



Gwen Harwood's representation of intense human emotion in her poetry is what draws and captivates readers, relating to it on his human level. The ~~powerful~~^{intense} human emotion of fear of death is a ground that we are all subject to, as is represented in her two poems 'Father and Child, Part I and II' and 'At Mornington'. Harwood presents the nature of life and death and how maturity in contrast to reckless youth brings about acceptance and casts out this fear of death.

'Father and Child, Part I 'Barn Owl' and Part II 'Nightfall' is a poem based on the changing relationship between a father and child. Written in first person, the persona, ~~contrast~~ ~~is~~ assumed to be female, contrasts her view of her father from her childhood experience in Part I to her father dying in Part II. The structure of the poem is featured in 6 lines in each of the 7 stanzas, in the rhyme scheme of 'ABABCC'. The commonality in structure is used to draw the idea of the same relationships, yet conveyed in different ways in each part. The tone in 'Barn Owl' in stanzas 1 to 3 are rebellious, confident and bitter ^{then} in stanzas 4 to 7



change to ~~express~~ an overwhelmed, fearful ^{tone expressing} ~~and traumatic~~ trauma. One interpretation or critical reading of Part I is the Christian reading which sees the elements of Biblical references and allusions to the Child coming her father as "the Old No-Sayer" ~~and~~ in stanza 2 and perceiving herself as "the master of life and death" in stanza 3. This is indicative of Adam and Eve's perception of God and themselves in the Garden of Eden, in which the Child then learns that ~~she~~ ^{her} rebellion caused destruction and ~~"leaned on the arm of my arm"~~ "leaned on my father's arm", coming back to his righteousness in the last stanza. The child realises the consequence of having not the dam out, fearing the sight of death, "believing death clean and final / not his obscene bundle of stuff". The child realises the fragility of life, fearing death at her action.

This human emotion of fearing death is carried into ~~the~~ Part II entitled 'Nightfall' to indicate that her father, like the wounded owl is "blind" in which "his" night and day are one" and that "the season that seemed incredible", his final stage of life, "has come". The tone completely changes in

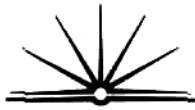


Part II, where she views her father as her "stick firm comforter". This visual imagery of her fragile father is ~~paired with~~ ^{complementary to} the tone of respect, reverence and sombre humility throughout the poem. Their relationship ~~becomes~~ ^{is} presented to be close, through Howson's allusion to King Lear, "Be your tears wet?" and "Old King", as she directly addresses the poem to her father. This is in direct contrast to her ~~own~~ ^{childish} view of the stern "Old No-Sayer" in Part I. The critical reading ~~but~~ is often imposed on ~~her~~ ^{her} this poem in the contrast between Part I and II is the feminist reading, where we see the reversal of roles and shifting in vulnerability between the father and child. The child, who learns the reality of death and has come to fear the sight of it, ~~experiences~~ ^{witnesses} it again in her dying father, grieving, "What sorrows in the end, no words or tears can mend". There is a tone of acceptance yet grief, as she learns to deal with her father's death.

Similarly in 'At Mornington', Howson comes to accept the reality of death while she has been afraid and in

fear of it throughout her life. This is due to the theme of relationships giving value to life in 'At Morningston'. With much personal pronouns, "I," "we", "me", in his poem, we assume the persona is clearly herself as she tells of an account of a day she spends with a valued friend at the cemetery, reflecting on the nature of life and death. Written in the structure of 12 lines in 5 stanzas and in free verse, the poem is very reflective as her thought meanders from her childhood memories, to the present and a dream sequence. She conveys life and death through a number of visual images: water, light and pumpkins.

The last stanza draws together each of these images represented throughout the poem, as she comes to "fear death no more" due to the comfort that relationships, particularly between her and the addressed friend bring to her life. She says that she "comes to laugh at the sight of death in a hollowed pumpkin", indicative and symbolic of Halloween and comes to accept that one day



she will be "rolled in a grinding race/ of dreams, pain, love, grief ^{and} memories", listing her life's experiences which flash before her eyes.

This intense human emotion of fearing death is combated in both poems with acceptance and realising the value of life through relationships in these two poems. It is in this way that Harwood presents a hope to her readers, by example of what is assumed to be her life ~~and known to be her~~ in 'Father and Child', and known to be her experiences in 'At Mornington'. The fear of death has a significance in the lives of every human, how it is dealt with is completely up to the person.