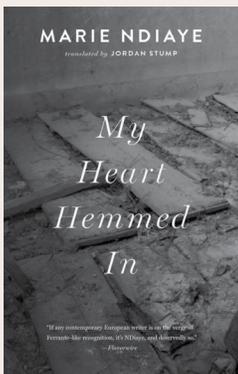


MY HEART HEMMED IN

Marie NDiaye, translated from French by Jordan Stump

1. Early in the novel Nadia comments that “no disgrace is ever completely unearned” (pg. 4). What potential explanations does the novel offer for Nadia and Ange’s prejudicial treatment, and is this question resolved by the end?
2. *My Heart Hemmed In* incorporates elements of horror, the supernatural, surreal, and uncanny: skeletal apparitions, runaway trams, body metamorphosis, potential cannibalism, and more. How do these elements emerge in the novel, and what effects do they have on the narrative?
3. Ange comments to Nadia that nothing is “private between us anymore” (pg. 124). How does the novel portray concerns around surveillance, privacy, and the fear of exposure?
4. How does Nadia’s relationship to her work as a teacher impact other parts of her life, including her family and social status? What perspective does the novel have on work and alienation?
5. How does Nadia relate to her own embodiment including, in her words, her “poor, fat-encased heart” (pg. 110)? In addition to embodiment, what other ways does Nadia perceive herself as “hemmed in”? How is the narrative itself also hemmed in, bordered, or blinkered?
6. Nadia, her ex-husband, Ralph, Lanton, and Nadia’s parents all make decisions that weigh the disclosure of their origins and identities against their status in dominant culture. What choices do they each make, and how do their tradeoffs contribute to the novel’s portrayal of what it means to belong, or not?
7. How does the reader’s perception of Nadia change as the novel progresses? Is Nadia a reliable narrator?



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