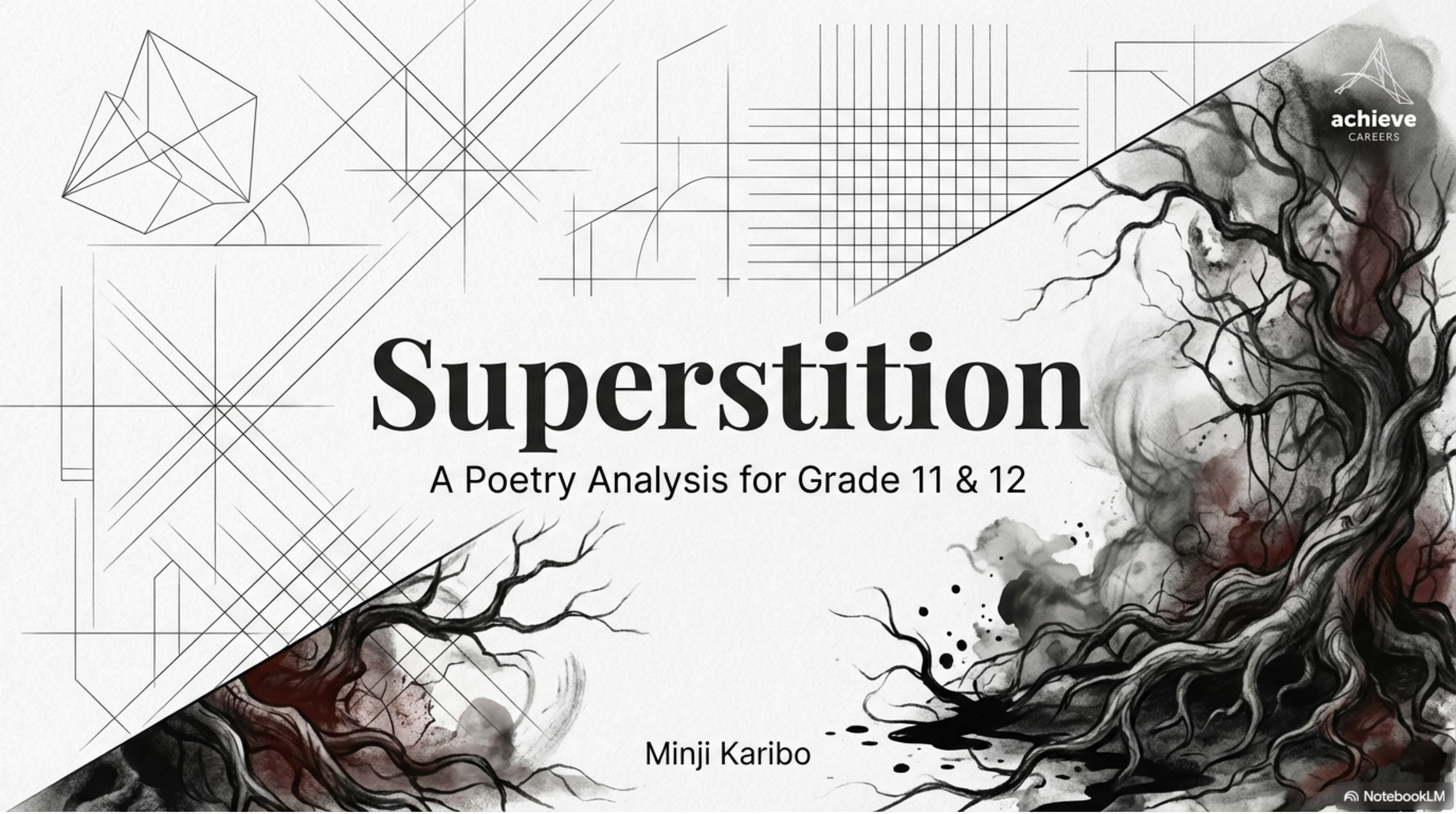


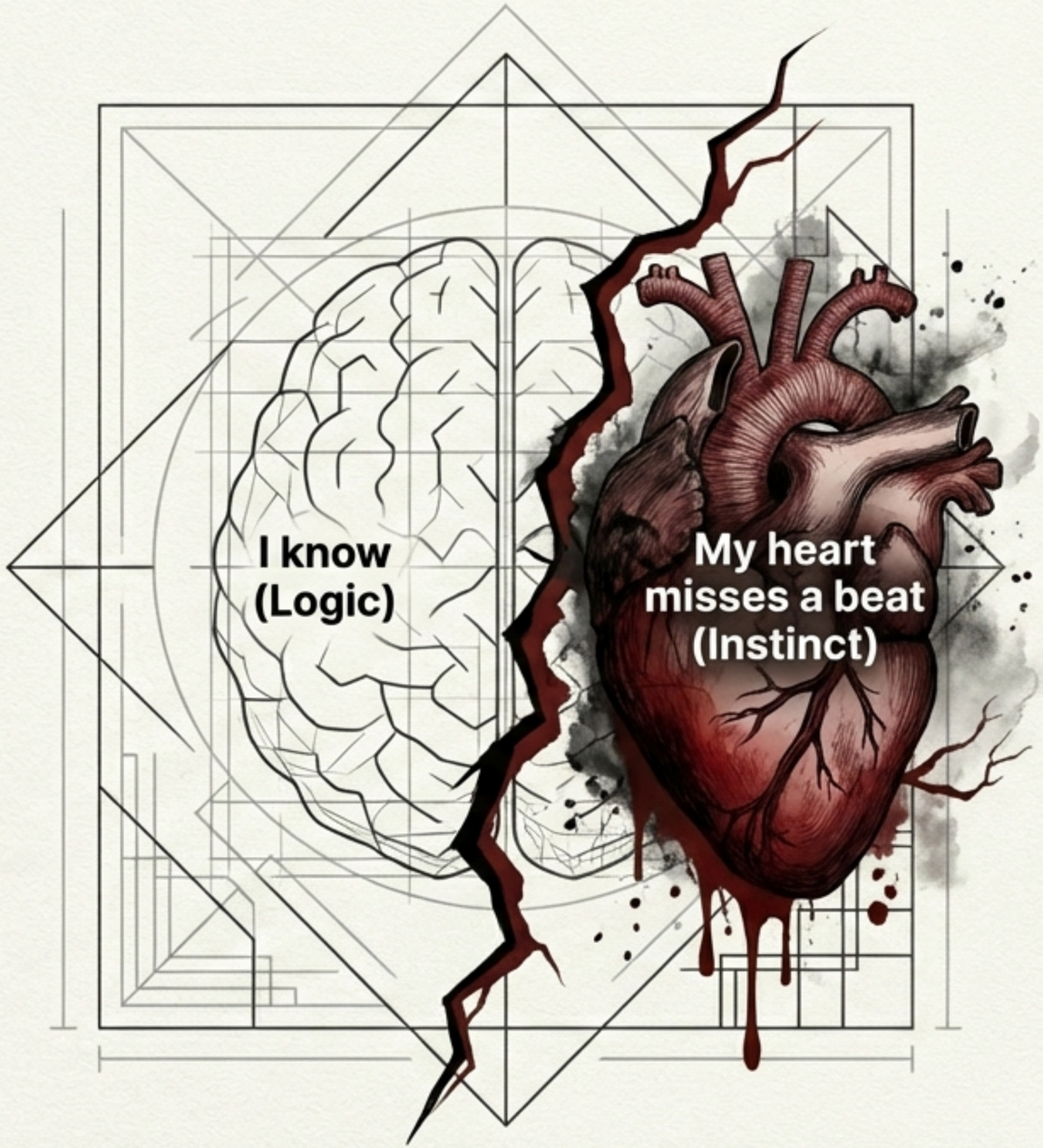
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The Poet: Minji Karibo

- **University of Ibadan, Nigeria** (1960s): wrote for the student magazine, The Horn.
- **The Shift**: Later declined writing more poetry to focus on parenting ‘lively children’.
- **Context**: An educated woman embedded in the cycle of life and tradition.

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The Paradox: Head vs. Heart

- **Lines 1–4:** “I know it is a superstition
  And yet
  When the owl hoots
  My heart misses a beat”

- **Literary Device:** Paradox. Intellectual knowledge vs. Visceral reaction.

- **Symbolism:** The Owl – A universal omen of death/danger.

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The Bridge: “And Yet”



And yet

Lines 5–8: The mirror breaks / “I feel a chill”

Device: Anaphora. The repetition of “I know... And yet” acts as a hinge, opening the door to the irrational.

Imagery: The Chill. A somatic (physical) response to psychological dread.

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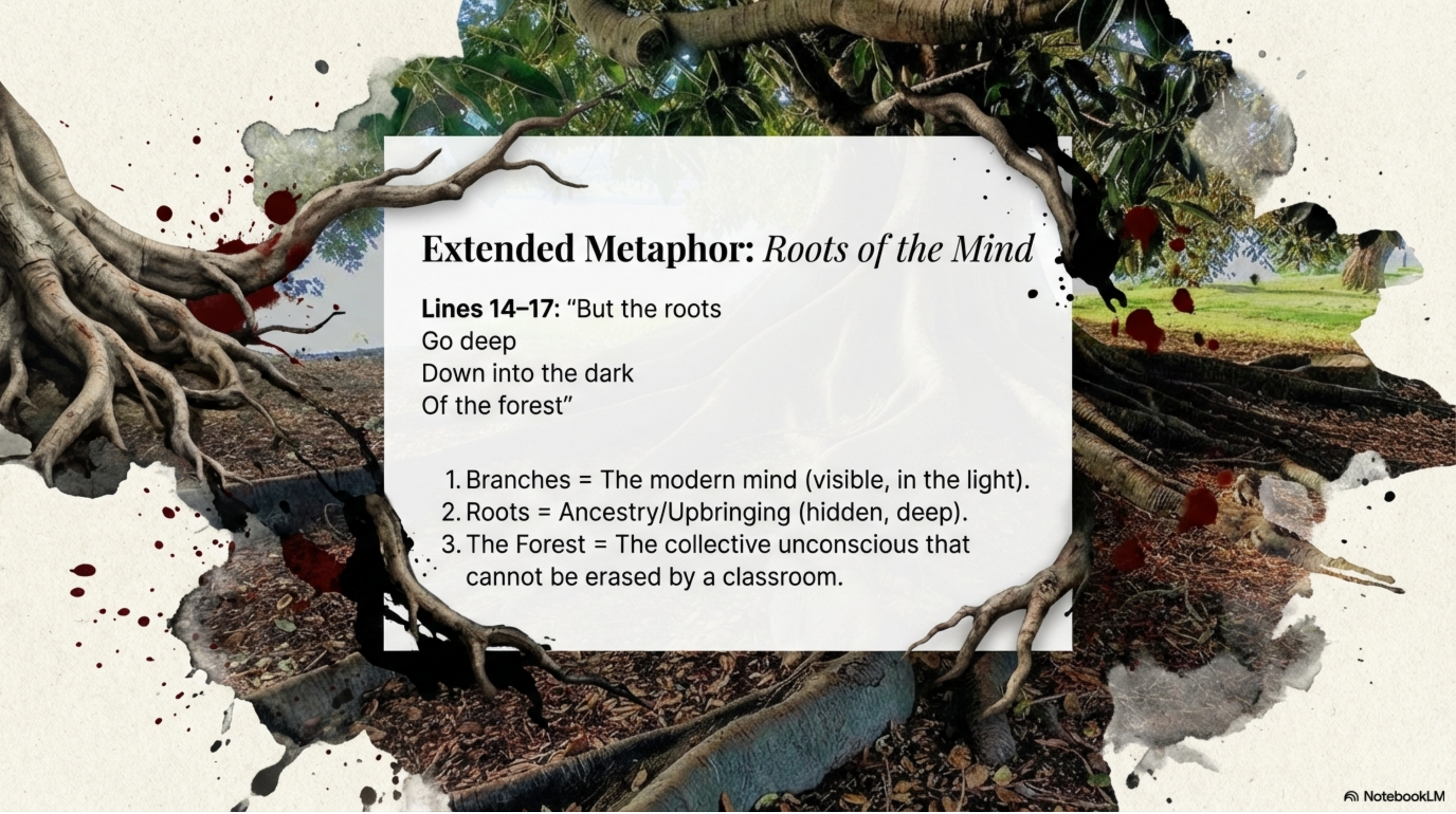
The Modern Facade



- **Lines 9–13:** “I am a modern woman / I have been to school / I have read books / And I have a degree”
- **Device: Juxtaposition.** This list of credentials (“degree,” “books,” “school”) builds a wall of Western rationalism.
- **Concept:** The “**Educated Self**” trying to shout down the “**Intuitive Self**”.

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Extended Metaphor: *Roots of the Mind*

Lines 14–17: “But the roots
Go deep
Down into the dark
Of the forest”

1. Branches = The modern mind (visible, in the light).
2. Roots = Ancestry/Upbringing (hidden, deep).
3. The Forest = The collective unconscious that cannot be erased by a classroom.

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Fear as a Predator



Lines 18–21:
“And the ancient fears
Are still there
Crouching in the corner”

Device: Personification. Fear is not abstract; it is a hunter waiting to strike.

Sound: Alliteration. The hard “**c**” sounds in “Crouching in the corner” mimic a clicking, predatory noise.

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Inventory: Morning & Day

Morning

The Old Woman: An ordinary neighbor transforms into a witch in the speaker's mind, forcing a retreat "back to bed".



Afternoon

The Wandering Sheep: In the "sultry afternoon," sheep are not animals, but "men come from their dark from their dark a graves" walking in mortal sight.



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Inventory: Signs & Omens



- **Signs:** Left hand or eyelid twitching = Bad Luck.
- **Sound:** The Owl hoots from a nearby tree.
- **Technique:** Rhyme Scheme (pluck / luck).
- **Analysis:** The use of simple rhyme mimics a nursery rhyme or a spell, reinforcing that these beliefs are rote-learned from childhood.

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Inventory: The Invisible World

Spilled Drinks: Not a mess, but a libation for ancestral spirits.

Banana Clumps: Hiding spots for witches.

Crumbs: Intentional leftovers left in pots “for babes unborn”.

Theme: The unseen world is hungry and watching. Accidental messes **become spiritual rituals.**

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Inventory: Thresholds

Doorways: “**Wrong to stand in doorways at dusk.**”

Reasoning: “For the ghosts must pass—they have right of way!”

Symbolism: Doorways are thresholds between the living and the dead. **Dusk is the boundary between safety (day) and fear (night).**”



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The Shift in Blame

Inter
Lines: “When a hidden root trips me over
Fault’s not in my foot.
It’s an evil root.”

Analysis:
- External Locus of Control
- External Locus of Control: The speaker refuses to accept clumsiness.
- The Metaphor: It is both a literal root and the “root” of her heritage tripping up her modern stride.



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The Final Warning

The Omen: “If I sleep with feet towards the door / I’ll not long be fit.’” (Corpses are traditionally removed from rooms feet first).

Closing Line: “I know it—Yes I know it!”

Analysis: The exclamation marks indicate panic. The poem ends cyclically, trapping the speaker in her belief.



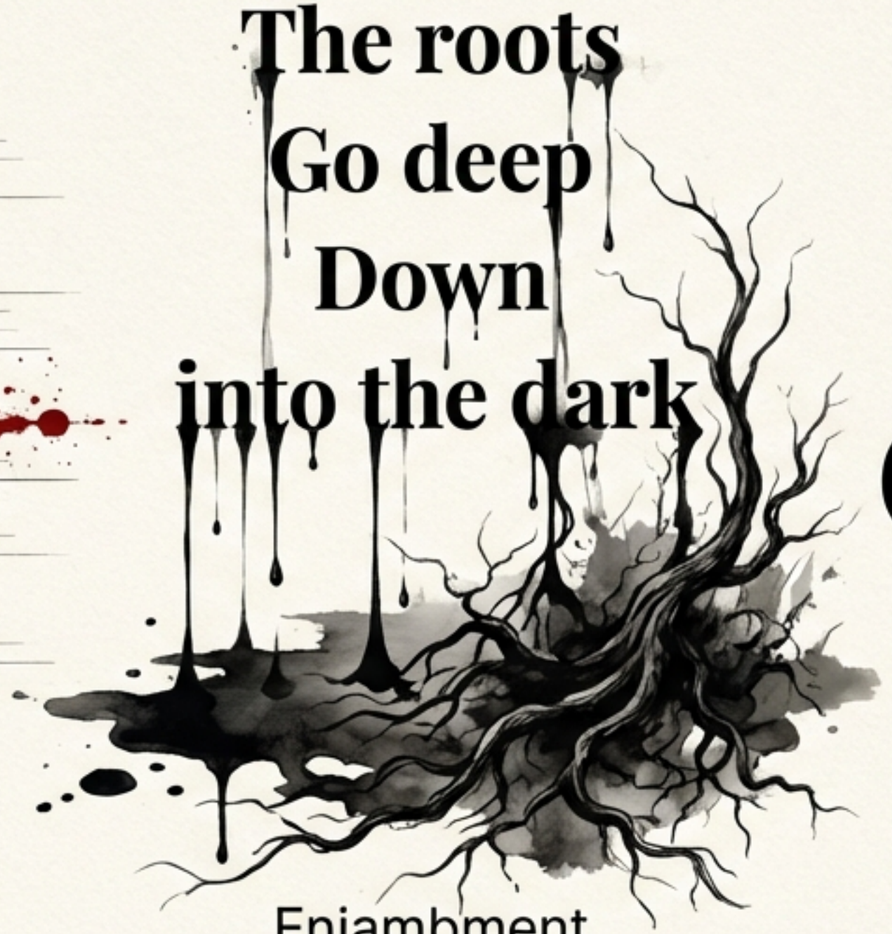
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Mechanics: Sound & Structure



Staccato Rhythm



Enjambment

Simple
Childlike

Diction

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The Unfinished Self

- We are never truly “finished” products of our education.

- Cultural heritage and childhood fears are shadows that follow us even into the brightest rooms of modern life.

- Discussion: Can you ever educate fear away?



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