K.N.GOVERNMENT ARTS COLLEGE FOR WOMEN (A) TNJ

I M.A CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE

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UNIT I

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1.Laure Anne Bosselaar - English Flavours

I love to lick English the way I licked the hard
Round licorice sticks the Belgian nuns gave me for six
Good conduct points on Sundays after mass.

Love it when 'plethora', 'indolence', 'damask',
Or my new word: 'lasciviousness,' stain my tongue,
Thicken my saliva, sweet as those sticks – black

and slick with every lick it took to make daggers
Out of them: sticky spikes I brandished straight up
To the ebony crucifix in the dorm, with the pride

of a child more often punished than praised.
'Amuck,' 'awkward,' or 'knuckles,' have jaw-
Breaker flavors; there's honey in 'hunter's moon,'

hot pepper in 'hunk,' and 'mellifluous' has aromas
Of almonds and milk. Those tastes of recompense
Still bitter-sweet today as I roll, bend and shape

English in my mouth, repeating its syllables
Like acts of contrition, then sticking out my new tongue –
Flavored and sharp – to the ambiguities of meaning.

About the author Laure-Anne Bosselaar

Laure-Anne Bosselaar grew up in Belgium where she worked for Belgian and Luxembourg Radio and Television. She is the author of Artémis, a collection of French poems, published in Belgium. She taught poetry workshops for the writers in the school program in colarado. She is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize, and her poems have appeared in Ploughshares, Ohio Review, Harvard Review, AGNI, Georgia Review, Orion, and The Washington Post as well as in textbooks.

Her first collection in English, The Hour Between Dog and Wolf, was published by BOA Editions. This book was a finalist for the Walt Whitman Award, the National Poetry Series, the Ohio State University Prize, and the Nicholas Roerich Prize. Her second book, Small Gods of Grief, won the Isabella Gardner Prize for Poetry in 2001, and her third poetry collection, A New Hunger, was selected as the American Library Association's Notable Book.

She taught a graduate poetry workshop at the Sarah Lawrence College MFA Program, was one of the founding faculty at the Stonecoast Low Residency MFA for Writers, has taught poetry workshops at the Sarah Lawrence Seminars for writers in Georgia.

With Kurt Brown, Bosselaar co-edited Night Out: Poems about Hotels, Motels, Restaurants and Bars, and edited Outsiders: Poems about Rebels, Exiles and Renegades as well as Urban Nature: Poems about Wildlife in the City, all with Milkweed Editions. Laure-Anne Bosselaar lives in Santa Barbara, CA

About the poem

Laura though she was fluent in four languages the poem English Flavours, shows her love for English language and how she has mastered the language.

Summary

In this poem the poet speaks about her love for English language. She finds the language very complex and compares it to the licorice sticks served by the Belgium nuns given as a token of appreciation for good conduct after the Sunday mass. She makes use of metaphors licorice sticks to express her love and taste for English language. With Words like, **plethora', 'indolence', 'damask' and** with the new word **lasciviousness** the poet loves to stain her tongue. These words thicken her saliva like those licorice sticks do with every lick.

The poet choose to brandish the new words learnt by her with pride in the dormitory. Laura adds that words like **Amuck,' 'awkward,' or 'knuckles,' are jaw breaking .**She also writes about

sweetness of honey in “hunters moon”, spicy peppers in the word of “hunk”, and word like “mellifluous” gathers aromas of almonds and milk.

The way by which she rolled, bend and shaped the English in her mouth and thereby practised every syllable by repetition reflects her ardent love, and passion for her language .

Thus the poet express her bash and unlashing love for English language.

Answer the following:

1. What did the Belgian nuns give the poet?
2. Why was the licorice given to the poet?
3. Write a note on the metaphor employed by the poet.
4. Write down the words loved by the poet to stain her tongue.
5. What did the poet choose to do with the new words learnt by her in the dormitory?
6. How did she practice words of jaw breaking flavors?

2. David John - Stone Shadows

For an entire year she dressed in all the shades
Of ash — the gray of old paper; the deeper,
Almost auburn ash of pencil boxes; the dark, nearly

Black marl of oak beds pulled from burning houses.
That year, even her hair itself was woven
With an ashen white, just single threads here & there.

Yet the effect at last was of a woman
Constructed entirely of evening shadows . . . walking
Toward you out of an antique ink-&-pearl snapshot.

Still, it was exactly the kind of sadness
I could understand, & even love; & so, I spent hours
Walking the back streets of Trastevere looking in the most

Forbidding & derelict shops for some element of ash
She’d never seen before. It may seem odd to you, now,
But this was the single ambition of my life. Finally.

I had to give it up; I'd failed. She knew them all. So,
To celebrate our few months together, I gave her
Before we parted one night a necklace with a huge fake

Ruby. She slipped it immediately over her head, & its knuckle
Of red glass caught the light reflecting off the thin candles
Rising by the bed. On her naked breasts it looked exactly

Like an unworldly, burgundy coal.

About the poet

David St. John was born in Fresno, California, on July 24, 1949. He received his BA in 1974 from California State University, Fresno, and an MFA from the University of Iowa. His many books of poetry include *The Last Troubadour* (Ecco, 2017); *The Window* (Arctos Press, 2014); *The Auroras* (HarperCollins, 2012); *The Face: A Novella in Verse* (HarperPerennial, 2005); *Prism* (2002); *The Red Leaves of Night* (HarperCollins, 1999); and *Study for the World's Body: New and Selected Poems* (1994), which was nominated for the National Book Award.

St. John is the recipient of many honors and awards, including both the Award in Literature and the Prix de Rome Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Discovery/*The Nation* Prize, the George Drury Smith Award from the Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Foundation, and the O. B. Hardison Prize from the Folger Shakespeare Library. He has also received several National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2016 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets in 2017.

St. John currently teaches in the PhD Program in Creative Writing and Literature and is the Chair of English at the University of Southern California. He lives in Venice Beach, California.

David is such a prolific writer that the poet Robert Hass says of St. John's writing:

> "It's not just gorgeous, it is go-for-broke gorgeous. It is made out of sentences, sweeping through and across the meticulous verse stanzas that could have been written, for their velvet and intricate suavity, by Henry James."

Summary of the poem

In this poem David st. John picturises his love for a woman and the pains inflicted upon him is well portrayed. The memory of the beloved always haunts him.

The poet is nostalgic about a woman who is dressed in the shades of grey that resembled the colours of dull old paper, pencil box, and oak beds that were pulled out of burning houses. He also says that she was not dressed in grey but her hair has also turned ashen white.

The grey colour affects the mind and body of the poet by causing unsettling feelings. Since the poet was haunted with love for the lady the poet associates the colour with feelings of sadness and depression.

The poet recollects the woman who could be his from the shadows of his memory. Like the shadows, the memory of the poet is long valuable that it is inseparable from his life.

The poet spends long hours by walking in the back streets of Trastevere in order to relieve the past. This habit of walking was the sole ambition of life earlier but now at a better stage of life he had to quit this compulsive obsession.

Before his parting he has presented a beautiful ruby necklace which resembled burgundy coal.

Answer the following:

1. What shades of grey did the woman get dressed up for the entire year?
2. What was the effect of the woman dressed in grey on the poet?
3. How did the poet attempt to understand the sadness inflicted on him?
4. What was the single ambition of the poet?
5. What did the poet do to celebrate his love?

3. Peter Cooley - Another of Happiness

It’s not that we’re not dying.
Everything is dying.
We hear these rumors of the planet’s end
none of us will be around to watch.

It’s not that we’re not ugly.
We’re ugly.
Look at your feet, now that your shoes are off.
You could be a duck,

no, duck-billed platypus,
your feet distraction from your ugly nose.
It’s not that we’re not traveling,
we’re traveling.

But it’s not the broadback Mediterranean
carrying us against the world’s current.
It’s the imagined sea, imagined street,
the winged breakers, the waters we confuse with sky

Willingly, so someone out there asks
are you flying or swimming?
That someone envies mortal happiness
like everyone on the other side, the dead

who stand in watch, who would give up their bliss,
their low tide eternity rippleless
for one day back here, alive again with us.
They know the sea and sky I’m walking on

or swimming, flying, they know it’s none of these,
this dancing-standing-still, this turning, turning,
these constant transformations of the wind
I can bring down by singing to myself,

the newborn mornings, these continuals—

About the author Peter Cooley

Poet and Editor Peter Cooley was born and raised in Detroit. He earned a BA at Shimer College, an MA at the University of Chicago, and a PhD at the University of Iowa. He is the author of numerous poetry collections, including *Divine Margins* (2009), *A Place Made of Starlight* (2003), and *The Astonished Hours* (1992).

Cooley served as poetry editor for the *North American Review* from 1970 to 2000. He has taught at Tulane University and the University of Wisconsin. He lives in New Orleans. Peter Cooley is the author of *Night Bus to the Afterlife* (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2014), *Divine Margins* (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2009), and *A Place Made of Starlight* (Carnegie Mellon

University Press, 2003). He is a Senior Mellon Professor in the Humanities and director of creative writing at Tulane University and lives in New Orleans.

About This Poem

The poet emphasizes through the poem that we have made a mess of planet earth, conceiving of the present and future situation in image and metaphor, may be the first step toward the possibility of change in rethinking.

Summary

The poet starts with a generalised statement that everything in this world is subject to extinction and death. The poet uses It's not that we're not as a mode of repetition in order to emphasise his statement. The poet uses enforcement on the line. We hear these rumours of the planet's end indicating that the death of the planet will seldom be witnessed by the mortal human beings.

When we look at our feet without shoes it would make us remind of the ducks or duck-billed platypus. Thus ugliness is evident with the removal of ones shoes. The poet reflects path of distraction and transgression on the part of an individual. The poet uses the metaphor web-footed due to depression of human mind

The author brings us to the concept of travel. Here the poet does not head to the countries around the Mediterranean Sea but refers to the travel of the soul after death, the place of travel cannot be imagined. The change in travel is not clear travel by flight of sea. The place of travel lies within the domain of the mortal imagination. The dead envy the mortal happiness of those who live in the earth.

The dead are willing to exchange their eternal life for a day. The change that takes place is cyclical and constant. Everything in this world is subject to change and transform.

1. Who envies mortal happiness?
2. What is the rumour that move 'us' will be around to watch?
3. What is the travel referred to by the poet?
4. What do the dead want to exchange for their days stay in the earth?

4. Reverie, with Fries by Marilyn L. Taylor (NON DETAILED)

Straight-spined girl—yes, you of the glinting earrings,
amber skin and sinuous hair: what happened?
You've no business lunching with sticky children

here at McDonald's.
Are they yours? How old were you when you had them?
You are far too dazzling to be their mother,
though I hear them spluttering Mommy Mommy
over the Muzak.

Do you plan to squander your precious twenties
wiping ketchup dripping from little fingers,
drowning your ennui in a Dr. Pepper
from the dispenser?

Were I you for one schizophrenic moment,
I'd display my pulchritude with a graceful

yet dismissive wave to the gathered burghers
feeding their faces—

find myself a job as a super-model,
get me to those Peloponnesian beaches
where I'd preen all day with a jug of ouzo
in my bikini.

Would I miss the gummy suburban vinyl,
hanker for the Happiest Meal on Main Street?
—Wouldn't one spectacular shrug suffice for
begging the question?

About the poet

Marilyn L. Taylor (born October 2, 1939) is an American poet with six published collections of poems. Taylor's poems have also appeared in a number of anthologies and journals, including *The American Scholar*, *Able Muse*, *Measure*, *Smartish Pace*, *The Formalist*, and *Poetry* magazine's 90th Anniversary Anthology. Her second full-length collection, *Subject to Change* (David Robert Books, 2004), was nominated for the Poets' Prize.

She served as the city of Milwaukee's Poet Laureate in 2004 and 2005, and was appointed Poet Laureate of the state of Wisconsin for 2009 and 2010. She also served for five years as a contributing editor for *The Writer* Magazine. A retired Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, she taught poetry and poetics for the Department of English and later for the Honors College. She currently lives in Madison, Wisconsin, where she presents readings and facilitates workshops throughout Wisconsin and beyond.

5. Leaves ---Lisa Zaran (NON DETAILED)

I went looking for God

But I found you instead.

Bad muck and destiny

You decide.

Buried in the muck,

The soot of the city,

Sorrow for an appetite,

Devil on your left shoulder

Angel on your right.

You, with your thorny rhythms

And tragic, midnight melodies.

My heart never tried suicide before.

About the poet

Lisa Zaran (born Lisa Marie Hoie, September 26,1969) is an American poet, essayist, author and artist. Best known for her poetry collection, the sometimes girl, which was published in 2004 by Inner Circle .

Zaran spent much of her youth reading poetry and listening to music through her older brothers closed bedroom door. The major poetic influence in her young life was James Whitcomb Riley, Thoreau, Walt Whitman and the Bible. Musical influences included The Beatles, Bob Dylan, Mozart and Luciano Pavaratti. She penned her first poem entitled Halway at the age of six. Throughout high school Zaran contributed pieces to her local high school paper with the author listed as anonymous .. Zaran began to write 'the sometimes girl' in the early years of her marriage. The collection is most noted for its ability to say the right thing for all times. Soon after the publication of 'the sometimes girl' in 2004, Zaran emerged as a poet who allowed an infinite access to the core of her existence with such noteworthy works as 'Talking To My Father Whose Ashes Sit In A Closet And Listen', 'Girl', 'Leaves', and'Tenderness'.Zaran went on to publish You Have A Lovely Heart (Little Poem Press,2004) , a chapbook which explores the beautiful and richly detailed Southwestern landscapeofArizona.
In 2005 she released a 22 poem collection online at Argonauts' Boat, almost as a prelude into her next full collection entitled The Blondes Lay Content (2006, Lulu Press) .

Another chapbook was published as well in 2006, Subtraction Flower, which she dedicates to her mother. Zaran's work continues to appear in magazines, journals, magazines and anthologies worldwide.

Her poetry appeals to young and old alike but it is through the young that she has won her largest fan base. Over twenty schools, K-12 and college level students, have studied her work and prepared essays, academic papers, debates and contests.

Zaran continues to write as well as speak at poetry festivals. In January 2007 she founded a poetry journal, Contemporary American Voices, whose goal is to encourage and carry out through publishing the art of poetry.

Summary of the poem

The speaker of the poem went looking for God or a dream person. However she didn't find what she wanted and it wasn't what she expected. But she thinks it is bad luck or maybe destiny or fate but she lets the person choose what they think happened.

The people in the city are two faced. The speaker has good decisions and bad decisions with the devil and angel. People don’t see the inner side of the city beneath the muck, like the secrets and baggage it has to make it dirty and nasty.

The poet also says that the person who she found has thorny rhymes which means they are hurtful rhythms. Also when she says a tragic and midnight melodies, it exemplifies that she has bad lullabies with bad dreams that makes her unable to fall asleep because of them. The rhymes haunt her in her sleep.

The speaker says her heart never tried to commit suicide before. She doesn’t want to do this anymore, the heart doesn’t like the guy .Her heart is failing and must be dying for the right person who she was looking for. (God)

UNIT II - PROSE

Clarence W.Wachner - The Early Years of American Literature

Early American Literature examines the cultures and literatures of the Americas from the colonial period through the early national period of the United States (ca. 1820). Beginning with Native American expressions and oral traditions, it ranges widely across the Americas, from Francophone writings in the north to Ibero-American literature in the south. Interdisciplinary in its origins, early American literature fosters close ties with other departments, including history, religious studies, and romance languages, in order to find the best methodological approaches for grappling with writings that often sit uneasily in any particular genre. The particular strengths at Washington University lie in African American literary traditions, Puritanism, transatlantic sentimentalism, and the role of religion in shaping literature and culture.

Like other national literatures, American literature was shaped by the history of the country that produced it. For almost a century and a half, America was merely a group of colonies scattered along the eastern seaboard of the North American continent—colonies from which a few hardy souls tentatively ventured westward. After a successful rebellion against the motherland, America became the United States, a nation. By the end of the 19th century this nation extended southward to the Gulf of Mexico, northward to the 49th parallel, and westward to the Pacific. By the end of the 19th century, too, it had taken its place among the powers of the world—its fortunes so interrelated with those of other nations that inevitably it became involved in two world wars and, following these conflicts, with the problems of Europe and East Asia. Meanwhile, the rise of science and industry, as well as changes in ways of thinking and feeling, wrought many modifications in people's lives. All these factors in the development of the United States molded the literature of the country.

This topic traces the history of American poetry, drama, fiction, and social and literary criticism from the early 17th century through the turn of the 21st century. For a description of the oral and written literatures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, *see* Native American literature. Though the contributions of African Americans to American literature are discussed in this article, *see* African American literature for in-depth treatment. For information about literary traditions related to, and at times overlapping with, American literature in English, *see* English literature and Canadian literature: Canadian literature in English.

The utilitarian writings of the 17th century included biographies, treatises, accounts of voyages, and sermons. There were few achievements in drama or fiction, since there was a widespread prejudice against these forms. Bad but popular poetry appeared in the *Bay Psalm Book* of 1640 and in Michael Wigglesworth's summary in doggerel verse of Calvinistic belief, *The Day of Doom* (1662). There was some poetry, at least, of a higher order. Anne Bradstreet of Massachusetts wrote some lyrics published in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* (1650), which movingly conveyed her feelings concerning religion and her family. Ranked still higher by modern critics is a poet whose works were not discovered and published until 1939: Edward Taylor, an English-born minister and physician who lived in Boston and Westfield, Massachusetts. Less touched by gloom than the typical Puritan, Taylor wrote lyrics that showed his delight in Christian belief and experience.

All 17th-century American writings were in the manner of British writings of the same period. John Smith wrote in the tradition of geographic literature, Bradford echoed the cadences of the King James

Bible, while the Mathers and Roger Williams wrote bejeweled prose typical of the day. Anne Bradstreet's poetic style derived from a long line of British poets, including Spenser and Sidney, while Taylor was in the tradition of such Metaphysical poets as George Herbert and John Donne. Both the content and form of the literature of this first century in America were thus markedly English.

In America in the early years of the 18th century, some writers, such as Cotton Mather, carried on the older traditions. His huge history and biography of Puritan New England, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, in 1702, and his vigorous *Manuductio ad Ministerium*, or introduction to the ministry, in 1726, were defenses of ancient Puritan convictions. Jonathan Edwards, initiator of the Great Awakening, a religious revival that stirred the eastern seacoast for many years, eloquently defended his burning belief in Calvinistic doctrine—of the concept that man, born totally depraved, could attain virtue and salvation only through God's grace—in his powerful sermons and most notably in the philosophical treatise *Freedom of Will* (1754). He supported his claims by relating them to a complex metaphysical system and by reasoning brilliantly in clear and often beautiful prose.

But Mather and Edwards were defending a doomed cause. Liberal New England ministers such as John Wise and Jonathan Mayhew moved toward a less rigid religion. Samuel Sewall heralded other changes in his amusing *Diary*, covering the years 1673–1729. Though sincerely religious, he showed in daily records how commercial life in New England replaced rigid Puritanism with more worldly attitudes. The *Journal* of Mme Sara Kemble Knight comically detailed a journey that lady took to New York in 1704. She wrote vividly of what she saw and commented upon it from the standpoint of an orthodox believer, but a quality of levity in her witty writings showed that she was much less fervent than the Pilgrim founders had been. In the South, William Byrd of Virginia, an aristocratic plantation owner, contrasted sharply with gloomier predecessors. His record of a surveying trip in 1728, *The History of the Dividing Line*, and his account of a visit to his frontier properties in 1733, *A Journey to the Land of Eden*, were his chief works. Years in England, on the Continent, and among the gentry of the South had created gaiety and grace of expression, and, although a devout Anglican, Byrd was as playful as the Restoration wits whose works he clearly admired.

The wrench of the American Revolution emphasized differences that had been growing between American and British political concepts. As the colonists moved to the belief that rebellion was inevitable, fought the bitter war, and worked to found the new nation's government, they were influenced by a number of very effective political writers, such as Samuel Adams and John Dickinson, both of whom favoured the colonists, and loyalist Joseph Galloway. But two figures loomed above these—Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine.

Franklin, born in 1706, had started to publish his writings in his brother's newspaper, the *New England Courant*, as early as 1722. This newspaper championed the cause of the "Leather Apron" man and the farmer and appealed by using easily understood language and practical arguments. The idea that common sense was a good guide was clear in both the popular *Poor Richard's* almanac, which Franklin edited between 1732 and 1757 and filled with prudent and witty aphorisms purportedly written by uneducated but experienced Richard Saunders, and in the author's *Autobiography*, written between 1771 and 1788, a record of his rise from humble circumstances that offered worldly wise suggestions for future success.

Poetry became a weapon during the American Revolution, with both loyalists and Continentals urging their forces on, stating their arguments, and celebrating their heroes in verse and songs such as "Yankee Doodle," "Nathan Hale," and "The Epilogue," mostly set to popular British melodies and in manner resembling other British poems of the period.

The most memorable American poet of the period was Philip Freneau, whose first well-known poems, Revolutionary War satires, served as effective propaganda; later he turned to various aspects of the American scene. Although he wrote much in the stilted manner of the Neoclassicists, such poems as "The Indian Burying Ground," "The Wild Honey Suckle," "To a Caty-did," and "On a Honey Bee" were romantic lyrics of real grace and feeling that were forerunners of a literary movement destined to be important in the 19th century.

In the years toward the close of the 18th century, both dramas and novels of some historical importance were produced. Though theatrical groups had long been active in America, the first American comedy presented professionally was Royall Tyler's *Contrast* (1787). This drama was full of echoes of Goldsmith and Sheridan, but it contained a Yankee character (the predecessor of many such in years to follow) who brought something native to the stage.

William Hill Brown wrote the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), which showed authors how to overcome ancient prejudices against this form by following the sentimental novel form invented by Samuel Richardson. A flood of sentimental novels followed to the end of the 19th century. Hugh Henry Brackenridge succeeded Cervantes's *Don Quixote* and Henry Fielding with some popular success in *Modern Chivalry* (1792–1815), an amusing satire on democracy and an interesting portrayal of frontier life. Gothic thrillers were to some extent nationalized in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), *Arthur Mervyn* (1799–1800), and *Edgar Huntly* (1799).

After the American Revolution, and increasingly after the War of 1812, American writers were exhorted to produce a literature that was truly native. As if in response, four authors of very respectable stature appeared. William Cullen Bryant, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Edgar Allan Poe initiated a great half century of literary development.

2. Marilynne Robinson - The Givenness of Things

A sense of wonder pervades the powerful essays in "The Givenness of Things," Marilynne Robinson's new collection. "Existence is remarkable, actually incredible," Robinson exclaims; even materiality is "profoundly amazing, uncanny." Yet unlike physics, which has a strong sense of the "givenness" Robinson refers to in her title, neo-Darwinian positivism rejects anything — the self, the soul or God — that cannot be explained empirically. Robinson defines the "given" as something "that presents itself, reveals itself, always partially and circumstantially, accessible to only tentative apprehension, which means that it is always newly meaningful." Calvin insisted that divine wisdom was one such "given," perceived only "within radical limits." Robinson does not say so, but here Calvin was deeply in tune with the great sages of the past, who all maintained that the transcendence we call God, Brahman, Nirvana or Dao must always ultimately elude us.

Calvin has had so profound an influence on Robinson's religious heritage that when she reads him it seems "like the awakening of submerged memory." Perhaps one reason for this is that the Protestant Reformation gave sacred sanction to ideals that were becoming essential to the new commercial economy in 16th-century Europe: independence, a strong work ethic, innovation and the enfranchisement of the lower classes. It had never been possible to implement these fully in premodern agrarian civilization, but their value would become self-evident in the modern West.

Yet Calvinism has declined in America, Robinson argues, and seems to have lost all sense of the "given." A falsely confident omniscience has instead become widespread in the Age of Information, and not only in the United States. Once we forget that our knowledge of anything can only be partial,

we can, like the positivists, become arrogantly disdainful of anyone who does not share our views. In American religion, Robinson believes, moral rigor has become an obligation "to turn and judge that great sinful world the redeemed have left behind," and self-righteous Christians can be "outrageously forgiving of one another and themselves, and very cruel in their denunciation of anyone else." Christianity has become a mere marker of identity, even a sign of electoral eligibility, and Calvin's cosmic Christ has degenerated into an "imaginary friend" in a faith that focuses solely on "personal salvation" and "accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior."

Christianity in her view has thus become the opposite of itself, and Christians seem preoccupied with "sins" Jesus never mentioned. For the prophets the great sin was always social injustice, but too many American Christians seem comfortable in a world in which 1 percent of the population controls 40 percent of the wealth, and are not perturbed to hear the Gospels cited to legitimize for-profit prisons or to sanctify the use of guns. Jesus said, "Blessed are you who are poor," but we now hear talk of the "unworthy poor" and of schemes that will humiliate and dispossess them.

Robinson's heroic lamentation is magnificent. Yet for me something crucial was missing: There is no sustained discussion of America's relationship with other nations. Robinson admits that the United States often seems like "a blundering giant, invading countries of which we know nothing," but there is no particular meditation on foreign policy or the Iraq war and its tragic aftermath. Robinson recalls Lincoln telling Americans during the Civil War that they must love their enemies because God loves them, but she does not wonder what that great president would have said about Guantánamo Bay or Abu Ghraib. Similarly, she mentions Martin Luther King and notes with sorrow that America unfairly privileges the values of those who are white, but we hear nothing specific about the current plight of -African-Americans.

Robinson's insistence, throughout these essays, that we recognize the limitations of our knowledge is timely and important. She is acutely aware that the "us and them" mentality, so prevalent in modern political discourse, is dangerous, false and unsustainable, and that it is essential that we cultivate "a respectful awareness of lives lived otherwise." Yet sometimes she herself pulls back from the "given," as when she wonders, with some trepidation, if those who do not know Christ can enjoy the ultimate good promised to the Christian. She concludes, tentatively, that because they participate in God's world, they must somehow be included in God's providence. This solution may have been acceptable in Calvin's time. But after studying the profundity and richness of world religions for over 20 years, I can no longer believe that any one faith has a monopoly on truth or wisdom.

Robinson rarely mentions other religious traditions specifically; when she does, however, she is seldom complimentary. She seems to have inherited from Calvin an anti-Catholic bias — her discussion of the Huguenot tragedy, for example, is one-sided and fails to take into account the recent scholarship clarifying that in this complex struggle there was bigotry on both sides and that it is impossible to divide 16th-century France into neat communities of Catholics and Protestants. She is extremely (and in my view inappropriately) scathing about ancient Near Eastern mythology. Yet she approvingly cites William James's warning that "we should never assume that our knowledge of anything is more than partial." This must — surely? — mean that no tradition can have the last word on the ineffable. Protestant Christianity had admirable, indeed indispensable insights, but like any ideology, its vision too was partial. John Locke, who, after Calvin, is Robinson's favorite theologian, suggested that the liberal state could tolerate neither Catholics nor Muslims, claimed that Native Americans had no property rights to their land, and showed some robust support for the institution of slavery.

In the West, we often speak of "the Reformation" as if it were a unique event. Robinson is not only convinced of this but seems to regard the Protestant Reformation as God's last word to humanity, something that cannot be bettered. Yet almost every single one of what we now call the "great world religions" began as a reformation of existing spirituality during a period of social, political or economic transformation, when old pieties no longer sufficed. This is true of the myriad religions of the Indian subcontinent (including Buddhism and Jainism), the Chinese traditions, Rabbinic Judaism,

Christianity and Islam. Over the centuries, all of these faiths continued to re-form themselves during times of disturbance and change. Perhaps in the global village that we have created, it is time for another reformation that will help us to achieve and to act upon the apparently difficult recognition that we share the planet with equals.

In her essay "Fear," Marilynne Robinson writes of America as a Christian country having lost its way. "My thesis is always the same, and it is very simply stated, though it has two parts: first, contemporary America is full of fear. And second, fear is not a Christian habit of mind," she writes. She laments that "some of us" are "associating the precious Lord with ignorance, intolerance and belligerent nationalism." And she ties that growing strain of fear in American society with the increasing grip that guns have.

What's especially compelling about those words is that they were published in 2015, before last year's presidential election in which the winning candidate ran on a platform profoundly informed by fear. Asked if she wrote that essay while in possession of a crystal ball, Robinson demurred: "Just the usual one of paying a reasonable amount of attention to what I hear and what I see," she said.

"I'm 74 years old," she added later in the phone conversation from her home in Iowa City. "I've had a fairly long career as an observer of this country. I don't remember people using fear as an amusement or as a drug of some kind the way that they seem to do now. It scares me. Roosevelt was right. Fear is an appropriate object of fear."

Robinson will accept the 2017 Chicago Tribune Literary Prize at a Chicago Humanities Festival event Saturday. She is being honored for her compelling novels of small lives closely examined: "Housekeeping" in 1980, and then the three Iowa novels, "Gilead," "Home" and "Lila," beginning in 2004, each of them examining a town, its residents and the incidents in their lives from a different perspective.

But she is also recognized for essays, such as "Fear," observations on religion and American culture that have struck a chord with readers. Her nonfiction books include "The Death of Adam," "Mother Country" and the most recent, "The Givenness of Things."

"It's a prize with a very distinguished history," Robinson said. "I'm happy to be on the list of recipients. Literary prizes, you know, I think they're probably as important as any single thing in drawing attention to, for our purposes, to American writers."

In announcing the award, the Tribune called Robinson "one of the most revered writers in America." The paper cited her "powerful use of language, with its special cadences" and ability to segue with eloquence "between the magisterial and the quotidian."

Chicago Tribune Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Bruce Dold, who will present the award to Robinson, called her "a wonderful fiction writer and a brilliant essayist. She challenges every reader to respect the deep mystery of faith."

Back in 2015, President Barack Obama made it clear that he agreed. As president, he went out of his way to sit down to talk with Robinson, with him posing the questions, in a conversation later published in The New York Review of Books. His animating idea, he said at the time, was, "Why don't I just have a conversation with somebody I really like and see how it turns out."

That 2015 talk holds up as an exchange of ideas, the kind of thing that a humanities festival audience would be thrilled to be on hand for. And probably even more than the Pulitzer Prize for "Gilead" or the fine 1987 film that was made from "Housekeeping," it brought Robinson to the attention of a public beyond the small subset that pays attention to literary fiction and the jousting of ideas.

"Christianity is profoundly counterintuitive," is one of the things she told the 44th president. " 'Love thy neighbor as thyself' — which I think properly understood means your neighbor is as worthy of love as you are, not that you're actually going to be capable of this sort of superhuman feat. But you're supposed to run against the grain. It's supposed to be difficult. It's supposed to be a challenge."

About Obama, she said over the phone, "I was very confident of his graciousness, which is perfect …. It's incredibly pleasing to talk to someone who so clearly wants to hear what you have to say."

Robinson retired last year from teaching at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, and she has been busy, she said, working on a piece about the Reformation for The New Republic. ("Some of my new theories," she said. "I don't know what they'll think of it, but I sent it to them anyway.")

"And then I'm working on an article for The Nation about, you know, immediately contemporary politics, that strange subject," she said. "But beside working on those things, I've also been writing fiction. I don't know how much — I have maybe 20 percent of a novel. I don't ever actually count."
It's far enough along, she said, where she might show it to her publisher "any day."
Asked if the book's subject might mean the sort of "Gilead" trilogy will become a "quatrology," she laughed and said, "A 'quartet,' how's that? Ah, well, you know, I think you could say that."
She would not go into more detail, but even that much is exciting news to readers who have followed the Iowa books. They began in 2004 with "Gilead," a sort of autobiography from the Rev. John Ames, a congregationalist pastor in the town. "Home," from 2008, examines Jack, the prodigal son of Ames' good friend the Rev. Robert Boughton. And "Lila" (2014) gets inside the head of the title character, Ames' much younger wife.
Asked what the allure is of examining one milieu so closely, she said, "I don't know, and that's probably a lot of the allure, you know?"
But part of it, Robinson continued, has to do with her respect for this region of the country, which she insists on calling the "Middle West." Why the full name?
"There's a way in which so much of the history, the cultural history and other, has been sort of elided out of the larger narrative of American history," she said. "And the elision in that name sort of reminds me of that.
"I mean the hard fact is that the Middle West is condescended to. I have experienced this in various circumstances. It is a very great pity because this part of the country has been unbelievably important in the formation of American culture."
Robinson talked about some of the "enlightened" history of Iowa and her novels perhaps helping, in a way, to reclaim it. "It was unconstitutional in Iowa before it was even a state to have a segregated school, for example," she said. "You know there was never a law against miscegenation, which is important to my novel? There were only two states in the union for which that was true, Maine and Iowa."
Further, she said, "the history of education in the state and in the Middle West in general is very strong. But people act as if all real education occurs on the coasts. You know, that's bizarre."
As for the term "flyover country," she says, "You can fly over anything."
If a new novel is en route, that would be four in, perhaps, 15 years, which amounts to a veritable torrent after the long waiting period between the highly praised "Housekeeping" and "Gilead." Some writers might be tortured by that, but Robinson speaks of it with calm and, perhaps, some of the distance that she says she tried to encourage her writing students to employ.
"When I wrote 'Housekeeping,' it's set in a place like the place where I grew up, the northern mountains in the West," she said, in Idaho. "And I set it there really because I had that place to myself. There were no books about it, really. And I could evade the problem of cliche and the problem of thin information and so on that felt so pervasive to me.
"And when I tried to write (afterward), I didn't want to repeat that solution. And I didn't feel I knew enough that I could trust I was actually saying what I could defend, rather than simply passing along received information. And received information is almost always very bad. And so I said, you know, that amounts to about 24 years studying.
"I mean books came out of that, 'Mother Country' and 'The Death of Adam,' right? But they were basically notes on what I was reading, and thinking, and observing and so on. That's a big chunk of life. It kind of takes my breath away that I assumed I would live long enough to make all that worthwhile."
Asked if that period was at all frustrating, she said it was quite the opposite.
"You know, I enjoyed it," she said. "Just inquiring into things is deeply satisfying to me.
"I'm glad that it came to me to write a novel. But I don't sit down to write a novel. You know, if I'm writing a novel it's because some voice is in my head, and I know that it's going to lead me into something with the length and breadth to be described as a novel."
The conversation, though, kept coming back to current politics, to some of the ideas outlined in the "Fear" essay and what she called the "impulse toward fearfulness that I do not like to see in the land of the free and the home of the brave," a phrase she used not because it has become a cliche but for its specific meaning.

"It just drives me crazy," she said. "Fear is dangerous. Fear is more toxic than any emotion. You cannot be fair to someone you're afraid of. You are never truly kind to someone you're afraid of. ... And so it's profoundly corrosive politically and culturally."
One of the things that gets corroded, she believes, is the public perception of her faith. She lamented "these people that are running around shrieking about the decline of Christianity … they are a great source of the problem. They have made it seem mean, and dingy and judgmental, tribalistic. It's just terrible, and they've monopolized all of the words and all of the categories, you know, and it's just terrible."
The word "extremist" comes to mind, and it's one that Robinson has contemplated.
"I mean, if they were extremely pious, if they were extremely given to open-handedness, if they were extremely pacifist, you know, that would be one thing," she said. "But they're taking their to-do lists from extreme political movements and so on. That's what they are doing. They are acting out of an extreme politics that is the absolute antithesis of religion."
She has her own fears, she said, that we might be living through a kind of unraveling of American idea.

3. Joan Didion - of Self-Respect

Introduction:
Joan Didion's essay "On Self-Respect" begins with an anecdote. At the age of nineteen, the author failed to earn a place in the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. At the time, it seemed like the end of the world, but over time, Didion realized that her negative reaction to the failure was the result of a "misplaced self-respect." The incident showed her that her self-worth did not depend upon getting everything she wanted.
Self-deception, Didion continues, is difficult to overcome, but one must do so to find true self-respect. We must come to know ourselves as we really are, not merely as others see us. When we can do that, we will find it much easier to cope with our failures and mistakes, both large and small. We will take a more balanced view of them and learn how to put them behind us and move on.

Self-respect, however, is not some magical charm that makes everything right in life:
Self-respect, however, is not some magical charm that makes everything right in life, but it does provide internal peace. Self-respect allows us to accept the consequences of our actions. It makes us tough enough to take responsibility for what we do and what we fail to do.

Previous generations, Didion notes, "knew all about" self-respect. They practiced a discipline that took charge of life, did what needed to be done even in the face of "fears and doubts," faced difficulties and dangers head on, and sacrificed immediate gratification for something better yet to come.

Self-respect makes us realize that "anything worth having has its price" :
It makes us willing to pay that price. To do so involves discipline and training the mind and body to respond properly in any situation. The author provides herself as an example; to stop her habit of crying (and being dramatic about it), she put her head in a paper bag. She notes,
it is difficult in the extreme to continue fancying oneself Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* with one's head in a Food Fair bag.

These little disciplines, however, must represent larger disciplines that train us to cope with the more serious events of our lives.

Conclusion:
Didion concludes that a strong sense of self-respect leads to other valuable character traits, like the ability to determine when to immerse oneself in a relationship or event and when to "remain indifferent." Self-respect allows us to step outside of ourselves and gain a certain control over our emotions. In doing so, we become free and actually find ourselves.

2. Didion cites several literary and historical references where people exhibit either having or not having self-respect:

Aside from relying on her personal experience and revelations, Didion cites several literary and historical references where people exhibit either having or not having self-respect. She nods to Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in calling herself "a kind of academic Raskolnikov." In explaining how self-respect is more important than reputation she cites Rhett Butler and Scarlet O'Hara from *Gone with the Wind*. She compares Jordan Baker from *The Great Gatsby* to Julian English from *Appointment in Samarra*, explaining how the former had self-respect where the latter did not.

In choosing the embarrassment of crying over the humiliation of sticking one's head in a paper bag to avoid tears, she believes "it is difficult in the extreme to continue fancying oneself Cathy in *Wuthering Heights* with one's head in a Food Fair bag." In considering how people who lack self-respect are so willing to give up themselves in strained efforts to please others, she references Francesca and Paolo from Dante's *Inferno*. Such citations do more than establish Didion as well-read;

they show that self-respect is a primary concern in artists' creative struggles to explore the human condition, implying that familiarity with such literary works provides, if not guidance in how to behave, at least a sense that we are not alone in questioning how we feel about ourselves.

Didion throws historical events :

And if literary references are not strong enough, Didion also throws in historical events. She cites Charles "Chinese" Gordon's "[putting] on a clean white suit and [holding] Khartoum against the Mahdi." She recounts events recorded in twelve-year-old Narcissa Cornwall's diary as she and her pioneering parents remain calm as Indians invade their homestead, demonstrating the family's self-respect in acknowledging the risks they were prepared to take in heading west. She paraphrases the Duke of Wellington's oft misquoted remark that "Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" in pointing out that the English officers learned at school the kind of self-respect and character necessary to defeat Napoleon. And in the same context she cites Dante, she cites Helen Keller's dependence on her teacher Annie Sullivan. Such historical references add credibility to her literary references, illustrating that whether fact or fiction, grappling with self-respect is the stuff of legends.

Because self-respect is a rather elusive abstract concept, and while Didion eventually describes its attributes, she defines self-respect by revealing what it is not. She labels her above-quoted diary passage as "a matter of misplaced self-respect." She offers little comfort when informing readers, "[t]he dismal fact is that self-respect has nothing to do with the approval of others…" and warns that "[t]o do without self-respect…is to be an unwilling audience of one to an interminable documentary that details one's failings…" When explaining how "[protesting] that…some people who *could not possibly respect themselves* seem to sleep easily enough is to miss the point entirely," she dispels "a common superstition that 'self-respect' is a kind of charm against snakes," insisting "[i]t has nothing to do with the face of things, but concerns instead a separate peace, a private reconciliation." By providing examples and explaining what self-respect is not before

showing what it actually is, Didion connects with readers whose own experiences are likely more aligned with "misplaced self-respect." Were self-respect any less elusive and misunderstood, what would be the need of writing the essay at all? If the first step to overcoming problems is to recognize and admit them, readers are more apt to accept her declaration that "character—the willingness to accept responsibility for one's own life—is the source from which self-respect springs."

Often we may assume we have self-respect, but Didion reveals how it is not a default quality everyone possesses. Nonetheless, it "is a discipline, a habit of mind that can never be faked but can be developed." Through anecdotes and scenarios, literary and historical examples, and dispelling misguided notions of what many people think self-respect is, Didion explores the difficult path necessary in acquiring this trait, which upon possessing "is to potentially have everything."

Didion opens with a concrete example of her own experience with self-respect to ground the rest of her essay, which is rather abstract.

This opening is effective because Didion's described situation is easy to visualize and empathize with. The pang of self-loathing that one feels after being rejected is nearly universal. Upon reading the description of Didion's rejection from Phi Beta Kappa, the reader will likely think of a similar experience from their own memory. This gives Didion both pathos and ethos. It evokes pathos because the audience can relate their own painful emotions and feel empathy. It evokes ethos because the audience and Didion now have something in common in regard to self-respect, and the audience is likely to trust someone who has had the same experiences.

Didion describes herself writing "innocence ends when one is stripped of the delusion that one likes oneself," when she was freshly rejected from Phi Beta Kappa. This is an emotional image of someone at war with herself. It is an uncomfortable and sad thing for the audience to think about. Didion then breaks the tension by lightly making fun of her past self, saying, "I marvel that a mind on the outs with itself should have nonetheless made painstaking record of its every tremor". This play at humor sets a lighter tone for the rest of the essay, which is fitting considering the subject is self-respect. The tone indicates that one can criticize themselves while still respecting themselves. The quote also indicates the Didion has matured a lot since her rejection, and therefore likely has some important wisdom to share on the subject.

Didion piles on metaphor after metaphor to try to pin down her abstract definition of self-respect. In one, she explains why she feels that Jordan Baker from *The Great Gatsby*, while "careless" and "incurably dishonest" actually had a lot of self-respect. Audiences familiar with the book will have no respect for Jordan Baker, and will wonder how she respects herself. The answer, Didion says, is not because Baker was faultless, but because she was comfortable with her faults. She had character, or "the ability to accept responsibility for one's own life". Using Jordan Baker as an example helped Didion clarify to her readers the abstract concept of how character relates to self-respect.

On self respect is a short compare and contrast essay written by Joan Didion in which she molds the idea of having self respect for yourself as you grow:

Didion compares those without self respect, to children sleeping in bed that they made themselves. She makes this comparison to show how the children did not build a well supported bed to sleep on, therefore they will not rest well during night. Those without self respect started with a lack of support from their families or friends which lead them to lack of self steam.

Joan Didion's thesis statement is "Innocence ends when one is stripped of the delusion that one likes oneself" compares the ancient times to modern day. She mentions the problem of lack of self respect today in society and because of this many people find themselves unsuccessful in life. Didion gives the example of cheating on your spouse translating from one paragraph to another with the use of words such as although, without, like, whether and in the other hand. She mentions how you can lie about it to others and everyone else around you but you are the one who is lying to your own self, and what matters is how you feel about it.

UNIT III DRAMA (DETAILED)

"A NUMBER" BY CARYL CHURCHILL

About the author:

Caryl Churchill, (born September 3, 1938, London, England), British playwright whose work frequently dealt with feminist issues, the abuses of power, and sexual politics.

When Churchill was 10, she immigrated with her family to Canada. She attended Lady Margaret Hall, a women's college of the University of Oxford, and remained in England after receiving a B.A. in 1960. Her three earliest plays, *Downstairs* (produced 1958), *Having a Wonderful Time* (produced 1960), and *Easy Death* (produced 1962), were performed by Oxford-based theatrical ensembles.

During the 1960s and '70s, while raising a family, Churchill wrote radio dramas and then television plays for British television. *Owners*, a two-act, 14-scene play about obsession with power, was her first major theatrical endeavour and was produced in London in 1972. During her tenure as resident dramatist at London's Royal Court Theatre, Churchill wrote *Objections to Sex and Violence* (1974), which, though not well-reviewed, led to her successful association with David Hare and Max Stafford-Clark's Joint Stock Company and with Monstrous Regiment, a feminist group. *Cloud 9* (1979), a farce about sexual politics, was successful in the United States as well as in Britain, winning an Obie Award in 1982 for playwriting.

The next year she won another Obie with *Top Girls* (1982), which deals with women's losing their humanity in order to attain power in a male dominated *environment.*

Softcops (produced 1984), a surreal play set in 19th-century France about government attempts to depoliticize illegal acts, was produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company. *Serious Money* (1987) is a comedy about excesses in the financial world, and *Icecream* (1989) investigates Anglo-American stereotypes. The former received an Obie for best new American play.

About the play A NUMBER

A Number is 2002 play by the English playwright Caryl Churchill which addresses the subject of human cloning .When the world was agog with news that a sheep called Dolly had been cloned, is short, spare and evocative, a quiet but anguished musing on the topic of cloning, identity and nature versus nurture. The exposition emerges organically through the play's five scenes rather than being supplied up front, but the result isn't intentionally brain-teasing or elliptical.

Summary of the play

The story, set in the near future, is structured around the conflict between a father (Salter) and his sons (Bernard 1, Bernard 2, and Michael Black) – two of whom are clones of the first one.

Bernard 2 discovers that he is actually a clone of his "brother" (Bernard 1), who was sent to a clinical home years before by his father (Salter) after the suicide of his mother, which left him in a constant state of fear and pain. Salter explains that he agreed to a cloning experiment to try again at parenting another version of his son. But, unbeknownst to Salter, the doctors had unethically made several more clones. Salter decides that they should sue the doctors, which soothes the shaken Bernard 2.

In the next scene, angry Bernard 1 visits Salter for the first time since his childhood while Bernard 2 is away. He has learned about the clones, and is furious at his father for doing it. Salter then admits

that the clones were meant to give him another chance at raising Bernard, without any of his many parental mistakes. Bernard 1 grows increasingly agitated, before threatening to murder Bernard 2.

Later, after Bernard 1 has left, Bernard 2 returns, having met Bernard 1 in the park. He has learned the truth about the situation, and now hates Salter for what he has done. Bernard 2 decides to leave the country for a while, both to get away from Salter and because he fears that Bernard 1 might try to kill him. Salter tries to convince him not to go, or at least to come back soon, but Bernard 2 refuses, saying he needs to go.

Sometime later, Bernard 1 returns and tells Salter that he followed and killed Bernard 2 after he left the country. Salter, stricken with grief, demands to know the details, but Bernard 1 refuses to say anything. Bernard 1 then leaves and kills himself, leaving Salter alone. Salter then decides to meet the other clones of his son, starting with the one named Michael Black. Michael, who never knew Salter, is a happily married maths teacher with three children. He is completely undisturbed that he is a clone, and tells Salter that he does not care. Salter demands to know more about him, particularly about something personal and unique, but Michael cannot answer. Salter then becomes unsatisfied with what Michael can give him.

To Salter, the cloning is always a big deal, though in what way it's a big deal changes over the course of the play. To Michael, it's an amusing tidbit about himself, but it doesn't change who he is, his memories, his family, his friends. The play ends with the (to Salter horrifying) revelation that Michael likes his life.

Nature vs Nurture

Caryl Churchill is not a playwright who repeats herself. She doesn't have an immediately identifiable writing style or revert to certain kinds of characters or situations. Although her work tends to be politically aware, highly original and inventive in terms of stagecraft, each play is distinctly different.

This plot follows a father, Salter, who has had one of his sons copied and who discovers that an unscrupulous scientist used his genetic material to create several more clones. As the action begins, he's in conversation with the original clone, Bernard — the man he considers his real son — and it becomes evident that Bernard's understanding of the way he came into being is false. He has always been told that Salter wanted to reproduce a first baby who died and whom he loved and considered perfect.

But it turns out that son number one — also Bernard — is very much alive, and he appears in the flesh to confront his father in the second scene. Newly widowed and with a drinking problem, Salter had attempted to raise this Bernard, made a ghastly botch of the job, and placed him in care at the age of four. In one of the play's most straightforwardly poignant moments — and one that evokes the existentialiness every one of us faces — this Bernard remembers calling for his father in the night: "I'd be shouting, 'Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!' I want to know could you hear me or not.... I didn't dare get out of bed to go and see, because if you weren't there, that would be terrifying, and if you were there, that would be worse."

Salter ponders his motivations — were they to create a perfect human being, or to erase his own shortcomings as a parent? — and considers legal action against the errant scientist; Bernard the clone is insecure and afraid, not least of twisted and homicidal original son Bernard. And then appears clone son number three, who turns out to be a completely different kettle of fish.

Churchill's plays don't force emotion on the actors or audience, but they do leave wide possibilities for tremendous emotion -- Salter's slow devastation through the play could end up being complex and moving. The script is a blueprint, and a thrilling one to read, because it leaves so many possibilities open. Churchill is enough of a master to be able to skirt the edge of meaninglessness without sliding over and her plays are richly suggestive,

A Number' by Caryl Churchill- A snapshot of the future?

The play is called 'A Number' and it is set in a world in the near-future where human cloning has become a commercial reality. It explores the idea of personal identity and the age-old debate of nature vs nurture.

The play follows Salter (the character that I play) who is in his early sixties when his son B2 tells him that he has found out about the cloning experiment that resulted in his birth.
It transpires that B2 is a clone of a first son (B1) that Salter had and not only was there one copy made but instead a number of copies were made without Salter knowing.

B2 takes it relatively well to start with, even suggesting meeting up with the other copies but when short-tempered B1 finds out that there are copies of him that his father made, he is not a happy bunny. (That last is an understatement.)

The decisions Salter made in the past come back to haunt him as tragedy ensues leading to tense encounters, sudden deaths and fresh starts, all because of that all-important question: "If that's me over there, then who am I?"

The play is in all senses of the word: a tragedy. The fact that Salter clones his son out of desperation and guilt is tragic, the fact that he feels he has to lie to his sons about what happened is tragic and the way that in the end, despite all of the copies existing,he is still alienated from them; this is also tragic. There are also a variety of emotions that Salter goes through on stage. The battle between hubris and despair is apparent at times when he says: "Nobody regrets more than me the completely unforeseen… but I could have had a different one but I wanted you again"

It is also very focused on the theme of human identity. It constantly questions whether two genetically identical people are really the same or not. The fact that B1 and B2 have very different character traits and reactions to the shocking news would suggest that they are indeed not the same but then the fact remains that from the outside they are indistinguishable from each other.

At any one time there is only two characters on stage which in no way seems contrived but rather adds to the effect of simplicity.

The actual words are thus emphasised as there is little else to distract the audience. In many ways, the lines appear disjointed in many places and confused, evidencing the emotional strain the characters are going through and in the dialogues between characters, this disjointedness leads to fast paced, tense exchanges.

Its subtle style contrasts the hard-hitting subject matter of the play effectively, resulting in a meaningful story with relatable characters. With this, it is the case where less is certainly more.

ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY A NUMBER

In A Number, the possibility of human cloning is explored through a series of encounters between Salter and three of his sons. One is his original son, two others are clones, and we learn during the play that a total of twenty-one clones have been made of this one original, although Salter himself had only asked for one "copy", which was intended to replace his first son. Churchill is tapping here into a popular theme of science fiction, but the originality of her treatment lies in the fact that her characters' crisis of identity becomes a discursive crisis, a failure of self-expression and of narrative identity.

From the opening lines, in which Salter does not ask how or why the cloning was performed, but how many clones there are, and then goes on to ask how much money can be made from them, the replacement of qualification by quantification is obvious. We could see that it contaminates notions both of identity and of morality.

As Poincare points out in his Science et method, mathematics is the art of giving the same name to different things. In A Number, this art is shown through its perverse effects, and one of the most striking linguistic features of the play is the absence of names within the dialogue. This absence is already suggested by the title and the printed text, where the first two sons are referred to as "B1" and "B2", and in the dialogue none of the characters ever call each other or refer to each other by their names. In the absence of names, numbers are omnipresent and function as a means, and sometimes the only means, of identification. The only initial description we are given of the characters is their

age, and age is also the main distinguishing feature of other people mentioned in the dialogue. B2 refers to the scientists responsible for the cloning in purely quantifying terms:

SALTER. Who did you see?
B2. Just some young, I don't know, younger than me.
SALTER. So who did it? B2. He's dead, he was some old and they've just found the records and they've traced
SALTER. So we sue the hospital. (A N, 6)1

Age replaces other forms of description, names and even nouns disappear, and this numerical identification is confirmed in the last scene, when Salter's mathematician son tells him about his children:

"boy and girl twelve and eight and now a baby well eighteen months" (A N, 43).

The inability to name is a recurring stylistic feature whenever the characters speak about the cloning or their own identity: naming is replaced by impersonal, neutral words such as "thing" or "it", and nouns are often suppressed or delayed by Churchill's stuttering, overlapping dialogue

. In the opening scene, B2 tells his father he has just learnt he has "a number" of clones, but does not know how many exactly:

B2. I didn't think of asking.
SALTER. I can't think why not, it seems to me it would be the first thing you'd want to know, how far has this thing gone, how many of these things are there?
B2. Good, so if it ever happens to you
SALTER. No you're right 30
B2. No it was stupid, it was shock, I'd known for a week before I went to the hospital but it was still
SALTER. It is, I am, the shocking thing is that there are these, not how many but at all
B2. Even one
SALTER. Exactly, even one, a twin would be a shock
B2. A twin would be a surprise but a number
SALTER. A number any number is a shock.
B2. You said things, these things

SALTER. I said?

B2. You called them things. I think we'll find they're people.

SALTER. Yes of course they are, they are of course.

B2. Because I'm one. [...] we just happen to have identical be identical identical genetic (A N, 3-5, my emphases) The disappearing nouns are either erased ("these…", "identical identical genetic…") or replaced by "things", deictics ("it", "these") and quantifiers ("a number"; "I'm one"), and the word "clone" is noticeably absent, and indeed never appears in the play.

This opening exchange contains several stylistic principles that will be observed throughout the play: on the one hand the dialogue's reliance on aposiopesis and progression through repetition and accumulation; on the other, the difficulty of naming and the disappearance of nouns, leaving an impression of vagueness and an increased focus on quantifiers, thereby highlighting the reduction of people to objects. By using numbers to designate her characters, Churchill inscribes the haunting presence of the Holocaust and its reification of humanity in the text of her play.

Although this analogy is not explicitly developed, Salter's sons are repeatedly reified: B2 describes B1 as "something terrible which is exactly the same genetic person" (A N, 29), Salter tells B1 that he abandoned him because "you were this disgusting thing by then anyone in their right mind

would have squashed you" (A N, 40), and later Salter tries to provoke his third son, Michael Black, into expressing an opinion by insisting that "there are things there are things that are what you are" (A N, 48). When people are not reduced to things, they belong to categories introduced by indefinite articles: B1's mother for example becomes "a person under a train" (A N, 30). 31 Talking about human beings has thus become problematic, and numerical description gradually replaces failing narrative identities.

In each scene, the relations between the characters depend on a request for a story: in Scene 1, B2 asks Salter about his origins; in Scene 2, B1 asks him about his childhood and his haunting memory of shouting for his father in the night; in Scene 3, B2 asks Salter again about his mother; in Scene 4, Salter asks B1 for an account of the murder he has just committed and for memories of their years together, which he himself "doesn't remember"; finally, in Scene 5, Salter simply asks Michael Black to "tell him about himself". However, none of these desires for narrative are satisfied. They are answered by silence, lies, or answers which remain incomplete.

The characters are unable to construct their narrative identities, and B2 emphasizes that "we can't know what we're it's too complicated to disentangle all the causes" (A N, 35). This narrative breakdown is finally confirmed in Salter's encounter with his mathematician son, who provides a numerical definition of humanity in which narrative identity has disappeared completely and syntagmatic progression is replaced by paradigmatic variation:

MICHAEL BLACK. We've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any
Other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a
chimpanzee. We've got thirty per cent the same as a lettuce.
Does that cheer you up at all? I love about the lettuce. It
makes me feel I belong. (A N, 50)

Finally this quantification is also applied to ethical values, which are perverted into value in the singular – financial gain – and emptied of their meaning. In Salter's lines, moral words are travestied into the lexical field of lawsuits and money.

Terms such as "value", "rights" are redefined as countable assets:

SALTER. But it's you, part of you, the value

B2. The value of those people

SALTER. Yes

B2. And what is the value of

SALTER. There you are, who knows, priceless, and they belong

B2. No

SALTER. They belong to you, they should belong to you, they're made from

your 32

B2. They should SALTER. They've been stolen from you and you should get

your rights (A N, 6-7)

As a consequence, the lexical field of acquisition contaminates the dialogue and human beings are referred to as possessions which can be acquired. B2 imagines the cloning as a commercial transaction, "there were a number a number of us made somehow and you were one of the people who acquired, something like that" (A N, 12), and Salter protests that the additional cloning "wasn't part of

the deal" (A N, 14). Moreover, when B2 and Salter talk about his responsibility, valuing words such as "good" are emptied of their meaning, as the deterministic vision of man cancels out the possibility of free will or ethical action: as Salter repeats "I was good I tried to be good I was good to you" (A N, 34), the repetition only hollows out the word into an empty shell haunted by forgotten meaning.

Genetic science is thus not the only target of Churchill's play: cloning functions as a metonymy of a technological, calculating society, in which the hyper rationalization of human behaviour threatens the possibility of ethical discourse.). This expression could well describe the characters in A Number, as calculation has invaded their attempts at self-definition and ethical positioning. ,

Churchill's play does not provide any rationalized criticism of the calculations she portrays. Her stage responds to the threat of science by becoming a non-analytical space. The stage as a non-analytical space Churchill's stage presents three characteristics which prompt me to describe it as non-analytical: the absence of a theoretical 33 position, the preference for non-epistemic modes within the fabula, and the disabling of the analytical gaze. Genetic science and scientists are notably absent from A Number. The voice of research remains silent, and the "doctors" are only a ghostly presence, a science-fiction cliché: "some mad scientist" according to Salter (A N, 4).

With the exception of Michael Black's percentages, the play does not contain any genetic discourse, and the vocabulary used by the characters remains commonplace, based on an average person's knowledge of genetics. The only description of cloning is provided by B1's evocation of the act, which is contaminated by its moral and emotional implications: "they take this painless scrape this specky little cells of me and kept that and you threw the rest of me away" (A N, 16).

The characters' discourse about the clones is constantly subjected to the test of "feelings", and attempts at rationalization are disrupted by bodily reality. Such tensions between knowledge and the body are a recurrent feature of contemporary science-related theatre." In A Number, this objection is embodied by B1's disruptive physicality: his material presence is highlighted by Salter who refers to him as "genetic material" and "raw materials", and his reactions are systematically physical ("my heart, people pay trainers to get it up to this speed"; A N, 15). B1's memories of his childhood centre on the act of shouting, in other words the dissolution of language into unformulated distress, and in his first confrontation with Salter his violent ravings clearly show a collapse of logical connections, giving in under the pressure of violence. In their second encounter he 34 becomes a silent body, refusing to answer his father. His presence thus resists logocentric, discursive knowledge, and opposes it with bodily awareness and suffering.

In A Number, this lack is emphasized by the dramatic structure: the realm of the possible takes over from that of the certain, and the state of 'not knowing' is extended to the spectator by the avoidance of narrative completion. None of the characters obtain the answers they are looking for, and when answers are given they remain possible rather than certain. When Salter finally answers B1's question about his shouting in the night, the answer he gives simply repeats all of B1's hypotheses: "Sometimes I was there, I'd sit and listen to you or I'd not be in any condition to hear you I'd just be sitting. Sometimes I'd go out and leave you" (A N, 40). 35 The epistemic mode is not only weakened in the characters' propositions, it is also reduced to a minimal role in the spectator's propositions, since the audience's hypotheses can never crystallize into a single thesis.

The plot structure of A Number disables the analytical gaze, thus defeating an Aristotelian conception of the tragic play as a linear chain of causes and consequences. Although the play contains some elements of tragic structure and appears to explore the consequences of Salter's original failure with his first son, the plot in fact disrupts the chain of causality and sabotages any attempts at logical conclusions.

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Annotations

B2: who's not identical, who's like

SALTER: not even very

B2: not very like but very something terrible which is exactly the same genetic person

SALTER: not the same person

B2: and I don't like it.

MICHAEL: I think it's funny, I think it's delightful

SALTER: delightful?

...

MICHAEL: We've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a chimpanzee. We've got thirty percent the same as a lettuce. Does that cheer you up at all? I love about the lettuce. It makes me feel I belong.

Answer the following

1 . Are the clones distinct people or are they merely copies that belong to B1?
2. How did Salter's role as B1's father impact B1?
3 .Are the clones distinct people or are they merely copies that belong toB1?
4. What was Salter trying to do by recreating B1?
5 .A reflection on how the play is constructed and the impact of dialogue of the story?

UNIT IV – SHORT STORIES

1.Ursula K.Le. Guin - The one who walks away from omelas(1973)

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" is a short story by American writer Ursula K. Le Guin. It won the 1974 Hugo Award for Best Short Story, which is given annually for a science fiction or fantasy story.
This particular work of Le Guin's appears in her 1975 collection, "The Wind's Twelve Quarters," and it has been widely anthologized.
Plot
There isn't a traditional plot to "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," except in the sense that it explains a set of actions that are repeated over and over.
The story opens with a description of the idyllic city of Omelas, "bright-towered by the sea," as its citizens celebrate their annual Festival of Summer. The scene is like a joyous, luxurious fairy tale, with "a clamor of bells" and "swallows soaring."
Next, the narrator attempts to explain the background of such a happy place, though it becomes clear that they don't know all the details about the city. Instead, they invite readers to imagine whatever details suit them, insisting that "it doesn't matter. As you like it."

Then the story returns to a description of the festival, with all its flowers and pastry and flutes and nymph-like children racing bareback on their horses. It seems too good to be true, and the narrator asks:

"Do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me describe one more thing."

What the narrator explains next is that the city of Omelas keeps one small child in utter degradation in a damp, windowless room in a basement. The child is malnourished and filthy, with festering sores. No one is allowed even to speak a kind word to it, so, though it remembers "sunlight and its mother's voice," it has been all but removed from human society.

Everyone in Omelas knows about the child. Most have even come to see it for themselves. As Le Guin writes, "They all know that it has to be there." The child is the price of the utter joy and happiness of the rest of the city.

But the narrator also notes that occasionally, someone who has seen the child will choose not to go home—instead walking through the city, out the gates, and toward the mountains. The narrator has no idea of their destination, but they note that the people "seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas."

The Narrator and "You"

The narrator repeatedly mentions that they don't know all the details of Omelas. They say, for instance, that they do "not know the rules and laws of their society," and they imagine that there would not be cars or helicopters, not because they know for sure, but because they don't think cars and helicopters are consistent with happiness.

But the narrator also states that the details don't really matter, and they use the second person to invite readers to imagine whatever details would make the city seem happiest to them. For example, the narrator considers that Omelas might strike some readers as "goody-goody." They advise, "If so, please add an orgy." And for readers who can't imagine a city so happy without recreational drugs, they concoct an imaginary drug called "drooz."

In this way, the reader becomes implicated in the construction of the joy of Omelas, which perhaps makes it more devastating to discover the source of that joy. While the narrator expresses uncertainty about the details of Omelas's happiness, they are entirely certain about the details of the wretched child. They describe everything from the mops "with stiff, clotted, foul-smelling heads" standing in the corner of the room to the haunting "eh-haa, eh-haa" wailing noise that the child makes at night. They do not leave any room for the reader—who helped construct the joy—to imagine anything that might soften or justify the child's misery.

No Simple Happiness

The narrator takes great pains to explain that the people of Omelas, though happy, were not "simple folk." They note that:

"… we have a bad habit, encouraged by pedants and sophisticates, of considering happiness as something rather stupid. Only pain is intellectual, only evil interesting."

At first, the narrator offers no evidence to explain the complexity of the people's happiness; in fact, the assertion that they are not simple almost sounds defensive. The more the narrator protests, the more a reader might suspect that the citizens of Omelas are, in fact, rather stupid.

When the narrator mentions that the one thing "there is none of in Omelas is guilt," the reader might reasonably conclude it's because they have nothing about which to feel guilty. Only later does it become clear that their lack of guilt is a deliberate calculation. Their happiness doesn't come from innocence or stupidity; it comes from their willingness to sacrifice one human being for the benefit of the rest. Le Guin writes:

"Theirs is no vapid, irresponsible happiness. They know that they, like the child, are not free...It is the existence of the child, and their knowledge of its existence, that makes possible the nobility of their architecture, the poignancy of their music, the profundity of their science."

Every child in Omelas, upon learning of the wretched child, feels disgusted and outraged and wants to help. But most of them learn to accept the situation, to view the child as hopeless anyway, and to value the perfect lives of the rest of the citizenry. In short, they learn to reject guilt.

The ones who walk away are different. They won't teach themselves to accept the child's misery, and they won't teach themselves to reject the guilt. It's a given that they are walking away from the most thorough joy anyone has ever known, so there is no doubt that their decision to leave Omelas will

erode their own happiness. But perhaps they are walking toward a land of justice, or at least the pursuit of justice, and perhaps they value that more than their own joy. It's a sacrifice they are willing to make.

Analysis of The one who walks away from Omelas

Introduction:
It is the Festival of Summer in the city of Omelas by the sea. Everyone in the city is celebrating and dancing as they parade northward through the streets toward “the great water-meadow called the Green Fields,” where naked children sit astride horses, preparing for a race. Everyone is going to watch the horse race. Banners flutter in the wind, marking the course that the race will take. As bells clang joyously, the entire city is filled with music and merriment.

The narrator pauses to contemplate the difficulty of describing a city of happiness to an audience conditioned to think of happiness as dull and “simple.” The narrator calls out this assumption as false, insisting that strife is a monotonous subject, and further, is only recognizable in contrast to happiness. Not only is it false to equate happiness with stupidity, it is dangerous. Artists have perpetuated this myth, so much so that society has largely forgotten how to describe happiness and smiles have become “archaic.”

The citizens of Omelas are happy, but not naïve or unintelligent:
The narrator clarifies the nature of the city’s happiness. The citizens of Omelas are happy, but not naïve or unintelligent. Their definition of happiness follows from a tripartite distinction: they understand the difference between what is necessary; what is unnecessary but not destructive; and what is destructive. The narrator invites the reader to imagine Omelas as they wish, so long as nothing about the city falls into the category of “destructive”. Thus, Omelas may have “central heating, subway trains, washing machines, […] a cure for the common cold. Or they could have none of that; it doesn't matter.” The narrator reveals the city’s imaginary status as they describe Omelas in more and more theoretical terms. The exact details of Omelas do not matter, so long as the reader is able to imagine a city that conforms to the narrator’s loose description.
Still, the narrator worries that Omelas may strike the reader as too perfect, too strictly adherent to rules to be an ideal society. The narrator insists that these guidelines for happiness still allow for a certain amount of hedonism, and encourages the reader again to imagine the city however they like: “if an orgy would help” the city seem more utopic, “don’t hesitate.” The narrator imagines that in Omelas there is religion but no clergy, sex and nudity are celebrated publicly, and “the offspring of these delightful rituals” of desire are “beloved and looked after by all.”

There is no guilt in Omelas:
“I thought at first there were not drugs” in Omelas, the narrator writes, “but that is puritanical.” Thus, the narrator supposes, there *is* an ecstasy-inducing drug named *drooz* in Omelas, and it is not even habit-forming. However, few people would need *drooz*, the narrator suspects, because the city feels “a boundless and generous contentment” all the time anyway. The city celebrates victory and courage, but has no soldiers—“the victory they celebrate is that of life.” There is no guilt in Omelas.
The narrator returns to the Festival of Summer. The parades of people have mostly reached the fields where the children’s horse race is held. The scene is impossibly idyllic. There is good food, and the children’s faces are “amiably sticky”. An old woman passes out flowers. A boy plays the flute as children ready their horses at the starting line, speaking to them gently and affectionately: “Quiet, quiet, there my beauty, my hope.” The crowd flanking the racecourse looks like a field. The narrator announces to the reader that “the Festival of Summer has begun,” then pauses to ask the reader directly whether they believe in this scene: “Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy?” If not, the narrator will reveal one more detail about Omelas.
In a dark, windowless room in a basement beneath one of the city’s public buildings lives a malnourished child. The room is tiny, about the size of a broom closet. The child shares the room with a couple of “clotted, foul-smelling” mops and a rusty bucket. The narrator suggests that the child’s

gender is irrelevant, and refers to the child using the pronoun “it”. The child is severely underdeveloped both physically and mentally; “it has become imbecile through fear, malnutrition, and neglect.” The child is terrified of the mops and shuts its eyes in fear, but nothing will ever change. “The door is always locked; and nobody ever comes,” except, on occasion, a person (or a few), to refill the child’s water jug and food bowl. The people who come to the door do not speak to the child, only “peer in at it with frightened, disgusted eyes.”
The child has not always lived in the locked room. In fact, it remembers “sunlight and its mother’s voice.” Though no one speaks to the child, the child begs the people who visit it for release, promising to “be good.” The narrator reveals that the child used to scream and cry constantly, but after years of neglect, it now only whimpers pathetically, and hardly ever speaks. It is naked, gaunt, and covered in festering sores from sitting “in its own excrement continually.” Its stomach is bloated from starvation, for “it lives on a half-bowl of corn meal and grease a day.”

This child’s existence is not a secret. Everyone in Omelas knows about it, whether they have seen the child personally or simply know of its existence. Every citizen knows that everything good in their lives (“their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers”) exists because of this child’s suffering. Some citizens understand why this is, while others do not, but all understand that the perfection of Omelas depends on the child’s abject misery.

Learning about the child’s existence is a sort of coming-of-age ritual in Omelas—an experience each child has, usually between the ages of eight and twelve. Despite the justifications they are given, each child reacts in disgust and anger. Their first instinct is to help the child out of its miserable situation, though they are able to override this instinct by reminding themselves that helping the child will ruin everyone else’s happiness, causing “all the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas” to “wither and be destroyed.” There is no way around this predicament. The narrator states that “the terms are strict and absolute,” though they never state why this is the case. Thus, to live in Omelas is to accept this child’s misery as a condition of one’s happiness.

Despite the initial trauma of learning about the child, most citizens come to justify their inaction. For some it takes weeks, for others, years, but eventually almost everyone comes to accept the predicament. The narrator runs through their reasoning: even if the child were released, it would not be able to experience much joy due to its underdevelopment. “It has been afraid too long to ever be free of fear,” they reason, and they are not cruel for neglecting the child, since they are helpless to change its circumstances. The children’s “tears at the bitter injustice dry when they begin to perceive the terrible justice of reality, and to accept it.”

The people of Omelas do not forget about the child’s misery:
Rather, their understanding of the child’s misery allows them to more deeply understand and appreciate their own happiness. The narrator assures the audience that “Theirs is no vapid, irresponsible happiness.” They understand that they are indebted to the child for its suffering. As much as the child is a slave to its misery, the people of Omelas are enslaved to the child’s situation—all are powerless to change the terms of their existence. None are truly free.

The narrator pauses to ask the audience if they believe in Omelas now, after learning about the child. The narrator suggests that this cruel situation makes Omelas “more credible.” Yet, there is another detail about Omelas that is “quite incredible.”

Though most citizens of Omelas come to accept the awful predicament of the child’s misery, some do not. Sometimes citizens decide to reject the terms of life in Omelas—something they can only do by leaving the city, alone, in total silence. These citizens walk into the darkness beyond Omelas and never come back. The narrator does not know where they go, for it is impossible to imagine—the place might not even exist. Still, the ones who walk away from Omelas do so with a sense of purpose, seeming “to know where they are going.”

2.Maggie Shipstead - Cowboy Tango(2009)

Introduction:

Maggie Shipstead's short story, "*The Cowboy Tango*," which appears in our Fall issue, charts decades in the lives of a crotchety rancher, nicknamed The Otter, and a stoic young woman he hires to help out with the horses, Sammy. In prose both epic and exact, Shipstead renders a quietly illuminating story of loneliness and longing in cowboy country. Shipstead, whose work can also be found in the *Mississippi Review,* the *Missouri Review,* and *Glimmer Train,* took some time to answer a few questions about the story and her life as a young writer.

The author grew up in California and went to major schools (Harvard and Iowa). It's amazing how did it come to be that she've written about rural, isolated ranch life in "The Cowboy Tango" and how she have worked on a ranch or had to walk a horse to its deathbed

This story is, at best, only a partial advertisement for writing what she know. Although she have been to 44 states, Montana unfortunately isn't one of them. She *have* ridden horses for most of her life, but she ride in an English saddle and my characters would find her laughably dandified and useless. When she started writing the story, she was staying with an aunt and uncle in Boulder on her way from California to Iowa, and she had already turned out the light to go to sleep when she decided to get up and write the first page. Then she went back to bed. So, to her, the story seems more like the product of a random impulse than of accumulated experience.

she admit that she is an opportunistic and larcenous for details as a raccoon is for shiny things. A close friend of her was helpful enough to spend a fair chunk of her life wrangling on a ranch in Montana, and her stories were the source of some of the details in the story—for instance, the way favorite horses were paid the respect of being shot out in the open air when their times came. Plenty of other details are pure invention or are composites. That said, when she was 19, she had to decide to have a young horse put down, and walking away from him knowing full well that he was about the die was a very painful experience, especially since she have always had a lingering suspicion that the brave choice would have been to stay with him through the end. That experience gave her a healthy appreciation for how a living horse is full of both vitality and fragility and how a dead horse, largely by virtue of its size, is inescapably troubling and grotesque.

There aren't any real heroes in "The Cowboy Tango.": The Otter and Sammy both make mistakes rooted in pride and selfishness, and cower in the face of opportunities to be good people. This is a story in which both main characters are flawed, unhappy people who make bad choices.

she think that she would have had a much harder time writing a story about flawless, happy people who make good choices. she like all the characters in this story, and, at the same time, she felt sorry for them. They inhabit a tiny world in the midst of a vast landscape. Driving cross-country, she have often experienced a trick played by big sky and wide, open spaces, which is the vicarious illusion that we, the tiny human speck in the middle of it all, have more freedom and live a life of more possibilities than we actually do. If love were the product of a logical, practical choice, Sammy and the Otter might have been much better off.

Her hopes for her writing life when she begin the Stegner fellowship this fall:

Well, the Stegner doesn't kick off for another few weeks, so that experience is still a mystery. Long before, when she was writing her novel, she spent eight months in fairly serious isolation on Nantucket: her record was five weeks without having a face-to-face conversation with another person,

besides basic transactions like buying groceries. hoping Stanford will help her find a balance between a somewhat normal life in which she is also a productive writer and the proverbial, Thoreau-wandering-the-woods-and-talking-to-himself writing life.

writers often have secret obsessions that last for a period of time, which may or may not inform their writing:

As a child she was an intense and very nerdy serial obsesser—shipwrecks, submarines, Egypt, paleoanthropology, Russian history, travel writing, spy novels, Sherlock Holmes. Lately she have been wondering where her obsessions have gone. she suspect they've coalesced into larger fixations and anxieties. For example, she have to struggle against an urge to write exclusively about how scary the ocean is and how much it freaks her out that strange and ruined things are submerged in it, which seems to derive from the same stray glitch of psychology that led her to check out all those shipwreck books when she was little.

3.Joan Wickersham - The news from Spain(2013)

Introduction:

Joan Wickersham is the author of two previous books, most recently *The Suicide Index*, a National Book Award finalist. Her fiction has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories* and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*. Her op-ed column appears regularly in *The Boston Globe,* and she has published essays in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *International Herald Tribune.* She has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the MacDowell Colony, and Yaddo. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
This type of imperfect conjuring proves hazardous to Wickersham's characters, who are mostly women, middle-aged and beyond. "The News From Spain: Seven Variations on a Love Story" (Wickersham's first collection, following a novel and an acclaimed memoir, "The Suicide Index") is an ode to heartbreak and regret, as well as to the unbidden intimacy that can emerge not only between friends but between strangers.
Wickersham's gift is for capturing the habits of mind that lead even smart people to deceive themselves, make poor choices, slide into affairs or marriages that have little chance of succeeding. As much as love, her characters long for affirmation, eager as they are to see themselves in another's eyes as desirable and desired. Thus one of two girls at an otherwise all-male school chooses to play the stand-up bass ("another embarrassment: to play an instrument that looked like you") and falls for a boy in her rock band, only to wonder later if he was involved with her favorite teacher. Elsewhere a paralyzed ballet dancer, married to an unfaithful choreographer, finds tenderness in the touch of a caregiver. Another wife, having discovered her husband's affair, worries about how easily she and he are falling, nevertheless, back into stride.

***The News from Spain* and of Wickersham's near magical ability to capture the mystery and complexity of love:**
In seven beguiling stories Joan Wickersham explores the passion and vulnerability, cruelty and tenderness of love in all its forms. *The News from Spain* presents a fascinating array of characters, settings, and perspectives: a long-married couple struggles with the repercussions of the husband's infidelity; a woman caring for her dying mother reconsiders their bond—and her own romantic relationships; a young girl discovers that the search for connections and affection can lead to selfish and reckless acts; a paralyzed dancer weighs the cost of her dependence on her adored, unfaithful husband; and a widow and a young mother develop a

surprisingly deep sense of trust and understanding during a brief afternoon conversation. In two clever and engaging stories Wickersham travels back in history. In one, she weaves vignettes about Mozart and his librettist into the story of two close friends and their love affairs; in the other, she imagines a love triangle among a journalist, a doctor, and the wife of a president.

The book opens with a succinct yet palpable description of the motel Susanne and John are staying in: “The rooms smelled of disinfectant and of bodies. . . .Outside, the wind was dazzling and salty”. This establish an emotional backdrop to the narrative that follows physical details in the descriptions of the wedding party and the meeting between Susanne and Barnaby offer insights into the psychological state of the characters.

Comparing Barbara and Barnaby’s reasons for getting married to Susanne’s reflections on her marriage their points of view represent the real choices open to them or are they based on compromise and rationalization are Barnaby and Susanne reluctant to share their thoughts with each other are there limits to the trust enjoyed between friends.

Harriet and Rebecca know that between them “love has always had to be proved. It is there; and it gets proved, over and over”. In these ways does Harriet’s illness become a testing ground for both of them. It is surprising or unusual that “they were having, in the middle of all this dire stuff, a good time together”. their intimacy deteriorate during the periods Harriet when enjoys relatively good health. the complexities of the mother-daughter relationship affect Rebecca’s approach to the men in her life and influence the course of her affairs with Peter and with Ben. The third story in the book, told in the second person, presents the point of view of an unnamed young girl; it is also the only story divided into distinct sections. With effect do these techniques have on the reader’s impressions of the protagonist, the events described, and the other characters.

The narrative of the third story captures the awkwardness and excitement of becoming a teenager—of finding a place within a school’s social structure, discovering the opposite sex, flourishing under a special teacher’s care, and observing often puzzling adult behavior. In these ways do each of the mini-chapters in this story set the stage for scandalous revelation and the girl’s reaction to it. It is the summation (“The Rest of the Story” and “The End”) related from an adult point of view. memories and dreams play in the dancer’s attempts to reconcile herself to her physical helplessness. her husband leaves for the tour, “They kiss—familiar, fond, nothing more, except she thinks there is a careful brightness between them, an implicit understanding that to regret, or even acknowledge any awareness of, their mutual unerotic kindness would be pointless and unwise”. This is the best (or only) way for these characters to deal with their situation, or would they benefit from more openness and honesty.

the details about Malcolm’s private life add to the central portrait of the dancer’s troubled marriage. There are similarities between the two relationships, between the dancer and Malcolm, the choreographer and Tim. the scene in the bathtub and the story the dancer tells Malcolm illustrate about the power of illusion and fantasy in our lives.

the sketches of Charlie and Liza and Alice establish a sense of how their meeting will unfold. the interview belie or conform our expectations. particular moments or comments transform the dynamics of the encounter.Liza inspires to confess her secret to Alice. Notable qualities, experiences, or beliefs unite Liza and Alice despite the differences in their ages and situations. people often tell a relative stranger something they have hidden from those closest to them. the parallels between the lives and loves of Elvira and Rosina and their namesakes in the Mozart and Da Ponte operas. The playful yet pointed echoes of the classic operas (and the legendary adventures of Don Juan) set a tone and enrich the atmosphere of the contemporary stories. they convey about the universal complications, pain, and pleasures of love.

Da Ponte writes “But I have learned that memory is inconstant, which is perhaps its greatest danger and yet also its greatest virtue”. light does this cast on Elvira’s attachment to Johnny

and its effect on her life and her work. the friendship between Elvira and Rosina built on the sharing and preserving of their personal and perhaps faulty versions of the past. A happily married woman unsettled by a sudden rush of love for a colleague sums up her emotional turmoil with both wit and poignancy: “My feelings—let’s hold on to this idea of them as shuffling Victorians, let’s make them servants, an entire uniformed household staff—were fresh, raw, perpetually startled. They weren’t sensible”. the metaphor is so effective. It does say about the battle between emotions and reason, between heart and head.
The final story begins with a simple pronouncement: “Some of this is fiction, and some isn’t”. It extents the appeal of the story about the doctor, the journalist, and the president’s wife stem from the combination of fact and fiction. It does Wickersham leave the “famous woman” unnamed although her identity is quite clear. It draws the woman to the doctor and him to her. In many ways do her public and her private identities overlap, and they differ. It effects the way she conducts herself with the doctor. the narrator present each character in an objective way or does her own situation color her opinions and speculations about them.

Conclusion:

Linking her two stories, the narrator of the last story says, “I am writing about women, about love and humiliation. Men do it to us, but mostly we do it to ourselves. We love the wrong people; we love at the wrong time. We think we can make it right, reconcile the irreconcilable”. other stories feature women who struggle to explain, justify, or simply make the best of difficult relationships. There are male characters who find themselves in similar situations.
Infidelity and betrayal play a central role in *The News from Spain*. Many of the characters are involved in or are considering an affair; friendships and family relationships are also betrayed, either intentionally or as a consequence of carelessness or self-interest. the various forms of unfaithfulness and deception depicted in these stories and they reveal about the unpredictable, often uncontrollable passions that underlie acts of transgression.

UNIT V - FICTION

THE COLOUR PURPLE

Brief Plot Summary of the Color Purple

The book opens as young Celle address God with her fears about the future. She is raped numerous times by who she believes to be her father, sees her mother beaten, and fears for her sister Nettie's life. She and her mother give birth on the same day to "His" children; "He" immediately kills the mother's baby and sells her own crying newborn. Soon enough, "He" sells her into marriage with an older widow with four children named Mr. Albert. Mr._ beats her, taunts her, and forces her to clean, cook, and look after his dirty and ungrateful children. Mean while, M r. --- lusts after Nettie until she runs away to the Reverend Mr.’s home with Celie's protective orders).

As her life with Mr. Progresses, the children grow. Harp, the eldest son, falls in love with a young girl named Sofia, and introduces her to the family already swelling and pregnant. She speaks her mind and flees to live with her sister Odessa. The two eventually marry and move in next door to Celie and Mr. . Celie and Sofia develop a strong friendship, as one accepts her beatings and the other beats her husband.

Celie continues to write to God and Nettie, explaining her miserable life with Mr. and hoping to reunite as soon as possible. Suddenly, Mr. brings his mistress, Shug Avery, home with him, for she is ill with venereal disease, and has no other salvation. Celie immediately finds herself attracted to the

celebrated singer, speaking with her, bathing her, and worshipping her. After an initial introduction of terror, the two become close friends.

Eventually, Sofia becomes bored with her marriage and leaves Harpo and their four children alone to stay with her sister, Odessa. Harpo learns how to live alone, and builds a juke joint in their old home. Shug Avery sings there and brings it big business. Celle and Shug continue to discuss sexuality, life, love, and family. One evening at Harpo's, Sofia returns with a new boyfriend. Harp° brings his new girlfriend, Squeak, to the joint, and everyone is reunited. However, when the dancing begins, Sofia punches Squeak in the mouth, knocking out her front teeth, and flees town again. The family learns that later that week, Sofia found herself in an argument with the mayor's wife, punched the mayor, and was thrown in jail after a brutal beating by the police. She is left there for years, while the family tries to help. Squeak discovers that she is related to the warden and tries to help Sofia by visiting him. When he sees her, he rapes her and leaves the family helpless.

Shug and Celie fall in love, as she teaches Celie about her own body, femininity, and sexuality. They discover that Mr._ has been hiding all of the letters that Nettie has sent to Celie. She is so angry that she develops violent feelings towards him. They begin to read the letters and learn all about Nettie's new and adventurous life. When she ran away from Mr. Years ago, she found Corrine and Samuel, two Christian missionaries who took her in. Their two adopted children, Adam and Olivia, are in fact Celie's biological children taken at birth. They travel to England and Africa to teach and help the youth of Africa. In Africa, they live in the village of Olinka, where they find a new home, the children grow and learn, and they discover new

theories on life and religion. Corrine falls ill with the African fever and eventually dies. Years later, Nettie and Samuel fall in love, marry, and are forced to leave their post in Africa. At this point, they decide to return home to Nettle's family. Adam and Olivia have become young adults, and Adam falls in love with an African girl named Tashi, whom he marries and brings to America.

Shug takes Celie, her new husband Grady, and Squeak to Memphis with her to escape the violent and cruel wrath of Albert. Celie is in heaven as she lives in a beautiful house with her beloved Shug, and discovers a method of making pants. Her pants become a runaway success and she opens Folkspants, Unlimited. Furthermore, she learns that her cruel father (who she learns is not her biological father) has died, leaving her the old house.

Unfortunately, Mr. hands Celie a letter stating that the ship on which Nettie and her family sailed has sunk. Celie is miserable, for she feels completely alone. While at home fixing her new house, Shug informs her that she is in love with someone else and just wants a six-month affair with the young man. Celie is brokenhearted for both grave losses, and spends the remainder of her time with Mr.. He has grown, changed, and found religion, making him a bearable companion.

Eventually, Shug returns to Celie's home wanting her love forever and Nettie arrives on their doorstep with their children. Celie's life is now complete as the two families join as one, despite blood relations and years of separation.

Female characterisation in The Color Purple

The Color Purple is considered a classic womanist text. It is about being a woman and a black, living in the frame of male civilization, racist and sexist, being subject to all possible forms of oppression. It explores the modern search for wholeness, connection of people in an age of fragmentation and exploitation. Trudier Harris in Black American Literature Forum states that The Color Purple has "become the classic novel by a black woman" because "the pendulum determining focus on black writers had swung in their favour … and Alice Walker had been waiting in the wings of the feminist movement…"

The Color Purple is an epistolary novel i.e. it is written as a series of documents, the usual form is letters. This technique allows Celie to speak for herself; she also gets to structure her identity and her sense of self by writing her letters. Celie's letters, her growing ability to express her thoughts point out to her spiritual development and also pave the way for her independence. The novel's narrative technique is linked with the novel's main thematic image of gaining an identity, of rebirth and of survival. Through the form, Walker also links a formal and western tradition to an oral and distinctly African American folk expression. The use of the vernacular infuses an old form with new life. Alice Walker uses the color purple which is a color of triumph, regal power. By using this color, Walker has rendered heroism to their lives and to their ability to survive and triumph over oppressions and hardships.

The novel faced criticism by the Afro Americans because of the unfavourable portrayal of men as being capable of oppressing other members of the community especially women. Young women are treated like sexual objects; Celie is raped by her 'Pa'. Her education is discontinued forcibly against her wish; she is married off to a person because she has become a "burden". At the start of the novel, her only voice is her letters to God. In 'The Bluest Eye' Pecola is completely silenced as a result of paternal violence, Celie does not resign her beauty to a world where blue eyes seem to be the white standard of beauty. Celie confides in to God about her sufferings and not to any imaginary friend, she refuses to be a voiceless victim.

The novel makes use of the Socialist and the Radical theory of Feminism. According to the Socialist theory, the lower status of women is due to the fact that the women are economically dependent on the male partner and the ideological myths about women have strengthened the male power over them. These myths have played a powerful role in defining their major roles as that of a mother, housekeeper and a child rearer. According to the Radical Theory, patriarchy is a result of the exploitation of female biology by men; marriage based family relationships in which men control women's behaviour.

At the beginning of the novel one can notice that Celie is completely devoid of identity. Her husband Mr ___ calls Celie a 'nobody'. Celie is unable to define herself. Her life has been fragmented into pieces, given away to others. In the later stages of the novel, through the narrative, one realizes Celie takes a step forward towards her own self-acceptance when she announces her decision to leave Mr ___ and live with Shug in Memphis. Celie declares, "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook…But I'm here". Initially in the novel Celie does not sign her letters but after a certain point she does so emphasising on her identity through her family relationships, her business, her love, her new place in the world.

The Womanism in The Color Purple brings out the depiction of various women characters which are Celie, Nettie, Shug, Sofia, and Mary Agnes. The bonding between them is also a reason responsible for Celie's metamorphosis into a strong and an independent person. In the novel the tale of Sofia's sisters brings to light the importance of female bonding and the potential power of women. Quilts and quilting play an important role in The Color Purple. They embody the ideal of unity in diversity which is very prominent in Walker's novels. As a truce Sofia and Celie make a quilt of diverse patterns suggesting the above stated idea of unity in diversity. Women's quilting plays the role of creating a female community in a world that represses any form of female expression. Quilting in The Color Purple is a symbol of female bonding, creativity and a manifestation of African American folk culture.

Letters written by Nettie depict the widespread racism of whites and it is also a contrast between the life of blacks in New York and the ones in south. The whites consider the missionary work in Africa just a 'duty' whereas the Africans and American Blacks work for the upliftment of the black people everyday.

In the novel, Nettie, Sofia and Shug go beyond the conventions of being a black woman; Nettie's education allows her to explore the larger world and to become a missionary. Sofia refuses to be controlled by anyone. In her relationship with her husband, Harpo, she goes beyond the gender conventions: she works in the fields while Harpo takes care of the domestic duties. According to the radical-libertarian feminists, men should be permitted to explore their feminine dimensions and women their masculine ones.

No human being should be forbidden the sense of wholeness that comes from combining his or her masculine and feminine dimensions.

The character of Shug Avery represents a total flaunting of the society's prescribed roles for women. Her career as a blues singer enables her to experience much more freedom than the other women bound by their duties. Celie finds Shug to be the most beautiful woman in the world. Celie becomes aware of her own beauty through her relationship with Shug. Celie's recognition of her own beauty is a very important step towards her self independence and self acceptance. The physical love between Shug and Avery is symbolic of the total liberation of women. Shug teaches Celie to love her own body and to follow the intuition of her mind.

Shug totally changes Celie ideas about God. Celie distrust a white, male God because he does not listen to 'poor colored women'. He is neither male nor female, black or white. For her god is present in all creation. In this perception of God, Walker reflects her own understanding. Through the voice of Shug, Walker emphasises the unity of all life. At the end of the novel, Celie is able to address a letter to this new God which completes her journey of searching her identity: "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God".

In the novel, the complete redefining of gender roles also leads to crucial changes in the character of Mr ___. His love for Shug indicates that even he can love and care for someone.

In the end, his attitude regarding women, gender roles is completely changed. He is transformed from anonymous Mr ___ to 'Albert'.

Towards the end of the novel, the female characters of the novel find their footing. Through their quilts, songs they realize their identities and individuality. Shug and Mary Agnes find themselves in music; Sofia and Celie in their Quilts; Nettie in her teaching; Celie also creates her folkpants which is also a culmination of art and free spirit. Walker in a very clever twist uses a traditional white holiday to mark the spiritual, economic, emotional and social independence of Celie.

In search of self-Analysis of the character of celie in the novel color purple

Alice Walker's third novel, The Color Purple, has won both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for Fiction. This novel is in epistolary form and also Black women-centered. The entire novel is written in a series of letters which form the source of information about Celie, the principal character. Celie's letters reflect her internal conflict, her silent sufferings, and the impact of oppression on her spirit as well as her growing internal strength, and final victory.The Color Purple is a song of joy and triumph. It is the triumph of a woman's struggle against racism, sexism, and social determinism ultimately leading to the wholeness of her being. Walker emphasizes on the universal oppression of black women in the novel Color Purple through the character Celie.
The novel unfolds a picture of the hard life of black people, especially that of black women and their quest for freedom.

Walker tries to figure out a way for the realization of the "survival whole" of black people through the novel. It vividly depicts the sufferings of African-American women from patriarchy, sexism and racism. Probing many facets of interrelationships of sexism and racism in the American society, she seeks to mobilize black women from a "suspended" state into an "emergent" one. The theme of

alienation could draw very well in the lives of the characters presented in the novel; especially Celie's. It is very evident from the social set up present in the novel that blacks are not treated well in the society. They are alienated from the white's society. These blacks are not only alienated from the Whites but among the Blacks itself they are treated differently according to their economic level.Alice Walker quotes about her protagonist Celie from the novel Color Purple

. Color Purple, is from an early age exposed to sexual abuse, violence and oppression first by a person she believed to be her father later by a man she is forced to marry" (Walker 3, 102). Search for Self It is one thing to be treated indifferent and alienated from other communities and another to be ill-treated by one's own community. Women being the most suppressed among all are alienated even from themselves. "the woman is repressed as subject and desired as object,"(54)

The main character Celie is sexually assaulted by her father but is not allowed to open her mouth about anything to anyone. "You better not never tell nobody but God"(CP1).She was threatened by her father that if she speak about anything that happened there, her father would leave their mother. Her father is supposed to take care of her; but he molests her for his pleasure and threatens her. Celie's alienation starts from her own family when she was molested by her father and she was forced to keep quiet about that.Celie never knew what it is to express her OWN opinion or to stand against anyone. Fathers are supposed to be protective over his family and considered to be the best friend and role model of girl children. Here Celie's father is nothing alike this supposedly father figure and uses his children for his pleasure and benefit. Celie's mother, though know what is happening around, never really care about what happens to them. Celie is alienated from an atmosphere which is supposed to be cozy and compassionate but turns out to be nightmarish and make her forgotten in her own family.

Celie was even denied of the freedom to raise her child. Immediately she delivered the baby, the baby was taken away from her by her father. Though she bore a child of her own father it is the right for every mother to raise one's child on their own. She was even denied of that right of a mother as women, though she may not know what exactly motherhood is. Celie was not ashamed to have the baby. Yet her father sold her right to be a mother and married off her to another family. This alienation which has started from her family continues to pursue her to her new family too. In reality Celie does not have a family in its true sense until she reunites with her sister. She was abused and regarded as nothing in her own family and consider to be servant and nanny without payment in her husband's house. Though Celie was never outspoken and endure everything as an in Search of Self .

. As a member of the household, Celie was provided with enough food and other substances in her Husband's house.

Though she did not lack any physical comforts, she lived in such subordination that she did not even know her husband's name. This shows that Celie was not accepted in her husband's household and was alienated. Even her step children were cruel to her when she first arrived at the house. Celie, denied of her own motherhood took care of someone else's offspring. She never showed any dislike to her new husband and his children.

Though the children were not that receptive of her, she withstood everything and took care of the children with love and affection. She never discriminated them as someone else's children. There too Celie was alienated as a mother from the children. The children never considered Celie as their real mother and they abused her whenever it was possible. Celie was moreover like a machine or another Thing among her husband's household articles; a nanny to kids, a cook to everyone, sweeper to the house, sex machine to her husband, and an overseer in the field. Her husband never spared her a second glance until he needs her for his pleasure. Though he was officially married to Celie he had tried to rape Celie's sister Nettie.

Celie had to send her sister away from his house in order to save her from his mistreatment. This shows that he is a man of no integrity and has no compassion for his wife. He commits adultery without any shame. He was not even ashamed to take his mistress to his house and askedCelie to take care of her. Celie too more than getting offended by her husband's action, took care of Shug very well even after treated like a vermin by her. After Shug came to his house, he never even considered Celie was living in his house and always spent his time taking care of Shug. He was like a whining puppy in front of Shug Avery and treated her like a queen.

Celie was very much attracted to Shug's confident nature.

She was never worried about her husband's relationship with Shug or the way Shug treated her in the beginning. Celie was even amused by the way Shug looked down on her husband. Though Celie and Shug were not much close in the beginning later they both developed a friendship among them. Celie was never loved or recognized by anyone until she met with Shug Avery. Shug taught Celie to smile without covering her mouth, to love herself and her body, to have self-confidence, and to be uptight about her opinions. Celie had never taken a single decision of her own or never had any opinion of her own until she met with Shug Avery. She believed that her life is to be ruled by others opinions. And she is to live a life of slave. But Shug Avery had changed Celie's notions about her life and other woman's life.

Shug was epitome of confidence and very feminine in her features. She valued her life and believed that she is precious. Having seen Shug's attitude to men and to the society Celie had learned to value her and understood that he is not below anyone. Shug made Celie to stand in front of a mirror and made her to smile without covering her mouth. Though Celie was a little reluctant in the beginning after trying sometime she was able to gain some self-confidence. Shug also made her aware of her physical beauty. Celie thought that she was not beautiful like other women. Shug made her realize that Celie had a wonderful physique by caressing and touching her compassionately. That was the first time Celie ever experienced such a physical love from other person. Celie never knew what real physical pleasure from her husband. She always used to simply lie under him so that he can do his "business".

That was kind of an everyday ritual to her. She never liked her husband groping all over her body and it was a disgusting act for her. She was unfortunate to know her mother's caressing hand and only experienced the forceful alcoholic breath of her abusive father. Thus for Celie physical touch was something that is associated with awful memories.

Shug made her forget all about her bitter experiences and Celie loved the way Shug caressed her. Through this Celie stared to give some credit to her and understood that she is not someone others have to be messing around for their benefit. Shug also urged Celie to not to carry out all the orders by her husband like a slave and have an opinion of her own like Shug. Shug taught her to have respect for herself. Though Celie was received so much love and affection from Shug which she never had received from anyone before, she could not change herself completely. Celie was more independent and free to Shug. But she could not control herself from running around like a slave to her husband. When Shug was not around she had gone back to her old life of being controlled by others.

More than anything Celie was alienated from herself. Celie has never received love or recognition from other people. She never knew how to appreciate herself and love herself. Since she does not give much value to herself, she believed that women have to be under the control of men. She believed that a woman who is not controlled by man is not a good one. Though she admired Shug Avery's outspoken and daring nature Celie could never change her inferior complex completely. She even advise Harpo (elder son of Mr.) to beat his wife Sofia (who was a fiercely independent woman) to make her do what Harpo wanted her to do. Sofia is younger than Celie, which partially explains why she is unable to accept the confining role laid out by the system for the meek black maid and the dutiful black wife. Sofia was meant to rule, not to take orders. She fights back when Harpotries to rule her with an iron fist .She wants a partnership relationship.

The COLOR PURPLE: AN EPISTOLARY NOVEL

The color purple an epistolary novel, made up of letters written by Celie to God and by Nettie to Celie. At the start of the novel, Celie is a fourteen-year-old, vulnerable, abused black girl who addresses her letters to "Dear God." Thirty years later, at the end of the novel, she has forged her own life despite a male-dominated and racially prejudiced society. She fights her way through life and questions everything she has been taught. Her most ambitious challenge is to remake her idea of God as an old, white, bearded male—her antithesis—into a God who encompasses everything and lives within her.

In Celie's first letter to God, we learn that she has been raped by her father, Alfonso. Alfonso told her that she must not tell anybody what happens, except God. Celie falls pregnant twice and is

taken out of school. Alfonso puts the children up for adoption, and they are taken in by a reverend living in the town. After her mother dies, Celie's father marries her off to Mr. Albert.

Married life is also quite painful for Celie. She must raise Albert's children, take full control of any house chores, endure unenjoyable intimate nights with her husband, and undergo regular, unnecessary beatings from him. Things improve for Celie for a short while after her sister Nettie comes to live with her. Unfortunately, Albert (who always preferred Nettie to Celie and asked Nettie to marry him first) refuses to allow Nettie to stay in his house unless she rewards him. When Nettie leaves, he follows her and tries to rape her, but she escapes and seeks out the Reverend, who is raising Celie's children.

She gets a job as a maid with the family. The Reverend, whose name is Samuel, and his wife Corrine are both missionaries preparing to go to Africa. After they find that one of their partner missionaries is unable to go, they offer Nettie the chance to join them in Africa. Nettie is delighted and accepts. When Nettie arrives in Africa she begins to write frequently to Celie. She is constantly worried that her letters will not reach her sister and voices her concern, telling Celie that Albert had promised that she would never hear from her again. Celie accordingly is not given a single letter from Nettie for years.

Albert's eldest son Harpo falls in love with a fifteen-year-old girl named Sofia. She is soon pregnant, and they marry. Harpo tries to dominate Sofia the way his father dominates Celie, but she is stronger and fights back. Eventually Sofia gets fed up with Harpo and leaves him to go live with her sister Odessa.

Albert finds out that his mistress of many years, Shug Avery, is ill. He drives off and brings her home, where Celie is required to take care of her. Celie is happy to do so; she remembers the first time she saw Shug in a photograph before she got married, and she thinks Shug is even more beautiful in the flesh. Shug is ill-tempered and nasty to Celie at first, but she soon starts to like Celie.

Harpo converts his house into a juke joint when Sofia leaves, but no one comes. He decides to ask Shug, who is a well-known jazz singer, if she will sing at his place. She agrees. Albert does not want Celie to go on the first night, but Shug insists that she go. Shug draws a large crowd and dedicates one of her songs to Celie.

Shug plans to leave but, in an attempt to keep her from going, Celie tells her that Albert beats her. Shug promises not to leave until he stops. Shug also learns that Celie has never enjoyed sex. Shug tries to educate Celie about how to get pleasure from sex, but it is soon clear that Celie feels nothing for Albert because she is attracted to women. Later, Celie experiences her first sexual pleasure with Shug.

One day Sofia turns up at Harpo's place with a new boyfriend named Buster. She sees Harpo, they start chatting, and he asks her to dance. His new girlfriend Squeak is very jealous and slaps Sofia. Sofia immediately punches Squeak back, knocking out several of her teeth. Soon after, out in town, Sofia meets the Major and his wife Miss Millie. Quite taken with the children and impressed by their cleanliness, Ms. Millie asks Sofia to work as her nanny. When Sophia refuses, the Mayor slaps her and, in response, Sofia knocks him down. She is arrested and given twelve years in jail. Squeak is sent on a mission to get Sofia out of jail and move her into the Major's house to work as a maid. Squeak goes to visit the warden and is raped by him. The visit is not fruitless, however, and Sofia is moved into the Major's house as a maid. Following her rape, Squeak tells Harpo to call her by her real name, Mary Agnes.

Shug returns to Celie and Albert, bringing with her a new husband named Grady. Shug warns Celie that Albert is hiding letters from her, and they soon discover that Albert has been hiding Nettie's letters all this time. Celie is furious, but Shug keeps her calm. Together they find all of the letters and start to read them.

Nettie's early letters explain the beginning of her missionary trip to Africa with the Reverend and his family. The Olinka tribe there worships the roof leaf the people use for their roofs—without it their homes would be destroyed in the rainy season. The natives view Nettie as a second wife of Samuel, which makes Corrine very jealous. Soon she stops Nettie from meeting with Samuel in private or from borrowing her clothes. After a few years, Corrine comes down with a fever and dies, but she learns the truth about Nettie and her adopted children beforehand: Olivia and Adam are not really Nettie's children by Samuel. Soon after, on a trip to England, Samuel and Nettie are married.

A road is built right through the village of the Olinka by a rubber manufacturing company, and it destroys the entire village. They are forced to relocate to a more barren area with poor water. The new owners of the land charge them for water and for the new tin roofs which the Olinka are forced to use. Many of the people leave to join the mbeles, a group of natives deep in the jungle who are struggling against the white man.

Since arriving in Africa, Adam and Olivia have become very good friends with a young Olinka girl named Tashi. Tashi decides that she must undergo the ritual Olinka scarring ceremony on her face as well as the female circumcision initiation in order to honor her culture. But she becomes so ashamed of the marks that she soon leaves to join the mbeles. Adam goes after her and brings her home, but she refuses to marry him because she is afraid she will not be accepted in the United States. Initially scathing about Tashi's decision to become scarred, Adam now gets his face marked as well so that they look alike and so that she will not feel ashamed. Tashi and Adam are married, and the whole family then makes plans to return home.

After finding her sister's letters, Celie decides to leave home with Shug. She tells Albert she is leaving. When he tries to stop her, she stabs his hand with a fork. Before she leaves, she curses him for the way he has treated her and tells him he will be cursed until he changes his ways. In response he refuses to send her any of Nettie's letters as they keep arriving.

Celie goes to Memphis with Shug, where she starts making a lot of pants. Eventually she gets so good at designing them that she receives regular orders. Shug helps Celie turn the work into a business. Soon after, Celie learns that Alfonso, known to her as Pa, is not her real father after all, just the man who married her mother after her real father (who was a successful businessman) had been killed. After Alfonso dies, Celie receives a phone call telling her that her family home now belongs to Nettie and herself.

Celie fixes up her new house while Shug elopes with her new love interest, a nineteen-year-old flute player named Germaine. Celie is heartbroken, but she meets up with Albert occasionally when she visits Sofia's daughter Henrietta, and they become good friends—he has changed a lot since the old days. Apparently, after Celie left he let everything go and almost died of malnourishment. Harpo finally forced him to send Nettie's letters to Celie, and from that point he began to change his life around.

Shug returns and decides to retire, for her flute player has gone to college. Celie is now financially comfortable. She has her new house and her father's dry goods store (which she also inherited) as well as her business.

Nettie finally returns home with Samuel and with Celie's grown children. Celie and Nettie fall into each other's arms and lie on the ground hugging. Celie writes that she has never felt so young before in her life.

Questions and Answers

1.What did the Minister's wife name Celie's daughter?

2.what does the way the community reacts to shug's illness say about the status of women ?

3.Main conflict in the color purple