

About the Author:

Viktor Emil Frankl (26 March 1905 – 2 September 1997) was an Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist with a specialisation in depression and suicidal behaviour. As the head of the neurology department at Rothschild Hospital, Dr. Frankl saved many patients from being euthanised under the Nazi euthanasia program. In 1942, Frankl along with his wife and parents was deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto where he worked in the psychiatric care ward, even setting up a suicide watch. He was later separated from his family, all of whom perished before the end of the war. Dr. Frankl was imprisoned for a total of 3 years in 3 separate camps- Auschwitz, Kaufering and Türkheim until 27 April 1945, when the camp was liberated by American soldiers. Following liberation, Dr. Frankl returned to Vienna and developed 'logotherapy', an approach to psychotherapy that believes an individual is primarily driven by a "striving to find meaning in one's life". Dr. Frankl's Logotherapy and existential analysis is

considered the Third Viennese school of Psychotherapy. His experiences in the concentration camps shaped his immense contributions to the fields of psychology, psychiatry and philosophy. He earned a PhD in philosophy, 28 honorary degrees as well as published over 30 books, the most well-known of which are *Man's Search for Meaning*, *The Unconscious God* and *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*. He died in 1997 at the age of 92.

Introduction to the Text:

Holocaust is a word of Greek origin meaning “sacrifice by fire”. The term ‘The Holocaust’ refers to the state-sponsored persecution and murder of 11 million people under the Nazi regime. This enormous figure includes Poles, gypsies, the physically or mentally disabled and homosexuals. However, the main targets of the holocaust were Jewish people, 6 million of whom were systematically murdered between 1933 to 1945.

Man's Search for Meaning is a book by Viktor Frankl about his experiences as a concentration camp inmate for 3 years during World War II. The book was published in 1946, shortly after Dr. Frankl's liberation from the camps. Through his lens as a psychiatrist, the book explores complex notions of existence, well-being, suffering and morality, many of which are the nascent forms of his later contributions to psychology and philosophy. At the time of Dr. Frankl's death in 1997, the book had sold over 10 million copies as well as been translated into 24 languages.

About the Author

Anton Chekov is a Russian playwright and master of the modern short story. He was a literary artist who probed below the surface of life, laying bare the secrets of his characters. His stories don't have complex plots and solutions, but have a haunting impact on the readers. Chekov evolved the short story. His stories proved to be difficult but Chekov refused to apologize to his readers insisting that it was the duty of the artist to ask questions and not answer them.

Introduction to the text

The story deals with a husband who has caught his wife and her lover red-handed and is sworn to avenge them. He heads to buy himself a gun as he plans to kill his wife, her lover and himself. While the shopkeeper furnishes different varieties of guns for the narrator to pick from, Chekov reveals the workings of the mind of a man who was wronged. Even in the heat of the moment he couldn't get things through. A crime of passion is avoided because of rational thought. The avenger that the story introduces is also rational. He haggles over the prize of a gun even in the heat of the moment. Chekov makes the readers question about Sigaev's rationality. He drives home the point that while rationality might be an answer to some situations in life, there are others that require more passion and prompt response.

About the Author

Chinua Achebe (pronounced *Chee-noo-ah Ah-chay-bay*) is one of the most influential African writer of his generation. Achebe introduces his readers to the modern African life and history. He is credited for reshaping the perception of African history, culture and place in world affairs. Achebe's first novel, *Things Fall Apart* is a literary classic and won the Margaret Wong Memorial Prize.

Introduction to the text

The story throws light on the great ethnic diversity of the Nigeria. The West African nation consists of two of the largest ethnic groups, the Ibibio and the Ibo. The Ibos are conservative and superstitious people and their outlook in life varies from how the rest of the world perceived it. The story starts with a young couple Nene, an Ibibio and Nnaemeka, an Ibo talking about revealing their intention to marry. Nnaemeka stalls the inevitable, fearing his father's disapproval. Nnaemeka's father Okeke is a devout follower of Christianity and strongly believes in the community's tradition. His society doesn't allow him to accept Nene as his daughter-in-law since she was from a different tribe and a teacher by profession. The tussle between traditional values and modern outlook creates a rift between the father and son. However, life brings in a twist. The old man finds out about his two grandsons from Nene and is compelled to accept his son and daughter-in-law for the sake of the children. The story is a realistic portrayal of the old and new generation's attitude towards marriage.

About the Author

Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014) was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her first novel, *The Lying Days* (1953), is a semi autobiographical narrative of a young South African woman. Her other novels include *Burgher's Daughter* (1979), *A Sport of Nature* (1987), and *My Son's Story* (1991). Her short stories are collected in *Selected Stories* (1975) and *Jump, and Other Stories* (1991). Gordimer's fiction is acclaimed for its attempt to deal with the complex socio political realities of life in South Africa in a thoughtful, nuanced manner. She was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991.

Introduction of the Text

“The Train from Rhodesia” is one of Nadine Gordimer’s earliest stories, first published in 1952 in her collection *The Soft Voice of the Serpent and Other Stories*. The short piece about a train’s brief stop in an impoverished African village exhibits the concise complexity that marks much of Gordimer’s other work. As a native South African of European heritage, Gordimer has focused much of her writing on the injustice of apartheid as practiced in the country. Though not an overtly political story, “The Train from Rhodesia” depicts the prejudicial attitudes that caused apartheid and reinforced it once racial segregation became law. By presenting characters of both races who are degraded by their belief in racial inequality, the author shows how both black and white South Africans are harmed by apartheid.

About the Author

Wakako Yamauchi (1924–) is a distinguished playwright, short-story writer, poet and painter. Through her creative work, Yamauchi draws portraits of people who struggle with their dreams and passions, while facing the psychological trauma of prejudice, economic depression, and the concentration camps of World War II. As a young child and adult, she witnessed the overt racism and harsh labor conditions her parents endured and later built these and other personal memories into the details of her work.

She was born Wakako Nakamura on October 24, 1924, in Westmorland, California to immigrant parents who farmed in the Imperial Valley, near the Mexican border. Yamauchi's mother assisted her husband in the fields, but also taught Japanese on Sundays at the Buddhist church. When Yamauchi was seventeen years old, she and her family were incarcerated at Poston concentration camp in Arizona (in barrack apartment 12-1-A—the title of a play she would later write). In Poston, she met young Nisei writer Hisaye Yamamoto, a few years her senior and already established in the Japanese American press. Both women worked on the camp newspaper, the *Poston Chronicle*, as layout artist and contributing writer, and shared an interest in art and literature. The two maintained a close, life-long friendship of inspiration and artistic support. After a year and a half at Poston, Yamauchi relocated to Utah and then to Chicago, where she worked in a candy factory and began attending plays, marking the beginning of her love for theater.

In 1948, she married Chester Yamauchi and bore a daughter named Joy. Although the couple divorced, she continued to write and publish under her married name. Returning to Los Angeles after the war, she studied painting at the Otis Art Center and later took a correspondence course in short story writing. Although she was better known as an artist, in 1960 she was asked by the Los Angeles Japanese American newspaper, the *Rafu Shimpo*, to contribute to their annual holiday edition and from that year on, Yamauchi regularly contributed a short story or essay to the newspaper's special edition.

Introduction of the Text:

In the 1970s, a group of Asian American writers organized a landmark anthology entitled *Aiiieeeee!*, which published Yamauchi's short story, "And the Soul Shall Dance" after Hisaye Yamamoto suggested it for inclusion. East West Players' artistic director Mako read the story and convinced Yamauchi to turn it into the script for a play. The play was first performed in 1974 at the East West Players theater in Los Angeles, winning the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for best new play of 1977. It was later produced as a television drama for the PBS station KCET in Los Angeles. Yamauchi continued her career as a playwright, writing several other scripts including "The Music Lesson," "The Memento," "12-1-A," and "The

Chairman's Wife." In 1994, a seminal collection of Yamauchi's plays and stories was published under the title *Songs My Mother Taught Me*.

Some of her best literary works explore how the experiences and aspirations of her generation, seen through a distinct Japanese American woman's perspective, collide with obstacles of race and class discrimination. Yamauchi deftly draws from her life experiences and observations—of her immigrant parents and the tension between the two generations, the trauma of World War II, post-war resettlement and assimilation, and the process of aging—to create her art. Many of her stories depict Issei and Nisei women who grapple with the barriers of gender and ethnicity, while simultaneously resisting the patriarchal norms and the consequences of their self-expression and desire for independence.¹³ She has since received numerous awards and fellowships, including several Rockefeller grants, the Brody Art Fund Fellowship, and the American Theater Critics Regional Award for Outstanding Play. She lives in Gardena, California, and enjoys spending her free time playing blackjack at the Japanese Cultural Institute in Gardena.

About the Poet

Octavio Paz was born in 1914 in Mexico City. On his father's side, his grandfather was a prominent liberal intellectual and one of the first authors to write a novel with an expressly Indian theme. Thanks to his grandfather's extensive library, Paz came into early contact with literature. Like his grandfather, his father was also an active political journalist who, together with other progressive intellectuals, joined the agrarian uprisings led by Emiliano Zapata. Paz began to write at an early age, and in 1937, he travelled to Valencia, Spain, to participate in the Second International Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers. 1938, he became one of the founders of the journal, *Taller* (Workshop), a magazine which signaled the emergence of a new generation of writers in Mexico as well as a new literary sensibility. His poetry is written within the perpetual motion and transparencies of the eternal present tense. Paz's poetry has been collected in *Poemas 1935-1975* (1981) and *Collected Poems, 1957-1987* (1987). A remarkable prose stylist, Paz has written a prolific body of essays, including several book-length studies, in poetics, literary and art criticism, as well as on Mexican history, politics and culture. Paz is a poet and an essayist. He was also the founder of two magazines *Plural* and *Vuelta*. His books include *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, *The Grammatical Monkey* and *East Slope*. In 1980, he was named honorary doctor at Harvard. Recent prizes include the Cervantes award in 1981 - the most important award in the Spanish-speaking world - and the prestigious American Neustadt Prize in 1982.

Introduction to the poem

The poem 'As One Listens to the Rain' is one that evokes naturalistic imagery to describe human relationships. It is of a deep, meditative tone and is replete with figures of speech that contribute to the aesthetics of the poem and refinement of thought. As one who was deeply

influenced by diverse philosophies of Surrealism, Hinduism, Buddhism and existentialism-
‘As One Listens to the Rain’ is imbued with concepts and ideas of such.

About the Author

Jamaica Kincaid (1949- present) was born in Antigua in the West Indies. Kincaid emigrated to the United States to attend college, which she found a dismal failure. She is now a naturalized citizen, living in New York City and in Burlington, Vermont. Her first collection

Calypso - unique
music
topical the
syncopated African
shyman

of short stories, *At the Bottom of the River* (1983), won the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. Her subsequent volumes have included *Annie John* (1985), *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996), and *My Brother* (1997). *Girl* was Kincaid's first published piece of fiction (in *The New Yorker*), written in 1977 after reading Elizabeth Bishop's *In the Waiting Room*. She drafted it in one rush of energy, and it is one long sentence.

Introduction of the Text

The short story "Girl," like many of Kincaid's books, deals with the experience of being young and female in a poor country. Kincaid's complicated relationship with her mother comes out in the mother-daughter dynamic in the story. She describes her mother as a literate woman who struggled against her poor circumstances, eventually feeling bitterness toward her children because of all her problems.

About the Poet

Derek Walcott was born January 23, 1930, in the capital city of Castries on the eastern Caribbean island of St. Lucia, a territory at that time under the dominance of Britain. While the official language of St. Lucia was English, Walcott grew up also speaking a French-

English patois. Both of his grandfathers were white and both grandmothers were black. From the beginning, Walcott was, in terms of St. Lucia, a bit of an outsider. In a poor, Catholic country, his parents were middle class and Protestant; his mother was a teacher at a Methodist grammar school who worked in local theater, and his father was a civil servant by vocation and a fine artist and poet by avocation.

In his early years, Walcott was schooled on St. Lucia, but in 1950, he attended the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, getting his degree in 1953 but staying on one more year to study education. From 1954 to 1957, Walcott taught in Grenada, St. Lucia, and Jamaica, and wrote and produced plays along with his brother, Roderick. In 1958, his play *Drums and Colours* earned him a Rockefeller grant to study theater in New York City. Alienated in the United States, Walcott returned to Trinidad in 1959 to found, with his brother, The Trinidad Theater Workshop, a project that lasted until 1976. From 1960 to 1968, Walcott also wrote for the local newspaper, the *Trinidad Guardian*. Walcott has taught in both America and the West Indies and has earned numerous awards. He has taught at New York University, Yale, Columbia, Harvard, and, since 1981, at Boston University. Walcott has won numerous awards: in 1965 he received the Royal Society of Literature Heinemann Award for *The Castaway and Other Poems*; his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* earned the 1971 Obie for the most distinguished off-Broadway play; in 1977 he was awarded a Guggenheim and in 1981 a MacArthur Foundation Award. In 1992, however, Walcott received literature's highest honor, the Nobel Prize. The author of more than twenty books, Walcott continues to write, paint, and direct.

Introduction to the poem

Derek Walcott's "A Far Cry from Africa," published in 1962, is a painful and jarring depiction of ethnic conflict and divided loyalties. In the early twentieth century, the first white settlers arrived in the region, forcing the Kikuyu people off of their tribal lands. Europeans took control of farmland and the government, relegating the Kikuyu to a subservient position. One faction of the Kikuyu people formed Mau Mau, a terrorist organization intent on purging all European influence from the country, but less strident Kikuyus attempted to either remain neutral or help the British defeat Mau Mau. The ongoing in Kenya magnified an internal strife within the poet concerning his own mixed heritage. As Walcott is divided in two, so too is the poem. The first two stanzas refer to the Kenyan conflict, while the second two address the war within the poet-as-outsider/insider, between

his roles as blood insider but geographical outsider to the Mau Mau Uprising. The Mau Mau Uprising, which began in 1952, was put down—some say in 1953, 1956, or 1960—without a treaty, yet the British did leave Kenya in 1963. Just as the uprising was never cleanly resolved, Walcott, at least within the poem, never resolves his conflict about whose side to take.

About the Author

Alice Malsenior Walker (9 Feb 1944) is an internationally celebrated author, poet and activist whose books include seven novels, four collections of short stories, four children's books, and volumes of essays and poetry. She's best known for *The Color Purple*, the 1983 novel for which she won the Pulitzer Prize—the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction, though (in her opinion) not the first African American woman to deserve it—and the National Book Award. The award-winning novel was adapted for Steven Spielberg's 1985 film and later for the stage, opening at New York City's Broadway Theatre in 2005, winning a Tony Award for best leading actress in a musical in 2006.

Walker has been an activist all of her adult life, and believes that learning to extend the range of our compassion is activity and work available to all. She is a staunch defender not only of human rights, but of the rights of all living beings. She is one of the world's most prolific writers, yet tirelessly continues to travel the world to literally stand on the side of the poor, and the economically, spiritually and politically oppressed. She also stands, however, on the side of the revolutionaries, teachers and leaders who seek change and transformation of the world. Upon returning from Gaza in 2008, Walker said, "Going to Gaza was our opportunity to remind the people of Gaza and ourselves that we belong to the same world: the world where grief is not only acknowledged, but shared; where we see injustice and call it by its name; where we see suffering and know the one who stands and sees is also harmed, but not nearly so much as the one who stands and sees and says and does nothing."

Introduction of the Text

This collection of essays in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* is a unique celebration of women's stories and spirituality through the ages. Alice Walker traces the umbilical thread linking women writers through history — from her discovery of Zora Neale Hurston and her collections of black folklore, to the work of Jean Toomer, Buchi Emecheta and Flannery O'Connor. She also looks back at the highs and lows of the civil rights movement, her early political development, and the place of women's traditions in art. Coining the expression "womanist prose," these are essays that value women's culture and strength, the handing on of the creative spark from one generation to another. "Her delight in life, her exuberant love of anecdote and friendship shine through... She is uniquely herself, as a writer of moving and transforming Stories." *The Observer*. Walker defines "womanist" at the beginning of the collection as "A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mother to female children and also a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female". In a 1984 review of the collection, Lynn Munro noted that: "Reading these essays not only gives one a clearer sense of Alice Walker but also countless insights into the men and women who have touched her life." As Munro put it, Walker "captures the voices of unsung heroines" with whom she has crossed paths.

Within these essays, She speaks about her search for early black writers such as Rebecca Jackson. She speaks of unsung heroines whom she has come into contact with who wish to tell their stories; for example Mrs. Winson Hudson. Hudson, the director of a Headstart center, wished to tell her story so that people would know "the agitation she caused in her community...was not for herself or for any one group but for everybody in the county". However, of all the writers she introduces, Zora Neale Hurston becomes a focal part in this section of essays.

Hurston's book *Mules and Men*, a collection of folklore, sparks Walker's interest immediately because it provides all the stories that Southern blacks "had forgotten or of which they had grown ashamed...and showed how marvelous, and, indeed, priceless, they are". Walker's exploration for the black writers of the past connects to her search for the kind of books that are underrepresented in American literature. She said she must be her own model as well as the artist attending, creating, learning from, realizing the model, which is to say, herself. Walker's search for 'models' is an attempt to "capture the voices" of writers who are often overlooked and/or forgotten such as Zora Neale Hurston. addresses black women coping with self-worth and self-respect. It offers encouragement to future generations of Black men and women.

In the opening of "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens", Walker quotes from Jean Toomer's *Cane*, taking note that in early literature by black men, black women were seen as hopeless and characterized as mere sex objects. "I asked her to hope, and build up an inner life against the coming of that day...I sang, with a strange quiver in my voice, a promise song." Walker says black women did not have the opportunity to pursue their dreams because they were given the main responsibility of raising children, obeying their husbands, and maintaining the household: "Or was she required to bake biscuits for a lazy backwater tramp, when she cried out in her soul to paint watercolors of sunsets, or the rain falling on the green and peaceful pasturelands? Or was her body broken and forced to bear children." Walker personalizes these women by referring to them as "our mothers and grandmothers". Toomer felt that black

women were unhappy and felt unloved. Both Walker and Toomer felt that black women were not allowed to dream, yet alone pursue them. "They were Creators, who lived lives of spiritual waste, because they were so rich in spirituality, which is the basis of art, that the strain of enduring their unused and unwanted talent drove them insane". Walker proceeds in saying how oppression has caused many talented black women to go unnoticed or unheard of. Walker cites Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, and Aretha Franklin to note talent lost amongst the black race and culture.

Additionally, Walker refers to Virginia Woolf's, *A Room of One's Own* and writer Phillis Wheatley; Walker compares both artists conveying that all of Woolf's fears were Wheatley's reality; due to restraints all of Woolf's goals were unachievable for Wheatley. Woolf writes, "any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill and psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty." Wheatley experienced everything Woolf dreaded, although Wheatley was granted limited freedom of expression and education by her owners. Walker focuses on the phrase, "contrary instincts" used by Woolf, believing that this what Wheatley felt since she was taught that her origin was an untamed and inadequate culture and race. In Wheatley's poetry she describes a "goddess", which Walker perceives as her owner, whom Wheatley appreciates although she was enslaved by this person. Walker pays tribute to Wheatley when she writes, "But at last Phillis, we understand. No more snickering when your stiff, struggling, ambivalent lines are forced on us. We know now that you were not and idiot or a traitor".

According to Walker, society viewed Black women as, "the mule of the world", this caused black women to become emotionless and hopeless. Further, in the essay Walker gives a personal account of her own mother, "And yet, it is to my mother-and all our mothers who were not famous-that I went in search of the secret if what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the black woman has inherited, and that pops out in wild and unlikely places to this day"; Walker describes her mother's simple, but appreciated talent of gardening. For Walker, her mother's ability to continue gardening despite her poor living conditions portrays her mother's strong persona and ability to strive even in hardship. "She spent the summers canning vegetables and fruits. She spent the winter evenings making quilts enough to cover all our beds. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption-by work or the noisy inquiries of children. The theme and idea of legacy reoccurs towards the end of the essay. Walker describes, the legacy of her mother, "Her face, as she prepares the Art that is her gift is a legacy of respect she leaves to me, for all that illuminates and cherishes life". Walker reveals how she has found and understood herself, while researching her heritage.

About the Author

Philosopher, political theorist, and commentator on contemporary life, Hannah Arendt is one of the most original and provocative social thinkers of the twentieth century. A Jew born in Germany in 1906, she fled to France in 1933 with the rise of Nazism, leaving Paris when Hitler invaded France in 1940, to settle permanently in the United States. During a distinguished academic career, she taught at American colleges and universities including Princeton (where she was the first woman to be appointed to a full professorship), Chicago, Columbia, Oberlin, California, and the New School for Social Research.

She received her own academic training at German Universities, most notably Heidelberg, where she studied with the existential philosopher Karl Jaspers, earning a PhD in philosophy at age twenty-two. Her reputation is based on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), a three volume, work tracing totalitarianism to imperialism and anti-Semitism. It drew on her personal experience as well as her philosophical and political training. Some have questioned the emphasis Arendt placed on anti-Semitism in her argumentation of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*- an overemphasis thought to derive from her own experience as a Jew in the time of Nazism. Regardless of any such criticism, the book is considered to be one of the most important works of political theory of our time. In more than twenty books, Arendt wrote about revolution, violence, civil disobedience, Jewish identity, the history of philosophy, the human condition and the life of the mind. Her controversial account of the war crimes trial of Adolf Eichmann, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1964), probably her best-known work, implicated all parts of European society, including Jewish leaders, in the evil of the Holocaust.

Introduction of the Text

In the passage from *Men in Dark Times* (1968) included here, Arendt discusses a central theme of the modern section of this anthology. She considers how personal and ethnic stories are related and how the telling of such stories enables us to understand the meaning of our individual and collective lives and to recover our humanity. Arendt found, in the different responses to the Holocaust, those that transcend their specific historical moment to become illustrations of the larger human condition.

About the Speaker

‘Dalai Lama’ is a title given to the foremost spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. They are monks in the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, believed to be an unbroken line of reincarnations of the spirit of compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. Tenzin Gyatso, the current and 14th Dalai Lama was born in 1935 into a small farming community in northeastern Tibet. At the age of two he was recognized as the reincarnation of the previous