The High Mountains of Portugal Study Guide

The High Mountains of Portugal by Yann Martel

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Contents

Plot Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this study guide: The High Mountains of Portugal, by Yann Martel. Alfred A. Knopf, Canada; Spiegel and & Grau, USA. 2016.

The novel is written primarily in present tense narration. There are no chapter breaks, only divisions into three parts.The story also has elements of magic realism.

The first part of the novel, Homeless, is set in Portugal in 1904. It focuses on the experiences of academic researcher Tomas, intensely grieving the recent deaths of his partner, son, and father. Narration describes the two major ways in which he deals with the intensity of his feelings: by walking backwards (which, he says, is an act of objecting to what has happened to him), and by traveling to the High Mountains of Portugal in search of a mysterious religious artifact. That artifact was constructed by Father Ulisses Manuel Rosario Pinto, a troubled missionary who spent much of his life in service to the citizens of a remote island.

As Tomas begins what amounts to a pilgrimage to find the artifact, he is given a car by a concerned relative (who has also just acquired a rare rhinoceros). At first, the frequently weeping Tomas is uneasy with driving and with the running of the car, but as his journey progresses he becomes increasingly comfortable with its speed, with its handling, and with its maintenance. Eventually, after a series of mishaps (which include his accidentally running over a very young boy) he arrives in the High Mountains and finds the artifact in a small village called Tuizelo: a large crucifix (i.e. statue of Christ on the Cross). Tomas is shocked to discover that Ulisses designed and built the figure of Christ to resemble a chimpanzee. As he cries out, he is helped by a woman named Maria Passos Castro and the local priest.

The second part of the novel is called Homeward and is set in Portugal in 1938. Late-working pathologist Eusebio is visited in the hospital mortuary where he works first by his wife Maria (who brings him the latest novel by mystery writer Agatha Christie, and who talks at great length about her theory of how similar murder mysteries are to the Bible) and by another Maria – Maria Passos Castro.

Eusebio is shocked and surprised to learn not only that Maria Castro has traveled from the High Mountain town of Tuizelo to get him to conduct an autopsy on her husband Rafael, but also that she wants to be present. After Maria Castro explains what happened to her family (including the mysterious death of their very young son), Eusebio eventually agrees to her request and conducts the autopsy, which leads to some intensely surprising discoveries, including the body of a small chimpanzee in Rafael’s abdominal cavity. Once the autopsy is finished, Eusebio watches as Maria Castro climbs into her husband’s skin. He then sews her into it, and settles down to read the book brought by his wife. When his assistant arrives, she discovers the autopsied body and Eusebio, asleep. Narration reveals that Eusebio’s wife is actually dead, and that he conducted the autopsy on her body. As his assistant considers what

to do in this unusual situation, she hears Eusebio waking up and weeping. She decides to go and comfort him.

Part three is entitled Home and begins in Canada in 1981, where a seasoned politician, (Peter, grieving the recent death of his beloved wife, discovers a strange but appealing connection with a chimpanzee (Odo) being kept in a research facility. Peter decides to leave his old life, rescue Odo, and move with him to the small town in Portugal (Tuizelo) from which his family came. As Peter and Odo travel, make a new home, and become accustomed to their new lives, they develop a close, intense relationship that eventually leads Peter to a place of relative peace and freedom that he has not felt for a long time.

Eventually, during a visit from his son, Peter discovers that Tuizelo is the town from which his grandfather Rafael and grandmother Maria emigrated; that the house in which he and Odo have settled was, in fact, Rafael and Maria's home; and that their very young son, who was accidentally killed in unexplained tragic circumstances, has come to be regarded as something of a holy figure in the town. In the aftermath of making all these discoveries, Peter and Odo go out onto the plains of the High Mountains. There, Odo leads Peter to the top of a boulder, where they glimpse a rare rhinoceros, long thought to be extinct. The stress of the day, the climb, and the sighting of the rhinoceros all combine to trigger a fatal heart attack in Peter. After he dies, cradled in Odo's arms, the chimpanzee runs off, following the trail left behind by the departing rhinoceros.

Part 1, Section 1

Summary

Homeless, pages 3 – 50. In 1904, Tomas sets off on his journey across Lisbon to his uncle's large home, from which he will leave for the High Mountains of Portugal. Present tense narrative of his journey through the city alternate with past tense narrative of events that brought him to this point in his life: his loving relationship with servant girl Dora (whom he could never marry); the birth and short life of their son Gaspar; and the sudden death of them both, shortly followed by that of his much loved father. After present tense narration of a couple of near misses on the street, narration then comments that "One step at a time, every few steps turning his head to glance over his shoulder at what lies onward, Tomas makes his way to Lapa walking backwards" (9).

Past tense narration then describes how Tomas' wealthy uncle simultaneously claims to understand why he is walking the way he is: as an expression of, or way of coping with, grief. In contrast, narration also offers the real reason: that Tomas is walking backwards out of objection to what has happened: "Because when everything cherished by you in life has been taken away, what else is there to do but object" (12)?

Present tense narration describes Tomas' arrival at his uncle's home and his sitting down outside, before entering, to look at the book he has brought titled, "Being the Life in Words / and the Instructions for the Gift / of Father Ulisses Manuel Rosario Pinto / Humble Servant of God" (13), a diary written while Ulisses was a priest on the Portuguese colony island of Sao Tome. Past tense narration then describes how Tomas accidentally discovered the diary while doing some archive and research work, and how he became so fascinated with it that he stole it. There is also a description of one of the most noteworthy pieces of Father Ulisses' writing: a juxtaposition between the frequently repeated phrase "This is home" and the comment that the island is only home until he dies. Narration then reveals how, as he examined the diary further, Tomas discovered how Ulisses created a unique, powerful Christian artifact – the "gift" of the diary's title. The exact nature of this artifact, narration reveals, was unidentified in the diary, but Tomas deduced that it was a crucifix (i.e. an image of Jesus Christ on the Cross). Memories of Dora's unyielding grasp of a crucifix at the time of her death solidified this belief that eventually grew into an obsession to find it. Eventually, Thomas narrowed his search down to five churches in the High Mountains of Portugal.

Narration returns to the present tense as Tomas' thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of a servant, who takes him into the house (full of memories of Dora and Gaspar) and into the presence of his Uncle Martim. Martim, who loves African culture and history, first shows Tomas his new pet rhinoceros, a rare Iberian, leading Tomas to briefly mourn the sad animal's capture and imprisonment. Martim then shows Tomas another new acquisition: a car that Martim intends for him to use on his journey to the High Mountains, which Martim has already filled with supplies. Martim explains, in great detail, how the car works and then takes Tomas on a drive to the outskirts of the city.

As Tomas vomits with anxiety and motion sickness, Martim assures him that driving the car will ease the journey to the High Mountains and also do Tomas good. Martim's servant Sabio, who has been assigned to follow the car, arrives on a motorcycle. After saying farewell, Martim leaves on the motorcycle. Sabio patiently instructs Tomas on the operations of the car, and then steps aside, leaving the driver's seat for Tomas. His first effort at driving is awkward and noisy. After he stops, Tomas recalls Gaspar's joy at adventuring and trying new things, and weeps heavily, becoming annoyed with himself for getting tears on the diary but at the same time, fully aware of the power of his grief. "When he looks in his eyes in the mirror when he shaves, he sees empty rooms. And the way he goes about his days, he is a ghost who haunts his own life" (48). Finally, however, resolve to complete his journey takes over, and he gathers his nerve and sets off.

Analysis

This section introduces several of the cornerstone elements of both this particular part of the book and the book as a whole. First, and in terms of this part of the story alone, there are introductions to the protagonist (Tomas) and his essential situation (his quest to find and identify the mysterious artifact referred to in the diary of Father Ulisses).

Worth noting is the setting in time for this part of the narrative: the early 1900's, meaning that automobiles were very new machinery, and therefore both very expensive and mysterious. This makes Martim's gift, Tomas' responsibility, and the extremely detailed evocation of the car and the responsibilities of driving it particularly significant.

A second point to note is the juxtaposition of Tomas' walking backwards with the idea of his moving forward in the car (he cannot, after all, drive a car backwards all the way to the High Mountains). There is a sense here that once the car comes into his life and becomes part of his journey, Tomas is forced to move forward into a new life, as opposed to staying stuck in objecting, his life stuck more in the past.

A third point to note relates to the name of the missionary with whom Tomas is obsessed. "Ulisses" is a spelling variant on the name Ulysses, a character in Ancient Roman myth who, in the aftermath of the Trojan War, spent years on an often dangerous, often frustrating journey to get home. The Greek name of the character was Odysseus, the basis of the term "odyssey," which means long voyage.

This section introduces and begins exploring the theme of father-son relationships. This is particularly interesting because Tomas is both: father to Gaspar, son to Silvestro, and grieving the loss of both. Other themes introduced in this section include: the exploration of journeys and journeying (the narrative making clear that at Tomas is at the beginning of both a physical and spiritual and emotional journey); the power of grief and loss (primarily evident in the various ways in which Tomas deals with his grief, including taking his aforementioned journey); and the nature and value of home.

Multiple motifs (repeated images with significant value to the story) are also introduced. One motif is the reference to walking backwards, and it being a way of expressing grief (something that is referred to in both subsequent parts of the book). A second motif is Tomas' weeping. Not only does the climax of this part of the book involve Tomas weeping heavily as he does in this section, but characters experiencing grief in other parts of the book also have moments in which their feelings manifest as deep weeping. All this means that both the walking and the weeping here are not only evocations of Tomas' own grief, but are also important pieces of foreshadowing.

Other instances of foreshadowing include the reference to Father Ulisses writing "this is home," which foreshadows circumstances in the second part of the book in where another character speaks the same refrain in somewhat unusual circumstances, and references in the third part to its central character having a renewed experience of feeling "at home." Then there is the reference to the High Mountains of Portugal which, aside from being the book's title, also plays an important role in the other two parts of the book. Finally, there is the reference to the Iberian Rhinoceros, an animal that plays a key role in both the literal and metaphoric climaxes of the book, late in its third part.

Discussion Question 1

In what way is the book's thematic consideration of the meaning of home developed, either positively or negatively, in Part 1, Section 1?

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree or disagree with the narrative's contention quoted from p. 21? Do you think the action of the story supports or contradicts this statement? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the symbolic parallel between the circumstances of the Iberian Rhinoceros and those of protagonist Tomas?

Vocabulary

catastrophe, perambulation, pedestrian, beholden, aplomb, complicit, amorous, strenuous, opprobrium, relegate, proffer, convulsive, countenance (v.), paltry, amiable, vagary, anonymity, nimble, delicacy, calibrate, dissemble, pantomime, diphtheria, assail, cornice, pliant, gesticulate, expulsion, happenstance, ecclesiastical, provenance, artifact, exemplary, pestilential, discursive, effigy, artifact, meticulous, innocuous, skein, calligraphy, decipherable, stupor, pestilent, deferential, curatorial, exuberant, menagerie, bastion, jocular, procure, offal, malodorous, cumulate, bulbous, veneration, opulent, plausible, elixir, ludicrous, ferocious, placid, behemoth, peroration, aptitude, pandemonium, permutation, incongruous

Part 1, Section 2

Summary

Homeless, p. 50 – 90. Present tense narration describes the awkwardness of Tomas' initial attempts to get the car going; his journeys through small towns (in which the curious residents tend to slow him down, sometimes even blocking him); and his growing joy in discovering nature as he passes, and his occasionally stops. Narration also describes how he sleeps in the well-stocked rear compartment of the car; how he spends his down-time learning more and more about the car's workings; and how eventually, he realizes that he's moving too slowly. Tomas also realizes that moving faster is up to him; only he can make the decision to change the car's gear and get it to move more quickly. He finally makes the choice, and the car moves more rapidly ahead.

For Tomas, both memories and current readings of Ulisses' diary trigger contemplations and realizations about his own journey. Here, the summing up of the diary's contents (which were written in past tense) shifts into present tense. The diary excerpts refer to how the people of Sao Tome lived in silence fueled by "despair and rage" (65); how they played an active role in the area's slave trade; and how Ulisses saw his mission as ministering to those who weren't served by the church – that is, the slaves and the poor.

Meanwhile, Tomas' journey continues. As he comes to the village of Ponte de Sor, he realizes he needs some of the moto-naptha (fuel) that his uncle told him he would have to purchase. He stops the car, walks (backwards) into town, and finds a store in which the storekeeper sells him what he needs, in spite of finding him somewhat strange. After Tomas leaves the store, still walking backwards, Tomas walks through the town, trying to memorize his route through. When he returns to the car, however, and tries to find his way, he becomes lost and the car stalls. His efforts to ask a nearby man for help end with the man (who is referred to by another resident as "the village idiot" (70) fetching his mother, who takes a club to the car in revenge for Tomas, as she sees it, humiliating her son. Tomas eventually gets away and leaves the town, worried about what his uncle will say when he sees the damaged car.

As he continues on his way, Tomas reflects on what Ulisses had to say, in his diary, about the darkness in people that he feels blooming in himself – "a chocking algae of the soul … it does not taste bad, only is unpleasant on the teeth. How much longer, Lord, how much longer" (74)? Continuing to worry about accessibility to fuel, feeling more of a sense of urgency, Tomas decides to push the car into third gear. Narration describes the speed, at this point, as being both worrisome and exciting.

As he continues to drive, Tomas encounters a stagecoach, drawn by four horses and carrying several passengers. As he speeds the car to pass it, he becomes aware that he is frightening the passengers and the horses, while angering the stagecoach's drivers. One of them throws a trunk onto the car, denting it: the other uses his whip on the car, scraping its paint. After he and the car pass the stagecoach, Tomas is tempted

to stop, but he does not want to risk another encounter so he presses on, excited and agitated – and becoming aware of an intensifying itchiness all over his body.

Analysis

Worth noting are the references to Tomas' handling of the car. He is becoming more experienced and confident in driving it, gradually increasing his speed and daring. This can be seen as a metaphor for his journey through grief - he is gradually making some progress.

Also important are the references made in Ulisses' diary. First, the reference to the slave trade can be seen as metaphorically echoing Tomas' experience of being a slave to his grief. Second, the references in the diary to despair and rage can be seen as echoing other aspects of Tomas' experience. Finally, although Ulisses' references to ministering to those who seem to have been abandoned by the church does not seem to be connected to any kind of strong faith in Tomas, there are few references (if any) to Tomas' own faith, or his feelings about the church, in the narrative. Rather, the resonance of this particular reference suggests that in the same way Ulisses ministered to the abandoned people of the island, his diary is ministering to the abandoned Tomas.

Meanwhile, the narrative continues to explore the theme of journeys and journeying as it follows Tomas on what seems to be an increasingly quixotic quest, or a quest that has a goal is either non-realistic or that doesn't really exist, with all its mini-calamities (which become more major in the following section) and confrontations. At the same time, because the themes of journeying and dealing with grief are intertwined, there is also the sense that as his journey continues, Tomas is also dealing, in some way, with his grief.

Foreshadowings in this section include the initial reference to driving through small towns, which foreshadows the conflicts later in this section as well as other important incidents to come in other small towns and also Tomas' eventual arrival at his destination, yet another small town. The reference to Tomas feeling itchy foreshadows developments in the following section as he tries to ease that itchiness, which can be seen as a metaphoric representation of his "itch" to find out the truth about the artifact.

Finally, there is the encounter with the stagecoach which, aside from providing a boost of narrative momentum and energy, can also be seen as having a metaphoric relationship to Tomas' situation.

Discussion Question 1

What metaphoric, and/or thematic, point is being made by the references to Tomas shifting gears and moving forward more quickly?

Discussion Question 2

What point is being made by shifting the description of the diary's contents and stories from past tense to present tense? Why does the shift take place at this particular point in the story?

Discussion Question 3

In what way does Tomas' encounter with the stagecoach (i.e. a mode of transportation which was, even at the time in which the story is set, of the past rather than of the present) reflect his personal situation and experience?

Vocabulary

dray, fecund, solicitude, ministration, conundrum, fortuitous, dormant, excruciate, imperceptible, reticence, morass, exhort, clamber, dissuade, gawker, reprimand, affront (v.), desolate, cusp, fetid, theoretical, insuperable, meager, ravenous, diligence, composure, incessant, incidental, miscegenation, mulatto, fraught, grievance, preclude, amicable, miscegenation, vigorous, apothecary, implacable, assail, frenetic, calisthenic, itinerant, incredulity, saturnine, lethargic, malaria, syphilis, pinnacle, velocity, cognizant, iridescent, conflagration, erratic, incensed, brandish, turbulent

Part 1, Section 3

Summary

Homeless, p. 79 – 111. As Tomas continues to drive, he becomes increasingly itchy and increasingly nervous about the car. He also becomes nervous about the time he is taking away from his archiving job, narration revealing that he had arranged for only ten days leave. If he extends beyond ten days, he believes he will be fired. During a rainstorm, Tomas encounters a silent shepherd who leaves him a gift of food, as it is close to Christmas. Shortly afterwards, and as he passes through yet another village, he finds a blacksmith with a large supply of moto-naptha which, Tomas discovers, is primarily used to kill infesting insects like those he has come to believe are causing his itching. Tomas buys both liquid naptha (for the car) and powdered naptha (for the insects that he believes are causing his itching) and, after the blacksmith refers to the impending visit of a stagecoach, runs - forward - to the car and drives away.

After the road fades away into the flat countryside, Tomas finds himself in a private enough place (the front of the car butted up against a tree) that he can strip naked and treat the infestation of pests all over his body. After indulging himself in a shouting, jumping, relieving bout of scratching (during which he is witnessed by a passing peasant and becomes deeply embarrassed), Tomas sticks a candle in the opening of a bottle of the moto-naptha, mixes some of the powdered and liquid naptha, and applies it all over his body. As he is letting its effects sink in, he is startled when the car explodes. The naptha he has on him catches fire, and he has to put himself out. The car is burned close to a cinder, but because it was in his trunk, the diary (along with other important papers) has survived. Tomas believes the car is still drivable and, more importantly, he must finish his quest, starting to believe that he is becoming more and more like Father Ulisses.

The next day, Tomas prepares to leave, but finds himself blocked by the tree. He had parked too close to be able to go around it, and the car has no reverse. He believes the only thing to do is chop the tree down, and he goes after it with an axe until his hands are bleeding. After the tree falls, Tomas realizes he is being watched by another peasant – Simao, who knows the tree's owner, knows the way to the road, and knows how to get the car free. Simao and Tomas put the car into neutral and push it far enough back that Tomas can get it moving. Simao then gives Tomas directions to the road, enjoying the ride in the car with a child-like glee. When they arrive at the road, Simao leaves and Tomas continues on his journey, eventually arriving at a large city. There, Tomas replenishes his supply of moto-naptha but is rejected by inn-keepers and restauranteurs because of his appearance. He then walks through city (backwards), returns to the car and, while waiting for night to fall (he has resolved to go through the town at night so as to avoid attention) he rereads the diary.

Tomas reads an excerpt that has stuck in his memory ever since he began reading the diary. Past tense narration describes how Ulisses attempted to minister to a trio of

slaves, all of whom eventually died, but not before he saw, in the eyes of one young woman, a wretchedness and desperation he had not seen in a slave before. “I entered that cell thinking I was a Christian man,” he wrote. “I walked out knowing I was a Roman soldier. We are no better than animals” (109). This section leads into the first description of Ulisses’ gift Ulisses was moved to make: “it is this sketch, with its haunting eyes, that set [Tomas] on his search” (111).

Analysis

As Tomas continues his journey (and thereby continues to develop the book’s thematic explorations of both journeys and dealing with grief), he seems to become increasingly foolish. The consequences of where he parked; the consequences of dousing himself with a double dose of naptha; and, most importantly, the consequences of sticking a lit candle in the mouth of a bottle of an explosive substance all combine into a self-afflicted, almost comic series of complications that do not seem to dampen the intensity of his desire but do seem to suggest that his quest is starting to become as foolhardy as his need to actually be ON it is becoming more desperate. Or, to look at it another way (and perhaps more charitably), this sequence of events does speak to Tomas’ desperation, the sense of his drive and determination.

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note the images or situations in this section that have echoes of Bible stories. Tomas’ bleeding hands can be seen as referring to the sufferings of Christ, whose hands were pierced with nails; his being rejected by innkeepers and others can be seen as referring to how Mary and Joseph were rejected by innkeepers in Bethlehem; and the name of the peasant who helps Tomas in the field, Simon, which can be seen as echoing the name of one of Christ’s main disciples, Simon Peter. All of these elements can be seen as ironic foreshadowing not only of the revelation at the end of this section (in which Tomas comes to question his experience of, and beliefs about, Christianity), but also the end of this part of the novel, the point at which Tomas’ discovery of the long-sought artifact deepens and intensifies those same questions.

Finally, there is the reference in Father Ulisses’ diary to humans being no better than animals. This not only foreshadows events and revelations, both thematic and narrative, at the end of this part of the book: it also introduces one of the book’s central overall themes, albeit obliquely. This is its exploration of the relationship between apes and humanity, commented on quite definitively at the end of this part.

Discussion Question 1

In what way do the appearance and gift of the shepherd manifest, or relate to, the theme of inter-connectedness?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think happened in the prison cell between Ulisses and the slave to make Ulisses change his perspective on himself and his relationship with Christianity?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the connection between Ulisses' visit to the slaves and his creation of the sketch?

Vocabulary

malefic, desecration, sobriquet, insatiable, askance, miasma, fiefdom, contraption, fulcrum, monotonous, repulsive, mortification, excruciating, elasticity, preposterous, vacate, visage, apathetic, carmine, corollary, avid, rebellious, emancipator, credibility, lambent, nocturnal, detritus, impertinent, exhortation, persevere

Part 1, Section 4

Summary

Homeless, p. 111 – 131. Tomas' attempt to make his way through the city ends in his becoming lost, in his falling asleep at the wheel of the car, and in his waking up the next morning once again surrounded by people. He eventually makes his way through the city, but becomes disoriented and spends days driving through the countryside, losing track of time but eventually reconnecting himself with his map and making his way into the area marked "The High Mountains of Portugal," an area that turns out to be a flat, plain-like area. He realizes he is close to his goal and resumes his search, making his way through three of the five possible cities with no result.

On his way to the next, Tomas first witnesses a falcon attack and kill a dove, and then realizes he has accidentally run over a young boy that, he also realizes, must have been a stowaway on the car from the last village. Tomas debates what to do, but then decides to drive away. As he does, he sees (in his rear-view mirror) a man run and collect the boy's body. This leads him to reflect on the two similar misfortunes in his life. As Tomas continues to drive, he becomes afflicted with intense stomach cramps and vomiting, which he comes to believe are related to his having killed the child.

Eventually, Tomas finds his way into a village called Tuizelo, where he goes searching for someplace to get some food but finds himself drawn to a church. He is let into it by the black-clad wife of the caretaker, Maria Dores Passos Castro, and sits in one of the pews to rest. After a while he begins to look closely at the crucifix by the altar, and comes to realize not only that it is the gift by Father Ulisses that he has been seeking but he also comes to realize what is unique about it. As he runs out of the church, again ready to vomit, Tomas confronts the bewildered Maria with what he has just realized: that Ulisses created and shaped the figure of Jesus on the crucifix to resemble a chimpanzee.

As Tomas rushes out of the church, the priest is returning to the village after a successful fishing trip. As the priest watches, Tomas leans up against his car, vomits, and starts to weep at everything he has lost, everything that he has caused to be lost, and everything that has been upset or destroyed by everything he has done. He also realizes the meaning behind both what Ulisses wrote and what he created with his crucifix: humans are only "random animals … a priest lucid in his madness encountered four chimpanzees on a forlorn island in Africa and hit upon a great truth: We are risen apes, not fallen angels" (131). He cries out, and the priest rushes to help him.

Analysis

This section of Part 1 contains two key narrative events. The first is the accidental killing of the boy which, despite its somewhat unlikely circumstances (the boy essentially

stowing away in the engine of the car?) is portrayed as deeply affecting for Tomas, and is potentially very affecting for the reader. The important thing to note here is that this incident has significant repercussions, not necessarily just for Tomas: Parts 2 and 3 both suggest there are repercussions for characters related to the boy both closely and distantly.

The second key narrative event in this section is its climax: Tomas' discovery of, and realizations about, the crucifix. Both aspects of this encounter, discovery and realization, function on a number of levels. Narratively, they bring Tomas' journey to a close, which also means that they essentially conclude the exploration of the "journeys and journeying" theme in this first part of the book. The encounter also ends that journey in a way that is simultaneously satisfying (in that Tomas has done what he set out to do) and deeply surprising, in that what Tomas has found is very different from his expectations, a way that also develops the book's overall thematic interest in the relationship between apes and humanity. In that sense, the encounter also foreshadows several important events and thematic explorations later in the book.

Then, in addition to the themes already outlined, there is also resolution to this part of the book's exploration of the nature of grief: the description of the reasons for Tomas' intense weeping is lengthy, intense, and multi-faceted, suggesting that Tomas has been grieving much more than the loss of his family: there has been a loss of faith, a loss of place in the world, a loss of place and comfort with himself. There is the sense, as this section concludes, that Tomas' true journey through grief is really only beginning, as is his journey into his understanding of life's meaning overall. There is also the sense that Tomas' physical journey has, in fact, only been concealing or masking the true depth of his experience of loss.

Other important elements in this section include the introduction of Tuizelo, which is the setting for much of the book's third part and is referred to in its second; the introduction of an important character, Maria Castro, who appears in Part 2 and who is referred to in Part 3; and the glancing reference to the priest having returned from a fishing trip. This can be seen as another subtly evocative reference to the Bible: not only to the story of Jesus miraculously converting a few loaves and fishes to a meal for thousands, but also to the story of Jesus referring to his disciples as "fishers of men." Here again, the story subtly layers references to Christian faith into the story, references that add facets of meaning to the book's thematic exploration of the relationship between apes and humanity. At this point it might be worth noting the name of this story's protagonist: Tomas, a variation on the name Thomas, who was one of Christ's apostles and who doubted his resurrection (hence the phrase "Doubting Thomas"). The sense here is that in the same way as Thomas the Apostle doubted Jesus, Tomas the Traveler doubts first himself in the aftermath of the deaths in his family, and then, in the aftermath of his discovery of the crucifix, doubts his understanding of faith in general and of Father Ulisses' faith in particular.

Discussion Question 1

How does this section of Part 1 develop the theme of the relationships between apes and humanity? At this point in the book, what are the implications, metaphoric and literal, of that development?

Discussion Question 2

What are the metaphoric implications of the “High Mountains” turning out to be a flat plain?

Discussion Question 3

In the final moments of this part of the book, and after running out of the church, Tomas cries out “Father, I need you!” Who do you think he is calling to: his own father? The nearby Catholic priest? Or is he, in fact, uttering a paraphrased echo of the words of Christ as He was dying on the Cross and calling out to God, his Father in Heaven?

Vocabulary

hinterland, luminous, susurration, alpine, homophone, clement, dependency, sustenance, amenable, profusion, harmonious, atavism, chassis, putrid, barter, buttress (n.), pilaster, maudlin, eloquence, simian, doleful, lucid, piteous

Part 2, Section 1

Summary

Homeward, p. 135 – 169. Present tense narration sets this section of the story on New Year's Eve, 1938. In the mortuary of a hospital in the Portuguese city of Braganca, Pathologist Eusebio Lozora works on a report in his office, reflecting on how his work (examining the bodies of dead people) is the only one in the medical field that depends upon skill with words (as opposed to skill with living bodies) for success. "Every dead body is a book with a story to tell," narration comments, "each organ a chapter, the chapters united by a common narrative" (137).

As Eusebio is discovering a long-neglected file, there is a knock on the door. Surprised, he opens it to discover his wife Maria, narration describing how she has brought something in a bag; how she considers herself to be an amateur theologian (i.e. contemplating and examining religion); and how much she loves to use words to talk, in contrast to how her husband uses words to write. "To her, writing is making stock and reading is sipping broth, but only the spoken word is the full roasted chicken" (140). After some bantering conversation, Maria settles in to talk about how, after several weeks of concentrated reading of a variety of books, she has found a solution to a problem she has been struggling with: in the mystery novels of Agatha Christie.

Maria's talk is interrupted, in narration, by descriptions of Eusebio's thoughts as he half-listens. For example, her comments about the physical, bodily nature of so many of Jesus' miracles lead Eusebio to think about the dead bodies he examines. Eventually, Maria makes the claim that all of Christianity's teachings have to be considered allegorically, as stories communicating meaning as opposed to actual narrations of historical events. Discussion of the literalist leanings of the local priest lead Maria to pull a bottle of red wine out of her bag. As Eusebio pours into a hastily cleaned glass, from which they will both drink, Maria first toasts the New Year, which has just turned, and then continues, wondering why there is so little actually written about Jesus in the historical record. She then sums up her thoughts by saying that "Jesus told stories and lived through stories. Our faith is faith in his story, and there is very little beyond that story-faith. The holy word is story, and story is the holy word" (155). This leads her again to the work of Agatha Christie.

Maria, in a lengthy monologue narration uninterrupted by Eusebio's thoughts, describes parallels she has found between the Bible and Agatha Christie, parallels that led her to the idea that no matter how many times a Christie novel is reread, the reader has a kind of amnesia about the identity of the murderer. This, she adds, is similar to amnesia about who actually murdered Jesus, given that there are so many layers and aspects to the story of his death. She then goes into a long deduction that ultimately leads her to claim that because Jesus was ultimately murdered by a crowd, "we murdered Jesus of Nazareth. We are the crowd. We are anonymous" (162).

Maria goes on to explain that Saint Paul, with his stories of Jesus and his teachings (stories written years before the Gospels), unraveled the mysteries of those teachings in the same way as Christie detectives unravel the mysteries in the books – through investigation, analysis of the facts, and deduction. After further analysis, she makes this conclusion: “[Jesus] is right there in [Christie’s] last name. Mainly, though, he hovers, he whispers” (164).

Analysis

The first section of the book’s middle part introduces a new set of characters - Eusebio and Maria, a new situation unfolding in a new and different time (more than 30 years after the events of the first part), and a new style of writing, or narrative construction. Where Part 1 was driven by a physical journey defined by event and situation, Part 2 is clearly driven by a journey through ideas and feelings, driven by conversation. Those ideas may seem to some readers somewhat unlikely, and perhaps even comic – at first. Later, as Maria develops her ideas and theories even more, the connections begin to make an unexpected sort of sense, and while the sense of unlikeliness is still present, there begins to emerge a unique sense of logic to them.

In terms of character, the treatment of protagonist Eusebio is somewhat unusual, in that he is fairly inactive through both this section of Homeward and the one that follows: it is only in the third section that he begins to take a more active role in the action, just in narrative time for his participation in the piece’s emotional climax. That said, there are clear and engaging insights into his character: his affection for his wife, his dedication to his job, and his contemplations of issues related to death and the body. All these play key roles in defining Homeward’s climax and giving its twist ending (revealed in Section 3) its emotional impact.

The sense of religious imagery and metaphor developed in Part 1 continues here, most vividly or obviously in Maria’s references to Jesus and the Bible but in at least one other, somewhat subtler way. This is in the reference to the two of them sharing red wine, wine being a centuries-old component of sacramental rituals symbolically marking aspects of Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection, and the faith that sprang up as a result of both. In other words, in the same way as wine, in Christian religious practice, has become symbolic of communion with Christ and his spirit of sacrifice, wine here becomes symbolic of communion between husband and wife, and a foreshadowing of a sacrifice made by Eusebio, the true nature of which is revealed in Section 3 of this part of the book. Here it is important to note that the term for “communion” has similar meanings to the term “connectedness,” meaning that the image of the wine, with its various metaphoric associations, can also be seen as developing the book’s theme of interconnectedness.

Finally, a word about Agatha Christie, who was one of the most famous and most-read mystery novelists in the first two-thirds of the twentieth Century. Christie was a British writer who made a name and reputation from constructing very clever murder mysteries, breaking what were believed to be established rules about writing such stories, and for populating those stories with colorfully developed characters and detectives. At the time

in which this part of the book is set, Christie was coming into the peak of her writing powers and professional success: Eusebio and Maria were not the only people in the world obsessed with her work. There is a significant irony associated with Maria's linking of Bible stories with those told by Christie: for several decades, the only book that sold more copies than Agatha Christie's books was the Bible.

Discussion Question 1

How is the theme of grief and loss indirectly explored in this Part 2, Section 1?

Discussion Question 2

What are the connections between Eusebio's thoughts on the narrative of a dead body at the beginning of Part 2, Section 1 and the references to the writings of Agatha Christie?

Discussion Question 3

What are your responses to the ideas Maria puts forward about Christ having been killed by a crowd, and about the implied complicity of contemporary believers in his death?

Vocabulary

supplication, concise, dutiful, rugose, exuberant, anomalous, sclerotic, exasperation, ardent, incessant, drivel, amorous, frivolity, levity, volubility, umbrage, arduous, ingenuity, malady, hemorrhage, abhorrence, carrion, impetus, anomalous, winnow, synoptic, infirmity, sanitize, zealous, salvific, revelatory, fortitude, compulsion, collusion, nebulous, congruence, equivalence, dissemination, putrefy, cadaver, corpulence, genuflection, precarious

Part 2, Section 2

Summary

Homeward, p. 169 – 198. Eusebio reacts with silent bemusement to what his wife is saying, wondering to himself how the Pope might react to claims such as those made by his wife. Maria concludes by talking about the difficulty of marrying faith (“How does one live an eternal idea in a daily way?”) and reason (“Reason, on its own, leads us nowhere, especially in the face of adversity”) (165), offering the mystery stories of Agatha Christie as the ultimate example of how to do so. She also says that in sharing her ideas with him, she has offered him a gift, a way to look at his favorite reading material in a helpful, life-illuminating way. He struggles to find the words to be grateful, reminding himself (as he embraces her) of just how much she has given him to be grateful for. She prepares to go, reminding him of some domestic details he has to take care of and saying that she has left him a gift that she wants him to open after she goes. Conversation reveals that the report he is writing is on the autopsy of a long drowned, murdered woman pushed off a bridge. After a detailed narrative description of what happens to a body in water for a long time, and after Eusebio comments that he is staying away from the bridge near where the body was found, Maria leaves, with a final comment: “Faith is the answer to death” (169).

After she goes, Eusebio kneels to pray, but chooses instead to look at the gift she left behind: a copy of the Agatha Christie novel Appointment with Death.

Present tense narration describes how Eusebio’s excited first read of his new book is interrupted by the arrival of another woman named Maria – Maria Dores Passos Castro who, Eusebio notices, is now middle aged but was once a very beautiful woman. He invites her in, thinking resentfully of the interruption but also remembering how only women came to the tomb of Jesus. He invites her in, very conscious of the messiness of his office, and invites her to explain why she is there, assuming that it has something to do with death.

This second Maria, as talkative as the first, reveals that she has come from the High Mountains of Portugal, which Eusebio understands: the hospital where he works is the closest one to the High Mountains. Maria then tells a lengthy story of how she married her husband Rafael, a farmer and shepherd; how she discovered the joys of sex, desire, and intimacy with him; and how they had only one child. Much to Eusebio’s confusion, she explains that she is there to learn how her husband lived, and then opens the suitcase she has brought to reveal “the dead and shoeless body” of her husband (183).

Maria Castro reveals that she wants Eusebio to open up her husband’s body, and tell her how he lived. She also demands, in spite of Eusebio’s protestations, to be present. He eventually gives in, realizing that he was dealing with a woman “who has so few wants left that the ones she still has are filled to the brim with her will” (186). He takes

Maria and her husband's body to the room where the autopsies are done. He prepares the body; prepares himself; and prepares Maria for what she is about to witness. First he likens the process of an autopsy to the investigation of a murder mystery, using ideas and actual language from the works of Agatha Christie in a way that he believes his wife would be proud of. He then explains at detailed length what he will do to the body. He is about to begin when Maria tells him to start with his feet. He protests, but she insists. Regretting his decision to even let her in his door, he agrees.

Analysis

This section of Homeward continues the stylistic approach developed in its first section: specifically, its exploration of ideas as revealed in conversation. As the first Maria brings her contemplations of the connection between murder mysteries and the mysteries of Christ to a close, she also brings manifestations of love, affection, and relationship into the discussion. There is a clear sense of a good marriage here, if a slightly uneven one: it seems that even though Maria is more talkative, and arguably more intellectually active (or acute) than her husband, they still have a healthy relationship – although moments at the end of Maria's visit (specifically: the references to the drowned woman and to the bridge) foreshadow revelations in the third and final section of the story that reveal the truth about this relationship.

The transition between the visits of the two Marias is marked by a reference to the Christie book Appointment with Death, the title of which can be seen later in the narrative as having a dark, ironic humor about it.

The second half of this section, and indeed the second half of this part of the book, begins with the arrival of Maria Castro, who seems to be the same Maria Castro who appeared late in Part 1. This aspect of her character functions on a couple of levels: as a development of the book's thematic interest in inter-connectedness (i.e. making a connection between Parts 1 and 2), and as a foreshadowing of her reappearance in Part 3. Another point to note about the appearance of this second Maria is that it is another evocation of Christian, or Biblical, imagery. Christ, while he was entombed after his crucifixion, was visited by two women named Mary: Eusebio is visited, in a place that is in some ways a metaphorical tomb, by two women named Maria, the Latin version of Mary. The point is not made to suggest that Eusebio is intended to be seen as a Christ figure; on the other hand, this subtle, and metaphoric, tying in of Eusebio's story with that of Christ echoes the presence and meaning of the red wine in the previous section.

Other points to note about this section, in the aftermath of the appearance of the second Maria, include the reference to their only child, which not only foreshadows revelations later in this section and in Part 3 related to that child's identity, but which also refers back to the death of the child in Part 1 with meanings that forthcoming references reveal. Then there is the reference to Agatha Christie (tying the appearances of the two Marias to each other); the twist on the intention of the autopsy (autopsies are generally performed to find out how a person died, not lived); and the reference to the autopsy

beginning with Rafael's feet. This last can be seen as an interesting evocation of the book's thematic interest in journeys and journeying. One way or another, every journey starts with footsteps: the image here suggests that in this particular case and in fulfillment of this particular request, Eusebio will begin his examination of Rafael's life with the part of his anatomy arguably most involved in the "journey" of that life.

Discussion Question 1

How does this Pat 2, Section 2 develop the book's overall thematic interest in inter-connectedness relationships?

Discussion Question 2

What does Maria mean when she says faith is the answer to death?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think the author is trying to say in his metaphorical tying together of Eusebio's experiences with those of Christ?

Vocabulary

injurious, tolerant, alleviate, piety, presumable, innuendo, deportment, hovel, lineage, brothel, aversion, protocol, scandalize, emaciated, orifice, cursory, extremity, sundry, matador, indefatigable, agonal, ligature, carbolic, thorax, exudate, viscera, peripheral, distal, subcutaneous, pungent

Part 2, Section 3

Summary

Homeward, p. 198 – 215. When Eusebio cuts into the foot, he is surprised and amazed when a lumpy, yellowish substance oozes out. Maria comments that it is vomit and, again surprised, Eusebio agrees. Maria then speaks at length of how the grief deep in Rafael became vomit, describing how the sudden, accidental death of their son left a great, sad space between them. Maria then describes how Rafael coped with his grief – specifically, how he began to walk backwards in a way, he said, that made carrying his grief easier. She describes how he started walking backwards after seeing a visitor to the village do it, adding that she saw the visitor as well and revealing that he left the village on foot to return to where he came from. She then goes into more detail about her and Rafael's grief: "it ate at us like maggots, attacked us like lice – we scratched ourselves to the edge of madness" (201).

As Eusebio continues his autopsy, going first into the other foot, then up the legs, then into the torso, he continues to find more vomit. In the lower torso he discovers several coins; and then, when he cuts into Rafael's penis on Maria's orders, he finds what Maria calls Rafael's "sweet flute" (205). He pieces it together, and Maria plays it, then places it next to the body. Eusebio continues his dissection, finding that the body is filled with strange items like feathers, dice, tools, a bit of red cloth, and, in the torso, a small chimpanzee and a small bear cub. After filling the suitcase with the items from her husband's body and an envelope containing a bit of the chimpanzee's fur, Maria takes off all her clothes and climbs into Rafael's body, repeating over and over again "This is home" (208). Eusebio then carefully sews Rafael's skin around his wife and leaves her on the table, returning to his own desk and falling asleep.

A short time later, Eusebio's assistant (Senhora Melo) arrives, and is surprised to discover both Eusebio, asleep at his desk (with the red wine and the book still in evidence) and the body on the table. As she notes the many seams and incisions on the body, she reflects on how strange Dr. Lozora (Eusebio) has been since the death of his wife, and on how he insisted on doing the autopsy on her himself (because there was no-one else to do it and the body was decomposing). Narration also describes how the circumstances of her death (by drowning, following a fall from a bridge) were ultimately believed to be murder, even though there was no reason to believe that anyone would, or could, murder her (an Agatha Christie novel was found near where her body had been found). Senhora Melo then hears Eusebio waking and weeping, and is undecided about whether she should go and comfort him. She then decides that, because he clearly needs help, she should go, so she does.

Analysis

Several narrative elements developed earlier in Homeward are given new, more emotional, and perhaps even tragic meaning in its final paragraphs. Specifically, the references to the death of Eusebio's wife suggest that everything in the first half of the narrative was something other than real: a dream, a hallucination, an act of imagination, or wishful thinking. This sense, of a particular narrative comment revealing previously unexpected truths, also seems to apply to the reference to the drowned woman in Section 2: the narrative's description of Eusebio's analytical thoughts about what drowning does to a body can, in retrospect, be seen as his experience of being both shocked and analytical about what he sees as having happened to his wife. Both of these un-layerings can be seen as evoking the book's thematic exploration of grief and loss: specifically, in terms of what Eusebio's mind and heart are making him think, feel, or imagine in the aftermath of his wife's death.

All that said, and keeping in mind what is revealed to be the truth about the Eusebio / Maria relationship, it's important to note that the Maria Castro aspect of Homeward may or may not be true. Similarly placed revelations about the family history of the protagonist of the book's third part (that is: revelations emerging as part of his story's climax) call into question what the narrative here portrays as having happened to Maria and Rafael: narration there suggests their lives ended in a very different way from what is depicted here. In short, the visits of the two Marias are part of a complex tapestry of events that seem to have at least some basis in reality but which may, or may not, have happened as the characters experience them. Arguably, they are among the most apparent examples, in the book as a whole, of a stylistic technique called "magic realism," in which events or characters with super-natural, mystical, or magical elements are smoothly integrated into a generally realistic narrative.

Magic realism is also the technique at work in the description of the various objects found in the body of Rafael which, given what the reader knows about other events in this section (i.e. the unreality of the visit of the first Maria), could also be seen as a carrying-through of Eusebio's dream, or imagination. The references to these items also foreshadow the references to, and reappearances of, these same items, several years later, in the lives of the characters in Part 3. Meanwhile, the reference to the chimpanzee in Rafael's abdominal cavity clearly has echoes of the Christ-chimpanzee in Part 1, with both foreshadowing the appearance of another chimpanzee in Part 3: that appearance, and the metaphoric / thematic meanings thereof, makes the full meaning of the appearances here and in Part 1 clearer.

Other important elements in this section include the further details of what happened to Rafael and Maria's son, the language here clearly evoking the experience of the boy accidentally killed by Tomas in Part 1. There are further developments in the narrative of this boy's life and death in Part 3. This section also echoes and develops a key aspect of the book's thematic exploration of grief: specifically, the practice of walking backwards as a way of easing feelings of loss. Then there is the reference to Maria saying "This is home," another clear echo of an aspect of Part 1 (i.e. the inclusion of the

same phrase in Ulisses' diary), and the description of Maria being sewn into Rafael's body (more magic realism, and another facet in the book's thematic exploration of the nature of "home"). Finally, there is a reiteration of the "weeping" motif and the compassion of Senhora Melo, which echoes the compassion of Uncle Martim in Part 1 and which the book seems to suggest is the automatic, necessary reaction to someone experiencing such an intensity of grief.

Discussion Question 1

How do events and conversations in Part 2, Section 3 of the book develop the theme of inter-connectedness?

Discussion Question 2

What writing tools does the author use to reveal the fact that Eusebio's wife is dead? Did this surprise you? Why might the author design the section in this way?

Discussion Question 3

How does Maria being sewn into her husband's body, and what she says while climbing into his skin, evoke the idea of home?

Vocabulary

glutinous, profusion, arduous, ravenous, trepidation, certitude, transient, ominous, extemporaneous, balustrade

Part 3, Section 1

Summary

Home, p. 219 – 255. Present tense narration describes how newly appointed Canadian senator Peter Tovy, in the aftermath of two traumatic events (the sudden and painful death of his wife Clara, the difficult divorce of his son Ben), takes a leave from his responsibilities and goes on a work-arranged trip to Oklahoma. There, after a series of low-intensity meetings, and he visits the Institute for Primate Research.

Peter develops an uneasy relationship with the Institute's director, Dr. Lemmon, and an awkward camaraderie with the director's assistant, Bob, and is shocked when he sees the prison-like living conditions of some of the primates being kept there, particularly the chimpanzees. Peter is particularly shocked when Bob comments that "This is home for them" (229). After insisting that he go into a private research area, Peter is at first frightened by how angry and aggressive the chimps seem, but then he discovers a connection with a quiet, seemingly thoughtful chimp at the back of the facility. Much to Bob's uneasiness, Peter shakes hands with the chimp, the two retaining eye contact. "Is it that no one since Clara has looked at him like that, fully and frankly, the eyes like open doors?" (235). The moment of contact between Peter and the chimp, named Odo, is interrupted by the angry arrival of Dr. Lemmon. Peter impulsively tells Lemmon that he will buy Odo for $15,000, and the amused Lemmon agrees, clearly telling Peter that there will be no returning Odo (who has had a history of being moved from place to place).

After he leaves the Institute, Peter starts wondering what he can, and will, do with Odo, eventually deciding to give him to a zoo. One morning, though, he wakes up and realizes he wants, and needs, to do more – not just for Odo, but for himself. He realizes he intends to take care of Odo, realizes that he can not do it in Toronto with his old life all around him, and makes plans to get rid of almost everything in his life and move to the part of the world from which his family originally came – the High Mountains of Portugal.

After selling his homes and possessions, all with the help of his grumbling son Ben, Peter drives down to the Institute, where he spends a challenging, stimulating day learning from Bob about chimpanzees in general and about Odo in particular. Despite moments of panic or uncertainty or discomfort, Peter becomes more convinced that he has made the right decision. Eventually, Peter meets with Dr. Lemmon, who has arranged all the necessary paperwork for Peter to take Odo to Portugal. Peter and Odo then leave, Bob bidding the chimpanzee a sad farewell.

As they drive across the country to New York City, their departure city, Peter avoids larger centers and hotels, staying instead by roadsides or in fields. At one point, he stays in a wooded area, letting Odo free to climb trees. Odo does, and stays in one tree for most of the day and the night, Peter realizing that it was probably the first time in his

life that Odo had actually been in a tree. This pattern repeats for the next few nights, until they get to New York. There, Peter injects Odo with a sedative that had been given to him by a veterinarian, and Odo immediately falls asleep. Peter then makes the arrangements to get them both on their scheduled flight and, after making the pre-arranged sale of his car, gets on the plane himself. He is allowed to visit Odo in the cargo hold, and eventually spends most of the flight there, with the knowledge and approval of the flight crew. Eventually, they arrive in Portugal.

Analysis

As the final part of the book begins, it raises all of the themes that have been considered and developed throughout the book so far. First, there are issues of dealing with grief and loss (explored through the situation and reactions of protagonist Peter Tovy) and issues related to the meaning of home. The theme of journeys and journeying takes central focus at the end of the first section, as Peter and Odo begin their literal and emotional journeys into what eventually, in following sections, becomes their physical and spiritual home. Then there are developments in the book's thematic interest in father-son relationships, explored literally through the Peter-Ben relationship, and more metaphorically through the Peter-Odo relationship. Finally, the themes of interconnectedness and the relationship between apes and humanity are simultaneously explored in the Peter-Odo relationship, which becomes the central relationship in this part of the book and also the primary means of exploring both themes in the book as a whole.

Then, and in addition to the above referenced themes and to the appearance of another chimpanzee as a central figure or image in the story, other elements encountered earlier reappear here. These include the High Mountains (which, here as elsewhere in the book, become a defining and somewhat ironic element of setting and metaphor) and the idea of a road trip. Specifically, the journey taken by Peter and Odo has echoes of the journey taken by Tomas in Part 1, particularly when it comes to the mode of transportation and the way they inhabit and make use of it.

There is also an echo of the connection between story here and Christian narrative: Peter was the name of the man who was arguably the closest of Christ's disciples. In fact, one of Peter's nicknames was "The Rock," an aspect of the name and its Christian implications that has particular significance later in the narrative, as a particular sort and shape of rock plays an important role in the story.

A particularly unique element in this section is the portrayal of the relationship between widower Peter and his deceased wife, Clara. The other two protagonists (Tomas in Part 1, Eusebio in Part 2) are also widowers, but their relationship with the dead women in their lives is somewhat different. For Tomas, Dora is completely gone from his life; for Eusebio, Maria is a ghostly visitor; but here and for the rest of Part 3, Clara is, for Peter, a companion whose advice, support, and insight he repeatedly reaches out for, in spite of knowing that she cannot and will not respond. His reaching out to his dead wife, essentially for comfort, is one of Part 3's explorations of the nature and effect of grief.

Discussion Question 1

In what contrasting ways is the thematically central idea of “home” explored in Part 3, Section 1?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways might Peter’s relationship with Odo be considered a father-son relationship?

Discussion Question 3

Consider the reference to chimpanzees in the following quote: “Each animal is like a piece of a puzzle, and wherever it settles, it belongs, clicking into place perfectly” (227). At this point in the book, what are the echoes, or resonances, in this quote to the other appearances of chimpanzees in the book?

Vocabulary

constituency, inordinate, sprite, caustic, venomous, chafe, convulse, reverie, minutiae, rudiment, prominent, perfunctory, concentric, pretense, cordiality, luxuriant, sinecure, grouse (v.), imminent, incredulity, assertive, demeanor, forage (v.), placate, brazen, notary, ensconce, retaliate, egregious

Part 3, Section 2

Summary

Pages 255 – 274. After arriving at the airport in Lisbon, Peter makes sure all his and the still-sleeping Odo's papers are in order, and then realizes he forgot to make a key arrangement: transportation. Struggling to communicate with the people at the airport who only speak Portuguese ("He remembers from long-ago conversations between his parents that this is what Portuguese sounds like, a slurred mournful whisper") (256), he finds his way to a car dealership. There, he purchases a car that, in its basic construction and design, has a great many similarities to the car driven by Tomas in Part 1. Peter makes his way back to the airport, finds that Odo is still sleeping and loads him into the car, learns that it will take about ten hours of driving to get to the High Mountains, and sets off, planning to do the same as he did in America: travel via small towns, avoiding big cities. Their first stop: Ponte de Sor. Peter pulls up, falls asleep, and wakes to find Odo next to him, also awake. They eat and resume their journey.

Past tense narration briefly sums up the experiences of Peter's parents – how, after they emigrated from Portugal, they were determined that Peter and his sister Teresa have better lives than they did. In their later lives, his parents began to reminisce about their homeland. In those reminiscences, they referred to coming from Tuizelo which, narration reveals, is where Peter has decided to settle with Odo.

Back in present tense narration, Peter and Odo's journey continues. They travel through a sequence of small towns, resting by the roadside. "He senses that the future comes like the night in these settlements, quietly and without surprise, each generation much like the previous one and the next …" (263). Occasionally, Peter fills the time with looking through his guidebooks, and is surprised to find references to a local anomaly, the mysterious Iberian Rhinoceros, seemingly extinct since the mid-1600's.

Eventually, they arrive in Tuizelo, and Peter is happily surprised at how quiet it seems. Difficult conversation with the villagers, who only speak Portuguese, results first in them all being reassured that Odo means no harm, and then in Peter being led to a house on the outskirts of the village. Rustic and dirty, Peter's first inclination is to look for something better, but when he sees how happy and at home Odo quickly becomes, he agrees to stay. The woman who has been leading the villagers, Dona Amelia, makes arrangements to return the next day and help him clean and set up. That night, the happy Odo and the nervous Peter make camp, Peter whispering to Clara that he believes she would love the house and would be happy there.

Analysis

Echoes of earlier narrative elements continue in this section, primarily the idea of a journey by road. In the same way as the journey from Oklahoma to New York in the

previous section, the journey in this section echoes Tomas' journey in Part 1. There are several aspects to this echoing: the description of the car; the fact that Peter and Odo, like Tomas, stop in Ponte de Sor; and the fact that they end up heading for Tuizelo, which is where Tomas ended up. All of this simultaneously develops the book's overall thematic interest in inter-connectedness.

Another reference from earlier in the book echoed here is that to the Iberian Rhinoceros. The animal's first appearance was in Part 1, when Tomas visited his uncle Martim and discovered that Martim had just received such a rhinoceros as a pet. Meanwhile, the appearance of the rhinoceros in Part 3, Section 2 foreshadows its appearance at the climax of this part, in its final section. All these parallels in event and theme, combined with the fact that all these similar events involve similar people in similar circumstances, again explore and develop the book's overall thematic interest in interconnection, mystic or realistic or otherwise.

All that said, there are foreshadowings in Part 3, Section 2 of the eventual truths about Peter and his family that are eventually revealed in the book's climax. The most notable of these include the references to Peter's parents, their language and history and origins in Tuizelo. These hints lay the groundwork for, once again, significant developments in the book's thematic interest in inter-connectedness.

Discussion Question 1

Consider the following quote: "He senses that the future comes like the night in these settlements, quietly and without surprise, each generation much like the previous one and the next …" (263). In what way might this quote be developing the theme of interconnectedness?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways might the description of the house in which Peter and Odo settle be seen as a metaphoric representation of aspects of Peter's character or situation?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the main reason that Peter decided to settle in Tuizelo? What do you think he is trying to accomplish, achieve, or discover?

Vocabulary

rickety, rudimentary, amenable, stanch, cartography, undulate, interlocutor, plausible

Part 3, Section 3

Summary

Home, p. 274 – 308. The next day, after Dona Amelia and a cleaning and repair crew arrive, Peter takes Odo into town. They visit a café, where Odo quickly endears himself to some of the people of the village. When he returns to the house with Odo, Peter is happily surprised to discover that Dona Amelia and the others have turned it into a clean, welcoming home. After sorting out the financial arrangements and learning that the nearest community to do business is Braganca, Peter leaves Odo alone at the house and goes into the city. There he does his banking and calls the doubtful Ben, explaining that he can be contacted by leaving a message at the village café. He then calls the more supportive Teresa, who teases him about searching out the family home and long-lost relatives, and then asks tenderly about both Clara and Peter's sometimes unhealthy heart. Peter admits to talking to Clara in his head, and adds that his heart seems fine.

Back at the house, Peter is relieved to find that Odo is still there. Present tense narration describes how, as they unpack and have dinner, Peter finds himself unsettled when he catches Odo staring at him. He evades the feeling that he has come to an awkward kind of ending by going for a walk with Odo, the two of them bonding even more under a pine tree in the rain; over breakfast the next morning (at which time Peter takes off his watch, feeling no need to tell the time); and over what seems to be developing into a ritual, grooming each other in the way apes do. Later, they go for a hike across the plains of the High Mountains, with Odo taking particular pleasure in exploring the many stone obelisks, or pillars, scattered about. One he pays particular attention to, climbing it and, eventually, helping Peter up as he climbs up as well. Together they enjoy the view.

Several months pass, with Peter becoming simpler and simpler in his habits. A call from his superiors in Ottawa leads him to resign his seat in the Senate; a call from his sister leads him to contemplate whether, as she suggests, he and Odo have developed a love for each other; and a call from his son makes him wonder whether his son actually does want him to come back. He also has a couple of good conversations with his granddaughter, who seems comfortable with just about every aspect of his life. To all of them, in one form or another, he indicates that he feels he is at home.

The days continue to pass. Peter and Odo look through Peter's photo album, and Odo begins to recognize Peter's picture, although not the ones of when he was very young, taken when he and his parents lived in Tuizelo, before they immigrated. For some reason, narration comments, sometimes looking at these pictures makes Peter weep, and Odo comforts him. Narration describes how comfortable they and the villagers are all becoming with each other; how Odo likes to climb the roof of the church while Peter is sitting quietly inside, looking at (among other things) the "awkward crucifix blackened

by time" (305); and how Peter notices that the villagers, at times of grief, walk backwards.

Analysis

The narrative line and story elements of this section are relatively low key, as Peter and Odo settle into their new lives, their new home, and the new deepening of their relationship. That said, there are important foreshadowings of climactic elements that take focus in the following, and final, section. Here it is important to note that the narrative, at this point, is building to a pair of climaxes: one for the book as a whole, and one for this particular part. In terms of the former, important elements include the reference to Ben and the reference to the photo album; in terms of the latter, important foreshadowings include the reference to Peter's heart, and the reference to the obelisks, or boulders.

Thematic elements developed in this section include further developments in both the literal and metaphoric father-son relationships in which Peter is involved (i.e. with Ben and with Odo respectively) and a number of different references to experiences of home (all of which tend to make the thematic suggestion that a feeling of being at home depends upon something other than, or in addition to, an experience of physical comfort). Then there are further developments of the relationship between apes and humanity, and continued references to grieving and loss. Here again the narrative re-presents the motifs of walking backwards and of weeping as representations of grief, with the interesting addition of Peter being comforted by Odo, an entwining of two of the book's key themes. All these developments of theme, all these recurrences of motif, combine in an evocation, in this section, of the last of the book's central themes: its exploration of interconnectedness, a thematic element that reaches its developmental climax in the following, and final, section.

Discussion Question 1

Other than developments in the Peter – Odo relationship, how does Part 3, Section 3 develop, or reiterate, the book's thematic exploration of the relationship between chimpanzees and humanity? What element from earlier in the novel and referred to here develops this theme?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways are Teresa's two questions – about Peter's heart and about his feelings for Odo – interrelated, either literally or metaphorically?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the most important component of feeling at home? What aspects of environment, situation, or circumstance give you that feeling or experience?

Vocabulary

rickety, rudimentary, amenable, stanch, cartography, undulate, interlocutor, plausible, mien, verification, forage, larder, concordance, censorious, proximate

Part 3, Section 4

Summary

Homecoming, p. 308 – 332. One day, Ben shows up unexpectedly. He and Peter are happy to see each other, and Ben makes a wary acquaintance with Odo. A few days later, Odo brings Peter a battered paperback that he has found – Appointment with Death, translated into Portuguese. When Peter asks where Odo found it, Odo gestures outside to an open suitcase which contains, among other things, feathers, dice, tools, a bit of red cloth, and an envelope containing a bit of hair that Peter thinks is very much like Odo's. He also discovers another envelope, containing the pathology report of a man named Rafael Castro, a report in which its author, Eusebio Lozora, swears that he took a small chimpanzee and a small bear out of the man's torso. Peter decides to take the report, along with the family photo album, to Dona Amelia to get her to translate more accurately. Ben and Odo accompany him. The excited Dona Amelia's story about Rafael's grieving family leaving Tuizelo confirms Peter's suspicions – that Rafael was his grandfather. She also indicates that Rafael lived in the house where Peter and Odo now live; and that Rafael was the "father" of "the angel in the church" (321), a little boy who, Peter sees, is peeking out from behind his mother in one of the album's photographs.

Dona Amelia leads Peter, Ben, and Odo to the church where, amidst a litter of prayer candles and crumpled requests, Peter sees the same face as part of the church's shrine. So do the villagers, and so does Dona Amelia, who runs to get the priest. Odo, meanwhile, sits and stares quietly at the crucifix behind the altar. When Dona Amelia returns with the priest, a long and frequently translated conversation results in Peter and Ben becoming aware of the story of The Golden Child and how various legends about the Child's divine powers emerged in the aftermath of the story's events. Back at the house, Peter wonders whether it will feel different to him, now that he knows its story. He realizes that that is not the case: "No. This isn't home. Home is his story with Odo" (327).

The next afternoon Peter, Ben, and Odo revisit the church. Ben notices that the crucifix has the proportions of a chimpanzee, and wonders aloud "what's with all the apes?" (327). Peter says he does not know, but does say that being with Odo brings him joy. Odo claps. He strikes out for the open plain, and Peter follows. Ben remains behind to, as he suggests, explore the home of his ancestors. When on the plain, Odo's attention is taken by one particular boulder. He quickly climbs up, and urgently beckons Peter to follow. Peter does, feeling constriction in his heart after the hard climb, but then looks over the edge at what Odo is excitedly looking at: a large, beautiful, Iberian Rhinoceros, who remains for a moment and then leaves, going from boulder to boulder. Odo and Peter remain still, watching the beautiful sunset. Peter weeps. Eventually he sits up, but it hurts his heart. Odo takes him in his arms. Peter becomes comfortable. Odo watches him.

Peter “stops moving, lifeless, his heart clogged to stillness” (332). Odo remains still, then lays Peter flat in the boulder. Odo stays there for another half hour or so, then leaps gracefully off the boulder and “runs off in the direction of the Iberian rhinoceros” (332). There the book ends.

Analysis

As previously discussed, Part 3, Section 4, and of the book as a whole, contains two climaxes. The first comes about as a result of the conversation with the priest, which is the climax of the book’s development of several narrative threads: specifically, those involving the child killed by Tomas in Part 1, the revelations of that child’s family background in Part 2, and the tying together of both elements into local legend and family history in Part 3. All the pieces of the book-long puzzle come together in this moment, which also marks the book’s thematic climax. Specifically, the book’s exploration of the theme of inter-connectedness reaches its most significant point here, in its statement and portrayal of how family and emotional connections can extend across time and down through several generations. This is not, however, the climax of the third part, of Home: that is the moment of Peter’s death on the top of the boulder, the moment at which his journey into himself, into healing from his grief, and into peace is finally complete. He has, in many ways, arrived at the fullest possible experience of letting go of the suffering that has propelled his actions to this point; to use a euphemism often deployed in relation to the concept of death, he has fully and finally gone home. Peter weeps one last time (in the aftermath of an experience that, on a simple level, evokes the power and magic of nature while, on another level, evokes freedom and possibility), and then his heart, weakened by both illness and by painful feeling gives out, and he dies.

Meanwhile, and in addition to being the climax of Part 3’s thematic explorations of the meaning of home, of journeys and journeying, and of dealing with grief, Peter’s death also marks the climax of Part 3’s consideration of father-son relationships (in that Peter is comforted in death by his chimpanzee “son” Odo) and, even more notably, its consideration of the relationship between apes and humanity. Odo’s sensitivity and compassion eases Peter’s transition into death, a sense of relationship and connection and full vulnerability that does not really seem to exist in any of the other protagonist relationships in the work. In other cases, with other characters, compassion only goes so far: here, it seems to go as far as it possibly can.

Some might argue that Odo’s disappearance at the end, in pursuit of the Iberian Rhinoceros, portrays Odo as insensitive, as more animal than human, and counter to the book’s thematic contentions about the human / chimpanzee relationship. It is certainly true that Odo behaves more like an animal than a human: he knows that there is nothing more to be done for Peter and that he (Odo) has done what was needed. It might also seem that, in Odo’s pursuit of the rhinoceros, curiosity has won out over compassion. On another level, however, it is important to consider Odo’s reaction in the light of the rhinoceros’ metaphoric significance.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think is the answer to Ben's question "What's with all the apes?" What IS with all the apes? What do you think all the images and narrative elements related to apes and chimpanzees are saying?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways is the title of the book that Odo brings to Peter significant? Consider both what has happened earlier in the book and what happens at the book's conclusion.

Discussion Question 3

Given the way in which the Iberian Rhinoceros was portrayed, or referred to, earlier in the book (see Part 1, Section 1), what are the metaphoric implications of its appearance here? How does the change in the circumstances in which the rhinoceros is portrayed echo the book's thematic explorations (i.e. of grief)?

Vocabulary

conjecture, amplitude, strenuous, artifice, hindrance, voracious, obelisk, intermediary, ovine, battalion, fluvial, duration, fractious, insatiable, cognition, expunge, antipodal, nonplused, pathological, requisite, mellifluous, hierarchy, autarkic, assiduous, exuberant, congest, oblique, atone proximity, turbulent, provenance, tenuous, pertinent, idiom, transient, pallor, chiaroscuro, extricate, venerable, imperative, vista

Characters

Tomas

Tomas is the central character and protagonist in the first part of the book, titled Homeless, and is an archivist and researcher in Portugal in the early 1900's. As his story begins, he is deep in grief over the recent deaths of the woman he loved (Dora), their child (Gaspar), and his father (Silvestro). He is portrayed as dealing with his grief in two ways: by walking everywhere backwards (as what he defines an "objection" to everything that has happened to him), and by taking himself on a pilgrimage, or journey, in search of a religious artifact created by a missionary whose diary Tomas has become obsessed with.

The story's title relates to Tomas' experience of being without a home; for him, home was where he was able to spend time with his beloved and his son, and now with them both gone, he feels as though the place where he felt most at home is no longer welcoming, no longer a place he wants to be. Thus, he leaves the city which he had called his home (Lisbon, the capital of Portugal) and journeys to the High Mountains.

As a character, Tomas is portrayed as vulnerable, sensitive, and somewhat obsessed There is the clear sense that he is determined to both make his pilgrimage and be successful in his search as a result of avoiding thinking too much about, or being affected too deeply by, his loss. As such, both he and his actions can be seen as the first manifestation in the book of its thematic interest in, and exploration of, the experience of dealing with grief. At the same time, the intensity of Tomas' need, his desperation to succeed, tends to make him foolish, careless, or thoughtless. Many of the setbacks and complications he encounters on his quest, most notably the near-destruction of the car given to him by his uncle, are the result of his own hastiness and lack of consideration of the consequences of his actions.

By the time he reaches his destination, Tomas' external appearance (tired, unkempt and bedraggled, unwell) can be seen as representing his inner state of being. He has been worn down physically by his journey in the same way as he has been worn down psychologically by grief, desperation, or both. This experience of being worn down is part of the reason why his reaction to finding the artifact he sought for so long and so intensely is so shattering. The main reason is the nature of the artifact: the fact that Christ has been carved and shaped to resemble a chimpanzee.

Eusebio Lozora

Eusebio is the central character and protagonist of the book's middle section, titled Homeward. He is a pathologist working in the mortuary of a small hospital in Braganca, a small Portuguese city near the High Mountains in the late 1930's. As his story begins, his late-night work is interrupted by two visitors. The first visitor is his wife Maria, who

brings him the gift of a book and the gift of a theory about the teachings of the Bible. Eusebio's second visitor is another Maria, who has journeyed from the High Mountains to get Eusebio to conduct an autopsy on the body of her husband. On one level, Eusebio responds to the requests of both Marias in the same way: with respect, with resignation (that his night is not going to go the way he planned), and with a dawning sense of wonder on what they are each, or both, asking him to think about. All this suggests that as a person, Eusebio is sensitive, compassionate, and open-minded. On another level, he responds to his wife with more affection and love than he does the second Maria, for whom compassion is tinged with pity, and with wonder.

Later in this part of the book, however, the narrative reveals the truth: that like the protagonists of the other two parts of the book, Eusebio is struggling to cope with an experience of recent death, and of grief – specifically, that of his wife Maria. Here, it is important to note that the narrative never explicitly states, once it has revealed that she is, in fact, dead, how Maria comes to be in his office. Eusebio does not react in any way that suggests she is a ghost: what is more likely, given that the story ends with Eusebio waking up, is that she (and quite probably the other Maria) came to him in a dream. This, if true, would mean that everything that happened in terms of Maria and Eusebio's relationship, as portrayed earlier in the story, emerged from Eusebio's grief-stricken imagination.

Events in Part 3 suggest a third possibility: that in encountering both Marias, Eusebio had some kind of magical experience that affected reality without necessarily being defined, or bound, by the way reality usually works. Either way, the story suggests that Eusebio, throughout his story, is primarily defined (in a thematically significant way) by his grief, an experience that seems to be much closer to the surface than either the experience of Tomas before him or the experience of Peter after him.

Peter Tovy

Peter is the third of three protagonists in the book, the central character in its third and final part, titled Home. Like both Tomas and Eusebio, Peter's experience in the story is defined and motivated by grief – in his case, over the death of his much loved, long-term wife Clara, and of the painful "death" of his son's marriage. Here it is important to note that Peter is something of an elder, unlike the other two protagonists, who seem to be in their thirties or so: at the time the story begins, Peter is in his early sixties, coming to the end of a successful career in Canadian politics. This means that his grief is arguably deeper and more profound than that of the other two protagonists: neither Tomas nor Eusebio has decades of love and good company to mourn in the aftermath of the deaths of their respective beloveds.

Like Tomas, Peter deals with his grief by going on a kind of quest, or journey: he leaves his home to return to the land of his ancestors, the High Mountains of Portugal, a place that narration seems to suggest is his genuine home – his spiritual home as well as the home of his ancestors. Unlike Tomas, however, Peter has a companion on his journey,

one that takes on a secondary quest: into the realm of feeling and intuition, of friendship.

This companion is Odo, a chimpanzee whom Peter rescued from a research facility and with whom Peter develops a bond that at times seems more brotherly, more loving, and in some ways more intimate than any relationship he has had before. On one level, and as a direct result of this relationship, Peter's grief eases and heals more than those of the other two protagonists. In Odo's company, or more specifically in the company of Odo's in-the-moment animal nature, Peter comes to value openness, trust, and affection in a way that brings him a degree of peace and healing. On another level, however, the fact of Peter's death from a heart attack (in which his heart is described as being "clogged to stillness" (332) can be seen as a metaphoric suggestion that no matter how grief seems to ease on an external level, its effect on the heart (i.e. the effect on the heart of pain and loss) can be destructive and fatal.

Maria Castro

This character appears in all three parts of the book. In Part 1, she helps Tomas get into the church where he reaches the end of his quest; in Part 2, she asks pathologist Eusebio to conduct an autopsy on her husband, and is present as he does; in Part 3, she is referred to as the ancestor of protagonist Peter. In all three parts, she is portrayed as wise and compassionate, earthy and sensitive. As such, she is an important influence on the grieving processes of all three protagonists: a catalytic influence on Tomas (in that her actions indirectly help him towards a sense of closure); a symbolically evocative influence on Eusebio (her actions as part of his dream help him imagine a metaphoric way of coping with his grief); and a time-distant but nevertheless example for Peter of the kind of courage and commitment that is necessary to overcome, or integrate, grief into a life.

Rafael Castro

Like his wife Maria, Rafael appears in all three parts of the book. He is a nameless peasant in Part 1, glimpsed by Tomas in the aftermath of his accidental killing of the boy; he is dead in Part 2, brought to protagonist Eusebio's mortuary by his wife Maria; and, like Maria, is revealed to be an ancestor of Peter, the protagonist in Part 3. Also like Maria, in Part 2 Rafael is a product of Eusebio's dreams or imagination, a circumstance which would explain the highly unusual collection of items found in his body during Eusebio's autopsy. Unlike Maria, however, whose presence in all three parts is somehow connected to the process of overcoming grief, Rafael is connected, again in all three parts, to an experience of being within grief.

The Boy Killed by the Car

This unnamed character also appears in all three parts of the book: in Part 1, as the victim of an accident involving Tomas and the car; in Part 2, he is identified as the son of

Rafael and Maria Castro; and in Part 3, the boy is identified as a Christ-linked "Golden Child." This last appearance develops the story of the Boy in the most detail. In the aftermath of his death, which villagers of the time believed to be the result of angelic involvement, he became something of a miracle worker, helping young women become pregnant. Peter discovers that the Boy was in the process of being made some kind of venerated figure - not quite a saint, but one with acknowledged holy "powers." He is a key figure in the development of the book's thematic interests in father and son relationships, in grief, and in inter-connectedness.

Father Ulisses Manuel Rosario Pinto

Father Ulisses is a Roman Catholic missionary assigned to a remote island in the mid 1600's. His diary, in which he describes his life, his experiences, and an artifact he created, is a treasured possession of Part 1's protagonist, Tomas, whose quest in search of said artifact defines Part 1's action. Ulisses is portrayed as lonely, disillusioned with faith, and philosophical in his contemplation of what has happened to him.

Dora

Dora is the love of Tomas' wife. Because Dora was a servant and Tomas was of a higher class, they never married: nevertheless, he adored both her and their son, taking good care of them and grieving them deeply when they died within days of each other.

Gaspar

Gaspar is the son of Tomas and Dora. His death, shortly after that of his mother and shortly before that of Tomas' father, is one of the driving, powerful sources of Tomas' grief. Gaspar is also one of several characters whose presence in the book manifest and develop its thematic interest in father-son relationships.

Martim

Martim is Tomas' well-to-do uncle. He is portrayed as compassionate but practical, acknowledging Tomas' grief but also suggesting that it's time for Tomas to start getting on with his life. His loan of an automobile to Tomas, so he can accomplish the goals of his grief-driven quest more quickly, is his way of encouraging Tomas to find healing sooner rather than later.

Maria Lozora

Maria is the wife of Part 2's protagonist, pathologist Eusebio Lozora. When she first appears, she is portrayed as talkative, intelligent, and loving. The narrative eventually

reveals that she is also dead, senselessly murdered and autopsied by her husband. This means that her earlier appearance is a dream, an act of imagination, a delusion, or some combination of all three. Her death is the primary motivator for Part 2's exploration of the nature and experience of grief.

Agatha Christie

Agatha Christie is the real-world author of a series of clever, popular murder mysteries. For much of her career, which ranged from the mid-1920's to the mid-1970's, she was one of the best selling authors in the world, in any genre. Her writings and processes are important elements in the theory presented by Maria Castro to her husband, and are ironic facets of Part 2's commentary on ways of encountering death.

Senhora Melo

The Senhora is Eusebio's secretary and assistant. Her discoveries and recollections, described in narration at the end of Part 2, provide the reader with essential information about the death of Maria Lozora. The Senhora is portrayed as being both businesslike and compassionate.

Clara

Clara is the wife of protagonist Peter. Like both Dora in Part 1 and Maria Lozora in Part 2, Clara's recent death is a motivating trigger in her husband's experience of grief. As a character, she is less developed than either Dora or Maria, and similarly, interacts with him in a different way. Where Dora is essentially absent from her husband's life in the aftermath of her death, and where Maria manifests as a dream, an illusion, or a ghost, Clara continues to exist in her husband's mind and experience as a confidante, someone who gives Peter an opportunity to voice his feelings without fear of contradiction or ridicule.

Ben

Ben is Peter's son. At the beginning of Part 3, the breakdown of Ben's marriage contributes to Peter's experience of grief and loss. In the middle of the narrative, as Peter is developing and deepening his companion-friendship with Odo, Ben is portrayed as being doubtful and somewhat cynical about that relationship. Eventually, Ben comes to visit his father, becoming more respectful of (and compassionate about) Peter and Odo's relationship. At the same time, Ben's arrival is one of several catalytic, or transformative, moments that connect with Peter's discovery of their family's history.

Teresa

Teresa is Peter's sister, loving and supportive but also pointedly perceptive. Her questions about Peter's relationship with Odo lead him to serious contemplations about himself and his situation.

Odo

Odo is a chimpanzee. Rescued by Peter from a research facility, Peter bonds with him quickly and intensely. Over time, and as they journey to Peter's ancestral home in Portugal, Odo becomes a source of intimacy, affection, and responsibility for Peter, eventually easing him into death. His open, impulsive, intuitive animal nature (not to mention his relationship with Peter) are the primary expressions of the book's overall thematic exploration of the relationship between apes and humanity.

Dr. Lemmon

Lemmon is the authoritarian head of the animal research institute where Odo is kept as a laboratory animal. When Peter visits, Lemmon at first seems impressed by his title ("Senator"), but the narrative suggests that when he finds out that Peter is a Canadian senator, rather than an American one, his attitude changes. He is confrontational, aggressive, insensitive, and seems to have no emotional attachment to, or respect for, the animals in his care. He is a clear and vivid contrast to both Bob and Peter.

Bob

Bob is a friendly assistant at the animal research institute where Peter first encounters Odo. At first, Bob follows the orders of the controlling Dr. Lemmon, but when he sees the relationship between Peter and Odo, Bob bends the rules so that they can develop their relationship. When Odo leaves, Bob is upset to see him go.

Dona Amelia

Dona Amelia is one of the first people in the village of Tuizelo to make friends with Peter and Odo when they arrive. Open-hearted, affectionate, and practical, she takes pleasure in helping them make their home and, later in the narrative, in helping Peter discover the truth of his ancestral relationship to, and with, the town.

Symbols and Symbolism

Chimpanzees

In all three Parts of the book, and in the thematic perspective of the book as a whole, the presence of a chimpanzee represents the power and value of animal nature, of compassion, and of humanity's ability to both transform and transcend death.

In each of the novel's three parts, a chimpanzee plays important roles in both the story and the development of theme. Those roles are most prominent in Part 3, in which a chimpanzee is arguably a key antagonist: Odo, whose presence and actions trigger significant transformation in protagonist Peter. In Part 2, a chimpanzee is discovered during the dream-like autopsy performed by protagonist Eusebio on Rafael Castro; in Part 1 protagonist Tomas discovers that the figure of Christ on the Crucifix he has traveled hundreds of miles to find has been given the shape and proportions of a chimpanzee.

Weeping

Another symbolic element that appears in all three parts of the book is intense weeping as a manifestation of deep grief. All three of the book's protagonists (who are, interestingly enough, all male) weep heavily, at times convulsively, in the aftermath of the intense grief and loss they have recently experienced. In each situation, weeping represents not necessarily a release, as the characters continue to feel and experience grief after their bouts of weeping. Instead, weeping seems to represent a deep connection with grief, an essential stage of the process of dealing with it.

The Iberian Rhinoceros

The Iberian Rhinoceros appears at both the beginning and the end of the book, bookending a key aspect of the book's explorations of grief: how it can imprison a life, and how when life ends, grief ends as well, an experience that can result in freedom from such imprisonment.

In the beginning, as a possession of Tomas' Uncle Martim, it is portrayed as being unhappily trapped and caged: in this case, it represents the way Tomas is trapped and caged by grief. At the end, as an almost mystical apparition (at the time in which this part is set, the Iberian Rhinoceros is thought to be long extinct), it is seen by Peter and Odo in the moments before Peter's death. In the immediate aftermath of that incident, the rhinoceros runs off, and is followed by Odo. In that case, it represents the freedom of the soul.

Appointment With Death

A novel written by Agatha Christie this story (the investigation of the murder of a much-hated woman) is of less apparent metaphoric significance than its title, which seems to represent the way that characters in all three parts of the book seem to have an "appointment with death" - that is, an encounter with death that shapes destinies in a way that seems meant, or an "appointment."

The High Mountains of Portugal

In all three parts of the novel, the High Mountains are representative of irony, because the High Mountains are, in fact, a broad and open plain.

In Parts 1 and 3, the High Mountains are a destination: in Part 2, they are a place from which characters come. In Part 1, this irony is connected to the irony of how Tomas' quest in Part 1 ends not in fulfillment but destruction - that is, of Tomas' hopes and beliefs. In Part 2, the irony of the true nature of the High Mountains is connected to the poignant irony of Eusebio's wife being dead, not lovingly alive as the first section of that particular narrative implies. In Part 3, the irony of the High Mountains is connected to the irony associated with the fact that the best, most human, most connected, most fulfilling relationship of Peter's life is with a chimpanzee.

(Homeless) The Diary

For Tomas in Part 1, the diary of missionary-priest Father Ulisses represents hope, renewed life, and possibility in the face of deep grief. Information in the diary is the trigger for a cross-country quest that leads Tomas in search of meaning, but ends in confusion and a kind of spiritual betrayal.

The Crucifix

Aside from being one of the most vivid representations of the book's thematic interest in the relationship between humanity and chimpanzees (and the earliest), the Crucifix also connects to the book's thematic interest in journeys and journeying.

At the end of Part 1, which also marks the end of Tomas' journey for something to ease his grief, he discovers the true nature of the mysterious artifact referred to in Father Ulisses' diary: a Crucifix (i.e. a figure of Christ on the Cross) in which the figure of Christ is given the proportions of a chimpanzee. Its surprising nature suggests that the end result of a journey is sometimes what the traveler expects, or wants, it to be.

The Car

The vehicle given to Tomas by his uncle Martim is a very early version of the automobile, but is nevertheless a generous manifestation of Martim's compassion and a fairly strong hint that Tomas needs to take some drastic action to get through his grief. As Tomas' journey progresses, the car becomes increasingly damaged, a metaphoric representation of Tomas' hope for the future itself becomes increasingly damaged as his quest takes more and more time and becomes more and more difficult.

(Homeward) Mystery Novels

Stories built around murder mysteries, and those written by Agatha Christie in particular, are the first of two main components of an argument put forth by Maria Lozoro suggesting a relationship between such stories and stories of Christ. One of the common elements between both sets of stories, Maria contends, is the idea of investigation into truth: the other is that the meaning of both lies in the story and how it is told, rather than in the actual events portrayed.

(Homeward) The New Testament

The New Testament of the Christian Bible is the second component of Maria's theoretical examination of the parallel meaning of mystery stories and stories of Christ. While she uses the example of mystery stories to illustrate the power of, and need for, investigation into narrative to determine its truth, she uses the New Testament (in particular, the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul) as examples of how meaning, in life as in Christ's teachings, is gleaned through metaphor rather than historical, literal accuracy.

(Homeward) Maria's Wine

On one level, the wind Maria Lozora brings to share with her husband is a symbol of love, affection, and intimacy between them. On another level, and because red wine is an important part of Christian ritual celebrating communion with God, the fact that Maria and Eusebio share red wine can be seen as symbolically representing not only their communion with each other or communion with God. Given that Maria is eventually revealed to be a ghost, it can also be seen as symbolically representing their communion with a more generally defined world of the spirit.

(Homeward) The Autopsy

Eusebio's autopsy of Maria Lozoro's husband, Rafael, reveals some strange and intriguing things in Eusebio's body, all of which can be seen as metaphoric representations of aspects of Eusebio's life (including the chimpanzee found in his

belly). As strange as they are, however, their presence ultimately makes sense when the narrative eventually reveals that the whole experience is grounded in some kind of non-reality - a dream, a hallucination, a visit by ghosts.

(Home) The House in Tuizelo

Initially, the house in which Peter and Odo make their home seems to be simply a representation of a new life, new friendships, new relationships, and freedom from grief. Later in the narrative, however, Peter discovers that the house was, in fact, the home of his grandparents. As such, it takes on an additional layer of thematic meaning: as an evocation of the book's thematic consideration of inter-connectedness.

(Home) The Boulders

Odo seems very much at home on the boulders widely scattered in the plain of the High Mountains of Portugal, which suggests a metaphoric connection between them and Odo's metaphoric value as a representation of nature. The fact that Peter dies on such a boulder reinforces this idea.

(Home) The Photo Album

The photo album functions as a key manifestation of the book's theme of inter-connectedness. One of the few possessions Peter brings from his old life in Canada to his new life in Tuizelo is his family's photo album. Later in Part 3, pictures from this album trigger unexpectedly intelligent reactions in Odo, while events of the book's climax make connections between individuals who appear in the album and not only the history of Tuizelo and Peter's family. Connections are also made between events and characters portrayed in all three parts of the book.

Settings

Portugal

The European country of Portugal is the book's primary broad-strokes setting. All three of its parts take place within its borders.

The High Mountains

This fictionalized geographical plain is a primary setting for two of the book's three parts (Part 1 and Part 3), and a peripheral setting in its second part. Ironically, the High Mountains are, in fact, a broad plain studded with oddly shaped boulders, small mountains that may themselves be the ironically named "High Mountains." The plain can be seen as representing the broad, seemingly endless expanse of grief experienced by each of the book's three central characters: the boulders can be seen as representing the occasional interludes of hope and positivity they each experience in the midst of that grief.

Tuizelo

A fictionalized version of the real-life town of Tuizelo is a key setting in the first and third parts of the book. Specifically, it is the ancient, medieval town in which the protagonist of the first part ends his quest. Tuizelo is the town in which the protagonist of the third part, eight decades later, makes his home. In the second part, Tuizelo is the town from which one of the visitors to the protagonist's mortuary comes.

The Mortuary

The narrative of Part 2 takes place in the hospital mortuary where pathologist Eusebio Lozora works and, on the New Year's Eve when the story is set, has two strange encounters with two women named Maria. The mortuary is a place of the dead, which makes it an appropriate setting for a visit from a ghost (the first Maria) and a woman obsessed with finding out truths about her dead husband (the second Maria).

North America

The beginning of Part 3 is set in North America: specifically, in Canada (the home country of protagonist Peter Tovy) and in the United States (where Peter goes on vacation, and where he encounters the chimpanzee who becomes his best friend).There is a clear sense of both insensitivity and pace about the scenes in North America, meaning that when the story moves to Portugal and Tuizelo, there is a very clear distinction in terms of atmosphere, energy, and mood. This distinction reinforces

elements of the narrative (i.e. the relaxed, vulnerable, open way in which the relationship between Peter and Odo develops) and of its themes (i.e. circumstantial peace making space for the development of inner peace).

Themes and Motifs

Fathers and Sons

The thematic and narrative backbone of all three parts of the novel, and therefore of the novel itself, is the father/son relationship. Each of the three stories has at least one such relationship at its core: Tomas and Gaspar in Part 1 (as well as Tomas and his own father); Rafael and his mysteriously killed son in Part 2; and a pair of father/son relationships (one literal, one metaphorical) in Part 3. In each case, the relationship is colored by grief and loss; in each case, the father struggles to overcome the loss by replacing the son with some other focus for feeling and intention; and in each case, grief over the loss is eased, to some degree, by a change in physical circumstances that, in turn, triggers change in emotional circumstances.

For Tomas, grief over both his son and his father leads him on an increasingly obsessive and dangerous search for a mysterious artifact. By the time his search is complete, the two parallel griefs have eased, but Tomas feels incredibly alone. Here, it is interesting to note the last thing he says: “Father, I need you!” Is he calling to his own father? Or the nearby Catholic priest? Or is he, in fact, uttering a paraphrased echo of the words of Christ as He was dying on the Cross and calling out to God, his Father in Heaven (which, perhaps, is yet another father/son relationship in the book, albeit one that is only hinted at obliquely).

Meanwhile, the experience of Rafael and his dead son (which has echoes of events in Part 1 and which foreshadows events in Part 3) is a secondary element in the story of protagonist Eusebio, but is still an important part of that story, as it provides Eusebio with an indication that he is not alone in his grief. Rafael and his son's experience shows Eusebio that unpredictable losses can happen to anyone. In terms of journeying, the narrative later reveals that as part of his healing process Rafael, like Tomas before him and Peter after him moved to a new place – in Rafael’s case, America.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, there is the pair of father/son relationships in Part 3. In both cases, the father figure is close-to-retirement politician Peter. In the literal father/son relationship, the son is Ben, somewhat distant and judging, but not entirely close minded when it comes to his acceptance of the more metaphorical father/son relationship in the story: the one that Peter shares with his erstwhile chimpanzee “son” Odo. Odo's presence in Peter’s life provides an experience of healing and connection that Peter is unable to realize with his own, flesh-and-blood offspring. In terms of journeying, the latter relationship develops as Peter travels to the homeland of his ancestors in Odo’s company, while the former relationship heals, to a degree, in the aftermath of that journey when Ben comes to visit Peter in his new / old home.

Journeys and Journeying

The action of the novel suggests that the process of recovering from, or at least dealing with, grief is a journey of sorts, either physical or psychological. It could be argued that in the first and third parts of the book, both sorts of journey are in play, as Tomas (in Part 1) and Peter (in Part 3) physically travel to new places as part of their struggle to overcome grief and, as a result, travel to new emotional places as well. It is interesting to note that the physical journeys of both characters end in the same place: the small, High Mountains of Portugal village of Tuizelo. There, both characters discover truths they had either knowingly sought (as is the case with Tomas) or merely hoped for, or wondered about (as is the case with Peter). The core, parallel natures of those truths are that at the end of difficult journeys (such as those through grief), there can be an encounter with the unexpected that provides resolution, whether pleasant and affirming (as is the case with Peter) or unpleasant and unsettling (as is the case with Tomas).

In Part 2, the only physical journey taken by protagonist Eusebio is from one room in the pathology lab where he works to another. His journey is much more inwardly directed, as the encounters he has with both his wife and the mysterious visitor (both named Maria) take him to an emotional and/or spiritual place that, in its way, is as unexpected and as life-changing as the place where Tomas and Peter end up.

That is not to say that there is no suggestion of a physical journey in Part 2 of the book; the second Maria has made a journey to Eusebio and his laboratory in search of a truth of her own, in the same way as both Tomas and Peter. Interestingly, Maria's journey is FROM Tuizelo. Just as interestingly, the results of Eusebio's encounter with Maria and her dead husband bring him closer to his own truths and experiences. Again, Tuizelo is a trigger, albeit in this case an indirect one.

Meanwhile, and as noted above, Rafael and Maria Castro also take a journey to help them deal with their grief: the details of that journey are only revealed in the book's third part, when Peter discovers that Rafael and Maria are, in fact, his immigrant grandparents.

In any case, the ultimate thematic point of the novel is that a journey in response to grief is a journey into a closer relationship to oneself, one's dreams, and one's truths.

The Meaning of Home

The protagonists of each of the book's three parts has an experience, or set of experiences, that suggest that home is where an individual feels the strongest, most intimate, most vulnerable connection with another person.

Tomas, the protagonist of the first part of the book, has his sense of self and his sense of the world shaken completely when the persons he considers to be his home – his beloved Dora, their son Gaspar, and his father Silvestro – are all taken from him, by death, within a week. He replaces his lost feeling of home with a near-obsessive search

for an artifact connected to someone whose experiences becomes something of a spiritual home for him, the idea here being that once the artifact has been found, Tomas will be able to feel at home in himself, at ease and at peace. He will have, he believes, released his grief by channeling its energy into his search. Home, for him, is gone: something else must give comparable meaning and focus to his life.

For Tomas, a change in his experience of home triggers the beginning of his journey. For the protagonist in the third part of the book, Peter, a similar experience (the death of his wife Clara) triggers a similar beginning, or at least an awareness of a need for change in his life. Only when he meets Odo, the chimpanzee who is to be the companion on his journey, does he realize that that change needs to involve a journey into a place that his ancestors called home, a place that he thinks will replace the home he had with Clara. Only when he is on that journey, with Odo, does Peter realize that his idea of home has become something entirely unexpected: a connection with a spirit, an identity, that takes him deeper into an experience of vulnerability and connection that he never imagined could exist, never mind be possible for him.

The middle part of the book, like it does in so many ways, looks at and manifests this theme in a slightly different way. Protagonist Eusebio is in what has become, in many ways, his physical and emotional home: his place of work. His other life (that is, his marriage) is portrayed as intruding on that place, that sense of home with its intimate connections to the dead and their mysterious truths. What the action of the story, and its unexpected ending, both reveal is that for Eusebio, his absorption in his work is his way of avoiding the truth of what was once his home – that is, his relationship with his wife Maria. When the narrative reveals that his wife is actually dead, and that her visit to him (with its affection, connection, and joy) was either imagination, dreamt, or delusion, it also reveals that the desire for the connection of home, the longing for it, and the rejoicing in it, can transcend physical “reality.”

Inter-connectedness

Life, home, grief, and significance of relationships – all exist as a result of being, and feeling, connected. The book explores this thematic contention in a variety of ways and through a variety of interactions. These range from the instantaneous and anonymous through to the long-term and deeply known and even further, through to the decades old and hinted at only by instinct.

The latter type of connection is perhaps the most significant, given that the climax of the book as a whole is defined by a discovery, made by Peter, the protagonist of Part 3. This is the realization that he is connected, by ancestry and over 60 years, to individuals whose actions and experiences were peripherally glimpsed in Part 1 (i.e. the accidental killing of the small boy) and explained in Part 2 (i.e. the revelation that the boy was the son of Rafael and Maria Castro who, in Part 3, are revealed to be Peter’s grandparents).

Meanwhile, Peter's experience is one of the main examples in the book of the second sort of inter-connectedness mentioned above, the long-term and deeply known. This is his relationship with his dead wife Clara, a loving and lasting connection that continues even after Clara's death, with Peter addressing her spirit sometimes out loud and sometimes only in his thoughts. Peter's experience with Odo the chimpanzee also manifests this second level of connectedness, given that the meaning and value of their relationship with all its intimacies emerges over a period of months).

Other examples of significant mid-range connectedness are the relationship between Eusebio and his wife Maria, as well as that between Rafael and the second Maria in Part 2, and between Tomas and his deceased family members in Part 1. In all these cases, strong longer-term connections between people are the triggers, motivations, and manifestations for action, and for grief when those connections are lost.

In terms of the shorter range sort of connections that have powerful impact, the primary example here is that of Tomas and the child that he accidentally runs over. The connection is brief, the interaction is passing, but it nevertheless has a profound effect on everyone involved, even peripherally (such as the boy's parents, Rafael and Maria, and, generations later, Peter). Other important short term connections with significant impact: the encounter between Eusebio and the second Maria in Part 2, and the encounters between Tomas and various other villagers or peasants in Part 1. All these have important effects on the protagonists in spite of their relative brevity.

The Relationship between Apes and Humanity

The appearance of an ape – specifically, a chimpanzee – in each of the book's three parts suggests that for the character in that story who encounters the ape, nature and instinct are fundamental aspects of being a living, spiritual person.

Perhaps the subtlest exploration of this theme appears late in Part 2. Pathologist Eusebio, coming to the end of his autopsy on the body of Rafael Castro, discovers a chimpanzee in the man's intestinal cavity, or gut, the part of the anatomy which has, both physically and spiritually, long been associated with experiences of instinct. The image suggests that Rafael was, on some level, ruled by his intuition, by his gut … by his connection to animal nature. A clearer manifestation of this theme can be found in the narrative of Part 3, in which protagonist Peter develops the most honest, the most vulnerable, the most instinctively attentive, the most instinctively responsive relationship of his life with the chimpanzee Odo. Through the development of that relationship, human being Peter becomes more of himself, a better person by learning how to be more of an animal.

The most vivid statement of this theme occurs at the end of Part 1. At the end of his long and difficult quest, Tomas encounters a crucifix featuring a chimpanzee-like Christ. In Christian theology and teaching there is not a more powerful evocation of those arguably core components of human existence, spirituality and soul, than the image of Christ being sacrificed on a Cross in the name of saving humanity. The uniting of this

image with that of a chimpanzee makes the novel's most clear statement about the uniting of animal spirit with the spirit of humanity, a statement echoed in the words of the missionary who shaped the crucifix. "We are risen apes, not fallen angels" (131). It might not be going too far, in fact, to suggest that with this image, the novel is actually arguing in favor of a sort of reverse evolution: while humanity evolved physically and intellectually past the apes, apes evolved spiritually past humanity.

Dealing With Grief

Grief makes people – specifically, the characters in this book - do what can seem like extreme things: walk backwards, travel across the world, hallucinate, literally climb into the skin of the beloved who has passed on, or become best friends with a chimpanzee. The grief does not necessarily go away, but it does become easier to manage, or is at least channeled in a different way: into objection, into a quest for new meaning, into happy memories, into a sense of security or continued companionship, into a replacement relationship. The book's thematic bottom line, developed through its explorations of the experiences of different characters in different eras in different circumstances is that grief, is a deeply shattering and transformative experience. People do things while grieving that they would not otherwise do, just to ease the pain.

One particular sort of loss seems, in the book's point of view, to be particularly universal in its effect: the loss of a spouse. The protagonists in each part (Tomas in Part 1, Eusebio in Part 2, Peter in Part 3) are each sent into a tailspin of grief by the loss of their wives, while a key secondary character (Maria Castro in Part 2) loses her beloved husband Rafael (although the reality of this particular loss is somewhat questionable, given what Part 2 reveals about Eusebio's encounter with Maria, and Part 3 reveals about the later lives lived by both Maria and Rafael). Of the three protagonists, Tomas' grief is perhaps the deepest, as it is compounded by the deaths of his son and father. Peter's grief is also compounded by a different sort of loss, the more metaphorical "death" of his family unit following the divorce of his son and daughter-in-law. The implication of this commonality is that what is really being grieved is a sense of companionship, of intimacy, of trust, love, and joy. In other words, what the characters are doing, and by thematic extension what people do (since loss is a universal experience), is taking extreme steps to feel less suddenly alone in the world, and with themselves.

Styles

Point of View

Each of the novel's three parts is written from a different point of view – specifically, that of each part's protagonist. In the first part, Homeless, that protagonist is Tomas, a researcher and archivist; in the second part, Homeward, that protagonist is Eusebio, a pathologist; in the third part, Home, that protagonist is Peter, a politician. All three protagonists have experienced recent, intense grief; all three stories are told in the third person, present tense point of view, which brings the reader more immediately into the experiences of each protagonist; and all three narratives focus on the journeys taken by each protagonist towards something other than their experiences of loss.

The book's central thematic point of view is related to those journeys. Each of the protagonists struggles in his own way to honor the love and relationships they have each lost as a result of the deaths of those whom they loved while, at the same time, finding new, or renewed, meaning in their own lives. In the first and third parts, those journeys are primarily physical, with the characters actually going from one place to another as part of their process of dealing with grief. In these parts, the novel seems to make the suggestion that healthy, engaged recovery from grief involves finding another object of focus – a purpose, a goal, or a relationship to replace the source of meaning that is no longer present. In other words, both the protagonists in these parts of the book undertake actual physical journeys that externalize their internal emotional needs. In the middle part, Homeward, the writing and story suggest another alternative: in action that stays in the same physical location, protagonist Eusebio is taken on a pair of journeys that are more emotional and spiritual, perhaps even mystical, than those of the other two protagonists. Eusebio's is an inward journey: those of the other characters are more outward, but have inner results. All three journeys reflect the overall thematic point of view that new, or renewed, meaning is something that exists beyond the reach of grief, and those experiencing grief must travel, in one way or another, to find it.

Language and Meaning

The first point to note about the book's overall use of language is that, as noted above, it is written almost entirely in the present tense. There are sections of memory, or description of past events, that are written in past tense, but for the most part, the book's use of present-tense language gives a sense of immediacy, of intimacy, and of intensity.

A second noteworthy point about language and meaning is its integration of magic realism. This is a style of writing in which events with a sense of improbability about them, events that can only take place with the involvement of forces or energies from outside the parameters of scientific reality, are integrated into narration of so-called "real" situations or circumstances. This is most apparent in the second two sections of

the book, Homeward and Home. Certain aspects of the first story, Homeless (such as its protagonist always walking backwards) are unusual, but they are not magical, or do not seem to be so. On the other hand, aspects of the autopsy results in Homeward and the way in which some of them reappear in Home are among the elements in the second two parts that have, or give, the feeling that something supernatural, or at least not entirely realistic, is in narrative play. The writing of Homeward suggests the revelations there are possibly a dream; the writing of Home, however, calls this suggestion into question, making the connection between the two intriguing, but ambiguous. All that said, and in terms of the connection between magic realism and meaning, it is important to note that one of the purposes of magic realism in general, and in this book in particular, is to suggest that, in the lives of the characters (and perhaps in the lives of readers, or in life in general), there is more going on than what is literally seen, felt, or otherwise perceived. The deployment of magic realism in The High Mountains of Portugal clearly and vividly reiterates this idea.

A third element of language usage worth noting is the repetition of certain words or ideas that both create and reinforce a sense of connection, or tying together, of the three parts of the story. Two vivid examples of this are the words “allotment” (which suggests boundaries, limited scope for possession or ownership) and “detritus” (which suggests debris, refuse, or unwanted things left behind). Each word appears in each of the book’s parts; each word has associations of both limitation and disposable-ness for each protagonist and his story; and both words, in their recurrences, reinforce the sense of connection and inter-relationship triggered by the incorporation of each part’s similar narrative elements. Again, these are but two examples of a language pattern used throughout the book to create a sense of meaning that is both individualized to the characters and creates a link between them.

Structure

Overall, and as previously discussed, the novel is divided into three parts, each with its own protagonist and narrative line but with thematic and narrative connections between the parts. Those connections play particularly important roles in the book’s climaxes, of which there are three – one in each part. That said, the overall climax of the novel is something separate from the climax of the third part. The former can be seen in the moment at which the third story’s protagonist, Peter, discovers the relationship of his family to the community in which he has settled, while the latter (the climax of the third story, as opposed to the climax of the novel) can be seen in the moment of Peter’s death. In other words, the action and themes of the book as a whole have built towards the moment of ultimate connection between past and present (i.e. Peter’s discovery of his family history): the action of each part is built towards the moment of ultimate conclusion of each protagonist’s individual experience.

In Parts 1 and 3, Homeless and Home, the narrative build to their climaxes is generally linear, following the principles of cause-and-effect. The narrative lines of these two parts of the book are defined by the needs, drives, and subsequent choices of their protagonists, Tomas and Peter respectively. The narrative build to the climax of Part 2

follows a less linear structure, becoming the result of an accumulation of information rather than an accumulation of action. Eusebio is not nearly as driven, or as active, a protagonist as Tomas or Peter: he spends much of his share of the novel listening, observing, and reacting. The climax of his part of the book is, therefore, more of a realization than an accomplishment, as much for the reader as for the protagonist. In fact, it is arguable that in this part of the book, the climax is more in the reader's experience (i.e. the putting together of the various narrative pieces into a clearer whole) than in the narrative's actual line of action.

Quotes

In the course of one week – Gaspar died on Monday, Dora on Thursday, his father on Sunday – [Tomas'] heart became undone like a bursting cocoon. Emerging from it came no butterfly but a grey moth that settled on the wall of his soul and stirred no farther."
-- Narration (Part 1, Section 1)

Importance: This quote sums up the situation of the protagonist of this first part of the book – specifically, the trio of losses that he experienced in a very short time that, in turn, led him to his grief-triggered decision to walk backwards through his life. There is the sense that the description of grief applied here to Tomas' experience could be seen as applicable to the grief-based experiences of the similarly grief-stricken protagonists of the book's other parts.

Tomas, I hope you are aware that what you have before your eyes is a highly trained orchestra, and it plays the most lovely symphony. The pitch of the piece is pleasingly variable, the timbre dark but brilliant, the melody simple yet soaring … When I am the conductor of this orchestra, what I hear is a glorious music: the music of the future. Now you are stepping up to the podium and I am passing you the baton. You must rise to the occasion.
-- Uncle Martim (Part 1, Section 1)

Importance: In the aftermath of his demonstration of how his automobile works, Tomas' Uncle Martim explains why he believes it is important that Tomas drive the car: the car, metaphorically referred to as the orchestra, represents the future, and he (Martim) suggests here that Tomas is stuck in the past – that is, his grief over the loss of his family.

The road is disappearing under its wheels with such thunder that he feels it's no longer the machine that is moving forward on the landscape but the landscape that is being pulled from underneath it, like that hazardous trick in which a tablecloth is yanked off a fully set table. The landscape vanishes with the same menacing understanding that the trick will work only if done at lightning speed … in this madness, he is a teacup rattling on a saucer, his eyes glinting like bone china glaze.
-- Narration (Part 1, Section 2)

Importance: This quote sums up the sense of urgency, verging on feeling out of control, encountered by Tomas as he finds the courage to take his speed of travel – and therefore, his drive to get to the end of his journey – to the next level of intensity. There is a sense that this description is a metaphoric evocation of Tomas' experience of transforming his grief into something more positive, with more direction.

That is the work world [Tomas] lives in, one where he is an insignificant, replaceable cog. His relations with the chief curator, the collections manager, and the other curators at the museum are no better than Father Ulisses' relations were with the Bishop and the island clergy. How happy is a work environment where colleagues never eat together

but rather sit in sour isolation?
-- Narration (Part 1, Section 3)

Importance: This quote draws the parallels between the experiences of Tomas and Father Ulisses even more vividly, and emphasizes the sense of disposability that is perhaps part of Tomas' determination to make himself noteworthy by finding Ulisses' artifact.

[Tomas] has come to see in the priest a man perfected by his suffering. A man to be imitated. Because to suffer and do nothing is to be nothing, while to suffer and do something is to become someone. And that is what he is doing: He is doing something. He must strike onward to the High Mountains of Portugal and fulfill his quest.
-- Narration (Part 1, Section 3)

Importance: Once again, narration draws a parallel between the experiences of Tomas and Father Ulisses, this time defining their sufferings as being similarly character building.

To be the victim of a theft, and now to have committed a theft. In both cases, a child stolen. In both cases, his goodwill and grieving heart of no consequence. In both cases, mere chance. There is suffering and there is luck, and once again his luck has run out.
-- Narration (Part 1, Section 3)

Importance: This quote draws parallels between Tomas' grief at the death of his son and his grief at having killed the little boy who had been secretly riding in the car. Here again, this specific evocation of grief can be seen as connecting to, foreshadowing, and evoking the experiences of grief of the protagonists of the other two parts of the book.

We no longer live in an age of prophecy and miracle. We no longer have Jesus among us in the way the people of the Gospels did. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are narratives of presence. Agatha Christie's are gospels of absence. They are modern gospels for a modern people, a people more suspicious, less willing to believe.'"
-- Maria Lozora (Part 2, Section 1)

Importance: In this quote, the talkative wife of Eusebio (the protagonist of the book's second part), sums up the solution to the problem that she has recently been struggling with: why have the stories of Jesus been passed down over the centuries in the way they have – as allegories, rather than actual historical events? That solution, she suggests, lies in perspective, in looking at the gospels with an eye to analyzing their stories in the same way that one would analyze a mystery, like those written by Agatha Christie.

Desire was a discovery. Where would I have found it earlier? My parents expressed desire like a desert. I was the one hardy plant they had produced … did the Church teach me desire? The thought would be worth a laugh, if I had time to waste. The Church taught me to shame something I didn't even know.
-- Maria Castro (Part 2, Section 2)

Importance: Here the second Maria to visit Eusebio sums up her experience of discovering the power and joy of desire in the aftermath of her sudden, emotionless wedding to her husband Rafael. There is a sense here of life and joy being celebrated, even in the face of death (i.e. the joy of sex with Rafael in the face of Rafael's death).

Rafael always had more faith than I did … he often repeated something Father Abrahan said to him once, how faith is ever young, how faith, unlike the rest of us, does not age."
-- Maria Castro (Part 2, Section 2)

Importance: This quote evokes one of the book's overall themes, its exploration of the importance of faith in surviving, and moving on from, the trauma of grief and loss.

Each animal is like a piece of a puzzle, and wherever it settles, it belongs, clicking into place perfectly.
-- Narration (Part 3, Section 1)

Importance: This brief quote, made in specific references to the chimpanzees encountered by Peter Tovy (protagonist of Part 3) at the Institute for Primate Research, can be seen as echoing the presence and metaphoric function of chimpanzees elsewhere in the book.

He still has to get used to this, to the ape's gaze. It sweeps around like the beam from a lighthouse, dazzling him as he bobs in the waters. Odo's gaze is a threshold beyond which he cannot see. He wonders what the ape is thinking and in what terms. Perhaps Odo has similar questions about him. Perhaps the ape sees him as a threshold too. But he doubts it."
-- Narration (Part 3, Section 2)

Importance: This quote describes the unsettled, but somehow pleasing, feeling that Peter experiences in Odo's watchful company. It is also a more metaphoric evocation of the connection between humanity and animals in general.

The members of his own species now bring on a feeling of weariness in him. They are too noisy, too fractious, too arrogant, to unreliable. He much prefers the intense silence of Odo's presence, his pensive slowness in whatever he does, the profound simplicity of his means and aims."
-- Narration (Part 3, Section 3)

Importance: In this quote, narration describes just how much Peter's relationship with Odo has deepened, and how much he (Peter) has changed as a result of that relationship. Here again, there is an evocation of this part's bigger-picture exploration of the relationship between humans and animals.

He was away from the village with his father – my great-uncle Rafael – who was helping out on a friend's farm. And then the next moment the boy was miles away, by the side of a road, dead. The villagers say his injuries matched exactly the injuries of Christ on the

Cross: broken wrists, broken ankles, a deep gash in his side, bruises and lacerations. The story spread that an angel had plucked him from the field to bring him up to God, but the angel dropped him by accident, which explains his injuries.
-- Peter (Part 3, Section 3)

Importance: This quote describes the injuries suffered by a distant ancestor of Peter's, under circumstances which seem to suggest that the boy was the boy killed by Tomas in Part 1.This quote also explains why the villagers, in the boy's home town, came to believe that he was somehow blessed or touched by God.