

UNIT - 1

TWENTIETH CENTURY VERSE : AN ANGLO-AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY

STRUCTURE

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss various Anglo-American Poets and their verses

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Literary modernism began in France, then spread to England, America, and finally back to Europe. Although many critics trace its origins as far back as the 1890s and its "death" as late as 1939, scholars generally agree that modernism peaked during the years 1910-1925.

Identifying where and when modernism occurred is easier than defining precisely what it was. Part of the difficulty, as we have seen in earlier chapters,

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involves the term "modern," for almost every literary period from the eighteenth century considered its works "modern" in relation to those from preceding eras. Another problem, as many critics have noted, is that modernism appears to constitute a cluster of separate movements, such as symbolism and imagism, rather than a unified approach to literature. Finally, modern authors themselves seem more distinguished by their differences than by their similarities.

Yet, while the novels of Marcel Proust differ strikingly in subject matter and tone from those of Franz Kafka, and the poetry of William Butler Yeats sharply contrasts with that of T. S. Eliot, several crucial characteristics remain common to the moderns and entitle them to be grouped together in a cultural revolution that was as wide-ranging and significant as the Renaissance. However, before discussing those characteristics, some understanding of early twentieth-century life will be helpful.

Historical, Social, and Scientific Background

The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed upheavals in long-established political, social, economic, and religious patterns, with the result that the stability of nineteenth-century life was shattered beyond recall. World War I, with its gas and trench warfare, gave lie to the idea of progress that had seemed an inevitable heritage of the European Enlightenment. Instead, the war disillusioned an entire generation brought up on the notion that it was sweet and honorable to die for one's country.⁽¹⁾ While the erosion of a clearly defined class structure in a country like England undermined confidence in a stable social order, the Russian Revolution (1917) brought catastrophic change to Central and Eastern Europe. In America, the stock market crash of 1929 with its resulting world-wide financial Depression challenged the faith in traditional economic authority. Finally, the weakening hold of religion set people adrift in a morally ambiguous and frightening universe.

While bringing enormous benefits, technology and urban development also contributed to an increasingly impersonal environment. Cities grew larger -- by 1910 the populations of London and New York each numbered five million -- and their burgeoning size diminished the sense of security and community. As in the Renaissance, scientific advances revealed a universe that was both exciting and terrifying. Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity (1905) and Ernest Rutherford's Theory of the Atom (1911) formulated new ideas that shocked because they contradicted long held beliefs about the movement and stability of matter. Thus, the physical universe seemed to be falling apart as fast as the social and political one. This, then, was the changing world in which the cultural revolution known as modernism erupted.

Modernism and the Rebellion Against the Past

Modernism reflected the tumult of this world in various ways. On one level, the movement rebelled against the artistic past. In painting, this rebellion took the

form of a complete abdication of what, until then, had preoccupied most artists in the post-medieval West -- the imitation of external reality. As if by prior agreement, modern artists of all nations and types deliberately chose not to reproduce reality or copy from nature, perhaps because photography could do so in a much more faithful way. Indeed, artists distorted natural forms and even rejected the principle of single perspective that had prevailed since the days of Michelangelo. *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (1907) by Pablo Picasso embodied these new ideas to perfection. Moreover, the work's semi-abstract, fractured human bodies and use of multiple points of perspective within a single canvas seemed, like so much of modern art, purposely designed to shock the sensibilities of the public.

In music, composers rejected what, until the end of the nineteenth century, had been the basis of all Western music -- the chromatic scale and the dominant concept of consonance or harmonious sounds. Instead, the new music often abandoned tonality altogether. It substituted a mingling of discordant sounds (dissonance) and even included non-musical sounds such as those of fire engines as well as artificially produced ones such as electronically synthesized music. The work of Edgard Varèse, among others, provides a showcase of these modernist principles.

Modernism and the Reevaluation of the Distant Past

On the other hand, a renewed interest emerged in the far reaches of the human past, specifically in the areas of myth and ancient cultures. Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* reflects this trend too; the woman on the left stands with one foot forward, the typical position in ancient Egyptian art. Other figures have mask-like faces, remarkably similar to the African masks that several of Picasso's friends had acquired by 1906. Efforts to identify any one actual mask as a specific influence for the *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* suggest that no single work that Picasso saw directly caused him to change his technique in mid-stream. Rather, the African artists' conceptual art, which made no effort to reproduce an exact lifelike image but distilled the concept of a face in almost abstract terms, reinforced the modernists in their experimentation with form. Picasso himself likened his affinity for African art, with its sophisticated abstraction of human form, to Renaissance artists' interest in Greco-Roman classicism, with its glorification of natural human form.

Picture of Igor Stravinsky, portrait by Picasso.

Igor Stravinsky, portrait by Picasso.

In music, a fascination with primitive myth contributed to the dissonant tones favored by composers such as Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). In *Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring), Stravinsky imagines in music the pagan rituals of ancient Russia. The Rite of Spring culminates in the community's choice of a virgin who must dance herself to death to propitiate the god of spring, whose

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advent anxiously is awaited in the ice-bound north (compare the Dionysian fertility rites of ancient Greece described in the Classical Drama section). With its pulsating rhythms and unharmonious sounds, the first performance of *The Rite of Spring* caused a riot in Paris on the night of May 29, 1913.

Literature, too, both embraced and abandoned the past, and like art and music, found myth a fertile ground for inspiration, thanks in large part to works like Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1914), an immensely influential anthropological study. Writers such as William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and William Faulkner, to name just a few, used myth both as subject matter and structure for their works. Many of Yeats's best poems derive from Irish legend ("Who Goes With Fergus") or classical myth ("Leda and the Swan"). Eliot too used myth, most notably in *The Waste Land* (1922). Having read Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), Eliot was struck by the Arthurian story of a sterile fisher king whose lands are symbolically barren. Seizing upon this ancient myth, Eliot saw how the legend could embody his thoughts and feelings about the present. Moreover, it was Eliot who perceived the general purpose that myth served in modern literature. Writing about James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (1922), based on the adventures of Homer's legendary hero in the *Odyssey*, Eliot observed that myth enabled a writer to give "a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."

Some Characteristic Features of Literary Modernism

Characterization and the Hero

For all their interest in ancient myth and ritual, however, modern writers broke with the literary past in more ways than they tried to preserve it. The symbolist movement, as we have seen in the Nineteenth-Century Prose Narrative section, foreshadowed modernism's interest in a deeper than surface reality. Part of that new, deeper reality involved a change in the portrayal of literary characters. Suddenly authors became aware that, in the words of novelist Virginia Woolf, "In or about December, 1910, human character changed." Woolf's precise date could refer to two key events that, in her mind at least, signalled the end of one age and the start of another -- the death of England's King Edward VII and the first Post-Impressionist exhibition in London. Though Woolf exaggerated -- human character itself had not changed -- people's knowledge of it had. Thanks in large part to the tireless documentation by Sigmund Freud of the power of the unconscious and of human sexuality, writers realized that the human personality, far from being a rational and comprehensible whole, was infinitely more complex than previously imagined. Consequently, the nineteenth century's tendency to define character by means of historical and social contexts was no longer adequate; newer, subtler techniques had to be developed to capture the irrational, unpredictable, darker side of human nature.

One such technique was the "stream of consciousness" device in which a character's thoughts are reproduced as they presumably occur, not in full sentences or in any logical sequence, but according to an associative process that depends on the conscious or unconscious connections made by each individual's mind. This device was used extensively by such authors as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce in Europe, and by William Faulkner in America. The first page and a half of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* (1916) employs this technique to particularly good advantage. Here, young Stephen Dedalus describes his world in a seemingly random, disjointed prose that is actually logical and coherent once the reader recognizes that it focuses, in part, on the child's five senses and what they tell him.

In addition to abandoning a traditional concept of characterization, modernism also abandoned one of the most fundamental, but also problematic, types of character -- the hero. What constitutes heroism has always aroused debate, but the typical protagonists of modernism, having lost faith in society, religion, and the surrounding environment, seem also to have lost any claim to heroic action or stature. Indeed, faced with a terrifying and possibly meaningless world, leading characters either fear to act, having concluded that action itself is pointless, or like Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa, the "hero" of *The Metamorphosis* (1915), or Joseph K., of *The Trial* (1925), cannot act in a universe that has entrapped them. Given this alienation from society, modern heroism seems often to be reduced to the heroism of becoming aware that in this new age, heroic or successful action is not only unattainable, but also perhaps undesirable.

Plot and Chronology

If heroism became a literary impossibility for many modern writers, so did the conventional way of telling a story from beginning to end; in the process, the modernists rejected traditional notions of plot and time. The nineteenth century saw time as comprising three distinct stages -- past, present and future -- through which an orderly progression of events evolves. Such a view of time produced, by necessity, a literature that focused on the major events in the life of a character and showed a rational, cause-effect relationship between those events and the character's development. By contradicting these traditional assumptions, modern authors produced an entirely different type of literature. This impulse may be traced, in part at least, to a non-literary source, the theories of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). In his influential study, *Time and Free Will* (1922), Bergson reasoned that time is not a series of logically sequential or separate stages. Rather, time is a continuous, uninteruptible flux or stream, with past, present and future simultaneously present in and indistinguishable from each other. Or, as T. S. Eliot would later write in *Four Quartets* (1943):

Time present and time past

Are both present in time future,

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And time future contained in time past.

Theoretically, then, always starting a story at the beginning became irrelevant, even misleading, because, in a sense, there was no real beginning. Freed from the tyranny of time, modern writers felt justified in dislocating normal narrative chronology through flashbacks, repetitions, or even by omitting transitions entirely. This dislocation, they believed, could more truly reflect reality than a narrative structure based on the artificial Aristotelian divisions of beginning, middle, and end.

Furthermore, the idea of time as flux implicitly challenges the practice of focusing on major events in a character's life. In a temporal stream, any occurrence, even the most trivial or mundane, possesses importance and is capable of revealing much about a person or the true nature of reality. This new attention to life's isolated, commonplace moments perhaps explains the great interest of modern novelists in the short story. Writers such as James Joyce (1882-1941), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930), William Faulkner (1897-1962), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940), Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), and Franz Kafka (1883-1924) achieved considerable success with this literary form.

The breakdown of narrative sequence in fiction was duplicated in poetry by similar changes in poetic syntax. Gone were the logical and rhetorical connectives of nineteenth-century poetry, gone were the long fluid verse paragraphs of a poem like "Tintern Abbey" which (if read superficially) read like prose. Instead, a general fragmentation in content and style appeared, along with abrupt changes in subject matter and tone, allusions to unfamiliar authors and works, and rhymes that seemed to have no relationship to their poetic context: "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo."⁽³⁾ Clearly, in using these stylistic techniques of altered time schemes, complex, alienated characters, and fragmented syntax, writers were attempting to reflect the uncertain, frightening nature of modern life. At the same time, this very emphasis on style was an effort to, in the words of Samuel Beckett, "find a form for the chaos" surrounding humanity. "These fragments I have shored against my ruins," says the speaker in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, but his voice could be that of almost any modern author.

The Alienated Author, the Active Reader

The rejection of traditional literary techniques and the adoption of new ones created new roles for both writer and reader. Authors, like artists and composers, became part of a culturally advanced group known as the avant-garde which, for the first time, set itself aside as an elite class, the precursor of artistic trends. This group disdained responsibility to its audience in favor of a total loyalty to the work of art. The split between author and audience owed much to the experimental nature of the artist's work on the one hand and to society's inability to adjust to the radically new style of modernism on the other. As the writer's alienation from his own society increased, the only solution in many cases seemed

to be that of Stephen Dedalus -- exile. Indeed, one could almost say that the hallmark of a modern writer was his inability to live in his own country and his affinity for a foreign one. Henrik Ibsen, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Bertolt Brecht, Richard Wright, and Samuel Beckett all left their native lands for one more hospitable to their art. Of those who did not, or could not leave, many, like Franz Kafka, felt like a stranger in a strange land.

Changes in the style of modern literature also affected the reader. Confronted with fragmented chronology and syntax, the reader's task became in a sense, to reassemble the story or poem, to understand not only in what order the events actually occurred, but also why the author chose this particular arrangement of events or words. Thus, form acquired its own significance, and now part of the act of reading was to discover that significance. Such a task, not easy to accomplish in any time, was made all the more difficult by the fact that modern literature, like modern art, had severed its connection to the external world for a deeper examination of the internal human world, to the subjective sense of time, the unconscious self, the fragmented thoughts and language that each one of us carries within ourselves. Consequently, novels, poems, and plays became self-referential. As we have seen, Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* blurs the distinction between art and life by containing two sets of characters, characters who are actors and actors who are characters. Their confrontation produced the same effect as that of two mirrors placed to reflect each other; one cannot tell what is real and what is merely an image of reality. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* revolves around its own axis, with Act II duplicating Act I. The last sentence of the centerpiece of modernist fiction, James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (1939), leads directly into its first. Thus, modernist literature becomes a closed system, its own object and its own subject.

1.2 G. M. HOPKINS' POEMS

Gerard Hopkins was born July 28, 1844, to Manley and Catherine (Smith) Hopkins, the first of their nine children. His parents were High Church Anglicans (variously described as "earnest" and "moderate"), and his father, a marine insurance adjuster, had just published a volume of poetry the year before.

At grammar school in Highgate (1854-63), he won the poetry prize for "The Escorial" and a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford (1863-67), where his tutors included Walter Pater and Benjamin Jowett. At one time he wanted to be a painter-poet like D. G. Rossetti (two of his brothers became professional painters), and he was strongly influenced by the aesthetic theories of Pater and John Ruskin and by the poetry of the devout Anglicans George Herbert and Christina Rossetti. Even more insistent, however, was his search for a religion which could speak with true authority; at Oxford, he came under the influence of John Henry Newman. (See Tractarianism.) Newman, who had converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism in 1845, provided him with the example he was seeking, and in 1866 he was received by Newman into the Catholic Church. In 1867 he

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won First-Class degrees in Classics and "Greats" (a rare "double-first") and was considered by Jowett to be the star of Balliol.

The following year he entered the Society of Jesus; and feeling that the practice of poetry was too individualistic and self-indulgent for a Jesuit priest committed to the deliberate sacrifice of personal ambition, he burned his early poems. Not until he studied the writings of Duns Scotus in 1872 did he decide that his poetry might not necessarily conflict with Jesuit principles. Scotus (1265-1308), a medieval Catholic thinker, argued (contrary to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas) that individual and particular objects in this world were the only things that man could know directly, and then only through the *haecceitas* ("thisness") of each object. With his independently-arrived at idea of "inscape" thus bolstered, Hopkins began writing again.

In 1874, studying theology in North Wales, he learned Welsh, and was later to adapt the rhythms of Welsh poetry to his own verse, inventing what he called "sprung rhythm." The event that startled him into speech was the sinking of the *Deutschland*, whose passengers included five Catholic nuns exiled from Germany. The Wreck of the *Deutschland* is a tour de force containing most of the devices he had been working out in theory for the past few years, but was too radical in style to be printed.

From his ordination as a priest in 1877 until 1879, Hopkins served not too successfully as preacher or assistant to the parish priest in Sheffield, Oxford, and London; during the next three years he found stimulating but exhausting work as parish priest in the slums of three manufacturing cities, Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow. Late in 1881 he began ten months of spiritual study in London, and then for three years taught Latin and Greek at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. His appointment in 1884 as Professor of Greek and Latin at University College, Dublin, which might be expected to be his happiest work, instead found him in prolonged depression. This resulted partly from the examination papers he had to read as Fellow in Classics for the Royal University of Ireland. The exams occurred five or six times a year, might produce 500 papers, each one several pages of mostly uninspired student translations (in 1885 there were 631 failures to 1213 passes). More important, however, was his sense that his prayers no longer reached God; and this doubt produced the "terrible" sonnets. He refused to give way to his depression, however, and his last words as he lay dying of typhoid fever on June 8, 1889, were, "I am happy, so happy."

Apart from a few uncharacteristic poems scattered in periodicals, Hopkins was not published during his own lifetime. His good friend Robert Bridges (1844-1930), whom he met at Oxford and who became Poet Laureate in 1913, served as his literary caretaker: Hopkins sent him copies of his poems, and Bridges arranged for their publication in 1918.

Even after he started writing again in 1875, Hopkins put his responsibilities as a priest before his poetry, and consequently his output is rather slim and

somewhat limited in range, especially in comparison to such major figures as Tennyson or Browning. Over the past few decades critics have awarded the third place in the Victorian Triumvirate first to Arnold and then to Hopkins; now his stock seems to be falling and D.G. Rossetti's rising. Putting Hopkins up with the other two great Victorian poets implies that his concern with the "inshape" of natural objects is centrally important to the period; and since that way of looking at the world is essentially Romantic, it further implies that the similarities between Romantic and Victorian poetry are much more significant than their differences. Whatever we decide Hopkins' poetic rank to be, his poetry will always be among the greatest poems of faith and doubt in the English language.

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
 It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
 Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
 Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
 And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.
 And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Form

This poem is an Italian sonnet—it contains fourteen lines divided into an octave and a sestet, which are separated by a shift in the argumentative direction of the poem. The meter here is not the "sprung rhythm" for which Hopkins is so famous, but it does vary somewhat from the iambic pentameter lines of the conventional sonnet. For example, Hopkins follows stressed syllable with stressed syllable in the fourth line of the poem, bolstering the urgency of his question: "Why do men then now not reckon his rod?" Similarly, in the next line, the heavy, falling rhythm of "have trod, have trod, have trod," coming after the quick lilt of "generations," recreates the sound of plodding footsteps in striking onomatopoeia.

Commentary

The poem begins with the surprising metaphor of God's grandeur as an electric

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force. The figure suggests an undercurrent that is not always seen, but which builds up a tension or pressure that occasionally flashes out in ways that can be both brilliant and dangerous. The optical effect of “shook foil” is one example of this brilliancy. The image of the oil being pressed out of an olive represents another kind of richness, where saturation and built-up pressure eventually culminate in a salubrious overflow. The image of electricity makes a subtle return in the fourth line, where the “rod” of God’s punishing power calls to mind the lightning rod in which excess electricity in the atmosphere will occasionally “flame out.”

Hopkins carefully chooses this complex of images to link the secular and scientific to mystery, divinity, and religious tradition. Electricity was an area of much scientific interest during Hopkins’s day, and is an example of a phenomenon that had long been taken as an indication of divine power but which was now explained in naturalistic, rational terms. Hopkins is defiantly affirmative in his assertion that God’s work is still to be seen in nature, if men will only concern themselves to look. Refusing to ignore the discoveries of modern science, he takes them as further evidence of God’s grandeur rather than a challenge to it. Hopkins’s awe at the optical effects of a piece of foil attributes revelatory power to a man-made object; gold-leaf foil had also been used in recent influential scientific experiments. The olive oil, on the other hand, is an ancient sacramental substance, used for centuries for food, medicine, lamplight, and religious purposes. This oil thus traditionally appears in all aspects of life, much as God suffuses all branches of the created universe.

Moreover, the slowness of its oozing contrasts with the quick electric flash; the method of its extraction implies such spiritual qualities as patience and faith. (By including this description Hopkins may have been implicitly criticizing the violence and rapaciousness with which his contemporaries drilled petroleum oil to fuel industry.) Thus both the images of the foil and the olive oil bespeak an all-permeating divine presence that reveals itself in intermittent flashes or droplets of brilliance.

Hopkins’s question in the fourth line focuses his readers on the present historical moment; in considering why men are no longer God-fearing, the emphasis is on “now.” The answer is a complex one. The second quatrain contains an indictment of the way a culture’s neglect of God translates into a neglect of the environment. But it also suggests that the abuses of previous generations are partly to blame; they have soiled and “seared” our world, further hindering our ability to access the holy. Yet the sestet affirms that, in spite of the interdependent deterioration of human beings and the earth, God has not withdrawn from either. He possesses an infinite power of renewal, to which the regenerative natural cycles testify. The poem reflects Hopkins’s conviction that the physical world is like a book written by God, in which the attentive person can always detect signs of a benevolent authorship, and which can help mediate human beings’ contemplation of this Author.

Summary**Notes**

The first four lines of the octave (the first eight-line stanza of an Italian sonnet) describe a natural world through which God's presence runs like an electrical current, becoming momentarily visible in flashes like the refracted glintings of light produced by metal foil when ruffled or quickly moved. Alternatively, God's presence is a rich oil, a kind of sap that wells up "to a greatness" when tapped with a certain kind of patient pressure. Given these clear, strong proofs of God's presence in the world, the poet asks how it is that humans fail to heed ("reck") His divine authority ("his rod").

The second quatrain within the octave describes the state of contemporary human life—the blind repetitiveness of human labor, and the sordidness and stain of "toil" and "trade." The landscape in its natural state reflects God as its creator; but industry and the prioritization of the economic over the spiritual have transformed the landscape, and robbed humans of their sensitivity to the those few beauties of nature still left. The shoes people wear sever the physical connection between our feet and the earth they walk on, symbolizing an ever-increasing spiritual alienation from nature.

The sestet (the final six lines of the sonnet, enacting a turn or shift in argument) asserts that, in spite of the fallenness of Hopkins's contemporary Victorian world, nature does not cease offering up its spiritual indices. Permeating the world is a deep "freshness" that testifies to the continual renewing power of God's creation. This power of renewal is seen in the way morning always waits on the other side of dark night. The source of this constant regeneration is the grace of a God who "broods" over a seemingly lifeless world with the patient nurture of a mother hen. This final image is one of God guarding the potential of the world and containing within Himself the power and promise of rebirth. With the final exclamation ("ah! bright wings") Hopkins suggests both an awed intuition of the beauty of God's grace, and the joyful suddenness of a hatchling bird emerging out of God's loving incubation.

Pied Beauty (1877)

Glory be to God for dappled things—
 For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
 Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
 And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.
 All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

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He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: Praise Him.

Form

This is one of Hopkins's "curtal" (or curtailed) sonnets, in which he miniaturizes the traditional sonnet form by reducing the eight lines of the octave to six (here two tercets rhyming ABC ABC) and shortening the six lines of the sestet to four and a half. This alteration of the sonnet form is quite fitting for a poem advocating originality and contrariness. The strikingly musical repetition of sounds throughout the poem ("dappled," "stipple," "tackle," "fickle," "freckled," "adazzle," for example) enacts the creative act the poem glorifies: the weaving together of diverse things into a pleasing and coherent whole.

Commentary

This poem is a miniature or set-piece, and a kind of ritual observance. It begins and ends with variations on the mottoes of the Jesuit order ("to the greater glory of God" and "praise to God always"), which give it a traditional flavor, tempering the unorthodoxy of its appreciations. The parallelism of the beginning and end correspond to a larger symmetry within the poem: the first part (the shortened octave) begins with God and then moves to praise his creations. The last four-and-a-half lines reverse this movement, beginning with the characteristics of things in the world and then tracing them back to a final affirmation of God. The delay of the verb in this extended sentence makes this return all the more satisfying when it comes; the long and list-like predicate, which captures the multiplicity of the created world, at last yields in the penultimate line to a striking verb of creation (fathers-forth) and then leads us to acknowledge an absolute subject, God the Creator. The poem is thus a hymn of creation, praising God by praising the created world. It expresses the theological position that the great variety in the natural world is a testimony to the perfect unity of God and the infinitude of His creative power. In the context of a Victorian age that valued uniformity, efficiency, and standardization, this theological notion takes on a tone of protest.

Why does Hopkins choose to commend "dappled things" in particular? The first stanza would lead the reader to believe that their significance is an aesthetic one: In showing how contrasts and juxtapositions increase the richness of our surroundings, Hopkins describes variations in color and texture—of the sensory. The mention of the "fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls" in the fourth line, however, introduces a moral tenor to the list. Though the description is still physical, the idea of a nugget of goodness imprisoned within a hard exterior invites a consideration of essential value in a way that the speckles on a cow, for example, do not. The image transcends the physical, implying how the physical links to the spiritual and meditating on the relationship between body and soul. Lines five and six then serve to connect these musings to human life and activity. Hopkins first introduces a landscape whose characteristics derive from man's alteration (the fields), and then includes "trades," "gear," "tackle," and "trim" as

diverse items that are man-made. But he then goes on to include these things, along with the preceding list, as part of God's work.

Hopkins does not refer explicitly to human beings themselves, or to the variations that exist among them, in his catalogue of the dappled and diverse. But the next section opens with a list of qualities ("counter, original, spare, strange") which, though they doggedly refer to "things" rather than people, cannot but be considered in moral terms as well; Hopkins's own life, and particularly his poetry, had at the time been described in those very terms. With "fickle" and "freckled" in the eighth line, Hopkins introduces a moral and an aesthetic quality, each of which would conventionally convey a negative judgment, in order to fold even the base and the ugly back into his worshipful inventory of God's gloriously "pied" creation.

Summary

The poem opens with an offering: "Glory be to God for dappled things." In the next five lines, Hopkins elaborates with examples of what things he means to include under this rubric of "dappled." He includes the mottled white and blue colors of the sky, the "brinded" (brindled or streaked) hide of a cow, and the patches of contrasting color on a trout. The chestnuts offer a slightly more complex image: When they fall they open to reveal the meaty interior normally concealed by the hard shell; they are compared to the coals in a fire, black on the outside and glowing within. The wings of finches are multicolored, as is a patchwork of farmland in which sections look different according to whether they are planted and green, fallow, or freshly plowed. The final example is of the "trades" and activities of man, with their rich diversity of materials and equipment.

In the final five lines, Hopkins goes on to consider more closely the characteristics of these examples he has given, attaching moral qualities now to the concept of variety and diversity that he has elaborated thus far mostly in terms of physical characteristics. The poem becomes an apology for these unconventional or "strange" things, things that might not normally be valued or thought beautiful. They are all, he avers, creations of God, which, in their multiplicity, point always to the unity and permanence of His power and inspire us to "Praise Him."

Themes

The Manifestation of God in Nature

Hopkins used poetry to express his religious devotion, drawing his images from the natural world. He found nature inspiring and developed his theories of inscape and instress to explore the manifestation of God in every living thing. According to these theories, the recognition of an object's unique identity, which was bestowed upon that object by God, brings us closer to Christ. Similarly, the beauty of the natural world—and our appreciation of that beauty—helps us

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worship God. Many poems, including “Hurrahing in Harvest” and “The Windhover,” begin with the speaker praising an aspect of nature, which then leads the speaker into a consideration of an aspect of God or Christ. For instance, in “The Starlight Night,” the speaker urges readers to notice the marvels of the night sky and compares the sky to a structure, which houses Christ, his mother, and the saints. The stars’ link to Christianity makes them more beautiful.

The Regenerative Power of Nature

Hopkins’s early poetry praises nature, particularly nature’s unique ability to regenerate and rejuvenate. Throughout his travels in England and Ireland, Hopkins witnessed the detrimental effects of industrialization on the environment, including pollution, urbanization, and diminished rural landscapes. While he lamented these effects, he also believed in nature’s power of regeneration, which comes from God. In “God’s Grandeur,” the speaker notes the wellspring that runs through nature and through humans. While Hopkins never doubted the presence of God in nature, he became increasingly depressed by late nineteenth-century life and began to doubt nature’s ability to withstand human destruction. His later poems, the so-called terrible sonnets, focus on images of death, including the harvest and vultures picking at prey. Rather than depict the glory of nature’s rebirth, these poems depict the deaths that must occur in order for the cycle of nature to continue. “Thou Art Indeed Just, Lord” (1889) uses parched roots as a metaphor for despair: the speaker begs Christ to help him because Christ’s love will rejuvenate him, just as water helps rejuvenate dying foliage.

Analysis

Gerard Manley Hopkins is one of the greatest 19th-century poets of religion, of nature, and of inner anguish. In his view of nature, the world is like a book written by God. In this book God expresses himself completely, and it is by “reading” the world that humans can approach God and learn about Him. Hopkins therefore sees the environmental crisis of the Victorian period as vitally linked to that era’s spiritual crisis, and many of his poems bemoan man’s indifference to the destruction of sacred natural and religious order. The poet harbored an acute interest in the scientific and technological advances of his day; he saw new discoveries (such as the new explanations for phenomena in electricity or astronomy) as further evidence of God’s deliberate hand, rather than as refutations of God’s existence.

One of Hopkins’s most famous (and most debated) theories centers on the concept of “inscape.” He coined this word to refer to the essential individuality of a thing, but with a focus not on its particularity or uniqueness, but rather on the unifying design that gives a thing its distinctive characteristics and relates it to its context. Hopkins was interested in the exquisite interrelation of the individual thing and the recurring pattern. He saw the world as a kind of network integrated by divine law and design.

Hopkins wrote most frequently in the sonnet form. He generally preferred the Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, which consists of an octave followed by a sestet, with a turn in argument or change in tone occurring in the second part. Hopkins typically uses the octave to present some account of personal or sensory experience and then employs the sestet for philosophical reflection. While Hopkins enjoyed the structure the sonnet form imposes, with its fixed length and rhyme scheme, he nevertheless constantly stretched and tested its limitations. One of his major innovations was a new metrical form, called “sprung rhythm.” In sprung rhythm, the poet counts the number of accented syllables in the line, but places no limit on the total number of syllables. As opposed to syllabic meters (such as the iambic), which count both stresses and syllables, this form allows for greater freedom in the position and proportion of stresses. Whereas English verse has traditionally alternated stressed and unstressed syllables with occasional variation, Hopkins was free to place multiple stressed syllables one after another (as in the line “All felled, felled, are all felled” from “Binsey Poplars”), or to run a large number of unstressed syllables together (as in “Finger of a tender of, O of a feathery delicacy” from *Wreck of the Deutschland*). This gives Hopkins great control over the speed of his lines and their dramatic effects.

Another unusual poetic resource Hopkins favored is “consonant chiming,” a technique he learned from Welsh poetry. The technique involves elaborate use of alliteration and internal rhyme; in Hopkins’s hands this creates an unusual thickness and resonance. This close linking of words through sound and rhythm complements Hopkins’s themes of finding pattern and design everywhere. Hopkins’s form is also characterized by a stretching of the conventions of grammar and sentence structure, so that newcomers to his poetry must often strain to parse his sentences. Deciding which word in a given sentence is the verb, for example, can often involve significant interpretive work. In addition, Hopkins often invents words, and pulls his vocabulary freely from a number of different registers of diction. This leads to a surprising mix of neologisms and archaisms throughout his lines. Yet for all his innovation and disregard of convention, Hopkins’ goal was always to bring poetry closer to the character of natural, living speech.

1.3 W.B. YEATS’ POEMS

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was born in Dublin. His father was a lawyer and a well-known portrait painter. Yeats was educated in London and in Dublin, but he spent his summers in the west of Ireland in the family's summer house at Connaught. The young Yeats was very much part of the *fin de siècle* in London; at the same time he was active in societies that attempted an Irish literary revival. His first volume of verse appeared in 1887, but in his earlier period his dramatic production outweighed his poetry both in bulk and in import. Together with Lady Gregory he founded the Irish Theatre, which was to become the Abbey

Notes

Theatre, and served as its chief playwright until the movement was joined by John Synge. His plays usually treat Irish legends; they also reflect his fascination with mysticism and spiritualism. The Countess Cathleen (1892), The Land of Heart's Desire (1894), Cathleen ni Houlihan (1902), The King's Threshold (1904), and Deirdre (1907) are among the best known.

After 1910, Yeats's dramatic art took a sharp turn toward a highly poetical, static, and esoteric style. His later plays were written for small audiences; they experiment with masks, dance, and music, and were profoundly influenced by the Japanese Noh plays. Although a convinced patriot, Yeats deplored the hatred and the bigotry of the Nationalist movement, and his poetry is full of moving protests against it. He was appointed to the Irish Senate in 1922. Yeats is one of the few writers whose greatest works were written after the award of the Nobel Prize. Whereas he received the Prize chiefly for his dramatic works, his significance today rests on his lyric achievement. His poetry, especially the volumes *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928), *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933), and *Last Poems and Plays* (1940), made him one of the outstanding and most influential twentieth-century poets writing in English. His recurrent themes are the contrast of art and life, masks, cyclical theories of life (the symbol of the winding stairs), and the ideal of beauty and ceremony contrasting with the hubbub of modern life.



Did u know?

After 1910, Yeats's dramatic art took a sharp turn toward a highly poetical, static, and esoteric style. His later plays were written for small audiences; they experiment with masks, dance, and music, and were profoundly influenced by the Japanese Noh plays.

Poem - “Sailing to Byzantium”

I

That is no country for old men. The young
 In one another's arms, birds in the trees
 —Those dying generations—at their song,
 The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
 Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
 Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
 Caught in that sensual music all neglect
 Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
 A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
 Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
 For every tatter in its mortal dress,
 Nor is there singing school but studying
 Monuments of its own magnificence;
 And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
 To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
 And be the singing-masters of my soul.
 Consume my heart away; sick with desire
 And fastened to a dying animal
 It knows not what it is; and gather me
 Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Form

The four eight-line stanzas of "Sailing to Byzantium" take a very old verse form: they are metered in iambic pentameter, and rhymed ABABABCC, two trios of alternating rhyme followed by a couplet.

Notes**Commentary**

“Sailing to Byzantium” is one of Yeats’s most inspired works, and one of the greatest poems of the twentieth century. Written in 1926 and included in Yeats’s greatest single collection, 1928’s *The Tower*, “Sailing to Byzantium” is Yeats’s definitive statement about the agony of old age and the imaginative and spiritual work required to remain a vital individual even when the heart is “fastened to a dying animal” (the body). Yeats’s solution is to leave the country of the young and travel to Byzantium, where the sages in the city’s famous gold mosaics (completed mainly during the sixth and seventh centuries) could become the “singing-masters” of his soul. He hopes the sages will appear in fire and take him away from his body into an existence outside time, where, like a great work of art, he could exist in “the artifice of eternity.” In the astonishing final stanza of the poem, he declares that once he is out of his body he will never again appear in the form of a natural thing; rather, he will become a golden bird, sitting on a golden tree, singing of the past (“what is past”), the present (that which is “passing”), and the future (that which is “to come”).

A fascination with the artificial as superior to the natural is one of Yeats’s most prevalent themes. In a much earlier poem, 1899’s “The Lover Tells of the Rose in His Heart,” the speaker expresses a longing to re-make the world “in a casket of gold” and thereby eliminate its ugliness and imperfection. Later, in 1914’s “The Dolls,” the speaker writes of a group of dolls on a shelf, disgusted by the sight of a human baby. In each case, the artificial (the golden casket, the beautiful doll, the golden bird) is seen as perfect and unchanging, while the natural (the world, the human baby, the speaker’s body) is prone to ugliness and decay. What is more, the speaker sees deep spiritual truth (rather than simply aesthetic escape) in his assumption of artificiality; he wishes his soul to learn to sing, and transforming into a golden bird is the way to make it capable of doing so.

“Sailing to Byzantium” is an endlessly interpretable poem, and suggests endlessly fascinating comparisons with other important poems—poems of travel, poems of age, poems of nature, poems featuring birds as symbols. (One of the most interesting is surely Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale,” to which this poem is in many ways a rebuttal: Keats writes of his nightingale, “Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! / No hungry generations tread thee down”; Yeats, in the first stanza of “Sailing to Byzantium,” refers to “birds in the trees” as “those dying generations.”) It is important to note that the poem is not autobiographical; Yeats did not travel to Byzantium (which was renamed Constantinople in the fourth century A.D., and later renamed Istanbul), but he did argue that, in the sixth century, it offered the ideal environment for the artist. The poem is about an imaginative journey, not an actual one.

Summary

The speaker, referring to the country that he has left, says that it is “no country

for old men”: it is full of youth and life, with the young lying in one another’s arms, birds singing in the trees, and fish swimming in the waters. There, “all summer long” the world rings with the “sensual music” that makes the young neglect the old, whom the speaker describes as “Monuments of unageing intellect.”

An old man, the speaker says, is a “paltry thing,” merely a tattered coat upon a stick, unless his soul can clap its hands and sing; and the only way for the soul to learn how to sing is to study “monuments of its own magnificence.” Therefore, the speaker has “sailed the seas and come / To the holy city of Byzantium.” The speaker addresses the sages “standing in God’s holy fire / As in the gold mosaic of a wall,” and asks them to be his soul’s “singing-masters.” He hopes they will consume his heart away, for his heart “knows not what it is”—it is “sick with desire / And fastened to a dying animal,” and the speaker wishes to be gathered “Into the artifice of eternity.”

The speaker says that once he has been taken out of the natural world, he will no longer take his “bodily form” from any “natural thing,” but rather will fashion himself as a singing bird made of hammered gold, such as Grecian goldsmiths make “To keep a drowsy Emperor awake,” or set upon a tree of gold “to sing / To lords and ladies of Byzantium / Or what is past, or passing, or to come.”

Poem - “The Second Coming”

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.
 Surely some revelation is at hand;
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
 When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
 Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand;
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
 Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.

Notes

The darkness drops again but now I know
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

The Second Coming was written in 1919 in the aftermath of the first World War. The above version of the poem is as it was published in the edition of Michael Robartes and the Dancer dated 1920 (there are numerous other versions of the poem). The preface and notes in the book contain some philosophy attributed to Robartes.

This printing of the poem has a page break between lines 17 and 18 making the stanza division unclear. Following the two most similar drafts given in the Parkinson and Brannen edited edition of the manuscripts, I have put a stanza break there. (Interestingly, both of those drafts have thirty centuries instead of twenty.) The earlier drafts also have references to the French and Irish Revolutions as well as to Germany and Russia. Several of the lines in the version above differ from those found in subsequent versions. In listing it as one of the hundred most anthologized poems in the English language, the text given by Harmon (1998) has changes including: line 13 ("somewhere in sands of the desert"), line 17 ("Reel" instead of "Wind"), and no break between the second and third stanza.

Form

“The Second Coming” is written in a very rough iambic pentameter, but the meter is so loose, and the exceptions so frequent, that it actually seems closer to free verse with frequent heavy stresses. The rhymes are likewise haphazard; apart from the two couplets with which the poem opens, there are only coincidental rhymes in the poem, such as “man” and “sun.”

Commentary

Because of its stunning, violent imagery and terrifying ritualistic language, “The Second Coming” is one of Yeats’s most famous and most anthologized poems; it is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. (It is safe to say that very few people who love this poem could paraphrase its meaning to satisfaction.) Structurally, the poem is quite simple—the first stanza describes the conditions present in the world (things falling apart, anarchy, etc.), and the second surmises from those conditions that a monstrous Second Coming is about to take place, not of the Jesus we first knew, but of a new messiah, a “rough beast,” the slouching sphinx rousing itself in the desert and lumbering toward Bethlehem. This brief exposition, though intriguingly blasphemous, is not terribly

complicated; but the question of what it should signify to a reader is another story entirely.

Yeats spent years crafting an elaborate, mystical theory of the universe that he described in his book *A Vision*. This theory issued in part from Yeats's lifelong fascination with the occult and mystical, and in part from the sense of responsibility Yeats felt to order his experience within a structured belief system. The system is extremely complicated and not of any lasting importance—except for the effect that it had on his poetry, which is of extraordinary lasting importance. The theory of history Yeats articulated in *A Vision* centers on a diagram made of two conical spirals, one inside the other, so that the widest part of one of the spirals rings around the narrowest part of the other spiral, and vice versa. Yeats believed that this image (he called the spirals “gyres”) captured the contrary motions inherent within the historical process, and he divided each gyre into specific regions that represented particular kinds of historical periods (and could also represent the psychological phases of an individual's development).

“The Second Coming” was intended by Yeats to describe the current historical moment (the poem appeared in 1921) in terms of these gyres. Yeats believed that the world was on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation, as history reached the end of the outer gyre (to speak roughly) and began moving along the inner gyre. In his definitive edition of Yeats's poems, Richard J. Finneran quotes Yeats's own notes:

The end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to its place of greatest contraction... The revelation [that] approaches will... take its character from the contrary movement of the interior gyre...

In other words, the world's trajectory along the gyre of science, democracy, and heterogeneity is now coming apart, like the frantically widening flight-path of the falcon that has lost contact with the falconer; the next age will take its character not from the gyre of science, democracy, and speed, but from the contrary inner gyre—which, presumably, opposes mysticism, primal power, and slowness to the science and democracy of the outer gyre. The “rough beast” slouching toward Bethlehem is the symbol of this new age; the speaker's vision of the rising sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world.

This seems quite silly as philosophy or prophecy (particularly in light of the fact that it has not come true as yet). But as poetry, and understood more broadly than as a simple reiteration of the mystic theory of *A Vision*, “The Second Coming” is a magnificent statement about the contrary forces at work in history, and about the conflict between the modern world and the ancient world. The poem may not have the thematic relevance of Yeats's best work, and may not be a poem with which many people can personally identify; but the aesthetic experience of its passionate language is powerful enough to ensure its value and its importance in Yeats's work as a whole.

Notes**Summary**

The speaker describes a nightmarish scene: the falcon, turning in a widening “gyre” (spiral), cannot hear the falconer; “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold”; anarchy is loosed upon the world; “The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned.” The best people, the speaker says, lack all conviction, but the worst “are full of passionate intensity.”

Surely, the speaker asserts, the world is near a revelation; “Surely the Second Coming is at hand.” No sooner does he think of “the Second Coming,” then he is troubled by “a vast image of the Spiritus Mundi, or the collective spirit of mankind: somewhere in the desert, a giant sphinx (“A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze as blank and pitiless as the sun”) is moving, while the shadows of desert birds reel about it. The darkness drops again over the speaker’s sight, but he knows that the sphinx’s twenty centuries of “stony sleep” have been made a nightmare by the motions of “a rocking cradle.” And what “rough beast,” he wonders, “its hour come round at last, / Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?”

Analysis

Yeats is the greatest poet in the history of Ireland and probably the greatest poet to write in English during the twentieth century; his themes, images, symbols, metaphors, and poetic sensibilities encompass the breadth of his personal experience, as well as his nation’s experience during one of its most troubled times. Yeats’s great poetic project was to reify his own life—his thoughts, feelings, speculations, conclusions, dreams—into poetry: to render all of himself into art, but not in a merely confessional or autobiographical manner; he was not interested in the common-place. (The poet, Yeats famously remarked, is not the man who sits down to breakfast in the morning.) His elaborate iconography takes elements from Irish mythology, Greek mythology, nineteenth-century occultism (which Yeats dabbled in with Madame Blavatsky and the Society of the Golden Dawn), English literature, Byzantine art, European politics, and Christian imagery, all wound together and informed with his own experience and interpretive understanding.

His thematic focus could be sweepingly grand: in the 1920s and ’30s he even concocted a mystical theory of the universe, which explained history, imagination, and mythology in light of an occult set of symbols, and which he laid out in his book *A Vision* (usually considered important today only for the light it sheds on some of his poems). However, in his greatest poems, he mitigates this grandiosity with a focus on his own deep feeling. Yeats’s own experience is never far from his poems, even when they seem obscurely imagistic or theoretically abstract, and the veil of obscurity and abstraction is often lifted once one gains an understanding of how the poet’s lived experiences relate to the poem in question.

No poet of the twentieth century more persuasively imposed his personal

experience onto history by way of his art; and no poet more successfully plumbed the truths contained within his “deep heart’s core,” even when they threatened to render his poetry clichéd or ridiculous. His integrity and passionate commitment to work according to his own vision protect his poems from all such accusations. To contemporary readers, Yeats can seem baffling; he was opposed to the age of science, progress, democracy, and modernization, and his occultist and mythological answers to those problems can seem horribly anachronistic for a poet who died barely sixty years ago. But Yeats’s goal is always to arrive at personal truth; and in that sense, despite his profound individuality, he remains one of the most universal writers ever to have lived.

Themes

The Relationship Between Art and Politics

Yeats believed that art and politics were intrinsically linked and used his writing to express his attitudes toward Irish politics, as well as to educate his readers about Irish cultural history. From an early age, Yeats felt a deep connection to Ireland and his national identity, and he thought that British rule negatively impacted Irish politics and social life. His early compilation of folklore sought to teach a literary history that had been suppressed by British rule, and his early poems were odes to the beauty and mystery of the Irish countryside. This work frequently integrated references to myths and mythic figures, including Oisín and Cúchulainn. As Yeats became more involved in Irish politics—through his relationships with the Irish National Theatre, the Irish Literary Society, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and Maud Gonne—his poems increasingly resembled political manifestos. Yeats wrote numerous poems about Ireland’s involvement in World War I (“An Irish Airman Foresees His Death” [1919], “A Meditation in Time of War” [1921]), Irish nationalists and political activists (“On a Political Prisoner” [1921], “In Memory of Eva Gore Booth and Con Markiewicz” [1933]), and the Easter Rebellion (“Easter 1916” [1916]). Yeats believed that art could serve a political function: poems could both critique and comment on political events, as well as educate and inform a population.

The Impact of Fate and the Divine on History

Yeats’s devotion to mysticism led to the development of a unique spiritual and philosophical system that emphasized the role of fate and historical determinism, or the belief that events have been preordained. Yeats had rejected Christianity early in his life, but his lifelong study of mythology, Theosophy, spiritualism, philosophy, and the occult demonstrate his profound interest in the divine and how it interacts with humanity. Over the course of his life, he created a complex system of spirituality, using the image of interlocking gyres (similar to spiral cones) to map out the development and reincarnation of the soul. Yeats believed

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that history was determined by fate and that fate revealed its plan in moments when the human and divine interact. A tone of historically determined inevitability permeates his poems, particularly in descriptions of situations of human and divine interaction. The divine takes on many forms in Yeats's poetry, sometimes literally ("Leda and the Swan" [1923]), sometimes abstractly ("The Second Coming" [1919]). In other poems, the divine is only gestured to (as in the sense of the divine in the Byzantine mosaics in "Sailing to Byzantium" [1926]). No matter what shape it takes, the divine signals the role of fate in determining the course of history.

The Transition from Romanticism to Modernism

Yeats started his long literary career as a romantic poet and gradually evolved into a modernist poet. When he began publishing poetry in the 1880s, his poems had a lyrical, romantic style, and they focused on love, longing and loss, and Irish myths. His early writing follows the conventions of romantic verse, utilizing familiar rhyme schemes, metric patterns, and poetic structures. Although it is lighter than his later writings, his early poetry is still sophisticated and accomplished. Several factors contributed to his poetic evolution: his interest in mysticism and the occult led him to explore spiritually and philosophically complex subjects. Yeats's frustrated romantic relationship with Maud Gonne caused the starry-eyed romantic idealism of his early work to become more knowing and cynical. Additionally, his concern with Irish subjects evolved as he became more closely connected to nationalist political causes. As a result, Yeats shifted his focus from myth and folklore to contemporary politics, often linking the two to make potent statements that reflected political agitation and turbulence in Ireland and abroad. Finally, and most significantly, Yeats's connection with the changing face of literary culture in the early twentieth century led him to pick up some of the styles and conventions of the modernist poets. The modernists experimented with verse forms, aggressively engaged with contemporary politics, challenged poetic conventions and the literary tradition at large, and rejected the notion that poetry should simply be lyrical and beautiful. These influences caused his poetry to become darker, edgier, and more concise. Although he never abandoned the verse forms that provided the sounds and rhythms of his earlier poetry, there is still a noticeable shift in style and tone over the course of his career.

1.4 T. S. ELIOT

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was born in St. Louis, Missouri, of an old New England family. He was educated at Harvard and did graduate work in philosophy at the Sorbonne, Harvard, and Merton College, Oxford. He settled in England, where he was for a time a schoolmaster and a bank clerk, and eventually literary editor for the publishing house Faber & Faber, of which he later became a director. He founded and, during the seventeen years of its publication (1922-

1939), edited the exclusive and influential literary journal *Criterion*. In 1927, Eliot became a British citizen and about the same time entered the Anglican Church.

Eliot has been one of the most daring innovators of twentieth-century poetry. Never compromising either with the public or indeed with language itself, he has followed his belief that poetry should aim at a representation of the complexities of modern civilization in language and that such representation necessarily leads to difficult poetry. Despite this difficulty his influence on modern poetic diction has been immense. Eliot's poetry from *Prufrock* (1917) to the *Four Quartets* (1943) reflects the development of a Christian writer: the early work, especially *The Waste Land* (1922), is essentially negative, the expression of that horror from which the search for a higher world arises. In *Ash Wednesday* (1930) and the *Four Quartets* this higher world becomes more visible; nonetheless Eliot has always taken care not to become a «religious poet», and often belittled the power of poetry as a religious force. However, his dramas *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) and *The Family Reunion* (1939) are more openly Christian apologies. In his essays, especially the later ones, Eliot advocates a traditionalism in religion, society, and literature that seems at odds with his pioneer activity as a poet. But although the Eliot of *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (1948) is an older man than the poet of *The Waste Land*, it should not be forgotten that for Eliot tradition is a living organism comprising past and present in constant mutual interaction. Eliot's plays *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1954), and *The Elder Statesman* (1959) were published in one volume in 1962; *Collected Poems 1909-62* appeared in 1963.

Poems “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

T. S. Eliot, 1888 - 1965

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
 A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
 Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
 Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
 Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
 Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.

Let us go then, you and I,
 When the evening is spread out against the sky
 Like a patient etherized upon a table;

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Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.
In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.
The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
 To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
 Time to turn back and descend the stair,
 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
 [They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]
 My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
 My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
 [They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]
 Do I dare
 Disturb the universe?
 In a minute there is time
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—
 Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
 I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
 I know the voices dying with a dying fall
 Beneath the music from a farther room.
 So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—
 The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
 Then how should I begin
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

And how should I presume?
 And I have known the arms already, known them all—
 Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
 [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]
 Is it perfume from a dress
 That makes me so digress?
 Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
 And should I then presume?

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And how should I begin?

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Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep... tired... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,

Would it have been worth while,
 After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
 After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—
 And this, and so much more?—
 It is impossible to say just what I mean!
 But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
 Would it have been worth while
 If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
 And turning toward the window, should say:
 “That is not it at all,
 That is not what I meant, at all.”

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
 Am an attendant lord, one that will do
 To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
 Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
 Deferential, glad to be of use,
 Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
 Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
 At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
 Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old... I grow old...

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
 Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
 I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
 I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
 I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
 Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
 When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
 By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown

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Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Form

“Prufrock” is a variation on the dramatic monologue, a type of poem popular with Eliot’s predecessors. Dramatic monologues are similar to soliloquies in plays. Three things characterize the dramatic monologue, according to M.H. Abrams. First, they are the utterances of a specific individual (not the poet) at a specific moment in time. Secondly, the monologue is specifically directed at a listener or listeners whose presence is not directly referenced but is merely suggested in the speaker’s words. Third, the primary focus is the development and revelation of the speaker’s character. Eliot modernizes the form by removing the implied listeners and focusing on Prufrock’s interiority and isolation. The epigraph to this poem, from Dante’s *Inferno*, describes Prufrock’s ideal listener: one who is as lost as the speaker and will never betray to the world the content of Prufrock’s present confessions. In the world Prufrock describes, though, no such sympathetic figure exists, and he must, therefore, be content with silent reflection. In its focus on character and its dramatic sensibility, “Prufrock” anticipates Eliot’s later, dramatic works.

The rhyme scheme of this poem is irregular but not random. While sections of the poem may resemble free verse, in reality, “Prufrock” is a carefully structured amalgamation of poetic forms. The bits and pieces of rhyme become much more apparent when the poem is read aloud. One of the most prominent formal characteristics of this work is the use of refrains. Prufrock’s continual return to the “women [who] come and go / Talking of Michelangelo” and his recurrent questionings (“how should I presume?”) and pessimistic appraisals (“That is not it, at all.”) both reference an earlier poetic tradition and help Eliot describe the consciousness of a modern, neurotic individual. Prufrock’s obsessiveness is aesthetic, but it is also a sign of compulsiveness and isolation. Another important formal feature is the use of fragments of sonnet form, particularly at the poem’s conclusion. The three three-line stanzas are rhymed as the conclusion of a Petrarchan sonnet would be, but their pessimistic, anti-romantic content, coupled with the despairing interjection, “I do not think they (the mermaids) would sing to me,” creates a contrast that comments bitterly on the bleakness of modernity.

Commentary

“Prufrock” displays the two most important characteristics of Eliot’s early poetry. First, it is strongly influenced by the French Symbolists, like Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire, whom Eliot had been reading almost constantly while writing the poem. From the Symbolists, Eliot takes his sensuous language and eye for unnerving or anti-aesthetic detail that nevertheless contributes to the overall beauty of the poem (the yellow smoke and the hair-covered arms of the women are two good examples of this). The Symbolists, too, privileged the same kind of

individual Eliot creates with Prufrock: the moody, urban, isolated-yet-sensitive thinker. However, whereas the Symbolists would have been more likely to make their speaker himself a poet or artist, Eliot chooses to make Prufrock an unacknowledged poet, a sort of artist for the common man.

The second defining characteristic of this poem is its use of fragmentation and juxtaposition. Eliot sustained his interest in fragmentation and its applications throughout his career, and his use of the technique changes in important ways across his body of work: Here, the subjects undergoing fragmentation (and reassembly) are mental focus and certain sets of imagery; in *The Waste Land*, it is modern culture that splinters; in the *Four Quartets* we find the fragments of attempted philosophical systems.

Eliot's use of bits and pieces of formal structure suggests that fragmentation, although anxiety-provoking, is nevertheless productive; had he chosen to write in free verse, the poem would have seemed much more nihilistic. The kinds of imagery Eliot uses also suggest that something new can be made from the ruins: The series of hypothetical encounters at the poem's center are iterated and discontinuous but nevertheless lead to a sort of epiphany (albeit a dark one) rather than just leading nowhere.

Eliot also introduces an image that will recur in his later poetry, that of the scavenger. Prufrock thinks that he "should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." Crabs are scavengers, garbage-eaters who live off refuse that makes its way to the sea floor. Eliot's discussions of his own poetic technique (see especially his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent") suggest that making something beautiful out of the refuse of modern life, as a crab sustains and nourishes itself on garbage, may, in fact, be the highest form of art. At the very least, this notion subverts romantic ideals about art; at best, it suggests that fragments may become reintegrated, that art may be in some way therapeutic for a broken modern world. In *The Waste Land*, crabs become rats, and the optimism disappears, but here Eliot seems to assert only the limitless potential of scavenging.

"Prufrock" ends with the hero assigning himself a role in one of Shakespeare's plays: While he is no Hamlet, he may yet be useful and important as "an attendant lord, one that will do / To swell a progress, start a scene or two..." This implies that there is still a continuity between Shakespeare's world and ours, that Hamlet is still relevant to us and that we are still part of a world that could produce something like Shakespeare's plays. Implicit in this, of course, is the suggestion that Eliot, who has created an "attendant lord," may now go on to create another Hamlet. While "Prufrock" ends with a devaluation of its hero, it exalts its creator. Or does it? The last line of the poem suggests otherwise—that when the world intrudes, when "human voices wake us," the dream is shattered: "we drown." With this single line, Eliot dismantles the romantic notion that poetic genius is all that is needed to triumph over the destructive, impersonal

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forces of the modern world. In reality, Eliot the poet is little better than his creation: He differs from Prufrock only by retaining a bit of hubris, which shows through from time to time. Eliot's poetic creation, thus, mirrors Prufrock's soliloquy: Both are an expression of aesthetic ability and sensitivity that seems to have no place in the modern world. This realistic, anti-romantic outlook sets the stage for Eliot's later works, including *The Waste Land*.

Summary

This poem, the earliest of Eliot's major works, was completed in 1910 or 1911 but not published until 1915. It is an examination of the tortured psyche of the prototypical modern man—overeducated, eloquent, neurotic, and emotionally stilted. Prufrock, the poem's speaker, seems to be addressing a potential lover, with whom he would like to “force the moment to its crisis” by somehow consummating their relationship. But Prufrock knows too much of life to “dare” an approach to the woman: In his mind he hears the comments others make about his inadequacies, and he chides himself for “presuming” emotional interaction could be possible at all. The poem moves from a series of fairly concrete (for Eliot) physical settings—a cityscape (the famous “patient etherised upon a table”) and several interiors (women's arms in the lamplight, coffee spoons, fireplaces)—to a series of vague ocean images conveying Prufrock's emotional distance from the world as he comes to recognize his second-rate status (“I am not Prince Hamlet”). “Prufrock” is powerful for its range of intellectual reference and also for the vividness of character achieved.

Analysis

Eliot attributed a great deal of his early style to the French Symbolists—Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Laforgue—whom he first encountered in college, in a book by Arthur Symons called *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. It is easy to understand why a young aspiring poet would want to imitate these glamorous bohemian figures, but their ultimate effect on his poetry is perhaps less profound than he claimed. While he took from them their ability to infuse poetry with high intellectualism while maintaining a sensuousness of language, Eliot also developed a great deal that was new and original. His early works, like “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and *The Waste Land*, draw on a wide range of cultural reference to depict a modern world that is in ruins yet somehow beautiful and deeply meaningful. Eliot uses techniques like pastiche and juxtaposition to make his points without having to argue them explicitly. As Ezra Pound once famously said, Eliot truly did “modernize himself.” In addition to showcasing a variety of poetic innovations, Eliot's early poetry also develops a series of characters who fit the type of the modern man as described by Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and others of Eliot's contemporaries. The title character of “Prufrock” is a perfect example: solitary, neurasthenic, overly intellectual, and

utterly incapable of expressing himself to the outside world.

As Eliot grew older, and particularly after he converted to Christianity, his poetry changed. The later poems emphasize depth of analysis over breadth of allusion; they simultaneously become more hopeful in tone: Thus, a work such as *Four Quartets* explores more philosophical territory and offers propositions instead of nihilism. The experiences of living in England during World War II inform the *Quartets*, which address issues of time, experience, mortality, and art. Rather than lamenting the ruin of modern culture and seeking redemption in the cultural past, as *The Waste Land* does, the quartets offer ways around human limits through art and spirituality. The pastiche of the earlier works is replaced by philosophy and logic, and the formal experiments of his early years are put aside in favor of a new language consciousness, which emphasizes the sounds and other physical properties of words to create musical, dramatic, and other subtle effects.

However, while Eliot's poetry underwent significance transformations over the course of his career, his poems also bear many unifying aspects: all of Eliot's poetry is marked by a conscious desire to bring together the intellectual, the aesthetic, and the emotional in a way that both honors the past and acknowledges the present. Eliot is always conscious of his own efforts, and he frequently comments on his poetic endeavors in the poems themselves. This humility, which often comes across as melancholy, makes Eliot's some of the most personal, as well as the most intellectually satisfying, poetry in the English language.

Themes

The Damaged Psyche of Humanity

Like many modernist writers, Eliot wanted his poetry to express the fragile psychological state of humanity in the twentieth century. The passing of Victorian ideals and the trauma of World War I challenged cultural notions of masculine identity, causing artists to question the romantic literary ideal of a visionary-poet capable of changing the world through verse. Modernist writers wanted to capture their transformed world, which they perceived as fractured, alienated, and denigrated. Europe lost an entire generation of young men to the horrors of the so-called Great War, causing a general crisis of masculinity as survivors struggled to find their place in a radically altered society. As for England, the aftershocks of World War I directly contributed to the dissolution of the British Empire. Eliot saw society as paralyzed and wounded, and he imagined that culture was crumbling and dissolving. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1917) demonstrates this sense of indecisive paralysis as the titular speaker wonders whether he should eat a piece of fruit, make a radical change, or if he has the fortitude to keep living. Humanity's collectively damaged psyche prevented people from communicating with one another, an idea that Eliot explored in

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many works, including “A Game of Chess” (the second part of *The Waste Land*) and “The Hollow Men.”

The Power of Literary History

Eliot maintained great reverence for myth and the Western literary canon, and he packed his work full of allusions, quotations, footnotes, and scholarly exegeses. In “The Tradition and the Individual Talent,” an essay first published in 1919, Eliot praises the literary tradition and states that the best writers are those who write with a sense of continuity with those writers who came before, as if all of literature constituted a stream in which each new writer must enter and swim. Only the very best new work will subtly shift the stream’s current and thus improve the literary tradition. Eliot also argued that the literary past must be integrated into contemporary poetry. But the poet must guard against excessive academic knowledge and distill only the most essential bits of the past into a poem, thereby enlightening readers. *The Waste Land* juxtaposes fragments of various elements of literary and mythic traditions with scenes and sounds from modern life. The effect of this poetic collage is both a reinterpretation of canonical texts and a historical context for his examination of society and humanity.

The Changing Nature of Gender Roles

Over the course of Eliot’s life, gender roles and sexuality became increasingly flexible, and Eliot reflected those changes in his work. In the repressive Victorian era of the nineteenth century, women were confined to the domestic sphere, sexuality was not discussed or publicly explored, and a puritanical atmosphere dictated most social interactions. Queen Victoria’s death in 1901 helped usher in a new era of excess and forthrightness, now called the Edwardian Age, which lasted until 1910. World War I, from 1914 to 1918, further transformed society, as people felt both increasingly alienated from one another and empowered to break social mores. English women began agitating in earnest for the right to vote in 1918, and the flappers of the Jazz Age began smoking and drinking alcohol in public. Women were allowed to attend school, and women who could afford it continued their education at those universities that began accepting women in the early twentieth century. Modernist writers created gay and lesbian characters and re-imagined masculinity and femininity as characteristics people could assume or shrug off rather than as absolute identities dictated by society.

Eliot simultaneously lauded the end of the Victorian era and expressed concern about the freedoms inherent in the modern age. “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” reflects the feelings of emasculation experienced by many men as they returned home from World War I to find women empowered by their new role as wage earners. Prufrock, unable to make a decision, watches women wander in and out of a room, “talking of Michelangelo” (14), and elsewhere admires their downy, bare arms. A disdain for unchecked sexuality appears in both

“Sweeney Among the Nightingales” (1918) and *The Waste Land*. The latter portrays rape, prostitution, a conversation about abortion, and other incidences of nonreproductive sexuality. Nevertheless, the poem’s central character, Tiresias, is a hermaphrodite—and his powers of prophesy and transformation are, in some sense, due to his male and female genitalia. With Tiresias, Eliot creates a character that embodies wholeness, represented by the two genders coming together in one body.

1.5 W.H. AUDEN

W.H. Auden was a British poet, author and playwright best known as a leading literary figure in the 20th century for his poetry.

“Among those whom I like or admire, I can find no common denominator, but among those whom I love, I can: All of them make me laugh.”

W.H. Auden, also known as Wystan Hugh Auden, was a poet, author and playwright born in York, England, on February 21, 1907. Auden was a leading literary influencer in the 20th century. Known for his chameleon-like ability to write poems in almost every verse form, Auden’s travels in countries torn by political strife influenced his early works. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948.

W.H. Auden was born Wystan Hugh Auden in York, England, on February 21, 1907. Raised by a physician father and a strict, Anglican mother, Auden pursued science and engineering at Oxford University before finding his calling to write and switching his major to English.

Auden pursued his love of poetry, influenced by Old English verse and the poems of Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, William Blake and Emily Dickinson. He graduated from Oxford in 1928, and that same year, his collection *Poems* was privately printed.

In 1930, with the help of T.S. Eliot, Auden published another collection of the same name (*Poems*) that featured different content. The success of this collection positioned him as one of the leading influencers in literature in the 20th century.

Auden’s poems in the latter half of the 1930s reflected his journeys to politically torn countries. He wrote his acclaimed anthology, *Spain*, based on his first-hand accounts of the country’s civil war from 1936 to 1939.

More so, Auden was lauded for his chameleon-like ability to write poems in almost every verse form. His work influenced aspiring poets, popular culture and vernacular speech. He stated in *The Complete Works of W.H. Auden: Prose: Volume II. 1939-1948*, “A poet is, before anything else, a person who is passionately in love with language.”

After moving to America, Auden’s work shifted away from political influences to instead reveal more religious and spiritual themes. *Another Time*, a collection that debuted in America, features many of his most popular poems,

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including *September 1, 1939* and *Musee des Beaux Arts*. Accolades followed Auden, including his 1948 Pulitzer Prize win for *The Age of Anxiety*. Though best known for his poetry, Auden was also a distinguished playwright and author. Auden wed Erika Mann, daughter of German novelist Thomas Mann, in 1935. The nuptial did not last, as it was a marriage of convenience for her to gain British citizenship and flee Nazi Germany. Auden, ever the avid traveler, visited Germany, Iceland and China, and then, in 1939, moved to the United States. On this side of the pond, he met his other true calling—his lifelong partner, fellow poet Chester Kallman. Auden eventually became an American citizen. With his health waning, Auden left America in 1972 and moved back to Oxford. He spent his last days in Austria, where he owned a house. Auden died in Vienna, Austria, on September 29, 1973.

1.6 STEPHEN SPENDER' POEM

Sir Stephen Harold Spender CBE (28 February 1909 – 16 July 1995) was an English poet, novelist and essayist who concentrated on themes of social injustice and the class struggle in his work. He was appointed the seventeenth Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the United States Library of Congress in 1965.

Spender was born in Kensington, London, to journalist Edward Harold Spender and Violet Hilda Schuster, a painter and poet. He went first to Hall School in Hampstead and then at thirteen to Gresham's School, Holt and later Charlecote School in Worthing, but was unhappy there. On the death of his mother he was transferred to University College School (Hampstead), which he later described as “that gentlest of schools.” Spender subsequently went up to University College, Oxford where, in 1973, he was made an honorary fellow. He left Oxford without taking a degree and subsequently lived for periods of time in Germany. He said at various times throughout his life that he never passed an exam, ever. Perhaps his closest friend and the man who had the biggest influence on him was W. H. Auden. Around this time he was also friends with Christopher Isherwood (who had also lived in Weimar Germany), and fellow Macspanday members Louis MacNeice and Cecil Day-Lewis. He was friendly with David Jones and later come to know W. B. Yeats, Allen Ginsberg, Ted Hughes, Joseph Brodsky, Isaiah Berlin, Mary McCarthy, Roy Campbell, Raymond Chandler, Dylan Thomas, Jean-Paul Sartre and T. S. Eliot, as well as members of the Bloomsbury Group, in particular Virginia Woolf.

His early poetry, notably *Poems* (1933) was often inspired by social protest. His convictions found further expression in *Vienna* (1934), a long poem in praise of the 1934 uprising of Viennese socialists, and in *Trial of a Judge* (1938), an anti-Fascist drama in verse. His autobiography, *World Within World* (1951), is a re-creation of much of the political and social atmosphere of the 1930s.

Spender began work on a novel in 1929, which was not published until 1988, under the title *The Temple*. The novel is about a young man who travels to Germany and finds a culture at once more open than England's—particularly about relationships between men—and showing frightening anticipations of Nazism, which are confusingly related to the very openness the main character admires. Spender says in his 1988 introduction:

In the late Twenties young English writers were more concerned with censorship than with politics... 1929 was the last year of that strange Indian Summer—the Weimar Republic. For many of my friends and for myself, Germany seemed a paradise where there was no censorship and young Germans enjoyed extraordinary freedom in their lives. When the Spanish civil war began, he went to Spain with the International Brigades (who were fighting against Francisco Franco's forces) to report and observe for the Communist Party of Great Britain. Harry Pollitt, head of the CPGB, told Spender "to go and get killed; we need a Byron in the movement".

His 1938 translations of works by Bertolt Brecht and Miguel Hernández appeared in John Lehmann's *New Writing*. A member of the political left wing during this early period, he was one of those who wrote of their disillusionment with communism in the essay collection *The God that Failed* (1949), along with Arthur Koestler and others. It is thought that one of the big areas of disappointment was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, which many leftists saw as a betrayal. Like fellow poets W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and several other outspoken opponents of fascism in the 1930s, Spender did not see active military service in World War II. He was initially graded "C" upon examination due to his earlier colitis, poor eyesight, varicose veins, and the long term effects of a tapeworm in 1934. However, he contrived by pulling strings to be re-examined and was upgraded to "B" which meant that he could serve in the London Auxiliary Fire Service. Spender spent the winter of 1940 teaching at Blundell's School, having taken the position left vacant by Manning Clark, who returned to Australia as a consequence of the war to teach at Geelong Grammar.

He felt close to the Jewish people; his mother, Violet Hilda Schuster, was half Jewish (her father's family were German Jews who converted to Christianity, while her mother came from an upper-class family of Catholic German, Lutheran Danish and distantly Italian descent). Spender's second wife, Natasha, whom he married in 1941, was also Jewish. After the war he was member of the Allied Control Commission, restoring civil authority in Germany.

With Cyril Connolly and Peter Watson Spender co-founded *Horizon* magazine and served as its editor from 1939 to 1941. He was editor of *Encounter* magazine from 1953 to 1966, but resigned after it emerged that the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which published the magazine, was being covertly funded by the CIA. Spender always insisted that he was unaware of the ultimate source of *Encounter's* funds. Spender taught at various American institutions, accepting

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the Elliston Chair of Poetry at the University of Cincinnati in 1954. In 1961 he became professor of rhetoric at Gresham College, London. He helped found the magazine *Index on Censorship*, he was involved in the founding of the Poetry Book Society, and he did work for UNESCO.

Spender was Professor of English at University College, London, 1970–77, and then became Professor Emeritus. He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) at the 1962 Queen’s Birthday Honours, and knighted in the 1983 Queen’s Birthday Honours. At a ceremony commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Normandy Invasion, D-day on 6 June 1984, President Ronald Reagan quoted from Spender’s poem “The Truly Great” in his remarks:

Gentlemen, I look at you and I think of the words of Stephen Spender’s poem. You are men who in your “lives fought for life... and left the vivid air signed with your honor.”

Poem: An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum

Far far from gusty waves these children's faces.
 Like rootless weeds, the hair torn around their pallor.
 The tall girl with her weighed-down head. The paper-
 seeming boy, with rat's eyes. The stunted, unlucky heir
 Of twisted bones, reciting a father's gnarled disease,
 His lesson from his desk. At back of the dim class
 One unnoted, sweet and young. His eyes live in a dream,
 Of squirrel's game, in the tree room, other than this.

On sour cream walls, donations. Shakespeare's head,
 Cloudless at dawn, civilized dome riding all cities.
 Belled, flowery, Tyrolese valley. Open-handed map
 Awarding the world its world. And yet, for these
 Children, these windows, not this world, are world,
 Where all their future's painted with a fog,
 A narrow street sealed in with a lead sky,
 Far far from rivers, capes, and stars of words.

Surely, Shakespeare is wicked, and the map a bad example
 With ships and sun and love tempting them to steal--
 For lives that slyly turn in their cramped holes
 From fog to endless night? On their slag heap, these children
 Wear skins peeped through by bones and spectacles of steel

With mended glass, like bottle bits on stones.
 All of their time and space are foggy slum.
 So blot their maps with slums as big as doom.

Unless, governor, teacher, inspector, visitor,
 This map becomes their window and these windows
 That shut upon their lives like catacombs,
 Break O break open 'till they break the town
 And show the children green fields and make their world
 Run azure on gold sands, and let their tongues
 Run naked into books, the white and green leaves open
 History is theirs whose language is the sun.

An elementary school classroom in a slum was published by Stephen Spender in 1964. The poem resonates the poet's political views and brings forth the difficulties faced by the kids in slums. This poem was written to highlight the social injustice prevailing at that time in the world. The following article summarizes his views and is divided stanza-wise for ease in understanding.

Explanations

Stanza 1

The poet says that the condition of the children in a slum school is pathetic. Their world is far removed from the open, healthy environment. They are as unwanted as the rootless weeds. Their hair is unkempt and they have pale faces which clearly indicate their deprived and under-nourished condition. These children, as the tall girl, are stressed by the burden of their circumstances. They are exhausted both physically as well as emotionally. The paper thin boy is skinny. His eyes have a scared look. These unfortunate beings have inherited only disease and bad luck from their parents. One of diseased ones can't even get up from the desk to recite his lesson. However, there is one child at the back of the class who is younger than the others. His inexperienced eyes are full of hope and he is dreaming about playing games in the open. Apparently gloom has still not enveloped him.

Stanza 2

The classroom walls have a dirty appearance as they haven't been painted for a long time. In other words, these children inhabit a world which is dreary and depressing. On the walls are displayed the names of people who have given donations. The bust of Shakespeare with the background of a clear sky at the

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time of sun-rise is also displayed. The walls also have scenic pictures of Tyrolese Valley with its beautiful flowers presenting a world of the heavenly splendor. Apart from all this, the walls also have a map revealing the world which they view from the classroom's windows which is foggy and harsh. It represents a dark and bleak future with no hope for amelioration. Their eyes can only view a narrow road which is enclosed with a dull sky. The poet suggests that these children are trapped in a hopeless situation and their reality is far removed from the literary world which glistens with the beauty of nature such as the rivers and the high land jutting from the sea.

Stanza 3

The pensive poet suddenly turns belligerent (aggressive) and feels that Shakespeare is 'wicked'. This is because he misleads the children. He shows them a beautiful world of ships, sun and love which is not only unreal for them but it has a corrupting influence on these children and instigates them to steal and try to escape from their cramped holes. Their existence is indeed, very sad. These emaciated children are so thin that it appears that they are 'wearing' skins. The spectacles they are wearing have glass which has been broken and mended. Their entire appearance reeks of their deprivation. The poet shows his outrage by suggesting that the maps on their walls should show huge slums instead of beautiful scenic graphics.

Stanza 4

In a conciliatory tone the poet appeals to the governor, inspector and visitor to do something to improve their condition. If there is political will this map showing the beautiful world outside can become their reality too. The poet hopes the authorities would realize their moral responsibilities and free these children from their grave-like entrapments. He wants all the barriers to be pulled down; barriers that keep away true education from them. The children must be given freedom to experience the wholesome bounties of nature-view the green fields and run on 'gold sand'. Let them read books and let them breathe in fresh air. Let them discover themselves and let them be creative so that their names can also enter the books of history. Let them find their place in the sun.

Summary

The opening stanza of "An Elementary School Classroom in a Slum" provides a clear, dreary depiction of the students in the classroom. The first child is a "tall girl with a weighed-down head." This girl is physically and emotionally exhausted, as if all life has been dredged from her body and sapped from her mind. Her classmates are in no better condition. "The paper- / seeming boy, with rat's eyes" is paper-thin and weak. His eyes are defensive and scared, like a scavenger, a rat. His prospect for survival, let alone success, is bleak. Another student, "the stunted, unlucky heir / Of twisted bones," is the victim of a genetic disorder. Spender writes that the boy has inherited his "father's gnarled disease"; he has been left

disfigured, trapped in a physically challenged body.

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1.7 DYLAN THOMAS' POEMS

Dylan Thomas was one of the eminent writers of the twentieth century. He believed that writing was a kind of self-discovery. This belief of his was even reflected in his writings and his works remained distinctly personal, having metaphorical language, aesthetic imageries and psychological details. His writings were not only personal but had worldly themes like birth, death, love and religion.

“And Death Shall Have No Dominion” by Dylan Thomas celebrates the undying and everlasting strength of the human spirit. It is through this spirit that humans can claim victory over death and ‘death shall have no dominion.’ The poet believed that the dead are never lost to us but they live on through the beauty of their memory and spirit. The struggle does not end, it continues.

Poem: ‘And Death Shall Have No Dominion.’

Stanza 1

Each stanza begins and ends with the title of the poem, ‘And Death Shall Have No Dominion.’ In the first stanza, the poet conveys that in death, all are one. Race and skin color no longer have any meaning when a person dies. The dead body reunites with nature. In death, everyone is naked and shall be one. There’s no discrimination in death. The poet goes on to say that after death, men become part of constellations, something bigger than he was, when he was alive. Though the dead men’s bones are naked, they shall be clothed in eternal glory and shall have stars at their elbows and feet. In the following lines, the poet says that though the men will go mad they will attain sanity. Those who have drowned in the sea of human sorrow shall rise again and taste joy. Moreover, lovers who were lost will be united after death. Finally he uses the final lines, ‘and death shall have no dominion.’

Stanza 2

The second stanza of ‘And Death Shall Have No Dominion’ takes the reader to a graveyard which is located on the sea floor. The poet says that one can find the souls of the sailors or the others who lost their lives in the sea. According to him, these people died courageously. Their lives have tortured them, the wheel of time has tested them but none of these could break them. Faith has been cracked in two and unicorn evils will put their horns through them. The ‘unicorn’ is an ancient mythical creature, sometimes used to symbolize Christ or God. Unicorn horns are considered as harder than diamonds and can neutralize poison. Their tears can heal wounds both of physical and mental nature. Again the stanza ends with the lines, ‘and death shall have no dominion’ representing the triumph and main theme of the poem.

Stanza 3

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The final stanza talks about the land, along the seashore. The poet begins the final stanza by saying that the dead are no longer disturbed by the materialistic world and the physical elements that made up their homes. Gulls are sea birds which will no longer cry at their ears; they will not be able to hear the loud noises made by waves. Yet new life will spring up, an intrepid life like a flower that 'lifts its head to blows of the rain.' Their innocence shall burst through like daisies. Their innocence ultimately wins over the sun and breaks it down. The phrase 'heads of the characters hammer through daisies' hints at the characters of those dead people who hammer through pain until innocence breaks them. The daisy blooms as dawn breaks, symbolizing the burst of innocence. In the same way, death becomes powerless as humanity regains purity and recollects hope, disregarding pain and hatred. In this way, death can be overcome and 'death shall have no dominion.'

Analysis

The repetition of the lines, 'And death shall have no dominion' reinforces the theme of the poem. The message rendered was to attain victory over death and it is even used as the title of the poem. By repeating the lines at the beginning and end of each stanza, the poem has developed a nice structure and a message to the readers. The first stanza idealizes mankind, the second emphasis on God and suffering while the third focuses on nature.

The poem is structured into three stanzas each containing ten lines. The poem is composed in near rhyme. Near rhyming mean words that come near rhyming but do not really rhyme. It is also known as imperfect rhyme.

Poetic devices in "And Death Shall Have No Dominion" included pun, paradox, repetition, alliteration, metaphors and contrast.

PUN: An example of pun is found in line 12. 'Windily' means both the movement of the sea and also the shroud in which the dead are buried in the sea.

PARADOX: 'Unicorn evils through' is an example of paradox because unicorn is a symbol of Christ and has nothing to do with evil. 'Though they go mad, they shall be sane' is also an example of paradox.

REPETITION: The most distinct repetition is 'and death shall have no dominion' which is repeated in every stanza, marks the most important idea of the poem. The repetition of the word 'though' is repeated in the first stanza reinforces the basic theme and provides a secure structure.

ALLITERATION: Alliteration is the close repetition of the consonant sounds at the beginning of words to facilitate narration. 'Though lovers be lost love shall not' is a fine example of alliteration.

METAPHOR: A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two things but is not clearly stated.

'Faith in their hands shall snap in two.' In this line, the poet has used a

metaphor to compare faith with a wooden stick.

IMAGERY: Images of sea, torture and biblical characters are used throughout the poem. Sea imagery is found in the first stanza by depicting that the dead sank in the sea and rose again. In the second stanza, ‘windings of the sea’ is an image of the sea itself. Sound of ‘gulls’ and ‘waves’ are examples of sound imagery. Biblical imagery is found by describing the rise of the dead symbolizing Christ’s Revelation. The use of unicorn, the mythical sea creature is also an example of biblical imagery. ‘Twisting on racks when sinews give way, strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break’ brings out an image of the human body of muscles and bones in pain.

The main idea of the poem, ‘And Death Shall Have No Dominion’ is that we should not let the fear of death control our lives. Although we are mortal, we will eventually be redeemed in the end. The poet makes a striking affirmation about life and death.

1.8 P. LARKIN’ AMBULANCES

Closed like confessionals, they thread
 Loud noons of cities, giving back
 None of the glances they absorb.
 Light glossy grey, arms on a plaque,
 They come to rest at any kerb:
 All streets in time are visited.
 Then children strewn on steps or road,
 Or women coming from the shops
 Past smells of different dinners, see
 A wild white face that overtops
 Red stretcher-blankets momentarily
 As it is carried in and stowed,
 And sense the solving emptiness
 That lies just under all we do,
 And for a second get it whole,
 So permanent and blank and true.
 The fastened doors recede. Poor soul,
 They whisper at their own distress;
 For borne away in deadened air
 May go the sudden shut of loss
 Round something nearly at an end,

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And what cohered in it across
The years, the unique random blend
Of families and fashions, there
At last begin to loosen. Far
From the exchange of love to lie
Unreachable inside a room
The traffic parts to let go by
Brings closer what is left to come,
And dulls to distance all we are.

Summary

Ambulances move through the city streets at noon, their doors and windows preventing anyone from seeing what is happening inside them. People look at them curiously, but they give nothing away. They are shiny and grey in colour, with a crest or plaque showing which organisation they belong to. They might stop at any kerb; nobody knows where they will visit next, but they will visit everyone, eventually.

This is a rather grim and bleak poem about death. The ambulances move through the city streets in the middle of the day, emphasising the fact that death can come at any time.

People are drawn to the ambulances, but they are 'closed' like confessionals. They are similar to confessionals in that those outside cannot see what is happening inside. There is also the connection between the fact that when people are in a confessional or in an ambulance, their outer self is stripped away to some extent. They are vulnerable and in need of help or consolation. Larkin was an agnostic, but he did not underestimate the power of religion.

The ambulances are not threatening in appearance. However, their very ordinariness reminds us how ordinary death is. The last two lines of the poem emphasise the fact that death is a part of life and can come to anyone. Nobody is safe from death, it can stop at 'any kerb'. Death is random and there is no avoiding it. We are reminded that it will come for us, in time.

People who are going about their daily business stop to watch as someone is carried into an ambulance and taken away. The patient looks terrified, but they are quickly put into the back of the ambulance and driven away.

The children are 'strewn' about the place and the women are 'coming from the shops'.

It is almost as if this moment freezes time and shows us the people as they would be if captured in a photograph. They are not prepared for the arrival of the ambulance, just as we are rarely prepared for the arrival of death. Again, we are

reminded that it can come to anyone at any time, even in the middle of an ordinary day.

The ordinariness of the scene contrasts with the patient's terror. He or she is 'a wild white face' as they are lifted into the ambulance. That person is now facing their mortality and the fact that this incredibly difficult and frightening ordeal takes place amidst the normal hustle and bustle of a world filled with the smell of dinners cooking and children playing shows us how life goes on for everyone else, even if it stops or changes unutterably for someone else. We feel that the freeze-frame moment will end when the ambulance pulls away, and that the people who watched will continue with their normal daily routine. There is something impersonal in the way the patient is described as 'it' and reduced only to a face seen briefly over stretcher blankets. Also, the patient is 'stowed' – put away neatly in the back of the ambulance the way you might put a piece of luggage in a locker or under a seat. There is no real drama in this situation for anyone but the patient. Notice the description of the patient. We never discover if the person is a man or a woman, and it does not matter. The poet James Shirley described death as a 'leveller': all are equal in the face of death. In this poem, Larkin goes beyond that idea to take an even more bleak view of illness and death. The patient is dehumanised – reduced to 'a wild white face'.

The people watching have a moment of realisation that death is close to them and they are moved. The pity they feel, though, is more for themselves than it is for the patient. For a second, they see death and they see what lies ahead for all of us. Everything that seems important now will dissolve and there will be nothing of us left. The door of the ambulance is shut and the person inside is no longer part of this world. They are removed from the sensual aspects of the world and their life is beginning to unravel. Everything that held them to this world is coming loose as they near death. The traffic parts to let the ambulance pass and the person inside moves further away from the rest of the world. At the end, all life is reduced to this and everyone goes to their final destination in the same way.

The people watching are forced, even if it is only for a moment, to face the terrible truth about death. No matter who we are or how important we think our lives are, we will all dissolve into nothingness in the same way. This is a very bleak view of life and death and offers no comfort in the form of heaven or any sort of afterlife. All that waits for us is emptiness. Those watching are moved to pity and distress, but it is not really pity for the patient; rather it is the horror they feel on thinking of their own mortality and the inevitability of death. There is a contrast between the word 'soul' and Larkin's view that there is no life beyond this one. The person in the ambulance is either dead or dying. The air inside the ambulance is 'deadened air', emphasising the fact that the patient is no longer a part of a world filled with the smell of 'different dinners', for example. There is a sense of loss as the doors are shut and the person taken away. They are shut off from the world. We are reminded again of the opening lines in which the

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separateness of the ambulance was highlighted. It does not give away its secrets but just as those outside cannot see into it, so those inside cannot see out.

They are now in a different world and there is no connection between it and our world. Everything that defined the person begins to slip away. Everything that made them ‘unique’ is vanishing and has no significance. In death, we are all alike. ‘Families and fashion’ mean nothing now. Not even love can touch us at the end. Death is a solitary experience in which, like the patient in the ambulance, we draw further and further away from the world and from everything that once mattered.

Theme

Sickness and/or death: This poem tells us that death is inevitable. It will come for all of us in time. Who we are now, our loves and our likes, mean nothing when death comes. Our very being will dissolve away as we leave this world. All that awaits us is ‘emptiness’. This is a very bleak view of death and of the transience of life.

Tone

The tone of this poem is bleak and rather depressing. There is no note of hope, nothing for us to look forward to after death but ‘emptiness’.

Features of style

- The language is straightforward and simple, which adds a certain force to the message. We cannot avoid what the poem is saying.
- The ambulance is a symbol of death.
- The person in the poem is dehumanised by illness and death. For all the detailed descriptions in the poem, we learn nothing of this person. The person – ‘it – is losing their personality, all that made them unique or special to others.
- The verb ‘stow’ adds to the idea that the person in the ambulance no longer has an identity. They are packed away like luggage.
- The sounds in the poem add to the bleak tone. There is a half-rhyme between ‘noons’ and ‘None’ which brings to mind the sound of the siren of an ambulance.
- The alliteration in the last line ‘dulls to distance’ adds to the idea of the depressing finality of death. The ‘d’ sounds are rather abrupt and quite harsh, emphasising the unavoidable, harsh nature of death.

1.9 THOM GUNN’S ON THE MOVE

an Anglo-American poet who was praised both for his early verses in England, where he was associated with The Movement and his later poetry in America,

even after moving toward a looser, free-verse style. After relocating from England to San Francisco, Gunn, who became openly gay, wrote about gay-related topics — particularly in his most famous work, *The Man With Night Sweats* in 1992 — as well as drug use, sex, and topics related to his bohemian lifestyle. He won numerous major literary awards.

Poem: On the Move

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
 Some hidden purpose, and the gush of birds
 That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,
 Have nested in the trees and undergrowth.
 Seeking their instinct, or their pose, or both,
 One moves with an uncertain violence
 Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense
 Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:
 Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boy,
 Until the distance throws them forth, their hum
 Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.
 In goggles, donned impersonality,
 In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,
 They strap in doubt--by hiding it, robust--
 And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardiness
 Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts
 They ride, directions where the tires press.
 They scare a flight of birds across the field:
 Much that is natural, to the will must yield.
 Men manufacture both machine and soul,
 And use what they imperfectly control
 To dare a future from the taken routes.
 It is part solution, after all.
 One is not necessarily discord
 On Earth; or damned because, half animal,

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One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes
 Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.
 One joins the movement in a valueless world,
 Crossing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,
 One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:
 The self-denied, astride the created will.
 They burst away; the towns they travel through
 Are home for neither birds nor holiness,
 For birds and saints complete their purposes.
 At worse, one is in motion; and at best,
 Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,
 One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Summary

“On the Move” is perhaps Gunn’s best-known poem. It perfectly and sympathetically captures the ethos of motorcycle gangs. The poem opens with images of birds following “instinct” and “some hidden purpose.” They have a secure place, since they are “nested.” This, of course, contrasts them to human nature; people are racked with uncertainty and have only a “baffled sense” because they lack instinct and defined purpose. The poem is the fullest exploration of a theme that has obsessed Gunn from the start of his poetic career.

In contrast to the ordinary person, who remains baffled, the motorcycle gangs “strap in doubt—by hiding it, robust—/ And almost hear a meaning in their noise.” They have escaped from the plight of the divided and approach—even if they never reach—the instinct of animals. Gunn describes them as “flies,” metaphorically connecting them to animals. Where they travel is a matter of chance rather than logic or even moral choice. For Gunn, a life that is open to chance, even if it is dangerous or destructive, is preferable to the intellectual paralysis to which modern people are prey.

The motorcycle gang is portrayed, however, as scaring “a flight of birds across the field.” They are antagonists to the birds of the first stanza. The birds must yield to the will. The actions of the motorcycle gangs, even if destructive, are a solution, if only a partial one.

Themes and Meanings

“On the Move” is a poem about how one defines oneself through actions. Driven by instinct or will, one is able to articulate one’s purpose only en route, through

the act itself. This is as true of the motorcyclists as it is for the poet.

“On the Move” is the opening poem of *The Sense of Movement* (1957), which Gunn said was inspired by the existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre. A major tenet of Sartre’s existentialism is that one derives authentic meaning in one’s lives not from any preconceived notions of what one should be, but from one’s own actions. One cannot know what one is except through what one does. Because one is, as Sartre says, “condemned to be free,” one must take full responsibility for one’s actions and, thus, for one’s existence.

Self-definition through engaged action is the ultimate existentialist act. If one could rely on instinct, as birds do, there would be no question of authenticity. Since the individual has free will, however, he or she must exercise it and take the consequences. The myth of the American motorcyclist is one of Gunn’s favorite figures for the restless, searching, often inarticulate existential hero. His doubt is part of his charm. His restless motion, instinctual or willed, is, consciously or unconsciously, a creation of meaning through “movement in a valueless world.”

Analysis

“On the Move” is composed in five eight-line stanzas, with the rhyme scheme abaccddb. The poem begins by observing the movement of birds in their natural surroundings and comparing their movement to human action. Whether driven by natural “instinct,” acquired “poise,” or some combination of the two, the birds seem to have some “hidden purpose” to give meaning to their motion. The “One” of the poem who observes them wonders whether his own “uncertain violence” of motion is driven by the same forces. Until now he has been bewildered equally by both the instincts of “baffled sense” and “the dull thunder of approximate words.” The rest of the poem tries to make words yield their precise meaning in relation to the experience of motion.

In the second stanza, the motorcyclists are introduced. They mediate between birds and man, their movement seeming half instinctual, half pilgrimage. First the reader sees the machines on the road, then, from a distance, “the Boys,” who look “Small, black, as flies” in their leather jackets and goggles. Suddenly, “the distance throws them forth” and they look and sound huge and heroic. Like knights in armor with visors, they wear impersonal goggles and “gleaming jackets trophied with dust.”

1.10 TED HUGHES’ POEMS

Ted Hughes is consistently described as one of the twentieth century’s greatest English poets. Born August 17th, 1930 in Mytholmroyd, Yorkshire, his family moved to Mexborough when he was seven to run a newspaper and tobacco shop. He attended Mexborough grammar school, and wrote his first poems from the age of fifteen, some of which made their way into the school magazine. Before beginning English studies at Cambridge University (having won a scholarship

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in 1948), he spent much of his National service time reading and rereading all of Shakespeare. According to report, he could recite it all by heart. At Cambridge, he he 'spent most..time reading folklore and Yeat's poems,' and switched from English to Archaeology and Anthropology in his third year.

His first published poem appeared in 1954, the year he graduated from Cambridge. He used two pseudonyms for the early publications, Daniel Hearing and Peter Crew. From 1955 to 1956, he worked as a rose gardener, night-watchman, zoo attendant, schoolteacher, and reader for J. Arthur Rank, and planned to teach in Spain then emigrate to Australia. February 26 saw the launch of the literary magazine, the St Botolph's Review, for which Hughes was one of six co-producers. It was also the day he met Sylvia Plath; they were married in four months.

Hughe's first book of poems, *Hawk in the Rain*, was published in 1957 to immediate acclaim, winning the Harper publication contest. Over the next 41 years, he would write upwards of 90 books, and win numerous prizes and fellowships including the following (in that order):

Harper publication contest, Guinness Poetry Award, Guggenheim fellowship, Somerset Maughan award, city of Florence International Poetry Prize, Premio Internazionale Taormina Prize, Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry, OBE, vote for the best writing in English in the New Poetry Poll, Whitbread Book of the Year, W.H. Smith Literature award, Forward Prize for Poetry, Queen's Order of Merit, T.S. Eliot Prize for Poetry, South Bank Award for Literature, Whitbread Prize for Poetry, and the Whitbread Book of the Year again.

In 1984, he was appointed England's poet laureate.

Hughes is what some have called a nature poet. A keen countryman and hunter from a young age, he viewed writing poems as a continuation of his earlier passion. 'This is hunting and the poem is a new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own.' (*Poetry in the Making*, 1967)

A strong indirect source of interest in the person of Hughes (aside from his poetry) is his seven-year marriage to the well-known American Poet, Sylvia Plath. *Birthday Letters* is a sequence of lyrics written by Hughes in the first year of their marriage, cast as a continued conversation with Plath.

When Plath committed suicide in 1963 (they had separated in 1962), many held Hughes responsible for her death as a consequence of his adulterous relationship with Assia Wevill; recent biographies such as Elaine Feinstein's *Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet* have attempted to 'set the record straight and clear the air of rancor and recrimination' (Brooke Allen, *The New York Times*).

Though deeply marked by the loss, Hughes was publicly silent on the subject for more than 30 years out of his sense of responsibility to protect the couple's two young children, whose perceptions of their mother would have otherwise been impossibly spoiled by external interference. The publication of *Birthday Letters* has been seen as a 'retaking' of the histories that had been stolen from the

family through the cracks in the armour.

Hughes deliberately subverts [turns upside down] traditional nature poems on the majesty of creation. The hawk lists natural features: 'sun', 'air' and the 'tree', which he thinks exist only in as much as they are of 'advantage to me'. He also says it took 'the whole of Creation' to produce his 'feather' and 'foot': the juxtaposition of something so huge and old, and biblical against a tiny foot/feather, shows how magnificent the bird thinks he is: as if he is the reason creation exists. This is interesting because it twists the traditional anthropocentric world view (i.e. humans are the peak of creation, the whole point of it all), that is set down in Genesis. When he flies up he says he will 'revolve' the world slowly - as if he is making it turn.

He gives the gift ('allotment') of death, which is an ironic juxtaposition as no one would want to receive this gift. It is as if he's the god of death. He says he has 'permitted no change' and ends with a final, simple declarative statement 'I am going to keep things like this'. The use of 'am' stresses his power. He doesn't say 'will' or 'might'; he's certain.

Poem: Hawk Roosting

Hawk Roosting

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
 Inaction, no falsifying dream
 Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
 Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.
 The convenience of the high trees!
 The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
 Are of advantage to me;
 And the earth's face upward for my inspection.
 My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
 It took the whole of Creation
 To produce my foot, my each feather:
 Now I hold Creation in my foot
 Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly -
 I kill where I please because it is all mine.
 There is no sophistry in my body:
 My manners are tearing off heads -
 The allotment of death.
 For the one path of my flight is direct
 Through the bones of the living.
 No arguments assert my right:

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The sun is behind me.

Nothing has changed since I began.

My eye has permitted no change.

I am going to keep things like this.

This is a great poem to use with 'Work and Play', as 'Hawk Roosting' describes a very different, much bloodier, side of nature. Hughes was fascinated by the 'animism' of ancient cultures, especially American Indians. Animism is the belief that spirits live inside all the parts of nature. Hughes poem seems to conjure the fierce spirit of a kind of Hawk God.

In this poem, Hughes writes in the imagined voice of a hawk. The hawk, in other words, is personified. For the sake of simplicity, I will call the hawk 'he'. The hawk's tone of voice is proud, arrogant, he thinks of himself as master of his world. Indeed, like a God, he has power over life and death. His whole life is spent either being in 'sleep' or hunting for prey. And even when he is asleep he dreams of mastering his hunting and killing technique.

The physical description the hawk gives of itself, 'Between my hooked head and hooked feet', confirms this obsession. Its weapons, the hooks, are the things that matter most to the bird. The hawk says that he has no 'falsifying dream', nor any 'sophistry' within himself, and that 'no arguments assert' his rights.

Sophistry means false, but clever arguments. In other words then, unlike humans, the bird is free of rules and regulations, it does not have to justify itself to anything or anyone. This is a complex poem and there are many possible interpretations.

1.11 SYLVIA PLATH'S POEM

Sylvia Plath was born on October 27, 1932, in Boston, Massachusetts. Her mother, Aurelia Schober, was a master's student at Boston University when she met Plath's father, Otto Plath, who was her professor. They were married in January of 1932. Otto taught both German and biology, with a focus on apiology, the study of bees.

In 1940, when Plath was eight years old, her father died as a result of complications from diabetes. He had been a strict father, and both his authoritarian attitudes and his death drastically defined her relationships and her poems—most notably in her elegaic and infamous poem "Daddy."

Even in her youth, Plath was ambitiously driven to succeed. She kept a journal from the age of eleven and published her poems in regional magazines and newspapers. Her first national publication was in the Christian Science Monitor in 1950, just after graduating from high school.

In 1950, Plath matriculated at Smith College. She was an exceptional student, and despite a deep depression she went through in 1953 and a subsequent suicide attempt, she managed to graduate summa cum laude in 1955.

After graduation, Plath moved to Cambridge, England, on a Fulbright Scholarship. In early 1956, she attended a party and met the English poet Ted Hughes. Shortly thereafter, Plath and Hughes were married, on June 16, 1956.

Plath returned to Massachusetts in 1957 and began studying with Robert Lowell. Her first collection of poems, *Colossus*, was published in 1960 in England, and two years later in the United States. She returned to England, where she gave birth to her children Frieda and Nicholas, in 1960 and 1962, respectively.

In 1962, Ted Hughes left Plath for Assia Gutmann Wevill. That winter, in a deep depression, Plath wrote most of the poems that would comprise her most famous book, *Ariel*.

In 1963, Plath published a semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*, under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas. Then, on February 11, 1963, during one of the worst English winters on record, Plath wrote a note to her downstairs neighbor instructing him to call the doctor, then she committed suicide using her gas oven.

Plath's poetry is often associated with the Confessional movement, and compared to the work of poets such as Lowell and fellow student Anne Sexton. Often, her work is singled out for the intense coupling of its violent or disturbed imagery and its playful use of alliteration and rhyme.

Although only *Colossus* was published while she was alive, Plath was a prolific poet, and in addition to *Ariel*, Hughes published three other volumes of her work posthumously, including *The Collected Poems*, which was the recipient of the 1982 Pulitzer Prize. She was the first poet to posthumously win a Pulitzer Prize.

Poem: Lady Lazarus

I have done it again.
 One year in every ten
 I manage it--
 A sort of walking miracle, my skin
 Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
 My right foot
 A paperweight,
 My face a featureless, fine
 Jew linen.
 Peel off the napkin
 O my enemy.
 Do I terrify?--
 The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

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The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.
Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me
And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.
This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.
What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see
Them unwrap me hand and foot--
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies
These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,
Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.
The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut
As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.
Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.
I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
 It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
 It's the theatrical
 Comeback in broad day
 To the same place, the same face, the same brute
 Amused shout:
 'A miracle!
 That knocks me out.
 There is a charge
 For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
 For the hearing of my heart--
 It really goes.
 And there is a charge, a very large charge
 For a word or a touch
 Or a bit of blood
 Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
 So, so, Herr Doktor.
 So, Herr Enemy.
 I am your opus,
 I am your valuable,
 The pure gold baby
 That melts to a shriek.
 I turn and burn.
 Do not think I underestimate your great concern.
 Ash, ash--
 You poke and stir.
 Flesh, bone, there is nothing there--
 A cake of soap,
 A wedding ring,
 A gold filling.
 Herr God, Herr Lucifer
 Beware
 Beware.
 Out of the ash
 I rise with my red hair
 And I eat men like air.

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The poem is spoken by Lady Lazarus, a speaker who shares a lot of similarities with the poet herself. Lady Lazarus begins by telling us that she has done "it" again. What is this "it"? We don't know at first. She compares herself to a Holocaust victim, and tell us that's she's only thirty years old, and that she has nine lives, like a cat. We soon figure out that "it" is dying; but, like the cat, she keeps returning to life.

She tells us about the first two times that she almost died, and tells us that dying "is an art." She says that dying is a theatrical event, and imagines that people come and see her do it. In fact, it starts to seem as if she's performing a third death in front of a crowd at a circus or carnival. She compares herself again to Holocaust victims, and imagines that she's been burned to death in a concentration camp crematorium. At the end of the poem, she resurrects (or returns to life from death) once again, and she "eat[s] men like air."

Summary

"Lady Lazarus" is a poem commonly understood to be about suicide. It is narrated by a woman, and mostly addressed to an unspecified person.

The narrator begins by saying she has "done it again." Every ten years, she manages to commit this unnamed act. She considers herself a walking miracle with bright skin, her right foot a "paperweight," and her face as fine and featureless as a "Jew linen". She address an unspecified enemy, asking him to peel the napkin from her face, and inquiring whether he is terrified by the features he sees there. She assures him that her "sour breath" will vanish in a day.

She is certain that her flesh will soon be restored to her face after having been sacrificed to the grave, and that she will then be a smiling, 30 year-old woman. She will ultimately be able to die nine times, like a cat, and has just completed her third death. She will die once each decade. After each death, a "peanut-crunching crowd" shoves in to see her body unwrapped. She addresses the crowd directly, showing them she remains skin and bone, unchanged from who she was before.

The first death occurred when she was ten, accidentally. The second death was intentional - she did not mean to return from it. Instead, she was as "shut as a seashell" until she was called back by people who then picked the worms off her corpse. She does not specifically identify how either death occurred.

She believes that "Dying / Is an art, like everything else," and that she does it very well. Each time, "it feels real," and is easy for her. What is difficult is the dramatic comeback, the return to the same place and body, occurring as it does in broad daylight before a crowd's cry of "A miracle!" She believes people should pay to view her scars, hear her heart, or receive a word, touch, blood, hair or clothes from her.

In the final stanzas, she addresses the listener as "Herr Dockter" and "Herr Enemy," sneering that she is his crowning achievement, a "pure gold baby." She

does not underestimate his concern, but is bothered by how he picks through her ashes. She insists there is nothing there but soap, a wedding ring, and a gold filling. She warns "Herr God, Herr Lucifer" to beware of her because she is going to rise out of the ash and "eat men like air."

Analysis

"Lady Lazarus" is a complicated, dark, and brutal poem originally published in the collection *Ariel*. Plath composed the poem during her most productive and fecund creative period. It is considered one of Plath's best poems, and has been subject to a plethora of literary criticism since its publication. It is commonly interpreted as an expression of Plath's suicidal attempts and impulses. Its tone veers between menacing and scathing, and it has drawn attention for its use of Holocaust imagery, similar to "Daddy." The title is an allusion to the Biblical character, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

The standard interpretation of the poem suggests that it is about multiple suicide attempts. The details can certainly be understood in this framework. When the speaker says she "has done it again," she means she has attempted suicide for the third time, after one accidental attempt and one deliberate attempt in the past. Each attempt occurred in a different decade, and she is now 30 years old. Now that she has been pulled back to life from this most recent attempt, her "sour breath / Will vanish in a day," and her flesh will return to her bones. However, this recovery is presented as a failure, whereas the suicide attempts are presented as accomplishments - "Dying is an art" that she performs "exceptionally well." She seems to believe she will reach a perfection through escaping her body.

By describing dying as an art, she includes a spectator to both her deaths and resurrections. Because the death is a performance, it necessarily requires others. In large part, she kills herself to punish them for driving her to it. The eager "peanut-crunching crowd" is invited but criticized for its voyeuristic impulse. The crowd could certainly be understood to include the reader himself, since he reads the poem to explore her dark impulses. She assumes that her voyeurs are significantly invested - they would pay the "large charge" to see her scars and heart.

However, she imbues this impulse with a harsh criticism by comparing the crowd to the complacent Germans who stood aside while the Jews were thrown into concentration camps. Further, the crowd ultimately proves less an encouragement than a burden when they also attend the resurrection. She despises this second part of the process, and resents the presence of others at that time. Whether this creates a vicious circle, in which that resentment is partially responsible for the subsequent attempt, is implied but not explicitly stated. Critic Robert Bagg explores the speaker's contradictory feelings towards the crowd by writing that Plath "is not bound by any metaphysical belief in the self's limitations. Instead of resisting the self's antagonists she derives a tremendous thrill from throwing her imagination into the act of self-obliteration." She can destroy her

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body, but her imaginative self remains a performer, always aware of the effect she has on others.

The poem can also be understood through a feminist lens, as a demonstration of the female artist's struggle for autonomy in a patriarchal society. Lynda K. Bundtzen writes that "the female creation of a male-artist god is asserting independent creative powers." From this perspective, "Lady Lazarus" is not merely a confessional poem detailing depressive feelings, but is also a statement on how the powerful male figure usurps Plath's creative powers but is defeated by her rebirth. Though Lady Lazarus knows that "Herr Doktor" will claim possession of her body and remains after forcing her suicide, she equally believes she will rise and "eat men like air." Her creative powers can be stifled momentarily, but will always return stronger.

The poem can also be understood in a larger context, as a comment on the relationship between poet and audience in a society that, as Pamela Annas claims, has separated creativity and consumption. The crowd views Lady Lazarus/the poet/Plath as an object, and therefore does not recognize her as a human being. Plath reflects this through her multiple references to body parts separated from the whole. From this interpretation, Lady Lazarus's suicide then becomes "an assertion of wholeness, an act of self-definition, and a last desperate act of contempt toward the peanut-crunching crowd." The only way she can keep herself intact is to destroy herself, and she does this rather than be turned into commodities. Though "Herr Docktor" will peruse her remains for commodities, she will not have been defeated because of her final act.

As has often been the case in Plath's poems, the Holocaust imagery has drawn much attention from critics and readers. It is quite profuse in this poem. Lady Lazarus addresses a man as "Herr Dokter," "Herr Enemy," "Herr God," and "Herr Lucifer." She describes her face as a "Nazi lampshade" and as a "Jew linen." As previously described, one effect of these allusions is to implicate the reader, make him or her complicit in passive voyeurism by comparing him or her to the Germans who ignored the Holocaust. However, they also serve to establish the horrific atmosphere than be understood as patriarchy, as a society of consumers, or as simply cruel humans. No matter how one interprets the crowd in the poem, they complicate the poem's meaning so that it is a sophisticated exploration of the responsibility we have for each other's unhappiness, rather than simply a dire, depressive suicide note.

1.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. As reflected in her poetry, Sylvia Plath's most tortured relationship was with her:

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| (a) Father | (b) Mother |
| (c) Aunt | (d) Brother |

2. Plath attended and taught at:

- (a) Harvard University (b) Smith College
(c) Columbia University (d) Boston College

3. Plath's only novel is entitled:

- (a) Nick and the Candlestick (b) The Bell Jar
(c) Ariel (d) The Colossus

4. Plath died from:

- (a) a car crash (b) accidental drowning
(c) suicide (d) illness

5. Plath's poetry is considered part of which movement?

- (a) Modernism (b) Realism
(c) Confessional poetry (d) Romanticism

6. Which fairy tale does Plath adapt in one of her most famous juvenilia poems?

- (a) Bluebeard (b) Snow White
(c) Cinderella (d) The Little Mermaid

7. What frightens the fairytale heroine in the poem named after her?

- (a) An ogre (b) A witch
(c) Fire (d) The clock

8. "Full Fathom Five" compares Plath's father to a:

- (a) sea god (b) fire god
(c) god of the underworld (d) god of war

9. What natural danger is Plath's father compared to in "Full Fathom Five"?

- (a) Ice-mountains (b) A huge cliff
(c) An abyss (d) A thundercloud

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10. At the end of "Full Fathom Five," Plath's father seems to be:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| (a) Exiled | (b) dead and buried |
| (c) killed by Plath | (d) alive |

1.13 SUMMARY

Most of the work featured in this study guide comes from Plath's two major poetry collections – *The Colossus and Other Poems* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965). However, there are several others that date from either her early days at Smith College or the period between the publication of the two major volumes. Plath's poetry, along with the novel *The Bell Jar*, has situated her as one of 20th century literature's most formidably talented and fiercely imaginative writers. It is difficult to summarize the poems, as many of them suggest multiple meanings, but nonetheless, each has a particular topic that can help to differentiate between them.

The earliest poem discussed here is "Cinderella," a retelling of the fairy tale. Plath's adaptation focuses on the moment in which Cinderella hears the clock chime midnight as she dances with the prince. She is overcome and clasps him tightly.

"Metaphors" is a short poem that describes a pregnant woman through figurative language. The woman, uncomfortable and alienated by her large and cumbersome body, refers to herself as an elephant, and as a melon walking on two tendrils. She knows that although she feels unlovely and merely like a "cow in calf," there is nothing she can do about it.

"The Colossus" is a complicated and powerful poem that is understood to be about Plath's father, who died when she was eight. She depicts him as a mighty statue which she attempts to repair so he can speak to her. She stays in his ear at night to protect herself from the wind, and suggests that there will be no ship coming for her – she will remain in this ruin of memory forever.

"A Life" is about a woman in the hospital (perhaps after a suicide attempt) staring at a painting and looking at the immovable, happy inhabitants within. She comments that real life is more "frank" and unsettling. She has been exorcized of emotion and is wary of the future, which she compares to a "gray seagull" screaming and tattling.

In "Tulips," a woman recovers from an operation in the hospital. She is happy for the quiet and calm, and relishes the separation from her life's baggage (which includes her husband and children). However, a bouquet of tulips has arrived and brashly confronts her with its startling vitality, color, and life-force. Over time, she lets herself be brought back to life, by accepting the tulips.

"Mirror" personifies a mirror that spends its time staring at the wall across

from it. A woman frequently looks in the mirror, but is distressed and overwhelmed by her reflection, upset at watching herself grow old.

"Daddy" is a bold and violent poem directed at Plath's father. Chanting in an almost nursery-rhyme manner, she compares him to terrifying patriarchal figures like a vampire, a Nazi, and a devil. Comparing herself to a Jew at the concentration camps, she details how she needs to finally be "through" with her father. At the end, she alludes to having placed her husband, Ted Hughes, in a similarly lofty position, and decides she must kill both him and her father.

"Ariel" concerns a woman who rides a horse through the countryside in the early morning, full of fire and energy. The rider feels herself becoming one with the horse as she flies into the hot sun. It may be about suicide or poetic creativity.

In "Cut," the speaker accidentally slices her thumb with a kitchen knife. Though initially excited by the pain and spectacle of her blood and skin, she eventually feels woozy and takes a painkiller. Some believe this poem is a reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

"Lady Lazarus" features a speaker telling a "peanut-crunching crowd" about her most recent suicide attempt. It was her third time. She claims that "dying is an art," and that she performs it well. She wants to die and be reborn like a phoenix.

"Sheep in Fog" concerns a solemn and slow horse ride through the fog, one morning in the countryside. It is a bleak poem in which the speaker confesses her fear of being admitted to a heaven that is devoid of stars and her father. She laments that people are disappointed in her.

"Child" is a poem directed to Plath's child, expressing delight in the baby's new experiences. However, it concludes on an anxious note, with Plath commenting that she hopes the child does not have to experience a "wringing of hands" and a dark ceiling "without a star."

In "Contusion," Plath speaks of color flooding to a bruise on a white body, then uses bleak images of doom and finality to create a haunting mood of resignation.

"Edge," Plath's final poem, describes a dead woman as "perfected." She delights in finding an end after traveling so far, and has two dead children coiled up within her. This poem, in its bleakness, seems to be an unfiltered view of her commitment to suicide.

- All the people sat around, the mother in the centre, while she continued to groan and twist with pain, on the mat.
- The narrators father who was normally a rationalist and a practical man, also gave in to the superstitious beliefs of the villages and joined them in their cursing and praying then putting a mixture of powders and herbs on her toe, a little paraffin on the bite and lit it with a match - hoping to burn the poison away. The narrator saw his mother's toe on fire and must have

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felt afraid. A holy man, the priest, performed some rites' to probably tame the poison. Only after (20) twenty hours did the poison subside the mother was relieved of the pain, and thanked god that the scorpion bit her and spared her children.

- The poem thus brings out the mother's love and sacrificial thoughts - the maternal instinct, as well as beautifully describes the superstitions and ignorant practices followed by the villagers. The title of the poem thus is very deceptive, as it does not focus on the scorpion at all.

1.14 KEY-WORDS

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. Acanthine | - relating to the acanthus, a small herb or shrub |
| 2. Anesthetist | - someone who delivers anesthesia to a patient |
| 3. Bailiwick | - a special place, domain |
| 4. Caustic | - marked by harsh sarcasm |
| 5. Contusion | - an injury without an open wound; a bruise |
| 6. Cornucopia | - a receptacle shaped like a horn or cone |
| 7. Cypress | - a coniferous, evergreen tree |
| 8. Efface | - to eliminate; to erase; to make indistinct |
| 9. Filaments | - single, elongated threadlike objects |
| 10. Flagons | - large glasses as for wine, usually with a handle and a spout |
| 11. Keel | - a flat-bottomed barge |
| 12. Luftwaffe | - the aerial warfare branch of the German military during WWII |
| 13. Opus | - a final, great work, usually referring to a musical composition |
| 14. Oracle | - a person (like a priestess of ancient Greece) through whom a deity is believed to speak; a shrine in which a deity reveals hidden knowledge or the divine purpose through such a person |
| 15. Pillbox | - a round shallow box |
| 16. Pithy | - terse, but substantive |
| 17. Ponderous | - heavy and slow-moving |
| 18. Rondo | - an instrumental composition; here, a dance |
| 19. Stasis | - lack of movement |
| 20. Swaddlings | - clothes an infant is enveloped/wrapped in |
| 21. Tendrils | - something suggestive of a tendril (slender leaf that |

- attaches a plant to its support)
- 22. Tor** - a rough, craggy hill
- 23. Troublous** - a form of the word troubling; stormy

1.15 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does the poet create a sense of the hawk's superiority?
2. Why do you think the poet is written in present tense?
3. Could this poem be linked to the government and political leaders?
4. Is the reader supposed to agree with the hawk's opinion of itself?
5. Why do you think the poet has chosen a hawk to convey his opinions?
6. Think about some of the images that recur in Hopkins's poems, and discuss why they are appropriate to the themes that most concerned him as a poet.
7. Are Hopkins's poems at all political? Do they make any attempt to come to terms with questions of history or nation? If so, where and how?
8. Hopkins is famous as a poet of both nature and religion. How does he combine these two traditional poetic subjects, and to what effect?
9. Yeats's style is quite unique among both nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets. What characterizes his poetic style?
10. What kind of consciousness seems to be indicated by his rough meters, half-rhymes, and frequent violations of formal constraints?
11. How do these traits affect, enhance, or interfere with his aesthetic articulation of his themes?
12. Give a literary analysis of Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting".
13. What messages Larkin tried to provide by the poem "Ambulances"? Explain.
14. Briefly explain Yeats the Second Coming.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (a) 2. (b) 3. (b) 4. (c) 5. (c) 6. (c) 7. (d) 8. (a) 9. (a) 10. (b)

1.16 FURTHER READINGS

1. "English for Competitive Exams" By Dr. R.P. Bhatnagar
2. "Unique Quintessence of General English" Edited By Dr. S. Sen and Others and revised by Dr. G.S. Mansukhani.
3. Bottrall, Margaret, ed. G.M. Hopkins, Poems, A Casebook. Macmillan, London, 1975.
4. Hartman, Geoffrey. Hopkins: A Collection of Critical Essays. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966.

UNIT - 2

G.B. SHAW'S "CANDIDA"

STRUCTURE

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction to the Playwright
- 2.2 Candida: A Brief Introduction
- 2.3 George Bernard Shaw as a Dramatist
- 2.4 Characterisation
- 2.5 Bernard versus Candida
- 2.6 Self-Assessment
- 2.7 Summary
- 2.8 Key-Words
- 2.9 Review Questions
- 2.10 Further Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Introduce G.B. Shaw as a Dramatist
- Discuss “ themes and plot of the Play Candida.

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAYWRIGHT

After the first performance of *Arms and the Man*, the vigorous applause quieted as the author stepped forward to speak. Suddenly a man booed. “My dear fellow,” Shaw replied, “I quite agree with you but what are we two against so many?” The poet and playwright W. B. Yeats, who was present that night of April 21, 1894, later wrote: “From that moment Bernard Shaw became the most formidable man in modern letters, and even the most drunken of medical students knew it” (The Autobiography of William Butler Yeats [New York, Collier, 1965], 187). Yeats correctly understood Shaw’s importance but he overestimated the play-going public. When Shaw read his newest play, *Candida*, to actor-manager Charles Wyndham early in 1895, the latter said the public wouldn’t be ready for it for twenty-five years (St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw: His Life, Works and Friends* [New York, William Morrow 1956], 339). Wyndham’s opinion reflected that of the majority of producers and playgoers of the day. Shaw’s plays (five to date) were of a type new to English theatre. As he put it: “Every subject struck my mind at an angle that produced reflections new to my audience” (G. B. Shaw,

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Sixteen Self Sketches [London, Constable, 1949], 57). It turned out Wyndham was too pessimistic; *Candida* was produced successfully in London in 1904 (Ervine, 342).

We think of Shaw mainly as a playwright, but early on he pursued many other ways of satisfying a strong need to express his opinions and ideas. After his basic schooling, he educated himself by a habit of voracious reading; attending galleries, concerts and plays; and by and associating with people who knew about topics that interested him: politics, economics, socialism, art, music, opera, theater—to name a few.



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Throughout his long life (1856–1950) he was a prodigious letter writer. In his twenties, with considerable effort, he transformed himself into an accomplished public speaker so that he could help promote social and cultural change.

By 1889, at age thirty-three, and thirteen years after leaving his native Dublin, Shaw had gained considerable celebrity in the political, intellectual, and cultural world of London. He had published two novels and written three more. He wrote hundreds of contributions to periodicals in the form of book reviews and art, music, and theatre criticism. He was in demand as a lecturer (A. M. Gibbs, *Bernard Shaw: A Life* [Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2005], 137). He had even tried writing a play in collaboration with his friend and fellow drama critic, William Archer. Shaw felt he had a talent for writing dialogue but not for plot construction; Archer felt he was good at plots and provided Shaw with one. After writing two acts Shaw had used up all of Archer's plot and asked for more. Archer replied that his plot was an organic whole and he couldn't add to it. There the matter rested (Charles Archer, *William Archer: Life, Work and Friendships* [New Haven, Yale University Press, 1931], 136).

Around 1887, through Archer, Shaw became acquainted with, then deeply influenced by, the plays of Henrik Ibsen. The Norwegian playwright's work was a focal point of heated debate about the social role of the theatre and the moral and religious foundations of society itself. Ibsen spoke to Shaw's reforming instincts. In 1891 Shaw published the first book on Ibsen in English, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. He saw in Ibsen "the possibility of a type of drama that engaged seriously and imaginatively with moral and philosophical issues in ways that presented a sharp contrast to the great majority of the theatrical entertainments that made up the staple diet of the late-nineteenth-century theater" (Gibbs, 153). Archer, a translator of Ibsen, met the Norwegian author in 1887 and observed: "He is essentially a kindred spirit with Shaw—a paradoxist, a sort of Devil's advocate, who goes about picking holes in every 'well-known fact'" (Archer, 156).

Then as now, in London's West End as on Broadway, it was difficult to have

plays produced if they were unusual or dealt with serious subjects. However, there was enough interest in such work to induce a few people to form small companies performing in parts of London equivalent to New York's off-Broadway. One was J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre, which opened in 1891 with Ibsen's *Ghosts* (in Archer's translation). Grein's venture was successful beyond expectation. Walking with Shaw one autumn evening in 1892, Grein complained of the lack of new British playwrights for his theatre. Shaw replied that he was a new British playwright and that he had a play ready; Grein accepted it on the spot. That summer, after several unsuccessful earlier attempts, Shaw had at last completed the comedy begun with Archer in 1884. He completely refashioned it into an anti-romantic comedy about marriage, money, social position, and coming to terms with being a slum landlord. *Widower's Houses*, Shaw's first play, opened on December 9, 1892 for only two performances. The hope that it might be taken up by some commercial manager for public production went unfulfilled. Once started, Shaw never stopped writing plays. The next performance of any of them was the 1894 *Arms and the Man*—in the West End this time. Even so, it took about ten years more before Shaw was a solidly established playwright.

America was discovering Shaw in this period and helping to advance his career. Richard Mansfield starred in *Arms and the Man* in New York just months after its London premiere. In 1897 he premiered *The Devil's Disciple*. He toured both plays for many years and the royalties significantly boosted Shaw's income (Archibald Henderson, *Bernard Shaw Playboy and Prophet* [New York, D. Appleton, 1932], 363-5). Anna Morgan directed an amateur production of *Candida* in Chicago in 1899. Archer saw a performance and wrote approvingly to Shaw who gave Morgan permission to produce any of his plays, and in 1901 she did *Caesar and Cleopatra* (Henderson, 397-8). Arnold Daly's 1903 production of *Candida* ran for over 150 performances. He then toured it, revived it in the 1904-05 season, and toured it again. Later that fall Daly authorized two other touring companies. At the close of the 1904-05 season, *Candida* had been seen in many of the principal cities of the U.S. (Henderson, 407-410). Daly had a successful five-month run of *You Never Can Tell* early in 1905, then in October had a succès de scandale with *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, which was closed for indecency during its New Haven tryout. The mayor of New York threatened to arrest Daly if he opened the play there. Daly courageously did so, and he and his company were duly arrested (Ervine, 347-8).

Instrumental in turning the tide of Shaw's fame in England was the remarkable enterprise of John E. Vedrenne and Harley Granville-Barker who took over management of the Royal Court Theater, London in fall 1904. That first season they produced a range of classical and contemporary plays, including five by Shaw (*Candida* among them). *John Bull's Other Island* was so popular that King Edward VII commanded a special performance. It was reported that he laughed so hard he broke his chair (Ervine, 346). In May 1905 The London Stage Society produced Shaw's first masterpiece, *Man and Superman*, which

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later entered the Court repertoire (Henderson, 432). When the Vedrenne-Barker partnership ended after two-and-a-half years, the Court Theatre had given 988 performances, 701 of them were of eleven plays by Shaw (Ervine, 347). By 1907, in his fifty-first year, Shaw had established himself first and foremost as a playwright.

2.2 CANDIDA: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The Reverend James Morell, a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England, is working in his drawing room. His morning is enlivened by a procession of visitors, some welcome, some not so much. First, is his secretary, Miss Prospeprine Garnett, who is arranging his usual busy schedule of lectures. Next is the Reverend Alexander Mill (“Lexy”), Morell’s curate, followed soon by Mr. Burgess, Morell’s father-in-law. Finally, Candida, Morell’s pretty and witty wife enters, followed closely by Eugene Marchbanks, a strange and insecure poet of eighteen years who has become a frequent guest in the Morell household.

Finally, Morell and Marchbanks find themselves quite alone. Marchbanks tells Morell that he is in love with Candida and means to take her away from what he sees as a plain, unhappy marriage. At first, Morell patronizes him and refuses to take him seriously. As the conversation becomes more heated, Marchbanks’s words begin to strike home. Marchbanks is about to leave when Candida enters and convinces him to come and help her set the table for lunch. Marchbanks feels he has won a great victory, and Morell is left alone, with his confidence in the security of his marriage badly shaken.

That afternoon Morell and Marchbanks are again in the drawing room when Marchbanks is horrified to learn that Candida is filling and trimming lamps. He chastises Morell for allowing his wife’s delicate fingers to be sullied by such work. Morell is again angered, almost to the point of violence. When Candida enters, Marchbanks contrasts the filling of dirty lamps with poetic visions of the romantic places he would like to take her where the lamps are stars, “and don’t have to be filled with paraffin oil every day.” Ever practical, she leads him off to the kitchen to slice onions.

Candida soon reenters to find her husband alone. Concerned about his worn appearance, she urges him to stop working and sit and talk with her. She tells him that the women who attend his lectures aren’t really moved by what he says. They simply come to look at him because they, like her, are in love with him.

However, she feels sorry that poor, young Eugene has never had the love that her husband is accustomed to. She is concerned for how Eugene will ever learn about love; and, gradually, Morell realizes that he would be foolish to simply take his wife’s love for granted. He is in a state bordering on mental agony when Marchbanks enters. Finally, Morell leaves for a lecture he has agreed to, leaving Marchbanks alone with Candida for the evening.

While Morell is gone, Marchbanks recites poetry to Candida by firelight. She, however, is deep in thought and largely oblivious to him. Finally, she tells him to put his poetry aside and come and talk to her. Morell returns from his lecture to find Marchbanks on his knees in front of Candida with his arms clasped on her lap. Unembarrassed, Candida leaves to take care of household business. Morell and Marchbanks argue again, about the young poet's feelings for Candida and about their very differing views on romance, marriage, and life.

When Candida reenters, the two men tell Candida of the arguments they have been having and tell her they want her to choose between the two of them. "I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other," she responds, and asks what each will bid for her. Morell finally breaks down and weeps but responds to her request with practicality, offering strength, honesty, industry, and dignity. Marchbanks is ever the poet, offering his "heart's need."

Candida will, of course, make her own decision, but, before she is finished, she hopes to teach these two men something. She is, after all, her own woman—and, if choose she must, it will be on her terms, not theirs. She likes them and displays them on the mantel, but Sanjeev wants to get rid of them. This sets the stage for a struggle between Sanjeev and Twinkle over who is going to control their relationship. Sanjeev, from whose point of view the story is mostly told, learns a great deal about his new wife and what it will take for them to have a harmonious marriage.

2.3 GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AS A DRAMATIST

Bernard Shaw was a dramatist with a purpose. His purpose was to build up a kingdom of heaven on the face of the earth. He believes that God has given us a beautiful world that nothing but our folly keeps from being it a paradise. We entertain airy notion and fantastic emotion regarding all temporal things. He wants to drive out all these rotten ideas from the mind of men with the help of the west wind.

That is why; he took up the current social political problems as the subject-matter of his plays. For example, he discussed the problem of prostitution in "Mrs. Warren's profession", London's slum in "Widower's House", the profession of doctors in "Doctor's Dilemma", war and marriage in "Arms and the man" and love and marriage in "Candida". So his plays are Problem plays. But it would be unfair on our part to dismiss Shaw as a writer of Problem Plays only. In fact his plays are more than Problem Plays. They are concerned with innate human quality or with human nature itself. That is why; problems discussed in them have been done away with.

In this respect he stands near William Shakespeare and he will be read and preserved for all time to come.

But critics have raised much dust against him. They feel that Shavian plays

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lack conflict. As yet the established doctrine has been “no conflicts no drama “In fine, conflict constitutes the soul of a drama. But Shavian characters are always seen sitting round a table and discussing this or that problem. In fact his plays present the tone and temper of a debating hall in which someone pleads for the motion and the other one against the motion. It is a fact that Shavian plays lack physical conflict. We hear in “Arms and the Man that a battle is being fought vigorously by both the sides. But we do not see anybody fighting there. Such examples are numerous and confirm our belief in lack of conflict in Shavian plays. When we dive deep in his plays, we find that his plays do not lack conflict. In fact, he has replaced physical conflict by mental conflict. As he believes that mental conflict is fiercer than the physical conflict. Besides, he believes that it is better to defeat a man on the plane of mind than to kill a man in the battle- field. As a victory achieved by means of physical force is temporary in comparison to victory achieved on the plane of mind. That is why his characters fight a battle of ideas with the help of logic and argument. They try to defeat their opponent on the plane of mind. So the conflict we find in a Shavian plays is more vigorous than the conflict which we find in other plays. That is why it is not fair to say that Shavian plays lack conflict.

It is equally unfair to say that Shavian characters are his mouthpieces. They are not independent of the author. It is a truth that Shaw expresses his ideas through the mouth of his characters. But it is not easy to say who represents Shaw. For example who represents Bernard Shaw in “Arms and the Man”? Both Sergius and Bluntschli present a valid case from the opposite angle. The same holds good with “Candida. We cannot say with confidence that Morell represents Shaw or Marchbanks represents Shaw. Both hold contradictory opinions on important matters. For example Morell says:”The overpaying instinct is generous one”Marchbanks says:”No cowardice, incompetence.”Again Morell says: “Man can climb to the highest summits but he cannot dwell for long.” Marchbanks says “It is false: there can he dwell forever .”We find that his characters hold contradictory opinions and the very fact prove that his characters are not his mouthpieces. The fact is that he allows his characters to hold independent views on important matters. They are not puppet in the hands of dramatist. The mind which creates and the man who suffers in his plays are two different beings. So he is as great an artist in the field of character portrayal as Shakespeare has been.

Some critics say that Shaw is a propagandist. He tries to preach a moral lesson. But this is also not a fact. He is not a moralist in the sense that he tries to preach a lesson. In fact he allows his characters to examine the pros and cons of a problem so that truth may be revealed to the spectators. He does not say that war is good or war is bad in “Arms and the Man” But he allows his characters to point out the merit or demerit of war. He expresses nothing in the form of conclusion. Just as a farmer separates the chaff from the grain and spreads it before the customer and thus customer decides the quality of the grain, in the same way he separates the chaff of falsehood from upon the grain of reality and

scatters it before the people. He does not propagate an idea. Like a true artist he exhibits reality. The function of an artist is to reveal the reality which lies beyond appearance. In "Candida, too, Shaw does not point out the secret in the poet's heart. He leaves it to be understood by the people.

Bernard Shaw attaches long prefaces to his plays. This is unusual on the part of a dramatist. But this is deliberate. The purpose behind long preface is to make his readers or audiences understand his plays. His prefaces help in the act of understanding and representing the plays on the stage. Thus these prefaces serve his dramatic purpose,

2.4 CHARACTERISATION

One of the faults which has been found in the "method" approach to acting is that it permits the interpreter to give the characters traits and dimensions which the playwright did not intend the character to have. For example, it is easy to read depth into the characters of Shaw's *Candida* - sensitivity into Marchbanks, for instance - and thus not only defeat the playwright's intention, but his very specific (and lengthy), stage directions.

It is important to note, in any discussion of a Shaw play, that George Bernard Shaw was an Irish Protestant who had moved to England at the age of twenty and, at the time of the writing of *Candida*, had not set foot in Ireland since. Shaw was a quintessential iconoclast, with no great love for England, religion, most institutions and most people. With regard to *Candida*, this is essential, as all of the characters are very English, three are directly associated with organized religion, and one is the errant son of a nobleman. There are four themes in *Candida*: ignorance, brutality, hubris and self-righteousness. Each character displays at least one of these traits, and Marchbanks is master of all. Marchbanks may be the most dynamic, but the pivotal character, in my opinion, is the Reverend James Mavor Morell.

"The Reverend James Mavor Morell, is a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England, and an active member of the Guild of St. Matthew and the Christian Social Union." He is forty years old, good looking, well mannered, and has a "sound unaffected voice... with the clean athletic articulation of a practiced orator..." His affect on his audiences, especially the women who make up the vast majority, is mesmerizing. The effect of his message, especially on these same women, is nil. Morell lives for the praise and adoration his oratory produces, and for the perceived love, admiration and respect his calling invokes in his wife. He understands nothing of his real effect on people and, at least until the second act, would reject any suggestion that his path is not absolutely correct and totally righteous. He would never believe that his curate is simply a conceited sycophant, or that his secretary's entire interest is in his person, rather than his preaching. And he firmly believes that his position in the world and in his home is totally unshakeable. Even the three "minor" characters exist only to illuminate

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his character. James Mavor Morell, in his ignorance, is the quintessentially happy man.

Who are these "minor" characters? The Reverend Alexander Mill is "a young gentleman gathered by Morell from the nearest University settlement, whither he had come from Oxford to give the East End of London the benefit of his university training." He is, at least to me, intellectually dishonest and thoroughly obnoxious. He has won Morell over "by a doglike devotion." Burgess is a businessman - ignorant, shallow, greedy, bigoted, totally insensitive to the feelings of those around him. (I have difficulty believing that Candida could have been sired and raised by such a boor.) His role in the play is to underscore Morell's self-righteousness by giving him the opportunity to pontificate on his father-in-law's greed. And last, there's Proserpine Garnett, Morell's secretary, who suffers from what Candida calls "Prossy's complaint." Prossy is a lonely, 30 year-old, lower middle-class woman who loves Morell, but would never admit it, even to herself. She provides the definition of Morell's effect on others.

Candida has been called Shaw's representation of the "ideal woman." On the surface she is young (thirty three), intelligent, physically attractive, kind, efficient, sensitive, loving, supportive, a good wife and a loving mother. (It may be relevant that when I, at the age of eighteen, played the role of Marchbanks, I actually fell in love with the production's Candida. I saw only these wonderful qualities. It was only years later that I saw Candida as a whole "person.") Candida is not all of these things. Her kindness is shallow and her sensitivity is limited to those who are immediately important to her. She has made a successful (and probably happy), marriage by shielding her husband from reality. She has shown him respect, while having little respect for what he thought he was trying to accomplish.



Did u know?

Marchbanks is pathetic. In describing him, Shaw uses the word, "sensitiveness," as opposed to "sensitive."

It is appropriate, for the only emotions Marchbanks feels are his own. Youth may excuse his hubris - his assumption that he could almost dictate Candida's feelings, but I see no way to excuse the viciousness he shows to Morell, or the disdain he shows the other characters, or the brutality of his demand that Candida choose between them. Marchbanks is a poet because Shaw says he is a poet. But poetry, indeed all art, is a giving, and Marchbanks is a taker.

Marchbanks is absolutely convinced of his own rectitude and righteousness. But he is a coward, and can only express himself brutally. Morell is absolutely convinced of his own rectitude and righteousness, and cannot hear unless beaten over the head. Candida makes Eugene's judgment - she chooses her husband - but not until making it clear to Morell that he is:

1. The weaker of the two
2. The recipient, not of respect, but of Prossy's complaint"
3. Master of the house because she has made him so.

All true, but all totally devastating for an arrogant man like Morell to hear. But he doesn't hear. In the end, life will go on as before, because James Mavor Morell will believe he won. Candida will dismiss, if not forget, Marchbanks. Marchbanks will live or die, become a poet or not, grow up, or simply age. The secret in the poet's heart? Many people have suggested many possibilities

2.5 BERNARD VERSUS CANDIDA

Bernard Shaw is often thought of as the author of plays of ideas or even propaganda plays where the preaching and the laughing are inextricably mixed. However, the actual writing of the plays and the plays themselves are far more complex than either the popular impressions or Bernard Shaw's explanations would suggest. The distinguished playwright and critic J. B. Priestley wrote, "Out of his own passion for ideas, his intellectual delight in discussion, the masterly debating style he forged for himself, a brisk good-humour that came naturally to him . . . and a tough knockabout sense of the Theatre, he created a new type of drama". Candida, which, according to some accounts, was Shaw's favorite play is certainly a prototype of that new drama, but it was built from many more observations, occupations, and obsessions than are in Priestley's catalogue.

Shaw, who often referred to Candida as "the Mother play," connects it to "a few weeks in Florence, where I occupied myself with the religious art of the Middle Ages" and "a very remarkable collection of the works of our British 'pre-Raphaelite' painters" in Birmingham). Indeed, as Louis Crompton argues in *Shaw the Dramatist*, "Shaw conceived of Candida as a Hegelian drama, showing the conflicts of two systems of ideals, each inadequate in itself, but both having a claim to our interest and respect". Or as Shaw put it, "To distil the quintessential drama from pre-Raphaelitism . . . it must be shewn at its best in conflict with the first broken, nervous, stumbling attempts to formulate its own revolt against itself as it develops into something higher". That revolt (or at least that strong difference of opinion) involved, for instance, admirers of William Morris as far removed from each other as Bernard Shaw, who "admired the social revolutionary" and William Butler Yeats, who "deplored Morris's political interests and was attracted exclusively by 'the idle singer of an empty day'". In the play, of course, Yeats (with a plentiful admixture of Shelley) becomes Marchbanks, while Morrell is closer to Shaw's basic beliefs. However, no Shaw plan is ever so schematic. Marchbanks is arguably the most frequent speaker of Shavianisms, and Candida also speaks a set of necessary truths.

Of course, there were many other influences on and elements in the play. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* had served as a catalyst in several senses. Ibsen's vision of Nora as the doll in the house of her husband led to Shaw's presentation of

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Morrell as the doll in Candida's house (Michael Holroyd, Bernard Shaw: The Search for Love [New York: Random House, 1988], 315). The three-way struggle among Marchbanks, Morrell, and Candida has a sense of realism about it that leads naturally (along with Shaw's anti-romantic principles) to a refusal to follow the normal plot lines usually laid down for such plays. Candida is not resolved romantically, idealistically, or even naturalistically. Even those people who believe that Candida made the right choice may have problems with her reasons for doing so. What sort of romantic triangle ends with the would-be lover sympathizing with the husband? Perhaps some of this complexity and some of Shaw's insights come from yet another of his sources of inspiration.

With financing from Henry Irving, Charles Charrington staged a production of *A Doll's House* "to bring out his wife as a great actress" (Stephen Winsten, *Jesting Apostle: The Private Life of Bernard Shaw*. Shaw, who was no stranger to unconventional relationships, was besotted with her. As he describes it, "I found myself suddenly magnetized, irradiated, transported, fired, rejuvenated, bewitched". He wrote "a sequel to *A Doll's House* which Archer read and begged him not to publish because it was" so bad. Having failed with a comedy, Shaw tried to write Janet Achurch a tragedy, but he was compelled to give it up because, he said, "he could write nothing beautiful enough for her, and that he could no longer allow himself to be in love with her because 'nobody short of an archangel with purple and gold wings shall henceforth be allowed to approach you'".

Clearly, Bernard Shaw did manage to create a play that was, at least in part, a homage to his infatuation. Marchbanks suggests that he and Morrell go to the ends of the Earth to find a worthier lover for Candida than either of them, "some beautiful archangel with purple wings"(Complete Plays with Prefaces, volume III, 256). "The rivalry between Marchbanks and Morrell over Morrell's wife Candida carries echoes from several of Shaw's three-cornered affairs . . . but was intended as an interpretation of the current drama between himself and the Charringtons. . . . In *Candida* herself he had written a part at which Janet would excel. Its success, he hoped, would nerve her to separate her interests from Charrington's, emerging from domesticity as an independent actress of genius" (Holroyd, 315).

However, the play and its early productions seem to have escaped its creator's control. In Margot Peters' words, "Candida does not change, as Shaw believed Janet must" (cited in Holroyd, 315). Shaw insisted that Janet Achurch should play Candida, but he could not enforce his casting, and he paid a price for his loyalty. Richard Mansfield, who was to make Shaw famous in America, accepted the play and started rehearsals, but then he cancelled the production. He had many reasons for his action but certainly one of the strongest was, as he wrote to Shaw, "I couldn't have made love to your Candida [Janet Achurch] if I had taken ether" (cited in St. John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends*).

In an irony that is positively Shavian (and which almost suggests that the play was writing the playwright and not the other way round), Shaw came to

reject Janet Achurch, saying, when at long last he saw her play *Candida*, that she "wasn't the right woman for it at all" (Holroyd, 383). Like Marchbanks, Shaw found himself sympathizing with the despised husband, asking Janet Achurch, "How is he . . . to be got out of your clutches: that is what I want to know?" (cited in Holroyd, 380). Bernard Shaw, of course, could claim that he had already provided a sufficient justification (if not perhaps an explanation) for all these complexities in his preface to the play. Speaking of "the distant light of the new age," he said, "Discernible at first only by the eyes of the man of genius, it must be focussed by him on the speculum of a work of art. . . . The artist himself has no other way of making himself conscious of the ray: it is by a blind instinct that he keeps on building up his masterpieces until their pinnacles catch the glint of the unrisen sun". Or to quote Pippin, "They say the whole is greater/ Than the sum of the parts it's made of". And finally, in a reminiscence of Falstaff, Shaw is not only debatable in himself but the cause of debate in other men—and women.



Notes

From 1888 to 1898 Shaw spent his life as a professional critic.

2.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT

Choose the correct answer:

1. Shaw was a
 - (a) Vegetarian
 - (b) Fabian
 - (c) Social Fascist
 - (d) All of these .
2. G.B. Shaw was a/an?
 - (a) English man
 - (b) Irish man
 - (c) American man
 - (d) None of these
3. From 1888 to 1898 Shaw spent his life as
 - (a) Dramatist
 - (b) Teacher
 - (c) Professional Critic
 - (d) None of these
4. Shaw died on 2nd November
 - (a) 1950
 - (b) 1970
 - (c) 1956
 - (d) 1945
5. The Swedish Academy voted him the Nobel Prize for Literature in.....
 - (a) 1925
 - (b) 1926
 - (c) 1930
 - (d) 1940

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2.7 SUMMARY

Candida, a comedy by playwright George Bernard Shaw, was written in 1894 and first published in 1898, as part of his Plays Pleasant. The central characters are clergyman James Morell, his wife Candida and a youthful poet, Eugene Marchbanks, who tries to win Candida's affections. The play questions Victorian notions of love and marriage, asking what a woman really desires from her husband. The cleric is a Christian Socialist, allowing Shaw—himself a Fabian Socialist—to weave political issues, current at the time, into the story.

Shaw attempted but failed to have a production of the play put on in the 1890s. However, in late 1903 actor Arnold Daly had such a great success with the play that Shaw would write by 1904 that New York was seeing "an outbreak of Candidamania." The play would soon be done in a notable London production, when, in 1904, The Royal Court Theatre performed it in six matinees. The same theatre would go on to successfully stage several of Shaw's plays from 1904 to 1907, including further revivals of Candida.

2.8 KEY-WORDS

1. **Paraphernalia** : Personal belongings, the article used a particular activity.
2. **Candida** : A comedy by playwright George Bernard Shaw

2.9 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the character analysis of James Morell?
2. Critically comment on the character of Eugene Marchbanks.
3. How can George Bernard Shaw's play, Candida, be explained as a play of ideas and a problem play?
4. What is the man versus man conflict in the play "Candida"?
5. Discuss the role of Eugene Marchbanks in Candida .
6. Is Candida a problem play? Explain.

Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (d), 2. (b), 3. (c), 4. (a), 5. (a),

2.10 FURTHER READINGS

1. Adams, Elsie Bonita, Bernard Shaw and the Aesthetes (Ohio State University Press, 1986, ISBN 0-8142-0155-5).
2. A B Shaw, letter to William Archer, c. 21 April 1898. Printed in Eight Modern

UNIT - 3

E.M FORSTER: WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

STRUCTURE

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Plot summary
- 3.3 E.M. Forster's Biography
- 3.4 Where angels fear to tread
- 3.5 Critical Overview
- 3.6 Self -Assessment
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Key-Words
- 3.9. Review Questions
- 3.10. Further Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to :

- Know about E.M. Forster
- Discuss the novel Where Angels Fear to Tread

3.1 INTRODUCTION

E.M. Forster (1879-1970) is one of the important novelists who dealt with the personal and social lives of the people in England during the early beginning of the twentieth century. During his literary career, he developed gradually his views about man and his position in society.

In his first novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread (1902), the focus is laid on local and personal issues in the lives of the characters. It is limited to the relations between neighbours in small communities. Though the setting is shifted to Italy, Forster does not make full use of this shift to present cultural or racial conflicts; rather he limits his plot to the private troubles of some characters that have no wider interest in life. His characters are isolated from the larger currents of the

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social and political life, preoccupied with some personal problems that take all their time and energies. But *Howards End* (1910) shows a clear and important shift from the limited affairs of daily life to the more general and crucial affairs that concern the whole society. He deals with the political and economic issues which were very important in England at that time.

3.2 PLOT SUMMARY

On a journey to Tuscany with her young friend and traveling companion Caroline Abbott, widowed Lilia Herriton falls in love with both Italy and Gino, a handsome Italian much younger than herself, and decides to stay. Furious, her dead husband's family send Lilia's brother-in-law Philip to Italy to prevent a misalliance, but he arrives too late. Lilia had already married the Italian and becomes pregnant again. While giving birth to her son, she dies. The Herritons send Philip again to Italy, this time to save the infant boy from an uncivilized life and to save the family's reputation. Not wanting to be outdone—or considered any less moral or concerned than Caroline for the child's welfare—Lilia's in-laws try to take the lead in traveling to Italy. In the public eye, they make it known that it is both their right and their duty to travel to Monteriano to obtain custody of the infant so that he can be raised as an Englishman. Secretly, though, they have no regard for the child; only public appearances.



Did u know?

Novels of Forster: *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905); *The Longest Journey* (1907); *A Room with a View* (1908); *Howards End* (1910); *A Passage to India* (1924); and *Maurice* (posthumously, 1971).

Similarly to *A Room with a View*, both Italy and its inhabitants are presented as exuding an irresistible charm, to which eventually Caroline Abbott also succumbs. However, there is a tragic ending to the novel: the accidental death of Lilia's child, which spurs a series of drastic changes within the story. Gino's physical outburst toward Philip in response to the news makes Philip realize what it is like to truly be alive. The guilt felt by Lilia's sister-in-law Harriet causes her to lose her mind. Finally, in Forster's novel, Philip realizes that he is in love with Caroline Abbott but that he can never have her, because she admits, dramatically, to being in love with Gino.

3.3 E.M. FORSTER'S BIOGRAPHY

Forster's father, an architect, died when the son was a baby, and he was brought up by his mother and paternal aunts. The difference between the two families, his father's being strongly evangelical with a high sense of moral responsibility, his mother's more feckless and generous-minded, gave him an enduring insight into the nature of domestic tensions, while his education as a dayboy (day student)

at Tonbridge School, Kent, was responsible for many of his later criticisms of the English public school (private) system. At King's College, Cambridge, he enjoyed a sense of liberation. For the first time he was free to follow his own intellectual inclinations; and he gained a sense of the uniqueness of the individual, of the healthiness of moderate skepticism, and of the importance of Mediterranean civilization as a counterbalance to the more straitlaced attitudes of northern European countries.

On leaving Cambridge, Forster decided to devote his life to writing. His first novels and short stories were redolent of an age that was shaking off the shackles of Victorianism. While adopting certain themes (the importance of women in their own right, for example) from earlier English novelists such as George Meredith, he broke with the elaborations and intricacies favoured in the late 19th century and wrote in a freer, more colloquial style. From the first his novels included a strong strain of social comment, based on acute observation of middle-class life. There was also a deeper concern, however, a belief, associated with Forster's interest in Mediterranean "paganism," that, if men and women were to achieve a satisfactory life, they needed to keep contact with the earth and to cultivate their imaginations. In an early novel, *The Longest Journey* (1907), he suggested that cultivation of either in isolation is not enough, reliance on the earth alone leading to a genial brutishness and exaggerated development of imagination undermining the individual's sense of reality.

The same theme runs through *Howards End*, a more ambitious novel that brought Forster his first major success. The novel is conceived in terms of an alliance between the Schlegel sisters, Margaret and Helen, who embody the liberal imagination at its best, and Ruth Wilcox, the owner of the house *Howards End*, which has remained close to the earth for generations; spiritually they recognize a kinship against the values of Henry Wilcox and his children, who conceive life mainly in terms of commerce. In a symbolic ending, Margaret Schlegel marries Henry Wilcox and brings him back, a broken man, to *Howards End*, reestablishing there a link (however heavily threatened by the forces of progress around it) between the imagination and the earth.

The resolution is a precarious one, and World War I was to undermine it still further. Forster spent three wartime years in Alexandria, doing civilian war work, and visited India twice, in 1912–13 and 1921. When he returned to former themes in his postwar novel *A Passage to India*, they presented themselves in a negative form: against the vaster scale of India, in which the earth itself seems alien, a resolution between it and the imagination could appear as almost impossible to achieve. Only Adela Quested, the young girl who is most open to experience, can glimpse their possible concord, and then only momentarily, in the courtroom during the trial at which she is the central witness. Much of the novel is devoted to less spectacular values: those of seriousness and truthfulness (represented here by the administrator Fielding) and of an outgoing and benevolent

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sensibility (embodied in the English visitor Mrs. Moore). Neither Fielding nor Mrs. Moore is totally successful; neither totally fails. The novel ends in an uneasy equilibrium. Immediate reconciliation between Indians and British is ruled out, but the further possibilities inherent in Adela's experience, along with the surrounding uncertainties, are echoed in the ritual birth of the God of Love amid scenes of confusion at a Hindu festival.

The values of truthfulness and kindness dominate Forster's later thinking. A reconciliation of humanity to the earth and its own imagination may be the ultimate ideal, but Forster sees it receding in a civilization devoting itself more and more to technological progress. The values of common sense, goodwill, and regard for the individual, on the other hand, can still be cultivated, and these underlie Forster's later pleas for more liberal attitudes. During World War II he acquired a position of particular respect as a man who had never been seduced by totalitarianisms of any kind and whose belief in personal relationships and the simple decencies seemed to embody some of the common values behind the fight against Nazism and Fascism. In 1946 his old college gave him an honorary fellowship, which enabled him to make his home in Cambridge and to keep in communication with both old and young until his death.

Although the later Forster is an important figure in mid-20th-century culture, his emphasis on a kindly, uncommitted, and understated morality being congenial to many of his contemporaries, it is by his novels that he is more likely to be remembered, and these are best seen in the context of the preceding Romantic tradition. The novels sustain the cult of the heart's affections that was central to that tradition, but they also share with the first Romantics a concern for the status of man in nature and for his imaginative life, a concern that remains important to an age that has turned against other aspects of Romanticism.

In addition to essays, short stories, and novels, Forster wrote a biography of his great-aunt, Marianne Thornton (1956); a documentary account of his Indian experiences, *The Hill of Devi* (1953); and *Alexandria: A History and a Guide* (1922; new ed., 1961). *Maurice*, a novel with a homosexual theme, was published posthumously in 1971 but written many years earlier.

3.4 WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD

Where Angels Fear to Tread presents two settings that represent two different civilizations connected together by a secondary character, Lilia, a foolish and headstrong widow of the eldest son of Mrs. Herriton who keeps her at Sawston so as to ensure that Lilia's little daughter, Irma, shall be brought up a good Herriton, loyal to the family's old laws and reputation. To keep Lilia from making any undesirable marriage, Mrs. Herriton sends her to Italy chaperoned by Miss Caroline Abbott, a girl ten years younger than Lilia but known in Sawston's society for her respectability. But soon after her arrival in Italy, Lilia falls in love with Gino, the son of an Italian dentist, marries him and settles down with him

in Monteriano. Lilia's marriage to Gino sparks the main action of the novel. The young widow hopes to find in Italy and marriage a freedom that she has been denied to in Sawston, but she is disappointed. Gino proves bad as a husband; incapable of offering his wife the kind of freedom she wishes. Left to herself in the little provincial Italian town, Lilia feels more miserable than she has ever been in Sawston. Gino asserts an Italian husband's authority on her, accompanied with blind and terrible anger. Lilia dies on child-birth, and the English family at Sawston plans rescue of the infant from his father's hand. Three persons are summoned to the job: Philip, the younger, clever, surviving Herriton son, his sister, Harriet, and Caroline Abbott. Direct bribery and persuasion having failed, an attempt is made to kidnap the baby who is killed during the attempt accidentally in a horrible incident. It is Harriet who has kidnapped the baby without her brother's knowledge. It is only in the incident that Philip discovers the child dead. The father, Gino, after an outburst of insane anger, is comforted and becomes calm and friendly. The novel ends with the return of the English party to England in a new spirit and consideration of matters.

Into such a simple narrative, Forster employs pieces of sharp description of places, characters and situations which give to the whole affair a convincing air of reality. All the principal characters in the novel undergo some changes in personality as a result of the sad experiences they pass through. Yet Caroline and Philip are the two protagonists on whom the attention is focused.

Caroline encourages Lilia's marriage because she hates "the idleness, the stupidity" of Sawston and hopes that Lilia will escape Sawston apathy, but she soon realizes that Lilia only "changed one groove for another- a worse groove. Hence she feels that she is the cause of Lilia's unhappiness and death. There is only one way for her of atonement: The child must be brought to England and properly reared. When she comes back to "save" the baby, Caroline's approach to life is still simplistic: "To her imagination Monteriano had become a magic city of vice" (p. 87) and she "prepared to do battle with the powers of evil."

She returns to Italy to be Mrs. Herriton's agent and fulfill her wish to see the infant brought to her. But Caroline learns a lot from Lilia's experience. After meeting Gino and noticing his loving treatment of his son, she comes to realize that they have no right to take the baby from his father's hand. She puts this matter clearly and frankly to Philip:

Do you want the child to stay with his father who loves him and will bring him up badly, or do you want him to come to Sawston where no one loves him but where he will be brought up well? Settle it... settle which side you'll fight on.

She regards the infant as a human being, not a mere thing; a being who needs the love of a father. As she and Gino talk, "the horrible truth" that wicked people are capable of love stood naked before her, and her "moral being was abashed."

Notes

At the beginning, Philip's attitudes to life are affected by his mother who has a complete dominance on him. He is his mother's boy, who grows up to see the life through her eyes. He has no serious aim in life; and being a boy of his rich mother, he does not like work or believe in its value. His mother has kept him "a puppet who can criticize but not rebel."

He even enjoys his mother's "diplomacy" with the result that he "does not think of his own morals and behavior anymore." (p. 82) He reflects his mother's condescending attitude towards Lilia. He visits Italy twice, and in both visits, he is obedient to his mother's wishes. Until the dramatic death of the child and its consequences, neither human love nor love for truth is within his experience. The child's death and subsequent happenings, especially meeting Caroline, prove that he is capable of change as a result of life's experiences.

Philip comes gradually to recognize and reject his mother's dominance and all her value. "To what purpose was her diplomacy, her insincerity, her continued repression of vigor?" (p.98) It is Caroline who denounces Mrs. Herriton and tries to open Philip's eyes to the truth of his mother:

"your mother has behaved dishonorably throughout... She has lied or acted lies everywhere... I cannot trust your mother."

Here, Caroline has the ambition to help Philip be independent, be a man.

Philip recognizes Caroline's role in his maturation:

In the train, while on his way back to England with Caroline after their tragic visit to Italy, Philip reviews sadly yet consciously and deeply his previous experiences and his new love for Caroline. He can see that "He had reached love by spiritual path. Caroline's thoughts and her goodness and her nobility had moved him first, and now her whole body and all its gestures had been transfigured by them." (p. 196) At the end of his self-examination, he comes finally to reject Sawston for "London and work".

Thus, he arrives at self-recognition after facing the facts of his life courageously. Caroline's rejection of him is the final blow to his self complacency, which leads to the completion of the process of his character re-molding. Toward the end of the novel, Philip thinks that Caroline is on the point of declaring her love to him, but he is shocked to discover that it is not him that she loves but Gino. She reveals this secret to him in a bitter ironic way, telling him her reasons for rejecting him: "I dare tell you this because I like you and because you are without passion. You look on life as a spectacle, you don't enter it, you only find it funny or beautiful." (p. 201) With this rejection and severe criticism, Philip is transformed from a spectator to a participant in the events. He is recalled from his spiritual death to active life. He learns that life is more complex and heroic than he has thought earlier; it is not just a beautiful spectacle to view.

Because of this, John Colmer, a critic, suggests a possible subtitle to *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, which is "the Education of Philip".

Thus, Philip accepts the moral responsibility for the child's death, hence he

is convinced that he alone should tell Gino of his son's death venturing his life with Gino's blind anger. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* is very characteristic of Forster's early art. He is concerned with the personal troubles of his characters who have no larger social concerns that may shift their problems to a broader dimension of significance.

With *Howards End*, Forster broadens his concern from the private to the public world, confronting for the first time not just personal or domestic antagonists, but England's social, political and economic powers. This novel asks: how are we to be saved in this industrial-commercial age? It was written but a few years before the First World War, and Forster had the international situation in mind. *Howards End* presents the society of the cultivated and well-to-do; it deals mainly with the world of business in that society. It is predominantly upper middle class world, with rich town houses and country houses for families having a plenty of servants, a world where class distinction is taken for granted. In this world of the novel, the British Empire is in its heyday. Business and commerce thrive; and the poor are kept in their place as far as possible.ⁱⁱⁱ The novel tries to say something about what shall become of England, the England of the years before 1914. It is both an analysis of the English social structure at its time and a prophecy about the fate of that structure. It tries to show who shall inherit England. The symbol of England is the house whose name gives the novel its title. Forster also explores the conflict between an individual's beliefs and the rules of society. The relations between classes, interrelationships between money and culture, and the examination of possible steps towards the achievement of sexual equality are all taken seriously in the novel. Just as the country is opposed to the city, so are the major characters to one another. Margret and Helen Schlegel, half German, half English, value the inner life, while the Wilcox family with the notable exception of Ruth Wilcox, the outer. Independently rich, Margret and Helen live with their adolescent brother, Tibby, in Wickham Palace, a comfortable London house on a quiet street. The two young women devote most of their energy to conversation and culture. Henry Wilcox, a successful London business, lives with his wife Ruth and their three grown up children at *Howards End*, Ruth's ancestral house.

Superficially, Margret and Helen are similar, both being liberal and intelligent. Yet, the differences that help to define the novel's structure distinguish one from the other. Helen, the younger and prettier of the two, is the more impulsive. Visiting *Howards End* for the first time she becomes infatuated not only with Paul, the younger Wilcox son, but also with the entire Wilcox family. One kiss from Paul is enough to bring about their engagement. But the engagement is off the next day when Helen discovers that Paul lacks the courage to announce their engagement. Disillusioned, she now sees Paul and all the Wilcoxes "as fraud, just a wall of newspapers and motor-cars and golf-clubs" behind which lie "panic and emptiness".^{iv} Helen is also a romantic idealist. Truth and justice, she believes, are absolute. After the episode with Paul, she

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takes up the cause of Leonard Bast, the young clerk, who loses his job through the misadvice of Henry's extremism. She tries to trap Henry into giving him a job. But the project fails when Jacky (Leonard's wife) recognizes Henry to be her former lover. That night, at the local inn, Helen and Leonard copulate, and she becomes pregnant. In taking up Leonard's case, Helen tries to behave heroically, and she is nearly shipwrecked. Following her one night affair with Leonard, she appears with "the look of a sailor who has lost everything at sea".

Margret is impulsive too, but less than Helen and much more balanced in outlook. Unlike Helen who is mainly absorbed by her inner world of thoughts and feelings, Margret sees that the outer life in society deserves watching and participating. Henry Wilcox stands for the flaws of the industrial society. Being a caricature of a businessman, he is stiff and imperceptive about himself and others. Forster's dislike of him comes through again and again. We learn of Henry's "patronizing tone" and his feeling that "what he did not know could not be worth knowing".

Only Ruth Wilcox stands out from the rest of the family. She is a wise old woman, who incarnates the spirit of Howards End. Forster wants her to be a symbolic figure: She values the past and the unseen, is intuitive rather than intellectual. She maintains a posthumous existence in the novel. She also represents the primary connection between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. Her friendship with Margret reaches its peak when she invites Margret to Howards End after hearing that the Schlegels are about to lose their own house. Her son Charles calls her "the mater" as if she had no existence outside that role, and indeed her "life had been spent in the service of husband and sons."

Mrs. Wilcox fulfils her novelistic role and dies after having discerned in Margret her spiritual heir and bequeathed Howards End, and by implication her husband, to her. For all their differences, the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes are rich. Leonard Bast, the novel's other key character, is poor. A young clerk, who lives in a squalid London flat with his mistress- later his wife- Jacky, he tries to relieve the tedium of his existence by going to concerts and reading literature. Victimized by the outer life and by the evils of industrial society, he cannot find a decent position and respectable living for himself. He feels alienated to society; and because of the acute class distinction, he becomes a fragmented being who will never be a whole.

The plot of *Howards End* is contrived to effect a partial synthesis of its antithetical elements. Margret is to marry Henry. Helen is to have a child by Leonard, and then, in the final settlement at Howards End,

Margret becomes the acknowledged mistress of the house. No novel of Forster is more obviously contrived. Wilcoxes, Schlegels, and Bast are three groups of characters socially and psychologically so far apart that in the normal course of events there is no reason why they should become involved with one another.

In the final chapter, the antitheses achieve a resolution: Margret and Henry, with Helen and her baby, are peacefully settled at Howards End, of which Margret is a mistress. It is a qualified and precarious resolution.^{viii} For the lives of the two sisters are still incomplete. Helen has a child but no husband; Margret a husband but no child. But Helen's child suggests hope, the child of a lower class father who will be brought up by Margret. He is the symbol of the "only connect" which was Margret's motto to the good life.

The novel reflects Forster's occupation with the future of England. He wants to say that Howards End, as England, must pass to those who will cherish it and their destinies become indistinguishable from it. Towards the end of the novel, Forster puts the symbol aside and refers to England by name directly. In a memorable scene, Margret Schlegel is watching the tide in Poole Harbour, she ponders on England's inheritance:

England was alive, throbbing through all her estuaries, crying for joy through the mouths of all her gulls, and the north wind, with contrary motion, blew stronger against her rising seas. What did it mean? For what end are her fair complexities; her changes of soil, her sinuous coast? Does she belong to those who have moulded her and made her feared by other lands, or to those who have added nothing to her power, but have somehow seen her, seen the whole island at once, lying as a jewel in a silver sea, sailing as a ship of souls, with all the brave world's fleet accompanying her towards eternity.

Howards End-the house- itself is practically a character in the novel as well as a main symbol. To the Wilcoxes, it is merely a house, and they do not know that to Mrs. Wilcox it had been "a spirit for which she sought a spiritual heir. Forster's immaturity as a writer can be seen in his early novel, *Where*

Angels Fear to Tread, where his concern is very limited; it is restricted to the personal concerns of a few characters who try to get their personal ambitions and emotional satisfaction. Lilia Herriton is attracted and aroused by the youth and energy of Gino, who, by English moral and social standards, lacks culture and civilization. In this novel, Forster is more melodramatic than in the later novel because he mixes the comic and the tragic, the trivial and the serious. His view of life is narrow and limited since he does not present his character in their broad social contexts. They are isolated from the wide current of life and preoccupied only by their simple everyday affairs.

Whereas in *Howards End*, Forster reaches a higher stage of development in his achievement as a novelist. The novel dramatizes the fact that in the modern world there is a separation between culture and wealth. The novel portrays Forster's view of contemporary England in considerable details. England is made a character, and its wealth and future are central subjects. Forster takes the house, *Howard End*, as a symbol of England itself, and the novel tries to settle the question of who should rule the country: the educated or the vulgar, the workers or the capitalists. At the end, Margret, the gentle and well-educated

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girl, inherits the house and takes Bast's child, the son of a poor worker, under her tutelage, something which suggests that an alliance between the cultured and the working class is vital for the rise of the country.

3.5 CRITICAL OVERVIEW

At the beginning of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* the family of Lilia Herriton's dead husband is sending her to Italy to keep her away from what they find to be unacceptable suitors in England. The novel begins at a train station, initiating a motif that occurs often in Forster's fiction of emotional meetings and partings at stations—emblems of the growing nomadism he sees in modern culture.

Charing Cross 1905 "They were all at Charing Cross to see Lilia off—Philip, Harriet, Irma, Mrs. Herriton herself. Even Mrs. Theobald, squired by Mr. Kingcroft, had braved the journey from Yorkshire to bid her only daughter goodbye." By placing a particular twist on a few key words in these simple opening sentences, Forster initiates the ironic method and direction that he will pursue throughout his fiction. The word "herself" appended to "Mrs. Herriton" implies that she might almost be thought too important to have come to the station, and the beginning of the second sentence seems to emanate from the mind of "Mrs. Herriton herself." The phrase "even Mrs. Theobald" implies that there is some reason she would not have come to do what seems a natural and expected thing: "bid her only daughter goodbye." This juxtaposition of Mrs. Herriton at the end of the first sentence with Mrs. Theobald at the beginning of the second creates a kind of dialogic counterpoint within the narration itself, separate from but related to the actual dialogue between characters. Forster's narrative voice does not maintain a constant point of view, but moves among the viewpoints of different characters and even different narrator(s), illustrating a remark by Russian critic Mikhail Bakhtin that in the modern novel "one often does not know where the direct authorial word ends and where a parodic or stylized playing with the characters' language begins." The method is effective; for instance, the reader is forced to confront prejudice by being thrust into that point of view.

Philip Herriton enjoins his departing sister-in-law not to go "with that awful tourist idea that Italy's only a museum of antiquities and art. Love and understand the Italians, for the people are more marvelous than the land." Philip does not realize that Lilia will take his advice literally, that she will find in Italy the love she is kept from in England. Philip also tells Lilia "of the supreme moments of her coming journey"—which in his opinion have to do with the scenery. At this point in the story he does not know that "supreme moments," as Forster sees it, have to do with human relationships. Natural settings are connected to human relationship but cannot in and of themselves be supreme. Philip knows only his idea of Italy: past grandeur and present picturesqueness. His aestheticism is yet to be confronted with the Italy of real people living ordinary lives.

As the train pulls out Mr. Kingcroft, returning too late with the foot-warmer, excuses himself saying, “These London porters won’t take heed to a country chap”; Mrs. Herriton replies with what the reader will shortly realize is scarcely veiled sarcasm, thus showing herself to be neither “noble” nor much more polite than the porters:

‘And I think it simply noble of you to have brought Mrs. Theobald all the way here on such a day as this.’ Then, rather hastily, she shook hands, and left him to take Mrs. Theobald all the way back. Sawston, her own home, was within easy reach of London, and they were not late for tea.

With the hasty handshake and departure Mrs. Herriton avoids inviting Mrs. Theobald and Mr. Kingcroft home for tea, something which Forster lets us know could easily have been done. As we read on in the chapter we find that Mrs. Theobald is old and frail and the weather bad. When Philip asks, “Why ever did she come?”, and Mrs. Herriton replies, “Mr. Kingcroft made her,” they both seem unable to grasp the simple fact that Mrs. Theobald loves her daughter. She “braved” the trip because Lilia was going away for a year and it was possible they might not see each other again, which in fact turns out to be the case, not, however, because Mrs. Theobald dies but because Lilia does. And maybe Mr. Kingcroft accompanied her not merely out of a self-interested desire “to see Lilia again,” as the Herritons think, but also out of kindness to an old lady.

The first chapter ends some months later. Harriet and Mrs. Herriton are sowing vegetable seeds when a letter from Mrs. Theobald comes with the post. “How intolerable the crested paper is!” exclaims Mrs. Herriton. Mrs. Theobald is apparently landed gentry. The Herritons’ dislike for her is obviously mixed up with class jealousies; they disdain the very class from which their own middle class attitudes and values derive. Ironically, of course, instead of the clergyman Mr. Kingcroft, Lilia marries—not Italian nobility—but the unemployed son of an Italian dentist, and when she eventually dies giving birth to his son, the Herritons undertake an expedition ostensibly to “rescue” the child, but in fact to protect their social image in Sawston. They find, however, that the father, Gino Carella, “for some perverse reason . . . will not part with the child.” Forster’s irony is blunt, for Gino’s feelings are simply those of parent for child: he loves his son as Mrs. Theobald loved her daughter. The “perverse” feelings about parental love are those of the Herritons. When the letter arrives announcing Lilia’s engagement, Mrs. Herriton’s first emotion is rage at the fact that the news came from Mrs. Theobald, that Lilia had written to her own mother before writing to her mother-in-law.

Cover of Baedeker When Mrs. Herriton looks up the offending Italian town, Monteriano, in a guidebook, she finds that Baedeker, like Philip in his parting advice to Lilia at the train station, lists buildings and views as notable, with the codicil, “The inhabitants are still noted for their agreeable manners.” Mrs. Herriton tells Harriet that Lilia is “not trying to marry any one in the place. Some

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tourist, obviously, who's stopping in the hotel. The place has nothing to do with it at all." Mrs. Herriton's own recourse to Baedeker belies the last statement: even she in her incomplete heart knows unconsciously that the place has everything to do with it. The guidebook lists the chief attraction of Monteriano as the church of Santa Deodata, whose story is later told:

So holy was she that all her life she lay upon her back in the house of her mother, refusing to eat, refusing to play, refusing to work. The devil, envious of such sanctity, tempted her in various ways. . . . When all proved vain he tripped up the mother and flung her downstairs before her very eyes. But so holy was the saint that she never picked her mother up, but lay upon her back through all, and thus assured her throne in Paradise.

Santa Deodata (i.e. Santa Fina) Forster satirizes the holy reprobate Santa Deodata, who lacked the human concern for her mother that Mrs. Theobald and Gino have for their children, and thereby condemns those Sawstonians who share with the so-called saint a perverse and harmful concept of familial love, exalting convention above kindness.

The experience of Philip, Harriet, and Caroline Abbott at the opera in Monteriano dramatizes the conflict in the novel between Sawston, "a joyless, stragglng place, full of people who pretended," and Italy, with its emotional freedom and passion. The scene is comic, but as Benjamin Britten has pointed out, "Under the comedy lies seriousness, passion, and worth: the worth of the Italians loving their tunes, being relaxed and gay together, and not being afraid of showing their feelings—not 'pretending,' like Sawston." (Aspects of E. M. Forster: New York, 1969).

Forster's choice of Lucia di Lammermoor as the opera the English people see is not adventitious. The opera signifies the intrusion of foreigners into Italy: a Scottish story set to music by an Italian. The Italians in the audience take the story into their hearts, reacting freely and enthusiastically. In contrast, the English—themselves foreigners in Italy—bring their own attitudes and prejudices to the opera as they have brought them to Italy in general. During the overture Harriet, the unassailable bastion of Sawston morality, hushes the noisy and spirited Italians, who, as Forster points out, "were quiet, not because it is wrong to talk during a chorus, but because it is natural to be civil to a visitor." As the theater fills up, however, Harriet loses her power; the audience enjoys itself, and so do some of the English visitors:

Miss Abbott fell into the spirit of the thing. She, too, chatted and laughed and applauded and encored, and rejoiced in the existence of beauty. As for Philip, he forgot himself as well as his mission. He was not even an enthusiastic visitor. For he had been in this place always. It was his home.

Harriet does not join in the fun, trying instead "to follow the plot," which in fact bears some resemblance to the plot of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. In the opera Lucia of the clan of Lammermoor is in love with Edgardo of the rival

Ravenswood clan. Lucia's brother and guardian, Enrico, who hates the Ravenswoods and stands to profit if Lucia marries someone else, manages to foil their romance. In the subsequent complications Lucia and Edgardo die; Enrico repents, but too late. Like Enrico, Harriet and the Sawston forces behind her try to impose their own interests on the emotional life of the woman under their protection. Unlike Lucia, however, Lilia does not die in a melodramatic tragedy; she dies in childbirth, apparently too weak to sustain the emotional life of which the child was a product and symbol. In the novel, as in the opera, characters die as a result of the confrontation of two opposing forces; and, as there is repentance in the opera, so in the end is there redemption in the novel. Lilia and her child die, but Philip and Caroline find a new life in the emotional awakening brought about by their part in the attempt to "rescue" the child. That they can join in the fun at the opera indicates that they have the potential to feel, to escape the pretense and hypocrisy of Sawston. Harriet, however, has little potential for such a liberation; she abhors the riotous atmosphere at the opera, finding it "not even respectable."

Baby Jesus from *Di Credi* It is this paragon of respectability who stubbornly carries through with her determination to "save" the baby, even if she must kidnap it. The "salvation," however, leads to the baby's death in the carriage accident, and Philip, no longer a mere observer of life now that the baby has died in his arms, takes responsibility and becomes the object of Gino's grief and anger in one of the most remarkable scenes in all of Forster, "my nearest approach to a strong scene," as Forster himself later described it. "Gino had stooped down by the rug, and was feeling the place where his son had lain. Now and then he frowned a little and glanced at Philip." Gino's almost maternally instinctual reaction—He is, since Lilia's death, both father and mother to the child—his silent, "uncanny" palpation of everything in the room, contrasts sharply with Philip's talk about responsibility and the need to break down. "The tour of the room was over. He had touched everything in it except Philip. Now he approached him." From the moment Philip tells Gino what has happened and Perfetta leaves unknowingly to get milk for the baby she does not know has died, until Caroline has interrupted the torture which follows and Perfetta has returned, Gino does not utter a word, behaving literally as a non-verbal animal. In contrast to Philip's words of comfort, fear, and pain, the only sounds Gino makes are "a low growl like a dog's," and later "a loud and curious cry—a cry of interrogation it might be called." Philip is able to stop Gino's first assault on his broken elbow with a blow that knocks Gino down:

Then he [Philip] was seized with remorse, and knelt down beside his adversary and tried to revive him. He managed to raise him up, and propped his body against his own. He passed his arm around him. Again he was filled with pity and tenderness. He awaited the revival without fear, sure that both of them were safe at last.

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Gino recovered suddenly. His lips moved. For one blessed, moment it seemed that he was going to speak. But he scrambled up in silence . . .

In fact the worst is yet to come, but Gino's torture of and apparent intent to kill Philip is finally interrupted by the arrival of Caroline followed by Perfetta with the milk. "Gino spoke for the first time," and "the peril was over at last." Language returns; the animal fury subsides. The fact that on his first trip to Italy Forster had fallen and broken his arm undoubtedly accounts for the particular physical pain described so graphically in the passage.

When he had initially turned on Philip, Gino's "face was that of a man who has lost his old reason for life and seeks a new one." That is, of course, literally Gino's status, but it is also, though less clearly, Philip's, and the excruciating physical pain inflicted by Gino, as he finds in revenge an immediate reason for life, is a complex image of repressed homosexual masochistic ecstasy mixed with the agony of birth. In the end both Gino and Philip are reduced to children. Gino "gave a piercing cry of woe, and stumbled towards Miss Abbott like a child and clung to her." She urges him to feed Philip the milk that "will not be wanted in the other room" and finish the rest himself. Having drunk the same milk, Gino and Philip are symbolically brothers, and Caroline is their mother.

In the latter part of the novel Forster often describes Philip as seeing Caroline, with whom he has fallen in love, as a divine being. When he meets her and Gino giving the baby a bath, he sees "to all intents and purposes, the Virgin and Child, with Donor." Madonna and baby In the scene Caroline assumes the role of mother to Gino's child, and hence of wife to Gino, with whom she obviously has fallen in love, perhaps even as early as when Lilia did. The fleshly and tactile description of the baby and its bath functions as a surrogate scene of physical passion between Caroline and Gino. Later, just before Caroline gives Gino the milk, we find out that "all through the day Miss Abbott had seemed to Philip like a goddess, and more than ever did she seem so now"; and later again he thinks, "This woman was a goddess to the end." In her apotheosis Caroline appears to be the saint that Santa Deodata most emphatically was not.

At the end Philip and Caroline have come to "love and understand" an Italian in ways never anticipated by Philip in his opening advice to his sister-in-law. Philip's aesthetic and intellectual appreciation of Italy has given way to an emotional apprehension. He and Caroline have been shown to have the potential for a passionate relationship, though neither of them finds one in the novel. Philip cannot have Caroline, for she loves Gino; and Caroline cannot have Gino, for he is betrothed inescapably to the lady from Poggibonsi: a marriage he had undertaken for the benefit of the child who has now died. And, of course, in the inevitable homosexual subtext Philip cannot have Gino. Two residents of Sawston have renounced its suburban values and found that the good in human intercourse lies elsewhere than in what Caroline calls the "petty unselfishness" of the Sawstonians, whose unselfishness is indeed calculated and slight while their

selfishness is gross and hypocritical. Harriet is reduced to a semi-invalid who must be watched to keep the cinders from getting in her eyes. She had always possessed the Sawston characteristic of claiming to see the motes in other peoples' eyes in spite of the motes in their own. Although Harriet collapses and the Herritons fail to take possession of Lilia's son by Gino, in England Sawston still prevails. The Herritons did not get Gino's boy, but neither did Gino. And the other child in the book, Lilia's English daughter Irma, will be brought up in Sawston and apparently suffer the same management that Lilia did. Furthermore, though Philip and Caroline have been transformed, they are not united; they will have no children.

Philip has moved from intoxication with an incomplete "idea" of Italy to a broader understanding of the Italian experience. Although he has gotten the mote out of his own eye, his clarified vision does not lead to a relationship, perhaps because in the end he has been left with a different kind of illusion. He has seen an ideal of human passion, and he has found another "complete" person he would like to relate to, but she remains inaccessible, a goddess, a myth that doesn't have a functioning correlate in his life. Such an illusion, such defective insight, marks the entire life of the main character of Forster's second novel, *The Longest Journey*.

3.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. English town that is home to the conventional middle-class Herriton family.
 - (a) Sawston
 - (b) Sewaka
 - (c) Peru
 - (d) None of these
2. is the region of west-central Italy along the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Seas that includes the provinces of Firenze (Florence), Pisa, Livorno, and Siena.
 - (a) London boys' schools
 - (b) High Wycombe Grammar School
 - (c) Highgate Junior School
 - (d) Tuscany.
3. is a hill town in Tuscany modeled on San Gimignano southwest of Florence and northwest of Siena, which is one of the best preserved medieval towns in Italy.
 - (a) London
 - (b) Peris
 - (c) Newyork
 - (d) Monteriano

dramatic monologue. The four speakers in this section are frantic in their need to speak, to find an audience, but they find themselves surrounded by dead people and thwarted by outside circumstances, like wars. Because the sections are so short and the situations so confusing, the effect is not one of an overwhelming impression of a single character; instead, the reader is left with the feeling of being trapped in a crowd, unable to find a familiar face.

Also like “Prufrock,” *The Waste Land* employs only partial rhyme schemes and short bursts of structure. These are meant to reference—but also rework—the literary past, achieving simultaneously a stabilizing and a defamiliarizing effect. The world of *The Waste Land* has some parallels to an earlier time, but it cannot be approached in the same way. The inclusion of fragments in languages other than English further complicates matters. The reader is not expected to be able to translate these immediately; rather, they are reminders of the cosmopolitan nature of twentieth-century Europe and of mankind’s fate after the Tower of Babel: We will never be able to perfectly comprehend one another.

Not only is *The Waste Land* Eliot’s greatest work, but it may be—along with Joyce’s *Ulysses*—the greatest work of all modernist literature. Most of the poem was written in 1921, and it first appeared in print in 1922. As the poem’s dedication indicates, Eliot received a great deal of guidance from Ezra Pound, who encouraged him to cut large sections of the planned work and to break up the rhyme scheme. Recent scholarship suggests that Eliot’s wife, Vivien, also had a significant role in the poem’s final form. A long work divided into five sections, *The Waste Land* takes on the degraded mess that Eliot considered modern culture to constitute, particularly after the first World War had ravaged Europe. A sign of the pessimism with which Eliot approaches his subject is the poem’s epigraph, taken from the *Satyricon*, in which the Sibyl (a woman with prophetic powers who ages but never dies) looks at the future and proclaims that she only wants to die. The Sibyl’s predicament mirrors what Eliot sees as his own: He lives in a culture that has decayed and withered but will not expire, and he is forced to live with reminders of its former glory.



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Where Angels Fear to Tread is a 1991 British drama film directed by Charles Sturridge. The screenplay by Sturridge, Tim Sullivan, and Derek Granger is based on the 1905 novel of the same title by E. M. Forster.

Thus, the underlying plot of *The Waste Land*, inasmuch as it can be said to have one, revolves around Eliot’s reading of two extraordinarily influential contemporary cultural/anthropological texts, Jessie Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* and Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*. Both of these works focus

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on the persistence of ancient fertility rituals in modern thought and religion; of particular interest to both authors is the story of the Fisher King, who has been wounded in the genitals and whose lack of potency is the cause of his country becoming a desiccated “waste land.” Heal the Fisher King, the legend says, and the land will regain its fertility. According to Weston and Frazier, healing the Fisher King has been the subject of mythic tales from ancient Egypt to Arthurian England. Eliot picks up on the figure of the Fisher King legend’s wasteland as an appropriate description of the state of modern society.

Eliot’s poem, like the anthropological texts that inspired it, draws on a vast range of sources. Eliot provided copious footnotes with the publication of *The Waste Land* in book form; these are an excellent source for tracking down the origins of a reference. Many of the references are from the Bible: at the time of the poem’s writing Eliot was just beginning to develop an interest in Christianity that would reach its apex in the *Four Quartets*. The overall range of allusions in *The Waste Land*, though, suggests no overarching paradigm but rather a grab bag of broken fragments that must somehow be pieced together to form a coherent whole. While Eliot employs a deliberately difficult style and seems often to find the most obscure reference possible, he means to do more than just frustrate his reader and display his own intelligence: He intends to provide a mimetic account of life in the confusing world of the twentieth century.

The Waste Land opens with a reference to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. In this case, though, April is not the happy month of pilgrimages and storytelling. It is instead the time when the land should be regenerating after a long winter. Regeneration, though, is painful, for it brings back reminders of a more fertile and happier past. In the modern world, winter, the time of forgetfulness and numbness, is indeed preferable. Marie’s childhood recollections are also painful: the simple world of cousins, sledding, and coffee in the park has been replaced by a complex set of emotional and political consequences resulting from the war. The topic of memory, particularly when it involves remembering the dead, is of critical importance in *The Waste Land*. Memory creates a confrontation of the past with the present, a juxtaposition that points out just how badly things have decayed. Marie reads for most of the night: ostracized by politics, she is unable to do much else. To read is also to remember a better past, which could produce a coherent literary culture.

The second episode contains a troubled religious proposition. The speaker describes a true wasteland of “stony rubbish”; in it, he says, man can recognize only “[a] heap of broken images.” Yet the scene seems to offer salvation: shade and a vision of something new and different. The vision consists only of nothingness—a handful of dust—which is so profound as to be frightening; yet truth also resides here: No longer a religious phenomenon achieved through Christ, truth is represented by a mere void. The speaker remembers a female figure from his past, with whom he has apparently had some sort of romantic involvement. In contrast to the present setting in the desert, his memories are

lush, full of water and blooming flowers. The vibrancy of the earlier scene, though, leads the speaker to a revelation of the nothingness he now offers to show the reader. Again memory serves to contrast the past with the present, but here it also serves to explode the idea of coherence in either place. In the episode from the past, the “nothingness” is more clearly a sexual failure, a moment of impotence. Despite the overall fecundity and joy of the moment, no reconciliation, and, therefore, no action, is possible. This in turn leads directly to the desert waste of the present. In the final line of the episode attention turns from the desert to the sea. Here, the sea is not a locus for the fear of nothingness, and neither is it the locus for a philosophical interpretation of nothingness; rather, it is the site of true, essential nothingness itself. The line comes from a section of *Tristan und Isolde* where Tristan waits for Isolde to come heal him. She is supposedly coming by ship but fails to arrive. The ocean is truly empty, devoid of the possibility of healing or revelation.

The third episode explores Eliot’s fascination with transformation. The tarot reader Madame Sosostris conducts the most outrageous form of “reading” possible, transforming a series of vague symbols into predictions, many of which will come true in succeeding sections of the poem. Eliot transforms the traditional tarot pack to serve his purposes. The drowned sailor makes reference to the ultimate work of magic and transformation in English literature, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (“Those are pearls that were his eyes” is a quote from one of Ariel’s songs).

The final episode of the first section allows Eliot finally to establish the true wasteland of the poem, the modern city. Eliot’s London references Baudelaire’s Paris (“Unreal City”), Dickens’s London (“the brown fog of a winter dawn”) and Dante’s hell (“the flowing crowd of the dead”). The city is desolate and depopulated, inhabited only by ghosts from the past. Stetson, the apparition the speaker recognizes, is a fallen war comrade. The speaker pesters him with a series of ghoulish questions about a corpse buried in his garden: again, with the garden, we return to the theme of regeneration and fertility. This encounter can be read as a quest for a meaning behind the tremendous slaughter of the first World War; however, it can also be read as an exercise in ultimate futility: as we see in Stetson’s failure to respond to the speaker’s inquiries, the dead offer few answers.

3.8 KEY-WORDS

- 1. Sawston** : Sawston. English town that is home to the conventional middle-class Herriton family. E. M. Forster modeled this dreary, repressive town on Tonbridge, Kent, southeast of London, where he himself had attended school. A gray place preoccupied with duty, spectability, and tradition, Sawston represents the worst of English repression of self and others. When family friend Caroline Abbott later dreams of the Italian town Poggibonsi

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as a “joyless, straggling place, full of people who pretended,” she recognizes it as Sawston. At the end of the novel, Philip Herriton’s growth is evident in his decision to move from his hometown to London.

- 2. Tuscany** : Region of west-central Italy along the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Seas that includes the provinces of Firenze (Florence), Pisa, Livorno, and Siena. Forster’s depiction of the Tuscan landscape draws on a long holiday he took there in 1901. Particularly close echoes of his travels come in his description of Philip and Harriet Herriton’s tourist hardships in several cities while they are on their way to Monteriano. Harriet, to whom “foreigners are a filthy nation,” embodies strong English chauvinism and is the only traveler unresponsive to the magic of Italy.
- 3. Monteriano** : Monteriano (mahn-teh-ree-AHN-oh). Hill town in Tuscany modeled on San Gimignano southwest of Florence and northwest of Siena, which is one of the best preserved medieval towns in Italy. Forster invents a description of his fictionalized town for his characters’ tour book, which characterizes Monteriano .

3.9 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does “Where Angels Fear To Tread” mean?
2. Write a brief note on E.M. Forster Life and works.
3. What is the theme of the novel “Where Angels Fear to Tread ?
4. Discuss the plot of the Novel Where Angels Fear to Tread?

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (a) 2. (d) 3. (d) 4. (a) 5. (a)

3.10 FURTHER READINGS

1. Gardner, Philip. Ed. E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1973.
2. Martin, John Sayre. E.M. Forster: The Endless Journey. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
3. Oliver, H. J. The Art of E.M. Forster. London: Cambridge University Press, 1962

UNIT - 4

JOSEPH CONRAD'S "HEART OF DARKNESS "

STRUCTURE

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Plot Heart of Darkness
- 4.3 Characterization
- 4.4 Themes, Motifs and Symbols
- 4.5 Part-Wise Summary and Analysis
- 4.6 Important Quotations Explained
- 4.7 Self-Assessment
- 4.8 Key-Words
- 4.9 Review Questions
- 4.10 Further Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Introduce Joseph Conrad and his works.
- Discuss the themes and plot of "Heart of darkness".

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Joseph Conrad did not begin to learn English until he was twenty-one years old. He was born Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857, in the Polish Ukraine. When Conrad was quite young, his father was exiled to Siberia on suspicion of plotting against the Russian government. After the death of the boy's mother, Conrad's father sent him to his mother's brother in Kraków to be educated, and Conrad never again saw his father. He traveled to Marseilles when he was seventeen and spent the next twenty years as a sailor. He signed on to an English ship in 1878, and eight years later he became a British subject. In 1889, he began his first novel, *Almayer's Folly*, and began actively searching for a way to fulfill his boyhood dream of traveling to the Congo. He took command of a steamship in the Belgian Congo in 1890, and his experiences in the Congo came to provide the outline for *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad's time in Africa wreaked havoc on his health, however, and he returned to England to recover. He returned to sea twice before finishing *Almayer's Folly* in 1894 and wrote several other

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books, including one about Marlow called *Youth: A Narrative* before beginning *Heart of Darkness* in 1898. He wrote most of his other major works—including *Lord Jim*, which also features Marlow; *Nostromo*; and *The Secret Agent*, as well as several collaborations with Ford Madox Ford—during the following two decades. Conrad died in 1924.

Conrad's works, *Heart of Darkness* in particular, provide a bridge between Victorian values and the ideals of modernism. Like their Victorian predecessors, these novels rely on traditional ideas of heroism, which are nevertheless under constant attack in a changing world and in places far from England. Women occupy traditional roles as arbiters of domesticity and morality, yet they are almost never present in the narrative; instead, the concepts of “home” and “civilization” exist merely as hypocritical ideals, meaningless to men for whom survival is in constant doubt. While the threats that Conrad's characters face are concrete ones—illness, violence, conspiracy—they nevertheless acquire a philosophical character. Like much of the best modernist literature produced in the early decades of the twentieth century, *Heart of Darkness* is as much about alienation, confusion, and profound doubt as it is about imperialism.

Imperialism is nevertheless at the center of *Heart of Darkness*. By the 1890s, most of the world's “dark places” had been placed at least nominally under European control, and the major European powers were stretched thin, trying to administer and protect massive, far-flung empires. Cracks were beginning to appear in the system: riots, wars, and the wholesale abandonment of commercial enterprises all threatened the white men living in the distant corners of empires. Things were clearly falling apart. *Heart of Darkness* suggests that this is the natural result when men are allowed to operate outside a social system of checks and balances: power, especially power over other human beings, inevitably corrupts. At the same time, this begs the question of whether it is possible to call an individual insane or wrong when he is part of a system that is so thoroughly corrupted and corrupting. *Heart of Darkness*, thus, at its most abstract level, is a narrative about the difficulty of understanding the world beyond the self, about the ability of one man to judge another.

Although *Heart of Darkness* was one of the first literary texts to provide a critical view of European imperial activities, it was initially read by critics as anything but controversial. While the book was generally admired, it was typically read either as a condemnation of a certain type of adventurer who could easily take advantage of imperialism's opportunities, or else as a sentimental novel reinforcing domestic values: Kurtz's Intended, who appears at the novella's conclusion, was roundly praised by turn-of-the-century reviewers for her maturity and sentimental appeal. Conrad's decision to set the book in a Belgian colony and to have Marlow work for a Belgian trading concern made it even easier for British readers to avoid seeing themselves reflected in *Heart of Darkness*. Although these early reactions seem ludicrous to a modern reader, they reinforce the novella's central themes of hypocrisy and absurdity.

4.2 PLOT--HEART OF DARKNESS

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The novel begins with the description of the light over the Thames in contrast with the gleam over London. The first narrator describes and meditates on past consequences and talks about the dark ages when the Romans invaded. He insists that although Romans were mere robbers in contrast with modern colonizers blinded by the idea of "Bringing light". A dead silence prevails in the vicinity of this headquarters of the colonial enterprise. Marlow is interviewed by the director and he is disturbed by the presence of two women knitting black wool. The contact with the doctor reminds us of the hypocrisy and deadliness of the mission.



Notes The intro to the novella, presented in the first episode shows the contrast between light and darkness which can also reflect man's enterprise. Light : civilization, "enlightenment", knowledge
Darkness : wilderness, ignorance, evil.

We may think Conrad believes in these imperialist ideas but he overturns it. Entire colonial enterprises are violent people, people are robbing countries and he proves to us that the enlightens were agents of darkness. The journey to the inner station is paralleled by Marlow's progressive discovery of the darkness of his soul, his life as a "horror". The fact that Conrad makes constant reference to the men of Africa as "pilgrims" is ironic as this is a typical westerner prejudice. Darkness gets murkier as the ship approaches the inner station. The reader is thrust into an obscure and barbaric past, into an atmosphere devoid of all trappings of our civilization that gives us comfort.

Heart of Darkness centers around Marlow, an introspective sailor, and his journey up the Congo River to meet Kurtz, reputed to be an idealistic man of great abilities. Marlow takes a job as a riverboat captain with the Company, a Belgian concern organized to trade in the Congo. As he travels to Africa and then up the Congo, Marlow encounters widespread inefficiency and brutality in the Company's stations. The native inhabitants of the region have been forced into the Company's service, and they suffer terribly from overwork and ill treatment at the hands of the Company's agents. The cruelty and squalor of imperial enterprise contrasts sharply with the impassive and majestic jungle that surrounds the white man's settlements, making them appear to be tiny islands amidst a vast darkness.

Marlow arrives at the Central Station, run by the general manager, an unwholesome, conspiratorial character. He finds that his steamship has been sunk and spends several months waiting for parts to repair it. His interest in Kurtz grows during this period. The manager and his favorite, the brickmaker, seem to fear Kurtz as a threat to their position. Kurtz is rumored to be ill, making the delays in repairing the ship all the more costly. Marlow eventually gets the

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parts he needs to repair his ship, and he and the manager set out with a few agents (whom Marlow calls pilgrims because of their strange habit of carrying long, wooden staves wherever they go) and a crew of cannibals on a long, difficult voyage up the river. The dense jungle and the oppressive silence make everyone aboard a little jumpy, and the occasional glimpse of a native village or the sound of drums works the pilgrims into a frenzy.

Marlow and his crew come across a hut with stacked firewood, together with a note saying that the wood is for them but that they should approach cautiously. Shortly after the steamer has taken on the firewood, it is surrounded by a dense fog. When the fog clears, the ship is attacked by an unseen band of natives, who fire arrows from the safety of the forest. The African helmsman is killed before Marlow frightens the natives away with the ship's steam whistle. Not long after, Marlow and his companions arrive at Kurtz's Inner Station, expecting to find him dead, but a half-crazed Russian trader, who meets them as they come ashore, assures them that everything is fine and informs them that he is the one who left the wood. The Russian claims that Kurtz has enlarged his mind and cannot be subjected to the same moral judgments as normal people. Apparently, Kurtz has established himself as a god with the natives and has gone on brutal raids in the surrounding territory in search of ivory. The collection of severed heads adorning the fence posts around the station attests to his "methods." The pilgrims bring Kurtz out of the station-house on a stretcher, and a large group of native warriors pours out of the forest and surrounds them. Kurtz speaks to them, and the natives disappear into the woods.

The manager brings Kurtz, who is quite ill, aboard the steamer. A beautiful native woman, apparently Kurtz's mistress, appears on the shore and stares out at the ship. The Russian implies that she is somehow involved with Kurtz and has caused trouble before through her influence over him. The Russian reveals to Marlow, after swearing him to secrecy, that Kurtz had ordered the attack on the steamer to make them believe he was dead in order that they might turn back and leave him to his plans. The Russian then leaves by canoe, fearing the displeasure of the manager. Kurtz disappears in the night, and Marlow goes out in search of him, finding him crawling on all fours toward the native camp. Marlow stops him and convinces him to return to the ship. They set off down the river the next morning, but Kurtz's health is failing fast.

Marlow listens to Kurtz talk while he pilots the ship, and Kurtz entrusts Marlow with a packet of personal documents, including an eloquent pamphlet on civilizing the savages which ends with a scrawled message that says, "Exterminate all the brutes!" The steamer breaks down, and they have to stop for repairs. Kurtz dies, uttering his last words—"The horror! The horror!"—in the presence of the confused Marlow. Marlow falls ill soon after and barely survives. Eventually he returns to Europe and goes to see Kurtz's Intended (his fiancée). She is still in mourning, even though it has been over a year since Kurtz's death, and she praises him as a paragon of virtue and achievement. She

asks what his last words were, but Marlow cannot bring himself to shatter her illusions with the truth. Instead, he tells her that Kurtz's last word was her name.

4.3 CHARACTERIZATION

Marlow

Although Marlow appears in several of Conrad's other works, it is important not to view him as merely a surrogate for the author. Marlow is a complicated man who anticipates the figures of high modernism while also reflecting his Victorian predecessors. Marlow is in many ways a traditional hero: tough, honest, an independent thinker, a capable man. Yet he is also "broken" or "damaged," like T. S. Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock or William Faulkner's Quentin Compson. The world has defeated him in some fundamental way, and he is weary, skeptical, and cynical. Marlow also mediates between the figure of the intellectual and that of the "working tough." While he is clearly intelligent, eloquent, and a natural philosopher, he is not saddled with the angst of centuries' worth of Western thought. At the same time, while he is highly skilled at what he does—he repairs and then ably pilots his own ship—he is no mere manual laborer. Work, for him, is a distraction, a concrete alternative to the posturing and excuse-making of those around him.

Marlow can also be read as an intermediary between the two extremes of Kurtz and the Company. He is moderate enough to allow the reader to identify with him, yet open-minded enough to identify at least partially with either extreme. Thus, he acts as a guide for the reader. Marlow's intermediary position can be seen in his eventual illness and recovery. Unlike those who truly confront or at least acknowledge Africa and the darkness within themselves, Marlow does not die, but unlike the Company men, who focus only on money and advancement, Marlow suffers horribly. He is thus "contaminated" by his experiences and memories, and, like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, destined, as purgation or penance, to repeat his story to all who will listen.

Kurtz

Kurtz, like Marlow, can be situated within a larger tradition. Kurtz resembles the archetypal "evil genius": the highly gifted but ultimately degenerate individual whose fall is the stuff of legend. Kurtz is related to figures like Faustus, Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, *Moby-Dick*'s Ahab, and *Wuthering Heights*'s Heathcliff. Like these characters, he is significant both for his style and eloquence and for his grandiose, almost megalomaniacal scheming. In a world of mundanely malicious men and "flabby devils," attracting enough attention to be worthy of damnation is indeed something. Kurtz can be criticized in the same terms that *Heart of Darkness* is sometimes criticized: style entirely overrules substance, providing a justification for amorality and evil.

In fact, it can be argued that style does not just override substance but actually

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masks the fact that Kurtz is utterly lacking in substance. Marlow refers to Kurtz as “hollow” more than once. This could be taken negatively, to mean that Kurtz is not worthy of contemplation. However, it also points to Kurtz’s ability to function as a “choice of nightmares” for Marlow: in his essential emptiness, he becomes a cipher, a site upon which other things can be projected. This emptiness should not be read as benign, however, just as Kurtz’s eloquence should not be allowed to overshadow the malice of his actions. Instead, Kurtz provides Marlow with a set of paradoxes that Marlow can use to evaluate himself and the Company’s men.

Indeed, Kurtz is not so much a fully realized individual as a series of images constructed by others for their own use. As Marlow’s visits with Kurtz’s cousin, the Belgian journalist, and Kurtz’s fiancée demonstrate, there seems to be no true Kurtz. To his cousin, he was a great musician; to the journalist, a brilliant politician and leader of men; to his fiancée, a great humanitarian and genius. All of these contrast with Marlow’s version of the man, and he is left doubting the validity of his memories. Yet Kurtz, through his charisma and larger-than-life plans, remains with Marlow and with the reader.

4.4 THEMES, MOTIFS & SYMBOLS

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Hypocrisy of Imperialism

Heart of Darkness explores the issues surrounding imperialism in complicated ways. As Marlow travels from the Outer Station to the Central Station and finally up the river to the Inner Station, he encounters scenes of torture, cruelty, and near-slavery. At the very least, the incidental scenery of the book offers a harsh picture of colonial enterprise. The impetus behind Marlow’s adventures, too, has to do with the hypocrisy inherent in the rhetoric used to justify imperialism. The men who work for the Company describe what they do as “trade,” and their treatment of native Africans is part of a benevolent project of “civilization.” Kurtz, on the other hand, is open about the fact that he does not trade but rather takes ivory by force, and he describes his own treatment of the natives with the words “suppression” and “extermination”: he does not hide the fact that he rules through violence and intimidation. His perverse honesty leads to his downfall, as his success threatens to expose the evil practices behind European activity in Africa.

However, for Marlow as much as for Kurtz or for the Company, Africans in this book are mostly objects: Marlow refers to his helmsman as a piece of machinery, and Kurtz’s African mistress is at best a piece of statuary. It can be argued that *Heart of Darkness* participates in an oppression of nonwhites that is much more sinister and much harder to remedy than the open abuses of Kurtz or

the Company's men. Africans become for Marlow a mere backdrop, a human screen against which he can play out his philosophical and existential struggles. Their existence and their exoticism enable his self-contemplation. This kind of dehumanization is harder to identify than colonial violence or open racism. While *Heart of Darkness* offers a powerful condemnation of the hypocritical operations of imperialism, it also presents a set of issues surrounding race that is ultimately troubling.

Madness as a Result of Imperialism

Madness is closely linked to imperialism in this book. Africa is responsible for mental disintegration as well as physical illness. Madness has two primary functions. First, it serves as an ironic device to engage the reader's sympathies. Kurtz, Marlow is told from the beginning, is mad. However, as Marlow, and the reader, begin to form a more complete picture of Kurtz, it becomes apparent that his madness is only relative, that in the context of the Company insanity is difficult to define. Thus, both Marlow and the reader begin to sympathize with Kurtz and view the Company with suspicion. Madness also functions to establish the necessity of social fictions. Although social mores and explanatory justifications are shown throughout *Heart of Darkness* to be utterly false and even leading to evil, they are nevertheless necessary for both group harmony and individual security. Madness, in *Heart of Darkness*, is the result of being removed from one's social context and allowed to be the sole arbiter of one's own actions. Madness is thus linked not only to absolute power and a kind of moral genius but to man's fundamental fallibility: Kurtz has no authority to whom he answers but himself, and this is more than any one man can bear.

The Absurdity of Evil

This novella is, above all, an exploration of hypocrisy, ambiguity, and moral confusion. It explodes the idea of the proverbial choice between the lesser of two evils. As the idealistic Marlow is forced to align himself with either the hypocritical and malicious colonial bureaucracy or the openly malevolent, rule-defying Kurtz, it becomes increasingly clear that to try to judge either alternative is an act of folly: how can moral standards or social values be relevant in judging evil? Is there such thing as insanity in a world that has already gone insane? The number of ridiculous situations Marlow witnesses act as reflections of the larger issue: at one station, for instance, he sees a man trying to carry water in a bucket with a large hole in it. At the Outer Station, he watches native laborers blast away at a hillside with no particular goal in mind. The absurd involves both insignificant silliness and life-or-death issues, often simultaneously. That the serious and the mundane are treated similarly suggests a profound moral confusion and a tremendous hypocrisy: it is terrifying that Kurtz's homicidal megalomania and a leaky bucket provoke essentially the same reaction from Marlow.

Notes***Motifs***

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Observation and Eavesdropping

Marlow gains a great deal of information by watching the world around him and by overhearing others' conversations, as when he listens from the deck of the wrecked steamer to the manager of the Central Station and his uncle discussing Kurtz and the Russian trader. This phenomenon speaks to the impossibility of direct communication between individuals: information must come as the result of chance observation and astute interpretation. Words themselves fail to capture meaning adequately, and thus they must be taken in the context of their utterance. Another good example of this is Marlow's conversation with the brickmaker, during which Marlow is able to figure out a good deal more than simply what the man has to say.

Interiors and Exteriors

Comparisons between interiors and exteriors pervade *Heart of Darkness*. As the narrator states at the beginning of the text, Marlow is more interested in surfaces, in the surrounding aura of a thing rather than in any hidden nugget of meaning deep within the thing itself. This inverts the usual hierarchy of meaning: normally one seeks the deep message or hidden truth. The priority placed on observation demonstrates that penetrating to the interior of an idea or a person is impossible in this world. Thus, Marlow is confronted with a series of exteriors and surfaces—the river's banks, the forest walls around the station, Kurtz's broad forehead—that he must interpret. These exteriors are all the material he is given, and they provide him with perhaps a more profound source of knowledge than any falsely constructed interior "kernel."

Darkness

Darkness is important enough conceptually to be part of the book's title. However, it is difficult to discern exactly what it might mean, given that absolutely everything in the book is cloaked in darkness. Africa, England, and Brussels are all described as gloomy and somehow dark, even if the sun is shining brightly. Darkness thus seems to operate metaphorically and existentially rather than specifically. Darkness is the inability to see: this may sound simple, but as a description of the human condition it has profound implications. Failing to see another human being means failing to understand that individual and failing to establish any sort of sympathetic communion with him or her.

Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

Fog

Fog is a sort of corollary to darkness. Fog not only obscures but distorts: it gives one just enough information to begin making decisions but no way to judge the accuracy of that information, which often ends up being wrong. Marlow's steamer is caught in the fog, meaning that he has no idea where he's going and no idea whether peril or open water lies ahead.

The "Whited Sepulchre"

The "whited sepulchre" is probably Brussels, where the Company's headquarters are located. A sepulchre implies death and confinement, and indeed Europe is the origin of the colonial enterprises that bring death to white men and to their colonial subjects; it is also governed by a set of reified social principles that both enable cruelty, dehumanization, and evil and prohibit change. The phrase "whited sepulchre" comes from the biblical Book of Matthew. In the passage, Matthew describes "whited sepulchres" as something beautiful on the outside but containing horrors within (the bodies of the dead); thus, the image is appropriate for Brussels, given the hypocritical Belgian rhetoric about imperialism's civilizing mission. (Belgian colonies, particularly the Congo, were notorious for the violence perpetuated against the natives.)

Women

Both Kurtz's Intended and his African mistress function as blank slates upon which the values and the wealth of their respective societies can be displayed. Marlow frequently claims that women are the keepers of naïve illusions; although this sounds condemnatory, such a role is in fact crucial, as these naïve illusions are at the root of the social fictions that justify economic enterprise and colonial expansion. In return, the women are the beneficiaries of much of the resulting wealth, and they become objects upon which men can display their own success and status.

The River

The Congo River is the key to Africa for Europeans. It allows them access to the center of the continent without having to physically cross it; in other words, it allows the white man to remain always separate or outside. Africa is thus reduced to a series of two-dimensional scenes that flash by Marlow's steamer as he travels upriver. The river also seems to want to expel Europeans from Africa altogether: its current makes travel upriver slow and difficult, but the flow of water makes travel downriver, back toward "civilization," rapid and seemingly inevitable. Marlow's struggles with the river as he travels upstream toward Kurtz reflect his struggles to understand the situation in which he has found himself. The ease with which he journeys back downstream, on the other hand, mirrors his acquiescence to Kurtz and his "choice of nightmares."

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4.5 PART WISE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Part 1

Beginning through Marlow's being hired as a steamboat captain.

Summary

At sundown, a pleasure ship called the *Nellie* lies anchored at the mouth of the Thames, waiting for the tide to go out. Five men relax on the deck of the ship: the Director of Companies, who is also the captain and host, the Lawyer, the Accountant, Marlow, and the unnamed Narrator. The five men, old friends held together by "the bond of the sea," are restless yet meditative, as if waiting for something to happen. As darkness begins to fall, and the scene becomes "less brilliant but more profound," the men recall the great men and ships that have set forth from the Thames on voyages of trade and exploration, frequently never to return. Suddenly Marlow remarks that this very spot was once "one of the dark places of the earth." He notes that when the Romans first came to England, it was a great, savage wilderness to them. He imagines what it must have been like for a young Roman captain or soldier to come to a place so far from home and lacking in comforts.

This train of thought reminds Marlow of his sole experience as a "fresh-water sailor," when as a young man he captained a steamship going up the Congo River. He recounts that he first got the idea when, after returning from a six-year voyage through Asia, he came across a map of Africa in a London shop window, which reinvigorated his childhood fantasies about the "blank spaces" on the map.

Marlow recounts how he obtained a job with the Belgian "Company" that trades on the Congo River (the Congo was then a Belgian territory) through the influence of an aunt who had friends in the Company's administration. The Company was eager to send Marlow to Africa, because one of the Company's steamer captains had recently been killed in a scuffle with the natives.

Analysis

Marlow's story of a voyage up the Congo River that he took as a young man is the main narrative of *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's narrative is framed by another narrative, in which one of the listeners to Marlow's story explains the circumstances in which Marlow tells it. The narrator who begins *Heart of Darkness* is unnamed, as are the other three listeners, who are identified only by their professional occupations. Moreover, the narrator usually speaks in the first-person plural, describing what all four of Marlow's listeners think and feel. The unanimity and anonymity of Marlow's listeners combine to create the impression that they represent conventional perspectives and values of the British establishment.

For the narrator and his fellow travelers, the Thames conjures up images of famous British explorers who have set out from that river on glorious voyages. The narrator recounts the achievements of these explorers in a celebratory tone, calling them "knight-errants" of the sea, implying that such voyages served a sacred, higher purpose. The narrator's attitude is that these men promoted the glory of Great Britain, expanded knowledge of the globe, and contributed to the civilization and enlightenment of the rest of the planet.

At the time *Heart of Darkness* was written, the British Empire was at its peak, and Britain controlled colonies and dependencies all over the planet. The popular saying that "the sun never sets on the British Empire" was literally true. The main topic of *Heart of Darkness* is imperialism, a nation's policy of exerting influence over other areas through military, political, and economic coercion. The narrator expresses the mainstream belief that imperialism is a glorious and worthy enterprise. Indeed, in Conrad's time, "empire" was one of the central values of British subjects, the fundamental term through which Britain defined its identity and sense of purpose.

From the moment Marlow opens his mouth, he sets himself apart from his fellow passengers by conjuring up a past in which Britain was not the heart of civilization but the savage "end of the world." Likewise, the Thames was not the source of glorious journeys outward but the ominous beginning of a journey inward, into the heart of the wilderness. This is typical of Marlow as a storyteller: he narrates in an ironic tone, giving the impression that his audience's assumptions are wrong, but not presenting a clear alternative to those assumptions. Throughout his story, distinctions such as inward and outward, civilized and savage, dark and light, are called into question. But the irony of Marlow's story is not as pronounced as in a satire, and Marlow's and Conrad's attitudes regarding imperialism are never entirely clear.

From the way Marlow tells his story, it is clear that he is extremely critical of imperialism, but his reasons apparently have less to do with what imperialism does to colonized peoples than with what it does to Europeans. Marlow suggests, in the first place, that participation in imperial enterprises degrades Europeans by removing them from the "civilizing" context of European society, while simultaneously tempting them into violent behavior because of the hostility and lawlessness of the environment. Moreover, Marlow suggests that the mission of "civilizing" and "enlightening" native peoples is misguided, not because he believes that they have a viable civilization and culture already, but because they are so savage that the project is overwhelming and hopeless. Marlow expresses horror when he witnesses the violent maltreatment of the natives, and he argues that a kinship exists between black Africans and Europeans, but in the same breath he states that this kinship is "ugly" and horrifying, and that the kinship is extremely distant. Nevertheless, it is not a simple matter to evaluate whether Marlow's attitudes are conservative or progressive, racist or "enlightened."

In the first place, one would have to decide in relation to *whom* Marlow was

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conservative or progressive. Clearly, Marlow's story is shaped by the audience to whom he tells it. The anonymous narrator states that Marlow is unconventional in his ideas, and his listeners' derisive grunts and murmurs suggest that they are less inclined to question colonialism or to view Africans as human beings than he is. His criticisms of colonialism, both implicit and explicit, are pitched to an audience that is far more sympathetic toward the colonial enterprise than any twenty-first-century reader could be. The framing narrative puts a certain amount of distance between Marlow's narrative and Conrad himself. This framework suggests that the reader should regard Marlow ironically, but there are few cues within the text to suggest an alternative to Marlow's point of view.

Marlow's visit to the Company Headquarters through his parting with his aunt.**Summary**

After he hears that he has gotten the job, Marlow travels across the English Channel to a city that reminds him of a "whited sepulchre" (probably Brussels) to sign his employment contract at the Company's office. First, however, he digresses to tell the story of his predecessor with the Company, Fresleven. Much later, after the events Marlow is about to recount, Marlow was sent to recover Fresleven's bones, which he found lying in the center of a deserted African village. Despite his reputation as mild mannered, Fresleven was killed in a scuffle over some hens: after striking the village chief, he was stabbed by the chief's son. He was left there to die, and the superstitious natives immediately abandoned the village. Marlow notes that he never did find out what became of the hens.

Arriving at the Company's offices, Marlow finds two sinister women there knitting black wool, one of whom admits him to a waiting room, where he looks at a map of Africa color-coded by colonial powers. A secretary takes him into the inner office for a cursory meeting with the head of the Company. Marlow signs his contract, and the secretary takes him off to be checked over by a doctor. The doctor takes measurements of his skull, remarking that he unfortunately doesn't get to see those men who make it back from Africa. More important, the doctor tells Marlow, "the changes take place inside." The doctor is interested in learning anything that may give Belgians an advantage in colonial situations.

With all formalities completed, Marlow stops off to say goodbye to his aunt, who expresses her hope that he will aid in the civilization of savages during his service to the Company, "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways." Well aware that the Company operates for profit and not for the good of humanity, and bothered by his aunt's naïveté, Marlow takes his leave of her. Before boarding the French steamer that is to take him to Africa, Marlow has a brief but strange feeling about his journey: the feeling that he is setting off for the center of the earth.

Analysis**Notes**

This section has several concrete objectives. The first of these is to locate Marlow more specifically within the wider history of colonialism. It is important that he goes to Africa in the service of a Belgian company rather than a British one. The map that Marlow sees in the Company offices shows the continent overlaid with blotches of color, each color standing for a different imperial power. While the map represents a relatively neutral way of describing imperial presences in Africa, Marlow's comments about the map reveal that imperial powers were not all the same. In fact, the yellow patch—"dead in the center"—covers the site of some of the most disturbing atrocities committed in the name of empire. The Belgian king, Leopold, treated the Congo as his private treasury, and the Belgians had the reputation of being far and away the most cruel and rapacious of the colonial powers. The reference to Brussels as a "whited sepulchre" is meant to bring to mind a passage from the Book of Matthew concerning hypocrisy. The Belgian monarch spoke rhetorically about the civilizing benefits of colonialism, but the Belgian version of the practice was the bloodiest and most inhumane.

This does not, however, mean that Conrad seeks to indict the Belgians and praise other colonial powers. As Marlow journeys into the Congo, he meets men from a variety of European nations, all of whom are violent and willing to do anything to make their fortunes. Moreover, it must be remembered that Marlow himself willingly goes to work for this Belgian concern: at the moment he decides to do so, his personal desire for adventure far outweighs any concerns he might have about particular colonial practices. This section of the book also introduces another set of concerns, this time regarding women. *Heart of Darkness* has been attacked by critics as misogynistic, and there is some justification for this point of view. Marlow's aunt does express a naïvely idealistic view of the Company's mission, and Marlow is thus right to fault her for being "out of touch with truth." However, he phrases his criticism so as to make it applicable to all women, suggesting that women do not even live in the same world as men and that they must be protected from reality. Moreover, the female characters in Marlow's story are extremely flat and stylized. In part this may be because Marlow uses women symbolically as representatives of "home." Marlow associates home with ideas gotten from books and religion rather than from experience. Home is the seat of naïveté, prejudice, confinement, and oppression. It is the place of people who have not gone out into the world and experienced, and who therefore cannot understand. Nonetheless, the women in Marlow's story exert a great deal of power. The influence of Marlow's aunt does not stop at getting him the job but continues to echo through the Company's correspondence in Africa. At the Company's headquarters, Marlow encounters a number of apparently influential women, hinting that all enterprises are ultimately female-driven.

Marlow's departure from the world of Belgium and women is facilitated, according to him, by two eccentric men. The first of these is Fresleven, the story of whose death serves to build suspense and suggest to the reader the

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transformations that Europeans undergo in Africa. By European standards, Fresleven was a good and gentle man, not one likely to die as he did. This means either that the European view of people is wrong and useless or else that there is something about Africa that makes men behave aberrantly. Both of these conclusions are difficult to accept practically or politically, and thus the story of Fresleven leaves the reader feeling ambivalent and cautious about Marlow's story to come.

The second figure presiding over Marlow's departure is the Company's doctor. The doctor is perhaps the ultimate symbol of futility: he uses external measurements to try to decipher what he admits are internal changes; moreover, his subjects either don't return from Africa or, if they do, don't return to see him. Thus his work and his advice are both totally useless. He is the first of a series of functionaries with pointless jobs that Marlow will encounter as he travels toward and then up the Congo River.

Marlow's journey down the coast of Africa through his meeting with the chief accountant.

Summary

The French steamer takes Marlow along the coast of Africa, stopping periodically to land soldiers and customhouse officers. Marlow finds his idleness vexing, and the trip seems vaguely nightmarish to him. At one point, they come across a French man-of-war shelling an apparently uninhabited forested stretch of coast. They finally arrive at the mouth of the Congo River, where Marlow boards another steamship bound for a point thirty miles upriver. The captain of the ship, a young Swede, recognizes Marlow as a seaman and invites him on the bridge. The Swede criticizes the colonial officials and tells Marlow about another Swede who recently hanged himself on his way into the interior.

Marlow disembarks at the Company's station, which is in a terrible state of disrepair. He sees piles of decaying machinery and a cliff being blasted for no apparent purpose. He also sees a group of black prisoners walking along in chains under the guard of another black man, who wears a shoddy uniform and carries a rifle. He remarks that he had already known the "devils" of violence, greed, and desire, but that in Africa he became acquainted with the "flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly." Finally, Marlow comes to a grove of trees and, to his horror, finds a group of dying native laborers. He offers a biscuit to one of them; seeing a bit of white European yarn tied around his neck, he wonders at its meaning. He meets a nattily dressed white man, the Company's chief accountant (not to be confused with Marlow's friend the Accountant from the opening of the book). Marlow spends ten days here waiting for a caravan to the next station. One day, the chief accountant tells him that in the interior he will undoubtedly meet Mr. Kurtz, a first-class agent who sends in as much ivory as all the others put together and is destined for advancement. He tells Marlow to let Kurtz know that everything is satisfactory at the Outer Station

when he meets him. The chief accountant is afraid to send a written message for fear it will be intercepted by undesirable elements at the Central Station.

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Analysis

Marlow's description of his journey on the French steamer makes use of an interior/exterior motif that continues throughout the rest of the book. Marlow frequently encounters inscrutable surfaces that tempt him to try to penetrate into the interior of situations and places. The most prominent example of this is the French man-of-war, which shells a forested wall of coastline. To Marlow's mind, the entire coastline of the African continent presents a solid green facade, and the spectacle of European guns firing blindly into that facade seems to be a futile and uncomprehending way of addressing the continent.

"The flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" is one of the central images with which Marlow characterizes the behavior of the colonists. He refers back to this image at a number of key points later in the story. It is thus a very important clue as to what Marlow actually thinks is wrong about imperialism—Marlow's attitudes are usually implied rather than directly stated. Marlow distinguishes this devil from violence, greed, and desire, suggesting that the fundamental evil of imperialism is *not* that it perpetrates violence against native peoples, nor that it is motivated by greed. The flabby, weak-eyed devil seems to be distinguished above all by being shortsighted and foolish, unaware of what it is doing and ineffective.

The hand of the "flabby devil" is apparent in the travesties of administration and the widespread decay in the Company's stations. The colonials in the coastal station spend all their time blasting a cliff for no apparent reason, machinery lies broken all around, and supplies are poorly apportioned, resting in abundance where they are not needed and never sent to where they are needed. Given the level of waste and inefficiency, this kind of colonial activity clearly has something other than economic activity at stake, but just what that something might be is not apparent. Marlow's comments on the "flabby devil" produce a very ambivalent criticism of colonialism. Would Marlow approve of the violent exploitation and extortion of the Africans if it was done in a more clear-sighted and effective manner? This question is difficult to answer definitively.

On the other hand, Marlow is appalled by the ghastly, infernal spectacle of the grove of death, while the other colonials show no concern over it at all. For Marlow, the grove is the dark heart of the station. Marlow's horror at the grove suggests that the true evils of this colonial enterprise are dehumanization and death. All Marlow can offer these dying men are a few pieces of biscuit, and, despite the fact that Marlow is "not particularly tender," the situation troubles him.

In this section, Marlow finally learns the reason for the journey he is to take up the Congo, although he does not yet realize the importance this reason will

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later take on. The chief accountant is the first to use the name of the mysterious Mr. Kurtz, speaking of him in reverent tones and alluding to a conspiracy within the Company, the particulars of which Marlow never deciphers. Again, the name “Kurtz” provides a surface that conceals a hidden and potentially threatening situation. It is appropriate, therefore, that the chief accountant is Marlow’s informant. In his dress whites, the man epitomizes success in the colonial world. His “accomplishment” lies in keeping up appearances, in looking as he would at home. Like everything else Marlow encounters, the chief accountant’s surface may conceal a dark secret, in this case the native woman whom he has “taught”—perhaps violently and despite her “distaste for the work”—to care for his linens. Marlow has yet to find a single white man with a valid “excuse for being there” in Africa. More important, he has yet to understand why he himself is there.

Marlow’s journey to the Central Station through the arrival of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition.

Summary

Marlow travels overland for two hundred miles with a caravan of sixty men. He has one white companion who falls ill and must be carried by the native bearers, who start to desert because of the added burden. After fifteen days they arrive at the dilapidated Central Station. Marlow finds that the steamer he was to command has sunk. The general manager of the Central Station had taken the boat out two days before under the charge of a volunteer skipper, and they had torn the bottom out on some rocks. In light of what he later learns, Marlow suspects the damage to the steamer may have been intentional, to keep him from reaching Kurtz. Marlow soon meets with the general manager, who strikes him as an altogether average man who leads by inspiring an odd uneasiness in those around him and whose authority derives merely from his resistance to tropical disease. The manager tells Marlow that he took the boat out in a hurry to relieve the inner stations, especially the one belonging to Kurtz, who is rumored to be ill. He praises Kurtz as an exceptional agent and takes note that Kurtz is talked about on the coast.

The word ‘ivory’ rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it.

Marlow sets to work dredging his ship out of the river and repairing it, which ends up taking three months. One day during this time, a grass shed housing some trade goods burns down, and the native laborers dance delightedly as it burns. One of the natives is accused of causing the fire and is beaten severely; he disappears into the forest after he recovers. Marlow overhears the manager talking with the brickmaker about Kurtz at the site of the burned hut. He enters into conversation with the brickmaker after the manager leaves, and ends up accompanying the man back to his quarters, which are noticeably more luxurious than those of the other agents. Marlow realizes after a while that the brickmaker is pumping him for information about the intentions of the Company’s board of

directors in Europe, about which, of course, Marlow knows nothing. Marlow notices an unusual painting on the wall, of a blindfolded woman with a lighted torch; when he asks about it, the brickmaker reveals that it is Kurtz's work.

The brickmaker tells Marlow that Kurtz is a prodigy, sent as a special emissary of Western ideals by the Company's directors and bound for quick advancement. He also reveals that he has seen confidential correspondence dealing with Marlow's appointment, from which he has construed that Marlow is also a favorite of the administration. They go outside, and the brickmaker tries to get himself into Marlow's good graces—and Kurtz's by proxy, since he believes Marlow is allied with Kurtz. Marlow realizes the brickmaker had planned on being assistant manager, and Kurtz's arrival has upset his chances. Seeing an opportunity to use the brickmaker's influence to his own ends, Marlow lets the man believe he really does have influence in Europe and tells him that he wants a quantity of rivets from the coast to repair his ship. The brickmaker leaves him with a veiled threat on his life, but Marlow enjoys his obvious distress and confusion.

Marlow finds his foreman sitting on the deck of the ship and tells him that they will have rivets in three weeks, and they both dance around exuberantly. The rivets do not come, however. Instead, the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, a group of white men intent on "tear[ing] treasure out of the bowels of the land," arrives, led by the manager's uncle, who spends his entire time at the station talking conspiratorially with his nephew. Marlow gives up on ever receiving the rivets he needs to repair his ship, and turns to wondering disinterestedly about Kurtz and his ideals.

Analysis

As Marlow describes his caravan journey through the depopulated interior of the colony, he remarks ironically that he was becoming "scientifically interesting"—an allusion to his conversation with the company doctor in Brussels. Given this, it is curious that Marlow talks so little about the caravan journey itself. In part, this is because it's not directly relevant to his story—during this time he is neither in contact with representatives of the Company nor moving directly toward Kurtz. Nonetheless, something about this journey renders Marlow a mystery even to himself; he starts to think of himself as a potential case study. Africa appears to him to be something that happens to a man, without his consent. One way to interpret this is that Marlow is disowning his own responsibility (and that of his fellow employees) for the atrocities committed by the Company on the natives. Because of its merciless environment and savage inhabitants, Africa itself is responsible for colonial violence. Forced to deal with his ailing companion and a group of native porters who continually desert and abandon their loads, Marlow finds himself at the top of the proverbial slippery slope.

The men he finds at the Central Station allow him to regain his perspective, however. The goings-on here are ridiculous: for example, Marlow watches a

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man try to extinguish a fire using a bucket with a hole in it. The manager and the brickmaker, the men in charge, are repeatedly described as hollow, “papier-mâché” figures. For Marlow, who has just experienced the surreal horrors of the continent’s interior, the idea that a man’s exterior may conceal only a void is disturbing. The alternative, of course, is that at the heart of these men lies not a void but a vast, malevolent conspiracy. The machinations of the manager and the brickmaker suggest that, paradoxically, both ideas are correct: that these men indeed conceal bad intentions, but that these intentions, despite the fact that they lead to apparent evil, are meaningless in light of their context. The use of religious language to describe the agents of the Central Station reinforces this paradoxical idea. Marlow calls the Company’s rank and file “pilgrims,” both for their habit of carrying staves (with which to beat native laborers) and for their mindless worship of the wealth to be had from ivory.

“Ivory,” as it echoes through the air of the camp, sounds to Marlow like something unreal rather than a physical substance. Marlow suggests that the word echoes because the station is only a tiny “cleared speck,” surrounded by an “outside” that always threatens to close in, erasing the men and their pathetic ambitions. Over and over again in this section of the book human voices are hurled against the wilderness, only to be thrown back by the river’s surface or a wall of trees. No matter how evil these men are, no matter how terrible the atrocities they commit against the natives, they are insignificant in the vastness of time and the physical world. Some critics have objected to *Heart of Darkness* on the grounds that it brushes aside or makes excuses for racism and colonial violence, and that it even glamorizes them by making them the subject of Marlow’s seemingly profound ruminations.

On a more concrete level, the events of this section move Marlow ever closer to the mysterious Kurtz. Kurtz increasingly appeals to Marlow as an alternative, no matter how dire, to the repellent men around him. The painting in the brickmaker’s quarters, which Marlow learns is Kurtz’s work, draws Marlow in: the blindfolded woman with the torch represents for him an acknowledgment of the paradox and ambiguity of the African situation, and this is a much more sophisticated response than he has seen from any of the other Europeans he has encountered. To the reader, the painting may seem somewhat heavy-handed, with its overtly allegorical depiction of blind and unseeing European attempts to bring the “light” of civilization to Africa. Marlow, however, sees in it a level of self-awareness that offers a compelling alternative to the folly he has witnessed throughout the Company.

Part 2

Marlow’s overhearing of the conversation between the manager and his uncle through the beginning of his voyage up the river.

Summary

One evening, as Marlow lies on the deck of his wrecked steamer, the manager

and his uncle appear within earshot and discuss Kurtz. The manager complains that Kurtz has come to the Congo with plans to turn the stations into beacons of civilization and moral improvement, and that Kurtz wants to take over the manager's position. He recalls that about a year earlier Kurtz sent down a huge load of ivory of the highest quality by canoe with his clerk, but that Kurtz himself had turned back to his station after coming 300 miles down the river. The clerk, after turning over the ivory and a letter from Kurtz instructing the manager to stop sending him incompetent men, informs the manager that Kurtz has been very ill and has not completely recovered.

Continuing to converse with his uncle, the manager mentions another man whom he finds troublesome, a wandering trader. The manager's uncle tells him to go ahead and have the trader hanged, because no one will challenge his authority here. The manager's uncle also suggests that the climate may take care of all of his difficulties for him, implying that Kurtz simply may die of tropical disease. Marlow is alarmed by the apparent conspiracy between the two men and leaps to his feet, revealing himself to them. They are visibly startled but move off without acknowledging his presence. Not long after this incident, the Eldorado Expedition, led by the manager's uncle, disappears into the wilderness.

In a few days the Eldorado Expedition went into the patient wilderness, that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver.

Much later, the cryptic message arrives that all the expedition's donkeys have died. By that time, the repairs on Marlow's steamer are nearly complete, and Marlow is preparing to leave on a two-month trip up the river to Kurtz, along with the manager and several "pilgrims." The river is treacherous and the trip is difficult; the ship proceeds only with the help of a crew of natives the Europeans call cannibals, who actually prove to be quite reasonable people. The men aboard the ship hear drums at night along the riverbanks and occasionally catch glimpses of native settlements during the day, but they can only guess at what lies further inland. Marlow feels a sense of kinship between himself and the savages along the riverbanks, but his work in keeping the ship afloat and steaming keeps him safely occupied and prevents him from brooding too much.

Analysis

Marlow's work ethic and professional skills are contrasted, throughout this section, with the incompetence and laziness of the Company's employees. Working to repair his ship and then piloting it up the river provides a much-needed distraction for Marlow, preventing him from brooding upon the folly of his fellow Europeans and the savagery of the natives. To Marlow's mind, work represents the fulfillment of a contract between two independent human beings. Repairing the steamer and then piloting it, he convinces himself, has little to do with the exploitation and horror he sees all around him.

Nevertheless, Marlow is continually forced to interpret the surrounding

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world. The description of his journey upriver is strange and disturbing. Marlow describes the trip as a journey back in time, to a “prehistoric earth.” This remark reflects the European inclination to view colonized peoples as primitive, further back on the evolutionary scale than Europeans, and it recalls Marlow’s comment at the beginning of his narrative about England’s own past. What disturbs Marlow most about the native peoples he sees along the river, in his words, is “this suspicion of their not being inhuman”: in some deep way these “savages” are like Europeans, perhaps just like the English were when Britain was colonized by Rome. Marlow’s self-imposed isolation from the manager and the rest of the pilgrims forces him to consider the African members of his crew, and he is confused about what he sees. He wonders, for example, how his native fireman (the crewman who keeps the boiler going) is any different from a poorly educated, ignorant European doing the same job.

It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—the suspicion of their not being inhuman.

The mysterious figure of Kurtz is at the heart of Marlow’s confusion. The manager seems to suggest that his own resistance against the consequences of the tropical climate reflects not just physical constitution but a moral fitness, or the approval of some higher power. That this could be the case is terrifying to Marlow, and in his shock he exposes his disdain of the manager to the man himself. Yet Marlow has a difficult time analyzing what he has overheard about Kurtz: if the manager’s story contains any truth, then Kurtz must be a monomaniacal if not psychotic individual. Next to the petty ambitions and sycophantic maneuverings of the manager, however, Kurtz’s grandiose gestures and morally ambiguous successes are appealing.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this section, though, is how little actually happens. The journey up the river is full of threatened disasters, but none of them comes to pass, thanks to Marlow’s skill; the most explosive potential conflict arises from an act of eavesdropping. The stillness and silence surrounding this single steamer full of Europeans in the midst of the vast African continent provoke in Marlow an attitude of restless watchfulness: he feels as if he has “no time” and must constantly “discern, mostly by inspiration, [hidden] signs.” In this way, his piloting a steamboat along a treacherous river comes to symbolize his finding his way through a world of conspiracies, mysteries, and inaccessible black faces. Now that both Africa and Europe have become impenetrable to Marlow, only the larger-than-life Kurtz seems “real.”

Marlow’s discovery of the stack of firewood through the attack on the steamer.

Summary

Fifty miles away from Kurtz’s Inner Station, the steamer sights a hut with a stack of firewood and a note that says, “Wood for you. Hurry up. Approach cautiously.”

The signature is illegible, but it is clearly not Kurtz's. Inside the hut, Marlow finds a battered old book on seamanship with notes in the margin in what looks like code. The manager concludes that the wood must have been left by the Russian trader, a man about whom Marlow has overheard the manager complaining. After taking aboard the firewood that serves as the ship's fuel, the party continues up the river, the steamer struggling and threatening at every moment to give out completely. Marlow ponders Kurtz constantly as they crawl along toward him.

By the evening of the second day after finding the hut, they arrive at a point eight miles from Kurtz's station. Marlow wants to press on, but the manager tells him to wait for daylight, as the waters are dangerous here. The night is strangely still and silent, and dawn brings an oppressive fog. The fog lifts suddenly and then falls again just as abruptly. The men on the steamer hear a loud, desolate cry, followed by a clamor of savage voices, and then silence again. They prepare for attack. The whites are badly shaken, but the African crewmen respond with quiet alertness. The leader of the cannibals tells Marlow matter-of-factly that his people want to eat the owners of the voices in the fog. Marlow realizes that the cannibals must be terribly hungry, as they have not been allowed to go ashore to trade for supplies, and their only food, a supply of rotting hippo meat, was long since thrown overboard by the pilgrims.

The manager authorizes Marlow to take every risk in continuing on in the fog, but Marlow refuses to do so, as they will surely ground the steamer if they proceed blindly. Marlow says he does not think the natives will attack, particularly since their cries have sounded more sorrowful than warlike. After the fog lifts, at a spot a mile and a half from the station, the natives attempt to repulse the invaders. The steamer is in a narrow channel, moving along slowly next to a high bank overgrown with bushes, when suddenly the air fills with arrows. Marlow rushes inside the pilot-house. When he leans out to close the shutter on the window, he sees that the brush is swarming with natives. Suddenly, he notices a snag in the river a short way ahead of the steamer.

The pilgrims open fire with rifles from below him, and the cloud of smoke they produce obscures his sight. Marlow's African helmsman leaves the wheel to open the shutter and shoot out with a one-shot rifle, and then stands at the open window yelling at the unseen assailants on the shore. Marlow grabs the wheel and crowds the steamer close to the bank to avoid the snag. As he does so, the helmsman takes a spear in his side and falls on Marlow's feet. Marlow frightens the attackers away by sounding the steam whistle repeatedly, and they give off a prolonged cry of fear and despair. One of the pilgrims enters the pilot-house and is shocked to see the wounded helmsman. The two white men stand over him as he dies quietly. Marlow makes the repulsed and indignant pilgrim steer while he changes his shoes and socks, which are covered in the dead man's blood. Marlow expects that Kurtz is now dead as well, and he feels a terrible disappointment at the thought.

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One of Marlow's listeners breaks into his narrative at this point to comment upon the absurdity of Marlow's behavior. Marlow laughs at the man, whose comfortable bourgeois existence has never brought him into contact with anything the likes of Africa. He admits that his own behavior may have been ridiculous—he did, after all, throw a pair of brand-new shoes overboard in response to the helmsman's death—but he notes that there is something legitimate about his disappointment in thinking he will never be able to meet the man behind the legend of Kurtz.

Analysis

Marlow makes a major error of interpretation in this section, when he decides that the cries coming from the riverbank do not portend an attack. That he is wrong is more or less irrelevant, since the steamer has no real ability to escape. The fog that surrounds the boat is literal and metaphorical: it obscures, distorts, and leaves Marlow with only voices and words upon which to base his judgments. Indeed, this has been Marlow's situation for much of the book, as he has had to formulate a notion of Kurtz based only on secondhand accounts of the man's exploits and personality. This has been both enriching and dangerous for Marlow. On the one hand, having the figure of Kurtz available as an object for contemplation has provided a release for Marlow, a distraction from his unsavory surroundings, and Kurtz has also functioned as a kind of blank slate onto which Marlow can project his own opinions and values. Kurtz gives Marlow a sense of possibility. At the same time, Marlow's fantasizing about Kurtz has its hazards. By becoming intrigued with Kurtz, Marlow becomes dangerously alienated from, and disliked by, the Company's representatives. Moreover, Marlow focuses his energies and hopes on a man who may be nothing like the legends surrounding him. However, with nothing else to go on and no other alternatives to the manager and his ilk, Marlow has little choice.

This section contains many instances of contradictory language, reflecting Marlow's difficult and uncomfortable position. The steamer, for example, "tears slowly along" the riverbank: "to tear" usually indicates great speed or haste, but the oxymoronic addition of "slowly" immediately strips the phrase of any discernible meaning and makes it ridiculous. Marlow's companions aboard the steamer prove equally paradoxical. The "pilgrims" are rough and violent men. The "cannibals," on the other hand, conduct themselves with quiet dignity: although they are malnourished, they perform their jobs without complaint. Indeed, they even show flashes of humor, as when their leader teases Marlow by saying that they would like to eat the owners of the voices they hear coming from the shore. The combination of humane cannibals and bloodthirsty pilgrims, all overseen by a manager who manages clandestinely rather than openly, creates an atmosphere of the surreal and the absurd. Thus, it is not surprising when the ship is attacked by Stone Age weaponry (arrows and spears), and it is equally appropriate that the attack is not repelled with bullets but by manipulating the

superstitions and fears of those ashore—simply by blowing the steamer's whistle. The primitive weapons used by both sides in the attack reinforce Marlow's notion that the trip up the river is a trip back in time. Marlow's response to the helmsman's death reflects the general atmosphere of contradiction and absurdity: rather than immediately mourning his right-hand man, Marlow changes his socks and shoes.

In the meantime, tension continues to build as Marlow draws nearer to Kurtz. After the attack, Marlow speculates that Kurtz may be dead, but the strange message and the book full of notes left with the firewood suggest otherwise. Marlow does not need to be told to "hurry up": his eagerness to meet Kurtz draws him onward. To meet Kurtz will be to create a coherent whole in a world sorely lacking in such things; by matching the man with his voice, Marlow hopes to come to an understanding about what happens to men in places like the Congo.

Marlow's digression about Kurtz through his meeting with the Russian trader.

Summary

Marlow breaks into the narrative here to offer a digression on Kurtz. He notes that Kurtz had a fiancée, his Intended (as Kurtz called her), waiting for him in Europe. Marlow attaches no importance to Kurtz's fiancée, since, for him, women exist in an alternate fantasy world. What Marlow does find significant about Kurtz's Intended, though, is the air of possession Kurtz assumed when speaking about her: indeed, Kurtz spoke of everything—ivory, the Inner Station, the river—as being innately his. It is this sense of dark mastery that disturbs Marlow most. Marlow also mentions a report Kurtz has written at the request of the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. The report is eloquent and powerful, if lacking in practical suggestions. It concludes, however, with a handwritten postscript: "Exterminate all the brutes!" Marlow suggests that this coda, the "exposition of [Kurtz's] method," is the result of Kurtz's absorption into native life—that by the time he came to write this note he had assumed a position of power with respect to the natives and had been a participant in "unspeakable rites," where sacrifices had been made in his name. At this point, Marlow also reveals that he feels he is responsible for the "care of [Kurtz's] memory," and that he has no choice but to remember and continue to talk about the man.

At the time Marlow is telling his story, he is still unsure whether Kurtz was worth the lives lost on his behalf; thus, at this point, he returns to his dead helmsman and the journey up the river. Marlow blames the helmsman's death on the man's own lack of restraint: had the helmsman not tried to fire at the men on the riverbank, he would not have been killed. Marlow drags the helmsman's body out of the pilot-house and throws it overboard. The pilgrims are indignant that the man will not receive a proper burial, and the cannibals seem to mourn the loss of a potential meal. The pilgrims have concluded Kurtz must be dead and the Inner Station destroyed, but they are cheered at the crushing defeat they

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believe they dealt their unseen attackers. Marlow remains skeptical and sarcastically congratulates them on the amount of smoke they have managed to produce. Suddenly, the Inner Station comes into view, somewhat decayed but still standing.

A white man, the Russian trader, beckons to them from the shore. He wears a gaudy patchwork suit and babbles incessantly. He is aware they have been attacked but tells them that everything will now be okay. The manager and the pilgrims go up the hill to retrieve Kurtz, while the Russian boards the ship to converse with Marlow. He tells Marlow that the natives mean no harm (although he is less than convincing on this point), and he confirms Marlow's theory that the ship's whistle is the best means of defense, since it will scare the natives off. He gives a brief account of himself: he has been a merchant seaman and was outfitted by a Dutch trading house to go into the African interior. Marlow gives him the book on seamanship that had been left with the firewood, and the trader is very happy to have it back. As it turns out, what Marlow had thought were encoded notes are simply notes written in Russian. The Russian trader tells Marlow that he has had trouble restraining the natives, and he suggests that the steamer was attacked because the natives do not want Kurtz to leave. The Russian also offers yet another enigmatic picture of Kurtz. According to the trader, one does not talk to Kurtz but listens to him. The trader credits Kurtz for having "enlarged his mind."

Analysis

The interruption and digression at the beginning of this section suggests that Marlow has begun to feel the need to justify his own conduct. Marlow speaks of his fascination with Kurtz as something over which he has no control, as if Kurtz refuses to be forgotten. This is one of a number of instances in which Marlow suggests that a person's responsibility for his actions is not clear-cut. The Russian trader is another example of this: Marlow does not clarify whether the trader follows Kurtz because of Kurtz's charisma, or because of the trader's weakness or insanity.

Marlow repeatedly characterizes Kurtz as a voice, suggesting that eloquence is his defining trait. But Kurtz's eloquence is empty. Moreover, the picture that Marlow paints of Kurtz is extremely ironic. Both in Europe and in Africa, Kurtz is reputed to be a great humanitarian. Whereas the other employees of the Company only want to make a profit or to advance to a better position within the Company, Kurtz embodies the ideals and fine sentiments with which Europeans justified imperialism—particularly the idea that Europeans brought light and civilization to savage peoples. But when Marlow discovers him, Kurtz has become so ruthless and rapacious that even the other managers are shocked. He refers to the ivory as his own and sets himself up as a primitive god to the natives. He has written a seventeen-page document on the suppression of savage customs, to be disseminated in Europe, but his supposed desire to "civilize" the natives is

strikingly contradicted by his postscript, "Exterminate all the brutes!" Marlow is careful to tell his listeners that there was something wrong with Kurtz, some flaw in his character that made him go insane in the isolation of the Inner Station. But the obvious implication of Marlow's story is that the humanitarian ideals and sentiments justifying imperialism are empty, and are merely rationalizations for exploitation and extortion.

Marlow's behavior in the face of an increasingly insane situation demonstrates his refusal to give in to the forces of madness. By throwing the dead helmsman overboard, Marlow spares him from becoming dinner for the cannibals, but he also saves him from what the helmsman might have found even worse: the hypocrisy of a Christian burial by the pilgrims. In contrast with the pilgrims' folly and hypocrisy, Kurtz's serene dictatorship is more attractive to Marlow. In fact, as Marlow's digression at the beginning of this section suggests, right and wrong, sane and insane, are indistinguishable in this world gone mad. Force of personality is the only means by which men are judged. As Marlow's ability to captivate his listeners with his story suggests, charisma may be his link with Kurtz. What the Russian trader says of Kurtz is true of Marlow too: he is a man to whom people listen, not someone with whom they converse. Thus, the darkness in Kurtz may repel Marlow mostly because it reflects his own internal darkness.

Part 3

The Russian trader's description of Kurtz through the Russian trader's departure from the Inner Station.

Summary

The Russian trader begs Marlow to take Kurtz away quickly. He recounts for Marlow his initial meeting with Kurtz, telling him that Kurtz and the trader spent a night camped in the forest together, during which Kurtz discoursed on a broad range of topics. The trader again asserts that listening to Kurtz has greatly enlarged his mind. His connection to Kurtz, however, has gone through periods of rise and decline. He nursed Kurtz through two illnesses but sometimes would not see him for long periods of time, during which Kurtz was out raiding the countryside for ivory with a native tribe he had gotten to follow him. Although Kurtz has behaved erratically and once even threatened to shoot the trader over a small stash of ivory, the trader nevertheless insists that Kurtz cannot be judged as one would judge a normal man. He has tried to get Kurtz to return to civilization several times. The Russian tells Marlow that Kurtz is extremely ill now. As he listens to the trader, Marlow idly looks through his binoculars and sees that what he had originally taken for ornamental balls on the tops of fence posts in the station compound are actually severed heads turned to face the station house. He is repelled but not particularly surprised. The Russian apologetically explains that these are the heads of rebels, an explanation that makes Marlow laugh out loud. The Russian makes a point of telling Marlow that he has had no medicine

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or supplies with which to treat Kurtz; he also asserts that Kurtz has been shamefully abandoned by the Company.

At that moment, the pilgrims emerge from the station-house with Kurtz on an improvised stretcher, and a group of natives rushes out of the forest with a piercing cry. Kurtz speaks to the natives, and the natives withdraw and allow the party to pass. The manager and the pilgrims lay Kurtz in one of the ship's cabins and give him his mail, which they have brought from the Central Station. Someone has written to Kurtz about Marlow, and Kurtz tells him that he is "glad" to see him. The manager enters the cabin to speak with Kurtz, and Marlow withdraws to the steamer's deck. From here he sees two natives standing near the river with impressive headdresses and spears, and a beautiful native woman draped in ornaments pacing gracefully along the shore. She stops and stares out at the steamer for a while and then moves away into the forest. Marlow notes that she must be wearing several elephant tusks' worth of ornaments. The Russian implies that she is Kurtz's mistress, and states that she has caused him trouble through her influence over Kurtz. He adds that he would have tried to shoot her if she had tried to come aboard. The trader's comments are interrupted by the sound of Kurtz yelling at the manager inside the cabin. Kurtz accuses the men of coming for the ivory rather than to help him, and he threatens the manager for interfering with his plans.

The manager comes out and takes Marlow aside, telling him that they have done everything possible for Kurtz, but that his unsound methods have closed the district off to the Company for the time being. He says he plans on reporting Kurtz's "complete want of judgment" to the Company's directors. Thoroughly disgusted by the manager's hypocritical condemnation of Kurtz, Marlow tells the manager that he thinks Kurtz is a "remarkable man." With this statement, Marlow permanently alienates himself from the manager and the rest of the Company functionaries. Like Kurtz, Marlow is now classified among the "unsound." As the manager walks off, the Russian approaches again, to confide in Marlow that Kurtz ordered the attack on the steamer, hoping that the manager would assume he was dead and turn back. After the Russian asks Marlow to protect Kurtz's reputation, Marlow tells the Russian that the manager has spoken of having the Russian hanged. The trader is not surprised and, after hitting Marlow up for tobacco, gun cartridges, and shoes, leaves in a canoe with some native paddlers.

Analysis

Until this point, Marlow's narrative has featured prominently mysterious signs and symbols, which Marlow has struggled to interpret. Now he confronts the reality of the Inner Station, and witnesses that symbols possess a disturbing power to define "reality" and influence people. The natives perceive Kurtz as a mythical deity and think that the guns carried by his followers are lightning bolts, symbols of power rather than actual weapons. Marlow and the Russian trader are aware

of the guns' power to kill, however, and they react nervously at Kurtz's show of force. Kurtz himself acts as a symbol for all of the other characters, not only the natives. To the Russian trader, he is a source of knowledge about everything from economics to love. To Marlow, Kurtz offers "a choice of nightmares," something distinct from the hypocritical evils of the manager. To the manager and the pilgrims, he is a scapegoat, someone they can punish for failing to uphold the "civilized" ideals of colonialism, thereby making themselves seem less reprehensible. The long-awaited appearance of the man himself demonstrates just how empty these formulations are, however. He is little more than a skeleton, and even his name proves not to be an adequate description of him (Kurtz means "short" in German, but Kurtz is tall). Thus, both words and symbols are shown to have little basis in reality.

Kurtz's African mistress provides another example of the power of symbols and the dubious value of words. The woman is never given the title "mistress," although it seems clear that she and Kurtz have a sexual relationship. To acknowledge through the use of the term that a white man and a black woman could be lovers seems to be more than the manager and the Russian trader are willing to do. Despite their desire to discredit Kurtz, the transgression implied by Kurtz's relationship is not something they want to discuss. To Marlow, the woman is above all an aesthetic and economic object. She is "superb" and "magnificent," dripping with the trappings of wealth. As we have seen in earlier sections of Marlow's narrative, he believes that women represent the ideals of a civilization: it is on their behalf that men undertake economic enterprises, and it is their beauty that comes to symbolize nations and ways of life. Thus, Kurtz's African mistress plays a role strikingly like that of Kurtz's fiancée: like his fiancée, Kurtz's mistress is lavished with material goods, both to keep her in her place and to display his success and wealth.

Marlow and the Russian trader offer alternate perspectives throughout this section. The Russian is naive to the point of idiocy, yet he has much in common with Marlow. Both have come to Africa in search of something experiential, and both end up aligning themselves with Kurtz against other Europeans. The Russian, who seems to exist upon "glamour" and youth, is drawn to the systematic qualities of Kurtz's thought. Although Kurtz behaves irrationally toward him, for the trader, the great man's philosophical mind offers a bulwark against the even greater irrationality of Africa. For Marlow, on the other hand, Kurtz represents the choice of outright perversion over hypocritical justifications of cruelty. Marlow and the Russian are disturbingly similar to one another, as the transfer of responsibility for Kurtz's "reputation" from the Russian to Marlow suggests. The manager's implicit condemnation of Marlow as "unsound" is correct, if for the wrong reasons: by choosing Kurtz, Marlow has, in fact, like the cheerfully idiotic Russian, merely chosen one kind of nightmare over another.

Marlow's nighttime pursuit of Kurtz through the steamship's departure from the Inner Station.

Notes**Summary**

Remembering the Russian trader's warning, Marlow gets up in the middle of the night and goes out to look around for any sign of trouble. From the deck of the steamer, he sees one of the pilgrims with a group of the cannibals keeping guard over the ivory, and he sees the fires of the natives' camp in the forest. He hears a drum and a steady chanting, which lulls him into a brief sleep. A sudden outburst of yells wakes him, but the loud noise immediately subsides into a rhythmic chanting once again. Marlow glances into Kurtz's cabin only to find that Kurtz is gone. He is unnerved, but he does not raise an alarm, and instead decides to leave the ship to search for Kurtz himself.

He finds a trail in the grass and realizes that Kurtz must be crawling on all fours. Marlow runs along the trail after him; Kurtz hears him coming and rises to his feet. They are now close to the fires of the native camp, and Marlow realizes the danger of his situation, as Kurtz could easily call out to the natives and have him killed. Kurtz tells him to go away and hide, and Marlow looks over and sees the imposing figure of a native sorcerer silhouetted against the fire. Marlow asks Kurtz if he knows what he is doing, and Kurtz replies emphatically that he does. Despite his physical advantage over the invalid, Marlow feels impotent, and threatens to strangle Kurtz if he should call out to the natives. Kurtz bemoans the failure of his grand schemes, and Marlow reassures him that he is thought a success in Europe. Sensing the other man's vulnerability, Marlow tells Kurtz he will be lost if he continues on. Kurtz's resolution falters, and Marlow helps him back to the ship.

The steamer departs the next day at noon, and the natives appear on the shore to watch it go. Three men painted with red earth and wearing horned headdresses wave charms and shout incantations at the ship as it steams away. Marlow places Kurtz in the pilot-house to get some air, and Kurtz watches through the open window as his mistress rushes down to the shore and calls out to him. The crowd responds to her cry with an uproar of its own. Marlow sounds the whistle as he sees the pilgrims get out their rifles, and the crowd scatters, to the pilgrims' dismay. Only the woman remains standing on the shore as the pilgrims open fire, and Marlow's view is obscured by smoke.

Analysis

Marlow describes his developing relationship with Kurtz in terms of intimacy and betrayal. The extravagant symbolism of the previous section is largely absent here. Instead, Marlow and Kurtz confront one another in a dark forest, with no one else around. Marlow seems to stand both physically and metaphorically between Kurtz and a final plunge into madness and depravity, as symbolized by the native sorcerer presiding over the fire at the native camp. It occurs to Marlow that, from a practical standpoint, he should strangle Kurtz. The nearness of the natives puts Marlow in danger, and Kurtz is going to die soon anyway. Yet to kill

Kurtz would not only be hypocritical but, for Marlow, impossible. As Marlow perceives it, Kurtz's "crime" is that he has rejected all of the principles and obligations that make up European society. Marlow "could not appeal [to him] in the name of anything high or low." Kurtz has become an entirely self-sufficient unit, a man who has "kicked himself loose of the earth." In a way, the Russian trader is right to claim that Kurtz cannot be judged by normal standards. Kurtz has already judged, and rejected, the standards by which other people are judged, and thus it seems irrelevant to bring such standards back to bear on him.

Marlow suggests that Africa is responsible for Kurtz's current condition. Having rejected European society, Kurtz has been forced to look into his own soul, and this introspection has driven him mad. Kurtz's illness, resulting from his body's inability to function outside of a normal (i.e., European) environment, reflects his psyche's inability to function outside of a normal social environment. Despite the hypocrisy latent in social norms, these norms provide a framework of security and defined expectations within which an individual can exist. In Freudian terms, we might say that Kurtz has lost his superego, and that it is the terror of limitless freedom, with no oversight or punishment, that leads to his madness. Kurtz now knows himself to be capable of anything. Marlow claims that his recognition of this capacity forces him to look into Kurtz's soul, and that his coming face-to-face with Kurtz is his "punishment." Marlow's epiphany about the roots of Kurtz's madness does lead to a moment of profound intimacy between the two men, as Marlow both comes to understand Kurtz's deepest self-awareness and in turn is forced to apply this realization to himself, as he sees that Kurtz's actual depravity mirrors his own potential depravity. Given this, for Marlow to betray Kurtz—whether by killing him or by siding with the manager against him—would be to betray himself. Later in the narrative, when Marlow speaks of his "choice of nightmares," the alternatives of which he speaks are social injustice and cruelty on the one hand, and the realization that one's soul is empty and infinitely capable of depravity on the other hand.

The pilgrims' fervent desire to use the natives for target practice as the steamer departs clearly reflects the former choice. Kurtz's mistress and, more generally, his level of control over the natives at the station are reminders that the kind of self-immolation that Kurtz has chosen has nothing inherently noble about it. Kurtz's realization of his potential for depravity has not kept him from exercising it. Significantly, Kurtz's mistress demonstrates that although Kurtz has "kicked himself loose from the earth," he cannot help but reenact some of the social practices he has rejected. There is something sentimental about her behavior, despite her hard-edged appearance, and her relationship with Kurtz seems to have some of the same characteristics of romance, manipulation, and adoration as a traditional European male-female coupling. Moreover, as was noted in the previous section, with all her finery she has come to symbolize value and economic enterprise, much as a European woman would. Critics have often read her as a racist and misogynist stereotype, and in many ways this is

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true. However, the fact that Kurtz and Marlow both view her as a symbol rather than as a person is part of the point: we are supposed to recognize that she is actively stereotyped by Kurtz and by Marlow.

Marlow's journey back down the river through his falling ill.

Summary

The current speeds the steamer's progress back toward civilization. The manager, certain that Kurtz will soon be dead, is pleased to have things in hand; he condescendingly ignores Marlow, who is now clearly of the "unsound" but harmless party. The pilgrims are disdainful, and Marlow, for the most part, is left alone with Kurtz. As he had done with the Russian trader, Kurtz takes advantage of his captive audience to hold forth on a variety of subjects. Marlow is alternately impressed and disappointed. Kurtz's philosophical musings are interspersed with grandiose and childish plans for fame and fortune.

The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was running swiftly, too.

The steamer breaks down, and repairs take some time. Marlow is slowly becoming ill, and the work is hard on him. Kurtz seems troubled, probably because the delay has made him realize that he probably will not make it back to Europe alive. Worried that the manager will gain control of his "legacy," Kurtz gives Marlow a bundle of papers for safekeeping. Kurtz's ramblings become more abstract and more rhetorical as his condition worsens. Marlow believes he is reciting portions of articles he has written for the newspapers: Kurtz thinks it his "duty" to disseminate his ideas. Finally, one night, Kurtz admits to Marlow that he is "waiting for death." As Marlow approaches, Kurtz seems to be receiving some profound knowledge or vision, and the look on his face forces Marlow to stop and stare. Kurtz cries out—"The horror! The horror!"—and Marlow flees, not wanting to watch the man die. He joins the manager in the dining hall, which is suddenly overrun by flies. A moment later, a servant comes in to tell them, "Mistah Kurtz—he dead."

The pilgrims bury Kurtz the next day. Marlow succumbs to illness and nearly dies himself. He suffers greatly, but the worst thing about his near-death experience is his realization that in the end he would have "nothing to say." Kurtz, he realizes, was remarkable because he "had something to say. He said it." Marlow remembers little about the time of his illness.

Once he has recovered sufficiently, he leaves Africa and returns to Brussels.

Analysis

Both Kurtz and Marlow experience a brief interlude during which they float between life and death, although their final fates differ. For Kurtz, the imminence

of death ironically causes him to seek to return to the world from which he had "kicked himself loose." Suddenly, his legacy and his ideas seem very important to him, and he turns to Marlow to preserve them. Kurtz's final ambitions—to be famous and feted by kings, to have his words read by millions—suggest a desire to change the world. This is a change from his previous formulations, which posited a choice between acquiescence to existing norms or total isolation from society. However, these final schemes of Kurtz's (which Marlow describes as "childish") reflect Kurtz's desire for self-aggrandizement rather than any progressive social program. Kurtz dies. His last words are paradoxically full of meaning yet totally empty. It is possible to read them as an acknowledgment of Kurtz's own misguided life and despicable acts, as a description of his inner darkness; certainly, to do so is not inappropriate. However, it is important to note both their eloquence and their vagueness. True to form, Kurtz dies in a spasm of eloquence. His last words are poetic and profound, delivered in his remarkable voice. However, they are so nonspecific that they defy interpretation. The best one can do is to guess at their meaning.

I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say.

Does this mean that Marlow is wrong, that Kurtz has "nothing," not "something to say"? Kurtz's last words could refer to the terrible nothingness at the heart of his soul and his ideas, the ultimate failure of his "destiny." In a way this is true: Kurtz's agony seems to be a response to a generalized lack of substance. In his dying words as in his life, though, Kurtz creates an enigma, an object for contemplation, which certainly is something. His legacy, in fact, would seem to be Marlow, who, like the Russian trader, seems to have had his mind "enlarged" by Kurtz. Marlow, though, finds that he himself has "nothing" to say, and thus Kurtz's life and his dying words oscillate between absolute emptiness and an overabundance of meaning. The "horror" is either nothing or everything, but it is not simply "something."

The actual moment of Kurtz's death is narrated indirectly. First, Kurtz's words—"The horror! The horror!"—anticipate and mark its beginning. Then flies, the symbol of slow, mundane decay and disintegration (as opposed to catastrophic or dramatic destruction), swarm throughout the ship, as if to mark the actual moment. Finally, the servant arrives to bring the moment to its close with his surly, unpoetic words. The roughness of "Mistah Kurtz—he dead" contrasts with Kurtz's self-generated epitaph, again bringing a blunt reality (death) into conflict with a subjective state (horror). It is interesting to consider why T. S. Eliot might have chosen the servant's line as the epigraph to his poem "The Hollow Men." The impenetrability of the brief moment of Kurtz's death and his reduction to something "buried in a muddy hole" indicate the final impossibility of describing either Kurtz or his ideas.

Kurtz's death is very nearly followed by Marlow's demise. Although both men's illnesses are blamed on climate, it seems as if they are both also the result

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of existential crisis. Furthermore, an element of metaphorical contagion seems to be involved, as Kurtz transmits both his memory and his poor health to Marlow. Unlike Kurtz, though, Marlow recovers. Having “nothing to say” seems to save him. He does not slip into the deadly paradox of wanting to be both free of society and an influence on it, and he will not have to sacrifice himself for his ideas. For Marlow, guarding Kurtz’s legacy is not inconsistent with isolation from society. Remaining loyal to Kurtz is best done by remaining true to his experience, and by not offering up his story to those who will misinterpret or fail to understand it. Marlow keeps these principles in mind once he arrives in Brussels. His reasons for telling this story to his audience aboard the *Nellie* are more difficult to discern.

Marlow’s return to Brussels through the conclusion.

Summary

Marlow barely survives his illness. Eventually he returns to the “sepulchral city,” Brussels. He resents the people there for their petty self-importance and smug complacency. His aunt nurses him back to health, but his disorder is more emotional than physical. A bespectacled representative of the Company comes to retrieve the packet of papers Kurtz entrusted to Marlow, but Marlow will give him only the pamphlet on the “Suppression of Savage Customs,” with the postscript (the handwritten “Exterminate all the brutes!”) torn off. The man threatens legal action to obtain the rest of the packet’s contents. Another man, calling himself Kurtz’s cousin, appears and takes some letters to the family. The cousin tells him that Kurtz had been a great musician, although he does not elaborate further. Marlow and the cousin ponder Kurtz’s myriad talents and decide that he is best described as a “universal genius.” A journalist colleague of Kurtz’s appears and takes the pamphlet for publication. This man believes Kurtz’s true skills were in popular or extremist politics.

Finally, Marlow is left with only a few letters and a picture of Kurtz’s Intended. Marlow goes to see her without really knowing why. Kurtz’s memory comes flooding back to him as he stands on her doorstep. He finds the Intended still in mourning, though it has been over a year since Kurtz’s death. He gives her the packet, and she asks if he knew Kurtz well. He replies that he knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another.

His presence fulfills her need for a sympathetic ear, and she continually praises Kurtz. Her sentimentality begins to anger Marlow, but he holds back his annoyance until it gives way to pity. She says she will mourn Kurtz forever, and asks Marlow to repeat his last words to give her something upon which to sustain herself. Marlow lies and tells her that Kurtz’s last word was her name. She responds that she was certain that this was the case. Marlow ends his story here, and the narrator looks off into the dark sky, which makes the waterway seem “to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.”

Analysis

Marlow's series of encounters with persons from Kurtz's former life makes him question the value he places on his memories of Kurtz. Kurtz's cousin and the journalist both offer a version of Kurtz that seems not to resemble the man Marlow knew. Kurtz, in fact, seems to have been all things to all people—someone who has changed their life and now serves as a kind of symbolic figure presiding over their existence. This makes Marlow's own experience of Kurtz less unique and thus perhaps less meaningful. The fact that he shares Kurtz with all of these overconfident, self-important people, most of whom will never leave Brussels, causes Kurtz to seem common, and less profound. In reality, Marlow's stream of visitors do not raise any new issues: in their excessive praise of Kurtz and their own lack of perspective, they resemble the Russian trader, who also took Kurtz as a kind of guru.

Marlow goes to see Kurtz's Intended in a state of profound uncertainty. He is unsure whether his version of Kurtz has any value either as a reflection of reality or as a philosophical construct. In response to the woman's simple question as to whether he knew Kurtz well, he can only reply that he knew him "as well as it is possible for one man to know another." Given what the preceding narrative has shown about the possibilities for "knowing" another person in any meaningful sense, the reader can easily see that Marlow's reply to Kurtz's Intended is a qualification, not an affirmation: Marlow barely knows himself. By the end of Marlow's visit with the woman, the reader is also aware, even if Marlow is not, that the kinds of illusions and untruths which Marlow accuses women of perpetuating are in fact not dissimilar from those fictions men use to understand their own experiences and justify such things as colonialism. Marlow has much more in common with Kurtz's Intended than he would like to admit.

Kurtz's Intended, like Marlow's aunt and Kurtz's mistress, is a problematic female figure. Marlow praises her for her "mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering," suggesting that the most valuable traits in a woman are passive. Conrad's portrayal of the Intended has thus been criticized for having misogynist overtones, and there is some justification for this point of view. She is a repository of conservative ideas about what it means to be white and European, upholding fine-sounding but ultimately useless notions of heroism and romance.

Although both Marlow and the Intended construct idealized versions of Kurtz to make sense out of their respective worlds, in the end, Marlow's version of Kurtz is upheld as the more profound one. Marlow emphasizes his disgust at the complacency of the people he meets in Brussels in order to validate his own store of worldly experience. Marlow's narrative implies that his version of Kurtz, as well as his accounts of Africa and imperialism, are inherently better and truer than other people's because of what he has experienced. This notion is based on traditional ideas of heroism, involving quests and trials in the pursuit of knowledge. In fact, by seeming to legitimize activities like imperialism for their

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experiential value for white men—in other words, by making it appear that Africa is the key to philosophical truth—the ending of *Heart of Darkness* introduces a much greater horror than any Marlow has encountered in the Congo. Are the evils of colonialism excusable in the name of “truth” or knowledge, even if they are not justifiable in the name of wealth? This paradox accounts at least partially for the novella’s frame story. Marlow recounts his experiences to his friends because doing so establishes an implicit comparison. The other men aboard the *Nellie* are the kind of men who benefit economically from imperialism, while Marlow has benefited mainly experientially. While Marlow’s “truth” may be more profound than that of his friends or Kurtz’s Intended, it may not justify the cost of its own acquisition.

4.6 IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS EXPLAINED

1. *“The word ‘ivory’ rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I’ve never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.”*

This quote, from the fourth section of Part 1, offers Marlow’s initial impression of the Central Station. The word “ivory” has taken on a life of its own for the men who work for the Company. To them, it is far more than the tusk of an elephant; it represents economic freedom, social advancement, an escape from a life of being an employee. The word has lost all connection to any physical reality and has itself become an object of worship. Marlow’s reference to a decaying corpse is both literal and figurative: elephants and native Africans both die as a result of the white man’s pursuit of ivory, and the entire enterprise is rotten at the core. The cruelties and the greed are both part of a greater, timeless evil, yet they are petty in the scheme of the greater order of the natural world.

2. *“In a few days the Eldorado Expedition went into the patient wilderness, that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver. Long afterwards the news came that all the donkeys were dead. I know nothing as to the fate of the less valuable animals. They, no doubt, like the rest of us, found what they deserved. I did not inquire.”*

During the first section of Part 2, Marlow watches the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, a band of freelance bandits, reequip and then depart from the Central Station. This enigmatic report is the only news he receives concerning their fate. The dry irony of this quote is characteristic of Marlow, who by this point has truly come to see white men as the “less valuable animals.” Although he chalks up the Expedition’s fate to some idea of destiny or just reward, Marlow has already come to distrust such moral formulations: this is why he does not seek further information about the Expedition. Again he mentions a “patient

wilderness": the Expedition's fate is insignificant in the face of larger catastrophes and even less meaningful when considered in the scope of nature's time frame.

3. *"It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—the suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend. And why not?"*

As Marlow journeys up the river toward the Inner Station in the first section of Part 2, he catches occasional glimpses of native villages along the riverbanks. More often, though, he simply hears things: drums, chants, howls. These engage his imagination, and the fact that they do so troubles him, because it suggests, as he says, a "kinship" with these men, whom he has so far been able to classify as "inhuman." This moment is one of several in the text in which Marlow seems to admit the limits of his own perception. These moments allow for a reading of *Heart of Darkness* that is much more critical of colonialism and much more ironic about the stereotypes it engenders. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that Marlow still casts Africans as a primitive version of himself rather than as potential equals.

4. *"The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was running swiftly, too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time. . . . I saw the time approaching when I would be left alone of the party of 'unsound method.'"*

This quote, which comes as the steamer begins its voyage back from the Inner Station in the third section of Part 3, with Kurtz and his ivory aboard, brings together the images of the river and the "heart of darkness" which it penetrates. The river is something that separates Marlow from the African interior: while on the river he is exterior to, even if completely surrounded by, the jungle. Furthermore, despite its "brown current," the river inexorably brings him back to white civilization. The first sentence of this quote suggests that Marlow and Kurtz have been able to leave the "heart of darkness" behind, but Kurtz's life seems to be receding along with the "darkness," and Marlow, too, has been permanently scarred by it, since he is now ineradicably marked as being of Kurtz's party. Thus, it seems that the "darkness" is in fact internalized, that it is part of some fundamental if ironic "unsoundness."

5. *"I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say."*

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This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. . . . He had summed up—he had judged. ‘The horror!’ He was a remarkable man.”

At the beginning of the final section of Part 3, Marlow has just recovered from his near-fatal illness. His “nothing to say” is not reflective of a lack of substance but rather of his realization that anything he might have to say would be so ambiguous and so profound as to be impossible to put into words. Kurtz, on the other hand, is “remarkable” for his ability to cut through ambiguity, to create a definite “something.” Paradoxically, though, the final formulation of that “something” is so vague as to approach “nothing”: “‘The horror!’ “ could be almost anything. However, perhaps Kurtz is most fascinating to Marlow because he has had the courage to judge, to deny ambiguity. Marlow is aware of Kurtz’s intelligence and the man’s appreciation of paradox, so he also knows that Kurtz’s rabid systematization of the world around him has been an act and a lie. Yet Kurtz, on the strength of his hubris and his charisma, has created out of himself a way of organizing the world that contradicts generally accepted social models. Most important, he has created an impressive legacy: Marlow will ponder Kurtz’s words (“‘The horror!’”) and Kurtz’s memory for the rest of his life. By turning himself into an enigma, Kurtz has done the ultimate: he has ensured his own immortality.

4.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT

1. Heart of Darkness opens in what setting?
 - (a) A boat on the Congo River
 - (b) A boat on the Thames River
 - (c) The Company’s offices in Brussels
 - (d) The Outer Station
2. Where does Kurtz die?
 - (a) At the Inner Station
 - (b) In Brussels
 - (c) Aboard Marlow’s steamer
 - (d) In the jungle
3. What does Marlow discover atop the fence posts at the Inner Station?
 - (a) Human heads
 - (b) Monkey skulls
 - (c) Dead infants
 - (d) The Company flag
4. The Company trades primarily in
 - (a) Gold
 - (b) Slaves
 - (c) Bananas
 - (d) Ivory
5. Which of the following receives Kurtz’s “Report” after his death?
 - (a) Marlow’s aunt
 - (b) Kurtz’s “Intended”
 - (c) A representative of the Company
 - (d) A journalist
6. Most of Marlow’s adventures take place in

- (a) Kenya (b) Rhodesia
(c) The Congo (d) England
7. Which of the following is not something that Marlow gives to the Russian trader?
(a) Food (b) Gun cartridges
(c) Tobacco (d) Shoes
8. What do the men at the Central Station hear about the fate of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition?
(a) That they have been successful and are returning with lots of ivory
(b) That the expedition's pack animals are dead
(c) That the men have been ambushed and killed by natives
(d) That the expedition has found Kurtz
9. At the end of his "Report" on the natives, Kurtz writes:
(a) "Exterminate all the brutes!" (b) "God help us!"
(c) "No more death!" (d) "God save the King!"
10. What one thing does Marlow need to repair his wrecked steamer?
(a) Steel plates (b) A new boiler
(c) Tools (d) Rivets

Notes

4.8 KEY-WORDS

1. **Constraint** - restriction or lack of ease
2. **Delude** - deceive or to be wrong
3. **Disparaging** - derogatory, unfavorable
4. **Docile** - calm, tame, gentle
5. **Emaciated** - extremely thin
6. **Incumbent** - imposed as a duty (upon)
7. **Intrepid** - fearless, courageous, bold
8. **Livid** - extremely pale, pallid

4.9 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why does *Heart of Darkness* have two competing heroes? Make the case for either Marlow or Kurtz as the true "hero" of the book.
2. Discuss the framing story that structures *Heart of Darkness*. Why is it important to narrate Marlow in the act of telling his story?
3. Interpret Kurtz's dying words ("The horror! The horror!"). What do they mean? What are the possible "horrors" to which he is referring? Why is

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Marlow the recipient of Kurtz's last words?

4. Contrast Kurtz's African mistress with his Intended. Are both negative portrayals of women? Describe how each functions in the narrative. Does it make any difference in your interpretation to know that Conrad supported the women's suffrage movement?
5. Describe the use of "darkness" both in the book's title and as a symbol throughout the text. What does darkness represent? Is its meaning constant or does it change?
6. How does physical illness relate to madness? How does one's environment relate to one's mental state in this book?
7. Why does Marlow lie to Kurtz's fiancée about Kurtz's last words? Why not tell her the truth, or tell her that Kurtz had no last words, rather than affirming her sentimental and mundane ideas?

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (b) 2. (c) 3. (a) 4. (d) 5. (d) 6. (c) 7. (a) 8. (b) 9. (a) 10. (d)

4.10 FURTHER READINGS

1. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Marlow*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1992.
2. Cheng, Yuan-Jung. *Heralds of the Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf, and Lessing*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999.
3. Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*. London: Verso, reprint edition 2006.

UNIT - 5

EZRA POUND'S POEMS

CONTENTS

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Introduction to the Ezra Pound's Poem
- 5.3 Poems: Summary and Analysis
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- 5.7 Summary
- 5.8 Key-Words
- 5.9 Review Questions
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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit students will be able to:

- Introduce Ezra Pounds and his works.
- Discuss the themes and symbols of the poems of Ezra pound

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Ezra Pound was born in Hailey, Idaho in 1885, the only child of Homer Loomis Pound and Isabel Weston. When he was eighteen months old, his mother took him to live back east, and his father soon followed. They settled in Pennsylvania, which is where Pound grew up.

During his childhood, Pound attended a number of different schools, ranging from a Quaker-run institution to a military academy. He knew from an early age that he wanted to be a poet. On November 7th, 1896, Pound published his first piece: A limerick he had written about William James Bryan, who had just recently lost a presidential election, appeared in the *Jenkintown Times-Chronicle*.

Pound took his first trip overseas at the age of 13. Two years later, in 1901, he earned admission to the University of Pennsylvania's College School of Arts. There, he met Hilda Doolittle (later known as the poet H.D. Doolittle), with whom Pound would go on to have a romantic relationship. However, his grades at UPenn were not impressive, and after another European tour with his parents

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and aunt, Pound transferred to Hamilton College. He graduated in 1905 with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and then went back to the University of Pennsylvania to get his master's degree in romance languages, graduating in 1906. After registering as a PhD student, Ezra Pound received a travel grant, which he used to return to Europe, moving between Madrid, Paris, and London. When he returned to the United States, he published his first essay, "Raphaelite Latin," in *Book News Monthly*. After that, Ezra Pound managed to irritate the head of the UPenn English Department, which resulted in him not getting his fellowship renewed. Pound therefore decided to leave UPenn without finishing his doctorate.

After teaching at Wabash College for two years, Pound traveled to Spain, Italy, and London, where he became interested in Japanese and Chinese poetry. He decided to make a permanent move to London, and stayed there almost continuously for twelve years. During this time, Pound published a collection of poetry called *Personae*, which became his most successful work to date. Together with Hilda Doolittle, who arrived in Europe in 1911, and poet Richard Arlington, Pound began to develop a new literary movement called *Imagism*, which aimed for more clarity and less abstraction in language and poetry. In 1914, Ezra Pound married Dorothy Shakespear, the daughter of novelist Olivia Shakespear. That same year, he became the London editor of the *Little Review*.



Did u know?

Ezra Pound believed that poetry is the highest of arts.
 He was a great admirer of the poet William Butler Yeats.
 He became known for his role in developing Imagism.
 He was a noted translator of Asian literature.

In 1921, the Pounds settled in Paris, but they were unhappy there and moved to Italy in 1924. In Paris, however, Pound had begun a love affair with American violinist Olga Rudge, and she followed the couple to Italy while pregnant with Pound's child. When Rudge and Pound's daughter, Mary, was born, Ezra Pound finally told his wife about the affair. Dorothy separated from her husband for several months, but later returned. Soon thereafter, the Pounds had a son of their own named Omar. Because they had different mothers, Mary and Omar had very different upbringings.

Throughout his time in Paris, Pound worked continuously on his poems and collections, including *The Cantos*, which remains one of his most famous works. He also befriended many notable poets of his time, including Ernest Hemingway and T.S. Eliot. After relocating to Italy, Pound became absorbed in fascism. This ideology followed Ezra Pound back to the United States, and soon after his return in 1945, Pound was arrested for broadcasting fascist propaganda. He was acquitted but declared mentally ill, which landed him in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. While confined, Ezra Pound was awarded the Bollingen-Library of Congress Award for the *Pisan Cantos*. He was eventually

released from the hospital, thanks to countless appeals from his fellow writers. He settled in Venice, Italy, where he eventually died in 1972.

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5.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE EZRA POUND'S POEMS

Though Ezra Pound produced a huge number of works, this Classic Note focuses on a handful of his most famous verses. The first, "Portrait d'une Femme," was published in 1912 and describes a woman from London and the "great minds" who seek her out in order to trade their knowledge, gossip, and ideas for her gaudy tales and useless facts. In the end, though, despite this trade, the woman has nothing that is truly her own, and this is the fact that defines her. This poem has a theme of "commerce" and is an example of the economic themes that permeate Pound's poetry.

"A Virginal", also published in 1912, tells the story of a man who is devoted to a young virgin to the point that he cannot even speak to another woman. "In a Station of the Metro" (1913) is a short, two-line Imagist poem about a crowd on a subway platform as the train rushes by and compares these faces to petals on a damp tree branch.

Pound frequently criticized Walt Whitman's poetry. Whitman was an American poet who lived during the 19th century, and Pound believed that his work was too crude and unpolished to be considered true art. "A Pact," however, published in 1916, was Pound's way of reconciling. In the poem, he admits that he has always judged Whitman's poetry harshly, but now recognizes how Whitman's work has paved the way for his own.

"The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter" (1917) is actually Pound's translation of a Chinese poem. He writes from the point of view of the sixteen-year-old wife of a Chinese river-merchant. She is waiting for her husband to return from a five-month trip down the river to trade with another village. She recalls how they met as children and goes on to describe their marriage, revealing that it took her a while to accept the idea of marrying him. Pound uses natural metaphors, like the seasons, to indicate time passing during their separation.

"A Girl" tells the story of mythological figures Daphne and Apollo. After being pursued relentlessly by the Apollo, Daphne begs her father to change her into a tree so she can escape him. The poem describes the process of Daphne's transformation from a woman to a tree, and Apollo's subsequent commentary. There is also a figurative interpretation for this poem. The Daphne character could actually be a child imagining that she is a tree, and the Apollo character is then an adult, telling her not to let the world subdue her creativity.

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“Hugh Selywn Mauberley” (1920) is one of Pound’s most pivotal works. It is made up of eighteen short poems and split into two parts. The first part contains a description of Pound himself, and the second part introduces the character of Hugh Selywyn Mauberley, a struggling poet desperate for the world to see value in his work. This poem is Pound’s way of criticizing society for devaluing art, beauty, and literature.

The Cantos embody everything Pound wanted to achieve in his career. There are over a hundred different cantos in this piece, which Pound wrote and published over the course of his later life. Like much of Pound’s prose, *The Cantos* centers on themes of economics, government, and history. Pound attempts to show how all of these ideas are connected, and how Western history and culture relates to that of the Far East. He was never able to finish *The Cantos*, however. His writing declined drastically after he was imprisoned for his antisemitic and fascist radio broadcasts, which led to a slow decline of his sanity. At the end of *The Cantos*, Pound expresses remorse about his failure to bring the universe together in the way that he had originally intended.

5.3 POEMS : SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**1. “PORTRAIT D’UNE FEMME” (1912)**

This poem paints an obscure image of a woman, beginning with a handful of sea metaphors describing her and her interactions with other people. She has been living in London for at least twenty years (“score” means twenty). On line three, “bright ships” is likely a metaphor for the people that surround her, leaving her abstract “fees” like ideas and gossip. “Great minds,” probably philosophers, writers, or others of that stature who “lack someone else” tend to seek her out. Even though she is always “second choice,” she prefers this life to being stuck in a dull marriage.

In return, she gives these people “facts that lead nowhere; and a tale or two,” which aren’t particularly useful. The poem characterizes the woman’s “riches” as decorative and gaudy. Despite this ongoing exchange, there is nothing that truly belongs to the woman, but this transience defines her. The poem finishes with the line “Yet this is you,” which suggests that she would not be who she is if she had things to call her own.

Analysis

Pound was certainly not the first to title one of his works “Portrait of a Woman” or some variation; the title is an homage to Henry James’s novel “Portrait of a Lady.” T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams also composed poems with titles

based on James's. To this end, a male poet with a female muse is a common poetic trope. In Pound's "Portrait," the poet cloaks his female subject in tattered mystique. Critics and historians have suggested that Pound's particular muse for this poem was Florence Farr, a British actress and writer.

Pound wrote this poem in blank verse, rather than the free verse he was frequently writing at the time. Blank verse is written in iambic pentameter, a rhythm most commonly associated with Shakespeare where each line consists of five sets of two-syllable "feet," or ten syllables in each line. In iambic pentameter, every other syllable is stressed. Though the vast majority of lines in "Portrait" follow this pattern, there are a few scattered which are either shorter or longer than ten syllables. There are a number of reasons why Pound may have done this, however, as it is common for poets to vary meter in order to draw attention to specific lines. Therefore, it is likely that Pound wanted to emphasize the lines that have irregular meter.

In the very first line, the speaker associates the subject with the sea, an extended metaphor that continues throughout the poem. He references the Sargasso Sea even though it is far from the subject's residence in London. However, the Sargasso Sea is known for collecting seaweed and debris just as this woman is known for collecting knowledge, gossip, and ideas. The sea also symbolizes this woman's reluctance to tie herself down; the sea flows on and on forever, collecting whatever it finds, and the woman would rather do the same rather than dropping anchor somewhere. The ever-changing sea belongs to no one, just like this woman, and at the same, nothing and no one belongs to *it/her*.

Pound reveals his fascination with economic theory in this poem through all the references to commerce and trade. He frames the woman and her ephemeral relationships as business interactions. "Great minds" and "bright ships" seek her out and provide her with gossip, knowledge, and ideas in exchange for the gaudy, decorative tales and useless facts. The setting fits with the commercial theme as well; the Sargasso Sea is located on an important trade route to the Caribbean, and London, of course, is a major global trading hub.

The speaker finishes by emphasizing that despite all the tidbits this woman has accumulated, none of it is truly her own. Does that make all of it worthless? Does that mean these great minds are sharing their secrets with others as well, so they are not uniquely hers? There are many possible interpretations for the final few lines, though the ephemeral nature of the woman and her life is apparent. The ending of the poem is purposefully vague.

2. "A VIRGINAL" (1912)

The speaker of this poem is a man shouting at someone, most likely a woman,

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because he already has a virgin lover who has “bound [him] straitly.” He says he will not spoil this happiness by loving another, then goes on to describe his love, the magic surrounding her, and what she has done to him. He is adamant, and in the second half of the poem, he tells the first woman to go away again because she will never be as good as his virgin girl.

Analysis

“A Virginal” is named for a small keyboard instrument played by young girls in the 16th and 17th centuries. Pound wrote this poem in the form of a Petrarchan sonnet, with fourteen lines and two distinct parts. The first part is called the octave, and the second part is called the sestet. The octave always has an “abbaabba” rhyme scheme, but the sestet can vary; in this case, Pound uses “cdeecd.” The break between the octave and the sestet occurs after line 8, after which Pound begins again with the speaker’s cry of rejection, “No, no! Go from me.”

Pound places a great deal of emphasis on the purity of the speaker’s beloved. The title clearly indicates suggests that she is a virgin, and Pound peppers the rest of the poem with additional images of purity. This virginal woman has brought a new lightness into the speaker’s life; she is “soft as spring wind” and there is “magic in her nearness.”

Furthermore, the final line of the poem associates her with the color white, which commonly symbolizes purity and innocence. Pound also associates her with several images of spring, which is the season of new growth and budding flowers. Virgins are often associated with buds that have yet to bloom.

However, the speaker is pulled in two different directions. He is so besotted with his virgin that he feels pain while in the presence of another woman. He describes his virgin as having “bound” him with her “magic.” He even uses sexual imagery, referring to his “sheath”, but claiming that he cannot “spoil it” with “lesser brightness.” This indicates that while the virgin herself is pure, the speaker is wrestling with his sexual urges.

At the end, speaker describes the past as “winter’s wound,” and says his virgin staunches it, bringing springtime’s shoots and branches. The speaker ultimately finds this virginal, blossoming springtime more alluring than seasons of “lesser brightness,” or pursuits that are less than pure. He believes that his virgin will be able to erase his past sins.

3. IN A STATION OF THE METRO” (1913)

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

In this quick poem, Pound describes watching faces appear in a metro station.

It is unclear whether he is writing from the vantage point of a passenger on the train itself or on the platform. The setting is Paris, France, and as he describes these faces as a “crowd,” meaning the station is quite busy. He compares these faces to “petals on a wet, black bough,” suggesting that on the dark subway platform, the people look like flower petals stuck on a tree branch after a rainy night.

Analysis

The brevity of this poem can be intimidating to analyze; after all, how much can a poet possibly convey in merely two lines? However, the shortness of this poem fits with its topic; when reading, the words flash by quickly, just as a subway speeds away from the platform in an instant. The doors open quickly, revealing a sea of faces, and then close again - the faces are gone after a fleeting glance. This poem's length and quick pace matches the constant motion of a train as it speeds by.

Though short, this poem is very sensory in nature; it allows the reader to imagine a scene while reading the lines. Through Pound's economical description of these faces as “petals on a wet, black bough,” he is able to invoke a transient tone.

This poem is also a clear example of the Imagist style. Victorian poets would frequently use an abundance of flowery adjectives and lengthy descriptions in their poems. Yet Pound employs a Modernist approach to “In a Station of the Metro,” using only a few descriptive words (and no verbs among them) to successfully get his point across.

Pound uses the word “apparition,” which is a ghostly, otherworldly figure, something ephemeral that fades in and out of view. By using this word, Pound reveals surprise at seeing this sea of faces as the subway doors open, which, for a brief moment, fills him with a sense of awe and astonishment. Also, the impermanence of the image gives the poem a melancholy tone, as if Pound is contemplating the fragility of life.

Pound connects images of petals and boughs to a mass of humanity - linking a man-made metropolitan scene with the cycles of nature. Pound's use of living metaphors adds to the fleeting tone of this poem. Flowers and trees, like human beings on a metro, are constantly moving, growing, and changing. This short glimpse through the metro doors is the only time that group of people will be as they are in that instant. Similarly, no two petals will ever look exactly the same, as rains come and go, winters freeze, and new buds bloom.

4. “A PACT” (1916)

Pound begins this poem by acknowledging his animosity towards American poet Walt Whitman, writing that he's “detested [him] long enough,” and offering to make a pact. Pound describes himself as “a grown child who has had a pig headed father,” and offers his friendship to Whitman. Pound admits that he has

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come to recognize the ways in which Whitman has paved the way for his own work. He ends with “let there be commerce between us,” accepting the inspiration that Whitman has given him.

Analysis

To understand this short poem, it is first necessary to explore Pound’s negative feelings towards Walt Whitman. In 1909, Pound wrote an essay titled “What I Feel About Walt Whitman,” in which he denounced the older poet’s “crudity” and “barbaric yawp.” He believed that Walt Whitman was the epitome of American authenticity. After Pound settled in the UK, he did not hold a very high opinion of Whitman’s classic American milieu. He also disliked Whitman’s work because he felt that the poet did not show enough restraint and reticence, and believed it impossible to consider him an artist without those two virtues. Whitman and Pound ever likely never met in person, since the former died when Pound was only seven years old.



Notes

Pound was not the creator of this poem; he translated it from the original Chinese version by Li Po. The Chinese original likely had a specific form and identifiable meter, but Pound did not know enough about Chinese poetry to preserve it in his translation.

Throughout this poem, it becomes clear that Pound once viewed Whitman as his creative antithesis, but has since matured. He describes Whitman as a paternal figure, admitting that his previous behavior has been “pig-headed.” Now, he is a “grown child,” and his views have appropriately evolved.

By comparing Whitman to a father figure, Pound insinuates that he felt intimidated by Whitman’s success. There is also a more obvious interpretation of this father/son metaphor; Whitman was alive and writing long before Pound, and it is natural that modern poets would learn from their predecessors’ work, just as a son could learn from his father. Pound, however, was always reluctant to take inspiration from others.

At the end of the poem, even though Pound has accepted Whitman’s influence, he still offers a backhanded compliment. He writes, “it was you who broke the new wood/now it is time for carving.” Pound describes Whitman’s purpose in the poetic world as lesser than his own. He insinuates that Whitman paved the way simply by finding this new wood and offering it to the world; now it is Pound’s turn to craft the raw material into refined artistic masterpieces. Therefore, even though Pound is certainly presenting a more cordial view of the American poet than he has in the past, he offers subtle reminders that his true opinion will never change.

Pound uses natural metaphors in the final lines of the poem like wood, sap,

and roots, which are all parts of trees. It may also be representative of Whitman's "crudity," according to Pound; nature is crude, raw, and unpolished in its purest state, which is how Pound saw Whitman's writing. Meanwhile, Pound sees his role as carving/refining the raw wood.

5. "THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE: A LETTER" (1917)

This poem takes the form of a letter from a lonely wife who has not seen her husband in five months. She begins by reminiscing about meeting him during childhood. She was pulling flowers at the front gate and he came by on stilts, playing horse. The next two lines, "And we went on living in the village of Chokan/ Two small people, without dislike or suspicion," imply that the pair did not grow close right away following that encounter; they continued to grow up separately.

In the next stanza, the wife describes marrying her husband at age fourteen. After that, she was continuously shy, either out of respect, sub-ordinance, or just because of her introverted personality. According to the next stanza, she became more comfortable with the marriage by age fifteen and "stopped scowling." A year later, her husband (a merchant) departed for another village, which is where he has been for the past five months. The monkeys' sorrowful noise mirrors her loneliness. She writes that her husband "dragged [his] feet" when he left - indicating that he did not want to leave her. She ends her letter by writing that if he comes back along the river, he should send word ahead, and she will come out to meet him. The poem is signed "by Rihaku."

Analysis

Pound was not the creator of this poem; he translated it from the original Chinese version by Li Po. The Chinese original likely had a specific form and identifiable meter, but Pound did not know enough about Chinese poetry to preserve it in his translation. Pound wrote his translation in free verse, structured around the chronological life events of the river-merchant and his wife. This form, though perhaps not Li Po's intent, does actually align with the content of this poem. The free verse makes the letter feel more authentic, as if it is a real letter from a wife to her husband. The lack of prescribed meter allows Pound to bring out the rawness of the wife's emotions, drawing readers directly into her loneliness without having to overcome the barrier of an overly structured presentation.

Lines 25 and 26 are two short lines that stand out because they appear in the midst of longer lines. Therefore, these two lines capture the reader's attention just as the poem reaches its climax, and the speaker, the wife, acknowledges the deep sorrow she feels because of her husband's absence. Poets often adjust form or meter in order to bring attention to a specific line. Even though this poem is free verse, those two lines are markedly different from the rest, which allows Pound to emphasize their content.

Notes

Because this poem follows the sequence of the characters' lives, it is thematically appropriate that Pound uses time-based imagery and figurative language as well. The setting of the poem shifts from spring to autumn. Spring usually represents abundance and new growth, and this is when the couple's love is in bloom. Meanwhile, in the autumn, growth and greenery slowly wither away, leaves fall, and the air grows colder. The husband is away and his wife longs for his return. The wife notes that the moss has grown thicker as well, which is another metaphor for the passage of time. As she grows older, the changing seasons represent her emotional development over time.

Rivers are also an important symbol in this poem. Rivers constantly flow and change, just as the relationship between the wife and her husband has evolved. A river forms the physical barrier between them, as the husband traveled along it to another village. At the end of the poem, the wife wonders whether or not another river will bring them back together.

In addition, the setting of this poem is a rare glimpse into a portion of China's landscape. In Pound's time, westerners had very little contact with this eastern land. Pound's translation of Chinese poetry probably caused a lot of discussion; it is doubtful that many of his contemporaries believed China to be the lush paradise he describes in this poem.

6. "A GIRL"

Ezra Pound likely based this poem on the myth of Apollo, the Sun God, and Daphne, a nymph. The traditional myth is that Apollo insulted Eros (or Cupid, his Roman name), saying he was not worthy of his warlike bow and arrow. In response, Eros angrily shot Apollo with an arrow to induce his love, and then shot the nymph Daphne with an arrow to make her feel hatred. Apollo fell head over heels for Daphne and continuously followed her, while she loathed him (and all men), desperate to shake his pursuit. Finally, Eros intervened to help Apollo catch Daphne, but she begged her father, Peneus, to change her form. He agreed, and thus Daphne transformed into a tree. "A Girl" details her transformation. In the poem, Apollo accepts Daphne as she is, but laments her foolish choice to transform into a tree in the last two lines: "A child—so high—you are/and this is folly to the world."

Analysis

Ezra Pound chose to employ split narration in this poem. The first five-line stanza reads as if Daphne is narrating. She closely details her transformation, describing the feeling of the tree entering her hands and growing in her breast. However, Pound wrote the second half of the poem from the perspective of a third-person onlooker, likely Apollo.

While this poem has a strong basis in mythology, and Pound clearly wrote it with this particular story in mind, there are more contemporary interpretations,

as well. The first narrator could be an older child detailing her figurative transformation into a tree, letting her imagination run wild. The second stanza could be from the perspective of an adult who understands her need to escape into reverie, assuring the girl that even if the world finds her imagined transformation to be “folly,” she shouldn’t let that dampen her creative instincts.

The free verse form of this poem is extremely effective, particularly since it’s so short. The lack of rigid structure makes it easier to picture this poem as a conversation between the two different narrators. The free verse also adds to the whimsical, childish sense of the interpretation of the poem that does not center around mythology; a child’s imagination is not constrained by any sort of structure, so neither is this poem.

Though critics and scholars continue to argue over whether the true interpretation of this poem lies in mythology or is a lesson on childhood imagination, it is possible that Pound had both meanings in mind. Pound was probably using the well-known myth of Apollo and Daphne to relay a wider message about the way society looks at imagination and creativity.

7. “HUGH SELWYN MAUBERLEY” (1920)

This poem is actually made up of eighteen short poems and grouped into two sections. The first is, in essence, Pound’s autobiography from the perspective of his third-person alter ego. It details his struggles to re-emphasize the importance of aesthetics and poetry in society. He pays particular attention to the classical Greek myths to illustrate his point, celebrating their classic beauty and intense passion. He describes America as a “half-savage land” where his art could not flourish. However, when he first arrived in London, he found that Britain was absorbed in commodities.

Later in section one, Pound goes on to criticize artists and publishers for caring only about sales instead of the craft. He does this by creating a fictional conversation between his alter ego and a bestselling novelist who cares only about the reviews of his work. This encompasses one of the main messages of Pound’s poem: mass culture will never be able to produce great art because of corrupt motivations.

In the second section of the poem, Pound introduces the title character, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, who is still interchangeable with Pound himself. Mauberley is a minor poet struggling to perfect his work, but unfortunately, society deems him irrelevant. Mauberley fails at romance - he can observe beauty but cannot act in time to seize it, and he eventually retires to the Pacific islands, which is where he dies.

Pound ends the collection with “Medallion,” a farewell poem that celebrates beauty. In “Medallion,” Pound once again alludes to classical mythology by using Venus as a symbol of beauty. Once again, Pound reminds his reader to celebrate beauty, aesthetics, and poetry because he feels that these values have started to recede from society’s collective consciousness.

Notes**Analysis**

Many critics and scholars regard “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley” as the turning point in Ezra Pound’s career. Pound meant this poem to be a strong statement, because he describes the first stage of his career when his primary concerns were aesthetics, literary traditions, and criticizing post-World War I society. Pound’s concern with aestheticism decreased drastically after he moved from London to Paris and then to Italy, where he became more concerned with politics and economics (particularly fascism).

Pound combined a bit of classical poetic organization with some more contemporary styles when he was designing the form and meter of this poem. He uses traditional four-line stanzas (quatrains) and employs an ABAB rhyme scheme, but there is no meter within the lines. Each line has a different number of syllables, making it difficult to find a steady rhythm when reading. This choice fits with Pound’s views on poetry; he believed it should sound musical, like the way people talk, rather than like a beating drum. Pound’s decision to combine old and new styles of poetic form and meter fits with the theme of the poem itself, which addresses the clash between old and new visions of literature and art.

Pound utilizes a lot of allusion in this eighteen-poem collection, particularly when he refers to classical mythology. He alludes to Venus, the Goddess of Love, as a representation of beauty and art. The lines “The tea-rose, tea-gown, etc./supplants the mousseline of Cos” point to the Greek island of Cos, which was famous for the famously beautiful local muslin. In lines 33-60, there are many more references to mythology, all illustrating Pound’s appreciation for the pure aesthetics of classic literature. Pound undoubtedly uses these allusions to strengthen his point; they serve as bits of evidence bolstering his assertion that commerce has corrupted contemporary expressions of art and beauty.

Pound interweaves lines in different languages throughout this poem. There are lines in ancient Greek, French, Italian, and Latin, to name a few, most of which appear at the beginning of a stanza. Pound, as an American expatriate in Europe, had a chance to experience many different cultures, and he certainly incorporated these languages to underline the universality of his message.

It is clear that the title character, Hugh, is Pound’s literary alter-ego. Pound even starts the poem with his initials, E.P. However, many readers question why he chose to write the poem from a third person perspective through a character of his creation rather than simply speak of himself in the first person singular. However, Pound wanted to maximize the poem’s relate-ability. Writing through a third-person character increases the chance that more readers will absorb his message.

8. "THE CANTOS: I - XXX" (1930)

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Pound begins *The Cantos* with a passage describing Odysseus and his companions sailing to Hades to find out what their futures hold. Canto II opens with an exploration of identity through an examination of four different versions of the poet Sordello: the actual poet, the titular character in a Browning poem, Pound's version of him, and his brief life that he wrote about in his manuscripts. Further on in the canto, there are other explorations of identity, mainly relating to the sea. Cantos III-VII take place in the Mediterranean, where Pound draws on classic mythology and the Renaissance in order to portray themes of clarity and light. These cantos are indicative of Pound's Imagist style.

Cantos VII-XI tell the story of Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, a 15th century poet and patron of the arts. They focus on the construction of the Church of San Francesco. Canto XII tells three moral tales about profit, and XIII introduces Confucius and his ethical teachings. Cantos XIV-XVI are made up of a vision of Hell inspired by Dante's *Divine Comedy*, finishing with a recount of World War I and the Russian Revolution.

The majority of Cantos XVII through XXX take place in Venice. Canto XVII contains a story about Dionysus, while XVIII and XIX discuss financial exploitation, beginning with Marco Polo's account of Kublai Khan's paper money, and ending with a criticism of war and those who profit from it. Canto XX contains a group of words and images from Mediterranean poetry, forming what Pound calls a "clear song." The Canto finishes with the Song of the Lotus Eaters. In Canto XXI, Pound discusses the Medici bank and the Medici family's effect on Venice, which he contrasts with the (positive) actions of Thomas Jefferson. The following canto focuses on finance as well.

Canto XXIII compares the destruction of Montségur, a Cathar stronghold during the Albigensian Crusade, to the destruction of Troy. Canto XXIV returns to 15th century Italy and tells the tale of the d'Este family and Niccolo d'Este's voyage to the Holy Land. Cantos XXV and XXVI discuss the Book of the Council Major and incorporate Pound's own memories of Venice, and Canto XXVII contains a condemnation of the Russian Revolution's destructive legacy. Canto XXVIII includes a passage that takes place on a transatlantic flight. Pound rejects Christianity in the final two cantos of this section, both of which return to the "clear song." This section concludes with the printer, Hieronymus Soncinus of Fano, preparing to print the works of Petrarch.

Analysis

To fully understand *The Cantos*, the reader must possess basic knowledge about the particular subjects that Pound references. Pound densely packed these poems with allusions to history, literature, politics, economics, and many cultural topics that Pound was interested in while he was writing. In particular, he focuses on classic mythology. It is beneficial for the reader to look up each cultural reference

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while studying the Cantos.

The lack of a plot makes *The Cantos* seem loose and structureless. They read like a stream of consciousness. However, one anecdote or reference will frequently appear across several cantos, which does serve to tie them together. However, the Cantos are more about continuity than union, and they build upon one other thematically. Additionally, the Cantos were originally published in separate sections, so some of these divisions are innate to Pound's process. Though Pound had preached Imagism throughout his career, which called for short, concise poetry, that style did not lend itself to the epic Cantos. As a result, Pound turned to what he called Vorticism, a much more abstract style.

Economics are a common theme in this section of *The Cantos*. Pound discusses profit and financial exploitation, makes references to World War I and the Russian Revolution (which were occurring while he was writing). In comparison to some of Pound's earlier poems, it becomes apparent that the poet's focus has shifted. His later works include much more societal criticism than his earlier ones, and the Cantos reflect his changing political views as he encountered different European cultures.

Pound's fascination with history is evident throughout the Cantos. He begins Canto I with the story of Odysseus and his companions sailing to Hades, and progresses through history to the 15th century and the poet Malatesta, and then on through the Renaissance, and finally, to World War I and the Russian Revolution. In his trajectory of opinions, it seems as though Pound's opinion of the world became increasingly grim. Towards the end of *The Cantos*, he continues to idolize classical mythology and the ancient stories of Greece and Italy. However, he clearly loathes the way that society has become concerned less with art, beauty, and literature (most evident in Hugh Selwyn Mauberly) and too wrapped up in war and financial success.

10. "THE CANTOS: XXXI - LI" (1934-1937)

An alternate name for Cantos XXXI-XLI is "Eleven New Cantos." In the first four of these Cantos, Pound uses many quotes from the writings of American politicians such as Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, and Martin Van Buren in order to illustrate the history of the United States and the American banking system. In Canto XXXV, Pound contrasts Revolutionary America with "Mitteleuropa," a German term for central Europe, and reveals traces of his famous antisemitism. In Canto XXXVI, Pound translates the poem *Donna mi pregha* by Cavalcanti; the poet felt this poem was a significant representation of "clear song."

In Canto XXXVII, Pound returns to familiar topics like the Bank War and the Peggy Eaton affair, as well as historical figures like Martin Van Buren, Andrew Jackson, Nicholas Biddle, and Alexander Hamilton. Canto XXXVIII opens with

a quote from Dante, and then goes on to address modern commerce, trade, and the problem of purchasing power. In Canto XXXIX, Pound returns to mythology, taking his reader to the island of Circe. Canto XL opens with Adam Smith's beliefs about trade as a conspiracy, and then includes a condensed retelling of Hanno the Navigator's voyage along the coast of west Africa. Pound closes the "Eleven New Cantos" by calling Benito Mussolini a man of action and then denouncing war again.

Cantos XLII-LI is also known as the Fifth Decad or "the Leopoldine Cantos." In Cantos XLII-XLIV, Pound discusses the Sienese bank, the Monte dei Paschi di Siena (the oldest surviving bank in the world), and the 18th century reforms of Pietro Leopoldo, the Habsburg Archduke of Tuscany. The Monte die Paschi was different from most banks because it was low-interest and not-for-profit, thus embodying Pound's non-capitalist ideals. In Canto XLV, Pound speaks out against usury and unethical bank loans. Canto XLVI is about the Bank of England and its corrupt profit practices, which Pound believed contributed to poverty in the nation.

Canto XLVII returns to Circe's island once again, where Odysseus is about to "sail after knowledge." In Canto XLVIII, Pound presents more instances of usury, and once again displays hints of antisemitism. Then, the setting moves to the village of St. Bertrand-de-Comminges, which stands on the former site of the ancient city Lugdunum Convenarum. Pound believed that the destruction of this ancient city represented the barbarous nature of human civilization.

In comparison, Canto XLIX is a tranquil verse, based on a Chinese picture book. Canto L contains more antisemitism, as Pound moves from John Adams to the failure of the Medici bank and other images of the European decay after Napoleon I's rule. The final canto in this section is about usury, and also contains instructions on making fishing flies, which shows man in harmony with nature. The first Chinese characters in this work appear at the end of this canto.

Analysis

The first set of cantos focus on history with allusions to economics. In general, this group of cantos contains an in-depth analysis of modern finance. Pound examines the American banking system and the American Bank War, comparing it to the Monte dei Paschi (which he viewed as non-corrupt) and the failure of the Medici bank. He claims that the practice of usury is both contrary to the laws of nature and inimical to the production of powerful art and culture. He examines the history of banking and how it become increasingly corrupt throughout the course of history.

Pound also focuses more on America in this section of cantos than he did in the previous one. Most of his writing after his move to Europe underlines his cynicism about America, and it seems that his opinion has only become more bleak. Pound frequently brings up America's forefathers as examples of

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corruption, scandal, bad business and predatory banking practices. One of the explanations for Pound's negativity was his hatred of capitalism. Since America exemplified capitalism during this time, it certainly stroked Pound's anger and criticism.

Pound's antisemitism had not yet hit its peak when he wrote *The Cantos*, but it is certainly evident throughout these verses. Pound was living in fascist Italy during that time, and both Italy and fascist Germany were filled with anti-Semitic propaganda, calling Jews "disease" and "vermin" and insisting that they brought a plague onto society. Soon after *The Cantos* was published, Pound started recording anti-semitic and pro-fascist broadcasts, which would significantly ruin his reputation for the rest of his career. The hints of antisemitic sentiment in *The Cantos* foreshadow his downfall.

Pound's concept of "clear song" is apparent in the previous section of *The Cantos* as well as this one. He supported the eradication of antiquated poetic language in favor of inventing a new one that would allow him to pierce the readers' minds with his "clear song." He described the "clear song" as an instantaneous understanding of the world and its connections. To do this, Pound wrote in free-verse and constructed this poem like a collage of quotes, historical anecdotes, and examples of prominent figures. Pound's "clear song" philosophy explains why *The Cantos* does not progress in chronological order. The poet cycles through different phases of history and poetry, moving from ancient Greek myths to modern banking practices, in order to show that everything is connected in some way.

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12. "THE CANTOS: LII - LXXIII" (1940-1945)

Pound based Cantos LII - LXI on the first eleven volumes of the twelve-volume *Histoire general de la Chine* by Joseph-Anna-Marie de Moyriac de Mailla, a French Jesuit who wrote about his many years in Beijing. Canto LII consists of a very antisemitic passage directed at the Rothschild family. In addition, this verse focuses on the classic Chinese text *Li Ki* or *Classic of Rites*, particularly the parts that deal with agriculture and natural cycles.

In Canto LIII, Pound covers Chinese history from the founding of the Hai dynasty through Confucius's life and 225 BCE. Canto LIV continues this story until 805 CE. Canto LV illustrates the rise of the Tatars and the Tartar Wars until 1200, and also includes the poet's musings on financial policy. Canto LVI contains details about Kublai, Genghis Khan, and the rise and fall of the Yuan dynasty, and closes with the establishment of the Ming dynasty.

Canto LVII begins with the flight of Emperor Kien Ouen Ti, and contains an account of Ming history until the sixteenth century. Canto LVIII contains a condensed history of Japan, and concludes with an account of the border pressure that the Tartar horse fairs caused, which eventually led to the rise of the Manchu dynasty. Pound begins Canto LIX with a translation of Confucian texts into Manchu, and then discusses the growing European presence in China. In Canto LX, Pound writes an account of the Jesuits and details their contributions to the west, like astronomy, music, and physics. The final "China Canto" continues through the reigns of Yong Tching and Kien Long. Yong Tching banned

Christianity, deeming it immoral.

The next set of cantos, until LXXI, are also known as “The Adams Cantos.” They are made up of fragments of John Adams’s writings. Pound depicted Adams as a well-rounded, rational, and competent leader. Canto LXII starts with a history of the Adams family in America, then continues through the events leading up to the American Revolution, Adams’s time in France, and the formation of the Washington administration. Pound portrays Alexander Hamilton as a villain. Canto LXIII details Adams’s career as a lawyer, and in particular, the Writs of Assistance case.

In Canto LXIV, Pound examines the taxation acts that the British set in motion in America, such as the Stamp Act and the Boston Massacre, which Adams defended. Canto LXVI centers on Washington’s nomination for president and Adams debating the practicality of war. Pound briefly touches on the Declaration of Independence and then returns to describing Adams’s time in France. In Canto LXVI, Adams is in London, serving as minister to the Court of St. James.

In Canto LXVII, Pound examines the government and the limits of the British monarch’s power. In Canto LXVIII, Pound compares John Adams to King Lycurgus of Sparta and reviews more of Adams’s notes on financing war and borrowing money the Dutch. Canto LXIX continues this line of thinking and also reveals Adams’s fear of a native aristocracy in America. Canto LXX includes Adams’s terms as president and vice-president, focusing on his statement “I am for balance.” Canto LXXI concludes the Adams Cantos and includes some information on Adams’s relationship with Native Americans.

The next two Cantos, also known as “The Italian Cantos,” were not published as part of *The Cantos* until 1987. Pound uses the model Dante developed in *Divine Comedy* and converses with ghosts from Italy’s past. In Canto LXXII, Pound speaks to various Italian ghosts about World War II, the dangers of obsession with the past or the future, and Pope Pius XII. In Canto LXXIII, the ghost of Guido Cavalcanti appears on horseback and tells Pound about a heroic girl who led a troop of Canadian soldiers to a minefield and died with the enemy. Neither of these Cantos contain antisemitic content, ending on a relatively positive note.

Analysis

Pound’s knowledge of Chinese history was not as extensive as his knowledge of other historical and literary subjects. Therefore, the China Cantos are mostly Pound’s translation and interpretation of Chinese history, based on renowned primary sources. Because of his lack of familiarity, he does not draw many new and interesting parallels or offer many of his own insights. He does, however, attempt to make links between Chinese history and European history. *The Cantos* offered western readers an introduction to Chinese history, which they would otherwise not read about - either in textbooks or in newspapers.

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In the China Cantos, Pound chooses his own villains. He describes Confucius and his teachings frequently throughout his recount of Chinese history and appropriately displays a perspective that aligns with Confucian beliefs. He views Taoists, Buddhists, eunuchs (castrated men who were servants to a royal court), and corrupted women (such as consorts) as enemies. Though Pound expresses distaste for all of them, the eunuchs particularly attracted Pound's hatred. Pound was very inspired by fertility and sexuality, neither of which eunuchs can experience.

While Pound had a poor opinion of America and American leaders in general, he clearly respected John Adams and his work. Pound writes about Adams in the same glorified manner that he describes Mussolini and Malatesta in other parts of the poem, even though their politics were vastly different. Pound likely presented the Adams Cantos after the China Cantos in order to connect Adams to the Chinese emperors he discusses in the previous section.

Many scholars have found the Italian Cantos to be puzzling. It is likely that Pound wrote the Italian Cantos with the intent of promoting fascism. These two cantos are simplistic in theme, structure, and language, more so than the rest of *The Cantos*. They also represent the end of a hiatus in Pound's career, since these were his first poems to be published since 1940.

13. "THE CANTOS LXXIV - LXXXIV: PISAN CANTOS" (1948)

This section of *The Cantos* is also known as the Pisan Cantos and is perhaps the most famous of all Pound's cantos. As World War II began, Pound was living in Italy and earning his income by making radio broadcasts. Pound spoke about his musings on politics, economics, and society, presenting opinions that were typically antisemitic and against the American involvement in the war. These radio broadcasts led to Italian Partisans arresting him in 1945. He was then detained at the American Disciplinary Training Center (DTC), north of Pisa. That is where he wrote the Pisan Cantos.

Canto LXXIV begins with Pound reflecting on the death of Mussolini while looking down from the DTC window at peasants working in the fields. Later, Pound writes about himself and Odysseus interchangeably, and then this character turns into Wuluwaid, who lost his freedom of speech when his father closed his mouth for "creating too many things." The protagonist then becomes the Chinese figure *Ouan Jin*, or the "man with education." Later, Pound quotes *The Seafarer*, writing, "Lordly men are to earth o'ergiven," and then applies this quote to his now-deceased friends from his years in London and Paris.

Further on in the canto, Pound imagines several goddesses visiting him in his tent at DTC. Pound also invokes the common theme of banking and money, along with another antisemitic passage directed at the banker Mayer Amschel Rothschild. In addition, Pound interweaves many of his memories from America

and Venice into this long and complex canto.

Canto LXXV is a copy of German pianist's Gerhart Munch's violin setting of the ancient song *Le chant des oiseaux*. Canto LXXVI begins once again with visions of goddesses in Pound's room, then moves to his memories of Paris, Provence, and Venice. After that, he writes about the American Revolution, and Pound considers what has been destroyed because of the war. LXXVII centers on the moment when Pound learned that World War II was over, and the goddess appears again.

In Canto LXXVIII, Pound moves into familiar territory: del Cossa, the economic basis of war, Pound's London friends, "virtuous" rulers, and usury. Canto LXXIX focuses on music and the ideas of many famous composers, and ends with a fertility hymn addressed to Dionysus. Canto LXXX centers on the aftermath of war, and Canto LXXXI is about fertility and Pound's memories of Spain. Once again, the Goddess of Love appears. Canto LXXXII returns to the camp and its inmates, and ends with Pound drowning in Earth.

In Canto LXXXIII, Pound departs from the previous cantos in which he writes about earth and air and refocuses on images of water and light. In one particular passage, Pound speaks out against the death sentence and cages for wild animals. Pound uses Chinese characters and Greek words, as he has in past cantos. Pound goes on to recount his time as secretary to poet W.B. Yeats, and at the end of the canto, he shifts from recalling his memories to describing the present. Canto LXXXIV begins with the delivery of a letter from Dorothy Pound, detailing the death of young English poet J.P. Angold while he was at war. After that comes a passage about Pound's visit to Washington, D.C. in 1939, when he attempted to stop American involvement in World War II. The goddess appears once again in this canto.

Analysis

Though Pound has employed the technique of interweaving different themes in the other parts of *The Cantos*, it appears most prominently in the Pisan Cantos. It reads like a fugue - a method of composition where multiple voices introduce a certain theme that recurs frequently throughout the piece. Many of the themes in the Pisan Cantos are also prominent in Pound's other cantos: economics, antisemitism, mythology, history, and war.

Pound wrote the Pisan Cantos while he was imprisoned at the DTC, He had no essential amenities. In fact, Pound originally wrote the beginning of Canto LXXIV on a sheet of toilet paper, which suggests that he must have begun writing it during the first three weeks of his imprisonment, while he was trapped in a reinforced steel cage. In the Pisan Cantos, he appears to be at his most vulnerable. However, he does not seem to be consciously trying to incite sympathy or make the reader understand his anguish. Instead, he remains stylistically consistent: presenting concrete images and themes together in order to express larger, more

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abstract ideas.

Pound does, however, devote some of the Pisan Cantos to recalling his past. He weaves together anecdotes of his time in London, Paris, and Venice, and brings up friends from each city who are now deceased. In particular, Pound quotes *The Seafarer*, writing “Lordly men are to earth o’ergiven” in reference to his deceased companions, including W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, and Ford Maddox Ford. Pound played a major role in helping many poets and artists when he lived in Europe. While he was nearing the end of his career, sitting in prison, he understandably ruminates on his past and the successes of his peers with a hint of bitterness.

A number of these Cantos begin with goddesses visiting Pound in his prison cell. Canto LXXIV contains three different goddesses who visit Pound one by one. First comes Kuanon, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy, then the moon spirit from Hagaromo, Sigismondo’s lover Ixxota, a girl who Manet painted, and finally, Aprodite, the Greek Goddess of Love. Pound describes Aphrodite rescuing him.

In these Cantos, it is clear that Pound was yearning to be free. In addition, Pound has always seen mythological gods and goddesses as the purest form of classic beauty and art, symbols of everything he has always aspired to embody in his work. Pound surrounds the goddesses in the Pisan Cantos with images of light and brightness, which reinforces his perspective.

14. “THE CANTOS LXXXV - CXVI” (1956-1969)

Pound wrote these cantos while he was incarcerated at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for Mental Health in Washington, D.C. The first canto is called *Rock Drill*, and Pound relied on two main sources for information: Confucius’s *Classic of History* and Senator Thomas Hart Benton’s *Thirty Years View: Or A History of the American Government for Thirty Years From 1820–1850*, which covers the bank wars.

The first canto contains a number of Chinese characters and Latin phrases, as well as some Greek language. The foreign language sections generally espouse Confucian ideals of good government and the natural world. In Cantos LXXXVI and LXXXVII, Pound continues to discuss good government, rulers, leaders, and lawmakers, as well as economics and usury. Canto LXXXVIII focuses on John Randolph of Roanoke and the campaign against the Bank of the United States. In Canto LXXXIX, Pound continues to present examples of good rule.

In Canto XC, Pound switches to a discussion of myths and love, both divine and sexual. He includes the sacred fountain of Castilla on Parnassus as an image of sexual love. The canto closes with an account of sexual love between gods and humans in a paradisiacal world. Pound continues this theme in the following canto, which opens with an example of “clear song.” The central image in this canto is Ra-Set, a fictional deity of the sun and the moon.

At the end of this canto, Pound returns to the *Odyssey*, recounting the story of the winds breaking up Odysseus's raft, after which a nymph offers him a veil to carry him to shore. Canto XCII opens with an image of seeds being distributed from a sacred mountain, centering on the relationship between nature and the divine. Canto XCIII includes examples of benevolent acts by public figures who represent the quote, "a man's paradise is his good nature." In Canto XCIV, Pound discusses forgotten Dutch Revolution leader Hendrik van Brederode. Canto XCV opens with the word "LOVE" in capital letters and explores certain relationships between love, light, and politics.

Pound also wrote *Thrones*, the second of these cantos, while he was in St. Elizabeth's. Pound described *Thrones* as "an attempt to move out from egoism and to establish some definition of an order possible or at any rate conceivable on Earth." Canto XCVI contains a summary of the decline of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Byzantine Empire, the Carolingian Empire, the Germanic Kingdoms, and the Lombards.

Canto XCVI includes a detailed passage on the Book of the Prefect, a 9th Century edict of Emperor Leo VI the Wise that lays out the rules of governance for the Byzantium Guild System. In Canto XCVII, Pound draws on Alexander del Mar's *History of Monetary Systems*, and XCVII focuses on Emperor K'ang Hsi's *Sacred Edict*. Throughout these Cantos, there are many images of goddesses, light, and divine creation.

Pound based Canto XCIX on K'ang Hsi's son Iong Cheng's commentary on his father's maxims. He also discusses the harmony between human society and the natural order. Odysseus makes a reappearance in this canto as well, now that the veil has helped him to reach the shore. Pound centered Canto CI on the Greek phrase meaning "the beautiful and good," as well as the moral aspect of beauty. It ends with a passage about Byzantium and the decline of the Western Empire.

CIII and CIV also examine the relationship between war, money, and government. In CV, Pound uses St. Anselm of Canterbury's writings, which emphasize the role of reason in religion and envision the divine essence as light. Canto CVI returns to a description of the goddess and her many roles. Demeter and Persephone are symbols of fertility, Selena, Helen, and Aphrodite symbolize the moon and love, and Athene and Diana are hunters. In Cantos CVII through CIX, Pound lifts details from Sir Edward Coke (an English jurist)'s study of English law.

Pound was only able to complete a few more cantos after his doctors declared him incurably insane and incapable of standing trial. He intended to write a final section of "Paradise Cantos" based on his paradisiacal vision. Other themes also permeate this section, such as a sense of artistic failure, jealousy, and hatred. Later, Pound goes on to recognize his indebtedness to his genetic and cultural ancestors. Canto CXVI was the very last canto that Pound was able to write. In this canto, Pound's Odysseus figure is home at last, and has reconciled with the Sea God. After his return, though, Odysseus finds that his home is different than what he remembers.

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Analysis

While Pound was writing the closing sections of this monumental work, his sanity was slowly slipping away. He wrote the Pisan Cantos while he was imprisoned in Italy. In the later portion of his career, Pound started to feel increasingly like a failure. His feelings of inadequacy are evident these last sections, in particular, the following passage from Canto CXVI:

I have brought the great ball of crystal;
 Who can lift it?
 Can you enter the great acorn of light?
 But the beauty is not the madness
 Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.
 And I am not a demigod,
 I cannot make it cohere.

This is a possible allusion to Pound's feelings of failure. In *The Cantos*, he attempts to connect history to the present, as well as paint symbols of light, nature, beauty, and gods. At the end, though, Pound realizes that he has not succeeded in creating this cohesion. He also recognizes that his failure was inevitable: he feels that the task of creating cohesion within the vast universe will elude any human being.

Pound uses images of light even more frequently in these final cantos. He explores the concept of light and the opposition between darkness and light. In his work, light represents a number of things: divinity, the artistic impulse, love, and good governance. He refers to the light of the sun and the moon. He commonly associates the moon with creativity, and he uses the sun as a symbol of political and social activity.

Throughout *The Cantos*, Pound reveals his feelings of kinship with Odysseus. The poem starts with Odysseus and his friends sailing off for Hades, and it closes with the end of his journey, when he returns to shore safely with the help of the nymph's veil. Pound uses Odysseus as a model for all the heroes and leaders he lauds throughout the cantos, most notably himself and John Adams.

Like Odysseus, Pound embarked on a journey to Europe with various goals in mind. He wanted to improve society's view on art and beauty, transform the world of literature, and aid the careers of other writers, among others. Though his journey was very different from Odysseus's, Pound certainly experienced his share of perils. In the end, Odysseus does not end up where he thought he was going to, just like Pound did. In *The Cantos*, Pound uses Odysseus as an extension himself, which reveals that the poet had a very large ego.

In the "Rock Drill Cantos," Pound explores a paradisiacal theme. His plan was always to conclude *The Cantos* with his musings about a vision

of paradise, and he foreshadowed this at the end of “The Thrones Cantos” by quoting Dante’s *Paradiso*. Pound’s obsession with paradise was likely rooted in his idealistic view of beauty, society, and the natural world. He dedicated much of his life’s work to criticizing society and trying to make it better for artists.

After his release from St. Elizabeth’s, Pound returned to Europe and his vision for the final cantos disintegrated. While some elements of paradise are still present, these cantos are mostly filled with commentary on hatred and Pound’s own failures. It is possible that Pound finally accepted that his version of paradise was impossible, if he hadn’t already, or perhaps his descent deeper into insanity drove paradise farther from his mind.

5.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Pound begins this poem by acknowledging his animosity towards American poet Walt Whitman, writing that he’s “detested [him] long enough,” and offering to make a pact. Pound describes himself as “a grown child who has had a pig headed father,” and offers his friendship to Whitman. Pound admits that he has come to recognize the ways in which Whitman has paved the way for his own work. He ends with “let there be commerce between us,” accepting the inspiration that Whitman has given him.

To understand this short poem, it is first necessary to explore Pound’s negative feelings towards Walt Whitman. In 1909, Pound wrote an essay titled “What I Feel About Walt Whitman,” in which he denounced the older poet’s “crudity” and “barbaric yawp.” He believed that Walt Whitman was the epitome of American authenticity. After Pound settled in the UK, he did not hold a very high opinion of Whitman’s classic American milieu. He also disliked Whitman’s work because he felt that the poet did not show enough restraint and reticence, and believed it impossible to consider him an artist without those two virtues. Whitman and Pound ever likely never met in person, since the former died when Pound was only seven years old.

Throughout this poem, it becomes clear that Pound once viewed Whitman as his creative antithesis, but has since matured. He describes Whitman as a paternal figure, admitting that his previous behavior has been “pig-headed.” Now, he is a “grown child,” and his views have appropriately evolved.

By comparing Whitman to a father figure, Pound insinuates that he felt intimidated by Whitman’s success. There is also a more obvious interpretation of this father/son metaphor; Whitman was alive and writing long before Pound, and it is natural that modern poets would learn from their predecessors’ work, just as a son could learn from his father. Pound, however, was always reluctant to take inspiration from others.

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At the end of the poem, even though Pound has accepted Whitman's influence, he still offers a backhanded compliment. He writes, "it was you who broke the new wood/now it is time for carving." Pound describes Whitman's purpose in the poetic world as lesser than his own. He insinuates that Whitman paved the way simply by finding this new wood and offering it to the world; now it is Pound's turn to craft the raw material into refined artistic masterpieces. Therefore, even though Pound is certainly presenting a more cordial view of the American poet than he has in the past, he offers subtle reminders that his true opinion will never change.

Pound uses natural metaphors in the final lines of the poem like wood, sap, and roots, which are all parts of trees. It may also be representative of Whitman's "crudity," according to Pound; nature is crude, raw, and unpolished in its purest state, which is how Pound saw Whitman's writing. Meanwhile, Pound sees his role as carving/refining the raw wood.

5.5 THEMES**The Importance of Aesthetics and Art**

Ezra Pound lived and wrote in a swiftly modernizing world that, as time went on, placed less and less emphasis on art and beauty. Pound, however, was dissatisfied by this, and made it a point to celebrate art, literature, and beauty in his poetry. The major example of this lies in his long compilation of eighteen short poems called "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley." In this poem, Pound criticizes mass culture, saying it will never again be able to produce great art because writers, painters, and other artists in modern day are concerned only with sales and profits. He believes that they are creating work for the wrong reasons.

Imagism

Since Pound pioneered the Imagist movement, its overarching style and themes resonate throughout his poems. He placed significant value on clarity and economy of language. Pound felt that classic poetry, namely Greek and Roman, presented many model examples of Imagism, and frequently referred back to those ancient verses in his work. He also praised the verbal economy of traditional Japanese and Chinese poetry. A notable example of Imagism in Pound's work is "In a Station of the Metro." It is extremely short, only two lines long, and says only what it needs to say and nothing more. Pound originally wrote thirty lines for this poem, and then proceeded to whittle it down to 14 crucial syllables.

Economics

In his later career, Pound became increasingly obsessed with economics,

especially when he moved to Italy and embraced fascism in the years leading up to World War II. The theme of economics is evident in a number of Pound's later poems, particularly the Cantos. His is clear about his hatred of interest rates and his belief that they were destroying Western civilization, and he also criticizes the Bank Wars and American capitalism. One of Pound's earlier poems, though he wrote it before he moved to Italy, also contains an abstract variation on this theme. In "Portrait d'une Femme," Pound describes the ideological commerce between the female protagonist and the great minds who came to exchange knowledge and stories for her rumors and tales.

Love

An overwhelming number of Pound's poems revolve around a theme of love. "The River-Merchant's Wife" is about a woman who loves her husband and wistfully longs for his return. "A Virginal" consists of a young man celebrating his affection for his virginal lover. Pound explores different ways that love can be powerful. He was likely a bit of a romantic himself; he became involved with a number of women in Europe before settling down with Dorothy Shakespear, and then even had an affair during his marriage which resulted in an illegitimate child. However, he often explores the divide between love and temptation, which could be a result of his tortured affairs.



What are the themes of the poem?

Nature

Pound often uses unexpected natural metaphors to reflect on people, business, and society. "In A Station of the Metro," he compares the faces on a subway platform to petals on a tree branch. In "A Virginal," the speaker compares his lover to a green spring and in "The River-Merchant's Wife," Pound compares the wife's sadness to somber monkeys and swiftly spreading moss. By frequently including nature into his work, Pound alludes to his love of aesthetics and beauty.

History

Pound explores history quite often in his poems. In the Cantos, Pound uses John Adams as an example of good government, business, and banking practices. He brings up historical instances of war and denounces them, claiming that war is costly and useless. He crafts the same criticism of poor economic practices and

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catastrophes like the American Bank Wars. Pound valued history because he recognized how much it influenced the present. He blamed bad historical precedents for all the societal corruption he describes in his poetry.

Journey

Many of Ezra Pound's poems center on the process of making a journey, whether metaphorical or physical, to accomplish some sort of goal. Pound himself made many different kinds of journeys, moving from the USA to London to Paris and then to Italy in order to achieve literary success and voice his opinions in the hope of changing society's views. Pound describes small journeys, such as the merchant's trip to another village in "The River-Merchant's Wife," as well as large-scale ones. The Cantos, though full of many different tangents, begin and end with Odysseus's legendary journey.

5.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Which year was Ezra Pound born?
 - 1870
 - 1885
 - 1912
 - 1972
- In which state was Ezra Pound born?
 - Iowa
 - New York
 - Idaho
 - Nebraska
- Which state did Pound's family move to when he was 18 months old?
 - New Jersey
 - Minnesota
 - Pennsylvania
 - New York
- What was the form of Pound's first published poem?
 - sonnet
 - free verse
 - haiku
 - limerick
- Which university did Ezra Pound attend (first)?
 - Harvard University
 - Hamilton College
 - Columbia University
 - University of Pennsylvania
- Which university did Pound transfer to in order to complete his undergraduate degree?
 - University College London
 - Hamilton College
 - University of Pennsylvania
 - Oxford University
- At which college did Pound teach for two years?
 - Carleton College
 - Hamilton College
 - Wabash College
 - Amherst College

8. In which European city did Pound first make his home?
 (a) Venice (b) London
 (c) Paris (d) Madrid
9. What was the first name of Pound's wife?
 (a) Olivia (b) Dora
 (c) Dorothy (d) Hilda
10. Which city did Pound settle in after leaving London?
 (a) Barcelona (b) Prague
 (c) London (d) Paris

Notes**5.7 SUMMARY**

Ezra Pound's contribution to poetry is marked by his promotion of Imagism, a movement centered on clarity, economic language, and rhythm. Pound started this movement after studying Japanese forms of poetry like waka verse and haiku. These forms have strict conventions and are typically very frugal with words. According to Imagism, poets should write "in fear of abstractions." Imagism was based on three principles, compiled by Pound, Richard Aldington, and Hilda Doolittle:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. Regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of a musical phrase, not in the sequence of a metronome.

Though Ezra Pound had work published in a few small American publications, the poet started to make an impact on the literary scene only after moving to Europe. In July 1908, he published his first book of poetry called *A Lume Spento (With Tapers Spent)*. Pound contributed to literary magazines such as *Poetry*, *The New Freewoman*, *The Egoist*, and *BLAST* while he was living in London and Paris, and helped other contemporary poets like T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, James Joyce, and Ernest Hemingway shape their work.

Some of Ezra Pound's most famous works include *Ripostes*, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and *The Cantos*. *Ripostes*, a collection of 25 of Pound's poems, was published by Swift and Co. in London in February of 1912. Eight of these poems had appeared in magazines before this collection was published, and one was a repeat from his first book of poetry, *A Lume Spento*. *Ripostes* marks the beginning of Pound's adoption of the Imagist style, and appropriately, it is the first time Pound uses the word "Imagiste."

Critics and scholars regard *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* as a major turning point in Pound's career, and he completed it shortly before he left England. *The Cantos* is a long, 120-section poem that Pound was never able to finish. It contains his opinions on government, economics, and culture, and includes Chinese characters

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and other non-English quotations. The section of *The Cantos* that Pound wrote at the end of World War II in occupied Italy is called the *The Pisan Cantos*, and it won the first Bollingen Prize in 1948.

Pound's work has received mixed reviews, mainly because of the nature of his writing style. Critics identify Pound's strong lyricism and modernity, and also recognize that his Imagism was a reaction against abstraction in writing. Pound drew inspiration from the clarity of Chinese and Japanese verse as well as Greek classics in order to combat the increasing generalities in poetry. His legacy lives on because of the profound impact Imagism has had on modern poetry, and also because he nurtured many other poets' careers as the editor of numerous literary publications. In addition to the aforementioned writers, Pound also worked with Marianne Moore, Jacob Epstein. However, Pound's work never gained a wide audience, and Pound himself recognized his own shortcomings as a writer because of his adherence to certain ideological fallacies.

5.8 KEY –WORDS

Approbation	- Approval or praise
Bough	- A main branch of a tree
Censure	- Expression of harsh disapproval; strong criticism
Consternation	- Feelings of anxiety or dismay
Disillusion	- Disappointment with the discovery that something is not as good as one thought it to be
Eddy	- A circular movement of water
Exacerbation	- An increase in the severity of something
Folly	- Foolishness; lack of good sense
Fortitude	- Courage in pain or adversity
Gaudy	- Extravagantly bright or showy
Gauze	- A thin, transparent fabric
Hedonist	- One who pursues pleasure
Imagism	- The poetic movement that Ezra Pound pioneered, which stressed clarity and economy of language in verse
Longevity	- Length or duration of life.
Maudlin	- Self-pitying or tearfully sentimental.
Mendacity	- Dishonesty.
Mousseline	- A thin fabric similar to muslin.
Myriad	- Countless or extremely great in number.

Obstinate	- Stubbornly refusing to change one's opinion, even after repeated prompts to do so.
Oddment	- A remnant or part of something.
Phantasmagoria	- A confusing or strange scene that is like a dream because it is always changing in some way.
Placid	- Not easily upset or excited.
Revery	- A state of fanciful musing.
Rhapsodize	- Speak or write about with great enthusiasm.
Sargasso Sea	- A region in the middle of the northern Atlantic Ocean, just north of the Caribbean.
Score	- Twenty years.
Seismograph	- Instrument used to detect and record earthquakes.
Succulent	- Tender, juicy, tasty.
Supplant	- To replace.
Tawdry	- Cheap and gaudy.
Uxorious	- having an obsessive fondness for one's wife.
Vocation	- A strong feeling of suitability for a particular occupation.
Wares	- manufactured articles, particularly of art or craft

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5.9 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Ezra Pound's use of classic mythology in his poetry.
2. What autobiographical details does Pound use in his poetry? What is the function of these personal allusions?
3. How did Pound's support of *Imagism* affect his own work? Is it accurate to label him an Imagist?
4. What kinds of controversy did Pound's poetry cause?
5. How does Pound explore economics in his poetry? Use specific examples
6. What does Pound mean when he says he wanted *The Cantos* to bring cohesion to the universe? Did he fail or succeed, and how?
7. Compare and contrast Ezra Pound journey with that of Homer's Odysseus, whom Pound frequently associated himself with. Discuss how this comparison is evident in *The Cantos*.
8. What role does aesthetic beauty play in Pound's poetry? How does he explore this topic?
9. Why did Pound strive to create a paradise at the end of *The Cantos*?

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10. Do you consider Ezra Pound to be a successful poet? Did he think he was successful? Why or why not?

Self-Assessment (Answers)

1. (b) 2. (c) 3. (c) 4. (b) 5. (d) 6. (b) 7. (b) 8. (a) 9. (c) 10. (a)

5.10 FURTHER READINGS

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