gate Jr. remarks, Soyinka does not “mirror reality in a simple one-to-one relationship” (Cited in James Gibbs 158).

Complex Human Existence in Wole Soyinka's Dramaturgy.

The complexity of Soyinka's dramatic vision also reveals itself in his view of human existence. Oby Okolocha and E.B. Adeleke, for instance, observe that "Soyinka's vision of humanity is often metaphysical and mythological" (180). Therefore Soyinka's view of human existence transcends the "simplistic" philosophical postulations of Kierkegaard, Descartes, Martin Heidegger, Paul Sartre, and the Platonic-Aristotelian concept of existence. In spite of the raging debate between these philosophers, what appears to link their views together is their belief that human existence is characterized by consciousness, and the ability to reason and act on their (human) lived experience. For instance, Harry Broudy states that:

The Kierkegaardian criterion of existence is the degree to which the thinker tries to live in his thought or the degree to which he tries to actualize its potentialities (296-7).

This view of existence is undoubtedly synonymous with Descartes logic- "I think therefore I am", which means that in Descartes' and Kierkegaard's philosophical musings it is man's consciousness, which fundamentally qualifies its existence far and above any other subject or object.

But in contrast to these views of existence is Soyinka's:

The Yoruba is not, like European man, concerned with purely conceptual aspects of time; they are too concretely realized in his own life, religion, sensitivity, to be mere tags for explaining the metaphysical order of his world. If we may put the same thing in fleshed-out cognitions, life, contains within it manifestations of the ancestral, the living and the unborn. All are vitally within intimations and effectiveness of life, beyond mere abstract conceptualization (Cited in Akporobaro et al 283).

As can be seen, against Western philosophical thought, Soyinka sees human existence as being made up of the life of the living, the dead, and the unborn. He sees "present human existence" as the "child of the past" and the "father of the future." As he himself explains, "sublimated beneath that shawl of multiple existences that the Yoruba wrap around their consciousness as a testament

of continuity (is) the world of the living, the ancestor and the unborn” (Dawn 57). Thus, in Soyinka’s dramaturgy, human existence does not have a beginning and an end, rather it is cyclical. The life of the dead has its continuation in that of the living, which in turn continues in that of the unborn. And this finds amplification in Soyinka’s *A Dance of the Forests* in which there is an umbilical cord tying the living to their dead ancestors and their unborn children. While the Dead Man and the Dead Woman symbolize the past of the living, the Half-Child is a symbol of their future; and they are all tied together in a metonymic quest for the essence and meaning of life. Accordingly, Soyinka’s view of human existence, to appropriate Gavin Murray-Miller’s words, is that “between the traumas of the past and hope of the future, the present comprised ... of things dead and things yet to be . . .” (167). Yet with this cyclical and deterministic sphere of human existence as epitomized by Dead Woman’s “A hundred generations has made no difference” (26), Soyinka still condemns “negative” human action. But his focus is not so much on the “negative” human action as it is on the ambiguous and paradoxical nature of human existence.

Existential Complexities in *A Dance of the Forests*.

This is obvious from the character of Rola/Madame Tortoise, who on the face value does not enjoy the sympathy of the author. Yet, Rola is simultaneously herself and a transcendent Madame Tortoise. She is presently a prostitute responsible for the death of many men, and in her previous life (some eight centuries ago), she was also a prostitute/queen of Mata Kharibu responsible for the death of Dead Man and Dead Woman, and countless others in a senseless war. In spite of the fact that what she is, she was, and would also become; she still appears to be “condemned” in Soyinka’s aesthetic world.

Yet, Soyinka’s focus in this play is not so much on her “negative” action as it is on the complex situation into which humans have been fated. The question Soyinka appears to pose with her character is similar to Bernard Shaw’s question with the character of Mrs. Warren in his play, *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. Who should be blamed when a woman prostitutes herself? Is it the woman or the men who patronize her, or is it the society in which she finds herself? It is significant that in Soyinka’s imaginative world, Rola sees no difference between the capitalistic

tendencies of businessmen who “ruin the lesser ones” (24) with her own action. It then follows that she is a product of her society as much as her society is a product of her. Also noteworthy is her ratiocination that “When that one killed the other, was it on my account? When he killed himself, could he claim that he did it for me? He was only big with himself, so leave me out of it”(24). Rather than seeing her prostitution as being responsible for the death of the men in her lives, Rola argues that the men kill themselves and each other as a result of their ego. What Soyinka, then, reveals is that as much as Rola can be blamed for being a prostitute, the men who patronize her are equally culpable. Therefore, in this play, Soyinka jettisons making simple moral judgment.

The ambiguous and paradoxical nature of this play is also evident in the character of Forest Father, who to all intent and purposes is equated to a Supreme Deity in Soyinka’s aesthetic world. That he is Forest Father is suggestive enough of his omnipotent figure. It is also significant that Forest Father himself admits that “The fooleries of beings whom I have fashioned closer to me weary and distress me” (88). This admission suggests that Forest Father is the creator in Soyinka’s imaginative world. Also through Ogun, Soyinka suggests Forest Father’s spiritual and metaphysical power with the acknowledgement that he is the one “masquerading as a human (Obaneji)” to bring the other characters to judgement (29). That he has the power to take up any form or guise is indicative enough of his omnipresence. Yet, in spite of being an all-knowing deity, as Obaneji, he still confesses: “Oh no. I have seen so much. It simply doesn’t impress me, that’s all I have told you, recognition is the curse I carry with me. I don’t want to know any more” (Forests18, 20).

Moreover, of utmost signification is Forest Father’s weariness:

Trouble me no further. The fooleries of beings whom I have fashioned close to me weary and distress me. Yet I must persist, nothing is ever altered. My secret is my eternal burden – to pierce the encrustations of soul-deadening habit, and bare the mirror of original nakedness – knowing full well it is all futility. Yet I must do this alone, and no more, since to intervene is to be guilty of contradiction, and yet to remain altogether unfelt is to make my long-rumoured ineffectuality complete; hoping that

when I have tortured awareness from their souls, that perhaps, only perhaps, in new beginnings... (88).

This passage is an acknowledgement of the inability of supernatural forces to change anything in the world. Consequently, critics might be tempted to read this passage as a manifestation of Soyinka's pessimism, which altogether is not invalid. But it does appear that its burden is the irony and paradoxes of human existence. Soyinka himself posits that in Yoruba cosmology, "the deities stand in the same situation to the living as do the ancestors and the unborn, obeying the same laws, suffering the same agonies and uncertainties" (Cited in Wilson 9). Therefore what Soyinka achieves with the character of Forest Father is the demystification of the deities – equating the quandaries of the gods with that of mere mortals. Forest Father's confessions and actions are revelations that the gods obey the same laws and suffer the same agonies and uncertainties as humans. It is therefore an ironic situation that while humans look to supernatural forces for solution to their problems; Soyinka reveals that such transcendental solution is a mirage since the gods themselves are conflicted with quandaries and indecisions that make their intervention ineffectual.

It is significant, for instance, that the Ogun Soyinka wished for during his infantile artistic development is not the Ogun he finally settled for. According to him, "My adopted Muse would remain Ogun, but only of the biting lyric. Alas, that willful deity would refuse to bow to mortal preferences within his dual nature" (Dawn 50). Within this context, it is the refusal of deities to bow to mortal preferences as a result of their dual nature that Soyinka dramatizes with the character of Forest Father. As can be seen to intervene would mean that humans are no longer created as free moral agents. Yet, not to intervene implies that the Supreme Being no longer cares for his creations. So, this play is more of a dramatization of the complexities of human existence, rather than a socio-political commentary of the Nigerian situation.

6 Theme of the Play:

Soyinka makes a distinction between the European and African literary experience in this play. The European experience consists of a series of literary ideologies: allegory, neoclassicism,

realism, naturalism, surrealism, absurdism, constructivism, and so forth. The African experience, on the other hand, while not without ideological concepts, concerns mainly the discovery of universal truths. In contrast to the European idea of literature as having an objective existence, African literature, Soyinka explains, remains integrated with traditional values, social vision, and collective experience. It is “far more preoccupied with visionary projection of society than with speculative projections of the nature of literature, or of any other medium of expression.” By social vision in literature Soyinka means a concern to reveal social realities beyond immediate, conventional boundaries, a concern to free society from historical presuppositions and replace them with the writer’s idealistic and pragmatic ordering of human experience.

One of Soyinka’s main concerns is the question of when (and whether) ritual can become drama—whether a mythic or religious celebration can be transformed into a work for the stage, and whether the actors and the audience can actually relive the revelation of a ritual experience. Soyinka believes that the audience is integral to the arena of dramatic conflict because it supplies. Since *A Dance of the Forests* was written primarily for a Nigerian audience, it can be best appreciated through an understanding of Yoruba culture. A recurring figure in Soyinka’s plays is Ogun, the Yoruba god of war, fire, carving, and metal. As Soyinka says in his essay “The Fourth Stage” (1976), “Ogun stands for a transcendental, humane but rigidly restorative justice.” By using elements of traditional Yoruba performance such as dance and music, Soyinka creates an effect of cathartic ritual. Yoruba myth and its ritual drama, however, do not reach toward an ideal absorption in “godlike essence,” but rather plunge “into the ‘chthonic realm,’ the seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and becoming.” As a Yoruba, Soyinka believes that the ancestral is contained within the living, and that the gulf between the living and their ancestors—and between mortals and deities—must be constantly diminished by ceremonial sacrifice and ritual. Because *A Dance of the Forests* was written primarily for a Nigerian audience, it can be best appreciated through an understanding of Yoruba culture. A recurring figure in Soyinka’s plays is Ogun, the Yoruba god of war, fire, carving, and metal. As Soyinka says in his essay “The Fourth Stage” (1976), “Ogun stands for a transcendental, humane but rigidly restorative justice.” By using elements of traditional Yoruba performance such as dance and music, Soyinka creates an effect of cathartic ritual. Yoruba myth and its ritual drama, however, do not reach toward an ideal absorption in “godlike essence,” but

rather plunge “into the ‘chthonic realm,’ the seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and becoming.” As a Yoruba, Soyinka believes that the ancestral is contained within the living, and that the gulf between the living and their ancestors—and between mortals and deities—must be constantly diminished by ceremonial sacrifice and ritual.

Perhaps the most basic metaphysical feature of West African religion is the belief that souls reside in objects and natural phenomena, a belief known as animism. Thus trees, hills, streams, oceans, and rocks all have resident souls. *A Dance of the Forests* is alive with species deities—all the Forest Dwellers.

7 Long questions and Answers

Q What is the role of myth in *Dance of the forests*?

A There has been an increasing tendency, on the part of modern African writers, to identify with the literary traditions of their people in terms of both content and technique. The reason is not far to seek. For a long time before African nations won political independence from their European colonizers, African culture was misunderstood and misrepresented. Words such as savage and primitive were used to describe them by foreign scholars who had little or no feeling for the languages and the attitudes in which that literature was expressed. It was only inevitable that, when these African nations won their independence, they undertook to reexamine and overhaul not only the institutions by which they had been governed but also the image of their culture that had long been advertised by outsiders. The aim was to demonstrate that Africa has had, since time immemorial, traditions that should be respected and a culture to be proud of.

African mythology covers a large area. There are so many countries, regions, languages, tribes, cultures and imperialist crossovers that the sheer diversity of prevailing gods would seem overwhelming if there weren't a few handy shortcuts. Traditional African belief is overwhelmingly monotheistic. There may be spirits and ancestors floating around, but there is only one God. Early missionaries made a complete pig's ear of their research in this respect and seem to have delighted in cataloging as many heathen gods as they could possibly get away with. African creator gods seem to follow a distinctive pattern— they are all extremely dissatisfied

with their creations. There is much shaking of heads, turning away in sorrow and avoidance of contact. The humans are left to fend for themselves. Attempts to regain contact with their God by building a heavenly ladder are the subject of many an unhappy legend. On the whole, African gods don't like to be pestered and humans have to learn to be content with their lot. But while God sits in Heaven wringing his hands in despair, the ancestral spirits are very willing to take an active part in Earthly life. These are mostly into hunting and other practical subjects— with food, sex and booze as popular as always. There is a remarkable innocence about the gods of Africa. They seem naive and unworldly, believing the best of everyone and optimistically giving the benefit of the doubt to all and sundry. No wonder they are rudely disappointed when it turns out their badly-chosen favorites are up to no good.

Like myths from other parts of the world, those of the African people reflect beliefs and values. But, while the mythologies of many cultures are carefully preserved relics of ancient times, African myths and legends are still a meaningful part of everyday life. Some African myths deal with universal themes, such as the origin of the world and the fate of the individual after death. All traditional African people agree that the soul of an individual lives on after death. Some people distinguish more than one spiritual essence living within one person, the life-soul or biospirit which disappears at the moment of definitive death, and the thought-soul which keeps his individual identity even after it is separated from the body. The life-soul can, according to some people in Africa, be separated during a person's life, in times of danger, and be kept hidden in a safe place, so that its owner can be harmed, mortally wounded even, but not killed, as long as his life-soul is safe. When the danger is past, the life-soul can be restored to the body and the person is hale and hearty again. The thought-soul lives on after death, but not for ever, it may gradually die and be forgotten. Souls of little children who died young, those of weak minds and insignificant persons will fade away after some years lingering. If, however, an individual had a strong personality, a rich and famous man, a mother of many children, a chief, someone who was loved or admired, that soul will live on for many generations. Evil souls, too, may have a long afterlife: witches, sorcerers, the souls with a grudge, who have a score to settle, will wait for their revenge and haunt the living for years. The oldest concept of the place where the dead continue their existence is the forest. The impenetrable depth of the great forests of Africa is the heartland of the spirits and of all magical beings. In the next chapter, the importance of the forests from the mythical perspective will be analyzed.

The African have a firm belief that where there are steep rocks, the dead reside in deep, dark caves, where their souls flutter about disguised as bats. Below the surface of rivers and lakes is the habitat of many souls. Many others linger on near the graveyards where they were buried. The good souls of the loved ones who have died, the wise parent's souls still accompany their living children and grandchildren. The Yoruba (Nigerians) believe that each person has at least three spiritual beings. Firstly there is the spirit, *emi*, literally breath, which resides in the lungs and heart and is fed by the wind through the nostrils, just as the fire is fed through the twin openings in the blacksmith's bellows. This *emi* is the vital force which makes a man live, that is, has done on earth. The good souls will then be sent to the Good Heaven, *Orun Rere*. The souls of the wicked, those who are guilty of theft, murder or cruelty, poisoning, witchcraft or slander, will be sent to *Orun Buburu*, the Bad Heaven, as punishment.

There are many other myths which spring from the continent's own settings, conditions and history. The people of Africa did not use written language until modern times. Instead, they possessed rich and complex oral traditions, passing myths, legends and history from generation to generation in the spoken form. Parrinder's illustrated volume, *African Mythology* (1967), describes the mythology of the indigenous people of Africa. In his introduction to the book, he discusses African's ancient oral tradition, noting that myths and stories have only begun to be collected and written down in recent times. He argues that religion is an essential part of African myth, it forms—topics which include myths, beliefs and rituals associated with the creator; God; the first human beings; the mystery of birth and origins of death; gods and spirits; divinations; ancestors and witches and monsters.

In some cultures, professional storytellers—called *griots*—preserved the oral tradition. The written accounts of African mythology began to appear in the early 1800s, and present-day scholars labour to record the continent's myths and legends before they are lost to time and cultural change. African mythologies include supernatural beings that influence human life.

Q. How is Yoruba mythology brought about in the play?

A Dance of the Forests focuses on Yoruba tradition as an important source. The role of Yoruba mythology is an emergent tradition and art in Africa. Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa. The majority of Yoruba speak the Yoruba language. The Yoruba constitute between 30 and 50 million individuals in West Africa and are predominantly in Nigeria with around 21 per cent of its total population. While the majority of the Yoruba live in Western Nigeria, there are also substantial indigenous Yoruba communities in the Republic of Benin, the USA, the United Kingdom and Togo. It is well-known that Yoruba culture and tradition forms the background of several contemporary written dramas. But, the importance of the Yoruba sources has not been explored in detail. One must understand that the Yoruba origins of the plays in order to appreciate their literary evolution. As in other parts of Africa, Nigerian literary genres have been inspired by traditional religious performance genres.

A Dance of the Forests presents a complex interplay between gods, mortals and the dead in which the ideal goal is the experience of self-discovery within the context of West African spiritualism. The living have invited two glorious forefathers to take part in a feast and celebration—the Gathering of the Tribes. The god Aroni, however, explains in the prologue that he received the permission of the Forest Head to select instead two obscure spirits of the restless dead: the Dead Man and the Dead Woman, a captain and his wife, from the army of the ancient Emperor, Mata Kharibu. These two were selected because in a previous life they had been violently abused by four of the living. The four mortals are Rola, an incorrigible whore nicknamed Madame Tortoise, who was then a queen; Demoke, now a carver and then a poet; Adenebi, now council Orator and then Court Historian; and Agboreko, Elder of Sealed Lips, a soothsayer in both existences. They have been selected because of past debauchery, which Aroni hopes can be expiated through revelation. Aroni further explains in the prologue that the Forest Head, disguised as a human, Obaneji, invites the four mortals into the forest to participate in a welcome dance for the Dead Man and the Dead Woman. Aroni takes them under his wing after the living group like Rola and others refuse to help them. The dance is interrupted by the wayward spirit Eshuoro. Eshuoro seeks vengeance for the death of Oremole, a devotee of Oro and apprentice to the carver Demoke, who killed Oremole by pulling him off the top of the araba tree that they were carving together. Ogun, the patron god of carvers, defends Demoke. Ogun (the god of iron, war and craftsmanship of the Yoruba) and Oro (the Yoruba god of punishment

and death) represent the antithetical forces that continuously interact until their hypothetical synthesis, through which the mortals would attain self-understanding.

Q. What do the characters of the play represent?

The characters of the play represent three worlds, i.e., human, natural and divine- a feature so common to Greek Tragedy and epics of the world. The human world is again divided into the ancient and contemporary ones. Firstly, the characters like Adenbi, Agboreko, Demoke and Rola represent the contemporary civilians of Nigeria, whereas the Dead Man (captain of army), the Dead Woman (the captain's wife), the Child, Mata Kharibu, the Court Historian and the Poet represent the ancient life of Nigeria. Secondly, the character like Agboreko, Araba, Obaneji the Forest Head, Murete, the tree spirits, the river spirits, the spirits of pachyderms and ants signify the natural world. Thirdly, the character like Eshuro, Oro, Ogun etc represent the divine world. Thus, Soyinka offers a complex picture of the Nigerian life where the human, the natural and the divine worlds are interrelated symbiotically. Almost all the characters carry the archetypal import as discussed below.

Forest Father or Forest Head, the chief god, who controls the universe of this play, is called Osanyin in the pantheon of Yoruba gods. He is the supreme arbiter who rules both humans and lesser gods. Because he represents the divine qualities of justice and mercy, he despairs the continuous evil of humanity's history but believes that humankind may be improved if mortals can be made to admit the consequences of their acts as part of history. He designs the dance to expose past and present wickedness. In his mortal guise, he masquerades as Obaneji who leads the party into the forest.

Eshuro, one of the aspects of Oro, is God of the dead. He has the qualities of the Yoruba God of mischief, Eshu. He is spiteful and antagonistic to humankind and demands from Forest Head vengeance against Demoke. It is his final chance to destroy the human race, as he so bitterly desires. Rola, the eternal whore, queen in the ancient court of Mata Kharibu, also called Madame Tortoise because of the image that once was on her back, she will not turn herself over. She is projected as a tormentor and sexual sadist. She demands the attention and subjugation of all men. In one evidence of her cruel nature, she orders the passivist army captain (the Dead Man) to be castrated for rejecting her sexual overtures. Now reduced to an actual prostitute, she continues

her sexual scandals in modern times when two of her lovers die, one by murder and one by suicide. She is the female black widow spider in human form.

The Dead Woman is Dead Man's wife. She is equally dirty, ragged and squalid, a far cry from the visions of lovely opulence from the other world that were anticipated to arrive. She was killed while pregnant. If her child can now be brought to birth, it will establish the future of the human race. In her crude way, she supplies the continuity of life that derives from motherhood and offers life even under degraded conditions.

All the characters are layered in and out with Yoruba mythic colour and hence have been projected with utmost dexterity by Soyinka. Characters like Eshuro and Ogun are based on the gods inspired from mythology. The Yoruba mythological issue finds a place in the play through the belief of a transition from the human to the divine essence. In other words, the primal essence of human beings is inspired from the Yoruba mythology. In fact, Soyinka uses Yoruba mythic figures through his archetypal characterization which is applied as a narrative device in the play. The play's characters are one of the human community representatives in Soyinka's literary output. Demoke, whose power is endowed by the creative god Ogun, is aware of his destructive power and is propelled toward redemption. Therefore, Demoke stands for the hope that Nigerians had in finding solution to the Nigerian sociopolitical hardships. Hence, the first Yoruba elements that stand out in the play are the names of the characters, both human and divine, and the forest setting. As gods are believed to inhabit trees in the Yoruba mythology, so do they in the play. The Yoruba names and setting locate the play unmistakably in a physical Yoruba world.

Apart from the mortal characters in the play, the deity characters have an important role to play in terms of the Yoruba mythology. Soyinka (1976:1) says that gods though, unquestionable, have a significant role to play in the drama and their symbolic roles are identified by man as the role of an intermediary quester, an explorer into the territories of essence-ideal around whose edges man fearfully skirts. Of Yoruba deities, especially that of Ogun, Soyinka refers as the protagonists to the Prometheus spirit god Ogun.

Ogun is the embodiment of will, and the will is the paradoxical truth of destructiveness and creativeness in acting man. Only one who has himself undergone the experience of disintegration, whose spirit has been tested and whose psychic resources laid under stress by the forces most inimical to individual assertion, only he can understand and be the force of fusion between the two contradictions.

Q. Give a brief description about the Yoruba people and the tradition as mentioned in the play.

A. The Yoruba is one of the largest ethnic groups of Nigeria. There are approximately fifteen million Yoruba people in south-west Nigeria and the neighboring Benin and Togo. They are loosely linked by geography, language, history and religion. Most of them live within the borders of the tropical forest belt, but remnants of the powerful Oyo kingdom include groups that live at the fringes of the northern Savanna grasslands. Archaeological evidence suggests that the ancestors of the Yoruba may have lived in the same general area of Africa since prehistoric times. In the mid eighteenth century the slave traders sent slaves of Yoruba descent to America . Some of them resettled in Cuba and Brazil where elements of Yoruba culture and language can still be found.

For centuries the Yoruba lived in large, densely populated cities which were able to practice special trades. Most of the people commuted to the countryside for part of the year to raise the staple crops—yams, corn, cassava, cocoa. The economy is structured around agriculture, trade and handicrafts. Women do not normally work outside the home. They attain social status through their role in the market system rather than through their husbands economic status. Each city state maintains its own interpretation of history and religious traditions and their unique art style, yet all acknowledge the ritual sovereign of Ife, all consult Yoruba herbalists and divination priests, and all honour the pantheon of Yoruba gods.

Soyinka, like other Yorubas, has three names: Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka. A Yoruba child is born with one name, christened with a second and has an attributive name. In Soyinka's case, Olul, used as a compound in Oluwole, originally belonged to a child of high or princely birth. Akinl, in Akinwande means strength or the strong one. Soyinka's parents adherence to the

traditional naming procedure suggests the traditional base of their family. He was born into a Yoruba family in Abeokuta, specifically, a Remo family from Isara-Remo on July 13, 1934.

Soyinka's first important play, *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), was written for Nigeria's independence celebration. Soyinka has played an active role in Nigeria's political history. In 1965, he made a broadcast demanding the cancellation of the rigged Western Nigeria Regional Elections following his seizure of the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service studio. He was arrested, arraigned but freed on a technicality by Justice Esho. In 1967, during the Nigerian Civil War he was arrested by the Federal Government of General Yakubu Gowon and put in solitary confinement for his attempts at brokering a peace between the warring Nigerian and Biafran parties. While in prison he wrote poetry on tissue paper which was published in a collection titled *Poems from Prison*. He was released 22 months later after international attention was drawn to his unwarranted imprisonment. His experiences in prison are recounted in his book *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* (1972). He worked as a lecturer, held a fellowship at Churchill College, Cambridge, and wrote three important plays: *Jero's Metamorphosis*, *The Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite*, and *Death and The King's Horseman*. In 1988 Soyinka became a professor of African studies and theatre at Cornell University. Despite government pressure, Soyinka was active in the Nigerian theater. Soyinka's best-known essays *Myth, Literature and the African World* were published in 1976.

Soyinka's artistic commitment merits an elaborate treatment. The complexity of Soyinka's styles merits from his use of language, myth, symbolism and allegory have been closely and profitable interwoven into the texture of his works. Much of Soyinka's celebrated obscurity is a direct result of the handling of the English tongue. He is fond of archaic words and loves to coin new phrases. Something of the dramatist and something of the poet, both of which Soyinka is, always find their way into his works.

Another quality peculiar to Soyinka's style is the structural use of the myth. Myths run in close parallel with the narrative in his works. And the characters also have mythological dimensions. Soyinka's complex style has more value to the discerning reader than that of those writers who simplify their language in order to reach a larger readership. Emphasizing the importance of the complex style, Soyinka himself says, —the energy and passion of social revolution appears. . .to

quarry into the metaphorical resources of language in order to brand its message deeper in the heart of humanity (Soyinka 1976:63). The radical originality of his approach is to liberate black Africa from its crippling legacy of European imperialism. He envisioned a New Africa 'that would escape its colonial past by grafting the technical advances of the present onto the stock of its own ancient traditions. For this purpose, Soyinka employed native myth which reformulated to accommodate contemporary reality and that served as the foundation of future. It opened the way to self-retrieval, cultural recollection and cultural security. In the light of the above discussion, the obscurity of Soyinka becomes part of a greater purpose and just not an effort on his part to ignore the ordinary reader. The ideological and mythical dimensions of Soyinka's works, the minute analysis of society and deep insights into the African psyche and his exploitation of the English language lend his works variety and depth besides earning them universal acceptability and acclaim. In the process, Soyinka emerges an African writer of unique distinction.

Q. How does *A Dance of the Forests* present a complex interplay between gods, mortals and the dead?

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Q. How can you say that the sacrificial gestures of the heroes are significant?

A. It may be argued that the sacrificial gestures of the heroes are significant and not futile since they leave behind examples of actions that are capable of revolutionizing society. For example, Oyin Ogunba points to the example of Eman in Wole Soyinka's 'The Strong Breed' (Soyinka) and argues that the societal guilt generated by his self-sacrifice is capable of

permanently affecting the attitude of the community to carriers in the future. It is significant that Ogunba prefixes his observation with 'it looks as if...'. Chikwenye Ogunyemi, however, uses less uncertain terms, arguing that, like Christ, Eman, through his life and death, disrupts traditional life, bringing about a 'doubtful' new way of life. Admittedly, it is possible to project into the future beyond the dramatized event and conjecture, quite plausibly, that Eman's (or indeed Demoke's) society becomes revolutionized and is not ever the same again. It should be pointed out, however, that this paper approaches texts, not as poetic creations capable of yielding endless meanings but as dramatic events, set within specific temporal frameworks. The question, therefore, is that of what is realized in dramatic terms, not what is visualized or deduced. Soyinka's plays, 'The Strong Breed' inclusive, do not dramatize Ogunyemi's new way of life or new and old orders co-existing in doubtful harmony. They unfold, instead, defiant actions by heroes who resent the statusquo and the tragedy that results invariably from these actions, since the statusquo always emerges triumphant. One does not deny to an extra-textual perspective the right to see the events as significant and capable of yielding moral lessons. What one would continue to state and demonstrate unequivocally despite this, is that, these heroic gestures, within the framework of the world in which they occur, are futile, since they fail to achieve significant results. The occasional Soyinkan hint at the possibility of a new beginning, as also observed by the critics cited above, would be properly seen as running counter to the internal logic of the dramatic events.

Short questions and answers:

Explain the character of Demoke

Demoke, is a thoughtful and reticent artist who is made to recognize, through the revelation of a past epoch in which he had been active, the continual re-enactment of man's evil nature generation after generation. What he is called upon to do to free mankind from this cycle of failure is revealed only at a symbolic level (he should lead the half-child, itself a symbol of a threatened posterity, through the Forest, to the light of day). But by the end of the play, it becomes evident that apart from attaining an indeterminate kind of quietist wisdom he fails to accomplish this mission or any other thing

significant enough to liberate mankind from 'the destructive path of survival' (Soyinka, 79). His totem would seem to be the most significant of all his actions in the play. But even this, as we would soon see, is ultimately ineffectual.

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Q How is it true that the Ants talk of 'the good to come' and of a time when the 'ring of scourges' would be complete and the hair would rise on tails like scorpions?

It is true that the Ants talk of ‘the good to come’ and of a time when the ‘ring of scourges’ would be complete and the hair would rise on tails like scorpions (79). A good time would, hopefully, come when the persecuted would violently free themselves from the bondage of tyranny. But what we witness is the drama of human failure in the bid to bring about this good time. As a court poet, Demoke had been forced, against professional ethics, to flatter a bloodthirsty queen who he had truly detested. In fact, in this play, only the Warrior can, strictly-speaking, be described as heroic. But even his heroism is futile. He asserts that his rebellion against the despotic monarchy had ‘started a new disease that catches quickly’ (57) that is, the ability to think for oneself, a thing Madame Tortoise confesses she has noticed among his soldiers (64). However, he does not seem to be certain that the new disease is capable of revolutionizing society. He confesses (and indeed discovers at his resurrection) that the old pattern cannot be broken: ‘Unborn generations will, as we have done, eat up one another’ (55). What is dramatized in his rebellion is therefore the impotence of this outcry. As the Historian rightly tells him:

This thing cannot last. It is unheard of.

In a thousand years it will be unheard of...

You only throw your life away uselessly (57)

Q. Who is the forest father?

A Forest Father or Forest Head, the chief god who controls the universe of this play. In the pantheon of Yoruba gods, he is called Osanyin. He is the supreme arbiter who rules both humans and lesser gods. Because he represents the divine qualities of justice and mercy, he despairs of the continuous evil of humanity’s history but believes that humankind may be improved if mortals can be made to admit the consequences of their acts as part of history. He designs the dance to expose past and present wickedness. He is concerned and sympathetic but all-powerful, reserving his supreme power to restrain and ultimately decide the outcome of the dance and therefore the outcome of the world. In his mortal guise, he masquerades as Obaneji, who leads the party into the forest.

Why is A Dance of the Forests seem to be the most elusive?

Among Wole Soyinka's expressionistic plays, *A Dance of the Forests* seems to be the most difficult and elusive. After reading the play, one cannot but wonder whether it is a play at all. Plot wise, not only is the cause and effect model disregarded, but the simple plot structure is jettisoned for a complex form in which disentanglement and re-arrangement is required. The play, for example, begins in media res with the appearance of the Dead Woman and the Dead Man. The reason for which they leave the world of the dead for that of the living is not only cloudy as at this stage, but their dialogue is also esoteric, suggesting nothing. In terms of characterization, not only is there no discernible protagonist or antagonist, but the practice in classical drama whereby the gods act as antagonists to their subjects is also jettisoned. Moreover, the story line of the play in which the living invites their dead ancestors to grace their celebration is not only a distortion and exaggeration of reality, but also a fantasy that overrides fidelity to the actual appearance of things.

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan

Girish Karnad

1 Introduction

2 About the author

3 Summary of the play

4 Characters in the play

5 Analysis of the play

6 Theme of the play

7 Questions and Answers

1 Introduction:

The term Postcolonial does not lend itself to any fixed definition. Postcolonial discourse, sharing the mood of postmodernism and questioning the continuation of hierarchies, does not merely suggest a reversal of the many binaries that exist in the contemporary world. Postcolonialism is basically a shift in perspective. It is difficult to isolate postcolonial literary theories as something that is purely literary in nature. The interdisciplinary nature of the theory forbids their purely literary use. The fact that the term lends itself to more than one interpretation allows its use in different contexts. It is an interdisciplinary field that sometimes encroaches upon what can be identified as cultural studies, feminist studies, dalit movement etc. Postcolonial investigation actually connects the literary with the sociological, the historical, the cultural, the political and the economic. One of the early attempts to theorise postcoloniality is made by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin in their book 'The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practices in Postcolonial Literatures'. Later Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emerged as the main voices.

Postcolonial discourse offers certain theoretical models which can be used in the discussion of literary texts which come either from the colonial period written by the colonised or the coloniser or from the postcolonial contemporary world. Different texts therefore, can be read differently by using the perspectives of writers from the former colonies. Postcolonial literary criticism has

primarily suggested a way of reading differently the colonial texts by reading differently and hence challenging any accepted mode of reading is an important feature of postcolonial criticism. Postcolonial critics challenge the identities imposed by the western discourse on the third world. Gayatri Spivak writes about the continued subalternisation of the so called third world literatures. Third world literature deals with the nation, with colonialism, with the trauma the colonial era has created in order to receive recognition in the international scene. In these literatures the desire to show one's own culture as a very distinctive culture overshadows the concern for raising questions regarding the impact of colonialism on these cultures. Discussion of literatures from India especially of creative writing in English in India therefore feels obliged to make a reference to the Indianness of experience that is presented through such literary works so that most of the novels written in the first half of 20th century cannot but mention the freedom struggle as it was the social reality of the time. Later the focus shifted to discussing what was lost or gained by the colonial experience. There is a very strong tendency among the postcolonial writers to rework the texts belonging to the colonial period. A re-reading of the different texts from the colonial era not only explores the various modes of representations of the colonized subjects but it also challenges the tendency to project colonizer as a unified subject superior to everyone else.

Locating the text in the social, historical cultural, temporal context therefore becomes important. Edward Said gives greater responsibility to a literary critic by asking him to read a text contrapuntally. Driving basically from the principles of comparative literary criticism, contrapuntal reading involves reading simultaneously from a different area or from a different period to throw more light on the interconnectedness of literature and history, of the centre and the margin. Subaltern historiography becomes a power tool in the hands of writers to do this. The historian in the subaltern historiography creates a place for the subaltern in history there by going against the norm of traditional history writing. The concept can be understood clearly if we look at one of the contemporary plays *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* written by Girish Karnad, a well known name in Indian theatre.

His historical play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* is a master-piece. This play is an honest attempt of Karnad for removing all the untruths and misunderstanding about the 'cursed hero' of Indian history – Tipu Sultan. Infact this play resurrects him as a modernizing monarch whose mind was

fraught with high ideals, hopes, projects, missions and visions which he wants to use them for the regeneration of his subjects. Indeed Tipu is a representative of modernity and his modern outlook throws light on contemporaneity. Verily, Karnad presents this great man with a new perspective who was, indeed, far ahead of his age.

This play is not mere a record of historical account of Tipu's inner life but it is a representation of his innovative, radical and progressive ideas which greatly influenced social, political, economic and religious aspects of his age, including his own personal life. His vigilance about his children's education is one of them.

Infact Tipu knows the value of education; therefore, he is very alert about it, particularly about his own children's education. When Tipu is preparing to send a delegation to France for commercial and political purpose, his son Fath Haider wishes to join it. At that time, Tipu advises him that he should concentrate on his studies in order to get new and latest knowledge of the world. He illustrates the importance of education with his father – Haider Ali's example, who was an illiterate, foul-mouthed and that was enough for him to rule. But his son Fath Haider belongs to different and challengeable age which was full of problems and difficulties. So Tipu thinks that his son must prepare himself for the different life and world and it could be possible only through education. Indeed, education can bring radical change in one's life. Definitely it provides knowledge for facing the worldly problems. Therefore, Tipu asks his son to concentrate on his studies instead of going on France tour. This approach of Tipu is, decidedly, modern one.

Girish Karnad one of the renowned bi-lingual dramatist of post-independence India, occupied a very prominent place in Indian English Literature. Girish Karnad was born on May 19th 1938 in Matheran near Bombay. He has the power of rewriting and enacting plays with a flavour of Indian Tradition. He holds the language very tight to his thought as the characters are bound to bind. As a bilingual dramatist he has marked a milestone in both the languages (Kannada and English). In terms of theme and contend of his plays Girish Karnad implants his roots in the Indian soil and sketches his dramatic imagination. It is unfortunate that the tradition of Indo– English drama earned minimum critical attention. The greatness of Girish Karnad lays the success on the stage as well as among the readers. The use of folk elements is one of the reasons behind Karnad's success as a playwright.

Drama as an Art:

Literary work of art is a reflection from society and it is also an imitation of life. Drama imitates life not just in words but also in action. It depicts the life of saints, apostles and miracles performed by Jesus Christ. Like the same Indian Drama also has its origin from religion. Dramatics in India could be traced to the religious rituals of the Vedic Aryans. Drama is a special mode of fiction represented in performance. The term comes from a Greek word meaning action which is derived from “to do”. Construction of plot is one of the significant features of Drama. The greater need for plot implies a greater need of eliminating the irrelevant. This is called the “law of dramatic economy”. Girish Karnad always draws the wealth of his dramatic knowledge from the past, weaves them in the present, and makes them desirable for the future. His dramatic imagination is highly charged with humanistic thoughts, secularist ideology, nationalist commitment, cosmopolitan spirit, traditionalist approach and modernist hypothesis. “A true play is three dimensional ; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes. In terms of Girish Karnad’s theatrical themes his plays implants his roots in the Indian soil and sketches his dramatic imagination engendering different realities at a junction point where Drama is simultaneously reality, where invisible coincides with the visible, where the object is both itself and the revelation of something not itself. With the presentation of Indian Theater and culture he inscribes the socio-cultural philosophy, political and the world of fantasy and reality.

Girish Karnad's “*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*” has been a subject of much academic discussion and research. It was played in 1997 and can be described as the long-awaited history play in which, after dealing with pre-colonial Indian history in two earlier works i.e. Tughlaq and Tale-danda. Karnad confronts British colonialism in its crucial early stages of military expansion. Karnad strongly felt that Tipu needed to be given his due as a major figure in Karnataka history, as a visionary, and a patriot and this play was written basically to revise his image. The ‘dreams’ of the plays title refer to a secret record of Tipu’s dreams maintained by him, found after his death. These ‘dream’ have been used like a metaphor by Karnad to show the ‘real’ man behind the image of the warrior, by looking into the inner aspirations of Tipu. The play portrays the Mysore king Tipu Sultan differently from how the British portrayed him. In the

play, Karnad reveals Tipu's inner world and the political visionary and dreamer in him.

Tippuvina Kanasugalu (English: The Dreams of Tipu Sultan) is a Kannada play written by Indian playwright Girish Karnad. The play has been performed many times but different groups around the world but mostly in the subcontinent mainly in Pakistan and India. The story follows the last days as well as the historic moments in the life of the Ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan, through the eyes of an Indian court historian and a British Oriental scholar.

The figure of Tipu Sultan has continued to dominate Indian and British imagination for over two centuries as the endless flow of scholarly works, ballads, plays and novels about his tempestuous life and tragic end testifies. What, however, is less well known is that this man, who spent a large part of his life on horseback, maintained a record of his dreams, which he kept concealed from his nearest associates. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* examines the inner life of this warrior, political visionary, and dreamer.

In many important respects Tipu Sultan follows the model of the history play established in Tughlaq and Tale-Danda. It draws upon a range of historical sources to present convincing portraits of the principal characters, but creates an imaginative plot and resonant dialogue to contain their experience. It deals with a controversial protagonist who can be characterized in radically opposite ways, depending on the observer's viewpoint – as a heroic figure of anti-colonial resistance comparable to the Rani of Jhansi in one perspective, and a treacherous but fallible and even foolish adversary in another.

2 About the author:

Girish Raghunath Karnad (born 19 May 1938) is a contemporary writer, playwright, screenwriter, actor and movie director in Kannada language. His rise as a playwright in 1960s, marked the coming of age of Modern Indian playwriting in Kannada, just as Badal Sarkar did in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. He is a recipient of the 1998 Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour conferred in India. Girish Raghunath Karnad is a playwright, poet, actor, director, critic, translator and cultural administrator all rolled into one. He has been rightly called the “renaissance man” (Kalidas & Merchant.”Renaissance Man”); whose celebrity is based on decades of prolific and consistent output on native soil. He belongs to a generation that has produced Dharamveer Bharati, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar who have

created a national theatre for modern India which is the legacy of his generation. Karnad is the most famous as a playwright. His plays written in Kannad have been widely translated into English and all major Indian languages. Karnad's plays are written neither in English, except few, in which he dreamed of earning international literary fame, nor in his mother tongue Konkani. Instead they are composed in his adopted language Kannad thereafter translated by himself into English—a language of adulthood. When Karnad started writing plays, Kannad literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in Western literature. Writers would choose a subject which looked entirely alien to manifestation of native soil. Conflicting ideologies, political freedom of India, modernity versus indigenous traditions supplied the specific backdrop to write plays. During his formative years, Karnad went through diverse influences that went long way into shaping his dramatic taste and genius. The earliest influence was that of the *Natak Company* that was in vogue in Sirsi. The *Yakshagana* plays which he used to see with the servants also appealed to him by their buffoonery and horseplay. But the greater influence came from the naturalistic drama of Henrik Ibsen and through him of G.B. Shaw. Karnad was also influenced by Shakespeare considerably. But the influence of Kannada drama was quite profound and deep on him. Karnad represents the best traditions of the Kannada drama which was quite rich with romantic plays, tragedies, comedies, poetic and blank verse plays. Karnad took keen interest in all these kinds of Kannada plays. He was exposed to a literary scene where there was a direct clash between Western and native tradition. It was India of the Fifties and Sixties that surfaced two streams of thought in all walks of life—adoption of new modernistic techniques, a legacy of the colonial rule and adherence to the rich cultural past of the country. Karnad has emerged as a living legend in the contemporary Indian English drama. His output which ranges from *Yayati* to *Wedding Album* marks the evolution of Indian theatre since four decades. “He represents”, Saryug Yadav considers, “synthesis of cultures and his formal experiments have certainly been far more successful than those of some of his contemporaries” His technical experiments with an indigenous dramatic form “opened up fresh lines of fruitful exploration for the Indian English playwright” (Naik. *A History of Indian English Literature* P. Hari Padma Rani also gives credit to Karnad to Indianize the form of drama in English: “Girish Karnad has attempted to Indianize the form by using some of the conventions of Indian Classical drama and some of those of the folk theatre and by blending them in a singular style of his own”

For four decades Karnad has been composing plays, often using history and mythology to tackle contemporary issues. He has translated his plays into English and has received acclaim. His plays

have been translated into some Indian languages and directed by directors like Ebrahim Alkazi, B. V. Karanth, Alyque Padamsee, Prasanna, Arvind Gaur, Satyadev Dubey, Vijaya Mehta, Shyamanand Jalan and Amal Allana. He is active in the world of Indian cinema working as an actor, director, and screenwriter, in Hindi and Kannada flicks, earning awards along the way. He was conferred Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the Government of India and won four Filmfare Awards where three are Filmfare Award for Best Director - Kannada and one Filmfare Best Screenplay Award. Girish Karnad was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Apart from working in theatre, he has directed and acted in films. He has served as Director of the Film and Television Institute of India, Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (the National Academy of the Performing Arts) and Director of the Nehru Centre, London (the cultural wing of the High Commission of India). He was Visiting Professor and Playwright-in-Residence at the University of Chicago. He has been honored with the Padma Bhushan and conferred the prestigious Jnanpith Award.

His Early Life:

Girish Karnad was born in Matheran, Maharashtra. His initial schooling was in Marathi. In Sirsi, Karnataka, he was exposed to travelling theatre groups, Natak Mandalis as his parents were deeply interested in their plays. As a youngster, Karnad was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theater in his village.

He earned his Bachelor's of Arts degree in Mathematics and Statistics, from Karnatak Arts College, Dharwad (Karnataka University), in 1958. As a young man studying at Karnataka University, Dharwar, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Mathematics and Statistics in 1958, Karnad dreamed of earning international literary fame, but he thought that he would do so by writing in English. Upon graduation, he went to England and studied at Oxford where he earned a Rhodes scholarship and went on to receive a Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. During his stay at Magdalen College, Oxford, Karnad felt immensely interested in art and culture. On his return to India in 1963, he joined Oxford University Press, Madras. This offered him an opportunity to get exposed to various kinds of writings in India and elsewhere. Such influences made an indelible mark on the creative genius of Karnad. In 1974, he received an important assignment and was appointed Director of the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. In 1987, he went to the U.S.A. as Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence at the Department of South

Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago. From 1988 to 1993, he worked as Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi (National Academy for Performing Arts), New Delhi. In 1994, he was awarded Doctor of Letters degree by the Karnataka University, Dharwad. The awards conferred to Karnad testify his recognition as a contributor to art, literature and cinema. Karnad's awards include the Mysore State Award for *Yayati* (1962), the Government of Mysore Rajyotsava Award (1970), Presidents Gold Medal for the Best Indian film for *Samskara* (1970), the Homi Bhabha Fellowship for creative work in folk theatre (1970-72), the Sangeet Natak Academy (National Academy of the Performing Arts) Award for playwriting (1972), the Kamaladevi Award of the Bharatiya Natya Sangh for the Best Indian play of the year for *Hayavadana* (1972), the National Award for Excellence in Direction for *Vamsha Vriksha* (shared with B.V. Karanth - 1972), the Mysore State Award for the Best Kannada film and the Best Direction for *Vamsha Vriksha* (1972), the Presidents Silver Medal for the Second Best Indian film for *Kaadu* (1974), the Padma Shri Award (1974), the National Award for the Best Kannada film for *Ondanondu Kaaladalli* (1978), the National Award for the Best Script for *Bhumika* (shared with Shyam Benegal and Satyadev Dubey - 1978), the Film Fare Award for the Best Script for *Godhuli* (shared with B.V. Karanth - 1978), the Best Bengal Film Journalists Association Award for the Best Actor in *Swami* (1978), the Karnataka Nataka Academy Award (1984), the Nandikar, Calcutta, Award for Playwriting (1989), the Golden Lotus for the Best Non-Feature Film for *Kanaka Purandara* (1989), the National Award for the Best Non-Feature Film on Social Issues for *The Lamp in the Niche* (1990), "Writer of the Year" Award from Granthaloka Journal of the Book Trade for *Taledanda* (1990), Karnataka State Award for the Best Supporting Actor in *Santa Shishunala Shareef* (1991), the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the Most Creative Work for *Nagamandala* (1992), the B.H. Sridhar Award for *Tale-Danda* (1992), the Padma Bhushan Award (1992), the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for Best Play for *Tale-Danda* (1992), the Booksellers and Publishers Association of South India Award (1992), the National Award for the Best Film on Environmental Conservation for *Cheluvi* (1993), a Special Honour Award from the Karnataka Sahitya Academy (1994), the Sahitya Academy Award for *Tale-Danda* (1994), and the Gubbi Veeranna Award (1996-97), and the Jnanpith Award (1999). He also served as Director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974-75), President of the Karnataka Nataka Academy (1976-78), Indian Co-Chairman for the Joint Media Committee of the Indo-U.S. sub-Commission on Education and Culture (1984-93).

In recognition of his meritorious contribution to art, culture and theatre, the President of India awarded him Padamshri in 1974 and Padambhushan in 1992. Karnad won the prestigious Gnanpith Award in 1999. He is a gifted genius and a man of excellent intellectual abilities. He strikes a balance between intellect and emotion in his plays.

When Karnad was preparing to go to England, amidst the intense emotional turmoil, he found himself writing play. It was just a chance that Karnad became a dramatist. He himself tells us: “I wanted to be a poet, the greatest ambition in my life. At the age of 22, I realized I would not be a poet, but be only a playwright” He finds it difficult to describe the trauma created by decision to go abroad for further studies. Karnad was surprised to see that instead of becoming a poet he had become a playwright. He himself recounts some reasons behind it:

“Going abroad was a much rare occurrence in those days; besides, I came from a large, close-knit family and was the first member of the family ever to go abroad. My parents were worried lest I decide to settle down outside India, and even for me, though there was no need for an immediate decision, the terrible choice was implicit in the very act of going.”

Upon graduation Karnad promptly went to England and studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Lincoln and Magdalen colleges in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar (1960–63), earning his Master of Arts degree in philosophy, political science and economics.

Career

After working with the Oxford University Press, Chennai for seven years (1963–70), he resigned to take to writing full-time. While in Chennai he got involved with local amateur theatre group, The Madras Players. During 1987–88, he was at the University of Chicago as Visiting Professor and Fulbright Playwright-in-Residence. During his tenure at Chicago Nagamandala had its world premiere at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis based on Karnad's English translation of the Kannada original. Most recently, he served as director of the Nehru Centre and as Minister of Culture, in the Indian High Commission, London (2000–2003). He served as director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974–1975) and chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the National Academy of the Performing Arts (1988–93).

His Literary Achievements:

Karnad is known as a playwright. His plays, written in Kannada, have been translated into English and some Indian languages. Karnad's plays are written neither in English, in which he vainly dreamt of earning international literary fame as a poet, nor in his mother tongue Konkani. Instead they are composed in his adopted language Kannada. Initially, his command on Kannada was so poor that he often failed to distinguish between short and long vowels (laghu and deergha). When Karnad started writing plays, Kannada literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in Western literature. Writers would choose a subject which looked entirely alien to manifestation of native soil. C. Rajagopalachari's version of the Mahabharat published in 1951, left a deep impact on him and soon, sometime in the mid-1950s, one day he experienced a rush of dialogues spoken by characters from the Mahabharata in his adopted language Kannada. "I could actually hear the dialogues being spoken into my ears... I was just the scribe," said Karnad in a later interview. Eventually *Yayati* was published in 1961, when he was 23 years old. It is based on the story of King Yayati, one of the ancestors of the Pandavas, who was cursed into premature old age by his preceptor, Shukracharya, who was incensed at Yayati's infidelity. Yayati in turn asks his sons to sacrifice their youth for him, and one of them agrees. It ridicules the ironies of life through characters in Mahabharata. It became an instant success, immediately translated and staged in several other Indian languages.

In a situation like that Karnad found a new approach like drawing historical and mythological sources to tackle contemporary themes, and existentialist crisis of modern man, through his characters locked in psychological and philosophical conflicts. His next was *Tughlaq* (1964), about a rashly idealist 14th-century Sultan of Delhi, Muhammad bin Tughluq, and allegory on the Nehruvian era which started with ambitious idealism and ended up in disillusionment.[8] This established Karnad, now 26-years old, as a promising playwright in the country. It was staged by the National School of Drama Repertory under the direction of Ebrahim Alkazi, with the actor Manohar Singh, playing the visionary king who later becomes disillusioned and turns bitter, amidst the historic Purana Qila in Delhi. It was later staged in London by the National School of Drama for the Festival of India in 1982.

Hayavadana (1970) was based on a theme drawn from *The Transposed Heads*, a 1940 novella by Thomas Mann, which is originally found in *Kathasaritsagara*. Herein he employed the folk theatre form of Yakshagana. A German version of the play was directed by Vijaya Mehta as part

of the repertoire of the Deutsches National Theatre, Weimar. *Naga-Mandala* (Play with Cobra, 1988) was based on a folk tale related to him by A. K. Ramanujam, brought him the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the Most Creative Work of 1989. It was directed by J. Garland Wright, as part of the celebrations of the 30th anniversary of Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis. The theatre subsequently commissioned him to write the play, *Agni Mattu Male* (The Fire and the Rain). Though before it came *Taledanda* (Death by Beheading, 1990) which used the backdrop, the rise of Veerashaivism, a radical protest and reform movement in 12th century Karnataka to bring out current issues.

Karnad's plays include *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1964), *Hayavadana* (1971), *Anjumallige*, Kannada version published by Manohara Grantha Mala, Dharwad, 1977. The English translation by the playwright as "Driven Snow" is as yet unpublished. *Hittina Hunja*. 1980, published as *Bali: The Sacrifice* [along with *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*] New Delhi: OUP, 2003. *Nagamandala: A Play with a Cobra*. (1990), *Tale-Danda* (1993). *The Fire and the Rain* (1998). "The Dreams of Tipu Sultan," *Theatre India*. No.1 May 2000: 47-85. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* and *Bali: The Sacrifice*. New Delhi: OUP, 2004. *Two Monologues: Flowers and Broken Images*. OUP, 2005. *Wedding Album*. OUP, Nov, 2008. Karnad's first play *Yayati* was the result of intense emotional crisis he felt while going to England for further studies. To escape from his stressful situation, he began writing a play based on the myth of Yayati from *Mahabharata*. The play that reflects his mental condition at that time is a self-conscious existentialist drama on the theme of responsibility. He combines native subject with existential philosophy and juxtaposes past and present together. The play reveals the existentialist view that each man is what he chooses to be or makes himself. The play doesn't glorify son's obedience to his father who exchanges his curse to his son Pooru is contrary to the original myth. Karnad raises practical question what would be the reaction of Pooru's wife? Chitralkha's protest attacks male-chauvinism and subverts patriarchy. Karnad being a problem playwright deals with soci-political and cultural concerns of the contemporary life. *Yayati*—unheroic hero stands for modern man inhabited by worldly desires, sensual pleasure, and irresponsible exercise of power and utter forgetfulness of the imperishable values of life. In *Yayati* Karnad reinterprets an ancient myth from the Puranic past to make a statement in the form and structure he borrowed from the Western playwrights. The play was a great success on the stage. Karnad's second play *Tughlaq* is a historical play on the life of fourteenth century Sultan of India—Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq.

Karnad has always found it difficult to find a suitable subject for writing plays. He read the history of Kannada literature by Kirtinath Kurtkoti and learnt from him that Indian history has not been handled by any Indian writer the way it has been done by Shakespeare or Brecht. Karnad was very much impressed by this statement; he went through a book of Indian history. And when he came to Tughlaq, he exclaimed, "Oh! Marvellous. That is what I wanted." That was a subject in tune with the times. In those days, existentialism was quite in vogue. Everything about Tughlaq seemed to fit into what Karnad had surmised from Kurtkoti. He felt that in Tughlaq he had hit upon a fantastic character. He realized that he had absorbed this character and it was growing in front of him, certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures. After a reign distinguished for policies that today seem far-sighted to the point of genius, but which in their day earned him the title 'Muhammad the Mad,' the sultan ended his career in bloodshed and political chaos. In a sense, the play reflected the slow disillusionment my generation felt with the new politics of independent India: the gradual erosion of the ethical norms that had guided the movement for independence and the coming to terms with cynicism and realpolitik. ("Author's Introduction" *Three Plays. Tughlaq* had a tremendous success with the reading public and it achieved greater popularity on the stage as actors have liked to do the role of the emperor. As opposed to the first play, Karnad wrote this one in the convention of the Natak Company. For form of the play, Karnad was no more interested in John Anouilh. He divided the play into scenes in the indigenous fashions of the natakas—*shallow* and *deep scenes*. The shallow scenes were played in the foreground of the stage with a painted curtain—normally depicting a street—as a backdrop. These scenes were reserved for 'lower class' characters with prominence given to comedy. They served as link scenes in the development of the plot, but the main purpose was to keep the audience engaged while the deep scenes, which showed interiors of palaces, royal parks, and other such visually opulent sets, were being changed or decorated. The important characters rarely appeared in the street scenes, and in the deep scenes the lower classes strictly kept their place.

Hayavadana (1970) is the third and the most representative of his plays. It deals with archetypal theme, underlying mythical patterns, identifiable character-types, folk theatre conventions i.e. use of mask, curtains, dolls, story within story, use of images of Kali, Ganesh, Rudra etc, allegorical significance of the play are the characteristic features of the play. It was originally written in Kannada and it was persuaded by Rajinder Paul to translate the play into

Krishnamurthy and Mrs. Yamuna Prabhu who jointly produced it for the Madras Players at the Museum Theatre, Madras on 7th December 1972. The plot of *Hayavadana* is derived from Somdeva's *Brihadkatha Saritsagar*, an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit. The central episode in the play—the story of Devadatta and Kapil—is based on a tale from *Vetala Panchavimshika*, but Karnad has borrowed it through Thomas Mann's novel *Transposed Heads*, a mock-heroic transcription of the original Sanskrit tales. Whereas the sub-plot—horse-man's search for completeness, is Karnad's original invention. *Hayavadana* is a play on the “mad dance of incompleteness? and search of identity in a world of tangled relationships. challenging in bringing folk and elite theatres together.

Karnad's play in a characteristic way begins where the ‘Vetal’ story ends. How would the woman take it if it really happened and would it ultimately solve the problem for her? are the fascinating questions the artist in him faces. Karnad doesn't satisfy with Pooru's acceptance of his father's old-age and *Yayati* uses this only as a starting point. If young Pooru had a wife how would she feel about Pooru's extraordinary decision, becomes the nucleus of his exploration of the problem raised by the mythical story. In *Hayavadana* what Karnad wants to suggest is that for us King Vikram's solution does not solve the problem. In fact, the real problem begins when it appears to be solved. That could be reason why he dropped the version of *Vetala Panchavimshika* which had the “incest” theme at its core. He also makes significant departures from Mann's story.

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan (1997) draws its plot from the history of Tipu Sultan. It follows the model of the history play established in *Tughlaq* and *Tale- Danda*. It was first written as a radio play for BBC to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence in 1996. The plot obviously deals with some aspect of Indo-British relation. It primarily explores the secret inner world of a man whose public life was a continual war against British colonialism. It was late A.K. Ramanujan who drew his attention to the record of his dreams maintained by Tipu Sultan himself. Karnad, like many other playwrights was fascinated by the valor of Tipu Sultan who continued to inspire folk ballads in Karnataka. Tipu Sultan is viewed as one of the most brave warriors, political visionary and dreamer; one of the most politically perceptive and tragic figures in modern Indian history. The radio play was broadcast by the BBC on 15th August 1997 and was directed by Jatinder Verma of Tara Arts with Saeed Jaffrey playing the role of Tipu Sultan.

Karnataka Nataka Rangayana staged the Kannad version in the periphery of Daria Daulat, Tipu's summer palace in Srirangapatna, to commemorate his 200th death anniversary in May 1999. Later it was entirely re-written for the stage. The play blends historical sources to portrait major characters and develops an imaginative plot and resonant dialogue to reflect their experience. Tipu stands for a force fighting against British Colonialism. The image in the play of polity in crisis, both because of internal dissensions and the presence of a powerful alien adversary, "carries the same potential for application to contemporary problems that had made the history of *Tughlaq* and *Tale-Danda* politically relevant in present day India". The characters major as well as minor are put together, language and dialogue apt to create the air of Sultanate period of India. Tipu, Haider Ali, Nana Phadnavis, Lord Cornwallis, Arthur and Richard Wellesley against a less prominent historical figures i.e. Kirmani, Tipu's queen and sons, courtiers, ordinary citizens and soldiers. Karnad avoids any partisan parade of heroes and villains, rather creates black sheep in both the camps. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker rightly comments: "Karnad interlineated 'textualized' history with legend, lore, and memory. because all these modes of transmission are germane to the story of Tipu". Karnad has also projected Tipu in multiple and contradictory roles—as a beloved ruler, legendry warrior, loving father, and visionary dreamer, but also a Machiavellian schemer who plots with the French against the British, the defeated soldier who enters into humiliating treaties with the enemy, and the gullible commander who is eventually betrayed by his own side. Tipu's decline destroyed a visionary who had progressive ideas to modernize his empire on the European line.

Bali: The Sacrifice discusses conflicting mindsets with religious beliefs, simultaneously exposes the hollowness and futility of age-old rituals. The plot of the play has drawn upon the thirteenth century Kannad epic *Yashodhara Charite* by Janna, which in turn refers back through an eleventh century Sanskrit epic by Vadiraja to the ninth-century Sanskrit epic *Yashastilaka*, by Somdeva Suri. The play is "a tribute to astuteness and sensitivity of Mahatma Gandhi that he saw so clearly the insistence of non-violence to the cultural and political survival of India. It offers a fresh perspective of approach vis-à-vis man's psychological struggle and manoeuvres. It presents the cultural, moral and religious dialogic in the context of the warfare between the losing grounds of reality and conscious right to social survival—a conflict between the effete essentialist position and the conceptualized work of living" (106).

It explores the existential dilemma of passion and violence posed by an ancient Jain myth. The myth is less concerned with actual violence than with the morality of substitution, which permits violence, a wider and subtler play by masking its true nature. Violence has been the one of the crucial subjects of debate in the history of Indian civilization. Vedic sacrifices, conducted by Brahmin priests, involved the slaughter of animals as offerings to the gods, which the Jains found repugnant. To the Jain, indulging in any kind of violence, however minor or accidental, violence. The issue found some resolution when the Brahmins renounced blood sacrifice. Miniature figurines, made of dough, were substituted for live animals, a practice that continues to this day. Despite this change, Jains objected this process of substitution that carries the original violent impulse within them which was no less dehumanizing. Karnad came across the myth of the Cock of Dough when he was in his teens and the myth littered with discarded drafts of dramatized versions of it. The myth revealed unexpected meanings with long ponderings over it and *Bali: The Sacrifice* is the result of over two decades evolution. Karnad transforms the story of the dough figurine that comes alive at the moment of sacrifice into a mature philosophical exploration of love, jealousy, desire, betrayal, and violence between men and women who are bound by the ties of blood and marriage, or encounter each other in the perfect freedom of anonymity. Novelty of the play lies in the unconventionality of its major characters, and the seriousness with which it yokes intimate personal acts to structures of religious belief and practice. Subaltern issue and the feminist study also make the play more valid in the present context. Mahout represents subalternity and his anger, frustration and disgust are very much generic; whereas old Queen (King's mother) and Queen Amritawati underline two sets of women—one traditional, blind adherent to age-old rituals indulging in sacrificial acts for material gains; second a woman of practical vision thwarting any form of violence. She even ridicules the morality of substitution. All the four characters are set of opposites—old Queen and Queen; King and Mahout. Vinod Mishra finds in the play, “a voice of reason against a saga of myths”. Subha Mishra has seen Foucault's Panopticism in *Bali: The Sacrifice* which implies deconstructing the established beliefs.

Karnad is an innovative, multifaceted and problem playwright who imbibes several personalities in one. He has contributed a lot to enrich Indian English Drama through playtext, performance, acting, and direction. Moreover, like his contemporary playwrights Vijay Tendulkar, Badal

Sircar, and Mahesh Dattani he has reshaped Indian English Drama. But unlike his contemporaries, he adapts mythical and historical material with a view to giving it a psychological interpretation. As a modern playwright, Karnad is always engaged in the act of “deconstructing myths. He takes up mythical and legendary tales from his own culture and unfolds them in the light of modern sensibility. This deconstructing myth becomes an act of self-searching for the playwright...he combines the past and the present into a unity that bespeaks of tradition and modernity in his art of playwriting”. Karnad upholds the rich cultural heritage of India and endeavours to fight against the legacy of colonialism by advocating Indian values and cultural ethos of India. Subjects from the native soil, characters deeply rooted in indigenous culture, English very much Indianised to suit the context and create feel of Indianness, and folk and classical theatre traditions endorse his well- thought design to set free Indian English drama from the colonial yoke. Indian imagination and sensibility can be easily seen throughout his plays.

3 About The Play:

Tipu Sultan is one of the most tragic figures of the eighteenth century nascent colonial India which is inherited from his father Haider Ali, the deep passion for his motherland along with the uneasy political equation with the English. His unceasing efforts throughout his life to contain the ever increasing aggressive penetration of the British into the Southern territory became the focal point of Sanjay Khan’s controversial teleserial in 1990, titled *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*. And it was Girish Karnad who ‘voiced a strong support for it on the grounds that Tipu needed to be given his due as a major figure in Karnataka history, a visionary, and a patriot.’ Karnad’s preoccupation with Tipu was the result of his long association with A.K. Ramanujan who had brought to his notice the existence of a little secret diary of the King, which had surprisingly survived the ravages of time. In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* the focus is on the multiple facets of a nationalist who perhaps was not treated fairly by history. As an example of a complex construction of a history play it offers a serious reappraisal of a figure marginalized by history. Study of the text further becomes relevant as Karnad attempts to re-read the past from the vantage point of the present and simultaneously use the past memories to make sense of the challenging present. Karnad’s originality is reflected by the fact that he brings together factual history, memories and dream sequences to create an almost flowing, poetic narrative without any disjunction. Set in 1803 the play begins with a very significant interaction between two

historians – one belonging to the class of colonizers- the other to the colonized. Mir Hassan Ali Khan Kirmani is the court historian who is being encouraged to ‘speak’, develop a certain objectivity, a dispassionate distance and to write history based on ‘bits of evidences’. One is expected to be loyal to history and keep emotions out, but the question is loyal to which side? Each side has a history of its own to tell which may be at variance with the other. As is the case of Kirmani and Mackenzie where the latter is concerned only with facts and Kirmani on the other hand is dependent on memories as well – those memories which seem to be fading rather quickly. If memory is truth then it is of a special kind – ‘It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimises, glorifies and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else’s version more than his own.’ At one point of time, during his interaction with Mackenzie, Kirmani refuses to acknowledge any connection of Tipu with the French Governor-General – Malarctic, though Tipu like his father had tried to forge a political alliance with them, in order to contain the British aggression. It appears to be a case of ‘selective memory’ where he tries to save his Sultan from being further vandalized on basis of evidence against him by the English historian. This attempt at subversion of formal history based on so called reality of documentary evidences can be looked upon as an effort to reiterate his allegiance to the memory of the real Tipu who is lost somewhere within the layers of history. But this is again touched by irony as slowly Kirmani’s memory seems to desert him. He remembers all the details of the final catastrophe (battle with the British) vividly but try as he might he fails to remember Tipu’s face during his last meeting with him. He also forgets the letter handed over to him by Tipu which contained the last of his recorded dreams before the final fateful confrontation with the British. This juxtaposition of memory with forgetfulness can be looked at, in two ways. Firstly, History ‘recorded under duress, the views expressed during interviews for public consumption ...’ can never represent the ultimate truth. ‘Authentic history is that which is engraved on hearts and minds and erased the moment it is put in writing, lest it be read by those for whom it is not intended.’ The second way of apprehending it is via the Trauma Theory of the 1990’s which has various strands, one of them being Freud’s Psychoanalysis. The study includes many areas focusing on psychological, ethical, aesthetic questions about the representation of traumatic experiences and they range from public, historical, personal to memorial. Freudian psychoanalysis provided a model about the effect of trauma on memory. The trauma involved for

Kirmani is apparent when he says, "There's no healing... the wound remains fresh." The violent end of the sultan is perhaps something too traumatic for him to come to terms with. On the other hand when Mackenzie insists on Kirmani to record his version of history it becomes the case of 'silenced' historical narrative being given a voice. This is an example of 'New historicism, (which) fascinated by the ideological omissions and repressions of historical narrative developed a mode of dissident or countervailing recovery of what had been silenced or lost in traditional literary histories'. On the very first reading of the play it becomes clear that the playwright's pre-occupation with Tipu is on multiple levels. While remaining within the framework of historical facts Karnad also tries to explore Tipu's character in light of his recorded dreams. He uses Tipu's own interpretations of his dreams to work out 'a political allegory of his reign.'⁸ It is quiet intriguing that a warrior who spent most of his life on horseback, waging wars recorded his dreams and kept them hidden under his pillow, 'concealed from his closest confidants'; Kirmani looks upon it as sacred, personal; for Mackenzie it is just an 'odd little book... A pleasantly inconsequential conversation piece.' The difference in their perceptions is obvious. Karnad succeeds in proving that this 'inconsequential conversation piece' was actually the essence of his principal aspirations, statesmanship, astute political sense, and desire for a strong nation state. It offers a new perspective and helps us decipher the complexities that constituted this unique persona, placed at a crucial juncture of the Indian history. In his struggle against the onslaught of the British it is his dreams that sustained him, 'spoke to him' and guided him in his public and personal life. Each of his dreams are a parallel to a particular event of his life except the fourth which is towards the end a tragic reversal of his expectations. The dreams come with an exact date thus giving them further credibility, of being rooted in reality, placing them at a certain point of time in the written history. The play proves to be adventurous in telescoping history and establishing the entire context through memory and dreams. The internal strife and the powerful external forces combine to form a similar backdrop as existed during his time. Outside was the formidable force of the British and within home was the treachery of the closest confidants like Mir Sadiq, Poorniya and Qamaruddin Khan who was prepared to hand over Tipu to the Nizam just for a jagir. 'Thus the battle of Seringapatnam was lost before it had begun.' During the last siege it was Mir Sadiq whose conduct was not above reproach as he ordered the closure of the watergate through which the Sultan wanted to leave the fort. Though Tipu had a tragic end and his life was a long, ever continuous struggle against his opponents, yet he never let go of his

single minded devotion to his motherland. His dream of having a consolidated strong prosperous Mysore was always at hand to sustain him against all odds. It was a compulsive passion within him for new inventions whether it was production of glass, guns, canons or silk, pearl culture or thermometers, he had a penchant for all. Tipu was perhaps much ahead of his times and a visionary born two hundred years too early. At the same time military acumen was his forte, and being a hardcore political strategist he tried his best to unite the Marathas and the Nizam along with forging alliance with the French to deter the imperialist designs of the British – their onslaught on the land, people, language and culture.

Conclusion :

If we reflect on this sentiment from the contemporary Indian socio-political considerations then the latest apprehensions of some sections over the various international deals with the U.S. become relevant. New inventions, knowledge, technology advancement goes hand in hand with progress for any nation but at the same time therein lies an inherent danger of invasion on its culture, traditions and language. In the end though Karnad did not overtly intend it but perhaps it is our prerogative to draw the conclusion that those who refuse to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

4 Characters of The Play:

Tipu: Tipu (1750-1799) presented himself as a very complex and fascinating character — a great warrior who spent more than half his life on horseback, but also made the time to carefully record and preserve his fragile world of dreams; a man who hated the British and fought them all his life, but also admired them for their administrative methodology and trading skills... Karnad radio play, *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, painted the character with all these complexities, moving back and forth between historical events and dreams that were as "real" to the dreamer as the events themselves. Karnad's portrayal of Tipu essays his unparalleled status as the invincible ruler, a military giant, a heroic figure of anti-colonial resistance, a business enthusiast and yet a fallen ruler deceived by his own people. His multiple and contradictory roles in the play are appropriately explained as a beloved ruler, legendary warrior, loving father, and visionary

dreamer, but also as the Machiavellian schemer who plots with the French against the English, the defeated soldier who enters into humiliating treaties with the enemy, and the gullible commander who is eventually betrayed by his own side. Among the different roles played by Tipu Sultan, his role as an anti-colonial hero is most prominent. In the play, Tipu Sultan is presented as a nationalist who recognizes and resists the colonizer's schemes of suppression. In the early years of British colonialism, the Indian rulers were content with the trade relations and friendship offered by the British. More than mere traders they had seen the English as friends which the latter exploited. Unlike others, Tipu realizes the ultimate aim of the British in India: to become the rulers of India and to plunder its riches. He tells to his Queen:

This land is *ours* and it's rich, overflowing with goods the and throw out the Europeans. So the only way the Europeans can ensure their profit for all time to come is by becoming rulers themselves. You see? It's them or us Tipu tries hard to convince other rulers like the Marathas about the treacherous ways of the British. He is a ruler with extraordinary political insight and military acumen. He warns Hari Pant of the Marathas: "Cornwallis has saved me because without me in South India, you Marathas would become too powerful. You are being carefully contained . Make sure it's not your children next " He tries to convince Hari Pant that the English have returned the territories which were their early possessions and in return Marthas have given them new territories. The English try to contain the Marathas from becoming more powerful.

Court historians have eulogized not only Tipu Sultan's character but his scholarship and literary skill, and his mastery of the Persian language has been taken for granted. British historians have reviled his character, disregarding the views of the court historians, but they have accepted their contention with regard to his scholastic attainments. The facts are the other way round. It is not essential that a great man should also be a master of some language or other which, in any case, Tipu Sultan was not. From the age of fifteen onwards we see him accompanying his father in the various wars which he fought. It is not to be wondered at that he could not receive systematic education of the type that he might have received had he lived in more peaceful times.

Of the thirty-seven dreams recorded the majority are concerned with his wars against the British and their allies. Such are dreams I, III, VII, XI, XIV, XX, XXI, XXIV, XXV, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXII and XXXVI. There are several other dreams which give tidings of general success

and victory in war such as dreams II, IV, V, VI, IX, XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXVII, XXVIII, and XXXIII.

Some of the dreams point to his intense love and veneration for the Prophet, Hadrat Ali and other Muslim saints and sufis. This is manifest from dreams VIII, X, XII, XXXI XXXIV and XXXV. In some of the dreams there is clear indication that the dream was recorded in the register immediately after Tipu Sultan woke up. Towards the end of dream III, for instance, he says, ^' While this conversation was still in progress, I woke up and wrote down the contents of the dream immediately", and at the end of dream IV, he records, "At this juncture I woke up and wrote down the dream." Tipu Sultan has also interpreted some of his dreams. Such is the case with dreams XIII, XVII, XXVIII and XXXI.

Some of these interpretations are highly interesting. In dream XIII Tipu Sultan interprets the woman in man's dress as his enemy, the Marhattas, against whom he was waging a war at that time. In dream XXVIII the three silver trays of fresh dates have been interpreted as the dominions of his three enemies, the British, the Marhattas and the Nizam, which, so he hoped, would fall into his hands. As has been mentioned above, Tipu Sultan's diary consists of dreams and certain other memoranda. In this book the reader will find the translation of all the dreams recorded by Tipu Sultan. As to the other memoranda, only one piece has been selected for translation. The various items in the memoranda relate to some of the events of Tipu Sultan's time or episodes in his life. In one place, for instance, one finds the names of persons killed or wounded in a certain battle, and in another, the time of Tipu Sultan's departure from, or arrival in, the Capital on a particular occasion. A present given by Tipu Sultan to a young couple on the occasion of their betrothal also finds a mention. A report received from the mofussil about the discovery of enormous footprints in a field has been included in the diary which, incidentally, is not in Tipu Sultan's own hand-writing. Perhaps he asked one of his secretaries to insert it in the diary. There is also recorded a dream of one, Sayyid Muhammad Aslam, concerning Tipu Sultan which he thought it fit to insert along with his own dreams. This piece seemed to fit into the scheme of the present book and has, therefore, been translated. The dominant note throughout these dreams is what was uppermost in Tipu Sultan's mind about how to free his country from the foreign yoke. Whatever the psycho-

analyst may have to say about them, to a student of history it is of greater importance to discover how Tipu Sultan himself interpreted these dreams and how they influenced his actions. From a perusal of this register it becomes clear that his hours of sleep were as devoted to the cause of freedom as the hours while he was awake.

Tipu Sultan exhibits the traits of a nationalist and a freedom fighter in his defence of the foreign forces. In this context, Karnad's Tipu is a proto-nationalist who resists as long as he can the Englishman's schemes to rob the land, even as he understands that the English 'believe in the destiny of their race' and are willing to die in faraway places for their dream of England. The internal tensions, the hostility between the Hindu and Muslim rulers, and their failure to recognize the foreign powers led to the fall of Tipu. Karnad poignantly portrays how a complex, civilized and prosperous culture is betrayed into subjection due to the pursuit of self-interests by key functionaries. Tipu Sultan is also a man ahead of his times. His potential to foresee things, his interest in inventions, and foreign trade, and so on are betrayed in his fascination for Europe: "that's what makes Europe so wonderful - it's full of new ideas - inventions - all kinds of machines – bursting with energy. Tipu's aspirations and visions were beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries. He was frustrated at the non-comprehension of his trade policies by his subjects: "Oh, will none of you ever learn? If profits are only seven pagodas while the expenses on clerk and accountants come to ten, how can anyone survive in business? How long will these traders be able to carry their bullion to other places? Don't you worry! They'll come back to us – crawling". Tipu is portrayed as a man of great intellect. He is eager to learn and experiment his knowledge and is portrayed as a visionary. The tragedy of Tipu's fall is not only that it made way for a full-scale colonial takeover, but that it destroyed a visionary who shared the modernizing impulses of the European Enlightenment, and could meet the English on their own terms. In the play, the British makes use of the internal conflicts like the one between Tipu and the Rajahs of Travancore as a reason to corner Tipu, in the name of their "friendship" with the Rajahs. Charles Malet, the representative of Lord Cornwallis succeeds in injecting Nana Phadnavis of the Marathas to turn against Tipu Sultan, in spite of an existing Peace treaty. He makes the unwilling Nana to be a part of their trap for Tipu: to attack Tipu from different directions. It is an act designed to punish in Malet's words, "a man who we believe is the enemy of all mankind. Thus,

the Company, the Nizam and the Marathas declare war on Tipu independently. Tipu's fall prefigures the fall of India and it is the result of lack of unity among Indian princely states. The play reflects the implementation of Macaulay's findings that the strength of India lays in its spirituality, belief systems; the only way to break the nation into parts is to strike at its very strength. The British did the same in boosting the enmity between different princely states.

Tipu Sultan acts the "Double" to the British, rather than being their "Other." Tipu displays the same urge to build a powerful empire and also shares their spirit in trade and commerce. He tells his son: ". . . I've had two teachers in my life. My father, who taught me war, and the English, who taught me trade. They taught me that the era of camel is over, that it is now the age of sailing ship. And they dislike me for being so adapt a pupil." The success and strength of Tipu cautions the British. It is reflected in the words of Mornington, the new Governor General of India: Tipu is building a trading empire on the European model and succeeding eminently. We have driven the French and Dutch out of India, contained the Portuguese. Is there any reason why we should tolerate an upstart native? The longer the peace, the stronger will Tipu become "The words of Mornington reflect his resentment in the power and strength of Tipu both as a ruler and as a trader. As the colonization will not support a dangerous "Double," the English decides to terminate Tipu. The concepts of a "unified nation" and the lack of a "national idea" loom large in the play. Through Tipu, Karnad illuminates the importance of a unified national idea which is explicit in the British. The conversation with Haider Ali in Tipu's third dream illustrates this:

"But the English fight for something called England. What is it? It's not a religion that sustains them, nor a land that feeds them. They wouldn't be here if it did. It's just a dream, for which they are willing to kill and die. Children of England!". Tipu realizes that the English believe in the destiny of their race which is absent in the case of Indians.

The political situation in the play depicts the decentred nature of power relations in the absence of a national idea. It lacks a unified interest for the nation. All the princely states and rulers mentioned in the play, Tipu Sultan, the Marathas, the Scindias, the Nizam, the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin are portrayed as rivals and engaged in fights. Whereas the conflict of beliefs made Tipu Sultan and the Hindu Marathas drift apart, personal egos prevent the Sultan and the Nizam of Hyderabad to make an alliance. The multi-religious, multi-lingual nature of

Indian society facilitated the British in their strategy of divide and rule. The colonization of India by the British is the direct result of the absence of a “national” idea on the part of Indians.

Among the reforms introduced by Tipu Sultan was the reform of the calendar.

It is necessary to have an understanding of it for the proper appreciation of the dates mentioned by Tipu Sultan. The function of the calendar is to distribute time into certain periods such as hours, days, weeks, months, years, etc. The solar day is determined by the daily rotation of the earth on its axis and the alternation of light and darkness and the solar year by the revolution of the earth around the sun which completes the circles of the seasons. But it is the revolution of the moon around the earth which yields the month.

Thus the solar day, the solar year and the lunar month may be termed the natural divisions of time. The Muslim calendar, however, is a lunar calendar in which twelve lunar months make a year, irrespective of the circle of seasons. The Muslim era, as is well known, is counted from the year of the hijrat or migration of the Prophet of Islam from Mecca to Medina in 622, A.D. The result of the adoption of the lunar year by the Muslims has been that the Muslim festivals do not fall in any particular seasons and run through all the seasons of the year, and in about 32-1/2 solar years the Muslim year returns to its starting point. Muslim governments, in following this calendar, have experienced administrative difficulty in the collection of agricultural taxes since crops are linked up with the seasons whereas the Muslim year is not. Consequently attempts have been made in Muslim history to devise ways and means for overcoming this difficulty. While for religious purposes the lunar year has been treated as sacrosanct, for other purposes a number of devices have been adopted from time to time.

Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani:

Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani, was an Iranian migrant scholar who lived in Mysore at the court of both Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. He is the author of an excellent two-part history in Persian on the life of these two rulers that was completed in 1802 – three years after the martyrdom of Tipu Sultan. The title of his work is “Nishan-e Hydari” It was translated into English by Colonel William Miles and published for the first time in London in 1864 by Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1997 it was reprinted by Asian Educational Services (New Delhi and Madras). Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani is also the author of another work in Persian titled

“Tadhkirat-al-Bilaad wa’l-Hukkam” (Memorial of the Principalities and Governors) – completed in 1215 AH/1800-01 AD. It is a history of the twelve principalities under the jurisdiction of the Mysore kingdom. Iranians of various walks of life -- traders, scholars, artisans, and soldiers of fortune -- had been coming regularly to the Mysore kingdom at the court of both Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. One of the few documented evidences of official dispatch of a military contingent from Iran to Mysore is from Karim Khan Zand the King of Iran on the request of Hyder Ali.

“Tipu Sultan and his Age: a collection of seminar papers”, Asiatic Society (Calcutta, India) 2001
Another interesting book, although its author has tried to defame Tipu Sultan and Islam in the introduction and footnotes is: "Selected Letters of Tippoo Sultan" by a historian of the British East India Company, William Kirkpatrick published in 1811.

Colin Mackenzie:

Colonel Colin Mackenzie (1754–1821) was Surveyor General of India, and an art collector and orientalist. He produced many of the first accurate maps of India, and his research and collections contributed significantly to the field of Asian studies. Mackenzie was born in Stornoway, Outer Hebrides, Scotland, the son of merchant Murdoch Mackenzie. He began his career as a customs officer in Stornoway, but at age 28, joined the British East India Company as an officer in the engineers. In 1799, he was part of the British force in the Battle of Seringapatam, where Tipu Sultan, Maharaja of Mysore was defeated by the British. He led the Mysore survey between 1800 and 1810. The survey consisted of a team of draftsmen and illustrators who collected material on the natural history, geography, architecture, history, customs, and folk tales of the region.

He later spent two years in Java, during the period of British occupation during the Napoleonic Wars. In 1815 he was appointed the first Surveyor General of India, a position he held until his death.

He used his military career and salary to support his research into the history, religion, philosophy, ethnology, folklore, art, and mathematics of India and Java. He hired learned Brahmins to assist him with surveys and translations of manuscripts. He researched Indian mathematics and India's system of logarithms.

He died in 1821 in Calcutta (Kolkata), India, and is buried in South Park Street Cemetery. Much of his collection of documents, manuscripts, artifacts, and artworks is now in the British Museum and the Oriental and India Office Collections of the British Library, though part of it remains in the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai (Madras).

Charles Mallet:

Sir Charles Warre Malet, 1st Baronet (30 December 1752 - 24 January 1815) served in the British East India Company as a Resident in the court of the Peshwa Mahrattas. He was the oldest son of Alexander Malet (1704–1775) a rector at Combe Florey in Somerset and his wife Ann. His first position was to the Mughal emperor residency at Cambay from 1774 to 1785. He served in the East India Company and was appointed Resident to the court of the Peshwas of Mahratta in 1785.

He considered western India an asset to improve British trade with China and considered it important to have greater control on the rulers of western India. When Tipu Sultan attacked Travancore in 1789, Cornwallis made an alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Peshwa of Mahratta through Malet. This treaty was signed with difficulty as Tipu also sought to forge alliances with the Peshwas. For his efforts Malet was created a baronet in February 1791. He left India in 1798 and married Susanna Wales (daughter of painter James Wales) in England. He continued to take an interest in India and influenced Thomas Daniell to publish Wales's paintings of the caves at Ellora apart from writing about them. He was created a Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of Arts. He had eight children by Susanna several of whom served in India. He also had three children through his mistress Amber Kaur, a princess from Rajasthan. In 1798 he left "bibi" Amber Kaur in Poona and her three children moved to England later. Portraits of the family were painted by James Wales.

Richard Wellesley:

Richard Colley Wesley, later Lord Wellesley, 1st Marquess Wellesley, (20 June 1760 – 26 September 1842), styled Viscount Wellesley from birth until 1781, was an Anglo-Irish politician and colonial administrator.

He was the eldest son of Garret Wesley, 1st Earl of Mornington, an Irish peer, and Anne, the eldest daughter of Arthur Hill-Trevor, 1st Viscount Dungannon; and brother of Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington. He first made his name as Governor-General of India between 1798 and 1805 and later served as Foreign Secretary in the British Cabinet and as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

Wellesley was born in 1760 in Ireland, where his family were part of the Ascendancy, the old Anglo-Irish aristocracy. He was educated at the Royal School, Armagh, Harrow School and Eton College, where he distinguished himself as a classical scholar, and at Christ Church, Oxford.

In 1780, he entered the Irish House of Commons for Trim until the following year, when by his father's death he became 2nd Earl of Mornington, taking his seat in the Irish House of Lords. He was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1782, a post he held for the following year. Due to the extravagance of his father and grandfather, he found himself so indebted that he was ultimately forced to sell all the Irish estates.

In 1784 he joined also the British House of Commons as member for Bere Alston. Soon afterwards he was appointed a Lord of the Treasury by William Pitt the Younger. In 1793 he became a member of the Board of Control over Indian affairs; and, although he was best known for his speeches in defence of Pitt's foreign policy, he was gaining the acquaintance with Oriental affairs which made his rule over India so effective from the moment when, in 1797, he accepted the office of Governor-General of India.

Mornington seems to have caught Pitt's large political spirit in the period 1793 to 1797. That both had consciously formed the design of acquiring a great empire in India to compensate for the loss of the American colonies is not proved; but the rivalry with France, which in Europe placed Britain at the head of coalition after coalition against the French republic and empire, made Mornington's rule in India an epoch of enormous and rapid extension of British power. Robert Clive won and Warren Hastings consolidated the British ascendancy in India, but

Mornington extended it into an empire. On the voyage outwards, he formed the design of annihilating French influence in the Deccan.

Soon after his landing, in April 1798, he learned that an alliance was being negotiated between Tipu Sultan and the French republic. Mornington resolved to anticipate the action of the enemy, and ordered preparations for war. The first step was to effect the disbandment of the French troops entertained by the Nizam of Hyderabad.

The invasion of Mysore followed in February 1799, and the campaign was brought to a swift conclusion by the capture of Seringapatam on 4 May 1799 and the killing of Tipu Sultan. In 1803, the restoration of the Peshwa proved the prelude to the Mahratta war against Sindh and the raja of Berar, in which his brother Arthur took a leading role. The result of these wars and of the treaties which followed them was that French influence in India was extinguished, that forty million people and ten millions of revenue were added to the British dominions, and that the powers of the Maratha and all other princes were so reduced that Britain became the true dominant authority over all India. He found the East India Company a trading body, but left it an imperial power.

He was an excellent administrator, and picked two of his talented brothers for his staff: Arthur was his military adviser, and Henry was his personal secretary. He founded Fort William College, a training centre intended for those who would be involved in governing India. In connection with this college, he established the governor-general's office, to which civilians who had shown talent at the college were transferred, in order that they might learn something of the highest statesmanship in the immediate service of their chief. A free-trader like Pitt, he endeavored to remove some of the restrictions on the trade between Britain and India.

Both the commercial policy of Wellesley and his educational projects brought him into hostility with the court of directors, and he more than once tendered his resignation, which, however, public necessities led him to postpone till the autumn of 1805. He reached England just in time to see Pitt before his death. He had been created a Peer of Great Britain in 1797, and in 1799 became Marquess Wellesley in the Peerage of Ireland. He formed an enormous collection of over 2,500 painted miniatures in the Company style of Indian natural history.

Begum Ruqayya Banu:

She was one of the Islamic wife of Tipu Sultan and belonged to his Zenana which comprised of many women. She was educated and beautiful and even helped Tipu in his administration.

Poorniyah:

Dewan Purnaiah has a unique place among the Dewans of the erstwhile Mysore kingdom. He was widely respected throughout the state and served under three kings. He was also a towering statesman with many great achievements. Well known both as an administrator and reformer in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, he laid the foundation for the modern Mysore state. He was a great visionary who brought reforms in administration, judiciary, revenue mobilisation and promoted irrigation activities. He also focused on providing infrastructure like roads, bridges and aqueduct in the kingdom. Dewan Purnaiah worked under Hyder Ali, his son Tipu Sultan in Srirangapatna and later with Mysore kings. Born into a poor family hailing from Coimbatore district in 1746, Purnaiah started working as a clerk at Srirangapatna and rose to the post of Dewan. He impressed Hyder Ali with his great memory. He was known for keeping accurate accounts as well. He was also involved in military campaigns in the Anglo- Mysore wars. He averted a war of succession immediately after Hyder Ali's death in 1782 when he kept the former's death a top secret till Tipu returned with his brother from a coastal campaign. Later, he served Tipu Sultan for 17 years. The period saw fourth Anglo-Mysore war in which Tipu was killed and the British took over Mysore. As the British were advancing towards Srirangapatna, Tipu Sultan entrusted his eldest son Fateh Hyder to Dewan Purnaiah's care and custody with a standing army on May 4, 1799, the day he was killed by the British in the war field.

Sathyanarayana, a tourist guide and researcher, said, Purnaiah, known to be loyal to his masters, championed that Fateh Hyder was the successor of Tipu Sultan. He did not favour the Wadiyar kings. He was against the displacement of the ruling family. However, things did not go as he wanted. As Krishnaraja Wadiyar III, a four-year-old boy, was crowned as the king, Purnaiah was again named as Dewan in view of his integrity, maturity, experience and knowledge. As the Dewan for a over decade, he reorganised the revenue administration, cut down wasteful

expenditure, brought in proper judicial administration, and military reforms. He oversaw the construction of many tanks, channels across the state and was instrumental in constructing a wooden palace for the king. When the king turned 16, he handed over the reins to him and retired in 1811. He died in 1812. Dewan Purnaiah used his administrative skills to put an end to dacoity near Ramanagaram (then Close Pet) on public proceeding towards Bangalore. He set up a small revenue village named after Sir Barley Close, the first resident of Mysore to prevent dacoity cases. He also posted police personnel and ensured that the people are provided security and moved without fear of dacoits. A Saga of service, Dewan Purnaiah was the mind behind construction of the wooden Palace for the Mysore Wadiyars after the capital was shifted to Mysore from Srirangapatna. The wooden palace lasted for nearly hundred years. It was reduced to ashes in a fire accident in the early part of 1900s and the Wadiyars constructed the present Amba Vilas Palace in its place. He also constructed dam at Sagarkatte across river Lakshmana Thirtha with a 23-mile channel for augmenting water to Mysore Palace through the Purnaiah canal. The stone bridge constructed across river Cauvery between Srirangapatna and Kirangur was dedicated to Governor General Wellesly which also connected Bangalore and Srirangapatna.

He was keen to provide drinking water to civilians during the war and planned an aqueduct through which water flowed into ponds in Srirangapatna town during war and provided water to irrigation activities. The Maharajas, impressed with his dedicated service and commitment, gifted him Yelandur taluk. However, barring a narrow bylane named after Purnaiah and a chowltory in Mysore nothing is left to educate public on contribution of this great statesman. Tourist guide Sathyanaraya said the district administration and the State Archives Department should hold programmes to educate younger generation about Purnaiah's services. He said that there are many structures like Krishnamurthy bungalow which is named after his grandson who also served as Dewan and implemented the first power project to KFG and Bangalore.

Mir Sadiq:

Mir Sadiq held the post of a minister in the cabinet of Tipu Sultan of Mysore and a General on the Mysorean Army. In the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, he allegedly pulled the Mysorean army from the battlefield to collect their salaries, during the Siege of Seringapatam. This allowed the

British forces to storm the boundary wall with little defence, paving the way for a British victory. Sadiq was killed by dismayed Mysorean troops immediately following the defeat as he attempted to go over to the British. Mir Sadiq, the chief conspirator, started to give away the pay to the soldiers when the enemies entered the fort. Allama Iqbal has referred to this traitor in the following couplet :

Jafar of Bengal and Sadiq of Deccan
Are a shame on humanity
Shame on religion and shame on country

Nana Phadnavis:

Balaji Janardan Bhanu was born in a Chitpavan Brahmin family in Satara in 1742 and was nicknamed 'Nana'. His grandfather Balaji Mahadaji Bhanu had migrated from a village called Velas near Shrivardhan during the days of the First Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath Bhat. The Bhats and the Bhanus had family relations and very good friendship. The two families had respectively inherited the 'Mahajan' or village-head positions of the towns of Velas and Shrivardhan. Balaji Mahadji had once saved the Peshwa from a murderous plot by the Mughals. The Peshwa therefore recommended Chattrapati Shahu to award the title of Phadnavis (one of the Ashtapradhan) on Bhanu. Later, when the Peshwa became the de facto head of state, Phadnavis became the main minister who held key portfolios of Administration and Finance for the Maratha Empire during Peshwa regime.

Nana was the grandson of Balaji Mahadji Bhanu and had inherited his grandfather's name keeping up with the tradition. The Peshwa treated him like family and extended the same facilities of education and diplomatic training as his sons, Vishwasrao, Madhavrao and Narayanrao. He continued to be the Phadnavis or the finance minister for the Peshwa.

In 1761, Nana escaped to Pune from the Third Battle of Panipat and rose to great heights becoming a leading personage directing the affairs of the Maratha Confederacy, although he was never a soldier himself. This was a period of political instability as one Peshwa was rapidly succeeded by another, and there were many controversial transfers of power. Nana Phadnavis

played a pivotal role in holding the Maratha Confederacy together in the midst of internal dissension and the growing power of the British East India Company.

Nana's administrative, diplomatic and financial skills brought prosperity to the Maratha Empire and his management of external affairs kept the Maratha Empire away from the thrust of the British East India Company. He displayed his best warfare skills in various battles won by Maratha forces against the Nizam of Hyderabad, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore and the English Army.

After the assassination of Peshwa Narayanrao in 1773, Nana Phadnavis managed the affairs of the state with the help of a twelve member regency council known as the Barbhai council. The council was Nana's mastermind plan to protect, Madhavrao II, son of Narayanrao, borne posthumously, to Gangabai, the widow of Narayanrao from the Peshwa family's internal conflicts. The Barbhai Council was an alliance of influential Sardars (Generals) led by Nana. Other members of the council were Haripant Phadke, Moroba Phadnis, Sakarambapu Bokil, Trimbakraomama Pethe, Mahadji Shinde, Tukojiroo Holkar, Phaltankar, Bhagwanrao Pratinidhi, Maloji Ghorpade, Sardar Raste and Babuji Naik. During this time the Maratha Empire although weakened by the Panipat war of 1761, was still significant in size with a number of vassal states under a treaty of protection who recognized the Peshwa as the supreme power in the region..

Nana died at Pune on the 13th of March 1800, just before Peshwa Baji Rao II placed himself in the hands of the British, provoking the Second Anglo-Maratha War that began the breakup of the Maratha confederacy. In an extant letter to the Peshwa, the Marquess Wellesley describes him thus: "The able minister of your state, whose upright principles and honourable views and whose zeal for the welfare and prosperity both of the dominions of his own immediate superiors and of other powers were so justly celebrated."

5 Analysis of the Play:

Girish Karnad in his play "*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*" uses the concept of dreams to indicate the downfall of Tipu Sultan through his dreams. The dreams of Tipu can be interpreted as

symbols or an indication which focuses on his downfall in the future and the Marathas as 'women in a men's garb' i.e., as those who cannot save themselves from the clutches of the British.

The story follows the last days as well as the historic moments in the life of the Ruler of Mysore Tipu Sultan through the eyes of an Indian court historian, Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani and a British Oriental scholar, Colin Mackenzie.

The play is a take on the historical account about Tipu Sultan who fought against the British domination of India. The play is based on the following event in Indian history about the ruler Tipu Sultan and his enmity towards the British.

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan is a postcolonial play as it discusses the primary issues regarding colonialism: conflict between the East and the West, between Whites and non-whites, and the colonizer and the colonized. The conflict between the two worlds, the western and the Indian, and the denigration of the natives are portrayed effectively in the play. The European conception of the superiority of Whites is evident in most of the scenes depicting a confrontation between the two. Though the British shows respect to the Indian rulers, their acts are underlined with a sense of contempt. Lord Mornington's reference to the other native rulers while discussing the plot to expel Tipu conveys this: "Tell the Nizam and the Marathas we shall expect their presence, though it scarcely matters either way" The Western conception of themselves as the proper "self," the ideal and that of the colonized as the "Other," the savage, is hinted in the play.

Historical Account:-

The English army fought four Anglo-Mysore wars against Tipu Sultan to defeat him and gain control over the Mysore kingdom as Tipu did not agree to cede with the British demands like the Nizams and Marathas.

The British started their operations against Srirangapatna started early in 1792 A.D. The English army marched against the fort and arrived in the sight of the fortress on the 16th Feb. 1792 A.D. On the same night, the operations started and the English pushed Tipu's force to the fort and

captured the island except the fort. Helplessly Tipu proposed the peace treaty and accepted the terms dictated by Lord Cornwallis. They signed the treaty on 23rd Feb. 1792 A.D. As per the treaty, Tipu agreed to surrender half of his territory to the English and pay three crores thirty lakhs of rupees as war indemnity to the English.

Since he could not pay war indemnity in full, he accepted to send his second and third sons namely Abdul Khaliq and Maiz-Uddin aged 10 and 8 respectively as hostages till he would pay the war indemnity. He paid the balance amount after two years and received his sons in 1794 A.D. at Devanahalli.

Karnad interlineates 'textualized' history with legend, lore, and memory because all these modes of transmission are germane to story of Tipu. The ruler's fabled persona as the Tiger of Maysore thus figures prominently in the action, both as oral legend and as military reality that the English must contend with. Karnad also casts his protagonist in multiple and contradictory roles – as a beloved ruler, legendary warrior, loving father, and visionary dreamer, but also as the Machiavellian schemer who plots with the French against English, the defeated soldier who enters into humiliating treaties with the enemy, and the gullible commander who is eventually betrayed by his own side. The perceptions of Tipu that have the greatest energy, however, are those with Brechtian-materialist overtones: they underscore Tipu's excitement over the 'new ideas' of Europe, his understanding of political economy, his interest in the link between commerce and empire, and his desire for an up-to-date army in his analysis. The tragedy of Tipu's fall is not only that it made way for a full-scale colonial takeover, but that it destroyed a visionary who shared the modernizing impulse of the European Enlightenment, and could meet the English on their own terms much to their chagrin.

Karnad's portrayal of English characters, is more in line with the conventional view of colonial conquest and the attendant cultural relations. Ethically, the main English characters in the play are rational, calculating, pragmatic, and ruthless, although their resentment of Tipu's apparent invincibility is also an aspect of what Homi Bhabha terms colonial ambivalence, while their racist contempt for all natives anticipates the unqualified colonialist denigration that Edward Said calls orientalism. Karnad's principal thematic argument is a familiar one; the English succeeded in India not only because of their superior weapons and warfare, but because of their

ability to play off members of the native ruling elite against each other. This accounts for the crucial quadrangulation between the Wellesleys, Tipu Sultan, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and Nana Phadnavis, and the dynamics made interesting from the perspective of the postcolonial present because it depicts the decentered nature of power relations in the absence of 'national' idea. Karnad's Tipu is a proto-nationalist who resists as long as he can the Englishman's schemes to rob his land, even as he understands that English 'believe in the destiny of their race' and are willing to die in faraway places for their dream of England. At home, however, his appeals to a common faith fail to rally the Muslim Nizam to his side, and the instinctive hostility between Hindu and Muslim princes alienates him from the Marathas, although he issues a prophetic and purely political warning about England's territorial ambitions. The pained scenes of Tipu's peace treaties with the English emphasize that a complex, civilized, and prosperous culture was betrayed into subjection because of the pursuit of petty self-interest by key functionaries. In hindsight, the 'traitorous' collaborations between English and native armies across racial and cultural lines becomes the perfect prelude and antithesis to the invention of India-as-nation by nineteenth-and twentieth-century nationalists.

The play has scenes from the present which show Hussian Ali Kirmani's attempts to write an 'objective' account of the dead Tipu for the English, and then there are also intermittent scenes from the past which portray the sultan. This gives the play a powerfully elegiac quality. Kirmani as a participant-observer in Tipu's tragedy, shows that the matter of history consists not of facts (which concern the English) but also with the memories of fabled ruler that are fading all too quickly. The play begins and ends with memory: Kirmani and Colin Mackenzie serve as the chorus for a highly selective and reflexive history that unfolds cyclically, beginning with the day of Tipu's last battle and returning to it via crucial stages in his slide towards defeat and death. In subtle moves, Karnad also reveals that the interests of the appointed historian are at variance in some respects with 'actual' history. Kirmani disclaims that Tipu ever sent an embassy to Malarctic, the French governor-general of Mauritius, whereas the very first scene with Tipu shows him talking about Malarctic's role in arranging a royal delegation from Mysore to France. Tipu's dreams-partly narrated and partly enacted are political allegories of his reign; some contain imaginary characters while others conjure up key historical figures like Lord Cornwallis and Haider Ali. The last dream is the most poignant because it is a fantasy of victory in the midst

of defeat and death. The insertion of this dream text into history introduces a level of experience even more evanescent than memory, and makes *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* almost a poetic play. Karnad has raised many questions through the play regarding the British Colonial policy of divide and rule; the short sightedness of Marathas, Tipu's lack of killer instinct etc. but he leaves many loose ends never imposing his own conclusions so that the reader or viewer can draw his/her own.

The efforts towards building allies:

After the Third Mysore war, Tipu Sultan sent envoys to Persia, France and Afghanistan to seek help from them in fighting against the English. He contacted Napoleon Bonaparte also. Though he accepted to help Tipu against the English because of his failure against the English, he could not keep his word. He planned a holy war against the English along with Afghanistan. This failed because of the timely action of Wellesley.

Considering these strategies of Tipu Sultan, Wellesley wrote a letter to Tipu Sultan on 8th of Nov. 1798 A.D. complaining that Tipu was working against the treaty of Srirangapatna. And he suggested resolving the problems through discussion. Wellesley's suggestions were ignored by Tipu. And so the English declared a war against Tipu Sultan.

On 4th May, 1799 A.D. Srirangapatna was seized by the English after killing Tipu Sultan in the Fourth Mysore War.

Girish Karnad uses this historical account in his play "*Dreams of Tipu Sultan*" with the incorporation of the dream allegory to portray the downfall of Tipu Sultan and leaves the interpretations to the readers and audience.

6 Theme of the play:

Analysis of the dreams in the play:-

A dream vision is a literary genre, literary device or literary convention in which the narrator falls asleep and dreams. In the dream there is usually a guide, who imparts knowledge (often

about religion or love) that the dreamer could not have learned otherwise. After waking, the narrator usually resolves to share this knowledge with other people.

The dream-vision convention was widely used in European literature from Latin times until the fifteenth century. If the dream vision includes a guide that is a speaking inanimate object, then it employs the trope of prosopopoeia. Dream allegory –it is an allegorical tale presented in the narrative framework of a dream.

There are several components to each dream category:

1. Dreams from the physical body

- Food
- Health
- Psychological

2. Dreams from the spiritual realm

- Precognitive and future

New information or knowledge

- The visit of a deceased or spirit.

Freud describes dreams in his work “Interpretation of Dreams” in this way:

“The idea that the dream concerns itself chiefly with the future, whose form it surmises in advance- a relic of the prophetic significance with which dreams were once invested- now becomes the motive for translating into the future the meaning of the dream which has been found by means of symbolic interpretation.”

If one's first thoughts on this subject were consulted, several possible solutions might suggest themselves: for example, that during sleep one is incapable of finding an adequate expression for one's dream-thoughts. The analysis of certain dreams, however, compels us to offer another explanation.

Meanings of Dreams through their Symbols:-

The subconscious mind is a most remarkable mechanism when it comes to creating dreams. Most people find their dreams an unintelligible mix of hidden meanings of dreams and secret symbols because that is the intention on the subconscious mind. It wants no interference from the dreamer's input or meddling with any of its actions.

Girish Karnad in his play “*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*” uses the concept of dreams to indicate the downfall of Tipu Sultan through his dreams. The dreams of Tipu can be interpreted as symbols or an indication which focuses on his downfall in the future and the Marathas as ‘women in a men’s garb’ i.e., as those who cannot save themselves from the clutches of the British.

7 Questions and Answers:

Long Questions with Answers:

1) Who was Tipu Sultan?

Tipu Sultan (November 1750, Devanahalli – 4 May 1799, Seringapatam), also known as the Tiger of Mysore, was the de facto ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore. He was the son of Hyder Ali, at that time an officer in the Mysorean army, and his second wife, Fatima or Fakhr-un-nissa. He was given a number of honorific titles, and was referred to as Sultan Fateh Ali Khan Shahab, Tipu Saheb, or Bahadur Khan Tipu Sultan. Tipu introduced a number of administrative innovations, including the introduction of a new coinage, new Mauludi lunisolar calendar and new land revenue system, and initiated the growth of Mysore silk industry. Tipu expanded the iron-cased Mysorean rockets which he deployed in his resistance against military advances of the British. During Tipu's childhood, his father rose to take power in Mysore, and upon his father's death in 1782, Tipu succeeded to a large kingdom bordered by the Krishna River in the north, the Eastern Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west. Tipu was a devout Muslim although the majority of his subjects were Hindus, and few were also Christian. At the request of the French, Tipu built a church, the first in Mysore. Tipu was fluent in Kannada, Hindustani, Persian, Arabic, English and French. In alliance with the French in their struggle with the British,

and in Mysore's struggles with other surrounding powers, both Tipu and his father used their French trained army against the Marathas, Sira and rulers of Malabar, Coorg, Bednore, Carnatic and Travancore. He won important victories against the British in the Second Anglo-Mysore War, and negotiated the 1784 Treaty of Mangalore with them after his father Hyder Ali died due to cancer in 1782 December in the midst of the second Mysore war.

During Tipu's childhood, his father rose to take power in Mysore, and Tipu took over rule of the kingdom upon his father's death. In addition to his role as ruler, he was a scholar, soldier, and poet. He was a devout Muslim but the majority of his subjects were Hindus. At the request of the French, he built a church, the first in Mysore. He was proficient in many languages. In alliance with the French in their struggle with the British, and in Mysore's struggles with other surrounding powers, both Tipu Sultan and Hyder Ali used their French trained army against the Marathas, Sira, Malabar, Coorg, Bednur, Carnatic, and Travancore. He won important victories against the British in the Second Anglo-Mysore War, and negotiated the 1784 Treaty of Mangalore with them after his father died the previous year.

He engaged in expansionist attacks against his neighbors, and harshly put down rebellions within his territories, deporting whole populations into confinement in Seringapatam. He remained an implacable enemy of the British, bringing them into renewed conflict with an attack on British-allied Travancore in 1789. In the Third Anglo-Mysore War Tipu was forced into a humiliating peace, losing a number of previously conquered territories, such as Malabar and Mangalore. He sent embassies to foreign states, including the Ottoman Empire and France, in an attempt to rally opposition to the British. In the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War the combined forces of the British East India Company and the Nizam of Hyderabad defeated Tipu and he was killed on 4 May 1799, defending the fort of Seringapatam.

Tipu's treatment of conquered subjects, non-Muslims, and prisoners of war, were controversial, and continue to be a subject of debate today. He introduced a number of administrative and

military innovations to Mysore, and introduced and promoted a more widespread use of Persian and Urdu languages in southern India.

How did Tipu Sultan die?

Tipu Sultan died at Srirangapatnam in the battle against the joint military force of British, Nizam and Marathas. He became martyr for India. His primary aim was the expulsion of the British from India and for this purpose he sought assistance wherever he could. But the two other important powers of southern India, namely, the Mahrattas and the Nizam, had shut their eyes to the impending danger of foreign domination and the British used them as tools to achieve their objects.

Lord Wellesley, who had become the Governor-General of British India, reached Madras in January 1799. Here he conspired with the Mahrattas, the Nizam and the highest dignitaries of Mysore state to wipe out Tipu Sultan, the only serious obstacle in his way of domination over India. In utter disregard of the treaty concluded after the third Mysore War, Lord Wellesley made an unprovoked attack on Mysore. On February 3rd, 1799 General Harris marched from Vellore and General Stuart from Cannanore. The Mahrathas and the Nizam too moved their forces into Mysore territory. Arthur Wellesley was in command of an army from Hyderabad. Tipu Sultan, who was surprised by this unexpected as well as unprovoked attack, fought valiantly, displaying brilliant strategy. But the treachery of his own generals foiled his efforts and the allied forces appeared before Seringapattam on April 17, 1799.

A siege was laid to the capital of Mysore. High dignitaries of the Mysore Government, including Dewan Purnia, Prime Minister Mir Sadiq, and Mir Ghulam Ali, were in secret league with the British. The final assault on the city was fixed for May 4th. On that day, according to the plan, Mir Sadiq started distributing salaries to the army. The soldiers left their posts and hurried to receive their pays. At that moment, the British troops in conjunction with the treacherous elements in the fort, crossed the Kaveri, stormed the opening guarded by Syed Abdul Ghaffar together with his few gallant soldiers, and entered the fort. Syed Abdul Ghaffar was killed in action. The Sultan was taking his meals and when informed of this disaster, he hurried to the spot

and gallantly fighting a hand to hand battle fell a martyr to the cause of national freedom. Thus perished on May 4th, 1799, Tipu Sultan, one of the most chivalrous and enlightened monarchs that India has produced. He preferred an honourable death to a life of humiliation and subjugation to a foreign power.

Tipu Sultan was an embodiment of nobility, chivalry and magnanimity. His life was a constant struggle for a noble cause against heavy odds. He sacrificed his life for the realization of his ideal of freeing his country from foreign domination and thus set an example for future generations. He was a true patriot, and a true Muslim who practised what he preached. He was a farsighted ruler who foresaw the danger which loomed on the Indian horizon and staked his all to remove it.

What was the religious policy that was adopted by Tipu Sultan?

As a Muslim ruler in a largely Hindu domain, Tipu Sultan faced problems in establishing the legitimacy of his rule, and in reconciling his desire to be seen as a devout Islamic ruler with the need to be pragmatic to avoid antagonising the majority of his subjects. His religious legacy has become a source of considerable controversy in the subcontinent. Some groups proclaim him a great warrior for the faith or *Ghazi*, while others revile him as a bigot who massacred Hindus.

During the early period of Tipu Sultan's reign in particular, he appears to have been as strict as his father Hyder Ali against any non-Muslim accused of collaboration with the British East India Company or the Maratha.] In 1780, he declared himself to be the Badshah or Emperor of Mysore, and struck coinage in his own name without reference to the reigning Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II. H. D. Sharma writes that, in his correspondence with other Islamic rulers such as Zaman Shah of the Afghan Durrani Empire, Tipu Sultan used this title and declared that he intended to establish an Islamic empire in the entire country, along the lines of the Mughal Empire, which was at its decline during the period in question. He even invited him to invade India to help achieve this mission. His alliance with the French was supposedly aimed at achieving this goal by driving his main rivals, the British, out of the subcontinent.

The portrayal of Tipu Sultan as a religious bigot is disputed, and some sources suggest that he in fact often embraced religious pluralism. Tipu Sultan's treasurer was Krishna Rao, Shamaiya

Iyengar was his Minister of Post and Police, his brother Ranga Iyengar was also an officer and Purnaiya held the very important post of "Mir Asaf." Moolchand and Sujan Rai were his chief agents at the Mughal court, and his chief "Peshkar," Suba Rao, was also a Hindu. There is such evidence as grant deeds, and correspondence between his court and temples, and his having donated jewelry and deeded land grants to several temples, which some claim he was compelled to do in order to make alliances with Hindu rulers. Between 1782 and 1799 Tipu Sultan issued 34 "Sanads" (deeds) of endowment to temples in his domain, while also presenting many of them with gifts of silver and gold plate. The Srikanteswara Temple in Nanjangud still possesses a jeweled cup presented by the Sultan.

In 1791, some Maratha horsemen under Raghunath Rao Patwardhan raided the temple and monastery of Sringeri Shankaracharya, killing and wounding many, and plundering the monastery of all its valuable possessions. The incumbent Shankaracharya petitioned Tippu Sultan for help. A bunch of about 30 letters written in Kannada, which were exchanged between Tippu Sultan's court and the Sringeri Shankaracharya were discovered in 1916 by the Director of Archaeology in Mysore. Tippu Sultan expressed his indignation and grief at the news of the raid, and wrote: "People who have sinned against such a holy place are sure to suffer the consequences of their misdeeds at no distant date in this Kali age in accordance with the verse: "Hasadbhih kriyate karma ruladbhir-anubhuyate" (People do [evil] deeds smilingly but suffer the consequences crying)." He immediately ordered his "Asaf" of Bednur to supply the Swami with 200 "rahatis" (fanams) in cash and other gifts and articles. Tippu Sultan's interest in the Sringeri temple continued for many years, and he was still writing to the Swami in the 1790s C.E. In light of this and other events, B.A. Saletare has described Tippu Sultan as a defender of the Hindu Dharma, who also patronized other temples including one at Melkote, for which he issued a Kannada decree that the Shrivaishnava invocatory verses there should be recited in the traditional form. The temple at Melkote still has gold and silver vessels with inscriptions, indicating that they were presented by the Sultan. Tippu Sultan also presented four silver cups to the Lakshmikanta Temple at Kalale.

Criticism of British accounts

Brittlebank, Hasan, Chetty, Habib and Saletare, amongst others, argue that stories of Tipu Sultan's religious persecution of Hindus and Christians are largely derived from the work of early British authors such as Kirkpatrick and Wilks, whom they do not consider to be entirely reliable. A. S. Chetty argues that Wilks' account in particular cannot be trusted, Irfan Habib and Mohibbul Hasan argues that these early British authors had a strong vested interest in presenting Tipu Sultan as a tyrant from whom the British had liberated Mysore. This assessment is echoed by Brittlebank in her recent work where she writes that Wilks and Kirkpatrick must be used with particular care as both authors had taken part in the wars against Tipu Sultan and were closely connected to the administrations of Lord Cornwallis and Richard Wellesley, 1st Marquess Wellesley.

Conversions of Hindus to Islam

Tipu sent a letter on 19 January 1790 to the Governor of Bekal, Budruz Zuman Khan which says:

"Don't you know I have achieved a great victory recently in Malabar and over four lakh Hindus were converted to Islam? I am determined to march against that cursed Raman Nair (Rajah of Travancore) very soon. Since I am overjoyed at the prospect of converting him and his subjects to Islam, I have happily abandoned the idea of going back to Srirangapatanam now."

On the handle of the sword presented by Tipu to Marquess Wellesley was the following inscription

"My victorious sabre is lightning for the destruction of the unbelievers. Ali, the Emir of the Faithful, is victorious for my advantage. And moreover, he destroyed the wicked race who were unbelievers. Praise be to him (God), who is the Lord of the Worlds! Thou art our Lord, support us against the people who are unbelievers. He to whom the Lord giveth victory prevails over all (mankind). Oh Lord, make him victorious, who promoteth the faith of Muhammad. Confound him, who refuseth the faith of Muhammad; and withhold us from those who are so inclined from the true faith. The Lord is predominant over his own works. Victory and conquest are from the Almighty. Bring happy tidings, Oh Muhammad, to the faithful; for God is the kind protector and is the most merciful of the merciful. If God assists thee, thou will prosper. May the Lord God assist thee, Oh Muhammad, with a mighty great victory."

During a search of his palace in 1795, some gold medals were found in the palace, on which the following was inscribed on one side in Persian: "Of God the bestower of blessings", and the other: "victory and conquest are from the Almighty". These were carved in commemoration of a victory after the war of 1780. The following is a translation of an inscription on the stone found at Seringapatam, which was situated in a conspicuous place in the fort:

"Oh Almighty God! dispose the whole body of infidels! Scatter their tribe, cause their feet to stagger! Overthrow their councils, change their state, destroy their very root! Cause death to be near them, cut off from them the means of sustenance! Shorten their days! Be their bodies the constant object of their cares (i.e., infest them with diseases), deprive their eyes of sight, make black their faces (i.e., bring shame)."

In 1788, Tipu ordered his governor in Calicut Sher Khan to begin the process of converting Hindus to Islam, and in July of that year, 200 Brahmins were forcibly converted and made to eat beef. Mohibbul Hasan, Prof. Sheikh Ali, and other historians cast great doubt on the scale of the deportations and forced conversions in Coorg in particular, and Hasan says that the British versions of what happened were intended to malign Tipu Sultan, and to be used as propaganda against him. He argues that little reliance can be placed in Muslim accounts such as Kirmani's *Nishan-e Haidari*; in their anxiety to represent the Sultan as a champion of Islam, they had a tendency to exaggerate and distort the facts: Kirmani claims that 70,000 Coorgis were converted, when forty years later the entire population of Coorg was still less than that number. According to Ramchandra Rao *Punganuri* the true number of converts was about 500. The portrayal of Tipu Sultan as a religious bigot is disputed, and some sources suggest that he in fact often embraced religious pluralism.

Attitude towards Christians

He was a devout Muslim but majority of his subjects were Hindus and Christians . The portrayal of Tipu Sultan as a religious bigot is disputed . At the request of the French, he built a church, the first in Mysore. He was proficient in many languages.[1] Tipu's army also included Catholic soldiers, and he allowed Christians to build a church at Seringapatam, where French generals

used to offer prayers and priests used to visit. Mangalorean historian A. L. P. D'Souza mentions that Tipu also had Christians in his administration. Pursuant to treaties concluded with the Portuguese, he also allowed Portuguese priests to settle disputes among Christians.

Tipu is regarded to be anti-Christian by some historians. The captivity of Mangalorean Catholics at Seringapatam, which began on 24 February 1784 and ended on 4 May 1799, remains the most disconsolate memory in their history.

The Barcoor Manuscript reports him as having said: "All Musalmans should unite together, and considering the annihilation of infidels as a sacred duty, labour to the utmost of their power, to accomplish that subject." Soon after the Treaty of Mangalore in 1784, Tipu gained control of Canara.] He issued orders to seize the Christians in Canara, confiscate their estates, and deport them to Seringapatam, the capital of his empire, through the Jamalabad fort route. However, there were no priests among the captives. Together with Fr. Miranda, all the 21 arrested priests were issued orders of expulsion to Goa, fined Rupees 2 lakhs, and threatened death by hanging if they ever returned.

Tipu ordered the destruction of 27 Catholic churches, all beautifully carved with statues depicting various saints. Among them included the Church of Nossa Senhora de Rosario Milagres at Mangalore, Fr Miranda's Seminary at Monte Mariano, Church of Jesu Marie Jose at Omzoor, Chapel at Bolar, Church of Merces at Ullal, Imaculata Conceicao at Mulki, San Jose at Perar, Nossa Senhora dos Remedios at Kirem, Sao Lawrence at Karkal, Rosario at Barkur, Immaculata Conceicao at Baidnur.[64] All were razed to the ground, with the exception of The Church of Holy Cross at Hospet, owing to the friendly offices of the Chauta Raja of Moodbidri.

According to Thomas Munro, a Scottish soldier and the first collector of Canara, around 60,000 people, nearly 92 percent of the entire Mangalorean Catholic community, were captured; only 7,000 escaped. Francis Buchanan gives the numbers as 70,000 captured, from a population of 80,000, with 10,000 escaping. They were forced to climb nearly 4,000 feet (1,200 m) through the jungles of the Western Ghat mountain ranges. It was 210 miles (340 km) from Mangalore to Seringapatam, and the journey took six weeks. According to British Government records, 20,000 of them died on the march to Seringapatam. According to James Scurry, a British officer,

who was held captive along with Mangalorean Catholics, 30,000 of them were forcibly converted to Islam. The young women and girls were forcibly made wives of the Muslims living there. The young men who offered resistance were disfigured by cutting their noses, upper lips, and ears. According to Mr. Silva of Gangolim, a survivor of the captivity, if a person who had escaped from Seringapatam was found, the punishment under the orders of Tipu was the cutting off of the ears, nose, the feet and one hand.

The Archbishop of Goa wrote in 1800, "It is notoriously known in all Asia and all other parts of the globe of the oppression and sufferings experienced by the Christians in the Dominion of the King of Kanara, during the usurpation of that country by Tipu Sultan from an implacable hatred he had against them who professed Christianity." Tipu Sultan's rule of the Malabar Coast had an adverse impact on the Saint Thomas Christian community. Many churches in Malabar and Cochin were damaged. The old Syrian Nasrani seminary at Angamaly which had been the centre of Catholic religious education for several centuries was razed to the ground by Tipu's soldiers.¹ A lot of centuries old religious manuscripts were lost forever. The church was later relocated to Kottayam where it still exists. The Mor Sabor church at Akaparambu and the Martha Mariam Church attached to the seminary were destroyed as well. Tipu's army set fire to the church at Palayoor and attacked the Ollur Church in 1790. Furthermore, the Arthat church and the Ambazhakkad seminary was also destroyed. Over the course of this invasion, many Saint Thomas Christians were killed or forcibly converted to Islam. Most of the coconut, areca nut, pepper and cashew plantations held by Christian farmers were also indiscriminately destroyed by the invading army. As a result, when Tipu's army invaded Guruvayur and adjacent areas, the Syrian Christian community fled Calicut and small towns like Arthat to new centres like Kunnankulam, Chalakudi, Ennakadu, Cheppadu, Kannankode, Mavelikkara, etc. where there were already Christians. They were given refuge by Sakthan Tamburan, the ruler of Cochin and Karthika Thirunal, the ruler of Travancore, who gave them lands, plantations and encouraged their businesses. Colonel Maculay, the British resident of Travancore also helped them.

Tipu's persecution of Christians even extended to captured British soldiers. For instance, there were a significant number of forced conversions of British captives between 1780 and 1784. Following their disastrous defeat at the 1780 Battle of Pollilur, 7,000 British men along with an unknown number of women were held captive by Tipu in the fortress of Seringapatnam. Of

these, over 300 were circumcised and given Muslim names and clothes and several British regimental drummer boys were made to wear ghagra cholis and entertain the court as *nautch* girls or dancing girls. After the 10 year long captivity ended, James Scurry, one of those prisoners, recounted that he had forgotten how to sit in a chair and use a knife and fork. His English was broken and stilted, having lost all his vernacular idiom. His skin had darkened to the swarthy complexion of negroes, and moreover, he had developed an aversion to wearing European clothes.

During the surrender of the Mangalore fort which was delivered in an armistice by the British and their subsequent withdrawal, all the Mestizos and remaining non-British foreigners were killed, together with 5,600 Mangalorean Catholics. Those condemned by Tipu Sultan for treachery were hanged instantly, the gibbets being weighed down by the number of bodies they carried. The Netravati River was so putrid with the stench of dying bodies, that the local residents were forced to leave their riverside homes.

Elucidate the statement. “Tipu Sultan was a ruler with approach to farsightedness and modernity”

Tipu is a far-sighted ruler and father, who took his children with him while administrating. He desires to give them the practical lessons of administration, therefore, involved children in the important decision-making process. This effort of Tipu clearly shows that he wants to develop his children's mind with progressive and enlightened thoughts with the experience of practical things. No doubt, he wants to train them for making a strong, knowledgeable, experienced and able ruler for future. Such approach of Tipu is modern one. Girish Karnad has written in this context: “It's time they started learning about the world”. Tipu is a devotee of new, scientific and innovative ideas. He readily accepts the novel ideas for the welfare of his subjects. Infact his goals and ideals are high which he wants to use them for the generation of his people. Therefore, he launches upon a series of innovations for the promotion his people. He encourages industry, agriculture, trade and commerce for the said object, which gave Mysore State the glory, sound economy, prosperity and respectable place in Indian history.

Indeed Tipu is an altruist ruler. Decidedly he tries to make his state modern on the basis of European model. So he introduces many schemes in his kingdom like reorganization of a Board

of Admirably, issue of new coinage, ban on the use of liquor, reform of the calendar, experiments in commerce, changing names of cities and towns, novel revenue and judicial regulations. All these novel schemes presents Tipu as an apostle of modernity who had modern sensibility and vision.

Tipu has a great interest in trade. He promotes trade and commerce in his state. He desires to make his state a 'trading nation' on European model. He establishes a trading company in order to get economic prosperity through trade and commerce. He encourages people to export many goods like pepper, chillies, sandalwood, cardamom and rice. He establishes factories in foreign countries at Muscat, Pegu, Cutch and Jiddah. Even he establishes trade relations with China, France, Turkey and Iran. He too, sets up factories at Seringapatam, Bangalore and Chitradurg. All these things display that Tipu had a commercial view like Britishers. He wants quick progress and economics. He says, 'John company-how they came to this country, poor cringing and what they have become in a mere fifty years. They threaten us today. It's all because of their passion for trade' (Karnad, Girish:2005(2004):26).

Tipu has modern sensibility. He knows that to depend on other nation for goods is nothing but a slavery. Infact, he wants to become his state as self-sufficient state. When he is sending a delegation to France, he orders them to bring everything including new techniques, inventions, machines etc. He further asks Mir Sadiq to bring silkworms and eggs from the island of Jezeriah Diraz near Muscat alongwith the five or six men who would rear up and look after the worms (P.21). Even Tipu desires that his Government should step in trading agency for sake of money. He thinks that money is essential for buying the glass, guns and cannons. There is no wiseness to buy these things from abroad. He does not want to beg and borrow silk from Chinese like a poor person. He knows that his land is rich and full of ivory, sandalwood and forests and we didn't get anything if we sell these things to an individual trader.

Prove that Tipu had a commercial mind with interest in business.

Tipu has commercial bend of mind. He has already brought few eggs of silks from China and flourished own industry. Now they are getting sufficient silks. He does not want to live like

traditional, stupid and unprogressed Marathas and the Nizam who were totally unknown about the existence of English and Europeans in this world.

Tipu is an ambitious ruler whose desire was to change the face of India. So he wants to import things and persons from abroad. He asks Osman Khan that he should return with ten thousand French soldiers and French craftsmen who could make guns, cannons and pistols (P.24). It means that Tipu wants to make himself well-equipped with the latest weapons. To develop, increase and to show the superiority of military powers to others is his main aim. Therefore, he wishes to bring many things and persons from abroad. Then he makes a provisional list of professionals which included a doctor, a surgeon, a smelter, a carpenter, a weaver, a blacksmith, a locksmith, a cutter, a watchmaker and new varieties of trees, flowers and bushes etc. alongwith them two gardeners from Versailles to look after Lal Bagh Garden. Indeed the catalogue of things shows that Tipu wanted to bring every item of his interest including thermometer.

Tipu is business minded. He looks business opportunities in every aspect. He has already sent a delegation to Istanbul last year under the chair of Akbar Ali Khan to meet His Holiness the Caliph of All Islamic Nations for the said purpose. This trip gets a sensational success. He knows that there is a great demand for ivory, sandalwood and other products in Turkey, Arabia and Iran. Even the Imam of Muscat has fallen in love with the sandalwood and spices of this country. So Imam of Muscat asks Tipu to build a factory for his products there (P.24). All these instances show Tipu's interest in business, trade, industry and soldiers. He knows that Europe makes herself wonderful due to new ideas, inventions and machines (P.25). The scientific approach of Europeans has resulted in rapid progress in every field. That's why Tipu wants to observe all these things in India in order to make India like Europe. And it is possible only then when India would possess the passion for trade like English. It is called vision of progress of Tipu. In this regard, Sudhir Grace Says, 'He (Tipu) wanted to open the doors of Mysore to new inventions, trade and commerce but without compromising on his independence and sovereignty of his state. He made growth and dynamism the foundation of his economic and commercial policies. He embarked on a bold economic policy, which included measures to modernize Mysore's industries, to introduce new ones such as cannon founding, paper-making, glass manufacture and ship-building. In addition to heavy industries Tipu saw the value of luxury such as pearl culture,

silkworms and import of fine asses from Arabia’.

Bring out the patriotism of Tipu Sultan.

Tipu is an ardent patriot. He loves his land very much. He never compromises with his ideals unlike the other rulers of India. To accept foreign help for saving their kingdoms was the main aim of these rulers including the Marathas and Nizam. English slavery is willingly accepted by them. On the contrary, Independence and sovereignty of the state is the most important value or doctrine of Tipu’s life. He has already seen the danger from English. This is the root cause of his oppose to English. To expel English from India becomes his ardent desire and first priority. So he starts making an active preparation for the said purpose, particularly, after the big defeat in the third Mysore War from Britishers. In this regard he builds up close contacts with the outside world, particularly with the French. Tipu had high hopes, with French aid the drama of American War of Independence could be repeated in India. Even he sends envoys to Persia, France and Afghanistan. The purpose is to seek help from them in fighting against the English. At the same time he tries to make unity of the Nizam and the Marathas. But he cannot get positive response from them. No doubt, Tipu has friendly relations with the French, Zamam Shah of Afghanistan and Abdul Hameed of Turkey. In this regard, B. Sheikh Ali says, “But Tipu’s relations with the French, the Afgans and the Turks indicate his grand designs to distress the English” (www.tipusultan.org/writ.htm accessed on 14.2.2010). On the other hand, his dream of union of the Marathas and the Nizam remains unfulfilled. It is important to note that he never makes allies with foreigners against any Indian power. But he only tries to use foreign help for expelling the English. And he uses the foreign contacts for this purpose. To be honest, Tipu’s foreign contacts are an emblem of modernity.

Tipu is the first Indian ruler who tried to make his state a Republic. So he develops trade and commerce and encourages his people to follow the path of progress and science like the Europeans. He builds up factories in foreign and also develops industries in his state. His vision is to make his people progressive and prosperous. Many efforts have been done to make his subjects happy by him. Even he tries to give economic stability to his state. No doubt, he makes many economic experiments, improvements in his administration, destroys the conservative feudalistic system and develops industries in his state. Infact his main object is to

make his state an Utopia. He sincerely tries the best in this direction but his untimely death resulted in not fulfilling his dream of Republic. This is a rare and exquisite example of Tipu's modernity.

Short Questions and Answers:

1 Who was the father of Tipu sultan?

Hyder Ali or Haidar Ali (1722-1782), Indian general, sultan of Mysore in Southern India from 1759 was the father of Tipu Sultan. In command of the army in Mysore from 1749, he became the ruler of the state 1761, and rivaled British power in the area until his triple defeat by Sir Eyre Coote 1761 1761 during the Anglo-French wars

2 When Tipu Sultan was killed?

Tipoo Sultan , the Tiger of Mysore` was killed during the assault on Seringapatam on May 4 1799 , it is believed by Private Johnson of the XIIth of Foot (Suffolk Regiment). the Regiment played a major part in the storming of his stronghold , and `Seringapatam ` is a battle honour carried on the colours of the Regiment .A Silver Powder Flask , which was taken from the body of Tipoo Sultan and inscribed

"This flask once the property of Tipoo Sultan was brought from the Palace of Seringapatam May 1799 by Wm Hartley , Lieut , 12th Regt ".The 12th of Foot became the East Suffolk Regiment in 1781 , and the Suffolk Regiment 1881. In 1959 The Suffolk Regiment amalgamated with the Norfolk Regiment to become the 1st Battalion the East Anglian Regiment. In 1964 whilst serving in Aden (South Yemen) It now became the 1st Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment . The flask that once belonged to Tipoo Sultan is now in the Officers Mess , 1st Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment. The Suffolk Regiment Museum is in Bury St Edmunds , West Suffolk.

3 Why was Tipu sultan called the tiger of Mysore?

Tipu was commonly known as the Tiger of Mysore and adopted this animal as the symbol of his rule. It is said that Tipu Sultan was hunting in the forest with a French friend. He came face to

face with a tiger. His gun did not work, and his dagger fell on the ground as the tiger jumped on him. He reached for the dagger, picked it up, and killed the tiger with it. That Tippu Sultan acquired this title as he won several battles and expanded Mysore Empire by annexing many kingdoms he won in the battles..He fought like a ferocious Tiger.Britishers could never even come near Mysore,but for the Treachery and Betrayal of Mir Sadiq, close relative of Tippu Sultan whom he trusted and entrusted the State Administration appointing him as Vazir. Since his childhood, Tipu Sultan pursued his strong interests in academics and various languages. Besides being well-educated Tipu was also adept as a soldier, learning the art of warfare, at the young age of 15, by attending numerous military campaigns, accompanying his father. He was also a devout Muslim who accepted other religions as well, contrary to certain theories describing him as a religious persecutor of Hindus and Christians. Tipu worked hard for the welfare of his subjects and his numerous contributions include his construction of roads, building tanks and dams, several ports along the shoreline, fortifying numerous palaces and forts, promoting overseas trade, commerce and increase in agricultural output. earned him the name "the Tiger of Mysore"

4 Give an account of the war with Marathas by Tipu Sultan.

The Maratha Empire under its new Peshwa Madhavrao II regained most of Indian subcontinent, twice defeating Tipu's father, who was forced to accept Maratha Empire as the supreme power in 1764 and then in 1767. In 1767 Maratha Peshwa Madhavrao defeated both Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan and entered Srirangapatna, the capital of Mysore. Hyder Ali accepted the authority of Madhavrao who gave him the title of Nawab of Mysore. However Tipu Sultan wanted to escape from the treaty of Marathas and therefore tried to take some Maratha forts in southern India. This brought Tipu in direct conflict with the Marathas, who sent an army towards Mysore under leadership of General Nana Phadnavis. The Marathas took many forts of Tipu Sultan in the Mysore region Badami, Kittur, and Gajendragad in June 1786. By the victory in this war, the border of the Maratha territory was extended to the Tungabhadra river. This forced Tipu to open negotiations with the Maratha leadership. He sent two of his agents to the Maratha capital at Pune. The deal that was finalized resulted in the Marathas recovering their territories which had been invaded by Mysore. Furthermore the Nizam of Hyderabad received Adoni and Mysore was

obligated to pay 48 lacs rupees as a war cost to the Marathas, and an annual tribute of 12 lacs rupees, in return the Marathas recognized the rule of Tipu in the Mysore region.

5 Give an idea about “The Other Side of Tipu”.

The play depicts the Sultan's dreams seen through the narrative of a historian. It was set during the last days of his reign when Tipu Sultan is faced with the wrath of the British Raj. As the play progresses, we see a side to Tipu Sultan often overlooked- he wasn't only a king but a husband and a father as well. While Tipu Sultan's journal seems a convenient narrative device, the play does effectively tell his story and a message. It also leaves the question of his competency as king open for debate. The play could be accessible to a larger audience, if the introduction of the characters was given more context.

6) How was Tipu a prudent ruler?

Tipu is prudent ruler. He sends his children as hostages to Lord Cornwallis for the common weal. He knows that there is no danger to the lives of his children. But he realizes another danger that English will teach their language and culture to them. This language has its power to turn the little children into the war of prisoners. He firmly determines that he must have to free his children before they could learn English language and mix up with that culture. In this regard Tipu says, “The danger is : they’ll teach my children their language, English. The language is which it is possible to think of children as hostages. All I can to do is agree to their terms and conclude the treaty in a hurry before my children have learnt that language” (P.43). To accept the dependence of language and culture means to mortgage one’s own individuality. It is the frightful wicked wheel. But Tipu is self respecting King. So it is unbearable of such type of encroachment on Indian language and culture for him. Regarding this Hanur Krishnamurthy says, “Later, the Muslim rulers who settled in India fought the British. Among them, Tipu holds a special place. Infact, it was natural for Tipu to resist the English infiltration during that period. Historical records of that period reveal that not only did Tipu oppose the increasing use of English language and culture, he also identified himself with Kannada culture” (2006:304).

The English Patient

1 Introduction

2 About the author

3 Summary of the text

4 Analysis of the Characters

5 Analysis of the Text

6 Theme

7 Questions for Practice

1 Introduction:

The English Patient is a work of historical fiction set in the hills of Tuscany during World War II. It intersperses the factual and the imaginary into a tale of tragedy and passion. Structurally, the novel resists chronological order, alternating between present action in the Italian villa and flashbacks to memories of a mysterious desert romance that is gradually revealed. The imagery is characterized by Ondaatje's "preoccupation with romantic exoticism and multiculturalism." Rather than offer a narrator telling a straightforward story, Ondaatje turns the romance into an unlikely mystery, revealing hidden facets of character and identity as the novel progresses. Ondaatje explores his characters by placing them in blank, secluded settings. Both the barren desert and the isolated Tuscan villa are insular and remote, enabling the author to study his characters intensely.

About The Novel:

The English Patient was published in 1992, is Ondaatje's most famous and critically acclaimed work. The novel won Ondaatje the prestigious Booker McConnell Prize in 1992, making him the only Sri Lankan writer ever to receive the honor. In 1996, Saul Zaentz produced *The English Patient* as a film, adapted by Anthony Minghella, starring Ralph Fiennes as Almasi and Kristen

Scott-Thomas as Katharine Clifton. The film went on to win a slew of Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

The English Patient features elements that define much of Ondaatje's earlier work -- his concern for historical accuracy, his experiments with fragmented consciousness and fragmented grammar/sentence structure, and his poetic imagery. Indeed, the opening of the novel is an epigraph from the real-life National Geographic Society, reflecting Ondaatje's penchant for blending documentary with fiction.

The English Patient also takes place during World War II, during which Ondaatje himself was born. The story involves four people converging on a villa and discovering the secrets of their past in an effort to move towards healing in the future. The book, like many of Ondaatje's novels, isn't slavish to plot constructions. Indeed, in several interviews Ondaatje has revealed that the plot didn't really exist until he finished the first draft of the book. He frequently begins with only a generative image. Ondaatje, in an interview to *Salon Magazine*, even noted, "Almasy wasn't in the story in my head. Kip wasn't in the story. Caravaggio wasn't in the story. It began with this plane crash and it went on from there."

Ondaatje has also noted that one of the more difficult passages of the book involved Kip's departure from the villa, since it seemed slightly "deus ex machina," or willed through force of plot by an omniscient hand. Ondaatje says it is the one part of the book he's often taken to task for, but he did the absolute best he could - and he doesn't know "how to make it work better," since during the revision process he developed Kip's character deeply enough to lay the groundwork for the departure.

The theme of revision comes up again and again in Ondaatje's interviews about his work, especially in regards to The English Patient. When talking to celebrated editor Walter Murch, Ondaatje revealed that it is in revision that the true work is done, sculpting the gems of inspiration that come from the initial generative visions. He keeps working until he is finished, sometimes even taking up to 6 or 7 years to finish a book.

All in all, however, Ondaatje notes that he doesn't believe in closure to his novels. At the end of *The English Patient*, after taking all his characters from their birth to a given destination, he abandons them, and sees a "new life beginning for Hana and Kip" off the page.

2 About The Writer:

Michael Ondaatje, poet, filmmaker, and editor, was born in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in September 1943. He was born to a Burgher family of Dutch-Tamil-Sinhalese-Portuguese origin. He moved to England with his mother in 1954. After relocating to Canada in 1962, Ondaatje became a Canadian citizen. He studied for a time at Bishop's College School and Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, but moved to Toronto, where he received his BA from the University of Toronto and his MA from Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. He then began teaching at the University of Western Ontario in London. In 1970, he settled in Toronto and, from 1971 to 1990, taught English literature at York University and Glyndon College. He moved to England with his mother in 1954, and then relocated to Canada in 1962, receiving an undergraduate degree from the University of Toronto and a master's degree from Queen's University in Kingston. Originally a poet, Ondaatje's eventual career in fiction was boosted by the success of his book of poetry, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970), an account of the factual and fictional life of the famous outlaw, for which Ondaatje won a Governor General's award. He won the coveted award again in 1979 for a second book of poetry entitled *There's a Trick with a Knife I'm Learning to Do*. He won the Booker Prize for his novel *The English Patient*, which was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film. He attended Dulwich College.

Works:

Ondaatje's work includes fiction, autobiography, poetry and film. In the 1980s, Ondaatje turned his attention to novels, publishing *Running in the Family* (1982) about his family's life in Ceylon, and *In the Skin of the Lion* (1987), which is set in 1930s Toronto. Ondaatje is perhaps best known, however, for *The English Patient* (1992), a novel set in World War II Italy. Ondaatje won a Booker Prize for the novel, and the 1996 film adaptation went on to win widespread critical acclaim and nine Academy Awards. Alongside his writing, Ondaatje has taught at York University in Toronto since 1971. He and his wife, Linda Spalding, make their home in Toronto,

and together edited the literary journal *Brick*. He has published 13 books of poetry, and won the Governor General's Award for *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970) and *There's a Trick With a Knife I'm Learning to Do: Poems 1973-1978* (1979). *Anil's Ghost* was the winner of the 2000 Giller Prize, the Prix Médicis, the Kiriya Pacific Rim Book Prize, the 2001 Irish Times International Fiction Prize and Canada's Governor General's Award. *The English Patient* won the Booker Prize, the Canada Australia Prize, and the Governor General's Award and was later made into a motion picture, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. *In the Skin of a Lion*, a fictional story about early immigrant settlers in Toronto, was the winner of the 1988 City of Toronto Book Award, finalist for the 1987 Ritz Paris Hemingway Award for best novel of the year in English, and winner of the first Canada Reads competition in 2002. *Coming Through Slaughter*, is a fictional story of New Orleans, Louisiana circa 1900 loosely based on the lives of jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden and photographer E. J. Bellocq. It was the winner of the 1976 Books in Canada First Novel Award. *Divisadero* won the 2007 Governor General's Award. *Running in the Family* (1982) is a semi-fictional memoir of his Sri Lankan childhood.

Adaptations:

The Collected Works of Billy the Kid, *Coming Through Slaughter* and *Divisadero* have been adapted for the stage and produced in theatrical productions across North America and Europe. Ondaatje's three films include a documentary on fellow poet B.P. Nichol, *Sons of Captain Poetry*, and *The Clinton Special: A Film About The Farm Show*, which chronicles a collaborative theatre experience led in 1971 by Paul Thompson of Theatre Passe Muraille. In 2002, Ondaatje published a non-fiction book, *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*, which won special recognition at the 2003 American Cinema Editors Awards, as well as a Kraszna-Krausz Book Award for best book of the year on the moving image.

His first real novel. Like *Coming Through Slaughter*, *In the Skin of the Lion* is minimal in dialogue, and blends documentary with fiction - establishing a precedent for a concern with historical accuracy found in much of Ondaatje's future work.

Ondaatje considers *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), which documents a Macedonian immigrant *Lion* presents characters whose lives continue, chronologically, in *The English Patient*: Caravaggio and Hana, as they move into the 1940s and through World War II, and Patrick, the

protagonist of *In the Skin of a Lion*, who dies in World War II. This is in keeping with Ondaatje's stated feeling that his characters live on after he has finished writing them.

Ondaatje has written several Hollywood screenplays, including *The Clinton Special*, *Sons of Captain Poetry*, and *Carry On Crime and Punishment*. He recently collaborated with acclaimed editor Walter Mirch on a book about the editing process, and he wrote a series of critical works on songwriter Leonard Cohen. Ondaatje currently lives in Toronto with his wife, novelist/editor Linda Spalding. Ondaatje's awards include the Ralph Gustafson Award, the Epstein Award, the President's Medal from the University of Ontario, the Canadian Governor-General's Award for Literature (twice), the Canada-Australia prize, and the Booker Prize.

His Personal Life:

He and his wife, a novelist herself and academic Linda Spalding, co-edit *Brick, A Literary Journal*, with Michael Redhill, Michael Helm, and Esta Spalding. Although he is best known as a novelist, Ondaatje's work also encompasses memoir, poetry, and film. Ondaatje has, since the 1960s, also been involved with Toronto's influential Coach House Books, supporting the independent small press by working as a poetry editor. In 1988 Michael Ondaatje was made an Officer of the Order of Canada (OC) and two years later became a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has two children and is the brother of philanthropist, businessman, and author Christopher Ondaatje.

In 1992 he received the Man Booker Prize for his winning novel adapted into an Academy-Award-winning film, *The English Patient*. Since the 1960s, Ondaatje has been involved with Toronto's Coach House Books, supporting the independent small press by working as a poetry editor. Ondaatje and his wife, novelist and academic Linda Spalding, co-edit *Brick, A Literary Journal*, with Michael Redhill, Michael Helm, and Esta Spalding. In 1988, Ondaatje was made an Officer of the Order of Canada (OC) and two years later a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Ondaatje serves on the board of trustees of the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry.

Ondaatje has two children and is the brother of philanthropist, businessman and author Christopher Ondaatje. Ondaatje's nephew David Ondaatje is a film director and screenwriter who made the 2009 film *The Lodger*.

3 Summary of the text:

The English Patient is written as we all know during the World War II. It is an easy classification into any particular literary genre from the innovative in narrative structure and complicated by numerous points of view. Yet Ondaatje uses the novel to renew themes that have been explored throughout the ages: national identity, the connection between body and mind, and love that transcends place and time. Perhaps most significant is the fact that Ondaatje blends the forms of prose and poetry, evoking images and emotions with highly lyrical language. His words translate "real experience into symbolic experience" by appealing to memories that involve all of the reader's senses. As Ondaatje once said in a radio interview, he uses his prose to "create a tactile landscape for his choreography." In *The English Patient* such a landscape augments the poetry and lyricism of the novel.

In *The English Patient*, the past and the present are continually intertwined. The narrative structure intersperses descriptions of present action with thoughts and conversations that offer glimpses of past events and occurrences. Though there is no single narrator, the story is alternatively seen from the point of view of each of the main characters. The novel opens with Hana, a young nurse, gardening outside a villa in Italy in 1945. The European theater of the war has just ended with the Germans retreating up the Italian countryside. As the Germans retreated, they left hidden bombs and mines everywhere, so the landscape is particularly dangerous. Although the other nurses and patients have left the villa to escape to a safer place, Hana decides to stay in the villa with her patient.

Hana does not know much about the man for whom she cares. Found in the wreckage of a plane crash, he been burned beyond recognition, his whole body black and even the slightest touch painful to him. He talks about the Bedouin tribe who found him in the wreckage, cared for his wounds, and eventually returned him to a British camp in 1944. He does not know who they were, but he feels grateful to them nonetheless. To pass the time, Hana reads to the English patient—she assumes he is English by his manner and speech—and also gardens, fixes up the

villa, and plays hopscotch. Sometimes she picks up the patient's notebook, a copy of Herodotus's *The Histories* marked throughout with his own notes, figures, and observations, and reads to him or to herself.

One day, a man with bandaged hands named Caravaggio arrives at the villa. He is an old family friend of Hana's father, Patrick, and had heard about her location while he was recovering in a hospital a few miles away. In Canada, where Caravaggio knew Hana years ago, he was a thief. He tells her how his skills were legitimized in the war and how he put them to use working for British Intelligence in North Africa. He tells her that the Germans caught him after an attempt to steal a camera from a woman's room. They tortured him and cut off his thumbs, leaving his hands mutilated and nearly useless. Although he has recovered somewhat, he is still addicted to morphine. In the villa, he reminisces with Hana and mourns with her over the death of her father in the war.

As Hana plays the piano in the library, two soldiers come in and stand alongside while she plays. One of them is Kip, an Indian Sikh trained as a sapper, or bomb-defuser, in the British army. After hearing the piano, Kip has come to clear the villa of bombs, knowing that the Germans frequently booby-trapped musical instruments. Kip and the English patient get along very well, as they are both experts in guns and bombs and enjoy talking to each other and sharing stories. Kip makes camp in the garden of the villa and becomes a part of the "family" that now exists there. He goes off into town every day to clear more bombs from the area and to bury fellow sappers who have died. Kip's job is extremely dangerous. He feels a strong attraction to Hana, and soon they become lovers.

Asked about his past, the English patient begins to tell the others his story. His real name is Almasy, though this is not definitively confirmed until Chapter IX. He spent the years from 1930 to the start of World War II exploring the North African desert. His job was to make observations, draw maps, and search for ancient oases in the sands. Along with his fellow European counterparts, Almasy knew every inch of the desert and made many trips across it. In 1936, a young man from Oxford, Geoffrey Clifton, and his new wife Katharine, joined their party. Geoffrey owned a plane, which the party found especially useful in helping to map the desert. The explorers, Almasy, and the Cliftons got along very well. One night, after hearing

Katharine read a passage from his book of Herodotus, Almasi realized he was in love with her. They soon began a torrid and tumultuous affair. Everywhere they stole glances and moments, and they were obsessed with each other. Finally, in 1938, Katharine broke off their affair, telling Almasi that Geoffrey would go mad if he ever found out. Although their affair was over, Almasi remained haunted by her, and he tried to punish her for hurting him by being particularly mean to her in public. At some point, Geoffrey somehow found out about the affair.

World War II broke out in 1939, and Almasi decided to close up their camp and arranged for Geoffrey to pick him up in the desert. Geoffrey arrived in his plane with Katharine. Geoffrey attempted to kill all three of them by crashing the plane into Almasi, who was standing on the ground. The plane missed Almasi, but the crash killed Geoffrey, left Katharine severely injured, and left them with no way to escape the desert. Almasi placed Katharine in a nearby cave, covering her with a parachute for warmth, and promised to come back for her. He walked across the desert for four days until he reached the nearest town, but when he got there, the English army would not help him get back to Katharine. Because Almasi had a foreign-sounding name, the British were suspicious and locked him up as a spy, prevented him from saving Katharine.

Almasi was eventually released, but he knew it was too late to save her. He worked for the Germans, helping their spies make their way across the desert into Cairo. After he left Cairo, his truck broke down in the desert. Without transportation, he walked to the cave to get Katharine. He took her dead body and placed it in a plane that had been buried beneath the sand. The plane malfunctioned during their flight and caught fire. Almasi parachuted down from the plane, his body covered in flames. That was the point at which the Bedouins found him and cared for his burns.

Little by little, the English patient tells this whole story. Caravaggio, who has suspected the English patient was not really English, has his suspicions confirmed. He fills in gaps for the Almasi, telling him that Geoffrey Clifton was really an agent of British Intelligence and that Intelligence had known about Almasi and Katharine's affair the whole time. They knew Almasi had started helping the Germans and planned to kill him in the desert. They lost him between Cairo and the plane crash, and now, of course, he is unrecognizable.

The focus of the novel shifts to Kip, and we are told his entire story. Although Kip's brother always distrusted the west, Kip went willingly to serve in the British army. He was trained as a bomb defuser under Lord Suffolk, a true English gentleman, and was then virtually welcomed into an English family. Kip soon grew quite skillful at his job, able to figure out both the "joke" and the "character" of each bomb he tackled. Lord Suffolk and his group were blown up defusing a bomb, and Kip decided to leave England and become a sapper in Italy.

Kip has felt emotionally removed from everyone in his job as a sapper. When he meets Hana, he uses her to once again connect to humanity. All the residents of the villa celebrate Hana's twenty-first birthday, and Kip grows comfortable as her lover. When August comes, however, Kip hears on the radio of the atomic bomb that the United States has dropped on Japan. He becomes enraged, knowing that a western country would never commit such an atrocity against another white country. He takes his gun and threatens to kill the English patient, whom he sees as a symbol of the West. Kip does not kill Almsy, but takes off on his motorcycle, leaving the villa forever. Years later, he is a doctor in India with a family of his own. Though he is happy and fulfilled in his new life, he often wonders about Hana.

4 Characters in the novel:

Almsy - The protagonist of the novel and the English patient of the title. Almsy is knowledgeable and reflective, the "blank screen" upon which the other characters reflect their thoughts and wishes. Though he is badly burned in a plane crash, he retains all his mental faculties and is able to tell Hana, Kip, and Caravaggio the pieces of his past and the story of how he fell in love with Katharine. Almsy strongly believes that nations are dangerous inventions, and that love can transcend both time and geography.

Hana - A young Canadian who serves the Allies as a nurse in World War II. Only twenty years old, Hana is an excellent nurse who takes good care of her patients. She has quickly learned that she must not become emotionally attached to her patients, as she has seen too many young soldiers slip out of her life. Very close to her father, Hana had an emotional breakdown when she heard the news of his death. She falls in love with the idea of the English patient, of the thought that she is caring for a saint-like man. Her heart, however, belongs to Kip, to whom she looks for protection as she stands at the boundary between adolescence and adulthood.

Kip - A Sikh man from India who works as a "sapper," defusing bombs for the British forces in World War II. First introduced only as "the sikh," Kip is polite and well-mannered, and has both the skill and character to be an excellent sapper. A brown man in a white nation, Kip has grown emotionally detached, aware that people will not always react positively to him. His emotional detachment stands in the way of his relationships, most significantly his relationship with Hana.

Caravaggio - A Canadian thief whose profession is legitimized during the war when he puts his skills to use for the British intelligence effort. Caravaggio, whom we first know only as "the man with bandaged hands," proves endearing despite the fact that his actions are not always virtuous. Hana remembers that, in his burglaries, Caravaggio was always distracted by "the human element"—an Advent calendar that was not open to the right day, for example. Caravaggio serves as a kind of surrogate father to Hana, and sheds light on the identity of the English patient.

Katharine Clifton - An Oxford-educated woman and the wife of Geoffrey Clifton. One of the most mysterious characters in the novel, Katharine is never fully understood. We know that she married Geoffrey quite young and traveled with him to Northern Africa, and that she is an avid reader who voraciously learns all she can about Cairo and the desert. Though polite and genteel, Katharine nevertheless takes what she wants, assertively approaching Almásy and telling him that she wants him to "ravish her." Though Geoffrey is a devoted and kind husband, Katharine never seems remorseful about her extramarital affair. We see Katharine's wild, dark side in her affair with Almásy, as she punches and stabs her lover, angry at him for refusing to change and daringly challenging the world to recognize their relationship.

Geoffrey Clifton - A British explorer and Katharine Clifton's husband. A young, good-natured, affable man, Geoffrey is a new addition to the group of explorers who are mapping the North African desert. Geoffrey seems to have everything going for him: an Oxford education, wealthy family connections, and a beautiful young wife. He is a proud and devoted husband, and enjoys praising his wife in front of the other explorers. Geoffrey claims to have come to North Africa purely out of an interest in exploration, but Almásy finds out that Geoffrey has been working for British Intelligence as an aerial photographer. Everyone seems to like Geoffrey, but Katharine, who knows him best, knows his capacity to be insanely jealous.

Madox - Almásy's best friend in the desert. Madox is a rational, level-headed man who, like Almásy, chose to live in the desert to study the features of the land and report back to the Geographical Society. Unlike Almásy, Madox includes his own emotional reactions in his writing and reports, and is not shy to describe his amazement at a particular mountain or his wonder at the size of the moon. Madox always carries a copy of *Anna Karenina*, the famous tale of adultery, but remains ever faithful to his wife back home. Madox sees the church as proclaiming a jingoistic pro-war message during World War II. He takes his own life in the church, and Almásy concludes that he "died because of nations."

Lord Suffolk - A member of the old English aristocracy who, once the war begins, takes it upon himself to defuse bombs and train other men to do so. Lord Suffolk is the one "true English gentleman" whom Kip meets while he is abroad. Though Lord Suffolk is described as strange and eccentric, Kip finds that he is actually a wonderful man and a kind mentor. Kip especially values the fact that Lord Suffolk can look beyond his race and welcome him into the "English family." The nobleman's death is a large loss in Kip's life.

Patrick - Hana's father, the only parent who was present to raise her while she was growing up. Like Hana, Patrick leaves Canada to join the war effort. Hana is extremely close to her father, and the news of his death sparks her initial emotional breakdown. She takes comfort in the fact that he died in a "holy place," a dove-cot.

Clara - Hana's stepmother and Patrick's wife. Clara does not appear in the novel as a character, but Hana thinks of her occasionally, remembering her in a canoe on the lake she loves so much. Despite her absence, Clara plays an important role in the novel because, to Hana, she symbolizes home, the place she has escaped from but the place to which she longs to return at the end of the novel.

4.1 Analysis of the major characters in the novel:

Almásy

Almasy is the burned English patient who stays at the village with Hana. He was burned when his helicopter crashed - a crash engineered by the man with whose wife he was having an affair. Almasy is a slippery, cryptic character, and is not particularly adept at self-examination. The characters seem to live through him, using him to heal their own wounds, as Hana does when she chains herself to him to repair the emotional trauma at the hands of her father. Almasy seems at once regretful of the circumstances that led to his lover's death and his own wounds and mystified by the passion that engulfed him, quite literally, in flames. Having lived a full life, he is still amazed by the consumptive power of love, and advises those around him to seek it out, even though it can be as destructive as it is beautiful. The protagonist and the "English patient" of the novel's title, Almásy exists as the center and focus of the action, despite the fact that he is without name or identity for much of the novel. Almásy thus serves as the blank sheet upon whom all the other characters focus their desires and expectations. Little by little, he reveals his identity, and finally his name, in Chapter IX. When Almásy's name is revealed we discover the great irony of the novel: the "English patient" is not even English, but rather Hungarian by birth, an "international bastard" who has spent much of his adult life wandering the desert. In this way, the English patient serves to highlight the great difference between imagination and reality, and the abstraction of concepts such as nationality and citizenship. On the whole, Almásy is not at all what the other characters think he appears to be.

Almásy's manner is knowledgeable and reflective. His entire career has consisted of searching for ancient cities and mapping empty land. He thus links the past to the present, writing in the margins of Herodotus what he sees to be the truths of the landscape. Almásy's clear-minded and otherwise rational thinking, however, is clouded by the entrance of Katharine Clifton into his life. He becomes obsessed with images of her body, which then inspire the writing of his book. He is unable to focus on his work, frustrated that he is at a loss to name the spot at the base of her neck. Almásy is overwhelmed by passion for Katherine, walking without direction through the desert like a madman after her death, searching for her body so he may return her to England as he promised.

Though Almásy is not a highly dynamic character—by the year in which the story is set, all the events of his life have passed—he is arguably the most intriguing and mysterious figure. He is portrayed in a sympathetic light, but we must keep in mind that this may be because we hear his story from his own point of view. From an objective perspective, many of his actions, lies, and betrayals appear reprehensible. Nonetheless, Almásy escapes total condemnation because of his knowledge, charm, and adherence to his own system of values. To Almásy—who places no value in the concept of nations and states—it is not at all unethical to help a German spy through the desert. Indeed, Almásy concludes that national identity is completely irrelevant in the desert. Ultimately, however, he suffers greatly for his beliefs and for his moments of passion. Almásy's enduring spirit and his firm connection between past and present are what keep him, the English patient, foremost in our minds.

Hana:

Hana is a twenty-year-old nurse for the Allies during World War II. She has spent much of her life treating patients and watching them die, and she seems to have a particular affinity for death. Initially we're not sure why Hana chains herself to the English patient in this lonely villa - we sense that she is emotionally wounded, and that she is withdrawing deeper inside herself. She is ultimately brought out by a sequence of events - all of which bring people to the villa, including Kip and Caravaggio, with whom she becomes involved in a love triangle. Hana falls in love with Kip, but he seems emotionally distanced. Almásy urges her to find that fire within and to kindle it. Ultimately it is revealed that Hana lost her father to an accident where he was burned beyond recognition, but she was too far away to save him. She never forgave herself, and chains herself to this English patient for atonement. Only twenty years old, Hana is torn between adolescence and adulthood. Barely eighteen when she leaves to become a nurse in the war, she is forced to grow up quickly, eliminating the luxuries of her character that get in the way of her duty. Three days into her work, she cuts off all her hair, as it gets in the way of her work, and refuses to look in a mirror for the duration of the war. With the confidence that comes with experience, Hana cares for the English patient, bringing him morphine and washing his wounds. Yet she still clings to vestiges of innocence that allow her to feel like a child—some nights, she goes out in the garden to play hopscotch. Hana is a dynamic character, and the novel is in many ways the story of her maturity into adulthood.

Hana goes about her duty with a Christian belief that has been somewhat compromised by the war. While she refrains from praying and outright religious ceremony, the allusions she makes are clearly religious. Hana sees her English patient as a "despairing saint" with "hipbones like Christ." This religious imagery elevates the tone of her thoughts and the importance of her actions. She imagines the patient to have been a noble warrior who has suffered—perhaps wrongly—for his actions. In reality, however, Almásy is a mapmaker who has helped German spies and carried on an affair with another man's wife. By projecting noble images onto the blank identity of the English patient, Hana builds innocent and childlike dreams. As the novel concludes, Hana sees the reality in her situation, and she longs to return home to the safety of Clara and her home.

Kip:

Kirpal Singh is a "sapper" (soldier) for the British, and works in demining and bomb defusion. He found a mentor in Lord Suffolk, but when Lord Suffolk died in a bomb explosion, he, like Hana, turned inwards. At the villa, Kip falls in love with Hana, but we see that deep down he is uncomfortable with his own race, and has never been comfortable being part of a culture that was subservient to the British. As a soldier who has had a difficult life both at war and at home, Kip is a conflicted and complicated character. Ondaatje takes free license with Kip, employing him as a lens through which to explore Anglo-Indian relations during a period of chaos for the British Empire. Kip's experiences in India with his brother—who harbors deep resentment toward the West—and with fellow soldiers in England who react with reserve to his brown skin highlight the strained and skeptical relations between two parts of one large Empire. As an Indian man serving in the British army, Kip straddles two worlds, walking a fine line between adopting Western customs and losing his national identity.

Yet as a character in himself, Kip is complex and elusive. He reacts with warmth to the welcoming embrace of his mentor, Lord Suffolk, but shrugs off Caravaggio's hug as he rides away on his motorcycle at the end of the novel. Much of the emotional distance Kip has built for himself is a result of his incredibly dangerous job in the war. As a man who must descend into deep pits to defuse bombs that could explode at any time, Kip has come to grips with the idea of his own mortality. His job has taught him to distrust everything and everyone. In the Italian villa,

however, Kip becomes a part of the small community that has sprouted there and begins to let his guard down. However, the news of the atomic bomb dropped on Japan, which he sees as a symbol of Western aggression, jolts him back into the reality that exists outside the villa. Kip returns to the path that was initially laid out for him, becoming a doctor and having an Indian family. Years later, however, his thoughts of Hana keep him tied between two worlds.

Caravaggio

Caravaggio is a thief who had his hands amputated when he was caught during the war. He comes to the villa to try to get Hana to leave, since the place is littered with mines. Eventually, however, he falls in love with her (somewhat surprisingly, since he's quite a bit older than her). Ultimately, Caravaggio is her practical guide, where Almasi is her ethereal guide.

Katharine Clifton

Katharine Clifton was the wife of Geoffrey Clifton, and came on one of his expeditions just after they were married. The English patient quickly fell in love with this Oxford-educated firebrand and began an adulterous affair with her that led to both of their demises, when Geoffrey tried to kill them both in a plane crash. Katharine is stubborn and feisty, and is frustrated by Almasi's coldness. She leaves him because he can't bear to be owned by her, but ultimately dies because of the time they spent together. When she dies, Almasi leaves her in a cave, promising to come back, but he is never able to.

Geoffrey Clifton

Geoffrey Clifton is Katharine's seemingly gregarious husband who is part of Almasi's expedition to chart the Terzura Oasis. As a part of the aristocracy, he is fiercely protective of his wife. When he finds out that she is having an affair with Almasi, he initiates a murder-suicide plane crash that kills him and his wife and burns Almasi beyond recognition. Later, Almasi learns that Geoffrey wasn't just on the expedition for an adventure - he was part of British intelligence.

Lord Suffolk

Lord Suffolk is Kirpal Singh's mentor when he is a sapper in the bomb-defusing unit of the British Army. Kip thinks of him as the best English gentleman he has ever met - and one of the best people he has ever known, almost a surrogate father. When Lord Suffolk is blown up by a 250-kg bomb, Kip is expected to take over for him - to be the new leader of the troop - but Kip finds the shoes too big to fill and escapes.

Madox

Madox is the English patient's best friend in the desert. He ultimately commits suicide because he believes the Church is promoting war instead of withdrawing from it. He seems constantly at odds with his practical and philosophical beliefs.

5 Chapter wise Analysis of the Text:

The first chapter portrays a woman who is busy with her gardening. She feels it starting to rain, so she returns inside and enters a room where a man lies on a bed. Every four days she washes his burned body, making it her job to care for his wounds and make him more comfortable. She feeds him with fruit from the garden. The nurse asks the patient how he was burned. He tells her he fell from a plane into the desert. Bedouin nomads saw him stand up, still burning, and emerge from the plane. They carry him across the desert to their camp and care for his wounds, putting a mask of herbs on his face and teaching him to lift his arms and draw strength from the universe. They do not know who he is, nor does he know them. Though he never sees them, he can tell them by scent and taste. They chew his food for him so that he might eat.

The nurse reads every night. Books are her window into another world, out of the cell of the war. She reads to her patient, but is not sure whether or not he listens. The nurse spends much of her time gardening, growing enough vegetables for them to eat, to trade a little, and to survive. They inhabit a bombed-out villa. In many parts, rain falls freely into the house. The German army had occupied the house and has left mines throughout. The nurse knows these dangers but does not pay much attention to them. She is only twenty years old and enjoys sleeping in the library, with its view of the night sky.

The villa is in an Italian hill town that contains one other villa and a monastery. The Villa Medici was where the generals lived; the Villa San Girolamo, which used to be a convent, had become the last stronghold of the German army and had housed nearly a hundred troops. The Allies turned the building into a hospital when they took over. The other nurses and patients moved to a safer location in the south, but this nurse, concerned for her English patient, insisted on staying behind. Though they have no heat or electricity, they manage to get by in the devastated villa. The nurse cleans out the villa and she feels safe there, though she knows there is danger of roaming brigands. She takes a crucifix from the church to make a scarecrow for her garden. She plays hopscotch at night to entertain herself.

The nurse picks up her patient's notebook. It is a copy of *The Histories* by Herodotus, with the patient's own writing, observations, and memoirs pasted into it. She reads of the desert winds that are known to destroy. The patient begins talking to her, telling her that the Bedouins cared for him and kept him alive because they suspected he had a skill. He is familiar with maps, remembers everything he reads, and knows the locations of ancient civilizations, lakes, and towns. He knows North Africa, and is useful to those nations fighting their wars on soil they do not know. The Bedouins bring him to a canyon and he realizes why they have brought him there. They ask him to reach out with his hand and identify the different types of guns. The guns are from many countries and all different time periods—a "museum in the desert." He shows the men how to match shells to guns in order to fire them. They cheer him on as he uses his skill to repay them for their care.

The Bedouins blindfold the patient most of the time, taking him to their secret towns and ceremonies. He has not been able to see for so long that he wonders whether the Bedouin dances are dreams or realities. There are no women in this camp, and he desires a young Bedouin boy.

Ondaatje takes full advantage of the possibilities of narrating in different tenses, alternating between present and past, changing tenses as he changes scenes. The novel uses flowing transitions to move from present action to flashback, mirroring real action and remembrance in smooth movement of prose. Such transitions and tense changes effectively put us in the position of outside observers peering into a scene. We do not know what has happened in the past and are not given any explanations for what we see, but things are explained to us little by little.

Ondaatje's use of tense creates the illusion of a continuous reality, a past that is in line with a present—in fact, inseparable from it.

The descriptiveness and lyricism of Chapter I are especially notable. The account of the patient's burned body and the Italian villa are detailed and realistic. Religious allusions are frequently in these passages: the nurse thinks her patient's hipbones are like the "[h]ipbones of Christ"; the Bedouin medicine man uses his oils to "anoint" the patient, much like John the Baptist and the baptism of Christ; and the patient thinks the figure of the medicine man looks like the drawings of the archangels he had tried to copy in school. Christianity permeates the minds of these characters, though they often choose to put it aside to deal with the realities of war. The nurse, who places the practicalities of survival before her religion, uses a crucifix to make a scarecrow for her garden. This image of the 'crucified scarecrow' is in great contrast to the religious images that have come before it. While the former images heighten the tone of the events, the latter brings the situation back into reality, making a point about the place of religion in war.

Chapter II tells us that the man with bandaged hands, Caravaggio, has been in the military hospital in Rome for over four months. He has been evasive with the doctors and nurses, refusing to tell them anything more than his serial number, which identifies him as part of the Allies. He is a war hero and they grant him his silence. He overhears the doctors talking about a nurse and a burned patient and he finally speaks to them, inquiring where the nurse is. They tell him that she and the patient are in an old, unsafe nunnery in the hills of Florence. They had tried to talk her into coming back to a safer place with them, but now that the war was over in these parts, it was impossible to force anyone to do anything anymore. The doctors tell him that the burned man talks all the time, but does not know who he is.

Caravaggio travels to the hills of Florence to find the nurse and her patient. He has known her for a long time, since she was a little girl in Toronto before the war. He remembers when she refused to have her tonsils taken out. The nurse, Hana, is surprised to see Caravaggio in her villa. He finds a bedroom and puts his things in it. She tells him that she is glad to see him, but that they will need more food now that he is here. He tells her he is unable to catch chickens like he used to, for he lost his nerve because the Germans caught him and nearly chopped off his hands.

Looking at Hana, Caravaggio is reminded of his wife. He is romantically interested in Hana, but he knows she has emotionally committed herself to the dying man upstairs.

Hana asks Caravaggio if he has been a spy and he tells her he has not. He has always been a thief, and the Allies sent him to steal some documents from a room at a German party. While he was at the party in a tuxedo, a woman took a picture of him, and he knew the picture would incriminate him. That night, he snuck into the woman's bedroom and stole her camera. Though she saw him, she seemed to agree not to tell her German boyfriend on him.

Nurses such as Hana often became shell-shocked from witnessing so much death around them. Hana pinpoints her breakdown to the moment that an official delivered a letter to her telling of the death of her father. It was not long after that that she met the English patient and decided to stay in the villa to care for him. She has never learned much about him, as there has been a shyness between them that is difficult to overcome.

One night, Caravaggio finds Hana in the kitchen, half-naked and sobbing deeply. She does not want to make love to him, as she is in love with the English patient. She believes the patient is a saint who needs her to care for him. Caravaggio tries to tell Hana that it is foolish for her to throw herself away on a ghost, but she does not care. Her mind flashes back to her youth in Toronto, when Caravaggio had been her first teacher, showing her how to do somersaults when she was little. When she grew older, she trained to be a nurse. After the first three days taking care of the men wounded from the battles of war, Hana cut off her hair because it got in the way. She never looked in a mirror again. After being in the war for so long, Hana grew colder and more detached, calling all her patients "Buddy." Staying in the villa and caring for the English patient is Hana's way of escaping the war and hiding from adulthood.

Hana and Caravaggio go out for a walk at night. He lets her change the bandages on his hands, and he tells her how he was tortured. The Germans caught him jumping from a woman's window and then brought him in, handcuffed him to a table, and cut off his thumbs. When Hana and Caravaggio get back to the house, the English patient sees Caravaggio and is stunned.

Hana decides to play the old piano in the library. Outside, it is pouring rain, and two soldiers slip into the library, at first unnoticed by Hana. With their guns, they come up to the piano and listen

to her play. When Caravaggio returns, he finds Hana and the soldiers making sandwiches together in the kitchen.

Analysis:

One major theme of *The English Patient* is the way the war transforms the individuals who are involved in it. All the characters that have been introduced thus far have been entirely altered by the war. Caravaggio, a former thief, has lost not only his thumbs, but also much of his youth and his identity. He can no longer steal, nor can he live any kind of happy life. He finds himself envious of those "whole" men he sees, men who can live independently and without pity. The English patient has likewise been visibly transformed by the war. Having literally lost his entire identity, he is alive only to reflect on the life he once had. Hana, too, has been irrevocably altered by her wartime experience. After having a near-breakdown, Hana stands on the cusp of adulthood, unsure whether to take charge of her life or to hide and look for shelter like a child. She chooses to postpone her decision, remaining in a villa and caring for a burned man. The war has taken a piece of each character's identity, replacing it with a scar that each now bears.

An important and recurring symbol in the novel is the Italian villa in which Hana and the English patient live. Ondaatje writes, "there seemed little demarcation between house and landscape, between damaged building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth." Such an organic image is symbolically important to the novel. Straddling the line between house and landscape, building and earth, the villa represents both death and rebirth. War has destroyed the villa, making huge holes in walls and ceilings. Nature has returned to fill these holes, however, replacing absence with life. Such an image mirrors the spiritual death and rebirth of the villa's inhabitants.

Chapter III talks about One of the soldiers who has entered the library while Hana plays the piano is a young sikh, an Indian officer who works with the British forces to clear unexploded bombs and mines. He has run into the library out of fear for the piano player, as Germans often hid bombs in musical instruments and metronomes. The sikh finds the piano safe and then makes camp in the garden of the villa. He makes it his duty to clear the area and make it safe for the

inhabitants. Hana notices that the sikh is always extraordinarily respectful and polite. She watches his muscles and notices the unashamed physicality of his body.

The sikh is sent on very dangerous and sensitive missions. He must protect the Italian people at their ceremonies honoring the Virgin Mary, and even look for bombs on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Although the sikh does not share these people's faith, he does everything he can to protect it.

Hana and Caravaggio talk. She tells him that she was pregnant and used to talk to the baby all the time, but lost the baby in an abortion when she got to Sicily, as the baby's father was dead anyway. Hana tells Caravaggio all she has learned about death in her work as a nurse. She tells him that, after a while, she refused to have anything to do with the soldiers on a personal level. She withdrew emotionally and threw herself into her work.

The sikh, named Kip, goes into the English patient's room to talk to him one day. It turns out that they get along very well, and they are able to spend much time talking of their expertise on bombs, guns, and weapons. Hana is glad that her patient has found a new friend.

The narrator tells the story of how the English patient got to Italy. The Bedouin tribe that saved him brought him to the British base at Siwa in 1944. He was moved from the Western desert to Tunis, then shipped to Italy. Because he could not be identified, and could hardly remember who he was, the British had a very difficult time trying to determine whether or not he was an enemy. He seemed very British and bombarded them with facts about Italy, the military, and history. His rambling drove them crazy, but they were never quite sure who he was. As the English patient tells Hana the story, he drifts off to sleep. She reads parts of his journal.

One day, Kip is searching the garden and he finds a large and complicated bomb with wires running through the grass and attached to a tree. He needs Hana's help to hold one of the wires while he tries to figure out which one to cut. He succeeds in neutralizing the bomb, but it has been particularly difficult and he is shaking. Hana tells him that she is not afraid of death, and that she just wishes she could curl up in his arms and feel safe here on the grass. While they are curled up and Hana is sleeping, Kip feels preoccupied. He knows that his brown skin will always make him a foreigner, unable to let his guard down and have real human contact.

That night, the four have a party in the English patient's room. Caravaggio has found a gramophone and he puts on music to dance with Hana. While they celebrate, Kip hears an explosion. He lies and tells them that it was not the explosion of a mine, but when he gets a chance, he runs down to the site of the explosion. He locates the dead and buries his second-in-command, Hardy. Kip is reminded of how dangerous his job is and is angered that Hana had treated her own life so casually that morning. He returns to the villa and finds Hana sitting by the side of the patient's bed, his hearing aid turned up to its highest volume. Kip thinks that he will be sane if he can just touch Hana. He cuts the wire of the patient's hearing aid, promising to rewire it in the morning, and touches Hana's shoulder.

The next morning, Hana, Kip, and Caravaggio are talking outside. Caravaggio wonders if it is possible for a person to be in love with someone who is not any smarter than that person. He is frustrated with Hana because she is so in love with her English patient that she refuses to do the reasonable thing and leave Italy to save herself. Caravaggio says that she and Kip should get out of this dangerous place and go off and have babies together. Hana begins to feel uncomfortable in the company of the three men now that physical attraction is palpably present. All she would like to do is lay with Kip and have him protect her.

At night, Hana sneaks across the garden into Kip's tent and they become lovers. She is very attracted to him and to the dark color of his skin. She knows that neither of them is beholden to the other. It is merely their choice to be together for the moment. Hana becomes annoyed sometimes at Kip's self-sufficiency, the way he is able to shut out the world around him. Nonetheless, she enjoys spending the night with him, lying under his protection.

Analysis:

In Chapter III, Ondaatje explores the nature of love and shows how it can surface even in the middle of war. Caravaggio charges that Hana is in love with the English patient, reasoning that she is drawn to the patient because he is so smart and mysterious. What Caravaggio does not see is that Hana needs the patient as much as he needs her. Although it seems that the patient ties Hana to an unsafe place, she sees him as freeing her from the awful horrors of war. She feels she

can once again become emotionally attached to someone, and that she can finally let down her guard.

The love Hana feels for Kip is of a different kind. Kip becomes her protector, a strong, healthy male figure to save her from dangers. Ondaatje writes that when Hana is with Kip, she feels "her tongue instead of a swab, her tooth instead of a needle, her mouth instead of the mask with the codeine drops to make him sleep." To Kip, Hana is not a nurse, but a woman, and this withdrawal from her professional duty is refreshing to her. Kip, on the other hand, finds in Hana a link to sanity, someone who is young and alive. Facing death every day, Kip is forced to come to grips with his own mortality, yet Hana links him to life. The love that emerges, therefore, is one based on mutual needs and the search for fulfillment of those needs during the stress of wartime.

Chapter IV opens with a brief discussion of the western world's history of involvement in the desert. Since Herodotus in 425 B.C., there has been little interest in the desert save for those old geographers who make it their business to explore the world and return to London to give talks at meetings of the Geographical Society. By the mid-1930s, there is a resurgence of desert exploration, and then in 1939 the desert becomes another theater of the war. As Hana sits by his bed, the English patient tells her how he was a part of an "oasis society," a small group of Europeans who mapped and explored the desert. They worked independently, but the desert Europeans knew all about each other. They would meet occasionally between their adventures and explorations. In 1930, he went on his first journey. It was only meant to last seven days, but the sandstorms were so severe that they lost all of their animals and supplies. If they had not kept moving they would have been buried alive by the sand.

The English patient had continued to travel across the desert throughout the 1930s, occasionally meeting another Europeans but spending almost all of his time with the Bedouin people. He came to hate the idea of nations and nationalities, feeling that such concepts were superficial and caused only destruction. The desert rejected such labels and nationalities. Though some of the European explorers tried to place their names on the things they found, the English patient wanted to disappear. He wanted to lose himself completely and not belong to any person or any nation.

The patient talks about how he wanted to remain in one particular oasis, among the acacia trees forever. It was a place where populations had existed over the centuries and then had disappeared entirely, coming and going with the water. He compares a lover to water, the life force that one needs in the desert. Hana wonders who this woman is who has been the great love of her patient's life.

The patient tells Hana that in 1936 a young man named Geoffrey Clifton had heard about his expedition from a friend at Oxford. Within two weeks, Clifton had gotten married to a woman named Katharine and flown with his new wife to join their party in Cairo. The party, which had consisted of four explorers—Prince Kemal el Dein, Bell, Almásy, and Madox—was focused on finding the ancient city of Zerzura, nestled in the Gilf Kebir, a plateau in the Libyan desert. Clifton was wealthy and had his own plane, a convenience that would make their search much easier.

The party was initially surprised that Clifton had brought his wife, but the patient says he thinks they accepted her politely enough. There seemed to be a large culture gap between the Cliftons and the explorers. The patient's entire life revolved around things that could not be valued in a material society—history, latitudes, and events that took place hundreds of years ago. One night, as they all sat at the campfire, Katharine recited poetry to them. That was the moment that the English patient had fallen in love with a voice.

The patient adds that adultery is something that was never included in the minutes of the Geographical Society. Theirs was a love that was left out of the detailed reports.

Analysis:

Starting the chapter with history by Herodotus and threading quotes by the historian throughout the novel, Ondaatje connects the past with the present. Indeed, the past is of utmost importance in *The English Patient*. The past is the only thing the patient has left in his life. Even before his injury however, he had always been aware of the past and connected to it. He chose his profession because he knew that money and power are fleeting, just as civilizations are. He wanted to immerse himself in something greater, something that was immortal, and he found that in the desert.

Time in the novel is extraordinarily fluid, as days blend into weeks and overlap with memories and past centuries. Ondaatje employs this fluidity of time as a device to encourage connections in our minds as we read the novel. Situations past and present are interrelated and are used to inform each other. The illicit nature of the patient's love affair is mirrored in Hana's relationship with Kip. Past and present intertwine to create a larger picture of love in war.

The desert itself functions like a character in the novel. It is a living entity that has the power to kill, to bury, and to alter lives. Ondaatje writes that it "could not be claimed or owned—it was a piece of cloth carried by winds, never held down by stones, and given a hundred shifting names long before Canterbury existed." In this way, the desert extends beyond time, connecting people across ages with a shared experience. The patient has used the desert to lose himself, to shed his nationality and identity. As a setting for a love story, the desert is an empty and barren place, which helps us focus on the intensity of personal connections that take place there. At once harsh and beautiful, the desert acts as an intensifier, heightening the drama and the tragedy in human relationships.

In Chapter V Katharine Clifton first dreamed of the man who would become the English patient several days after she met him. She woke up screaming as if from a nightmare and Geoffrey brought her a glass of water. In her dream she had felt the man's anger toward her, his frustration that a married woman was among them. In her dream he had "yoked her neck back so that she had been unable to breathe within her arousal." Most of what she felt toward him was sexual. While he rambled, she longed to slap him, though she listened politely. She had plenty of time to study him, this man who had years earlier left normal life for the world of the desert.

The man angers Katharine with his assumptions and his excessive politeness. Nonetheless they begin a love affair and soon cannot bear to be apart from one another, sneaking private moments in plum gardens, crowded markets, and offices. She is confused about what to do, as she hates a lie but knows that Geoffrey will go mad if she tells him about her affair. Katharine takes her frustration out on the English patient, making various colors of bruises on his skin with her blows, throwing plates at his head, and stabbing forks into his shoulder. He makes up silly excuses for his wounds, and people start to think he is quite accident-prone.

The love affair is tumultuous. The man, who has never felt alone even in the desert, cannot bear to be without Katharine. He wishes to "burn down all social rules, all courtesy" to get to her. He knows that they are "sinners in a holy city" but does not care, as long as he can remain with her. In public, she builds a wall between them, refusing even to look at him or acknowledge him. This drives him mad, but he knows Katharine does it for her own protection, as he has protected himself emotionally from the outside world for so long. He tries to work but he can hardly write. He goes insane if he is not with her, and he cannot accept losing her.

One night, the twenty-eighth of September, Katharine decides she cannot compromise, and insists that they be apart. She tells the man that they can never see each other again, as her husband, Geoffrey, will go mad if he finds out. The man brings Katharine home, unsure whether Geoffrey is inside. He tells her he does not miss her yet, but she says that he will. He feels he has fallen in love and been disassembled.

Analysis

Chapter V is like the other chapters in that it is not chronological, but is unlike some of the others in that it has a unifying theme: the English patient's passion for Katharine. Their love, which begins as purely physical, quickly progresses to something much deeper. This conflation of the physical body with the emotional existence is a recurring idea in the novel. The English patient's connection to Katharine transcends the physical, and he feels insane when he is not with her. She is so constantly in his thoughts that he is unable even to work. Her emotional and psychological presence becomes so foremost in his mind that he is shocked to be brought back to reality with a reminder of physicality—a vaccination scar on her arm. Ondaatje perhaps mentions the otherwise insignificant scar to highlight the physical and emotional depth of Katharine's relationship with the English patient.

The physical wounds the English patient endures at Katharine's hand are also significant. Her abuse of him suggests that love and hate are closely intertwined emotions. When two people who have been extremely accustomed to existing alone suddenly connect, abandoning their self-sufficient worlds, they find it shocking and upsetting to discover their reciprocal need for another person. Katharine especially struggles because this person she has discovered a need for does not

fit nicely or neatly into her life. This is what Katharine discovers, and she hates her lover for it. What emerges from this chapter is an overriding sense of extreme, even uncontrollable passion. Ondaatje portrays a passion for which the characters would sacrifice their entire existence.

The English patient flashes back to another of his memories, describing the time in Cairo when he was in love with Katharine. One day he asks his friend Madox what the spot in the front, right at the base of a woman's neck, is called. Madox tells him to pull himself together.

Caravaggio tells Hana that he thinks the English patient is not really English. He thinks he is a Hungarian man named Almásy who worked for the Germans during the war. Almásy had been a desert explorer throughout the 1930s. He knew all about the desert and its dialects, and when the war broke out, became a guide for spies, taking them across the desert into Cairo. Caravaggio thinks the patient is Almásy because one night the patient suggested some very peculiar names for the dog—names only Almásy would know. Hana sticks to her opinion that the patient is an Englishman.

Caravaggio continues, telling Hana the whole story of the Hungarian man. Almásy had helped the German spy Eppler get across the desert. Eppler was an extremely important man, as he delivered coded messages directly to General Rommel through a code hidden in a copy of the novel *Rebecca*. Almásy was known for both being able to fly planes and being able to sound English. He was educated in England and in Cairo he was even known as "the English spy." Caravaggio is almost certain that the English patient is Almásy.

Since being wounded, Caravaggio has become a morphine addict. Hana noticed that he found and raided her supply of medicinal morphine as soon as he got there. Now Caravaggio wants to give her English patient a Brompton cocktail—morphine and alcohol—to get him talking. Hana is concerned and thinks Caravaggio is too obsessed with her patient's past. She figures that it does not matter what side he was on now that the war is over. Hana tells her patient that Caravaggio thinks he is not English. She also tells him that Caravaggio was a thief, albeit an unsuccessful one, in Canada.

After the Brompton cocktail, the English patient talks freely about the events that led up to his plane crash. He tells Caravaggio exactly where he was in the desert, having just left the Gif

Kebir. Driving through the desert, his truck exploded. He assumed it had been sabotaged by one of the Bedouins, as there were spies from both sides among them. Escaping the explosion, he set out in the direction of a plane he knew was buried at one location in the desert. After four nights of walking, he arrived at Ain Dua, where the plane was buried. There, he cooled himself in the waters of the well and entered the cave where Katharine remained. He had promised to return to her. He found her in a corner wrapped in parachute material, dead. He approached her, as a lover does, and made love to her dead body. He then carried her out into the sun, dressed, and brought her to the plane.

Katharine had been in the cave for three years. In 1939, she was injured when her husband Geoffrey attempted a murder-suicide with his plane. Geoffrey had somehow found out about their affair and intended to kill all three of them in one moment. He was supposed to pick up the English patient in the desert at an appointed time. He arrived, but was flying erratically. He landed not fifty yards away from the English patient, intending to crash into him and kill all three at once. But the English patient was unhurt and Katharine was only injured by the crash. Still, she was too weak to walk across the desert, so he carried her to the cave to wait for him. He left his copy of Herodotus with her. He promised to come back for her and take her to safety. Three years later, he did.

The English patient flashes back to the events leading up to the fateful plane crash that injured Katharine. It was during their months of separation, when Katharine insisted that they not see each other anymore, that the English patient became bitter. He could not bear that she would not see him, and he became determined that she had taken another lover. Her last endearments to him seemed false, and he trusted nothing. In his copy of Herodotus he wrote down all her arguments against him, wanting to record them so he might remember and believe them. It was the patient's meanness to Katharine that made Geoffrey suspect that he was her lover.

While he was carrying Katharine's injured body from the plane to the cave, they had a few moments to talk. She told him that he killed everything in her during their separation. She said that she left him not only because her husband was mad, but because she knew she could never change him. He would not reveal one more inch of his character to her, and she felt isolated.

Three years after he had this conversation with her, he came back to find her dead body. He dug up the buried plane, for which he had brought fuel, and placed her inside it. They took off in the plane and flew a small distance when the plane begins to fall apart. Oil poured over his knees as the bottom of the plane brushed the trees. There was a spark and the whole plane caught fire. He parachuted down to the ground, and only then did he realize that his entire body was on fire.

Back in the present, the English patient talks to Kip. They share a can of condensed milk, which the English patient greatly enjoys. He tells Kip that they get along so well because they are both "international bastards," born in one place and choosing to live elsewhere. Kip thinks of all the teachers he lost, his English mentors. He is emotionally withdrawn.

Analysis

In *The English Patient*, there is no single narrator, as each of the main characters has a voice at one time or another. The point of view shifts from one character to another, sometimes within the same chapter, offering descriptions of a single event from multiple perspectives. The critic Lorraine York points to the evening of Hana's birthday to illustrate this "complicated dance of gazes." On this evening, Caravaggio watches Hana's legs as she walks: "her legs and thighs moved through the skirt of her frock as if it were thin water." Then, from Kip's point of view: "Hana moved alongside them, her hands in her pockets, the way Kip loved to see her walk." This change of perspectives adds depth to the narrative, emphasizing the presence of multiple realities and various points of view within a scene. There is no one character who is the only watcher, or other characters who are the only ones watched. Each character watches in his or her own right, taking in sensory experiences and mixing them with memories. Ondaatje's use of this technique makes the narrative a complete tale, rejecting the idea that there is only one story to be told.

Chapter VI speaks about how Kip brings a ladybird for Hana to give to the English patient. The ladybird clutches the patient's dark skin. In the library, Caravaggio accidentally nudges a fuse box off a counter. Kip's body slides under it, saving them from the explosion that would have resulted. Kip knows he has made an impression on Caravaggio, and knows that one day, the thief will be kind to an East Indian in return and will think of Kip. Caravaggio tells a story about one

of his burglaries that was foiled by a family of Indians. Hana partly believes this story, as she remembers that Caravaggio "was constantly diverted by the human element during burglaries."

Kip remembers a time in 1941 when he was lowered into a pit to defuse a giant Esau bomb. He was very cold, nearly twenty feet down a pit in muddy water with little sunlight to warm him. His fingers were so cold that they lost their agility and became almost useless. His body was so close to the bomb that he could feel the temperature changes. He describes in detail how he first tried to defuse the bomb, made a mistake, and then finally succeeded in neutralizing it. They pulled him out of the pit after the bomb was dead, and his body was almost frozen from the liquid oxygen he spilled onto himself in his first attempts. When he got out of the pit, he realized there was a crowd around, far too close to the bomb. They would have been destroyed if the bomb had exploded. But all Kip could think about was how he was not frightened in the pit, just angry at his mistake. Only Hardy, his next in command, still kept him human.

Hana and Kip sit out in the sun after Kip washes his long hair. She enjoys gazing at his body and imagining his quiet civilization. He tells her how his brother thinks he is foolish for trusting the English. His brother believes that Asia is not a free continent and the English will never give any credit to the Sikhs for their help in the war. On this point, Kip disagrees with his brother. Hana thinks that at night, when Kip lets down his hair, "he is once more in another constellation."

Kip never moves independently, but always in relation to things: his eyes are always observant, searching for something dangerous. He will never take a moment to consider himself, because he is the only thing that is certainly safe. Though he can describe Hana's clavicle and the shape of her shoulder, he would find it difficult to remember the color of her eyes. He only sees what he needs to see. He spends time with the English patient because he realizes that, though sick, the creature inside is noble, and has a memory that reaches far deeper than any of the others'.

The four in the villa are accustomed to rising at daybreak and eating dinner with the last available light. Late one night, long after Hana has blown out the candle in the English patient's room, she and Kip sneak into the villa from two different doors. This is a game they have arranged to play. It is completely dark, and Kip sneaks through the kitchen into the enclosed

courtyard to hide in a well, waiting for Hana. He has swept the library for mines for a week, so he knows that this room, at least, is completely safe. Hana enters the library with a small light on her arm. She goes to look for one of the few English books among the many Italian ones. She finds what she is looking for and lies down on the couch to read the book. She can hear Caravaggio's wheeze, as he is lying on the floor at the other end of the library. Caravaggio knows Hana is there. He thinks how much more he loves her now that she is an adult. When she was little, he used to wonder what she would be like, but now he knows that she has consciously decided how her life will be shaped, and he feels happy to be a part of that.

Kip, from his vantage point at the well, also sees Hana lying on the couch. All at once, everything seems to be in movement. Caravaggio walks over to the couch and reaches down to touch Hana, but she is not there. He feels an arm close around his neck and he realizes Kip has him in a grip from which he cannot escape. He hears Hana's voice saying "got you, got you." This is all part of their game. Hana has used him as a decoy in her game with Kip. Caravaggio leaves the room, and Kip and Hana make love in the dark.

Kip and Hana feel there are greater forces than sex working between them. As she scratches his back when they are falling asleep, he is reminded of the comforting love of his mother.

In Chapter VII we find, Kip remembers his training for the bomb squad in 1940 in Westbury, England, under the direction of Lord Suffolk, his mentor. As the second son in his family, Kip was expected to be a doctor, but the war changed all that. He volunteered for the army and ended up in the bomb unit. The work was extremely dangerous and the life expectancy was only about ten weeks. Once the Germans began bombing Britain, there were suddenly nearly 3,700 unexploded bombs in the country, ready to be tripped by unwitting people. It was Kip's job to help clear all these bombs away.

Kip greatly admired Lord Suffolk, and thought he represented the best of the English. Suffolk would tell Kip of English culture and customs just as if he were an Englishman himself, not a foreigner visiting their country. Suffolk was full of anecdotes and information, and taught Kip about western life. When Kip had first applied for the position as part of the bomb detonation unit, he was worried he would be denied because of his race. However, Suffolk and his secretary,

Miss Morden, told him he had completed the problems so well and had such a good character, that they were sure they would offer him the job. Kip found himself welcomed into a little family of which he was glad to be a part. His skill and character won him a position of individuality, free of the "chaotic machinery" of the army. Living in the unit with Suffolk, he began to love the English and their ways.

Kip tells Hana about the moment he learned that Lord Suffolk, Miss Morden, and four men in training were killed. He was in London working on a bomb when an officer came to tell him the news that they had all been killed when Suffolk was attempting to dismantle a 25-kilogram bomb. Kip was unbearably upset, but held himself together and pretended they were all still alive. The officer came to tell him there was another bomb, just like the one that killed Suffolk, and it needed to be taken care of immediately.

Kip went to attempt to dismantle the bomb, though it was the middle of the night and he was exhausted. He knew the Germans must have changed the way they put the bomb together. To figure out the secret, one had to understand not only the bomb-maker's mind, but also his character. Kip was excellent at figuring out both.

When Kip got to the bomb, the area was ablaze with the officers' lights. Kip examined the bomb and realized that he could dismantle it from its explosive material, making it essentially harmless. Once he did this, he set to work on figuring out the "joke" to the bomb. Eventually he realized it: the Germans had put a second gaine, a whole separate device into the bomb to make it very difficult to defuse. Once Kip realized this, he also had to accept that Lord Suffolk and his English friends were dead. Kip now carried the responsibility of defusing all the bombs of this type and teaching all the other sappers in England how to do so. He had not realized Suffolk's responsibility until that point. Such responsibility trained Kip to block out everything else whenever he is working on a bomb, and to realize what a terrible weight rests on him.

Kip figured out the new bomb that night. The second fuse was set to detonate exactly an hour after the first, long after a sapper would have assumed the bomb was safe. Kip wrote out detailed diagrams and explanations of the new bomb, and looking at the problem from another angle, was

able to come up with a method of defusing that would completely change the way bombs were handled in England.

Kip was uncomfortable with the respect his skill earned him among the ranks of men. Because of his race, he was used to being anonymous and invisible in England, and he was comfortable with that. He chose to leave his duty in England and travel on ship with a hundred other sappers to Italy, where he could be comfortable with his invisibility once more. Kip had built up emotional defenses in England, and it was not so easy for him to take them down.

Kip remembers his family at home. His brother had been the one who courted confrontation, who refused to give into anything that implied English domination. Kip's brother was put in prison and remained there for a long time. Though Kip admired his brother, he knew he would be different, as he hated confrontation and searched for effective means around it. Kip would stand still, invisible, until he was allowed to do whatever he wanted. He joined the army in his brother's place. His brother was not upset, and was confident that Kip possessed the trick of survival.

The chapter closes with Kip remembering his sapper test, the time Lord Suffolk watched him as he defused a bomb on the famous chalk horses on the hills of Westbury. Miss Morden had been so nice to him, bringing him refreshments without fear of her own safety. But now she was gone.

Analysis:

Through Kip, Ondaatje further explores the idea of nationality and the quality of being "nationless." The English patient tells Kip that the two of them get along so well because they are both "international bastards"—men born in one place who choose to live in another. Unlike his brother, Kip embraces the western world, and especially the English. He sings Western music, wears Western clothes, and makes it his job to defuse bombs in order to save English lives. Far from being "nationless," Kip has strongly attached himself to the English nation, and knows he could never imagine doing the same job for the Germans.

Much of Kip's goodwill toward the English emerges from his experience with Lord Suffolk and his staff. Suffolk is astute enough to recognize Kip's skill and character, and thus not only trains

him in bomb defusing, but also welcomes him into the "family," even taking him to see *Peter Pan* when he wanted to. Kip is touched by the fact that this "true English gentleman" would look past his race and take him under his wing. It becomes evident that Kip feels closer to his English family than to his Indian one. Though he talks sadly about his mentor Lord Suffolk and his premature demise, he seems relatively nonchalant about the fate of his Indian family. When Hana asks if Kip's father is still alive, he replies as if it is not much concern to him: "Oh, yes. I think. I've not had letters for some time. And it is likely that my brother is still in jail."

Kip's experience highlights the fallacy of being "nationless." Though he is born of a different nation—albeit part of the British empire—Kip finds a nation to which he attaches himself both in nature and in action. Such an understanding of Kip's connection to a nation sheds light on the English patient's connection to his own nation, as the patient himself invites this comparison. The patient has left his European home and joined the nation that is the desert. There, like Kip, he has found his skills were most useful, and feels able to erase his past so that he may be known and valued for what he has to offer the people of his new nation, the desert. Escaping one's nation, then, becomes a larger metaphor for escaping one's past, and creating a new identity: one that is based on personal character.

Chapter VIII highlights the differences between Kip and Caravaggio. Caravaggio, though a thief, is morally and emotionally complex. Far from perfect at his profession, Hana remembers him being "constantly diverted by the human element during burglaries. ...Breaking into a house during Christmas, he would become annoyed if he noticed the Advent calendar had not been opened up to the date to which it should have been." Such a diversion signals fallibility in Caravaggio, and his remarkably human actions give us the sense that even though he is a thief, he may not necessarily be immoral. In contrast, Kip's profession in the army is a noble one. He saves innocent lives every day by defusing bombs, a duty that neutralizes aggression. As a character, however, Kip is not gripped by the same humanizing diversions that occupy Caravaggio. While he is working on a bomb he completely puts aside the human element of his work. He does not give a thought to his feelings or emotions, but only to the task at hand. He repeatedly thinks that he needs either Hardy or Hana to "bring him back to humanity."

This contrast between Kip and Caravaggio emphasizes the nature of humanity in wartime. Because the characters find it is so necessary to protect themselves emotionally, they find it easy to sacrifice humanity. Kip sections off his humanity, seemingly saving it until after the war by placing a wall between himself and everyone else. The English patient also does this throughout the 1930s, refusing to let anyone get close to him in his travels, his affairs, and his friendships. He shares little about his private life, choosing to stick to only the descriptive facts when he writes about the landscape and the geography. This detachment is what makes Katharine's entrance into his life so disruptive to him. She forces humanity and fallibility into his life. In the end, Ondaatje offers no judgment on the characters' varying approaches to the question of humanity, as both Kip and Almasy are left with only the consequences of their decisions.

In the last chapter, Kip makes dinner for Hana's twenty-first birthday, and together they celebrate with Caravaggio, drinking wine and singing. Caravaggio thinks how much he wants Kip and Hana to get married. He wonders how he got in this position.

Hana reflects on Kip. In the tents at night, he has told her all about his home, his family, and India. He has taken her mentally on a tour through his sacred temple, to the tree shrine, into his very favorite places. Hana thinks of her lover as a knight, a warrior saint. She would like to be closer to him, but she knows that his job requires him to separate himself from humanity. In any danger, he creates a space around himself and concentrates. He is able to replace loss quickly, and Hana knows this is part of his nature.

Kip remembers first arriving in Italy in October 1943. The German retreat across Italy had been one of the most terrible retreats in history. They laid mines everywhere, hoping to terrorize the Italian people and the Allies for years. The entire electrical system in Naples had been booby trapped so that the whole city would go up in flames when the electricity was finally turned on again. It was the job of Kip and the other sappers to make sure this did not occur. Naples was evacuated so the only humans left in the town were the twelve sappers. Kip spent the entire night looking for mines and explosives, trying to figure out how an entire electrical system could be bombed. By mid-afternoon he was so tired he could no longer bear it. He lay down to sleep in the back of a church with a statue of an angel above him. At three in the afternoon there was no explosion, but light.

One day in August, Hana sees Kip in the lower field of the villa. She hears him scream an awful sound and sink to his knees in agony, his headphones on. He runs to his tent, grabs his rifle, and charges into the English patient's room. He points the gun at Almásy and says he has just heard that they have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. He blames Almásy, as a representative of the English, for all of the terrible things the west has done to Asia. He knows that they would never have dropped such a bomb on a white country. Almásy entreats Kip to pull the trigger, to help him end his life, but Kip cannot. He puts the gun down, but a wall of silence has been constructed between him and the white people in the villa.

By morning, Kip has removed all vestiges of military insignia from his clothes. He finds an old motorbike behind the villa and drives away on it, refusing to say goodbye to Hana. As Kip leaves, Caravaggio hugs him, saying that he will have to learn now how to miss him. Kip rides on his motorbike toward the south. He plans to ride to the Adriatic and avoid the army as much as he can. As he is riding, he refuses to think of Hana. He skids on a wet bridge and is thrown, by the momentum of his bicycle, off the side of the bridge. He and the motorbike fall through mid-air into the water. His head rises above the water and he gasps in air.

Hana writes a letter to her stepmother, Clara. She has been unable to write to anyone at home since the death of her father, Patrick. She now finds the strength to write to Clara, telling her how her father died, how his men left him after he was burned beyond recognition. Hana mourns the sadness of geography: she, a nurse who knows so much about burns, could not care for her own father because he was far away. But she is comforted by the fact that her father died in a holy place, on a dove-cot, a comforting place built so that doves could be safe.

Years later, Kip thinks of the time he spent with Hana, Caravaggio, and the English patient in a small villa in hills of Italy. He is now a doctor, with a wife and two children, and is permanently busy taking care of his patients. He is happy with his family, whose hands are all brown and who are comfortable in their way of life. Nonetheless, he often thinks of Hana: where she is now, who she is with, what she looks like. She sent him letters for a year, but after receiving no replies, eventually gave up. He thinks of her now, smart and serious, accidentally brushing a glass off a shelf. Kip leans over and catches a fork an inch from the floor, and returns it to the hands of his daughter.

Analysis

The news of the atomic bomb brings the reality of the outside world back into to the sheltered environment of the Italian villa. When Kip hears about the United States' bombing of Hiroshima, he screams, falling to his knees. His pain comes not only from the shattered lives of the Japanese people, but from the shattering of his own ideals. Despite his older brother's anti-western warnings, Kip has put his faith in the west, adjusting to its culture and doing all he can to save it from destruction. He denies, in his own mind, that the west could be as oppressive to Asia as his brother claims. The explosion of the atomic bomb symbolizes the destruction of Kip's entire belief system. The bomb's intrusion on their villa existence highlights the fact that events and realities are not isolated. What happens in Japan touches the very heart of emotions in a small villa in the hills of Italy. Kip responds to the news of the bomb by running away, escaping his life in the villa. He views his running away as a flight from the oppression of the west. Ultimately, however, Hana's suspicion that Kip can so easily move on is confirmed, as he finds himself tied to the life he once led. Kip's emotional tie to Hana transcends time and geography, and transcends even the great realities of nationality.

The novel's characters frequently mention the idea of "dying in a holy place." Katharine dies in a cave, a holy place to the ancient people of the desert. Patrick, Hana's father, also dies in a holy place, a dove-cot, a ledge above a building where doves can be safe from the rats who try to prey on them. Likewise, Madox dies in a holy place, taking his life in a church England. This idea of death in sacred places recurs throughout the work, but the meaning of such places in the novel is complex. "Holy place" does not signify a place that is holy to individual people: Katharine hated the desert, Patrick hated to be alone, and Madox lost his faith in the holiness of the church. The locations of these respective characters' deaths were not special to the characters themselves. However, the figurative idea of a holy place touches on the connection between actual places and states of emotion in the novel. Emotionally, each of these characters died in a "holy place" by remaining in the hearts of people who loved them. In *The English Patient*, geography is transcendent, while it is the sacredness of love that endures.

6 Theme of the film:

Nationality and identity are interconnected in *The English Patient*, functioning together to create a web of inescapable structures that tie the characters to certain places and times despite their best efforts to evade such confinement. Almásy desperately tries to elude the force of nationality, living in the desert where he creates for himself an alternate identity, one in which family and nation are irrelevant. Almásy forges this identity through his character, his work, and his interactions with others. Importantly, he chooses this identity rather than inheriting it. Certain environments in the novel lend credence to the idea that national identity can be erased. The desert and the isolated Italian villa function as such places where national identity is unimportant to one's connection with others. Kip, who becomes enmeshed in the idea of Western society and the welcoming community of the villa's inhabitants, even dismisses his hyperawareness of his own racial identity for a time.

Ultimately, however, the characters cannot escape from the outside reality that, in wartime, national identity is prized above all else. This reality invades Almásy's life in the desert and Kip's life in the Italian villa. Desperate for help, Almásy is locked up merely because his name sounds foreign. His identity follows him even after he is burned beyond recognition, as Caravaggio realizes that the "English" patient is not even English. For Kip, news of the atomic bomb reminds him that, outside the isolated world of the villa, western aggression still exists, crushing Asian people as Kip's brother had warned. National identity is, then, an inescapable part of each of the characters, a larger force over which they have no control.

Healing vs. Denial

One of the more complex themes in *The English Patient* involves the extraordinary emotional baggage that the main characters bring to the start of the novel. When each character arrives at the Italian villa, it seems they are physically and/or emotionally wounded: Hana lost her father in an accident, Caravaggio lost his thumbs at the hands of the German army, Kip lost his mother and his surrogate father, and the English patient lost both the love of his life and his own body. Each character is given the chance to remember his or her story or speak it aloud, and it is the process of shedding light on the dark corners of their respective souls that seems to bring healing to each one of them. However, denial is a constantly threatening force: Hana refuses to admit the villa is unsafe, Kip has yet to come to terms with his race, and the English patient cannot even

acknowledge his own name, because of its entanglement with a separate, politicized identity. The question of how much each character heals and how much each character denies is central to the novel.

Passion vs. Frigidity

In this novel, the union and disunion of characters is often based in their ability to communicate, and their inherent tendencies towards passion or frigidity. Almásy is exceedingly rational and cerebral, and seems completely immune to matters of the heart. Instead, he is concerned with knowledge, with learning in the textbook sense. In Katharine, however, he encounters the opposite - a true firebrand who lives moment to moment wrapped in the flames of passion. Indeed, the two learn from each other: Almásy learns to love, and Katharine begins to become more curious. Their differences, however, are what ultimately undo them: Katharine cannot stand Almásy's coldness, his ability to so clinically separate himself from her in public. The irony, of course, is that it is the passion - the raging furious passion - of her husband Geoffrey that ultimately leads to her death, long after the affair with Almásy has ended. As he recounts the story, Almásy is surprised at how all-consuming passion can be - he can no longer remember all the details of his own politicized role in the world, because all he cares to remember is Katharine and the way she changed him. Hana and Kip struggle with similar issues, in that both have built strong defenses against getting to know people, perhaps because of the deaths of their respective parents. Hana reconnects with life by the end, but we're not quite sure whether Kip does - we know only that he escapes and begins anew.

Drive towards Life vs. Drive towards Death

One of the subtler aspects of *The English Patient* is revealed in the progression of character arcs - in the ability of our protagonists to either reconnect to life and find reasons to live or to embrace death. The English patient, for instance, hangs on to life at the outset, the glimmers of his romance with Katharine so deep in his memory, so fresh on his lips - but by the end of the novel, after recounting the story, he seems ready to die. Indeed, when Kip confronts him with a gun, he asks Kip to shoot him. Hana, meanwhile, begins the novel moving firmly towards death - she is obsessed with it, even, to the point of wanting to stay in the unsafe villa simply to be with her

patient. But as she begins to see what waits for her once she gives up her guilt and leaves him, Hana begins to drift back into the world. The patient, after all, is a substitute for her father - a man who died after being burned. Hana cannot forgive herself for having been so far away when her father died, and thus clings to the patient who represents him. As she learns to forgive herself, she loses her attachment to death and renews her engagement in life.

The Desert

The desert is an inextricable aspect of Ondaatje's novel in that it provides so many dualities for imagery, theme, metaphor - the heat of the day, the cold of the night; the seeming serenity and then the suddenness of storms; the quiet pierced by the racket of war. Remembering his experiences in the desert, it seems like Almasy cannot bring up his memories chronologically. Instead, the desert seems to refract memory. And everywhere is the image of fire - the Bedouin boy dancing in the moonlight, the plane falling out of the sky, the man on fire before he becomes the English patient. It seems almost tamable, but his experiences there suggest the reverse: the volatile desert, able to consume and ravage at will, is always in control.

Loneliness vs. Connection

All of the characters come to the villa without attachment. Hana has nothing in the world but her patient, Kip soon loses his sapper partner, Caravaggio is on the run, Almasy has lost his love. It is crucial, then, to notice how alone these characters are - how they could die in the villa without anyone noticing. Upon reaching the villa, they seem happy in their isolation, but soon enough they begin to connect and to see the threads that they have in common. By the end, even Hana has stopped using the library as a refuge, and instead uses it as a place to playfully prank Caravaggio and Kip.

Surrogate Parents

The characters in *The English Patient* cling to surrogate parents in order to relive and heal from their childhood traumas. Hana lost her father in a terrible accident in which he was burned to death. She was across the world from him and has never forgiven herself for being so far away, and so she chains herself to the similarly burned English patient to make sure that he is given the

chance to end his life in peace. The English patient is clearly a substitute for her father, and the desert a symbol for the physical and emotional vastness between Hana and her dead parent. Kip, meanwhile, has lost his mother, and we see that in Hana's arms, he finds the comfort of a surrogate mother. There is love and lust at first with Hana, but soon it becomes clear that all he needs is the embrace of a woman who he can project as his mother. And just as Almásy made love to Katharine's dead body, now he has Hana revering his dying body, allowing him to die having achieved peace.

Debt

Our protagonists repeatedly seem concerned with what they "owe" others. After Hana stays to help Kip defuse the bomb, Kip is resentful that Hana might now expect something from him - that he owes her for her remaining with him under such dangerous circumstances. On the other hand, Hana feels as if she owes everything to the English patient, and cannot survive elsewhere because she is in debt to him. Kip meanwhile believes Almásy owes him a debt for all the lives that were ruined by Indian subservience to the British. Indeed, Kip believes that Almásy, as a representative of the West, owes him something considerable, and nearly takes his life over it.

Love's Ability to Transcend Time and Place

One theme that emerges in the novel is that love, if it is truly heartfelt, transcends place and time. Hana feels love and connection to her father even though he has died alone, far from her in another theater of war. Almásy desperately maintains his love for Katharine even though he is unable to see her or reach her in the cave. Likewise, Kip, despite leaving Italy to marry in India, never loses his connection to Hana, whom he imagines thirteen years later and halfway across the world. Such love transcends even death, as the characters hold onto their emotions even past the grave. This idea implies a larger message—that time and place themselves are irrelevant to human connection. We see this especially in Almásy's connection to Herodotus, whose writings he follows across time through the desert. Maps and geography become details, mere artificial lines that man imposes on the landscape. It is only the truth in the soul, which transcends time, that matters in the novel.

Bodies

The frequent recurrence of descriptions of bodies in the novel informs and develops its themes of healing, changing, and renewal. The text is replete with body images: Almásy's burned body, Kip's dark and lithe body, Katharine's willowy figure, and so on. Each description provides not only a window into that character's existence; more importantly, it provides a map of that person's history. Almásy remembers the vaccination scar on Katharine's arm and immediately knows her as a child getting a shot in a school gymnasium. Caravaggio looks at Hana's serious face and knows that she looks that way because of the experiences that have shaped her. Understanding the bodies of the different characters is a way to draw maps, to get closer to the experiences which have shaped and been shaped by identity. Bodies thus function as a means of physical connections between characters, tying them to a certain times and places.

Dying in a Holy Place

The characters in the novel frequently mention the idea of "dying in a holy place." Katharine dies in a cave, a holy place to ancient people. Patrick, Hana's father, also dies in a holy place, a dove-cot, a ledge above a building where doves can be safe from predatory rats. Madox dies in a holy place by taking his life in a church in England. This idea recurs throughout the novel, but the meaning of "holy place" is complex. It does not signify a place that is 'holy' to individual people: Katharine hates the desert, Patrick hates to be alone, and Madox loses his faith in the holiness of the church. None of these characters, then, die in a location that is special to them. But the figurative idea of a 'holy place' touches on the connection between actual places and states of emotion in the novel. Emotionally, each of these characters died in a "holy place" by remaining in the hearts of people who love them. In *The English Patient*, geography is transcendent; it is the sacredness of love that endures.

Reading

Reading recurs throughout the novel in various forms and capacities: Hana reads to Almásy to connect with him and try to make him interested in the present life, Katharine reads voraciously to learn all she can about Cairo and the desert, and Almásy consistently reads *The Histories* by Herodotus to guide him in his geographical searches. In each of these instances of reading, the characters use books to inform their own lives and to connect to another place or time. Reading

thus becomes a metaphor for reaching beyond oneself to connect with others. Indeed, it is Katharine's reading of the story in Herodotus that makes Almásy fall in love with her. Books are used to pass secret codes, as in the German spy's copy of *Rebecca*. In their interactions with books, the characters overlay the stories of their own lives onto the tales of the books, constructing multi-dimensional interactions between persons and objects.

Symbols

The Atomic Bomb

The atomic bomb the United States drops on Japan symbolizes the worst fears of western aggression. The characters in the novel try to escape the war and all its horrors by remaining with the English patient in a small Italian villa in the hills. Staying close to the patient, they can immerse themselves in his world of the past rather than face the problems of the present. The atomic bombs rip through this silence of isolation, reawakening the characters, especially Kip, to the reality of the outside world pressing in upon them. The bomb reminds them of the foolishness and power of nation-states and reminds them of the violability of their enclosed environment.

The Italian villa

In Chapter II, Hana reflects to herself that "there seemed little demarcation between house and landscape." Such an organic depiction of the villa is symbolically important to the novel. Straddling the line between house and landscape, building and earth, the villa represents both death and rebirth. War has destroyed the villa, making huge holes in walls and ceilings. But nature has returned to fill these holes, replacing the void with new life. Such an image mirrors the spiritual death and rebirth of the villa's inhabitants, the way they learn to live again after the emotional destruction of war.

7 Questions for practice

Long Answer Questions:

- 1) How is the theme of nationality and nationhood expressed in the novel? Can nationality and ethnicity be transcended?

The idea of national identity is continually questioned in *The English Patient*. One way to answer this question would be to consider some of the characters' different nationalities, and how they respond to their nationality when placed in different situations. Almásy, for example, though Hungarian by birth, is educated in England. His speech and mannerisms are so shaped by his education that many people simply assume he is English. However, Almásy rejects all national identity, choosing to shed "the clothes of his country" in the desert, where nationality does not matter nearly as much as character. In wartime, however, national identity is of utmost importance, and Almásy's casual attitude towards national allegiances lands him in a great deal of trouble. To him, it does not seem wrong or unethical to help a German spy cross a desert—he sees the war as just a silly feud between nations. Despite his beliefs, the realities of the world outside press in on him, finding him even in the desert. Even when Almásy's identity is truly masked by his burns, nationality remained oppressive to him.

Nationality also plays a large role for Kip. Though born and raised in India, Kip chooses to join the British army to fight in World War II. Despite the fact that he puts his life on the line everyday to save English lives, he knows that the British still hold contempt for him because of his race. Most of the time, Kip tries to put this knowledge aside and dismiss the fears of his older brother. When the atomic bomb falls on Japan, however, Kip's worst fears are realized. He returns to India, embracing his nationality and his prescribed path, becoming a doctor in accordance with the custom of his family. In the end, neither Kip nor Almásy are able to transcend their nationality. The outside world presses into their sheltered environments and reinforces the label of national identity despite their efforts to shed it.

- 2) Describe the function of the body in the novel. How is the body used as a larger metaphor for the connection between people?

In *The English Patient* the body represents as a vessel for exploration into relationships between people and the larger issue of identity. The novel is replete with images of the body: Almásy's

burned body, Kip's dark and lithe body, Katharine's willowy figure, and so on. Each description provides not only a window into each character's existence, but, more important, provides a map of that person's history. Almásy remembers the vaccination scar on Katharine's arm and immediately envisions her as a child getting a shot in a school gymnasium. Caravaggio looks at Hana's serious face and knows that she looks that way because of the experiences that have shaped her. Understanding the bodies of the different characters is a means of drawing maps, a way of getting closer to the experiences that have shaped—and been shaped by—identity.

Bodies also function as a means of physical connection between people, tying individuals to certain times and places. When looking at instances of body imagery in the novel, it is important to pay close attention not only to the words used, but also to the reactions and observations of the other characters to the bodies of others.

- 3) How is adultery addressed in the novel? Do the characters feel shame about their adultery? Why or why not?

Though the love affair between Katharine and Almásy is illicit, this illicitness is not the primary focus of their relationship. Passion and obsession overwhelm them, causing them to block out the outside world and its rules of right and wrong. Almásy does sometimes have glimpses of the reality of his actions, and admits that he and Katharine are "sinners in a holy city." Nonetheless, he does not ever show remorse over their deception or betrayal of Geoffrey. Almásy cares only about possessing Katharine, and she alone occupies all his thoughts. Katharine shows a similar lack of regret for hurting her husband. When she finally breaks off the affair with Almásy, she cites the fact that "he won't ever change" and that Geoffrey will go mad. Aside from that admission, however, she does not seem to worry about the consequences of her adulterous liaisons. She, too, is largely overcome and overwhelmed by passion.

The adulterous nature of Almásy and Katharine's affair, then, is merely incidental to the nature of their love. Almásy does mention the fact that while he carries Herodotus—which includes a story of adultery—and sleeps with the wife of another man, Madox carries the famous adultery novel *Anna Karenina* yet remains perfectly faithful to his own wife. However, this observation is merely a note of irony that is added to the story. Such an incidental treatment of adultery reminds

us that *The English Patient* is a product of 1992, not 1945. If the novel were written fifty years earlier, the adulterous nature of the affair would likely have figured as a much larger role. Ultimately, the incidental nature of the adultery sheds light on the form of the novel and on the characters themselves, emphasizing the self-centered nature of their attitude toward the betrayal they commit.

How the impact of war is obvious through the narrative style of the characters?

Caravaggio was changed forever by the way both physically and emotionally. The day his thumbs were cut off was a day he'd never forget; the memories are with him constantly. The wounds themselves would heal but disfigurement would always be there to remind him. Emotionally, he would never be the same.

Discuss about Almasy as a man of the Desert.

Michael Ondaatje has a penchant for blending documentary and fiction, and for maintaining historical accuracy in his representation of time and place. In *The English Patient*, we see this attention to detail primarily in his discussion of the history of the desert. Over the course of the novel, Almasy leads us through this brief history of Western interest in the Libyan desert.

Herodotus was the first to study the desert in *The Histories*, which charted the different types of wind. Herodotus' history of the winds is at once compelling and humorous - he lists wind like the aajej, the winds in southern Morocco, which the local dwellers defended themselves against with knives; the africo, which is so strong, it blows into Rome on occasion; even a wind called the datoo out of Gibraltar, which carries fragrance. The gusto with which Almasy documents each of the winds in Herodotus' history bolsters our sense of his character as an information-gatherer. He is obsessed with facts - knowing, learning, acquiring - not so much out of curiosity, but more because he believes (at least initially) that it is the purpose of life.

After Herodotus, says Almasy, the Western world demonstrated little interest in the desert for hundreds of years. For over 2300 years, there was an "averting of eyes," a yawning chasm of silence. In the 1800s, the desert became popular amongst "river seekers," before finally becoming a center of renewed fascination in the 1920s. This interest manifested largely through

privately funded expeditions that usually ended with prestigious lectures at the Geographical Society in London at Kensington Gore. Indeed, Almasy expresses a desire to map the desert that recalls how modern people wish to climb Everest - for the challenge, because of its novelty, and because it is a grand way to show off. Still, these expeditions required years of preparation, research, and fundraising, and the glamour of the expedition fad didn't disguise the fact that many people died. Eventually the desert lost all glamour when it became a theater of WWII in 1939.

Almasy calls himself a new breed in those WWII years - part of the Desert Europeans, transplanted from Europe to the desert and forced by circumstances to become more familiar with the desert than they even were with their homeland. The desert becomes his new home, and he becomes a master of its elements, its volatility, and its equanimity. After the war, the West again lost interest in the desert. And thus Almasy thinks of himself as a man without a homeland: he forsook his home for war, and war for the desert, and cannot even remember all the political associations of "Almasy" - hence his willingness to disown the name Caravaggio gave him. He thinks of himself only as a man of the desert.

- 4) How does the motif of reading in *The English Patient* inform the novel as whole?
- 5) Describe the role of the desert in the novel. How is this setting intertwined with the themes of the story?

- 6) We do not learn Hana's name until Chapter II, Kip's name until Chapter III, and Almásy's name until Chapter IX. Why might Ondaatje have chosen to withhold the names of the characters? What larger implications does this have regarding the characters' identities?

- 7) Which characters change throughout the course of the novel? Which ones remain static? What does this personal growth or stagnation reveal about the nature of each character?

- 8) Compare Kip to Caravaggio. How do their different emotional reactions to the war emphasize the different types of "humanity" that emerge in wartime?

Short Answer Questions:

- 1) Who saves the English patient from the burning plane??

Ans. The Nomadic Bedouins Who save the English patient from the burning plane?

- 2) Where is the villa that houses Hana and the English patient?

Ans. The villa that houses Hana and the English patient is in the hills outside Florence, Italy

- 3) When does Almásy first take notice of Katharine Clifton?

Ans. Almásy first take notice of Katharine Clifton when When she recites poetry to the group of explorers by the fire.

- 4) What is Kip's job in the British army?

Ans Kip's job is to search for and defusing bombs.

- 5) What does Katharine do that the English Patient cannot bear?

Ans. . She ignores him in public, acting as if she does not know him. This is something which The English patient cannot bear.

6) Who trains Kip in the art of defusing bombs?

Ans. It was Lord Suffolk who trains Kip in the art of defusing bombs.

7) What is Kip's profession at the end of the novel?

Ans. Kip becomes a doctor at the end of the novel.

1. Does *The English Patient* follow a linear story structure? In other words, do events happen chronologically? If not, how would you characterize the structure of the novel?

The English Patient is characterized by a non-linear story structure that follows individual characters for a chapter and incorporates not only their present circumstances, but their past stories as well. Structurally the novel seems resistant to patterns - we're not sure when we'll take a detour with a given character, and chapters do not begin and end with the same character. The book even resists naming a central protagonist.

What is the best explanation for why Katharine Clifton leaves Almasy in the novel and returns to her husband?

Katharine seems furious over the fact that Almasy isn't publicly devastated over their secret affair. She finds him too easily able to compartmentalize - to be able to turn off and on in a way that means he'll never "own" or "be owned."

Why is Hana so drawn to the English patient? Who does he remind her of? Why is she willing to trade her safety for his company?

The English patient reminds Hana of her father, who burned in an explosion when she was halfway across the world. Unable to save him because of their geographical distance, Hana has always blamed herself for his death. She attends to the English patient largely so that she can atone for her perceived sins.

What is Kip's initial reason for coming to the villa? Why does he leave?

: Kip comes to the villa because he hears a piano playing and thinks there might be a pencil bomb in the instrument. He is traveling around Italy, and with his expertise in de-mining, he seeks out unsafe places where he can defuse lurking bombs left from WW II.

If one takes Caravaggio out of the novel, it seems to hold up narratively and in terms of emotional impact. What purpose does he serve in the villa? Why is he brought in as an essential character?

: Caravaggio can be seen in a number of contexts, but the most obvious one is as a surrogate father to Hana whom she rejects. He is also immune to the politics of war - something that connects all these characters. In other words, he serves as a point of contrast.

Why is Caravaggio so determined to reveal the English patient's identity? Does the English patient seem particularly afraid of being found out?

The English patient seems unconcerned with revealing his true identity because he's lost all touch with it, and remembers only his love affair with Katharine as the defining moment of his life. Caravaggio seems determined to reconnect him with his identity in order to prove that he lost his thumbs for a reason.

What is the significance of the moment when Kip catches the fuse box that might explode upon its fall from the shelf?

The novel resonates with the idea of debt and what is "owed." When Kip catches the fuse box, suddenly Caravaggio - who doesn't seem particularly fond of Kip - owes him his life.

Why does Geoffrey Clifton plan the murder-suicide even though the affair between his wife and Almasi is already over?

Geoffrey is deeply embarrassed upon discovering the rumors between his wife and Almasi. The embarrassment is enough to send him into a seething, murderous rage.

What is Kip's relationship to his own skin color? Does he feel inferior or superior to the English?

Kip is sensitive to any form of subservience to the British, so when he discovers that Almasy was involved in British intelligence, he threatens to kill him and flees. He sees the British as the cause for all his latent pain, since they subjugated his race.

Who is Hana ultimately loyal to? The English patient, Caravaggio, or Kip, or someone else?

Hana's loyalty is to the memory of her father. Until she atones for her guilt over not having saved him from the flames of death, she has no intrinsic loyalties to anyone else.

Disgrace

1 Introduction

2 About The Author

3 Summary of the Text

4 Characters of the novel

5 Analysis of the Novel

6 Theme of the Novel

7 Important Questions and Answers

8 Conclusion

1 Introduction:

Disgrace was published by South African writer J.M. Coetzee in 1999 and immediately received both critical and popular acclaim. The novel earned Coetzee an unprecedented second Booker Prize, one of the most prestigious literary prizes for novels written in the English language (he was also awarded the Booker Prize in 1983 for his novel *Life and Times of Michael K*). Coetzee went on to win the Nobel Prize for literature in 2003 for his entire body of literary work. Out of Coetzee's many highly-regarded novels, however, *Disgrace* remains one of his most popular and widely-read works. It even hit the big screen recently in a critically-acclaimed film adaptation starring John Malkovich.

The novel tells us the story of David Lurie, a professor in Cape Town, South Africa, who finds himself in the middle of quite a scandal when he has an affair with a student that goes awry. When David moves out to the country to live with his grown daughter Lucy and wait for the scandal to blow over, he enters an entirely different world. The Eastern Cape is still reeling from the horrors of Apartheid, a system of racial segregation and oppression, which only recently ended (for more information on Apartheid, see our "Setting" section). Thinking that he would leave disgrace and shame behind him in Cape Town, a vicious attack on Lucy's home drives both

father and daughter to the lowest depths imaginable.

As with many of Coetzee's novels, *Disgrace* reveals the troubled relationship between its characters and their native South Africa. In previous works like *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life and Times of Michael K*, and *Age of Iron*, Coetzee renders disturbing visions of South Africa under Apartheid. Unlike these other novels, *Disgrace* takes place after the end of Apartheid; nevertheless, it shows the ways in which the memory of racial and political oppression persists and is very much alive out in the country, pervading characters' attitudes, actions, and relationships.

In *Disgrace* (1999), J.M. Coetzee enters intimately into the mind of a twice-divorced academic, David Lurie, as he wrestles with the impediments that societal standards place on the fulfillment of his sexual desire. Fired from his position in Cape Town because of sexual misconduct with a student, the professor goes to live with his daughter, Lucy. Lurie, a specialist in Romantic literature, is catapulted into a rural South Africa much different from the scenes described in Wordsworth. Crime, poverty, and rape fill the landscape of Salem, and Lurie and his daughter must salvage what they can of their relationship after violence strikes.

As the winner of the Booker prize, *Disgrace* finds a honored place within the genre of post-apartheid literature. While both black and white authors, such as Nadine Gordimer, Alan Paton, and J.M Coetzee himself, played a major role in bringing apartheid to global attention decades earlier, many of these same authors were responsible for bringing global attention to the condition of South Africa *after* apartheid as well. What distinguishes post-apartheid literature from apartheid literature is primarily its thematic focus. Although race is a current throughout these works, post-apartheid literature foregrounds the themes of poverty, crime, bloodshed, homosexuality, and the AIDS epidemic. Although abroad *Disgrace* was applauded for its brutal honesty, South Africa's political realm was not as receptive. The book sparked debate in Parliament. Many members of the ruling party, the African National Congress, felt the book portrayed South Africa in too pessimistic a light.

Disgrace was written after 1995, when the new constitution for South Africa was passed. This constitution gave men and women equal rights. The constitution also gave equal rights regardless

of sexual orientation (a fact very relevant to Lucy in the book). The African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party, was one of the most prominent anti-apartheid movements led by Nelson Mandela. In 1994, Mandela won by a landslide to become the first President of South Africa. Post-apartheid South Africa was by no means idyllic, however. Violence increased significantly in the country. Incidents of car jackings escalated, and many commercial farmers either emigrated or gave up farming because of violence committed against them. From 1989 to 1994 the murder rate doubled, and a young South African woman could be expected to be raped twice in her lifetime on average. The changing landscape encouraged many of the wealthier South Africans, particularly in Johannesburg, to move into gated communities.

Disgrace is unique stylistically because even though it is written by a third person narrator, David Lurie's point of view dominates the story. 'Free indirect discourse' and 'third person limited' are terms that describe this mode of writing. Coetzee's decision to use this technique gives his audience access to not only Lurie's spoken words but also his unspoken thoughts. The reader becomes intimately familiar with Lurie's desires, passions, and discourse.

In fact, Lurie's discourse is distinctively academic in nature. David Lurie is a perpetually thinking character, living more in abstract thought than concrete experience. *Disgrace*'s narrative style grows out of Lurie's studies in literature and language. Throughout the narrative, Coetzee inserts phrases in Afrikaans, Latin, German, Italian, and French into the text. David Lurie references romantic poets such as Byron and Wordsworth or Scarlatti's sonatas, Charles Dickens' novels, or Norman McLaren's films. David Lurie also pays close attention to language even in everyday conversation. Often in the novel, Lurie would linger over a word used by someone else or even himself delving into its context, connotation, or etymology. Lurie's language is just one symptom of his detachment from South African society. In the country, the people of the land (the majority) speak Xhosa, and Lurie's opera and philosophy does not matter. Yet his displacement began even before his exile to Salem, when Lurie, whose academic specialty is Romantic poetry, is reduced to a Communications professor who is allowed one elective course per semester on literature. Lurie is a man of exile. With two divorces behind him, Lurie at the age of fifty-two has not been able to sustain an intimate relationship. The relationships in the novel display this failure of intimacy. For instance, Soraya is a prostitute, Bev Shaw is a one-night stand, and Melanie is simply an average student with whom he does not even share the

same passion for art and literature. Lurie's relationship with his daughter is his last chance to step outside of himself. Yet as violence enters their world, Coetzee leaves us to question whether even this relationship is salvageable.

It is worth noting that Coetzee himself ultimately left South Africa for Australia in 2002, where he became a citizen in 2006 and continues to live and write today. His major works of fiction since then, *Elizabeth Costello*, *Slow Man*, and *Diary of a Bad Year*, have taken place in Australia, though his most recent work, a fictionalized memoir called *Summertime* (2009), largely takes place back in South Africa. To read Coetzee's fiction is to learn a great deal about his own background and ambivalent attitudes toward the country where he spent his youth. As the last work of fiction that Coetzee published prior to leaving South Africa, *Disgrace* not only gives us insight into what life was like for many during a difficult time in his native country, but it also tears into our sympathies and fears on a universal, human level.

Disgrace. That's a pretty loaded word, huh? In our lives, it fits into a lot of situations. Your dad might yell "What a disgrace!" at the TV when someone on his favorite football team misses a pass; your teacher might tell you that your class's behavior in front of your substitute teacher was disgraceful. We've all been there – but so what?

Well, let's think about disgrace on a more personal level. We're not trying to say that we've all done bad things, but we are all familiar with what it's like for something embarrassing or shameful to happen to us – experiences that make us want to crawl into a hole and come out ten years later. Maybe your best friend told that popular kid all about the huge, embarrassing crush you have on him or her. Maybe you studied like crazy for a test but then bombed it. Maybe you played a prank on someone that hurt their feelings more than you meant to. Maybe you forgot your lines during the school play and had two hundred people in the audience look at you like you were stupid. No matter what, everybody goes through moments like these.

So, what in the world does this have to do with a story about a middle-aged South African university professor in the 1990s? Well, nothing and everything. We might not know what it's like to be punished for having an affair with a student, but we know how bad it feels to want to be with someone who doesn't like you back. We might not know what it's like to be the victim of

a violent home invasion, but we do know what it's like to be truly, deeply scared and worried. We don't know what it's like to deal with a daughter who has been brutally hurt, but we do know what it's like to look for the right words to say and come up empty. The characters of *Disgrace* go through some unimaginably tough experiences that most of us haven't been through, but the emotions that they display and the shame that they feel belong to all of us.

2 About The Author:

John Maxwell "J. M." Coetzee is a South African novelist, essayist, linguist, translator and recipient of the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature. He has lived in Australia since 2002. He became an Australian citizen in 2006. He lives in Adelaide, South Australia.

In 2013, Richard Poplak of the Daily Maverick described Coetzee as "inarguably the most celebrated and decorated living English-language author". Before receiving the 2003 Nobel Prize in Literature, Coetzee was awarded the CNA Prize (thrice), the Prix Femina Étranger, The Irish Times International Fiction Prize and the Booker Prize (twice), among other accolades.

Coetzee was born in Cape Town, Cape Province, Union of South Africa, on 9 February 1940 to Afrikaner parents. His father, Zacharias Coetzee, was an occasional lawyer, government employee and sheep farmer, and his mother, Vera Coetzee (born Wehmeyer), a schoolteacher. The family spoke English at home, but Coetzee spoke Afrikaans with other relatives. Coetzee is descended from early Dutch immigrants to South Africa in the 17th century, he also has German and ancestry. His mother's maiden name is German. His maternal great-grandfather was born in Czarnylas, Poland. Coetzee spent most of his early life in Cape Town and in Worcester in Cape Province (modern-day Western Cape) as recounted in his fictionalized memoir, *Boyhood* (1997). The family moved to Worcester when Coetzee was eight after his father lost his government job due to disagreements over the state's apartheid policy. Coetzee attended St. Joseph's College, a Catholic school in the Cape Town suburb of Rondebosch, and later studied mathematics and English at the University of Cape Town, receiving his Bachelor of Arts with Honours in English in 1960 and his Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Mathematics in 1961. Coetzee relocated to the United Kingdom in 1962 and worked as a computer programmer for IBM in London, staying until 1965. In 1963, while working in the UK, he was awarded a Master of Arts degree from the

University of Cape Town for a thesis on the novels of Ford Madox Ford entitled "The Works of Ford Madox Ford with Particular Reference to the Novels" (1963). His experiences in England were later recounted in *Youth* (2002), his second volume of fictionalised memoirs.

Coetzee went to the University of Texas at Austin, in the United States, on the Fulbright Program in 1965. He received a PhD in linguistics there in 1969. His PhD thesis was on computer stylistic analysis of the works of Samuel Beckett and was entitled "The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett: An Essay in Stylistic Analysis" (1968). In 1968, he began teaching English literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo where he stayed until 1971. It was at Buffalo that he started his first novel, *Dusklands*. In 1971, Coetzee sought permanent residence in the United States, but it was denied due to his involvement in anti-Vietnam-War protests. In March 1970, Coetzee had been one of 45 faculty members who occupied the university's Hayes Hall and were subsequently arrested for criminal trespass. He then returned to South Africa to teach English literature at the University of Cape Town. He was promoted to Professor of General Literature in 1983 and was Distinguished Professor of Literature between 1999 and 2001. Upon retiring in 2002, Coetzee relocated to Adelaide, Australia, where he was made an honorary research fellow at the English Department of the University of Adelaide, with his partner, Dorothy Driver, is a fellow academic. He served as professor on the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago until 2003.

One of South Africa's most renowned writers, J.M. Coetzee is known for his portrayal of his native country both during and after apartheid. His postcolonial orientation draws upon myth and allegory as freely as it does realism. Coetzee is further distinguished by his acute awareness of marginalization, his affinity for rural settings, and his unique take on ethno-linguistic identity.

Although Zacharias grew up on a farm in Worchester, a rural Afrikaans community in Cape Town, he took advantage of the educational resources available to him and became a lawyer for the city government while Vera worked as a teacher. The installment of the Nationalist Party in 1948 brought grave consequences for the Coetzee family. Because of his opposition to the legalization of apartheid, Zacharias was dismissed as a government lawyer. At this time, John Maxwell was eight and the family moved back to the Coetzee family farm in Worchester. There, Zacharias farmed sheep and kept books for the local fruit-canning factory. Although the young

boy developed a fond affinity for the farm, it was during his time in Worchester John Michael came to understand what it was like to be marginalized.

Zacharias' family were Afrikaners, people of Dutch South African descent. For the most part, Afrikaners were Protestants belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church and spoke Afrikaans, a Dutch South African dialect. Because of the political dissent between the English and the Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans, the school systems for whites were segregated along linguistic lines. John Michael however did not fit neatly into Afrikaans culture. He attended English-medium classes and claimed to be Catholic. He loved reading English literature and never fully identified with rural Afrikaans children, who he found to be rough, coarse, and poor. Although Afrikaans nationalism was at its height, the people were in the midst of an agricultural depression.

The family moved back to Cape Town in 1951 where Zacharias opened up a law firm, which failed because of Zacharias' inability to manage money. The family became more and more dependent on Vera's humble earnings as a teacher. As a young child, John Maxwell was very close to his mother but had trouble understanding the nuanced racism of South Africa. Coetzee says in his autobiography *Boyhood*, which is written in third person,

John Michael is always trying to make sense of his mother. Jews are exploiters, she says; yet she prefers Jewish doctors because they know what they are doing. Colored people are the salt of the earth, she says, yet she and her sisters are always gossiping about pretend-whites with secret Colored backgrounds. He cannot understand how she can hold so many contradictory beliefs at the same time. Young Coetzee struggled to make sense of his world. On the farm, Coetzee had been told that the Colored laborers belonged on the land their ancestors had inhabited, yet he did not understand their unchanging subservient position. In Cape Town, Coetzee observed how the laws increasingly restricted these people to these low-paying jobs.

For high school, Coetzee attended St. Joseph's and continued to the University of Cape Town, where he received a B.A. in English in 1960 and a B.A. in mathematics in 1961. He worked as a computer programmer in England from 1962 to 1965. While in England, Coetzee completed a thesis on the novelist Ford Maddox Ford and earned his master's from the University of Cape

Town. Coetzee moved to America in pursuit of a Ph.D.; he enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Texas at Austin where he completed a doctoral thesis on Samuel Beckett's English fiction. During his studies, Coetzee came across a 1760 account of explorations into South Africa written by one of his remote ancestors, Jacobus Coetzee. The account later became a seed for his first published work of fiction. In 1968, Coetzee moved to the State University in New York at Buffalo to pursue a job in academia; the campus, meanwhile, was consumed by the Vietnam anti-war movement. Coetzee returned to the University of Cape Town as a professor of literature in 1972 after being refused permanent residence in the United States.

J.M. Coetzee then embarked on a rich literary career. Drawing both from the combination of his experience living in America during Vietnam and from his ancestor's exploration accounts, Coetzee wrote his first novel, *Dusklands* (1974). He followed this with *In the Heart of the Country* (1977) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), in which Coetzee explored the themes of colonialism. In 1983, Coetzee won his first Booker Prize for *The Life and Times of Michael K*, a tale of a simple gardener who is made prisoner in a civil war from which he seeks liberation. The work also received the C.N.A. Literary Award and the Prix Etranger Literary Award. In *Foe* (1986), Coetzee turned to Robinson Crusoe for inspiration, writing the narrative from the perspective of mute Friday, Crusoe's slave whose tongue has been cut out. In 1990, he wrote *Age of Iron*, the story of an old South African woman dying of cancer, and in 1994, *Master of Petersburg*, a fictionalized account of the Russian author Dostoevsky. Coetzee became the first author to receive the esteemed Booker Prize twice with *Disgrace* in 1999. His latest novel is *Slow Man* (2005). Coetzee has received recognition for his non-fiction as well, including *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (1996) and *The Lives of Animals* (1999). In 1997, he also wrote a memoir written in third person, *Boyhood*. In 2003, J.M. Coetzee received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Coetzee met and married his wife, Philippa Jubber, in 1963. While in America, they had son in 1966 and a daughter in 1968. He and his wife divorced in 1980, and they later lost their son in a car accident. Coetzee held several positions at the University of Cape Town from 1972 until 2000 and has been a visiting professor at several prominent universities such as Harvard, John Hopkins, Stanford and the University of Chicago. In 2002, Coetzee emigrated to Australia, where he lives today.

3 Summary of the text:

Disgrace is a story which takes place in Cape Town, South Africa with our narrator telling us that by this point in his life, 52-year-old Professor David Lurie has "solved the problem of sex rather well" (1.1). We learn that he gets his jollies out by visiting a prostitute named Soraya once a week, and that while he fulfills his desires with her, the sex is missing that "wow" factor. In fact, David doesn't feel much passion for anything in his life, from his love life, to his career, to his hobbies – until Melanie steps in, that is. David begins a slightly stalker-ish affair with Melanie, a student in his Romanticism course, who awakens a passionate side of David that he didn't know existed anymore.

Things start to feel a little bit off with her almost immediately, though, and we start to get the vibe that their affair is pretty one-sided. It comes to an end when David finds out that Melanie has filed a complaint against David with the University. After an investigation, David loses his job, his status, and, as the title implies, his dignity. Realizing that there's nothing for him in Cape Town, David opts for a change of scenery. He heads east across the country to the rural town of Salem in the Eastern Cape, where his daughter Lucy lives alone on a smallholding (a small farm that usually supports just one family – this word pops up a lot in the book), growing vegetables to sell at the Saturday market and running a kennel for dogs. David begins a new life there, helping Lucy at the market, assisting Lucy's neighbor Petrus with odd jobs and taking care of the dogs, and volunteering at the Animal Welfare Clinic with Bev Shaw. He also spends time poring over his newest academic project, an opera based on the love affair between the British poet Lord Byron and his mistress Teresa Guiccioli. Things seem to be going just fine for a while, despite David's apparent distaste for the life that Lucy has chosen for herself. Lucy realizes that David would have expected a daughter of his to choose a more prestigious life path rather than, you know, digging around in the dirt all day by choice (rather than by necessity) and hanging out with unrefined, uneducated folks. Still, life in the country goes on without a hitch, and David seems able to adjust to it.

Then one day everything changes. David and Lucy are out and about taking a couple of the dogs for a walk when they run into three strangers – two men and a boy – on the road. Both David and Lucy feel a little sketched out by the encounter but shrug it off and keep walking. When they get

home, they find that all of the dogs in the kennel are barking like crazy. The boy has apparently been taunting them from outside the pen while the two men (whom the narrator calls the tall man and the second man) just seem to be waiting for David and Lucy. The boy tells Lucy that they need to use the phone because the sister of one of the men is having an "accident" – that is to say, a baby.

Lucy tells David to stay outside while she takes the tall man indoors to use the phone. Big mistake. The second man runs in to the house behind them and locks David out. In a total panic, David lets go of the bulldog's leash and commands the dog to go after the boy. Then he kicks down the kitchen door. Apparently untrained in the going-after-bad-guys arts, David falls victim to the intruders almost immediately; he feels someone whack him over the head. He falls down, barely conscious, and feels himself being dragged across the floor. When he comes to, he's locked in the bathroom and wondering what's going on with Lucy. The second man comes in to get the car keys from David and then locks him back in. Meanwhile, he looks out and sees the tall man with a rifle. The tall man starts shooting the dogs one by one, splattering brains and guts all over the place. And if that isn't bad enough, the second man and the boy come back in the bathroom, douse David with alcohol, and set him on fire (luckily just his hair catches ablaze and he extinguishes himself in the toilet). They leave, stealing David's car. David and Lucy are left to deal with everything that just happened. During this whole nightmare, Petrus is nowhere to be found.

Over the coming days and weeks, Lucy falls apart both physically and emotionally, and it's pretty clear that the men raped her. Still, she doesn't want to pursue the crime as a rape – she is only willing to report it as a robbery and assault (on David; not on herself). The relationship between David and Lucy grows increasingly strained, and David turns to Bev for advice over and over again. Petrus comes back and throws a party at his place. David and Lucy attend, and things seem to be going all right until Lucy tells David that the boy is at the party and they have to leave. David gets all worked up and goes to confront the boy. Petrus gets in the middle of their fight, and it becomes pretty obvious that Petrus and the boy know each other pretty well. David says he'll go to the police. Lucy gets upset because she doesn't want David to ruin everything for Petrus, who is just starting to make his way in the world. Instead of making things better, David

just ends up making things worse between himself and Lucy.

David tries to spend time outside of the house to give Lucy some breathing room. He spends more and more time with Bev in the clinic, helping her to put unwanted animals to sleep and taking whatever advice he can get from her. Somehow, in the romantic light of the clinic's surgery room, Bev takes a shine to David and they end up having sex on the floor. Soon after, David gets a call that his car has been found and that arrests have been made in his case. He's pretty psyched – until he finds out it was all a mistake. This experience brings a lot of repressed emotions to the surface, driving Lucy and David's relationship to a breaking point. He realizes he has to leave.

On his way back to Cape Town, David goes to visit Melanie's dad to explain his side of the story. Melanie's dad invites him over for dinner with the whole family. It's awkward. David apologizes for what he put everyone through. David arrives back in Cape Town and finds that his home has been robbed. He tries to start over, but realizes that what he wants to do is to come crawling back to Lucy. A phone conversation with Bev gives him the excuse to do just that: she tells him that there have been "developments" and that he should talk to Lucy.

David goes back to the Eastern Cape only to find out that Lucy is pregnant, and that it's likely that the boy is the father. Also, she's decided to keep the baby, which throws David for a loop. The next time he sees the boy (whose name, we find out, is Pollux), David gives him a good smack in the face. As the novel ends, David is back in the clinic with Bev, once again putting animals to sleep. He picks out his favorite dog from the clinic's shelter and gives it to Bev, saying that he is "giving him up."

4 Characters of the Novel:

David Lurie:

The cool thing about David is that, even though he's not the narrator of the novel per se, we still get to read his thoughts the whole time. David's our protagonist, and sure he makes us groan, but we just spend so much time in his head, watching him watch himself in decline, that we can't help but sort of feel for the guy. When we first meet David, things are kind of humdrum, but

they're pretty much as good as they're going to get. He feels OK in general, but by that we mean he regards his life the way you regard the ham and cheese sandwich on white bread that your mom backed for your lunch today: it's fine, but it's not inspiring or exciting, and you would gladly trade it for something more flavorful. His job has him in a funk, his sex life is sort of lukewarm (and he pays for "eh" sex at that...), he's not getting any younger, and he's not feeling too inspired professionally or personally.

Cue Melanie.

When Melanie enters the picture, things seem to perk up. We even see David feeling young again; he's been out of the game for a long time, and he's not sure as to what's the best way to make the girl swoon. Of course, we see the end coming before David does. While he's lost in post-coital bliss, we see her frowning, looking away, and making excuses not to see him. Sure, we're confused when she comes over to his place unannounced, too, but it seems like David lets his passion get the best of him to the extent that he doesn't see things falling apart until it's too late. We haven't been on the dating market nearly as long as he has, but we could definitely offer him a few pointers, especially when we see his mind in a frenzy trying to figure out how to get Melanie's attention – even while he's lecturing an entire class!

While Melanie brings out the young and vulnerable side of David (including some adolescent insecurities), his colleagues bring out his cocky side. Why does he have to act so smug during his hearing, we want to ask? Why doesn't he suck it up and just say he's sorry? David's caught in a bind here – he doesn't want to admit to something he doesn't actually feel, which is understandable in a way; admitting you did something wrong can make you feel undignified. But unluckily for David, refusing to admit he's wrong slaps him with a different kind of disgrace altogether: he basically loses everything he's worked for. We're not advocating lying, but do you think that insisting to tell the truth was worth it?

So then we go from David in the city to David in the country. Some of the same things plague him as before: he worries about getting older and he continues to daydream about Melanie and her tight little body. But other things start to creep into his mind: what in the world is he doing out in the country? Who are these people? Why are they so poorly dressed? Why do they set

their sights so low?

These problems, of course, are soon overshadowed by much bigger issues after he and Lucy are attacked. How can he talk to her about her rape? How can he look at himself the same way knowing he may have put Melanie through what Lucy went through? Was he a good enough father to Lucy, or will he enter old age having let her down?

By the end of the novel, David puts himself into a real gloom (we're guessing spending all that time helping to put dogs to sleep isn't doing him a whole lot of good emotionally, either – though it does give him a sense of purpose). In the end, David's a guy who tries his best, but he also makes a lot of mistakes along the way. He's stubborn, he's strong-headed, and he sees his importance waning. Like we said, as much as we dislike him sometimes, we've got to feel for him.

Lucy Lurie:

When we first meet Lucy, it's sort of a shock that she's even remotely related to David. In contrast with David's sleek, suave, sophisticated ways – pouring red wine, watching art films, teaching at a university in a major metropolitan area – Lucy is an earthy woman who lives out in the country, works the land for a living, and doesn't pay attention to fashion or body image. We learn that Lucy's home was once a commune, but now she's the only person who hasn't moved away:

[...] now here she is, flowered dress, bare feet and all, in a house full of the smell of baking, no longer a child playing at farming but a solid countrywoman, a boervrou. (7.5)

We don't know about you, but this both strikes us as a little odd and makes us more interested in Lucy – why should she decide to stay on the farm even when her friends (and lover) leave? Lucy never gives us these answers up front, but she keeps our curiosity churning every step of the way through the book.

Lucy's relationships with others, particularly her sexual relationships, are some key components

of her character that are worth paying attention to. Slowly through the course of the novel, we learn that Lucy is a lesbian and that she used to live with a woman named Helen, who has since moved on. Lucy's sexual identity doesn't just tell us about Lucy's views on sex; it also provides a platform upon which David thinks about women and sexuality in general. In some ways, David feels more at ease talking to Lucy about his affair with Melanie because both he and she have experience with women, romantically and sexually. Of course, we learn pretty early on in the novel that Lucy isn't just going to see things from David's side of the coin; her experience as a victim of sexual assault inevitably prods her to see things from Melanie's perspective – or, you might argue, a more universal female perspective – as well.

Lucy's experience as a victim of assault doesn't just change her views on male/female dynamics; it also changes the way she relates to the people in her own life. It seems like David and Lucy are on the verge of developing a closer father/daughter relationship when the unthinkable happens: three intruders viciously attack Lucy and David, and during this attack Lucy is raped.

Lucy's character undergoes a perceptible shift after this event. Despite the obvious trauma she experiences, she is reluctant to seek help from the police. This totally baffles David. She becomes depressed and withdrawn, lying awake all night and falling asleep during the day. She also becomes increasingly irritable and snippy with David. While it doesn't seem that they are ever really that close, before her rape Lucy is at least willing to open up to David about a number of highly personal topics. It seems that, after her rape, though, she closes up. More than that, she almost seems to see David as no better than the men who raped her – didn't he, after all, put another woman through something just like what she's dealing with?

After a good deal of tension and conflict emerges between Lucy and David, Lucy seems to think that David is incapable of offering her a better option than what she already has. In fact, in spite of David's best efforts to persuade her that the country is dangerous and uninhabitable, it's hard to convince her that she should go back to live in a more "civilized" setting with David.

Instead, her rape seems to tie her even more to the land and the people there. Just think about how Lucy's relationship with Petrus changes after Lucy is assaulted. They go from being friendly

neighbors to becoming something like family. The way that Lucy looks out for Petrus and defers to his needs is especially apparent when the boy shows up at Petrus's party: even though Lucy is totally upset to see him there, she also doesn't want to disturb Petrus's big event or mess things up for him by getting the police involved, so she opts for a quiet exit (even though David clearly isn't capable of following suit). When we find out that Lucy is pregnant as a result of her rape, she decides to marry Petrus as a means of protection. We can tell that there isn't much in the way of a personal connection between Petrus and Lucy, but they do coexist in their own unique way. Lucy helps Petrus achieve a higher social status by helping him to acquire land; Petrus supposedly looks after her (though he's notably M.I.A. during her rape) and will look after her child when he or she is born.

By the end of the novel, it seems that she's tied to the country for good. What do you think Lucy's actions say about her? We don't have access to her thoughts, so we only have her actions to go on for clues. Why do you think she decides to stay in the country, and what do you think she wants in the long run?

Petrus:

When we meet Petrus, we seem to be meeting a representative of the countryside. David immediately notices his physical features: "A lined, weathered face; shrewd eyes. Forty? Forty-five?" (7.51). With a face that's lined by the outdoors, it's hard to tell exactly how old he is. Petrus introduces himself to David in terms of his occupation, which is comprised of distinctly rural duties:

"I look after the dogs and I work in the garden. Yes...I am the gardener and the dog-man." He reflects for a moment. "The dog-man," he repeats, savouring the phrase. (7.55)

Yet Petrus doesn't seem to really enjoy being identified as the "dog-man," does he? He seems to repeat it as a mantra that reminds him of who he is, where he is now, and where he wants to go (think of how he later says I am no more the dog-man just as he begins to celebrate the land transfer that will make him a wealthier and more powerful man).

Social status is a topic that comes up frequently in reference to Petrus, and through him we not only see the way that social dynamics shift between characters in the novel, but also throughout their community and country. Even before his stock starts to rise in the novel, Petrus is already pretty well-established, but with Lucy's help, she notes, he'll go far:

"He got a Land Affairs grant earlier this year, enough to buy a hectare and a bit from me. I didn't tell you? The boundary line goes through the dam. We share the dam. Everything from there to the fence is his...By Eastern Cape standards he is a man of substance." (9.16)

Through the land transfer from Lucy, Petrus becomes an example of the changing opportunities for blacks in South Africa after Apartheid. Lucy never comes right out and says why she helps Petrus to get the land, and she also seems embarrassed when Petrus refers to Lucy as his family's benefactor (15.27). David seems uncomfortable with the ensuing shift of power; he thinks that Lucy feels pressured to sacrifice her own interests in order to make up for past injustices in South African history (for more on this, check out "Setting").

In fact, the shift of power dynamics is one of the more important issues in the novel that Petrus helps to illuminate for us. The major power struggle we encounter in the novel is the intrusion of the two men and the boy. Lucy and David are rendered powerless while the intruders are empowered by the way they get away with the crime. Whose voice could be the deciding factor in making things right? Why, Petrus's, of course. Does he do anything with that power? No.

During the scenes that follow Lucy's rape, Petrus seems reluctant to get involved in the conflict – he doesn't even seem to want to offer an opinion as to what happened, which drives David totally up the wall. He turns a blind eye to the fact that Lucy was raped when he talks to David about the invasion; he acts like it was just a simple robbery. His behavior at the party is no different when he chooses not to pursue David's accusation that the boy is wanted by the police; in fact, Petrus basically ignores any pleas that David makes for him to set things right. Of course, we don't know at this point that the boy is Petrus's wife's brother. Regardless, you could argue that the entire course of the novel would be different if Petrus acted differently in response to the rape – or if he had even just been there when Lucy called for him.

On one hand, Petrus's actions (or lack thereof) push the dynamics of power decidedly in favor of the intruders and against Lucy and David. But Petrus's actions aren't just affected by the potential outcomes where power is concerned. We learn that he also has a lot at stake in terms of his own family's well-being. When Petrus protects Pollux, he doesn't just look out for a member of his own race; he also looks out for a member of his own family.

Where does that leave his relationship with Lucy, then? We never really find out how he feels about her on a personal level, but his actions both work against her (when he's anything but helpful after the home invasion) and for her (well, sort of – he offers her protection when he declares he'll marry her). In either case, he serves the needs of the group with which he most identifies, both on a large and small scale. Petrus is one of the most frustrating characters we have to deal with, but he's also one of the most interesting; from him, we learn an unbelievable amount about loyalty, betrayal, and trying to make it in the world.

Melanie Isaacs:

We don't spend a huge chunk of time with Melanie during the course of the novel, but a lot happens in the few chapters during which we get to know her. When we first meet Melanie, she's the cute, fashionable girl taking David's Romantic Poetry course, a drama student who spends her time out of class rehearsing for a comedy called *Sunset at the Globe Salon*. David is instantly taken in by her, and honestly, so are we. She's the kind of girl who seems to have a lot of thoughts crawling around her head but who chooses her words carefully. She cares about literature, especially feminist writers like Alice Walker. She asks informed questions. She's someone we might have an interesting conversation with.

But then we get another version of Melanie: the secretive, sad Melanie who seems to have an approach/avoid relationship with David. She has sex with him even when she says she doesn't want to, making us think that he raped her; but then later she shows up at his apartment unannounced, crying hysterically and asking if she can stay with him. In fact, the Melanie we encounter during her affair with David is complex and, well, a little confusing, too. It almost makes us wish that we could get a sequel written from her perspective just so we could get a

handle on what's going on here.

What happens with Melanie can be kind of hard to figure out. There comes a point where it's pretty clear that she shouldn't be having sex with David, and David seems to know it, too: "Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core" (3.67). Still, since we never hear the story from Melanie's perspective, she leaves a lot of questions open: do we think that Melanie felt violated and decided to press charges against David herself? Did she go slack in bed with him because, as we soon find out, she has a boyfriend and doesn't want to cheat on him? Why does she cry hysterically when she shows up at David's? Is it because she has already filed a complaint and now feels regretful? Or is everything falling apart for her? Melanie is one of the first characters to display feelings of true shame and personal disgrace, and it is also because of his desire of her that David himself becomes disgraced.

Bev Shaw:

We meet Bev Shaw when David goes to the market with Lucy for the first time. Bev unambiguously belongs to the country. In contrast with the women that David's used to meeting in the city, she totally rubs him the wrong way. He can't get over her plain looks:

He has not taken to Bev Shaw, a dumpy, bustling little woman with black freckles, close-cropped wiry hair, and no neck. He does not like women who make no effort to be attractive. (8.52).

In addition to Bev's lackluster looks, she also has a job that strikes David (OK, and us at first, too) as a little strange. She runs the Animal Welfare Clinic on a voluntary basis, taking care of animals who are injured or sick and putting those animals to sleep who are too far gone or just plain unwanted. While this job strikes us as weird at first, though, it reveals a lot about her character. Bev sees herself as the person who guides those who suffer to their rest. While she does this most obviously for animals, it is also worth noting that she starts to play the role of guide for David, too.

One of the most interesting moments of Bev's many interactions with David is when she hits him up for sex. It just blows our minds. Up until this moment, we've seen her as one of the most

morally upright characters of the book – and then she goes and cheats on Bill, her squat but friendly husband? We see a side of her here that we weren't really expecting. Still, it doesn't seem like she expects anything to come of their tryst relationship-wise; it seems that she's filling a need that they both have. And not to be trite, but many facets of Bev's relationship with David are like that. Without him knowing it, she seems to provide just what he needs. In this case, by having sex with David, Bev gives his romantic life a reality check – we see this play out later when he decides to make the heroine of his opera an older woman.

Bev's companionship isn't just physical, though; she also acts as David's confidante and trusted adviser. Sometimes she offers him words of comfort; other times she gets tough and tells him when to back off and mind his own business. When things get tough for Lucy following her rape, for example, Bev isn't afraid to hit him with a dose of Lucy's perspective and to tell him he doesn't understand what's going on. Still, regardless of whether she's being encouragingly optimistic or surprisingly tough, Bev is a constant presence of wisdom and comfort throughout the novel.

Pollux

He is another one of our chief characters who exists solely in the country. The narrator initially presents him as "a boy," which makes him sound innocent enough until we actually see what he is capable of doing. It is pretty clear from the get-go that "the boy" doesn't really have a mind of his own yet; rather, he follows along with what others are doing – and this can be a dangerous quality. The first thing we see him do is taunt and harass the dogs in Lucy's kennel, which causes a stir and sets up the frightening and disturbing attack on Lucy's home. Though he seems uninvolved at first – just the two men are in the house with Lucy – he is present when David gets set on fire. But look at what he's up to: "behind him [David] glimpses the boy in the flowered shirt, eating from a tub of ice cream" (11.93). Even while he assists in a brutal assault, Pollux still acts like a kid.

Pollux never exactly shakes away his childish demeanor. One quality that characterizes Pollux's interactions with others is the highly reactive way in which he tends to respond – sort of like an overgrown toddler. At Petrus's party, for example, Pollux initially acts smug and collected when

David approaches him, but then when Petrus gets involved, he immediately gets whiny and defensive, as though he were afraid of getting into trouble:

"He—this thug—was here before, with his pals. He is one of them. But let him tell you what it is about. Let him tell you why he is wanted by the police."

"It is not true!" shouts the boy. Again he speaks to Petrus, a stream of angry words. (15.106-107)

Later, when David catches Pollux spying on Lucy, he immediately starts wailing on him. Pollux doesn't "man up" and fight back the way his counterparts, the tall man and the second man, might have. Rather, he throws a hissy fit, as if this were a playground fight: "The boy is moaning with pain. Snot is running from his nostrils. 'I will kill you!' he heaves. He seems on the point of crying" (23.12). Lucy immediately runs to break up the fight, and his reaction to her characterizes him even further as a child: "'Come, let us go wash it,' [Lucy] says. The boy sucks in the snot and tears, shakes his head" (23.14). At this moment, it seems inconceivable that Pollux ever could have raped and impregnated Lucy. Doesn't it seem more like Lucy is the mom and Pollux is the little kid? Maybe he's referred to as "the boy" throughout the novel not only because he is visibly youthful, but also because in many ways his actions characterize him as a child – albeit a disturbing, violent one.

Minor Characters:

The Tall Man:

The tall man is one of the three intruders who attack Lucy and David. He is the first one to get into the house under the pretense of having to use the phone. The narrator describes him as being handsome (11.63). We don't see much of him again until he takes the rifle and shoots all the dogs, in one of the most graphic and disturbing scenes of the novel. Unlike Pollux (the boy), the tall man only appears in the attack scene. Nevertheless, he remains an important and unforgettable, if also distressing, figure in the novel

Rosalind:

David's second wife. She acts as a counselor/advice giver to David. She's not afraid to tell him everything just like it is, even if it's something he doesn't want to hear (maybe even especially in those cases).

Bill Shaw

He is Bev's husband. Red-faced, pot-bellied, and pretty much made out to be a simple country guy with simple country ways, Bill is what we call a flat character – that is to say, he's not all that developed in terms of personality or actions. Nevertheless, what we do know about Bill is that he's there for his friends in times of need – even if some friends (we mean David) don't even realize that they were friends to begin with.

Manas Mathabane:

Manas Mathabane is a professor of Religious Studies at Cape Technical University. He is the chair of the investigation into David's relationship with Melanie.

Teresa:

Teresa is the main character of David's opera on Byron. She becomes almost like a character in the novel, though, as a result of the way that David creates a life of her own for her. For more on Teresa, see the analysis of her role in the "Symbolism" section.

Helen:

We never meet Helen in person, but we learn that she is Lucy's former lover. She used to live on the smallholding with Lucy, but now she lives in Johannesburg. We don't know why she's moved on or whether or not things are going to be patched up between her and Lucy. The relationship between Lucy and Helen is one that David is really curious about and, heck, the same thing goes for us

5 Analysis of the Novel:

The narrator introduces us to David Lurie as a fifty-two-year-old divorced man who has "solved the problem of sex rather well." Subtle, right? We learn that, every Thursday at 2pm, David

visits a prostitute named Soraya and they do their thing. The narrator tells us more about David's life: he sort of walks the middle ground. He's happy enough as far as he's concerned; his sex life is okay; his job is okay; he is financially stable – "he lives within his income, within his temperament, within his emotional means" (1.2).

We find out more about David's job. He's a professor at Cape Technical University, which used to be Cape Town University College. He used to be a Professor of Modern Languages (sort of like a literature professor), but they closed down that department, so now he is a professor of Communications. He's offering Romantic Poetry this semester. We learn that David has written three scholarly books, but now he wants to turn things around and write an opera about Byron.

David isn't really that into his job. He considers himself a scholar and only teaches because it helps him make a living. He doesn't make an impression on his students: "they look through him when he speaks, forget his name" (1.20). David thinks about how 90 minutes of sex every week is enough for him – he doesn't see the need for a relationship or to be married, though he's been married twice before. One Saturday morning David sees Soraya walking into a seafood restaurant. Turns out she has two small sons! David feels weird because he hasn't thought about her having a life outside of their Thursday "meetings."

Soraya notices him looking at her through the restaurant window with her sons. Their next hookup is awkward. We learn that David's whole family life has revolved around women. He's had lots of aunts and sisters, he's been married twice, and he has a daughter. He thinks that this female company has made him love women but has also made him a womanizer (1.34).

We find out that David's good looks have gotten him a lot of ladies in the past, but now that he's older he's lost his game. David notices that Soraya is starting to act coldly towards him when they meet. He imagines her talking trash about him behind his back to other prostitutes. One week, Soraya cancels their appointment for the next week and says that she has to go visit her sick mother. David asks if he'll see her the week after. She tells him to phone the agency. It's

pretty clear to him that he's being blown off for good. When he calls the agency, they say that she's left the agency and that they can't put him in touch with her.

They do, however, get him a new girl named Soraya! Except this Soraya is much younger – "no more than eighteen, unpractised, to his mind coarse" (1.47). He sleeps with her but he doesn't have a great time. David notices Dawn, the new secretary in the English department. They go out to lunch and she inadvertently calls him old.

David takes Dawn out again, and they sleep together. She gets really, *really* into it, and this turns him off. When he starts ignoring her at the office, she gets pouty but then snubs him. David thinks giving up sex entirely and muses about castration. David pays a detective to find Soraya and calls her one morning when he figures her family will be gone. She pretends not to know who he is; the chapter ends with David feeling jealous of Soraya's husband.

David feels like nothing exciting happens in his week now that hanky-panky Thursdays are a thing of the past. He spends a lot of time in the library doing research on Byron for the opera he wants to write. One Friday he's walking home and notices Melanie Isaacs, one of the students in his Romantics course. He says hi. We learn that David has a bit of a crush on her. David and Melanie start making small talk, and then he takes a leap and invites her to his apartment for a drink. Melanie hesitates but then agrees. David can't stop staring at her.

At David's place, Melanie checks out his bookshelves while he cracks open a bottle of wine, gets her some cheese and crackers, and puts on some Mozart. He thinks about how this is all a ritual that men go through to seduce women. He wonders whether he will be OK with seeing her in the classroom as just a student after this evening is over. They chat about his class. Melanie says she liked Blake but didn't like Wordsworth, who happens to be David's favorite. David goes on about how the way poetry hits you is like falling in love with someone, and then he gets self-conscious about whether or not he sounds like an old man saying that. They talk about how Melanie used to write poetry, as well as about her favorite authors (Toni Morrison, Adrienne Rich, and Alice Walker).

David offers to make dinner. Melanie agrees with some hesitation and then disappears to go make a phone call. We learn that Melanie is a drama student. She's taking his Romantics class for

a "change of atmosphere" and because she "didn't want to take Shakespeare again" (2. 41). When they eat dinner, we also learn that she has a healthy appetite.

Melanie polishes off her wine, and then David puts on an old movie about dance. He gets the feeling that Melanie isn't really into it. After the movie, Melanie checks out the piano and then notices all of David's books on Byron. He gives her some background on Byron's love scandals (we recommend keeping these tidbits in mind – they'll come back later in the novel). David offers her some liqueur. She says no but lets him pour a shot of whiskey in her coffee. As Melanie drinks her coffee, David strokes her cheek and then asks her to spend the night. She asks him why; he notices that she "does not withdraw, but does not yield either" (2.16). He recites a couple of lines of Shakespeare to sweeten the deal. This backfires.

He awkwardly hugs her. She leaves. On Sunday, David, who realizes he should know better, snoops Melanie's file from the department office and gets all her info. Then he calls her and asks her out for lunch. She is too taken aback to come up with an excuse, so they agree to meet up. He swings by to pick her up, noticing that "her hips are as slim as a twelve-year-old's" (3.11). At lunch she doesn't have an appetite (and she ate so much at dinner last time!), and David asks her if she's worried about their relationship. Melanie says maybe. He assures her he won't let it get out of hand. It begins to rain like crazy. He takes her back to his place and they have sex on the floor. Even though "she is passive throughout," David is so wowed that "he tumbles into blank oblivion" (3.21).

When he wakes up, he notices he's still lying on top of her and she's kind of frowning. She "frees herself" (3.23), goes in the next room, gets dressed, and leaves. The next day, David wakes up feeling awesome. He sends Melanie some carnations. On Tuesday it's still raining and David finds Melanie and gives her a ride home. In the car, he realizes that she is "no more than a child!" but also notes that he's feeling especially horny. David realizes that he doesn't really remember how to be smooth with the ladies. He thinks he sounds more like a parent than a lover. When they get to her place, David asks if he can come in; she says no. He asks when he can see her again; she leaves without answering. On Wednesday, Melanie comes to class. As David lectures, he thinks about her and looks over at her. She seems to be pretending to be really absorbed in her textbook.

David thinks about how it's hard to get his students excited about Wordsworth, and then how it's hard to get Melanie excited about him. All of a sudden he remembers what it was like to put his hands up her sweater. At this moment Melanie looks up and they make weird eye contact. She looks away. Later, David goes to Melanie's play rehearsal, sitting in the dark in the back row of the auditorium. Then he realizes that it's really sketchy that he's there spying on her. He leaves.

The next day David shows up at Melanie's apartment unannounced. He takes her in his arms. She tells him "not now," but he carries her into the bedroom. She doesn't really resist him, but she's definitely not into him either. The narrator notes that she doesn't look at David or kiss him, but she does help him take off all her clothes. After they do the deed, David leaves. He feels awful and sits in his car just staring for a while. He imagines Melanie taking a bath, trying to purify herself from being with him.

The next day is the midterm exam in the Romantics class, but Melanie doesn't show up. David gives her a 70 anyway. After a week of not coming to class, Melanie shows up at David's door on a Sunday at midnight, wearing head-to-toe black clothing. She asks if she can crash at his place. David sets up a bed for her in his daughter's old room. The next morning, David goes into her room and asks Melanie what's wrong – but he almost says, "Tell Daddy what is wrong" (3.82). Melanie asks if she can stay for a while. David manhandles her for a bit and then says yes. Melanie seems to feel better after sleeping, but she still doesn't explain what's up. The chapter ends with David wondering if Melanie is exploiting him.

David and Melanie have sex in David's daughter's bed. She asks him if he often sleeps with his students. He doesn't answer. Then she asks about his divorces. That afternoon, David is in his office when a young man with a goatee, an earring, and dressed from head to toe in black leather – or, as the narrator says, who "looks like trouble" – enters (4.16). He says that Melanie says that David "fucks her" (4.19). He taunts David for a bit and then pushes everything off David's desk. The student leaves the office, telling David, "just wait and see!" (4.26). When David leaves for the day, he finds his car has been vandalized. When the locksmith asks him who did it, David says he has no idea.

Melanie keeps avoiding David. On Monday, Melanie comes to class. The guy in black leather, who the narrator calls "the boyfriend" now, is with her. The class is totally silent because they know something's up. David starts lecturing on Byron and his scandals. He notices that everyone is still not talking, even though they usually at least participate a little bit. He thinks it's because Melanie's boyfriend is making the whole class uncomfortable.

David ends the class early and asks Melanie if he can talk to her in his office. The boyfriend follows them but David tells him to wait outside. David tells Melanie that she has to take a make-up midterm since she skipped the test. She says that she hasn't done any of the reading. David tells her that she just has to take the test – it doesn't matter if she's studied or not. Later when he drives home, David notices a motorcycle whiz by. It's Melanie and her boyfriend. David looks at her legs wrapped around her boyfriend and thinks of how he's been in between them. Melanie doesn't show up for her make-up test. Instead, David gets a note that says she's officially withdrawn from his class. Only an hour later, Melanie's dad calls saying that Melanie wants to drop out of school and asks if David can talk some sense into her because Melanie respects him so much. David thinks about how he's already lost that respect.

David calls Melanie's flat and Melanie's cousin Pauline picks up. She's cold and says that Melanie doesn't want to talk to him. The rest of the week goes badly. Nobody shows up to class except for the suck-ups. David decides that word must have gotten out about his affair with Melanie. Mr. Isaacs shows up in the department office and tells David that what he's done "is not right" (5.21). There are a lot of people around and it's totally obvious that they notice what's going on.

David leaves, but Mr. Isaacs calls after him that he hasn't "heard the last of it" (5.26). The next day David gets a notice that a complaint is being filed against him for victimization and harassment – basically, for taking advantage of and bothering a student. David decides that Melanie wouldn't have done this on her own – it must have been her dad or Pauline. David goes to meet with the committee in charge of addressing Melanie's complaint. When he gets to the Vice-Rector's office, there are three people there: Aram Hakim, Elaine Winter, and Farodia Rasool. We learn that Elaine Winter has never liked David. Elaine tells David that Melanie

admitted to not going to class and skipping the midterm. David says he has no real excuse for giving Melanie a fake grade on her test.

Aram Hakim gives David the blow-by-blow of what to expect as they investigate Melanie's complaint. Farodia Rasool doesn't say much through this whole process. David gets mad because he thinks the committee is treating him like a child. He storms off, but it turns out all the doors are locked from inside so Hakim has to let him out. Hakim walks David to his car in the rain. Hakim tells David that he sympathizes with him. We learn that they are old tennis buddies.

Everyone knows what's up with David and Melanie. People quit talking when he walks into the rooms. Nobody shows up to his class anymore. David meets with a lawyer. The lawyer suggests counseling. Rape Awareness Week starts on campus. Somebody leaves David a note that says, "YOUR DAYS ARE OVER, CASANOVA" on a pamphlet called "WOMEN SPEAK OUT" (5.70). David has dinner with Rosalind, his ex-wife. Lo and behold, she already knows all the dirt on him. He tells her he's thinking of going to visit his daughter Lucy in the country. Rosalind grills him on the details of his affair and then scolds him.

The next day Rosalind calls David to tell him that there's a piece about his scandal in the paper. The chapter begins with David's hearing. David's reaction to the whole thing seems to just be "whatever." He's not nervous but he knows he should be. The committee is made up of Farodia Rasool, Desmond Swarts, and a business professor. They're sort of like a jury. Mathabane is the judge in this situation. There is also a female student observing the proceedings.

We learn that Melanie isn't going to come to David's hearing. She gave the committee her story the day before. David has to answer to two charges. The first is from Melanie. The second is from the registrar because David fudged Melanie's grades. David pleads guilty immediately – in a bored, nonchalant way. The rest of the committee is surprised because nobody expects him to plea anything yet because they still need to hear his side of the story.

David says he pleads guilty to everything Melanie accuses him of in her statement but – get this – he never actually reads her statement. This makes everyone confused. Farodia Rasool tells him that they may need to "protect [David] from [himself]" (6.29), and the business professor asks David if he is prepared to undergo counseling of any sort. The committee takes a break to discuss

what to do with David's plea. David and the student, who we learn is named Ms. Van Wyck, go sit in Hakim's office. It's awkward. David wonders what she thinks of him now that she has met him face-to-face.

They go back into the room where the committee is sitting. The vibes aren't good. Farodia Rasool finally pipes up and says it's hard to take David's answers seriously when he's not taking any of the proceedings seriously. She says that they can't punish David for something if they don't know exactly what he admits to. David snaps back at her. Farodia says that if David's just going through the motions, then he should be severely punished. Even though the committee can't punish David, she says they should recommend that he lose his job at the University. Desmond Swarts speaks for the first time. He asks David if he wants more time to think about things. David notes (out loud) that none of the women are defending him. David starts telling the committee about the time he first ran into Melanie while walking on campus. He tells them that it's Eros's (i.e., Cupid's) fault and that getting with her was an impulse that he couldn't resist.

This story totally rubs Farodia the wrong way. She says that what David did was abuse and that he's using the whole "Eros" bit as an excuse. She thinks he's just pleading guilty but not admitting that he was really wrong. The committee lets David go so they can reach a decision. David gets bombarded, paparazzi-style, by a whole bunch of people. David thinks about how they're just like hunters who are about to kill a beast. David makes the (student newspaper) headlines the next day. The picture of him in the paper is unflattering. Manas Mathabane calls David at home. He tells him he probably won't lose his job, but he'll be required to peace out for a while. All he has to do to keep his job is to publicly apologize. Of course, David refuses to apologize. So Manas tells him that there's nothing left that he can do for David; he'll hear from the higher-ups at the University.

David leaves Cape Town to go stay with his daughter Lucy in Salem. We get a description of the area where she lives. We're not in Kansas anymore (or, we guess, Cape Town). Salem is all dirt roads and stables. We meet Lucy. David hasn't seen her in a year and he almost doesn't recognize her. He notices she's put on a few pounds and is totally becoming a country gal. He is really happy to see her.

We learn that Lucy moved into this country house as part of a commune, but everyone except Lucy and her friend Helen has since moved away. Lucy has turned it into a farm. Then we learn that Helen moved to Johannesburg in April. It seems that Helen and Lucy were more than just pals. David unpacks in Helen's deserted room, and then Lucy shows him around. He notices that she has a LOT of dogs. It turns out she's running a kennel and keeps most of the dogs for a short time.

We meet Katy, a bulldog who was abandoned by her owners. David thinks about how Lucy shows how history is repeating itself in South Africa, but more modestly – meaning that she's sort of like the old white settlers by living off the land, but she's not dominating anyone. David feels good about having a daughter like Lucy who is down-to-earth and sensible. David tells Lucy about his opera. Then he brings up his affair with Melanie, and Lucy lets him know she's already heard a little bit about it from Rosalind. We meet Petrus. He looks like he's about 40 or 45. He introduces himself as the "gardener and the dog-man" (7.55). We learn that Petrus and his wife live in the old stable on Lucy's property. We also learn he has another wife in Adelaide.

David wonders if Lucy will spend her whole life out in the country but hopes it's just a phase. He starts to notice the differences between country ways and city ways. David tells Lucy more about what went down in Cape Town. He gets kind of dramatic. She tells him so. That night all the dogs start barking like crazy. The next morning Lucy tells David he'll get used to it. Lucy and David take Katy and two Dobermans for a walk. They talk more about David's scandal. Turns out that Melanie is from this neck of the woods.

David notices that Lucy has a lot to say about women. This is the first time they've talked about his love life, like, ever. David feels a little weird about it, but he's also like, well, if I don't talk to her, who do I talk to? David asks Lucy if this is the life she wants. She sort of shrugs it off and says "it will do" (8.40). On Saturday, they wake up at 5am in the freezing cold and go to sell vegetables in the farmer's market. Petrus helps them load the car but stays behind.

David thinks about how he used to take care of Lucy, and now she's showing him a world that's totally new to him. Cape Town suddenly feels really far away.

We meet some of the locals: Tante Miems and Oom Koos sell potatoes near them. Then we meet Bev Shaw. She is "dumpy" and has "no neck" (8.52). David isn't into her at all because he doesn't like women who don't try to be attractive.

We learn that Bev Shaw runs the Animal Welfare clinic. Lucy and David go to visit her there. David is grossed out by the animal smells. We meet Bill, Bev's husband, who is "equally squat" (8.55).

Lucy thinks that David is being cocky about being from the city and says she can tell that he wanted her to do something better with her life and that he doesn't like the way her lifestyle reflects on him. David falls asleep watching soccer. Then, when he wakes up, Petrus is sitting next to him drinking beer. Lucy talks to David about adjusting to country life. He doesn't really pay attention. Instead he thinks about how she has nice feet and how he's cared for her as a father.

Then he wonders how Lucy is with her lovers and if it's OK or if it's awkward for him to talk to her about her love life. Lucy tells David he can help take care of the dogs. He can also help Petrus. Lucy also suggests that David help Bev out at the animal clinic. David thinks of Melanie and shudders with delight. Lucy sees him. He sees her see him. David goes to play with Katy and then falls asleep. David and Lucy talk about whether or not dogs have souls.

We learn that it's Bev's job to put dogs to sleep. David apologizes to Lucy for not having been a better dad. Then he agrees to help out at the animal clinic. David shows up at the animal clinic. It smells like pee. David walks into the back room and sees Bev performing dental surgery on a dog. He helps by holding the dog down. The next patient is a goat that was attacked by dogs. Its scrotum is all bloody and has grubs coming out of it. Bev tells the owner they should put it to sleep. The owner says no and takes it away. David spends the rest of the day helping Bev at the clinic. He asks if Bev knows about why he's in Salem; Bev says she only knows that David is in some kind of trouble.

David goes home and listens through the wall to Lucy talking on the phone. He thinks it's Helen and wonders if lesbians make the bed creak when they're doing it. David reads about Byron and thinks about getting old. David and Lucy watch some ducks. Then they have breakfast. Then they go for a walk with the two Dobermans. On their walk, Lucy asks David if he pictures

himself living out here in the country for good. Maybe he can find a job at the local university! David talks about how his career is over. Then he starts thinking about making love to Melanie and remembers all the sounds and smells and sights.

David explains his situation to Lucy by making an analogy to the dog that their old neighbors had. It got punished every time it went after a lady dog. So then it started acting guilty around them. David feels like that dog – he thinks he is being punished for desiring the ladies. We learn from Lucy that Bev is in awe of David because of his fancypants professor ways. Two men and a boy appear on the path. The men walk by and Lucy says she's never seen them before.

When David and Lucy get home, they notice all the dogs are going crazy. The two men and the boy are there waiting for them. The boy is taunting the dogs. Lucy calls for Petrus but he's not there. Lucy asks the men what they want. They say they need to use the phone because one of their sisters is having a baby and they are from a neighborhood with no phones or electricity. Lucy tells David to stay outside. The tall man wants to use the phone. She takes him inside, but then the second man runs in the house, too. David knows something's up. He calls for Lucy but she doesn't answer. He runs to the house but hears the door lock in front of him. He shouts for Petrus but nobody comes. The boy tries to run to the house. David sics the bulldog on him. While the boy is trying to get rid of the bulldog, David kicks down the kitchen door and crawls into the kitchen.

All of a sudden someone hits David over the head and knocks him out, but somehow he can tell he's being dragged across the floor. When he comes to, he's lying on the bathroom floor. He's locked in. He hears all the dogs barking. He calls Lucy's name. David realizes he has to do *something*. He bangs on the door. Then the door opens and knocks him down. It's the second man. He just says, "The keys" (11.82).

The second man threatens to hit David with the bottle he's holding. David says that he can take whatever he wants as long as he leaves Lucy alone. The second man takes the (car) keys and locks David in the bathroom again. The dogs' barking gets louder. He looks out the window and sees the second man carrying Lucy's rifle and a bag of stuff. David realizes that the second man is going to steal his car.

The tall man takes the rifle and starts shooting the dogs. Blood and brains are splattered everywhere. The second man comes back to the bathroom and pours alcohol all over David. Then he sets David on fire. David goes crazy trying to put out the flames. He puts them out with water from the toilet. He gets locked in again. One of his eyes is swollen shut and all of his hair is burned off. He's in pain but all he does is call for Lucy. He can't stop thinking about what must be happening to her. Then he hears the car start. The intruders are leaving. The bathroom door opens. It's Lucy. Her hair is wet and she's wearing a bathrobe. David and Lucy check out what the three intruders did. They killed most of the dogs, except for one that is still breathing. They took a lot of stuff from the house. Lucy keeps shrugging David off.

David thinks about how things like this are happening all over South Africa. They can't call the police because the phone is smashed. They let the air out of the tires in Lucy's car and they stole David's car. Lucy says she'll go get help from Ettinger, who is her neighbor. She tells that if anyone asks what happened, he can only tell them what happened to him – but not what happened to her. David says she's making a mistake. Lucy says she isn't. We meet Ettinger, who says he never goes anywhere without his gun. David wonders if he would have saved Lucy if he had a gun. He decides he probably wouldn't. They start driving. David thinks they are going to the police station but it turns out they're going to the hospital.

David can't stop trembling but he notices that Lucy seems strong and secure. There is only one doctor on duty so they wait for a couple hours. Then he sees the doctor. When he comes out he is surprised to see Bill. He says that Lucy is with Bev at their house. They get back to the Shaws' house. Bev says that Lucy talked to the police. Bev runs a bath for David. Then he tries to sleep. He wakes up and tries to speak to Lucy, but she tells him to go back to bed. The next day, David asks Bev how Lucy is. She makes it seem like it's none of his business.

By now, it's clear that Lucy was raped. David thinks that somehow, raping a lesbian is worse than raping a virgin. David goes to talk to Lucy and notices that she's crying. Lucy tells him they have to go back and clean up and pick up where they left off. David says they shouldn't because it isn't safe. Lucy says they have to go anyway. David realizes that Lucy isn't his little girl anymore (12.62). Before David and Lucy leave Bev's house, Bev fixes up David's bandages. David tries to talk to Bev about what happened to Lucy but Bev tells him he should keep trying to talk to Lucy instead. David is bummed. David realizes that it's his job to take care of Lucy and

the farm. He doesn't feel ready for it. A couple of policemen show up to investigate the scene of the crime. Lucy tells them what happened, but David knows it's her version of the story and not the whole story. He keeps his mouth shut, though. We find out that Katy the bulldog is still alive!

Lucy tells the police that the intruders stole a bunch of stuff, set David on fire, and shot the dogs. She doesn't tell them that she was raped. While she talks she keeps an eye on David, making sure he doesn't pipe up (13.18). Ettinger shows up for a short visit. When he leaves he tells David that it could have been a lot worse – meaning that the three intruders could have taken Lucy away with them. David doesn't know what to say. David asks Lucy why she isn't telling the whole story. She says she has told the whole story. He doesn't go any further with the subject, but he pictures the three intruders feeling awesome that Lucy is too ashamed to get them in trouble. David buries the dogs.

Lucy sets up a bed in the pantry. David knows she's doing this because she can't sleep in the room where she was raped. He gives her his room and tells her he'll sleep in the pantry. But then he decides to sleep in her room to chase out the "ghosts of Lucy's violators" (13.49). While they eat dinner, David encourages Lucy to come clean with the whole story because "there is no shame in being the object of a crime" (13.51). Lucy looks like these words have bothered her and she doesn't say anything. David asks Lucy if she's trying to remind him of "what women undergo at the hands of men" (13.55) – that is, he wonders if Lucy is trying to imply that he hurt Melanie the same way the intruders hurt her.

Lucy says that if it were another time and place she would have gone to the police, but here in South Africa it's her own problem. David disagrees with her. Lucy gets upset. David feels like he's never been so far away from her. Ettinger calls and offers to lend them a gun. David says he'll think about it. David starts repairing the kitchen door. He wonders how to make the house safer.

Petrus comes back with his wife and someone driving his truck. Petrus is wearing a suit that's too small for him. They unload a bunch of stuff, including two sheep. Lucy spends all her time zoning out. David tells Petrus about the robbery. Petrus acts like what happened is in the past. David thinks it's weird that Petrus doesn't act more worried. All Petrus asks is if Lucy will go to the market the next day. Lucy doesn't want to go to the market. David goes. He feels shy about

sitting there all bandaged up. He answers a lot of questions. Turns out that their story has made the papers. Petrus still hasn't explained where he was during the fiasco. David wonders if he knew what was going to happen before it happened. David thinks about how in earlier times he could have fired Petrus. David thinks about Petrus and how he'd like to hear his life story. He thinks about how it wouldn't seem authentic to hear the story in English. David admires Petrus but also distrusts him. He guesses that Petrus wants to take over all of Lucy's land. Later on when he's alone with Petrus, David brings up the invasion again. Petrus treats it like it was only a carjack and not a physical attack on either Lucy or David. David gets worked up because he's not acknowledging what really happened.

David calls Rosalind, just in case the news has gotten all the way to Cape Town. She's not there so he faxes her. Lucy can't eat or sleep. David has nightmares. David starts working on his Byron project again. The two sheep that Petrus brought home are making too much noise. Petrus tells David he's going to slaughter them for a party that he's having on Saturday. David unties the sheep so they can graze. He thinks about how they exist to be slaughtered. Lucy is snippy with David. He tells himself that it's because she's still getting over the attack. David asks Lucy if she's hiding anything from him, like medical test results, because she could have picked up something from "those men." Lucy's all like "What men?" but then she says she's kidding. She doesn't know yet (15.18-27).

David thinks about how the sheep are spending the end of their lives in the worst way possible. He feels weirdly attached to them and thinks about buying them from Petrus but then decides against it. David asks Lucy if he can skip out on Petrus's party without being rude. He says it's because he's disturbed about the sheep. On Saturday they don't run the stall at the farmer's market. David sees a bunch of women all dressed up. They're there to help get things ready. David thinks he can tell the moment they kill the sheep. He wonders if he should mourn. David takes Katy for a walk. We find out that David grew up in Johannesburg. Lucy asks David if he's going to the party. She's dressed up and lookin' good. They go to the party. They're the only white people there. They can't find Petrus. Petrus shows up. He says, "No more dogs. I am no longer the dog-man" (15.69). Lucy gives Petrus's wife a gift – it is a bedspread with an Ashanti design on it. Petrus calls Lucy their benefactor. This rubs David the wrong way.

Petrus's wife is pregnant, so David asks when the baby is due. Petrus says October and that he hopes it's a boy, because girls are "expensive" (15.85). Then he says not Lucy, because Lucy is "as good as a boy. Almost!" (15.88). Lucy is embarrassed and goes to dance. David sits down with a plate of food, including two mutton chops (yup, from *those* sheep). He decides to "eat it and ask for forgiveness afterwards" (15.95). Lucy comes up and asks if they can leave – she saw one of the intruders at the party. She asks David not to make a big deal of it and he's like, "uh, no." Turns out the boy is there. David confronts him. Then Petrus shows up. David asks him if he knows who the boy is. Petrus avoids the question and says he doesn't know what the trouble is.

David says the boy is wanted by the police. The boy screams that it's not true. David says he's lying and that Lucy will back him up. She doesn't. So David says he's going to call the cops. At home, Lucy stops David from calling the cops because it will ruin everything for Petrus. David doesn't know why he should be worried about Petrus if he's not helping them.

Lucy tells David to wait until the next day. David tells her it's nice that she's trying to right the wrongs of the past but if she doesn't stick up for herself, she'll "never be able to hold [her] head up again" (15.121). Lucy gets mad and tells David he doesn't know what happened. She goes to bed. David goes back to the party. Everyone stares at him. He's sort of glad that everyone looks uncomfortable. Petrus shows up at the front door, but not to talk about what happened at the party. Instead he said he's there to lay down some pipes. He asks David to help. While they work, Petrus still doesn't say anything about the boy or what happened at the party. So then of course David brings it up. He asks who the boy is.

Petrus says the boy isn't too happy that David's calling him a thief. David says that if Petrus just gives him the boy's name they can leave everything up to the police. David asks Petrus if the boy is related to him or something. Petrus ignores the question and says that the boy is sixteen and can't be tried as an adult. David's like: that's not the point. Petrus says that everything that happened was a big mistake but that it's all in the past. David goes to see Bev Shaw. He says he would have gone back to Cape Town but he's afraid to leave Lucy alone on the farm and she won't leave it. Bev tells David that he should let Lucy go.

Bev says that, without Petrus, Lucy wouldn't have anything that she has – he got her that space at the market and everything. Bev says that Lucy owes Petrus a lot. Bev also says that David doesn't know what Lucy has been through. David feels like an outsider. David watches TV and works in the garden and thinks about his opera. David works in the Animal Welfare Clinic and helps Bev put dogs to sleep. It really bums him out. Since Bev's in charge of giving the lethal injections, David takes care of dumping their remains. Basically he loads them up in Lucy's truck and takes them to the incinerator at the hospital.

David makes it a point to burn the dogs himself; he doesn't want them to be left around with other trash because it would be a dishonor. He thinks about how he has to do it because nobody else will. Bev and David are cleaning up the clinic. Bev asks him about Cape Town and Melanie. David is like: whoa, nosy. Bev asks David if he regretted his affair at the time. He says no. David thinks Bev was probably pretty cute twenty years ago. He runs his finger over her lips. She sort of kisses his hand. Oh, and it makes her "blush furiously" (17.22). That's all that happens.

The next day Bev calls David and asks him to meet her at the clinic at four. The clinic is closed. David knows that this is a booty call. David thinks about how never in his wildest dreams did he ever think he'd sleep with Bev. They do it on the floor of the clinic. It's pretty clear she's planned everything out ahead of time, from blankets to condoms. After thinking about how chubby Bev is, David remembers Melanie and thinks about how this is what he's come to. David thinks about how Petrus is coming up in the world and how he's outdoing Lucy. He starts wondering about what Lucy's going to do with herself in the future. He pictures her being frumpy and middle-aged.

David goes up to Petrus at the site of Petrus's new house. David asks Petrus if he could look after the farm if he took Lucy to Cape Town for a while. Petrus ends up saying no because it is "too much" (18.21). David gets a phone call from the police. They've found his car and two men have been arrested. David is pumped. David and Lucy go to get the car. David meets Detective-Sergeant Esterhuyse, who says that the two men are out on bail. David tells Esterhuyse that that was a bad move because it'll be almost impossible to find them again. Turns out that the police reported the wrong car and David's car is still missing.

David tells Lucy what happened. She gets upset. David hadn't realized that she wanted anyone to be caught, but Lucy is trying really hard to hold back her tears. David tells Lucy she can either "stay on in a house full of ugly memories and go on brooding on what happened to [her], or [...] put the whole episode behind [her] and start a new chapter elsewhere" (18.56).

Lucy says she can't talk about it anymore. But then Lucy starts talking about how she could feel the intruders' hate when they were raping her. David says it wasn't her that they hated, but a whole history of wrongdoing by white people that they were trying to make up for. Lucy is afraid that the intruders will come back for her. David tells her to move overseas to somewhere like Holland. Lucy tells him he doesn't know what happened. He tells her that she was raped, that she was afraid of being killed, and that she's mad that David didn't save her. This is the first time they've used the word "rape" in front of each other. Lucy says that David can't blame himself.

Lucy is sure that the rapists will come back for her. David tells her there's no way she could or should stay. Lucy talks to David about how, from a guy's perspective, having sex with a woman is kind of like killing her because it's sort of like stabbing her and leaving her. David is startled. They end their conversation. David thinks about rape. Then he thinks about Byron.

David imagines Lucy's rape. He can put himself in the shoes of the rapists but wonders if he has it in him to look at rape from a woman's perspective. David writes Lucy a letter telling her she's making a big mistake. He sticks it under her door. Then Lucy writes back to him saying that she has to stay and that he hasn't been listening to her and isn't the right person to guide her at this time. David and Bev have sex again on the floor of the clinic. Bev asks David about his first wife.

We learn that David's first wife, Evelina, is Lucy's mom. When David and Evelina got divorced, Lucy moved to Holland with her. When Evelina got remarried, Lucy didn't like her stepdad so she came back to South Africa. Bev tells David that she and Bill and Petrus will look after Lucy. David goes to the Isaacs' house to talk to Mr. Isaacs. He's not there, but he meets Melanie's little sister Desiree. She invites him in and doesn't seem to recognize his name when he introduces himself as David Lurie. Desiree tells David that Mr. Isaacs is still at work at the local school. David tells her he'll go catch him there.

We learn that Mr. Isaacs is the middle school principal. He is surprisingly calm when David walks in and reminds Mr. Isaacs of who he is. David tells Mr. Isaacs that he wants to give him his side of the story of what happened between him and Melanie. David tells Mr. Isaacs that Melanie "struck up a fire in [him]" (19.39). He wonders if Mr. Isaacs can relate to that feeling, but gets the vibe that he's more of the churchgoing type. Mr. Isaacs cuts him off. He looks uncomfortable. He asks David why he's there telling him stories.

We learn that Melanie is back in school and involved in the theatre again. Everything seems OK with her, according to Mr. Isaacs. Mr. Isaacs asks David what his plans are now that he isn't working at the University anymore. David talks about Lucy and his Byron project. Mr. Isaacs responds with, "How are the mighty fallen!" (19.48). Ouch. David notices how Mr. Isaacs resembles Melanie. He tries to shake his hand but ends up sort of stroking it instead. Just when David's about to leave, Mr. Isaacs invites him over for dinner with the fam.

David goes to the Isaacs' house. He brings wine but then it's kind of obvious that they're not the drinking type. David remembers getting Melanie liquored up at his place. Desiree seems nervous and awkward, and it's clear to David that her parents have filled her in on who he is and why he's there. David imagines what's going on in Desiree's mind – basically, "Ew, I can't believe my sister did it with this old guy." We meet Mrs. Isaacs. She can't look David in the eye. Neither can Desiree. David tells Mr. Isaacs he should leave. Mr. Isaacs tells him to stick around. David makes small talk about life in the country. He realizes that he's able to make it sound easy and simple even though it's been hard and traumatic.

David and Mr. Isaacs are alone for a moment. David apologizes for what he's put the family and Melanie through. Mr. Isaacs is basically like, "We're all sorry when we get caught." David tells Mr. Isaacs that he [David] has "sunk into a state of disgrace from which it will not be easy to lift [himself]" (19.106) and that living like that is a huge punishment in itself. Mr. Isaacs doesn't really buy it. David goes into one of the bedrooms where Mrs. Isaacs and Desiree are sitting. He gets on his knees in front of them and touches his head to the floor. Then he goes home.

That night, Mr. Isaacs calls David. He wishes him strength for the future. Then he's like, "I hope you're not trying to get us to help you get your job back." Because, according to Mr. Isaacs, God has put David on this path for a reason. David gets back to Cape Town. He's broke. His garden is

a mess. His windows are broken. All his stuff has been stolen – even canned food. There's a dead pigeon in the bathroom. His phone doesn't work. David goes back to the Communications building on campus. Someone named Dr. Otto has taken over his old office. David collects his stuff. David sort of misses life in the country. He calls Lucy. He tells her he can come back when she needs him. She's like, "Nah, that's okay."

David goes to the supermarket. He stands behind Elaine Winter (the chairwoman of his old department) in line. They make small talk. He is relieved when she leaves. David works on his opera. It's hard for him to get excited about it. David starts over on his opera. Instead of being about Byron and his mistress in their youth, he rewrites it to be about Teresa, Byron's lover, after Byron is already dead. Now she's dumpy and middle-aged.

Now David gets really into writing the music and lyrics for his opera. It's all he does. All of a sudden, he writes Byron's daughter, Allegra, into the opera. He hadn't expected to make a character out of her. David and Rosalind meet for coffee. She keeps looking at his gross, misshapen ear. Rosalind says she heard about his "trial" at the University and knocks him for not doing a better job defending himself.

Then Rosalind tells David that she saw Melanie recently. She disses him for throwing his life away over a young girl like her. David gets all hot and bothered by the mention of Melanie. He wonders if it's over. He feels old and regretful. David goes to Melanie's play. He wishes he could get a sign to tell him what to do. He thinks about Melanie naked.

David suddenly remembers a German hitchhiker that he picked up one time and had sex with. He thinks of all the lovers he's had and how they've all changed his life in some way. Then a spitball hits David in the head and he hears someone making hissing noises. It's Ryan, Melanie's boyfriend. David leaves. Ryan follows him into the parking lot. Ryan tells him to "stay with [his] own kind" and that "Melanie will spit in [his] eye if she sees [him]" (21.66-71). David is shocked to hear this. David drives around and finds a hooker. She's clearly either drunk or high. She gives him oral sex in the car. David's like, whoa, I forgot that feeling better can be that easy!

David has been talking to Lucy on the phone. She says things are fine, but David feels like he can hear in her voice that she's not telling the truth. David calls Bev and asks if Lucy is OK. Bev says that there have been "developments" (22.5) and tells him that he should probably talk to

Lucy himself. David calls Lucy, saying he has a job interview in her area (which is a lie). He asks if he can come see her while he's there. David shows up at Lucy's. Things look different. Petrus has built himself a nice big house.

Lucy tells David that she's pregnant. David's like, whoa, I thought you took care of everything. Lucy says that she's not willing to have an abortion. She hints that she's already had an abortion in the past, which startles David. When David asks why she didn't tell him, Lucy says that she didn't want David to make it all about him. She says, "You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life" (22.29).

David thinks about how his family line is going to continue through a child who is the result of his daughter's rape. David finally breaks down and cries. Lucy tells David that the boy is back. We learn that his name is Pollux. It turns out that Pollux is Petrus's wife's brother and, according to Lucy, Petrus has family obligations towards him. The next day David goes to see Petrus, meeting Petrus's wife on the way. She doesn't speak. David confronts Petrus about Pollux. Petrus asks rhetorically if David really expects him to cast Pollux away "because of this thing that happened" (22.64).

David asks Petrus why he lied to him about who Pollux was. Petrus says he has to look after "[his] child" (22.68). He considers Pollux his child because Pollux *is* a child and is one of "his people" (22.70). David thinks about how Lucy is *his* people. Petrus says that when Pollux is older he can marry Lucy. In the meantime, he says he will marry her himself. David is totally dumbfounded. He tells Petrus that Lucy isn't into the idea of marrying a man. Petrus says that, out where they live, a woman has to be married for safety's sake.

David goes back to Lucy's place and talks to her about it. Lucy says she's considering marrying Petrus. She said it's more of a business deal than anything – an alliance for protection, not for love. She figures that, this way, Petrus and his family will also be responsible for Lucy's child. David says that this whole situation is humiliating; Lucy agrees but also says that she's at a new starting point – even if she has no rights or dignity.

David is taking Katy out for a walk when he notices Pollux peering into the bathroom window, taking a peek at Lucy. David runs up and smacks Pollux in the face, calling him a "filthy swine" (23.3). Then Katy jumps on him and bites him. David kicks Pollux. Katy continues biting Pollux

and ripping his shirt. Lucy appears on the scene and gets Katy off of Pollux. Pollux is about to cry and is blowing snot all over the place. He says, "I will kill you!" (23.12).

When Lucy gets up from helping Pollux, her bathrobe opens and Pollux and David both stare at her breasts. As Pollux leaves, he shouts, "We will kill you all!" (23.17). David realizes that Lucy was right – there's something not right about Pollux. Lucy says she can deal with Pollux and his crew, and she can deal with David, but she can't deal with all of them. She says she is willing to sacrifice anything for the sake of peace. David asks if he's part of what she's willing to give up. She's like, "You said it, not me." David says he'll pack his bags.

David thinks about what just happened. He's really pissed. He feels like he should apologize to Lucy but he doesn't think he can. He thinks about Teresa, the character in his opera. David goes to see Bev. They hug awkwardly and he can't believe they were ever naked together. David thinks about Dante's *Inferno*, where angry dead souls gnaw at each other.

Bev tells David that Lucy will be OK as long as Petrus is around. Bev thinks it might be time for David to back off and let Lucy live her own life. David tells Bev if anything else happens to Lucy, he won't be able to deal with it. Then he tells her he can come to help out at the clinic anytime.

David buys a pickup truck for the dead dogs he's going to take to the incinerator. This part includes a really funny exchange where the guy selling the car says he can get someone to put protective rails on the car so the dogs won't jump out, and David is just like "my dogs don't jump" (23.52). David rents an apartment in the area, but ends up spending most of his time in the clinic. He decides to keep on with this new lifestyle until Lucy's baby is born. He thinks about how the local kids probably think he's a nutty old man.

The beginning of the chapter puts us right in the middle of a scene from the opera that David's been writing throughout the book. Teresa is standing at her bedroom window in the dark longing for Byron. The opera is becoming all-consuming for David – except that it doesn't seem to be going anywhere. He hopes he can write something really worthwhile so that other people in the future might study it and that, in the present, Lucy might think a little bit better of him.

We learn about a particular dog living at the clinic that David has become attached to. It's got a bad leg and nobody wants to adopt it. David knows that it's going to have to be put to sleep sooner or later. The dog has sort of chosen David – it sleeps at his feet and even seems to like the sound of the banjo that David is using as part of his opera. David and Lucy go to the market. David asks her about how Petrus is doing. Then he gets serious and asks Lucy if she loves her unborn baby yet. Lucy says no way – but she will some day. She says she's going to do her best to be a good mom and a good person. Then Lucy and David don't see each other for a while.

One day he goes to Lucy's place. Lucy is working in the flower garden. This earthy image makes David think that Lucy is becoming more of a peasant every day. Thinking about Lucy's pregnancy pushes David to think about how he's going to be a grandfather – and then he thinks, what young hotties would want to sleep with a grandfather? (24.41). Lucy finally notices David and invites him in for tea.

On Sunday, David and Bev are back in the clinic, putting dogs and cats to sleep. Finally, there is only one left – the crippled dog that follows David around. David thinks about the dog and how it's inevitable that one day he'll have to put the dog down. David opens the dog's cage, and it follows him out like a good little dog. He picks the dog up. Bev says, "I thought you would save him for another week" (24.63) and asks if David is giving the dog up. The novel ends with David saying, "Yes, I am giving him up."

6 Theme of the Novel:

Animal Treatment

One of David Lurie's greatest transformations in the novel concerns his attitude towards animals. Initially, when he meets Bev Shaw, the owner of the animal shelter, he is repelled; she is not attractive and smells of the animals she works with all day. Reluctantly, he agrees to volunteer at the shelter as his daughter suggests. His experience assisting with the treatment and etherisation of animals changes his perspective. At one time convinced animals have no souls, Lurie is disturbed when two sheep he has become acquainted with are slaughtered for Petrus' party. By the end of the book, Lurie discovers his purpose in life is not to write a famous opera on Byron

or even to be a animal rights advocate. He finds his purpose in the humble task of disposing of the dogs' bodies with dignity.

Fathers and Daughters

David Lurie and Lucy Lurie have a unique father-daughter relationship from the novel's beginning. Even though Lucy was raised in a home of two academics, she has chosen the life of a farmer. Her livelihood comes from the sale of flowers and vegetables and the housing of dogs on her farmland. As a white lesbian woman, she lives by herself in Salem, South Africa. Lurie on the other hand lives in Cape Town. His livelihood comes not from the work of his hands but from the generation of ideas. He has written three books and currently hopes to compose a opera about Byron. The two could not be more different, yet they both find themselves caught in devastation that forever changes their lives. Disgrace unites them. Lurie has been fired from his position as professor because of sexual misconduct with a student. Lucy has been raped by three Africans and must bear the shame and humiliation the crime carries with it in her community.

Race

Disgrace is set in post-apartheid South Africa. Even though apartheid has legally ended, its legacy still haunts the country. Robbery and vandalism frequent the countryside. Rape is a common occurrence. The outrage from a history of oppression and violence cannot be suppressed. J.M. Coetzee brings racial tensions to the forefront of the novel when David Lurie arrives in Salem. His daughter, Lucy, is one of the few white farmers remaining in the region. In the back of her property lives an African named Petrus who helps around the farm tending to the garden and helping with the farm. He is in a subservient position. The racial dynamics become more strained when Petrus is implicated in indirectly facilitating a robbery on her land. He disappears when three men attack and comes back with building supplies to renovate his new house. The division becomes clear when Lurie confronts Petrus. The end of the novel however does not allow for such a clear distinction when Lucy becomes pregnant with one of the robbers' children and thus becomes a part of Petrus' family, though unwillingly.

Rape

Lucy is raped by three men as they rob her house. The rape is a violent, hate-filled act. Although they are strangers, it is described as "personal." Lucy makes the critical decision not to report the rape because to her it is a private matter. She also realizes that in the context of modern South Africa, no true justice will be served. The rape forever changes her relationship with her father. There is now a clear division between men and women. Her father becomes one of them. Her father must stand on the outside as he watches his daughter go through the aftermath of fear and depression, unable to offer any comfort or solace.

Justice

As an ideal, justice is the standard by which one measures guilt and innocence. However in this novel, J.M. Coetzee explores the moral foundation on which justice depends. The university's investigation into the sexual harassment charges filed against Lurie is modeled after the criminal justice system. Throughout the hearing, guilt and confession are inextricably linked. Justice becomes a public act that is driven by guilt and shame. Lucy too finds herself struggling within the justice system. She decides not to report her rape in order to protect her privacy. However even with the charges of theft and robbery reported, justice is never served. The criminals are never prosecuted.

Geriatric Sexuality

At fifty-two, David Lurie is a sexually active man. He has been married twice and currently sleeps with a prostitute to fulfill his needs. The problem comes when Lurie crosses both departmental and generational boundaries and sleeps with his student. As a professor, it is against the University's code of conduct to sleep with a student. When Lurie crosses this boundary, he places the student in a difficult situation. Although she complies, his position of power gives Lurie an unfair advantage. The young student drops out of school and eventually files charges. Lurie is fired and publicly censured for his action when the student's boyfriend commands him to "stick to your own kind."

In *Disgrace*, David rediscovers his role as a father to Lucy both when she welcomes him into her home and when he finds that he has no choice but to take care of her after she's raped. Even though their personal relationship is strained, their familial relationship comes to the surface in a

powerful way. Family is one of the most important means through which the characters of the novel support and protect each other; think also of the way that Petrus protects Pollux and how Mr. Isaacs storms after David in response to his treatment of Melanie.

At times, the violence in *Disgrace* hits you right over the head – we mean, it's hard to ignore it when David gets knocked out and, you know, lit on fire. Then there is the violence we don't see but know happens, like Lucy's rape. We also see extreme violence acted upon the dogs in the kennel when the tall man slaughters them one by one. But then there also actions that are characterized as violence even when the person doing it out doesn't realize that it can be viewed that way; for example, David is stunned to hear the committee refer to his affair with Melanie as an instance of abuse; he certainly hadn't seen it that way. Violence can be intentional or unintentional, but in either case, it permeates this text.

What is it, exactly, that makes a man a man? This is a complex question that lies at the heart of *Disgrace*. On one hand, masculinity can be characterized as one specific side of the gender coin. You've got masculinity and you've got femininity, characteristics of the male and the female. But masculinity isn't just about gender alone; it's also about how gender affects one's actions, identity, and attitudes. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee pushes us to look at some of the more complicated issues that spring from masculinity, particularly through the ways male characters treat women. When Petrus says that he wants his firstborn to be a boy, he explains that boys should show girls the proper way to behave. This shows us an ingrained attitude about masculinity in opposition to femininity. We can look at the three intruders' rape of Lucy as an example of how masculinity can be used as a means of suppressing femininity. In a book that pays close attention to the sexual dynamics between men and women, it's not surprising that questions of gender roles come hurtling to the forefront.

Some of our most important characters in *Disgrace* – Melanie, Lucy, and Bev – play major parts in the text precisely because of what they have to tell us about the experience of women, and they each do so in a distinct way. Melanie is beautiful and youthful, qualities that give her power over men but also make her vulnerable to them. Bev, on the other hand, is plain and getting on in years, but she is wise, motherly, and experienced. Lucy emerges somewhere in the middle; she is strong and forthright. She also brings a different quality to the table in terms of sexuality: she is a

lesbian. As a result, she exists both outside the social pressures of male/female dynamics that affect the other characters, but it also makes it that much more shocking when she is raped by three men.

Everyone suffers in some way in *Disgrace*, and suffering takes place in a number of forms. Multiple examples of physical suffering pop up through the book: the goat with the infected scrotum at the animal clinic bleats in pain (we know, ew); David withstands being knocked out and set on fire; the dogs in the kennel are viciously executed, except for one that just lies there bleeding to death and waiting to die. These are all disturbing examples of physical suffering, but it's also important to think about the role that emotional and mental suffering plays in the novel; it seems that nobody escapes without some serious psychological wounds. While we don't witness Lucy's rape firsthand, we see how it changes her into a mere shadow of her former self who patters around the house and refuses to see people. David's own worries about Lucy constitute a major source of suffering for him. These, of course, are just a couple of examples of how suffering afflicts the mind as much as it does the body.

Hate is a theme that runs throughout the book, sometimes bubbling quietly under the surface, and other times bursting forth with full force. In *Disgrace*, it is not unusual for characters to either feel or outright demonstrate hatred towards others. In some instances, it is restrained – think of the scene in which Mr. Isaacs accosts David at the University, when David secretly wants to throttle Petrus, or when David regards the women of the committee hearing with secret dislike. In other moments, it is overt, like when David tries to beat the stuffing out of Pollux. Hate, however, isn't just something that characters feel toward others; sometimes characters who don't obviously demonstrate feelings of hate feel hated. Lucy is a prime example; she reports feeling hate radiating toward her from the men who rape her, but she doesn't talk about feeling the same way towards them.

David has a complicated relationship with Justice and Judgment. Initially in *Disgrace*, a system of judgment acts upon him – you might even say *against* him – and changes the course of his life. When Melanie files a complaint against David, he has to appear before a committee that judges his actions and punishes him by recommending that he lose his job. However, after moving to the Eastern Cape, the tables turn. Rather than being someone who is punished by a

system of justice and judgments, in the Eastern Cape, David instead has to seek justice on behalf of Lucy. Unfortunately for David, this justice is more elusive than he would hope.

No sooner do we crack open the book and read the first line than we see the word "sex" – and the rest of the book follows suit. You don't need us to tell you that *Disgrace* is chock-full of sex. That said, for all the sex that we encounter, we don't see any starry-eyed, bosom-heaving, passionate lovemaking here – at least, nothing that is mutual and consensual. Instead, we see sex used as a method of domination, as in Lucy's rape; as a way of filling in a void, as in David's pursuit of prostitutes or Bev's invitation to David; and, perhaps most importantly as a source of shame – or, dare we say it, disgrace – as in David's relationship with Melanie and, once again, Lucy's rape.

7 Important Questions and Answers

1) Discuss about the writing style of Disgrace.

If we could only say one thing about J.M. Coetzee, it would be, "dang, that man can *write*." His writing is simple, clean, and straight to the point, but don't be fooled – underneath that straightforward veneer, his words reveal some really complex ideas and emotions. Besides its concision, Coetzee's writing has two trademarks: first of all, like many of Coetzee's novels, *Disgrace* takes place in the present tense, which has the effect of pulling us right into the moment during *every* moment – regardless of whether David is delving inward, merely sitting around thinking his deep, brooding thoughts, or if he is experiencing the outside world in a moment of extreme panic, like realizing that his body is literally being lit on fire. No matter what, we're right there with David from start to finish.

The other quality of Coetzee's writing, both in general and in *Disgrace* specifically, is that it has an extremely learned flavor. Coetzee is a well-educated man, and it shows in every little allusion and reference that he makes. Coetzee's writing exemplifies the amazing amount of content that he has read, researched, and absorbed over the course of his career, both as a scholar and a

writer. With their powers combined, these elements – pithiness, immediacy, and bookishness – make for a unique, thought-provoking, and compulsively readable writing style.

2) Make an analysis of the title of the novel *Disgrace*.

Disgrace. It's not a big word, but it sure is a loaded one when you hear it said, or even when you just see it staring back at you on the cover of a book. We know it doesn't sound too pleasant, but what exactly is it? Well, disgrace is a thing in itself – a loss of reputation or respect – but disgrace can be an action, too: to bring shame on yourself or on somebody else.

The word "disgrace" appears throughout the book and is used in reference to a number of characters, from David (who seems to be an especially big fan of the word...), to Lucy, to the dogs on the farm. David, for one, experiences disgrace in a number of ways. He disgraces Melanie by making her feel ashamed; he also disgraces himself in front of the University community when he loses his job in a public and humiliating way. Lucy doesn't disgrace herself, but she *lives* in disgrace as she copes with the pain and mortification of being raped in a brutal and abusive way. Being victimized leads to disgrace, but being unable to overcome shame just deepens that shame and makes it worse. Even the dogs in this novel live pathetic lives; they are disgraced both by living base, simple lives and by dying in undignified ways. *Disgrace* touches every character of the novel in some way, both through the ways they affect others and through the ways that others affect them.

3) Discuss the plot analysis in *Disgrace*.

Most good stories start with a fundamental list of ingredients: the initial situation, conflict, complication, climax, suspense, denouement, and conclusion. Great writers sometimes shake up the recipe and add some spice. In the initial situation David feels like everything is mediocre and sleeps with a lot of ladies.

We learn a couple of things about David when the novel begins: he's someone who likes to spend time in bed with the ladies, but he also doesn't feel any passion toward them – nor is he particularly attached to any of them. Soraya gets the job done for him in terms of fulfilling his sexual urges, but we also learn that his trysts with her are scheduled precisely for every Thursday at 2pm – seriously, what's sexy or spontaneous about that? The narrator's explanation of David's

sex life further reveals that the rest of his life is sort of ho-hum and passionless. He's OK with his job, but he also has a lot of issues with it; he's content enough, but we don't get the impression that he's really happy.

Conflict

David has an affair with Melanie, who then files an official complaint against him.

David finally finds the passion and excitement that until this point has escaped him when he begins his relationship with Melanie. Finally, he has some mind-blowing sex. For a short while, our pal David is just walking on sunshine – that is, until he realizes that he might be forcing himself on Melanie a little too much. Things start to get heavy; she shows up at his door in tears but never explains what's up. Her boyfriend comes after David. One day he finds out that Melanie has filed an official complaint against him for harassment.

Complication

David loses his job and has to move out to the country to lie low at Lucy's for a while.

After an unsuccessful appearance before the faculty committee that leaves us all slapping our foreheads and groaning, David loses his job and heads out to the rural town of Salem in the Eastern Cape. He starts working with Lucy, Petrus, and Bev and finds that it will take some effort to get used to country life. On a personal level, he starts to feel his age creep up on him. He's not exactly a happy camper.

Climax

Two men and a boy invade Lucy's home, raping Lucy and seriously hurting David.

This is the number one game-changing moment of the novel. Just when David is starting to get used to life in the country, he and Lucy are attacked in a vicious and inhuman way. This is the sort of event from which you never really recover. The events of this scene dictate the direction of the entire remainder of the novel, not only in terms of what happens plot-wise, but also in terms of how the characters relate to one another. David's relationship with Lucy changes forever.

Suspense

David and Lucy go to a party at Petrus's house. They see the boy. David causes a ruckus.

So, let's recap. Lucy and David were attacked and, during said attack, Petrus was nowhere to be found. David thinks this is a little sketchy. Then Petrus comes back and throws a party, and Lucy puts on a happy face for the first time since the attack and drags David to join her at the shindig. As if Petrus's timing weren't a little weird on its own, he's also been downplaying the seriousness of what's happened to them. Then the boy shows up at the party, and Petrus seems not only to know him, but also to defend them. Then Lucy gets upset with David for wanting to get the police involved. This is a major us-versus-them moment in the book, where David isn't sure who to trust and we as readers aren't sure how everything is going to turn out. David leaves the Eastern Cape, goes back to Cape Town, but then returns to Salem.

At this point in the novel, David's relationship with his daughter is pretty much shot and he doesn't know how to salvage it. The more he tries to reach out to her, the worse he makes things. David heads back to the Eastern Cape, stopping by the town of George to see the Isaacs family on the way. He arrives back in Cape Town only to find that there's not really any life there for him anymore – his home has been totally ransacked and someone else has taken over his office. He goes to see Melanie's play, but Ryan accosts him and tells David that Melanie never wants to see him again. Basically, this is the part of the novel where he ties up the loose ends of his old life – everything belonging to his life in Cape Town seems to be a part of the distant past. We don't know if he'll ever return to Cape Town in the future, but for now it seems like that chapter has ended. He wants nothing more than to go crawling back to Lucy and return to the country; he gets the excuse to do so when Bev tells him that there have been "developments."

1. How do different characters in the novel experience disgrace? Is there anyone who is not affected by disgrace in some way?
2. Once someone is in a state of disgrace, can they get out of it?
3. Do you think that David thought his relationship with Melanie was consensual, or do you think he knew he was crossing a line?

4. After thinking about all the different women that David sleeps with during the novel without forming any feelings of attachment towards them, why do you think Melanie had to be the special one? Is it merely because she was young and beautiful? Was it because she was technically off-limits?
5. Why do you think Lucy is resistant to the idea of leaving Salem, even though she feels unsafe there? Why doesn't she want to go to Holland or Cape Town, like David suggests?
6. If you had to give anyone in this novel some advice, who would it be, and what would you tell them?

Short Answer Questions:

- 1) What is the theme of this novel?
Ans. The theme of this novel is pathos and tragedy.
- 2) The image of what emphasize the novel's interests in social status and personal disgrace?
Ans. Dogs are the animals who has been portrayed in this novel.
- 3) Why do things go downhill for David and Melanie?
Ans. Melanie files a complaint with the University. Therefore things go downhill for David and Melaine.
- 4) On what project does David work in Salem?
Ans. David works in an opera which is about Lord Byron and his mistress in Salem.
- 5) Who provides a starting point through which David can explore the themes of love and sex in his opera?
- 6) Who rises from status of dog-man in this novel?
- 7) Whom are David and Lucy surprised to see at Petrus' party?
- 8) What happens when David tries to rescue Lucy?
- 9) What do the men do to David before they leave the house?
- 10) What does David do after the ordeal with Melanie?

8 Conclusion

David stays in Salem, waiting for Lucy's baby to be born; he continues his work with Bev.

David tells Lucy that he's coming through Salem on the way to a "job interview" and asks if he can hang out for just a couple of days. David knows – and we know – that this is a lie. Instead, it's pretty clear that he's starting a new chapter of his life out in the country. David finally gets the chance to slap Pollux silly for impregnating Lucy, but of course this only further alienates him from Lucy. David hopes that things will change with Lucy once the baby arrives. In the meantime, he continues working on his opera – the work that he hopes to leave behind as his personal legacy – and helping Bev out in the clinic. As a symbolic act of self-sacrifice, he brings the dog who has been following him around to Bev, who will put him to sleep.