

Women's Writing (B.A. English Sem. I)



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UNIT-1

"Daddy"

Themes

Death

Death is an ever-present reality in Plath's poetry, and manifests in several different ways.

One common theme is the void left by her father's death. In "Full Fathom Five," she speaks of his death and burial, mourning that she is forever exiled. In "The Colossus," she tries in vain to put him back together again and make him speak. In "Daddy," she goes further in claiming that she wants to kill him herself, finally exorcising his vicious hold over her mind and her work.

Death is also dealt with in terms of suicide, which eerily corresponds to her own suicide attempts and eventual death by suicide. In "Lady Lazarus," she claims that she has mastered the art of dying after trying to kill herself multiple times. She sneers that everyone is used to crowding in and watching her self-destruct. Suicide, though, is presented as a desirable alternative in many of these works. The poems suggest it would release her from the difficulties of life, and bring her transcendence wherein her mind could free itself from its corporeal cage. This desire is exhilaratingly expressed in "Ariel," and bleakly and resignedly expressed in "Edge." Death is an immensely vivid aspect of Plath's work, both in metaphorical and literal representations.

Victimization

Plath felt like a victim to the men in her life, including her father, her husband, and the great male-dominated literary world. Her poetry can often be understood as response to these feelings of victimization, and many of the poems with a male figure can be interpreted as referring to any or all of these male forces in her life.

In regards to her father, she realized she could never escape his terrible hold over her; she expressed her sense of victimhood in "The Colossus" and "Daddy," using powerful metaphors and comparisons to limn a man who figured heavily in her psyche.

Her husband also victimized her through the power he exerted as a man, both by assuming he should have the literary career and through his infidelity. Plath felt relegated to a subordinate, "feminine" position which stripped from her any autonomy or power. Her poems from the "Colossus" era express her frustration over the strictures under which she operated. For instance, "A Life" evokes a menacing and bleak future for Plath. However, in her later poems, she seems finally able to transcend her status as victim by fully embracing her creative gifts ("Ariel"), metaphorically killing her father ("Daddy"), and committing suicide ("Lady Lazarus", "Edge").

Patriarchy

Plath lived and worked in 1950s/1960s England and America, societies characterized by very strict gender norms. Women were expected to remain safely ensconced in the house, with motherhood as their ultimate joy and goal. Women who ventured into the arts found it difficult to attain much attention for their work, and were often subject to marginalization and disdain. Plath explored and challenged this reductionist tendency through her work, offering poems of

intense vitality and stunning language. She depicted the bleakness of the domestic scene, the disappointment of pregnancy, the despair over her husband's infidelity, her tortured relationship with her father, and her attempts to find her own creative voice amidst the crushing weight of patriarchy. She shied away from using genteel language and avoided writing only of traditionally "female" topics. Most impressively, the work remains poetic and artistic - rather than political - because of her willing to admit ambivalence over all these expectations, admitting that both perspectives can prove a trap.

Nature

Images and allusions to nature permeate Plath's poetry. She often evokes the sea and the fields to great effect. The sea is usually associated with her father; it is powerful, unpredictable, mesmerizing, and dangerous. In "Full Fathom Five," her father is depicted as a sea god. An image of the sea is also used in "Contusion," there suggesting a terrible sense of loss and loneliness.

She also pulled from her personal life, writing of horse-riding on the English fields, in "Sheep in Fog" and "Ariel." In these cases, she uses the activity to suggest an otherworldly, mystical arena in which creative thought or unfettered emotion can be expressed.

Nature is also manifested in the bright red tulips which jolt the listless Plath from her post-operation stupor, insisting that she return to the world of the living. Here, nature is a provoker, an instigator - it does not want her to give up. Nature is a ubiquitous theme in Plath's work; it is a potent force that is sometimes unpredictable, but usually works to encourage her creative output.

The self

Plath has often been grouped into the confessional movement of poetry. One of the reasons for this classification is that she wrote extensively of her own life, her own thoughts, her own worries. Any great artist both creates his or her art and is created by it, and Plath was always endeavoring to know herself better through her writing. She tried to come to terms with her personal demons, and tried to work through her problematic relationships. For instance, she tried to understand her ambivalence about motherhood, and tried to vent her rage at her failed marriage.

However, her exploration of herself can also be understood as an exploration of the idea of the self, as it stands opposed to society as a whole and to other people, whom she did not particularly like. Joyce Carol Oates wrote that even Plath's children seemed to be merely the objects of her perception, rather than subjective extensions of herself. The specifics of Plath's work were drawn from her life, but endeavored to transcend those to ask more universal questions. Most infamously, Plath imagined her self as a Jew, another wounded and persecuted victim. She also tried to engage with the idea of self in terms of the mind and body dialectic. "Edge" and "Sheep in Fog" explore her desire to leave the earthly life, but express some ambivalence about what is to come after. "Ariel" suggests it is glory and oneness with nature, but the other two poems do not seem to know what will happen to the mind/soul once the body is eradicated. This conflict - between the self and the world outside - can be used to understand almost all of Plath's poems.

The Body

Many of Plath's poems deal with the body, in terms of motherhood, wounds, operations, and death.

In "Metaphors," she describes how her body does not feel like it is her own; she is simply a "means" towards delivering a child. In "Tulips" and "A Life," the body has undergone an operation. With the surgery comes an excising of emotion, attachment, connection, and responsibility. The physical cut has resulted in an emotional severing, which is a relief to the depressed woman. "Cut" depicts the thrill Plath feels on almost cutting her own thumb off. It is suggested that she feels more alive as she contemplates her nearly-decapitated thumb, and watches the blood pool on the floor. "Contusion" takes things further - she has received a bruise for some reason, but unlike in "Cut," where she eventually seems to grow uneasy with the wound, she seems to welcome the physical pain, since the bruise suggests an imminent end to her suffering. Suicide, the most profound and dramatic thing one can do to one's own body, is also central to many of her poems.

Overall, it is clear that Plath was constantly discerning the relationship between mind and body, and was fascinated with the implications of bodily pain.

Motherhood

Motherhood is a major theme in Plath's work. She was profoundly ambivalent about this prescribed role for women, writing in "Metaphors" about how she felt insignificant as a pregnant woman, a mere "means" to an end. She lamented how grotesque she looked, and expressed her resignation over a perceived lack of options. However, in "Child," she delights in her child's perception of and engagement with the world. Of course, "Child" ends with the suggestions that she knows her child will someday see the harsh reality of life. Plath did not want her children to be contaminated by her own despair. This fear may also have manifested itself in her last poem, "Edge," in which some critics have discerned a desire to kill her children and take them with her far from the terrors of life. Other poems in her oeuvre express the same tension. Overall, Plath clearly loved her children, but was not completely content in either pregnancy or motherhood.

Summary

"Daddy," comprised of sixteen five-line stanzas, is a brutal and venomous poem commonly understood to be about Plath's deceased father, Otto Plath.

The speaker begins by saying that he "does not do anymore," and that she feels like she has been a foot living in a black shoe for thirty years, too timid to either breathe or sneeze. She insists that she needed to kill him (she refers to him as "Daddy"), but that he died before she had time. She describes him as heavy, like a "bag full of God," resembling a statue with one big gray toe and its head submerged in the Atlantic Ocean. She remembers how she at one time prayed for his return from death, and gives a German utterance of grief (which translates literally to "Oh, you").

She knows he comes from a Polish town that was overrun by "wars, wars, wars," but one of her Polack friends has told her that there are several towns of that name. Therefore, she cannot uncover his hometown, where he put his "foot" and "root."

She also discusses how she could never find a way to talk to him. Even before she could speak, she thought every German was him, and found the German language "obscene." In fact, she felt so distinct from him that she believed herself a Jew being removed to a concentration camp. She started to talk like a Jew and to feel like a Jew in several different ways. She wonders in fact, whether she might actually be a Jew, because of her similarity to a gypsy. To further emphasize her fear and distance, she describes him as the Luftwaffe, with a neat mustache and a bright blue Aryan eye. She calls him a "Panzer-man," and says he is less like God than like the black swastika through which nothing can pass. In her mind, "Every woman adores a Fascist," and the "boot in the face" that comes with such a man.

When she remembers Daddy, she thinks of him standing at the blackboard, with a cleft chin instead of a cleft foot. However, this transposition does not make him a devil. Instead, he is like the black man who "Bit [her] pretty red heart in two." He died when she was ten, and she tried to join him in death when she was twenty. When that attempt failed, she was glued back together. At this point, she realized her course - she made a model of Daddy and gave him both a "Meinkampf look" and "a love of the rack and the screw." She promises him that she is "finally through;" the telephone has been taken off the hook, and the voices can no longer get through to her.

She considers that if she has killed one man, then she has in fact killed two. Comparing him to a vampire, she remembers how he drank her blood for a year, but then realizes the duration was closer to seven years. She tells him he can lie back now. There is a stake in his heart, and the villagers who despised him now celebrate his death by dancing on his corpse. She concludes by announcing, "Daddy, Daddy, you bastard, I'm through."

Analysis

"Daddy" is perhaps Sylvia Plath's best-known poem. It has elicited a variety of distinct reactions, from feminist praise of its unadulterated rage towards male dominance, to wariness at its usage of Holocaust imagery. It has been reviewed and criticized by hundreds and hundreds of scholars, and is upheld as one of the best examples of confessional poetry.

It is certainly a difficult poem for some: its violent imagery, invocation of Jewish suffering, and vitriolic tone can make it a decidedly uncomfortable reading experience. Overall, the poem relates Plath's journey of coming to terms with her father's looming figure; he died when she was eight. She casts herself as a victim and him as several figures, including a Nazi, vampire, devil, and finally, as a resurrected figure her husband, whom she has also had to kill.

Though the final lines have a triumphant tone, it is unclear whether she means she has gotten "through" to him in terms of communication, or whether she is "through" thinking about him. Plath explained the poem briefly in a BBC interview:

The poem is spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. The father died while she thought he was God. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyze each other –she has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it.

In other words, contradiction is at the heart of the poem's meaning. Neither its triumph nor its horror is to be taken as the sum total of her intention. Instead, each element is contradicted by its opposite, which explains how it shoulders so many distinct interpretations.

This sense of contradiction is also apparent in the poem's rhyme scheme and organization. It uses a sort of nursery rhyme, singsong way of speaking. There are hard sounds, short lines, and repeated rhymes (as in "Jew," "through," "do," and "you"). This establishes and reinforces her status as a childish figure in relation to her authoritative father. This relationship is also clear in the name she uses for him - "Daddy"- and in her use of "oo" sounds and a childish cadence. However, this childish rhythm also has an ironic, sinister feel, since the chant-like, primitive quality can feel almost like a curse. One critic wrote that the poem's "simplistic, insistent rhythm is one form of control, the obsessive rhyming and repeated short phrases are others, means by which she attempts to charm and hold off evil spirits." In other words, the childish aspects have a crucial, protective quality, rather than an innocent one.

"Daddy" can also be viewed as a poem about the individual trapped between herself and society. Plath weaves together patriarchal figures – a father, Nazis, a vampire, a husband – and then holds them all accountable for history's horrors. Like "The Colossus," "Daddy" imagines a larger-than-life patriarchal figure, but here the figure has a distinctly social, political aspect. Even the vampire is discussed in terms of its tyrannical sway over a village. In this interpretation, the speaker comes to understand that she must kill the father figure in order to break free of the limitations that it places upon her. In particular, these limitations can be understood as patriarchal forces that enforce a strict gender structure. It has the feel of an exorcism, an act of purification. And yet the journey is not easy. She realizes what she has to do, but it requires a sort of hysteria. In order to succeed, she must have complete control, since she fears she will be destroyed unless she totally annihilates her antagonist.

The question about the poem's confessional, autobiographical content is also worth exploring. The poem does not exactly conform to Plath's biography, and her above-cited explanation suggests it is a carefully-constructed fiction. And yet its ambivalence towards male figures does correspond to the time of its composition - she wrote it soon after learning that her husband Ted Hughes had left her for another woman. Further, the mention of a suicide attempt links the poem to her life.

However, some critics have suggested that the poem is actually an allegorical representation of her fears of creative paralysis, and her attempt to slough off the "male muse." Stephen Gould Axelrod writes that "at a basic level, 'Daddy' concerns its own violent, transgressive birth as a text, its origin in a culture that regards it as illegitimate –a judgment the speaker hurls back on the patriarch himself when she labels *him* a bastard." The father is perceived as an object and as a mythical figure (many of them, in fact), and never really attains any real human dimensions. It is less a person than a stifling force that puts its boot in her face to silence her. From this perspective, the poem is inspired less by Hughes or Otto than by agony over creative limitations in a male literary world. However, even this interpretation begs something of an autobiographical interpretation, since both Hughes and her father were representations of that world.

Plath's usage of Holocaust imagery has inspired a plethora of critical attention. She was not Jewish but was in fact German, yet was obsessed with Jewish history and culture. Several of her poems utilize Holocaust themes and imagery, but this one features the most striking and disturbing ones. She imagines herself being taken on a train to "Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen," and starting to talk like a Jew and feel like a Jew. She refers to her father as a "panzer-man," and notes his Aryan looks and his "Luftwaffe" brutality. One of the leading articles on this topic, written by Al Strangeways, concludes that Plath was using her poetry to understand the connection between history and myth, and to stress the voyeurism that is an implicit part of remembering. Plath had studied the Holocaust in an academic context, and felt a connection to it; she also felt like a victim, and wanted to combine the personal and public in her work to cut

through the stagnant double-talk of Cold War America. She certainly uses Holocaust imagery, but does so alongside other violent myths and history, including those of Electra, vampirism, and voodoo. Strangeways writes that, "the Holocaust assumed a mythic dimension because of its extremity and the difficulty of understanding it in human terms, due to the mechanical efficiency with which it was carried out, and the inconceivably large number of victims." In other words, its shocking content is not an accident, but is rather an attempt to consider how the 20th century's great atrocity reflects and escalates a certain human quality.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine that any of Sylvia Plath's poems could leave the reader unmoved. "Daddy" is evidence of her profound talent, part of which rested in her unabashed confrontation with her personal history and the traumas of the age in which she lived. That she could write a poem that encompasses both the personal and historical is clear in "Daddy."

"Lady Lazarus"

Summary

"Lady Lazarus" is a poem commonly understood to be about suicide. It is narrated by a woman, and mostly addressed to an unspecified person.

The narrator begins by saying she has "done it again." Every ten years, she manages to commit this unnamed act. She considers herself a walking miracle with bright skin, her right foot a "paperweight," and her face as fine and featureless as a "Jew linen". She address an unspecified enemy, asking him to peel the napkin from her face, and inquiring whether he is terrified by the features he sees there. She assures him that her "sour breath" will vanish in a day.

She is certain that her flesh will soon be restored to her face after having been sacrificed to the grave, and that she will then be a smiling, 30 year- old woman. She will ultimately be able to die nine times, like a cat, and has just completed her third death. She will die once each decade. After each death, a "peanut-crunching crowd" shoves in to see her body unwrapped. She addresses the crowd directly, showing them she remains skin and bone, unchanged from who she was before.

The first death occurred when she was ten, accidentally. The second death was intentional - she did not mean to return from it. Instead, she was as "shut as a seashell" until she was called back by people who then picked the worms off her corpse. She does not specifically identify how either death occurred.

She believes that "Dying / Is an art, like everything else," and that she does it very well. Each time, "it feels real," and is easy for her. What is difficult is the dramatic comeback, the return to the same place and body, occurring as it does in broad daylight before a crowd's cry of "A miracle!" She believes people should pay to view her scars, hear her heart, or receive a word, touch, blood, hair or clothes from her.

In the final stanzas, she addresses the listener as "Herr Dockter" and "Herr Enemy," sneering that she is his crowning achievement, a "pure gold baby." She does not underestimate his concern, but is bothered by how he picks through her ashes. She insists there is nothing there but soap, a wedding ring, and a gold filling. She warns "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" to beware of her because she is going to rise out of the ash and "eat men like air."

Analysis

"Lady Lazarus" is a complicated, dark, and brutal poem originally published in the collection *Ariel*. Plath composed the poem during her most productive and fecund creative period. It is considered one of Plath's best poems, and has been subject to a plethora of literary criticism since its publication. It is commonly interpreted as an expression of Plath's suicidal attempts and impulses. Its tone veers between menacing and scathing, and it has drawn attention for its use of Holocaust imagery, similar to "Daddy." The title is an allusion to the Biblical character, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

The standard interpretation of the poem suggests that it is about multiple suicide attempts. The details can certainly be understood in this framework. When the speaker says she "has done it again," she means she has attempted suicide for the third time, after one accidental attempt and one deliberate attempt in the past. Each attempt occurred in a different decade, and she is now 30 years old. Now that she has been pulled back to life from this most recent attempt, her "sour breath / Will vanish in a day," and her flesh will return to her bones. However, this recovery is presented as a failure, whereas the suicide attempts are presented as accomplishments - "Dying is an art" that she performs "exceptionally well." She seems to believe she will reach a perfection through escaping her body.

By describing dying as an art, she includes a spectator to both her deaths and resurrections. Because the death is a performance, it necessarily requires others. In large part, she kills herself to punish them for driving her to it. The eager "peanut-crunching crowd" is invited but criticized for its voyeuristic impulse. The crowd could certainly be understood to include the reader himself, since he reads the poem to explore her dark impulses. She assumes that her voyeurs are significantly invested - they would pay the "large charge" to see her scars and heart.

However, she imbues this impulse with a harsh criticism by comparing the crowd to the complacent Germans who stood aside while the Jews were thrown into concentration camps. Further, the crowd ultimately proves less an encouragement than a burden when they also attend the resurrection. She despises this second part of the process, and resents the presence of others at that time. Whether this creates a vicious circle, in which that resentment is partially responsible for the subsequent attempt, is implied but not explicitly stated. Critic Robert Bagg explores the speaker's contradictory feelings towards the crowd by writing that Plath "is not bound by any metaphysical belief in the self's limitations. Instead of resisting the self's antagonists she derives a tremendous thrill from throwing her imagination into the act of self-obliteration." She can destroy her body, but her imaginative self remains a performer, always aware of the effect she has on others.

The poem can also be understood through a feminist lens, as a demonstration of the female artist's struggle for autonomy in a patriarchal society. Lynda K. Bundtzen writes that "the female creation of a male-artist god is asserting independent creative powers." From this perspective, "Lady Lazarus" is not merely a confessional poem detailing depressive feelings, but is also a statement on how the powerful male figure usurps Plath's creative powers but is defeated by her rebirth. Though Lady Lazarus knows that "Herr Doktor" will claim possession of her body and remains after forcing her suicide, she equally believes she will rise and "eat men like air." Her creative powers can be stifled momentarily, but will always return stronger.

The poem can also be understood in a larger context, as a comment on the relationship between poet and audience in a society that, as Pamela Annas claims, has separated creativity and consumption. The crowd views Lady Lazarus/the poet/Plath as an object, and therefore does

not recognize her as a human being. Plath reflects this through her multiple references to body parts separated from the whole. From this interpretation, Lady Lazarus's suicide then becomes "an assertion of wholeness, an act of self-definition, and a last desperate act of contempt toward the peanut-crunching crowd." The only way she can keep herself intact is to destroy herself, and she does this rather than be turned into commodities. Though "Herr Docktor" will peruse her remains for commodities, she will not have been defeated because of her final act.

As has often been the case in Plath's poems, the Holocaust imagery has drawn much attention from critics and readers. It is quite profuse in this poem. Lady Lazarus addresses a man as "Herr Dokter," "Herr Enemy," "Herr God," and "Herr Lucifer." She describes her face as a "Nazi lampshade" and as a "Jew linen." As previously described, one effect of these allusions is to implicate the reader, make him or her complicit in passive voyeurism by comparing him or her to the Germans who ignored the Holocaust. However, they also serve to establish the horrific atmosphere than be understood as patriarchy, as a society of consumers, or as simply cruel humans. No matter how one interprets the crowd in the poem, they complicate the poem's meaning so that it is a sophisticated exploration of the responsibility we have for each other's unhappiness, rather than simply a dire, depressive suicide note.

UNIT-2 The Color Purple

Character List

Celie

The novel consists of Celie's diary entries, which begin when she is fourteen years old and end when she is forty-four. As readers of Celie's entries, we are closest to her throughout and see the world predominantly through her eyes. She starts to write after she is raped by her father, who tells her that the only person she is allowed to tell is God. She begins by addressing her entries to God. Years later, when she receives her first letter from sister Nettie, the entries are made up of her letters to Nettie and the letters she receives from Nettie. By the end of the novel, thirty years after her first entry, Celie has modified her address from "Dear God" to "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God." She has learned to accept the world and her place in it and has learned about her own faith and religious beliefs--uniquely hers, they are not the images of God she was taught to accept. Initially a very timid, vulnerable young girl, she is not only raped by her father but also, later, beaten by her husband. But Celie gains confidence and succeeds through the opportunities she takes advantage of, and she learns to love and be loved.

Nettie

Nettie is Celie's younger sister. Nettie is intelligent, resilient, and completely loyal to Celie. As a young girl, she escapes a lot of the difficulties that Celie goes through; she is not raped by their father, and when their father does show an undue interest in her, Celie protects her. She is able to stay at school whereas Celie is taken out when she gets pregnant. Nettie takes full advantage of her education and works very hard, knowing that this is her opportunity to escape. She shares her wealth of knowledge with Celie when they are together, and when she leaves on her missionary voyage to Africa, she writes to Celie religiously. Along with Shug, she is Celie's closest friend. Nettie is dedicated to teaching others and grateful for meeting the Reverend Samuel and his family, who treat her as part of their family and take her to Africa with them. She spends most of her life caring for Samuel's adopted children, who are really

Celie's children, and brings them home safely to Celie after thirty years of separation. Nettie's letters are among the diary entries in the novel so that we have access to Nettie's experiences and thoughts in the same way that we experience Celie's.

Alfonso (Fonso/Pa)

The man whom Celie and Nettie call Pa. He rapes CELIA when she is fourteen years old because his wife, who is ill, will not sleep with him. He instigates Celie's letter-writing by telling Celie that she must be silent about the rape. He is a controlling, selfish, and weak man without a conscience. He pushes the marriage between Celie and Mr. _____ by refusing to allow Nettie to marry him. He marries again after Celie's mother dies, and he lives with his new wife in the family home. Toward the end of the novel, Nettie finds out that Pa is not actually their father. Their real father was killed by a white businessman who felt threatened by their father's entrepreneurial success. Alfonso married their mother after their father died and raised the children as his own, living in their property for years afterward. Finally confronted by Celie at the end of the novel, all he says to her is, "now you know." He dies at the end of the novel.

Mr. _____

Mr. Albert _____ is often described as a very handsome man. He appears to want a conventional home with upright standards--a mother for his children and a wife to look after the house--but he is never really happy with the conventional standards of others. He is in love with Shug Avery and has been for many years before we meet him, but he never marries her because of the public's (especially his father's) opinion of her. Caring only for Shug (he cries once in the novel because he is upset that nobody fights for Shug), he stubbornly sticks to old-fashioned views of women and of male authority without taking the time to understand how this is affecting his family. He is a coward for choosing the life he leads and is unhappy because of it, taking it out on his family. He hides the letters Nettie sends to Celie and prevents communication between them for years. When he finally hands the letters over, he begins his life afresh and starts to listen to people and to forge relationships with people he has never taken the time to get to know.

Carrie and Kate

Albert's sisters. Although we meet the sisters only briefly, they give us a good idea of the values Albert was brought up with: they gossip condescendingly to Celie about Albert's love affair with Shug and about how they thought Annie Julia was a bad housekeeper. Kate visits the house again by herself and insists that Celie be bought new clothes. Kate takes Celie clothes shopping herself, marking the first attempt to make Celie comfortable in Albert's home. The introduction of this bold female into the house marks the beginning of change away from male dominance; it signals very clearly that Albert will have to fight to maintain his role.

Harpo

Harpo is a sensitive boy. He is only twelve when Celie first meets him, when he throws stones at her. At this stage, he is clearly protective of his mother and does not want Celie to replace her. He is found crying a couple of times by Celie, once after a nightmare of his mother dying in his arms and the other time because Sofia does not do what he tells her to do. He finds happiness young and is too ignorant to know he is happy. When he and Sofia get married and

have their children, he works hard, whistling the while but, unsure of what his role should be, relies on his father for advice and learns from his father's relationship with Celie that he should be dominant. This pattern leads to marital disaster. Harpo is not brave enough to follow what he feels is right. He is a bright boy, though, who fulfills his entrepreneurial potential by building his juke joint.

Shug Avery (Queen Honeybee)

Shug is a well-known Bessie Smith jazz singer. She arrives at Mr. _____'s house at least six years after Celie moves in, but she is introduced to us much earlier in the novel. Celie's sixth diary entry records her first glimpse of Shug in a photograph. Celie writes that she is "the most beautiful woman I ever saw." She is independent, single-minded, and the strongest and most outrageous female character in the novel. She is sexually free and unashamed of it, enjoying Albert's company whether married or not. She can be mean; she remarks how ugly Celie is. And she can be selfish; she runs off with Germaine at the end of the novel. But she exudes life and brightens up the world around her. When she arrives at Albert's home, she is wearing a red wool dress, and when she sings at Harpo's, Celie describes her outfit as "a skintight red dress look like the straps made out of two pieces of thread." The old dress she gives Celie for her quilt is a sunny yellow color. Shug brings color and opportunity to the people she meets. She brings Celie and Albert love, she brings Harpo income, she inspires others to sing, and she brings entertainment to all her fans.

Sofia Butler

Harpo meets Sofia in church when she is fifteen, but even at that age, she is "strong and ruddy looking." She is confident and not intimidated by men who think they have power over her. She is loyal and devoted to Harpo, but when he starts treating her badly, she does what she thinks is best and leaves him. She has huge support from her sisters and looks like she has potential to be successful--she is practical and strong willed--but she has a fiery temper. After she is put in jail, she loses her fighting spirit. She also is changed after her time at Miss Millie's; she resents white people and the way she has been treated, and she retreats into a shell. When she gets back together with Harpo at the end of the novel, we see a gleam of hope that she might find her spirit again.

Aunt Odessa

One of Sofia's sisters. Like Sofia, she is strong and practical. She is described by Harpo as a militant mother. She supports her sister and looks after her children when she is in jail. Not a central member of Celie's family but a member nonetheless, she represents the depth of female support in this community.

Old Mr. _____

Albert's father. He only appears once in the novel. His attitude to Albert is scathing. He reprimands his son for his behavior with Shug Avery and tells Celie she has his sympathy. Inadvertently, he brings Celie and Albert closer together, uniting them in their love for Shug.

Henry Broadnax (Buster)

Sofia's second boyfriend. He has one child with Sofia. He allows her to remain independent--his job, he says, is to take her where she wants to go and to love her--and he does not fight Sofia's battles for her.

Mary Agnes (Squeak)

Harpo's girlfriend after Sofia leaves. Typically, Harpo is dominant in the relationship, and she has to stand up to Sofia herself without Harpo's support. This leads to Sofia knocking her teeth out. She seems meek and ineffectual to begin with, but everything changes after she is raped by the warden. She learns resilience, insists that Harpo call her Mary Agnes, and begins to sing.

Major and Miss Millie

The Major is a bully who uses his power as a white male to physically intimidate and then abuse Sofia because he is insulted by her insolence. Along with the warden and the businessmen who kill Celie's father, the Major contributes to a very bleak picture of the white males in the community. Miss Millie is insensitive but essentially harmless. Not realizing her condescension to Sofia's family, she feels insulted when Sofia refuses her offer and then happily accepts Sofia's sentence as maid in her house. Typically separated from the black community, Miss Millie does not even think to question the status quo let alone resist it.

Eleanor Jane

Miss Millie's daughter, who does her best to support Sofia and make Sofia's life easier. She wants Sofia to care about her in the way that she cares about Sofia--after all, she has been brought up by Sofia. Unfortunately for Eleanor Jane, her efforts to persuade Sofia are fruitless. Nevertheless she retains her kindness and makes food for Sofia's daughter Henrietta when she is ill. Eleanor Jane represents a positive step for the future, for she is more intelligent and forward-thinking than either of her parents.

Henrietta

Sofia's youngest child. She is unruly and mischievous and has a dangerous disease. Characteristic of her mother when she was young, Henrietta puts up a brave fight and is still going by the end of the novel.

Corrine

Happily married to Samuel, the only thing missing in her life is children. When she adopts Adam and Olivia, she asks for nothing else, for she now has a completely happy family. Hardworking and religious, Corrine succumbs to suspicion and jealousy when she sees how well Nettie and Samuel get on and how much the children look like Nettie. She dies content that Nettie is not their mother--but has spent many anxious years thinking that Nettie was.

Samuel

The Reverend Samuel is dedicated to his missionary duties and works hard to bring help to the Olinka tribe. Gentle and sensitive, he takes Nettie into his home thinking she has come in search of Adam and Olivia. Happy in his first marriage but hurt by Corrine's accusations, he marries Nettie after years of friendship once Corrine dies.

Olivia

Intelligent and independent, Olivia does not immediately fit into the Olinka way of life. She does not find love during the course of the novel, but this is presented as a good thing, for the men she lives with in Africa expect her to be subservient and this is something she adamantly refuses.

Adam

A passionate young boy who loves Tashi but finds the culture she comes from difficult to accept. He cannot bear to think she will undergo the scarring and the female initiation ceremony. When he realizes how much he loves her, he decides to join her and have the scarring done himself.

Catherine and Tashi

Catherine is a typical Olinka mother and wife when we meet her; she does not doesn't want her daughter Tashi to go to school. After years with Nettie and Olivia, Catherine realizes that education is important and that she is free to change her views once her husband is dead. Tashi is torn between her Olinka culture and the more modern world that Nettie and Olivia introduce to her. Not officially educated, Tashi learns from Olivia but succumbs to the tribal ceremonies of scarring and the female initiation ceremony.

Doris Baines

The white missionary whom Nettie and Samuel meet on their way to England. Unusually forward thinking for her time, Doris has contributed hugely to communities in Africa as well as helping individuals by sending them to England for their education. She has adopted Harold, the African boy with whom she is traveling, as her grandson. She sees past color and convention and is a key contributor to change.

Summary

The Color Purple is 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 roofleaf 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.

UNIT-3 The Yellow Wallpaper

Character List

Narrator

Modelled after Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the narrator in “The Yellow Wallpaper” is a young wife and mother who has recently begun to suffer symptoms of depression and anxiety. Although she does not believe that anything is wrong with her, John, her physician husband, diagnoses her with neurasthenia and prescribes several months of S. Weir Mitchell’s famed “rest cure.” In addition to being confined to the nursery in their rented summer home, the narrator is expressly forbidden to write or engage in any creative activity. The narrator desperately wants to please her husband and assume her role as an ideal mother and wife, but she is unable to balance her husband’s needs with her desire to express her creativity. While attempting to adhere to John’s wishes for the most part, the narrator secretly writes in her journal, seeking solace from her extreme loneliness and inactivity. Over the course of the story, the narrator also begins to find comfort in the hideous yellow wallpaper that covers the walls of the nursery. She gradually begins to see a female figure trapped behind the bar-like pattern of the wallpaper and realizes that both she and the figure are suffering from oppression and imprisonment. As the narrator becomes more and more preoccupied with the pattern of the wallpaper, she forgets her desire to become the perfect wife and mother and thinks only of a way to release the imprisoned woman from the wallpaper. Gilman’s increasingly choppy prose and disjointed stream-of-consciousness express the narrator’s growing insanity with each passing day. By the end of the story, the narrator has lost all sense of reality, and John discovers her creeping around the perimeter of the nursery, following the endless pattern of the wallpaper. While she discards her duty as a wife and mother, as well as her sanity, the narrator ultimately triumphs in her personal quest to release the woman in the wallpaper - and thus liberates herself.

In some editions of the story, the narrator declares her liberation from the wallpaper and the rational world by proclaiming, "I've got out at last...in spite of you and Jane." Some scholars argue that "Jane" is simply a misprint for "Jennie," John's sister and housekeeper. Yet, it is also possible that "Jane" is the actual name of the narrator, a character who remains a nameless stereotype of female social oppression for the entirety of the story. If this "Jane" is, in fact, the narrator, then Gilman suggests that the narrator's liberation from sanity and the bars of the wallpaper also means an "escape" from her own sense of self.

John

The husband of the narrator, John is a practical physician who believes that his wife is suffering from nothing more than a “slight hysterical tendency.” He prescribes the “rest cure,” confining the narrator to the nursery and forbidding her to exercise her creative imagination in any way. His antagonism toward her imagination stems from his own rationality and personal anxiety about creativity; he scoffs openly at the narrator’s fancies and is incapable of understanding her true nature. Throughout the story, he treats her in an infantile manner, referring to her as his “blessed little goose” and “little girl.” Moreover, when the narrator attempts to discuss her unhappiness with the situation in a mature manner, he refuses to accept her as an equal and simply carries her back up to the nursery for more bed rest. He is fixed in his authoritative position as husband and doctor and cannot adapt his strategy to account for her opinion on the matter. He believes in a strict, paternalistic divide between men and women; men work outside

of the home, as he does, while women like Jennie, his sister, and Mary, the nanny, tend to the house.

Although John is set up as the villain of the story, he can also be seen as a more sympathetic character. He clearly loves his wife and relies on her for his own happiness. Yet he is unable to reconcile her creative desires with his own rationality or the chauvinistic expectations of the time period. His wife is unable or unwilling to adhere to the ideal model of domesticity expressed by the 19th-century society, and John is at a loss as to what to do. His solution is to use Weir Mitchell's rest cure to "fix" his wife, and he does not realize that his own actions push her over the edge of insanity.

Woman in the wallpaper

Although the narrator eventually believes that she sees many women in the yellow wallpaper, she centers on one in particular. The woman appears to be trapped within the bar-like pattern of the wallpaper, and she shakes the pattern as she tries to break out. The woman is most active by moonlight, a symbol of femininity and a sign that John's strict daytime regimen is no longer applicable to the narrator.

Over time, as the narrator's insanity deepens, she identifies completely with this woman and believes that she, too, is trapped within the wallpaper. As a ghostly counterpart of the narrator, the woman in the wallpaper also symbolizes female imprisonment within the domestic sphere. Unable to break free from the room, like the narrator, the woman in the wallpaper has only the symbolic option of tending to the house as a wife or mother. The woman's habit of "creeping" suggests that she must still be secretive after she has achieved her liberation. Social norms will not accept her freedom from the domestic sphere, and so she must creep furtively and lie in wait in the shadows of the wallpaper.

Jennie

Jennie is the narrator's sister-in-law and takes care of the house during the narrator's illness. Although she does not play an active role in the narrative, she is a constant reminder of the narrator's inability to assume her proper role as John's wife and housekeeper. Always maintaining a passive position under John's supervision, Jennie symbolizes the happily domesticated woman who does not find anything wrong with her domestic prison. However, Gilman also suggests that there may be more to Jennie than meets the eye: the narrator acknowledges that Jennie is aware of the narrator's growing interest in the wallpaper and even discusses her future with John.

Mary

Mary takes care of the narrator and John's baby. With her name a possible allusion to the Virgin Mary, Mary is the perfect mother-surrogate for the narrator, an idealized maternal figure whose only concern is her child. Like Jennie, she also symbolizes the happily domesticated woman. Although Mary is even less present in the text than Jennie, she still serves to remind the narrator of her personal failings as a 19th century woman, particularly in terms of her own child.

Summary

The narrator and her physician husband, John, have rented a mansion for the summer so that she can recuperate from a “slight hysterical tendency.” Although the narrator does not believe that she is actually ill, John is convinced that she is suffering from “neurasthenia” and prescribes the “rest cure” treatment. She is confined to bed rest in a former nursery room and is forbidden from working or writing. The spacious, sunlit room has yellow wallpaper – stripped off in two places – with a hideous, chaotic pattern. The narrator detests the wallpaper, but John refuses to change rooms, arguing that the nursery is best-suited for her recovery.

Two weeks later, the narrator’s condition has worsened. She feels a constant sense of anxiety and fatigue and can barely muster enough energy to write in her secret journal. Fortunately, their nanny, Mary, takes care of their baby, and John's sister, Jennie, is a perfect housekeeper. The narrator's irritation with the wallpaper grows; she discovers a recurring pattern of bulbous eyes and broken necks, as well as the faint image of a skulking figure stuck behind the pattern. As more days pass, the narrator grows increasingly anxious and depressed. The wallpaper provides her only stimulation, and she spends the majority of her time studying its confusing patterns which, as she asserts, are almost as “good as gymnastics.” The image of the figure stooping down and “creeping” around behind the wallpaper becomes clearer each day. By moonlight, she can see very distinctly that the figure is a woman trapped behind bars. The narrator attempts to convince John to leave the house for a visit with relatives, but he refuses, and the narrator does not feel comfortable confiding in him about her discoveries in the wallpaper. Moreover, she is becoming paranoid that John and Jennie are also interested in the wallpaper and is determined that only she will uncover its secrets.

The narrator's health improves as her interest in the wallpaper deepens. She suspects that Jennie and John are observing her behavior, but her only concern is that they become obstacles to her and the wallpaper. She also begins to notice that the distinct “yellow smell” of the wallpaper has spread over the house, following her even when she goes for rides. At night, the woman in the wallpaper shakes the bars in the pattern violently as she tries to break through them, but she cannot break free. The swirling pattern has strangled the heads of the many women who have tried to break through the wallpaper. The narrator begins to hallucinate, believing that she has seen the woman creeping surreptitiously outside in the sunlight. The narrator intends to peel off the wallpaper before she leaves the house in two days.

That night, the narrator helps the woman in the wallpaper by peeling off the wallpaper halfway around the room. The next day, Jennie is shocked, but the narrator convinces her that she only stripped the wallpaper out of spite. Jennie is able to understand the desire to peel off the ugly wallpaper and does not tell John that anything is out of the ordinary. The next night, the narrator locks herself in her room and continues stripping the wallpaper. She hears shrieks within the wallpaper as she tears it off. She contemplates jumping out of a window, but the bars prevent that; besides, she is afraid of all of the women that are creeping about outside of the house. When morning comes, the narrator has peeled off all of the wallpaper and begun to creep around the perimeter of the room. John eventually breaks into the room, but the narrator does not recognize him. She informs him that she has peeled off most of the wallpaper so that now no one can put her back inside the walls. John faints, and the narrator continues creeping around the room over him.

UNIT-4 A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

Character List

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

A widely respected and read 18th-century Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer. His political philosophy was influential for the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. His novel *Émile: or, On Education* was a treatise on the education of the whole person for citizenship. Wollstonecraft painstakingly critiques many of Rousseau's ideas regarding women and their "nature" in *Vindication*.

Edmund Burke

An Irish politician, author, orator, political theorist and philosopher. He served in the House of Commons as a member of the Whig Party for many years, supported the American Revolution, and opposed the French Revolution. His conservative (classical liberal) *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, concerned about the tyranny of new democracies that try to remake longstanding social traditions, garnered a response from Thomas Paine (*The Rights of Man*) and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

John Milton

An English poet and civil servant for the Commonwealth of England, best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. He was a man of letters and worked under Oliver Cromwell. He is touted as a man of genius by Wollstonecraft, although she gives some criticism of his apparent views on women.

Dr. Gregory

A Scottish physician, medical writer, and moralist whose book *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774) was widely read in the 18th century. Wollstonecraft attacked his promulgations of women's cultivation of beauty and eschewing of learning.

Dr. Priestley

An 18th-century English theologian, clergyman, natural philosopher, chemist, educator, and political theorist. He published over 150 works and is usually credited with the discovery of oxygen by isolating it in its gaseous state.

Louis XVI

The King of France from 1643 to his death in 1715. His long reign was characterized by extravagance and absolute rule.

Adam Smith

An 18th-century Scottish social philosopher and economist. His main works included *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, the latter being one of the most influential works on economics ever published and a classic explanation of capitalism.

Francis Bacon

A 17th-century English philosopher, statesman, scientist, lawyer, jurist, and author. He was active in politics and was on the forefront of science, pioneering the scientific method. He is sometimes referred to as the father of empiricism.

Samuel Richardson

An extremely popular 18th-century writer. He is best known for his epistolary novels: *Pamela: Or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa: Or the History of a Young Lady* (1748), and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753).

Dr. James Fordyce

An 18th-century Scottish Presbyterian minister and poet best known for his collection of sermons *Sermons for Young Women* (1766), or *Fordyce's Sermons*.

James Hervey

An 18th-century English clergyman and writer.

Madame de Stael

A Swiss, French-speaking author who lived in Paris and other European cities at the turn of the 19th century. She was influential on literary tastes at the time.

Madame Genlis

A French harpist, writer, and educator. In Britain she was best known for her children's books. She wrote over 80 works, including novels and educational tracts.

Summary

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is a treatise on overcoming the ways in which women in her time are oppressed and denied their potential in society, with concomitant problems for their households and society as a whole. The dedication is to Charles M. Talleyrand-Périgord, the late bishop of Autun whose views on female education were distasteful to Wollstonecraft. The introduction sets out her view that neglect of girls' education is largely to blame for the condition of adult women. They are treated as subordinate beings who care only about being attractive, elegant, and meek, they buy into this oppression, and they do not have the tools to vindicate their fundamental rights or the awareness that they are in such a condition.

In the first chapter Wollstonecraft promotes reason and rationality and discusses the deleterious effects of absolute, arbitrary political power and the vices associated with riches and hereditary honors. Chapters two and three detail the various ways in which women are rendered subordinate. They are taught that their looks are of paramount concern, and they tend to cultivate weakness and artificiality to appear pleasing to others. They are seldom independent and tend not to exercise reason. Writers like Rousseau and Dr. Gregory desire that women remain virtual slaves, enshrined in the home and concerned only with their "natural" proclivities of being modest, chaste, and beautiful. Women are taught to indulge their emotions and thus have unhappy marriages because passion cannot be sustained. Virtue should not be relative to gender; as both men and women were created by God and have souls, they have the same kind of propensity to exercise reason and develop virtue. Female dependence as seen in her day is not *natural*. Women's confinement in the home and inability to participate in the public sphere results in their insipidness and pettiness. Wollstonecraft wants to inspire a "revolution in female manners."

In chapter four she excoriates the premise that pleasure is the ultimate goal of a woman's life. Reason and common sense are usually ignored in favor of emotion and sentiment, and young girls are taught every early to concern themselves only with their persons. Such trends are problematic for mothers, who either spoil their children or ignore them. In addition, marriage should resemble friendship because husband and wife should be companions. In chapter five Wollstonecraft lambastes many of the writers who have perpetuated these ideas. In chapter six she explains the importance of early associations for the development of character; for women, false notions and early impressions are not tempered by knowledge or nuance. Girls begin to prefer rakes to decent men.

In chapters seven and eight Wollstonecraft addresses the subject of modesty and explains that modesty is not the same as humility. The women who exercise the most reason are the most modest. Women's modesty can only improve when their bodies are strengthened and their minds enlarged by active exertions. Women's morality is undermined, however, when reputation is upheld as the most significant thing they should keep intact. Men place the burden of upholding chastity on a woman's shoulders, yet men also must be chaste.

In chapter nine Wollstonecraft calls for more financial independence for women, expresses the need for duty and activity in the public sphere, argues for the need to be a good citizen as well as a good mother, and describes the various pursuits women might take on in society. Chapters ten and eleven concern parenting duties, repeating that there must be reforms in education for women to be good mothers who neither tyrannize over their children nor spoil them. Chapter twelve concerns Wollstonecraft's ideas for education reform. These include a conflation of public and private education, co-education, and a more democratic, participatory educational structure.

Chapter thirteen sums up her arguments. She details the various ways in which women indulge their silliness. These include visiting mediums, fortune tellers, and healers; reading stupid novels; engaging in rivalries with other women; immoderately caring about dress and manners; and indulging their children and treating them like idols. Women and men must have things in common to have successful marriages. Overall, women's faults do not result of a natural deficiency but stem from their low status in society and insufficient education.

UNIT-5 DRAUPADI

Draupadi is a short story of around 20 pages originally written in Bengali by Mahasweta Devi. It was anthologised in the collection, *Breast Stories*, translated to English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

Devi situates her story against the Naxalite movement (1967-71), the Bangladesh Liberation War (1971) of West Bengal and the ancient Hindu epic of Mahabharata, engaging with the complex politics of Bengali identity and Indian nationhood. The tribal uprising against wealthy landlords brought upon the fury of the government which led to *Operation Bakuli* that sought to kill the so-called tribal rebels.

Draupadi is a story about Dopdi Mehjen, a woman who belongs to the Santhal tribe of West Bengal. She is a Robin Hood-like figure who with her husband, Dhulna, murders wealthy landlords and usurp their wells, which is the primary source of water for the village. The government attempts to subjugate these tribal rebel groups through many means: kidnapping, murder, rape. Dopdi is captured by Officer Senanayak who instructs the army officers to rape her to extract information about the rebel uprising.

Ironically, the same officers who violated her body, insist that she covers up once she is 'done with'. Intransigently, Dopdi rips off her clothes and walks towards officer Senanayak, "...naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts. Two wounds". Senanayak is shocked by her defiance as she stands before him "with her hand on her hip" as "the object of [his] search" and exclaims, "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed."

The story is stripped away from the Mahabharata's grand narrative and royal attributes and situated in Champabhum, a village in West Bengal. The 'cheelharan' of *Draupadi* is reconstructed in Devi's story, subverting the narrative where *Draupadi* is rescued by a man, Lord Krishna. Instead, in Devi's narrative, Dopdi is not rescued, yet she continues to exercise her agency by refusing to be a victim, leaving the armed men "terribly afraid".

Dopdi is a woman of strong mind and will as she defied the shame associated with rape and sexual abuse, which is extremely relevant to India today. Especially in the onset of the #MeToo movement where many brave women came forward with their stories.

Due to reading *Draupadi* with the knowledge that it was translated by Spivak I was constantly reminiscent of her essays: *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1983) and *The Trajectory of Subaltern in my Work* (2003). Devi's representation of Dopdi encapsulates what Spivak means by a gendered subaltern. Through the dislocation of the epic princess *Draupadi* to the tribal rebel Dopdi, Devi is able to present voices and perspectives otherwise unspoken and unheard of.

The Hindu mythology of the subaltern female body which is never questioned and only ever exploited is rejected by Devi. For example Goddess Durga in her form of Sati, 'a good wife,' self-immolates her body in pain over her father's abuse of her husband, Lord Shiva. Enraged, Lord Shiva dances over the universe with Sati's body on his shoulder. Lord Vishnu then dismembers her body, and her body parts are strewn over the universe. Each relic of Sati's body becomes a place for worship and pilgrimage. Also in the Mahabharata, *Draupadi*'s marriage to all the Pandavas and her re-virginisation is another way in which the female body is exploited. In both, the case of Durga and *Draupadi*, what happens to their body is a result of patriarchal voices which denies them agency.

The character of Dopdi allows us to view the subaltern's identity vis-à-vis the hegemonic structures seen through the policemen and Officer Senanayek. Thus, Dopdi's body becomes a site of both the exertion of authoritarian power and of gendered resistance. Dopdi bears the torture as she is raped by many men through the encouragement of the voice of another man Arijit, that urges her to save her comrades and not herself. However, the attack on her body fades this male authority's voice as she candidly reacts to the police. Her refusal to be clothed goes against the phallogocentric power, and the exploitation of her body gives her the agency to step away from the hegemonic patriarchy of the policemen.

Devi illustrates how any conflict or war results in the women's body being the primary targets of attack by men. In the contexts of both the Naxalite movement and the Bangladesh Liberation war, both men and women are tortured, but it is much worse for women as they additionally undergo sexual abuse. Thus with Spivak's concepts on the subaltern in mind, through Dopdi, Devi represents the gendered subaltern subject who exists at the periphery of society and dares to go against the existing patriarchal structures. Spivak has shown concern regarding the representation of the subaltern in the mainstream discourse on the basis that the subaltern cannot be represented; only re-presented. However, Devi's use of polyphony not just re-presents the subaltern, it also explores the politics around the category of the 'subaltern.'

Although there are many facets to the mythical Draupadi's character, Devi focuses on the infamous incident where the princess is almost disrobed and subverts it to suit Dopdi's context. Devi has always said that she is interested in the stories of ordinary people which is evident through the subversion of Draupadi's rape. Towards the latter part of her life, she focused on presenting the narratives of ordinary people. In *Draupadi*, Devi has not allowed her female protagonist, Dopdi, to be submissive and conquered by the male-dominated society, unlike Draupadi from the *Mahabharata*.

Draupadi is a narrative that is universal in its portrayal of women as the most brutal victims of conflict and war. This approval on the part of Officer Senanayak in the story for the officers to 'make her' is reminiscent of the situation of Bangladesh's Birangona and Japan's comfort women. At the end of the story as she confronts the army officers with her bare body, the body that was violated and tortured is also in reverse used as a weapon. Even though Dopdi has been physically abused, she refuses to be emotionally wounded.

In *Draupadi*, Devi presents a strong woman who despite being marginalised and exploited, transgresses conventional sexual and societal standards. Dopdi subverts the physicality of her body from powerlessness into powerful resistance. She does not represent the tribal woman by romanticising her depiction of Dopdi but instead realistically re-presents her through simple language and complex emotions. *Draupadi* recognises a woman's body as an asset through which they can resist the socio-political objectification of their bodies and overcome oppression.
