

‘A Close Look at **Journey to the Interior**’ by **Margaret Atwood**

Mind Travel

“Journey to the Interior” is a metaphysical poem that appeals to the reader with its central motif of a journey, an image favourite with Atwood, which has been exploited by her commendable skill in her novel “Surfacing.”

here are similarities

therefore inaccessible. Mostly

I notice: that the hills

that travel is not the easy going

which the eyes make flat as a wall, welded

from point to point, a dotted

together, open as I move

line on a map, location

to let me through; become

plotted on a square surface

endless as prairies; that the trees

but that I move surrounded by a tangle

grow spindly, have their roots

of branches, a net of air and alternate

often in swamps; that this is a poor country;

light and dark, at all times;

that a cliff is not known

that there are no destinations

as rough except by hand, and is

apart from this.

The poem views the human mind as a landscape. As one delves deeper and deeper into the mind, it seems to widen out in various directions, all equally daunting and ultimately inscrutable. Only someone endowed with enormous faith in one's own selfhood can launch on such a daring journey and emerge unscathed at the end.

For those who stand outside and the non-observant, human psyche is as flat as any two-dimensional picture: "Flat as a wall." Its shades and colours may seem to be "welded together," as in a landscape painting. One cannot travel through it. But for those endowed with the gift of probing the mind, the mind will "open as I move to let me through," like endless prairies, the vast open grasslands of Canada. It is not that the interior 'landscape' or the 'mindscape' is uniformly fertile; for the mind has its own inaccessible, barren swamps too, capable of producing merely "spindly trees."

The exploration of the interior of the mind is not a straight forward enterprise. It is not a point-to-point, neat "dotted line on map." The daring traveller must traverse several devious routes in order to make some headway. These routes offer a variety of obstacles on the way. Significantly, "there are no destinations" at the end of such a 'journey.'

We are the only owner and tiller of this interior landscape – the mind, neither we can sell them nor lend them to others. In Martine Heidegger's terminology (whom I consider a great "Teacher" of the 20th Century and say further – so far I haven't found another) I would say we are "beings thrown-into-the-world" with a unique interior landscape of mind given to us without a choice. The question is not about 'choice' given or not given. It is more of how much we take time to travel, explore and till the landscape of our mind whose outcome reflects our interior and exterior outlook towards oneself, others and the universe. It says about the unique attitude and character and so on of a person. This aspect is often mentioned by/to each of us when we say to others or hear from others commends like 'you have an inclusive mind,' 'you have a big heart,' and other synonymous phrases. All these commend which passes through our lives unnoticed are actually a mirroring of the landscape of our mind. Hence I think poet leaves us with a soul-searching question, how much do we travel and explore our mind the unique landscape we possess, and further till it to make it beautiful and fruitful. I think to explore and till the interior landscape of mind and make it beautiful and see it filled with the fruits of our labour is the 'real happiness' of life/a life actualized.