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Project Proposal
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The creative writing project that I intend to focus on, and which I plan to share with the class, appears to be either a memoir or a fictional hybrid accounting of a real event from my past. Very tentatively titled "The Lobster Trap", the writing explores the circumstances surrounding the drowning of my father when I was four. The event happened off the coast of eastern Nova Scotia where I was born. The "received" story of the event is that my father, who was on a short leave from the Canadian navy, got into a small skiff with his cousin Martin with the aim of going out to pull up some lobster traps so they could cook up a bunch of the critters for themselves and for friends with whom they'd been drinking and playing cards. The boat "must have capsized" or "something must have happened" or "perhaps there was a good bit of wind, it being November after all" and both men drowned.

Of course, the story doesn't stop there. Fast forward 50 years and I discover another telling of the tale that involves gunshots from the shore and a potential double murder. As that version of events so wildly contrasts with the "received" version, I find myself free to explore the "truth" through a creative approach. In particular, I am drawn to the notion of a myth or fairy tale that gets embedded within a larger story as is done in the story-within-a-story feature of Atwood's *Bluebeard's Egg*.

I admire the symbolism and the use of objects and stories about those objects to bring a tale to a timeless, universal and deeper level, but one that also speaks to our modern predicament. The specific use of a folktale, or of one that has been modified, is

a device that I want to apply to my own storytelling. The deepening that occurs when a character tells a tale that is then mirrored in the outer world is satisfying indeed.

I also appreciated how Atwood wastes no time in jumping from past to present back to past again, trusting that her reader will follow and not overloading us with explanation of what she is doing. In the scene when she describes the rules of dinner, she jumps from one sentence to describe “needling [the heart men] from time to time,” to launching into a past tense dialogue that describes such needling. That moves the story along rapidly rather than the author signaling that she’s going back in time.

Other bigger themes and ideas that come up for me in the writing include death (and the fear of death, specifically by drowning), fear of the ocean/the deep/the unknown, territoriality and boundaries and the wrongful crossing of boundaries, stealing/taking what is not one's own, never really knowing the "truth" about something, the "same" story from multiple points of view, never being able to resolve something/solve something, etc. Regardless of the theme explored, my principle interest is in letting a fairy tale be my guide.