

Upstreaming

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Upstreaming Swimming upstream is a short story written by Beth Brant.

Anne May the main character in this short story lives with a woman named Catherine, whom she has a loving relationship with and is proud to have her by her side. However, Anne suffers the loss her son Simon, whom she loved so much. She claims that the courts denied her the custody of her son because she lived with a woman, as well as her history of alcoholism; thus, Tony, her ex-husband, was given custody. After her son's death, Ann May goes through a series of changes, from nightmares to inventing the future for his son so as to see how her son's life would have been if he did not die. Therefore, this paper will analyze the process Anne May undergoes after her son's death and the significance of embracing life in a phenomenal swim of faith.

The memories of her son made Anne May unable to get over his death. Her son had fallen out of the boat and drowned while they were fishing with his father. The images of his son drowning could not leave her mind, which resulted in nightmares almost every day until they became her companion. In her dreams, she could see “ her son drowning in the water, his skinny arms flailing the waves, his mouth opening to scream, but no sound coming forth” (Brant 50). These dreams kept the memories of her son alive; thus, she welcomed them.

However, Anne May enters another process where she blames herself for her son's death. Although she had not been there when the accident occurred, Anne May felt that it was her duty to protect her son. “ It is my fault, she said out loud. She thought of all the things she should have done to prevent Simon's leaving. She should have placated Tony, she should have lived

alone, she should have pretended to be straight, and she should have never been an alcoholic, she should have never loved, she should have never been born (Brant 53). This hurt her and made it difficult for her to forgive herself, as well as her ex-husband, Tony who desperately begged for forgiveness.

The joy of her son's birth made Anne May stop drinking. Her desire to have a drink ended when she saw Simon. However, his death made her thirst for the drink and hated attending meetings. " She wanted to drink and drink and drink until it was all over" (Brant 52). She finally buys a bottle of wine at a liquor store and decides to travel as she thinks about her past life, about her alcoholic father and how he made her mother live a miserable life. While standing on a rock at Sauble Falls, she watched the fish as they moved upstream. According to Brant (55), the water portrays faith and hope for a better future for the fish since it is both life giving and life taking.

However, there was one fish that was unable to move upstream because of a torn fin. Anne watched as the fish tried to move upstream with his phenomenal swim of faith (Brant 55). She anticipated the fish to move as she sat on a rock until her heart started beating fast. She closed her eyes and thought the fish had to push his bleeding body forward, believing his magic to get him there. Believing, believing he would get there" (Brant 54). The torn fin symbolizes an act of faith. That no matter how much pain the fish was experiencing, it managed to move upstream making a complete circle. The circle symbolizes the power that Anne May has to overcome her difficult past and turn around and start a new life.

Works cited

Brant, Beth. *Swimming Upstream*. Chicago: New Victoria Publishers. 1995.
Print.