

Teacher—Manjula Sholapurkar

Lecture 1 --- ‘Revolving Days’ by David Malouf(b.1934)

**Note for students** --- I hope you have familiarised yourself with the two prescribed poems of David Malouf in your course. In the two audio lectures, that you all have access to, I had tried to help you understand the poems. In this space, I want you to engage more critically with the poems, to this end, I have tried to build up points for comprehension in a graded manner. I have also included the insights of scholars & reviewers on Malouf, for your further study.

\* The poem was first published in the volume *Typewriter Music* in 2007 and again as the title poem of the volume *Revolving Days* in 2008.

\* The poems in the collection are arranged, ‘not in the order they were written but by the places that inspired them. - - - - - The result is a fragmentary autobiography where old and new poems interleave in luminous, counterpoint; to read them is to travel often mysteriously, through space and time.’ ( From - *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 15, 2008 ).

\* Malouf’s poems are a graceful interplay of language and memory.

\* Non- linear time with its associative unpredictability is one dimension of memory. The title ‘Revolving Days’ conceptualizes this aspect, as well as the re-emergence of memories; as a trope that builds on the inherent idea of circularity and return that the word ‘revolving’ connotes.

\* In Malouf’s poems memory is ‘embodied consciousness’. For Malouf the Body is the sensory receptor of the world we inhabit. Not only is lived experience filtered in through the five senses, but the passions and desires of the body have to be accommodated in our evolving sense of Self and the Other. In this poem let us situate the ‘beloved’ as the other.

\* Therefore, perhaps the ‘tug’ of reciprocated desire, (- ‘the life we promised to pour into each other’s mouths /forever and forever), is as constitutive of the poet’s selfhood as the separation and parting of ways of the lovers.

\* Therefore, we should not limit the poem into reading a specific gendered identity of the beloved. Labelling the desire as homoerotic or hetero-erotic would be a needless and reductive exercise. (Ashley Tellis, ‘The Body’s Business’: David Malouf’s Corporeal poetics and Politics’, see the World View edition )

\* The resurfacing of embodied memories, has to allow space for one of ‘those selves’ from the past to step into the present.

\* Selfhood evolves out of an accretive understanding of the past in the present.

\* 'The fusion of intellect and passion in Malouf's poetry is reminiscent of the metaphysical poets'; this is an interesting observation made by Amrita Singh ,( " Writing as public Dreaming ": Reading Malouf's Poetry, in the World View edition) you can think over the idea and its relevance to this poem, however I have given you only a fragment of the idea cogently developed in the essay, hoping you read it for yourself.

\* The poet's ability to reconstitute experience through the act of writing ( Read Malouf's interviews, included in World View anthology).

Note on the text used : I have used Sati, Someshwar, Ed. *A Warble Of PostColonial Voices:An Anthology of Short Stories and Poems, Vol II:Poems*. Delhi: WorldView Publications,2015. This anthology brings together, very relevant Critical Essays on Malouf's works. It also includes two interviews with the author and his 2000 Neustadt lecture.

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