

PREMIÈRE PARTIE – COMPOSITION EN LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE

Compare and contrast the following documents.

Axe : Imaginaires effrayants.

Document A

After a shipwreck in East Africa, Horace Holley (the narrator, an Englishman) and his travelling companions were captured by a native people, the Amahagger. In the following passage, they are brought before the Amahagger's queen for the first time.

At last we reached the curtains, and here Billali collapsed flat on to his stomach, with his hands stretched out before him as though he were dead, and I, not knowing what to do, began to stare about the place. But presently I clearly felt that somebody was looking at me from behind the curtains. I could not see the person, but I could distinctly feel his or her gaze, and, what is more, it produced a very odd effect upon my nerves. I was frightened, I do not know why. The place was a strange one, it is true, and looked lonely, notwithstanding its rich hangings and the soft glow of the lamps—indeed, these accessories added to, rather than detracted from its loneliness, just as a lighted street at night has always a more solitary appearance than a dark one. It was so silent in the place, and there lay Billali like one dead before the heavy curtains, through which the odour of perfume seemed to float up towards the gloom of the arched roof above. Minute grew into minute, and still there was no sign of life, nor did the curtain move; but I felt the gaze of the unknown being sinking through and through me, and filling me with a nameless terror, till the perspiration stood in beads upon my brow.

At length the curtain began to move. Who could be behind it?—some naked savage queen, a languishing Oriental beauty, or a nineteenth-century young lady, drinking afternoon tea? I had not the slightest idea, and should not have been astonished at seeing any of the three. I was getting beyond astonishment. The curtain agitated itself a little, then suddenly between its folds there appeared a most beautiful white hand (white as snow), and with long tapering fingers, ending in the pinkest nails. The hand grasped the curtain, and drew it aside, and as it did so I heard a voice, I think the softest and yet most silvery voice I ever heard. It reminded me of the murmur of a brook.

“Stranger,” said the voice in Arabic, but much purer and more classical Arabic than the Amahagger talk—“stranger, wherefore art thou so much afraid?”

Now I flattered myself that in spite of my inward terrors I had kept a very fair command of my countenance, and was, therefore, a little astonished at this question. Before I had made up my mind how to answer it, however, the curtain was drawn, and a tall figure stood before us. I say a figure, for not only the body, but also the face was wrapped up in soft white, gauzy material in such a way as at first sight to remind me most forcibly of a corpse in its grave-clothes. And yet I do not know why it should have given me that idea, seeing that the wrappings were so thin that one could distinctly see the gleam of the pink flesh beneath them. I suppose it was owing to the way in which they were arranged, either accidentally, or more probably by design. Anyhow, I felt more frightened than ever at this ghost-like apparition, and my hair began to rise upon my head as the feeling crept over me that I was in the presence of something that was not canny.

H. Rider HAGGARD, *She: A History of Adventure*,
London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1887, p. 141-142.

Document B

Best-selling author Paul Sheldon has been seriously injured in a car accident and rescued by former nurse Annie, who has taken him to her isolated farmhouse.

She left and returned with a steaming bowl of soup. There were vegetables floating in it. He was not able to eat much, but he ate more than he thought at first he could. She seemed pleased. It was while he ate the soup that she told him what had happened, and he remembered it all as she told him, and he supposed it was good to know how you happened to end up with your legs shattered, but the manner by which he was coming to this knowledge was disquieting – it was as if he was a character in a story or a play, a character whose history is not recounted like history but created like fiction.

She had gone into Sidewinder in the four-wheel drive to get feed for the livestock and a few groceries... also to check out the paperbacks at Wilson's Drug Center – that had been the Wednesday that was almost two weeks ago now, and the new paperbacks always came in on Tuesday.

'I was actually *thinking* of you,' she said, spooning soup into his mouth and then professionally wiping away a dribble from the corner with a napkin. 'That's what makes it such a remarkable coincidence, don't you see? I was hoping *Misery's Child* would finally be out in paperback, but no such luck.'

A storm had been on the way, she said, but until noon that day the weather forecasters had been confidently claiming it would veer south, toward New Mexico and the Sangre de Cristos.

'Yes,' he said, remembering as he said it: 'They said it would turn. That's why I went in the first place.' He tried to shift his legs. The result was an awful bolt of pain, and he groaned.

'Don't do that,' she said. 'If you get those legs of yours talking, Paul, they won't shut up... and I can't give you any more pills for two hours. I'm giving you too much as it is.'

Why aren't I in the hospital? This was clearly the question that wanted asking, but he wasn't sure it was a question either of them wanted asked. Not yet, anyway.

'When I got to the feed store, Tony Roberts told me I better step on it if I was going to get back here before the storm hit, and I said –'

'How far *are* we from this town?' he asked.

'A ways,' she said vaguely, looking off toward the window. There was a queer interval of silence, and Paul was frightened by what he saw on her face, because what he saw was nothing; the black nothing of a *crevasse* folded into an alpine meadow, a blackness where no flowers grew and into which the drop might be long. It was the face of a woman who has come momentarily untethered from all of the vital positions and landmarks of her life, a woman who has forgotten not only the memory she was in the process of recounting but memory itself. He had once toured a mental asylum – this was years ago, when he had been researching *Misery*, the first of the four books which had been his main source of income over the last eight years – and he had seen this look... or, more precisely, this unlook. The word which defined it was *catatonia*, but what frightened him had no such precise word – it was, rather, a vague comparison: in that moment he thought that her thoughts had become much as he had imagined her physical self: solid, fibrous, unchannelled, with no places of hiatus.

Then, slowly, her face cleared. Thoughts seemed to flow back into it. Then he realized *flowing* was just a tiny bit wrong. She wasn't filling up, like a pond or a tidal pool; she was *warming up*. *Yes... she is warming up, like some small electrical gadget. A toaster, or maybe a heating pad.*

'I said to Tony, "That storm is going south."' She spoke slowly at first, almost groggily, but then her words began to catch up to normal cadence and to fill with normal conversational brightness. But now he was alerted. Everything she said was a little strange, a little offbeat. Listening to Annie was like listening to a song played in the wrong key.

Stephen KING, *Misery*, London: Guild Publishing, 1987, p. 20-21.

Document C



The Haunted Lane, photographic print on stereo card, Melander & Bro., Chicago, Illinois, 1889, Library of Congress.

Note: viewed through a stereoscope, these two photographs would have formed one three-dimensional image.

Les candidats traduiront les deux textes ci-dessous.

1 – THÈME

Madeleine habitait le quartier depuis quarante-deux ans. Je l'avais peut-être déjà croisée, ici ou là, mais son visage ne me disait rien. Cela dit, j'étais encore relativement nouveau dans le coin, mais j'aimais arpenter les rues pendant des heures pour réfléchir. Je faisais partie de ceux pour qui l'écriture s'apparente à une forme d'annexion d'un territoire.

Madeleine devait connaître les histoires de bien des habitants du quartier. Elle avait dû voir des enfants grandir et des voisins mourir ; elle devait savoir derrière quel nouveau commerce se cachait une librairie disparue. Il y a sûrement un plaisir à passer une vie entière dans le même périmètre. Ce qui m'apparaissait comme une prison géographique était un monde de repères, d'évidences, de protections. Mon goût immodéré pour la fuite me poussait souvent à déménager (j'étais également du genre à ne jamais ôter mon manteau dans un restaurant). À vrai dire, j'aimais m'éloigner du décor de mes souvenirs, contrairement à Madeleine qui devait chaque jour marcher sur les traces de son passé.

David FOENKINOS, *La Famille Martin*, Éditions Gallimard, 2020.

2 – VERSION

With considerable effort I hauled myself to the base of the branch in which the koala was snuggling. I wasn't much more than my own height above the ground, and I could have reached out and touched the koala, which was not far from my head. I kept my head carefully away from the little beast.

'Boo!' I shouted.

The koala took no notice. I edged closer along the branch.

The branch broke. Branch, koala and I dropped abruptly into the thick ferns below.

The koala landed on its back. I landed spreadeagled on the koala. The koala was out of sight beneath my considerable bulk, but I knew it was there because it was growling and snorting and trying to dig its way to freedom through my yielding flesh.

It was an extraordinary experience—down in those ferns, winded, able to see nothing but fern fronds, half-stunned so that I couldn't co-ordinate myself, with that hard-muscled, surprisingly large fur-covered length of malevolence trying to disembowel me.

Where the hell was Mary Anne?

Kenneth COOK, "The Killer Koala,"
The Killer Koala: Humorous Australian Bush Stories, Tortoiseshell Press, 1986.