**EN LIN**

**CMLIT 102W-02**

**DATE:05/19/2019**

The comments of your journal generally are very well done. They address the works carefully and with precision, highlighting many points of interest and curiosity both about characters and situations. The comments are organized and presented well, though there are some places where minor grammatical errors need correction in order to remove from your writing an unnecessary distraction.

Note: you incorrectly interpret an element of *Chosen Place, Timeless People.* Harriet, commenting on the division that she sees in the island from above in the airplane is not showing irritation to Bourne Island. Rather, she is surprised that such an extreme difference of the sections of the island—even seen from afar—are visible in what seems to be a very small place.

Otherwise, your comments are convincingly presented.

Grade: A

**King Lear**

1: Love vs Law

One important question that the book *King Lear* raises is the relation between love and law. Is love below or above law? Lear seems to prefer his youngest daughter Cordelia; He conducts a trial of love in order to force Cordelia to show her love with words, as if love can be obtained by power and force. Cordelia responses to Lear, “My heart into my mouth, I love your majesty according to my bond, no more nor less” (Shakespeare I, I). In some degree, Cordelia is claiming that love is beyond language, it is spontaneous, and it can’t be enforced by power. The conflict between love and law has also been highlighted by the relationship between the villain Edmund and his father Gloucester. At the beginning of the story, Edmund justifies the motivation of his conspiracy against Edgar and Gloucester in his words, “Why bastard, who in the lusty stealth of nature takes more composition and fierce quality than doth within a dull, stale, tried bed Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops Got ‘tween asleep and wake” (Shakespeare I, II). Edmund seems to argue that since there is passion and love between his father and mother, it is unjust to deprive him of his rights to be a legitimate heir of his father Gloucester. In this way, Edmund is challenging the law by stating that love is above law, which seems to be a reasonable statement.

2: Blindness

When King Lear refuses to give Cordelia his lands simply because of her words, Kent tells Lear to “See better”, which implies that King Lear has been mentally blinded by his power and ignorance. Gloucester is a character that is parallel to King Lear. At early stage, He is also in a state of blindness. Only by listening to the words from Edmund, he gives Edmund his unconditional trust, and tries to get rid of his honest son Edgar. Ironically, only after his eyes are plucked out by Cornwall, does Gloucester start to recognize which one of his sons is loyal to him. His loss of vision helps him see better. It can’t be denied that sometimes our vision doesn’t give us insight into the truth. A wise person must constantly re-evaluate himself and others to see the world clearer.

**As I Lay Dying**

1: Anse Bundren

Throughout the novel *As I lay dying,* Anse is depicted as a lazy and selfish father and husband. He justifies his laziness by telling people that if he ever sweats, he will die (Faulkner 17). This excuse sounds even more ridiculous by knowing that the story takes place in Mississippi, where the temperature is high enough to make a person sweat. On the Bundrens’ way to Jefferson, the bridge collapses, then the wagon along with the coffin falls into the river. Cash, Jewel and Darl all struggle to save the coffin, while Anse stands on the bank complaining about the bridge. Anse doesn’t even get himself wet on this accident. After Addie Bundren’s children overcome all the obstacles and hardships on their trip to Jefferson, they finally send their mother to the gravesite she wishes for. To everyone’s surprise, Anse immediately marries a woman who loans him the shovel, which ironically is used to bury his wife Addie. Despite the horrible personality Anse has, he is not portrayed as an evil character like Edmund in *King Lear*. He strives to keep his promise to his wife Addie, even though this promise has taken him into a series of troubles. To some extent, Anse has resembled people that we meet in our daily life. They are more than just good or bad. A sympathetic person might have his own weakness to blame, and a hateful person might have good traits that are overlooked. But our minds are ideal. We often neglect the complexity within human beings, which makes us less tolerant and patient.

2: Poverty

What kind of person will Anse Bundrenbe, had he not despaired in a state of extreme poverty? In order to earn three dollars, Darl and Jewel have to part with their dying mother. As Peabody describes, “I knew that nobody, but a luckless man could ever need a doctor in the face of a cyclone. And I knew that if it had finally occurred to Anse himself that he needed one, it was already too late” (Faulkner 41). Anse Bundren always tries his best to avoid proper treatment from doctor Peabody, so that money can be saved. Poverty and harsh reality force the Bundren family to depend on their neighbors, which they find themselves uncomfortable with. For Anse Bundren, little time is allowed for grief or healing. It might be fair to say that poverty magnifies selfishness, hypocrite and other ugly sides of humanity.

**Pride and Prejudice**

1: Appearance vs Truth

Mr. Wickham, a seemingly perfect character at the beginning of the story, turns out to be a disgraceful man. He elopes with Mr. Bennet’s smallest daughter Lydia, which causes a big trouble to the Bennet family. Mr. Wickham has very attractive appearance as is described in the book, “His appearance was greatly in his favor; he had all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address” (Austen 67). When he lies to Elizabeth about his past with Mr. Darcy, Elizabeth takes his words without suspicion. She tells Jane that she trusts him merely because “there was truth in his looks” (Austen 81). Later, she finds out that she is indeed wrong. This reminds us of three evil characters Regan, Goneril and Edmund in *King Lear,* who take advantage of their skills in language, and conceal their wickedness and disloyalty from King Lear. Both stories imply that people tend to associate beautiful things with truth, even when they are completely unrelated. The truth is not necessary as pretty as our fantasy, and that might be one of the reasons why we chose not to see it.

2: Social Inequality

Unlike Elizabeth, Charlotte Lucas’s view of marriage is quite pragmatic, “It is sometimes a disadvantage to be so very guarded. If a woman conceals her affection with the same skill from the object of it, she may lose the opportunity of fixing him; there are very few of us who have heat enough to be really in love without encouragement. In nine cases out of ten a woman had better show more affection than she feels” (Austen 18). Patrilineal society has given women little security. For instance, Mr. Bennet's estate is inherited by his strange cousin Mr. Collins, instead of his wife and daughters. A woman in such context must find a way to secure their future, and marriage is certainly the most convenient one. Charlotte’s philosophy of “showing more affection than she feels” in marriage serves as a criticism to a patrilineal society where women are limited to opportunities.

**Things fall apart**

1: Okonkwo

In contrast to hypocritical characters like Edmund in *King Lear*,Mr. Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice,* and Anse Bundren in *As I lay dying,* Okonkwo is somewhat clumsy, reluctant and even angry when it comes to express himself. Instead, He takes actions. Even though he tries very hard to conceal his emotions, his actions make us aware of his personality. Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna in order to show his loyalty to rules. However, he hesitates before this action and regrets after it. There are some emotional moments that Okonkwo’s true character and his caring for his family members Ezinma and Ekwefi is revealed. One of such moments happens when Ezinma is forcibly taken away to the shrine by the priest. Ezinma’s mother Ekwefi follows behind the priest alone and attempts to protect her daughter at any cost. At such intense moment, Ekwefi screams to discover a man standing behind her with a machete. To her surprise, this man is Okonkwo. The book describes her mixed feelings at this very moment, “Ekwefi did not answer. Tears of gratitude filled her eyes. She knew her daughter was safe” (Achebe 108).

2: The society of Umuofia falls apart from within

In *Things fall apart*, Okonkwo ends his life with unrespectful suicide. His death signifies the beginning of colonized Umuofia, since he is the last person who faithfully defends their native religion, culture and virtue. A society exists in a form of culture and belief, not in a form of people. Okonkwo knows he can never protect Umuofia when people start to reject their religion and when their faith is compromised. That might be the reason why he becomes so desperate and eventually hangs himself on the tree. This reminds me of Japanese schools that were opened in northeast China during the Second World War. The very first thing that the Japanese did, after they took over northeastern lands of China, was to enact a law to force native children to attend Japanese schools, which marks the advent of cultural invasion.

**Cities of Salt**

1: Technology

In the story of *Cities of Salt,* the advent of modern technological innovations has completely changed the way people live, both physically and mentally. Trees are razed down by cold machines and people see concrete buildings raise up day by day. They are told that camels, which are the most precious things they deem, are no longer needed. From generation to generation, travel has been the only way of exploring the unknown, but the telescope and radio give the emir a new way of thinking the world. His telescope serves as an extension to his view, with which he can easily observe the wedding of the son of Dabashi, the body of western woman and every movement of Harran’s people. The emir is so excited that those technologies “let the world come to him” (Munīf 457). He would rather stay at his room since he has virtual access to even more information than he would with travelling. But can a man adapt to new things and new places without losing a part of himself? (Munīf 134). Today, technology seems to disconnect people as much as it connects them. We are gathered to centralized places called company. We work in our cubic cells and we leave our cubic cells. We stare at our phones more often than we breathe. Soon, we might all be living in an electronic coffin, which promises to take us to wherever we want.

2: Power vs Duty

Those Characters who are in power all fail to address the conflicts between the Americans and the natives in Harran. For example, Dr. Subhi Al-Mahmalji, a highly educated physician, refuses to treat his competitor Mufaddal when he is terminally ill. Johar, who used to be a kind and humble young man, ends up a totally different person in his uniform; After becoming the head of the Desert Army, he violently oppresses workers in Harran in order to claim his authority. The emir, whose power has granted him exclusive access to information, ends up mentally unstable. At the end of the story, people see that the emir leaves Harran with stethoscope around his neck and keeps waving back at them. This scene serves as a criticism against the leaders whose capability is beneath their position.

**Running in the Family**

1: Dark Humor

The overall narrative tone of the book *Running in the Family* is lighthearted and humorous. Michael Ondaatje covers serious subjects by making jokes out of them. For instance, he describes the death of Wilfred, “poor Wilfred Bartholomeus who had large teeth was killed while out hunting when one of his companions mistook him for a wild boar” (Ondaatje 40). He also describes an amusing event when his grandmother Lalla is groped on a bus, “He seemed to be enjoying himself. Then she looked down and saw that his hand was squeezing her breast. She smiled to herself. She had not felt a thing. Her left breast had been removed five years earlier and he was ardently fondling the sponge beneath gown” (Ondaatje 43). Perhaps Michael Ondaatje has inherited his sense of humor and optimism from his grandmother Lalla and his mother Doris.

2: Blind Faith

In the chapter “Blind Faith”, Michael Ondaatje reveals the motivation behind writing this book. He expresses directly his love towards his father instead of indirect narrating, “I am the son you have made hazardous, who still loves you” (Ondaatje 180). He wishes he could know more about his father’s inner struggles during those last years of his life, and “save” him like how Edgar saves Gloucester in *King Lear*.

**The Chosen Place, The Timeless People**

1: Resistance

The CASR team arrives at Bournehills to carry on a special development project intended to bring Bournehills to modernization. They are confused by the fact that the islanders don’t seem to welcome their visiting. The islanders refuse to take new houses provided by the government and insist on their old shacks; They refuse to work in the pottery factory; When Lady Stanley tries to educate them on family planning, they drive her out of their door. As Hinkson puts it, “Bournehills is like some place out of the Dark Ages… Even when you try to brighten up life a little for them, they don’t seem to want it” (Marshall 58). The elite claims their good intentions to help but fails to understand the islanders’ psychology and their history of slave rebellion. The islanders resist on changes because they know that the so-called “improvement” is just another mask for a will to control.

2: Harriet Amron

In the book *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*,Harriet Amron might be the character who remains furthest from Bournehills (Moses). Harriet’s connection with Bournehills predates her marriage to Saul. She is a descendant of colonists who enslave people in Bournehills in the past. During the entire time staying on the island, she tries to conceal her personal history from her husband Saul. Unlike her husband Saul, who are determined to bring changes to Bournehills, Harriet doesn’t really care much about the islanders’ well-being. Her first reaction to Bournehills reveals her irritations towards Bournehills, “It struck her as being another world together, one that stood in profound contradistinction to the pleasant reassuring green plain directly below; and she wondered gazing intently out toward those scared hills, how an island this small could sustain such a dangerous division” (Marshall 21). Throughout the story, Harriet disappoints Saul because she is incapable of understanding the culture in Bournehills. She sees everything she is doing in Bournehills in terms of her relationship with Saul, which eventually leads to her divorce with Saul. She commits suicide after the divorce.

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