

THE FURTHEST DISTANCES I'VE TRAVELLED- LEONTIA FLYNN

MEANINGS/ IDEAS AND THEMES EXPLORED:

- Flynn explores **the theme of youth**, and the **excitement that comes with travel** when you are young, contrasted to the **menial nature of everyday life and the reality** of travel. She explores themes of **identity and society**, suggesting that people are actually the most important things in life.

USE OF FORM:

- The first three to four stanzas are not ordered at all, with lots of hyphens and colons interjecting lines in order to **convey the stop-start nature of travelling**.
- This also conveys a sense of **freedom, of lack of restrictions** when you are younger.
- Contrasting to this, the poem becomes **increasingly more ordered**, and in the last stanza there is an AABB rhyme with the lines *'unravelled'* and *'travelled'*, as well as *'survives'* and *'lives'* rhyming at the end of each line of the stanza.
- The more rigid structure reflects the **confinements and rules** of adulthood in juxtaposition to the supposed **freedom of childhood**.
- However, the narrator does not necessarily resent this confinement, in a way it is more **secure and reassuring**.

USE OF STRUCTURAL DEVICES:

- There is a contrast between the **narrator's opinion and attitude** towards travel when they were young, compared to when they are older. She optimistically starts off by **idealising travel**, like *'some sort of destiny'*, and then later goes on to describe the **risks** of travel *'the scare stories about larium and the threats of delirium'*; there is a realisation that she does not necessarily miss the freedom of travel.
- In the second stanza, Flynn chooses to break the word anonymity *'in any-mity'*, splitting the word across two lines with the use of forced enjambment. This could indicate that the narrator's whole **attitude towards travelling is actually very forced**, that she likes the idea of the travelling more than she actually enjoys the experience. This also creates the idea that all the **travelling is making her confused and disjointed**, so that she can't quite piece things together properly.

AN EASY PASSAGE- JULIA COPUS

MEANINGS/IDEAS AND THEMES EXPLORED:

- In this poem, the Copus compares and contrasts women at different ages, from two young girls, to a mother, to a secretary who lives a boring and menial life.
- The beauty, vitality and freedom of youth is emphasised in this poem, in contrast to the monotonousness and tediousness of being a grown woman and the constrictions and lack of rule-breaking that comes with this.
- This poem also looks at how attitudes of society towards women grow and change as they get older, how they are expected to act a certain way.
- The poem focuses on specific examples of women at different ages; however it gives more of a broad message about the growth of women in general, and more general contrasts between childhood and adulthood.

USE OF FORM:

- The poem is made up of one long stanza, with no separation between this. This conveys the flow and development of childhood, this ongoing and natural process of growing up.
- The way in which the poem shifts to focus on the different women creates an almost-cinematic process to the poem; we begin by focusing on the close images of the girl on the rooftop and her friend below, then the poem becomes broader, and pans out like the camera in a movie, looking at the secretary and how she sees the young girl on the roof.

USE OF STRUCTURAL DEVICES:

- There is a use of contrast, juxtaposition between youthful beauty and the dullness of adulthood.
- A wide variation in sentence lengths is used throughout the poem; long sentences at the beginning of the poem, emphasise freedom of childhood, whereas shorter sentences are used when describing the secretary; showing the constriction of her job and her life.
- A 3rd person narrative voice is used, an omniscient narrator. This creates a less personal feel to the poem, and more of a generalised message and withdrawn tone.
- Equally, more formal and poetic diction is used, which makes the poem feel less sentimental.
- An older voice interrupts the flow of description in the stanza '*-What can she know of the way the world emits us less and less the more we grow?'*' This use of rhetorical question, broadly questions the attitudes of society towards women as they get older.

USE OF LANGUAGE FEATURES:

Notes

'*too big*' at the start of each line in the tercet '*too fat to leave, too fat to buy a pint of full fat milk*'. As a pre-modifying adjective '*too*' shows that the narrator knows the extent of her own obesity, that it is restricting her freedom.

STRUCTURE AND FORM

- 'Eat me' is a poem that could be described as a fable, as it tells a story containing a moral, which suggests the consequences of abusing the power that you have over someone else, possibly it could be seen as a parable, but doesn't not necessarily depict a strong religious moral.
- The poem does not follow a specific form, however it is organised in ten neat tercets, which shows no break in rigidity, which could suggest how the feedee is fed in a calculated way, in order to make her overweight.
- However, within each stanza there is variation in form; such as the italics used in stanza four, and a small amount in stanza eight, along with the use of anaphora in stanza seven. Therefore, the outward form of the poem is very constrained and even, whereas, within each stanza, the form is uncomfortably messy and unstructured. This contrast could be reflective of the fact that the feeder in the poem appears to be the one who has the power, however deep down the feedee breaks this control. Equally, it could be an overall representation of the dysfunctionality of their relationship.
- Oddly, the title of the poem echoes the label that Alice finds on the cake in 'Alice in Wonderland' that she must eat to make herself grow bigger, they say '*EAT ME*'. This may be a reflection of how the food that her abuser makes her eat makes her grow larger in a literal sense, for example when she talks about the cake '*The icing was white but the letters were pink, they said, EAT ME*', it is difficult to tell if she means literal letters, such as Alice in Wonderland or if the narrator meant '*EAT ME*' in a metaphorical sense.
- Agbabi rhymes words such as '*cake*' and '*weight*'. This creates a sense of uncertainty and vagueness. Alternatively it could create a suspicious tone because the rhymes don't quite add up.
- There is also assonance of the 'o' sound in the 8th tercet, "*poured olive oil down my throat*" creating the sound of choking.
- The rhyme/half rhyme scheme of aba further increases the sense of claustrophobia in the poem. The subject's physicality is enacted at the level of language and structure. The half rhyme creates uncertainty and when the rhymes don't add up, it seems suspicious
- In general, repetition and alliteration are used throughout, for example the adjective '*fat*' is repeated constantly within the poem, as a sort of acknowledgement of her own obesity. The word itself is one often used in an unpleasant manner, as an insult; therefore she seems to be speaking about herself with self-hatred.
- The use of italics allows Agbabi to change the point-of-view, or the speaker, in the poem, for example the feeder gets a voice in the poem, which also