

Annotated passage from *Swallow the Air* (p. 99-100)

There is a contrast between *all* and *different*, suggesting the tensions created by grouping people together – contrasted with the pronoun *we*

The terraces reflect the tensions of the people – *colliding together*.

There is an absence of punctuation which may suggest a lack of boundaries or confusion.

Drug smuggling and *thugs* is an expected combination but *thugs* is being used as a verb not a noun – what is the effect?

The sense of despair is accentuated by the alliteration of *spitting* and *spinning*

“We’re all family here, all blacks, here, from different places, but we’re all one mob, this place here...”

She pulled back the dirty lace curtain; we looked out on to the cement and tar.

The terraces colliding into each other. Rubble edging fences. Rubbish clogging gutters. Mothers screaming fathers or brothers or cousins. Uncles drinking, thinking under bread and butter. People giving their whole dole to the bowl that is empty, that they run right over as if they got plenty. Drug smuggling thugs the mothers. Baby cried for others. Fits uncrucify the losers. The grinning winners looking down from two towers. Metal rods flog *moguls* on the grog. And they’re spitting and spinning out. And some places don’t sleep, only drown.

“This here a meeting place for our people, always. Welcome to the Block, little sis. “

The description of the Block is framed by two statements from Joyce who introduces and then welcomes May to the Block.

The lace curtain leads us to a new visual point of view to the *cement and tar*. The change from the pronoun *she* to *we* shows acceptance of May.

Sentence fragments are used to describe the Block as if it is an incomplete way of living – this is a place that doesn’t offer may her sense of completion.

The use of rap accentuates the idea of urban dispossession. A rhyming couplet is formed by *empty* and *plenty* emphasising the generosity of the people even though they have nothing.

The people fall into two lots those who are *fit* and those who are *losers* but they support each other with the fits *uncrucifying* the losers. But both groups stand separate from those who are *winners*.

Given the desperate scene in front of her the welcome is ironic